

VIRGINIA RIDER

Serving the Riders of Virginia & West Virginia

MAGAZINE™



FREE

ROLLING THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

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Virginia offices in Newport News, Richmond, and Roanoke

"And so, I'm offering this simple phrase To kids from one to ninety-two, Altho' it's been said many times, many ways Merry Christmas to you"





from the editor's desk

Season's greetings, friends! We are so glad that you could join us as we celebrate the holidays and begin the wrap-up of another fantastic year with you. We have really enjoyed having you along with us! This year, there have been so many life-altering changes for so many people in the world around us, and many right in our own backyards. If you've been affected by the changes and aren't sure where to turn for help, please let us know so we can try to point you in the right direction and hopefully connect you with the right people. We really are "here for you" and will do whatever we can to help.

We are better together – The Community page on our website is still being created to bring together local/regional riding groups from Facebook and help riders who are looking to connect with other riders in their neck of the woods. We are hoping to have it completed by the end of December 2025. There's an old saying, "Birds of a feather flock together." That's why there are riding groups on Facebook to help bring riders together. Trying to find those groups is not always easy, and unless you type in the correct wording in your search, you may be missing out on meeting lots of other "birds". That's what the Community page is all about: to help you find each other. So hang tight & we'll have it ready for you soon!

Thank you all so much for being with us this year and supporting our amazing advertisers. They are with us to let you know that they are there for you, too! Stay with us to meet more rider-friendly places that will be joining us in 2026 and all of the awesome, great places to ride in the Virginias!

From all of us here at Virginia Rider, our warmest wishes go out to all of you & your families for a joyous & peaceful holiday season. Remember that the best presents will never be found under the tree but in our hearts with those we love.

Have a Merry Christmas with a healthy, happy & safe new year ahead.

Get ready 2026, here we come!!!

Til next year, friends,

Happy Trails

Kelly



IN THIS ISSUE



GREAT PLACES TO RIDE If you're in the mood for holiday fun, we've made your holiday planning easy, by compiling a list of ten of our favorite Virginia traditions, affordable activities, and can't-miss winter events. Use our seasonal checklist to fill your days with good cheer, very merry activities, and all the best of the holidays in Virginia.



ALONE FOR THE HOLIDAYS For those who feel lonely during the holidays, this time of year can be a time of additional stress. If you're experiencing loneliness that causes you stress during the holiday season, we have some practical suggestions can help you get through what may be a difficult time.



THE BIKE SAVER With fall in the books and winter fast approaching, John takes time to reflect on his accomplishments over the last year. He also acknowledges that this is a time when it's easier to be less proactive, but as he says about down time, "It's amazing what you can do with idle hands."



MUSIC AND MOTORCYCLES "Motorcycle Driveby" by Third Eye Blind. This song is the first of an incredible four from artists with major San Francisco Bay Area connections. Not only are they from San Francisco, this song is specifically about being at Ocean Beach park in San Francisco.



A WEEKEND TO REMEMBER Join Drew and Chey Cheney as they share their Weekend to Remember, staying at and visiting some of the best rider-friendly businesses in the Virginias and taking you on adventures to some great hidden gems.



THE LIGHTHOUSE Most of us have experienced the frustration of a package we were waiting for was lost in transit. This is the story of a young boy with hopes and dreams waiting on such a package, and the delivery person who went above and beyond his normal delivery routine to find the lost item.



SAFE AND SOUND MOTORCYCLE WINTER STORAGE Cold weather riding isn't everyone's jam, and you want to protect your bike through the winter. You can reduce the chances of frustrations and repair costs in the spring by making a small investment now to winterize and store your bike. We've noted some steps you should consider to protect your bike and save money on potential repairs down the road.

Holiday Edition 2025

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GERMAN "ROLLMOPS" IS A PICKLED HERRING DISH WITH ONIONS AND PICKLES THAT WILL FIX YOU.

Sauna
RUSSIANS FLOG EACH OTHER WITH BIRCH LEAVES IN A SAUNA.

Wet Sand
IN OLD IRELAND, HANGOVERS WERE CURED BY COVERING YOUR BODY IN WET RIVER SAND.

Pickle Juice
THE POLISH CURE IS A "BEEG GLASS OF PEECKLE JUICE."

Beer
IN THE NETHERLANDS, BEER IS THE ONLY CURE FOR A HANGOVER.

Menudo
MEXICANS CLAIM THAT THE SPICY TRIPE SOUP WILL SAVE YOUR SOUL.

Onion Soup
THE FRENCH PREFER THE PERFECT ONION SOUP AS THE CLASSIC HANGOVER CURE.

Cheeseburger Pizza
A Hardcore Aussie will plow into the cheeseburger and fries pizza.

Herbal Bitters
ITALIANS WILL IMPORE YOU TO DRINK AN HERBAL CONCOCTION TO SOOTHE JITTERS.

Umehoshi
EXTREMELY SALTY, PICKLED PLUMS ARE WHAT THE JAPANESE ADVISE IF YOU OVERDO THE SAKI.

Hair of the Dog
FROM THE DAYS OF SHAKESPEARE COMES THE ADAGE, "THE HAIR OF THE DOG THAT BIT YOU."

Sauerkraut
THE EASTERN EUROPEAN CURE HELPS HEADACHES AND SOOTHES GASTROINTESTINAL EFFECTS.

Bacon Sandwich
BRITS CLAIM THAT A GOOD BACON SANDWICH WILL CURE ALL OF YOUR "ALES!"

Ginseng
THIS PUNGENT CHINESE ROOT IS A DIURETIC AND BOOSTS YOUR MANPOWER!

Garlic Soup
IN SPAIN, GARLIC SOUP CALLED "AGO BLANCO" IS "MUY BUENO!"

13 Black Pins
VOODOO RITUAL CLAIMS THAT 13 BLACK PINS INTO THE BOTTLE THAT CURSED YOU WILL CURE YOU.



CHEERS TO THOSE WHO WISH US WELL!

