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Shop with a Passion this Holiday in Virginia *-Ten Tips for Enjoyable, Stress-free Gift Buying Getaways-*

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RICHMOND, Va. – If the mad rush of the holiday gift-buying season has you singing Blue Christmas, never fear. Virginia, the state that’s for lovers, shopping lovers especially, has ten tips to help people add some passion to their holiday shopping with enjoyable, stress-free gift buying getaways.

Tip #1: Shop a Different Century

Virginia is an American history icon with destinations and exhibits stretching back 400 years. Take a trip to Virginia’s historical sites and shop for holiday gifts from a different century. From Jamestown to Colonial Williamsburg to the Museum of Frontier Culture in Staunton, the extensive gift shops at Virginia’s historical sites offer four centuries of the ultimate gift ideas for history buffs everywhere.

Tip # 2: Ditch the Car

Save some gas money and parking hassles and ditch the car. Virginia is full of great places to walk from shop to shop for unique gifts. Check out Carytown, Richmond’s “mile of style”. The shops on Cary Street sell vintage clothing, works of art, antiques, boutique bags and accessories. Other great places to put it in park and stroll from shop to shop include Old Town Alexandria, which offers free on-street parking for visitors, historic downtown Roanoke, and quaint Middleburg in Northern Virginia.

Tip #3: Wine to Warm the Spirits

Take an enjoyable shopping trip through some of Virginia’s most scenic areas with a visit to Virginia’s wineries. The state has more than 130 wineries that are perfect places to shop for wine lovers. Many Virginia wineries and vineyards hold open houses and special events during December. After tasting some of Virginia’s award-winning wines, purchase a bottle or two and engraved glasses for an ideal wine gift package. Don’t forget to pick up extra bottles to bring to all those holiday parties. Check out www.Virginia.org/wine for more information about December winery events and specials.

Tip #4: Food for Thought

Shopping for someone who loves food? If so, visit the Virginia destinations known around the world for specialized food items. Along Smithfield’s charming Main Street, visit the antique and home décor shops before purchasing an authentic Smithfield Ham. In nearby Suffolk along Route 58, purchase authentic Virginia peanuts direct from the source. Or head to Virginia’s Eastern Shore to pick up snack mixes, She Crab soup and Sting Ray Bloody Mary mix from the Blue Bay Crab Company in Melfa. For a complete list of Virginia food gift ideas visit www.shopvafinest.com.

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Tip #5: Shop Main Street

Virginia is home to Main Street America and these gorgeous small towns across the state hold some of the best shopping spots around. Visit Virginia's Main Street communities such as Staunton, Culpeper, Lexington, Warrenton and South Boston for quality, unique gifts at locally-owned shops. Virginia's Main Street communities will make visitors feel right at home and offer historic hotels and B&Bs for enjoyable holiday shopping getaways. For a complete list of Virginia's designated Main Street communities go to www.Virginia.org/mainstreet.

Tip #6: Add Culture to Your Cart

Virginia's museums cater to interests ranging from the Civil War to gardening to bluegrass music. Gifts from Virginia's museum gift shops show a touch of class and personalization. For the mountain music lover, stop in the [Ralph Stanley Museum](#) gift shop in Clintwood for Stanley CDs and [Crooked Road](#) apparel. Check out the shop at the [American Civil War Center](#) at Tredegar in Richmond for the Civil War buff in the family. Marine life fanatics would love a gift from the [Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center](#) in Virginia Beach. Green thumbs will delight in the gardening gifts at [Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens](#) in Richmond. With more than 700 museums, Virginia is a treasure trove for unique holiday gifts.

Tip # 7: Package of Memories

Virginia's travel destinations offer packages and special deals that make for incredible holiday gifts and memories to last a lifetime. Virginia travel packages combine lodging, dining, activities and extra perks that offer excellent value and entertainment. www.Virginia.org is the best place to search for Virginia travel packages geared towards couples and families.

Tip #8: Buy an Original

Visit Virginia's artisan havens to purchase a one-of-a-kind keepsake that will be cherished for years. Virginia's artisans offer their crafts at centers and shows throughout the year and especially during the holiday season. Find fine art, pottery, baskets, sculpture and more at places such as the [Torpedo Factory](#) in Alexandria, [the Cave House](#) in Abingdon, [the Jacksonville Art Center](#) in Floyd and the [Southern Virginia Artisan Center](#) in Martinsville. For a complete list of artisan centers and craft shows in Virginia go to www.Virginia.org.

Tip #9: Pamper Yourself and Loved Ones

What better way to erase stress and find decadent gifts than with a visit to one of Virginia's world-class [spas](#)? After enjoying a relaxing treatment and massage, pick up special lotions, soaps, scented oils and gift certificates for the ultimate in indulgent gift-giving. Places like the [Spa at Colonial Williamsburg](#), the [INN Spa at Poplar Springs](#), and [Boar's Head Inn Spa](#) in Charlottesville feature products made especially for their services and available for purchase in their shops.



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Tip # 10: Give the Gift of Love This Season

Virginia is for Lovers is one of the oldest and well-loved tourism slogans in the world. Put this famous brand under the tree this year for travel lovers on the list in the form of a t-shirt, wine glasses, coffee cup or even a dog leash. Take a virtual trip to the Virginia is for Lovers merchandise shop at www.Virginia.org/shop or visit the nearest visitors center for gift ideas.

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Note to media: for downloadable images to accompany this story go to:

<http://www.vatc.org/PRMediaKit/Assets/Images/Holiday%20Shopping.jpg>

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<http://www.vatc.org/PRMediaKit/Assets/Images/RestWine.jpg>

For additional story ideas and recent news releases visit:

<http://www.vatc.org/pr/mediacenter.asp>

www.Virginia.org is the official tourism Web site for the Commonwealth of Virginia and is the best resource to include in news items and travel stories.

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