



Colonial Thanksgiving

By Laura Hampton

Photos courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Peasants in coarse linen aprons and head kerchiefs bend to daily tasks. Gentry with powdered wigs, cocked hats and walking sticks gather in public houses to ponder the latest news from England. Fifers and drummers play authentic patriotic tunes in daily parades. Aged oak sizzles and crackles in the fireplaces of cozy taverns, and the aroma of succulent turkey and dressing compete with baked apples and cinnamon for the most tantalizing scent wafting from the kitchen. The sights, sounds and smells of early Americana make Thanksgiving in Colonial Williamsburg a feast for the senses.

Travelling north on Interstate 95, Williamsburg is 150 miles south of Washington D.C. and 50 miles east of Richmond. Although a 10-hour drive from downtown Jacksonville, roaming through this 300-acre living-history museum in the crisp Virginia autumn more than makes up for the drive. With historical attractions and programs meticulously recreated to duplicate life in Colonial America, it is easy to imagine yourself celebrating the “day of national thanksgiving” suggested by the Continental Congress in the late 1770s.

Although always geared toward tourism, Colonial Williamsburg steps up the charm during the holiday season. Each evening, more than 1,200 electric candles glow in multi-pane glass windows, musicians stroll down tree-lined walkways playing the season’s favorites and wreaths made from pine cones, fresh fruit and oyster shells hang on every door.

Holiday concerts, pageants, children’s activities and 18th-century dances by candlelight set an idyllic American scene in which to celebrate a quintessential American holiday. colonialwilliamsburg.com.

Fantasy Feast

As grand as our modern Thanksgiving dinners are, they pale in comparison to an authentic Colonial fall harvest feast when food was garden fresh and table presentation was regal. Several taverns in Colonial Williamsburg offer three-course Thanksgiving dinners that feature historically accurate dishes taken from Colonial-era records and cookbooks.

Chowning’s Tavern

Originally opened in 1766 by Josiah Chowning who wanted to appeal to the “ordinary sort,” Chowning’s is a one-of-a-kind 18th-century alehouse.



Campbell’s Tavern

Reportedly George Washington’s favorite for seafood, Christina Campbell’s Tavern transports visitors to the 18th century through décor. Pewter candlesticks, brass sconces and reproduction chairs set the stage for an Early American experience.

Shield’s Tavern

Good music, authentic eats and great fun are always on the menu at this lively tavern established in 1745. Order a “sipping drink,” while you wait for your feast. House favorites include the “rummer” made of dark rum mixed with apricot and peach brandies, and “Primm’s cup” made with spiced gin and ginger ale.

King’s Arms Tavern

Established in 1772 by Jane Vobe, who once described King’s Arms Tavern as the sort of place “where the best people resorted,” the

rustic reproduction establishment is known for hearty fare and sumptuous desserts.

Thanksgiving Day Hours and Prices for all Taverns

11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. • Adults \$60.95 and children \$24.95 • Reservations Required

Sweet Slumber

Williamsburg Woodlands

Located within walking distance of the historic district, Woodlands is a convenient, family-friendly choice for visitors to Colonial Williamsburg. After a day of exploring in the old city, families can visit the "fun zone" for kids and enjoy activities such as miniature golf, table tennis and shuffleboard. Average nightly room price is \$200.

Providence Hall Guesthouses

No need to leave four-legged family members home alone for the holidays; Providence allows pets for a fee of \$50 per night. Spacious rooms and close proximity to the old city make this inn a good bet. Average nightly room price is \$425.

Guests at Colonial Williamsburg Hotels receive discounted tickets to the Colonial Williamsburg Historical District. \$29 for adults, \$14.50 for children. Good for each day of your stay.

Delightful Diversions

Children's Orientation Walk

Listen to tales of childhood and family life in the 18th century in addition to information on the latest programming, dining and shopping options to help you plan your visit. Tours at 10 a.m. and 11 a.m., Nov. 22–24. Tickets: Included in cost of admission to Colonial Williamsburg Historical District.

A Kid's Holiday Memories Tour

Make a holiday decoration and play Colonial games with a costumed guide, as you learn about a real Colonial Christmas. Each child receives a bag to hold their decoration and other treasures. Recommended for children age 6 through 12. One tour available on the weekend of Thanksgiving. 9:40–11:10 a.m., Nov. 24. Tickets: Adults \$15, children \$7.50.

Hands-On History at the Powell House

Children learn about seasonality, chores, food preparation, diversion and music in 18th-century America in this hands-on history experience set in the restored original home of Williamsburg's most famous

carpenter and contractor, Benjamin Powell. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Nov. 22–24. Tickets: Included in cost of admission to Colonial Williamsburg Historical District.

Lantern Tour

Explore the lives of masters, journeymen and apprentices by candlelight as you visit the shops of four tradesmen who helped shape the 18th-century Virginian economy. 7 p.m., Nov. 23. Tickets: Adults \$15, \$7.50 for children under 6.



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