



Newsletter

WWW.LAKEFREDERICKTRAVELCLUB.COM

MEETS THE 2ND MONDAY OF EVERY MONTH FROM 11:30 A.M. – 1:00 P.M. IN RACHEL’S KITCHEN

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Cruise & Foreign Travel

DECEMBER 2025 ISSUE

President’s Message

Welcome to Winter!

I hope you had a blessed and joyful Thanksgiving with family and friends. Michelle and I had a quiet celebration together enjoying the carry-out meal from the Lodge and watching the parades on TV. It’s not Thanksgiving for Michelle without Macy’s and other parades. November was a quiet travel month except for the Leesburg Outlet Shopping and Wine Tour that Bill Johnson led. Read his trip reports for that trip and the Fall Colors Wine Tour II at the end of October in this newsletter. Thanks, Bill! Greg Payonk, our frequent traveler, also gave us some excellent tips and tricks for foreign travel at our November Potluck lunch. Greg’s handout provides strategies to cost-optimized luxury travel experiences especially Viking, Celebrity and United (airline/cruise options). In 2024/25 he took twelve international trips and has four booked for 2026. Check out Greg’s handout at the end of this newsletter.

December Holiday Celebrations and Trips!

We are at the beginning of the joyous Christmas and Hanukkah holiday season when we gather to celebrate love and friendship with family and friends. There are many events at the Lodge and Athletic Center to help us get ready. Many of them, including our Travel Club events, may be sold out by the time you read this. Check out the Events Calendar and don’t wait too long to register for events you want to attend. That includes Travel Club events. Remember: you cannot charge our events to your Lodge Member Card. You must pay with a check made out to “Lake Frederick Travel Club” and leave it at the concierge desk. By now, you should have received special email notification of our events in December. They are included in this newsletter for your reference.

Wreaths Across America

I hope you will join us on Saturday, December 13, to lay wreaths on the graves at Winchester National Cemetery. You are welcome to join us for this patriotic event whether you sponsored wreaths or not. We need to fill the bus and join our friends in having lunch at the 50-50 Tap House after the ceremony.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Next Meeting and

Holiday Luncheon

December 10, 2025

Arts & Exploration Studio

1:00 p.m.

\$25.00

Schedule of Trips Updated

See the updated list of trips (V17) and the event announcements in this issue.

Registering for Travel Club Trips

If you have any trouble registering for our trips the Lodge Concierge should be able to help you. This includes club members who are not MTL members and family and friends travelling with a club member. Send me an email with questions.

Trip Ideas for 2026

It's not too early to start thinking about our trips for 2026. If you have any suggestions, especially if you can help in the planning, please send them to me with as much information as you can. An overnight trip that I am thinking about for after Easter is a "Blue Ridge Spring Odyssey." It would include Natural Bridge State Park, lunch in Lexington, tour of Virginia Museum of Transportation in Roanoke, the Roanoke Star overlook, supper and overnight stay in the historic Hotel Roanoke, Smith Mountain lunch cruise on The Virginia Dare, tour of Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest summer home, and dinner at Devils Backbone Base Camp on Route 151. Let me know if you want to help plan this.

We hope to include Sam Kerns' Pennsylvania Disasters and Railroads overnight trip in the Fall of 2026. And the Men's Bible Group is working on a trip to the Museum of the Bible to see the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit at the beginning of Holy week.

See our tentative list of trip ideas for 2026 in this issue. We will return to using Shenandoah Tours for some of our trips. Doc Holaday has selected several of their trips to include in our calendar. See his list in this newsletter. Shenandoah Tours will be joining us again this year for our January coffee and cookies lunch to give us a preview of their 2026 calendar of trips.

I hope to see you around campus and at our Holiday Luncheon on December 10 in the Arts and Exploration Studio at 1:00 p.m. Please wear your name badge. Contact James (Doc) Holaday if you need one. (Register on MTL Events and drop off your check at the concierge desk.)

