

## Point State Park



## 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.

Cover photos by  
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## POINT STATE PARK



Charlene Reinhart

## Point State Park

Point State Park, located at the confluence of three rivers, is at the tip of Pittsburgh's "Golden Triangle." The park commemorates and preserves the strategic and historic heritage of the area during the French and Indian War (1754 - 1763).

Once a busy industrial zone, the area had deteriorated into a commercial slum by the 1940s. The development of a state park was authorized in 1945 and the first parcel of the 36-acre property was purchased the next year. The park was completed and dedicated

in 1974. In 1975, Point State Park was designated a National Historic Landmark.

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

The 36-acre park is located at 601 Commonwealth Place. The park's parking

lot is at 101 Commonwealth Place (across from the Post Gazette building) and is open from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. 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:** I-376 west at the Stanwix Street Exit.

**FROM THE SOUTH AND WEST:** I-279 north through the Fort Pitt Tunnels and then across the Fort Pitt Bridge.

**FROM THE NORTH:** I-279 south across the Fort Duquesne Bridge.

## HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

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

The location of Fort Duquesne is marked by a granite tracery (outline) within the Great Lawn. The center of the tracery contains a bronze medallion depicting the fort. The locations of four of the five bastions, projecting parts of the fortification, of Fort Pitt have been delineated.

The Flag Bastion and the Monongahela Bastion 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. Both the Music Bastion, located in the city-side lawn area, and the Ohio Bastion, located in the plaza across from the museum and block house, 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.

The original location of the river's edge during the mid-1700s is depicted by a granite tracery within the Great Lawn.

**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 & Indian War, the American Revolution and the birth of Pittsburgh. Built on the footprint of the original Fort Pitt's Monongahela Bastion, the museum's façade allows visitors to sense the enormous size of what was, at that time, the second largest fort in North America.

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 a.m. to 5 p.m. 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, a key British fortification during the French and Indian War, which also served as the western headquarters of the Continental Army during the American Revolution.

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 turned into a trading post for a number of years. 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 and another family living on the first floor.

In 1894, the Block House was gifted to the Pittsburgh Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution by the structure's owner, Mary 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 structure is the oldest architectural landmark in Pittsburgh, and it is also the nation's 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 that are largely original to its 1764 construction. For hours of operation call 412-471-1764.

GPS: Lat. 40.44115 Long. -80.0097



## HISTORY

During a trip to negotiate with the French in 1753, Lieutenant George Washington, in the Virginia militia, passed through the land that would become Point State Park. He wrote about it in his journal.

*"As I got down before the Canoe, I spent some Time in viewing the Rivers, and the Land in the Fork; which I think extremely well situated for a Fort, as it has the absolute Command of both Rivers. The Land at the Point is 20 or 25 Feet above the common Surface of the Water; and a considerable Bottom of flat, well-timbered Land all around it, very convenient for Building: The Rivers are each a Quarter of a Mile, or more, across, and run here very near at right Angles: Aligany bearing N. E. and Monongahela S. E. The former of these two is a very rapid and swift running Water; the other deep and still, without any perceptible fall."*

By George, he was right!

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.

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 at the Forks, which gave them control of the Ohio Valley. In 1755, General George 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 General John Forbes, marched west from Carlisle. Forbes stopped at 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. Fort Pitt, named in honor of William Pitt, secretary of state of Britain, was to be the most extensive fortification by the British in North America.

The French were never to regain control as their other outposts in the region fell to the British. The only further action at Fort Pitt was in 1763 when it withstood American Indian attacks during Pontiac's Insurrection.

Fort Pitt was sold in 1772 and then reclaimed in 1774 by the Virginia Territory. In 1777, the Continental Army used Fort Pitt for its western headquarters. Troops and supplies were stockpiled to defend the new United States. The first Peace Treaty between the American Indians and the United States was signed at Fort Pitt in 1778. Fort Pitt was finally abandoned in 1792 due to its deteriorating condition. It had served to open the frontier to settlement as Pittsburgh became the "Gateway to the West."

## RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Visitors can walk along ADA accessible paved promenades on the riverfront and to overlooks 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. Dock cleats are available along the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers for boaters to moor during the day at the park.

