

## Overview of Virginia

Natives of the Commonwealth of Virginia are enormously proud of their local history and have put a great deal of effort into preserving their historical landmarks, homes and public buildings. The bountiful land of Virginia is where the first permanent English colonists put down roots, founding the town of Jamestown in 1607. They originally stepped ashore on a sandy beach at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, a large estuary that became their gateway to the scenic hinterland.

Following the rivers inland, the early pioneers found rolling hills and the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains towering over valleys in the western part of the state. Today, 400 years later, a great deal of Virginia's wilderness areas remain pristine and untouched, making it the perfect destination for lovers of the outdoors, as well as for those intent on discovering some living history.

Virginia has not just preserved its historic relics, it uses them as settings for living historical displays. Historic parks and some entire towns such as Williamsburg act as time machines to transport visitors to a bygone age, where bewigged gentlemen stroll the streets and craftsmen ply their trades along cobblestone streets.

The state has also preserved numerous battlefields and monuments associated with the Civil War, with its capital, Richmond, being the seat of the Confederacy. Many of Virginia's sons have played a vital role in politics during the centuries. The state has produced eight United States Presidents, including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, whose homes are open to the public.

Even Virginia's popular seaside resort city of Virginia Beach is steeped in history, so visitors who come to enjoy the state's many miles of Atlantic Coast sandy beaches cannot help but absorb some of the region's historic importance along with their sunbathers. Virginia's worth as an enjoyable destination can be proven by the fact that tourism is a main source of state revenue.

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## Key Facts

### **Language:**

English is the most common language spoken but Spanish is often heard in the south-western states.

### **Passport/Visa:**

It is highly recommended that travellers' passports have at least six months' validity remaining after the intended date of departure from their travel destination. A visa is required for short visits unless travellers qualify for entry under the Visa Waiver Program. The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) enables citizens of certain countries to travel to the US for a stay of up to 90 days without a visa. Visitors under the VWP need to register online three days before travel and have an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). This allows the US government to screen all visitors before travel. Visitors entering the country under the VWP must have a machine-readable passport (MRP) that has a barcode on the photo page. Travellers under the VWP must have passports that include biometrics if they wish to enter the country without a visa, which means that passports must contain unique personal data such as fingerprints or iris details. All passports must contain a digital photo image in order to travel visa-free. All visitors to the USA have a photograph and two fingerprints taken by an inkless scanner on arrival, including those travelling visa-free under the VWP. As part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), all travellers travelling between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and the Caribbean region are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. If departing from the USA, a valid passport is required by immigration authorities. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official sources.

### **Currency:**

The official currency is the US Dollar (USD), which is divided into 100 cents. Only major banks exchange foreign currency. ATMs are widespread and credit cards are widely accepted. Banking hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm.

### **Electricity:**

Electrical current is 120 volts, 60Hz. Plugs are mainly the type with two flat pins, though three-pin plugs (two flat parallel pins and a rounded pin) are also widely used. European appliances without dual-voltage capabilities will require an adapter.

# Travel to Virginia

## Climate for Virginia

The Virginia climate is a coastal one, mild and humid, with the four seasons experienced slightly differently in the different regions. The Tidewater regions, where Virginia's major rivers drain into the Chesapeake, are low-lying and experience more moderate temperatures, with warm to hot summers and mild winters.

As one moves westward and altitudes increase, temperatures tend to drop and winters tend to be far colder, particularly in the more mountainous regions and the northeastern areas, with heavy snowfall in the Appalachians. Summers, however, tend to also be mild and pleasant, and the average summer temperature statewide is close to 80F (27C). Winter temperatures in January, usually the coldest month, are usually about 30F (-1C).

Severe weather, including tornadoes, tropical cyclones, hurricanes and winter storms, impacts the state on a regular basis. There is an average of seven tornadoes per year in western Virginia, most occurring between May and August. Hurricanes striking coastal Virginia tend to be on the decline as they come north from the Gulf of Mexico, and flooding from torrential rains is the biggest concern.

## Health Notes when travelling to United States of America

There are no specific health risks associated with travel within the USA. Medical facilities are excellent, but expensive. Only emergencies are treated without prior payment and treatment can be refused without evidence of insurance or proof of funds. Good medical insurance is essential. Visitors must be fully vaccinated with the primary series of an accepted COVID-19 vaccine to travel to the United States by plane if they are non-U.S. citizens.

## Safety Notes when travelling to United States of America

Travel within the United States is generally trouble-free, though travellers should be aware that the US shares with the rest of the world, an increased threat from terrorist incidents. Security has been heightened, particularly at airports. Restrictions on hand luggage apply and travellers are advised to check on the latest situation with airlines in advance. Travellers should also be alert to the dangers of car and street crime in cities and should use common sense and take basic precautions. Hurricanes are common between June and November, putting the southern USA, including the Gulf Coast and the eastern US at risk. There is a risk of wildfires in many dry areas in the US, particularly on the West Coast from March to November.

## Customs in United States of America

Laws vary from state to state, including speed limit, fines and punishment. The age at which alcohol may be legally bought and consumed is 21 years.

## Duty Free in United States of America

Travellers to the United States who are returning residents of the country do not have to pay duty on articles purchased abroad to the value of \$800 provided their stay was longer than 48 hours and their duty-free allowance was not used in the 30-day period prior. For passengers arriving from Samoa, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands, a duty-free allowance of \$1,600 is allowed. The following items are included in this: 50 cigarettes and 10 cigars and 150 millilitres (5 fl. oz.) of alcoholic beverages or 150 millilitres (5 fl. oz.) of perfume containing alcohol. Restrictions may apply to goods from Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Burma (Myanmar), Angola, Liberia and Sudan. It is prohibited to import Cuban cigars from any country.

