BALTIMORE, MD (March 18, 2014) – This winter’s challenging weather has kept everyone inside long enough. Now is the time to shake off any lingering cabin fever, lace up your hiking boots, tighten your bike chains and map out a route along any one of Maryland’s rails to trails.

“Each Maryland region offers exciting opportunities to stretch your legs, exercise and take in the sights and sounds around our state,” says Margot Amelia, executive director of the Maryland Office of Tourism. “Hikers and bicyclists can trace portions of the 200-year-old Historic National Road, follow routes along the Religious Freedom Byway, or experience areas that showcase Chesapeake Bay wildlife along the Eastern Shore.”

The state offers miles of motor-vehicle free, kid-friendly trails and was recently ranked #11 among the League of American Bicyclists’ top “Bicycle Friendly States.” One of the state’s trails encompasses 184.5 miles of spectacular views of the Potomac River along the C&O Canal. The trail stretches from Washington, D.C. to Cumberland, where it merges with the Great Allegheny Passage, which continues onto Pittsburgh.

Below is a sampling of cycling, hiking and water trails across Maryland’s five regions:

**Western Maryland**

The 23-mile Western Maryland Rail Trail follows the former Western Maryland Railway Line, stopping close to Fort Frederick State Park, site of the restored star-shaped Fort used in the French and Indian War.

Flowing through central Maryland, the Monocacy River Trail offers more than 41 miles of scenic paddling and river views of historic Civil War landscapes and American Indian settlements.

In Washington County, visitors can tour through and around Hagerstown, the Antietam National Battlefield and Fort Frederick State Park.

Green Ridge State Forest in Allegany County boasts a 12-mile single track mountain bike trail that offers plenty of challenge and four easy outs for those who just can’t do it all. Long climbs, steep down hills and stream crossings are all tucked into a beautiful forest setting.

In Garrett County, at the extreme western border of Maryland, motivated hikers can ascend the 700-foot, steep, one-mile climb to Hoye-Crest on Backbone Mountain. At an elevation of 3,360-feet, it’s the highest point in the state and offers unparalleled views of the surrounding valley from the top.

**Capital Region**

Hop on the 11-mile Capital Crescent Trail in Georgetown, Washington, D.C., and follow it to Silver Spring, Md., over four historic bridges and through two tunnels alongside the Potomac River.

Just outside Washington, D.C., mountain bikers will love Seneca Creek State Park, which includes Schaeffer Farm Trails, a 10-mile multi-use trail system through wooded valleys and open farm land.

Hike through Gambrills State Park near Frederick, Md., and enjoy several scenic overlooks throughout the 15-mile wooded trail system.

The 3.5-mile Woodrow Wilson Bridge Trail extends from Maryland’s National Harbor into Alexandria, Va. The
asphalt and concrete trail surface is completely separate from motor vehicle traffic, offers views of the Potomac River, and is perfect for bicyclists, pedestrians, hikers, runners and more.

Central Maryland

Patapsco State Park in Howard County is known for its steep pathways and rocky terrain. Don’t miss the park’s 170 miles of trails, which draw more than a million adventure enthusiasts every year.

Head just north of Baltimore to the Torrey C. Brown Trail, which extends into Gunpowder Falls State Park, featuring more than 100 miles of trails. Hike or bike the trail, or look for fishing opportunities.

Experience Baltimore’s unique heritage with walking tours of the city’s most historic neighborhoods. Urban ranger-led walking tours include the Heritage Walk, Cultural Walk, Pennsylvania Avenue Heritage Trail, and Historic Fell’s Point Trail.

Don’t miss the B&A Trail connecting to the 12.5 mile BWI Trail that encircles the BWI airport and offers access to community resources and public transportation for hikers, bicyclists, walkers and more. The trail is mostly asphalt but also features wooden boardwalks in some areas to protect natural features.

Carroll County has a collection of 10 looping bike routes, consisting of more than 150 miles. Explore Carroll’s scenic and historic towns on routes ranging from light walks to expert climbs.

Southern Maryland

Begin your trip in historic St. Mary’s City before hiking or biking on the “To the Point” trail, which extends to the 1828 lighthouse at Point Lookout State Park, site of a Civil War museum and nature center.

The Indian Head Trail in Charles County features forests, wetlands and wildlife through a 13-mile route, once an abandoned rail corridor.

The Parkers Creek Preserve is the largest natural area in Calvert County, featuring more than 4,000 preserved acres and 19 miles of hiking trails, a series of guided canoe trips on Parkers Creek, and a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program to the public. Calvert County also offers Calvert Cliffs State Park, a 1,460-acre wooded state park featuring the majestic Calvert Cliffs on the Chesapeake Bay and Jefferson Patterson Park & Museum, with hiking trails, a Native American village, tours, educational programs, and a canoe and kayak launch.

In Charles County, drop in your kayak or canoe at the State Park and travel north on the Port Tobacco River Trail or south into Goose Creek, approximately 2.5 miles. Similarly, the Lower Potomac River Water Trail offers 3 miles of tranquil paddling from Purse State Park to Mallows Bay.

Eastern Shore

Called “the Everglades of the North,” the 27,000-acre Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge is perfect for hikers and bikers, and close by to the historic town of Cambridge.

Head out to Assateague Island National Seashore for several of the state’s most popular hiking trails where chances are very good you will encounter the wild horses that roam the island.

Talbot County on Maryland’s Eastern Shore features six themed bicycle trails totaling 180 miles. Trails include the “Talbot Farmland” route, which takes hikers and riders through 27.6 miles of countryside or “School Days,” which runs past the Little Red Schoolhouse, one of 43 one-room schoolhouses being used in Talbot County in
Each trail is specifically designed for cyclists ranging from beginner to expert.

For sea lovers, there are six water trails around Kent Island offering varying degrees of difficulty. Follow the Kent Island Water Trails map for information on paddling routes and access points around the Chesapeake Bay and nearby creeks. Or paddle down any of the water trails along the Pocomoke River, such as the Bog Iron Water Trail, EA Vaughn Kayak Trail and the Sinepuxent Bay Water Trail.

Located near Crisfield on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, Janes Island State Park offers more than 30 miles of marked water trails throughout the island’s over 2,900 acres salt marsh. Many of the water trails are protected from wind, allowing even the most novice paddler to enjoy. The area also includes a campground, rental cabins, picnic areas and pavilions.

The Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center, located in Grasonville, also offers paddling experiences with water views and an opportunity to see the diverse aquatic and bird life of the Bay. Glide around Marshy Creek, the Narrows and Prospect Bay in a canoe or kayak, or sign up for a Guided Kayak Tour, offered monthly May through October. Even more, beginning on May 1, visitors to Northside Park in Ocean City can experience the Bay on a rented kayak or stand-up paddleboard (SUP). Patrons can rent a single or tandem kayak, or a soft top 10-foot SUP by the hour, half-day or full day.

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**About Maryland Tourism**

The Maryland Office of Tourism is an agency of the Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts within the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development. Visitors to the state spent more than $14.7 billion on travel-related expenses in 2012. During 2012, the Maryland tourism industry also generated $2 billion in state and local taxes, and provided more than 135,000 jobs for Maryland residents.