Motorboats must display a boat registration from any state. Non-powered boats must display one of the following: boat registration from any state; launching permit or mooring permit from Pennsylvania State Parks that are available at most state

park offices; launch use permit from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

**FISHING:** The three rivers are a warm-water fishery. Common species are sauger, walleye, catfish, panfish and various bass species. The wharf area provides a fishing pier for people with disabilities on each river. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission 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 that represent the plants that 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. Some plants that can be seen include dogwood, redbud, honey locust, blueberry, hydrangea, wild phlox, mayapple,

wild geranium and hay-scented fern. Native plants can also be found at the Overlook.

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, which is 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 to reduce this heating effect known as the "urban heat island."

The natural areas of Point attract wildlife even in the heart of downtown Pittsburgh. Native plants, like those in the woodlands, 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.

## THREE RIVERS



Point State Park is at the meeting place of rivers, which is 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 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 Allegheny River begins

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

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" meaning "Beautiful River."

## 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 was 29 years in planning and construction.

The newly renovated fountain features a raised fountain base, easily accessible seating, an infinity edge waterfall, new stone paving, new plumbing and new lighting.

When the fountain is operating, over 500,000 gallons of water are in the system. Six 150 hp 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 re-circulated. 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 from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. weather permitting, during the spring, summer and fall seasons.

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

## Access for People with Disabilities

The main park entrance, walkways, 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.

If you need an accommodation to participate in park activities due to a disability, please contact the park you plan to visit.

## In an Emergency

Directions to the nearest hospital are at the office and the information kiosks

## NEAREST HOSPITAL

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



## Information and Reservations

## For More Information Contact

Point State Park  
601 Commonwealth Place, Building A  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
412-565-2850  
email: pointsp@pa.gov  
GPS: Lat. 40.4417 Long. -80.00719  
An Equal Opportunity Employer  
www.visitPAParks.com

## Information and Reservations

Make online reservations at [www.visitPAParks.com](http://www.visitPAParks.com) or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Saturday, for state park information and reservations.

## Pocket Ranger™ App by Parks by Nature



## 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.

- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.

- Because uncontrolled pets may chase wildlife or frighten visitors, pets must be controlled and 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 park only in designated areas and obey all traffic regulations.

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

- Soliciting and posting signs is 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 Venture Outdoors Festival, Pittsburgh Marathon, Three Rivers Art Festival, Three Rivers Regatta, Richard S. Caliguire Great Race and the Santa Spectacular are some of the events held within the park.

Information on year-round events and walking tours of the city is available from the Greater Pittsburgh Convention and Visitors Bureau. [www.visitpittsburgh.com](http://www.visitpittsburgh.com)

## HIKING, BOATING AND BIKING TRAILS

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

**THREE RIVERS HERITAGE TRAIL:** The Three Rivers Heritage Trail (TRHT) is a pedestrian trail and greenway system in the Pittsburgh area, covering 37 miles along both sides of the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio Rivers. It is a nearly complete route for cyclists, walkers, and runners, and in some places rollerbladers. In addition, over 20 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. [www.trailink.com/trail/three-rivers-heritage-trail-system.aspx](http://www.trailink.com/trail/three-rivers-heritage-trail-system.aspx)

**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, interpretive signs, canoe/kayak racks and parking lots. The trail was created and is maintained by the Friends of the Riverfront, a volunteer group that promotes stewardship of the rivers. [www.friendsoftheriverfront.org/files/water\\_trail.html](http://www.friendsoftheriverfront.org/files/water_trail.html)

**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, 325 miles long, to Washington, DC. The ten-foot-wide multipurpose trail is built on railroad corridors of gentle grades, sweeping curves, large bridges and tunnels that pass through mountains, not over them. The terminus of the GAP is at the Forks of the Ohio marker 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 a region important to the development of national culture and politics. George Washington envisioned the Potomac River as a trade route linking the Atlantic Ocean and the upper Ohio River Basin.

The history of the region and the tangible character of the trail corridor itself highlight the concept of "the frontier" in American culture and the westward migration of Anglo-American society into the trans-Appalachian region of the continent.

The Great Allegheny Passage is a part of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, which is a diverse network of trails and routes running between Point State Park in Pittsburgh, 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](http://www.gaptrail.org)  
GPS: Lat. 40.44189 Long. -80.01324

Tell us about your hike at:  
[ExplorePAtrails.com](http://ExplorePAtrails.com)  
powered by you

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

Point State Park offers a variety of environmental education, interpretive and recreational programs. Through these programs, participants gain appreciation, understanding and a sense of stewardship toward natural and cultural resources.

Programs are offered seasonally, from spring through fall. Programs for student groups are available. For more information contact the park office or visit [www.vistiPAParks.com](http://www.vistiPAParks.com).

