

Potomac Fever

by Captain Bill Washington
President, CAPCA

Unlike most of you, I consider the Potomac River around Washington, DC, to be my primary cruising ground. As mundane as this may sound, the area offers many attractions and wonderful marinas that you can take advantage of. I've listed the public marinas below, along with descriptions of what each has to offer. If you're willing to make the 96-mile trip from the Chesapeake Bay, it'll be worth your while.

Listed south to north, there are these marinas:

National Harbor
Alexandria City Marina
Washington Sailing Marina
James Creek Marina
The Yards Marina
The Gangplank Marina at the Wharf
The Wharf
Columbia Island Marina



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1. National Harbor (Maryland) Phone: (301) 749-1582

National Harbor Marina is located approximately 96 miles from Chesapeake Bay along the Potomac River in Smoots Bay, just south of the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge. It features all the amenities of a waterfront resort in addition to facilities such as private restrooms, showers and laundry. Dock carts are also available. It's managed by Island Global Yachting (IGY) and focuses on providing only the highest quality of service to its clients.

Whether you're a permanent boating resident or just visiting, you'll benefit from the centralized address, no matter if you're traveling by water or land. Within easy travel from dozens of historic sites such as Georgetown, Mount Vernon or Old Town Alexandria, and offering a world of dining and entertainment spots for boaters, National Harbor Marina is more than just a place to dock your boat. It offers an exciting new way to interact with the river that's not only fun, but practical. The Potomac Riverboat Company operates the water-taxi service that connects Alexandria's historic waterfront with National Harbor. Service is offered from the commercial pier at National Harbor as well as the Gaylord Resort and Convention Center dock.

2. Alexandria City Marina (Virginia) Phone: (703) 838-4265

The marina is a three-mile cruise from Washington and just under 100 miles from the Chesapeake Bay. In addition to offering a spectacular view of the Potomac River, the City Marina has overnight boat slips and additional short-term docking space on seawalls and adjacent areas. The City Marina offers docking for pleasure boats as well as commercial vessels. For boaters who wish to stay overnight, restroom and shower facilities are available. One 30-amp electrical connection and water hose bib (in season) are available for each boat slip. Alexandria is a dog-friendly city. In fact, there is a public-access dog park within easy walking distance of the marina.

3. Washington Sailing Marina (Alexandria, Virginia - Daingerfield island) Phone: (703) 548-9027

Whether you're a veteran boater or taking lessons for the first time, you're in store for a memorable experience on the Potomac. Enjoy a breathtaking view of downtown DC while sailing, kayaking or enjoying a stand-up paddleboard around the iconic Daingerfield Island. Prefer two wheels to the water? Rent a bike and explore the nearby Mount Vernon Bike Trail, which takes you from the front doors of George Washington's Mount Vernon to the foot of the Washington Monument. End your adventures with a picnic in the park or stop for delicious contemporary cuisine, your favorite cocktail, and remarkable views of DC at the nearby Indigo Landing restaurant.

The Washington Sailing Marina, located in Alexandria, is the premier facility for one-design and small-sailboat racing in the DC metro area, and host to the Potomac River Sailing Association, Daingerfield Island Sailing Fleet, Sailing Club of Washington, Georgetown Sailing Team, and the National Yacht Club.

4. James Creek Marina (Anacostia River - Washington DC) Phone: (202) 554-8844

James Creek Marina is one of the oldest marinas in the area. It offers slip rentals, along with amenities such as transient dockage for boats up to 100 feet or more, fuel docks, a no-wake zone, floating docks, ample parking, a picnic area, volleyball, and much more.

It was first constructed in 1913 as the Corinthian Yacht Club. It was transferred to the National Park Service under the name Fort McNair Yacht Basin in 1964.

In September 1988, the name of the marina was changed to the James Creek Marina. James Creek was the name of the body of water that ran in this area when Pierre L'Enfant designed the city of Washington in 1791.

In 1990 the marina was completely renovated. All the existing pilings, docks, and structures were removed or demolished. The marina was dredged, a sea wall was built along the existing shoreline, and new Meeco floating docks were installed.

