The self-guided tour of the Ghost Fleet of Mallows Bay consists of 16 points traveling around the bay and into the Burning Basin. To reach the Accomac from the launch point is a 7-10 minute paddle, and the complete route requires 1.5–2 hours and covers 2.5 miles.

**WARNING**

Paddle at your own risk. Vessel sites are fragile and potentially hazardous. On not paddle, walk, or climb over the wrecks. Change in water level can affect the surface of the water. Not recommended for inflatable kayaks or stand up paddles board.

**PRIVATE PROPERTY**

The area surrounding Mallows Bay is primarily privately owned and trespassing is prohibited.

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**POINTS OF INTEREST**

1. **LAUNCH POINT**
   - A boat ramp is located within Mallows Bay Park for small craft (shallow water) access to the Potomac River. It is open from 5:30 AM to dusk year-round.

2. **ACCOMAC**
   - The only steel-hulled vessel in the Mallows Bay Distillery area. She serviced the ferry service between Cape Charles and Norfork, Virginia until she suffered a fire and was permanently taken out of commission. About 1973, the ship was hauled to the southern perimeter of Mallows Bay and abandoned.

3. **BENZONIA**
   - Launched into the Columbia River in Washington in 1919 and named after a town in Michigan. A short period later Benedict was engaged in the war effort, but was sold to Western Marine and Salvage Company in 1922. In 2003, she was moved by Hurricane Isabel and in 2013, a hurricane force storm hit her in a slight section.

4. **MONO**
   - Mono was among the 94 U.S. Shipping Board steamships in the celebrated “Titanic Wave” of national ship building on July 4, 1918. She was put to work on the San Francisco-Hawaiian Islands “Pinapple Run.” Mono was among the last of Mallows’ wooden ship fleet to be permanently retired, until she was sold for scrapping. She appears to have been among the last wrecks to be permanently enacorched in Mallows Bay since at least 1929.

5. **YAWAH**
   - Yawah is documented as being active at least one voyage to Genoa, Italy, in late 1919. Backing in the James River during the Great Ship Tug of 1922, she was eventually purchased by the Western Marine and Salvage Company for scrapping, and moved to the Potomac River soon afterwards. Yawah is entirely submerged except at the stern.

6. **GRADY’S SPIT**
   - Named after a locale in California, Camden’s career, like those of her sister ships was short. Today, the site at the extreme northern end of Mallows Bay beside an unidentified wooden steamship, both sitting on their keels in sand usually awash and submerged.

7. **THE THREE SISTERS**
   - The Three Sisters is a group of three wrecks: Dertona, the “Heron Wreck”, and the Moosabee. Dertona was briefly in the coastal trade. The “Heron Wreck” is named for the frequent sightings of Great Blue Herons on and about the site. The Moosabee carried timber logs to Europe from 1919 until 1922.

8. **THE FLOWER POT WRECKS**
   - Engaged to make at least one trans-Atlantic voyage to Rouen, France, from which she sailed on her return voyage for Norfolk, VA, in 1919. Aftonia lies resting on her beam and partially submerged.

9. **SS AFRANIA**
   - Named by the wife of President Woodrow Wilson, Baronie was launched in 1918 in the presence of 3,000 spectators. Her career, like many other vessels built for WWI was brief, and she was sold for scrap in 1922.

10. **BURNING BASIN**
    - Engaged to make at least one known trans-Atlantic voyage to Rouen, France, from which she sailed on her return voyage for Norfolk, VA, in 1919. Aftonia lies resting on her beam and partially submerged.

11. **THE FLOWER POT WRECKS**
    - Named after a locale in California, Camden’s career, like those of her sister ships was short. Today, the site at the extreme northern end of Mallows Bay beside an unidentified wooden steamship, both sitting on their keels in sand usually awash and submerged.

12. **Benjamin**
    - Named after a locale in California, Camden’s career, like those of her sister ships was short. Today, the site at the extreme northern end of Mallows Bay beside an unidentified wooden steamship, both sitting on their keels in sand usually awash and submerged.

13. **THE FLOWER POT WRECKS**
    - Engaged to make at least one trans-Atlantic voyage to Rouen, France, from which she sailed on her return voyage for Norfolk, VA, in 1919. Aftonia lies resting on her beam and partially submerged.

14. **CASMALIA**
    - Named after a locale in Oregon, this the earliest US Shipping Board steamship. Casmalian was eventually purchased from the Bethlehem Steel Corporation in 1922. Casmalian was launched in 1918 and employed on a number of voyages to and from Havana, Cuba, and on the Potomac River during the Great Ship Tug of 1922, but was sold to Western Marine and Salvage Company for scrapping in 1922. Casmalian was the last of Mallows’ wooden ship fleet to be permanently retired, until she was sold for scrapping. She appears to have been among the last wrecks to be permanently enacorched in Mallows Bay since at least 1929.