George Darnell, President

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Fall Colors Wine Tour II Trip Report

By Bill Johnson

October 30, 2025

The interest in the Fall Colors Wine Tour was far more than anticipated, so a second trip was scheduled for later in the same week. By 8.45 a.m., 18 wine enthusiasts were checked in and ready to depart when Julie of Shenandoah Shuttle arrived to take us south to the Charlottesville wine region. As Julie had just done this itinerary a few days before we expected no difficulty in getting to our destinations on time.



Everyone was concerned about having only an hour at each of the wineries and wanted to know if we could squeeze in a few more minutes at each. So, when we visited the rest stop on I-81, I said the less time we spent there, the more time we could spend drinking wine. It was soon obvious that this was a group of serious wine drinkers as we were back on the road in only half the allotted time.

Likewise, as the Rockfish Gap scenic overlook was covered with an even more dense haze than a few days before, according to Julie, there were no objections to continuing without stopping, giving us yet a few more minutes.

Most of the people on this second trip had heard about the delay at Michie Tavern and the shortened visit at Early Mountain and were concerned we would have the same problem. So, when we arrived at Veritas Vineyard, I offered several options, and the consensus was to skip Michie Tavern so that we could extend our winery visits by another 30 minutes.

Veritas Vineyard and Winery was very welcoming and had several people on hand to serve tastings, glasses or bottles as required. Per our discussion, we extended our visit by another 30 minutes, allowing everyone to linger over their wine and even order food.



Next stop was at Barboursville Vineyard. We were directed to the tasting room, but a few decided to head to the library to try some of the older wines. Again, the extra 30 minutes allowed us to linger over our glasses or bottles. Some took advantage of the extra time, and now excellent weather, to visit the ruins of the home of James Barbour (1775-1842), who served as Virginia governor (1812-14), U.S. Senator (1815-25), Secretary of War (1825-28), and Minister Plenipotentiary to Great Britain (1825-28).



Our final stop was Early Mountain Vineyard where we were seated at two large round tables. Based on the events of Tour I, I talked to the manager about payment, and they agreed to let us order at the bar, which allowed to pay our bills individually instead of one bill for the entire group. We departed promptly at 5:30 p.m. and arrived back at the Lodge at 7:10 p.m.



By the chatter and laughter on the bus throughout the day and on the way home, it was apparent that everyone was having a good time. Myself, I took a much needed (I'd been up since 3am) and well-deserved nap on the way home. Thanks to everyone for being so cooperative and flexible.



Outlet Mall Shopping Spree, Lunch & Wineries Tour Report

Nov 14, 2025

By Bill Johnson

It was a nice crisp fall morning as 11 hardy souls ventured forth to the Leesburg Premium Outlet Mall to search their many stores for any hidden values. Julie, our driver from Shenandoah Shuttle, dropped us off just a few minutes before the shops opened at 10am. I hadn't planned to do any shopping so headed to the food court, but stopped in a shoe store just to browse, only to leave with a pair of boots to wear on my upcoming Christmas Market cruise. Everyone returned to the drop off point promptly by noon so that we could depart for Tuscarora Mill for lunch.



Tuscarora Mill was set up and ready for us upon our arrival at 12.15pm. Despite the busy restaurant, our server ensured we received our food and drinks quickly since we were on a tight schedule. The food, as always, was excellent, and I'm sure we would have enjoyed lingering awhile longer before getting back on the road.



Our first stop was a small boutique winery called Firefly Cellars, previously known as Hunter's Run, but now with new owners and wine maker. Located on Rt 9, about a mile north of Rt 15, the tasting room retains some of the former ambiance of stable with saddles suspended over the room. Knowing we were coming, two servers were on hand to meet our drink requests, and we were soon socializing over our preferred beverages.

The next stop was at Williams Gap Vineyard, a much larger facility, located just north of Round Hill. Williams Gap is relatively new, having only opened in April 2021. I had attended their soft opening but had not been back until planning this itinerary. Again, we were expected and several young women were on hand to provide tastings, glasses or bottles as we chose.



