

# Riding at the 2019 RA Rally

by Jeff Dunkle

## What “is” the Shenandoah Valley?

According to [www.shenandoahvalleyweb.com](http://www.shenandoahvalleyweb.com): “The Shenandoah Valley lies between the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east and the Allegheny Mountains to the west. It stretches approximately 200 miles from Harpers Ferry, West Virginia to Roanoke, Virginia.” The “valley” is not just one flatland between two mountains; it spans a broad valley floor and multiple ridge lines to the east and west. Therein lies much of the riding fun.....crossing those ridges to get someplace interesting.

## Why is the Valley Special?

First, it’s beautiful; lush green farmland and forests in the summer, some of the most amazing fall foliage in the world, and charming old cities and towns. Second, a lot of the Civil War occurred in the Valley and many of the cities and towns predate the war by 50 to 100 years. Third, it’s surrounded by mountains with great roads for riding. There are fine colleges and universities throughout the region. Museums and historic sites abound. If you like wineries, we’ve got ‘em. Caverns and other natural formations.....those too. And everywhere you go, folks are friendly toward motorcyclists, probably because a lot of folks who live here ride too.

**Notes – 1)** *MANY of the included locations and restaurants have LIMITED HOURS. Please check their web listings and plan your ride accordingly!*

**2)** *The staff of the Shenandoah County Sheriff’s Department are friendly and professional. They DO enforce the low in-town speed limits. Also, many area reduced speed limits are not in current data bases, either GPS or phone. Be alert to the signs.*

## Three Notable Ride Destinations

Here are three of the best known area attractions. If you’ve not “actually” been to, or ridden on them,.....as the Nike slogan says; “Just Do It!”

### The Skyline Drive

Skyline Drive is a 105-mile road that runs along a major ridge line through the Shenandoah National Park in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The northern entrance at mile marker 0, near Front Royal, is only 25 miles from the rally site. The speed limit is 35 mph. Fee for a motorcycle is \$25, good for 7 days. An annual pass is \$55. Is it worth it? A resounding, yes.

### The Blue Ridge Parkway

Per the Parkway’s web site; “Sweeping curves and awe-inspiring vistas are just a few reasons why hundreds of thousands of motorcyclists ride the Blue Ridge Parkway each year.” It starts at the end of the Skyline Drive at Rockfish Gap, 75 miles south south west of the rally site. Total length is 469 miles, ending in Swain County, NC. There is no entrance fee on the Parkway. Speed limit is 45 mph. There are numerous access points so it can be ridden about any distance desired. The scenery is amazing. While it’s a good idea to combine a run of the Skyline Drive with some distance on the Blue Ridge Parkway, keep in mind that the speed limits will restrict somewhat the distance you can cover in one day. But any time spent on either, or both, will be special.

## **Luray Caverns**

From their web site; “Luray Caverns is the largest caverns in the eastern United States, yet walking through feels more akin to an unearthly experience.” It’s only 23 miles from the rally site. For a fun ride, take the route that includes Rt 11, then Rt 675 – Fort Road, when riding there. You will experience about 10 miles of very technical twisties along the way. Tours run from 9 AM to 7 PM.

**Special offer for RA Rally-goers:** Normal entrance fees are \$28 for adults, and \$15 for children twelve and under. The Caverns sales office is giving RA rally attendees a special tour price of \$18.50 for adults, \$10.50 for children. To obtain this special rate, do not go to the main gate ticket booth. Rather, go to the Car and Carriage Museum group ticket sales office and ask for Steve Fox, sales manager. Say you’re with the BMW group and show your wrist band. Then join the normal tour group. The Caverns tour is over a mile walking and takes about an hour and a quarter. Your ticket also includes access to the Car and Carriage Museum, a very special collection, worth the time to visit.

## **Other Special Geographic Sites in the Valley**

### **Natural Bridge State Park**

Per their web site: “Once owned by Thomas Jefferson and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the 215-foot tall Natural Bridge is a limestone gorge carved out by Cedar Creek. The park is more than just the bridge; beautiful forests and rolling meadows showcase the area’s terrain, and vistas of surrounding mountains and the James River valley display nature’s splendor. “ It’s 107 miles south south west of Woodstock and while the roads to get there aren’t necessarily technical, it’s a great addition to a ride from the rally site.

### **Reddish Knob**

Located on the boarder of Virginia and West Virginia, it’s one of the highest points on the Shenandoah Mountain. While only 63 miles from the rally site, the final approach road to the summit is a rather ”interesting” semi-paved road that’s not for the faint of heart on a touring bike, though I have managed the ride on an old Gold Wing once. Once at the summit, view is one of the best in the region. The basic route is to go to Harrisonburg and head west per your GPS.

