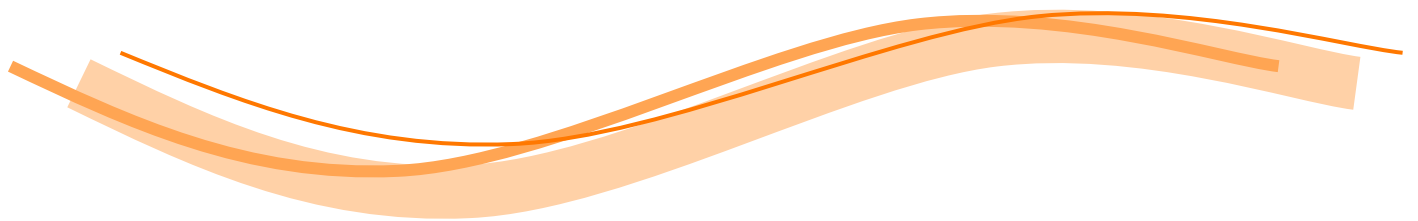




VIRGINIA'S SHENANDOAH





VIRGINIA'S SHENANDOAH

When mentioning Shenandoah National Park, visitors often get that faraway look in their eye, fondly recalling adventures at this scenic mountain jewel rising high atop Virginia's Appalachians. What makes Shenandoah so special? First, consider panoramic views from overlooks scattered on lofty Skyline Drive, which runs 170 kilometres down the length of the 800-square-kilometre sanctuary. Additionally, beyond Skyline Drive lies another Shenandoah, where bears roam the hollows and brook trout ply the tumbling streams. Trailside flowers color the woods. Quartz, granite, and greenstone outcrops jut above the diverse forest, allowing far-flung views of the Blue Ridge and surrounding Shenandoah Valley. It is this beauty near and far that create the unforgettable Shenandoah experience.

Shenandoah - Virginia's first national park - was dedicated July 3, 1936. Cobbled together along the Blue Ridge from Front Royal to Waynesboro, the long narrow preserve divides the proud Shenandoah Valley from the rolling Piedmont to the east. The park contains a wide array of flora and fauna as it rises from a mere 550 feet at its lowest elevation to over 4,049 feet at its highest atop Hawksbill.

Shenandoah National Park has an entrance fee, payable at one of the four major entrance stations. The fee is good for 7 consecutive days, even if you leave the park. The weather tends to be up to 10 degrees cooler than the surrounding lowlands, a good thing in summer. Although supplies are limited in the park, fuel is available 24/7 at Big Meadows Wayside.

Skyline Drive closes during bad weather. If you have weather concerns, call (540) 999-3500, 1, 1 to see if Skyline Drive is open.

The Park has three districts, each with its own characteristics - North, Central and South. Explore each district. Try new places and discover new wonders of Virginia's biggest and oldest national park.

Stop by any Virginia Welcome Center to pick up a park guide with a convenient pull out map of Shenandoah National Park.

From the Blue Ridge Mountains to the countryside, Charlottesville and Albemarle County Virginia are filled with history, horse farms and vineyards. The homes of three great presidents — Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe — remain beautifully preserved. And at its heart, lies the picturesque city of Charlottesville and the University of Virginia, one of the nation's great public universities and a world-renowned architectural masterpiece. But the past is only part of the story. Stroll on the Historic Downtown Mall and you will experience a thriving community: a foodie destination with a myriad of world-class restaurants, over 120 unique

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	shops, various hotels, live music, theatre, art, and sports. Whilst this is a year-round destination, the spring and fall are particularly delightful times to visit. By happy coincidence, these periods are also the time when many Canadian Snowbirds are driving by Charlottesville on the way down to Florida and on their return... So this is a great place to break the journey for a few days. In the summer time, for vacationers at Virginia Beach, the cooler delights of Charlottesville are just a 3-hour drive westwards.
Location	Located midway between New York and Florida, Virginia is the gateway to the South. It is also sometimes classified in the Mid-Atlantic region. The Commonwealth is bordered by Washington, D.C., the USA capital, and Maryland to the north; the Atlantic Ocean to the east; North Carolina and Tennessee to the south; and West Virginia and Kentucky to the west.
Geography	The southwest of Virginia is a beautiful landscape of rolling green ridges that rise from the Atlantic Ocean and its Barrier Islands to the coastal plain and on towards the higher and higher peaks of the Appalachian Mountains.
Name	Named after Elizabeth I, Queen of England 1558-1603
Population	6.9 million
Language	English
Currency	US Dollar (the Canadian Dollar stands at 81 cents US as at Oct 2017)
Tipping	Tipping is expected: 15% where appropriate
Government	Democracy
Documentation	Passports are required
Time zone	Eastern Standard Time
Health	Fine medical facilities - but take travel insurance as medical treatment in the US can be very expensive.
Safety tips	Normal caution whilst travelling

CLIMATE	
General climate	Mild with four distinct seasons
Today's weather	22 degrees Centigrade and sunny in Charlottesville, Virginia as October 7 th 2017
Best time to visit	Spring and fall are especially beautiful – the fall colours in Shenandoah are legendary.

