

Did you know that George Washington spent his boyhood years growing up on **Ferry Farm** in Fredericksburg? In fact, local legend claims that may be where he chopped down the infamous cherry tree.

By driving north on I-95 only 50 miles to Fredericksburg, you and your kids can truly step back in time on Ferry Farm and many other places that are just as rich with stories. Fredericksburg, often referred to as "America's most historic city," is a charming and hospitable destination, chock-full of Revolutionary and Civil War sites presented in a kid-friendly way. What a well-kept secret!

Today Ferry Farm is an active archaeological site. While no buildings on the property were there at the time of the Washington family, the Visitors' Center houses a gallery featuring "George Washington: Boy Before Legend." There is also a display of artifacts found on the site and an archaeology lab.

In addition, Ferry Farm has sprawling grounds with picnic tables and a spectacular demonstration gar-

NORTH

Finding Fun In Fredericksburg

By LIBBY CARTY McNAMEE

den abounding with birds and insects, as well as plants typically grown during George Washington's time, such as tobacco, cotton and corn.

Alongside the Rappahannock River, the picturesque Ferry Farm also offers a number of unique workshops for children

"I Dig George" is an archaeological experience with various sessions for children ages three to 12. Young diggers learn to dig, wash and mend artifacts found in educational digs on the property. In "Nature Exploration," children hunt for clues as they learn about forests, gardens and animals. Other workshops such

as "Powhatan Indians: First Virginians" and "Corn, Canoes, and Buffalo Fur" teach kids about Indian culture, leading them to the realization that George Washington wasn't the first person to walk on the land at Ferry Farm.

Nearby historic **Kenmore**, former plantation and home of George Washington's sister Betty Lewis, also offers workshops for inquiring minds from ages three to 12. Through "Play and Work in the 18th Century," kids have the opportunity to explore the daily activities of chil-

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Kenmore workshop
(Photo: Stafford Co. Tourism Dept.)



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When your first child is an infant, you can still travel to most "grown-up" destinations. But just try taking a three-year-old to Monticello or Michie Tavern in Charlottesville. Or don't try.

On a recent visit to the area with little Helen, I decided to skip the classic Charlottesville historic attractions. Instead, we started by strolling the shady, pedestrian-friendly downtown Mall, peeking in several shops and restaurants and ending up at the **Virginia Discovery Museum**.

This children's museum packs a lot into a small space by emphasizing activities best enjoyed by one or two children at a time. As a whole, the exhibits appeal to all ages under 12, no easy task. Some, like the game of skittles or the camouflage exhibit and the observation bee hive in the Back Gallery, require dexterity or a reading and comprehension ability above the preschool level.

Helen loved the dress-ups and the reproduction cabin with wood-

West

Charlottesville, Sans History

By ANGELA LEHMAN-RIOS

en and tin table settings. The pirate ship with a slide was also a big draw. I would have thought, "I drove all this way so she could slide in a pink tutu?" except that I enjoyed everything else myself. Show your Children's Museum of Richmond or Science Museum of Virginia membership card for free admission.

A second visit to the Mall, with nine-year-old Emily, found us at **The Glass Palette**. Maria DiMassimo, who owns the studio/workshop with her daughter, instructed us and other walk-in artists in the basics of glass cutting and assembling, then stepped back and let us create. All materials are provided. You can choose from pre-cut shapes and molds, or go free-

form. If you make a sand-etched creation, you can take it home that day; otherwise, the studio will fire it and mail it to you. DiMassimo was extraordinarily helpful and encouraging without being patronizing. See theglasspalette.net to become inspired!

For a change of pace, we drove south on Route 20. The road is winding but well-maintained, offering glimpses of beautiful rural Virginia. Helen liked spotting horses and cows; I enjoyed seeing old houses.

We found **Simpson Park** of the

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Beehive at the Virginia Discovery Museum
(Photo: Peggy Harrison, VDM)



East

Young Children, Busch Gardens: No Problem!

By KERRY DAY

Sixty miles east of Richmond can feel a world away, especially if the journey is to **Busch Gardens Europe**. Divided into areas featuring seven major countries, the amusement park showcases 100 landscaped acres, 50 attractions and nine main shows.

But is the expense worth it for families with young children? A family of four with children ages three to six pays over \$190—and this doesn't include parking or food and beverages. Given the unpredictable nature of kids, that's a fairly loaded proposition.

A lot of families, ours included, say NO to the single day pass, but the park's newly created "Fun Card" for

Virginia residents makes the decision a lot easier. It allows unlimited visits for spring and summer. As of June 1st, the cost per person over age three is \$59.95.

