FOR 16 STRAIGHT WEEKS IN THE SUMMER OF 2020, the top-ranked destination in the country* for travelers wasn’t New York City, nor Orlando, nor Las Vegas, it was right here in the Old Dominion in Norfolk-Virginia Beach. As the pandemic’s unprecedented disruption to travel plans the world over began to become evident, so too did the first-time-ever pairing of the culture and character of Norfolk with the surf and sand of Virginia Beach into a safe and satisfying vacation offering for visitors looking for an escape.

While impressive apart, combined, the destination’s 182 miles of shoreline, four unique beaches, 20+ breweries and distilleries, hundreds of independent dining experiences, 128 hotels, dozens of museums, nearly 300 bike trails, myriad of shopping options, aquarium, and zoo, make for a getaway few other markets can match.

And while COVID-19 hopefully begins to wane, this partnership isn’t going anywhere.

Take a stroll down one of America’s Top 10 favorite boardwalks**, or trace the trail of brave souls en route to their freedom on the Underground Railroad, watch the walls come alive with color, charm, and creativity in the NEON and ViBe districts, or sample the soul, seafood, spirits and more at the region’s many eateries; snap a fly ball at Harbor Park (home of the Norfolk Tides), or freefall yourself at iFly at the Beach. Their just launched digital discount application available at visitnorfolkvabeach.com makes saving simple while you experience everything both cities have to offer.

These days, we could all use a little togetherness. So bring a friend, bring the family, or bring your favorite to Norfolk-Virginia Beach.

YOU WOULD BE HARD-PRESSED TO FIND ANOTHER DESTINATION THAT OFFERS SO MANY COMPLEMENTARY ATTRIBUTES IN SUCH CLOSE PROXIMITY. WE ARE DEFINITELY BETTER TOGETHER.

– Kurt Krause, President and CEO, Visit Norfolk

TOGETHER, NORFOLK AND VIRGINIA BEACH TRULY HAVE SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE! WE ARE UNITED IN OUR COMMITMENT TO ENSURING YOUR NEXT VISIT IS A SAFE, UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE.

– Lauren Townsend, Director of Marketing, Visit Virginia Beach

NORFOLK-VIRGINIA BEACH COMES TOGETHER, AT LAST
With more than 3,500 miles of Scenic Byways, Virginia is a mecca for road trippers whose bucket lists include All-American Roads—we have the Blue Ridge Parkway, Colonial Parkway and George Washington Parkway as well as National Scenic Byways, like Skyline Drive and The Journey Through Hallowed Ground. While these well-known routes are each a worthy destination in their own right, here are a few lesser-known trips to fulfill your wanderlust, or WanderLove, as we call it here in Virginia.
SMALL TOWN CRUISE

U.S. Route 58 stretches west to east across southern Virginia, from Cumberland Gap to Virginia Beach, meandering through scenic stretches and picturesque towns, and blending natural beauty with culture and history along the way.

MARTINSVILLE

Martinsville may be best known for its heart-pounding NASCAR races, but even those looking to downshift will find plenty of ways to enjoy this friendly southern town.

Stay & Play
Grab a few reads for the road at Books and Crannies, a cozy independent bookstore in uptown. Families will love discovering exhibits that span from dinosaurs to initiatives at the Virginia Museum of Natural History.

The pristine, craftsmen-style Starting Point sleeps up to nine guests and is a perfect respite on the side of the road.

Fancy Gap Cabins and Campground boasts a giant LOVE mural, as well as kayaks and other outdoor equipment.

Venture to Occoneechee State Park to park your RV, pitch your tent or stay in one of 13 cabins for an overnight stay.

RIVERSIDE RAMBLE

Discover a unique blend of U.S. history, waterfront beauty and maritime culture as you follow the Rappahannock River from Northern Virginia to the River Realm.

FREDERICKSBURG

History around every corner (literally). Amazing local fare. And did someone say retail therapy? Find it all in quaint Fredericksburg, just an hour south of D.C.

Stay & Play
Plan a few stops along the Trail to Freedom, which traces the routes of more than 10,000 Freedom seekers that passed through the area by mid-September 1862.

Maggio’s Italian Grill offers outstanding cuisine, and the Deltaville Maritime Museum is a must-visit to learn about the history of local watermen.

Continued along Route 58 east, stopping in Colonial Beach to stretch your legs on the Riverwalk and fill up on tacos at Mucho Taqueria.

Bounded by the Chesapeake Bay, the Rappahannock River and the Piankatank River - and boasting more than 15 marinas - the “Boating Capital of the Chesapeake Bay” is the perfect launch pad for maritime adventure.

Stay & Play
Get out on the water with a boat charter or pontoon rental from Norton Yachts. New to sailing? Their sailing school will show you the ropes!

Located on Bug Island Lake (aka Kerr Reservoir), “Virginia’s only lake-side town” offers both a quaint downtown and access to the best of the area’s outdoor recreation, from fishing and watersports to shoreline trails.

Clarksville

Located on Bug Island Lake (aka Kerr Reservoir), “Virginia’s only lakeside town” offers both a quaint downtown and access to the best of the area’s outdoor recreation, from fishing and watersports to shoreline trails.

