

The Best of Virginia

In 2007 Virginia celebrated the 400th anniversary of the landing of the first permanent English-speaking colonists in North America. That small band of gentlemen and tradesmen had a rough start at Jamestown, but within a few years this beautiful and bountiful land had greatly rewarded them for their courageous efforts. They first set foot on a sandy Atlantic Ocean beach at Cape Charles, at the mouth of one of the world's great estuaries, the Chesapeake Bay. Beyond them lay a varied, rich, and scenic land. They settled beside one of the great tidal rivers whose tributaries led their descendants through the rolling hills of the Piedmont, over the Blue Ridge Mountains, and into the great valleys beyond.

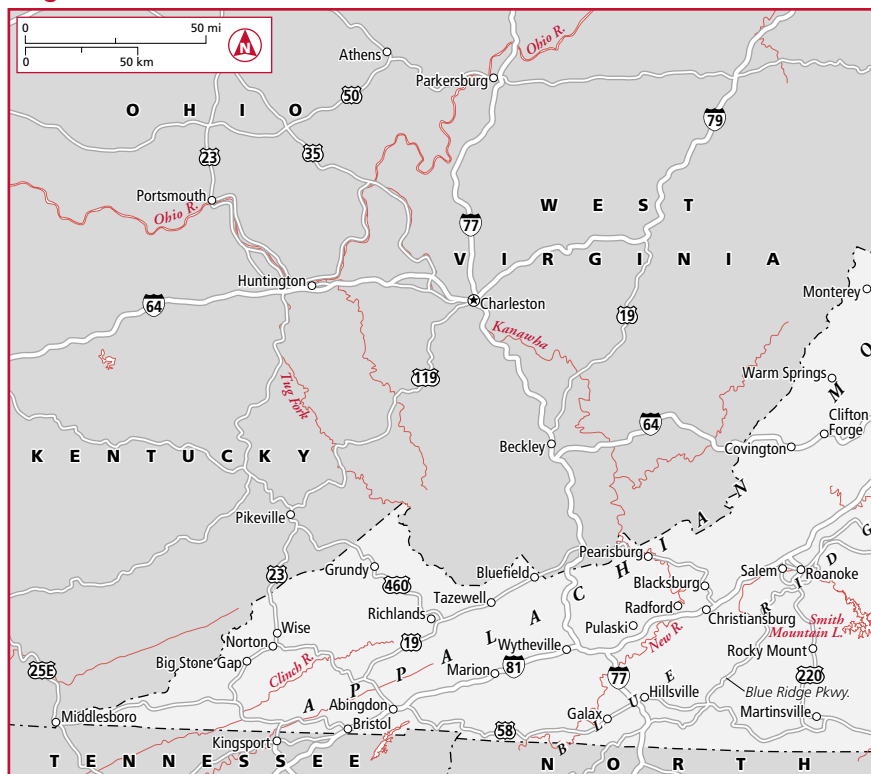
Today, the history-loving Commonwealth of Virginia abounds with historic homes and plantations, buildings that rang with revolutionary oratory, museums that recall the bloody Civil War fought on its soil, and small towns that seem little changed since Colonial times. Conservation efforts have kept a great deal of Virginia's wilderness looking much as it did in 1607, making the state a prime destination for lovers of the great outdoors. Virginia has an abundance of places to indulge your passion.

Given so much to cover in relatively few pages, this entire book could be called *Frommer's Best of Virginia*. In this chapter, I choose what I consider to be the best of the best. You'll surely come up with your own list as you travel through the state. Be sure to see the destination chapters later in this book for full details on the places mentioned below.

