



The Ohio & Erie Canal played a vital role in transforming the State of Ohio and the nation. Today, the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area celebrates this history and enduring impact, inviting visitors to explore the rich heritage of the Canal and natural surroundings of the 110-mile area that extends from Cleveland to New Philadelphia. Walk, bike, run, or paddle alongside the 101-mile Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail through the heart of the Ohio & Erie Canalway to discover endless natural, recreational, cultural, and historic treasures.

Before the canal was completed in 1832, a trip from Akron to New York City took a month. After, it took just ten days!

## A Country Connected: History of the Ohio & Erie Canal

As the first inland waterway to connect the Great Lakes with the Gulf of Mexico, the Ohio & Erie Canal transformed American commerce and fueled the nation's western expansion. While the canal was new, the route it followed was well traveled, used by generations of native people living in the Cuyahoga Valley, seeking food and trade.

### Early History

Early inhabitants migrated to the Ohio region from a sub-arctic landscape at the end of the last Ice Age, following large game for food. Later, tribes lived in seasonal base camps, hunting and gathering food from the region's abundant forests and waterways. After many tribes were forced westward by Euro-American settlers, they found refuge in the Ohio area. By the mid-1800s, warfare and disease had eliminated or

displaced most Native Americans from the area, as Ohio became an early western frontier of the United States.

Poor and sparsely populated at the time, Ohio's earliest Euro-American settlers were drawn to the same natural resources that sustained native people for thousands of years, including timber, stone, fertile soil, and coal. Soon, they were producing excess crops, lumber, and other materials to sell, but lacked reliable transportation to move them.

### Transforming a Nation

Dug by hand from 1825 to 1832, the state routed the Ohio & Erie Canal through the Cuyahoga Valley with water supplied by the Cuyahoga River and the nearby Portage Lakes. It was the first canal west of the Appalachian Mountains, connecting Lake Erie to the Ohio River and connecting Ohio to New York City via the Erie Canal. Upon completion, people and products flowed across America from

New York City to New Orleans. Americans could buy and sell from each other, depending less on European trade. Farmers could produce more, using the waterway to reach new markets across the growing country.

As canal towns grew into bustling commercial centers, Ohio's population and wealth also swelled, driving westward expansion. Towed by mules or horses that walked along the towpath, canal boats

carried crops, products, and people through a series of locks that raised and lowered the boat as it traveled. While Ohio owned the canal, the boats were typically owned by private businesses and people flocked to the region for jobs as boat-builders, mule drivers, and cargo handlers. By 1840, Ohio was the nation's third most populous state and ranked fourth in total capital invested in manufacturing.

Dug by hand, it took seven years (1825-1832) to finish the canal, which followed water routes used by Native Americans.



### Celebrating a Legacy

By the 1850s, the rapid expansion of railroads began replacing the canal. Faster and more reliable in winter, this new transportation technology sustained the region's growth after the Civil War and cemented Ohio as a hub of industry, agriculture, and innovation. As those seeking jobs continued to migrate to the area, diverse communities continued to grow. During this time, the canal fell into deeper disrepair. After several attempts to revive it, a flood in 1913 destroyed much of the canal and Ohio opted not to rebuild, ending the canal era.

Today, the Ohio & Erie Canalway celebrates the vital role the canal played in our nation's history and the lasting impact it had on the region. Extending 110 miles from Cleveland to New Philadelphia, the Canalway invites a new generation to explore its rich history and stunning natural beauty.



As a young man, President James Garfield worked as a mule driver along the Ohio & Erie Canal.

National Park Service Collection

## Experience the Natural Beauty

While the historic Ohio & Erie Canal spurred commerce and connected a growing country, today the Canalway connects visitors to beautiful natural and recreational assets. The Ohio & Erie Canalway welcomes visitors to a vibrant, one-of-a-kind environment that pays tribute to 150 years of history. From paddling to a picnic, experience the beauty of this National Heritage Area.