Stay & Play
Stretch your legs with a stroll along Virginia Avenue to browse local artwork, home decor and a selection of gourmet foods and wines.

Enjoy a meal - and stay the night - at Cooper’s Landing Inn & Traveler’s Town, a historic home renovated into a beautiful restaurant and inn.

Venture to Oconeechee State Park to park your RV, pitch your tent or stay in one of 13 cabins for an overnight stay.

MORE IDEAS: MUSICAL JOURNEY

Explore Southwest Virginia’s role in the evolution of Bluegrass and Traditional Mountain Music along the Crooked Road: Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail. Rounding from Franklin County, the “Moonshine Capital of the World” to the Blue Ridge Mountains, this 400-mile route will connect you with the Virginia Kentucky border, giving you an up-close view of 60 cultural music venues with urban stages, folk music and local restaurants.

THE CROOKED ROAD: BRIAN CAMP / KILMARNOCK INN: SARAH HAUSER

Stay & Play
Car on a scavenger hunt for the iconic boots of Watermen’s Way, a public art project honoring the area’s heritage.

Kilmarnock

The Northern Neck’s commercial hub, this charming town will greet you with a beautifully renovated Main Street that houses boutique shops and local restaurants, with nautical stories to the area’s history.

Stay & Play
Get out on the water with a boat charter or pontoon rental from Norton Yachts. New to sailing? Their sailing school will show you the ropes!

MORE IDEAS: THRILLING RIDE

Squeezing 73 miles across three mountains, the Back of the Dragon’s 400 curves and static views are a rider’s dream. This stretch of Route 58 is known as the Dragon’s Tail because of its winding nature. This 15-mile stretch of Route 58 is a favorite during fall foliage season, but you can become a “Dragon Master” any time of the year, stopping at the new Welcome Center to kick back and snap shots of the road.

Hit the Road. Continue along Route 58, making the bridge across the Rappahannock River at the Middle Peninsula. Grab a waterfront lunch at Merrior, an “oyster-tasting room” known for their crab cakes and oysters, sourced fresh from the Chesapeake Bay.

DELTAVILLE

Bounded by the Chesapeake Bay, the Rappahannock River and the Piankatank River - and boasting more than 15 marinas - the “Boating Capital of the Chesapeake Bay” is the perfect launch pad for maritime adventure.

Stay & Play
Get out on the water with a boat charter or pontoon rental from Norton Yachts. New to sailing? Their sailing school will show you the ropes!

Explore from land at Holly Point Nature Park, meandering along their waterfront trail dotted with wildlife sculptures and benches to stop and take it all in.

The Deltaville Maritime Museum is a must-visit to learn about the history and culture of the town and its watermen.

MORE IDEAS:

“Sip” back and relax on the outdoor pavilion while taking in vineyard views at Good Luck Cellars.

Just a half-block from Main Street, the Kilmarnock Inn is your home away from home, with Victorian beauty, a serene courtyard and a deck made for friends.

Hit the Road. Continue along Route 3 east, taking the bridge across the Rappahannock River to the Middle Peninsula. Grab a waterfront lunch at Merrior, an “oyster-tasting room” known for their crab cakes and oysters, sourced fresh from the Chesapeake Bay.

Head east on Route 58 toward Martinsville, with a pit stop in Meadows of Dan to stretch your legs on the Riverwalk and fill up on tacos at Mucho Taqueria.

Virginia is for Lovers

Virginia.org

15
MOUNTAIN Adventure

Travelers are familiar with Interstates 81 and 64, but natural wonders and hidden gems beg to be discovered along quieter roads as you traverse the Shenandoah Valley and head into Virginia’s mountains.

WINCHESTER
At the north end of the Shenandoah Valley, Winchester is both a hub for outdoor adventure as well as a historic town with local flair, anchored by Old Town’s vibrant pedestrian mall of boutique shops, patio dining and live performances.

Stay & Play
Marker-Miller Orchards Farm Market is just one of many orchards in this “Apple Capital”, offering an abundance of fresh produce and family fun.

With 3,000 acres, 100 campsites and three spring-fed lakes, the pet-friendly Cove Campground is a mecca for swimming, fishing, tubing, mountain biking, caving and more.

Hike the lesser-known Tuscarora Trail to the Eagle Rock Overlook for the best views of the Great North Mountain range. Acid hikers enjoy the 2.2-mile out-and-back route from U.S. 48-55, while families often opt for the 1.1-mile trail from Dry Cap.

Hit the Road. Parallel I-81 on the quieter Route 11, the historic Wilderness Road that was once a natural thoroughfare for migrating bison, Native American hunters and settlers striking out for the western frontier. Stop for an appropriately themed snack at the Route 11 Potato Chips Factory and Visitor Center in Mount Jackson.

LEXINGTON
This historic college town is anything but sleepy. A bustling downtown welcomes you with local restaurants, galleries and boutiques, while natural wonders abound nearby.

Stay & Play
Follow the Maury River on bike or foot along the Chessie Nature Trail, a rail-trail that connects Lexington and Buena Vista.

