



## Explore Capital Region USA

Themed trails around Virginia, Maryland and Washington, DC

- The Crooked Road Music Trail
- Walk Washington Neighbourhoods
- Bike the Sites in Washington, DC
- Birding and Wildlife
- Chesapeake Bay Gateway Network
- Capital Region at the Heart of the Civil War
- The Great Grape Trail
- Region's Golf Courses Rated Tops

### Keep on the Sunny Side -- Follow the Crooked Road Music Trail

"The poetry of the common man" is how the legendary Merle Haggard describes country music. That poetry is alive and well along the Crooked Road in the forest glens of Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains ([www.thecrookedroad.org](http://www.thecrookedroad.org)). Born out of a need to seek joy from the daily hardships of mountain life, the first country music recordings were made famous by the Carter family of Virginia. The first family of country music lived in a tiny spot west of Bristol, Virginia, called Hiltons. "Keep on the Sunny Side of Life" is one of the most memorable refrains of Carter family recordings.

Follow the Crooked Road, a 250-mile music trail through this virgin mountain land and you'll discover the musical haunts of local artists and musicians. The music venues are as genuine as life -- old movie theatres, tin-roofed sheds, log cabin buildings, fairgrounds and local parks. Even the local radio stations broadcast live performances of local musicians -- a tradition the American music industry was built on -- and one that is uniquely preserved here.

Some of the great spots along the trail include the Blue Ridge Music Centre at Forum College, the Birthplace of Country Music Alliance in Bristol ([www.birthplaceofcountrymusic.org](http://www.birthplaceofcountrymusic.org)) and the Carter Family Fold in Hiltons. Gospel, bluegrass and mountain music stemmed from the Scotch-Irish immigrants who settled this region.

Every August, the purest strains of "old-time" mountain music echo through the famed Blue Ridge Mountains at the Old Fiddler's Convention ([www.oldfiddlersconvention.com](http://www.oldfiddlersconvention.com)) in Galax. This event draws more than 50,000 people to giant jam sessions during warm weather.

Many local musicians and shop owners are keeping musical traditions alive by creating and selling beautiful, hand-carved instruments in communities along the trail. Wayne Henderson's handmade guitars are in such great demand that world-famous musicians wait as long as five years for a personalised instrument. Handcrafted woodwork, weaving, and pottery lure visitors into country stores and small workshops along the music trail.

The Crooked Road Music Trail is a finalist in the 2006 British Guild of Travel Writers Awards for Best Overseas Tourism Project.

### Walk About Washington Neighbourhoods with Cultural Tourism DC

Washington makes it easy to enjoy an insider's tour of its lively, artistic neighbourhoods, on foot. Visit the Cultural Tourism DC ([www.culturaltourismdc.org](http://www.culturaltourismdc.org)) website for a schedule of walking tours offered from April through to October. Complete with easy-to-read street signs and descriptive neighbourhood brochures, the tours take you to places where famed jazz musician Duke Ellington grew up near revitalised U Street, to Lafayette Park, an exquisite neighbourhood

near Washington's government centre replete with seven museums. Enjoy walking through Georgetown, a thriving city built long before Washington, and hike about Dupont Circle to see many of the most exquisite mansions in town.

### **Bike the Sites in Washington, DC**

Enjoy Washington's splendid architecture and tree-lined paths on a guided bike tour with the entertaining staff of Bike the Sites ([www.bikethesites.com](http://www.bikethesites.com)). Two and three-hour overviews are offered on daily tours of the city. Choose from the Capital Tour, a Monuments tour, Washington at night, a bike tour designed with children in mind, or develop your own tailor-made excursion with the company's staffers.

Several longer bicycle trails in the Washington area afford terrain challenges and terrific scenic views, including the C&O Canal, the Washington & Old Dominion Trail, the Capital Crescent Trail and the Mount Vernon Trail.

Across the states of Virginia and Maryland, old railroad beds have been converted into easy bicycle paths with a popular program called "Rails to Trails." Since early American railroads were built near naturally cut river beds, many of these trails are found in wooded glens near river beds and streams. The Virginia Department of Transportation ([www.virginiadot.org/infoservice/bk-default.asp](http://www.virginiadot.org/infoservice/bk-default.asp)) and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources ([www.dnr.state.md.us/outdoors/biking.html](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/outdoors/biking.html)) provide detailed information on bike trails available across both states.