GETTING THERE	
Flying time	Flying time: just 65 minutes from Toronto and 2 hours from Montreal Airports: Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and Washington Dulles International Airport, both located in Virginia, are major

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	<p>gateways. There are several airlines flying directly, including Air Canada, Porter and United.</p>
<p>Cities</p>	<p>All the cities of Northern Virginia – Virginia’s Cultural Region – are close by and of course Washington DC itself is on the doorstep. The two principal gateway cities for Shenandoah are Luray and Charlottesville.</p> <p>Luray Luray is a town in Page County, Virginia, in the Shenandoah Valley in the northern part of the state. It is the county seat with a population of 5,000. The town was started by Willian Staige Marye in 1812, whose family was from Luray, France. Now it has become the northern gateway town for Shenandoah National Park, with a range of accommodation and restaurant options for those planning to spend time in the park. It’s only a 90-minute drive from Washington Dulles Airport. Luray Caverns is located in the western part of Luray and it is the nearest town to the Thornton Gap entrance to Skyline Drive (to the east), as well as serving as the headquarters for Shenandoah National Park. Murder Mountain, located off Old Wagon Road in Luray, has become a destination for ghost hunters. The Luray Downtown Historic District is a Virginia Main Street Community and a registered National Historic District. One of the dominant hills in the Town of Luray is the location of the Grand Old Mimslyn Inn, a 1931 classic Southern mansion style hotel. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt visited the Mimslyn during a short visit in the late 1930’s. The community's proximity to the South Fork of the Shenandoah River provides recreational opportunities connected with boating, white water rafting, and fishing as well as hunting in the fall.</p> <p>Charlottesville The City of Charlottesville population is 43,475 and Albemarle County has just over 100.000 inhabitants. Charlottesville and Albemarle County offer the best of all worlds... Vibrant city life (without the inconveniences of large metropolitans!) and quaint countryside only a short drive away. For those who revel in the urban experience, Charlottesville will astound you with its awesome atmosphere and array of options for entertainment, shopping and dining! Here’s a suggestion for spending two days in town...</p> <p>Day One Start your day by hopping on our free trolley, which will take you to the heart of Thomas Jefferson’s Academic Village, at the University of</p>

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	<p>Virginia. There, you will want to explore the campus, stroll the Lawn and take a guided tour of the historic Rotunda. Time to eat again, so why not have a bite at one of the many restaurants on The Corner. Time for some serious shopping and you are in luck, because Emmet Street (which turns into Seminole Trail or Route 29) features many shopping centres like Barracks Road Shopping Center, The Shops at Stonefield and Fashion Square Mall, to name a few. Shopping sure can build up an appetite so time to head to the Belmont neighbourhood where you can choose from the many unique restaurants, including The Local, Mas and Belmont BBQ. And since the night is still young, you can now take in one of the many live music performances presented at venues such as the nTelos Wireless Pavilion, The Jefferson or the John Paul Jones Arena. Finally, get a good night sleep at one of the many centrally located hotels or inns and dream about your first wonderful day in Charlottesville...</p> <p>Day Two Time for breakfast again and this time, why not try one of the fabulous restaurants on the historic pedestrian Downtown Mall. Then to walk off breakfast, explore the Mall, where you will find an array of unique privately owned boutiques, art galleries and (you guessed it!), eateries (you know you will get hungry again!). To take a break from shopping, why not visit The Glass Palette, where you can create your very own glass art piece or City Clay, where you will be able to spin your own wheel and fabricate a unique pottery item. After lunch at one of the famous downtown eateries, why not go put on some skates and fly on the ice at the Main Street Arena! Afterwards, venture away from the Downtown Mall to the Historic Court Square to see our 200-year old courthouse, which is the only one in the United States that has been used by three early American Presidents at the same time. Then, head west on Market Street, passing Lee Park and the McGuffey Art Center, to West Main Street and its Main Street Market, for some lovely shops and eateries (don't miss Albemarle Baking Company if you're in the mood for a treat!). It's dinner time, and there are so many options to choose from either on West Main Street or in the Downtown Mall area. Time for theatre and the choice is yours. The Paramount welcomes you with its world-class shows, or if you prefer high-quality volunteer theatre, don't miss the productions at Live Arts.</p>
Distances	Virginia is a 12 hour drive south of Montreal and Toronto
Trains	Virginia Railway Express www.vre.org Amtrak www.amtrak.com
Driving	Virginia's Skyline Drive is a National Scenic Byway that runs 170 kms along the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains starting in the north of the

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	<p>Shenandoah Valley at Front Royal to Waynesboro, where it meets the Blue Ridge Parkway. Skyline Drive is Shenandoah National Park's linear conduit, with 75 overlooks connecting travellers to all the major visitor centers, campgrounds, lodges, picnic areas and most trailheads. Concrete posts numbered every mile keep you apprised of your whereabouts. The Drive is a worthy destination in its own right. Fall is the most popular time to travel along Skyline Drive, with its colourful foliage from late September to mid-November. But spring offers the most colourful wildflowers along the drive, as well as blooming azaleas and mountain laurel.</p>
Buses	Greyhound www.greyhound.com
Passes	Passes are available for many of the historical sites – see www.virginia.org for details

