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### 2014 Guide to Williamsburg

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# 2014 Guide to Williamsburg

*Michael Umberger, Reference Librarian*

This guide is intended to provide a rundown of all that Williamsburg and beyond have to offer. I'm relatively new to the area, having arrived in January 2013 from Seattle, so I've been keen to find things to see and do in the area. I'm building on all the excellent suggestions library director Jim Heller has provided and adding my own personal recommendations. If you're native to the area and want to correct my egregious opinion about something, let me know!

## A Few Words About Town

The law school is located just south of the main Williamsburg "downtown." **Duke of Gloucester Street (Dog Street)** connects the three main locales in downtown Williamsburg (from west to east: the College of William and Mary campus, Merchants Square, and Colonial Williamsburg).

The College's campus is beautiful, and there are a number of trails for walking that wind around it, particularly around [Lake Matoaka](#). The Wren Building, at the western edge of Dog Street, is one of the three oldest buildings on campus that originally formed the entirety of the College. The Wren is open for [tours](#), and on Saturday mornings there are [free organ recitals](#) at 10am in the Wren Chapel.

[Merchants Square](#) is the name for the collection of shops and restaurants in downtown Williamsburg. I'll get into some of the places to eat later, but of note here are a couple of bookstores, the [William & Mary Bookstore](#) (a Barnes & Noble) and [Mermaid Books](#), a used bookstore. Some of the stores in Merchants Square tend toward the idiosyncratic or specialized. On most Saturdays throughout the year, the [Williamsburg Farmers Market](#) will be held on Dog Street in Merchants Square. It's a good place to find local produce, plants, and products. A variety of other events are held in this spot throughout the year.

[Colonial Williamsburg](#) (or CW) is the big draw in town, and it actually spreads past Dog Street to the adjacent streets and beyond. If you've ever wanted to experience life in the 1770s, this is the place for you. As a William & Mary student, you'll be entitled to the [W&M Collegiate Pass](#), which offers free admission to the CW sites and museums and discounts on CW tours and programs. As Jim mentioned, friends and family members can receive discounted tickets if you have the Collegiate Pass. You can obtain your pass at the CW Regional Visitor Center, north of the downtown area, or at the Lumber House Ticket Office on Dog Street.



Governor's Palace, Colonial Williamsburg

CW makes for a nice place to walk, jog, or ride your bike, especially in the off-peak season when fewer tourists are wandering about. All the CW properties are worth checking out, but there are a few to highlight. The [DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum](#) and the [Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum](#) are both accessible from the [Public Hospital of 1773](#) building on Francis Street, and offer an extraordinary array of exhibits both colonial and contemporary. The [Kimball Theatre](#) on Dog Street puts on performances and runs foreign and smaller films. They occasionally host film festivals and special programs.

## Places to Eat That You Could Walk To

I'd walk, but if you're pressed for time, there's usually parking in the area, especially during the off-season (*i.e.*, the school year). FYI, Tribe Square is a WM-affiliated area on Richmond Road with a few dining options.

- [Zime](#) -- conveniently located within the law school. This is brand new.
- [Blackbird Bakery](#) -- newish bakery in Merchants Square.
- [The Cheese Shop](#) -- a Williamsburg classic, in Merchants Square. Call ahead (757-220-0298) to pick up your order from the window on the right side and avoid the maze of people and products inside.
- [Dog Street Pub](#) -- gastropub with true British fare in Merchants Square. More of an evening place, with a full bar and rotating beer list. Also hosts a number of local events.
- [Aromas World](#) -- coffee shop off Merchants Square. Also serves sandwiches and baked goods. Occasionally has live music.
- [Retro's](#) -- local burgers and shakes place off Merchants Square. Simple but effective.
- [Mooyah](#) -- burgers and shakes in Tribe Square. The sweet potato fries are excellent.
- [Pita Pit](#) -- college town favorite in Tribe Square. Healthy and vegetarian options. Fun fact: its corporate headquarters are in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.
- [The Crust](#) -- pizza and grinders in Tribe Square. Grinder is not a term I knew because I'm from Georgia. It's a sub sandwich.
- [Wawa](#) (PDF menu) -- just a convenience store but so much more. Sandwiches made to order. Some fresh fruit.
- [Paul's Deli Restaurant](#) & [The College Delly](#) -- local spots on Scotland Street near the football stadium. Good places to get simple American fare and a drink. Seem to be run by the same people.
- [The Green Leafe](#) -- good, solid American pub fare on Scotland Street at the stadium. Good place to get a drink. For whatever it's worth, *Travel + Leisure* named it one of "[America's Best College Bars](#)."

- [Jimmy Johns](#) -- another college town favorite, on Scotland Street. Subs so fast, you'll freak, as they say. Will deliver to the law school. Another location is in New Town.
- [William & Mary Marketplace](#) -- William & Mary dining location at the Campus Center near the Wren Building. Has a salad bar, a yogurt bar, a soup bar, a grill, sandwiches, and snacks.

