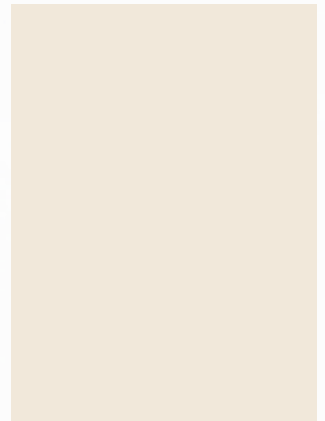
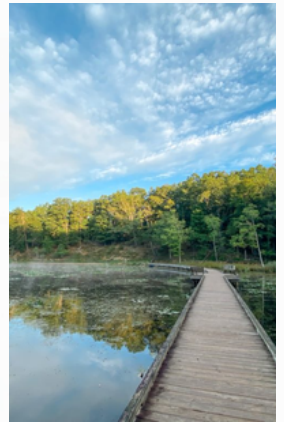


# MONTGOMERY COUNTY TOURISM



MEDIA  
MARKETING  
UPDATE &  
MEDIA COVERAGE  
REPORT  
JANUARY 2025

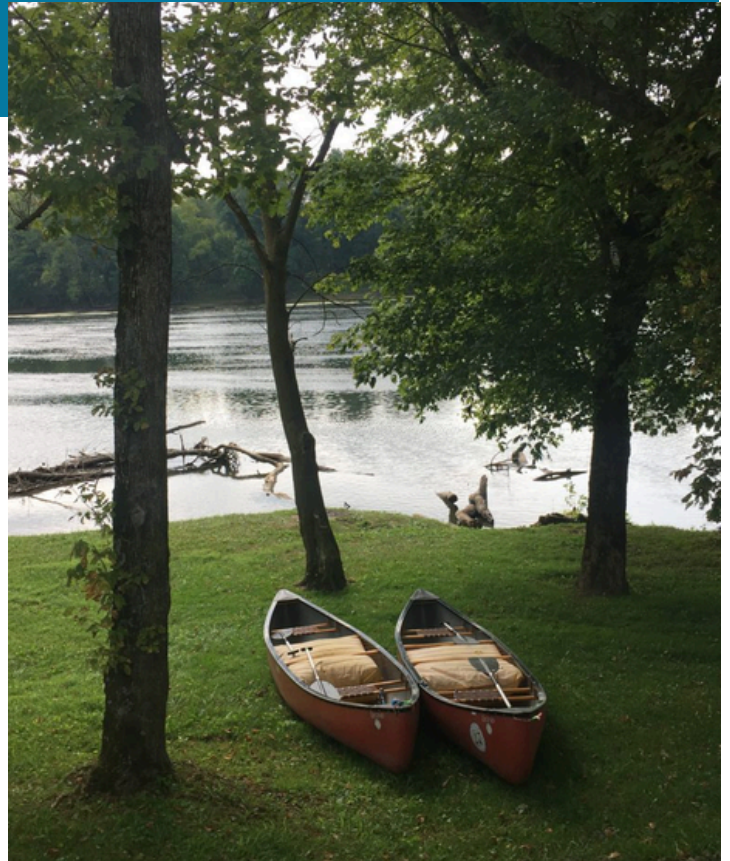
PREPARED BY  
Geiger & Associates Public Relations

# BACKGROUND

Geiger & Associates Public Relations, Inc. was founded by Debbie Geiger in 1985 after serving as Publicity Bureau Chief for the Florida Division of Tourism. The destination marketing specialists at Geiger & Associates have assisted more than 200 destination marketing organizations and other tourism industry clients in communicating specific messages to various audiences of journalists, opinion influencers, potential visitors and revenue sources for nearly 40 years. Those 200+ clients include state tourism agencies, smaller community CVBs, large urban CVBs, regional tourism organizations, resort properties, international clients and other organizations with a tourism marketing component.



*Geiger & Associates*  
public relations



## OBJECTIVE

Montgomery County Tourism began working with Geiger & Associates Public Relations in Fall 2023 to implement a comprehensive media marketing and public relations program. Since then G&A has planned, implemented and conducted three group media tours in November 2023, May 2024 and October 2024. Working in collaboration with Montgomery County Tourism, the goal of each media tour is to generate positive editorial coverage of local lodging, dining and attractions

The success of this joint effort is evident in the outstanding media coverage generated and the effective partnership with local tourism industry sponsors.

# CUMULATIVE MEDIA TOURS RESULTS



**25**

Number of travel journalists who visited Montgomery County for editorial research

**97**

Number of articles generated in print, radio or online media

**156.0  
MILLION**

Number of consumers reached by earned editorial coverage

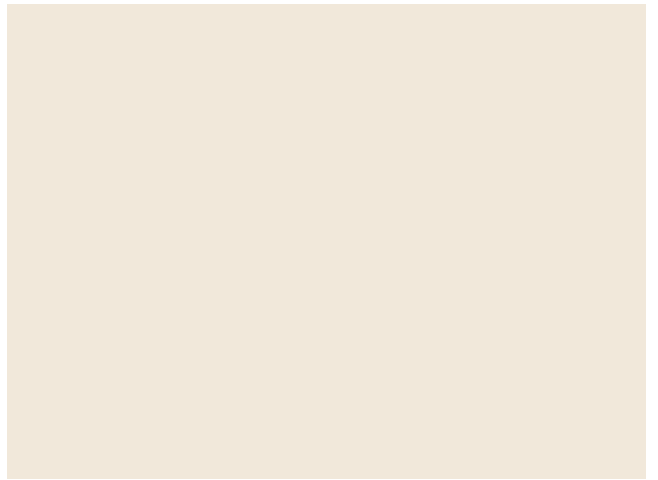
**\$1.33  
MILLION**

Total value of this media coverage if purchased as paid advertising

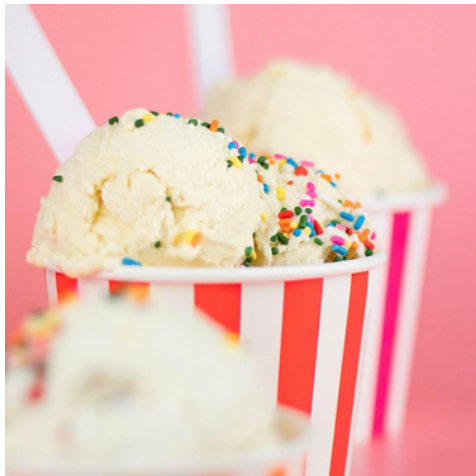


# RECENT MEDIA COVERAGE

**\*\*THE FOLLOWING IS A  
SAMPLE OF COVERAGE FROM  
THE LAST THREE MONTHS**



[CLICK TO  
VIEW ALL  
RECENT  
COVERAGE](#)





**Factory Made**  
AN UNLIKELY HOME CONVERSION

**Taste Thailand**  
WITH CHEF SILA DONALDSON

**Bosse High at 100**  
ALUMNI SHARE THEIR MEMORIES

# EVANSVILLE

*Living*

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TOAST TO THIS YEAR'S 49 WINNERS!