ACCOMMODATION TYPES	<p>There is every type of accommodation available in and around Shenandoah from pretty B & B's to motels to five star hotels. I can recommend the following from my recent trip to the region:</p> <p>Mimslyn Inn, Luray Experience vintage southern hospitality at the Mimslyn Inn. This member of Historic Hotels of America is your host for the evening. The classic charm of this 1931 establishment first appears as you are greeted by a circular drive leading to a portico supported by high columns. Enter the gracious lobby, complete with winding staircase, and be transported back to the antebellum era of the Old South. Known throughout the Shenandoah Valley for the elegant atmosphere, personalized service, and picturesque surroundings, the historic setting features expansive lawns peppered with gardens, oversized patios, landscaped terraces, and tasteful stonework. 401 W. Main Street, Luray, VA 22835 http://mimslyninn.com/ Tel 540-743-5105</p> <p>Hotel Laurance, Luray A newly renovated, 12-room boutique hotel is a luxury property located in the downtown historic district of Luray. Steeped in rich history, it was built in 1830 as a mercantile establishment and converted in 1883 to the Hotel Laurance, The Hotel was a favorite destination for early travellers exploring Luray Caverns and looking to experience the Shenandoah Valley. 2 South Court Street, Luray, VA 22835 http://www.hotellaurance.com/ 540-742-7060</p> <p>Skyland, Shenandoah NP Skyland, first called Stony Man Camp, was begun in 1888 by George</p>
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	<p>Freeman Pollock, Jr. Influential in establishing Shenandoah as a national park, Pollock chose the perfect spot for his summer retreat. At 3,680 feet, the highest point on the Skyline Drive, he had breathtaking views of the Shenandoah Valley. Today Skyland offers guests 178 rooms ranging from rustic cabins to cozy suites and newly renovated rooms with spectacular valley and mountain vistas. Skyland also offers pet friendly rooms. The Pollock Dining Room features regional cuisine and free family-friendly entertainment is scheduled nightly in the Mountain Taproom.</p> <p>Milepost 41.7 or 42.5 on Skyline Drive Luray, VA 22835 http://www.goshenandoah.com/lodging/skyland tel 877-847-1919</p> <p>Keswick Hall, Charlottesville History and spectacular landscapes come together in Charlottesville, at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Celebrated landmarks, including Thomas Jefferson's Monticello and the University of Virginia, are clustered here within the East Coast's most beautiful scenery. The region is also home to over 25 wineries, breweries, and cideries. This is the setting for the award-winning Keswick Hall, an impressive 48-room mansion nestled on 600 acres, and the prestigious Keswick Golf Club, site of Pete Dye's award-winning Full Cry golf course. The resort is perfect for a destination wedding, corporate gathering, or retreat; or a getaway filled with relaxation, gracious hospitality, and fresh country air.</p> <p>Keswick Hall & Golf Club, 701 Club Drive, Keswick, Virginia 22947 http://www.keswick.com/ Reservations: 888-778-2565</p>
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LIFESTYLE GROUPS	
Kids	All the attractions here have plenty of hands-on kid's activities to keep the little ones amused. The hotels too are very child friendly, many with pools and supervised child minding facilities.
Teens	Most teens are interested in the many outdoors activities on offer in this part of Virginia.
Romance	"Virginia is for lovers"! says it all...
Honeymoons & Weddings	Wonderful resorts and settings for weddings and honeymoons abound in Virginia. Depending upon the location of your hotel, you can watch the sun rise or set over the mountains and valleys of Shenandoah!
Zoomers	<p>The slower pace of life in the countryside and the fascinating historical sights make this a great state to visit for Zoomer travel. Of course the cuisine and the wineries don't hurt either!</p> <p>This is a perfect destination for Snowbirds making their way to and from the southern US. Plan to stay in the area for a few days to break the journey and explore the many pleasure of Charlottesville.</p>

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	<p>Started in 2011, The Monticello Artisan Trail is a connected network of talented artisans strewn throughout the beautiful landscapes of this area. On the trail, you'll find the local artisans studio and retail galleries, events and workshops related to their craft, as well as information about area farmers - the longest-standing business of agriculture has made some 21st century updates to better welcome you to their homes, farms, and doors through a fusion where agriculture meets tourism.</p> <p>Artisans Studio Tour - November</p>
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<p>UNIQUES</p>	<p>Luray Caverns Discover Eastern America's largest and most popular caverns. Luray Caverns, a U.S. Natural Landmark, is noted for the profuse variety of formations and unsurpassed natural colour. From well-lighted, paved walkways explore cathedral-sized rooms with ceilings 10 stories high, filled with towering stone columns and crystal-clear pools. Hear the haunting sounds of the world's only Stalacpipe Organ. Also check out the Museum. Address: 970 US HWY 211 West, Luray, VA 22835 www.LurayCaverns.com</p> <p>The Luray Valley Museum is included in the Luray Caverns general admission. Step back in time and discover the rich history of the Shenandoah Valley at the Luray Valley Museum. Your journey begins at the log Stonyman building which houses historic items from pre-contact Native peoples to life in the bustling 1920s. Continue your exploration across a seven-acre recreation of a small 19th century farming community. Knock on the door of the 1835 home of the county's first Delegate to the Virginia General Assembly. Peek into the Hamburg Regular School, the area's first school for African American children. Read the actual signatures of Union and Confederate soldiers scrawled into the walls of the Elk Run Dunkard Church.</p>
<p>Surprising</p>	<p>Between penning the Declaration of Independence and curriculum at The University of Virginia, Jefferson also wrote, "Not less than two hours a day should be devoted to exercise...health is the first requisite to morality." Over 200 years later, Charlottesville still follows his advice.</p> <p>Charlottesville has a strong community of fitness and health minded individuals. In fact, Men's Journal named Charlottesville the "Healthiest Place to Live in America." There are health and nutrition stores, yoga studios, gyms, fields, public facilities and other healthy hot-spots in Charlottesville.</p>
<p>History</p>	<p>Colonial Era: The Virginia Company sailed from England to try and establish the first permanent English colony in the New World. Their instructions were to settle Virginia, find gold and a water route to the Orient. The explorers landed on Jamestown Island on the banks of the</p>

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	<p>James River on May 14, 1607.</p> <p>Virginia is the site of the first permanent English-speaking settlement in North America at Jamestown in 1607. Here, the English met the Powhatans, a chiefdom of Algonquian Indians who lived in central and eastern Virginia. The New World's first English women and Africans came to Jamestown in 1619, the year and place where the Western Hemisphere's first representative legislature met.</p> <p>Virginia was the largest, most populous and prosperous of the original 13 colonies.</p> <p>Virginia leaders including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, George Mason and Patrick Henry, played a major role in the Revolutionary War-era events and in the writing of documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.</p> <p>At Yorktown on Oct. 19, 1781, British forces under General Charles Cornwallis surrendered to the combined French and American forces serving under the command of General George Washington.</p> <p>Virginia is called the Mother of States & Mother of Presidents: Eight states were formed in whole or in part from Virginia, including Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky and Pennsylvania. Virginia has produced more U.S. presidents than any other state: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, Zachary Taylor and Woodrow Wilson.</p> <p>More major battles of the American Civil War were fought in Virginia from 1861 through 1865 than in any other state. Today, one-third of America's most important Civil War battlefields are in Virginia, and most are open to the public.</p>
<p>Books</p>	<p>Lonely Planet's USA Guide is my go-to guide for all US destinations.</p> <p>Charlottesville by Eryn S Brennan, Margaret Maliszewski</p> <p>Growing side by side with Jefferson's University of Virginia, Charlottesville developed into a bustling community whose businesses, families, and celebrations were well documented in photographs beginning in the 1880s. The collection of images reproduced in Images of America: Charlottesville tells the story of the creation, growth, hardship, transformation, and success of a city beloved by residents and visitors alike.</p>
<p>1000 Places to see before you die in Virginia</p>	<p>Shenandoah Valley – between the Allegheny Mountains and the Blue Ridge Mountains</p> <p>Monticello – home of Thomas Jefferson</p> <p>Colonial Williamsburg – open-air living history museum recreating 1750-1775 end of colonial era</p> <p>The Inn at Little Washington</p> <p>The Homestead Hotel</p>

