

Ten Destinations for a Brush with Authenticity in Virginia

RICHMOND, Va. – Cultural passions run deep in Virginia – from music to art to food and racing, Virginia’s cultural traditions are as beautiful and diverse as the people who keep them alive. Explore these ten destinations guaranteed to offer a brush with authenticity.

Experience the Music and Culture of Appalachia: Immerse yourself in the passion of bluegrass music and the culture that gave it life when you travel *The Crooked Road: Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail*. Venues such as the Carter Family Fold, the Rex Theater and the Ralph Stanley Museum bring to life the infectious energy of the music – and you’ll never forget the people you meet there.

Attend a Virginia Indian Powwow: Your spirits will soar on eagles’ wings as brilliantly costumed men and women perform the dances of their ancestors set to rhythmic drum beats and chants. Vendors sell authentic handmade wares, clothing and musical instruments. Virginia Indian powwows are held throughout the Commonwealth and are designed to bring together people of all cultures to experience and be a part of the festivities.

Fulfill Artistic Passions: Fine quilts, exquisite pottery, forged metalcraft, sculpture, folk art and treasures of the canvas – nearly everywhere you go in Virginia you’ll find skilled artists and craftspeople. In Southwest Virginia, visit the artisans of the Round the Mountain or 16 Hands groups. Meet working artists in their studios at the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria or the D’Art Center in Norfolk. You’ll bring a piece of Virginia home with you that you’ll treasure as much as your visit.

Sample Virginia’s Culinary Culture: From peanut soup to Smithfield ham to Chesapeake Bay oysters and crabs – Virginia’s indigenous cuisine has thrilled taste buds from Colonial times to present. Go on a Virginia culinary tour from the historic taverns of Colonial Williamsburg to an Eastern Shore seafood shack or a Southern Virginia small town café. You’ll discover what the Founding Fathers knew – Virginia is for Food Lovers!

Go Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Auto racing has been a tradition in Virginia since the days running the law on the backroads. NASCAR races, and all the tailgating and people watching that go with it, come to Richmond and Martinsville each year. The Virginia International Raceway is a top road race course that brings drivers from around the world.

Explore African American Culture: Virginia is a treasure trove of African American heritage sites. In Hampton, visit Emancipation Oak, Old Point Comfort and Fort Monroe. The Hampton University Museum is the oldest and largest African American museum in the country. Richmond’s historic Jackson Ward, the “Harlem of the South,” is experiencing a vibrant rebirth.

Milk a Cow or Get Lost in a Corn Maze: Virginia’s agrarian traditions are now yours to experience. Get your hands dirty and have the experience of a lifetime as an “agri-tourist.” Visit a working Virginia farm and learn how to milk a cow or shear a sheep. You can pet an alpaca – or a pig, get lost in a corn maze or pick a bushel of apples.

Rub Elbows with the Watermen of the Chesapeake: Take the ferry to Tangier Island, where the locals still speak an enchanting version of Elizabethan English. Watermen bring their fresh catch of crabs and fish to the docks on Tangier and along the Chesapeake shorelines. Step aboard a deadrise, the preferred craft of the waterman and the official boat of Virginia.

Come to the Folk Festival: Richmond was home for three years to the National Folk Festival and now has its very own Richmond Folk Festival, October 10-12. Top performers from across the country and around the world will assemble to perform music and dance in a memorable celebration.

Step Back in Time in Mennonite Country: The Mennonite community in the central Shenandoah Valley centers itself on long-held traditions of family and faith. Horse-drawn buggies are a common site on area roads. Visit the Dayton Farmers Market or other specialty shops for locally-produced quilts, crafts and good eats. Meet the good, hard working people of the region and learn about their fascinating way of life. Ready for a brush with authenticity? Visit Portraits of Passion on www.Virginia.org for more cultural heritage destinations and watch Wayne Henderson as he plays one of his own guitars. Or call 1-800-VISITVA to request a free *Virginia is for Lovers – Live Passionately* travel guide.

#