**BEST BRUNCH:** COMFORT  
BY THE CROSS-EYED CRICKET

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2024 \$4.95

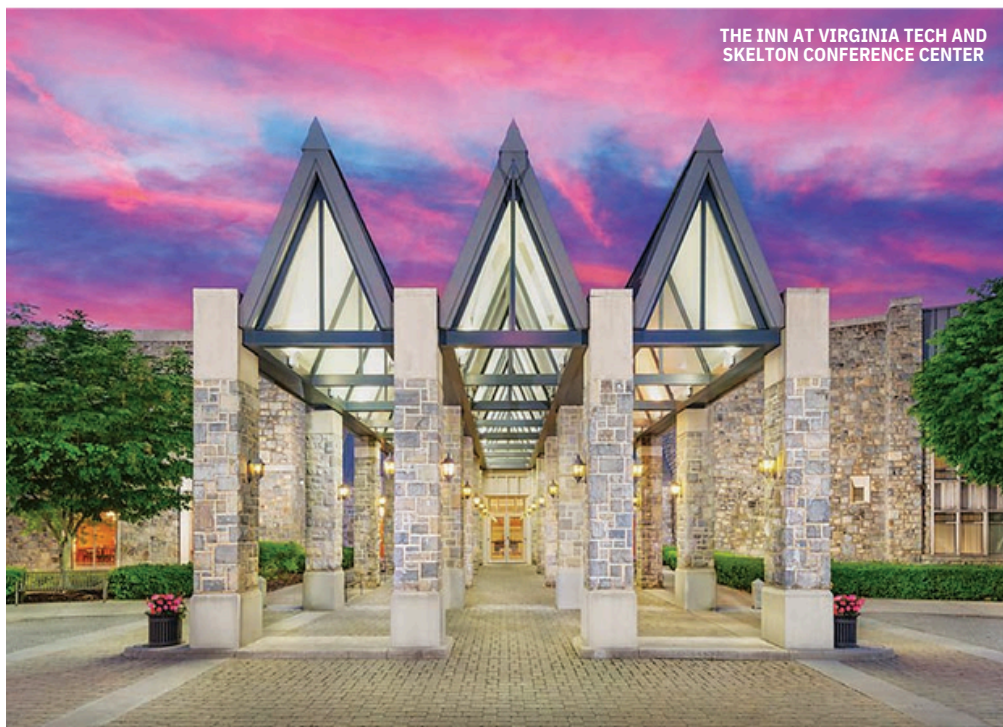




# BLACKSBURG BEAUTY

Experience agritourism, culture, and Tech life in Virginia

BY KRISTEN K. TUCKER



THE INN AT VIRGINIA TECH AND SKELTON CONFERENCE CENTER



HISTORICAL MARKER AT VIRGINIA TECH

I was a teenager when I first heard the lore and legend of Blacksburg, Virginia. My husband's cousin Rick was a civil engineering graduate of Virginia Tech University, which calls Blacksburg home, and to me, "Tech" was a mysterious place. I envisioned Blacksburg as a tiny college town set in a mountain valley; the male students all would wear beards (like Cousin Rick), have nicknames (Rick's is "Buck," acquired at the VT Sigma Nu fraternity house), and be outdoorsy types, dressing in flannel shirts and boots.

Last fall, I finally had the chance to visit **Montgomery County, Virginia**, home to Blacksburg and Virginia Tech, and its small-town neighbor, Christiansburg. My perception was not exactly accurate, though I did see plenty of students wearing beards, flannel, and boots. During my stay, Tech's football team was on the road at ACC rival University of Louisville, so I did not witness the spectacle that turns the entire town into a tailgate. Our group did see another type of spectacle when we witnessed the Hokies' offensive line loading up on ribs and

"game day mac and cheese" at **Bull & Bones Brew Haus & Grill** on Main Street Thursday night before they departed for Louisville.

Blacksburg, Virginia, may be a college town, but I immediately sense it's much more than just a temporary students' home. If you're looking for a weekend of outdoor excursions, Blacksburg is the ideal retreat. Nestled between the Blue Ridge and Alleghany Mountains, set along the banks of the New River, Blacksburg is near various points on the Appalachian Trail, including the famed McAfee Knob, as well as a variety of walking, hiking, and biking trails.

Here are the spots you won't want to miss in Montgomery County.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

When I visit a college town, I like to stay in the "union," if such accommodations are offered. At Virginia Tech, that would be **The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center**, the only hotel offered on the VT campus and the only full-service hotel in Blacksburg. Plan your trip around

football games and Tech family weekends, when rooms fill up fast. If you find that's the case, there are name-brand hotels within eyesight of the union, just off campus.

## WINE AND DINE

The **Blacksburg Wine Lab** was borne from owners John Boyer's and Katie Pritchard's vision for an educational enjoyment component in wine tasting. Drawing from Boyer's tenure as a Virginia Tech geography professor — where he devised an extremely popular course, *Geography of Wine* — the Blacksburg Wine Lab focuses on demystifying wine and wine consumption and using it as a learning tool. Today, the course is offered online, and each spring, it has more than 1,500 students. At the Wine Lab, the owners seek to shine a light on lesser-known wines. Flights focusing on geography also are offered. I sampled my way through New Zealand whites and reds. Taking a cue from restaurants throughout Italy and Spain, the Blacksburg Wine Lab offers tinned seafood. It's a trend that is reaching our shores with "seacuterie" plates



showing up on East Coast menus. Visitors to the Blacksburg Wine Lab are greeted with a beautiful wall display of tinned fish and chocolates for purchase.

For dinner, dine at **The Blacksburg Tavern**, a historic gem tucked into Main Street in the town's oldest house, circa 1892. Proprietor Daniel Riley writes on the eatery's website, "When this home was built, Main Street was a dirt road where horses pulled wagons and picket fences kept milk cows from roaming." Virginia Tech then was known as Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College with a total student enrollment of 135. Our group was served a traditional farmer's feast family style with classic choices of country ham, beef brisket, meatloaf, fluffy biscuits, macaroni and cheese, and vegetables.

At **Beliveau Farm & Winery** Yvan, a retired Virginia Tech architecture professor, and Joyce Beliveau, a VT graduate with a master's degree in counseling who held several leadership roles in Blacksburg during her career, purchased 165 acres of land and the 1900s farmhouse-turned-barn that sat upon it in 2001. By 2009, the first grapes were planted, and the winery opened in 2012. A brewery was added in 2019 to produce gluten-free beers, currently Virginia's only gluten-free suds. According to Joyce, the secret to their award-winning wine is they are committed to making Virginia wine and not trying to be California. Accommodations are offered at Beliveau Farm at The Manor House bed-and-breakfast.

**Rising Silo Brewery & Farm** is a farm-

based brewery using exclusively organic malts and water from the farm's well. I tried a flight consisting of Saison, Ginger Hare Carrot beer, Rising Silo Festbier, and an Apple Atcha cider. The crew also runs Farm & Forage Kitchen with a seasonally directed menu that rotates weekly. The pizza oven is fired up virtually every evening.

**Iron Tree Brewing**, in Christiansburg, was started by three friends (and here the story repeats – they all are Tech graduates) with a passion for tasty beer. After much practice at home brewing, the trio acquired the site of a former furniture store in Downtown Christiansburg, retrofitted it as a brewery, and hosted its grand opening in May 2021.

## OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

So great are the opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts, that it is impossible to list them all here. Some hikes require a degree of technical proficiency and scrambling. Come September, the Jefferson National Forest is **Pandapas Pond** and parts of the Poverty Creek Trail system, which spans 17 miles across the New River Valley. A popular spot for walkers, birders, and photographers is the one-mile loop trail encircling the eight-acre Pandapas Pond and wetlands over boardwalks and bridges. **Stiles Falls at Alta Mons** is a stunning 40-foot waterfall at the apex of an easy three-mile round-trip hike. The trail features multiple crossings over Purgatory Creek before reaching Stiles Falls, with occasional steep inclines and rock hopping.



