



Cruisin' the Capital Region USA: A sample two-week itinerary

Days 1 and 2: Washington, DC

Welcome to America's capital! Washington, DC is a cosmopolitan city, packed with famous sights and free attractions and home to some of the world's best-known museums and monuments, including the Smithsonian Institution, the International Spy Museum and the Newseum, the new interactive museum of news. Combine this with hip new restaurants and bars, stunning hotels, great nightlife, live music, theatre, charming neighborhoods and terrific shopping options and you have a fantastic start to your trip through the Capital Region.

Days 3 and 4: Baltimore, Maryland

Get in on the charm of Baltimore – where it's not so much a place as an experience. And after close to 300 years of history, this city can deliver more fun-filled days (and romantic evenings) to make any stay memorable. Since the city's renaissance in the late 1970s, millions of people have come to see Baltimore's Inner Harbor, where one can ride the elevator 27 stories to the Top of the World Observation Level in the World Trade Center, explore the inside of the World War II submarine Torsk and visit sharks, dolphins, sea turtles and thousands of other aquatic animals at the National Aquarium in Baltimore. If it's retail therapy you are after then Baltimore has an astounding array of choices, from upscale malls to antiques and designer shops. Check out lively Fell's Point and Canton, where atmospheric old bars and pubs offer an astonishing array of cuisines. In-season, don't miss the Duck Tours, the perfect way to experience the city's highlights by land and water.

Day 5: Annapolis, Maryland

Discover the "Yachting Capital of the USA" – lovely Annapolis. The vibe is laid-back, the scenery is awe-inspiring and the local fare is seasoned with the flavors of the Chesapeake Bay. At the center of the city, overlooking the town's web of streets stands the Maryland State House, completed in 1779 and soon after served as an early capitol of the U.S. It remains the oldest state house still in legislative use. The narrow streets feature historic homes and restored buildings that showcase architecture from the 18th and 19th centuries. The lively waterfront offers many opportunities for harbor cruises, while the cafes and shops around the Market House are an inviting place to relax and enjoy the harbor views. The imposing U.S. Naval Academy is home to more than 4,000 midshipmen training to become Naval Officers. Guided tours of the Academy are available for the public.

Days 6 and 7: Maryland's Eastern Shore & the Chesapeake Bay

Take the next two days to explore Maryland's Eastern Shore. Visit the beautiful Chesapeake harbor town of St. Michaels, called "the town that fooled the British" because locals hung lanterns in the trees during the War of 1812 and the British cannons overshot the houses. Here, you can feast on the local

specialty – crab - whilst overlooking the small picturesque harbor. Browse the antique shops, ice cream parlors and cafes, or just sit back and enjoy the town's delightful ambiance. Southwest of St. Michaels is Tilghman Island, home port for many of the Chesapeake Bay's remaining skipjacks. Nearby is Oxford, once a major port and shipbuilding center. You can get to Oxford by taking the Oxford-Bellevue Ferry (in season), the longest cable-free ferry in the U.S. The 1684 port town of Cambridge has many historic homes, buildings and museums with agricultural, maritime, industrial and Native American displays. The nearby Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge is an important nesting and feeding area for wild geese, osprey, swans, owls, muskrats, rare Delmarva fox squirrels and bald eagles. South Dorchester County has been called the "Cape Cod of the South" for its quaint waterman's villages and ferry bridge.

Days 8 and 9: Virginia Beach

Travel down the Delmarva Peninsula to Virginia's Eastern Shore and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, a 17-mile engineering wonder that takes you over and under the water. Before you reach the bridge, stop and visit the shops in the waterfront village of Cape Charles. In Virginia Beach, the world's longest pleasure beach, stroll the beach and 40 blocks of boardwalk, or just relax in the sun. You can kayak Virginia's coastal waters in search of dolphins, they've been known to swim alongside! Or hike the six miles of unspoiled beaches at False Cape State Park, one of the last undisturbed coastal environments on the East Coast. At night, the beachfront comes alive as you sit with your cocktail overlooking the boardwalk, before enjoying a meal at one of the many restaurants.

Days 10 and 11: Williamsburg, Virginia & the Historic Triangle

Don't miss Colonial Williamsburg, the most extensively restored 18th century town in the U.S. So compelling and complete is the restoration that visitors feel they are in a crown colony 300 years ago. A similar sensation occurs at Jamestown, where America's first English settlement was established in 1607. Nearby Yorktown was where the American Revolutionary War ended. Today visitors can stroll the battlefield and explore the charming town. Voted the world's "most beautiful theme park" for 16 consecutive years, Busch Gardens Williamsburg (open seasonally) combines 17th-century charm with 21st-century technology to create the ultimate family experience. Situated on 100 action-packed acres, Busch Gardens boasts more than 50 thrilling rides and attractions, nine main stage shows, and a wide variety of cuisine. Plunge into outrageous fun at the mid-Atlantic's largest water park, Water Country USA. Featuring a 1950s and '60s surf-theme, it offers families tons of summertime fun with more than 30 slides, water rides and super soakin' thrills.

Days 12 and 13: Charlottesville, Virginia

On your way to Charlottesville, you may want to stop in Richmond to visit the White House of the Confederacy, the new American Civil War Center, or the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Then, your journey is through an area which Thomas Jefferson called the "Eden of the United States." You can visit his home, Monticello, atop a mountain in Albemarle County overlooking Charlottesville. It is one of the country's foremost architectural masterpieces and is featured on the World Heritage list along with the nearby University of Virginia, which Jefferson also designed. Charlottesville is the quintessential college town – gracious, urbane and sophisticated, with an enviable location in

the foothills of the famed Blue Ridge Mountains. You can mix with the students on 'the Corner' adjacent the University, and then sample award winning Virginia wine at a local country vineyard.

Day 14: The Shenandoah Valley

Discover why this region is known as "Virginia's crowning glory." Your route takes you through lush rolling countryside, past gracious horse farms to the splendor of the Skyline Drive. Travel this America's Byway®, stopping at overlooks for views of the Shenandoah Valley below. With more than 500 miles of hiking trails, you can relax and explore the lush forests, streams, waterfalls and wildflowers. Amble along a beautiful bridle path on a guided horseback ride, or hike the Appalachian Trail. Nearby is Luray Caverns, the largest caverns on the east coast.

Day 15

Enjoy the scenery en route to Washington, DC or Baltimore to drop off your car and catch your flight home.