

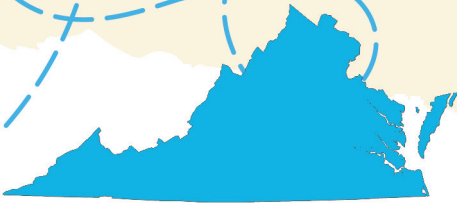
VIRGINIA
is for



Tara Z. Fisher


gatekeeper press
Columbus, Ohio

Table of Contents



Introduction	7
Chapter 1 HEART OF APPALACHIA	13
Chapter 2 BLUE RIDGE HIGHLANDS	37
Chapter 3 VIRGINIA MOUNTAINS	63
Chapter 4 SHENANDOAH VALLEY	87
Chapter 5 NORTHERN VIRGINIA	111
Chapter 6 CHESAPEAKE BAY	137
Chapter 7 CENTRAL VIRGINIA	165
Chapter 8 SOUTHERN VIRGINIA	195
Chapter 9 HAMPTON ROADS	227
Chapter 10 EASTERN SHORE	253
Conclusion	287
Meet the Author	293
Acknowledgements	295

Introduction



Hi! I'm Meg. I'm 10 years old, and I live in Wytheville, Virginia.

There are two things you need to know about my hometown. First, you pronounce it WITH-ville. A lot of people get that wrong, and that's how we know they're not from here. Second, people come here to see a giant pencil that hangs above a store on Main Street. That's right, our town attracts visitors because of a giant pencil.

It's not the world's biggest pencil. That award goes to a pencil that is 76 feet long and can be found at a museum in Missouri. Our pencil is 30 feet long and can be found hanging above the office supply store on West Main.

People come from all around to get their picture taken with our giant pencil, and the jokes about making it a *point* to stop in Wytheville are never-ending.

My favorite thing about Wytheville is what sits across the street from the giant pencil. That's where you'll find our local hot dog shop, Skeeter's. Skeeter's has been around for a hundred years,

VIRGINIA IS FOR ADVENTURERS

and you can get a Skeeterdog with mustard, onions, and chili for just three dollars any day of the week.

While you wait, you can spin on the stools at the lunch counter for free. My friend Lily spun herself so fast one afternoon, she fell off and chipped her tooth. It wasn't funny at the time, but we laugh about it now!

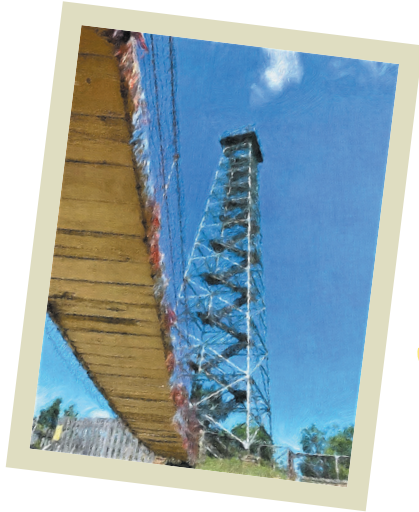


I've spent my whole life (an entire decade!) growing up in Wytheville. I love it here. We are surrounded by blue mountains, green valleys, and sweet Virginia breezes.

When friends come to visit from out of town, we show them the giant pencil, take them to lunch at Skeeter's, and drive them to Big Walker Lookout. The lookout is where you can climb a 100-foot tower and see into West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina.

INTRODUCTION

The climb up the tower always makes my knees a little wobbly, but if you're brave enough to make the journey, you can watch bald eagles, red-tailed hawks, and black vultures circle the skies at the top.



For most people, the views from the top of the tower are the best part. For me, the best part is what resides below the tower in the old, rickety store. It's here that you can find F.R.O.G. jelly and mystery boxes. Two of my favorite things!

Mystery boxes are boxes wrapped in plain, white paper with only two things written on the outside—a price and a category. I usually select a box that says “Twenty Dollars” and “Girl 10-12 Years.”

Unwrapping these boxes is the best surprise. You never know what you will find inside! One of my favorite treasures is a silver bracelet with charms that dangle from its links.