Most of the group sat at the tables downstairs, but several went upstairs to enjoy the more comfortable club chairs.

After a most enjoyable day, we departed to Lake Frederick and arrived right on time at about 6 p.m. Thanks to everyone for being so cooperative and prompt so we could keep on schedule.



Trip Ideas for 2025, V17

- Dec 4-18—Seaboard Antarctica Exploration with cruise leader
- Dec 6—Antietam National Battlefield Park Grand Illumination drive through preceded by early dinner at Harpers Ferry Brewery
- Dec 10 Travel Club Holiday Catered Luncheon in Arts & Exploration Studio
- Dec 12—Christmas at Mount Vernon
- Dec 13—Wreaths Across America Ceremony in Winchester
- Dec 14—Bull Run Winery & Festival of Lights Drive Through

Check out the Shenandoah Tours at
< <https://www.shenandoahtours.com/> >
Early registration is recommended.
They sell out quickly.

TRIP IDEAS 2026, V 3

Tour Planning in Progress



<p>JANUARY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mystery Winter Wine Tour Surprise 	<p>JULY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July – Trail Ride & Brewery Lunch
<p>FEBRUARY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidents Day Outing to Smithsonian History Museum 	<p>AUGUST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harpers Ferry Tour
<p>MARCH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Patricks Pub Crawl • March 30—Museum of the Bible Dead Sea Scrolls Exhibit 	<p>SEPTEMBER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gettysburg Tour
<p>APRIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue Ridge Spring Odyssey (Overnight in Roanoke) 	<p>OCTOBER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Disasters & Railroads Overnight Trip • Sperryville & Little Washington Tour
<p>MAY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mosby in Loudoun County • Monticello, Michie Tavern, & Montpelier 	<p>NOVEMBER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall Wine Tour
<p>JUNE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frontier Heritage Tour • Shenandoah County Wine Tour 	<p>DECEMBER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wreaths Across America • Candlelight Christmas at Mount Vernon

Calendar of Shenandoah Tours Trips for 2026, V1



<p>May 5-7 – Celebrate Spring at the Biltmore and Grove Park Inn by motor coach. 3 Days/2 Nights/ 4 Meals; \$775 pp double/\$909 single; Deposit \$100 pp. (Page 6)</p>	<p>Nov 18-20 – Magical Smokey Mountain Christmas by motor coach. 3 Days/2 Nights/3 Meals; \$709 pp double/\$879 single; Deposit \$100 pp. (Page 42)</p>
<p>June 8-11 – Niagara Falls “Moments to Remember” by motor coach. 4 Days/3 Nights/ 4 Meals; \$1029 pp double/\$1419 single; Deposit \$100 pp. (Page 11)</p>	<p>Nov 27-30 – A Country Christmas at Opryland Hotel by motor coach. 4 Days/3 Nights/ 2 Meals; \$1499 pp double/\$1999 single; Deposit \$150 pp. (Page 43)</p>
<p>Sep 14-17 – Niagara Falls “Moments to Remember” by motor coach. 4 Days/3 Nights/ 4 Meals; \$1029 pp double/\$1419 single; Deposit \$100 pp. (Page 11)</p>	<p>Dec 1-3 – Candlelight Christmas at Biltmore Estate by motor coach. 3 Days/2 Nights/4 Meals; \$979 pp double/\$ 1099 single; Deposit \$100 pp. (Page 44)</p>
<p>Sep 23-29 – Iceland “Land of Fire and Ice.” 7 Days/6 Nights/7 Meals; \$4618 double/\$6377 single; Deposit \$699 pp. (Page 33)</p>	<p>Dec 8-10 – Virginia’s Festival of Lights by motor coach. 3 Days/2 Nights/4 Meals; \$819 pp double/\$999 single; Deposit \$100 pp. (Page46)</p>

A minimum of eight (8) participants is required for motor coach tour pick-up in Lake Frederick with Shenandoah. Otherwise, pick up is at Routes 522 and 50 on the Red Roof Inn parking lot. Contact: <https://www.shenandoahtours.com>

Antietam Battlefield Grand Illumination

December 6, 2025

Antietam National Battlefield will present the Annual Memorial Illumination on Saturday, December 6, 2025, to honor the 23,000 casualties from the Battle of Antietam on September 17, 1862.

