

Virginia

By Tom Kirvan

A STATE WHERE AMERICA'S STORY BEGINS

Known as the “Mother of Presidents” and the birthplace of America, Virginia is a state where rolling mountains meet Atlantic shores, and cobblestone colonial towns exist just a short drive from modern cities. With a population of approximately 8.7 million people, Virginia offers a rich blend of heritage, geography, and unforgettable destinations for every kind of traveler.

Virginia spans a striking range of landscapes. To the east lies the Atlantic Coast, where beaches and marshlands define the Tidewater region. Inland, the Piedmont region is marked by gentle hills and fertile farmland. Farther west, the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Appalachians rise, creating a haven for outdoor enthusiasts. The Shenandoah Valley, nestled between mountain ridges, is one of the state's most scenic areas and is renowned for its pastoral beauty.

The capital city, Richmond, sits along the James River in central Virginia. As one of America's oldest cities, Richmond is a blend of history and modern vitality. It played a pivotal role during both the American Revolution and the Civil War and now features historic landmarks, a thriving arts scene, and a riverfront that invites kayaking, walking, and relaxation.

Tucked away in southwestern Virginia in Grayson Highlands State Park, Mount Rogers rises to 5,729 feet, making it the highest point in the state. This remote peak is a favorite among hikers and backpackers, especially those trekking sections of the Appalachian Trail, which passes nearby.

Few states rival Virginia's significance in American history. It was the site of the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown in 1607. It played a central role in the American Revolution, Civil War, and formation of the United States. Eight U.S. presidents were born in Virginia – more than any other state – including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison.

During the Civil War, Richmond served as the capital of the Confederacy, and many of the war's pivotal battles were fought on Virginia soil, including Manassas (Bull Run), Fredericksburg, and Appomattox, where the war ended.

Virginia's legacy is not without complexity. It was central to the institution of slavery, and today, many historic sites have embraced a broader narrative that includes the stories of the enslaved and their fight for freedom. This evolving interpretation offers visitors a deeper, more honest understanding of America's past.



Fast Facts

Capital: Richmond

Population: 8.7 million

Highest Point: Mount Rogers (5,729 feet)

Longest River: James River (350 miles)

Primerus Members:

- **Goodman Allen Donnelly, PBLI/PDI**
(Charlottesville, Virginia, U.S.)
- **Goodman Allen Donnelly, PBLI/PDI**
(Glen Allen, Virginia, U.S.)
- **Goodman Allen Donnelly, PBLI/PDI**
(Norfolk, Virginia, U.S.)
- **Goodman Allen Donnelly, PBLI/PDI**
(Williamsburg, Virginia, U.S.)
- **Wharton Aldhizer & Weaver, PLC, PBLI/PDI**
(Harrisonburg, Virginia, U.S.)

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Five Must-See Destinations

- **Colonial Williamsburg:** Step back in time at Colonial Williamsburg, the world's largest living history museum. Here, the 18th century is brought vividly to life through costumed interpreters, historic buildings, and interactive exhibits. Visitors can tour blacksmith shops, dine in taverns once frequented by revolutionaries, and experience what daily life was like on the eve of the American Revolution.
- **Shenandoah National Park and Skyline Drive:** One of the most iconic drives in the United States, Skyline Drive runs 105 miles along the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains, offering spectacular views, especially in autumn. The road winds through Shenandoah National Park, home to waterfalls, hiking trails like Old Rag and Dark Hollow Falls, and abundant wildlife including deer, black bears, and songbirds.
- **Monticello:** Near Charlottesville lies Monticello, the mountaintop estate of Thomas Jefferson, the third U.S. president and author of the Declaration of Independence. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Monticello showcases Jefferson's architectural genius, gardens, and inventions. The site also includes a powerful and expanding focus on the lives of the enslaved people who lived and worked on the plantation.
- **Virginia Beach:** Along the southeastern coast, Virginia Beach is a popular seaside getaway. Its three-mile oceanfront boardwalk, wide sandy beaches, and lively entertainment scene make it perfect for families and couples alike. Outdoor lovers can kayak through First Landing State Park, or spot dolphins and whales along the coast.
- **Mount Vernon:** Just south of Washington, D.C. is Mount Vernon, the beloved plantation home of George Washington. Overlooking the Potomac River, this meticulously preserved estate includes the mansion, gardens, working farm, museum, and Washington's tomb. Interactive displays and knowledgeable guides offer insight into the first U.S. president's life, legacy, and the complexities of 18th-century plantation society.