Travellers to the United States who are non-residents do not have to pay duty on the following items: 50 cigars or 200 cigarettes and gifts to the value of \$100 provided their stay in the USA is not less than 72 hours and that the allowance has not been used in the preceding six-month period.

Prohibited items for residents and non-residents include meat or meat products, poultry, narcotics, absinthe, plants, seeds, vegetables, fruits, soil, live insects and other living plants or animal pests. Fish is prohibited unless it carries disease-free certification. Wildlife and animals or their by-products carry restrictions. Dairy products and eggs from specified countries are not allowed. Firearms and ammunition are not allowed without the necessary license and permit.

## Doing Business in United States of America

In such a large country, filled with so many diverse groups, business practices may differ according to each state, however rarely to any large degree. The East Coast is traditionally more formal than the West Coast, though in states such as California, dress code and conservative appearance are as common as they would be in New York. Punctuality is important throughout the country and it is considered rude to be late for a meeting. Gift-giving is uncommon as it may be construed as bribery. Appropriate titles (Mr, Mrs, Ms) are used upon introduction and until otherwise stated. Americans favour politeness and greetings of 'Hello' and 'How are you?' are often expressed with sincerity. Business hours may vary in each state, but an 8am start and 5pm finish Monday to Friday is the most common with an hour over lunch.

Status and age are not necessarily indicative of seniority, nor do they carry much weight in themselves. Those doing business in the States should be mindful of this fact; foreigners should never make assumptions about someone's position or rank. Best practice is to be respectful to all parties. That said, the US upholds a hierarchal business structure, in which 'the boss' is the ultimate decision-maker. Senior leaders have the power of the last word, and can go against the grain just as easily as they can follow popular opinion. Foreigners should concentrate on winning over this individual, even if the greater group seems unsupportive. Americans value a direct style of communication. In this fast-paced, consumer culture 'time is money', and small-talk is viewed as unnecessary and wasteful. It's best for foreigners to get to the point quickly, speak about issues in a frank and open manner, and to avoid taking offence if someone questions or challenges them outright.

## Communication in United States of America

The international country dialling code for the United States is +1. Mobile networks cover most of the country, especially all urban areas, and WiFi is widely available.

## Tippling in United States of America

A 15 percent tip is expected by taxi drivers, bartenders, hairdressers and waiters, but travellers shouldn't tip in fast-food or self-service restaurants. In expensive restaurants or for large parties, the tip should be 20 percent of the bill. It is normal to tip staff such as valets and porters in hotels; this is discretionary, although a minimum of \$5 is expected. Most services are customarily tipped if the service is good.

## Passport/Visa Note

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## Airports in Virginia

### Richmond International Airport (RIC)

#### *Richmond International Airport*

**www.flyrichmond.com**

**Location:** Richmond The airport is situated nine miles (14km) southeast of Richmond.

**Time:** GMT -5 (GMT -4 from mid-March to the first Sunday in November).

**Contacts:** Tel: +1 804 226 3000

**Getting to the city:** The Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) offers public buses to Richmond. Taxi, shuttle, and limousine services are also available outside the baggage reclaim area.

**Car rental:** Desks for rental car agencies are situated on the lower level of the terminal building. Represented are Alamo, Avis, Budget, Enterprise, National, Dollar, Thrifty, Payless, and Hertz.

**Airport Taxis:** Airport Taxi, Galaxy Cab Co. and Mimi Taxicab operate at the airport and taxis are available from the first flight departure to the last flight arrival every day. Taxis are found in the centre section of the lower level next to the North and South parking garages. Rates vary according to destination and taxi company.

**Facilities:** A bank located in the main lobby on the ground floor offers full service banking including foreign currency exchange. Airport facilities also include ATMs, several bars, cafes and restaurants, shops, WiFi, conference rooms, an inter-faith chapel and a Visitor's Information Center.

**Parking:** The hourly lot charges \$2 per hour; the daily rate is \$12. The economy lot is connected to the terminal via a free shuttle service and charges \$7 per day.

### Norfolk Airport (ORF)

#### *Norfolk International Airport*

**www.norfolkairport.com**

**Location:** Norfolk The airport is located less than 10 miles (16km) northeast of central Norfolk.

**Time:** GMT -5 (GMT -4 from mid-March to the first Sunday in November).

**Contacts:** +1 757 857 3351

**Getting to the city:** There is no public transport offered to Norfolk Airport; however, taxis, shuttles, and rental cars are available and some local hotels offer free shuttle service to guests.

**Car rental:** Rental cars are available from Alamo, Avis, Budget, Dollar, Enterprise, Hertz and National. The rental car offices are located in the Arrivals Terminal.

**Airport Taxis:** Taxis are available. The companies include Andy's Cab Co., Black and White, City Wide Cabs, Coastal Ride, Duke Cab Co. East Side Cabs, Eden Cab Co., Norfolk Checker, Oceanside Executive, Southside Cab Co., Waterside Taxi Company Inc., and Yellow Cab of Norfolk.

**Facilities:** Airport services include ATMs, a bank, currency exchange, mail drops, conference facilities, a lost and found, USO services, mother's rooms, and a variety of retail shops and dining options.

**Parking:** Short-term parking is charged at \$1 every 30 minutes, with a maximum of \$24 per day. Long-term parking is \$1 per 30 minutes up to \$10 per day.

## Roanoke Airport (ROA)

### *Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport*

[www.flyroa.com/](http://www.flyroa.com/)

**Location:** Roanoke The airport is located five miles (8km) northwest of Roanoke.

**Time:** GMT -5 (GMT -4 from mid-March to the first Sunday in November).

**Contacts:** +1 540 362 1999

**Getting to the city:** The Smart Way Bus stops at Roanoke Airport every one to two hours between 6.35am and 8.35pm Monday to Saturday, making a number of stops between Roanoke and Blacksburg. Some local hotels offer free shuttle transfers for guests.

