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# St. Michaels WATER TRAIL

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A collaborative effort between the  
Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism,  
Parks & Recreation, and Public Works

There are four suggested paddling routes around and near St. Michaels: San Domingo Creek, Oak Creek, Miles River, and Leadenham Creek. The trails are not marked and demand a certain level of skill and caution. Paddlers should be aware of the weather forecast, wind direction, wind speed, tides, and water temperature before undertaking any of the trails. The sights you see and experiences you may enjoy vary depending on the season.

## PADDLING AND BOATING SAFETY TIPS

Although many Talbot County creeks and coves are suitable for beginners, there are extensive areas of open water that are subject to tidal influence, high winds, and strong currents. Be prepared! Review these guidelines before getting on the water. Those new to the water can take part in group paddle trips offered by outfitters and more experienced boaters can create their own adventures that can range from a few hours to all day.

- **Wear a properly fitted, U.S. Coast Guard approved, lifejacket** while on the water. (See Maryland Boating Regulations below)
- **Boat with others** and carry a spare paddle. Boating safety increases with numbers so boat with others. Leave a copy of your “float plan” with a land-based contact.
- **Know your route** and any potential hazards along it. Review maps, charts, river levels, and weather conditions before launching. Be aware of obstacles such as fallen trees, debris, islands and rocks that you may encounter along the route.
- **Dress appropriately** for the weather, air and water temperatures and always wear protective footwear.
- **Carry a supply of food and water** adequate for the length of your trip. Stay hydrated and protected from the sun year-round to minimize the danger of dehydration and heat exhaustion.
- **Never paddle farther from shore than you are prepared to swim** and stay at least 100 yards away from all moving vessels, piers and other restricted areas.
- **Keep your weight centered and as low as possible at all times, especially when entering and exiting a boat.** If your boat flips over, remain calm. Hold on to your paddle and the boat if possible. Try to reach a calm, shallow spot or the shoreline, then empty the boat and re-enter.
- **Be alert to weather changes.** Thunderstorms can be common during the warm weather months and are usually accompanied by temperature drops, increased winds and dark clouds. Get off the water immediately if you see lighting.

For more information on paddling and boating safety, visit [dnr.maryland.gov/nrp/Pages/BoatingSafety/home.aspx](http://dnr.maryland.gov/nrp/Pages/BoatingSafety/home.aspx).

## MARYLAND BOATING AND FISHING REGULATIONS

**Personal Flotation Devices:** Boats propelled by oars or paddles are required to carry one PFD of either Type I, II, III, or V for each person on board, regardless of length. All motorized craft 16-65 feet must carry a Type I, II, III, or V for each person on board, plus one extra Type IV. Anyone under the age of 13, in a boat less than 21 feet in length, while underway, must wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket all times. (MD State Law).

**Boat Registration:** All boats, whether commercial or recreational, must be registered in Maryland if it is: equipped with any kind of primary or auxiliary mechanical propulsion; and used in Maryland most in a calendar year. U.S. Coast Guard documented vessels using Maryland waters are NOT exempt from the vessel excise tax. When used principally in Maryland, documented vessels must display a documented use decal. For more information, visit [dnr2.maryland.gov/Boating/Pages/registration.aspx](http://dnr2.maryland.gov/Boating/Pages/registration.aspx).

**Fishing Licenses:** Maryland's recreational fishing requirements and rules are divided into Tidal (Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries) and Non-Tidal. Annual licenses require a fee for Maryland residents and non-residents, which allows fishing from January 1 through December 31. A 3-day or 5-day license can also be purchased for a reduced fee.

For Boating Licenses and Registration, visit [dnr.maryland.gov/Boating/Pages/registration.aspx](http://dnr.maryland.gov/Boating/Pages/registration.aspx).

For Fishing Licenses, visit [compass.dnr.maryland.gov/dnrcompassportal](http://compass.dnr.maryland.gov/dnrcompassportal).

## CONSIDER A SHUTTLE

To enhance your water trail experience along routes that have more than one access point, make plans to shuttle your vessels ahead of time. The idea of a shuttle is to launch your vessel at the upstream point of access and your vehicle at the downstream destination. This is easily done with two or more vehicles. Employ a friend or hire a professional shuttle service to take you to your starting point.