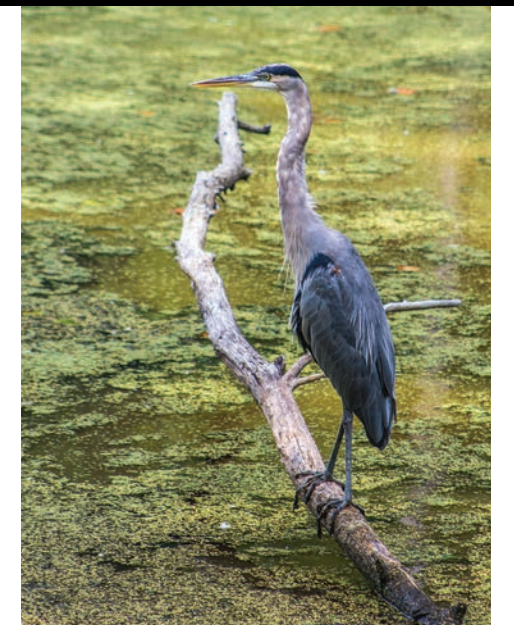
### River and Lake Connections

Running parallel to the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, you'll find the two rivers that provided water for the canal on either side of the continental divide: the Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas. While strolling, cycling—even riding a horse on some parts of the Towpath Trail—you can see how the trail relates to and was fed by local waterways. Nearby, Lake Erie is one of many lakes within the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area. You can also boat, kayak, or canoe in Summit Lake, Lake Nesmith, Long Lake, Portage Lakes State Park, and others.



### Wildlife

Whether on land or water, look for abundant wildlife and birds making their home in the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area. Bring binoculars to look for more than 250 bird species, including blue herons, kingfishers, osprey, and bald eagles. Beavers, painted turtles, and deer are also easy to spot—especially at Beaver Marsh and other locations in Cuyahoga Valley National Park. The Bath Road Heronry is a great place to see herons performing courtship displays, repairing nests, and raising young. The Lakefront Reservation is a key migratory observation area for both birds and monarchs.



## Ways to Explore the Ohio & Erie Canalway

Designated a National Heritage Area by Congress in 1996, the Ohio & Erie Canalway offers a variety of options for experiencing the rails, trails, landscapes, towns, and sites along the first 110 miles of the canal that helped our nation grow.

### Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail

More than 2.5 million Americans visit the iconic 101-mile Towpath Trail each year. Running through the heart of the Ohio & Erie Canalway, it is open to bicycling, hiking, birding, and running. In some areas, the trail can be traveled by horse-back or viewed from a canal boat or train car. Following the historical towpath as closely as possible, the trail shows where, from 1827 to 1913, mules and horses pulled canal boats of passengers and goods.

- Remnants of the canal can be found along the way at:
- Canal Basin Park
  - Lock 40 North
  - Canal Exploration Center & Lock 38
  - Deep Lock Quarry & Lock 28
  - Locks 10 to 15 (Cascade Locks)
  - Canal Fulton
  - Lock 4
  - Bolivar
  - Zoar



### The Ohio & Erie Canalway America's Byway

Much more than a single road, the nationally designated, 110-mile Ohio & Erie Canalway America's Byway is a carefully mapped route. Through four counties and 58 communities, it connects key cultural, historic, recreational, and natural sites of interest while following the route of the historic canal and Towpath Trail. Follow more than 600 blue and orange signs guiding off-freeway driving from Cleveland's Flats to Schoenbrunn Village in New Philadelphia. The Ohio & Erie Canalway America's Byway is nationally designated by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation and part of the National Scenic Byways Program.



### Ohio to Erie Trail

The Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail is the northeastern portion of the Ohio to Erie Trail, also called U.S. Bike Route 21. From major cities to canal towns and countryside, this 326-mile trail connects the Ohio River to Lake Erie and offers many recreational opportunities. The Towpath Trail becomes part of the Ohio to Erie Trail in Massillon.



### Waterways and Lakes

Many waterways and lakes connect with the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail across the National Heritage Area (see "River and Lake Connections" above). You can take advantage of opportunities for boating, kayaking, canoeing, or floating at many locations.



### Historic Canal Boat

Experience the canal as it was used historically by hopping aboard the St. Helena III in Canal Fulton, a canal boat replica, drawn by two Percheron horses along the Towpath Trail. The trip takes about an hour, traveling past McLaughlin Dry Dock to Lock 4, returning along the Ohio & Erie Canal.



### Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad

Book a ride on the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad for spectacular views of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Running parallel to the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, it welcomes bicycles aboard in addition to kayaks. Because it operates year-round, each season offers riders a different landscape to enjoy.

Bikes and kayaks aboard! Passengers on the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad can bring their bikes and kayaks when traveling.



**National Park Service Passport Sites:**

Be sure to collect passport stamps at these locations within the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area:

- The Cleveland History Center
- Century Cycles
- Hale Farm & Village
- Akron/Summit Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Richard Howe House
- Canal Fulton Canalway Center
- Historic Zoar Village
- Boston Mill Visitor Center

# Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area



## Mileage Between Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trailheads

