

## Staunton, Virginia Vacation Travel Guide

### Discover Art, Theater and More in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley

By Nancy Parode, About.com Guide

Staunton, Virginia is known for its historic downtown area, excellent museums, thriving arts scene and commitment to regional foods, wines and music. Staunton (pronounced "Stanton," not "Stawnton") is much more than a stopover on Interstate 81. This charming small city is a perfect weekend getaway destination and makes a good "home base" for a leisurely exploration of Virginia's Shenandoah Valley.

#### Getting There

Staunton is less than three hours by car from Washington, D.C., four and one-half hours from Charlotte, N.C. and five hours from Pittsburgh, Pa. Staunton is a short drive from Interstate 81. Take exit 222 (Virginia Route 250) on I-81. Travel along Route 250 for about 2.5 miles, and you'll find yourself in Staunton's historic downtown district. Staunton is served by the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport in Weyers Cave, Va. Amtrak trains also stop at Staunton's unmanned railroad station.

#### Where to Stay in Staunton

Staunton's lodging options include inexpensive motels, bed and breakfast inns and historic hotels. The historic **Stonewall Jackson Hotel's** downtown location, elegant public spaces and southern hospitality make it a perfect place to begin your exploration of Staunton and the Valley. Budget-minded travelers have several options to choose from. Sleep Inn, just off the interstate, is clean and comfortable. Bed and breakfast inns range from Victorian mansions to a reproduction of Anne Hathaway's Cottage.

#### Dining Options

Staunton's thriving restaurant scene attracts visitors from up and down the Shenandoah Valley. For locally-sourced regional specialties, stop by **Mockingbird Artisan Fare and Roots Music**. If you're at the restaurant on a Wednesday, Thursday, Friday or Saturday on which a performance is scheduled, linger to listen to some excellent local music. **Mill Street Grill's** Sunday brunch is popular with both visitors and locals. **Baja Bean Co. Restaurante y Cantina** serves up tasty Mexican fare at very reasonable prices.

#### Getting Around

Staunton's pedestrian-friendly downtown area is the perfect place to take a leisurely walk, but other transportation options are available. The **Staunton Free Trolley** serves three routes and won't cost you a penny. The Green Route, which connects downtown with Gypsy Hill Park is most useful to visitors; it runs every day but Sunday. Augusta County's public bus service, CATS, serves Staunton, Waynesboro and other nearby communities.

## Staunton's Senior-Friendly Attractions

You'll find plenty to do in Staunton, particularly in the historic downtown area. The Red Brick District features art galleries, restaurants and performance venues. The **American Shakespeare Center's Blackfriars Playhouse**, the only full-sized reproduction of William Shakespeare's indoor London theatre, offers performances and tours all year long. The **Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library** is just a few blocks away on Coalter Street. If you enjoy spending time outdoors, head to Gypsy Hill Park for a walk around the duck pond or a summer concert.

Just outside of town, the **Frontier Culture Museum** gives you the opportunity to "time travel" to the early days of European settlement in the Shenandoah Valley and to learn about the cultures that contributed to the area's history and heritage. Wine travel is popular, too; there are three wineries near Staunton. Famed local gardening expert **Andre Viette's** gardens and nursery are well worth a visit; you can wander through the gardens, take in a lecture and enjoy the best of each season's natural beauty. Of course, **Shenandoah National Park** and the **Natural Bridge** are just a short drive from Staunton, and **Monticello** and the enticements of Charlottesville are less than an hour away by car.

## Events and Festivals

There's always something happening in Staunton. The Monday evening summer concert series in Gypsy Hill Park features the **Stonewall Brigade Band**. The park's free Summer Jazz Series hosts musicians from around the world. Each June, the Frontier Culture Museum hosts the **Shenandoah Valley Wine Trail Festival**, featuring wines from around the Valley and performances by local musicians. Festivals celebrating everything from African American heritage to bicycling and fall foliage take place throughout the year.



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