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What's New in Alexandria, Virginia 2018

Waterfront Developments Juxtapose History with Modern Experiences

As the D.C. region's waterfront landscape evolves with multi-billion dollar developments like The Wharf, which opened in October 2017, and MGM National Harbor in Maryland, which opened last year, here's what's new with the region's most historic waterfront. Alexandria-based [Potomac Riverboat Company](#) has launched high-speed, low-wake water taxi service from Alexandria's marina to The Wharf, in an expansion of their D.C.-region water taxi service which includes access to the National Mall, National Harbor and Mount Vernon. In the fall of 2018, visitors can take in 180° panoramic views of the Potomac River with the opening of [Interim Fitzgerald Square](#), a new public plaza connecting Alexandria's historic retail district with the water. Coming in 2019 to the Alexandria marina is the tall ship *Providence*, which appears in the Academy Award-winning film *Master and Commander* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*. These new offerings join recent waterfront happenings, including the opening of Alexandria's first waterfront hotel, [Hotel Indigo Old Town Alexandria](#), the opening of a new waterfront restaurant by renowned chef Cathal Armstrong, [Hummingbird](#), and the launch of [Embark DC](#), which offers private custom-crafted cruises for up to six people. During construction of Hotel Indigo, archaeologists discovered an 18th century ship along the historic waterfront. The 50-foot-long fragmented hull was excavated in January 2016 and is undergoing an extensive conservation process that the public can follow on a [special website](#) launched in fall of 2017, featuring 360 degree views of individual timbers that will be 3D printed. A new exhibit *Archaeology on the Waterfront* at the **Alexandria Archaeology Museum** opening in January 2018 will feature artifacts from the excavation and explore what can be learned from finds as small as a cherry pit or piece of Caribbean coral.

New High-Speed Water Taxi Connects D.C.'s Most Historic Waterfront with Its Newest

D.C.'s Southwest Waterfront is undergoing a \$1.5 billion redevelopment known as [The Wharf](#), with phase one newly opened in October 2017. Alexandria-based [Potomac Riverboat Company](#) has expanded their D.C.-region water taxi service with new high-speed, low-wake water taxi service from Alexandria's historic waterfront to The Wharf. Visitors can enjoy dinner in Alexandria followed by a 25-minute trip to The Wharf where they can enjoy entertainment at concert venues such as [The Anthem](#). The high-speed water taxi also offers service between The Wharf and Georgetown. One-way tickets start at \$10 for adults and \$7 for children. Roundtrip tickets start at \$18 for adults and \$12.60 for children.

New Waterfront Plaza Connects Historic Retail District With Potomac River Experiences

In the fall of 2018, visitors strolling King Street, named one of the "Great Streets" of America, can take in 180° panoramic views of the Potomac River from [Interim Fitzgerald Square](#), a new public plaza that will seamlessly connect Old Town's historic retail corridor with the water. The square is part of the City of Alexandria's [Waterfront Plan](#) and will be completed by Olin, the designers of Bryant Park in New York. Interim Fitzgerald Square will become a gathering point for the community that transforms throughout the year to support seasonal events and functions such as a temporary ice rink in the winter and a temporary beach in the summer. The space will include a fine lawn area where people can sit and relax on blankets and enjoy the sunshine, a marina terrace with movable tables and chairs where you can

bring lunch and sit under the shaded canopy and look out over the dock, and a continuous promenade that will connect the marina with the adjacent Waterfront Park. Following this interim plaza design, a permanent installation is projected to open in 2027 with an interactive water feature, overlook building, and hardscape revealing how the historic shoreline has changed over time.

Celebrity Tall Ship to Sail Home to Alexandria's Seaport in 2019

The tall ship *Providence*, which appears in the Academy Award-winning film *Master and Commander* starring Russell Crowe and *Pirates of the Caribbean* starring Johnny Depp, is projected to arrive at Alexandria's waterfront in the summer of 2019 to make the city her permanent home as a key attraction of the developing waterfront. The 110-foot, twelve-gun sloop-of-war is a **full-scale replica of the Continental Navy's first warship**. Alexandria's [Tall Ship Providence Foundation](#) has acquired the vessel and is undergoing a fundraising campaign to rehabilitate the replica for educational maritime heritage programs. Built in the 1700s, the original ship's first mission in the American Revolution was to clear the Chesapeake Bay of enemy British ships. The public can look forward to public tours, chartered cruises, historical seminars and other educational programs.