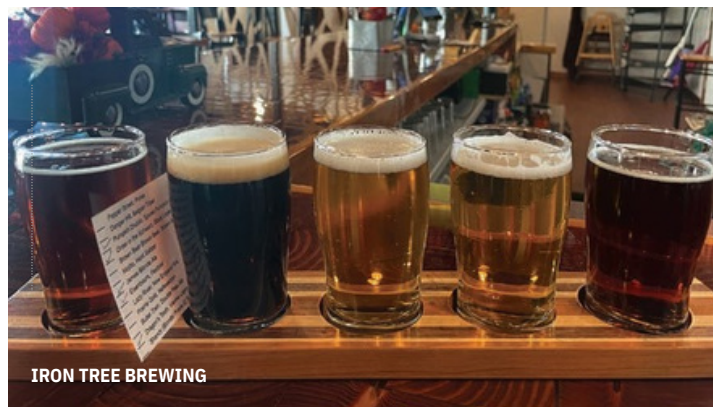
BLACKSBURG WINE LAB



BELIVEAU FARM & WINERY



RISING SILO BREWERY & FARM



IRON TREE BREWING



PANDAPAS POND





MOSS ART CENTER



FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT STATUE IN THE HAHN HORTICULTURE GARDENS

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MONTGOMERY COUNTY VIRGINIA REGIONAL TOURISM

## ATTRACTIONS

At the **Moss Arts Center**, the heart of Virginia Tech's artistic community, performance and visual arts converge under a single roof. Located at the crossroads of VT and Downtown Blacksburg, the center operates as both a presenting organization and a 147,000-square-foot, top-caliber arts center.

Explore nearly six acres of teaching and display garden on the campus of Virginia Tech at the **Hahn Horticultural Garden** and the **Peggy Lee Hahn Pavilion**. Located adjacent to Tech's baseball stadium, English Field at Atlantic Union Bank Park, and across the street from the football arena, Lane Stadium, the gardens are open from

dawn to dusk every day. Director Scott Douglas reports several spots within the gardens are popular places of respite for students and professors grading papers. Like most college towns, Blacksburg offers plenty of shopping opportunities – mostly small, locally owned boutiques and specialty shops. For all things Hokie and



a cold, sugary treat, visit **Sugar Magnolia**. Here, hand-dipped ice cream is served up inside a charming boutique offering plenty of “burnt orange and Chicago maroon” – VT’s colors selected way back in 1896 because no other college was using that combination at the time.

Eight miles south of Blacksburg lies Christiansburg, the quieter part of the county. Here, we visited the **Montgomery County Museum** and **Sinkland Farms**. As the region’s steward of art and history located in a historic bank building, the Montgomery County Museum takes pride

in inspiring and educating through cultural programming. Agriculture, coal mining, rail service, and the establishment of Virginia Tech were important factors in the county’s growth since its inception in 1776, and all are presented in the museum. Train service again will impact Christiansburg in 2025 when an Amtrak stop is added there as part of the Transforming Rail in Virginia initiative.

Agritourism is a mainstay in western Virginia, and Sinkland Farms demonstrates that in a big way. Set on 125 acres of rolling hills, verdant meadow, and gardens reminiscent of the French Provençal countryside, Sinkland Farms is a renowned wedding venue and home to many events including a sunflower festival and the annual Pumpkin Festival held over six weeks each fall. We visited the last weekend of the Pumpkin Festival.

Now that a trip to Blacksburg, Virginia, is in your travel plans, what is a Hokie? For that, we turn to public art. In summer 2006, Blacksburg was adorned with creatively decorated **Hokie Bird** statues as part of the Gobble de Art initiative, aimed at fostering community engagement and appreciation for the visual arts. Although the originally painted statues have found their forever homes, the legacy of Gobble de Art endures with approximately two dozen sculptures on public display, alongside a continuous offering of related merchandise.



HOKIE BIRD AT VIRGINIA TECH

## WHEN YOU GO

### START HERE

#### MONTGOMERY COUNTY VIRGINIA REGIONAL TOURISM

gotomontva.com

### STAY

#### THE INN AT VIRGINIA TECH

innatvirginiatech.com

### EAT & DRINK

#### BELIVEAU FARM & WINERY

beliveauwinery.com

#### THE BLACKSBURG TAVERN

theblacksburgtavern.com

#### BLACKSBURG WINE LAB

winelab.com

#### BULL & BONES

bullandbones.com/blacksburg

#### IRON TREE BREWING COMPANY

irontreebrewing.com

#### RISING SILO BREWERY & FARM

risingsilobrewery.com

#### SUGAR MAGNOLIA

sugarmagnoliashops.com/  
experience-blacksburg

### VISIT

#### ALTA MONS

altamons.org



#### HAHN HORTICULTURE GARDEN

hahngarden.vt.edu

#### MONTGOMERY MUSEUM OF ART & HISTORY

montgomerymuseum.org

#### MOSS ARTS CENTER

artscenter.vt.edu

#### POVERTY CREEK TRAILS COALITION

povertycreektrails.org

#### SINKLAND FARMS

sinklandfarms.com



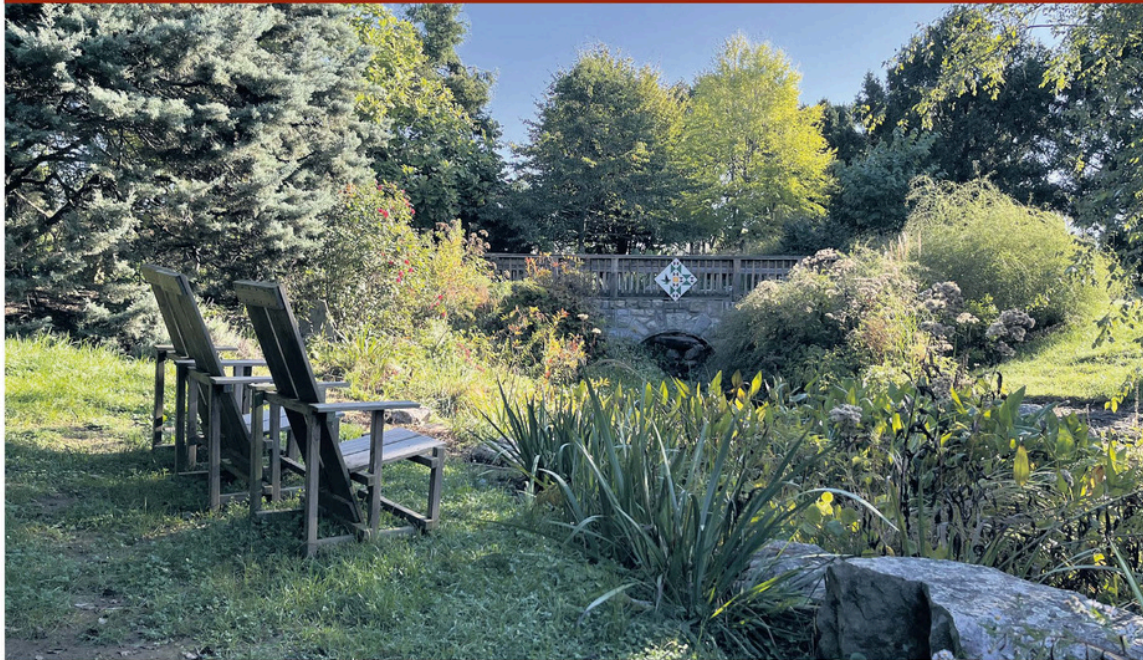
#### VIRGINIA PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY

vapassengerrailauthority.org/  
transformingrail



## THE SMALLER SIDE OF TEXAS • 12

## SECTION I



The Hahn Horticulture Garden offers a nature sanctuary for the public and Virginia Tech students with six acres to discover.

# Fall in love with small-town Virginia

Neighbouring communities nestled among Blue Ridge and Allegheny mountains will draw you in with natural beauty, southern charm

NADYA PANKIW

**B**LACKSBURG, Va. — It's on licence plates, highway signs and even on stickers for sale at local shops: Virginia is for Lovers.

In two neighbouring towns, Blacksburg and Christiansburg, nestled between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny mountains the saying couldn't be more true. But it also takes on new meaning — this part of the state is for lovers of nature, the arts and most importantly, community.

If you want to get away from the hustle and bustle of big America, mall shopping and crazy crowds, these two towns offer Hallmark-movie-worthy scenery, quintessential southern hospitality and local wares like no other.