VIRGINIA IS FOR ADVENTURERS

Another treasure of our region is located just beyond Big Walker Lookout. The travel books call it Burke's Garden, but folks around here call it "God's Thumbprint." It got this name because it looks like a giant green thumbprint on top of a mountain. If you don't believe me, look it up!

Oh, I almost forgot, F.R.O.G. jelly stands for fig, raspberry, orange, and ginger. It doesn't actually come from frogs! That's something my brother Max would try, but not me.

Max is two years older than me and enjoys all things gross and gruesome. Our cousin Chad dared him to eat a cicada once, and he put it in his mouth while the wings were still flapping. It was DISGUSTING!

I also have a sister, Melanie, who is two years older than Max. She is pretty laid back. Melanie and I get along well for being four years apart. My mother jokes that our calm temperament helps balance out Max's wild behavior.

This summer our family will be spending a lot of time together. We are getting ready to embark on a 10-day trip across the state of Virginia to participate in an outdoor scavenger hunt.

The details of the scavenger hunt were released on the Virginia tourism board's website a few months ago, and the start date is tomorrow. All we know is that the first clue will appear on the tourism website at 7am, and the route will start somewhere in southwest Virginia. The rest of the clues will be located at LOVE signs across the state.

If you're not familiar with Virginia's LOVE signs, let me explain. The tourism slogan for our state is "Virginia is for Lovers." This can

INTRODUCTION

mean Art Lovers, Music Lovers, Outdoor Lovers, or whatever else you choose to LOVE.

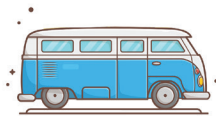
The counties around Virginia have taken this slogan to heart (see what I did there?) and created signs with the letters L-O-V-E that reflect the culture and history of their region. There are more than 200 LOVE signs across the state of Virginia, and they will be very important to our success.

My parents have been packing our van for the last few days. The trunk is full of backpacks, blankets, and hiking gear. We named our van Chublet, after a stuffed cow my brother had when he was younger, and the name just seemed to stick. Last year, my mom made it official when she ordered CHUBLET license plates and fastened them to the front and back of the car.

I always wonder what other drivers think when they pass us on the road, and I hope they understand it's an inside joke. I guess I'll never know. Anyway, it will be our family and CHUBLET hitting the road at 7am tomorrow.

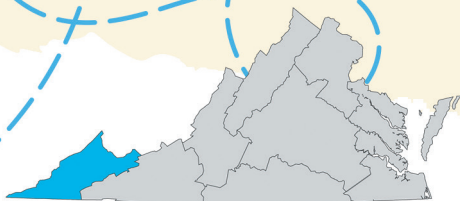
The first team to complete the scavenger hunt will collect 10 prizes at the end—one from each region of the state. Can you even imagine? That would be like unwrapping 10 mystery boxes at the Big Walker Lookout!

My whole body is buzzing with excitement, and I can't wait for you to join me on this amazing adventure!



Chapter

1



HEART OF APPALACHIA

DAY 1

I woke up at sunrise and waited for 7am to arrive. When it did, a firecracker of confetti exploded on the tourism website, and the instructions for the scavenger hunt magically appeared on the screen.

Welcome to the greatest state-wide scavenger hunt ever created! You are about to travel through all 10 regions of Virginia by collecting clues at LOVE signs and completing adventures along the way.

The game is organized as a 10-day journey, and you will visit one region each day. Clues for the next region will be released at 7am the following day.

VIRGINIA IS FOR ADVENTURERS

Each region will include two LOVE signs and three adventures. The LOVE signs are where you start and end your day. The first LOVE sign will have a clue sheet that tells you what adventures to complete and where to find the second LOVE sign. The second LOVE sign will tell you where to begin the next day.

You will need to register your team on the tourism board's website. After you set up an online account, you will use it to upload pictures to a photo journal.

You are required to upload 5 pictures each day. One from each of the LOVE signs and one from each of your three adventures.

The first team to cross the finish line with a completed photo journal will receive a mystery prize from each region. Good luck!

STARTING CLUE:



Make your way to a Wise town known for its vintage street signs and friendly people.