**Car rental:** Rental cars are available from Avis, Budget, Hertz, Enterprise, and Alamo. Offices are located on the first floor, near baggage claim.

**Airport Taxis:** City Cab offers a taxi service from the airport; it is advisable to call to book in advance.

**Facilities:** Airport facilities include ATMs, workspaces, mail drops, a pet relief area, a news and gift shop, vending machines, and various shopping and dining options. Disabled facilities are good.

**Parking:** Parking at Roanoke Airport is free for the first 15 minutes. Short-term parking is an extra \$1 per half hour, up to \$16 per day. Long-term parking is \$1 per half hour, up to \$9 per day.

## Charlottesville Airport (CHO)

### *Charlottesville–Albemarle Airport*

[www.gocho.com](http://www.gocho.com)

**Location:** Charlottesville The airport is located ten miles (16km) north of Charlottesville.

**Time:** GMT -5 (GMT -4 from mid-March to the first Sunday in November).

**Contacts:** +1 434 973 8342

**Getting to the city:** There is no public transport to Charlottesville Airport. However, a dozen local hotels offer free shuttle transfers for guests, and taxis and rental cars are available. A parking shuttle operates in the parking lots day and night.

**Car rental:** Rental cars are available from Avis, Hertz, National, and Budget.

**Airport Taxis:** Yellow Cab provides metered taxi service from the airport, but flat rates are charged to a number of destinations; the fare to downtown Charlottesville is about \$25.

**Facilities:** Terminal facilities include ATMs, conference facilities, and a number of shopping and dining options.

**Parking:** The first 30 minutes in the short-term lot are free. After that the rates are \$2 for the first hour and \$1 per 30 minutes thereafter, up to a daily maximum of \$13. The long-term lot charges \$13 per day, while the economy lot charges \$9 per day. There is a parking shuttle for transport to the terminal from outlying parking lots.

## Richmond

The stately Southern grand dame of Richmond has been Virginia's state capital since 1780. Although a bastion of history, it also has all the hallmarks of a lively and modern urban centre, acting as an ideal gateway to the rest of the state. A range of attractions is within easy reach and visitors can enjoy the neighbouring sights and sounds of the ocean, mountains, historic colonial Williamsburg or even drive into Washington DC to visit the nation's capital.

Richmond has played an enormous role in American history, particularly as the capital of the Confederacy during the Civil War. Today, visitors can discover a host of monuments, battlefields and museums harking back to the days when Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee held out against the Union.

But this isn't a city stuck in the past and there are numerous modern attractions including an active nightlife, plenty of restaurants and outdoor concerts. Strolls along the attractive Canal Walk and the restored Haxall and Kanawha Canals are a great way to relax. There's also the option of catching a boat, with some tours including an historical narration, or there you can simply hire a car and get around by yourself.

The cityscape is an interesting combination of modern high rise office complexes housing financial institutions, Fortune 500 Companies, government offices, hospitals and universities, and the more charming cobblestone, gas-lit streets flanked by 19th-century warehouses, and a 300-year old farmers' market, filled with the scent of ripe fruit and fresh flowers.

## Getting around in Richmond

The Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) runs the public bus system that serves the Richmond metropolitan area. The bus routes access most of the major cultural attractions in Richmond and are therefore useful for tourists. Richmond is well supplied with taxi companies, with cab ranks outside most major hotels, the airport, Amtrak and the Greyhound terminal; ride-hailing apps such as Uber and Lyft are available.

The city also offers plenty of walking tours and is relatively compact and easy to negotiate on foot. It is worth hiring a car to explore the outlying regions, but not entirely necessary if staying in town, traffic is usually fairly light and parking relatively easy to find which makes driving in Richmond a pleasure.

## Climate in Richmond

Richmond has a humid subtropical climate, with hot, humid summers and mild winters. Late May heralds the start of warm summer days, and the peak summer months between June and August can be very hot and humid, with temperatures ranging between 65F (18C) and 100F (38C). Some relief from the summer heat is provided by rain showers, with July the wettest month of the year. Days stay warm to mild through to October, when autumn is marked by nights once again becoming chilly. December and January are the coldest winter months, with temperatures ranging between 28F (-2C) and 51F (11C). Light snowfalls occur from the end of November, but most snow falls in January.

## Sightseeing in Richmond

The capital of Virginia, Richmond is not only rich in American history, but is also a modern urban space where visitors will find something to suit every taste.

In terms of history, Richmond certainly delivers. Home to some incredible museums and historical sites, such as St John's Episcopal Church, The American Civil War Museum and the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, those with an interest in the American Revolution and the Civil War will be very happy here. The State Capitol is a favourite with visitors.

For those with less interest in history and more in the arts, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts houses a world-class collection of classical American and European sculptures and paintings. Visitors will also enjoy the River District where trendy restaurants can be found occupying century-old warehouses and bands entertain crowds on the lawns of Brown's Island. For lovers of science and the more left-brain thinkers among tourists, the Science Museum of Virginia will not disappoint.

Whatever their interests, there is something to keep all visitors to Richmond entertained and those travelling with kids will find the city very family-friendly.

## Richmond Attractions

## Capitol Square

Richmond's Capitol Square is an oasis of old trees, statues and green lawns perched on a hilltop in the heart of the downtown area. The magnificent centrepiece is the neoclassical State Capitol building, designed by Thomas Jefferson, which has been in continuous use since 1788. In its rotunda stands a life-sized statue of George Washington, Virginia's most treasured artwork. The Governor's Mansion, home of Virginia governors since 1813, has been restored and contains its original woodwork, plaster cornices and ornamental ceilings, while other historic buildings in the square include the old Bell Tower, dating from 1824 and the neoclassical Old Finance Building.

