

VIRGINIA



LGBTQ+ TRAVEL EXPERIENCES: A JOURNEY THROUGH CULTURE AND COMMUNITY





DAY ONE

Landing at [Dulles International Airport](#) places you right in the heart of Northern Virginia and at the beginning of your adventure through the Commonwealth.

Just 50 kilometers from the airport, the charm of [Alexandria](#) awaits. The city, given a perfect score for LGBTQ equality by the Human Rights Campaign Municipality Equality Index in 2023, positions itself as a captivating home base for visitors attending [World Pride 2025](#) in Washington, D.C. Ideally situated just across the Potomac River from the nation's capital, Alexandria is known for its well-preserved Old Town, vibrant art scene, and welcoming atmosphere, and offers an idyllic retreat from the hustle and bustle of D.C.

The mile-long stretch of King Street, a treasure trove nestled in the heart of the city, invites visitors to explore the largest collection of independent shops in the D.C. region. Venture into local boutiques and specialty stores offering everything from handpicked stationery and unique vintage barware to eco-conscious fashion. Alongside these gems, discover widely loved brands such as Warby Parker and West Elm.

In the afternoon, check out the [Torpedo Factory Art Center](#). This venue is a beacon for LGBTQ+ artists and allies alike, offering workshops and exhibitions that celebrate diversity and inclusion. Engage with the art and the artists, diving deep into the stories they tell.

Check into [The Lorien Hotel & Spa](#), known for its luxurious amenities, inclusive atmosphere, and for being a proud partner of the LGBTQ+ community. Spend your first evening enjoying a welcome dinner at [Hank's Oyster Bar](#), where the acclaimed Jamie Leeds takes the helm, noted "Best Chef" in the Washington Blade's Best of Gay D.C. Awards for two consecutive years. End your first day in Virginia with a nightcap at [King's Ransom](#), celebrated for its vibrant music and friendly vibe, or head over to [Freddie's Beach Bar & Restaurant](#) just four miles north in [Crystal City](#). Freddie's has been a home and social hotspot for many Queer east-coasters since 2001, and is known for their weekend buffets, karaoke and Drag shows.

DAY TWO

Savor one more delight in Alexandria as you brunch on the waterfront at [Vola's Dockside Grille](#) before continuing 180 kilometers south to [Charlottesville](#), gateway to the Blue Ridge Mountains and a city proud of its vibrant cultural scene and inclusivity.

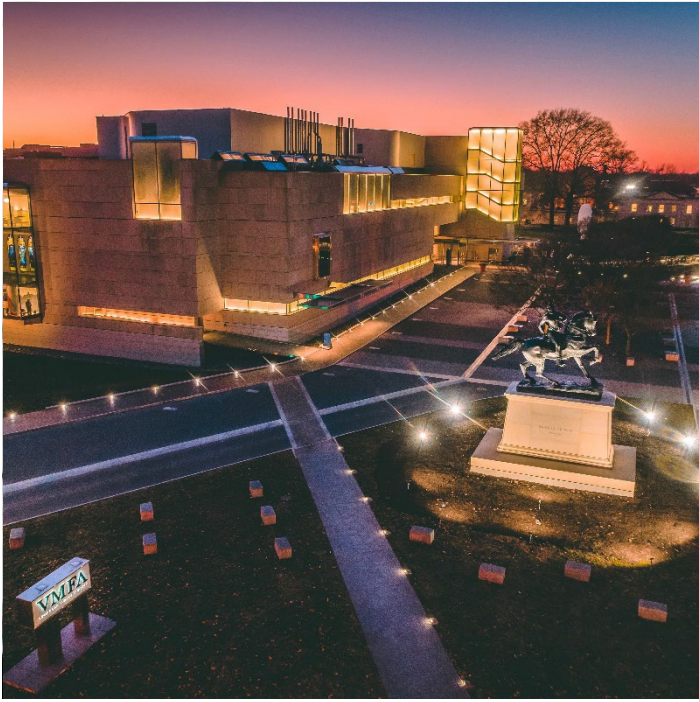
Celebrated by Wine Enthusiast Magazine as the "[2023 Wine Region of the Year](#)," Charlottesville presents a fabulous opportunity to indulge in some of Virginia's premier wines against a backdrop of stunning vistas. The LGBT-owned [Montifalco Vineyard](#), part of the award-winning [Monticello Wine Trail](#), welcomes visitors of all backgrounds to enjoy their Old-World traditions with New World terroir.

