

VTC EDITORIAL STYLE GUIDE.

Virginia Tourism Corporation's goal is to highlight the abundance of travel experiences that Virginia offers through informative, lighthearted content. We are the knowledgeable friend that you turn to for travel ideas and tips; our voice is fun-loving, positive, and always passionate.

Travel messaging is core to everything we put out. Every piece of content must tie back to a person or place to provide visitors with the opportunity to experience all there is to LOVE in Virginia.

The “Virginia is for Lovers” brand stands out for its long history; we are proud to have one of the most recognizable travel brands in the world, so using our messaging of “love” is a great way to create consistent content that readers will immediately identify as our brand.



Basic writing guidelines

- Headlines/Titles: Visit Virginia style is to capitalize all words except for small words like a, an, of, the, etc. (“Virginia is for Lovers” NOT “Virginia Is For Lovers”)
- Oxford Comma is preferred
- Use “more than” rather than “over”
- Numbers under 10 are written out (unless an age, anniversary or date)
- Months with dates should be abbreviated when used as dates (Jan., Feb., March, April, May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.)
- No “th” after a number (unless an anniversary)
- Single space after a period
- The correct term is “LOVEworks” (not Loveworks, LoveWorks, or LOVEWorks)
- Always be mindful to use inclusive language (example: “Indigenous peoples” is the preferred term for what used to be known as ‘Native Americans’; Black with a capital B rather than “African American”)

News releases

A news release sent from Virginia Tourism Corporation to members of the media is formal and informative. It will usually contain detailed information on the subject along with a quote from a VTC executive or partner. The tone of news releases is straightforward and official. VTC utilizes AP Style for news releases to match how media outlets share information.

Social media

Informal, tongue-in-cheek, and relaxed, the tone of the “Virginia is for Lovers” social media channels is the most approachable and informal. Content on these channels should read as a discussion between friends about where to take the next vacation. But while we may include jokes and puns in the copy, we never devalue, belittle, or utilize negativity in our language. Maintaining an uplifting and positive mindset is key to creating an inclusive and welcoming space.

Social Media Style Guidelines

Instagram

- Informal channel that leans heavy into inspirational. The tone can sometimes be quirky, funny and informative. Content centers on brand building, quizzes, roundups, and guides. Use hashtags and emojis sparingly, no more than 3-5 a post. Always use a location tag, tag for partner DMO and tag the photographer when applicable.

Twitter

- A mix of quirky and informative. Content shared is usually more news and product focused. Use hashtags and emojis sparingly, no more than 3-5 per tweet.

Facebook

- Our most informative channel. The tone can sometimes lean funny but traditionally is inspirational and educational. Content centers on brand/editorial and product features. Always use the location tag and tag businesses and partners when applicable. Use emojis sparingly, do not use hashtags.

Pinterest

- Our most inspirational channel. The tone can be quirky at times but mostly sticks to informative. Content shared here is brand building, guides, and product focused. Do not use hashtags.

LinkedIn

- Most Formal channel. The tone of voice here leans very informative and is the least quirky or funny out of all the social channels. Content is focused on showcasing VTC programs and impact, brand building, partner stories and thought leadership. Use hashtags sparingly. Do not use emojis.

Blog

The purpose of the Virginia is for Lovers blog is to provide detailed, up-to-date information and support the “Virginia is for Lovers” brand. Inclusivity and diversity is key to the voice used in the blog. The tone should be casual and approachable but informative. It should be less informal than our social media channels but more laid back than Virginia.org content.

Blog Style Guidelines

- Separate paragraphs with bold titles. Use h2 tags for these titles.
- Double hyphen for location. Example: Virginia Museum of Fine Art—Richmond
- All links should direct to Virginia.org listings or landing pages when possible.
- Use bullets, italics, bold, or all caps to break up text into headers and subheaders.
- Permalink is edited down to 3-4 word relevant URL. Example: blog.virginia.org/2017/03/unexpected-spring-break-destinations/
- Fill in Search Engine Listing Title Tag and Meta Description in Wordpress plugin using title and less than 140 characters that describe the article with keywords. (Use intro paragraph if it fits).
- Add relevant tags and category fields.
- Choose the appropriate Arrivist and Adara pixel.
- If many locations across state, create a Google Map, make shareable with all sources, and embed in code when relevant.
- Embed Widen images using custom HTML field; use h5 text block for photo credit, linking to Instagram account of photographer when provided.
- Set a featured image before publishing. This is the image that shows up as a thumbnail on blog.virginia.org.

Email newsletter

The emails sent from VTC utilize concise, to-the-point copy, conveying our message in 1-2 sentences. The tone is often informal and conversational, and lighthearted puns in the titles reflect this.

Virginia.org listings

The “Virginia is for Lovers” website content is the most formal channel, but the focus lies in sharing concise, helpful, and informative copy that will quickly help visitors navigate through thousands of pages of travel planning content to find what they are looking for.

Do:

- Be concise
- Use plain but inclusive English. Imagine you are speaking to a friend
- Think of commonly-asked questions and answer these in your listing
- Provide insider tips and know-before-you-go information (are reservations suggested? Where do you park?)
- Add physical addresses only

Don't:

- Use overly flowery language
- Use idioms, puns, or clichés.
- Use marketing jargon
- Use exclamation points (for the most part)
- Use highly sensitive or offensive topics (religion, politics)
- Create multiple listings with the same name/title or the same description