**Rt 758 to the Fire Tower** – Thanks to George Vandenbosche – Rt 758 east of Woodstock is a dirt road that goes up the mountain. A large off road riding area half way up the mountain should keep GS riders busy all afternoon. At the top of the ridge on Rt. 578 is a fire tower open to the public, with a great view of the Seven Bends of the Shenandoah River.

## **Riding in West Virginia**

Next to the Skyline and Blue Ridge, one of the most appealing reasons to come to this year’s RA Rally is riding in West Virginia; notable are the roads and attractions in Pocahontas County, about 130 miles to the west. Getting to there is half the fun. Then there are the attractions and great roads.

### **Green Bank Radio Observatory**

This should be on your rally ride list. It’s 126 miles from the Fairgrounds and has two things going for it; first are some amazing roads to get there and back. And second, it’s a fascinating place. It’s the birth place of radio astronomy and has the largest movable antenna in the world; bigger than a football field. For decades it’s been the site of important astronomical research. The visitors center exhibits, their presentation, and then site tour are VERY worthwhile.

### **Cass Railroad State Park**

Just a few miles south of Green Bank is the Cass Railroad. It's an operating steam locomotive with an old time turn of the century store as it's station, and the whole operation is a West Virginia State Park. Get to Green Bank early enough, add this to your day's ride, then return to the rally, for a fine day's outing.

### **Pocahontas County, WV**

Both Green Bank and Cass are located in Pocahontas County West Virginia, which has some of the best motorcycle riding roads in the eastern US. The county has prepared number of mapped motorcycle ride routes of varying lengths, most of which are easy day rides from the rally. Here's the link to the county's web site pdf page with these maps.

<https://www.pocahontascountywv.com/Files/FInalMotorcycle2010.pdf>

### **Other Sites of Interest in the Region**

**The Flight 93 Memorial** Located a few hours ride to the northwest in Pennsylvania. If you've never been there, it's a truly moving experience. Several routes to the Memorial take you through **Berkeley Springs, WV**. For two centuries this people have come there to soak in the mineral springs. It now is a center for folk art with charming shops and restaurants. Plan on stopping there on your ride to or from the Memorial.

**Udvar-Hazy Center of the Air and Space Museum.** This is the large planes site for Smithsonian, and perhaps the best big aircraft display in the world; notable are the Space Shuttle Discovery; the B-29 Superfortress Enola Gay; a Concorde, and an SR-71 Blackbird. It's only 77 miles east of Woodstock, near the Dullas Airport. But be forewarned; it can be a busy freeway much of the way depending on time of day. But, the ride is certainly manageable, and, if you've never been there, go.

### **Gettysburg Battlefield**

Only 110 miles to the northeast, spending a day at one of the most historic sites in the US is a worthwhile destination from the rally.

### **Morton's BMW Motorcycles**

Soon celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary selling BMW motorcycles, Morton's is located about 100 miles to the southeast from Woodstock in Fredericksburg. Set your GPS for two lanes and turns and you'll have an interesting ride most of the way there and back. They're offering the following to any rally attendee who rides there. Show your wrist band and get a free Morton's BMW coffee mug. Make a purchase of \$50 or more and get a free Morton's tee shirt and a complementary helmet visor cleaning. They're one of several fine BMW dealerships in the region. After riding to Morton's have Bar B Q at Alman's, or cone or shake at Carl's Frozen Custard. Both have been destinations in Fredericksburg for decades.

## **Other Points of Interest in the Valley**

### **Woodstock Restaurants**

Every Fast Food Place There is – Reservoir Road just southwest of the rally site.

Cracker Barrel – At the Walmart turn off Reservoir Road

Sheetz – made to order takeout counter – Reservoir & Main at the bottom of the hill. Don't forget they have a free air machine.

The Spring House Tavern – Main Street – classic tavern food done right. Lots of craft beers on tap. Note: this is “the” local go-to place Friday and Saturday nights. Expect long waits those evenings.

The Brewhouse - 123 E Court St, just off Main St. – beautifully restored old industrial building, featuring lots of craft beers and good bar food.

Asian Spice – at bottom of hill beside Rite Aid – Asian buffet.

Woodstock Garden Cafe – Serving breakfast and lunch in a garden center green house area. Hand crafted sandwiches and salads. Good coffees and desserts. Turn left on Heisey Ave. just past Tractor Supply.

Woodstock Cafe – Main Street – downtown Woodstock. Made to order sandwiches and salads. Good specialty coffees Cheeses & wine for sale.

Sunrise Cafe – bottom of hill on Main Street – just south of Sheetz – Breakfast, lunch, good pies.

Carmalized Restaurant – Breakfast till 11 AM, lunch after that. Dinner till 8 PM. Beside the Econo Lodge a mile and half south of town on Rt 11. Really good diner style food and great pies. Their chicken fingers dinner will surprise you.