Back in downtown Charlottesville, the pedestrian-only [Historic Downtown Mall](#) stands as the lively core of the city, blending old-world allure with contemporary flair across its historic buildings, unique shops, delectable dining options, and diverse entertainment venues. A stone's throw from downtown, the [IX Art Park](#), home to The Looking Glass, offers Virginia's pioneering immersive art space. Step into an enchanting forest and a kaleidoscopic cavern where light, sound, color, and interactive installations create a captivating multisensory experience.

[The Graduate Charlottesville](#), the #1 rated city hotel on Misterb&b, with its quirky and colorful décor and friendly atmosphere, will be your home here. Immerse yourself in Charlottesville's vibrant LGBTQ+ nightlife with an evening at the [Chinchilla Café](#), the city's most eclectic queer DIY venue for concerts and movie screenings. This hidden gem's location remains a closely guarded secret, revealed only upon RSVP, offering an air of mystery and exclusivity. The line-up often features incredible bands that truly captivate the audience.

Alternatively, explore the rich cultural tapestry of Charlottesville at [Live Arts](#), a cornerstone of the community theater scene for decades. Here, the stage comes alive with some of the most cherished productions. If your visit aligns, don't miss the chance to attend one of their quarterly Queer Rooftop Happy Hours. These gatherings celebrate the LGBTQ+ community, offering a unique blend of socializing, art, and entertainment under the open sky. Don't forget to check out the area's [Out & About](#) schedule for more weekly events centered around the LGBTQ+ community.





DAY THREE

On your way out of Charlottesville, stop by the gay-owned [MarieBette Cafe & Bakery](#) for a coffee and a freshly baked croissant to go, or relax on their patio while enjoying your treats.

Next stop, [Richmond](#), known affectionately as RVA. Only 115 kilometers east, Virginia's capital offers a blend of southern hospitality and a progressive spirit. Their annual [Virginia PrideFest](#) is one of the largest LGBTQ+ events in the region. But if the schedule does not align, no worries, every day in [OutRVA](#) is a celebration of diversity and inclusion.

Start your afternoon at the [Virginia Museum of Fine Arts](#) to marvel at Kehinde Wiley's "Rumors of War," a striking sculpture by the queer artist, and view his painting and many more fabulous works of art inside. Catch a groundbreaking performance at [Richmond Triangle Players](#), the first LGBTQ+ theater company in the Mid-Atlantic. Discover hidden gems at [Diversity Thrift](#), where your purchases support LGBTQ+ causes. Continue your shopping expedition in [Carytown](#) where stores like [Mongrel](#) offer unique & trendy home accessories, greeting cards and novelty items.

Take-in the evening with a cosmopolitan or specialty martini at [Barcode](#), one of RVA's oldest gay owned and operated businesses. Spend your dinner with a touch of quirky class at [L'opossom](#), where James Beard-nominated chef and OutRVA Insider, David Shannon, presents a truly unique and unforgettable culinary experience. Finish with a night of dancing or a show at [Babes of Carytown](#), a lesbian-focused bar known for its vibrant environment, karaoke night, and live music, or try [Papi's](#) Downtown where you'll be posing and dancing with all the local trend setters.

Stay at [Quirk Hotel](#) in the Arts District of the city, where inclusivity is part of the fabric of your experience. The hotel's design merges classic and modern elements, flooded with natural light and offering Instagram-worthy moments around every corner. Make sure to book their "Love is Love" package where each booking includes a \$10 donation to Side by Side, a Virginia-based local non-profit committed to creating supportive communities for Virginia's LGBTQ+ youth.

DAY FOUR

No visit to Richmond would be complete without the [Godfrey's](#) Drag Brunch experience. This wildly entertaining meal and a show has been recognized as one of the top 10 Drag brunches in the U.S. by Thrillist.