## OUTFITTERS

### **Dockside Boat Rentals**

314 N. Morris St., Oxford  
410-652-6533  
[docksideboatrentals.com](http://docksideboatrentals.com)

### **Easton Cycle and Sport**

723 Goldsborough St., Easton  
410-822-7433  
[eastoncycleandsport.com](http://eastoncycleandsport.com)

### **Easton Point Marina**

975 Port St., Easton  
410-822-1201  
[eastonpointmarina.com](http://eastonpointmarina.com)

### **Lowes Wharf Marina Inn**

21651 Lowes Wharf Rd., Sherwood  
410-745-6684  
[loweswharf.com](http://loweswharf.com)

### **Shore Pedal & Paddle**

500 S. Talbot St., St. Michaels  
410-745-2320  
[shorepedalandpaddle.com](http://shorepedalandpaddle.com)

### **Tilghman Island Marina & Rentals**

6140 Mariners Ct., Tilghman Island  
410-886-2500  
[tilghmanmarina.com](http://tilghmanmarina.com)

## BIRDS OF THE WATER TRAIL

Land, water, sky—all three provide opportunities for viewing Chesapeake bird life. Windy weather should not detract from Water Trail birding because even a relaxing paddle along a sheltered shoreline can bring you close to many beautiful species. This bird list should help you home in on the species you are most likely to see whatever the season and wherever you chose to go on the St. Michaels Water Trail. How many did you see on your trip?

### WATER'S EDGE AND SKY ABOVE

- **Canada Goose** (migratory populations in winter, non-migratory in summer)
- **Mute Swan** (graceful arched back, orange bill; can be aggressive; not a native species)
- **Mallard** (most common duck; males have green head and white neck ring; quacks)
- **Great Blue Heron** (long-legged sovereign of the Chesapeake)
- **Turkey Vulture** (tilting glide with wings curved up above horizontal)
- **Black Vulture** (smaller and flaps more than Turkey Vulture, white patch near wing tip)
- **Bald Eagle** (birds older than 5 years have white head and tail; wings horizontal in flight)
- **Red-tailed Hawk** (call a wild descending scream; unbanded tail is red above)
- **Killdeer** (common shorebird whose raucous call says its name)
- **Herring Gull** (breeds on Poplar Island, frequents shores and harbors all year)
- **Great Black-backed Gull** (larger than Herring Gull; often on buoys in open water)
- **Forster's Tern** (black cap, forked tail, wings frosty white above; often dives in shallows)

### LANDLUBBERS

- **Mourning Dove** (brown, with pointed tail and wings that whistle on takeoff)
- **Red-bellied Woodpecker** (extensive red on head, black-and-white "ladder back")

- **Downy Woodpecker** (small with bark-sticker of a bill; males with red topknot)
- **Northern Flicker** (larger than a Robin; often seen on ground; black "V" on chest)
- **Blue Jay** (our raucous blue bird with a crest and face edged in black)
- **American Crow** (familiar "caw" call; Fish Crow sounds like it has a bad cold)
- **Carolina Chickadee** (small, with black bib and crown; "dee-dee" call)
- **Tufted Titmouse** (noisy but friendly little crested gray bird; associated with chickadees)
- **White-breasted Nuthatch** ("toy horn" call; goes down tree trunks head-first)
- **Carolina Wren** (brown with white eye stripe, cocked tail; "tea-kettle" call)
- **Eastern Bluebird** (blue in good light; reddish upper breast; smaller than Robin)
- **American Robin** (the familiar red-breast of lawn and garden)
- **Northern Mockingbird** (gray, wings flash white; superb mimic, repeats phrases 3 times)
- **European Starling** (familiar introduced species; winter birds have small spots)
- **Common Grackle** (iridescent squawking blackbird; flies with long tail in a "V")
- **Song Sparrow** (streaks and a central "stickpin" spot on breast; cheerful song)
- **Swamp Sparrow** (fat dark sparrow of wetlands; throat whitish, brown cap)
- **Northern Cardinal** (crested; males red with black face, females duller)
- **House Finch** (rosy-looking finch of homes and feeders; introduced from the West)
- **American Goldfinch** ("wild canary" yellow spring, summer; "per-chick-oree" call)
- **House Sparrow** (common in villages; males have black bib; European origin)

## WILDLIFE VIEWING ETHICS

### **Act responsibly.**

Stay clear of nests, dens and rookeries. Do not touch or feed wild animals. Do not allow pets to interfere with wild animals.