1 The Best of Colonial Virginia

- **Old Town Alexandria:** Although Alexandria is very much part of metro Washington, D.C., the historic district known as Old Town evokes the time when the nation's early leaders strolled its streets and partook of grog at Gadsby's Tavern. See "Alexandria" in chapter 4.
- **Mount Vernon:** When he wasn't off surveying, fighting in the French and Indian Wars, leading the American Revolution, or serving as our first president, George Washington made his home at a plantation 8 miles south of Alexandria. Restored to look as it was in Washington's day, Mount Vernon is America's second-most-visited historic home. See "Mount Vernon & the Potomac Plantations" in chapter 4.
- **Fredericksburg:** Not only did the Fredericksburg area play a role in the birth of a nation, it was the boyhood home of George Washington. James Monroe, who as president kept European powers out of the Americas by promulgating the Monroe Doctrine, lived here before he moved to Charlottesville. The great Confederate leader Robert E. Lee was born near here a generation later. Fredericksburg still retains much of the charm it

Virginia



possessed in those early days. See chapter 5.

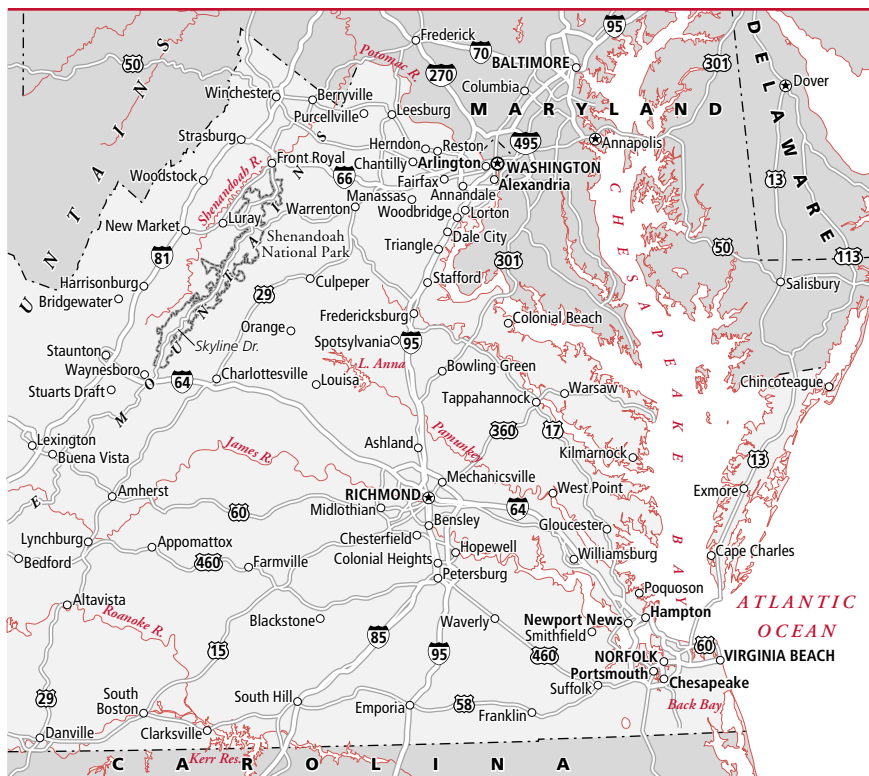
- **Charlottesville:** If Washington was the father of the United States, then Thomas Jefferson was its intellectual genius. This scholar, lawyer, writer, and architect built two monuments—his lovely hilltop home, Monticello, and the University of Virginia—that still evoke memories of this great thinker and patriot. See chapter 6.

- **Williamsburg, Jamestown & Yorktown:** Known as the Historic Triangle, these three towns are the finest examples of Colonial America to be found. Colonial Williamsburg looks as it appeared when it was the capital of Virginia in the 18th century. The original Jamestown settlement is now a national historical park, as is Yorktown, where Washington defeated Lord Cornwallis to end the American Revolution. See chapter 10.

2 The Best of Civil War Virginia

When the Civil War broke out in 1861 and the Confederacy moved its capital to Richmond, the state became the prime

target of the Union armies. Virginia saw more battles than any other state, as Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia



turned back one assault after another. Today you can visit the sites of many key battles, all of them national historical parks.