Celebrate a day of adventure by pairing mountain views with a crisp brew and a jumbo pretzel on the patio at Devils Backbone Outpost Tap Room & Kitchen.

The majestic Natural Bridge towers 215 feet over the creek that carved it. Continue along the Cedar Creek Trail to discover bonus gems: the reconstructed Monacan Village and the cascading Lace Falls.

Hit the Road. Forego I-64 for the more scenic route, following Route 39 west to Warm Springs - with a stop at Goshen Pass - and connecting to U.S. 220 south to Falling Spring Falls.

COVINGTON
Surrounded by the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, Covington offers a taste of small-town life along the banks of the Jackson River and is a great jumping-off point for fresh-air fun.

Stay & Play
Double down on your LOVEwork bucket list by checking off two - in downtown Covington and at the iconic Humpback Bridge.

Call up Alleghany Outdoors for a kayak or tube trip on the Jackson River. They even offer bike trips for those who prefer dry land.

Enjoy a sandy beach with mountain views at Lake Moomaw, which offers two options for this rare combo: Coles Point on the southern end and Bolar Mountain Campground to the north.

Hit the Road. Covington is just an hour’s drive from the heart of D.C. and a short trip from the historic Shenandoah Valley. You might want to spend the night at historic Luray Caverns or cross over to the Blue Ridge Mountains for a true mountain adventure.

Branch Out
Branch Out IN DC’S WINE COUNTRY
SIP, SAVOR AND EXPLORE: beer & wine trails, farm-fresh dining, historic small towns and outdoor adventures in scenic Northern Virginia.

Visit LOUDOUN DC’s Wine Country VISITLOUDOUN.ORG

How have you been to a place that just felt like home, even though you’ve never been before? That’s the magic of Middleburg. You’ll feel our authentic sense of community from the moment you pass into our town, where gracious avenues, inviting storefronts and hospitable residents welcome you with open arms. Not sure what to do when you get here? Just ask a friendly local. If we do say so ourselves, we’re your best tour guides.

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If these itineraries have you itching to hit the road, head to virginia.org/wanderlove for even more trip ideas!
imply put, LOVEworks are the heartbeat of Virginia – put on display for all to see. With "love" from the state’s slogan “Virginia is for Lovers,” and "works" like distinctive works of art, these giant LOVE signs uniquely represent the communities in which they’re found. And with more than 200 LOVEworks to be discovered throughout the Commonwealth, we’re challenging you to spot as many as you can while traveling.

To get you started, here are six LOVEwork Expeditions that pair hearty family adventure with prime LOVEworks spotting. Best of all, these experiences promise incredible sights throughout Virginia and priceless family memories.

BY SAMANTHA NELSON
ALPACAS & WATERSPORTS
Smith Mountain Lake

Sneak away to the Blue Ridge Mountains to discover a wealth of opportunities for charming family adventure. First, visit the nation’s largest agritourism facility for alpaca education: Smith Mountain Lake Alpaca Farm. It’s not a petting zoo, but it will provide up-close experiences (feeding alpacas!), as well as engaging, hands-on learning activities for the entire family. After that, rent a pontoon boat from Bridgewater Marina & Boat Rentals and explore the crystal waters of Smith Mountain Lake. You can even dock your boat for lunch at a variety of waterfront marina restaurants.

LOVE Hunt: Can you locate the decorative LOVEwork at the alpaca farm? How many activities can you find in the new LOVEwork mural at the Smith Mountain Lake Visitor Center?

PICTURE

ZIPLINES & WILDLIFE
Breaks Interstate Park
Virginia Living Museum

Encompassing the “Grand Canyon of the South” – a 4-mile gorge that plunges 1,500 feet! – this park affords all visitors endless adventure and spectacular views. Rent a private cabin or yurt, or book a restful getaway at the park’s lodge. Whatever you choose, don’t skip the ziplining! The entire family can experience a safe but thrilling adrenaline rush of soaring over the Russell Fork gorge from incredible heights. The views are unforgettable. Don’t miss the seasonal elk watching tour, too.

LOVE Hunt: Look closely as you enter Breaks Interstate Park. There is an intricately painted LOVEwork depicting all the adventures you can find while visiting this location.

PICTURE

FRESH AIR & WILD PONIES
Chincoteague Pony Swim

Set your sights on Virginia’s Eastern Shore and visit Chincoteague and Assateague Islands. Not only will you be able to tour the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge with more than 14,000 acres of beaches, sand dunes and maritime forests, but you can also catch a glimpse of the famous wild ponies. Time your visit just right and you’ll be able to see the annual pony swim, a tradition dating back to the 1700s. Other nearby activities great for families include Maui Jack’s Waterpark and the Assateague Lighthouse.

LOVE Hunt: Commemorate your trip with a family picture on the LOVEwork made of giant Adirondack chairs!

PICTURE

TEXTBOOKS COME TO LIFE
Mt. Vernon or Historic Jamestowne

Experiential learning is one of the fastest ways to stimulate curiosity in little minds. So, a visit to either of these spots is a great way to make history come alive! Tour George Washington’s home at Mount Vernon or visit Historic Jamestowne, the original site of America’s very first settlement. Let Virginia transform your family of history learners into history lovers.

