



Virginia, Maryland and Washington, DC Three Regions, Multiple Personalities, Thousands of Possibilities

Virginia

The State of Virginia has a rich vein of history which has been pulsing for thousands of years, from ancient Indian cultures through to the founding of the first British Colony in the New World 400 years ago, the American War of Independence and the American Civil War.

Virginia didn't stop there – it became the retreat of presidents, the birthplace of country music and gained a place in popular culture with the success of TV series “The Waltons”, tracing the life and times of a Virginian mountain family during the years of the Great Depression.

But the State is not stuck in a time warp: its vibrant modern cities, beach resorts, mountain retreats, theme parks, burgeoning wine industry and world class hotels make Virginia the perfect holiday destination. Even better, modern development is tempered by an overriding desire to preserve both the natural and the historic environments that have helped to make Virginia the place it is today.

Virginia is huge, stretching hundreds of miles from the Atlantic Ocean to the west, taking in fertile plains and valleys and a huge slice of the Appalachian Mountains. Bordered by North Carolina, Kentucky, West Virginia and Maryland, the state has a Southern character whilst the names of the towns and cities will be familiar to any British visitor – Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Richmond, Bristol and Abingdon.

Touring holidays are the best way to experience what Virginia has to offer and indeed it would take weeks to see it all, so it is good to focus on a particular theme or region for a two week holiday, whether that be the Crooked Road country music trail in the south west, the Wine Trails of central Virginia, the Historic Triangle of Jamestown, Yorktown and Colonial Williamsburg or the mountains and valleys of Shenandoah.

Maryland

From mountains, to the bay, to the Atlantic Ocean, Maryland boasts a vast assortment of outdoor activities, unique attractions, and historical landmarks. In the 1920s, a reporter for National Geographic visited Maryland and dubbed the state “America in Miniature” as it encapsulates in just one state elements from mountains to seashores – and everything is within about a 3-hour drive of the biggest city, Baltimore.

Western Maryland is the perfect place for adventure for Indiana Jones types. There are picturesque mountains perfect for hiking and white-water rapids just waiting to be tackled by daring rafters. Deep Creek Lake, the state's biggest manmade body of water, welcomes boaters and water skiers in warm weather; Wisp, Maryland's ski resort, welcomes skiers and tubers in the winter months. If you prefer to step back in time rather than taking a walk on the wild side, explore such sites as the C&O Canal and Antietam National Battlefield.

Central Maryland is home to both the capital, Annapolis, and its most populated city, Baltimore. This region boasts an unbeatable combination of fun and culture. You can go out to a ball game, attend the symphony, shop 'til you drop and visit historic sites all in the same day – and still have time left to enjoy a great meal at one of the region's famous restaurants. Within minutes' drive of the big-city hustle and bustle, there are serene pastures that are home to Maryland's thoroughbred horses, old mills and farms, and waterside villages that are havens for boaters and history buffs alike.

Maryland is a generous state; so generous, in fact, that in 1791 they donated the land that became Washington, D.C. They have benefited greatly from that action, and today the three Maryland counties that border the nation's capital are far more than "bedroom" communities. In fact, if you had to choose a room in your house that best represents this area, you'd have a tough time deciding whether it should be the study (this region is packed with history); the garden (there are a surprising number of state and national parks that offer everything from hiking to biking); or the dining room (there's an astounding array of restaurants featuring everything from down-home cooking to cuisine from around the world).

Southern Maryland is where it all began way back in 1634, when 140 Europeans arrived to settle the colony that would be named Maryland. The state's original capital, now called Historic St. Mary's City, is preserved as a living history museum, but this area's appeal is not limited to those who enjoy delving into the past. You'll be hard-pressed to find better bass fishing anywhere on the East Coast, and the waters of the Chesapeake Bay and the Patuxent and Potomac rivers are a hit with boaters, too. If you prefer to just sit back and take it easy, you can do that here, as well. It's where you'll find a number of tiny waterside resorts that beckon to travellers eager to abandon their cares.

The Eastern Shore is the location for Ocean City, Maryland's biggest beach resort. They say that "Maryland is for crabs," and nowhere is that proven more true – or false – than on the Eastern Shore. It's true in terms of the quality and quantity of the beloved blue crab, whose succulent meat is the key ingredient in many a feast. But it's entirely false if you're referring to the attitude of the people; there's a level of hospitality here that makes it easy to understand why Maryland is considered a Southern state. Spend a day on the bay, sailing from point to point and discovering this region's history, or drive from one waterfront village to the next in search of the perfect crab cake.

Washington, DC

Washington, DC is the capital city of the USA and was founded in 1791 and named after President George Washington. It is completely unique in that it was created to be an independent city in a "Federal district", not part of any state, and is known as the District of Columbia, in reference to Christopher Columbus.

The city was built on land donated by Maryland, on the northern bank of the Potomac River and covers just 68 square miles. It is divided into four quadrants: Northwest, Southwest, Northeast, and Southeast. The U.S. Capitol building marks the centre where the quadrants meet.

Like both Virginia and Maryland, Washington is steeped in history with quaint districts and historic buildings at every turn. It is best known for its wide array of cultural and historical attractions, historic monuments and memorials, almost all of which are **free** to the public and open seven days a week. Most famous are the White House, U.S. Capitol, Library of Congress, National Archives, and various Smithsonian museums, National Gallery of Art, National Zoo, Newseum, Union Station and Arlington National Cemetery.

But the city has so much more to offer and is one of the easiest cities to navigate and a terrific city for touring – once you understand the basics. Check the quadrant indicator (NW, NE, SW, SE) of a local address before setting out. The numbered streets run north to south, whilst lettered streets run east to west (there are no J, X, Y, or Z streets), alphabetically becoming two syllable names (Adams, Belmont), then 3-syllable names (Allison, Buchanan) as you travel out farther from the centre. Avenues named for U.S. States run diagonally, often meeting at traffic circles and squares.

With one of the safest, cleanest and most efficient public transportation systems in the country serviced by Metrorail (subway) and Metrobus, Washington, DC's many attractions and neighbourhoods are easily accessible. These range from colonial Georgetown, to multi-ethnic Adams Morgan, hip Foggy Bottom, colourful Chinatown and the vibrant African-American U Street district, home of jazz legend Duke Ellington and once known as "Black Broadway".

One of the best ways to experience Washington is on foot, with wonderful pockets to explore, including the inspiring monuments and museums found on the National Mall as well as the intimate museums, world-class theatres and splendid gardens, squares and circles throughout the District. There is also huge variety of guided tours of the city to get you oriented, ranging from traditional Old Town Trolley Tours to DC Ducks tours that cross land and water, ultra hi-tech Segway Tours and the brand new On Location Tour, taking in famous movie locations around the city.

For more information go to www.capitalregionusa.co.uk

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