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WILLIAMSBURG**

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**FUN  
FOR**

**EVERYONE!**

Roller coasters! Zip-lining! Mind-blowing history!  
Williamsburg, VA, packs in so much family fun that one trip will never  
be enough. Find out why you'll want to visit again and again!

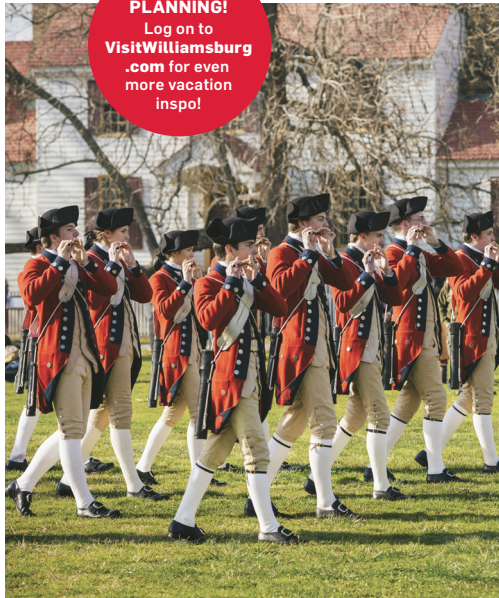
BY ELIZABETH ANNE SHAW \ \ PHOTOGRAPHY BY ELI MEIR KAPLAN

**Y**ou know that sparkly feeling you get when you travel someplace new only to discover that it's so much more than you ever imagined? Well, that's exactly what happened when my family visited Williamsburg, VA, early this spring. We were thrilled to be invited down by *FamilyFun's* partner, Visit Williamsburg, because the area had long been on our list of "must-dos with the children." After all, the region is quite literally the birthplace of America, and my husband, Patrick, and I couldn't wait to make that history come alive for our boys, Cole, 13, and Jason, 12. By the end of our long weekend, we couldn't believe how far beyond expectation the trip actually was.

We not only time-traveled to the 17th and 18th centuries, we also zipped back to the future on high-speed coasters, climbed among the treetops, and even hopped on the mostly-for-grown-ups-but-kids-still-welcome wine/beer/spirits tasting trail. None of us can wait to go back!

Because you can get from almost any Point A to any Point B in about 15 minutes or less, I've outlined our stops according to theme instead of day. You can mix and match as you like. My biggest piece of advice for making your daily schedule is to alternate history and museums (great for mornings) with modern-day fun (for afternoon and evenings). We were in town for four days and packed everything in; if you prefer a more leisurely pace, plan on five to seven. You won't regret you did!

**START PLANNING!**  
Log on to [VisitWilliamsburg.com](http://VisitWilliamsburg.com) for even more vacation inspo!



## TIME TRAVEL

It's one thing to read about history and completely another to be where that history was made. These places will stay with you!

### Historic Jamestowne

This was the first stop on our trip, and it allowed us to truly see, feel, and in some cases even touch a world that existed 400 years ago. Historic Jamestowne sits on the exact spot where the **first permanent English colonists settled in 1607**, and what really sold it for our boys is the fact that it's an active archaeological dig. We watched archaeologists as they excavated the site where several churches have stood, including the one in which Pocahontas and John Rolfe were married in 1614.

After touring the grounds, we stopped in **The Ed Shed**, an interactive space where your kids can sift through debris for real artifacts from the 1600s. Cole and Jason found tiny bird bones, a mouse tooth, and a fish scale! Then we headed over to the **Archaearium**, where you can see the more than 4,000 objects that have been discovered on the site. One note: The museum displays skeletal remains. Older kids and adults will find them fascinating, but use your judgment if little ones are in tow. [historicjamestowne.org](http://historicjamestowne.org)

### Jamestown Settlement

About a mile down the road from Historic Jamestowne is Jamestown Settlement, which combines a traditional museum with outdoor life-size re-creations of the original **James Fort**, the three ships that brought the first 104

settlers from England, as well as a **Powhatan Indian village**, named for the Native American confederation of tribes that controlled coastal Virginia. Kids are welcome to clamber inside the officers' berths on the **Susan Constant**, the biggest (but still small!) of the ships, sit in a dugout canoe, and grind corn in the Powhatan village. [historyisfun.org](http://historyisfun.org)

### Colonial Williamsburg

Most of us know at least a little about Colonial Williamsburg (CW)—it's *the* standard for all living-history museums for a reason. Still, we couldn't really imagine the scope of it. It's more than 300 acres, and it comprises the entire historic district of Greater Williamsburg. There are more than 500 buildings and among them over 40 public sites including homes, taverns, trade shops, and retail stores, so **it's worth dedicating at least a whole day**. You need an admission ticket to access any of the interpretive sites, and it's money very well spent (they start at \$12 for kids and \$26 for adults). Interacting with the costumed interpreters provides a much richer and more moving experience than you'll ever get on your own. In fact, they're the whole point!

