

# VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS

## *Feature*

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## Enjoy A Virginia Resort During the Holidays

Join the ranks of travelers throughout America who've discovered how to take the stress out of their holiday season with a family resort vacation in Virginia.

Nationwide, travel during the winter months has risen more than 10 percent in the last five years.

A winter family vacation in Virginia affords all the comforts and holiday trimmings of home — without the hassle. Visitors to Virginia's reputable resorts find vast recreational opportunities, terrific cuisine, shopping diversions and an abundance of history and culture at every turn. From ski resorts in the Blue Ridge Mountains, to 18th-century Yuletide celebrations, Atlantic Ocean beaches and the suburbs of Washington, D.C., the courtesies of Southern holiday traditions ring true in Virginia

What would the holiday season be without a little shopping?

The Northern Virginia region serves up some of the best shopping on the East Coast. The Ritz-Carlton at Tysons Corner features a tony metropolitan getaway near the best upscale shopping in Virginia. Adjacent to the hotel, the Galleria at Tysons II includes Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman Marcus and Macy's as anchor stores. Nordstrom, Lord & Taylor, Bloomingdales and other fashionable shops greet visitors to Tysons

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Corner Center, across the street from the Ritz-Carlton. A short distance away, visitors discover Fairfax Square Mall — home to Tiffany & Co., Fendi, Gucci, Hermes and Louis Vuitton. Several weekend getaway packages — with either a room or a suite for two — await visitors to the Ritz-Carlton during the holiday season. And for those who shopped until they dropped, a variety of fitness and lifestyle services, personal training and treatments — at the hotel's recently added two-story spa — will rejuvenate.

For a snow-capped holiday, visit one of Virginia's four ski resorts found in the Shenandoah Valley and Central Virginia regions of the state. At Bryce Resort — in the Shenandoah Valley town of Basye — a new ski building housing a larger ski rental area and a children's ski school await those wanting to hit the slopes. Farther south and 10 miles east of Harrisonburg, skiers and snowboarders dreaming of a white Christmas discover snow, a snowboard park and a 1,100-foot vertical drop — the highest in Virginia, Maryland or Pennsylvania — at Massanutten Resort.

For an elegant holiday, travel to The Homestead, a tradition for many families. Visitors to the property, located 20 miles north of Covington, partake in winter activities including skiing, snowboarding and ice skating. The recently renovated European-style spa and natural hot springs-fed indoor pools indulge guests eager for pampering. Weather permitting, horseback riding, carriage rides, hiking, golf, skeet shooting, sporting clays and hiking round out the options. Seasonal music by local choirs, showings of "Miracle on 34th Street" and a tree in every guest room create a warm holiday atmosphere. The Homestead, set on 16,000 acres in the Allegheny Mountains, offers attractive getaway packages in December.

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Central Virginia affords travelers the opportunity to ski at Wintergreen Resort, located near the Blue Ridge Parkway. Wintergreen, a four-season resort community, offers skiing, snowboarding, golfing, hiking, fishing, tennis and indoor sports facilities. This year, Wintergreen's Appalachian Mountain Christmas package includes free skiing and lift tickets with a two-night or longer stay. Thanksgiving and New Year's packages are also available.

Holiday food demonstrations, roaring Yule-log fires, and carriage rides await holiday guests at the Boar's Head Inn and Sports Club outside Charlottesville. This 53-acre country estate features a special holiday package, Dec. 23-26, with a colonial Christmas carol dinner theater, breakfast with Santa Claus and seasonal musical performances, as well as year-round tennis, squash, golf, horseback riding, hot air balloon rides, facials and massages.

For an English country manor experience, plan to spend the holidays at Keswick Hall, outside Charlottesville. Guests to the 600-acre, 48-room property — named "Country House Hotel of the Year in 1994" by Andrew Harper's *Hideaway Report* — enjoy a traditional Thanksgiving and Christmas Day meal and have use of Keswick Club facilities. Or ring in 1997 at the gala black tie masquerade ball on New Year's Eve before retiring to a beautifully appointed Laura Ashley-decorated room.

Virginia's Tidewater and Hampton Roads area entices tradition-loving holiday travelers to the Tides Lodge Resort and Country Club in Irvington each winter. Nestled on the Rappahannock River off Route 3, the Tides Lodge affords leisurely Thanksgiving and Christmas luxury. Following a bountiful Thanksgiving weekend, the resort

transforms itself for the holidays with colonial-style decorations hand-crafted by the staff. Guests enjoy caroling, wassail parties and each receives a special gift from Saint Nicholas on Christmas Eve.

Thanksgiving weekend marks the start of the holiday season at Founders Inn, Virginia Beach's only 4-diamond hotel. A 40-foot live tree highlights the hotel's atrium, and choirs and choral groups fill the air with beautiful music. Carriage rides lead past thousands of lights illuminating the hotel's 26 acres.

Best known for its beautiful and intricate holiday decorations created from greenery and fruits, Colonial Williamsburg bustles with holiday activity. Bonfires, carolers and the scent of warm apple cider fill the world's oldest and largest living history museum. Attractively priced two-night holiday packages at the Williamsburg Inn, Williamsburg Lodge, Williamsburg Woodlands and Governor's Inn include some meals and admission to the historic area, a tour and lecture.

With the help of city and local tourism offices, visitors can also develop their own travel packages. Almost every town and community observes the holidays with special activities and events ranging from candlelight tours to "First Night" celebrations. Plan now to escape the hustle this winter by traveling to Virginia where memorable holiday moments abound.

For a free Virginia is for lovers Travel Guide and state highway map, contact the Virginia Tourism Corp., 901 E. Byrd St., Richmond, VA 23219, or call toll-free (800) 932-5827 or (804) 786-4484. Virginia travel information is also available through the VISIT Virginia web site at <<http://www.VIRGINIA.org>>.

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