- **Manassas:** The first battle of the war occurred along Bull Run near Manassas in northern Virginia, and it was a shock to the Union (and thousands of spectators who came from Washington to watch) when the rebels engineered a victory over a disorganized Union force. They won again at the Second Battle of Manassas. See “The Hunt Country” in chapter 4.
- **Fredericksburg:** No other town in Virginia has as many significant battlefields as Fredericksburg. Lee used the Rappahannock River as a natural

line of defense, and he fought several battles against Union armies trying to advance on Richmond. You can visit the battlefields in town, and at Chancellorsville and the Wilderness, in a day. See chapter 5.

- **Appomattox Court House:** After the fall of Petersburg in 1865, Lee fled for little more than a week until realizing that continuing the war was fruitless. On April 9, he met Grant at Wilbur McLean’s farmhouse and surrendered his sword. America’s bloodiest conflict was over. The farmhouse is preserved as part of Appomattox Court House National Historical Park. See “What to See & Do” in “Charlottesville,” chapter 6.

- **Richmond:** The capital of the Confederacy, Richmond has many reminders of the war, including the magnificent Museum of the Confederacy and the White House of the Confederacy, home of President Jefferson Davis. Monument Avenue is lined with statues of the rebel leaders. The city's eastern outskirts are ringed with battle sites, part of the Richmond National Battlefield Park. See chapter 9.
- **Petersburg:** After nearly 4 years of trying to capture Richmond, Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant bypassed the Southern capital in 1864 and headed for the railroad junction of Petersburg, the lifeline of the Confederate capital. Even there, he was forced into a siege situation, but finally, in April 1865, Grant broke through and forced Lee into a westward retreat. See "An Easy Excursion to Petersburg" in chapter 9.

3 The Best of the Great Outdoors

Virginia has hundreds of thousands of acres of natural beauty preserved in national and state parks, national forests, and recreation areas. Especially in the mountains, you can find more than 1,000 miles of trails for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. The Chesapeake Bay offers boating and fishing, and the Atlantic beaches are among the best on the East Coast.

- **Shenandoah National Park:** Nearly two million visitors a year venture into the Shenandoah National Park, which straddles the Blue Ridge Mountains from Front Royal to Rockfish Gap. Many visitors merely drive along the 105-mile Skyline Drive, one of America's most scenic routes, but the park has more than 500 miles of hiking trails, including 101 miles of the Appalachian Trail. Many trails start at the Skyline Drive and drop down into hollows and canyons, some of them with waterfalls. Even on the Skyline Drive, you are likely to encounter deer, and you might even see bear, bobcat, and wild turkey. See "Shenandoah National Park & the Skyline Drive" in chapter 7.
- **Running the Rivers** (Front Royal, Luray, Lexington, Richmond): The South Fork of the Shenandoah River twists and turns its way between the valley towns of Front Royal and Luray, making it a perfect venue for rafting, canoeing, and kayaking—or just floating along in an inner tube. The James River can be swift and turbulent as it crosses the Shenandoah Valley, cuts through the Blue Ridge Mountains, and courses its way across the Piedmont to Hampton Roads. Depending on the amount of rain, you may be able to raft down the James through metropolitan Richmond. See chapters 7 and 9.
- **Mount Rogers National Recreation Area:** While you won't be alone in Shenandoah National Park, you could have a hiking, biking, horseback-riding, or cross-country skiing trail all to yourself in Mount Rogers National Recreation Area. This wild land in the Southwest Highlands occupies some 117,000 acres of forest and includes its namesake, Virginia's highest peak. Two of Virginia's finest rails-to-trails hiking, biking, and riding paths serve as bookends to the 60-mile-long recreation area: the New River Trail, near Wytheville, and the Virginia Creeper Trail, from Abingdon to White Top Mountain. See "The Great Outdoors in the Southwest Highlands" in chapter 8.
- **Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge/False Cape State Park** (Virginia Beach): You can't sunbathe or swim

on the beach of Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, but you can hike through the dunes or take a canoe into the marshes, which are on the Atlantic Flyway for migrating birds. You can sunbathe and swim at the adjoining False Cape State Park, but it's so out-of-the-way that you'll have to bring your own drinking water. See "Parks & Wildlife Refuges" in the Virginia Beach section of chapter 11.

