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History is Timeless in the Fredericksburg Region

From walking in the footsteps of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe to learning about colonial practices, visitors will find rich American history within the Fredericksburg region. Its location between Washington D.C. and Richmond made it a central spot for multiple significant historic events throughout our nation's history. Today, visitors can experience how Colonial America once was and learn firsthand about the Civil War era, while still enjoying modern-day amenities. Whether they're exploring a battlefield, touring George Washington's childhood home or learning about the women who shaped American history, visitors will be whisked away to a land that will forever remain timeless, right here within the Fredericksburg region.

Capture a Glimpse into Civil War History

Along with traditional visitor experiences available at the battlefields of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Spotsylvania Courthouse and Wilderness, the Fredericksburg area boasts compelling African American and civilian Civil War stories.

- In 1862, as many as 10,000 slaves crossed the Rappahannock River to freedom in Stafford County. Today, visitors can retrace that route on a self-guided driving and walking tour that follows the life of John Washington and the [Trail to Freedom](#).
- The interesting stories of civilian experiences during the battles live through the writings of poet Walt Whitman, who penned them from the hospital and union headquarters at [Chatham](#), the only home in America visited by George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson.
- The [White Oak Museum](#) houses tens of thousands of relics and artifacts that were gathered by locals in Civil War encampments to honor the memories of the fallen. The White Oak Museum, a former elementary school, has the greatest locally oriented collection of Civil War artifacts in the county, and the owner, D.P. Newton, will walk any visitor through books and artifacts to help them find their ancestry.
- Stonewall Jackson's amputated arm is buried at [Ellwood Manor](#), the 18th-Century house that was used as the Union headquarters during the Battle of Wilderness in 1864 and a year later became a hospital for the wounded soldiers, among which its most famous patient was Confederate General "Stonewall" Jackson.
- The [Stafford Civil War Park](#) offers insightful interpretations of the impact of the Army of the Potomac's winter encampments and soldiers' lives during their stay in the region.

George Washington's Boyhood Home: Ferry Farm

After years of research and planning by historians, architects, archaeologists and curators, the George Washington Foundation recently completed the preservation of [Ferry Farm](#), George Washington's boyhood home, where he lived from ages six to 22. This property has been known as an archaeology park with grassy fields, beautiful views of the Rappahannock River, large-scale archaeology excavations and an extensive collection of Washington artifacts. The dig is considered to be one of the largest active sites in Virginia, with more than 735,000 artifacts excavated to date. The construction that is now underway is focused on building a replica of the Washington house, with surrounding support buildings. Since the house will be a reconstruction, the Foundation will be able to present Colonial America in ways that most historic house museums cannot – the fireplace will be lit, and the windows will be open, allowing visitors to experience 18th-Century life with all of their senses.

Timeless Women

The Fredericksburg area has a long lineage of successful women who helped shape American History, and today, the area preserves those memories well, with everyday reminders of the women who lived and worked here, including George Washington's mother and sister, Mary Ball Washington, and Betty Lewis, who lived at [Kenmore Plantation](#). Today, the [Mary Washington House](#) and Monument, which has been preserved by the Washington Heritage Museum, remains open to visitors. In addition to the Washington women, pioneer, teacher, nurse and founder of the American Red Cross, Clara Baron, volunteered her medical services to the Union Army and for days operated on hundreds of soldiers at [Chatham Manor](#), which at the time served as a hospital and today has been restored to welcome visitors. Finally, Corinne Melchers, wife of American impressionist painter Gari Melchers, took a special interest in gardening and

maintained impeccable kitchen and flower gardens, cultivating beautiful roses at their Belmont home in 1916. Today, the house is open to visitors as the [Gari Melchers Home and Studio](#).

History by Trolley

Visitors can travel through downtown Fredericksburg to hear about the days when the Native Americans hunted and farmed in the area, the arrival of the settlers from Jamestown, Yorktown and other faraway lands in the 1600s, and the growing pains of the birth of our nation during the Civil War era. During the 75-minute guided [trolley tour](#), visitors will experience the past, present and future of a city rich in history and teeming with monuments, markers and attractions. Some of the highlighted historic sites on the tour include:

- [The Rising Sun Tavern](#) – The building was built by Charles Washington, George’s youngest brother, in 1760 as his home and was later operated as a tavern, the only “proper” tavern in the bustling port city of Fredericksburg. The “tavern wenches” at the Rising Sun today entertain visitors as though they have just stepped off a stagecoach in a lively interpretation of 18th-Century tavern life.
- [Hugh Mercer Apothecary Shop](#) – This restored 18th-Century building now presents a vivid living history interpretation of colonial medical practices of the 1700s. Doctor Mercer treated many patients, including Mary Washington, by using leeches, lancets, snakeroot, crab claws and cobwebs as remedies.
- [Kenmore](#) – One of the most elegant colonial mansions in America, built by patriot Fielding Lewis and his wife Betty, George Washington’s sister, contains some of the most elaborate and beautiful plasterwork from Colonial America.
- [James Monroe Museum](#) – The building that was once James Monroe’s law office in Fredericksburg now provides visitors with a glimpse of the style of living in the White House established by Monroe and his family, which is still the standard today. The museum contains the largest amount of Monroe artifacts.

Take Flight in the Region

The Fredericksburg area is home to one of the most historic airports in the nation. Home to 12 of the rarest American aircrafts, the [Shannon Air Museum](#) at Shannon Airport houses the only known surviving Vultee V-1A, a SPAD VII biplane fighter from World War I, a Pitcairn PA-5 Mailwing and a Bellanca CH-400 Skyrocket, as well as thousands of related artifacts showcasing the “Golden Age of Aviation.”

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