

# The Charms of Loudoun County

## A Luxurious Day as Told by Local Experts

By Peter Frerichs

The United States is home to an untold array of landscapes, traditions, and lifestyles. The country's sheer size and natural diversity produce awe-inspiring regional wonders, and by far, one of the nation's oldest and most cherished is the equestrian culture of luxurious Loudoun County, Virginia.

The county features a variety of equestrian disciplines, many of which have attracted Olympic-level horses and riders to live and train in Loudoun. For Cricket Bedford, a native of Upperville in western Loudoun County and one of the county's top-performing real estate agents, an ideal day in Loudoun sounds absolutely delightful.

"My dream day in Loudoun County would be to start with an early morning run or bike ride along our wonderful gravel roads edged with old stone walls and mature trees," Bedford describes. This section of Northern Virginia is steeped in history, and after the outing, Bedford recommends a cup of coffee and a nibble at The Upper Crust Bakery, Middleburg Commons Grounds, or Cuppa Giddy Up in Middleburg.

Bedford grew up in the saddle, so it's no surprise that a perfect Loudoun day is only complete with a ride across this stunning countryside. "Afterward, treat your body to a massage at the spa at the Salamander Resort and finish it off with a nice meal at the Hunter's Head Tavern."

In Aspen, Beaver Creek, or Park City, "ski-out" is a coveted condo or house feature. In equestrian-centered Loudoun County, sophisticated buyers seek "ride out" properties, allowing residents to leave their homes on horseback.

"Due to the rapid expansion and development in Loudoun County over the last twenty years," Samantha Fisher, Principal Broker at On The Market Properties, relates, "most properties with 'ride-out' are to the west of Leesburg." Fisher explains that Rosemont Farm in the historic area of Waterford is one of the most unique and sought-after equestrian communities in Loudoun County. "There are only a handful of custom homes on 123 acres, and they sell almost immediately, often attracting out-of-state buyers," she explained.



Photo courtesy of the 868 Estate Vineyards



While the county is without a doubt an equestrian dream, there is plenty more to do and see in Loudoun. Northern Virginia is a key producer of the country's top wines and part of the state's nearly 400-year viticultural history. Thomas Jefferson originally wrote of a "dream of Virginia to produce world-class wine," and the region's sandstone and granite soils continue to produce exceptional Chardonnay, Viognier, and Bordeaux blends.

Stone Tower Winery has been run by three generations of the Huber family over an expansive 300-acre estate. A visit is sure to result in some of the region's most age-worthy and complex wines, coupled with breathtaking views of Hogback Mountain.

868 Estate Vineyards is also family-owned, but by three distinct families who purchased the farm with a vision of merging wine, music, food, and art on 120 acres of fertile Loudoun County countryside. The result - 3,500 cases of wine produced annually and 2020 Virginia Governor's Cup winners.

If spending a night or two is a possibility, two hotel/resorts cannot be missed. The previously mentioned Salamander Middleburg Resort fuses old-world charm with modern amenities over a breathtaking 340 acres at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Forbes Five-Star and AAA Five-Diamond resort features one of the country's premier equestrian facilities, where a 14,000-square-foot-stable and 25 acres of pristine countryside welcomes equestrians of all levels to partake in truly unique experiences.

Known locally as the "jewel of the county," the Red Fox Inn & Tavern traces its roots to 1728. Tourists from around the globe descend to Middleburg to explore the community's local wineries, attend a polo match or steeplechase, and traverse villages and towns that seamlessly merge the founding charm of the United States with present-day luxuries. Five historic houses and buildings make up the Inn, where all 22 rooms exude their own archetypal appeal.

The County recently constructed an impressive 250' x 350' riding ring open to equestrians of all levels. Featuring top-of-line Pinnacle footing, Bedford and Fisher light up just talking about the future of their quaint American community.

It's rare to find communities that have retained what makes them special for as long as Loudoun. After a ride in the ring, Bedford likes to phone in her food order to Back Street Brews and Coffee Shop. "The service is incredible," she says with a smile, "they'll bring out my favorite order of a London Fog tea and an everything bagel right out to my truck and trailer." That's customer service, but the cherry on top is there is usually a carrot involved as well for her horse.



*Photo courtesy of the Red Fox Inn & Tavern*



*Photo courtesy of the Salamander Middleburg Resort*



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