



Just in Time for Presidents' Day ... Hail to the Chiefs Sites Up and Down Virginia's Shenandoah Valley Boast Strong Presidential Ties

Virginia's Shenandoah Valley (February 15, 2018) – As a breeding ground for leaders of the free world, no state can top Virginia. Boasting the birthplaces of eight presidents – George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, Zachary Taylor and Woodrow Wilson – Virginia easily edges out the closest competitor, Ohio. (Thanks, President Harrison for being born in Virginia and then moving to Ohio. They may try to claim you, but we think Virginia gets you, fair and square.)

As the neighbor to the nation's capital, Virginia has certainly welcomed every president ... even if this wasn't his official home state. [Virginia's Shenandoah Valley](#) is home to sites that former presidents held near and dear, and those places are eager to welcome modern-day visitors. In honor of Presidents' Day, we're providing a round-up of some presidential places that are well worth a visit.

The Shenandoah Valley is always ready to welcome you, whether you're a history buff, an outdoors lover or a foodie. The Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership is a professional collaboration between 11 marketing partners representing destinations from Winchester to Lexington, and their shared goal is to promote the region as an outstanding year-round destination.

To begin planning your visit and to learn more about these sites and all the adventures that await you in the Shenandoah Valley, please check out www.virginiasshenandoahvalley.com.

[Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library & Museum](#): Not to be confused with the Woodrow Wilson homes in South Carolina or Washington, this site in Staunton is where the 28th president was born on December 28, 1856 ... and it was designated his presidential library by his widow. The property includes a historic house, museum (with an excellent World War I exhibit), library, gardens and gift shop. Of the eight presidents born in Virginia, Wilson is last on the list alphabetically and chronologically ... and perhaps the least known. So here are some career highlights: A history professor and president of Princeton University, Wilson became governor of New Jersey before running on the Democratic ticket and winning the 1912 presidential election. He served as president during World War I, established the League of Nations and created the Federal Reserve. All of these accomplishments and many more are explored here in Staunton, where his father served as a pastor.

[George Washington's Office](#): The little log building that is today one room of the George Washington Office Museum in the town of Winchester was used as Washington's military office from September 1755 to December 1756, when Fort Loudon was being constructed nearby (see below). Washington was responsible for planning out the fort and supervising the work throughout its construction. Washington's military and political career began in Winchester; he came to the area at the age of 16 as a surveyor, bought a farm and ultimately served in the French & Indian War ... as a British soldier. *Note: This site is open seasonally, from April 1 through October 31, but also opens for Presidents' Day.*

Fort Loudon: Also located in Winchester, this is the site of Washington's regimental headquarters during the French and Indian War. Not much is left of the fort these days, but Washington hand-selected the site because he considered Winchester a strategic location. Remember that in those times, Virginia was officially the young colonies' frontier land. Washington didn't think there was better spot between Maryland and North Carolina to set up a western defense. Today the site is peppered with interpretive signs, and the town's [French and Indian War Foundation](#) hosts lectures, reenactments and even a special President's Day event. In addition, the foundation offers a free audio tour.

Washington & Lee University: Founded in 1749 and therefore one of the oldest universities in the United States, Washington & Lee is located in Lexington and named in part for George Washington. It operated under the name "Liberty Hall Academy" during and immediately after the Revolutionary War. The school benefited from a generous endowment of \$20,000 in stock that Washington donated in 1796, and two years later its board of trustees voted to change the name to "Washington Academy" to acknowledge that generous gift. The name changed to "Washington College" in 1813, and then once more in 1871, to acknowledge the contributions of Robert E. Lee, who served as the college's president from 1865 until his death in 1870. Today the university is home to the Lee Chapel and Museum, which includes a portrait gallery with Washington family portraits. Visitors are welcome to tour the campus and its buildings.

Natural Bridge: The Natural Bridge is a 215-foot-tall limestone gorge that officially became a Virginia State Park in September 2016. Rumor has it that George Washington once surveyed the land where this landmark is located – way back in 1750 – perhaps going so far as to carve his initials into the wall of the bridge. But the president with the stronger tie to this site is Thomas Jefferson. Nearly 250 years ago, in 1774, Jefferson bought 157 acres of Virginia land – including the Natural Bridge – from King George III for the bargain price of 20 shillings. He built a two-room cabin that over the years hosted his friends and counterparts, including presidents James Monroe and Martin van Buren. Today visitors can explore the site via six miles of hiking trails that take them through forests, meadows and foothills. Living history programs help explain the region's natural and human story.

Town of Mount Jackson: This little town in Shenandoah County is perhaps best known by travelers driving up and down Interstate 81 as the place with the water tower that's decorated with crisp, delicious-looking apples. The town was originally called Mount Pleasant, but changed its name in 1826 to honor Andrew Jackson, who was a frequent visitor on his travels between Washington and his home in Tennessee. There are no sites to mark Jackson's visits, but you can't miss that water tower with his name on it! The Town also boasts a wonderful museum with information on Jackson's connection to the area.

For those Shenandoah Valley visitors who want to extend their stay beyond a day trip and be treated like a dignitary, [The Georges](#), a boutique hotel in Lexington, is offering a President's Day Package on Sunday, February 18. It includes a suite or deluxe room, breakfast, and three-course Sunday dinner for two at Haywood's Bar and Grill. In addition to the usual Haywood's menu, Chef Tony West is offering a Washington-themed dinner special that features some the first president's favorite foods. Rates start at \$250 for a deluxe room and \$300 for a suite; guests should call 540-463-2500 for full details.