LOVE Hunt: Drive 16 minutes from Mount Vernon to spot the LOVEwork at the Workhouse Arts Center. Painted by artist Marlon Digg’s, “Marly McFly,” this LOVEwork represents the area’s melting pot of culture. If you are near Historic Jamestowne, don’t miss the 8-foot-tall steel LOVEwork at Quirks of Art.

PICTURE

EVERYTHING BUT THE KITCHEN SINK
Massanutten Resort

Want to experience an indoor/outdoor waterpark, ziplining, mountain biking and golfing all in one spot? Massanutten Resort is known for being a hotspot for family adventure with all sorts of activities, including skiing and snow tubing, as well as year-round fun. Located just two hours from the nation’s capital, it’s the perfect combo of thrills and learning, with can’t-miss sights like White Oak Lavender Farm just a short drive away.

LOVE Hunt: When you’re at the resort, you literally can’t miss this gigantic LOVEwork sign, which stands at 11 feet tall and 35 feet wide and is made of wood and grapevines from around the resort. Strike a pose and snap a picture when you find it.

PICTURE

#LOVEVA

Be sure to snap and share with fellow LOVE seekers using #LOVEVA.
Virginia’s food scene reflects the rich agricultural history that generations of farmers and artisans have preserved, as well as the vibrant and diverse cultures of those who have made these food hubs home. What makes dining in the Commonwealth so exciting is the way that restaurants are doubling down on these foodways and interpreting them in dishes both modern and traditional, giving Virginia towns distinct dining calling cards. 

From Pakistani-Appalachian food truck fare to Southern comfort classics, these five delicious destinations are worth the trip.

Abingdon, Appalachian Spirit
Located in the Blue Ridge Highlands of the Appalachian Mountains, Abingdon has a deep connection with the land with its agricultural history and the Creeper Trail’s outdoor recreation. The laid-back mountain town’s creative spirit is anchored by downtown’s historic Barter Theatre and reflected in Appalachian foodways, in which seasonal, resourceful cooking is echoed on local restaurant menus.

Abingdon Farmers Market: Robust year-round market with produce and provisions from local farmers and purveyors.

White Birch Kitchen & Juice Bar: Vibrant juice bar and café serving locally sourced, scratch-made breakfast and lunch on historic Main Street.

Snow’s Fine Meats & Provisions: Whole animal butcher shop offering custom cuts and pantry provisions, plus butchery and cooking classes.

The Pakalachian: Food truck blending its co-owners’ Southwestern Virginia and Pakistani heritages.

The Harvest Table: Casually elegant farm-to-table restaurant where heirloom crops are the star of seasonal plates.

Sarah Jean’s Eatery: A casual spot for clever spins on homey Southern and Appalachian fare.

Falls Church, Global Flavors
In Falls Church, the restaurant experience is the food, and eating your way through town is a gustatory, globetrotting extravaganza. You can find a stellar bowl of Vietnamese pho as easily as Peruvian rotisserie chicken, reflecting the diverse cultures and vibrant cuisines of the people who call Falls Church home. Hidden gems include the best sushi in town unassumingly located next to a carpet cleaning service and sitting across the street from a Lebanese halal butcher shop.

Taco Bamba: Logic-defying tacos from Falls Church native chef Victor Albisu.

Padaek: A Lao and Thai restaurant at Seven Corners Center showcasing unabashedly spicy, bright and funky flavors.

Eden Center: Vietnamese shopping center chockful of restaurants. Hit up Huong Viet Restaurant, Rice Paper or Hai Dong.

Four Sisters: Stalwart family-owned Vietnamese restaurant lauded for its crispy spring rolls.

Peking Gourmet Inn: Local institution specializing in Peking duck, carved tableside. Dumplings are top-notch, too.

Takumi: Intimate yet unpretentious sushi bar serving some of the most pristine fish in the D.C. area.

These five Cities are Dining Destinations for Best-in-Class Eats.
Cape Charles: Spectacular Seafood

Thanks to a resurgence in local aquaculture and tourism, Cape Charles is experiencing a renaissance. The secret to the flourishing seafood scene—including local oysters, clams, crabs and fish—is the area’s pristine water quality.

While shucking houses dotting the landscape once shocked oysters for mass consumption, now it’s all about craft oysters, each of which reflect their unique terroir, or marine environment.

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Cape Charles is experiencing a renaissance. The secret to the area’s thriving seafood scene—including local oysters, clams, crabs and fish—is the area’s pristine water quality. Thanks to a resurgence in local aquaculture and tourism, Cape Charles is experiencing a renaissance. The secret to the area’s thriving seafood scene—including local oysters, clams, crabs and fish—is the area’s pristine water quality.

The Shanty: A local favorite for steamed seafood in Cape Charles Harbor.

The Oyster Farm Seafood Eatery at Kings Creek: Upscale seafood eatery with a fresco dining and sunset views of the Chesapeake shore. Its raw bar earned it a spot on the Virginia Oyster Trail.

Hook@Harvey: Formerly the Hook-Up Gourmet, this modern bistro serves up oysters and seasonal seafood-inspired dishes.