For our children—ages six, four and two—the excitement begins the moment we hit the parking lot. "Apollo's Chariot," a roller coaster with a 210-foot drop and 70 mph maximum speed, looms high above.

"Choo choo," my two-year-old son yells enthusiastically, his pudgy fingers pointing towards the giant metal track. Not exactly, but there is a striking resemblance. Even the tram ride from the parking lot to the entrance holds charm.

Word of advice: avoid an initial

wait at the main gates by ordering tickets on-line and printing out a voucher, and arriving at 10 a.m. when the park opens.

We recommend hitting as many rides as early as possible. Enjoy the slower-paced activities when the crowds and the heat start to intensify.

Nearly every one of the park's seven areas has kid-friendly attractions. Our children are drawn to the spinning teacups known as "Turkish Delight" and the centrifugal force of the "Catapult." "Tradewinds," a high-flying swing, and "Le Scoot Log Flume" are classics. As crowds grow, the only downside is the wait, so be prepared to entertain your kids while in the queue.

Kinan, avid park fan and mother of two children ages three and five said their favorites are "the train, especially when little legs get tired and you don't want to wheel a stroller around...the horse stables..."

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Land of the Dragons (Photo: Busch Entertainment Corp.)

South

What's New in Petersburg?

By LINDA BARRETT

"Let's go down to Petersburg," I said. "Let's have an adventure!" Of course, I had no idea what we'd do there, but isn't that what adventure is all about?

We headed for the Petersburg Visitors Center for ideas and were directed to the Siege Museum, Blandford Church and Centre Hill Mansion, Petersburg's jewel museums. But we wanted more. We dug deeper and found some of Petersburg's newest treasures.

Enjoy a Kid-Friendly Ice Cream

Nothing beats a good old-fashioned banana split on a 90-degree day—made even sweeter when nine-year-old owner Meghan Nunnally serves it up herself. Surprise! This fourth-grader

is the proprietor of the **M&M Ice Cream Parlor** in Old Towne.

We sat back to watch this competent girl handle customers, orders and the register. And we were even more delighted when she gathered the children for Saturday story time (1:30-2:30) in the cozy nook called Meghan's Comfy Zone. Meghan commanded the audience as she read to the uplifted faces.

Several years ago, Meghan approached her parents, AJ and Kimberly, to ask why they had all the businesses and she didn't. So they asked what kind of business she would like. Six months later she announced, "I want an ice cream parlor."

Opened in May, M&M is named for Meghan and Mom, but according to

Kimberly, "Meghan runs 75 percent of the business." Meghan interviews and trains her employees, tracks inventory and manages the store. "When I hire I look for a good attitude. They have to be a nice person or we don't want them," Meghan says. "The most important thing I've learned is that you have to show niceness and be considerate of others...even those customers who are not the most polite."

What does Meghan spend her profits on? "I save my money from my paycheck for college...and for church, but I spend it on butter brickle ice cream!" she laughs. "I pay for my own ice cream because it sets an example for my employees." She is already talking about opening other M&M shops.

Meghan's altruism reaches into the educational community. Her parlor sponsors school achievement celebrations and gives a \$1000 year-

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Meghan Nunnally (Photo: L. Barrett)

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North



Triassic treasure? (Photo: Fredericksburg Area Museum & Cultural Center)

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dren living in Colonial times. Activities may include grinding corn, quill pen writing, making plaster pieces, playing colonial games, stringing green beans, marching and dancing.

Have your children ever wondered what it was like to be a Civil War soldier? What did the soldiers wear? And what did they use to fight? Find out by joining the Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park's children's program.

Each morning from July 8-16, participants ages seven to 12 will be able to try on soldier uniforms, march and drill as soldiers did, and learn about the lives of men who fought and died there on the surrounding battlefields. This highly interactive program is free, but children must pre-register at the Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitors Center and have an accompanying parent.

Fredericksburg also boasts the stunning Belmont, painter Gari Melcher's home and studio, which offers art and painting classes for kids, such as "Creating Wearable Flower Art" and "Exploring Botanical Watercolors in Belmont's Garden." In addition, Belmont hosts a kids' scavenger hunt and encourages picnicking on the lovely grounds.

Not to be underestimated, charming Old Town Fredericksburg is a wonderful place to stroll with the baby, window-shop, have lunch and visit old-fashioned ice cream shops such as Goolrick's. It includes a number of casual eateries like Sammy T's, Basil's and Eileen's, as well as an antique children's clothing store

called Brother & Sister and a used bookstore with a generous selection of kids' books.