**Website:** [www.vacapitol.org/square.htm](http://www.vacapitol.org/square.htm)

## Museum and White House of the Confederacy

Civil War buffs flock to the Museum of the Confederacy, which houses the most comprehensive collection of Confederate artefacts, personal memorabilia, and art to be found anywhere in the United States. The exhibits include artworks, 550 battle flags and 215 uniforms, including those of well-known officers. Beside the museum is the White House of the Confederacy. Tours are available of the 1818 mansion in which Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his family lived during the Civil War, and the property is still furnished with original items.

**Website:** [acwm.org/white-house-of-the-confederacy/](http://acwm.org/white-house-of-the-confederacy/)

## Richmond National Battlefield Park

Union armies repeatedly set out to capture Richmond, strategic capital of the Confederacy, and end the Civil War. Three of those campaigns came within a few miles of the city. The park commemorates 13 different sites associated with those campaigns, including the battlefields at Gaines' Mill, Malvern Hill and Cold Harbor. In 1865, President Abraham Lincoln made a historic visit to the battlefields of Richmond days before his assassination, urging an end to the war. Established in 1936, the park protects 763 acres (308 ha) of historic ground. There are roughly seven miles (11.2km) of well-maintained walking trails around the battlefields.

**Website:** [www.nps.gov/rich](http://www.nps.gov/rich)

## Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Richmond boasts an exceptional Fine Arts Museum, which presents a panorama of world art from ancient to modern, including the largest public Faberge imperial Easter egg collection outside of Russia, consisting of roughly 150 jewel-encrusted creations made for Tsars Alexander III and Nicholas II. The Museum is also home to a collection of English silver, one of the world's leading collections of the art of India, Nepal and Tibet, and six Gobelin Don Quixote tapestries.

**Website:** [vmfa.museum](http://vmfa.museum)

## St John's Episcopal Church

St John's Church has stood on Richmond Hill above the James River since 1741, and is known for having been the venue for the second Virginia Convention in 1775, attended by George Washington and other historic personalities. The church is also where legendary Pocahontas was baptised and married to John Rolfe. The wooden building is still home to its original pulpit and some exquisite stained-glass windows. Between May and September, living history performances are given every Sunday recreating the historic Second Virginia Convention. Informative tours explore the historic significance of the church building and grounds.

**Website:** [www.historicstjohnschurch.org](http://www.historicstjohnschurch.org)

## Virginia Science Museum

The hands-on Virginia Science Museum allows visitors to touch, observe and explore the impact of science on their lives, covering everything from astronomy to computers to flight engineering. Live demonstrations are given daily on each level. Level One has programmes aimed at younger children, while the demonstrations on Levels Two and Three include animal dissections. Other special events are held regularly, with schedules available on the website. The fascinating and fun museum is complemented by The Dome, which at 76 feet (23m) is the largest screen in Virginia. It's 45-minute features cover everything from the Amazon rainforest to astronomy.

**Website:** [www.smv.org](http://www.smv.org)

## Shenandoah National Park

Following the Blue Ridge Mountains for 100 miles (161km) through western Virginia, the Shenandoah National Park is a nature reserve where tens of thousands of animals, including deer and black bears, roam among richly forested slopes. More than 500 miles (800km) of hiking trails snake through the area from the azalea-trimmed Skyline Drive, the 105-mile (169km) long road that runs through the park from the Piedmont Plateau, providing wonderful vistas of the Shenandoah Valley from its overlooks. A free event called Wildflower Weekend is celebrated in May and will appeal to lovers of wild flowers and nature-themed art, and ranger-led tours and programmes are offered between April and October. There are also special activities for kids.

**Website:** [www.nps.gov/shen](http://www.nps.gov/shen)

## Lexington

The sedate town of Lexington, 138 miles (222km) west of Richmond in the Shenandoah Valley, contains one of the most picturesque downtown areas of old buildings in America. Tourists visit the town simply for its ambience, and perhaps to pay tribute to Civil War General Robert E. Lee, who was eventually buried in Lexington along with his famous horse, Traveller. There are many fun outdoor activities and attractions in Lexington, with scenic routes such as the Appalachian Waters Scenic Byway, Blue Ridge Parkway and Rockbridge Rides. Geocaching, hiking, canoeing, horseback riding and golf are all popular activities, while local orchards, wineries, breweries and coffee roasteries also offer tastings in the scenic greater Lexington region.

**Website:** [www.lexingtonvirginia.com](http://www.lexingtonvirginia.com)

## Mount Vernon

One of Virginia's most popular tourist attractions and the highlight of any historical Virginia tour is the colonial estate of George Washington, Mount Vernon. Since its private purchase in 1858, it's been restored and kept as a historic monument. Consisting of 500 acres (202ha) situated on the Potomac River, the gardens, mansion and other buildings are open to the public, and costumed employees demonstrate life in the 18th century. Visitors can even tour Washington's Tomb, which holds ceremonial wreath-layings at 10am and 2pm. In 2007, Mount Vernon was given permission to reopen Washington's distillery, which now produces its own whiskey. The estate also offers cruises on the Potomac River.

**Website:** [www.mountvernon.org](http://www.mountvernon.org)

## Monticello

Monticello was the estate of Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States and author of the Declaration of Independence. The distinctive neoclassical building of the main house was designed by Jefferson himself, furnished with a blend of original and replica pieces. Jefferson's time at Monticello is surrounded by controversy regarding his treatment of his slaves. Monticello has several multimedia exhibitions that deal frankly with the president's slave ownership. The outbuildings and gardens are all open to the public, and offer some stunning sights with beautifully cultivated flower gardens. The gardens are also home to the Center for Historic Plants, a project started by Jefferson himself.

**Website:** [www.monticello.org](http://www.monticello.org)

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**Parking:** The hourly lot charges \$2 per hour; the daily rate is \$12. The economy lot is connected to the terminal via a free shuttle service and charges \$7 per day.

