

Forget the English Countryside — this corner of Virginia has rolling hills, horse farms and wineries

How to spend a long weekend in one of the most charming parts of the state.



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Keep the Cotswolds on your travel list. But if you can't make it there now, there's always Hunt County.
(photo by Bill Koplitz via Getty Images)

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Whenever I need a break from Washington, D.C. and its constant churn, I head west. Drive a little over an hour outside of the city and the Beltway gives way to country roads lined with old stone walls, rolling hills, horse farms, vineyards and tiny towns filled with antique shops and cafés.

This is Virginia's Hunt Country, a pocket of northern Virginia that feels a lot like the English countryside, where shops sell tweed blazers and newsboy caps and people walk around in riding clothes. Even though the area has seen its fair share

of famous names— like John F. Kennedy and Elizabeth Taylor, to name a few — it still feels like a new discovery every time I visit.

Across towns like Middleburg, The Plains and Leesburg, horses are part of daily life. Lean into that spirit by anchoring a trip here around a local equestrian event, like a polo match or a steeplechase. I like to round out a weekend with a little antiques, window shopping and, of course, some local wine tasting. Like me, you certainly don't need a political pedigree (or your own horse) to appreciate this part of Virginia's charms.

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These are the things I return to again and again.

Watch polo or bet on a steeplechase



Get in on the equestrian culture by attending an event like the Virginia Gold Cup.
(The Washington Post via Getty Images)

It's not every day you get to watch a polo match or a steeplechase, but a weekend trip to Hunt Country makes both seem like everyday occurrences. Loudoun County alone is home to over 15,000 horses, and the area still carries an air of polished glamour of an earlier era, like the years when Jacqueline Kennedy spent weekends here on horseback as a break from life in D.C.

You don't have to have a former horse girl (like me) or know anything about either sport to get into the spirit. Snag a ticket to a local steeplechase or polo match, where elaborate tailgates, colorful fascinators and tweed are all part of the spectacle and charm. I like to bring binoculars, a few dollars to place a bet on a steeplechase winner and a camp chair.

Steeplechases take place each [fall](#) and [spring](#) at Glenwood Park in Middleburg and [Great Meadows](#) in The Plains, while summer polo matches are held at Great Meadows and [Morven Park](#) in Leesburg.

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If you're feeling inspired to try an equestrian sport yourself, you can book [a polo lesson](#) at Twilight Polo in Middleburg. Salamander, a resort outside of town, also offers more [low-key trail rides](#) around its property. And if you're really drawn to the area's horse obsession, you might like spending an hour or two at the [National Sporting Library & Museum](#) in Middleburg. The museum has a remarkable collection of equine sporting paintings and sculptures that trace the tradition of riding, steeplechases, fox hunts and polo through the centuries.

Hunt for antiques



Whether you're window shopping or buying new-to-you antiques, Hunt County has you covered.
(The Washington Post via Getty Images)

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This part of Virginia feels very old-world, so it's no surprise that antiquing here is excellent. There are plenty of shops that have eye-popping price tags, and while those aren't necessarily in my budget, they're always fun to browse through.

[The Paradise Antiques](#), just outside of Middleburg, sells European antiques and rare finds hand-sourced by its owner, who for years ran an interiors boutique in her native Buenos Aires before relocating to Virginia, where she continues to curate with her impeccable eye. I also love Old Millstones Vintage Thrift Shop, where I've found vintage linen napkins and new John Derian plates for a few dollars each, and [Vintage](#) in nearby Marshall. Run by a husband-and-wife team, the couple takes regular buying trips to France, where they ship things back by container.

I also make a point of going to [Lucketts](#) outside of Leesburg — the various vendor stalls turn over constantly, so there's always something new. Each fall and spring, they hold sprawling antique fairs in Berryville, which attract dealers from up and down the East Coast, and the food carts and live music make it worth a full day.

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And when I find myself way off the beaten path, in the one-street town of Waterford, I love to stop in at [The Corner Store](#), which pairs a beautifully curated selection of vintage furniture and rugs with small, handcrafted home items. Don't miss the tiny café counter tucked in the back.

Go wine tasting



Tastings, wine classes and private dinners are all options across Hunt County's wineries.
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While the state's best-known wine region lies further south near Charlottesville, the vineyards in this part of Virginia make a strong case of their own. Known for Bordeaux-style reds and whites like Petit Manseng, there are over fifty wineries in the area alone.

I like to skip some of the larger spots in favor of the smaller, quieter vineyards. I love to spend a lingering afternoon at [The Winery at La Grange](#) in Haymarket, on the grounds of a historic home. Nearby [William Gap Vineyard](#) in Round Hill has incredible views of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and in addition to tastings and classes, they also host private wine dinners.

Serious wine aficionados will appreciate a trip to [Lost Mountain Vineyards](#) in Delaplane, known for its award-winning wines. For something more low-key and family-friendly, [Old Farm Winery at Hartland](#) in Aldie makes for a fun afternoon that's as much about trying the wine as it is about hanging out.