

Upper St. Mary's River Trail - Great Mills Launch to St. Mary's City

Distance: Approximately 6.5 miles roundtrip from Great Mills Launch to Tippity Wichity Island. Approximately 7 miles one-way from Great Mills to St. Mary's City following the shoreline.

Difficulty: Moderate to difficult. Flat calm water dependent on tides and weather.

This trail allows paddlers to experience the sheltered beauty of the headwaters of the St. Mary's River or the more open waters downriver at St. Mary's City. For an easy paddle, launch from Great Mills and head (to the right) downstream. The water here is shallow during dry spells and has sandy areas where a simple portage may be necessary. After rain events use caution: fast moving water and 'strainers' could be encountered. Shortly after launching, the river will pass beneath Route 5 and will remain narrow and shallow for about a mile. Beyond this point, the water will open up to quiet marshes and houses along the shoreline. Paddlers will pass smaller islands prior to seeing Tippity Wichity Island (private property). Stay close to the eastern shoreline before circling the island and heading back to the launch point, or explore Western Branch, which will be on the left when facing the island.

More experienced paddlers may continue downriver to St. Mary's City. The dormitories of St. Mary's College and the spires of Trinity Church can be seen from the water and the route remains relatively easy to paddle unless conditions are windy. The terminus of the trail is at the dock of the St. Mary's College Sailing Center. It is recognizable as a large, open cove, with piers, boathouse, and beach on the left. After paddling, rest along the waterfront or walk to Historic St. Mary's City (see the other side of this guide for details).

Great Mills Launch

GPS: 38 14' 17.06" N 76 29' 55.78" W

Hours: Open daily sunrise to sunset

Managed by: St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Parks

Amenities: Wooden ramp suitable for canoes or kayaks only. Boats must be carried down the steps to the water. A large paved parking area is located at the top of the ramp. Trailer parking is also available.

Directions: Drive south down Route 5 through Leonardtown and continue on Route 5 south. The launch is on the left side of the road just before the intersection with Route 246.

Address: 20228 Point Lookout Road, Great Mills, MD 20634

St. Mary's City Launch

GPS: 38 11' 20.98" N 76 25' 57.60" W

Hours: Open daily sunrise to sunset

Managed by: St. Mary's College of Maryland, (240) 895-4291

Amenities: A soft landing, appropriate for hand-launched vessels such as canoes and kayaks only. This very small facility provides access to the water for enjoying nature, fishing or crabbing.

Directions: Drive south down Route 5 to St. Mary's City. Veer right onto Trinity Church Road. The access point is at the sandy beach on the right. For parking, follow Trinity Church Road then turn onto Old State House Road. Turn left onto Route 5 then turn right

onto Mill Field Drive. Park in Campus Center parking lot K on the left.

Address: 47498 Trinity Church Road, St. Mary's City, MD 20686