## Norfolk

Norfolk is Virginia's second-most populated city with more than 245,000 residents and is bordered by the grand Elizabeth River and historical Chesapeake Bay. Home to the largest Navy Base in the world and aptly referred to as the 'navy capital,' Norfolk makes for a great break away and sees many visitors year after year return to enjoy this seaside destination.

Its waterfront location makes Norfolk a pleasure for those who value seaside splendour. Offering much in the way of maritime attractions, Norfolk makes for a good break away in the sun and offers much more than just a beautiful shoreline. Norfolk is also home to a lively arts community, boasting some top notch galleries, museums and an impressive opera house.

Visitors often marvel at the unique attractions found in Norfolk. Not only home to the Naval base where visitors can enjoy guided tours and learn about Naval life, visitors can also take some time out to enjoy the likes of the Waterside Festival Marketplace. Overlooking the Elizabeth River, those who pop by can find live entertainment, an attractive array of dining options and superb shopping opportunities. Tourists of the region can also wander through the historic district of Ghent and discover old-world Norfolk as it once was. The downtown area is also a favourite; having flourished over the years it makes for a memorable visit.

Also known as a budget-friendly destination, visitors of Norfolk will no doubt enjoy what the region has to offer, and will save a couple of dollars in the process.

## Getting around in Norfolk

Hampton Roads Transit provides transportation within Norfolk and surrounding cities (including Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Hampton and Newport). Multi-day passes are available. The Tide Light Rail system extends east-to-west through downtown Norfolk, making 11 stops. Trains stop every 10 to 30 minutes depending on time of day, and operate from 6am to 11pm Monday to Thursday, 6am to 12am on Fridays and Saturdays, and from 10.55am to 9.50pm on Sundays and holidays. Taxi stands are located throughout the city; ride-hailing apps such as Lyft and Uber are options. Water taxis are also available from the Norfolk and Portsmouth waterfronts on weekends during the summer.

## Climate in Norfolk

Norfolk and the Virginia Beach area have a humid subtropical climate. Winters (December to February) are mild, with light snowfall averaging around 5.8 inches (147mm) annually; temperatures generally stay between 32F (0C) and 52F (11C). Summers (June to August) are hot and humid with warm evenings, averaging temperatures between 67F (19C) and 87F (31C). Spring and summer are the wettest periods, although rainfall is fairly constant all year long. Norfolk is in a fortuitous location in that it is south of major winter storms and north of hurricanes, and thus is at less risk of storms than most cities on the East Coast of the US.

## Sightseeing in Norfolk

Largely influenced by its watery environment, visitors to Norfolk will find some superb attractions to enjoy. The city has a beautiful shoreline; a given considering it is home to the world's largest naval base. The beach at Ocean View is a popular choice for those looking to take some time out, but there are many superb beaches to choose from. There are also some outstanding maritime centres, museums and nautical memorabilia shops on offer in the region, not to mention the mammoth navy base. But belying its naval reputation, Norfolk is also home to a vibrant arts community, boasting a variety of dynamic art galleries, including the world-class Chrysler Museum of Art, numerous theatres and a grand opera house.

The historic district of Ghent is a popular choice for those looking for something a little different. There are traditional wooden houses, tree-lined boulevards and old churches to see, all resembling the Norfolk of a time gone by. For lovers of history, antiques, art and architecture, this district is certainly worth the visit.

Those in search of some fun after dark won't be disappointed should they stop over in the downtown area of Norfolk. Here great restaurants and chic bars can be relished long into the early hours. For more music and culinary fare, the Waterside Festival Marketplace is also a good bet for live entertainment and some great dining opportunities. From here travellers can also embark on a tour of the harbour and surrounding areas on an elegant tall ship or paddlewheel ferry.

## Norfolk Attractions

## The Chrysler Museum of Art

Originally founded in 1933, the Chrysler Museum of Art is located on the waters of The Hague, in the Ghent district of Norfolk, and is home to the art collection of Walter P. Chrysler Jr. Over time it has increased its collection significantly and is one of Norfolk's most esteemed attractions. The museum is family-friendly and kids especially will love the Daniel Rozin interactive installation.

**Website:** [www.chrysler.org](http://www.chrysler.org)

## Nauticus

Nauticus is a must-see for families on holiday in Norfolk. This maritime-themed science centre and museum now stands where Norfolk's banana pier once stood and features exhibits, interactive theatres and shark touch tanks, as well as a weather station. Open since 1994, the museum is a popular educational attraction in Norfolk for anyone interested in learning about America's maritime history. The AEGIS Theater allows visitors to experience naval battles first-hand, and Secrets of the Deep lets them practise gathering samples from the ocean floor with a nine-foot robotic arm. Nauticus is also home to the USS Wisconsin battleship and the Schooner Virginia, an additional interest for mariners and holidaymakers alike.

**Website:** [www.nauticus.org](http://www.nauticus.org)

## Airports in Norfolk

### Norfolk Airport (ORF)

*Norfolk International Airport*

<http://www.norfolkairport.com>

**Location:** Norfolk The airport is located less than 10 miles (16km) northeast of central Norfolk.

**Time:** GMT -5 (GMT -4 from mid-March to the first Sunday in November).

**Contacts:** +1 757 857 3351

**Getting to the city:** There is no public transport offered to Norfolk Airport; however, taxis, shuttles, and rental cars are available and some local hotels offer free shuttle service to guests.

**Car rental:** Rental cars are available from Alamo, Avis, Budget, Dollar, Enterprise, Hertz and National. The rental car offices are located in the Arrivals Terminal.

**Airport Taxis:** Taxis are available. The companies include Andy's Cab Co., Black and White, City Wide Cabs, Coastal Ride, Duke Cab Co. East Side Cabs, Eden Cab Co., Norfolk Checker, Oceanside Executive, Southside Cab Co., Waterside Taxi Company Inc., and Yellow Cab of Norfolk.