Pearl Market: A curated shop for local seafood, provisions and artisanal treats.

Sharon, frequently plan trips across the state with food in mind. John shares some of his most memorable restaurant experiences with John Park, aka @HungryAsianRKE.

JOHN’S TOP 5

The Roanoker: Iconic spot for down-home breakfasts such as country ham with red eye gravy.

Scratch Biscuit Company: Casual counter-service spot known for fluffy, buttery biscuits and clever sandwiches.

Mama Jean’s Barbecue: Known for down-home comfort food and choice of sides—fried chicken and baked beans are favorites.

River & Rail: Casual cool eatery with a lovely patio, winning modern American menu and plenty of good times to be had.

The Local: Cozy Belmont eatery with a lovely patio, winning modern American menu and more than 50 Virginia wines on its 300-label list.

Flair: Polished French restaurant with a local-leaning wine list on the historic Downtown Mall.

John Park describes himself as a food evangelist. The Roanoke-based financial planner is passionate about dining local and sharing his stories and experiences with the world. He and his wife, Sharon, frequently plan trips across the state with food in mind. John shares some of his most memorable restaurant experiences with John Park, aka @HungryAsianRKE.

Most Memorable Meals with John Park, aka @HungryAsianRKE

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Charlottesville: Wine-To-Table

Charlottesville’s burgeoning restaurant scene reflects the widespread support for eateries that champion local sourcing, including wine. Restaurateurs’ appreciation for the diversity of the Monticello Viticultural Area’s terroir has steadily grown.

You’ll find Virginia staples such as Cabernet Franc and Viognier, but also lesser-known varietals such as Petit Verdot, a full-bodied red with dark fruit flavors, or Petit Manseng, an aromatic dry white wine. Whether paired with Southern-inflected tapas or classic French cuisine, Charlottesville’s viticulture makes it a wine-to-table foodie paradise.

About 1,000 miles of trails for biking, hiking and climbing, plus sweeping mountain views along the Blue Ridge Parkway, Roanoke is an outdoor lovers’ paradise.

The Star City’s culinary scene shines bright thanks to classic and contemporary restaurants dishing out Southern comfort food. Roanoke’s culinary heritage can be traced back to downtown’s Roanoke City Market, where farmers and vendors have sold fresh produce, flowers, baked goods and artisanal wares since 1882. From biscuits to barbecue, cornbread to cheese slaw, it’s all guaranteed to be served with a hearty helping of Southern hospitality.

There’s a movement growing in Virginia vineyards. Come experience it for yourself.
My first visit to a presidential home was the result of a disappointment.

It was the summer of 1967 and my best friend Michelle and I were on the Wilson Line ferry headed from Washington, D.C., to Marshall Hall, an amusement park on the Maryland side of the Potomac River. I was 10 years old; Michelle was 11. We lived next door to each other in tidy brick homes, with hard-working dads and stay-at-home moms. Our Black, middle-class Washington, D.C., neighborhood with tree-lined streets and white-paved sidewalks was safe enough to leave the doors unlocked, even after the streetlights came on.

Carefree young girls, Michelle and I were blissfully unaware of what was happening beyond our sheltered community. We had no idea that earlier that summer, there were riots in cities across the country from Newark to Detroit to Milwaukee that left 83 people dead and hundreds more injured. We did not know about the smoldering cities or about the racial inequality that ignited the unrest. Our parents’ efforts to protect us from the country’s racial ills and social inequities had been very successful. At 10 years old, I did not know that my brown skin made me different from other Americans.

From Mount Vernon to Monticello

A 50-year journey to my ancestral home.

BY GAYLE JESSUP WHITE
That summer, all I knew or cared about was my mother’s promise to take us to Marshall Hall. The rides, we were told, were superior to the ones at Glen Echo, the region’s other popular amusement park. Until 1961, it was for Whites only. It took the arrest of free Howard University students for refusing to get off the park’s carousel and the protests that followed to desegregate Glen Echo. Marshall Hall had a similar history, but I would not learn about the brave people who paved the way for my summer adventure until I was an adult.

The day we sailed across the Potomac was full of sunshine and anticipation as the Wilson Line left D.C.’s wharf and headed toward Maryland. After a journey that seemed like an eternity (but was probably less than an hour), we approached the bank. I stood on the boat’s deck, my heart pounding as we drew closer and park’s view grew larger.

But we never got to Marshall Hall that day. Nature called Michelle just as we were about to disembark. By the time we made it to the gangway, the boat was pulling away. With tears rolling down my cheeks, I watched my dream fade into the distance.

But over the years, the spirit of evolution brought change to the Commonwealth. From house museums like Monticello and Montpelier, to locations such as Colonial Williamsburg and Point Comfort (now Fort Monroe in Hampton), the stories of the enslaved are an integral part of the visitor experience.

For me, the stories shared at Virginia’s venerated historical sites are personal because they also tell the history of my family. Not only am I descended from enslaved people from throughout central Virginia, but I am also related to those who enslaved them – most famously, Thomas Jefferson.
A domestic who could not read, write or even spell her own name, she left little behind aside from a conviction that her nieces and nephews were descended from the third president of the United States. “You’re descended from Thomas Jefferson. I’m not, but you are,” she would say.