- **Assateague Island:** Of all the natural areas in Virginia, none surpasses

Assateague, which keeps the Atlantic Ocean from the back bays of Chincoteague. Here you will find the famous wild ponies in Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and relatively tame humans strolling along some 37 miles of pristine beach. Assateague Island is also situated directly on the Atlantic Flyway, making it one of the best bird-watching sites in the country. See "Chincoteague & Assateague Islands" in chapter 11.

4 The Best Scenic Drives

The Old Dominion has some of America's most beautiful scenic drives.

- **George Washington Memorial Parkway** (northern Virginia): Stay away during rush hour, when it becomes a major artery into and out of Washington, D.C. But any other time, the "G.W. Parkway" is a great drive along the Potomac River from I-495 at the Maryland line to Mount Vernon. The views of Washington's monuments are unparalleled. See "A Scenic Drive along the Potomac River" in chapter 4.
- **The Presidents Route (Va. 20;** Charlottesville to Montpelier): Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe would travel the 25 miles north to visit their friends James and Dolley Madison by a winding wagon trail. Today that road is known as Va. 20, and it's still a scenic wonder through the modern vineyards and expensive horse farms of the Blue Ridge foothills. See "James Madison's Montpelier" in chapter 6.
- **Skyline Drive** (Shenandoah National Park): Few roads anywhere can top the Skyline Drive, which twists and turns 105 miles along the Blue Ridge crest in Shenandoah National Park. The views over the rolling Piedmont

to the east and Shenandoah Valley to the west are spectacular, especially during spring, when the wildflowers are in bloom, and in fall, when the leaves change from green to brilliant hues of rust, orange, and yellow. See "Shenandoah National Park & the Skyline Drive" in chapter 7.

- **Lexington to Hot Springs:** Va. 39 runs from Lexington to Hot Springs via the Goshen Pass, a picturesque gorge cut by the Maury River. You can make a loop by continuing north from Hot Springs via U.S. 220 to the beautiful village of Monterey in "Virginia's Switzerland." From Monterey, you can cross the mountains via U.S. 250 to Staunton and I-81. See chapter 7.
- **Blue Ridge Parkway:** A continuation of the Skyline Drive, this road continues along the Blue Ridge crest south to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina. Of the 218 miles in Virginia, the most scenic are north of Roanoke. See "The Blue Ridge Parkway" in chapter 8.
- **Colonial Parkway:** It's not long, but the Colonial Parkway between Jamestown, Williamsburg, and Yorktown has its scenic merits, especially the views of the James River near

Jamestown and of the York River near Yorktown. See chapter 10.

- **Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel:** A man-made wonder, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel runs for 17 miles

over—and under—the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay between Norfolk and the Eastern Shore. You can barely see land when you're in the middle. See chapter 11.

5 The Most Charming Small Towns

Virginia's many lovely small towns capture and nurture the state's history and culture. This is especially true in the Shenandoah Valley, where I-81 and U.S. 11 follow the route of the Colonial-era Valley Pike, thus continuing to string together Winchester, Strasburg, Staunton, and Lexington, all possessed of 18th- and 19th-century brick and stone buildings.

- **Middleburg:** The self-proclaimed capital of Virginia's Hunt Country, Middleburg takes up barely 6 blocks along U.S. 50, small enough to be digested in an afternoon. Some of the world's wealthiest individuals keep their horses near Middleburg, and the town has a host of upscale shops in buildings dating from the 1700s. See "The Hunt Country" in chapter 4.
- **Monterey:** Over Shenandoah and Bull Pasture mountains from Staunton, the village of Monterey appears more like New England than Virginia, with its white churches and clapboard homes in a picturesque valley. Thousands of visitors make the trek over the mountains to the annual Highland Maple Festival in March. See "Staunton-to-Warm Springs via Monterey" in chapter 7.
- **Staunton:** There's Shakespeare to be seen at the Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, an old railroad town that was formerly most famous as President Woodrow Wilson's birthplace. The replica of The Bard's 17th-century indoor theater has spurred a downtown renaissance, with new

restaurants and shops opening all the time. A don't-miss for kids, the Frontier Culture Museum, is here, too. See "Staunton: A Presidential Birthplace & the Bard's Playhouse" in chapter 7.

