

America's Top 25 Heritage Sites

Our readers vote for their favorite historic places

America is blessed with a richness of historical sites: From Franklin Roosevelt's Campobello home on the Canadian border and the Hemingway House in Key West to the little known WWII battlefield of Attu in Alaska's remote Aleutian islands and our country is packed with places we have imbued with meaning.

Given this richness, it's tough to choose favorites, but that's

what we asked you to do. "I don't think there is any place I wouldn't go to," said subscriber Joan Hollins in an email to the editors. "Do we have to make a choice?"

More than 500 readers filled out the survey. Their top 25 favorites—selected from more than 100 choices—are listed in order of their popularity on the following pages.



The original Smithsonian Institution Building, built in 1855, is affectionately known as 'The Castle.'

1. Smithsonian Institution Museums, Washington, DC

Our subscribers' favorite site turned out to be the world's largest museum and research complex. Hundreds of curators and specialists manage the Institution's 137 million artifacts, artworks, and biological specimens in 19 museums and galleries. After a \$85 million renovation, the National Museum of American History is scheduled to



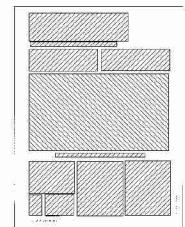
reopen this November. Exhibits will include a dramatic new display of the restored Star-Spangled Banner and exhibition on Abraham Lincoln. (202) 633-1000
www.si.edu

2. Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg, PA

America's reverence for Gettysburg is well founded. In the first three days of July 1863, more than 165,000 fought in the largest battle in North America. It was the largest battle ever fought in North American history. More than 51,000 soldiers were killed, wounded, or captured.

Often referred to as the "High Water Mark of the Confederacy," the Battle of Gettysburg ended Gen. Robert E. Lee's second and most ambitious invasion of the North—and provided Abraham Lincoln with a powerful setting for his most famous address.

This year, a beautiful new visitor center opened with extensive exhibits (see our article "Gettysburg Redux" on page 10) and the famed Cyclorama mural of the battle, fully restored, will reopen in September. The National Park offers a wide range of programs, including battlefield walks, reenactments, evening campfire programs, and



concerts. (717) 334-1124 ext. 8023

www.nps.gov/gett

Dwight D. Eisenhower's home welcome visitors near the Gettysburg National Military Park with tours of the 34th president's home and guided walks around his farm. (717) 338-9114 ext. 10

www.nps.gov/eise

3. Statue of Liberty National Monument & Ellis Island, New York, NY

"Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World" was a gift of friendship to U.S. citizens from the people of France. Located on 12-acre Bedloe Island in New York Harbor, the imposing sculpture has become a universal symbol of freedom and democracy.



The star-shaped pedestal on which the Statue of Liberty stand is the remains of a stone fortress built during the War of 1812.

The Statue of Liberty was dedicated on October 28, 1886, designated as a National Monument in 1924, and handsomely restored for its centennial on July 4, 1986. Tours of Liberty Island are regularly available, leaving from Battery Park in New York and Liberty State Park in New Jersey. The museum details the making of the Statue. (212) 363-3200 www.nps.gov/stli

Two in five Americans can trace their ancestry through Ellis Island. Today, a three-floor museum with exhibits and self-guided tours details the history of the island and 19th-century immigration. (212) 363-3200 www.nps.gov/elis

4. USS Arizona & USS Missouri Memorials, Pearl Harbor, HI

On December 7, 1941, Japanese fighter pilots launched a surprise attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, sinking the USS *Arizona*, along with with 1,177 sailors. The 184-foot-long USS *Arizona* Memorial, (808) 422-0561, www.nps.gov/usar, includes two theaters and a museum dedicated to the "Day of Infamy," which propelled America into World War II. Only a short distance away lies the USS Missouri Memorial. Guided tours of the battleship show where representatives of the allied nations and the government of Japan signed the terms of unconditional surrender on September 2, 1945. (877) MIGHTYMO www.nps.gov/elis

5. U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC

Construction of the nation's massive center of representative government began in 1793 and continued intermittently into the 1800s. During the War of 1812, British troops set fire to the Capitol, which was saved by a fortuitous rain shower. Frequent guided tours take visitors through the neoclassical structure, past the Rotunda at the building's heart where great citizens like Abraham Lincoln lay in state, and great works of art including John Trumbull's painting of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. (202) 225-6827 www.aoc.gov/cc

6. Independence Hall and Liberty Bell Center, Philadelphia, PA

The modest 1756 State House, now Independence Hall, was the venue for the Second Continental Congress in 1775, which appointed George Washington commander-in-chief of the new American Continental Army and signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Nearby, in its own building, sits the 2,055-pound Liberty Bell, which rang from the Independence Hall tower from the early 1750s until it cracked beyond repair in 1846. Tickets for tours of Independence Hall are available in person, online, or by phone. (215) 965-2305 www.nps.gov/elis



7. Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, VA

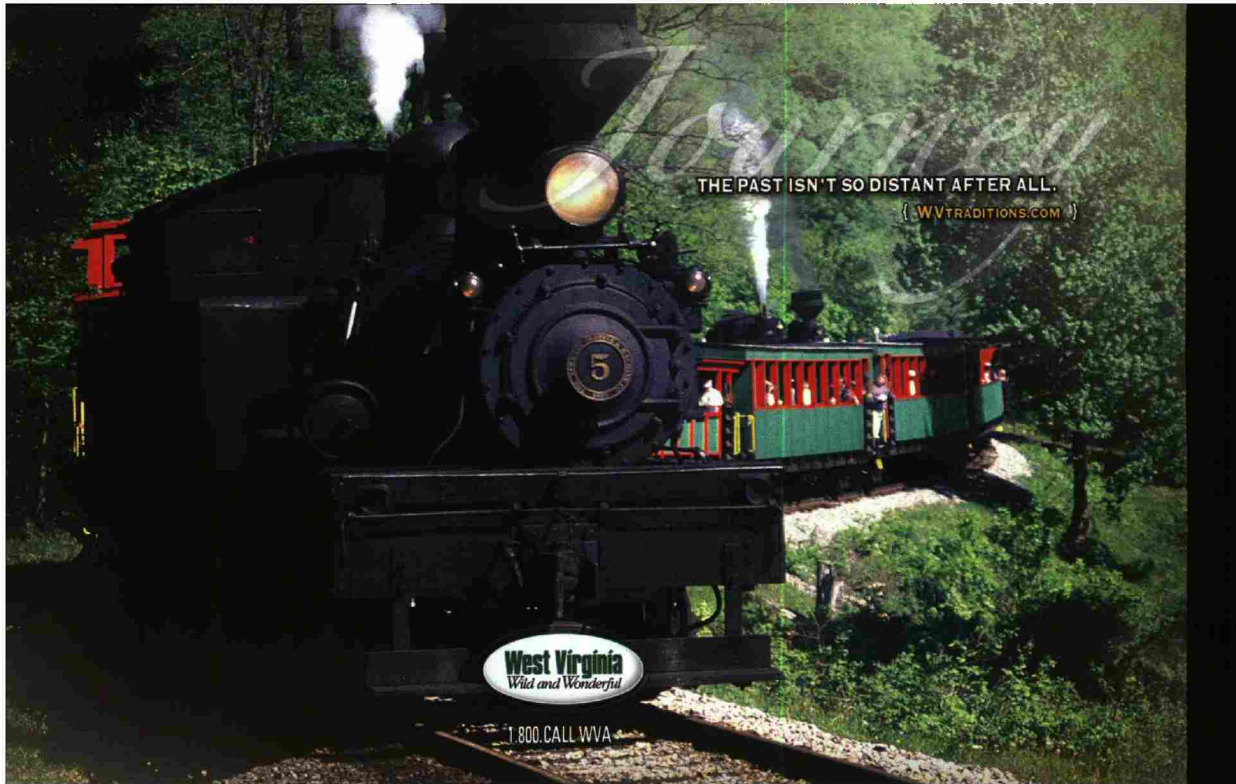
Not far from The College of William & Mary sits 300 acres of lovingly restored colonial America. Visitors can wander the streets of this colonial town, speak with a George Washington rectorator, dip a candle, and eat an 18th century dinner. Williamsburg pioneered the concept of "living history." (757) 229-1000 www.history.org

8. The White House, Washington, DC

The grand symbol of America's presidential authority since 1801, the White House, features—among many other things—the East Room used by James Madison for meetings of his Cabinet and the State Dining Room. Visitors must pass a rigorous security clearance; public tours are available for groups of 10 who book a month in advance after obtaining the approval of their Member of Congress. The determined visitor will find the sumptuously decorated state rooms well worth the hassle. (202) 456-7041 www.whitehouse.gov/history/tours

9. Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming

Yellowstone, stretching across Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho, became the first national park in 1872. Old Faithful, which shoots up to 8,400 gallons of water into the air every 90 minutes, is only the most famous of the park's more than 300 geysers. Hiking, biking, and bridle trails wind through park, allowing visitors to take in breathtaking views of the Rocky Mountains. (307) 344-7381 www.nps.gov/yell



10. Arlington National Cemetery and Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee National Memorial, Arlington, VA