### **Birding and Wildlife in Capital Region**

The American Bald Eagle is sacred to American Indians - and its ceremonial use reaches back centuries before the arrival of Europeans. This majestic bird has symbolised America's strength since 1782 when it became part of a national seal designed in part by Thomas Jefferson. Today, the U.S. protects its Bald Eagle population through wildlife refuges and special breeding grounds.

In the Capital Region USA, watch the breeding habits of Bald Eagles at Caledon State Park ([www.stateparks.com/caledon.html](http://www.stateparks.com/caledon.html)) in Virginia south of Washington, DC and at the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge ([www.fws.gov/blackwater](http://www.fws.gov/blackwater)) on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Piscataway National Park in Maryland across the Potomac River from George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate is another great place to see American Bald Eagles. Eco-tours with Atlantic Canoe and Kayak ([www.AtlanticKayak.com](http://www.AtlanticKayak.com)) or Blackwater Paddle and Pedal Adventures ([www.blackwaterpaddleandpedal.com](http://www.blackwaterpaddleandpedal.com)) give travellers first-hand knowledge of their feeding, nesting and breeding habits.

Years of research and community support across Virginia have given rise to the first state-wide Birding and Wildlife Trail ([www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/vbwt/index.asp](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/vbwt/index.asp)) in the U.S. Within Virginia's 43,000 square miles of diverse natural habitat, you can find some 400 species of birds, 250 species of fish, 150 species of terrestrial and marine animals, 150 species of amphibians and reptiles, and a wide variety of aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates.

One of the great spectacles of autumn migration is the hawk flight. The National Wildlife Federation says that Turkey Point, on the north side of the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland, is one of the best places in the country to watch migrating hawks. Nature lovers and serious watchers gather at annual hawk watches to help count the number of migrating birds to reveal important environmental trends. These creatures with the expansive four-foot wing span are extremely sensitive to changes in species they prey upon. The Federation also points to another Chesapeake Bay area site - Kiptopeke, Virginia ([www.dcr.state.va.us/parks/kiptopek.htm](http://www.dcr.state.va.us/parks/kiptopek.htm)) at the southern tip of the Delmarva Peninsula, as the best place in the world to watch marlins.

### **The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network Showcases Local Maritime Culture**

At a speed of 113,000 kilometres per hour, a gigantic asteroid hit the earth nearly 35 million years ago. The place it landed is now the Chesapeake Bay. Long after the giant meteor crash, a huge glacier melted and flooded the Susquehanna River Valley, spilling over to create the Bay. It's still possible to find evidence of life during this period. Fossil hunting is one of the

intriguing options within an easy drive of Washington, DC, where visitors can dig at approved sites for 20-million year-old dinosaur shark teeth. These and other Miocene Epoch fossils are embedded in river banks in Maryland and Virginia. The Calvert Museum of Marine Science in Maryland exhibits a superb collection of fossils excavated from the area as well as an intriguing model of a huge prehistoric shark.

The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, ([www.baygateways.net](http://www.baygateways.net)), an organisation of public and private sites in the states that make up the Bay's watershed, has knitted together the cultural and natural heritage stories of this water soaked region.

The goal of the 140-plus sites comprising the Chesapeake Bay network is to encourage citizens and visitors to protect and preserve these places of natural and historical value. On the CBGN website, you'll find links to the travels of 17<sup>th</sup> century explorer Captain John Smith ([www.baygateways.net/smithexplorations.cfm](http://www.baygateways.net/smithexplorations.cfm)), useful information for visiting the quaint lighthouses of the Chesapeake Bay ([www.baygateways.net/lighthouses.cfm](http://www.baygateways.net/lighthouses.cfm)) and descriptions of efforts by the individual sites to interpret and save Bay life. The CBGN program is overseen by the National Park Service, and is unique in joining together local organisations that share a common bond.

