



Connect to African American Heritage in Fairfax County, VA

Fairfax County, VA – August 23, 2011 – As thousands once again flock to the hallowed grounds of the National Mall in Washington, DC to celebrate the grand opening of the much-anticipated memorial to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Visit Fairfax (www.fxva.com) invites visitors to connect to the rich African American heritage and history waiting just over the river in Fairfax County, Virginia.

“The African American experience is intricately entwined in the rich tapestry of Fairfax County’s history,” says Barry Biggar, President and CEO of Visit Fairfax. “We are fortunate to have access to a wealth of heritage sites and museums for visitors and residents to experience in order to gain knowledge and appreciation of the journey African Americans have made from slavery to the realization of one man’s dream.”

Just a short drive from Washington, DC, Fairfax County is home to several memorable sites, including:

Gum Springs – (<http://gumspingsmuseum.blogspot.com>) - located just outside of Alexandria, Virginia, Gum Springs is a small hamlet of 2,500 residents established in 1833 by West Ford, a freed slave who lived on nearby Mount Vernon Estate. The town became a haven for former slaves, both freedmen and runaways, creating a self-sufficient community that soon thrived into the oldest African American community in the United States.

George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate & Gardens – (www.mountvernon.org) – located on the shores of the Potomac River, Mount Vernon is the preserved home of the nation’s first president. In addition to more than 50 acres of gardens, an interactive museum, and the tombs of both George and Martha Washington, the estate serves as one of the nation’s memorials to the contributions of 18th-century slaves and showcases an honest account of the era in which Washington lived, including slavery.

Gunston Hall – (www.gunstonhall.org) – just up the road from Mount Vernon is George Mason’s Gunston Hall, home of the outspoken proponent of civil liberties, author of Virginia’s Declaration of Rights, and former slave owner. This sprawling plantation includes restored structures and interpretative actors throughout the grounds that depict the varying parts needed to make the 18th-century household work.

Visit Fairfax developed a number of interactive website tours including the African American Heritage Trail Tour. The one to five day tour details 21 sites throughout the region relating to African American heritage. For more information on the County’s African American Heritage Trail, visit www.fxva.com.

Visit Fairfax is the official tourism organization for Fairfax County, Virginia. Charged with destination marketing and tourism promotion, it is directed by many of the County's top tourism and hospitality leaders. For more information, please visit www.fxva.com.

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