



Photo: Frederick Douglass painting by Hughie Lee-Smith, courtesy of Banneker Douglass Museum's Fine Art Collection.

Following in His Footsteps: Maryland's Frederick Douglass Driving Tour

Self-Determination, Autonomy, Empowerment

Frederick Douglass held a strong connection to Maryland, woven into the fabric of his identity. His homeland – the banks of the Tuckahoe River near Hillsboro – hold the bittersweet memories of his beginnings in slavery. An extraordinary visionary, Douglass believed in his own self-worth and was determined to be free, despite harsh experiences in slavery. He longed for autonomy, and put into action a plan to attain it.

In Baltimore, learning to read opened a world of knowledge and sparked an intense desire for freedom. He didn't let failure, fear, or severe punishment stand in his way.

After he took flight from Baltimore in 1838, Douglass worked relentlessly to gain freedom for others through his eloquent speeches and writings that demanded abolition. Douglass changed the world as he traveled, but for him, Maryland was home.

Frederick Douglass's Beginnings on Maryland's Eastern Shore

Begin your journey to discover Frederick Douglass's deep roots in Maryland on the Eastern Shore, at [The Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe](#) near Holme Hill Farm, his birthplace. The park offers outdoor exhibits describing Douglass's humble beginnings and formative years, and his legacy as a fighter for civil rights. An overlook with tranquil views of the Tuckahoe River is a sacred touchstone to his deep roots in this area.

In 1877, Douglass proclaimed, *"I am an Eastern Shoreman, with all that name implies. Eastern Shore corn and Eastern Shore pork gave me my muscle. I love Maryland and the Eastern Shore!"*

Douglass returned to his homeland on the Tuckahoe in 1878 to find the land on which his grandmother lived and collect soil to carry back with him to his Washington, D.C. home, [Twin Cedars, now the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site](#).



*Frederick Douglass Statue at the Talbot County Courthouse
Photo: Talbot County*

In Easton, you'll find the [Frederick Douglass Statue at the Talbot County Courthouse](#). On the evening of November 25, 1878, Douglass gave a paid lecture to a segregated audience in the main courtroom of this courthouse. He delivered his "Self-Made-Men" speech, one of his five popular speeches. The statue on the courthouse lawn portrays Douglass at the podium delivering this speech.

Just around the corner is the old [Talbot County Jail](#). Douglass's attempted escape in April 1836 from the Freeland Farm ended here at the jail. Although there were many slave traders from the Deep South who set up permanent offices in Easton, surprisingly, Douglass was not sold. Instead, he was retrieved by his enslaver, Thomas Auld, who sent him back to [Fells Point](#) in Baltimore, giving Douglass the opportunity to obtain his freedom two years later.

Head to "The Hill" in Easton, an historic African-American community where Douglass spoke to a crowd at [Bethel A.M.E. Church](#) and [Asbury United Methodist Church](#) in November 1878 about working hard and saving their money.

Drive west on MD 33 to the town of St. Michaels. At the corner of Cherry and Talbot streets (MD 33) is the Site of the Thomas Auld Home and Store. Douglass lived with and labored for Auld in 1833 and started a Sabbath Day school, where he secretly taught enslaved people to read. When Auld discovered this, he promptly rented out Douglass to Edward Covey, infamous for his ability to break the spirit of rebellious slaves.

On Cherry Street you'll find the Home of William and Louisa Bruff, Thomas Auld's daughter and son-in-law. In 1877, long after Douglass's successful escape and when he was recognized as a prominent orator and statesman, the Bruffs welcomed Douglass as an honored guest, breaking yet another barrier that Douglass had faced throughout his life. He came seeking reconciliation with his old master. The home is now the [Dr. Dodson House Bed and Breakfast](#).



Photo: Dr. Dodson House Bed & Breakfast.



*Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum
Photo: Talbot County*

Head to the [Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum](#) where you'll find the Mitchell House. Douglass's sister Eliza Bailey Mitchell, her free husband Peter and their two children lived in this house, which was moved here from the Hambleton estate at Perry Cabin. Eliza was one of the only siblings with whom Douglass maintained a lifelong relationship. They had shared experiences living enslaved under Thomas and Rowena Auld's oversight. The site provides a view of the lifestyles of middle class free African-Americans in the 19th century.

Stop at the [St. Michaels Museum](#), which hosts a Frederick Douglass Walking Tour on the fourth Saturday of the month from May through October, featuring several of these sites. See the museum's exhibit: Frederick Douglass: His World 1818-1895.

Just west of St. Michaels you'll find the [Inn at Perry Cabin](#), once the ancestral home of the Hambleton family. Years prior to the Civil War, Samuel and John Hambleton freed all of their slaves, including Peter Mitchell, who later married Frederick Douglass's sister, Eliza. The Hambleton brothers offered free blacks in the area a chance to rent an acre of land to build a home.



