

Point State Park



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Pennsylvania State Parks Mission

The primary purpose of Pennsylvania state parks is to provide opportunities for enjoying healthful outdoor recreation and serve as outdoor classrooms for environmental education. In meeting these purposes, the conservation of the natural, scenic, aesthetic, and historical values of parks should be given first consideration. Stewardship responsibilities should be carried out in a way that protects the natural outdoor experience for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

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POINT STATE PARK



Point State Park is located at the confluence of three rivers at the tip of Pittsburgh's "Golden Triangle." The park commemorates and preserves the strategic location and historic heritage of the area during the French and Indian War (1754-1763) and the dramatic events of 1750-1795 that shaped our country.

Once a busy industrial zone, the area had deteriorated into a commercial slum by the 1930s. The development of a state park was authorized in 1945 and the first parcel was purchased by the commonwealth the next year. In 1960, the Forks of the Ohio (which includes the Great Lawn area, Fort Pitt, and Fort Duquesne) was recognized by the Department of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark. In 1966, it was also officially designated on the National Register of Historic Places for its significance as the

junction of three rivers and as a strategic key to the Ohio Valley during the French and Indian War.

Point was officially dedicated as a state park in 1974 after nearly 25 years of construction. In 2013, the park was again listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing site of the Pittsburgh Renaissance Historic District for its mid-century modernist design.

Point State Park is owned and operated by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Bureau of State Parks. DCNR works in collaboration with the Heinz History Center and the Fort Pitt Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution to interpret the history of the Forks of the Ohio.

Directions

GPS DD: Lat. 40.4417 Long. -80.00719

The 36-acre park is located at 601 Commonwealth Place. The park's parking lot is at 101 Commonwealth Place and is open from 7:00 AM to 11:00 PM daily, for a fee. There is limited metered parking along Commonwealth Place near the park entrance and a pull-in, visitor drop-off area.

From the east: Follow I-376 into the city and take the left exit for Stanwix Street. At the end of the ramp turn left onto Fort Pitt Boulevard. Stay to the right along Fort Pitt Boulevard turning right at the end of Fort Pitt Boulevard onto Commonwealth Place. Point State Park and the parking lot concession are located on the left.

From the south and west: Drive I-279 north across the Fort Pitt Bridge. Exit right on the ramp toward the Boulevard of the Allies. Commonwealth Place is located at the end of the ramp. Point State Park is on the left and the parking lot concession is on the right.

From the north: Drive I-279 south across the Fort Duquesne Bridge. Exit the Fort Duquesne Bridge via the left-center lane on Fort Duquesne Boulevard. At the bottom of the ramp, move to the far-right lane. Turn right onto Stanwix Street at the first traffic light. Drive Stanwix Street six blocks and turn right on the Boulevard of the Allies. Driving toward Commonwealth Place, Point State Park will be on the right and the parking lot concession will be on the left.

Public transportation: Available from the Port Authority of Allegheny County. <https://www.portauthority.org>

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Visitors can walk along ADA accessible paved promenades on the riverfront and the Overlook for dramatic views of Pittsburgh, its busy waterways, scenic hillsides, and many bridges. Natural landscaping and a 100-foot-tall fountain enhance the beauty of this unique park at the Forks of the Ohio. Numerous benches are throughout the park. Visitors may picnic on the lawns. A stepped wall along the Allegheny River section of the park provides seating for outdoor events.

BOATING: unlimited horsepower boating

The three rivers provide boating for most sizes and types of recreational boats. Mooring rings are available along the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers for boaters to moor during the day at the park.



FISHING: The three rivers are a warmwater fishery. Common species are saugers, walleyes, catfishes, panfishes, and various bass species. The wharf areas along the rivers provide ADA fishing access for

people with disabilities. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission regulations and laws apply.

HIKING AND BIKING: see other side.

THE NATURE OF POINT

Over two acres to the north and south of the Great Lawn are planted with 54,000 native plants representative of what would have been on the site in the mid-18th century. Using historically correct plants is a defining feature of the original 1953 landscape design for the park. The Woodlands are edged by natural boulders to retain a one-foot level above the lawn and to protect the loose soil needed for the plants to thrive. Species include dogwood, redbud, honey locust, blueberry, hydrangea, wild phlox, mayapple, wild geranium, and hay-scented fern. At the Overlook, native

plants include mountain laurel, winterberry, cardinal flower, bee balm, and Christmas fern.

