



AAA WORLD GIVEAWAY

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THE MID-ATLANTIC WINE SCENE IS GETTING SOME WELL-DESERVED ATTENTION LATELY. JOIN US AS WE TOUR OUR AREA'S UP-AND-COMING WINE TRAILS.

# Local Tastings

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MONTICELLO  
WINE TRAIL

**Wine lovers** of the Mid-Atlantic, rejoice. Some of the world's finest wineries are a short drive away.

By the *AAA World* staff  
Photos by Paul Emberger

# Virginia Vintage

"I HAVE TWO JOBS," explains Kirsty Harmon, winemaker and general manager at Blenheim Vineyards in Charlottesville, Virginia. "One is to squish grapes, and the other is to not make vinegar." Harmon's modesty is at once refreshingly Virginian and grossly misleading, as her expertise with viognier and other varietals is the stuff from which legends are made. This is clearly a gig she takes seriously and, fortunately for wine lovers on the East Coast, she is not alone in her zeal. • Grape cultivation and winemaking are nothing new to Virginia. Thomas Jefferson, often recognized as the father of American viticulture, endeavored to re-create his favorite European wines by nearly blanketing his beloved Monticello in grape-growing experiments. Regardless of Jefferson's personal success—or lack thereof—his enthusiasm certainly inspired many contemporaries in the region, each eager to pick up where he left off.



But what makes the Virginia wine world so unique is perhaps its utter lack of haughtiness. In true Jeffersonian spirit, Virginian winemakers have managed to produce world-class wines while maintaining a friendly, semi-Southern style that defies pretention.

While the region may not carry the same mystique as California's Sonoma County or attract oenophile pilgrimages like Napa Valley, it is turning heads in the wine community—for both its quality of wines and its appeal as a tourism destination (Wine Enthusiast magazine recently named Virginia 1 of the top 10 wine destinations in the country). Now the fifth-largest producer of wine in the U.S., Virginia has two-dozen wine trails and more than 200 wineries, each boasting plenty of worthy wines. With that much wine spread out over that much territory, it can be a daunting task to settle on an itinerary. In a nod to Jefferson's early vision, we decided to check out the Monticello Wine Trail, a collection of 25 vineyards and wineries—each with its own distinct flavor or specialty. On the following pages are some of our favorite stops along the way. Salut!

### Blenheim Vineyards

PERHAPS BEST KNOWN for its connection to rock musician Dave Matthews—who owns the property and even designed the winery building—Blenheim attracts visitors with its own winemaking merits as well.

Situated in the foothills of Carter Mountain, Blenheim Vineyards was designed to have a minimal impact on the environment and, at first glance, appears almost too small to house an operation that ships 5,000 cases of wine per year.

The winery building is built into a hill. The ground floor is open, airy and naturally lit during the day, with



offices, a shop, a tasting area and glass floors that give you a view of the production facility below. Beyond the tasting area, a spacious wooden deck overlooks the vineyard and surrounding landscape, a perfect spot for lounging with friends as you enjoy a bottle of your favorite Blenheim wine, which perhaps you sampled during your tasting. We recommend the syrah, also Harmon's personal favorite.

*Tastings are \$5 per person and include a souvenir glass.*

### Barboursville Vineyards

BARBOURSVILLE VINEYARDS was founded in 1976 by Gianni Zonin, an Italian immigrant whose family has been in the wine business for almost 200 years. It's among the earliest vineyards in Virginia and a

trailblazer in the state's nascent wine industry.

But not only is Barboursville an attractive destination for wine lovers; it's also a fascinating stop for history buffs. The land was owned by James Barbour, one-time Governor of Virginia (1812–1814), and featured a residence designed by his close friend Thomas Jefferson. Although the residence was destroyed by a fire in 1884, the ruins remain just a short walk away from the Northern Italian-style farmhouse that's now home to the vineyard's operations.

Free guided tours of the facility, which are offered on Saturdays and Sundays, include just as much insight into the winery's history as they do into its wine. Barboursville



also boasts one of the best-appointed tasting rooms on the trail: a huge, beautiful, well-staffed wooden bar with enough tasting stations to accommodate the large crowds the vineyard attracts. While not always available during the tasting, at least a sip of Barboursville Vineyard's critically acclaimed Octagon—a blend

of merlot, cabernet franc, cabernet sauvignon and petit verdot, named after the salon in the original house—is a must.