**Facilities:** Airport services include ATMs, a bank, currency exchange, mail drops, conference facilities, a lost and found, USO services, mother's rooms, and a variety of retail shops and dining options.

**Parking:** Short-term parking is charged at \$1 every 30 minutes, with a maximum of \$24 per day. Long-term parking is \$1 per 30 minutes up to \$10 per day.

## Shenandoah Valley

The lush Shenandoah Valley, extending for 200 miles (322km) from Harper's Ferry in West Virginia to Salem and Roanoke, is a combination of history, beauty and adventure. Visitors to the Valley can enjoy spectacular hikes in the Blue Ridge Mountains, follow in the footsteps of Revolutionary and Civil War heroes, explore museums, battlefields and historic homes, or ski and golf at top-class resorts.

Known as the Daughter of the Stars, the Valley can essentially be divided into three; the North, South and Central Valley regions. The Northern Valley area is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts, with exciting opportunities to tackle the Shenandoah River by canoe or kayak, hike the Appalachian Trail or cross-country ski in the mountains.

The Central Valley offers exciting skiing, golfing, snowboarding and fishing opportunities, as well as a chance to explore historical sites, farmers markets and the spectacular Shenandoah Caverns. The Southern part of the Valley boasts several mineral springs, the 215ft (66m) Natural Bridge, historic towns such as Lexington, and the bustling cities of Roanoke and Salem.

## Virginia Coast

Virginia Beach, 119 miles (191km) east of Richmond, is one of the most popular holiday resorts on the East Coast, where thousands of sun lovers flock each spring and summer for a traditional beachfront vacation. Most visitors are drawn to the three-mile (5km) long boardwalk, lined with numerous hotels and restaurants overlooking part of the 20 miles (32km) of unbroken sand that covers the coastline here. The beaches are excellent, and the town hosts the East Coast Surfing Championships, as well as the North American Sand Soccer Championships each year. In fact, Virginia Beach is listed in the Guinness Book of Records for having the longest pleasure beach in the world.

Virginia Beach also has some interesting sightseeing attractions, particularly the Virginia Marine Science Museum, the most popular museum in the state. Historic landmarks include the Old Cape Henry Lighthouse dating from 1791 and Adam Thoroughgood House, built around 1680. There is also the First Landing Seashore State Park (where the Jamestown settlers came ashore) offering nature trails and boating. The Veterans United Home Loans Amphitheater hosts a number of productions throughout the summer.

Virginia Beach is located at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, and is near to a number of interesting towns, including Chesapeake, Hampton, Portsmouth, and Suffolk. Its close proximity and resort town infrastructure make it an excellent base for exploring all of the towns and hamlets of the Virginia coast.

Near Virginia Beach, the three east-Virginian towns of Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Yorktown make up a unique historical attraction where the clock has been turned back 200 years or more. The first British settlers in the 'New World' founded Jamestown in 1607. In nearby Yorktown in 1781 Americans won their independence during the last major battle of the Revolution.

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation looks after 88 original buildings in the town, while 300 others have been reconstructed, including two taverns, a parish church, the courthouse and capitol building. Various local tour companies offer guided tours of the Historic Triangle, and group tours are available.

## Chincoteague Island

Virginia's only resort island, Chincoteague captures the essence of the Chesapeake Bay, the waterman culture and the nostalgic summertime rituals reminisced over by so many families in the region. Its small town is a quaint collection of charming boutiques, divine seafood restaurants, and museums chronicling life on the sea. On this small barrier island, life revolves around the water, the source for both residents' livelihood and visitors' pastimes. Waders in the shallow water rake for clams, while others crab with nets and baited lines. The rewards are the time-honoured traditions of the clambake and crab feast. Brown paper is unrolled across tabletops and guests take up their mallets to crack open freshly steamed crabs smothered in the region's ubiquitous red seasoning, Old Bay.

Chincoteague is connected by a bridge to the large barrier island of Assateague, empty but for pristine stretches of beach, a historic lighthouse, and herds of wild ponies. Along the Assateague National Seashore, in the absence of vendors and noise, beachgoers bask in the sunshine, read books under umbrellas, and enjoy the peaceful beauty. At the height of summer, the event for which Chincoteague is best known takes place: the annual pony swim, poignantly captured in Marguerite Henry's children's classic, *Misty of Chincoteague*. Each year, to manage the wild population, ponies are rounded up by local firemen. These 'saltwater cowboys' then swim the ponies across the Assateague channel to Chincoteague, where they are auctioned off to buyers eager to own one of the unique breed.

# Virginia Attractions

## Overview

Virginia is steeped in history and visitors to the Old Dominion are spoilt for choice when it comes to taking a look into the past. The state is justifiably proud of its place in American history, having produced eight American presidents. Tourists can explore the homes of two of them at Mount Vernon and Monticello, both top attractions.

The city draws in many tourists each year, offering world-class museums as well as natural wonders such as the Luray Caverns, the Natural Bridge and Shenandoah National Park. Once home to the first English settlers on the continent, Virginia also contains fascinating colonial history, including a number of Civil War battlefields. These are most popularly explored within the Richmond National Battlefield Park while many districts of the colonial capital of Williamsburg have been restored to their 18th century splendour.

For something less quaint, the state capital Richmond provides wonderful shopping opportunities as well as some great restaurants specialising in local produce and some award-winning wines. Those with a penchant for the outdoors will also find plenty of diversions in Virginia with its many hiking trails and a beautiful shoreline to occupy visitors during the summer months.

## Capitol Square

Richmond's Capitol Square is an oasis of old trees, statues and green lawns perched on a hilltop in the heart of the downtown area. The magnificent centrepiece is the neoclassical State Capitol building, designed by Thomas Jefferson, which has been in continuous use since 1788. In its rotunda stands a life-sized statue of George Washington, Virginia's most treasured artwork. The Governor's Mansion, home of Virginia governors since 1813, has been restored and contains its original woodwork, plaster cornices and ornamental ceilings, while other historic buildings in the square include the old Bell Tower, dating from 1824 and the neoclassical Old Finance Building.