THE LIGHTHOUSE

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." – Isaiah 9:6

An Inspiring Story of One Man's Persistence at Christmas

A deliveryman's prayer is answered when a lost package is found in time to brighten a sick child's Christmas.

Why do we feel the need to tell stories around Christmas? Is it because we are all together and finally have time to talk? Or is it because an inspirational Christmas story reminds us of the joys this season can hold for us? Maybe it's a little of both.

Learn the lengths that a deliveryman went to bring a young boy some holiday happiness in this inspirational Christmas story:

Playing Santa

Everybody can use extra money around the holidays, and Christmas is UPS's busiest season. I signed up for a temporary route. Who knew how much I'd love the job?

One rainy afternoon, a couple of days before Christmas, I carried a box up a walkway. Three faces appeared at the window as I approached. The front door opened, and a woman stuck her head out.

"Could you go around the back?" she whispered.

I gave her a wink. This wasn't the first time I'd helped a mom keep a Christmas surprise.

"Did the kids see?" my driver, Dan, asked when I got back to the truck.

I shook my head. "But not for lack of trying." We laughed and started off down the street.

"Now I know how Santa Claus feels."

I really did feel like Santa Claus. There was nothing like bringing people something they really needed or wanted. Omaha steaks, books they couldn't wait to read, and even replacement bathroom fixtures were fun to deliver, especially if they were a gift for someone else. A lot of people would be happy Christmas morning in part because of me.

A Lost Package

We turned onto a short street with only three houses. We knew it well. As we pulled to a stop, a woman came up to the truck.

"Do you have something for me?" she asked, pointing to her house. She sounded anxious.

"I'm sorry. Today's package is for the house next door."

"Mine must've gotten lost," she said.

Dan and I exchanged a look of concern.

We'd delivered 1,440 packages without a glitch. We didn't want even one to go astray.

"Maybe one of your neighbors has it," I said.

I checked at the house next door, but they had no extra packages. No one answered at the house across the street.

"They're the only other people on the block," I said.

The woman looked on the verge of tears.

"What was in it?"

"A Santa suit," she said. I might have laughed if she hadn't looked so upset. Obviously, this Santa suit was important. "My husband is going to wear it on Christmas Eve. We want to make this Christmas extra special for our son. He's seven and he's... well, he's been very sick."

We had to find that package! According to our tracking records, we had definitely delivered the woman's package to the right street, but not the right address. The package had to be in that empty house. We didn't even have a phone number.

Praying for a Christmas Miracle

For the next two days, I thought of nothing except that package. But the house stayed empty, and I had no way of getting inside.

Santa could solve this problem by magic, I thought as I climbed into the truck for my last day on the job, December twenty-third. I needed God's help. Please, let me find that package. It would be the best Christmas gift you could give me.

All day I prayed for a miracle. But none came. Just after sunset, we turned down the little street once more. As we passed the house with the sick child, I spotted his mother standing in the garage. She looked sad. Like she'd given up. Maybe it was time I did too.

"Hey," Dan said. "The garage door is open." He pointed across the street. For the first time in days, there were signs of life at the mystery house. A couple was getting out of a car. I almost broke my neck running over to catch them. "Did you find a package by any chance? A package that doesn't belong here?"

"We just pulled in to check on our friends' house," one of them said. "They're on vacation. But we'd be glad to look around for you."

Moments later, I was springing across the street with the long-lost box in my hands. "UPS, we deliver!" I announced as I handed it over.

"I've been trying to find a replacement suit for days!" the woman said. "Nobody could get it to us by Christmas Eve!"

Just then, a little boy came to the door. He seemed fragile, but with the innocent face of an angel.

"This man has brought us a very important package," his mother told him.

The boy looked up at me. "Thank you," he said. "Do you like fruitcake?"

He went into the house and returned with a box wrapped with a ribbon.

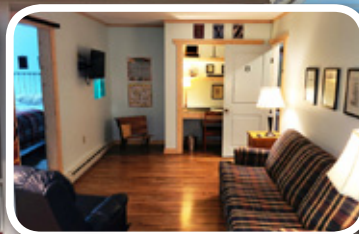
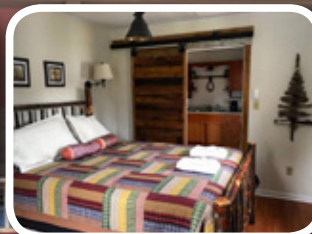
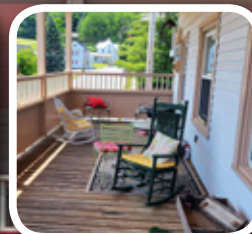
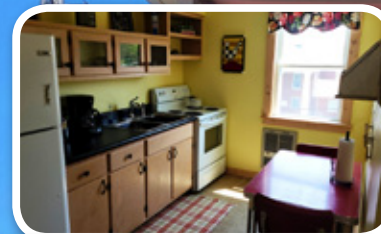
"Merry Christmas," he said.

"Looks like you got a present too," Dan said when I got back to the truck with the box.

I sure did. And I didn't mean the fruitcake.

In the heart of Christmas, the true magic lies not in the gifts we receive but in the joy of giving and the warmth of love.

*Luke 6:38:
"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."*



Ride here. Eat here. Stay here.

Welcome Riders! Warm, cozy suites!