### **Avoid getting too close.**

View wild birds and other animals from an appropriate distance. If animals change their behavior, appear nervous, keep looking at you with head up and ears pointing toward you, or if an animal doesn't resume its normal activity, then you are too close.

### **Make your observation brief, then move on.**

If you are looking at baby birds in a nest or fish in a pond, remember that they can't leave and that you are interrupting normal behavior.

### **Don't chase an animal.**

Don't chase an animal while trying to get a better glimpse or photo. Don't follow animals or behave in any way that might be seen as harassment. And don't allow your pets to do it either.

### **Move quietly and slowly.**

At popular viewing sites, limit your movement and noise level so you do not distract the wildlife. Loud noises, sudden movements or an unannounced approach can startle and cause stress to animals.

### **Do not use calls or whistles, or try to rouse animals in any way.**

This can interrupt breeding cycles, drive birds from their territories, or make animals "call shy" so they don't respond to the real thing.

### **Divide large groups of people into small groups.**

Small groups of people are less disturbing, usually talk more quietly, and tend to act in a more responsible way than big groups do.

## LEAVE NO TRACE

Please practice the following stewardship principles of Leave No Trace:

### **Plan ahead and prepare.**

- Know your route and the limitations of yourself and your group.
- Carry the proper equipment and clothing.
- Notify someone of the time you intend to return.

### **Stay in designated areas.**

- Keep to designated trails and public areas.
- Keep groups small and avoid trampling plants.
- Protect wildlife and your food—store rations securely.
- Leave recreation areas and picnic sites cleaner than you found them.

### **Dispose of waste properly.**

- Clean fish at designated areas.
- Pick up litter and dispose of waste in proper receptacles or take it with you.

### **Leave what you find and be considerate of other visitors.**

- Respect natural and cultural heritage—leave all items as you found them.
- Keep noise to a minimum—enjoy the music of nature.
- Respect private property and the privacy of others.

For more information on Leave No Trace ethics, visit [Int.org](http://Int.org), call 800-332-4100, or contact your local resource managers for additional guidance.

# St. Michaels Harbor and Miles River

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## DIRECTIONS TO LAUNCH SITE:

From Route 33 in St. Michaels take E. Chew Avenue and proceed 2 blocks to harbor on left. There are two boat ramps in the harbor. Hard put-in.

## PADDLING DIRECTIONS:

Paddle time: 2 + hours

Paddle distance: 3 miles

Skill level: Intermediate to difficult, open waters with NW to SW exposure.

## CAUTIONS:

Be aware of tidal currents. Waves 1-2 feet or higher in strong winds. Return trip can be against SW winds, especially in summer. Check local weather for wind direction and speed. Motorized boat traffic can be high during the summer.

From boat ramp head west (right). Before exiting the harbor, you may want to tour around to view the various businesses, restaurants and inns from the water. From the harbor head north (right) into the Miles River. Turn east (right) and follow developed southern shoreline for 1.25 miles to Spencer Creek to the SE (right). Explore the creek and retrace your path to the harbor and boat ramp.



## ATTRACTIONS:

St. Michaels harbor has many attractions to be viewed from the water. Once out in the Miles River, watch watermen fish for crabs and clams. The embayment's eastern shoreline hosts farm fields buffered by small red cedars and other trees and grasses. Birdlife you are likely to encounter include Osprey, Great Blue Heron, Eagles, and Swans. You may also encounter turtles and muskrats.

# (A) Oak Creek (B) Newcomb Creek

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## DIRECTIONS TO LAUNCH SITES FOR A & B:

From St. Michaels take Route 33 toward Easton to the Oak Creek Bridge. Just before the bridge, turn right on Station Road and turn left into the 4 parking lot. Boat ramp launch is at the end of parking lot. Hard put-in.

### (A) OAK CREEK

#### PADDLING DIRECTIONS:

Paddle time: 1 hour

Paddle distance: 2 miles

Skill level: Beginner to intermediate, easy paddle, protected waters.