It was easy to doubt Aunt Peachie. Back then, people did not discuss Jefferson’s connection to Sally Hemings, the enslaved woman who bore six of his children. However, after decades of research, I would discover that Aunt Peachie was telling the truth. Oral history, fragmented documents and DNA testing confirm that my family is in fact descended from Jefferson, though not through his connection with Hemings.

In an extraordinary discovery, I discovered that I am descended from one of Jefferson’s great-great-grandsons who had a relationship with my great-grandmother, a niece of Sally Hemings. Named after her aunt, she was the daughter of enslaved Monticello cook and brewer, Peter Hemings, one of Sally’s older brothers.

My family’s history, like America’s, is confounding and complex. Untangling the past is one reason visiting Virginia’s historical sites is essential. Places like Monticello tell an honest American story, with all of its contradictions, complexities, failures and triumphs. Understanding our history will help us build a better, more inclusive future.

I could not have imagined when I was a curious 10-year-old exploring Mount Vernon, the home of America’s first president, that I would one day work at the home of the third American president, Thomas Jefferson. I could not have foreseen that I would give voice to the people he enslaved, including my own family. I could not have envisioned that what started as a disappointment would result in such a gratifying ending.
SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL: IT’S THE VIRGINIA WAY

BY JOHNNY MOLLOY

When lovers of the great outdoors come to Virginia, they have high expectations—and deservedly so. Exploring Virginia means adventurous ranging from combing the beaches of the Atlantic Coastline to trekking the lofty Blue Ridge Mountains to exploring a host of the Atlantic coastline to trekking the lofty adventures ranging from combing the beaches of the Atlantic Coastline to trekking the lofty mountains to exploring the fascinating geology of Natural Tunnel State Park.

Want to pair a waterfall hike with a visit to a winery? DuCard Vineyards is located in the shadow of Shenandoah National Park, near the wild waterfalls of Shenandoah’s Whiteoak Canyon. DuCard Vineyards sets the standard for green wineries. This leading producer of organic wine uses cutting edge biodynamic procedures utilizing the land’s natural qualities with minimal inputs and a long term approach to conserving the land and environment. DuCard Vineyards simply wants to be a good steward of the land when they compost grape waste byproducts and filter wastewater through a wetland of their own creation, among other practices. Be sure to visit the tasting bar, enjoying vineyard samples plus new release wines. Up your game with a wine flight combined with tasty platters of locally made gourmet cheese or a homemade dessert.

The historic Mountain Lake Lodge — where the iconic movie “Dirty Dancing” was filmed — is part of the non-profit Mountain Lake Conservancy, protecting 2,600 acres of picturesque Appalachian highlands. The untamed forest ecosystem safeguards streams, water quality while protecting lesser-seen flora and fauna, including the wide lip orchid and sought-for bird species like the Northern saw-whet owl and yellow-bellied sapsucker. The land, laced with enticing hiking trails leading to overlooks such as Bald Knob, is also a long term approach to conserving the land and reestablishing native landscapes, as well as mounting soap and shampoo dispensers in their cabin showers. These actions reduce waste while preserving and restoring the natural landscape. This way your travel experience will be for the good, whether you are going into the wild gorge of Breaks Interstate State Park, camping beneath the stars at Lake Anna State Park or admiring the fascinating geology of Natural Tunnel State Park.

Adventure Kayak Tours leads paddling trips in southeastern Virginia, from primeval coastal creeks to beaccomching island treks in the Atlantic Ocean, with an eye on the environment. Adventure Kayak Tours periodically holds “P.I.T.O.” (Paddle In Trash Out) events, partnering with paddling enthusiasts to clean up local streams. Waterways they paddle on their excursions include the wild gorge of Breaks Interstate State Park, camping beneath the stars at Lake Anna State Park or admiring the fascinating geology of Natural Tunnel State Park.

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Virginia’s state parks are among the leaders in sustainable tourism. When you visit preserves such as Grayson Highlands with its wild ponies, historic Occoneechee on Lake Kerr or sandy Kiptopeke on the Eastern Shore, you will see these Virginia State Parks participating in wide ranging green initiatives covering all aspects of environmental integrity. This includes installing water bottle filling stations and reestablishing native landscapes, as well as mounting soap and shampoo dispensers in their cabin showers. These actions reduce waste while preserving and restoring the natural landscape. This way your travel experience will be for the good, whether you are going into the wild gorge of Breaks Interstate State Park, camping beneath the stars at Lake Anna State Park or admiring the fascinating geology of Natural Tunnel State Park.