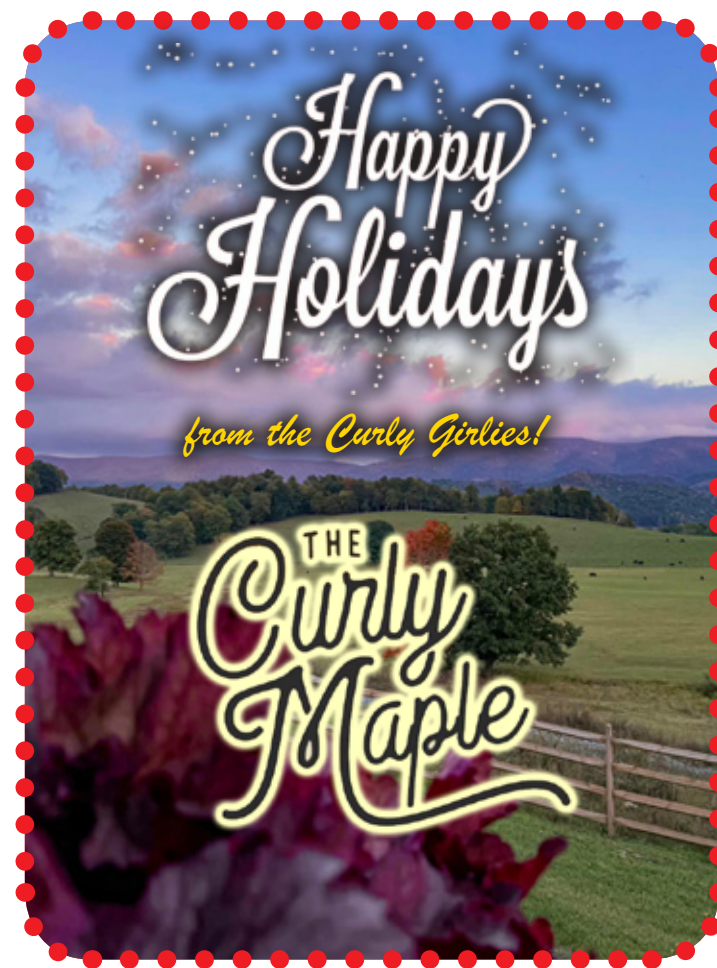
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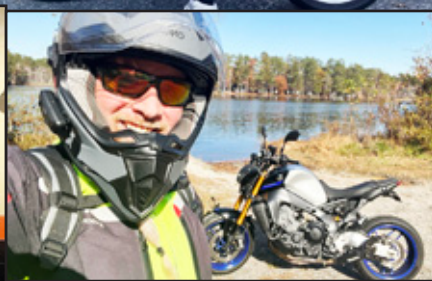
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LET'S DO SOME SHOTZ!!!
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GREAT PLACES TO RIDE

The Ultimate Checklist for an Unforgettable Virginia Holiday

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Santa isn't the only one making a list and checking it twice! 'Tis the season for all your favorite holiday fun, and we want to help you make the most out of this time of year. To make your holiday planning easy, we've compiled a list of ten of our favorite Virginia traditions, affordable activities, and can't-miss winter events. Use our seasonal checklist to fill your days with good cheer, very merry activities, and all the best of the holidays in Virginia!

1. Visit a Festive Pop-Up Bar



Celebrate the season by visiting one of Virginia's festive pop-up bars, where holiday cheer and craft cocktails come together for a merry good time. These pop-up experiences transform ordinary bars into winter wonderlands, decked out in dazzling holiday decor, twinkling lights, and seasonal vibes.

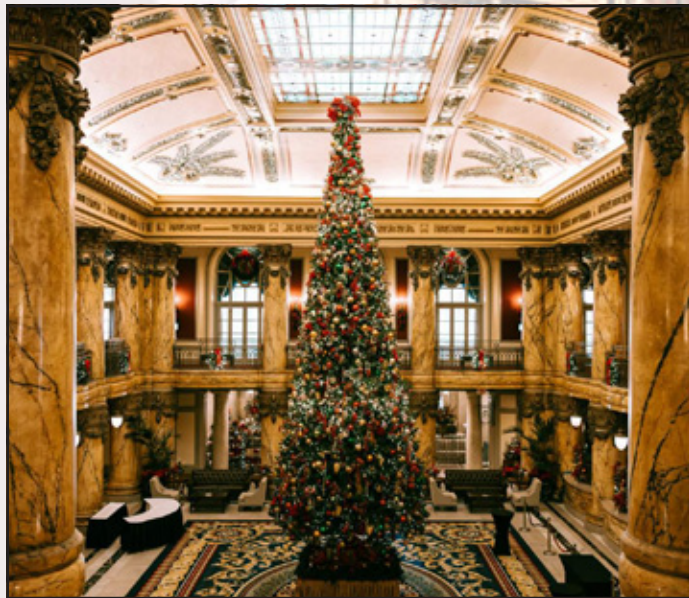
From Santa-themed drink menus filled with signature cocktails to glitzy eye-catching holiday decor, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Gather with friends for a fun night out at these pop-up bars, where you can pair tasty food and drinks with live music and festive photo ops.

Another way to support Virginia's drink scene? Head to [Virginia's distilleries](#), ABC stores, and [vineyards](#) to purchase a few locally-made spirits or wines as gifts for the imbibers in your life.

If you prefer brews over cocktail bars, spirits, and wines, you'll find seasonal ales available at [practically every brewery](#) in the Commonwealth, from spiced beers to gingerbread-inspired craft brews.

SEE MORE: [Seasonal Drinks & Holiday Pop-Ups](#)

2. Plan a Holiday Hotel Getaway



Escape the hustle and bustle of everyday living with a holiday getaway to an [over-the-top decorated hotel](#) in Virginia. Whether you're looking for a luxurious mountain retreat or a quaint countryside inn, Virginia offers festive accommodations that go all out with seasonal decorations, twinkling lights, and heartwarming amenities.

In addition to the season's best accommodations, many hotels feature holiday-themed events, such as gingerbread house decorating, cozy afternoon teas, or visits from Santa Claus himself, making it the perfect opportunity to create lasting memories with loved ones. From romantic weekends for two to family-friendly staycations, a holiday hotel getaway in Virginia promises a magical and stress-free experience full of seasonal charm.