Choose Your Own Adventure With Custom Travel Experiences

Visitors to Alexandria can create their own custom travel experience in the historic city through experiences such as [Embark DC](#), which offers private custom-crafted cruises for up to six people, and [Discover Alexandria](#), which offers custom tours for groups ranging from two to 30 people with adaptable options including a Sweet History tour, Shop Alexandria Boutiques tour and Virginia is for Runners tour. Other tour groups offering catered-just-for-you experiences include African-American history tours by [Manumission Tour Company](#). At **George Washington's Mount Vernon**, visitors can choose their mode of [transportation](#) from Old Town (depart by bike and return by boat, or by biking both ways) as well as their tour. Mount Vernon offers a variety of special interest [tours](#), from the National Treasure Tour to the Garden and Groves Tour to the All the President's Pups tour. Visitors looking to arrange private parties while in Alexandria can choose from a selection of historic and unexpected locations, like the **Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum** and the spooky vault at **Ivy Hill Cemetery**. **Port City Brewing Company** recently announced a new [Beer Guides on Demand](#) program that adds a fun, educational component to any private event.

Independent Boutiques Expand with New Concepts

Alexandria, the D.C. region's Shop Small destination and the #1 Best Cities for Entrepreneurs according to *Entrepreneur*, continues to see its independent boutique scene grow with successful shops adding second concepts and otherwise expanding. Amy Rutherford, owner of Red Barn Mercantile, a home furnishings and gift store celebrating more than 10 years in Alexandria, is the newest business owner to branch out with a second concept, [Penny Post](#), a chic paper goods shop. Popular yarn boutique [fibre space](#) expanded by placing permanent roots in Alexandria with the purchase of a historic flatiron building. Victoria Vergason of [The Hour](#), a vintage glassware and barware store, will launch a new e-commerce business and spinoff of The Hour in 2018, **The Modern Home Bar**, which will include her own new line of original barware and glassware including pieces made in the U.S. [Forge Industrial Works](#), which features a curated selection of reclaimed industrial furniture along with an impressive range of gifts, antiques, and more, was opened by Alexandria restaurateurs branching out into retail. Last year, Elizabeth Todd of The Shoe Hive opened [The Hive](#), a luxury clothing boutique.

Alexandria's Restaurant Scene Continues to Evolve With 18 New Restaurants

Alexandria's booming dining scene continues to expand with 18 new restaurants in 2017 and many more expected in 2018. Some of the most notable recent openings include [Hummingbird](#), a waterfront restaurant located inside Hotel Indigo Old Town Alexandria led by Chef Catha Armstrong of Eat Good

Food Group, which has four other restaurants in Alexandria—Restaurant Eve, Society Fair, Eamonn’s and PX. Hummingbird, which opened in May 2017, is an energetic bar and kitchen inspired by the American spirit of cherished traditions such as clambakes and crab boils, fish fries and oyster roasts. [Sunday in Saigon](#) opened in April 2017 by the owners of local favorite Caphe Banh Mi and combines Vietnam’s rich regional diversity with the modern urban atmosphere of Saigon. Their menu features iconic dishes such as Bun Cha Ha Noi from the North and Bun Bo Hue from Central Vietnam. Also new is Ethiopian restaurant [Mekeda](#), opened by a local investor and New York chef Philipos Mengistu known for Manhattan’s Queen of Sheba. Coming soon are **Whiskey & Oyster**, which will feature a 20-foot oyster bar, a 50-foot bar, and outdoor dining with fire pits, and **Mia’s Italian Kitchen**, by Alexandria Restaurant Partners, that will feature Italian favorites such as freshly-made pastas, Sicilian-style pizza and sandwiches.

Snack-Sized Eateries Meet the Public’s Craving For Savory and Sweet

Alexandria is known for its diverse and independent culinary scene with more than 80% of the restaurants and shops in Old Town Alexandria being independently owned. The rise of [creative comfort food](#) was a big trend in 2017. Adding to the city’s culinary landscape are snack-sized eateries. [The Happy Tart](#), a beloved gluten-free patisserie in Alexandria’s Del Ray neighborhood, re-opened in October 2017 after a nine-month renovation. The bakery now offers additional seating, including an outdoor patio, and an expanded menu featuring a variety of crepes. **Snackbar** opened in September 2017 in Del Ray serving items like breakfast tacos and sandwiches. These join recent favorites like [The Italian Place](#), a gourmet Italian market and sub shop that opened in the fall of 2016. Expected in 2018 in a **former historic ice house** will be a coffee shop with carry-out hand pies and pastries.

