

# Camp David

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Coordinates: 39.648328° -77.465801°﻿ / ﻿39.648328°N -77.465801°W﻿ / 39.648328; -77.465801

The **Naval Support Facility Thurmont**, popularly known as **Camp David**, is the rustic 125-acre (0.5 km<sup>2</sup>) mountain retreat of the President of the United States. Camp David is part of the Catoctin Mountain Park recreational area in Frederick County, Maryland, 60 miles north of Washington, D.C. It was founded by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as Shangri-La and later renamed Camp David after Dwight Eisenhower's grandson, David Eisenhower.

## Contents

- 1 Establishment
- 2 Post-World War II era
- 3 Notable events at Camp David
- 4 Modern usage
- 5 Gallery
- 6 See also
  - 6.1 Analogous facilities
- 7 External links



Main Lodge at Camp David during Nixon administration, February 9, 1971.

## Establishment

Catoctin Mountain Park was originally submarginal land purchased by the U.S. government in 1936, to be developed into a recreational facility. The purpose of the land was to demonstrate how rough terrain and eroded soil could be turned into productive land.



Anwar Sadat, Jimmy Carter, and Menachem Begin meet on the Aspen Lodge patio on September 6, 1978.

During the New Deal program of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Works Progress Administration began the work in the newly created Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area, joined by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1939. Camp Misty Mount was first used by the Maryland League for Crippled Children. After the first year (1937), the League moved to a second camp, Camp Greentop, because Camp Misty Mount's terrain was difficult to negotiate in a wheelchair. A third camp, **Camp Hi-Catoctin**, was completed in the winter of 1938-1939 and was used for three years as a family camp for federal employees.

Roosevelt was accustomed to seeking relief from hot Washington summers and relaxing on weekends aboard the

presidential yacht *Potomac* or at his home in Hyde Park, New York. In 1942, the Secret Service became concerned about the President's use of *Potomac*. World War II had brought U-boats of the *Kriegsmarine* (German War Navy) to U.S. coastal waters in the Atlantic. Roosevelt's health was also a concern. The muggy climate of the Washington area was considered detrimental to his health, affecting his sinuses. A new retreat within a 100 mile (160 km) radius of the capital with cool mountain air was sought.

Several sites were considered but Camp Hi-Catoctin in the Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area was selected after the President's first visit on April 22, 1942. A camp was already built on the site and the estimated conversion cost was \$18,650. It was also almost 10 degrees (5 degrees Celsius) cooler than Washington. Roosevelt quickly renamed the camp **Shangri-La**, from James Hilton's 1933 novel, *Lost Horizon*.

## Post-World War II era

At the close of World War II, there was some debate over the future of Shangri-La. Should it be returned to the National Park Service? Should it be maintained as a national shrine or monument? Should it be transferred to the Maryland State Forest and Park System as was the original plan of the demonstration area? In a letter to Maryland Governor Herbert R. O'Connor, President Harry S. Truman wrote:

*I have decided because of the historical events of national and international interest now associated with the Catoctin Recreation Area that this property should be retained by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. This action is in accord with the position expressed by the late President Roosevelt before his death.*

In 1952 Truman approved a compromise under which the land north of Maryland Route 77 would remain Catoctin Mountain Park operated by the National Park Service and the land south of Maryland Route 77 would become Cunningham Falls State Park. The official transfer took effect in 1954. President Dwight Eisenhower renamed the retreat **Camp David** for his grandson after he took office in 1953.

## Notable events at Camp David

Camp David has often been used for formal and informal discussion between the United States and world leaders. Probably most famous is the summit that led to the peace agreement between president Anwar Sadat of Egypt and prime minister Menachem Begin of Israel that was forged at Camp David in 1978 with U.S. President Jimmy Carter, known as the Camp David Accords (1978), now also called "Camp David I."

In 2000 there were also the talks that led to the Roadmap for Peace on the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the summit meeting between U.S. President Bill Clinton, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak known as the Camp David 2000 Summit or "Camp David II."

## Modern usage



Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan at Camp David.

Camp David continues to serve as the Presidential Retreat today. It is a private, secluded place for recreation, contemplation, rest, and relaxation. Many historical events have occurred at the Presidential Retreat; the planning of the Normandy invasion, Eisenhower-Khrushchev meetings, discussions of the Bay of Pigs Invasion, Vietnam War discussions, and many other meetings with foreign dignitaries and guests. Maintaining the privacy and secluded atmosphere of the retreat is an important role for Catoctin Mountain Park. The Presidential Retreat still remains within park boundaries but is not open to the public. It is a place where Presidents can relax, unwind, or entertain distinguished guests in an informal setting. Furthermore, Camp David has, on numerous accounts, served as a place of safety and security for the President.

## Gallery



George H.W. Bush meets with his National Security advisors in the Laurel Lodge conference room on August 4, 1990.



George W. Bush meets with his advisors at Camp David on January 17, 2004, while preparing for his State of the Union address.



From Camp David, Vice President Dick Cheney and members of the Interagency Team on Iraq participate in a video teleconference with President George W. Bush in Baghdad, Iraq.

## See also

- White House, official residence of the President of the United States
- List of official residences
- Site R, nearby bunker and communications center.

## Analogous facilities

- Chequers, country residence of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
- Harpsund, country residence of the Prime Minister of Sweden
- Harrington Lake, country residence of the Prime Minister of Canada
- Marienborg, summer residence of the Prime Minister of Denmark

## External links

- Camp David official White House page
- Camp David from the Federation of American Scientists
- **Maps and aerial photos**
  - Satellite image from WikiMapia, Google Maps or Windows Live Local
  - Street map from MapQuest or Google Maps
  - Topographic map from TopoZone
  - Aerial image from TerraServer-USA

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Categories: Executive branch of the United States government | Frederick County, Maryland | Official residences in the United States | Houses in Maryland | Works Progress Administration | Dwight D. Eisenhower

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