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<p>Must Sees</p>	<p>There are two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the grounds of Jefferson's home, Monticello, and the University of Virginia.</p> <p>Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), author of the American Declaration of Independence and third president of the United States, was also a talented architect of neoclassical buildings. He designed Monticello (1769–1809), his plantation home, and his ideal 'academical village' (1817–26), which is still the heart of the University of Virginia. Jefferson's use of an architectural vocabulary based upon classical antiquity symbolizes both the aspirations of the new American republic as the inheritor of European tradition and the cultural experimentation that could be expected as the country matured.</p>
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<p>SPORTS ACTIVITIES</p>	
<p>Golf</p>	<p>The Old Dominion has some of the country's best classic designs and modern layouts. It has one of the world's great mountain courses (the Cascades Course at The Omni Homestead Resort) and one of the world's great golf destinations (Williamsburg, ranked No. 24 in the world by Golf Digest). Most of the great architects have worked a plot or two of Virginia soil.</p> <p>You can find the modern wonder of the Pete Dye designed Full Cry at Keswick Hall and River Course at Kingsmill Resort, or the classic touch of Robert Trent Jones at the GoldenHorseshoe Golf Club. Golf is played in Virginia's great metropolises, its wonderfully quaint small towns and its scenic rural areas. Wherever you are in the Old Dominion, it's a sure bet you're just a few kilometres from a great golf experience. Plus, there is plenty to do beyond the course.</p> <p>All of this lays the framework for the most diverse menu of golf courses any state on the East Coast offers. No state can match Virginia for quality and diversity, and one needs to look no further than the top of the list of the state's 220 public courses. The Highlands Course at Primland Resort and the Cascades Course at The Homestead are two of the nation's finest mountain courses. The Jack Nicklaus Course and Arnold Palmer Course at Bay Creek Resort are two magnificent sea level courses. The Golden Horseshoe Golf Club's classic Gold Course in Williamsburg is one of the nation's finest resort courses. Laurel Hill in Lorton is one of the nation's best municipal courses. Golf magazines have ranked Williamsburg and the Virginia mountains among the 50 best golf destinations in the world.</p>
<p>Fishing</p>	<p>Virginia offers excellent, extremely diverse freshwater angling opportunities. Over 176,000 acres of public lakes and 50,000 kms of fishable streams provide every freshwater angler something: tidal river for largemouth bass, striped bass, blue catfish and shad; unsurpassed</p>

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	<p>float fishing smallmouth bass rivers spread across the state; expansive reservoirs renowned for largemouth bass, striped bass, and crappie; numerous "close-to-home" small, family fishing lakes and ponds with great chances to land bass, sunfish, and channel catfish; and phenomenal stocked and wild trout fishing in the Blue Ridge and Allegheny mountains.</p>
<p>Horse riding</p>	<p>There is great trail riding in Virginia's many parks. Here is one recommendation: Fairhunt Farm 348 Irish Road, Scottsville, VA 24590 Phone: (434) 960-8830 Website: http://www.fairhunt.com/ Fairhunt Farm in Scottsville Virginia; equine lessons for riders of all ages. Set in a lovely area; acres of trails; fields for the experienced rider; sand arena for beginner lessons or jumping. Tackroom heated/AC. Fairhunt Farm is also a member of Farmington Hunt Club and many hunt fixtures are nearby.</p>
<p>Hiking</p>	<p>Virginia is a hiker's paradise - whether it's a walk through coastal marshes or a rugged jaunt along the famed Appalachian Trail, Virginia has a footpath for everyone. Trails for all abilities offer stunning views, flowing cascades, rhododendron and large hemlock trees. Shenandoah National Park is of course superb for trails of all kinds, from multi day hikes to ten minute saunters off the road. More details are at www.Virginia.org/outdoors</p> <p>If you love hiking, camping and the great outdoors, bring your love to Charlottesville and Albemarle County, where outdoor enthusiasts can adventure at every altitude and every speed! By land there's hiking, disc golf, and horseback riding, and if you are looking for something a little splashier, whet your appetite for adventure with tubing, canoeing, kayaking and rafting. There are even hot air ballooning, high ropes courses and skydiving if you prefer your adventures sky-high.</p> <p>Many of the area's outdoor excursions are led by local experts and experienced survivalists, but the area offers acres and acres of land and water for solo exploration, whether along the miles of the Rivanna Trail, the 200kms of the Appalachian Trail in nearby Shenandoah National Park or across miles of wilderness areas jointly maintained by Charlottesville and Albemarle County, including the Ragged Mountain and Ivy Creek natural areas.</p> <p>Some of the historical landmarks such as Monticello and Montpelier also have wonderful, scenic trails to explore.</p>
<p>Cycling</p>	<p>Virginia is a destination with endless opportunities for both mountain bikers and road cyclists. From the Alleghenies to the Blue Ridge and</p>