The moment I finished reading the clue, I pulled out my map of Virginia. I knew the game was supposed to start somewhere in southwest Virginia, so I scanned the southwest corner of the state and looked for the word “Wise.”

When I read the clue, I noticed the word Wise was capitalized. That usually means the word is a proper noun. I figured we were looking for a town named “Wise” or “Wise County,” so I focused my attention on towns and counties in the southwest region.

A few seconds later, my eyes landed on exactly what I had been looking for—one of the counties in southwest Virginia was named “Wise.”

Now I just need to find a town in Wise County with “friendly people,” I thought to myself.

I searched the tourism website for a list of towns in Wise County. There were only a few, including a town named Wise, so I decided to research them in alphabetical order.

The first town on the list was Appalachia. No mention of friendly people or vintage street signs there (although the people in the pictures sure looked friendly).

The second town was **B**ig Stone Gap. Nothing that matched the clues there either.

The third town was Coeburn. The website for Coeburn showed a town seal with the words “The Home of Friendly People.” This was promising.

I scrolled further down and found a picture of the town. The street in the picture had two neon signs. One said “Lays Hardware,” and the other said “Old Dominion Power Company.” Both signs looked old-fashioned. *This has to be it,* I thought.

“We have a winner!” I blurted out in excitement. “Our first stop is Coeburn. It matches all the clues from the website!”

“CHUBLET, let’s get this show on the road!” my father exclaimed.

VIRGINIA IS FOR ADVENTURERS

All 5 of us jumped in the car, and just like that, we were on our way to Wise County.



As we pulled onto Front Street in Coeburn, it felt like the neon signs were screaming my name. They were bold, bright, and beautiful—just like in the pictures—but we weren't there for the neon signs, we were there to find the LOVE sign.

Fortunately for us, the map on the tourism website showed that the LOVE sign in Coeburn was right off Front Street.

When we got there, I could see that the LOVE sign truly captured the spirit of the region. There were banjos to represent bluegrass music and checkered flags to represent stock car races.

The next thing I noticed was a red box next to the sign. *This must be where the clues are located*, I thought. But before I could lift the lid of the box, Max jumped in front of me and grabbed a blue sheet.

“You snooze, you lose,” he said in a snarky voice.

“Grow up,” said Melanie. “We’re here to win a scavenger hunt, not the prize for biggest goofball.”

“Yeah, yeah,” replied Max. “I know.” Then he showed us the clue sheet.

CLUE #1



Welcome to the Heart of Appalachia region! Located in Virginia’s westernmost tip, this area is known for its amazing outdoor treasures.

Today’s adventures are all located in Scott County. Remember to take a photo of each of them.

1. Your first challenge is a 1.5-mile hike that leads to a magical pool of water called “Devil’s Bathtub.” To get here, you will have to complete 12 river crossings and walk across a narrow ridge secured by a rope line. Don’t worry, the Devil’s got your back!
2. Next you are headed to a 10-story gorge called Natural Tunnel State Park. Take the chair lift down to the bottom to discover the 850-foot tunnel. Once you get there, you will need to take a picture of a train going through the tunnel to complete the challenge.

3. Your last adventure of the day will take you across the Clinch River on the Clinchport Swinging Bridge. Note that this adventure is not for the faint of heart! To complete this challenge, you have to walk across the bridge and take a photo when you are standing in the middle.

After you complete all three adventures, make your way to the gates of a city “Where Mountains and Music Make Memories.”

I could hardly contain my excitement. “This is going to be incredible!” I shouted with glee.

“The incredible thing will be seeing you navigate 12 river crossings and a rope line,” Max replied. “This isn’t a fairytale, Squirt. It’s a real adventure.”

“I know,” I said in amazement. “I can hardly wait!”

I had been on hikes before, but never one that required multiple river crossings and a rope line.

As we walked towards CHUBLET, we saw other cars starting to arrive at the LOVE sign. One of the vehicles was a green van with a large scratch on the side. When it passed us, I noticed an orange sticker on the back bumper. The sticker said, “Be Ruthless, Be Rude, Stay Alive.”

Well, I thought, always good to know who you’re up against.

