

# IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF PRESIDENTS

★ One U.S. President and founding father had a home in Bedford County, but other Presidents have either visited or played a pivotal role in Bedford's history. Here is our suggestion for how to spend a fascinating weekend exploring the influence of U.S. Presidents on Bedford. ★

## — Thomas Jefferson's — POPLAR FOREST

**Thomas Jefferson is one of the most famous Virginians to ever live.** As a founding father, he drafted the *Declaration of Independence* and the preamble to the *Constitution*. He served as Governor of Virginia and the third President of the United States. Jefferson's primary home, *Monticello*, is located about two hours away in Charlottesville, but his beloved retreat of **Poplar Forest** is located in the eastern section of Bedford County.



Jefferson designed *Poplar Forest* and personally supervised its construction beginning in 1806. The architectural style of the house is reminiscent of *Monticello*. Jefferson enjoyed the tranquility of *Poplar Forest*. He treasured his privacy in his post-presidency years and rarely accepted VIP visitors while at his Bedford County retreat. He spent his time reading, writing and being with his family, including his granddaughters, who frequently accompanied him on his visits to Bedford.

The property has been beautifully restored and is now on the *National Register of Historic Places*. It's a popular destination for visitors from all over the world. Visitors will gain an understanding of Jefferson's life, creativity and brilliance, as well as a sense of awe as they stroll the porch where Jefferson himself usually relaxed in the country air. Slave quarters have also been preserved. The estate does an outstanding job of educating visitors about the lives of the enslaved people at *Poplar Forest*.



### TIPS FOR VISITING:

- *Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest* is located in Forest, VA, where visitors will find plenty of options for dining, as well as a craft brewery and winery.
- Allow some extra time to browse the museum store to purchase books and souvenirs, including many locally made items.
- A trail system meanders throughout the property, offering a glimpse of the plantation and landscape.
- Check the website for information on special events and festivals.
- Enjoy a side trip to the *Peaks of Otter* about 20 miles west of *Poplar Forest*. Jefferson admired the beauty of the area and once wrote, "the mountains of the *Blue Ridge*, and of these the *Peaks of Otter*, are thought to be of a greater height, measured from their base, than any others in our country, and perhaps in North America." In the fall of 1815, Jefferson and some associates attempted to get an accurate measurement of the elevation of the peaks.

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## — *George W. Bush Dedicates the* — **NATIONAL D-DAY MEMORIAL**

Bedford was chosen as the location for the National D-Day Memorial because this small town lost more soldiers per capita in the allied invasion of Normandy than any other community in America. Congress approved the establishment of the monument in 1996. After years of planning, fundraising and construction, the memorial was ready to open in 2001.



On June 6, 2001 — 57 years after the epic landing on the shores of France — President of the United States George W. Bush officially dedicated the memorial. The event was attended by thousands of visitors along with dignitaries from all over the world, representing the allied nations who took part in the operation. The ceremony was also attended by hundreds of *World War II* veterans, including some who served on *D-Day*.

## — *Dwight D. Eisenhower* — **COMMANDER OF ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCES**

While it is unclear whether Eisenhower ever visited Bedford during his lifetime, his impact on the community is profound. Before becoming President, General Eisenhower was *Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force* in Europe. In that role, he was the chief strategist behind the planning and execution of the *D-Day* operation in France. A section of the memorial tells the fascinating story of the planning of the operation and Eisenhower's obsession with secrecy to ensure success.



### TIPS FOR VISITING:

- **Stop by the Bedford Welcome Center**, where you can pick up brochures, maps, merchandise, and get trusted recommendations for where to stay and dine while in Bedford County.
- **Save time and money** by purchasing tickets in advance at [dday.org](http://dday.org).
- **Aside from the gift shop and a few exhibits, most of the memorial is outdoors.** Dress accordingly for cool or hot temperatures and don't forget sunscreen.
- **Guided tours are often available based on staff availability.** Self-guided tours are an option for people who like to linger and read the many interpretive signs and plaques.

A special combo ticket to the *National D-Day Memorial* and *Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest* is available. This ticket includes admission and guided tour at both sites. Tickets are good for one year from the date of purchase. Sites may be visited on separate days.