*Tastings are \$5 per person and include a souvenir glass.*

Veritas Vineyard & Winery  
OWNED BY husband and wife

Andrew and Patricia Hodson, Veritas Vineyard & Winery is truly a family affair. The grape cultivation and vine care falls to Patricia. Their youngest daughter, Chloe, runs the tasting room and manages weddings and other events held at the vineyard. The winemaking is performed by Andrew and daughter

### THE MONTICELLO WINE TRAIL AT A GLANCE

Northern Trail

**GLASS HOUSE WINERY**  
434/975-0094  
glasshousewinery.com

**MOUNTFAIR VINEYARDS**  
434/823-7605  
mountfair.com

**STINSON VINEYARDS**  
434/823-7300  
stinsonvineyards.com

**STONE MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS**  
434/990-9463  
stonemountainvineyards.com

**WHITE HALL VINEYARDS**  
434/823-8615  
whitehallvineyards.com

Southern Trail  
**BLenheim VINEYARDS**  
434/293-5366  
blenheimvineyards.com

**DELFOSSÉ VINEYARDS & WINERY**  
434/263-6100  
delfossewine.com

**FIRST COLONY WINERY**  
434/979-7105  
firstcolonywinery.com

**GABRIELE RAUSSE WINERY**  
434/296-5328

**JEFFERSON VINEYARDS**  
434/977-3042  
jeffersonvineyards.com

**LOVINGSTON WINERY**  
434/263-8467  
lovingstonwinery.com

**PIPPIN HILL FARM & VINEYARDS**  
434/202-8063  
pippinhillfarm.com

**TRUMP WINERY**  
434/977-3895  
trumpwinery.com  
Eastern Trail

**BARBOURSVILLE VINEYARDS**  
540/832-3824  
barboursvillewine.com

**BURNLEY VINEYARDS**  
540/832-2828  
burnleywines.com

**HORTON CELLARS WINERY**  
540/832-7440  
hvwine.com

**KESWICK**  
434/244-3341  
keswickvineyards.com

Western Trail  
**AFTON MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS**  
540/456-8667  
aftonmountainvineyards.com

**CARDINAL POINT VINEYARD & WINERY**  
540/456-8400  
cardinalpointwinery.com

**FLYING FOX VINEYARD**  
434/361-1692  
flyingfoxvineyard.com

**KING FAMILY VINEYARDS**  
434/823-7800  
kingfamilyvineyards.com

**POLLAK VINEYARDS**  
540/456-8844  
pollakvineyards.com

**VERITAS VINEYARDS & WINERY**  
540/456-8000  
veritaswines.com

Gateway North  
**SWEELY ESTATE WINERY**  
540/948-9005  
SweelyEstateWinery.com

**PRINCE MICHEL VINEYARDS & WINERY**  
800/800-WINE (9463)  
princemichel.com



### PIMP MY WINE TOUR

OK, WE ADMIT WE'VE SPENT a lot of time and energy talking about drinking wine in this issue. While we stand by our assertion that hitting the trails is tremendous fun for anyone who enjoys wine, regardless of the sophistication of his or her palate, we also feel it's time to talk about responsible wine tourism. We are, after all, AAA. And needless to say, we take roadway safety very seriously. Therefore we consider it our duty to point out that drinking any alcohol at all before driving is always a terrible idea. So terrible, in fact, that most states will actually imprison you if they catch you doing it. So don't. Ever.

Well and good, you say, but how then is a wine enthusiast to get out and enjoy the local vintages without putting themselves and others at risk? We can answer that with two simple words: In. Style.

Limos are not only an easy and safe way to experience all that our regional wine trails have to offer, but they're also much more affordable than you might think. Plus, there's a comfort factor that just seems to pair wonderfully with wine tourism. But beyond the comfort, convenience and safety, there may be no better way to "be seen." To wit, consider our friends at **WAHOOPTIE**.

The term "Wahooptie" is actually a combination of "Wahoo!" and "Hooptie," a slang term used to describe large, older cars with excessive after-market customization. "There really are two main ideas behind Wahooptie," says Joseph Mills, owner of the Charlottesville, Virginia-based taxi company. "One is to love people well, and the other is to do things in excellence."

Founded in 2007 with a day glo orange limo purchased from a punk rock band for \$50, Wahooptie started off as a fun way to shuttle fans during that year's University of Virginia/Virginia Tech football game. Soon word spread, and as the hard-to-miss limo began to be seen more and more frequently around town, business grew. More demand led to more vehicles, and more inquiries led to more services. Today, Wahooptie's stable includes four stretch limos, two buses, one humongous van and an army of devotees. Each vehicle is painted an eye-stabbing color, and each is available 24/7 for pretty much any reason you can imagine. "It really has become something that has taken on a life of its own. It has its own feel—its own way of existing in the community," says Mills.

While Wahooptie's main gig is as a taxi service, it also serves customers traveling between airports and local hotels and is available for any number of tours—especially Virginia wine trail tours. Bottom line: You really don't even need a plan to have a great time in a Wahooptie. Just give Mills a call, and he'll gladly make some suggestions.

For us, there's no better way to experience the Monticello Wine Trail.

Emily Hodson Pelton, a winner of the 2007 National Women's Wine Competition.

