



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Superintendent
3655 US Highway 211 East
Luray, VA 22835

540-999-3500 phone
www.nps.gov/shen

Shenandoah National Park News Release

Release Date: October 7, 2020

Contact: Claire Comer, claire_comer@nps.gov, 540-999-3500 ext. 3183

Shenandoah National Park Issues Travel Tips for October

Luray, Virginia: October is a popular time to visit Shenandoah National Park, typically garnering nearly a quarter of the Park's annual visitation of 1.4 million. The Park is experiencing higher than usual visitation with numbers up for the year about 10% despite a closure in the spring due to the COVID pandemic. Park officials are expecting high visitation in October as visitors come to Shenandoah for the fall leaf display. The first weekend in October saw 14,000 cars enter the park, doubling 2019's 7,000. According to Superintendent Patrick Kenney, "We know fall is an amazing time to visit the Park; we highly encourage visitors to recognize that is also our most popular time to visit and to anticipate higher levels of visitation and come prepared.

To help visitors plan their trips to the Park during this popular time, Park officials have issued some tips to help make your experience better:

- Purchasing passes or paying entrance fees online ahead of time at www.recreation.gov. This will reduce wait times at entrance stations. Special lanes for visitors who have pre-paid have been established at the most popular entrances at Front Royal and Thornton Gap.
- Utilizing the less popular entrances off Route 33 and Interstate 64 can also significantly reduce wait times to access Skyline Drive.
- Pre-planning. Shenandoah has over 65 overlooks and 500 miles of trails so pre-planning can help visitors have an enjoyable trip to the Park. The Park's website (www.nps.gov/shen) and its official app (<https://www.nps.gov/shen/learn/photosmultimedia/app.htm>) offer suggestions for how to enjoy your visit. If you want a less crowded experience, arrive early or stay late and avoid main trails, such as Old Rag, Whiteoak Canyon, Dark Hollow Falls, Stony Man, and Hawksbill Trails.
- If you see someone whose behavior might hurt them, others, or the Park, please tell a ranger or call 1-800-732-0911.

The boost in visitation has also brought about some resource-protection challenges as Park staff work to stay ahead of more intense cleaning protocols due to COVID. Park officials urge visitors to be sure to secure food and trash in bear-resistant containers. “We know people enjoy the wildlife they see in the Park; managing your trash is a simple thing we all can do to ensure their protection” said Kenney.”

Shenandoah National Park is one of a few national parks that allow pets. Visitors with pets are urged to comply with regulations. Pets must be restrained on a 6-foot leash at all times and owners must bag their pets' waste and dispose of it in a trash receptacle. Pets are prohibited on the following trails: Fox Hollow, Stony Man, Limberlost, Dark Hollow Falls, Story of the Forest, Bearfence Mountain, Frazier Discovery Trails, and Post Office Junction to Old Rag Shelter, Old Rag Ridge, Saddle, Access and Ridge Access Trails.

Additional tips and COVID-related information can be found on the Park's website at <https://www.nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/know-before-you-go.htm>.