Blacksburg, which was established Jan. 13, 1798, is home to Virginia Tech, a buzzing campus that provides a youthful, vibrant energy to the town. Since the horrific on-campus shooting 17 years ago which resulted in the deaths of 32 students and faculty members, the school has erected a memorial for the victims and honours them annually during remembrance walks.

The school, which is highly regarded for its engineering program is also home to the Moss Arts Center and Gallery, a partially-converted cafeteria with a stunningly spacious theatre that hosts professional artists and student groups throughout its season.

On the south side of campus the Hahn Horticulture Garden offers natural solace for the public and students with six acres to discover. Visitors are welcome to recharge and explore the unique annual and perennial plants offer, such as a banana tree and Zig Zag Redbud.

Established in 1984, the garden also boasts a koi pond, educational workshops for plant and bug identification, and various art sculptures including the *Maid in the Mud* garden sprite by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Blacksburg's highly walkable Main Street is located a stone's throw off Virginia Tech's campus. Along the cobblestone sidewalks, its charming storefronts promote locally-made art, art supplies and Virginia Tech gear, and host an array of restaurants.

If you're searching for southern comfort food, look no further than the

## HOW TO GET THERE

The Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport is the closest flight-hub to Blacksburg and Christiansburg. Non-stop service is offered to eight cities in the United States. Travellers from Winnipeg would have the option of flying through Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport or Chicago O'Hare International Airport before continuing on to Roanoke.

## WHERE TO STAY

The Inn at Virginia Tech provides a comfortable stay on the Virginia Tech campus, which is close to the action on Blacksburg's Main Street.



Blacksburg Farmers Market features vendors year-round selling goods produced or grown within an 80-kilometre radius of the town.



Cambria Station Antiques features three floors filled with reasonably priced vintage wares.

Blacksburg Tavern. The town's oldest home, originally constructed in 1892, was purchased by Daniel Riley in 2007 and converted into a restaurant. It's now serving up hand-battered buttermilk fried chicken, beef brisket and of course you can't forget the buttermilk biscuits and cornbread.

If you're dining on the patio or porch, be sure to head inside the tavern to examine its interior — each wall features murals hand-painted by the owner's great-aunt depicting local history and landscapes.



A massive archway made out of books connects the Old New River Books shop to the neighbouring Cambria Station Antiques.

● CONTINUED ON 12



## SMALL-TOWN VIRGINIA • FROM 11

Located next door to the tavern, Cabo Fish Taco is a chain with locations in Virginia and North Carolina that serves up specialty tacos, burritos and quesadillas as well as an ooey-goey queso dip that you simply must not skip.

Once you are satisfyingly stuffed, cool off from Virginia's humid climate and head over one block to Sugar Magnolia.

The shop, which specializes in spectacular ice cream and delectable chocolates and stocks an adorable selection of stationery and giftware, was established in 2015 by husband-and-wife duo Michelle and Tom Raub.

After starting up in a 632-sq.-ft. shop down the road, the Raubs opened their current location in 2018 and even blew out the wall of the neighbouring building, a former bank, to expand their business.

"We have an awesome local base that really has a strong affinity to us," said Michelle. "We're the space where on a Friday, Saturday night, the middle schoolers are allowed to stay until 1 a.m."

"That was really our whole mission, was building community one gift at a time."

Community also is the cornerstone of Blacksburg Farmers' Market, an event that has brought vendors together since its inception in 1985.

The year-round producer-only market gathers downtown in a converted parking lot to host vendors selling items produced or grown within an 80-kilometre radius of Blacksburg.

During a Saturday-morning visit in early October, the market featured about 30 vendors selling blossoming floral arrangements, organic produce, dog treats, watercolour paintings, alpaca yarn, soaps, jams, honey, eggs, and various baked pastries and breads. Debbie Edwards, manager of Blacksburg Farmers' Market, says the event really comes alive around mid-morning as families often gather on the lawn space to listen to live music performed by local artists.

"There's a vibe and an energy here that is very special to the community," said Edwards.

An autumn visit wouldn't be complete without a trip to the nearby Jefferson National Forest, which puts the state's mountain landscape, tree foliage and wildlife on a platter for nature lovers. Surrounded by pine, oak and poplar trees, the eight-acre Pandapas Pond features a 1.6-km packed-gravel loop perfect for hikers, bikers, dog walkers, birdwatchers and baby strollers.

Families with younger children, however, may prefer the outdoor recreational offerings of Christiansburg's 50-acre, award-winning Huckleberry Park.

The former cattle farm turned public facility opened in September 2023 and features a splash pad, state-of-the-art playground equipment from Sweden, turf field, trails and two dog parks.

Brad Epperley, director of parks and recreation for the town of Christiansburg, says the park was designed intentionally to provide recreational opportunities for everyone, especially those with disabilities.

The family fun continues over at Sinkland Farms' Pumpkin Festival. Over six weeks in the fall, owner Susan Sink, 71, says approximately 40,000 visitors come to enjoy the corn maze,



Pandapas Pond at Jefferson National Forest features a packed-gravel loop perfect for hikers, bikers, dog walkers, birdwatchers and baby strollers.



A Sinkland Farms employee cosplays as a scarecrow.

food and craft vendors, live music, pig races and hay rides, and of course, to pick out a perfect pumpkin for the season.

Set on 125 acres, the festival is a highly Instagrammable affair if not for the breathtaking scenery then for the hay bales painted to look like farm animals and staff cosplaying in creepily convincing scarecrow attire.

Christiansburg's history comes alive at the Montgomery Museum of Art and History. The museum moved into a former bank about two years ago, and the space has been creatively used to display regional history and art.

Sometimes, learning more about

an area can go beyond the walls of a museum. Visitors with a knack for treasure hunting are best to head to Cambria Station Antiques.

The three-storey warehouse is situated beside active train tracks, so you won't be sifting through the reasonably-priced vintage goods for long until the store's hardwood floor begins to vibrate from the force of a passing train. Whether you're searching for jewelry, dishes, clothing, records or furniture, shoppers are bound to come across a unique oddity.

Attached via a massive archway made of books, Old New River Books features used reads priced around US\$3-4. By



Children play at Christiansburg's Huckleberry Park.



Sinkland Farms' annual Pumpkin Festival features more than just pumpkins.

visiting this local gem, you'll be sure to get a good story out of it.

Speaking of affordable, if you're looking for a delicious meal that won't break the bank in Christiansburg, head over to Gardner's Grill. Head chef Matthew Tolbert trained at the Culinary Institute of the Carolinas and now works at the Grill with his mother, Cindy (also known as Mama C).

"In order to be a better place for Christiansburg, we needed to lower our prices," said Cindy.

With Matthew's culinary expertise, he revised the restaurant's menu which serves up grab-and-go favourites like Mama's Grilled Cheese, smash burgers

and hot dogs. Matthew even cooks up specials like the Kickin' Chicken and Waffles, to offer flavours locals usually couldn't find around town.

"If I don't like it, then I don't sell it," said Matthew.

As many of these destinations are within walking distance, renting a car at the Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport will allow visitors to get the most out of these two towns.

Nadja Pankiw was provided a promotional trip to Blacksburg and Christiansburg.

nadja.pankiw@freepress.mb.ca



# The surprises offered in western Virginia

By Elaine Warner

One of the best-known tourism slogans ever – Virginia is for Lovers – could read Virginia is for Everybody. Perhaps most people think of spots like Williamsburg, Mount Vernon and Monticello in eastern Virginia. These are important places, but I'm finding surprises in the far western part of the state – cool little towns like Blacksburg and Christiansburg with beautiful mountain scenery, swift-flowing rivers, and great food and, yes, wine.



Elaine

These two communities are tucked in a valley between the Allegheny and Blue Ridge Mountains. The heart of the valley is the New River. The name is oxymoronic as geologists believe this is one of the oldest rivers in the world, the result of the collision of the African tectonic plate with the North American plate some 300 million years ago.