Our first stop was the **ax-throwing range**. While the range isn't original to CW, historians know that a local farmer complained that Washington's young soldiers

were using his fruit trees as targets. (They may have been in the army, but they were still bored teenagers!) Our own teen and tween were more than happy to embody those disorderly privates. And when we stopped at the **carpenter's yard**, they got to try splitting wood using tools exactly like those used in the 1700s.

There is one experience you must—no matter what—make sure you have: **Meet with a Nation Builder**. CW has an elite group of 16 interpreters who train for years to portray real historical figures. We saw Young Thomas Jefferson (there's also President Thomas Jefferson!), and his performance was one of the most amazing things we've ever witnessed. We felt as if we were in the presence of the actual man. He spoke with a slight stutter (as TJ supposedly did), he bantered with other visitors about the history of Saxony and his (big) problem with Alexander Hamilton, and he told the boys all about his trip to Lake George when he learned we were from New York and had visited there too. And when Cole, our family's resident historian, called him out for smuggling grains of rice from Italy in the hem of his coat, he wholeheartedly owned up. Good man. [colonialwilliamsburg.com](http://colonialwilliamsburg.com)

### American Revolution Museum at Yorktown

Like the Jamestown Settlement, the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown has traditional galleries as well as outdoor living history, including a **Continental Army camp** and a **Revolutionary-era farm**. Don't skip **Liberty Fever**, a 20-minute film that shares the experiences of five real people who lived through the Revolution. Bonus: Kids have plenty of opportunities to interact with the exhibits through "please touch" displays and "test your knowledge" quizzes. [historyisfun.org](http://historyisfun.org)

### Yorktown Battlefield

To see where the war was won, drive down the road to the nearby **Yorktown Battlefield Visitor Center**. You can pick up a driving-tour map that will take you to the **Moore House**, the home where the terms of surrender were negotiated, as well as **Surrender Field**, where the British laid down their arms. Or if you have time, consider doing the tour by bike. You can pick up rentals at **Patriot Tours & Provisions** in downtown Yorktown and ride along the river to the park. When you're done, refuel at **Water Street Grille** ([waterstreetgrille.net](http://waterstreetgrille.net)) and take in the views of the York River. [nps.gov/york/index.htm](http://nps.gov/york/index.htm)



### grab a deal!

It almost always will make sense to get your tickets in some kind of combo instead of individually. You even have the option of getting your tickets and your hotel in one. Visit the "Packages & Deals" page of [VisitWilliamsburg.com](http://VisitWilliamsburg.com) to view the latest offers. You can also consider these:

**History Four-Site Ticket (\$14 to \$40 each):** Covers Historic Jamestowne, Jamestown Settlement, American Revolution Museum at Yorktown, and the Yorktown Battlefield for seven consecutive days.

**America's Historic Triangle Ticket (\$42 to \$93.50 each):** Covers all Colonial Williamsburg sites, Historic Jamestowne, Jamestown Settlement, American Revolution Museum at Yorktown, and the Yorktown Battlefield for seven consecutive days.

**Bounce Ticket (starts at \$87.50 each):** Covers Colonial Williamsburg and Busch Gardens Williamsburg (as well as the water park Water Country USA when it is open) for seven consecutive days; price varies by season.



## 21ST-CENTURY FUN

Ready to let loose for a while? Greater Williamsburg delivers with adventure, heart-stopping rides, and even Santa!

### Busch Gardens

This charming park takes visitors on a little tour of Europe. Each "land" is themed to countries, including England, Italy, Germany, and more. But I promise you the quaintness disappears the second you lock into one of the eight roller coasters the park is most known for: Whether you like to keep it old-school (but crazy-fast) on the wooden **InvadR** or scream your head off like I did while suspended at the top of the **Griffon's 205-foot 90-degree drop** (yes, straight down!), there's a coaster for everyone in your clan. Cole swears by the **double-loop Loch Ness Monster**. Jason is all about the snow-monster-themed **Alpengeist**. Adding to thrills this year: the new **Battle of Eire** ride, combining motion-based theater simulators with VR headsets. [buschgardens.com/williamsburg](http://buschgardens.com/williamsburg)

### Go Ape Treetop Adventure

Our kids are no strangers to rope courses and zip lines, but they declared Go Ape their favorite one yet. The challenge takes you through five courses that get progressively higher and more difficult, each one ending with a thrilling zip. Many of the courses give optional routes, and even though it will seem bananas, you have to try the Tarzan swing! To participate in the **Treetop Adventure**, kids must be 10 years old and at

least 55 inches tall; kids 15 and younger must be supervised on-course by an adult.