**Website:** [www.vacapitol.org/square.htm](http://www.vacapitol.org/square.htm)

## Museum and White House of the Confederacy

Civil War buffs flock to the Museum of the Confederacy, which houses the most comprehensive collection of Confederate artefacts, personal memorabilia, and art to be found anywhere in the United States. The exhibits include artworks, 550 battle flags and 215 uniforms, including those of well-known officers. Beside the museum is the White House of the Confederacy. Tours are available of the 1818 mansion in which Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his family lived during the Civil War, and the property is still furnished with original items.

**Website:** [acwm.org/white-house-of-the-confederacy/](http://acwm.org/white-house-of-the-confederacy/)

## Richmond National Battlefield Park

Union armies repeatedly set out to capture Richmond, strategic capital of the Confederacy, and end the Civil War. Three of those campaigns came within a few miles of the city. The park commemorates 13 different sites associated with those campaigns, including the battlefields at Gaines' Mill, Malvern Hill and Cold Harbor. In 1865, President Abraham Lincoln made a historic visit to the battlefields of Richmond days before his assassination, urging an end to the war. Established in 1936, the park protects 763 acres (308 ha) of historic ground. There are roughly seven miles (11.2km) of well-maintained walking trails around the battlefields.

**Website:** [www.nps.gov/rich](http://www.nps.gov/rich)

## Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Richmond boasts an exceptional Fine Arts Museum, which presents a panorama of world art from ancient to modern, including the largest public Faberge imperial Easter egg collection outside of Russia, consisting of roughly 150 jewel-encrusted creations made for Tsars Alexander III and Nicholas II. The Museum is also home to a collection of English silver, one of the world's leading collections of the art of India, Nepal and Tibet, and six Gobelin Don Quixote tapestries.

**Website:** [vmfa.museum](http://vmfa.museum)

## St John's Episcopal Church

St John's Church has stood on Richmond Hill above the James River since 1741, and is known for having been the venue for the second Virginia Convention in 1775, attended by George Washington and other historic personalities. The church is also where legendary Pocahontas was baptised and married to John Rolfe. The wooden building is still home to its original pulpit and some exquisite stained-glass windows. Between May and September, living history performances are given every Sunday recreating the historic Second Virginia Convention. Informative tours explore the historic significance of the church building and grounds.

**Website:** [www.historicstjohnschurch.org](http://www.historicstjohnschurch.org)

## Virginia Science Museum

The hands-on Virginia Science Museum allows visitors to touch, observe and explore the impact of science on their lives, covering everything from astronomy to computers to flight engineering. Live demonstrations are given daily on each level. Level One has programmes aimed at younger children, while the demonstrations on Levels Two and Three include animal dissections. Other special events are held regularly, with schedules available on the website. The fascinating and fun museum is complemented by The Dome, which at 76 feet (23m) is the largest screen in Virginia. It's 45-minute features cover everything from the Amazon rainforest to astronomy.

**Website:** [www.smv.org](http://www.smv.org)

## Shenandoah National Park

Following the Blue Ridge Mountains for 100 miles (161km) through western Virginia, the Shenandoah National Park is a nature reserve where tens of thousands of animals, including deer and black bears, roam among richly forested slopes. More than 500 miles (800km) of hiking trails snake through the area from the azalea-trimmed Skyline Drive, the 105-mile (169km) long road that runs through the park from the Piedmont Plateau, providing wonderful vistas of the Shenandoah Valley from its overlooks. A free event called Wildflower Weekend is celebrated in May and will appeal to lovers of wild flowers and nature-themed art, and ranger-led tours and programmes are offered between April and October. There are also special activities for kids.

**Website:** [www.nps.gov/shen](http://www.nps.gov/shen)

## Lexington

The sedate town of Lexington, 138 miles (222km) west of Richmond in the Shenandoah Valley, contains one of the most picturesque downtown areas of old buildings in America. Tourists visit the town simply for its ambience, and perhaps to pay tribute to Civil War General Robert E. Lee, who was eventually buried in Lexington along with his famous horse, Traveller. There are many fun outdoor activities and attractions in Lexington, with scenic routes such as the Appalachian Waters Scenic Byway, Blue Ridge Parkway and Rockbridge Rides. Geocaching, hiking, canoeing, horseback riding and golf are all popular activities, while local orchards, wineries, breweries and coffee roasteries also offer tastings in the scenic greater Lexington region.

**Website:** [www.lexingtonvirginia.com](http://www.lexingtonvirginia.com)

## The Chrysler Museum of Art

Originally founded in 1933, the Chrysler Museum of Art is located on the waters of The Hague, in the Ghent district of Norfolk, and is home to the art collection of Walter P. Chrysler Jr. Over time it has increased its collection significantly and is one of Norfolk's most esteemed attractions. The museum is family-friendly and kids especially will love the Daniel Rozin interactive installation.

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## Mount Vernon

One of Virginia's most popular tourist attractions and the highlight of any historical Virginia tour is the colonial estate of George Washington, Mount Vernon. Since its private purchase in 1858, it's been restored and kept as a historic monument. Consisting of 500 acres (202ha) situated on the Potomac River, the gardens, mansion and other buildings are open to the public, and costumed employees demonstrate life in the 18th century. Visitors can even tour Washington's Tomb, which holds ceremonial wreath-layings at 10am and 2pm. In 2007, Mount Vernon was given permission to reopen Washington's distillery, which now produces its own whiskey. The estate also offers cruises on the Potomac River.