Artisanal Sweet Spots Add Alcohol for Can’t-Resist Boozy Desserts

Alexandria has long been known as a dessert destination with nearly 20 artisanal sweets and dessert spots. Now, alcohol-infused treats are making their way onto menus. [Triple Craft](#), which opened in the summer of 2017, offers giant mouthwatering milkshakes garnished with cake frosting, whipped cream, candies, sweet drizzles and cookies. Adult versions include Chocolate Kahlua, Vanilla Bourbon and Strawberry Rum-Amaretto. [Sugar Shack Donuts](#) in Alexandria represents the ultimate blending of sweets and spirits as they often have donuts that incorporate Port City Brewing Company’s beer and have a speakeasy, [Captain Gregory’s](#), hidden inside the donut shop. Argentine-inspired [Casa Rosada Artisan Gelato](#) serves up gelato and sorbets in flavors like Malbec (wine) and “Granizado” (stracciatella, white vanilla, cooked with a little rum and woven with melted chocolate). If chocolate is your vice, try [Blüprint Chocolatiers](#), which offers six chocolates with alcohol, including Porto, Grand Mariner and More Whisky, starring the 12 year Cragganmore Scotch Whisky. Additional seasonal flavors range from the Dark & Stormy featuring dark rum to Buffalo Trace for the Kentucky Derby. At [Fleurir Chocolates](#) indulge in truffles like the Grand Mariner Orange Blossom, Irish Coffee and Lavender Shiraz. For Father’s Day, try their Bourbon Box with cocktail-inspired truffles like Bourbon Ginger, Old Fashioned and Manhattan.

Mount Vernon Reopens 4D Theater with Snowfall, Fog, and Rumbling Seats

The most visited historic estate in the U.S., **George Washington’s Mount Vernon** will reopen its Revolutionary War Theater in early 2018, marking the completion of a year-long \$2.2 million renovation to the 4-D theater and an overhaul of the feature film. The theater, which first opened in 2006, features state-of-the-art 4-D effects including snowfall, fog, and rumbling seats to tell the story of General George Washington’s major victories during the American Revolution. With these updates, guests will feel in the midst of the action of the Revolutionary War. The new 17-minute film focuses on the same major battles as its first iteration: Washington’s victories in Boston, Trenton, Princeton, and Yorktown.

The updated production includes improved live action and animated sequences, as well as a two-minute pre-show that provides background of the causes of the Revolution.

Alexandria's LGBT-Friendly Reputation on the Rise

Recognized by the Human Rights Campaign as a highly ranked LGBT-friendly destination in Virginia and the D.C. region, Alexandria's LGBT-friendly reputation is on the rise. For the first time, Alexandria's Old Town and Del Ray neighborhoods were nominated for the Washington Blade's 2017 "Best of Gay D.C." awards, alongside numerous Alexandria businesses and Editor's Choice "Best Chef" Jamie Leeds. A new LGBT initiative spearheaded by Visit Alexandria has certified nearly 70 hospitality businesses as LGBT-friendly through educational training sessions, an effort launched alongside Virginia Tourism Corporation's [statewide initiative](#) to market to the LGBT traveler. Visitors can browse VisitAlexandriaVA.com/LGBT for designated businesses and will notice welcoming rainbow decals in windows around town. Alexandria authentically meets what research shows many LGBT travelers are looking for: a small city with urban and rural amenities, historical and cultural spots, theater and concert experiences, and restaurants where they can enjoy dinner and drinks. Plus, LGBT travelers can expect a safe and welcoming destination that offers LGBT-friendly hotels like Kimpton Lorient Hotel & Spa, activities like Drag Brunch at Hank's Pasta Bar and plenty of locally owned businesses like Virtue Feed & Grain restaurant and The Dog Park boutique that are committed to supporting the LGBT community. Minutes from Washington, D.C., Alexandria is rated the #2 most LGBT-friendly city in Virginia by the Human Rights Campaign Municipality Equality Index in 2016 and the #2 Best Town in Virginia for LGBT Families by Movoto in 2016. VisitAlexandriaVA.com/LGBT

Kimpton Lorient Hotel & Spa Undergoes Major Renovation

In early spring 2018, [Kimpton Lorient Hotel & Spa](#) in Old Town Alexandria, Virginia will complete a multimillion-dollar phased redesign to all 107 guest rooms including 16 suites, hallway corridors, public areas, adjacent restaurant BRABO, and its 5,600 square feet of meeting and event space, including two main function rooms accommodating up to 100 as well as the hotel's signature outdoor suite terraces overlooking King Street. The hotel's contemporary new design from MONOGRAM by BBGM echoes Old Town's classic and refined charm with elegant, subdued colors and a touch of whimsy with the restrained injection of color to add a modern and relaxed flair. An ethereal color palette of purples, copper, blues and greens and timeless furniture with modern twists will adorn the reimagined spaces with playful layers of curious art meant to spur imaginative thought. www.lorienhotelandspa.com

More Growth Forecasted for Alexandria's Hotel Portfolio in 2019

Alexandria welcomed its first waterfront hotel, [Hotel Indigo Old Town Alexandria](#), in May 2017 adding to its robust hotel portfolio. Three hotels are tentatively expected to open in 2019—a 124-room hotel, Hyatt Centric at 1611 King Street; a 170-room Choice Hotels property in the Potomac Yards neighborhood; a 64-room boutique hotel located at 115 S. Union Street; and a hotel in Alexandria's booming Carlyle neighborhood.

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