Areas like the Woodlands and lawns at Point provide important open and natural space among the urban environment. Urban green spaces provide a natural setting in a built environment while also providing ecological benefits. The trees and plants at Point reduce pollution as they absorb carbon dioxide emitted from vehicles on the nearby highways.

Green space can even cool down the city of Pittsburgh in the summer heat. In cities,

asphalt, concrete, and buildings absorb solar radiation and reemit it as heat, causing air temperatures to rise. Trees and plants reduce and shade these urban surfaces and help reduce the urban heat island effect.

The natural areas of Point attract wildlife even in the heart of downtown Pittsburgh. Native plants provide the right food and shelter for Pennsylvania's wildlife to survive. At Point, visitors may see squirrels, rabbits, chipmunks, sparrows, woodpeckers, chickadees, orioles, and warblers.



name Allegheny is derived from the American Indian name "Alligewihanna" which translates to "stream of the Alligewi" in reference to the tribe that lived in the region.

The two rivers meet at Point State Park, beginning the Ohio River. The Ohio River flows 981 miles to Cairo, Illinois, where it joins the Mississippi River which reaches the Gulf of Mexico by New Orleans, Louisiana. Early inhabitants and explorers to the region considered the Ohio and Allegheny rivers to be one river. It was named "Ohi-io" by the Seneca meaning "river beautiful" and listed on maps by French explorers as "La Belle Riviere" also meaning "beautiful river."

THREE RIVERS

Point State Park is at the meeting place of rivers called a confluence.

The Monongahela River, which originates in Fairmont, West Virginia, flows northward over 128 miles to Pittsburgh and drains southwestern Pennsylvania and parts of West Virginia, Maryland, and Virginia. The name of the river is derived from the American Indian name "Menaungehilla" which means "high banks breaking off and falling down at places" and is descriptive of the often-muddy appearance of the water.

The Allegheny River begins 325 miles upriver from Pittsburgh near Coudersport, Pennsylvania, and drains northwestern Pennsylvania and part of New York. The

POINT FOUNTAIN

The majestic fountain at the headwaters of the Ohio River was dedicated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on August 30, 1974, marking the completion of the 36-acre Point State Park which took 29 years in planning and construction.

Renovated in 2013, the fountain features a raised fountain base, easily accessible seating, an infinity edge waterfall, stone paving, and LED lighting.

When the fountain is operating, over 795,000 gallons of water recirculate through the system at 20,000 gallons per minute. Six 150 horsepower pumps power the central column of water, the infinity edge waterfall, and the three peacock tail water features, which represent the three rivers.

The circular basin of the fountain is 200 feet in diameter. The water within the fountain is recirculated. Water to replace

the amount lost during fountain operations is obtained from a 54-foot-deep well that penetrates sands and gravels under the park. These sands and gravels are below the groundwater table and are saturated with water that infiltrates from the adjoining rivers.

The fountain is operated daily, weather permitting, May through October.

HISTORY

During the mid-1700s, the armies of France and Great Britain vied for control of the Ohio Valley. Four different forts were built at the Forks of the Ohio within a period of five years.

The economics of trade was central to the ongoing conflict. However, American Indians, Colonists, and French Canadians would also clash over and seek out a better life, personal freedom, and maintain cultural traditions.

In 1754, French forces captured an outpost known as Fort Prince George at the Point that had been erected by a force of Virginians. George Washington led British forces to recapture the fort but suffered his first and only surrender at Fort Necessity, 50 miles to the south.

The French then built Fort Duquesne, which gave them control of the Ohio Valley. In 1755, General Edward Braddock led the British to capture the forks, but was defeated at the Battle of the Monongahela, eight miles from the fort.

In 1758, a British army of 6,000 led by Brigadier-General John Forbes, marched west from Carlisle. Forbes and his army constructed Fort Ligonier, 50 miles to the southeast and made final preparations for the assault on Fort Duquesne.

The French, realizing they were badly outnumbered, burned the fort and departed two days before the British arrived on November 25, 1758. The British built a temporary fort called Mercer's Fort which was used until construction of Fort Pitt began in 1759. The fort was named in honor of William Pitt, Secretary of State of Great Britain. Fort Pitt was the most extensive fortification built by the British in North America. The French were never to regain control of the region.