#### CAUTIONS:

Be aware of tidal currents. From boat ramp head south (right and away from bridge on your left) and stay to the right at fork in creek. The Oaks, a long-time Eastern Shore Inn, is located 0.7 miles from boat ramp up the right fork of Oak Creek. Paddle back along the right fork and head SE along the left fork. Return via the eastern shoreline to boat ramp.

### (B) MILES RIVER & NEWCOMB CREEK

#### PADDLING DIRECTIONS:

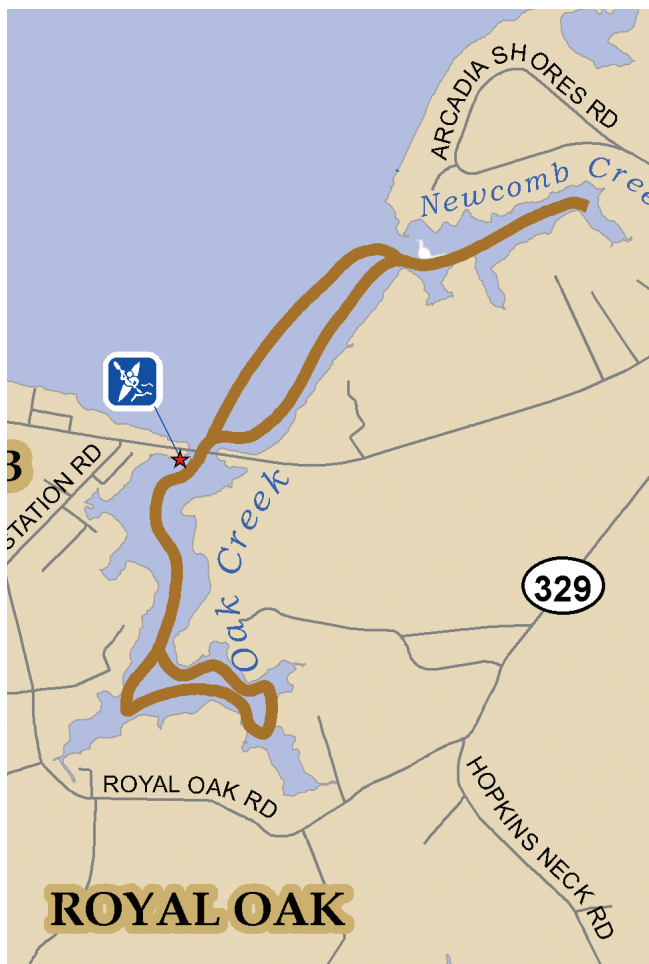
Paddle time: 1.5-2 hours

Paddle distance: 2.5 miles

Skill level: Intermediate to difficult, open waters with NW to SW exposure.

#### CAUTIONS:

Be aware of tidal currents. Waves 1-2 feet or higher in strong winds. Return trip can be against SW winds, especially in summer. Check local weather for wind direction and speed. From boat ramp head north (left) and pass under Oak Creek Bridge. Stay on the eastern shoreline (right) for about 0.5 miles and enter Newcomb Creek. There is an island at the mouth of the creek and a shallow area on the N side of the opening. Follow creek to right along the developed shoreline. The creek ends in a pond area with a fringing marsh dominated by salt marsh cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) and marsh elder (*Iva frutescens*). Retrace your path to boat ramp.



#### ATTRACTIONS:

*Oak Creek:* The shoreline is lined by many older Talbot County homes and estates. Shoreline is a mix of rip-rap (stone breakwater) and wooded edges. The calm waters provide excellent viewing of Osprey fishing. You can see resident Canada Geese nests and Great Blue Herons wading in the shallows. Blue Crab fishing boats and clamming boats operate from the moor.

*Miles River & Newcomb Creek:* Watermen work on the Miles River, fishing for clams and crabs. During colder months, Bufflehead, Old Squaw, Canvasbacks float in the open waters. During the summer you may see log canoes, skipjacks, sailboats in the river.

# San Domingo Creek to Hambleton Island

3

## DIRECTIONS TO LAUNCH SITE:

From Route 33 in St. Michaels take W. Chew Avenue and proceed 2 blocks to harbor on left. Put-in is to the right of the boat launch and dock in the park. Soft put-in.