Members of the press trip were staying at the Inn at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg. Pardon my ignorance, but it's not in the Big Twelve or even the SEC. So I wasn't prepared for the massive and magnificent campus and I quickly understood that Virginia Tech and its mascot, the HokieBird, were a very big deal in the area.

Opened in 1872 as Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College, the school changed names several times, finally settling on Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. That's a mouthful, so people just call it Virginia Tech. The mascot, the HokieBird dates back to the last century when a football fan would bring trained turkeys to the games to entertain the crowd. The Tech teams adopted the name The Gobblers, which morphed somehow into the turkey-like HokieBird.

Most of the buildings on campus are constructed from Hokie Stone, dolomite from the university's own quarry, which produces approximately 50 tons of stone per week. The campus covers 2,600 acres with more than 213 buildings. The Inn entrance features stone column topped with glass triangles – striking architecture. And my room and the restaurant were wonderful.

The town is delightfully diverse with great historical elements plus an exciting young vibe. In a quick tour of the downtown area, I found a great independent book store – not only a place to buy books, but a gathering place with cool activities. My favorite section was labeled "Non-boring Non-fiction." And they have a comfy kiddy corner and a community poetry project that changes weekly. Blacksburg Books is definitely not boring.

Close by was Sugar Magnolia, an ice cream parlor and gift store with a real family feel and super-friendly employees. The ice cream was good, too. My blackberry pomegranate sorbet really hit the spot.

Food is always an interesting element to me and our selections in Blacksburg were diverse. Contemporary met traditional at Preston's in the Inn. A definite college vibe and outdoor dining accompanied super selections at Cabo Fish Tacos. A romantic Italian meal was a hit at Zeppoli's and historic offerings, including fried chicken, baked ham, biscuits and cornbread, rounded out the tour at the 1892 Blacksburg Tavern.

Drinks were also on the itinerary. A drive through the beautiful countryside brought us to the 165-acre Beliveau Farm Winery featuring Virginia wines and a million-dollar view. The farm also has a brewery, the only gluten-free brewery in the state, and a charming bed and breakfast facility.



Books are big business at Cambria Station Antique and Old New River Books in Christiansburg. (All photographs by Elaine Warner.)

Other breweries we visited included lunch at Eastern Divide Brewing. Hot Honey Fried Chicken Sandwich and the Crab Cake Sandwich were tempting, but, feeling a need to go light, I ordered the Summer Salad with chicken. Turned out, I could have split it with two friends! Beers here are brewed with Virginia grains supporting local agriculture. Some are fermented in oak barrels previously used for wine, bourbon or maple syrup, adding new notes to familiar flavor profiles.

In Christiansburg, we stopped at Iron Tree Brewing, a smaller facility with a real neighborhood feel. And it was pet friendly. The company was started by three Virginia Tech friends who began home brewing. Their brews became so popular at tailgates and among other friends that in 2018, they opened their own brewery. Situated in downtown, it's a center for members of the community – all ages welcome.

I have to admit – I don't like beer! So my favorite stop was Moon Hollow Brewing Company back in Blacksburg. Woman owned, LGBTQ+ friendly, their brews reflected lots of personality with selections like Mountain Mist Hibiscus Grapefruit Hard Seltzer and E&F Prickly Pear (pale sour ale with prickly pear puree) along with more traditional Moon Hollow Hefewiesen and Lunatic (an American-style IPA). They won my heart with their non-alcoholic choices and I thoroughly enjoyed Smoked Mint Julep, a craft soda.

Lest you think all we did was eat and drink – there were lots of other activities. We enjoyed a peaceful walk around Pandapas Pond in the Jefferson National Forest. The towering trees, trilling birds, geese paddling on the pond past water lily pads and the fresh air made a refreshing break from our busy schedule.

A stop along the New River gave us history on the area. At New River Junction we toured a family-owned and operated campground and recreational park – the ideal place for tubing in the river.

A good Saturday morning stop at the Blacksburg Farmers Market provided a look at produce and crafts – and a chance to pick up breakfast before

heading to the Hahn Horticulture Garden at Tech. The six acres here include a Trident Maple allée leading into a shade garden, a meadow and stream area and a garden with plantings arranged on the color spectrum. The Hahn Garden is the largest botanical garden in western Virginia and is free to the public.

In Christiansburg, Huckleberry Park was an eye-opener. While the park includes expected areas like playing fields, a dog park, picnic facilities and trails, the thing I found most amazing was the playground area. The playground incorporates activities for all abilities including special equipment for guests with social, emotional, cognitive, physical, hearing or visibility issues. There's also an adult fitness zone and challenge area.

While in the area, we also stopped at Cambria Station Antiques and Old New River Books – three floors of vintage, antique and hand-made items and books – lots of books. So many books, there's a wall of them with an arched door – of books.

We did all these things – and more – in two-and-a-half days. I always say "Travel writers get one lick off the lollipop but we get lots of lollipops." Sweet stops are more than available to travelers who take the time to explore the New River Valley in Virginia.



Eastern Divide Brewing headlines their beer options, but their food offerings shine, too.



The scenic Virginia countryside is cuddled by the Allegheny and Blue Ridge Mountains.



Sweet treats are served with a big smiles at Sugar Magnolia in Blacksburg.

# CNHI

syndicated newspaper group distributed in  
Texas, Indiana, Kentucky, and Oklahoma

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**WEATHERFORD**  
DEMOCRAT

*The*  
**SENTINEL  
ECHO**

**The**  **Item**

**Stillwater**  
**News Press**

**GAINESVILLE**  
**Daily Register**



# The Delight of Visiting a Used Bookstore

David and Kay Scott | America's Historic Road Trip Nov 30, 2024



Ken Vaughan, co-owner of Old New River Books with his wife Heather, stands in front of a case holding a few of their rare books.  
David and Kay Scott

During an October journey to the New River Valley, a scenic four-county region of southwest Virginia, we stopped at Old New River Books in Christiansburg. Visiting libraries and bookstores has long been an enjoyable part of our travels. It is always fun to browse the aisles of a bookstore brimming with volumes of stories, illustrations, history and ideas. While all bookstores offer enjoyment, used bookstores add the mystery of never knowing what you might discover. A used bookstore is the rare commercial enterprise where a few dollars can buy many hours of pleasure. We especially enjoy small town bookstores where strangers are generally welcomed by a knowledgeable and friendly owner who enjoys discussing books and telling out-of-towners about the community. Old New River Books is one of these special places.

Christiansburg enjoys an interesting history. With a population of 23,000, it is located 8 miles south of Blacksburg, a town twice its size and home of Virginia Tech University. In addition to driving on public roads, a paved trail allows residents to hike or bike between the two towns. Christiansburg was named for Colonel William Christian, an early settler and brother-in-law to Patrick Henry. Established in 1792, the town once served as home to Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone and, later, Booker T Washington. Christiansburg still has an operating drive-in theater, one of six remaining in the state. It is host to a fall pumpkin festival and can boast having one of the most impressive public parks we have visited in a town of its size. Interestingly, the town's Main Street follows the Eastern Continental Divide with rainfall on one side flowing to the Gulf of Mexico and the other side flowing to the Atlantic Ocean.

The Old New River Bookstore consumes the rear portion of the first floor of an early 1900s warehouse. The three-story building is primarily devoted to antiques with the bookstore occupying space that was formerly an apartment for the previous owner. The building sits across the street from the town's historic 1868 railway depot that served as a passenger and, later, freight depot until 1960. An earlier depot was burned by Union forces during the Civil War. For train buffs, the station alone is reason enough to visit Christiansburg, a town with a lot of early American history.