The event is a driving tour open to the public starting at 6:00 pm. Cars enter the park by traveling west on Route 34 and lining up on the shoulder of the road. Drivers must be with their vehicles parked on the shoulder of Rt 34 after 5:00 pm. Any unattended vehicles parked on the westbound shoulder of Rt 34 after 5:00 pm, blocking the flow of traffic into the event, will be towed. Cars are allowed to enter the event until midnight. Walking is not allowed.

The Lake Frederick Travel Club will hire a 24-passenger bus to drive us through the park after we stop at Harpers Ferry Brewing Company for dinner.

Schedule:

- 3:45 p.m. Gather at Lodge
- 4:00 Depart
- 5:00 Arrive Harpers Ferry Brewing Company
- 6:30 Depart
- 7:00 Arrive Antietam Battlefield
- 8:00 Depart
- 8:30 Arrive WV Welcome Center Rest Stop
- 8:45 Depart
- 10:00 Arrive Lodge

All times are approximate and subject to changes depending on the conditions of the day of the trip.

\$60 covers roundtrip bus transportation. Meals, tastings, purchases, and driver tip are not included.

The minimum for the trip is 12 and the maximum is 24.

Register on MTL Events and drop off your registration check, payable to "Lake Frederick Travel Club," with your contact information and the date of the trip, at the Lodge Concierge **no later than December 1, 2025.**





Holiday Luncheon

Lake Frederick Travel Club Holiday Luncheon
December 10, 2025, 1-3 p.m.
Arts & Exploration Studio

\$25.00

This year the Travel Club will celebrate the holidays with a luncheon catered by the Lodge. The Travel Club will be subsidizing this luncheon in appreciation of the trips you have taken with us this year.

Lunch includes:

- Sandwiches with homemade chips and pickles
- Charcuterie Board
- Freshly Baked Cookies
- Iced Tea
- Lemonade
- Iced Water

The Inglenook Bar will be open to members who would like a bar drink at their own expense.

Register on MTL Events and drop off your registration check, payable to "Lake Frederick Travel Club," with your contact information and the date of the trip, at the Lodge Concierge **no later than December 1, 2025.**

Please note: You cannot charge this event to your Lodge Member Card.

Wreaths Across America: Winchester National Cemetery December 13, 2025



The Travel Club is joining several groups in Lake Frederick, including the Veterans Association, in laying “Wreaths Across America” in Winchester National Cemetery on **Saturday, December 13, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

We will provide round-trip bus transportation to the wreath laying ceremony, whether you sponsored a wreath or not. Following the wreath laying ceremony. **\$15 for bus transportation**

Lunch on your own after the ceremony at the 50-50 Tap House

Everyone loves to sponsor and lay wreaths at Arlington, but the smaller local National Cemeteries, like Winchester, are often overlooked. I hope you will join your neighbors and me in sponsoring at least three wreaths next year. The website and more information along with how you can also support local organizations involved in the ceremony. at <https://lakefredericktravelclub.com/newsletter>

Please indicate that you would like your wreath to go to the Winchester, VA National Cemetery (VAWNCW). Thank you so much for supporting Winchester National Cemetery and Wreaths Across America!

Schedule:

- 10:00 a.m. Bus leaves lodge
- 10:30 Arrive Winchester National Cemetery
- 11:00 Volunteers lay wreaths
- 12:00 p.m. Ceremony begins
- 1:00 Board bus
- 1:15 Arrive 50-50 Tap House for lunch
- 2:30 Board bus
- 3:00 Arrive lodge.

Minimum for this trip is 10 and maximum is 24. Registration is \$15 for transportation.