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	<p>Shenandoah Valley, Virginia is home to some of the best trails in the country for mountain biking action, and has been rated the best state in country to pedal off-road by the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA). Die-hard road cyclists will also find what they want in Virginia, with everything from roads filled with challenging climbs through mountainous terrain to moderate trails along calm coastal flatlands.</p>
<p>Watersports</p>	<p>Shenandoah and the countryside around offers watersports of all kinds, from Canoeing to rafting.</p> <p>Shenandoah River Outfitters Scenic self-guided trips on the legendary Shenandoah River. With canoes, kayaks, rafts and tube rentals, SRO is one of the largest outfitters in the mid-Atlantic region with over 45 years of river activities. A five kilometre, 90 minute adventure provides spectacular mountain views, gentle rapids and great opportunities for bird and wildlife enthusiasts. River log cabins and tent camping are also available. www.shenandoah-river.com</p> <p>Eastern Shore Splendour Paddling enthusiasts will love will love the Eastern Shore's Virginia Seaside Water Trail. The 170 kms trail is a series of day use paddling routes that run between the Virginia National Wildlife Refuge at Cape Charles and Chincoteague Island. With 37 accessible routes ready for boaters of all abilities, the trail also includes additional segments that move through Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and connect to Assateague National Seashore and the Assateague Canoe Trail.</p>

<p>CULTURE</p>	
<p>Arts</p>	<p>Charlottesville is home to a historic and established arts scene. After all, it was Georgia O'Keeffe who had quit painting at age 21 before she had moved to Charlottesville. A few University of Virginia art classes later, and she was on her way to becoming one of America's most revered artists. Currently, Charlottesville is home to dozens of art galleries and museums that highlight the works of internationally and locally renowned artists.</p>
<p>Music</p>	<p>Charlottesville has an arts & culture scene that rivals that of any metropolis in the country. Just look at some of the performers who have swung by recently; Sheryl Crow, Lady Gaga, U2, Jay-Z, Kenny Chesney, Elton John, Jimmy Buffet, Taylor Swift and Bruce Springsteen (twice). With all those big names, it's easy to forget Dave Matthews created his band while bartending on Downtown Mall and regularly plays sold out shows in Charlottesville. The area continues to serve as an incubator for the next big artist to</p>

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	<p>emerge from its thriving local scene, and concert venues of all sizes support the diversity of performers. From the 15,000+ seat John Paul Jones Arena, to the historic Paramount Theater and intimate, one-of-a-kind establishments like The Southern, Charlottesville provides a range of venues that attract both the world's biggest performers and small emerging artists.</p>
Film	<p>The Virginia Film Festival is more than a four day festival of films. We engage the local community through school screenings, interactive workshops, filmmaking competitions, and more. The 30th Annual Virginia Film Festival will be held in November 2017. http://virginiafilmfestival.org</p>
Museums	<p>The Virginia Discovery Museum, on the Downtown Mall in Charlottesville, has a variety of child and family-oriented exhibits. Closed Monday, open until 5pm other days. Admission is \$4 for all ages.</p>
Festivals	<p>Year round, Charlottesville hosts an assortment of festivals and events that are enjoyable for all types and ages. Morgan Freeman, Sandra Bullock, Anthony Hopkins and thousands of movie buffs have all attended the annual Virginia Film Festival. The Virginia Festival of the Book brings together writers and readers every year in March to celebrate literature. Twice a year, people flock into Albemarle County to witness a premier steeplechase event called the Foxfield Races. And whether you've got a green thumb or can just barely keep a cactus alive, Historic Garden Week celebrates spring blooms at their finest. There is always something going on in Charlottesville! Here are some of the event and festivals over the next few months:</p> <p>September First Fridays Fridays After Five Charlottesville City Market Foxfield Races Charlottesville Chamber Music Festival Monticello Heritage Harvest Festival Women's 4-miler U.Va. Football Top of the Hops Gran Fondo Cycling Race</p> <p>October First Fridays Charlottesville City Market Top of the Hops International Food Festival</p>

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	<p>Apple Harvest Celebrations Crozet Arts & Crafts Festival Scenic Leaf Drives VNB Tennis Tournament U.Va. Football Virginia Wine Month</p> <p>November Charlottesville City Market Apple Harvest Celebrations Virginia Film Festival Jefferson's Thanksgiving Ball & Holiday Show Downtown for the Holidays Montpelier Hunt Races Scenic Leaf Drives Cut your own Christmas tree/Ash-lawn Highland U.Va. Football & Basketball Virginia Cider Week</p> <p>December Charlottesville City Market First Night Virginia Downtown for the Holidays Sounds of the Season A Holiday Concert The McGuffey Holiday Art Show Three Bridges Marathon & Half Marathon U.Va. Basketball U.Va.'s Annual Lighting of the Lawn</p>
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ATTRACTIONS	
Wildlife	<p>Shenandoah National Park serves as a refuge for many species of animals otherwise pressured by human activities, development and other land uses. There are over 190 resident and transient bird species, over 50 species of mammals, over 50 reptile and amphibian species, and over 35 fish species found in the park. Only incomplete records of insects, spiders, and other invertebrates are available so the total number of different species of these groups is unknown. A handful of these species are large and conspicuous and therefore easily found by visitors. The park provides boundless opportunities for the public to search for and discover the thousands of other park residents. Virtually all park visitors see some mammals, such as white-tailed deer and gray squirrels. Others, like the big brown bat, striped and spotted</p>