Travel 157 kilometers to Virginia's coastal region and your next destination, [Norfolk](#). For over 30 years, this city has been home to the [Hampton Roads Pride Festival](#), uniquely hosting the nation's sole Pride boat parade right on the waterfront.

Shopping is a must in Norfolk with the [Selden Market](#) as a shining gem. Here, you'll be introduced to a rotating lineup of Norfolk's most innovative concepts in retail, food, and more, offering a taste of the city's dynamic business landscape. Extend your support further by visiting LGBTQ+ owned shops like [Velvet Witch](#) and [Kitsch](#), or stumble upon a pop-up market featuring the [Norfolk Candle Co](#). These establishments are not just shops but bastions of the community, with products like the highly sought-after soy candles known for their catchy titles and enticing scents.

No visit to Norfolk would be complete without a stroll through the [NEON District](#). This neighborhood is an open-air gallery, home to over 70 works of public art that range from whimsical murals of oversized bees on bicycles to profound tributes to the local military heritage. Each piece tells a story, contributing to the tapestry of Norfolk's rich cultural identity.

Nearby is [The Glass Light Hotel & Gallery, Autograph Collection](#), an establishment that mirrors the city's blend of luxury and art and proudly welcomes guests of all sexual orientations and gender identities. As the name suggests, the hotel is adorned with exceptional works of glass art by world-renowned artists such as Dale Chihuly, Peter Bremers, and Lino Tagliapietra, which are strategically placed throughout the hotel to engage guests and enrich their stay.

As evening approaches, the vibrant nightlife of Norfolk calls. Start at [MJ's Tavern](#), a cornerstone of the LGBTQ+ community since 2012. Known for its themed parties, trivia nights, karaoke, and more, it's a place where friendships are forged, and the community comes together. The night doesn't end there. Make your way to [The Wave](#), the largest LGBTQ+ dance club in the region and a beacon of diversity, equity, and inclusion. With multiple dance floors, DJs spinning a variety of tunes, and ample space for socializing and dancing, The Wave is the epitome of Norfolk's inclusive nightlife, where every beat of the music celebrates the joy and freedom of expression.





DAY FIVE

Conclude your excursion with a day at [Virginia Beach](#), just 30 kilometers from Norfolk and perfectly set on the Atlantic Ocean. Each year Pride on the Beach wraps up the Hampton Roads Pride weekend at the famous Virginia Beach Oceanfront.

Kick off your Virginia Beach adventure with a sustainable and locally sourced breakfast at Commune, setting the tone for a day immersed in coastal culture and natural beauty. Just steps away, the [ViBe Creative District](#) awaits, offering a vibrant space to shop at local boutiques and marvel at community art. Alternatively, dive into the artistic wonders at the [Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art](#), known for its award-winning exhibits.

For the adventurer at heart, a scenic [horseback ride](#) along the beach offers an unforgettable experience matched with a quaint beach picnic arranged by [The VB Picnic Co.](#) Continue your day of outdoor recreation with a unique [kayak tour](#), paddling alongside dolphins for a memorable encounter with Virginia Beach's marine residents.

For the complete beach experience, stay at the [Embassy Suites by Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront Resort](#), where the ocean's vastness greets you each morning and the boardwalk is merely steps away. Elevate your final evening at the [Rainbow Cactus](#), Virginia Beach's premier LGBTQ+ bar and nightclub since 1996, where you can revel in a delicious food menu and endlessly entertaining Drag performances as your trip begins to wind down.

This journey through Virginia is more than a vacation; it's an invitation to connect, explore, and celebrate within the LGBTQ+ community, set against the backdrop of some of Virginia's most charming and inclusive cities.

CONTACT

Heidi Johannesen

Director, Global Marketing
and Media Relations

HJohannesen@Virginia.org

703 . 217 . 2263

Christi Braginton

Associate Director, Global Media
Relations and Marketing

CBraginton@Virginia.org

505 . 500 . 7396

Ryan Winfree

International Marketing Manager

RWinfree@Virginia.org

804 . 201 . 1245

Virginia Tourism Corporation

901 East Cary Street, Suite 900
Richmond, Virginia 23219
Virginia.org

SOCIAL

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