- **Lexington:** One of America's best small towns, Lexington has a lively college atmosphere in addition to a host of sights. It's home to the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), where Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson taught; its students went off to the Civil War at New Market. Afterward, Robert E. Lee came here as president of Washington College, now Washington and Lee University. VMI was the alma mater of Gen. George C. Marshall, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for his plan to rebuild Europe after World War II. Jackson, Lee, and Marshall are buried here, and there are museums dedicated to them. See "Lexington: A College Town with a Slice of American History" in chapter 7.
- **Abingdon:** Daniel Boone opened Virginia's Southwest Highlands to settlement in the 1770s, and a thriving town grew up at Abingdon. Homes and buildings dating to 1779 line Main Street, making it a wonderful place to stroll. The town is home to the Barter Theatre, Virginia's state stage, where you can still barter for a ticket. See "Abingdon: A Show-Stopping Town" in chapter 8.

6 The Best Family Vacations

The majority of Virginia's visitors arrive by car, and most of them are families. Accordingly, the state's major attractions and resorts are well equipped to entertain and care for children. It's a great place for kids to learn about American history while enjoying a good time at the beach or one of three major amusement parks.

- **Shenandoah National Park:** Two lodges in the most popular part of Shenandoah National Park make this a great place for family vacations. The kids can participate in ranger programs, hike to waterfalls, or go for a pony ride in the forest. See "Shenandoah National Park & the Skyline Drive" in chapter 7.
- **Colonial Williamsburg:** The Historic Area of Colonial Williamsburg is the best place for children to get a quick lesson in American history. On the streets, they might run into Thomas Jefferson (actually, an actor) and have a conversation about the Declaration of Independence, or drill and march with the 18th-century militia. As soon as they get bored, head for Busch Gardens Europe or

Water Country USA, two nearby theme parks. See chapter 10.

- **Virginia Beach:** First there's the beach, 4 miles or so, with lifeguards during summer—but that's not all. Rainy days can be spent at the local Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center, the state's most popular museum. Norfolk's NAUTICUS, Hampton's Virginia Air and Space Center, and Colonial Williamsburg are all just short drives away. See chapter 11.
- **Chincoteague & Assateague Islands:** The fishing village was the setting for Marguerite Henry's classic children's book *Misty of Chincoteague*, and there are plenty of wild horses (called "ponies") in Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge on Assateague Island, which also has a guarded beach for swimming during the summer. The best time to see the horses is during the annual pony swim the last week in July, but the kids can ride one in a small equestrian center. See "Chincoteague & Assateague Islands" in chapter 11.

7 The Most Unusual Virginia Travel Experiences

A museum devoted to hounds, a stalactite organ, an 18th-century version of today's Jacuzzi, a stuffed horse, and a cruise to Elizabethan times all make for unusual travel in Virginia.

- **Chimes Down Under** (Luray): One of the most fascinating caverns in the Shenandoah Valley is at Luray. Through huge subterranean rooms comes beautiful music—in the form of hammers striking million-year-old stalactites. See "Luray: An Underground Organ" in chapter 7.
- **Ancient Hot Tubs** (Warm Springs): Eighteenth-century travelers couldn't climb into the Jacuzzi after a rough day on the road—unless, that is, they pulled into Warm Springs. Since 1761, travelers have slipped their weary bodies into these natural rock pools whose waters range from 94°F to 104°F (34°C–40°C). You can, too. See "Warm Springs & Hot Springs: Taking the Waters" in chapter 7.
- **Mounting Little Sorrel** (Lexington): After he died of wounds accidentally

inflicted by his own men at the Battle of Chancellorsville, Gen. Stonewall Jackson was buried in Lexington, where he had taught at Virginia Military Institute. Thanks to taxidermy, Jackson's war-horse, Little Sorrel, stands in VMI's museum. Robert E. Lee's horse, Traveller, is buried just outside Lee Chapel, his master's resting place. See p. 184.