**Website:** [www.mountvernon.org](http://www.mountvernon.org)

## Monticello

Monticello was the estate of Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States and author of the Declaration of Independence. The distinctive neoclassical building of the main house was designed by Jefferson himself, furnished with a blend of original and replica pieces. Jefferson's time at Monticello is surrounded by controversy regarding his treatment of his slaves. Monticello has several multimedia exhibitions that deal frankly with the president's slave ownership. The outbuildings and gardens are all open to the public, and offer some stunning sights with beautifully cultivated flower gardens. The gardens are also home to the Center for Historic Plants, a project started by Jefferson himself.

**Website:** [www.monticello.org](http://www.monticello.org)

# Currency

The official currency is the US Dollar (USD), which is divided into 100 cents. Only major banks exchange foreign currency. ATMs are widespread and credit cards are widely accepted. Banking hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm.

## Exchange rate for 1 USD - U.S. Dollar

<b>0.00</b> BMD Bermudan Dollar	<b>0.93</b> EUR Euro	<b>0.80</b> GBP U.K. Pound Sterling	<b>152.99</b> JPY Japanese Yen	<b>1.37</b> CAD Canadian Dollar	<b>0.91</b> CHF Swiss Franc
<b>1.52</b> AUD Australian Dollar	<b>39.40</b> UAH Ukrainian Hryvnia	<b>443.91</b> KZT Kazakhstani Tenge	<b>93,075.00</b> LBP Lebanese Pound	<b>4.86</b> LYD Libyan Dinar	<b>6.86</b> BOB Bolivian Boliviano
<b>0.00</b> NPR Nepalese Rupee	<b>0.00</b> OMR Omani Rial	<b>0.00</b> QAR Qatari Rial	<b>1.35</b> SGD Singapore Dollar	<b>10.82</b> SEK Swedish Krona	<b>0.00</b> TTD Trinidad Tobago Dollar
<b>0.00</b> VEF Venezuelan Bolivar	<b>58.11</b> DOP Dominican Peso	<b>0.00</b> HRK Croatian Kuna	<b>16.95</b> MXN Mexican Peso	<b>610.53</b> XOF West African CFA Franc	<b>0.00</b> PGK Papua New Guinean kina
<b>0.00</b> BSD Bahamian Dollar	<b>0.00</b> FJD Fiji Dollar	<b>0.00</b> HNL Honduran Lempira	<b>133.87</b> DZD Algerian Dinar	<b>0.00</b> MMK Myanma Kyat	<b>0.00</b> BWP Botswana Pula
<b>3.72</b> PEN Peruvian Nuevo Sol	<b>938.44</b> CLP Chilean Peso	<b>386.84</b> AMD Armenia Dram	<b>23.29</b> CZK Czech Koruna	<b>17.63</b> MDL Moldova Lei	<b>139.89</b> ISK Icelandic Krona
<b>12,582.40</b> UZS Uzbekistan Sum	<b>3.72</b> ILS Israeli New Sheqel	<b>0.71</b> JOD Jordanian Dinar	<b>0.00</b> KWD Kuwaiti Dinar	<b>38.15</b> UYU Uruguayan Peso	<b>0.00</b> MUR Mauritian Rupee
<b>0.00</b> NIO Nicaraguan Córdoba	<b>10.88</b> NOK Norwegian Krone	<b>4.03</b> PLN Polish Zloty	<b>3.75</b> SAR Saudi Riyal	<b>0.00</b> LKR Sri Lanka Rupee	<b>36.79</b> THB Thai Baht
<b>3.66</b> AED U.A.E Dirham	<b>5.09</b> BRL Brazilian Real	<b>4.63</b> RON Romanian New Leu	<b>7.81</b> HKD Hong Kong Dollar	<b>610.53</b> XAF Central African CFA Franc	<b>25,405.70</b> VND Vietnamese Dong
<b>878.36</b> ARS Argentine Peso	<b>0.00</b> XCD East Caribbean Dollar	<b>0.00</b> GTQ Guatemalan Quetzal	<b>10.06</b> MAD Moroccan Dirham	<b>0.00</b> BHD Bahrain Dinar	<b>1.00</b> PAB Panamanian Balboa
<b>1.70</b> AZN Azerbaijan Manat	<b>3,920.00</b> COP Colombian Peso	<b>88.42</b> KGS Kyrgyzstan Som	<b>362.00</b> HUF Hungarian Forint	<b>10.89</b> TJS Tajikistan Ruble	<b>16,073.70</b> IDR Indonesian Rupiah
<b>47.95</b> EGP Egyptian Pound	<b>1,358.84</b> KRW South Korean Won	<b>7,456.52</b> PYG Paraguayan Guaraní	<b>4.74</b> MYR Malaysian Ringgit	<b>508.31</b> CRC Costa Rican Colón	<b>1.67</b> NZD New Zealand Dollar
<b>277.87</b> PKR Pakistani Rupee	<b>91.39</b> RUB Russian Rouble	<b>18.51</b> ZAR South African Rand	<b>3.13</b> TND Tunisian Dinar	<b>0.00</b> BBD Barbadian Dollar	<b>1.82</b> BGN Bulgarian Lev
<b>32.33</b> TRY Turkish Lira	<b>57.28</b> PHP Philippine Peso	<b>32.31</b> TWD New Taiwan Dollar	<b>1,164.84</b> NGN Nigerian Naira	<b>0.00</b> XPF CFP Franc	<b>0.00</b> GHS Ghanaian Cedi
<b>0.00</b> JMD Jamaican Dollar	<b>0.00</b> ANG Neth. Antillean Guilder	<b>0.00</b> BND Brunei Dollar	<b>108.90</b> RSD Serbian Dinar	<b>7.24</b> CNY Chinese Yuan	<b>6.94</b> DKK Danish Krone
<b>3.49</b> TMT New Turkmenistan Manat	<b>83.42</b> INR Indian Rupee				