## PADDLING DIRECTIONS:

Paddle time: 2-3 hours

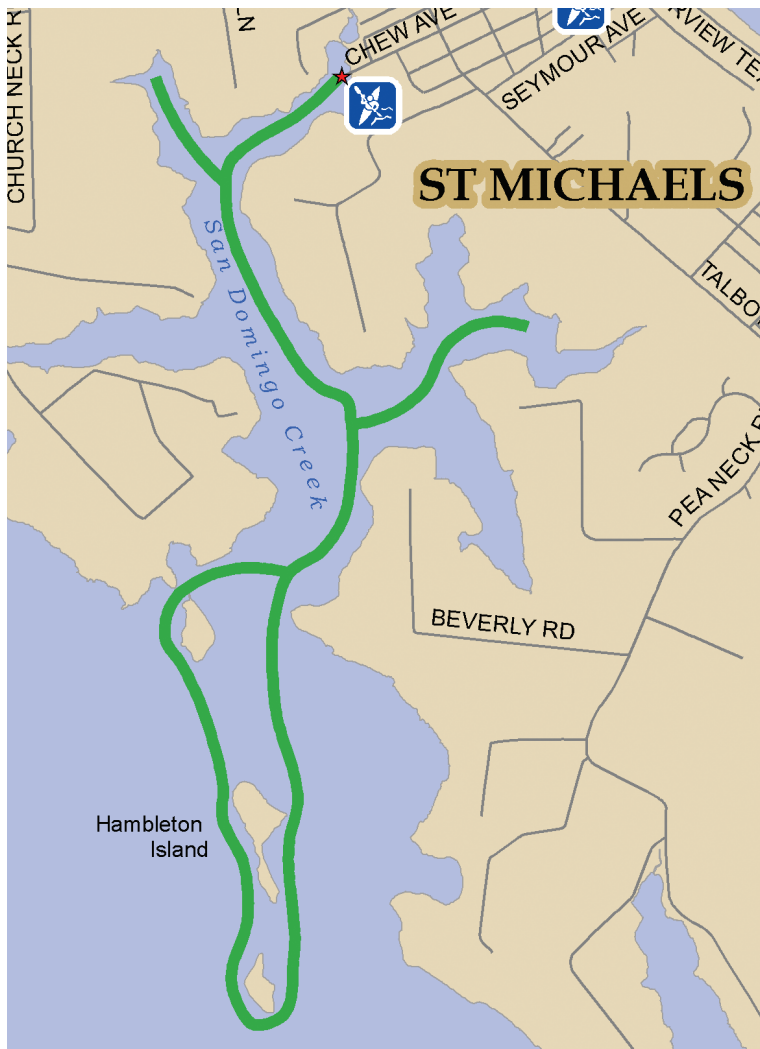
Paddle distance: 3 miles

Skill level: Beginner to Intermediate, some open waters with SW exposure.

## CAUTIONS:

Be aware of tidal currents. Waves 1 foot or higher in strong SW winds around Hambleton Island. Check local weather for wind direction and speed.

From boat ramp head west out of harbor and then head south (left). There are several coves to explore along the way, but the main channel is marked with red and green channel markers. Follow these to the mouth of San Domingo Creek. At the red channel marker #4, look to your right to locate Hambleton Island. Paddle around Hambleton Island and retrace your path to the put-in.



## ATTRACTIONS:

Note the several colonial homes along the shoreline of San Domingo Creek. At the #4 channel marker, explore the left shoreline (east) to see submerged grasses if the water clarity allows. These underwater grasses provide habitat and food for many aquatic organisms. Some of the grasses have been restored to the area through a University of Maryland research project. Make your way back across San Domingo Creek to Hambleton Island. These islands were once one island, but are now eroding and have split. Again look for underwater grasses in the shallows around the islands and visit the small sandy beach on the west side at low tide.



# Neavitt Landing to Leadenham Creek

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## DIRECTIONS TO LAUNCH SITE:

From St. Michaels take Route 33 toward Tilghman Island for about 2 miles. Turn left on Neavitt Road toward Bozman. Continue on Neavitt Road for about 6 miles through the villages of Bozman and Neavitt, to the launch site on Neavitt Road. Put-in is the boat ramp. Hard put-in.