Walking into Old New River Books through a unique portal constructed of nearly 3,000 books, we met Ken Vaughan who, along with wife Heather, are the store's owners. The couple love the New River area and chose to remain following graduation from local universities, Radford and Virginia Tech, respectively. Offering a greeting, Ken reached into the book-lined portal and opened a fake book filled with candy. Becoming burned out from years working in the software industry, he and Heather spent six years building an online book business prior to branching into retail by renting a booth in the Christiansburg antique store. Their retail business had grown to three booths when the store owner mentioned her intention to retire and offered the business to the Vaughans who, along with a business partner, took the plunge and bought the building.

Ken estimates the store typically has about 4,000 volumes on its shelves, with another 10,000 books in the couple's home that are available online ([oldnewriverbooks.com](http://oldnewriverbooks.com)). Most of their inventory is acquired from estates and book-rich families who have decided to downsize or move from the area. Major estate purchases typically offer the owners a yield of about 20% keepers for resale with the remainder being donated to nonprofits. Both the sales and acquisition sides of their business benefits from being near a large university like Virginia Tech.

Although you might expect this of a bookstore owner, it was obvious during our conversation that Ken is in love with books. He commented that one of his greatest pleasures of being in the business is experiencing the enormous variety of what authors have written. When asked about the problems of operating a bookstore, he mentioned not having sufficient funds to buy all the books he wanted. He realizes not everyone has the same interests as himself. In the Vaughan's case, they make a point to stock a wide variety of books so any customer entering the store will find something he or she would enjoy reading.

Following an enjoyable visit, we departed Old New River Books with a used copy of "The Shortwave Mystery," a Hardy Boys adventure story in a series written for young boys who dreamed of a life as exciting as that experienced by teenage sleuths Frank and Joe Hardy. After reading the book once again, I realized that after 70 years, Frank and Joe were still smarter than me.

*David and Kay Scott are authors of "Exploring the Oregon Trail" America's Historic Road Trip" (Globe Pequot). The authors live in Valdosta, Georgia. Visit them at [blog.valdosta.edu/dlscott](http://blog.valdosta.edu/dlscott).*



# Valdosta Scene

South Georgia  
Life & Style

Holiday 2024

A product of  
Valdosta Daily Times

*Making spirits bright*

*Holiday traditions bring joy at Christmas*



# Thomasville Scene

*A reflection of our culture*

## A Country Christmas

*Southern charm shines bright during holidays*

HOLIDAY 2024

A PRODUCT OF THE  
**THOMASVILLE  
TIMES-ENTERPRISE**

NOEL WITH THE NFL  
MAKES WISHES COME TRUE

BURTON BRAMBLES BRINGS  
THE CHRISTMAS SPREAD

SCB'S THE NUTCRACKER  
TO WOW AUDIENCES



# *The* **Delight** *of Visiting a Used Bookstore*



*words & photography by David & Kay Scott*

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Ken Vaughan, co-owner of Old New River Books with his wife Heather, stands in front of a case holding a few of their rare books.







Ken Vaughan used nearly 3,000 books to constructed an arch that separates the bookstore from a floor filled with antiques.



Old New River Books has approximately 4,000 used books on its shelves. Another 10,000 books are stored in the owners' home and are available online.

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Cambria Station Antiques is in a 3-story building that once served as a storage facility for goods that arrived by train.

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The 1868 train station across the road from Old New River Books served as a passenger, and later, freight depot until 1960.



The new 50-acre Christiansburg Huckleberry Park has an all-inclusive playground, an ADA accessible adult fitness zone, a large dog park and multi-purpose playing fields.







LEFT: Sinkland Farms outside Christiansburg holds an annual pumpkin festival on six weekends each fall. The festival includes multiple activities including a corn field maze.

LEFT BELOW: One of 26 booths used by antique sellers to display their goods in Cambria Station Antiques.



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## Exploring interesting airports: BCB, Blacksburg, Virginia

BY FRANCIS ZERA



An aerial view of Virginia Tech/Montgomery Executive Airport in Blacksburg, VA. Photo courtesy of BCB Airport

We usually cover specific events at airports, often relating to aircraft or airline events, but sometimes about milestones at the airport itself.

We're going to try something new – profiling airports you may not know about, ones that have an interesting history or attribute.

First up will be Virginia Tech/Montgomery Executive Airport in Blacksburg, Virginia (BCB).

Why choose an airport that most avgeeks haven't heard of, that's well off the beaten path, and that doesn't even have commercial service? Because of all those things. We love to learn, and places like these are often filled with fascinating tidbits of info and history.

Last month we had the opportunity to visit and tour BCB with the airport's Executive Director, Keith Holt.



The heavy use from training aircraft was ruining the grass runway, so in 1941 a 2,850-foot paved runway was installed, designated 08-26. Over time, it became apparent that the runway was not optimally aligned with prevailing winds, so in 1966 what was then the 4,200-foot runway 12-30 was constructed; runway lighting was installed the following year. The original runway (08-26) was closed in 1985 and converted to aircraft parking.



A row of parked bizjets and private aircraft parked at the airport for a Virginia Tech football game

Since then, the airport has expanded even further, lengthening the runway, adding a localizer, DME, and GPS instrument approach and landing equipment, an automated AWOS weather system, and updated lighting.



Virginia Tech operates a turbomachinery and propulsion lab at the airport



Looking down the 5,501-foot runway 13 at BCB airport

The airport currently boasts a jet-capable 5,501-foot runway, but that wasn't always the case.

Virginia Tech has been around since 1872. The airport was founded in 1929 on land that was owned by the university, located about 1.5 miles from campus. Before that, aviators made use of either a nearby farmer's field and an athletic field on campus (those old biplanes didn't need a very long runway).

The airport officially opened in 1931. As World War II approached, the airport was designated a Civilian Pilot Training Program facility and an aircraft mechanic training facility, all to help the war effort.



Blacksburg Airport, Virginia Tech. Blacksburg, VA 7/26/39



Blacksburg Airport, Virginia Tech. Blacksburg, VA 7/26/39

Aerial photos of the airport from 1939. Photos courtesy of the Virginia Aeronautical Historical Society



We asked the airport's Executive Director Keith Holt to describe what makes the airport unique and useful for the region: "BCB is an in-town destination. We are incorporated inside town limits and our property line directly borders the campus of Virginia Tech. Our location is central and convenient not just for visitors to the University, but also businesses and corporations doing business in Blacksburg, Christiansburg and the greater Montgomery County."



An interesting and forward-thinking amenity at the airport is a charger for BETA Technologies electric aircraft, which Holt says have visited the airport

Holt said the airport has 42 aircraft based on site and 21,900 operations a year. "The most common aircraft are corporate jets, charters and light general aviation," he said. "As an airport so close to a major university – sporting events and college graduations become a large event for the airport. For a recent football game, we had 59 arrivals just for the game," he said.



**FRANCIS ZERA**

**EDITOR-AT-LARGE / DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY - SEATTLE, WA** Francis Zera is a Seattle-based architectural, aerial, aviation, and commercial photographer, a freelance photojournalist, and a confirmed AvGeek.