Save This Season: Even if you don't stay at a hotel, they can be great spots for [taking festive photos](#). Many also host events that are open to the public.

SEE MORE: [15+ Festive Hotels in Virginia](#)

3. Visit a Decked-Out Virginia Town



Experience the magic of the season when you head to one of [Virginia's charming towns](#), all decked out in holiday splendor. These towns transform into awe-inspiring wonderlands that capture the heart of the holidays, with twinkling lights along Main Streets, tacky lights tours in festive neighborhoods, and extravagant window displays at boutique shops and restaurants.

Stroll through historic districts adorned with wreaths, ribbons, and garlands, warm up with homemade hot cocoa at a local cafe, and attend seasonal events such as Christmas parades, tree lightings, and holiday markets. Plus, you can spend as much or as little as you like while seeing the holiday sights. Virginia's Hallmark-worthy towns are sure to fill your heart with joy and nostalgia.

SEE MORE: [Our favorite festive towns](#)

4. Attend a Unique Virginia Holiday Celebration



This holiday season, immerse yourself in Virginia's festive charm by attending one of its unique holiday celebrations, where tradition and seasonal magic come to life in unforgettable ways.

In the picturesque town of Middleburg, the [Christmas in Middleburg Parade](#) offers a delightful experience for visitors of all ages with a procession of horseback riders and hunting hounds celebrating the holiday season in the heart of Hunt Country. The free event takes place December 6.

The beautiful mountains of Southwest Virginia are illuminated by thousands of lights at the [Magical Christmas Village & Marketplace at Mountain Lake Lodge](#), open November 22 until January 3, 2026.

This holiday celebration includes shopping in the Village, horse-drawn carriage rides, a life-size gingerbread house, glow-in-the-dark ice skating, live entertainment, and the Pinecone Express, a festive train providing rides around the mountaintop property.

Head to some of Virginia's historic colonial attractions like [Jamestown](#) or [Colonial Williamsburg](#), where the Grand Illumination lights up the night with stunning displays of candles, twinkling lights, and even fireworks. These iconic sites also host special holiday events, from traditional caroling and colonial-era festivities to hands-on crafts for the entire family, creating an atmosphere that transports you to a simpler time while celebrating the joy of the season.

Regent University's [CBN & Regent Christmas Village](#) is a festive and family-friendly event running December 4–6 and 11–13, 2025. Get into the holiday spirit with sparkling lights, a towering 40-foot Christmas tree, horse-drawn carriage rides, a vibrant market, and a visit to Santa's Cottage. It's a magical celebration designed to create unforgettable holiday memories for all ages.

Whether you're taking in a small-town holiday parade, exploring quaint streets, enjoying historic reenactments, or simply marveling at the breathtaking holiday lights, Virginia's seasonal celebrations offer a truly magical way to celebrate the holidays.

SEE MORE: [Dozens of Holiday Events in Virginia](#)

5. Find Holiday Gifts in a Bustling Shopping District



This holiday season, make your gift-giving even more special by shopping for unique treasures in [Virginia's vibrant shopping districts](#). From local boutiques in historic downtowns to bustling open-air malls, Virginia offers a wealth of opportunities to find one-of-a-kind gifts for everyone on your list.

Wander through the cobblestone streets of Alexandria's Old Town, where artisanal shops and cozy cafés set the perfect backdrop for a festive shopping spree.

In [Richmond's Carytown](#) or [Charlottesville's Downtown Mall](#), you'll discover a mix of locally crafted goods, vintage finds, and stylish fashion pieces—perfect for adding that personal touch to your holiday presents.

Many districts are also beautifully adorned with holiday lights, live entertainment, and seasonal events, creating an inviting atmosphere that makes shopping feel like part of the celebration. Whether you're seeking handmade jewelry, specialty foods, or unique décor, Virginia's shopping districts offer a festive experience filled with local charm and seasonal spirit.

If you're unable to visit in person, consider supporting Virginia artisans and makers by shopping our [Made in Virginia Gift Guide](#).

SEE MORE: [14 Shopping Destinations Worth the Trip](#)

6. Pick out the Perfect Tree at a Local Farm



Kick off your holiday season with a visit to one of [Virginia's picturesque tree farms](#), where you can pick out the perfect Christmas tree to bring the spirit of the season into your home. Stroll through acres of fragrant evergreens, from classic Douglas Firs to fresh-cut Virginia pines, and choose the tree that best suits your holiday traditions.

Most Virginia tree farms also offer hands-on family fun like hayrides, hot cocoa stands, and even visits from Santa Claus. A few farms even let you cut your own tree, giving you the chance to make lasting memories as you search for the perfect one. After choosing this year's tree, relax by the fire pit or shop the farm's additional seasonal offerings, from wreaths and garlands to local treats and gifts.

SEE MORE: [our favorite tree farms](#)

7. See Dazzling Lights at a Virginia Theme Park



The magic of the season comes alive at Busch Gardens Williamsburg. The theme park goes all out for the holidays, stringing up millions of twinkling lights, festive decorations, and spectacular light shows set to classic holiday music.

At [Busch Gardens' Christmas Town](#), stroll through enchanted pathways lined with lights, sip on seasonal treats like hot chocolate, and enjoy festive performances that will get you in the holiday spirit.

8. Get Active on the Slopes at a Family-Friendly Mountain Resort



Get active on the slopes at one of [Virginia's family-friendly winter resorts](#), where seasonal fun awaits at every turn. [Wintergreen Resort](#), [Massanutten Resort](#), the [Omni Homestead Resort](#), and [Bryce Resort](#) offer a perfect mix of skiing, snowboarding, and tubing for all skill levels, making them ideal for families looking to enjoy outdoor adventures together.