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	<p>skunks are more elusive, remaining largely out of sight until darkness falls. Black bears and bobcats, though sometimes active during the day, seem to remain hidden deep in the forest. The smallest mammals (moles, voles, and shrews) found in the park are rarely seen because they spend much of their lives underground or hidden under leaves and low growing plants. Careful observation should bring rewards in finding many of the wild inhabitants of the park.</p> <p>Just as the number and distribution of mammals varies somewhat from year to year, the number of species present in the park changes over time. For example, coyotes, an adaptable predator, have recently expanded their range in Virginia and can now be found throughout the park.</p>
<p>Parks</p>	<p>Virginia State Parks are consistently rated the best in the USA and have been the backdrop for perfect family vacations for more than 75 years. Visitors will find that Virginia's 35 state parks are as diverse as the state itself, with parks found along the Atlantic Ocean and Chesapeake Bay, on historic sites, in the Blue Ridge Mountains or just outside of major cities. Here are just a couple in the area:</p> <p>Shenandoah National Park 3655 U.S. Highway 211 East, Luray, VA 22835-9036 Website: https://www.nps.gov/shen/index.htm</p> <p>Shenandoah National Park lies astride a beautiful section of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Shenandoah River flows through the valley to the west, with Massanutten Mountain, 70kms long, standing between the river's north and south forks. The rolling Piedmont country lies to the east of the park.</p> <p>Skyline Drive, a 200km road that winds along the crest of the mountains through the length of the park, provides vistas of the spectacular landscape to east and west.</p> <p>The park holds nearly a thousand kilometers of trails, including nearly 200kms of the Appalachian Trail. Trails may follow a ridge crest, or they may lead to high places with panoramic views or to waterfalls in deep canyons. Many animals, including deer, black bears, and wild turkeys, flourish among the rich growth of an oak-hickory forest. In season, bushes and wildflowers bloom along the Drive and trails and fill the open spaces. Apple trees, stone foundations, and cemeteries are reminders of the families who once called this place home.</p> <p>Camping, horseback riding, cottages, and lodging are available at different locations along the drive.</p>
<p>Gardens</p>	<p>High above Charlottesville at his Monticello home, Thomas Jefferson was known as an avid gardener. The former President once proclaimed, "no occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of the garden." Over 200 years later,</p>

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	<p>Jefferson's dedication towards gardening is deeply rooted within Charlottesville-Albemarle.</p> <p>Jefferson's Pavilion Gardens at the University of Virginia are open and available to visitors at times. Special tours combining public and private gardens take place during April's Historic Garden Week. In addition, three nearby sites - Monticello, Ash Lawn-Highland and Montpelier - offer gardens and groves of presidential stature.</p>
<p>Historical Sites</p>	<p>Monticello, the Rotunda and the grounds of the University of Virginia - designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites - draw both U.S. and international visitors intrigued by how the area helped shape and was shaped by the politics and personalities of the country's founding fathers.</p> <p>Not surprisingly, both sites bear the touch of one of world's most important historical figures, Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States and author of the Declaration of Independence. Hundreds of thousands of visitors each year tour Monticello, the mountaintop home he planned and designed in painstaking details and continued to evolve throughout his life.</p> <p>Jefferson's most important legacy, however, lies in the heart of Charlottesville. One for which the architecture is merely the outer trappings to underlying ideals: The Rotunda and adjoining Pavilions that form The Lawn at the University of Virginia founded what is today one of the top universities in the nation, fulfilling Jefferson's vision of creating a "bulwark of the human mind in this hemisphere."</p> <p>While these sites form a triple crown for history lovers, the region offers much more for anyone fascinated by glimpses of the challenges, culture and quirks of colonial life, including a free walking tour of historic downtown.</p> <p>Ash Lawn-Highland, the nearby residence of the fifth U.S. president, James Monroe, offers a unique perspective on the working farm and estate that friend, neighbour and fellow President Jefferson too understood. A short 30 minute drive from Charlottesville is Montpelier, the beautiful home of James Madison.</p>

<p>OTHER ACTIVITIES</p>	
<p>Beaches</p>	<p>Framed by both ocean and bayside beaches, Virginia's Coastal Virginia - Eastern Shore accommodates every beach vacationer. With the Bay's gentle waters, nature trails and more than 142 campsites as well as value hotels, this is ideal for families with small children. And for couples, boutique inns and B&Bs offer romantic and adventure getaway weekends.</p> <p>Virginia's Eastern Shore — home to three notable beaches — is connected to the mainland via the 30 kms Chesapeake Bay</p>

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	<p>Bridge-Tunnel, which snakes between the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay.</p> <p>Just north-west of the Bridge-Tunnel, Kiptopeke State Park features a 24-hour accessible fishing pier, picnic areas, hiking trails, playground and a guarded swimming beach. Known for its bird watching, Kiptopeke State Park presents the Eastern Shore Birding Festival every October. Travel a few minutes north to the unique shops and beautiful bayside community of Cape Charles. See grand, historic B&Bs, golf and marina resorts and a beach right downtown.</p> <p>Sister islands of Assateague and Chincoteague are further north in Accomack County. From the island town of Chincoteague Island, a short causeway leads into the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and to its Atlantic Ocean beach at Assateague Island National Seashore. Chincoteague Island has been given a Traveler's Choice award by TripAdvisor as one of America's Top Islands.</p> <p>The Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge provides environmental education and recreational opportunities such as biking, fishing, hunting, wildlife observation, interpretation, and wildlife photography. It includes more than 14,000 acres of beach, dunes, marsh, and maritime forest. Assateague Island National Seashore, stretching over 60 kms from Virginia into Maryland is one of the world's best beaches for communing with nature. The only developed area on the beach is the Interpretive Center. Be on the lookout for its most famous residents — the wild ponies that gained worldwide fame in <i>Misty of Chincoteague</i>, a book written by Marguerite Henry in 1947.</p> <p>Another highlight of the island is the Assateague Lighthouse, where you can learn about the "Legacy of the Lighthouse" program offered by the Refuge staff.</p> <p>The most popular world-renown event is the annual Pony Swim & Auction, where saltwater cowboys round up the wild ponies and swim across the channel. They are then herded through town to the fairgrounds, where they are auctioned off the next day.</p>
<p>Shopping</p>	<p>The Shenandoah region is rich in arts and crafts shopping opportunities as well as many rural antique shops.</p> <p>Like many towns tucked into the rural countryside, the greater Charlottesville area offers its share of antiques, quilts, crafts and Americana, as well as shopping on a much grander scale too.</p> <p>The Barracks Road Shopping Center, for example, offers more than 80 distinctive shops, boutiques and restaurants offering everything from original art and upscale clothing to souvenir gifts and gadgets for hearth and home, all linked with walkways dotted with fountains and outdoor dining for a perfect morning or afternoon.</p>