Located conveniently in Old Town, the Fredericksburg Area Museum's summer-long exhibit, "Treasures from the Triassic," allows kids to experience the story of the "missing" Virginia dinosaurs. Footprints of a three-toed dinosaur from the Triassic Era were found just miles from Fredericksburg in 1989, but actual dinosaur fossils remain elusive.

Another Old Town museum highlight, the Hugh Mercer Apothecary Shop, is an 18th-century doctor's office and pharmacy. Kids find out about Colonial herbal remedies and treatments, such as using leeches to suck the bad blood out of fevers and earaches and using tobacco to plug up a runny nose.

An additional option for exploring Fredericksburg is to take a trolley ride around town and/or purchase a pass to visit several of the historic sites. Kids under six are free. Enjoy your trip!

Make
Your
Plans



Fredericksburg Visitor Center
706 Caroline Street
800-678-4748
Daily, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.
visitfred.com
Links to attractions mentioned
in the article.

South

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ly scholarship to one deserving graduating senior.

Kimberly, a former educator, helped choose the bright red-and-yellow color scheme and 1950s décor that makes M&M a fun stop. Vinyl records and high-top sneakers decorate the walls, and red-and-white Coca-Cola-branded tables fill the floor. Grab lunch and an ice cream here, then prowl through the surrounding antique stores.

Pick up an Old Towne Bonus Card at any of the downtown establishments for discounts at most stores, including M&M.

Challenge Yourself

"OK, time for some physical fun," I announced. "Let's go hit a few balls." Opened in April, Swaders Sports Park is a draw for kids of all ages. We eyed batting cages that offer slow and fast pitch softball and hardball.

But miniature golf is more our speed, and this 36-hole course is made interesting—and challenging—by fountains, waterfalls, streams and ponds. For serious golfers, the driving range provides both natural grass and artificial tees.

The kids went crazy for go-carting, and Swaders offers two tracks, with four types of vehicles: slick track wedges, rookie karts, jaz karts and two-seaters. To those in the know about go-carts, this is *totally rad*. Pop into the clubhouse for hot dogs and slushees,



Rookie Karts (Photo: Swaders)

and throw a few quarters in the arcade.

Purchase a Gold Gift Card that gives you an extra 10 percent value free. Or consider a "Run of the Park Special." For \$20, you get one round of mini golf, two go-cart rides and two batting cage tokens.

Tour a Movie Studio

Petersburg has its own world-class production facility in New Millennium Studios. It is fascinating to see where the TV show "Linc" and the movies "Cherry Falls," "Asunder" and "Nothin' 2 Lose" were produced. Owned by actor/director Tim Reid and his wife actress/producer Daphne Maxwell Reid, the studios consist of 40,000 square feet of production facilities including a sound stage and backlot. Most memorable is the standing Oval Office set used in "The Contender," "First Kid" and the TV pilot "Commander in Chief."

"The tour lasts about an hour, and when Daphne Reid is here, she gives it herself," explains Ken Roy, director of facilities and media services. Visitors tour the post-production building, editing suites and sound production studios. Get a real insider's view of the sound stage and backstage areas containing dressing rooms, hair, makeup and wardrobe areas.

"If we have a project going on here, people can quietly walk through and see the sets or even the filming," Roy continues. What fun! Register online for advance tour tickets (\$10 or less).

Well, what do you know. We had an adventure after all. In Petersburg.

Make
Your
Plans

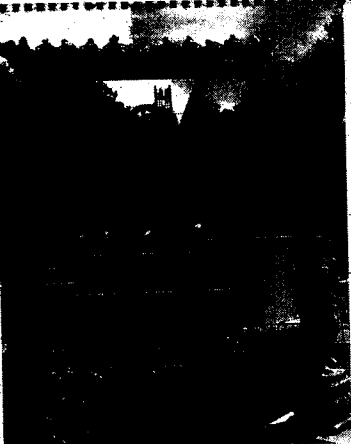


Petersburg Visitors Center
425 Cockade Alley
800-368-3595
Daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

M&M Ice Cream Parlor
105 W. Bank Street
804-733-9499

Swaders Sports Park
4725 Whitehill Blvd.,
Prince George
804-733-3700
swaders.com

New Millennium Studios
804-957-4200
nmstudios.com



(Photo: Busch Entertainment Corp.)

East

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the carnival games... Oh, and the Le Mans Raceway!"

Be sure to consider your child's personality. As one park attendant remarked, "My four-year-old is a real chicken. He won't ride anything except the horse statue *outside* the carousel." Tailor your trip accordingly.