From seasoned skiers to first-timers, these Virginia resorts provide lessons and rentals, ensuring everyone can join in the fun. Off the slopes, you'll find cozy mountain accommodations and delicious dining options to warm up after a day on the slopes. With scenic mountain views, snow-covered trails, and a host of winter activities, Virginia's mountain resorts offer outdoor adventure and holiday cheer for the whole family.

MORE TO EXPLORE: [Virginia's Mountain Resorts](#)

9. Cozy Up with a Glass of Wine at a Virginia Vineyard



Escape into the tranquil beauty of Virginia's wine country this holiday season and cozy up with a glass of locally crafted wine at one of the state's [many picturesque vineyards](#).

Nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains or the rolling hills of the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia's wineries offer a perfect retreat to enjoy the season's best flavors. During this magical time of year, vineyards transform into festive havens for the holidays, with tasting rooms adorned in holiday decor and warmed by cozy fireplaces. Whether you're enjoying a quiet afternoon with friends or indulging in a wine-and-cheese pairing, a visit to a Virginia vineyard is the perfect way to savor the season and toast to the holidays in style.

SEE MORE: [The coziest wineries for the winter](#)

10. Take Family Photos in Front of a Decorated LOVEwork



Capture the spirit of the season with a memorable family photo in front of one of [Virginia's 300+ iconic LOVEworks](#). Scattered throughout the state, many of these creative LOVE sculptures are transformed for the holidays with festive wreaths, twinkling lights, and seasonal touches, making them the perfect backdrop for your family's holiday photo.

Visiting a Virginia LOVEwork is a fun and free way to take home a snapshot of the holidays. As you gather together for these special photos, you'll not only preserve memories for years to come but also take part in one of the state's beloved traditions, spreading holiday cheer in true Virginia style.


VIRGINIA RIDER MAGAZINE

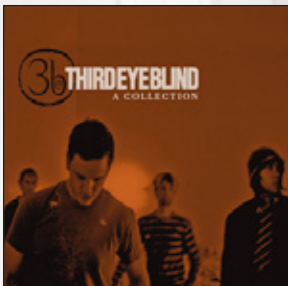
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MUSIC & MOTORCYCLES



MOTORCYCLE DRIVE BY



This song is the first of an incredible four from Third Eye Blind. Not only are they from San Francisco, this song is specifically about being at Ocean Beach park in San Francisco. Maybe my selection of these artists shows my local bias, or maybe it's the amazing weather, legendary race tracks, and epic mountain roads. Whatever the case, this particular song is about seeing and reacting to what one sees when riding.

MOTORCYCLE DRIVE BY

One, two, three, four
One, two

It's a motorcycle drive-by
Baby, dry your kind eyes
I think it's about time we headed home
Walking on such tight rope with my damn high hopes
Country boys don't die alone

Reading poetry under shade trees
That woman, she's my baby
I will be in Richmond by tonight
With so much shame inside me
I just want to hide me
But they want to hear me sing my songs under lights

It's a motorcycle drive-by
Baby, dry your kind eyes
I think it's about time we headed home
Walking on such tight rope with my damn high hopes
The country boys don't die alone
Everyday's so fleeting, and I have been trying to save it while I can
The look on her face, all these hot humid days
And the boys in my damn band

It's a motorcycle drive-by
Baby, dry your kind eyes
I think it's about time we headed home
Walking on such tight rope with my damn high hopes
Country boys don't die alone

Reading poetry under shade trees
That woman, she's my baby
I will be in Richmond by tonight
With so much shame inside me
I just want to hide me
They want to hear me sing my songs under lights

It's a motorcycle drive-by
Baby, dry your kind eyes
I think it's about time we headed home
Walking on such tight rope with my damn high hopes
Country boys don't die alone



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"That's not exactly how I intended you to use the treadmill."

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AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from all of us at Blue Grass Mercantile!



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10 SIGNS YOU'RE DOING WELL IN LIFE:

- 1.) You have a roof over your head.
- 2.) You ate today.
- 3.) You have a good heart.
- 4.) You wish good for others.
- 5.) You have clean water.
- 6.) Someone cares for you.
- 7.) You strive to be better.
- 8.) You have clean clothes.
- 9.) You have a dream.
- 10.) You're breathing.

Be Thankful For The Little Things

EASY DOES IT

Turkey and Stuffing Bowl

Happy Holidays



An easy turkey and stuffing bowl can be assembled in minutes using pre-cooked or leftover ingredients. It is a quick and satisfying meal that layers classic holiday components like turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, and gravy in a single dish.

Classic Layered Turkey and Stuffing Bowl

Ingredients:

- Cooked turkey
- Prepared stuffing
- Mashed potatoes (optional)
- Cooked vegetables (optional)
- Warmed turkey gravy
- Cranberry sauce (optional)
- Optional toppings: crispy fried onions, shredded cheese, or fresh parsley

Instructions:

Warm all ingredients.

Layer ingredients in a bowl, starting with mashed potatoes (if used), followed by stuffing, turkey, and vegetables. Top with warm gravy, cranberry sauce, and other desired toppings.

Serve immediately & enjoy! Bon appetit friends & happy eating this holiday season!



THE BIKE SAVER

Idle Hands

It's Fall, and the squirrels are running around the yard with their nuts in their mouths, tearing little holes in the lawn as they bury them for the winter – or Spring, maybe?? It doesn't make much sense to me to bury something you might later have to eat, but it is going to be under ten feet of snow soon...I dunno; I'm no squirrel, and they are smarter than me. Only the squirrels know, and they ain't talkin'. I throw the occasional random banana out there to make their day a little more interesting.

Me, on the other hand, I do a lot of talking. Mostly to myself when I'm up to my 10 millimeters in an engine somewhere. Case in point is this 1974 CB550K I've been writing about...



Ain't She Sweet!

Yes, she's very pretty. But like all pretty things that are high maintenance, this one is no exception. This pic was taken right after I had finished rebuilding her, went to start her, and this horrible sound of gnashing gears and grinding metal assaulted my ears and sounded generally unpleasant.