## PADDLING DIRECTIONS:

Paddle time: 4-6 hours

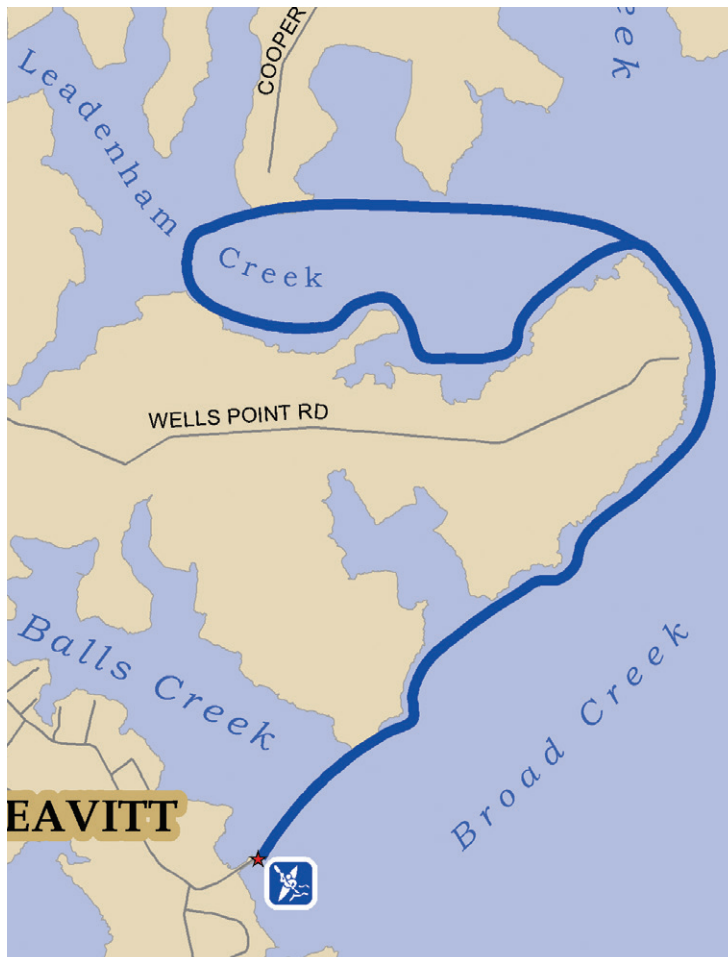
Paddle distance: 8 miles

Skill level: Intermediate to difficult, open waters with SW exposure.

## CAUTIONS:

Be aware of tidal currents. Waves 1-2 feet or higher in strong winds. Return trip can be against SW winds, especially in summer. Check local weather for wind direction and speed.