If mom and dad are interested in riding a coaster, don't delay. You'll need to divide and conquer (one adult takes the children to a kid-friendly attraction while the other indulges in the thrill ride). OR, take advantage of the park's "Kid Swap" option. Children wait in line with both parents and when the coaster comes around, each adult gets to ride while the other hangs with the youngsters without going to the back of the line. This avoids double wait time, but also leaves kids in the lurch (because they don't get to ride). Use it sparingly.

Another park attendant shared this nugget, "We tell parents to do all their rides *first* before taking the kids to 'Land of the Dragons,' because once the kids get there they never want to leave!"

This holds true for our children as well—especially the small-scale wading pool with stepping stones and water jets. Be prepared and dress kids in swimming suits underneath their clothes. Complete your trip to this area by climbing the dragons' tree house, sliding down slides and enjoying the kiddie rides.

Then slow down the pace by heading to Jack Hanna's Wild Reserve. Kids can pet brightly colored birds, see bald eagles and gray wolves, and walk through an exhibit with free-flying

feathered friends. Then take a load off by enjoying "Pet Shenanigans," a show complete with cats, dogs, a mathematician parrot, a pot-bellied pig and more. Even better, all the animals were rescued from shelters.

We find that five hours is the maximum staying power of our brood. To end our trip, we always hop on the Skyride. It provides calming views of the water and trees below and exhilarating glimpses of fast-moving coasters. The train is also a nice alternative. The setting is gorgeous, and park designers have made every attempt to enhance, rather than negatively impact, its natural beauty.

Just before exiting, we highly recommend splitting a cotton candy. It's worth the \$3, if for nothing more than the pink fluffy beards and sticky fingertips that follow. With exhausted bodies and full-on smiles our children return to the car, where dream-filled sleep inevitably overtakes them.

Make Your Plans



- ▶ Visit www.buschgardens.com (click on Day Planner > Age-based Itinerary) for a complete list of rides and activities categorized by age and height restrictions.
- ▶ Arrive at opening and depart before meltdown.
- ▶ Avoid an oversized stroller; an umbrella stroller works best.
- ▶ Bring a couple of snacks, as dining in the park can be expensive.
- ▶ Take a map home. It's perfect entertainment for the drive, and then can be taped to bedroom walls for future day-dreaming.

West

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Albemarle County park system and cooled off in its water spray area. We were traveling on a weekday, or else we would have driven a little farther south to Hatton Ferry, where cars can cross the James River on a poled ferry. It's one of the last two poled



Rope bed in 200-year-old log cabin reconstructed in the Virginia Discovery Museum. (Photo: Peggy Harrison)

ferries in the country, and it operates free of charge on weekends from mid-April to mid-October.

After the splash stop, we hopped on Route 6 to Scottsville. We ate peach pie at Willow Coffee shop, across the street from the newly restored **Victory Hall Theatre**. Although the theatre takes a summer break from its programming of live music, exhibits and movies, Scottsville has an outdoor concert series called *Rhythm on the River*. On July 4, a concert by Las Gitanas ("gypsalachian" music) and Willow Branch (bluegrass) will be followed by fireworks.

Canal Basin Square in Scottsville is a fascinating outdoor exhibit about James River history. I managed to read snatches of the informative panels while Helen practiced her skipping and ruckus-raising before we returned to Richmond on quiet Route 6.

For families with children ages six to 11, **Monticello** offers special tours of Thomas Jefferson's famous home. The 30-minute guided tours highlight Jefferson's role as "grandpapa" and give children the chance to touch objects in each room of the house. They run daily through Labor Day (except July 4) on the hour from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Over at **Ash Lawn-Highland**, James Monroe's home, Tuesdays in July and August feature hands-on workshops for ages eight and up. For a small fee in addition to admission, you can learn how to cook on an open hearth, hand-punch a lantern and more. Their summer music festival includes Saturday morning children's shows as well as evening concerts and

full-scale productions of "West Side Story" and "The Merry Widow."

If you plan to really jump back in time, buy a **Presidents' Pass**, which gives discounted admission to Monticello, Ash-Lawn Highland and Michie Tavern.

For an outdoorsy trip, call 434-923-9022 to request the brochure "Great Hikes on the Rivanna Trail for Young Children and Their Families" or download it from rivannatrails.org. The Rivanna Trail circles Charlottesville through a natural "urban wilderness." Also, Scottsville has sports outfitters for tubing, canoeing or kayaking trips on the James. **RPM**

Make Your Plans



**Charlottesville/
Albemarle County**
Links to attractions mentioned in the article:
soveryvirginia.com

Downtown Visitors Center
Mon.-Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun.
11 a.m.-3 p.m.
877-386-1103

Main Visitors Center
(Monticello)
Daily 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
877-386-1102

Town of Scottsville
434-286-9267
scottsville.org