- **Splashing with Harbor Seals** (Virginia Beach): Children and adults will love the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center's **Harbor Seal Splash**. Accompanied by an animal care specialist, you get into a pool and

splash around with the resident harbor seals and participate in a training session. See p. 306.

- **"Hoi Toide Tonoit"** (Tangier Island): Out in the Chesapeake Bay sits remote Tangier Island, whose residents have been so isolated that they still speak with the Elizabethan brogue of their forebears. Out here, "high tide tonight" is pronounced *hoi toide tonoit*—as in "hoity-toity"—and narrow 17th-century lanes barely can accommodate modern automobiles. Cruises leave from the Northern Neck and the Eastern Shore. See chapters 5 and 11.

8 The Best Country Inns

With all its old homes and gorgeous countryside, Virginia is a hotbed of country inns and B&Bs. Some have been in business since Colonial times; a few are among the best around. Our picks barely touch the surface.

- **Red Fox Inn** (Middleburg): In the center of tiny Middleburg, this rambling inn maintains the romantic charm of early Virginia in its original 1728 stone structure. There's a cozy dining room downstairs. See p. 99.
- **The Hope and Glory Inn** (Irvington): The state's most fascinating country inn occupies a converted 1890s schoolhouse, and it has cottages in the garden, but what really sets it apart is an outdoor bathroom complete with claw-foot tub. That's right: It's outdoors, albeit surrounded by a stockade fence. See p. 121.
- **Clifton** (Charlottesville): Thomas Mann Randolph, husband of Thomas Jefferson's daughter, Martha, built this clapboard house as a trading post in 1799. Today it's a luxury-laden but relaxed country inn. The restaurant itself is worth writing home about. See p. 129.

- **The Inn at Little Washington** (Washington): For the best, you need look no further than the Blue Ridge foothill village of Washington, which everyone in Virginia calls "Little Washington." An English decorator designed the rooms here, but it's the romantic restaurant that draws the most raves. See p. 164.

- **Fort Lewis Plantation & Lodge** (Millboro): One of Virginia's most unusual inns, the Fort Lewis Lodge occupies an old mill and rebuilt barn on a farm beside the Cowpasture River, just over the mountain from Warm Springs. A spiral staircase ascends to three rooms inside the old silo, and there are two log cabins with their own fireplaces. It's a great place to show urban kids a bit of farm life in beautiful surroundings. See p. 180.
- **The Martha Washington Inn** (Abingdon): Gracing Abingdon's historic district, the center portion of this Greek Revival inn was built as a private home in 1832—and as if to prove it, the plank floors creak loudly as you enter the gracious lobby. You can sit in white-wicker rocking chairs

on the front porch and watch the traffic on Main Street—or imagine

Daniel Boone's dogs being attacked by wolves nearby. See p. 212.

9 The Best Luxury Accommodations

With deep-enough pockets, you can enjoy some of the Mid-Atlantic's best luxury accommodations in Virginia.

- **Morrison House** (Alexandria): More like a country inn in the middle of Old Town Alexandria, this small, luxurious hotel isn't that old, but it looks exactly like the Federal-period homes surrounding it. The dining is marvelous. See p. 75.
- **The Tides Inn** (Irvington): A venerable boating and golfing retreat, The Tides Inn stands among Virginia's elite resorts. The style is more British Raj than Old Virginny, but the facilities are first-rate, including a spa with treatment rooms overlooking Carter's Creek. The golf course is one of Virginia's best. See p. 121.
- **Boar's Head Inn** (Charlottesville): A 19th-century gristmill serves as the centerpiece of this lakeside resort, on the outskirts of Charlottesville, and lends ancient charm to the Old Mill dining room, one of the best places to sample Virginia wines without trekking to the vineyards. Modern amenities include a full-service spa and access to Charlottesville's best-equipped sports club. See p. 127.