## Places to Eat Within 15 Minutes of Law School

These places are not too far away, and I've gone to them on lunch breaks. Some of the nicer sit-down restaurants you might want to save for dinner so you're not rushed.

- [South of the Border](#) -- Mexican restaurant on Second Street, east of CW. Check out the pupusas if the chef is in.
- [Nawab](#) -- Indian food on Monticello Avenue in the Monticello Shopping Center. The lunch buffet is a great deal with a lot of variety.
- [Sal's by Victor](#) -- local Italian restaurant on Richmond Road in the Williamsburg Shopping Center. Tucked away in the corner of the shopping center, this place is a personal favorite. The place is always busy, so you know it must be good. Get the half carafe of wine for two.
- [Bangkok Garden](#) -- Thai food on Richmond Road. The lunch is a steal. Also good for takeout to be shared at home.
- [Chipotle](#) -- the paradigmatic fast-casual Mexican grill, on Richmond Road. Food with integrity, etc.
- [Qdoba](#) -- the other fast-casual Mexican grill, on Richmond Road. Check out the Rewards program for good deals.
- [Panera](#) -- a bakery-cafe fast casual restaurant, according to Wikipedia. All the soup, salad, sandwiches, and baked goods you could want. In New Town.
- [Noodles](#) -- the name is pretty accurate: they serve noodles. Located on Monticello Avenue. Noodle dishes from around the globe.
- [Honey Butter's Kitchen](#) -- comfort food in an unlikely location, off Monticello Avenue in the Monticello Marketplace shopping center.
- [Five Forks Cafe](#) -- diner-style food with a Greek side. Located a few miles down John Tyler Highway/VA-5. Supposedly run by the same people as Honey Butter's.

## Places Worth Driving To/Other

Some more highlights from the greater Williamsburg area.

[Taco Mexicali](#) -- as Jim says, this is the best Mexican restaurant in town. It's a good drive from the center of town though, a few miles past the Outlets. Fun decor and great waitstaff.

[Pierce's Pitt Bar-B-Que](#) -- again, as Jim explained, this is probably the best barbeque in town, although there are better places in Richmond (Alamo, Buz and Ned's). The place is out on Rochambeau Road, off Mooretown Road, and has a homey feel. The BBQ sandwich is good, but the onion rings and desserts are where it's at.

[Queen Anne Dari-Snak](#) -- Yelp corrects the name to "Dairy Snack," but the sign definitely says "Dari-Snak." As Jim described, visiting here is like taking a step back in time. The milkshakes are so good.

**Sushi** -- I do not have the most discriminating palate when it comes to sushi, and Williamsburg has pretty limited selection, but there are a couple places to get sushi. [Gold Taste Sushi and Japanese Rice Bowl](#) off Monticello Avenue in the Monticello Marketplace shopping center. The place is small, but everyone's friendly. The other is [Ichiban New Town](#), which I was tipped off about by one of your class members. Ichiban serves Japanese and Thai but seems to focus on Chinese dishes, and they do have, I hear, the best sushi in town. There are other places to get sushi, but if you really want to go all out, I'd suggest either heading to Newport News/Norfolk or the opposite way to Richmond.

[Duck Donuts](#) -- a local favorite for fresh donuts, on Monticello Avenue. Known for their maple bacon, but I usually go for something with peanut butter icing. Donuts are made fresh in front of you. It's like Krispy Kreme but with cake donuts. Competition in Richmond is Sugar Shack, which was recently named one of the "[10 tastiest doughnut shops in the USA](#)." Duck Donuts is really good too though.

**Seafood** -- there are seafood restaurants in town, like [Berret's](#) at Merchants Square, and they're pretty good, but if you want the absolute freshest seafood, head down the road to Newport News or Norfolk. Another good option is a local place called [Carino's](#), on Ironbound Road. It's more a seafood market that specializes in crab, but they will fry up anything you see and serve it up for you on the spot. Also, if you're in Yorktown, stop at the [Yorktown Pub](#). Good local dive with fresh seafood.

**Greek** -- this might be my favorite cuisine, but I've been surprised there weren't more options here. [The Grecian Plate](#) off Monticello Avenue is pretty good, but what I've actually learned is that most of the restaurants here, especially the diner-style places, also serve Greek food. They're not jaw-to-the-floor amazing, but they give you the option of having a gyro if you don't want burgers.

## Groceries

For a city its size, Williamsburg has a veritable glut of grocery stores. See Reference Librarian Fred Dingeldy's guide [here](#).

## Coffee

Starbucks. Although you should certainly support the local coffee shops, sometimes there's comfort in the predictable. Also, pumpkin spice and gingerbread lattes.