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	<p>The nearby and centrally located Seminole Square Shopping Center is home to over 45 unique stores where you can find anything from jewelry to clothes to bicycles and is easily accessible on Route 29N.</p> <p>On the east end of town lies the Pantops Shopping Center, offering a variety of stores from electronics vendors, home décor shops and everything in between.</p> <p>The Downtown Mall packs more than 120 shops into a beautiful stretch of tree-spanned pedestrian-only brick walkways along East Main Street, while the nearby Warehouse Districts offers shopping a little further from the beaten path, with specialty shops offering arts, imports and one-of-a-kind fashions.</p> <p>West Main and The Corner complete Charlottesville's mix of independent retailers, while at the other end of the spectrum, the Fashion Square Mall just off Route 29 at Rio Road offers some 100 familiar shops for clothes, beauty and fragrances, gifts, toys, shoes and more.</p>
Markets	<p>Virginia is host to many wonderful curiosity and collectible shops, from thrift stores, antique shops and auctions where you can talk to appraisers, vendors and fellow collectors.</p> <p>Charlottesville: The producers-only City Market at the corner of Water and First Streets has brought a different kind of shopping to Charlottesville every Saturday morning for more than four decades, with vendors selling handcrafted ceramics, living herbs, artisanal cheeses, wines from area vineyards, fresh fruits and vegetables, unique jewelry and gifts. From Thanksgiving to Christmas, the Market moves to the Downtown Mall Fridays and Saturdays, lasting until 5 p.m.</p>
Nightlife	<p>Nightlife in Virginia includes ballroom dancing, theatre, concerts as well as line dancing, neighborhood pubs and karaoke.</p> <p>The excitement of a day in Charlottesville doesn't have to end with a beautiful sunset on the Blue Ridge Mountains.</p> <p>From concert halls that put on unforgettable shows to dance clubs that keep your feet moving into tomorrow, Charlottesville has exciting and inviting nightlife covered. The Charlottesville area is peppered with distinct bars and clubs that cater to all ages and interests. Whether you're looking for "chill" or "upbeat" or revisiting the college days, it's easy to find a watering hole to fit your scene. Area breweries, wineries and restaurants also provide great outlets to keeping the good times rolling.</p>

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<p>CUISINE</p>	<p>Gearharts Fine Chocolates 243-B Ridge-McIntire Rd., Charlottesville, VA 22903 Phone: (434) 972-9100 Website: http://www.gearhartschocolates.com/</p> <p>Gearharts Fine Chocolates is an artisan chocolate shop and dessert cafe in historic downtown Charlottesville. Gearharts features a display production kitchen, private event space, coffees, wines and beer. At a time when ingredients like cardamom, chilis and fresh herbs simply weren't found in American chocolate, a globetrotting chef dared to dream of an artisanal chocolate shop in the South. Tim Gearhart began his journey to chocolatier by wandering the world through its kitchens. He toured the Far East as a Marine Corps cook, trained in pastry at the Culinary Institute of America, and then honed his craft everywhere from an English castle to a Western dude ranch. Inspired by his travels and eager to craft chocolates that reflected them, he returned home to Virginia to set up shop amid Charlottesville's emerging food scene. Emboldened by the confidence of a fellow chef and former boss, Tim launched Gearharts Fine Chocolates with Bill Hamilton in 2001. Outfitted with a small office kitchenette, and armed with only two forks and a bowl, Tim hand-dipped about 700 pieces of chocolate a day during that first holiday season. While the need to create more than 13,000 chocolates a day has since forced the mechanics to change, the recipes and handcrafted nature have remained. Fusing their own blend of the world's finest chocolate with local sweet cream and pure butter, they continue to craft their original 16-piece signature line.</p>
<p>Food</p>	<p>The Commonwealth of Virginia – already well known as a top wine travel destination - is now rapidly becoming well known for its varied and excellent cuisine as well.</p> <p>Orchards & Farms The mild climate and rich soil of Charlottesville and Albemarle County allows for the growth of abundant farms and orchards. Agriculture enthusiasts from all over are drawn into Central Virginia from the first pink and white dogwood blossoms of the year through to the last sweet, crisp apples harvested in the fall. Area farms offer a chance to take in the scenic beauty of Albemarle County, while getting a firsthand look at the inner workings of agriculture. Many of the farms sell their products directly on site. Others offer tours that take you around the property and even let you test your hand in milking a cow. For foodies, families and anyone looking for a less bovine encounter, family-run orchards around Charlottesville invite people to make memories among rows of strawberries, peaches, nectarines, cherries,</p>