The historic Mountain Lake Lodge — where the iconic movie “Dirty Dancing” was filmed — is part of the non-profit Mountain Lake Conservancy, protecting 2,600 acres of picturesque Appalachian highlands. The untamed forest ecosystem safeguards streams, water quality while protecting lesser-seen flora and fauna, including the wide lip orchid and sought-for bird species like the Northern saw-whet owl and yellow-bellied sapsucker. The land, laced with enticing hiking trails leading to overlooks such as Bald Knob, is also a long term approach to conserving the land and reestablishing native landscapes, as well as mounting soap and shampoo dispensers in their cabin showers. These actions reduce waste while preserving and restoring the natural landscape. This way your travel experience will be for the good, whether you are going into the wild gorge of Breaks Interstate State Park, camping beneath the stars at Lake Anna State Park or admiring the fascinating geology of Natural Tunnel State Park.

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Would you like to mix a relaxing float down the Potomac River with a dining experience at one of America’s first organic farm eateries? The Restaurant at Patowmack Farm, located near Lovettsville, will do it for you. Their motto is to “nourish the soul and excite the palate.” They do this using freshly cultivated products from their own farm—along with other local ingredients—and combine them for a stellar dining event.

The center also supports area farms by selling homegrown products and hosting agritourism events such as grape stomping and apple butter making. And when in Abingdon, a bicycle ride on the gorgeous Virginia Creeper Trail—a repurposed rail trail running through lovely terrain—is a must.

No matter your chosen Virginia outdoor vacation—whether you paddle the coast, hike the mountains, bicycle a rail trail or camp somewhere in between—you can visit Virginia parks, accommodations, wineries, restaurants and artisans that combine their unique specialties and services with a genuine love and respect for their surroundings. It’s the Virginia way.

To start planning your next eco-friendly vacation, visit virginia.org/green.

Please be sure to leave no trace as you explore Virginia’s diverse natural habitats. Always pack up what you bring along, respect the wildlife and your surroundings and leave the land as you found it beautiful. Visit let.org for more information.

The Restaurant at Patowmack Farm

Lovettsville

703-737-7800

www.restaurantatpatowmackfarm.com


National & Regional Parks, Refuges & Forests

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HIKING
Virginia State Parks trails are as diverse as the parks, so you’re sure to find a great trail for a short and easy family walk or a strenuous hike suited for backpacking. Every park has a trail guide to make planning your visit a snap.

RIDING
With more than 55 miles of mountain biking trails and approximately 256 miles of multiuse trails for bikers, hikers and horseback riders, we are a trail lovers paradise. From relaxing rides with the kids, to hand-cycle friendly routes, to challenging trails for your thick wheels, Virginia State Parks has trails for you.

STAYING
Cabins are open year-round and are great for peaceful mid-week getaways. RV and tent camping is available March through November, and so are yurts, which bridge the gap between tent camping and cabins for when you want to rough it, but not too much.

PADDLING
Virginia State Parks offer canoeing, kayaking, and, for a real challenge, stand-up paddleboards. Other water amenities include full-service marinas, car-top, slide and concrete boat ramps. State parks provide access to Virginia’s most popular rivers and lakes, as well as the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

WATCHING
Bald eagles soaring thousands of feet overhead. Deer gracefully stepping through the forest. Foxes, raccoons, beavers … the list goes on and on. You’ll find few places better suited to wildlife than Virginia’s state parks. Remember: Wildlife is wild, so keep a respectful distance.
Imagine a natural haven that is just a short car drive away, yet immerses you in a resort club lifestyle that is all your own. Bay Creek is a breathtaking, coastal setting in which you can seek refuge and adventure on some of the most coveted property on Virginia’s Eastern Shore.

Enjoy 1,720 acres of lush beauty, two miles of private beach, 27 holes of Palmer and Nicklaus golf, a 350-acre nature preserve with miles and miles of trails — and countless opportunities to fish, swim, crab, kayak, paddle board, hike, or simply take in the pristine wonders on every side.

Contact Bay Creek to learn more about Golf and Vacation Getaways.

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1 Clubhouse Way, Cape Charles, VA 23310
(844) 620-2900   BayCreekResort.com

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The Omni Homestead Resort
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(800) 838-1766   (540) 839-1766
TheOmniHomestead.com

Sam Snead once remarked that if he could play only one course, it would be The Cascades at The Omni Homestead Resort in Hot Springs. Recently ranked #25 on Golf Digest’s list of America’s 100 Greatest Public Courses, The Cascades is regarded as one of William S. Flynn’s finest works.

Flynn’s deft architectural skills created a course which fit perfectly within the scenic Allegheny Mountains. A variety of tee shots lead to sloping, tree-lined fairways and the Cascades stream comes into play on several holes.

The Old Course is distinguished as home of the nation’s oldest first tee in continuous use. Updates by Flynn and Donald Ross are showcased in the abundant fairway contouring and smallish greens, making approach shots interesting.

The Highland Course at Primland
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(866) 960-7746   Primland.com

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Primland Resort

The immaculate Highlands Course at Primland, ranked #13 in the US by Golf Digest, is just the beginning of a truly unforgettable experience. Explore luxury accommodations, award-winning cuisine, and endless outdoor adventures across our 12,000 acres.

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Virginia is full of wild places to explore, whether your interest is hiking, wildlife watching, fishing, hunting, or boating. And remember, the Outdoors are Better Together!

Find out more at VirginiaWildlife.gov/explore
Virginia Vibes

All the gear you need to show your Virginia love! Visit virginia.org/shop to get yours.