I had JUST finished completely rebuilding the engine – split the cases, took out the transmission, cleaned and repainted the cases... everything had gone together beautifully, and I was horrified to think that I had missed something—something important, something small, something critical...but whatever it was, it was going to have to be attended to. It was kind of like a mechanic's version of that horror movie where the heroine is told 'The call is coming from INSIDE the transmission'! Oh, it sucked.

But Yes, I tore the engine down AGAIN, went through it AGAIN, rebuilt it AGAIN, wrestled it back into the frame AGAIN – tried to start it up, AGAIN, and heard that foul noise - AGAIN!!

GAAHHH!!

It sounded like a box of rocks had been dumped in there and was being ground to bits by the gears, a sound usually associated with the

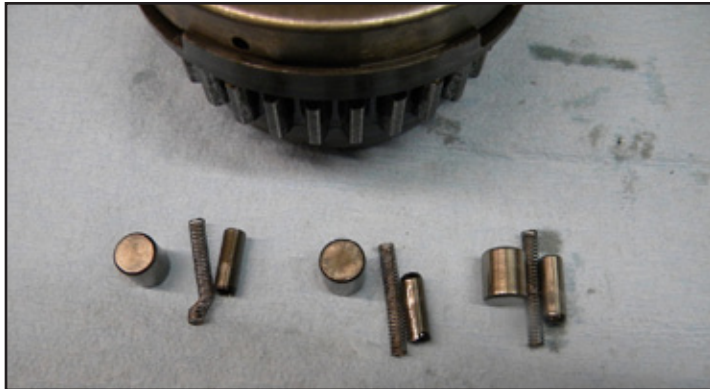
with John Peterson



Yamaha Virago - that's a story for another time. But as a noted biker/mechanic friend of mine once said, 'There's always time to do it twice, never time to do it right,' and I've found over the years that axiom rings true; oh, so very true...

Anyway – I picked my jaw up off the floor and got over my bad self, did some research, and discovered that when the starter clutch goes bad in a motorcycle, it will let you know this by making the horrible noise I heard coming from the 550's engine case.

The interwebs tell us that when you start a motorcycle, a starter clutch works by the starter motor spinning a gear, which in turn rotates the starter clutch housing (seen here at the top of the pic), which has some little springs, rollers (the big barrel-looking things in the pic), and cap rollers in it (the little tubular things) seen here...turns out the bent spring was the source of my problem!



In a nutshell, as the starter clutch spins, centrifugal force throws those round, spring-loaded barrel-like slugs outward and essentially grips or 'jams' on the crankshaft, causing the engine to turn over – here's a better pic...see how those parts fit in those little slots there...?



If you squint, you can see the springs...

But that's just the half of it – the starter clutch is of course buried IN the engine, and I had to get to it.

Not wanting to drop the engine and take it apart – AGAIN – I discovered that you actually CAN take the starter clutch out by going up through the bottom of the engine – which I DID! It only took about an hour and a half,

too, and most of that was taking everything off that I needed to (starter motor, oil pan, shifting mechanism, etc) to get the starter clutch out. Sweet. Back to the Interwebs I went to order replacement parts.

While I was waiting, I had a bunch of free time on my hands and nothing to do, at least with that bike. Luckily, I have a bunch of projects lying around that need some love, so I turned my attention to this little beauty – my 1979 Kawasaki KZ400H, found on a West Virginia mountaintop about four years ago.



Taking some sun

I took it all apart, had a work-stoppage when I couldn't find the right pistons so it sat for about a year, but I finally found the right ones and put her back together again, but then it sat for another year or so in the corner of the shed ("Bad Johnnie!") while a bunch of other bikes got in the way. Whenever I'd go into the shed, her mournful little headlight always seemed to look my way and say hopefully..."Today...???" (Yes, I anthropomorphize my bikes...don't we all?)

Well, just a few days ago was the Day! A tweak of the carb floats, and she started right up! I was thrilled! This is a fun little bike, and SO easy to work on, I'm very happy. And so is she.

And of course, there's still the 1972 Honda CB350 Four I'm working on as well, seen here waiting on an oil filter spring. Have you ever noticed that old bikes always seem to be missing something in the oil filters?? A washer, a nut, an O-ring, or spring (in my case)...