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	<p>apples and pumpkins throughout the year. In addition to the sweetness of fresh-picked fruit, Albemarle County's orchards offer ciders, preserves, candied fruit and other farm-fresh treats.</p>
<p>Wine</p>	<p>Vineyards, Breweries & Cideries</p> <p>Thomas Jefferson could be called the father of wine and wineries in Virginia, the first to take winemaking from the province of backyard hobbyists with a few vines to acres of vineyards and a focus on refining exceptional varietals.</p> <p>Winemaking wouldn't hit its stride in Albemarle County for two centuries, in the mid-1970s. But today, after more than 35 years of winemakers intensively learning the land, light and distinct characters of generations of vines, wines from the Monticello American Viticultural Area (named for Jefferson's home) are considered among the best produced anywhere in the Eastern United States.</p> <p>Part of that award-winning excellence comes from the topography. All around Charlottesville, time and the elements have eroded ancient mountains down to rolling hills that yield wines of incredible complexity as slight variations in altitude and aspect, soil and light, create subtle differences in grapes from vine to vine. The Terroir is perfect!</p> <p>The result is a portfolio of wines that balance the best of Old and New World styles - bright, medium-bodied wines that pair as well with foods as they can be enjoyed on their own, all produced by small, family-run wineries that are passionate about what they do and passionate about sharing it. Here is just one example:</p> <p>Trump Winery 3550 Blenheim Rd, Charlottesville, VA 22902 Phone: (434) 984-4855 Website: http://www.trumpwinery.com/ Named Top 10 Best Wine Travel Destinations in the world, there are plenty of reasons to escape to Virginia Wine country. Situated on 1,300 acres of breathtaking scenery, Trump Winery is Virginia's largest vineyard and its located along the Monticello Wine Trail. Just minutes from downtown Charlottesville and historic sites Monticello and Ash Lawn-Highland, Trump Winery is producing sparkling, white and red wines that compete with the best wines from around the world. The charming tasting room and adjacent outdoor terraces are the perfect setting to experience Virginia wine country. Sample their fantastic selection of award-winning wines, savor our seasonal cuisine, and experience the breathtaking views of the vineyards. Tasting Room Hours: Open year round 11am-5pm daily.</p> <p>But grapes aren't the only vines winning a following in Charlottesville. Hop vines thrive in the climate (in fact, Virginia was once known as the</p>

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	<p>hop capital of the world), and Albemarle County is home to small-batch breweries making handcrafted ales and lagers as well as hard ciders from the region's orchards.</p> <p>A handful of these award-winning brew houses form a beer-lovers dream tour known as the Brew Ridge Trail (an homage to the Blue Ridge Mountains). The trail welcomes visitors in causal comfort, often with live music and simple but creative kitchen fare to complement the art, science and inventive spirit of this region's master brewers.</p> <p>Charlottesville has four breweries within its city limits, South Street Brewery, Champion Brewing Company, Three Notch'd Brewing Company, and C'ville-ian Brewing Company. Starr Hill Brewery, was originally based in Charlottesville, and is today located in Crozet, Virginia, 24kms west of the city.</p>
<p>Restaurants</p>	<p>Here are a few of my personal recommendations in the Shenandoah region of Virginia...</p> <p>Gathering Grounds Patisserie and Café, Luray 24 East Main Street, downtown Luray This calm, quirky cafe & espresso bar, a local favorite, features include a wide variety of house-baked pastries, pies, sandwiches & coffee drinks.</p> <p>Fossett's at Keswick Hall, Charlottesville For an authentic al fresco dining experience like no other, look no further than Keswick Hall's award-winning restaurant, Fossett's. Dine indoors and enjoy spectacular panoramic views of the estate's pristine landscape and the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains beyond through floor-to-ceiling windows, or opt for unforgettable evening under the stars with a table on their romantic terrace.</p> <p>Charlottesville In its own quiet way, Charlottesville offers a culinary destination to make any foodie salivate and restaurants that can go plate-to-plate with any city across the country. With an appetite for excellence, the entrepreneurial restaurateurs of Charlottesville operate more than 100 independent restaurants, cafes, bistros, grills and pubs. These are people who are passionate about good food and great dining who make the most of abundant farming and agriculture in the area. The area hasn't adopted a "farm-to-table" approach - here, it's just a way of life. The result is a dazzling array of menus that draw on the freshest foods</p>

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	<p>of the region: organic produce, handmade cheeses, free-range poultry and grass-fed beef, all expertly prepared with a nod to regional traditions plus flavour influences from around the world. French? Japanese? Southwestern? Indian? Thai? You'll find it all alongside pulled pork, biscuits and black-eyed peas and traditional Virginia fare. Much of the dining is casual, with most places offering a mix of indoor and outdoor seating to make the most of the mild climate. But locals offer atmosphere for any occasion, from formal fine dining to street food and treats found strolling the Saturday morning City Market, from stews made on-site to fresh crepes and melt-in-your-mouth donuts hot out of the oil.</p> <p>Last but not least, food lovers take note: some of Albemarle County's best eats aren't found in restaurants at all. Visitors delight in seeking out the "hidden kitchens" of Albemarle County, meandering scenic back roads and stopping off at country stores and farm stands where flavour and freshness can't be beat.</p> <p>Virginia's non-profit Local Food Hub also offers an online directory of where to find fresh, locally grown foods: http://www.localfoodhub.org/find-our-food/</p>
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MORE INFO	
Brochures	Call 1-800-671-4195 for a range of brochures on Virginia
Website	<p>Virginia website: www.virginia.org</p> <p>Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/VirginialsForLovers</p> <p>Pinterest: https://www.pinterest.com/visitvirginia/</p> <p>Twitter: https://twitter.com/visitvirginia</p> <p>You Tube: https://www.youtube.com/user/VisitVirginia</p> <p>For Charlottesville: Charlottesville Downtown Visitors Center 610 East Main Street, Charlottesville, VA 22902 Phone: (434) 293-6789 The Downtown Visitors Center sits on the east end of the Historic Downtown Mall and is open 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily to assist visitors during their stay in Charlottesville and Albemarle.</p> <p>Website: https://www.visitcharlottesville.org/</p> <p>Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/charlottesvillevirginia/</p> <p>Twitter: https://twitter.com/visitcville/</p>

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PERSONAL EXPERIENCES	I toured Virginia's Shenandoah region in September 2017 and you can read my Travel Blog of my journey here: http://www.chrisrobsontravelshow.ca/Blog.aspx I have also created a Pinterest board of images from my trip : http://www.pinterest.com/TravelShow
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