In 1763 during Pontiac's Rebellion, Fort Pitt was under siege from May through August by American Indian forces. After his victory at the Battle of Bushy Run 20 miles to the east on August 5th and 6th, Colonel Henry Bouquet relieved Fort Pitt from the siege.

Fort Pitt was decommissioned by the



18th century depiction of a treaty negotiation

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

Monuments, plaques, and markers throughout the park commemorate events and people of historic importance at the Forks of the Ohio.

Two granite traceries (outlines) can be found within the Great Lawn. One marks the location of Fort Duquesne. The center of the tracery contains a bronze medallion depicting the fort. The second identified the original location of the river's edge during the mid-1700s.

The Flag Bastion and the Monongahela Bastion of Fort Pitt have been reconstructed of brick. The Flag Bastion overlooks the Monongahela River and the parking lot. The Fort Pitt Museum is housed in the Monongahela Bastion. The Music Bastion, located in the city-side lawn area; the Ohio Bastion, located in the portal plaza across from the museum and block house; and the Monongahela Bastion are marked by granite traceries. The traceries of both Fort Duquesne and Fort Pitt are lit by LED lights for a spectacular view from above at night.

FORT PITT MUSEUM: The Fort Pitt Museum is a two-floor, 12,000-square-foot museum that tells the story of western Pennsylvania's pivotal role during the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, and the birth of Pittsburgh. Built on the footprint of the original Monongahela Bastion of Fort

Pitt, the museum's façade allows visitors to sense the enormous size of Fort Pitt.

Through interactive exhibitions, life-like historical figures, and numerous artifacts, visitors can learn about the important role the region played in shaping the United States. Operated by the Senator John Heinz History Center, the museum is open to the public daily from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Special programs and group tours are available throughout the year. Please contact the museum to inquire about programs or tours at 412-281-9284. www.heinzhistorycenter.org
GPS: Lat. 40.44097 Long. -80.0094

FORT PITT BLOCK HOUSE: The Fort Pitt Block House was built in 1764 as a small defensive redoubt and is the only surviving structure of Fort Pitt.

The Block House was originally constructed to help defend Fort Pitt from American Indian attacks during the mid-18th century. After the British abandoned the fort in 1772, the Block House became a trading post. By 1785, the building was converted into a single-family dwelling. During the 19th century it became a multi-family tenement with a family living on the second floor.

In 1894, the Block House was gifted to the Pittsburgh Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution by Mary

British army in 1772 and then reclaimed in 1774 by the Virginians under Lord Dunmore who briefly renamed the site Fort Dunmore.

With the outbreak of revolution in 1775, Virginia militia again took control of Fort Pitt. By 1777, it became the western headquarters for the Continental Army. On September 17, 1778, the first written treaty between the newly formed United States and an American Indian nation, known as the Treaty of Fort Pitt, was signed by the Lenape (Delaware) Indians and representatives from the United States. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of the Treaty of Fort Pitt was short-lived.

In 1792, the fort was decommissioned by the U.S. Army with military operations in Pittsburgh moving to the newly constructed Fort Fayette located ¾ of a mile along the banks of the Allegheny River. Fort Pitt had served to open the frontier to settlement as Pittsburgh became the "Gateway to the West."

The dramatic events that took place at the Forks of the Ohio, the consequences of on-going conflict, the ideas formed during this struggle for control, and the efforts at diplomacy and negotiation are the foundation of the representative form of democracy that exists in the U.S. today.

Croghan Schenley. The chapter embarked upon a 16-month restoration, which primarily involved the in-filling of window and door openings cut into the Block House during its century-long use as a residence.

The Block House is still owned and operated by the Fort Pitt Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. It has remained free and open to the public since 1895. The redoubt is the oldest architectural landmark in Pittsburgh and the only authenticated pre-Revolutionary War structure west of the Allegheny Mountains. Much of its architectural fabric is intact, including the stone foundation, bricks, and timber elements original to its 1764 construction. For hours of operation or to arrange a tour, call 412-471-1764.

GPS: Lat. 40.44115 Long. -80.0097



INFORMATION AND RESERVATIONS

Point State Park

601 Commonwealth Place, Building A
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
412-565-2850
PointSP@pa.gov
An Equal Opportunity Employer
www.visitPAparks.com

Make online reservations at

www.visitPAparks.com or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday.

@PointSP

Access for People with Disabilities

The main park entrance, walkways, wharfs, restrooms, and drinking water fountains are ADA accessible.