<https://www.zeraphoto.com>

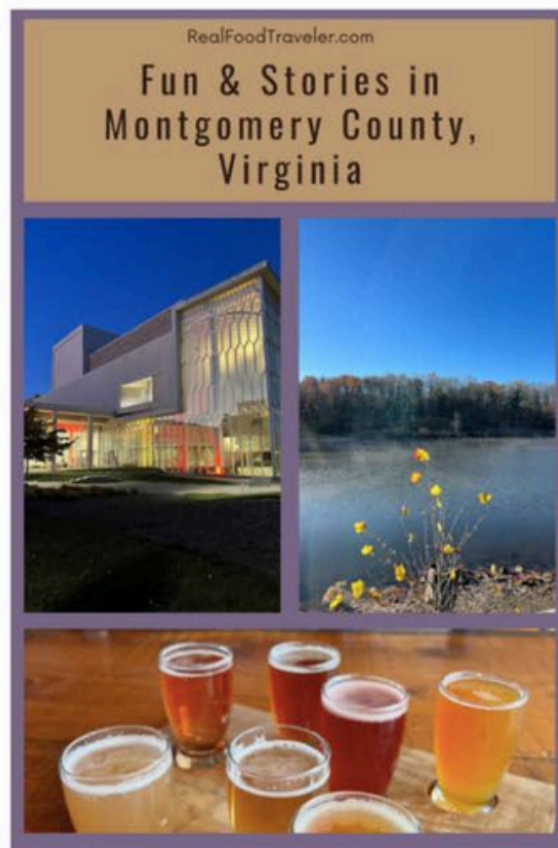




# Fun & Stories in Montgomery County, Virginia

Courtney Drake-McDonough, Publisher and Managing Editor

*Between the Blue Ridge and Alleghany Mountains is Montgomery County, in Virginia. It's a pastoral region that celebrates its agricultural roots and the long history of Virginia Tech University. Two of its most unique towns, Blacksburg and Christiansburg, have many stories to tell and many things for visitors to experience. A late-fall visit left me with so much to share with [Real Food Traveler](#) readers, from time spent on the peaceful land to the energetic vibe that comes with a "college town," to some great backstories of area businesses. Here are my Editor's Picks for where to eat, stay and play in Montgomery County, Virginia.*





## Discovering Fun & Stories in Montgomery County, Virginia

### Where to Eat and Drink in Montgomery County

**Bull & Bones Brew Haus & Grill** is the oldest brewery in southwest Virginia and serves wood-fired BBQ including ribs, seafood, steak and chicken. Specialties include the "Smoke Alarm Burger" with jalapenos, pepper jack cheese and spicy ranch. "Game Day Mac & Cheese" has pulled pork and melted cheddar jack. Their ten-barrel brewhaus generates six craft beers they are very proud of. The owner, Jon, was a medical device rep selling pacemakers and defibrillators even through the first three years of his business. There are college bars a-plenty but no breweries nearby. Jon saw microbreweries and pubs in other states and knew it was only a matter of time before the trend reached Virginia. He saw the market need and went for it.



*A BBQ platter from Bull and Bones Brew Haus & Grill shows off some of the best of the best.*

**Beliveau Farm Winery** is owned and operated by a husband-and-wife team (Joyce and Yvan) with other members of their family. She's more the self-described "desk person" and he's the winemaker. Some 25 years ago, the couple started contemplating what to do after retirement. Formerly a professor at Virginia Tech, Yvan had always wanted to make wine, seeing it as "art versus science," because it's the art of manipulating yeast and other elements that create the wine. The winery officially opened in 2012 and, seven years later, they added a brewery that produces the state's only gluten-free beers. They pride themselves on only using Virginia grapes to make their wine.

Up the hill, next to one of the expanses of vines, is the Sugar Shack where they do food and wine pairings and multi-course dinners. Cozy inside, there's a huge patio outside, affording sprawling views of rolling hills. Just stunning.



*Beliveau Farm Winery offers wine and food tastings, lodging, an events venue and beautiful scenery.*

**Blacksburg Wine Lab** specializes in cheese and charcuterie plates, fresh-baked, local breads, crackers and pastries from around the world. They are known for their tinned fish and the house-made pimento cheese and spicy Tasso ham grilled cheese. Owners John Boyer and Katie Pritchard incorporate education in wine tasting that draws on John's years teaching a wine geography class at Virginia Tech. Reflecting on the cultures from which the grapes are grown and harvested before becoming wine, there's much to learn and pass on to eager diners.

Hungry for more? [Read about the Blacksburg Wine Lab experience.](#)

**Iron Tree Brewing** in Christiansburg was started by three friends who met at Virginia Tech and were all homebrewers. After a decade of lots of home brewing practice and growing their brand, they opened the tasting room. The name comes from one of the owners, Seth's, brewing with water from his home well which had a lot of iron and lent a flavor they all loved.





*Enjoy a flight of beer or a pint at Iron Tree Brewing in Montgomery County's Christiansburg.*

**Rising Silo Brewery** is a delightful surprise just about a mile out of town. The farm-based brewery is in a large wood building with walls decorated with old doors. It's rustic, casual and super-charming. The beers are brewed using their own well water. They take advantage of a ready supply of local ingredients to brew some core beers but also seasonal beers with tongue-in-cheek names like Udder Chaos Milkshake IPA with pawpaws (described as mountain mangos), a Sasquash beer made from squash and their popular Apple 'Atacha Pale Ale with Red Delicious apples. They use only organic grain and grow their own barley hops. Because the operation is small, they can get creative in having different grains and yeast which wouldn't be successful on a large scale.

On the food side, their **Farm & Forage Kitchen** operation, they have a seasonal menu that rotates weekly, using local ingredients. They are best known for their pizzas made in the oven built right in the dining room.



*Rising Silo makes creative beers and great food like the Silo Burger with Silo Sauce, in their casual and funky setting.*



**The Blacksburg Tavern** is a standout dining experience in Montgomery County, which is saying a lot. Located in the oldest house on Main Street (circa 1892), it is owned by Daniel Riley who purchased the property in 2007, converting the former home into the restaurant. Guests cross the grand porch into the foyer where the host, likely Daniel, welcomes and seats them in one of several rooms of the home. The menu is a hearty, regional farmer's menu like was undoubtedly served by the family who originally lived in the house. Chicken, beef, ham, veggies, biscuits with apple butter, pie and ice cream fill up the table like a holiday feast. While there, enjoy Appalachian bluegrass music and wall murals hand-painted by Virginia McLaughlin, the owner's great aunt when she was 91!



*The setting and food are really special at Blacksburg Tavern.*

**Zeppoli's Italian Restaurant & Wine Shop** opened in 1996 by Cody Thompson and Chris Mullens, specializes in made-from-scratch cuisine and recipes handed down from their Italian mothers. Spinning from that with their own creations, favorites include Smoked Salmon Bruschetta, Bacon Florentine Aglio and Vodka Crab Rigatoni. The pasta and bread are all made from scratch and fresh pasta can be purchased by the pound. Shop bottles of wine off the shelf to take away or to have opened to accompany dining in.

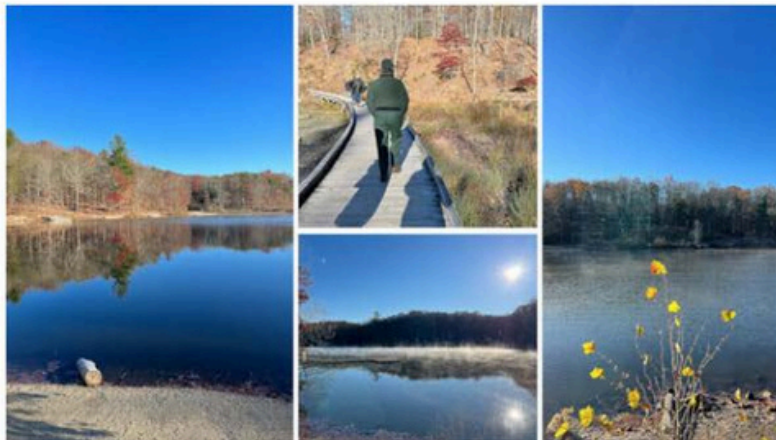


*Scratch-made Italian food and a world of wines make Zeppoli's a great place to dine.*

### Where to Play in Montgomery County:

**Hahn Horticulture Garden**, which celebrated 40 years in 2024, is on Virginia Tech property but is supported by fundraisers and volunteer helpers. The six-acre gardens' goals are 1. To be a place of teaching and learning (art, plants, insects and poetry); 2. To provide community outreach with schools, garden clubs and community in general with opportunities to learn wreath making and flower arranging; 3. To offer a place to relax especially for students and staff. There are hammock stands so students can bring their own hammocks, string them up and relax. Teachers come to grade papers there. One joked he gives better grades when he's grading from the garden. Get a glimpse of one of the waterfall features in our video below.