Las Trancas – A good Mexican restaurant at the top of the hill near Food Lion. Could “almost” walk there and indulge on some fine margaritas. I love their grilled salmon tacos.

### **Places to Eat in Edinburg**

Sal's Italian Bistro - Main Street – Very good sit down Italian restaurant, open for lunch and dinner. My wife's favorite dinner spot. One of the area's destination places for good food.

Bean's Barbecue – 11 AM to 7 PM Thu, Fri, Sat. Here's the deal. Bean's is a joint in a garage on Main Street in Edinburg. Cooker sits permanently on the sidewalk. Mostly takeout. A few folding chairs and tables. Cash only. Brisket on Thursday. Pulled pork and ribs each day open. They usually run out of something or other early. I always call before I go to see if they have what I want. 200 folks will overwhelm them. Some of you will get the best ribs for miles.

Edinburg Mill Restaurant – Located just south of town on Rt 11 in the lower level of the Edinburg Mill Museum, the restaurant serves lunch and dinner, and breakfast on the weekend. Hours are lunch 11 – 2, dinner 4-9. Very nice venue for a good, leisurely sit down meal. Check their web link to be sure their hours correspond with your plans.

Edinburg VFW Post 2447 – On Stony Creek Blvd across from the Fire House. If you're a member, it's a good place to eat.

## **Restaurants Further South**

Southern Kitchen – Rt 11 in New Market – 20 miles south. Charming town, popular place for southern style comfort food – can you say fried chicken?!

Blue Stone Inn – Rt 11, north of Harrisonburg – 28 miles south. An intimate old restaurant with very good food. Nice place for sit down dinners. Family owned for decades. My wife was a waitress there 35 years ago.

Bar B Q Ranch – Rt 11, north of Harrisonburg – 34 miles south. A small place with surprisingly good food. Nice stop going to or coming from Harrisonburg.

Log Cabin Barbecue – Rt 33 near Elkton, east of Harrisonburg. 48 miles. Classic vinegar based Carolina barbecue done right. Go east over the first ridge, then run Rt 344 south toward Elkton, then over to the Log Cabin, for a pleasant ride. Or, take Rt 11 to Harrisonburg then go east on Rt 33.

**Wines and spirits heritage of the area.** We all know that drinking and riding don't mix. But, from the time of Jefferson, wine making, brewing, and distilling spirits have been part of the fabric and culture of Virginia and the Valley. Visiting these sites is another way to learn about the area. Here's some of the places within 50 miles of the Fairgrounds. Google "Blue Ridge Whiskey Wine Loop" for an interesting take where to go and what to see.

### **Area Wineries – (listed sort of north to south)**

Kindred Pointe Winery - 151 N Loudoun St, Winchester, VA 22601 - 35 miles northeast

James Charles Winery - 4063 Middle Rd, Winchester, VA 22602 – 28 miles northeast

Valerie Hill Vineyard & Winery - 1687 Marlboro Rd, Stephens City, VA 22655 – 25 miles northeast

Trumpet Vine Farm - 266 Vacluse Rd, Stephens City, VA 22655 – 23 miles northeast

North Mountain Vineyard & Winery - 4374 Swartz Rd, Maurertown, VA 22644 – 7 miles north

Muse Vineyard - 16 Serendipity Ln, Woodstock, VA 22664 – 2.5 miles west

Shenandoah Vineyards - 3659 S Ox Rd, Edinburg, VA 22824 – 3 miles southwest

Wolf Gap Vineyard & Winery - 123 Stout Rd, Edinburg, VA 22824 – 9 miles southwest

Cave Ridge Vineyard - 1476 Conicville Rd, Mt Jackson, VA 22842 – 13 miles southwest

Third Hill Winery - 2110 Quicksburg Rd, Quicksburg, VA 22847 – 21 miles south

Wisteria Farm & Vineyard - 1126 Marksville Rd, Stanley, VA 22851 – 36 miles south

Quievermont Winery - 162 Gidbrown Hollow Rd #335, Washington, VA 22747 – 42 miles east

Little Washington Winery - 72 Christmas Tree Ln, Washington, VA 22747 – 43 miles east

Note: This is just a list of nearby wineries. Google search wineries and you'll find a LOT more within 50 to 100 miles along the valley!

## **Breweries & Distilleries, etc.**

Filibuster Distillery - 80 Maurertown Mill Rd., Maurertown, VA - Just a few miles north on Rt 11. Kentucky is the epicenter of American whiskey production because of the special properties of its limestone-filtered water and the minerals it contains. Watch out Kentucky! Shenandoah limestone possesses an even higher ratio of beneficial minerals than Kentucky water.