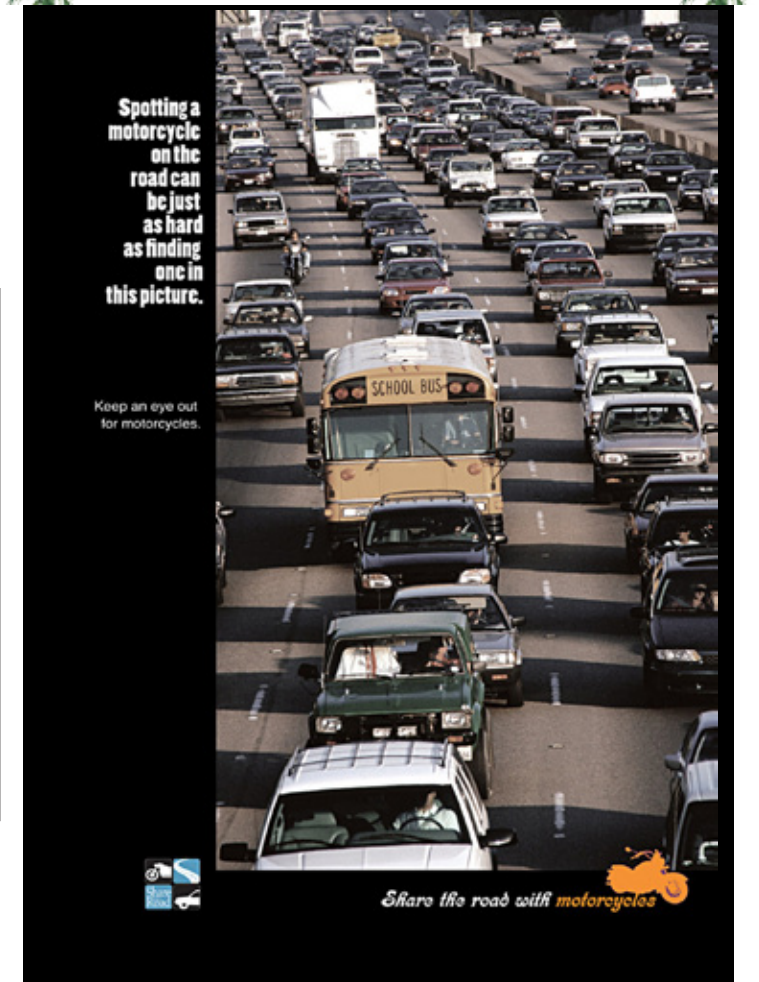


It's starting to look like a motorcycle again!

Jumping ahead a bit, the spring finally arrived so I could put the oil filter back in; I have spark on all four plugs (the garage gods were smiling upon me), and tried to get it to fire but the garage gods simply laughed

and said "You have much to learn Grasshopper...Wisdom lies in not the Completion of a Task, but the Effort..." and have now tasked me with setting the points to see what happens next. I hate doing points...well, maybe 'hate' is too strong a word to use in these sensitive times...let me rephrase and say I 'have an intense and passionate dislike' for them. Still – knowledge is power, as they say...

But as an addendum to all this, the CB550K clutch springs have arrived, and I did get them in, got the starter clutch back in the bike, and the oil pan buttoned up, and it did solve all those scary noises I heard coming from the engine. My valves and rocker arms are bouncing up and down happily like a new bride on her wedding night, and the engine turns over now, sounding like a sewing machine instead of a mechanical nightmare. It's amazing what you can do with idle hands.



Alone For The Holidays

The holiday season is generally thought of as a time of joy and love, but for many people, it's a time of loneliness. Some people live far from family and miss seeing their loved ones this time of year; others dread going to holiday parties and New Year's Eve celebrations without a partner and end up staying home; it's also common for people to feel emotional distance from the people they're with, thus feeling lonely even if they're in a room full of people.

Be Good To Yourself

While this may not completely erase feelings of loneliness, taking special care of yourself can help you to feel better and enjoy your solitude more. Whether you take a relaxing bath and give yourself spa treatments, curl up with a good book, enjoy a hobby, or learn something new, taking time to do things that will enhance your self-esteem or at least give you a good dose of fun will not only take your focus off of feeling alone, but it can lift your spirits as well.

Understand That You're Not Alone

While you may be feeling alone in your life right now, knowing that the holidays can be a lonely time for many people may help you to feel less so. Many people wish they could be with family, but can't; many people long for closer connections with friends, or wish for a supportive romantic relationship, and find themselves feeling isolated during the holidays. YOU ARE NOT ALONE! While it may be uncomfortable to feel lonely, it's also okay to feel this way. Talking to others who may share your feelings (either via the internet, or in real life) can help you to feel less alone in your situation.

Rethink Your Expectations

Part of why holidays feel more lonely for many people is that our society has high expectations for this time of year. The absence of a romantic partner or a close family rarely seems more uncomfortable than during this flurry of expected social activity when we're all supposed to be going to parties and exchanging gifts and enjoying jolly feelings with loved ones. One way to deal with the feelings of loneliness is to re-think your expectations. Realize that few people's lifestyles truly measure up to "movie standards" of perfect living, and shift your focus to all the great things you do have in your life. Realizing that it's just fine to take a good friend (instead of 'the perfect date') to a holiday party, or that the flawed love of a difficult family member still counts as love, has helped many people feel less lonely.

Get Connected

As I mentioned, it is possible to feel lonely when surrounded by people, but it's harder to feel lonely when you're reaching out to them. Whether you're saying hello to neighbors you're usually too rushed to acknowledge, exchanging friendly words with people at the office, or picking up the phone and calling an old friend you haven't spoken to in a while, reaching out to people and strengthening bonds can help you feel more connected and less lonely. This article has more on meeting people and creating a circle of friends.

Cultivate Gratitude

There are many far-reaching benefits to gratitude. One easy antidote to feelings of lack is to cultivate feelings of gratitude for what you already have; it's hard to focus on both at once. If you're feeling a lack of love in your life, make a concerted effort to focus on the love that you do have--from friends, family, neighbors, and even pets. You can also focus on things you really value in your life, like your work, the hobbies you have, or even your potential. Maintaining a gratitude journal can be a wonderful exercise in cultivating an attitude of gratitude, and can leave you with a written record of everything you have to value in your life, to read through when you're feeling down.

Give To Others

One excellent way to feel less lonely during the holidays is to donate your time to a cause you believe in. Helping others who are less fortunate than you can fill you with feelings of love and pride, and even connect you with others who share your passion. You'll be part of something larger than yourself, and you'll be immersing yourself in the true spirit of the holiday season.



Examine Your Feelings

This one probably won't make you feel better immediately, but if you feel lonely much of the time, this may be a cue that some changes are in order for the coming year. You may want to examine what's behind your feelings of loneliness, either on your own or with the help of a therapist. Would you benefit from putting more time into your social life so that you have stronger relationships? Is something inside of you causing you to keep people at a distance? If you'd like to deepen your friendships, it can cost a little extra time and energy, but the payoff is having increased support and feelings of being heard and understood. Making time for friends, truly listening when your friends talk, and being there for them are all ways to build supportive friendships.

You are not alone. We wish you hope and happiness this holiday season and all the best to you for a bright and joyful new year ahead.



This January, why not start the year with an empty jar and fill it with notes about good things that happen. Then, on New Years Eve, empty it and see what awesome stuff happened that year.



This holiday season, you're **not** alone.