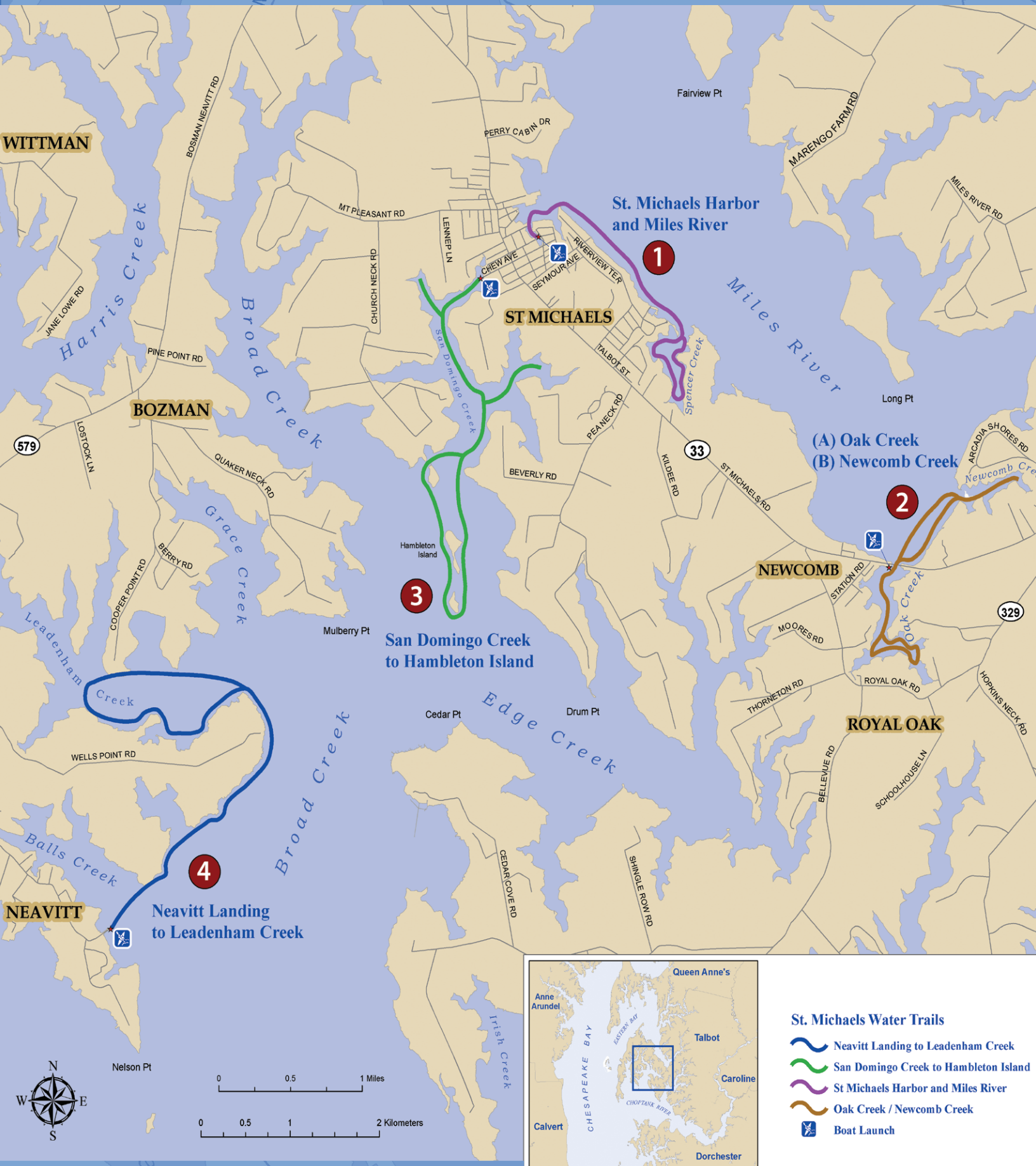
From boat ramp head east across creek to northern shore (left). Follow shoreline keeping it on your left. There is one cove before Leadenham Creek you may want to explore. The entire shoreline is part of the Jean Ellen DuPont Shehan Audubon Sanctuary. Follow shoreline into Leadenham Creek to left at green channel marker #1. Paddle west (left) up Leadenham Creek about 2 miles. Turn around and retrace your path back to Neavitt boat ramp, keeping the shoreline on your right.



## ATTRACTIONS:

If the water clarity allows, you will see an abundance of submerged grasses along the natural shoreline. The Sanctuary is a 950 acre estate donated in 1997 by Jean Ellen Dupont Shehan to the Audubon Society. It remains largely undeveloped and provides the paddler with a glimpse of native Chesapeake Bay vegetation. Nearly 200 bird species frequent the Sanctuary during the year.

# St. Michaels Water Trail





# Talbot COUNTY

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism  
Talbot County Visitors Center  
11 South Harrison Street  
Easton, MD 21601  
410-770-8000 | [tourtalbot.org](http://tourtalbot.org)

Talbot County Parks and Recreation  
Hog Neck Community Center  
10028 Ocean Gateway  
Easton, MD 21601  
410-770-8050 | [talbotparks.org](http://talbotparks.org)

***Remember: It is your responsibility to have the necessary skills, knowledge, and equipment for a safe and environmentally sensitive visit.***

The development of this map was funded by a Recreational Trails Grant from the Maryland Department of Transportation to Talbot County Tourism.

The St. Michaels Water Trail map is a collaborative effort between Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism, Parks & Recreation, and Public Works.

Safety Information Courtesy of Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