Littles can try the **Treetop Junior**, which introduces them to the same critical-thinking, confidence-building skills of climbing, but at a lower height. Kids must be 39 inches tall; adult supervision is required. Tickets are \$28 to \$58. Reservations recommended. [goape.com](http://goape.com)

### Go-Karts Plus

Four go-kart tracks, bumper cars and blaster boats, kiddie rides, mini golf, plus an arcade—basically, the perfect way to wrap up a day. The park is not too big and not too small and has plenty to keep kids of all ages having fun. Jason recommends the **DISK'O**, a spinning, up-and-down ride that can make you feel weightless—if you have an iron stomach like he does! Each ride requires three to five tickets (\$60 for 60; \$30 for 25; or \$1.50 each; wristbands are \$35). Height requirements for the go-karts: 46 to 60 inches. [gokartsplus.com](http://gokartsplus.com)

### Yankee Candle Village

Sometimes you just need a craft break. Or to feel like it's Christmas. At this flagship store, kids can choose from three different **candle-making activities**, browse through the **toy shop**, or watch it snow (inside!) at **Santa's workshop** (yep, he's there too!). [yankeecandle.com/village](http://yankeecandle.com/village)





## A DAY JUST FOR YOU

One of the special things about Greater Williamsburg is that it has just as much for grown-ups as it does for kids—which makes it an excellent destination for either a parents-only getaway or a trip with the grandparents, who can babysit while you sneak away. **Try this mini itinerary:** Ease into the day at the **Spa at Kingsmill Resort** ([kingsmills.com/spa](http://kingsmills.com/spa)), then stop at **La Tienda Tapas Bar & Market** ([latienda.com](http://latienda.com)) for lunch. (Order the tabouleh salad and the crispy fried eggplant with honey!) When you're done, pick up a few Spanish treats for the kids in the market. Spend the rest of the day sampling local wine, beer, and more on the **Williamsburg Tasting Trail** ([williamsburgtastingtrail.com](http://williamsburgtastingtrail.com)).

At the gorgeous **Williamsburg Winery** ([williamsburgwinery.com](http://williamsburgwinery.com)), you can enjoy a tour and

tasting for just \$12. Depending on the season, you might get to see the bottling room in action! After that, head back toward downtown to visit the **Silver Hand Meadery** ([silverhandmeadery.com](http://silverhandmeadery.com)), which specializes in this centuries-old honey-based drink. While you might expect all mead to lean sweet, we sampled bottles that ranged from very dry to even smoky and bourbony. Mead tastings are free; honey tastings are \$6 to \$9 per person (kids are welcome for those). Finish up at **Alewerks Brewing Company** (197B Ewell Road; [alewerks.com](http://alewerks.com)), an award-winning brewery and the first one in town. My fave? The Saison, hands down.

## WHERE TO EAT

This was a happy surprise: Williamsburg is a foodie town! Our favorites are **Shorty's Diner** ([shortysdiner.com](http://shortysdiner.com)) for classic breakfast dishes and **Craft 31** ([craft-31.com](http://craft-31.com)) for burgers and pizza (plus 31 craft beers). Also good for lunch: the eclectic **Culture Cafe** ([culturecafeva.com](http://culturecafeva.com)). The kids will dig their door-covered walls (think chic *Monsters Inc.*) and the fried chicken and waffle. Adults will deeply appreciate the grain bowls and the separate coffee menu. When you need a late-afternoon pick-me-up, stop by **Duck Donuts** ([duckdonuts.com](http://duckdonuts.com)), which was so good we went twice. The donuts are made to order, and you can choose one of their suggested favorites (like French Toast), or mix and match coatings and drizzles.

You may think you're too full for dinner, but there's always



## find a place to stay

Williamsburg has a huge range of lodging options—a great place to start your search is on the Packages & Deals page at [VisitWilliamsburg.com](http://VisitWilliamsburg.com). If you're looking for something more homey and spacious than a traditional hotel room, consider **King's Creek Plantation** (191 Cottage Cove Lane; [kingscreekplantation.com](http://kingscreekplantation.com)). The resort resembles a little village and features one-, two-, and three-bedroom cottages and two- and four-bedroom townhomes, each with a full kitchen and a washer and dryer (game changer!). Between the pools, playgrounds, trails, and resort activities, you'll have plenty to keep the kids entertained. Summer rates start at \$169 a night.

room for pimiento mac 'n' cheese or shrimp and grits at the **Amber Ox Public House** ([theamberox.com](http://theamberox.com)). And because you're on vacation, go for dessert again—ice cream and chocolate this time—at **Kilwins** ([kilwins.com](http://kilwins.com)). Enjoy your cones with a walk around nearby **Merchants Square**, which sits at the end of Duke of Gloucester Street, the main road through Colonial Williamsburg. Sure is a sweet way to end the day!