At its widest point, the Bay spans 35 miles at the mouth of the Potomac River. This mighty waterway is where Washington, DC was established and where the nation's first debates over interstate commerce and trade began. The Potomac flows past Mount Vernon, home of first U.S. President George Washington and southeast toward salty water and southern plantation homes where bird watching, boating and hiking bring simple pleasures. Fresh, local seafood is served up in down-home restaurants where patrons feast on crabs, oysters and rockfish.

Just 25 minutes west of Washington, DC, the spectacular Great Falls National Park is a scenic wonderland affording white water kayaking and rock climbing adventures, hiking trails and historical evidence of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal venture. On the banks of the Potomac in Georgetown - the oldest part of Washington DC -- you can watch crew team's race for collegiate glory.

For world-class sporting events, take in the Maryland Maritime Heritage Festival ([www.annapolismaritimemuseum.org/newslett/03\\_2004.htm](http://www.annapolismaritimemuseum.org/newslett/03_2004.htm)) in Annapolis and then try your own hand at sailing by signing up for lessons on the Bay in Maryland and Virginia.

Rivers flowing into the Chesapeake Bay were the chief roadways for American Indians and European colonists and today the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network invites you to explore the worlds these rivers sustain.

### **Capital Region at the Heart of the Civil War**

It was the 1860s and Washington, DC was treeless and swampy. The southern states had declared independence from the Union - they even wrote their own constitution. Richmond, Virginia was the capital of their confederacy and they convened their congress in the Virginia state capitol designed by Thomas Jefferson, author of the *Declaration of Independence*. Washington was only 120 miles north of Richmond so the capture and defence of both cities raged on land, rivers and harbours here.

Just 80 years after George Washington won America's freedom from Britain in the Revolutionary War, civil war broke out in Manassas, Virginia, only 50 miles from Washington. Wealthy spectators who took picnic lunches to the battlefield to watch a quick skirmish never expected the nightmare that ensued from 1861 to 1865. This war became the last of the old and first of the new. The first war to be documented in photographs, the American Civil War was also one of the last where soldiers used Napoleonic tactics to fight face-to-face. The first ironclad vessels changed naval warfare forever after their use in the Battle of the Monitor and the Merrimac in Virginia waters during the American Civil War.

More of the major battles of the Civil War were fought in the Capital Region USA than in any other place in America. Today visitors to the Capital Region can see the traces of the most

strategic battles of this epic war by following a Civil War Trails ([www.civilwartrails.org](http://www.civilwartrails.org)) tour of Washington, DC, Virginia and Maryland. Walking and bus tours of Civil War Washington are also offered through Cultural Tourism DC. ([www.culturaltourismdc.org](http://www.culturaltourismdc.org))

Visit Antietam Battlefield in Maryland, ([www.nps.gov/anti](http://www.nps.gov/anti)) where the bloodiest battle of the war was fought. See the American Civil War Center ([www.tredegar.org](http://www.tredegar.org)) at the Historic Tredegar Ironworks in Richmond. The former confederate munitions factory serves as the Richmond National Battlefield Park headquarters and provides views from the perspectives of Union, Confederate and African-American soldiers.

Ford's Theater ([www.nps.gov/foth](http://www.nps.gov/foth)) in downtown Washington, DC still operates as a performance centre and gives tours of the shattering event involving John Wilkes Booth's assassination of US President Abraham Lincoln. Booth's escape route is part of the self-guided Maryland and Virginia Civil War Trails.

The Peace Memorial with a statue that's often referred to as "America," stands before the nation's capitol, while a statue of Union General Ulysses S. Grant in downtown Washington symbolises the rebirth of the United States following the Civil War. To see the actual site where the country was re-united in a surrender treaty, visit the tiny village of Appomattox, Virginia. ([www.appomattox.com](http://www.appomattox.com)) At the McLean House, ([www.nps.gov/apco](http://www.nps.gov/apco)) the site where Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Grant, hear the story of Wilmer McLean who left his home in Northern Virginia to settle in this sleepy town with the hope of escaping the war. The Route of Lee's Retreat ([www.civilwar-va.com/virginia/va-retreat/retreat.html](http://www.civilwar-va.com/virginia/va-retreat/retreat.html)) on the way to Appomattox is an easy drive from Petersburg, a town that was under siege for 10 months during the Civil War.

Every spring and summer it is typical to find re-enactors recreating the tactical commands of key Civil War battles near the actual sites where the battles occurred.