Swover Creek Farms & Brewery - 4176 Swover Creek Rd, Edinburg, is where you want to take the kids and dogs to relax and play while you enjoy great craft beer and food from scratch!

Box Office Brewery – Located in the historic Strand Theater in Strasburg, VA Started by a couple of college guys making home brew, it's now a fine place for craft beer and food.

Copper Fox Distillery - 9 River Lane, Sperryville, VA 22740 - “We emphasize the combination of innovation and tradition to produce a whisky that is truly unique. And yes, it's whisky—not whiskey—for us, in the grand and storied tradition of the Scotch techniques that were our inspiration. “ 39 miles east.

Showalters Orchard & Greenhouse - 17768 Honeyville Rd, Timberville, VA 22853 - “The Shenandoah Valley's Original Hard Cidery.” 25 miles south.

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## **Area Museums and Historic Sites**

The Woodstock Museum of Shenandoah County – 104 S. Mulhenberg St., Woodstock. “with the purpose of stimulating interest in the early history of Woodstock and the surrounding area, and in the manners and customs of the people who lived here, and to collect, preserve, and display visible evidences of their way of life. Docent led tours from 1 PM to 4 PM.

Shenandoah County Courthouse – Originally built in 1790, located in the center of downtown Woodstock. The Shenandoah County Historical Society and County Tourism office operate the Visitor Center and Courthouse Museum in the historic courthouse.

Shenandoah Valley Cultural Heritage Museum at The Edinburg Mill - 214 South Main Street, Edinburg. “One of the Best local History Museums I've Visited.” Displays portray life and transportation in centuries past. There is also a fine restaurant and wine shop on the first floor.

## **Going North**

Museum of the Shenandoah Valley – 901 Amherst St, Winchester. About 34 miles north of the rally site. A palatial mansion originally built by the founder of Winchester, over 200 years ago, surrounded by seven acres of exquisite gardens, it's a show place at the northern end of the Valley.

Belle Grove Plantation – “Constructed in 1797 by Major Isaac Hite, Belle Grove Plantation's Manor House is a stunning example of Jeffersonian architecture. Located in the northern Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, USA. It is situated in Frederick County, about a mile southwest of Middletown.

## Going South

The Shenandoah Caverns - about 19 miles south of the rally site, near Mt. Jackson, at 261 Caverns Rd, Quicksburg, VA 22847. The only cavern in Virginia that has elevator access. The Shenandoah Caverns has a mile-long guided tour. Seventeen "rooms" of connecting chambers are traveled through during this time.

Virginia Museum of the Civil War-New Market Battlefield State Historical Park - 8895 George Collins Pkwy, New Market, VA 22844 . The town was the location of the last major Confederate victory in the American Civil War.

## Cities & Towns

**Winchester** – 35 miles to the north. Besides The Museum of the Shenandoah Valley, there's Old Town Winchester, with some buildings dating back 250 years. The Shenandoah Discovery Museum is a hands-on educational experience. Stonewall Jackson's headquarters offers a glimpse into his Civil War efforts.

**Front Royal** – 26 miles going north then east. Like almost every town in the valley, it figured in the Civil War. Originally settled by various Native American tribes, it became a rough and tumble settlement by the 1790s, known as "Helltown," due to the many livestock wranglers and boatmen on the Shenandoah coming through the area, who came into town looking for alcohol. The coming of the rail road decades later brought more development. It's now a mix of an old settled community, and DC commuter condos. Nearby are;

Skyline Caverns, one mile south of Front Royal.

Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute

Warren Rifles Confederate Museum

Shenandoah Valley Overlook

**Harrisonburg** – 34 miles to the southwest. The home of James Madison University (JMU), and Eastern Mennonite University. There are numerous art galleries , more breweries, dining from Asian to barbecue. By going south to Harrisonburg, you can pick up Rt 33 and have a pleasant ride over the ridges east toward areas like Fredericksburg and Morton's BMW; or west toward venues in West Virginia. I prefer taking Rt 11 vs. I-81 to get to Harrisonburg. More scenic and much less hectic.

**Charlottesville** – 90 to 100 miles depending on route. I prefer to take Rt 11 to New Market, then head east and eventually connect to Rt 33. Home to the University of Virginia, with its core campus designed by Thomas Jefferson. On the outskirts, Jefferson's mountain-top plantation, Monticello. Also Highland, President James Monroe's home. There's the Virginia Discovery Museum, a great place for kids to do hands-on stuff.

**Lynchburg** – 134 miles south. While the site of much Civil War activity, Lynchburg was the only major city in Virginia that was not recaptured by the Union before the end of the American Civil War. Perhaps it's now most famous as the home of Liberty University, who by the way is the largest employer in the city.