

# Summer Fun

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Richmond Magazine: July 2008

## Sure-fire Ways to Enjoy Your Season in the Sun

### Outdoors

#### Lost in Nature

Feel a million miles away without a big trip

#### Tube the James River

The 13-mile Maidens to Watkins Landing stretch of the James River features plentiful islands and a getaway feel. If you can't handle the logistics, opt for the \$5 tubing trips offered by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities and the James River Park on weekends (646-6446).

#### Fish in Powhatan Lakes

It's catch and release only at the 66-acre, newly reopened Powhatan Lakes ([dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/index.asp](http://dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/index.asp)), found within the Powhatan Wildlife Management Area. Until the lakes get restocked later in the summer, the angling might be sparse, but this spot is on the comeback trail.

#### Hike the North and South Banks

The James River Park System's seven-mile loop trail crosses the James twice, and along the way you'll see history, geology, flora and fauna. The city offers a challenging guided 10-miler, the Summer Sizzler, on Aug. 16. (Call 646-6446 to register.)

#### Paddle the Pamunkey River

For a quick paddling trip to ancient times, Garrie Rouse, owner of Mattaponi Canoe and Kayak (800-769-3545 or [mattaponi.com](http://mattaponi.com)) in Aylett recommends people put in on Route 301 at Little Page Bridge in Hanover County. Paddle the steep-banked, narrow Pamunkey upstream for a mile or two to see an impressive section of fossil-lined banks.

#### Rock-Hop on the James

For many years, Stratford Hills resident Marianne Donahue's family had a summer sunrise tradition of walking and rock-hopping, breakfast in tow, from the James River Park's southern bank between the 43rd Street and 22nd Street entrances to the flat rocks in the river. Whether you'd like to park yourself in a rushing riffle, fish a solitary pool or soak up the sunrise, early morning on the James is a lovely otherworld right here in the real one.

#### Floating Your Boat

Whatever watercraft you want, it's available right here. Riverside Outfitters (560-0068 or [riversideoutfitters.net](http://riversideoutfitters.net)) offers raft trips on the James River through Labor Day. (Guided canoe and kayak trips and rentals are also available.) Meanwhile, Chesterfield County Parks and Recreation offers a variety of ways to explore the Dutch Gap Conservation Area by boat, including a moonlight paddle on Aug. 16 (706-9690 or [chesterfield.gov](http://chesterfield.gov)).

For fishing from a canoe or kayak, try the small but well-stocked Powhatan Ponds south of Route 60 off 627 and 662. Farther out, cast a line from your boat on Amelia Lake, in Amelia County. It's 100 acres of fishing frenzy ([dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/index.asp](http://dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/index.asp)).

You might also consider joining the Virginia Boat Club ([virginiaboatclub.org](http://virginiaboatclub.org)) and learning to row, row, row their sleek, skinny boats, starting with evening classes in individual sculling or sweep rowing.

## Two-Wheel Treks

### Road

So many road cyclists start their rides from Hanover Courthouse on Route 301 above I-295 because — with only a few exceptions — the countryside still feels like countryside out there. One 28-mile loop is a lovely mix of shade and open fields, and suddenly the sign says “Entering King William County” and you're passing farms and streams and forests. Another popular, almost mandatory ride is to Ashland and back from the Laurel Park Shopping Center at the corner of Woodman and Hungary roads. That route features a stop at the perfectly situated Ashland Coffee and Tea. For these and other local rides, check out Jim Homerosky's Road Biking Virginia and be sure to consult the Richmond Area Bicycle Association's Web site ([raba.org](http://raba.org)) for loads of useful information, including maps for many area rides. RABA offers 20- and 30-mile rides for new riders on July 5 and Aug. 2 at 8:30 a.m., starting at Laurel Park.

### Off-Road

The Richmond edition of the XTERRA Mountain Bike Race, which winds through Forest Hill Park and the Buttermilk, North Bank, and Belle Isle trails, is considered the toughest race on the XTERRA tour. It's not surprising: Trail riding in Richmond is like being a kid in a dirty candy store. Yum. If you like to eat dirt so much, check out the Muddy Buddy ([muddybuddy.com](http://muddybuddy.com)), a crazy-fun mountain-biking and trail-running 10K held on July 13 at Pocahontas State Park in Chesterfield County. Pocahontas has miles of trails for the beginner, plus double-red ones that are tough even for advanced riders. The Richmond-area chapter of Mid-Atlantic Off Road Enthusiasts ([richmond-more.org](http://richmond-more.org)) sponsors a night ride at Pocahontas on July 8.

On Aug. 16 and 17, the 18-Hour Scout's Honor (798-7046 or [bikereg.com](http://bikereg.com)) offers a day-and-night endurance ride along a 9.5-mile course in Goochland that's primarily wooded singletrack. Your entry fee includes a huge breakfast at race's end.

Poor Farm Park on Liberty School Road in Ashland has flat singletracks for beginners and hills for

the more advanced rider. Lesser-known mountain-biking trails within the city are Larus Park (near Stony Point Shopping Center) and Powhite Park, conveniently located directly across from Chippenham Hospital.

### Spots for Bird Spotting

If your frequent-flyer miles aren't taking you anywhere this summer, check out the well-traveled birds who frequent our region in July and August, when birders' early-morning hours make sense. Within the city, the James River Park offers dozens of species, including kingfishers, bald eagles and great blue herons, but with 59 varieties attributed to the wetlands section alone, keep going. Dutch Gap Conservation Area in Chesterfield County offers an intriguing mix of habitats, including swamp, river, meadows and freshwater marsh, where you can add to your life list. One hundred and forty species have been noted there, including prothonotary warblers, ruby-throated hummingbirds and yellow-billed cuckoos. The Richmond Audubon Society ([richmondaudubon.org](http://richmondaudubon.org)) offers a bird walk at Bryan Park on July 6 at 6:30 a.m., as well as other field trips throughout the year.