

VIRGINIA GETAWAYS

BY JAYNE CLARK

WHY HIDE FROM WINTER WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY DELIGHTFUL WAYS TO EMBRACE IT? NOT FAR FROM WASHINGTON, DOWNHILL SKIING, EAGLE-WATCHING AND MORE, AWAIT THOSE EAGER TO GET OUT AND ENJOY THE SEASON.

WHERE: HARRISONBURG

DISTANCE FROM DOWNTOWN D.C.: 130 MILES

Site of Virginia's first recognized arts and culture district, this small Shenandoah Valley city is big on cutting-edge creativity. Among the dozen-plus art galleries is Oasis Fine Art & Craft, a cooperative of 45 artists working in sculpture, fiber art, pottery and other media. Or take in a live show at the Forbes Center for the Performing Arts at James Madison University. The perfect antidote to a cold winter's day: wood-fired pizza or handmade pasta at Bella Luna, set in a cozy historic livery. Lodging options include By the Side of the Road Inn & Cottages, with four B&B suites in a circa-1790 manor house, three luxury cottages with fireplaces and whirlpool tubs, and two modern pond-side cottages with shower rooms.

DON'T MISS: Massanutten Resort, 11 miles east of the city. Its snow-making capability guarantees downhill schussing on 14 ski trails. The resort also sports two terrain parks and a downhill tubing park. If you're not into skiing or snowboarding, get a bird's-eye view of the action via the 800-foot dual-racer Mega Zip. When nature delivers, cross country skiers head for one of the resort's two golf courses. And when it's time to come in from the cold, head for the indoor water park featuring multiple aquatic amusements in water heated to an ahh-inducing 84 degrees. Afterward, relax with a hot toddy, local wine or craft beer at Base Camp, a 5,000-square-foot slope-side patio under a giant umbrella roof.

INFORMATION: VisitHarrisonburgVa.com

WHERE: CALEDON STATE PARK, KING GEORGE

DISTANCE FROM DOWNTOWN D.C.: 58 MILES

Winter is prime time for bald-eagle viewing in this National Natural Landmark near Fredericksburg. Known for its old-growth forest, the 2,579-acre haven is home to resident eagles year-round. But in winter, they're joined by migrating birds, making the site home to one of the East Coast's largest concentrations of bald eagles. Fun fact: The tract



George Washington's Mount Vernon
Credit: Buddy Secor



Caledon State Park



Caledon State Park
Credit: Bill Crabtree, Jr



was established in 1659 as Caledon Plantation by John Alexander, a Scottish immigrant who later purchased what is now the city of Alexandria for 6,000 pounds of tobacco. In 1974, Alexander's descendants donated the land to the state, but to protect the eagle habitat, it didn't become a park until 2012. Fourteen easy to moderate hiking trails, ranging from half a mile to more than two miles, wind through the forest. A visitor center in the 1910 home of former owners, contains exhibits on bald eagles and local fauna. Kids will enjoy the touch table, with snakeskins, animal skulls, deer antlers and even a bearskin.

DON'T MISS: Belle Grove Plantation, 11 miles away. The manor house, built in 1791, is the birthplace of President James Madison. The house and grounds are also rich in Civil War-era history. Lincoln assassin John Wilkes Booth fled across the Rappahannock River from here, pursued by Union soldiers. It's now a bed and breakfast, but daily tours are open to the public.

INFORMATION: Virginia.org

WHERE: GEORGE WASHINGTON'S MOUNT VERNON, MOUNT VERNON
DISTANCE FROM DOWNTOWN D.C.: 17 MILES

Winter is a quieter, less hectic season at George Washington's Potomac River estate. Time it right (Nov. 26 – Jan. 6) and you can get in on Christmas at Mount Vernon festivities. Christmas was an important religious holiday and the Washington's entertained frequently during the season. But don't expect Christmas trees and

mistletoe, which didn't factor into the revelry of the era. Chocolate did, however, and costumed interpreters demonstrate daily how cacao seed was processed at the estate for making hot chocolate and chocolate tea.

On select dates in November and December, take a character-guided candlelit tour focused on 18th-century holiday customs. Tour Mount Vernon's slave quarters, blacksmith shop and greenhouse. There's also an opportunity to try your hand at 18th-century footwork in dance lessons with costumed interpreters.

On December 15th and 16th, join Mount Vernon for an evening of family-friendly fun and fireworks choreographed to holiday music, with fireworks beginning around 9PM. Take a stroll through the estate while being serenaded by local choirs, visit with re-enactors from the First Virginia Regiment in winter encampment, and learn 18th-century dance moves from costumed guides in the Greenhouse. George and Martha Washington will also be on site to greet Mount Vernon's holiday guests.

DON'T MISS: A photo op with Aladdin the Christmas Camel. Washington is known to have had an interest in both domestic and exotic animals, and in 1787, records show he paid 18 shillings to have a camel brought to the estate for the amusement of his holiday guests. A costumed interpreter talks about camels and other exotic animals that made appearances at the estate in Washington's day.