Marina Amenities

- 297 slips 18 to 87 feet
- Transient dockage, 100 feet plus
- 30-amp, 125-volt and 50-amp, 250-volt shore power
- 100-amp single-phase electrical main panels
- Fuel dock: 89 octane gasoline with 10% Ethanol, ultra-low sulfur diesel, Amsoil two-stroke oil
- Pumpout
- Fresh water at the slip
- Friendly and courteous staff
- Short no-wake zone (five minutes in or out)
- Easy access to public transportation
- Floating docks
- Clean restrooms with showers
- Gated entryways
- Ample parking
- Picnic area
- Volleyball court
- 24-hour access
- Winter de-icing system
- Extended staff hours

5. The Yards Marina (Anacostia River - Washington DC) Phone: (202) 484-0309

One of the newest marinas in the area, the Yards Marina is located on the north bank of the Anacostia between Nationals Park and the Washington Navy Yard. They have annual slips available for leasing, but they are filling up fast. If you are a transient boater, this is your new port for dining, events and ballgames. They allocate slips year around for this purpose, so there is always a place for you.

This marina just opened July 1, 2016. Procedures and logistics are still being worked out, but the docks, water, and electricity all seem to be working just fine.

The Yards is a wonderful location and community, so please take some time to visit ashore and check out all the restaurants, sites, and, retail establishments. Lastly, Forest City Washington, developer of The Yards community, has some very nice apartments in case you are looking for DC residence options.

Living Classrooms – Living Classrooms is the local community partner chosen by Forest City as a resident charity in The Yards and is the manager/operator for the Yards Marina. The marina will provide funding for Living Classrooms's educational and workforce development programs, as well as serving as a job-training site for underserved teens and adults. You may notice the 1928 Chesapeake Bay Buy Boat, the *Half Shell*, in the marina. This historic ship serves as Living Classrooms's educational and

science vessel in Washington, DC. They take out several thousand school children a year on this ship for a broad range of science and environmental programs.

Bathrooms - There are public bathrooms in the “Lumber Shed” building – the two-story glass encased building overlooking the marina. There are entry doors on either side of the building and the bathrooms are down a hallway. Plans are in place for designated bathrooms and shower facilities to be installed during the winter, along with a permanent dock office.

Groceries – There is a Harris Teeter supermarket two blocks up Fourth Street, in the direction of the Vida Health Club, which you can see from the marina. There are numerous restaurants and a brewery in The Yards and most offer carry-out. There is an excellent ice cream shop on the street side of the “Lumber Shed” (the two-story building closest to the boardwalk and marina).

Trash - Please use the large cans that are situated at the bottom of the ramps to 'B/C' and 'D/E' docks.

Parking - Seasonal and annual slip holders can rent a single space monthly in the nearby parking Lot Q. Hourly, daily, and short-term transient boaters should direct visiting guests to any and all public parking around The Yards area. Unfortunately, it can be very difficult to find parking space on weekends and especially during Nationals ball games.

Hours and Contacts – The Yards marina monitors VHF Channel 16. The dockmaster currently is positioned on the 'Half Shell' when you arrive. There will be a permanent dock office by the Spring of 2017. The office phones are not monitored continuously. Living Classrooms, the Yards Marina operator, can be reached at 202-484-0309 during normal working hours, Monday through Friday. You can also e-mail them at office@yardsmarina.com for written inquiries and answers.

The DC metropolitan police and the Capital Riverfront Business Improvement District (BID) patrol the DC public park, which consists of the boardwalk, birch grove, grassy areas, and fountains. The BID operates the public park. The DC Harbor Patrol monitors the marina from the water.

6. The Gangplank Marina (Washington Channel - Washington DC) Phone: (202) 554-5000

The Gangplank Marina at the Wharf is a unique marina facility currently undergoing a complete renovation. Located in the Washington Channel within walking distance of the Washington Monument, this facility provides a distinctive venue for local and transient boaters seeking the best of all worlds—the luxury of a boater's life and the proximity to the cosmopolitan attractions of the Nation's Capital. It's the perfect on-the-Potomac escape, whether for a week, a season or for a lifetime.

The Gangplank Marina docks can accommodate vessels up to 125 feet long with a beam of 32 feet. Electrical Power: 50-amp, 125/250 volts as well as 100-amp single-phase, split-phase and three-phase at some locations. Marina services include ice, showers, laundry facilities, and dock carts, winter de-icing systems for docks and piers, 24-hour security services staff the parking lot and security gates. Package delivery and notary services as well as private parking by permit are available. Boat services and repair is handled by outside marine contractors whose names and insurance coverage are maintained on record in the marina security office.

