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Virginia Tourism Connects the Stars in “Flags of Our Fathers”

Media Only

Richard Lewis
Public Relations Manager

TEL (804) 545-5574
EML rlewis@virginia.org

Virginia Tourism Corporation

901 East Byrd Street
Richmond, VA 23219-4048 USA

TEL (804) 545-5500
FAX (804) 545-5501
www.virginia.org (consumer)
www.vatc.org (industry)



RICHMOND, Va. – “Flags of Our Fathers,” the Clint Eastwood movie about the famous flag-raising at Iwo Jima, has a special connection to Virginia – one that takes on greater meaning as Veterans’ Day approaches and that spotlights Virginia as a visitor’s destination for American military heritage.

The movie, a portion of which was filmed in Virginia, chronicles the historic moment when five Marines and one Navy corpsman raised an American flag atop Mount Suribachi on Feb. 23, 1945, during the savage battle of Iwo Jima. Photographer Joe Rosenthal was there to snap a picture that would become an iconic image throughout the world and that gave a huge boost to the American war effort. The film is based on the book of the same name by James Bradley, son of one of the men in the photograph, with Ron Powers.

Visitors to Virginia can experience tangible connections to Iwo Jima, to the flag-raising and to the legacy of all American servicemen and women on Veterans’ Day and throughout the year. The Iwo Jima Memorial, that massive monument inspired by the Rosenthal photograph, is in Arlington. Nearby Arlington National Cemetery is among the most hallowed pieces of American ground and is the final resting place of three of the six Iwo Jima flag-raisers.

On Nov. 13, 2006, Virginia’s connection to Iwo Jima and American military history will be further enhanced by the opening of the National Museum of the Marine Corps and Heritage Center. The 100,000-square-foot museum is surmounted by a 210-foot tilted mast and atrium that evoke the image of the Iwo Jima flag-raising. Among the treasured artifacts on display is the actual American flag raised atop Mount Suribachi and seen in the photograph.

Virginia’s status as a place of honor for American soldiers does not begin or end there. Another new memorial, the United States Air Force Memorial, lies directly across from the Pentagon in Arlington. Arlington National Cemetery is the resting place of officers such as John F. Kennedy, “Pappy” Boyington, Omar Bradley, George C. Marshall and John J. “Blackjack” Pershing, and enlisted men such as Audie Murphy, Joe Louis, Lee Marvin and Medgar Evers. Among the luminaries of Arlington, none are more honored than those soldiers buried in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Nearby at George Washington’s Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens is the gravesite and new museum dedicated to the nation’s first commander in chief; and Douglas McArthur, Lewis “Chesty” Puller and Robert E. Lee are among other famous soldiers buried elsewhere in Virginia.

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The inspiring National D-Day Memorial sits on a hilltop overlooking the town of Bedford. It is a fitting location, as Bedford lost more of its soldiers per-capita on D-Day than any other community in America. Visitors can also experience the Virginia War Museum, the U.S. Army Women's Museum, the Quartermaster Museum, the American Civil War Center at Historic Tredegar and the National Museum of the Civil War Soldier among the Commonwealth's excellent military museums.

Some of the most critical battles in American history took place in Virginia. Storied Civil War battlefields include Manassas (Bull Run), Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Petersburg and the Richmond area battlefields. In the waters off Newport News occurred the first battle between ironclad warships, the USS Monitor and the CSS Virginia. Visitors can also tour the spots where the Revolutionary War and the Civil War came to their conclusions, at Yorktown and Appomattox.

Special Veterans' Day activities throughout the Commonwealth are another enticement to visit. Some attractions have special offers honoring soldiers, such as Colonial Williamsburg, which will offer free admission to active-duty and reserve soldiers, veterans and their families. Information on Veterans' Day observances in Virginia can be viewed at www.Virginia.org/VeteransDay.

Honor America's soldiers and experience the legacy of the American military with a visit to Virginia. For more information, visit the Virginia Tourism Corporation website, www.Virginia.org, or call toll-free 1-800-932-5827.

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