■ Call **988** for support anytime.



A Weekend To Remember

A huge THANK YOU!!! goes out to Virginia Rider readers, Drew & Chey Cheney, for sharing their amazing weekend of adventures with us, as they visited a few of our wonderful advertisers and explored some of the best motorcycle roads in Virginia and West Virginia! WE appreciate you!

We would also like to send a big THANKS to our friends at The Curly Maple, Blue Grass Mercantile, and the Orange Cat Café, for making their visit extra special.

Thanks to your magazine, my wife, Chey, and I had a wonderful trip at the end of August.



We stayed at the Curly Maple (in a two-bedroom apartment) Friday, Saturday, and Sunday night. Since the Curly Maple was closed upon our arrival, our room was open with a small collection of local flyers and hard copies of the Virginia Rider magazine (I thought it was online only). It was a very nice, clean, and comfortable accommodation, with a full bathtub that was enjoyed after a couple of long days of riding. We would alternate between the stock Goldwing seat and the Air Hawk seat cushions to minimize soreness. The apartment was also very quiet, since they were painting several other rooms and we were the only tenants that weekend. The hallway was clear of painting supplies, and there were no paint fumes in the apartment. Had Cappy, the Curly Maple’s owner/manager, not told us, we may not have noticed the painters at all.

Friday night, we had dinner at High’s Restaurant in Monterey, a block from the Curly Maple. I don’t think I’ve seen this place advertised in the magazine, but we would highly recommend: Large, delicious meals, nice atmosphere with Andy Griffith reruns on the TV, wonderful staff, and most of the dinner was taken back to the Curly Maple apartment as leftovers.

Saturday morning was breakfast at the Curly Maple, and it definitely lived up to our expectations with quality and presentation. With full bellies, we then wandered into WV, via Hwy’s 220 and 33, and walked around the Seneca Rocks Discovery Center. Maybe next time we’ll take appropriate hiking boots, so we can explore the trails. Yokum’s Store and Motel, across the road from the Discovery Center, has a large parking lot, a lunch counter with lots of seating, clean restrooms, and a great selection of fishing & camping gear, souvenirs, snacks, drinks, and basic groceries. On our way back through Franklin, WV, we had a wonderful lunch of ice cream at the Orange Cat Cafe at Moe Fatz. The sandwiches and wraps we ordered as “dessert” were taken back to the apartment for later (sometimes adulting ain’t that bad). The owner, Cindy Gray, asked us to stop in front of her restaurant so she could take a picture of us. Since there was no traffic in downtown Franklin, we were able to stop right in front of the café to accommodate her request. Sunday found us wandering to Blue Grass, VA, passing another Goldwing and several BMW Adventure bikes on Hwy 250, north out of Monterey. We found a back way into WV, via Hardscrabble Rd out of Blue Grass. The last two miles of Hardscrabble in VA were truly hardscrabble...a glorified gravel two-track with many deer and farms to be seen. Thankfully, the dark side Goldwing handled the terrain with ease, and we only passed one small car from the opposite direction. It was a beautiful ride with a small



mountain stream along the “road” that became blacktop at the state line. They made me promise we wouldn’t take the same road back. We eventually made our way back to Blue Grass, after riding through Elkins, to pick up a couple of BBQ sandwiches and slaw from the Mercantile, which were delicious. The Blue Grass Mercantile is like stepping back in time and is well worth a visit. Chey finally asked me if I planned the entire weekend just to visit different restaurants and cafés. She was on to me!

Sunday evening, we took a walk around Monterey and marveled at many of the beautiful, historic homes. Lots of folks were sitting on their front porches and said hello as we were admiring their home (ala Mayberry). The Charles Pinckney Jones House Museum, just a few doors down from the Curly Maple, has a large porch and several rocking chairs. The chairs were full of locals, enjoying the

evening air and greeting the passersby...just another place we’ll have to visit on our next trip.

Monday morning, we ventured over to the Ace Hardware (we need more small, locally owned hardware stores), picked up some zip ties, then had breakfast and coffee at Claire’s Cakes & Café (also recommended) in Monterey. While walking around the town, we bumped into Cappy (Curly Maple owner/manager). It was nice to meet her in person, since all our communication had been done online or via phone/text. There was a lot of trust on her part since she never took any credit card information until we paid for our Saturday breakfast. We actually bumped into “her” twice, having met and struck up a conversation with another lady also named Cappy on our walk. This Cappy was the aunt of the Curly Maple’s Cappy. What are the odds?

It was a great weekend with beautiful scenery, amazing food, and lots of incredible people...

All thanks to your magazine! Thank you



REMINDERS FOR THE
holiday season

♥ Set boundaries

♥ Take breaks

♥ Rest as needed

♥ Check in on loved ones

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE



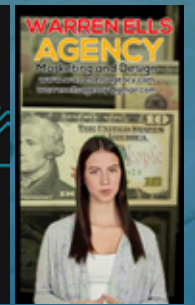
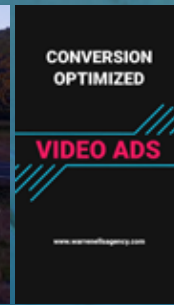
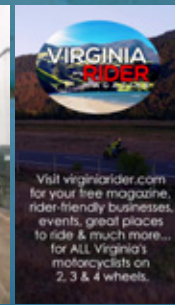
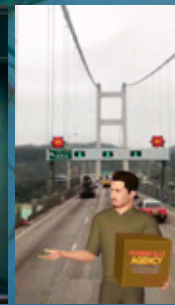


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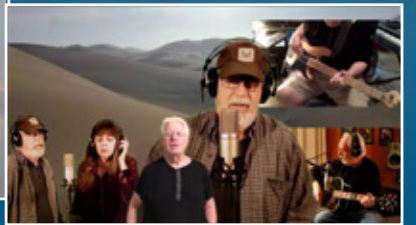
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