Lunch and driver tip are not included. Please register on MTL Events and drop off your registration check payable to “Lake Frederick Travel Club” with your contact information and the date of the trip with the lodge concierge **no later than Noon Monday, December 1, 2025**

You cannot charge this to your Lodge Member Account.



Greg Payonk's Travel Tips

Tips on strategies to cost-optimized luxury travel experiences especially Viking, Celebrity and United (airline and cruise). In 2024/2025 I have taken 12 international trips and has 4 trips booked for 2026. Contact Greg at gpayonk@gmail.com, phone 201-323-2144 for additional information.

GENERAL TIPS

- always use airfare provided through the tour operator (bonus includes transfers at destination)
- purchase annual travel insurance not single trip (e.g., Allianz); \$15K □ \$750/yr
- join vendor traveler programs
- enroll in Global Entry which includes TSA precheck
- use Costco credit card for bulk of payments as earn 3% back on all travel

CELEBRITY

- previously my preferred cruise line now being supplanted by Viking
- sense of charging for everything, especially regarding drink package
- Shore Excursions are overpriced, and discounts and base prices change regularly. Create spreadsheet and cancel and rebook (easy process) which I do on a matter of principle even over 5% difference
- pain to have to always show Sea pass card to get drink or soda
- poor quality, low-end liquors included even on drink packages that cost \$90/pp/pd +20% gratuity (before discount which I would not buy unless can get at least 40% which still is very expensive)
- shareholder On Board Credit \$200-500 depending on length of cruise if own at least 100sh RCL
- other than special discount \$1500 for elite members on Galapagos expeditions, I have not realized that much benefit from their Captains Club loyalty program
- sign-up to earn Celebrity Power Up Points monthly beyond actual on-board nights

VIKING

- a fantastic premium luxury experience
- completed 5 river and ocean in last 2 years, have 2 more booked in 2026
- book close-in (2-5 months) for best prices and wait for special codes (use alternate email)
- promotional pricing usually includes airfare, gratuities and silver spirits drink package
- Shore Excursion prices never change and are reasonable
- drink package tremendous value (\$27/day) top shelf liquors
- included shore excursion at every port. We do optional tours in a.m. and catch late included p.m.
- when find a cruise that you are ready to book, complete the booking on Viking web site up to last point where deposit or payment needed and select 24hr complimentary hold. No money needed but you will get booking number. Then call Leah Mann (United Cruises 617-587-6235) and provide booking number and you will earn 7-10mi/\$ (if use United credit card for some minimal payment) else 2-4mi/\$ any credit card. Sometimes United Cruises has internal promos that include special extra On Board Credit.
- regarding booking future cruises on-board, just learned that if you get special promo code by email, can replace book-on-board code and get better prices and defer future bookings credit to newly booked cruise
- on river ships, can buy up to 10 future cruise certs of \$100 each which are matched by Viking for any cruise

UNITED AIRLINES AND CRUISE DEPARTMENT

- United credit card (\$150/yr; no bag fees, lounge access, global entry, priority boarding, cabin upgrade waitlist, bonus miles, reduced award mile redemption). If you want to get this credit card, contact me.
- strive to achieve United elite status for economy plus seating at check-in at no extra charge
- know air ticket issue date (not same as reservation), then look for "upgrade cabin" option. In past two years have secured 8 Polaris upgrades and 2 premium economy seats on miles (and \$500 for Polaris)
- United cruises: absolute gem. Luxury and Mass Market cruise divisions. Earn hundreds of thousands of United miles beyond your best deal. Transfer your booking made elsewhere to United Cruises within 14 days. Contact me for my luxury and mass market representatives or call 800-811-3877.

GLOBUS

- The "Viking" of land tours. Completed a 10-day Iceland and 16-day Ireland tour which were exceptional and beyond expectation and highly recommended. I will be doing 16day Scotland tour in 2026 or 2027.

MARRIOTT CREDIT CARD

- \$95/yr includes one hotel night yearly including all taxes, resort fees. \$400 to take card + 80,000 points