INFORMATION: Mountvernon.org



The Workhouse Arts Center



The Barns at Wolf Trap



The Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center

FAIRFAX COUNTY

Across the river from our nation's capital in the heart of Northern Virginia, you'll find Fairfax County, home to a treasure-trove of premiere historic attractions, welcoming accommodations, and world-class arts, natural and cultural resources. Fairfax County is a destination worth exploring year-round, but it's an especially attractive place to visit during the late fall and winter months because of the special events surrounding the holiday season and the always-temperate indoor oriented attractions. Here are just a few suggestions of how you can have fun on your next visit.

THE SMITHSONIAN'S NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM STEVEN F. UDVAR-HAZY CENTER

is the companion facility to the Air and Space Museum on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. It's the perfect place to spend a crisp fall or winter day — exploring its two huge hangars where thousands of aviation and space artifacts, including a Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird, a Concorde, and the iconic Space Shuttle Discovery. The Center also houses the Airbus IMAX® Theater and features the Donald D. Engen Observation Tower, which gives you a 360-degree bird's-eye view of Washington Dulles International Airport and the surrounding area.

Don't miss: Daily docent-led tours, flight simulators, a movie in the IMAX theatre, the Donald D. Engen Observation Tower.

THE WORKHOUSE ARTS CENTER

is set on 55 acres of land on the campus of what used to be the historic D.C. Workhouse and Reformatory where prisoners (including imprisoned suffragettes) built the facilities and farmed the land, gaining skills to walk a steady path upon release. Today, that legacy of healing and creation is carried forth on a campus housing 65 studio artists and over 100 exhibitions showcasing craftspeople from painters to glassblowers to fiber artists. Visitors are encouraged stop in to watch the resident artists at work in their studios, purchase one-of-a-kind creations, or enjoy one of the hundreds of theatrical, dance, comedy or musical performances held year-round on campus.

Don't miss: Second Saturday Art Walks, the Prison Museum, the artist studios and exhibitions.

THE BARNS AT WOLF TRAP is a popular night spot for D.C. area music lovers. At 382 seats, it allows audiences to experience performances in an intimate setting. You'll find more than 80 performances annually between October and May, everything from jazz greats to chamber musicians to legendary folk singers. The venue's unique name stems from it being constructed out of 2 adjacent 18th century barns refurbished and refined that allow for the superb acoustics and amenities to really take center stage. The Barns were donated in 1981 by Wolf Trap founder Catherine Filene Shouse.

Don't miss: The full bar and concessions available to patrons 90 minutes prior to performances, the superb acoustics and state-of-the-art sound system.



WINTER IN LOUDOUN COUNTY

Christmas in Middleburg
Credit: Visit Loudoun

THE HORSE IN ANCIENT GREEK ART SPECIAL EXHIBITION

Discover a collection of Greek vases and sculptures from the 8th through the 4th centuries BCE that explore the significance of the horse in ancient Greek culture, the superb horsemanship skills of the ancient Greeks and imagery of the horse in ancient myth, war, sport and competition.

National Sporting Library & Museum

Through January 14, 2018

LOCO HANGAR FEST

Tap into the LoCo Ale Trail and experience craft beer from more than a dozen Loudoun County breweries at this event held in a private jet hangar. Home to

more than 22 breweries, this is a perfect place to sample some of the 200 brews created in Loudoun on any given day, meet with brewmasters and discover why Loudoun is a must-visit beer destination.

ProJet Aviation Corporate Hangar
November 11, 2017

CHRISTMAS IN MIDDLEBURG

Celebrate the season in the romantic and historic town of Middleburg. Watch the iconic horses and hounds take to the streets for the annual hunt parade followed by a traditional Christmas parade, hayrides, a progressive food and wine tour, artisan displays and more.

December 1-3, 2017

HOLIDAYS IN HISTORIC LEESBURG

With decorated windows and street lamps glowing in the crisp evening air, historic Leesburg looks like a scene from a vintage postcard during the holidays. Celebrate the season with a tree and menorah lighting and performances from local groups. Stay the weekend to partake in the annual craft fair where 90 artisans will feature everything from stained glass and jewelry to candles and hand-carved wooden goods.

December 1-3, 2017

LOVETTSVILLE CHRISTKINDLMARKT

The Loudoun Valley German Society presents the annual Christkindlmarkt, a traditional

German Christmas market. Enjoy a glass of mulled wine, German sausage platters and artisan sweets while being serenaded by a strolling accordionist playing old time German and Austrian carols. Children will enjoy visiting with St. Nicholas dressed in full bishop's attire imported from Bavaria, the electric train display, pony rides, face painting, story telling, and more. Shop the unique gifts from a wide variety of juried artisans and crafters including jewelry, pottery, ornaments, wood carvings, and more.

December 2-3, 2017

For a complete listing of winter events and activities, visit visitloudoun.org