Inn at Perry Cabin

Continue west on MD 33 to Tilghman Island, a maritime village with sweeping scenic views of the Chesapeake Bay. On your drive, look for New St. John's Church on your left. Across the street is the former Covey Farm, home to the infamous slave-breaker Edward Covey.

Along your drive, imagine sixteen year-old Douglass walking the seven miles from St. Michaels to the farm after Thomas Auld sent him there on New Year's Day 1834 to live for a year. Douglass eventually fought Covey and defeated him in a fistfight, which became a turning point in his life. From that point on Douglass was no longer beaten.

From this farm, Douglass saw sailing ships pass by the farm on the Chesapeake Bay, giving him the inspiration to escape via water, although without a clear notion of which way to go. In April of 1836, he and several others were prepared to escape, but his plan was discovered, and the group was arrested and forced to walk 20 miles to the jail in Easton.



*Banneker-Douglass Museum
Photo: Visit Annapolis*

Frederick Douglass as a Prominent Speaker in Annapolis

Frederick Douglass visited Annapolis to deliver several memorable speeches later in his life.

Tour the [Maryland State House](#) to see where Douglass spoke in the Senate Chamber in June of 1874. He paced in front of the painting of General Washington resigning his commission at the conclusion of the American Revolution. Douglass delivered Washington's resignation speech from memory with all of his oratorical powers. During the same visit, he addressed an African-American audience at one of the A.M.E. churches in Annapolis.

Experience the heritage of Frederick Douglass today at the [Banneker-Douglass Museum](#), which is Maryland's repository of African-American history and culture, housed within the former Mount Moriah African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Frederick Douglass in Baltimore: Becoming Empowered and Finding Freedom

Begin your tour of Frederick Douglass's life in Baltimore at the [Fells Point National Historic District](#). Douglass was sent here by boat from St. Michaels at age eight to live and work for Hugh Auld, his master Thomas Auld's brother. Douglass lived most of his childhood and adolescent years here and then returned as a young adult. The Fells Point waterfront is now known for its charming cobblestone streets lined with boutiques, galleries, restaurants, hip pubs and taverns, many with live music.

In Fells Point, you'll find the [Frederick Douglass Isaac Myers Maritime Park](#), which chronicles the saga of Frederick Douglass's life in Baltimore as an enslaved child who learned to read. The exhibits describe the tales of a young man who gained his freedom.

Travel north on Caroline Street, turn right on Fleet, and South Dallas Street is immediately on your left. This block is known as [Douglass Row](#) where he bought land from the Centennial Methodist Episcopal Church in 1892 and constructed 5 brick rowhomes as rental properties for African Americans, helping to empower them.

From South Dallas Street head west onto Eastern Avenue to President Street and turn right. [President Street Station](#), a former train station, is one block away. It now houses the Baltimore Civil War Museum. Here is where Douglass escaped slavery in 1838 at age twenty by disguising himself and boarding a train heading to Philadelphia on the *Baltimore, Wilmington and Philadelphia Railroad*. The museum's exhibits interpret his escape.



*Frederick Douglass Isaac Myers Maritime Park
Photo: Visit Baltimore*



Reginald F. Lewis Museum of African American History and Culture. Photo: Visit Baltimore

Head north on President Street to the intersection with Pratt Street. The [Reginald F. Lewis Museum of African American History and Culture](#) is on the corner. This museum celebrates more than 350 years of Maryland African-American history and culture and includes the story of Frederick Douglass and the challenges and consequences faced by freedom seekers.

A few miles north of Fells Point in Baltimore is [The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum](#) and the [Frederick Douglass Statue at Morgan State University](#). The wax museum displays more than 100 life-size wax figures in dramatic historical scenes, including an exhibit on Frederick Douglass and his role as an abolitionist.

Frederick Douglass in and around the Nation's Capital

Start your visit at the University of Maryland College Park in front of the Hornbake Library at Frederick Douglass Square where a statue memorializes Douglass as an enduring role model for social justice. A vertical wall highlights Douglass's words. The library houses an exhibition, *Frederick Douglass: Scholarship and Legacy*, featuring images and works of Frederick Douglass and includes scholarship about Douglass conducted by university faculty.

Head south on the Baltimore Washington Parkway to the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, D.C. where you'll find the [Frederick Douglass National Historic Site](#). The centerpiece of the site is his home, Cedar Hill, where he lived his last years from 1877 until 1895, seen by guided tours only. A visitor center has displays and a film about Douglass's life and sells tickets for tours of his home.

Finish your day at the Smithsonian's [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#), which celebrates American history through the African American lens, including collections and exhibitions on civil rights and slavery where Frederick Douglass is featured.



National Museum of African American History and Culture