- **The Homestead** (Hot Springs): Outstanding service, fine cuisine, and a myriad of activities characterize this grand old establishment, in business since Thomas Jefferson's day. In fact, Jefferson was the first of seven presidents to stay here. The Homestead offers accommodations ranging from standard rooms to plush suites. PGA pro Lanny Wadkins presides over its golf course, one of Virginia's finest. See p. 178.
- **The Jefferson Hotel** (Richmond): A Beaux Arts landmark with Renaissance-style balconies and an Italian clock tower, the Jefferson was opened in 1895 by a wealthy Richmonder who wanted his city to have one of America's finest hotels. See p. 221.
- **Williamsburg Inn** (Williamsburg): An establishment with three fine golf courses, the Williamsburg Inn was built as part of the Colonial Williamsburg restoration but looks like it might have been here in 1750. If staying in the main inn with its superb service and cuisine won't do, you can opt for one of the restored houses and taverns that have been converted into accommodations. See p. 262.

10 The Best Moderately Priced Accommodations

Virginia has too many fine, affordable lodgings to mention them all here. The following are some we like best.

- **Richard Johnston Inn** (Fredericksburg): Elegantly appointed rooms await in these two 18th-century homes across from historic Fredericksburg's visitor center. See p. 110.
- **Frederick House** (Staunton): A cross between a boutique hotel and a B&B,

this collection of Victorian houses is in the heart of Staunton, a quick walk to both Woodrow Wilson's birthplace and the Blackfriars Playhouse. See p. 172.

- **Inn at Gristmill Square** (Warm Springs): A naturally warm spring used to turn the water wheel of the gristmill that makes up part of this comfortable inn. Some rooms are in an old barn and silo. See p. 179.

- **Hampton Inn Col Alto** (Lexington): No ordinary Hampton Inn, Col Alto is an 1827 manor house converted into a comfortable B&B-type hotel. Even if you stay in the modern motel buildings next door, you'll eat your continental breakfast in the period dining room. See p. 186.
- **Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center** (Roanoke): The grand, Tudor-style Hotel Roanoke stood in a wheat field when the Norfolk & Western Railroad built it in 1882. It was closed in 1989, but a \$45-million renovation completely restored its grand public areas to their original appearance and rebuilt all its rooms to modern standards. See p. 200.
- **Summerfield Inn** (Abingdon): Ideally situated a block behind the Barter Theatre, this bed-and-breakfast offers spacious rooms in a converted carriage house, one with a two-person hot tub and walk-in shower. See p. 212.
- **Linden Row Inn** (Richmond): This row of Victorian-era town houses has been renovated but not restored, which has left the rooms with 12-foot ceilings, a mix of late Empire and Victorian pieces, and marble-top dressers. See p. 222.
- **The Five & Drum Inn** (Williamsburg): Upstairs over the stores of Merchants Square, this charming bed-and-breakfast has Williamsburg's Historic Area right out its front door. For those who can't handle climbing up the stairs, owners Billy and Sharon Scruggs, themselves Williamsburg natives, have a Colonial-style cottage to rent around the corner. See p. 265.

11 The Best Inexpensive Accommodations

Virginia has many clean, comfortable motels of the budget-chain variety. But for something a little more special, check out the following choices.

- **Fredericksburg Colonial Inn** (Fredericksburg): Don't be surprised to see Blues and Grays toting Civil War rifles in the lobby; this place is very popular with reenactors. An avid collector, the owner has laden the rooms with antiques. See p. 110.
- **Best Western Cavalier Inn at the University** (Charlottesville): The University of Virginia owns and spotlessly maintains this older motel, a half-mile west of the Rotunda, the center of campus. See p. 128.
- **Big Meadows & Skyland lodges** (Shenandoah National Park): With stunning views from atop the Blue Ridge Mountains, these two rustic but charming inns are surprisingly affordable. Just be sure to reserve as early as possible. See p. 151 and p. 152.
- **Llewellyn Lodge** (Lexington): This B&B within an easy walk of Lexington's many attractions is made special by owners John and Ellen Roberts, who willingly share their knowledge not only of the town but the surrounding wilderness. See p. 188.
- **Luray Caverns Motel West** (Luray): This old-fashioned motel sits across the highway from the famous caverns, which owns it and keeps it spotless. See p. 166.
- **Anderson Cottage** (Warm Springs): A real warm spring courses behind this charming B&B in one of Bath County's oldest buildings. It's stocked with so many of owner Jean Randolph Bruns' family heirlooms that it seems as much museum as place to stay. See p. 179.
- **Colony House Motor Lodge** (Roanoke): This older but clean and very well-maintained motel is convenient to both downtown Roanoke

