



Places to visit for a day or a weekend...

Shenandoah

English Now!

Why You Should Go. The Shenandoah region of Virginia is a beautiful area with great nature, scenic views, and some of the best hiking/walking trails on the East Coast. Located only about 90 minutes from Bethesda, Shenandoah is the closest of America's national parks to Washington, D.C. It is a "must see" for international residents of the area. We encourage you to explore Shenandoah and experience its natural beauty and outdoor activities!

Shenandoah National Park. Shenandoah National Park is the most common destination in the Shenandoah region. It is a 105-mile long national park that is famous for **Skyline Drive**, a road that runs the length of the park along the top of a mountain ridge. It is fun and easy to enter the park at the north entrance to Skyline Drive, near Front Royal, Virginia, drive to a parking area, and then hike or walk. Many visitors bring a picnic lunch and have lunch while enjoying amazing views of the Shenandoah River Valley. Skyline Drive has views like those that you expect in the more famous national parks in the American West. It is the first National Park Service road east of the Mississippi River listed as a National Historic Landmark on the National Register of Historic Places. It is also a National Scenic Byway. Skyline Drive is particularly popular in the fall when the leaves are changing colors, but it is beautiful year-round. Get an annual 'park pass' for only \$40 and go back many times!

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Hiking. The Shenandoah region is a fantastic area for hiking. Shenandoah National Park has 101 miles (163 km) of the **Appalachian Trail**, a hiking trail that runs north-south from Maine to Georgia, in the park. In total, there are over 500 miles (800 km) of trails in the park! One of the most popular trails is **Old Rag Mountain**, a challenging hike that offers a thrilling rock scramble and some of the most breathtaking views in the Mid-Atlantic region. Another popular hike – and a bit easier – is **White Oak Canyon**, where you can hike to a beautiful waterfall deep in the forest. Another great hike is **Jeremy's Run**, just outside the park, which is not as hilly but where you cross a (shallow) mountain stream 14 times on the hike! Ask us for recommendations about great hikes, based on your hiking experience, physical condition, and desire for a challenge.

Camping (and Learn About Bears!). In the United States, tent camping is a common practice. In daily life, we are often busy and easily distracted. We often do not get the chance to look at what is around us, lose sight of the beauty of nature, and sometimes even fail to pay attention to the people around us. Camping is a great way to "get away" from a busy life, appreciate nature, and spend time with people. Shenandoah National Park has a number of large camping areas, where you can reserve a campsite online. The most popular area in the park for tent camping is **Big Meadows**, though the **Lewis Mountain** area is smaller and not as crowded. However, we advise that you consider camping away from these areas, which are often crowded on weekends. The park offers 196,000 acres of "**backcountry**" or "**wilderness**" camping, where you hike into the forest and camp far

away from other people. While in the backcountry, campers must be careful of wildlife, including bears. Note that you will sometimes see black bears in the Shenandoah region. Don't worry: if you follow simple rules, bears are not dangerous. Virginia has never recorded an unprovoked or a fatal bear attack. As for bear attacks in Shenandoah National Park, there have been only minor incidents (e.g. such as a researcher that got a swat from a bear that he was releasing from a snare trap). If you go to the park, you must follow simple rules to stay safe. For example, campers suspend their food from trees while camping overnight in "bear bags" to prevent attracting bears. Also, don't approach bears to take photos, especially if a baby bear is nearby. Ask us for ideas about camping, including for less crowded areas where you can enjoy quiet retreat with friends and family.

Cabin Camping. Another great option, especially if you have never gone tent camping, is to rent a small, old-fashioned cabin. Many cabins have wood stoves and offer a novel experience. The **Lewis Mountain camping** area at Shenandoah National Park has cabins, as do several other areas. The **Big Meadows** area in the park has a lodge that has a mountaintop feel.

Horseback Riding. There may be no more genuine way to experience Shenandoah National Park than on horseback. A guided ride through a wooded trail using an old-fashioned, low-technology mode of transportation offers an entirely new perspective. Horses are available at **Skyland Stables** (mile 42.5 on Skyline Drive), weather permitting. Horseback rides depart from the stables, cross Skyline Drive, and travel past the **Limberlost** area through an apple orchard. Search for Skyland Stables Shenandoah, and make reservations before your trip.

Ranger Talks. As you plan your Shenandoah National Park adventure, you may want to consider attending a "Ranger Talk", where a park employee, called a "park ranger", presents a talk about the park's plant and animal life or its history. Rangers are often enthusiastic to share information about the park and its natural beauty. Many of these talks are designed for children, as well.

OUTSIDE THE PARK

"Tubing" (or Canoeing) on the Shenandoah River. The Shenandoah River runs the length of the Shenandoah Valley, with beautiful views of the mountain. It is usually a calm, shallow river. You can stand in many places. For a great summertime outing, try "tubing", e.g. riding in an inflatable inner tube down the river. Shenandoah River Outfitters, www.shenandoah-river.com/, will arrange for a "float trip" down the river. This is quite an experience, even for Americans. Upon arrival, you check in and pay, leave your wallet and car keys at the Shenandoah River Outfitters building, ride in an old school bus approximately six miles "up river", and are given an inner tube. Then float slowly down the river with the river current, back to your starting point. Many people bring a cooler filled with beverages and food. People tie coolers to their inner tubes. It is quite an experience!

Thornton River Grille. Our favorite restaurant on the way to the Shenandoah is Thornton River Grille, in a quaint town called Sperryville, Virginia. It offers American cuisine including trout caught locally. 3710 Sperryville Pike, Sperryville, VA 22740

Early Mountain Vineyard & Shenandoah Wine Trail. Finally, a fun outing – and one that the school arranges in the fall – is a visit to one of Virginia's many Shenandoah region vineyards. Our favorite is Early Mountain Vineyard in Madison, Virginia, which features a patio with great views of the mountains. Or learn more about the "Shenandoah Wine Trail" and visit one of the dozens of vineyards in the region!

For More Information. Please let Paul or Kirstie know if you are traveling to the Shenandoah. We would love to hear about your plans, and we would love to hear how your trip goes, after you return, so that we can share what you learn with other students.