**Jefferson & George Washington National Forest** offers a network of trails spanning 17 miles that local volunteers have designed and maintained. Within the area is the eight-acre **Pandapas Pond** that has a one-mile loop trail around it, going around wetlands, over boardwalks and bridges and among a wide variety of plant life. A trio of people, bundled up and looking through binoculars on the early November morning we were there, said it's a great area for bird-watching. We certainly enjoyed seeing the reflection of fall colors in the glassy water, a thin layer of frost around the edges, and evaporation fog rising as sun warmed it up. It was a very serene place.



*Pandapas Pond is a great place to stroll to enjoy one of many of the area's nature trails. See the morning fog rising in our video below.*

**Montgomery Museum of Art & History** in Christiansburg is housed in an old bank building that dates back to the 1800s. Many structural elements remain and are celebrated like the giant safe and safe deposit boxes. As a museum celebrating the towns, communities, industries, long history and agriculture, it's the cultural and community hub, offering something for everyone in exhibits and programming. The museum is viewed as an excellent example of reuse and is an anchor for the improving downtown area.



**Moss Arts Center**, on the Virginia Tech campus in Blacksburg, was created to provide programming bringing an arts presence to the university's science-technology-engineering focus for which it is known. The dramatic building opened in 2013 and hosts 28-30 performances each year. Artists typically spend several days there holding master classes, free mid-day concerts and outreach to schools. Community engagement is very important to the Moss Center and to the artists who visit. For visual arts, exhibitions are swapped out every semester but are planned 2-3 years in advance. Art talks and exhibits are free to the students and public. Check out their schedule and plan ahead to see performances and exhibits.



*The Moss Center on the Virginia Tech campus benefits students, residents and visitors alike with arts and culture happenings.*

**Sinkland Farms**, on 125 acres of rolling hills, gardens, meadows and farm fields in Christiansburg, is home to the popular Pumpkin Festival which runs six weeks in the fall, celebrating the region's agriculture. Once a dairy farm, Susan Sink and her husband bought it in 1989 right out of college. They tried to keep it a dairy farm but it wasn't doing that well because there was already so much supply out there. So they turned it into a pumpkin farm. Tragically, Susan's husband was killed in a motorcycle accident leaving her with three kids and a large business to run. She decided to expand the pumpkin farm, began offering school field trips and added an events venue. In a happy turn of events, Susan remarried her husband's best friend around six years ago. She said he came around to check on her and never left! Together, and with the help of the kids and grandkids, they've made Sinkland Farms a successful community venue in Christiansburg. In addition to the pumpkin festival, they host a wine festival, an art in the barn event, a Sunflower Festival in July and have local live music and other activities throughout the year.

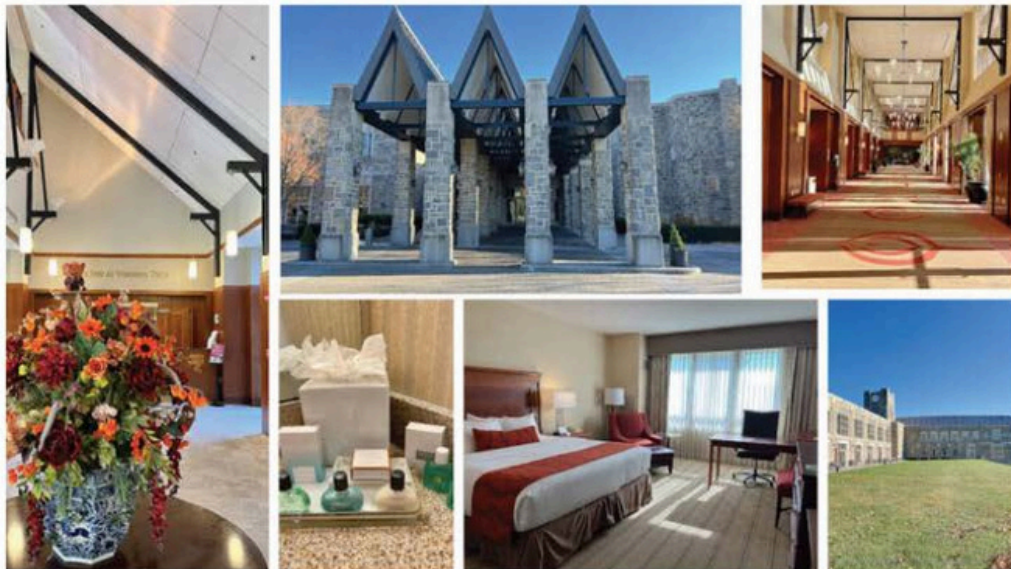


*The pond area at Sinkland Farms is the site of many weddings and other gatherings. The resident geese might join in.*

### **Where to stay in Montgomery County, Virginia:**

**The Inn at Virginia Tech** is an ideal home-away-from-home when visiting Blacksburg and Christiansburg. It's certainly a favorite of parents in town for Virginia Tech events and to visit their kids. And it's where performers for the Moss Center are likely to be staying – I met several musicians who were in town for concerts.

The Inn is the only hotel on the Virginia Tech campus and offers spacious rooms, nice in-room amenities, flexible meeting spaces, Blacksburg's largest event venue and Preston's restaurant with delicious food (their plentiful breakfast buffet was one of the most varied I've experienced).



*The Inn at Virginia Tech offers comfortable lodging and a convenient location for enjoying Montgomery County.*

**For more information about Blacksburg & Christiansburg in Montgomery County, Virginia, visit [gotomontva.com](http://gotomontva.com).**

*-Story and photos by Courtney Drake-McDonough, Publisher & Managing Editor of Real Food Traveler*



# MEDIA LIBRARY

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## PREVIOUS EDITORIAL COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

  
  
**Journeys of Discovery with Tom Wilmer**  
Tom Wilmer's award-winning shows travel from the Arctic to Africa safaris, to the wilderness of the Shenandoah Valley, flying to Mexico borders, navigating a mine field above Victoria Falls, sailing around Canada, sailing through the white of Malaysia jungles and exploring remote trails and towns throughout the South Pacific.

**Engaging with Virginia Tech and the community at Eastern Divide Brewing Company**  
Correspondent Tom Wilmer visits with head brewer, Brandon Roberson and tap room manager Samantha Sol at Eastern Divide Brewing in Blacksburg, Virginia

[▶ LISTEN - 27:06](#)

**CANADA'S POST MEDIA SYNDICATION:**



Travel / Travel USA

### Enter Blacksburg, Va., and Virginia Tech

After listening to Metallica's Enter Sandman, you will be in the mood to take a trip in your mind to Blacksburg, a small community in southwestern Virginia which is intertwined with a big U.S. college, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, commonly known as Virginia Tech.

Donald Duench • Toronto Sun

Published Aug 09, 2024 • Last updated Aug 10, 2024 • 10 minute read

[Join the conversation](#)



The Torgerson Bridge on the campus of Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va. PHOTO BY DONALD DUENCH / Toronto Sun



**Virginia Tech and the great outdoors**

1. It's a beautiful day in Blacksburg, Va., and the sun is shining brightly. The Torgerson Bridge, a 40-year-old concrete arch bridge, spans the Shenandoah River. The bridge is a popular spot for locals and visitors alike to enjoy the view and the outdoors. The bridge is a great example of the community's commitment to preserving its natural beauty and providing a space for outdoor recreation.

**ENTER BLACKSBURG**

Blacksburg, Va., is a small town with a big heart. It's a town that has a rich history and a strong sense of community. The town is home to Virginia Tech, one of the most prestigious universities in the United States. The town is also home to a variety of other attractions, including the Torgerson Bridge, the Shenandoah River, and the surrounding mountains. The town is a great place to visit, whether you're looking for a quiet retreat or a fun-filled vacation.

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