



VIRGINIA

The Civil War and award-winning wineries, mountain-biking the Creeper Trail and delicious Brunswick Stew

As the nation gears up to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War (2011 to 2015), the place to go is Virginia, home to more **Civil War battlefields, museums and historic sites** than any other state. At Pamplin Historical Park & The National Museum of the Civil War Soldier, you can view gripping films; interact with costumed interpreters; and tour a cutting-edge museum, a battlefield, slave-life exhibit and antebellum homes. You can even live the life of a soldier for a weekend at Pamplin's Civil War Adventure Camp. At the USS Monitor Center, you can experience life aboard an ironclad warship. **Richmond's** American Civil War Center at Historic Tredegar is housed inside a former Confederate ironworks. At Fredericksburg Spotsylvania National Military Park, rangers lead free History at Sunset walking tours on Friday evenings throughout the summer.

Not only are **Virginia's wineries** taking top honors in national competitions, they're also fun places to visit. At Williamsburg Winery, you can spend the night at its Wedmore Place hotel, where each of the 28 rooms is decorated in the style of a European province. High in the Blue Ridge Mountains, Chateau Morrisette Winery hosts lively festivals such as the Black Dog Wine and Blues Festival (July 10), the Black Dog Wine and Jazz Festival (August 14) and Cinema on the Lawn (September 4). At Barboursville Vineyards, you can eat at Palladio, one of Virginia's best restaurants, and stay overnight in its 1804 Inn. During Veramar Vineyard's three-day Wine Camp, participants live with the Bogaty family and experience hands-on the day-to-day life of a winemaker.

One of the best ways to enjoy Virginia's famous mountain scenery is by mountain biking the beautiful **Virginia Creeper Trail** in the southwest. Easy even for novice bikers, it runs along an old

railroad bed, is smoothly surfaced, and includes dozens of old trestles along the way. In the town of Damascus, outfitters such as Adventure Damascus (adventuredamascus.com) will rent you a bike and take you to the trailhead on White Top Mountain. From there, it's 17 miles back to town ... downhill all the way. Hardened bikers can challenge themselves by riding the entire 35-mile trail.

A hippie haven since the 1970s, the small town of **Floyd** in the Blue Ridge Highlands is now one of the most outstanding arts communities in Virginia. The Bell Gallery and Garden carries the works of many local artists — pottery, glass, fabric and photography — and the Jacksonville Center for the Arts is a farm-turned-arts-incubator with studio spaces, display galleries and classrooms. Floyd is also a hoppin' music center. One of the top venues for bluegrass music is the Floyd Country Store; every Friday night, the store and streets are swarmed when bands perform. Floydfest (July 22 to 25) is one of Virginia's best annual music festivals.

Virginia's **Eastern Shore** is pleasingly off the beaten track. From Virginia Beach, a trip through the amazing 20-mile-long Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel brings you to the southern tip of the Eastern Shore peninsula. At Cape Charles, you'll find a Chesapeake beach where classical music plays at sunset, a charming downtown, and Bay Hill Resort with its Nicklaus and Palmer golf courses. Dave Burden of Southeast Expeditions (southeastexpeditions.net), a kayaking outfitter, will take you exploring the coastal ecosystem; he even does the country's only wine-tasting-by-kayak tour. Farther north is the historic town of Onancock, full of good restaurants such as Flamenco, the Charlotte Hotel, the Inn and Garden Café and Mallard's at the Wharf. At Assateague Island National Seashore, you will find an unspoiled Atlantic beach, wild ponies, a nature center and hiking trails.

Above: Sharp Top Mountain peak looms above Abbott Lake, Bedford, Va.



LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

A Virginia staple since Colonial times, Brunswick Stew is made with chicken and lots of fresh vegetables simmered for hours in large pots. Although it's rarely available in stores, you can find the real thing at fundraisers run by service organizations such as Ruritan Clubs and volunteer fire companies. Brunswick County is said to be where the dish originated.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond (moc.org) has the world's largest collection of artifacts, manuscripts and photographs from the Confederate States of America. Three floors of galleries bring the past to life through such curiosities as "Stonewall" Jackson's forage cap, and Robert E. Lee's field tent. The museum's centerpiece is the home of Confederate President, Jefferson Davis.



TRUE FLAVOR

Though there are many variations of the recipe, classic Virginia barbecue is mainly smoked pork shoulder, hand pulled and slathered with a tomato-based sauce. Among the state's favorite local barbecue joints: Pierce's Barbecue (Williamsburg), Buz & Ned's (Richmond), Virginia Barbecue Company (Ashland), Galax Smokehouse (Galax), and Doumar's (Norfolk).



STATE FISH: Brook Trout