Veritas has a balanced portfolio of wines, including a petit manseng, a cabernet franc, a merlot, multiple varietal blends and more. The family's personal favorites are the sauvignon blanc and the viognier, which Pelton has poured for First Lady Michelle Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the International Women of Courage Awards.

Possibly one of the best examples of the explosion in popularity of Virginia wines, Veritas, which was established in 2000, has increased its planted acreage almost fivefold to keep up with consumer demand for its wines. Also experiencing dramatic growth is its signature event, Starry Nights, a monthly outdoor summer concert series that was conceived in the early days of the vineyard as a way to attract visitors and get its name out. Once drawing fewer than two-dozen people, today Starry Nights attracts picnickers, music fans and wine lovers in droves. (Visitors can also purchase tickets that include catered meals from Veritas chefs with wine pairings.) The attendance of the most recent Starry Night? Almost 5,000.

*Tastings are \$5 per person.*

### Pippin Hill Farm & Vineyards

IT'S NO SURPRISE to learn that owners Lynn and Dean Andrews have extensive experience in both the hospitality industry and event planning. Their expertise and passion manifests itself in Pippin Hill Farm & Vineyards, a new hybrid winery and event venue that has already distinguished itself on the Monticello Wine Trail.

As soon as you set foot onto Pippin Hill Farm &



MONTICELLO

## MEET THE WINE DIVAS

SOMETIMES ALL YOU NEED to become engrossed in a new hobby is a little help from your friends, and no one knows that better than Stephanie Browne. Browne, by day an executive for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, is the founder of **DIVAS UNCORKED**, a group of 10 professional women who host wine-related activities with the mission of providing a low-pressure environment in which beginners can learn about wine without having to be concerned about their relative inexperience in a world that can be a little intimidating. “Our mantra is wine savvy, not wine snobby,” says Browne.

Only a few short years ago, the Divas were just a group of friends whose knowledge went little beyond distinguishing the differences between red and white wines. Their shared love of wine led them to take turns hosting private wine dinners together, exploring different varietals and learning why they like the wine they do. Now looking to share their passion and love with others, this viticultural supergroup hosts tastings, dinner pairings, winery tours, conferences and even cruises.

For more information on the Divas, their events, and basic information on wine and terminology, visit [divasuncorked.com](http://divasuncorked.com).

Vineyards, it’s clear that nothing about the property is an accident. Pippin Hill is built directly across from protected land, ensuring scenery that will never change. A well-timed visit to the tasting room will afford you with a view of the sun setting over the Blue Ridge Mountains—a view that is capable of instilling a sense of serenity even before you take a single sip of wine. And the vineyard’s buildings, newly constructed with geothermal heating and cooling as well as rainwater capture systems for irrigation, retain a classic American farmhouse look.

“Pippin Hill Farm is an integrated concept of a vineyard, winery and farm operation,” says Dean Andrews. “A lot of it is about the wine and vines, but it is also a more comprehensive concept about being a Virginia farm.”

An example of a sustainable vineyard-to-table philosophy, almost 90 percent of what is served here is sourced from local Virginia farms or even grown on-

site. While traditional tastings are offered, Pippin Hill’s specialty is its educational food pairings, during which visitors are taught the art and science of matching wines with foods.

Well-suited to everything from casual dinners for 20 to weddings with more than 200 guests and everything in between, the design of Pippin Hill’s event space was guided by Lynn Andrews. “When we started to design the vineyard and the farm in its totality, it was wonderful because we got to, every step of the way, have an event in mind, in terms of how it would unfold,” she says.

*Tasting flights are \$5 per person, and food is served at an additional cost.*

### Glass House Winery

THE SMALL BUT distinctive boutique-style Glass House Winery is the product of husband and wife Jeff and Michelle Sanders. A worthy stop for its

artisan wines, Glass House Winery has a few unique characteristics that make it even more attractive, especially if you have a sweet tooth. In addition to its artisan wines—including Meglio del Sesso, a rich chocolate dessert wine—Glass House Winery offers a variety of gourmet chocolates handmade by Michelle.

Glass House gets its name from the large greenhouse that is part of the winery building. With a seating capacity of more than 80 people, it also serves as an event hall for weddings, small concerts, private parties and more. Stocked with tropical plants native to Honduras—where the Sanderses lived for five years—the greenhouse brings a little slice of the tropics to Central Virginia. If your timing is right, you may even get a chance to sample the bananas or other tropical fruit grown on-site.

In addition to holding public events in the greenhouse, Glass House attracts visitors by providing a scenic spot overlooking its six-acre vineyards and lake, where picnickers can enjoy a self-provided meal and a bottle of Glass House’s wine.

*Tastings are \$5 and include a sample of Michelle’s handmade chocolate.* 🍫



### LINKS & RESOURCES

Everything you need to know about accommodations, restaurants, events and more



### E-MAIL

We welcome your suggestions, ideas and feedback. E-mail us at [editorial@aaaworld.com](mailto:editorial@aaaworld.com).