Use Code VTG21 for 20% off your purchase!
**THE GOOD LORD BIRD**

Based on the eponymous novel by James McBride, and starring Ethan Hawke as 19th-century abolitionist John Brown, “The Good Lord Bird” is told from the point of view of Onion, an enslaved teenager who becomes a member in Brown’s motley family during the time of Bleeding Kansas, eventually participating in the famous 1859 raid on the Army depot at Harpers Ferry. Brown’s raid failed to initiate the slave revolt he intended but is often cited as the instigating event that started the Civil War.

**LOCATIONS:** Richmond, Petersburg, Powhatan, Goochland and more. The cast and crew stayed in Richmond, with favorite locations including the Byrd Theatre and Carytown.

Richmond’s Belle Isle serves as John Brown’s Camp in episodes 101 and 102.

Thomas Jefferson’s real-life childhood home, Tuckahoe Plantation, plays the exterior of Colonel Washington’s Farm in episodes 106 and 107.

Old Towne Petersburg’s Grove Avenue, Main Street and Appomattox Ironworks all make appearances - as Chatham’s Main Street in episode 105 and the parade ground in episode 108.

**THE WALKING DEAD: WORLD BEYOND**

The first generation to come-of-age in the franchise’s post-apocalyptic realm, a group of friends leave an established community of contained safety and comfort to brave dangers - living and undead - on an important quest.

**LOCATIONS:** Hopewell, Richmond, Powhatan, Charles City and more.

Virginia State University plays several university settings, as well as Dr. K’s Apartment.

The infamous plane crash was filmed in downtown Hopewell.

Look for Powhatan State Park in the Horde of Walkers scene.

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden’s Bloemendaal House stars as the University Greenhouse and Antelope Hall.

Want to find more of Virginia in these shows and others? Check out virginia.org/film to learn more.

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**On the Big Screen**

Did You Know? These popular new releases were filmed in Virginia!

**WONDER WOMAN: 1984**

This star-studded sequel finds Wonder Woman transported to 1984, facing off against two all-new foes: Max Lord and The Cheetah. Alexandria’s Landmark Mall was transformed into a bustling 1980s shopping mall in its neon heyday, with many classic storefronts making memorable cameos.

**WHAT TO SPOT**

Keep an eye out for this retro Virginia is for Lovers™ drum!
Welcome to All
BY BRANDON PRESSER
Discover unflagging diversity in these LGBTQ+ hubs.

THOUGH SMALL BUSINESS OWNERSHIP, ACTIVIST ORGANIZATIONS, ANNUAL EVENTS AND RECENT LEGISLATION PROTECTING THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY FROM DISCRIMINATION, VIRGINIA’S SPECTRUM OF RESIDENTS HAS WOVEN RAINBOW COLORS INTO THEIR CITIES’ URBAN FABRIC, NEVER RELIGATING THEMSELVES TO A SINGLE NEIGHBORHOOD OR TOKEN BAR.

alexandria
A walk down King Street immediately rebukes the notion that Alexandria is just a suburb of Washington, D.C. A perfect day in this standalone city starts at the Torpedo Factory Art Center — a repurposed warehouse that’s now home to dozens of diverse artists working in a variety of media and materials — and ends with seafood at Hank’s Oyster Bar plus a nightcap at Captain Gregory’s, tucked past the trick wall of a donut shop.

rICHMONd
In capital-city Richmond, it’s hard to pick the district that’s pulsing with the most creativity along the Parisian-esque boulevards that spiderweb between historic mansions and monuments. Try Carytown to Eat, Play, Love among the row homes that hide some of the best bistros and gift shops — like Mongrel — behind their technicolor facades. Get in on the ground floor before prices appropriately soar; enjoy second-Friday art walks each month then cap off summer nights at Dockside Tiki Bar.

COlONiALBeACh
Colonial Beach is quickly emerging as Virginia’s very own seaside escape with affordable, craftsman-style inns and rentals, and a smattering of waterfront holes that feel more Cheers-for-queens instead of a thumping club scene. Get in on the ground floor before prices appropriately soar; enjoy second-Friday art walks each month then cap off summer nights at Dockside Tiki Bar.

Norfolk
Home to the country’s naval military headquarters, Norfolk is not the most obvious choice for the LGBTQ+ traveler, but every year thousands descend upon the city for Hampton Roads Pridefest, one of the most dynamic LGBTQ+ festivals in the country that honors its maritime roots with a unique boat parade. After, hit up Granby Street which — following a glamorous face lift — has anchored the Ghent neighborhood as the region’s new locus of bohemian cool.

CHARLOTTESViLLe
One of America’s original college towns exudes youthful rebellion from its maroon, Jeffersonian bricks. The Charlottesville Pride Community Network supports causes dear to every letter in the alphabet and bolsters other communities in need as well. Branch-hop your way around the city to check out the LGBTQ+ hangouts, like Marie-Bette Cafe & Bakery, The Pie Chest and Bagel Ladies.

From vibrant small towns to bustling cities, Virginia can’t wait to welcome you! For a full list of LGBTQ+ city guides, visit virginia.org/lgbt.