15. **THE BARGE WRECK**
    - This wooden barge with iron fittings was used by Bethlehem Steel during the creation of the Burning Basin. It is barely used as a work platform and for shipping/dredge spoil, cargo, and scrap during the disposal operation.

16. **THE SEA SCOUT WRECK**
    - One tradition suggests this boat may have been a US Coast Guard patrol boat or a US Navy patrol torpedo boat sold out of service after World War II.
A BRIEF HISTORY

Mallows Bay holds a diverse selection of historic shipwrecks during both the Revolutionary War, but is most renowned for the remains of more than 100 wooden steamships, known as the “Ghost Fleet.” These ships were built for the US Emergency Fleet between 1917-1919 as part of America’s engagement in World War I. Their construction at more than 40 shipyards in 17 states reflected the massive national wartime effort that drove the expansion of communities, and related maritime service industries.

At the end of WWI, the now obsolete ships were brought to Mallows Bay to be burned. Bethlehem Steel later built a salvage basin during World War II to recover metal to support the war effort. The shipwrecks are visible from the water, especially during high tide when the ship remains lie just below the waterline in a cluster, especially during high tide when the ship remains lie just below the waterline in a cluster.

WILDLIFE

In addition to the rich WWII history in Mallows Bay proper, the surrounding area is home to historic vessels dating back to the Revolutionary War. During the Civil War, the shores were fortified and defended by thousands of Union troops to prevent a Confederate invasion of Southern Maryland, with batteries extending from Sandy Point southwest to Liverpool Point.

The nationally significant history of this site earned its designation as the Mallows Bay-Wide- water Historic and Archæological District on the National Register of Historic Places. It has also been named a National Treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Mallows Bay has tremendous opportunities for wildlife viewing, both on shore and on the water. The bay and surrounding area is inhabited by many bird, eagle, raccoon, and an array of fish, plants, and animals. The list below describes some of the species you are likely to observe during your visit.

Insects

DRAGONFLY
Live near still bodies of water and have an appetizing array of bugs and other small insects. Many species feature brilliant iridescent or metallic colors.

DAMSELFLY
Dragonflies and damselflies are often mistaken for each other, but damselflies have slender bodies and hold their wings above their body while at rest, while dragonflies cannot do this.

BIRDS

BALD EAGLE
Bird of prey with white head and tail that can be found nesting in the trees along the shoreline.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT
A prehistoric looking, large fishing bird with yellow-orange facial markings.

GREAT BLUE HERON
Subtly blue-gray plantpecker and often stands monochrome as it scans for prey.

OSPREY
The ospreys are our must take vies to these lake eating birds.

HENNA GULL
Our freestanding gray and white, winged “seagull” can be found around much of coastal North America.

RING-BILLED GULL
Medium sized gull with yellow legs and a yellow bill with a black band around it.

FISH

LARGEMOUTH BASS
Aated one of the most popular sport fishes in the US, with an elongated yellow green body and dark-side strips.

BLUE CATFISH
Large, invasive fish with a slate blue body and whiskies like barbels around its mouth.

NORTHERN SNAKEHEAD
Large, invasive fish with a snake-like pattern, large mouth, protruding lower jaw, and many teeth.

PLANTS

HYDILLA
An invasive bay grass made up of long, finely branched stems with tiny straight or lance-shaped leaves that usually have visible teeth along the edge.

COONTAIL
A bushy looking bay grass with whorls of stiff, forked leaves along densely branched stems.

ARROW ARUM
A native perennial that has long, thin, arrow-shaped shaped leaves with protruding sections on the middle and along the edge.

WILD RICE
A native annual grass that has a round, heftly upright stem. Its long, flat, hollow reed-like, divided edges and can grow up to 16 inches in length and 2 inch wide.

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

NORTHERN WATER SNAKE
An anaconda looking snake that grows between 2-4 feet long.

EASTERN BOX TURTLE
Round-bodied turtle with the tail, upper shell it brown with orange and yellow markings.

RED BELLIED COOTER
Aquatic snake with a dark shell and a shiny orange red belly that can’t be found building on the points of streams and ponds.

WADING BIRDS

Duck, geese, and swans can be found near the water as they feed. Some, like the red-eyed teal and bald eagle, are often found nesting in the trees along the shoreline.

GETTING THERE

In the Wye River, Mallows Bay Park is easily accessible, just a short drive from Washington D.C., the Ghost Fleet of Mallows Bay is home to the largest number of visible historic shipwrecks in the Western Hemisphere, and offers a truly unique paddling experience. Over one hundred wooden and steel-hulled ships dating from the 18th century through the mid-20th century are located here, with nearly ninety belonging to the United States Shipping Board’s World War I Emergency Fleet of wooden steamships. These unique sites are evolving into veritable islands: artificial habitats for birds, animals and fish of all kinds.

As the historic hub of the Mallows Bay-Widewater National Register Historic and Archaeological District, Mallows Bay offers visitors the most unique maritime landscape in the Chesapeake Tidewater, where history is in the process of becoming nature itself.

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