Marina Amenities

- Floating docks and piers
- Parking lot and gate security provided by a licensed security company
- Marina is totally gated for personal security
- Courtesy dock carts
- Laundry
- Pumpout system on the dock
- Waste oil facilities
- Restrooms and showers

On-Site Restaurants

- Cantina Marina
- Jenny's at the Wharf
- King's Ribs

Wharf Mooring Field

The Wharf Mooring Field is now open, offering eight moorings located on the northwest side of the Washington Channel. Since August 2016, boats no longer have been permitted to anchor in the Channel north of the police pier (Pier 5).

7. The Wharf (Washington Channel - Southwest DC Waterfront) Phone not available at this time.

Phase 1 of The Wharf is scheduled to launch in October 2017, with grand opening celebrations and activities planned until April 2018 - so visitors can look forward to discovering something new almost every day.

But The Wharf doesn't stop there. At full build-out, 14 signature buildings, each designed by a different architect will be linked by 10 acres of public space and parks to create an ever-changing and exciting experience along the water.

The community is comprised of 24 acres of land and 50 acres of water. The Hoffman-Madison Waterfront team is restoring a 200-year-old fish market (the original Wharf)

and creating 1,400 waterfront residences; Relocating a 127-year-old yacht club and setting up three unique hotels; Designing and building a 6,000-person-capacity concert hall and conference center; And constructing four public piers. They will all be linked by a waterside promenade with more than 75 restaurants and shops extending along a mile of waterfront.

It is this combination of offerings—the river, restaurants, marina, residences, water taxis, businesses, fish market, shops, music and piers, that make The Wharf such a unique destination.

The Wharf is a launchpad for all kinds of water activities—from leisure cruises and kayak tours to sailing lessons and paddleboarding The Southwest Waterfront makes it easy to play on the river. Plus the water taxi might just be the fastest way to get to Georgetown, Old Town Alexandria, or National Harbor.

Opening in Fall 2017, day docks located just off Market Pier will be the perfect landing spot for visiting boaters. Slips will be available for boaters visiting for just a few days or up to a full week. In addition, boaters can take advantage of adjoining facilities, which will offer showers and bathrooms for their convenience.

8. Columbia Island Marina (Virginia - North of the 14th Street Bridge) Phone: (202) 347-0173

Important Note!: To access Columbia Island Marina, you must be able to pass under the CSX - Potomac River Swing Bridge. This is one of the lowest bridges on the river with a clearance of only 20 feet.

Columbia Island Marina provides services for boaters seeking year-round slips as well as for those looking for the perfect place to enter the Potomac for fishing or cruising by the monuments. Conveniently located just north of the 14th Street Bridges on the Virginia side of the river in the Pentagon Lagoon, amenities include: 256 annual slips, 20, 24, 30, 40, and 50 foot sizes, also 126 seasonal slips, 20 feet in size.

Marina Amenities

- Transient dockage for vessels up to 50 feet in length. The cost is \$1.50 per foot per day; electricity is \$5.00/day for 30 amp service and \$7.00/day for 50 amp service. Please reserve in advance.
- Access for slipholders to a private, handicapped-accessible restroom and shower area.
- A boat ramp, open 24-hours a day for a \$5.00 fee.
- A gas dock that sells mid-grade unleaded gasoline. They accept Visa, MasterCard, Discover, and American Express. Please contact for current pricing.
- Pumpout system at gas dock - free for slipholders, \$5 fee for the public.
- Recycling services for glass, cans, newspapers, etc.

- Great food at the Columbia Island Café, which serves the world's best BBQ, hamburgers, hot dogs, sandwiches, ice cream, beer and ice. The Café facilities are also handicapped-accessible.
- Catering Services through the Café for events either on your boat or on their patio. Please feel free to check out the catering menus.
- A seasonal outdoor patio is available. It is tented and equipped with lights and ceiling fans for either casual use or for your planned event.
- National Park Service picnic area and nearby public restrooms.

I hope this information is helpful and provides an insight as to what's available to boaters on the Potomac River near the Nation's Capital if you ever plan a trip here.

Sincerely,
Captain Bill Washington
President, CAPCA

Captain Washington's guide originally appeared in the February 2017 issue of The Log.