Almost a quarter of a million men and women are buried on the 600-acre campus, representing every conflict in which the United States has fought. Within the National Cemetery are also the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the graves of Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and President John F. Kennedy, which burns with the Eternal Flame. (703) 607-8000 www.arlingtoncemetery.org. Nearby is the grand columned plantation home of Robert E. Lee, where he made his difficult decision to join the South during the Civil War. (703) 235-1530 www.nps.gov/arho

11. Historic Jamestowne and Jamestown Settlement, VA

Excavation of the original 1607 "Jamestowne" fort continues near the brand new Archaearium gallery featuring many of the over one million artifacts uncovered thus far. (757) 229-1733 www.nps.gov/jame. Down the road is the

Jamestown Settlement, which boasts extensive and detailed exhibits on the area's history, Native American culture, and daily life within the settlement. Just outside lies a recreation of the fortified town and a harbor where three, tall ships are anchored. (757) 253-4838 www.historyisfun.org

12. Mt. Rushmore and Wounded Knee Battlefield, MT

Although work on the mountain sculpture ceased in 1941, Mount Rushmore's famous faces still watch over visitors to the Black Hills mountains, once revered by Sioux and Cheyenne Indians. (605) 574-2523 www.nps.gov/moru. An hour's drive south east will take visitors to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, where there is a monument at the site of the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee, where American troops murdered 300 Sioux gathered for the Ghost Dance.

13. USS Constitution, Boston, MA

It was during the USS Constitution's battle with British warship HMS Guerriere that one sailor cried, "Huzzah! Her sides are

made of iron!" bestowing upon her the fond moniker, "Old Ironsides." Now anchored in the Boston harbor, visitors may explore the historic, three masted warship



and see its three decks and 54 cannon on a tour in which the guide discusses its construction and many battles. (617) 426-1812 www.usconstitutionmuseum.org

14. George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens and George Washington's Grist Mill & Distillery, Mount Vernon, VA

The home of the nation's first president, Mount Vernon was the first—and most

important—historic house museum in the nation. A brand new museum contains 25 galleries with hundreds of artifacts. State of the art theaters and interactive displays, plus a library for researchers and students, provide a memorable experience. The gardens, riverside fields, and four-acre farm lend the visitor a taste of plantation life. Find restaurants, cafeterias, and shops round out the experience. Don't miss the reconstructed Washington whiskey distillery and gristmill located three miles from the mansion. (703) 780-2000 www.mountvernon.org

15. Bunker Hill Monument and Battle of Bunker Hill Museum, Charlestown, MA

As war broke out in the Colonies, 1,500 inexperienced Massachusetts militiamen clashed with 2,600 professional British soldiers at Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775. The outnumbered, outgunned Americans twice repulsed the British, inflicting heavy casualties before finally succumbing. Today the Bunker Hill monument, a 221-foot obelisk, recently renovated at a cost of \$3.7 million, stands on the site nearby the Battle of Bunker Hill Museum, completed in 2007, which features exhibits on the battle. (617) 242-5642 www.nps.gov/bost

16. Appomattox Court House National Historical Park, Appomattox, VA

Generals Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee met at the Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865, to negotiate terms of surrender. After an hour and a half's conference, an amicable agreement was signed. The defeated Confederates relinquished their weapons, but kept their horses. Reenactors portray historical figures during summertime programs, but exhibits run year round and include many artifacts from the surrender such as Gen. Lee's pencil used to insert corrections to the surrender terms. (434) 352-8987 ext. 26 www.nps.gov/apco

17. Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, Washington, DC

Just nine days after the end of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated here by Confederate sympathizer John Wilkes Booth on April 14, 1865. After being shot, the fatally wounded President was carried across the street to the Petersen House,

where he died the next morning. The theatre and house are preserved together as Ford's Theatre. The theatre has been an active venue since 1861, but is currently undergoing a major renovation and will not be open for public access for the foreseeable future. (202) 426-6841 www.nps.gov/foth

18. Shenandoah National Park and Manassas National Battlefield Park, Manassas, VA

The first major battle of the Civil War (also known as the Battle of Bull Run) was fought here, as well as the equally important Second Battle of Manassas, which convinced General R.E. Lee to invade Union territory. The visitors center offers electronic battle maps, displays of equipment, and battle memorabilia, and interpretative presentations of battlefield history by National Park Service rangers. (703) 361-1339 www.nps.gov/mana

19. The Alamo at The San Antonio Missions National Historic Park, San Antonio, TX

The Alamo, where American heroes Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie perished in 1836, is the grand symbol of the Texan war for independence. Defenders of the old mission church held off Mexican General Santa Anna's siege for 12 days. Visitors can see the old church on the site, a unique feature called "Wall of History," as well as a museum. (210) 225-1391 www.thealamo.org/main.html

20. Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Crow Agency, MT

Dedicated in 1879 as a national cemetery, the Little Bighorn Battlefield honored the fallen men of George Armstrong Custer's 7th Cavalry. Today, the National Park Service has added a long awaited Indian Memorial. Daily ranger talks are offered during the summer on the battle. (406) 638-3204 www.nps.gov/libi

21. Valley Forge, Washington's Crossing, PA

General George Washington needed a winter quarters for his continental army that allowed observation of the British army without exposure to surprise attack. Valley

Forge offered that advantage and there he led nearly 12,000 men in December 1777. The winter was severe. There was talk of mutiny but the men stayed together through their loyalty to Washington and the cause of freedom. (610) 783-1077

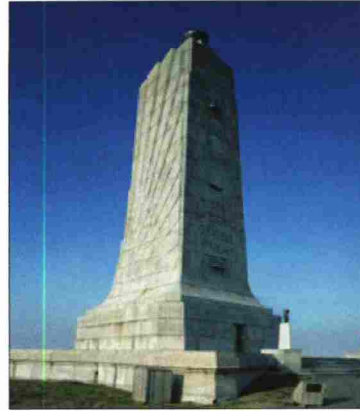
www.nps.gov/vafo

22. The Wright Brothers National Memorial, Manteo, NC

The dream of flight brought Wilbur and Orville Wright to Kitty Hawk, where after three years of experimentation, courage and perseverance, these self-taught engineers, relying on teamwork and application of the scientific process, achieved the first successful airplane flights on December 17, 1903. The Wright Brothers National Memorial, located at Kill Devil Hills (Manteo), has reproductions of the historical items that allowed for the development of flight, including a reproduction of the original flyer. (252) 441-7430 www.nps.gov/wrbr

23. Niagara Falls, Fort Niagara, NY

Nature has left an indelible mark where the Canadian Falls, with a height of 177 feet, and the American Falls, at 184 feet high, are true wonders. www.infoniagara.com Fort Niagara was established in 1726 on the northeastern shore of the Niagara River, facing Lake Ontario. It was once occupied by the French, the British, and finally the United States, and saw much action during the French and Indian War. The fort's original stone buildings were built before the American Revolution. Fort Niagara offers a unique collection of original military architecture and fortifications from the 18th Century and the 19th Cen-



tury, with living history events, programs, historical exhibits, and collections.

<https://oldfortniagara.org>

24. Antietam and Monocacy Battlefields, Frederick, MD

The Battle of Antietam was the bloodiest one-day fighting in American history, where 23,000 soldiers were killed, wounded, or missing after 12 hours of savage combat on September 17, 1862. The battle ended the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia's first invasion into the North and led to Abraham Lincoln's issuance of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. At the visitor center are museum exhibits and tours of the battlefield are also available. (301) 432-5124

www.nps.gov/anti

In the summer of 1864, in a last attempt to carry the war to the north and to relieve some pressure from General R.E. Lee in the south, General Jubal Early led 15,000 Confederate forces towards Washington, DC and threatened to capture the



ALLEN - PARK STUDIOS

Capitol City. On July 9, Union troops under General Lew Wallace met Early's forces at Monocacy. Wallace's troops delayed Early's forces, giving the Union Army time to prepare a defense of Washington and saving it from Confederate capture. At the park visitors can experience stories of the past in a landscape that has changed little since the 19th century. (301) 662-3515
www.nps.gov/mono.

25. Old State House and Faneuil Hall, Boston, MA

A center of Boston's civic life in the 18th century, the Old State House hosted some of the most dramatic events leading up to the American Revolution. Here, Samuel Adams, James Otis, John Hancock, and John Adams debated the future of the British colonies. Just outside, five men were among the first casualties of the battle for independence, in what would later be known as the Boston Massacre. The Declaration of Independence was proclaimed from the balcony to the citizens of Boston in 1776. In 1881, The Bostonian Society restored the building, and has operated it

as a museum ever since. Two floors of exhibits explain the Revolution and the role of the State House in it. (617) 720-1713
www.bostonhistory.org.

Faneuil Hall has served as a marketplace and a meeting hall since 1742 when construction and a local artisan to create the grasshopper weather vane that still perches atop the building's cupola was funded by Peter Faneuil, a wealthy merchant. Inspiring speeches by Samuel Adams and other patriots were given that eventually led to American independence. When Boston became a city the use of Faneuil Hall as a government meeting place came to an end. Today, the first floor is still used as a lively marketplace and the second floor is a meeting hall where many Boston City debates are held. National Park Service rangers present free historical talks daily except when Hall is in use for special events. (617) 242-5642, www.cityofboston.gov/freedom-trail/faneuilhall.asp

The market building was built in 1742 and was also the site of town meetings in the lead-up to the Revolutionary War. (617) 242-5642 www.nps.gov/bost