

A Stop-by-Stop Tour of Front Royal

Your first stop on a trip around Front royal and Warren County is the visitor's Center. It's a must for every prudent tourist headed to historic downtown Front Royal. It's on Main Street, located adjacent to the gazebo commons area and surrounded by fabulous shopping and restaurants, the center is a wonderful resource for making the most of your time in the Front Royal/Warren County area. The walls are filled with racks of brochures about area lodging and attractions, local maps, souvenirs, ideas for rainy day activities, and tour guides. History buffs will undoubtedly enjoy the walking tour of the historic district and the driving tour of the Battle of Front Royal (both originate at the Visitor's Center). According to tourism Coordinator Don Lafever nearly 42,000 visitors frequented the Visitor's Center in 2002 alone. The Center is open from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. every day and is staffed by knowledgeable local citizens anxious to help plan your visit to the county. Telephone travel assistance is also available by calling (800) 338-2576. The Visitor's Center is on the Web at www.discoverfrontroyal.com

Popular Hikes

The Warren County area is home to many popular hiking paths including miles of the famed Appalachian Trail. The Virginia Atlas & Gazetteer (available for purchase in local gas stations) outlines many local trails and popular scenic roads. Below are some favorite hiking spots in the area.

Skyline Drive, Shenandoah National Park, (540) 999-3500

Fox Hollow: milepost 4.6, leads to an old farm home site and cemetery - 1.2 miles

Lands run: milepost 9, easy and scenic hike - 2 miles

Hickerson Hollow: milepost 9.2, easy horse trail - 2-2 miles.

Compton Peak: milepost 10.4, moderate, somewhat steep and rocky hike - 2.4 miles.

Overall Falls: milepost 22.2, a moderate hike to the park's highest waterfall - 6 miles.

George Washington National Forest, (540) 984-4101

There are more than 400 miles of trails in the Lee Ranger District, including:

The popular 3.9-mile Buzzard Rock Trail. Located off route 619 near the fish hatchery in Warren County, the moderate hike up the Massanutten Mountain offers some spectacular views of the valley below.

The Signal Knob Loop Trail. The steep, 10.2-mile hike leads to an important Civil War outpost. The trailhead begins on Fort Valley Road near the Elizabeth Furnace Campground.

Llama Treks

Looking for a unique trip through the wilderness? Twin Creeks Llamas (www.twincreeksllamas.com) offers guided weekend llama hikes into the valley. From short hikes on the llama farm in Browntown to half day picnic hikes, owners Tim and Donna Parkman cater to each party's needs. They arrange tours that vary in length and difficulty, and their llamas carry a delicious four-course picnic lunch for their hungry hiking companions. The most popular hikes are those along the scenic foot trails in the Shenandoah River State Park, which culminate with lunch at the spectacular Wildcat Ledge Overlook. Call Twin Creek Llamas at (540) 631-9175 to arrange a tour to suit your special occasion.

Warren County Web Sites

- Visitor's Center: www.discoverfrontroyal.com
- Front Royal Homepage: www.shenvalley.com
- Chamber of Commerce: www.frontroyalchamber.com

Fishing

For the serious angler to the lackadaisical caster, The area boasts many fishing spots in its numerous parks, creeks, and along the Shenandoah River. Popular fishing areas range from an in-town stream at Bing Crosby Park to a man-made lake at the Northern Virginia 4-H Center.

Trout enthusiasts also enjoy wading the stocked Passage Creek along the George Washington National Forest in Fort Valley. The Shenandoah River State Park and the Shenandoah National Park are also home to some excellent angling waters.

For a list of Shenandoah River fishing information including public boating access sites, regulations, and species of fish, visit the Virginia Game and Inland Fisheries Department website at www.dgif.state.va.us.

Canoe Capital of Virginia

Anyone who's gazed down at the weekend traffic on the Shenandoah River can understand why Front Royal boasts the title of "Canoe Capital of Virginia." Nestled between the Shenandoah National Park to the East and the George Washington National Forest to the West, the North and South forks of the Shenandoah River converge in Front Royal to become the main stem of the river. The navigable waters and scenic stretch of waterway provide the perfect atmosphere for canoeing, kayaking, rafting, and tubing. Home to three canoe companies (all located off U.S. 340 in Bentonville), Warren County's watercourse offers paddling adventures of varying length and difficulty. All three companies offer Shenandoah River State Park trips, multi-day trips, canoeing, rafting, kayaking and tubing.

The Downriver Canoe Company (www.downriver.com) offers seven-day trips and two multi-day trips for canoeing, kayaking and rafting enthusiasts. They also rent float tubes along two three-hour routes and provide rental fishing gear for anglers. Across the road at *Shenandoah*

River Trips (www.shenandoah.cc), water lovers can find similar trips and rentals in addition to unique packages ranging from sunset paddling to an afternoon of floating, hay rides, and cookouts. *The Front Royal Canoe Company* (www.frontroyalcanoe.com), also located off U.S. 340 South, offers over 15 standard river trips in addition to two distinct adventures. From May-August, guided Full Moon Floats with a campfire and snacks are available. The Saddles and Paddles Package offers river-goers the thrill of a trail ride and picnic in the Park prior to tackling the ripples.

Tourists and residents alike are bound to find the makings for a perfect river adventure at one of our three popular canoe companies. Drift along the scenic main stem of the Shenandoah River and discover why we're home to some of the most popular canoeing in the state.

Gateway to the Skyline Drive

Perhaps Front Royal's most notable landmark is its gateway to the Skyline Drive, a 105-mile breathtaking road through the 159,000-acre Shenandoah National Park. Open year-round, this scenic mountaintop thoroughfare is complete with more than 500 miles of hiking trails, including more than 100 miles of the legendary Appalachian Trail. The Drive originates at the Front Royal entrance station off U.S. 340 with a \$10 per vehicle (\$5 per pedestrian) fee. Frequenters of the park should invest in a \$50 annual National Park Pass which gains cardholders access to all National Parks across the country.

Upon entering the park, inquisitive visitors should purchase an audio tape tour at the entrance station or at the *Dickey Ridge Visitor's Center* (open daily from April to November). The Dickey Ridge Ranger Station is located at mile 4.6 and provides park literature, exhibits, souvenirs, history lessons, and picnic sites. Another popular picnic/camping site along the Warren County corridor is *Mathew's Arm* at milepost 22.1.

Visitors to the park can find many ways to explore the scenic natural surroundings of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Drive's 75 overlooks provide photography buffs with panoramic views of the mountains, valley, and rivers below. Historic sites are labeled and animals, waterfalls, wildflowers and beautiful foliage greet passersby from the many vistas. Hikers and campers can follow the blazes and sleep under the stars at numerous spots along the Drive (just be sure to check at the Ranger Stations about backcountry camping).

Both junior and experienced outdoorsmen can also be amused and educated at one of the many field seminars and ranger-led programs. Led by scientists, educators, and researchers, these many educational events cater to young and old and cover topics from geology to photography. Parents can make the most of their children's time in the park by enrolling youngsters in the Junior Ranger program. Kids over the age of 7 can work towards becoming Junior Rangers by completing an activity-filled Junior Ranger Explorer Notebook.

Full of history, beauty, and outdoor entertainment, the Skyline Drive offers exercise for the mind and body and relaxation for the weary, overworked soul. Fall is the perfect time to cross the Gateway to the Skyline Drive at Front Royal and enjoy the scenic foliage, gorgeous sunsets, and perfect weather. To plan your visit, log onto www.nps.gov/shen to download maps and tourist information or call the park at (540) 999-3500.