The closest location is the [Starbucks inside Harris Teeter](#), but it's not a full Starbucks. Standalone locations are at:

- [5227 Monticello Avenue](#), near The Fresh Market;
- [240 McLaws Circle](#), off 199 on the south side of the city;
- [5541 Richmond Road](#), near the Premium Outlets; and
- [800-L East Rochambeau Drive](#), off 199 on the northwest side of the city.

In case you're [not feeling corporate](#), the aforementioned [Aromas](#) is on Prince George Street near Merchants Square, and there's a great place called [The Coffee House](#) that's a 5-10 drive from the law school, off 199 in the shopping center on John Tyler Highway.

## Movies

When Netflix gets old.

- [The Kimball Theatre](#) -- as mentioned above and by Jim, this venue is part of CW on Dog Street. Has foreign and arthouse films, mostly. Also hosts several film festivals. The Kimball updates its schedule online every two months, so check it periodically.
- [Movie Tavern at High Street](#) -- dinner and a movie! This theater shows mostly first-run films with optional dining service. Occasionally, they have Retro Cinema nights.
- [Regal New Town Stadium 12](#) -- a typical movie theater showing first-run films. All the big ones play here.
- [Hampton Town Centre 24](#) -- this gigantic movie palace feels like a relic from the outsized 1990s (which it is), but it's also the best option for finding a movie around here if you missed it on the first go-round. If it's no longer in Williamsburg, look here.

## Parks and Recreation

Despite its small size, Williamsburg has a ton of recreational options. There's a [bowling alley](#), a [driving range/batting cage center](#), many [golf courses](#) (and [mini-golf courses](#)), [tennis courts](#), and more. Get acquainted with the [Student Rec Center](#) on campus and all the other William and Mary recreation facilities.

If you are a cyclist, there are a couple bike shops in town. [Bikes Unlimited](#) is the closest to the school, just off Richmond Road on Monticello Avenue. I go to [BikeBeat](#), which is on Monticello in the Monticello Marketplace shopping center. Additionally, the [William & Mary Bike Initiative](#) is a new cooperative effort on campus to "create an environment more conducive to cycling at William and Mary." They provide information on where to ride and how to maintain your bike and ride safely. Check it out and see how you can get involved!

There are a number of [city parks](#) in Williamsburg. Bicentennial Park and College Landing Park are the closest to the law school, and they make for nice brief walks if you need some fresh air. [Waller Mill Park](#), another Jim Heller suggestion, is a city park nearby that has a lake and hiking/biking trails. The park includes a 1.5 acre [dog park](#) as well.

As for state parks in the area, we have [York River State Park](#), on the south bank of the York River, and [Chippokes Plantation State Park](#), a (free) ferry ride away on the south bank of the James River. Both are extraordinary places to get away. At the national level, we have [Colonial National Historic Park](#), which consists of [Historic Jamestowne](#) (the site of the 1607 Jamestown settlement); [Yorktown Battlefield](#) (the site of the 1781 Siege of Yorktown that decided the American Revolution); and the [Colonial Parkway](#), which I mentioned earlier as the road that connects Jamestown, Colonial Williamsburg, and Yorktown.

Both Jamestown and Yorktown are obviously great for their history, but there are also great opportunities for biking. Jamestown has a loop around the island, and you can easily bike throughout Yorktown. I've biked the Colonial Parkway before, but I'd suggest going early in the morning when the traffic is low, as it's an old, bumpy road without lane markers.

## Other

Just a few other items.

**Target** -- we have two Targets, about equidistant apart. [One](#) is in the Monticello Marketplace off Monticello Avenue. The [other one](#), which I call "Secret Target," is down 199 East about 2 miles from Henry Street. It has an aura of mystique surrounding it (or it could just be less crowded).

**Amtrak** -- yes, [Amtrak](#) stops in Williamsburg! The Northeast Regional line extends from Newport News to Williamsburg and Richmond and then on up the corridor to Boston. The [train station](#) is on Boundary Street in the downtown area.

**Post Offices** -- we have two close to town. The [one nearest the law school](#) is on Boundary Street, near the train station. There's [another one](#) over on Monticello near New Town, if you're over that way.

**Home Improvement** -- [Home Depot](#) and [Lowe's](#) are practically next to each other on Mooretown Road, off 199. We also have an [Ace Hardware](#) off Richmond Road.

## Conclusion

For its size, Williamsburg has a lot going on, although you sometimes have to dig around to find it. If you're ever in need of something to do, Richmond is about an hour away to the west and Norfolk an hour to the east. Keep heading west from here and you'll find mountains, and keep heading east to reach the beach. Williamsburg has a really unique history and character, and it's a place that I've enjoyed getting to know. If you have any questions about the area or Virginia in general, please feel free to [contact me!](#)

PHOTOGRAPH:

[Colonial Williamsburg Governor's Palace Main Building by Fletcher](#)