### **The Great Grape Trail**

With a climate similar to parts of the Mediterranean, the Capital Region USA has become fertile experimental ground for more than 120 vineyards. Many of the region's best wineries and their patrons enjoy the direct influence of European winemakers.

Travellers to the Capital Region find visiting vineyards and tasting wines a fine pairing for the cultural spots and country inns that grace the scenic countryside. In Jamestown, Virginia for example, the Williamsburg Winery ([www.williamsburgwinery.com](http://www.williamsburgwinery.com)) produces one of the state's most popular wines and the tasting room here is replete with archaeological evidence and historical documents showing colonists were making wine in the early 1600s. Just down the road at Jamestowne, ([www.apva.org/jr.html](http://www.apva.org/jr.html)) site of America's first permanent English settlement, archaeologists have unearthed a treasure trove of wine casks from the early 1600s.

Virginia's 100-plus wineries ([www.virginiawines.org](http://www.virginiawines.org)) cluster mostly in the Northern and Piedmont regions of the state, but can also be found in the coastal areas of the Eastern Shore near the Chesapeake Bay and in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains, off the Blue Ridge Parkway.

A newcomer to the winemaking industry, Maryland ([www.marylandwine.com/](http://www.marylandwine.com/)) has 20 wineries and nearly half are in the rolling hills of the Piedmont region; the others dot the farmland around the Bay.

Two varietals grown in the Capital Region USA are gaining national recognition for the wines they produce: the Viognier and the historically significant Norton, made from a native Virginia grape which earned recognition in 1878 as the "Best Red Wine of All Nations" in Vienna, Austria.

Author of "The Great Wines of America," Paul Lukacs describes a Horton Winery ([www.hvwine.com/](http://www.hvwine.com/)) Viognier as "a bright June morning in a glass" and calls it among the country's 40 greatest oenological achievements - one of only three on the East Coast. Horton Winery owner Dennis Horton grew up in Missouri where German descendents were making

their own wines with the Virginia Norton grape. Horton planted his first French Viognier vines in Virginia in 1992 and continued experimenting with Norton vines. At that time Viognier was grown exclusively in the Rhone near Lyons, France. Despite being one of the largest wineries in Virginia, today Horton can't make enough Viognier to meet demand. Located just 20 miles north of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, Horton is close to an Italian-run winery, Barboursville Vineyard and Winery, ([www.barboursvillewine.com](http://www.barboursvillewine.com)) located in a romantic setting against a backdrop of 19<sup>th</sup> century ruins.

If you would enjoy being chauffeured from your Washington, DC area hotel to several vineyards in the countryside to taste wines all day, check out the wine limo tours offered by Oasis Winery, ([www.oasiswine.com](http://www.oasiswine.com)) whose Sparkling Wine was named one of the top 10 in the world.

### **Capital Region USA Golf Courses Rated Tops**

Picture yourself playing golf in a lush valley on a clear, crisp day, surrounded by blue-hazed mountain ridges. Or imagine playing challenging course just minutes from a wide, sandy beach where you can kick back and relax after your early tee time. Some of the best names in professional golf have designed courses across the Capital Region - players like Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer and Robert Trent Jones. The standard bearer of golf, the Presidents' Cup Golf Tournament, has been played here many times. Golf schools at fabulous resorts make a Capital Region holiday even more enjoyable for people looking to start - or polish - their games with help from the pros.

The most widely read golf magazines in America continually rank Capital Region USA golf courses and resorts among the best in the country. Virginia ([www.Virginia.org/golf](http://www.Virginia.org/golf)) alone has more than 200 golf courses that are the envy of other states and select courses in Maryland have appeared on rankings of "America's best, state by state."

If your travel schedule only allows a round of golf in Washington [www.golfdc.com](http://www.golfdc.com) proper, shoot the nine-hole courses in East Potomac Park or the city's oasis, Rock Creek Park.

For more information, go to [www.capitalregionusa.org](http://www.capitalregionusa.org)

- ends -

For press enquiries please contact:

Lisa.Cooper at KBC PR & Marketing on 01825 76 36 36  
[Lisa.Cooper@kbc-pr.com](mailto:Lisa.Cooper@kbc-pr.com)