Fun Fact Virginia's Gourmet Contributions

A native of Newport News, the late author William Styron once said that the French consider salt-cured Virginia hams to be America's only gourmet contribution to the world's cuisine. Virginians love their ham (especially stuffed into hot biscuits), and they are crazy about rockfish (sea bass) and crabs from the Chesapeake Bay and shad and trout from the rivers. Virginia's farms produce a plethora of vegetables, and its orchards are famous for apples. And let's not forget the peanut, one of Virginia's major crops, which has been used in soup since Colonial times!

and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Doors to the rooms have louvers to let in fresh air but not light—an unusual touch for any inexpensive hotel. See p. 200.

- **Quarterpath Inn** (Williamsburg): You can walk to Williamsburg's Historic

Area from this clean, family-owned motel east of town. See p. 264.

- **Belvedere Resort Motel** (Virginia Beach): With the Atlantic Ocean out its back door, this comfortable, clean establishment is the last family-owned motel on the Virginia Beach oceanfront. See p. 308.

12 The Best of Virginia Cooking

You can dine on all types of cuisine in Virginia, but the highlights are produced from recipes handed down since Colonial times—dishes such as peanut soup and Sally Lunn bread—or that put a modern spin on local ingredients. Here are some of the best places to sample Virginia's unique and very historic cuisine.

- **Gadsby's Tavern** (Alexandria): George Washington said goodbye to his troops from the door of Gadsby's Tavern in Alexandria's Old Town. This former rooming house and the tavern next door look much as they did then, and a waitstaff in Colonial garb still serve chicken roasted on an open fire, buttermilk pie, and other dishes from that period. See p. 76.
- **The Inn at Little Washington** (Washington): Chef Patrick O'Connell constantly changes his menu to take advantage of trout, Chesapeake Bay seafood, Virginia hams, and other local delicacies in his romantic dining room. The service at Virginia's

finest restaurant is wonderfully attentive and unobtrusive. See p. 164.

- **Mrs. Rowe's Restaurant and Bakery** (Staunton): Every town has its favorite "local" restaurant, where you can clog your arteries with plain old Southern favorites like pan-fried chicken, sausage gravy over biscuits, and fresh vegetables seasoned with smoked pork and cooked to smithereens. In business since 1947, Mrs. Rowe's somehow manages to cook great veggies without all that lard. See p. 174.
- **Roanoker Restaurant** (Roanoke): Another local, favorite the Roanoker regularly changes its menu to take advantage of the freshest vegetables available. And every day it serves the best biscuits in Virginia, hot from the oven. See p. 203.
- **King's Barbecue** (Petersburg): Like all Southerners, Virginians love their barbecue, and it doesn't get any better than at the two branches of King's.

Pork, beef, ribs, and chicken roast constantly over an open pit right in the dining rooms, and the sauce is served on the side, not soaking the succulent meat and overpowering its smoked flavor. See p. 243.

- **A Chef's Kitchen** (Williamsburg): You don't just go to dinner at veteran Chef John Gonzales's table, for he puts on an entertaining and highly

informative cooking show for nearly 3 hours. See p. 268.

- **Old Chickahominy House** (Williamsburg): Named for a nearby river, this reconstructed, antiques-filled, 18th-century house is one of the best places to sample traditional Virginia fare, such as Brunswick stew and Virginia ham on hot biscuits. See p. 269.