This symbol indicates facilities and activities that are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible for people with disabilities. This publication text is available in alternative formats.

In an Emergency

Call 911 and contact a park employee. Directions to the nearest hospital are posted on bulletin boards and at the park office.

NEAREST HOSPITAL

Mercy Hospital
1400 Locust Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412-232-8111



Protect and Preserve our Parks

Please make your visit safe and enjoyable. Obey all posted rules and regulations and respect fellow visitors and the resources of the park.

- Be prepared and bring the proper equipment. Natural areas may possess hazards. Your personal safety and that of your family are your responsibility.

- People and pets are prohibited in the fountain or reflecting pool.

- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.

- Because uncontrolled pets may chase wildlife or frighten visitors, pets must be physically controlled, attended at all times, and on a leash, caged or crated.

- Do your part to keep wildlife wild! Enjoy wildlife from a safe distance and do not feed or approach wild animals.

- Please recycle. Place trash accumulated during your stay in proper receptacles or take it home with you.

- Soliciting and posting signs are prohibited without approval from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Nearby Attractions

Numerous events and attractions are held in and around Point State Park. The Pittsburgh Marathon, Three Rivers Art Festival, Richard S. Caliguire Great Race, and the Santa Spectacular are some of the events held within the park.

Information on nearby attractions and walking tours of the city are available from VisitPITTSBURGH.

www.visitPITTSBURGH.com

HIKING, BIKING, AND BOATING TRAILS

Not only is Point State Park the confluence of rivers, it is the meeting place of many hiking, biking, and boating trails.

CAUTION:

- When river levels are high, trails may flood. Please use an alternative route.
- Bicyclists, please be aware of the safety of other park users and travel at a safe speed.
- Pedestrians, please be aware of bicycles.

THREE RIVERS HERITAGE TRAIL:

The Three Rivers Heritage Trail (TRHT) is a trail and greenway system in the Pittsburgh area covering 33 miles along both sides of the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio rivers. It is a nearly complete route and mostly paved for cycling, walking, and rolling. The trail is a great way to explore the city and learn

regional history with over 60 educational signs. An additional 36 miles of trail are in planning or development phases. The TRHT also connects to the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP), the developing Erie to Pittsburgh Trail, and the Pittsburgh to Harrisburg Main Line Canal Greenway. For more information and a trail map, visit <https://friendsoftheriverfront.org>.

GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE: The Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) rail trail offers 141 miles of hiking and biking between Cumberland, MD, and Point State Park in Pittsburgh. In Cumberland, the GAP joins the C&O Canal Towpath, creating a continuous trail experience of 325 miles to Washington, D.C. The ten-foot-wide multipurpose trail is built on railroad corridors of gentle grades, sweeping curves, large bridges, and tunnels

that pass through the mountains, not over them. The terminus of the GAP is at the Forks of the Ohio medallion near the fountain in Point State Park.

The trail system links the Cumberland and Pittsburgh metropolitan areas, providing visitors with an opportunity to travel through and learn about this region's importance to the development of national culture and politics. The Great Allegheny Passage is a part of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, a diverse network of trails and routes running between Point State Park in Pennsylvania and Point Lookout in Maryland.

The Fort Pitt Museum is an official National Park Service Passport stamp location for the trail. www.gaptrail.org
GPS: Lat. 40.44189 Long. -80.01324

THREE RIVERS WATER TRAIL:

This National Recreation Trail is a series of boat launching points on the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio rivers that aids non-powered boaters in exploring the three rivers and the city of Pittsburgh. Red paddle signs orient water trail users from the land and water to amenities like launching ramps, educational signs, canoe/kayak racks, and parking lots. The trail was created and maintained by Friends of the Riverfront, a nonprofit that promotes stewardship of the rivers. <https://friendsoftheriverfront.org>

Tell us about your hike at:



LEARN, EXPERIENCE, CONNECT

Point State Park offers a variety of programs year round. Programs cover topics such as changes over time, Pennsylvania mammals, native wildflowers, bird watching, and also include joint programming with on-site partners such as "Forks of the Ohio" homeschool series and "Living History at Fort Pitt" demonstrations.

Curriculum-based environmental education programs are available to schools and organized groups. Call the park office to schedule a group program. A variety of professional development workshops are also offered for teachers.

Contact the park office or explore the online calendar of events, <https://events.dcnr.pa.gov>, for more information on programs and other learning experiences.

