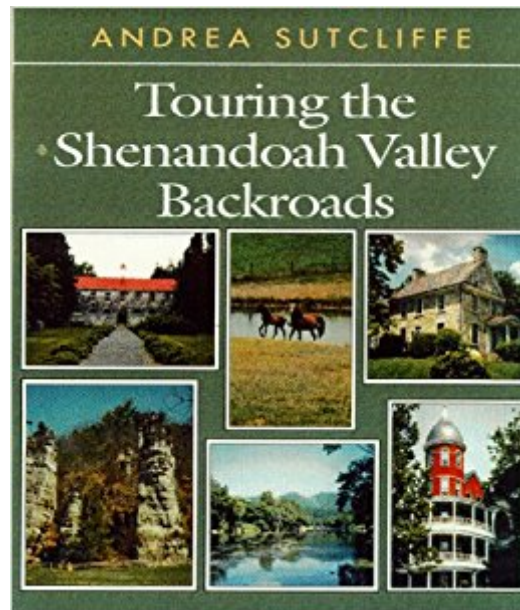




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# Touring The Shenandoah Valley Backroads (Touring The Backroads)



## Synopsis

The Shenandoah Valley, which stretches some 200 miles from Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, to Roanoke, Virginia, is rich in both history and natural beauty. Highlights from the 14 day-trips in this book include such sites as the New Market Battlefield, where 247 teenage cadets from VMI halted advancing Union troops; 6,000 acres of rare virgin forest in Ramsey's Draft Wilderness Area; the Mennonite towns of Dayton and Bridgewater, where the horse and buggy is still a primary mode of transportation; Highland County, where sheep outnumber people; and Fort Valley, which was the planned route for George Washington's final retreat had the Revolutionary War turned out badly for the Americans.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Shenandoah most often translated as "Daughter of the Stars" is one of the loveliest names in the language. Backroads travelers will find that it fits the Valley perfectly. Most people know the Shenandoah Valley for its Civil War-era history, from Robert E. Lee's capture of John Brown at Harpers Ferry in 1859 to Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign of 1862 to the Battle of New Market in 1864. Fewer know that the Winchester area was home to George Washington, explorer Richard Byrd, novelist Willa Cather, and singer Patsy Cline. Or that Thomas Jefferson owned the geologic wonder known as Natural Bridge. Or that the McCormick Farm near Steeles Tavern was the site of a revolutionary breakthrough in agriculture. The word Shenandoah may have had as many spellings and definitions as there are stars in the sky, but travelers will know they've reached the Valley when

they see rugged Goshen Pass, the beautiful country roads between Lexington and Staunton, the Mennonite farms around Harrisonburg, and the mineral springs that first attracted visitors over 200 years ago. The 13 tours in this book explore areas of unspoiled wilderness and mountain landscapes within easy range of metropolitan centers like Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Richmond, and Norfolk.

Andrea Sutcliffe has been a writer, editor, and editorial project manager for more than 25 years. She planned the content and led the team that wrote *The New York Public Library Writer's Guide to Style and Usage*. She now lives in Bayse, Virginia.

This book is not a travel guide, per se, but is a collection of driving tours dedicated to historic architecture in the greater Valley of Virginia. Let me explain. First, the book's coverage extends well beyond the boundaries of the Shenandoah Valley proper. The lovely eastern panhandle counties of West Virginia are included, as is the far "upper valley," south of Lexington, VA. It includes tours of places like Harpers Ferry, Shepherdstown, Charles Town and Martinsburg in West Virginia, as well as Fincastle and Buchanan in the south, close to Roanoke. Really, this book is for architecture lovers. The text is organized, by chapter, into thirteen driving tours that will take you through the towns and villages in the area, directing your attention to historic buildings. For people who like that sort of thing, this book is for you. Don't come here looking for listings of hotels, B&Bs and restaurants. It's all about the buildings. The book is also focused on the small towns and villages in the valley rather than cities. There's no coverage of Charlottesville, Lynchburg, or Roanoke, none of which are in the Valley anyway, but you will get feature pieces on places like Winchester, Staunton and Harrisonburg. This book is a second edition, and is generally well done, but there are some conspicuous errors that undermine the credibility of the author and editors. First of all, the execution of John Brown took place in 1859, NOT in 1759, as is written in the text (p. 26). The small map of Berryville, Virginia includes the erroneous title, "Downtown Winchester," (p. 76). And while the selection of sites is generally comprehensive, there are some startling omissions, such as the important site at Harewood in Jefferson County, WV (briefly mentioned on p. 23). These are relatively minor distractions from a book that is otherwise a real treat for people interested in the history of this region, as told through its buildings. The author's attention to sites in the West Virginia panhandle is particularly good, and there are many interesting sidebars, such as "Why Virginia Split," that complement the text beautifully. There are plenty of small maps and black-and-white photographs that will give you a good, intuitive "feeling" for each area covered in the respective tours. I

recommend this book to those interested in historic architecture, and the history of the Valley of Virginia in general. I do not recommend it for people looking for a practical travel guide to the region.

I bought this book while planning a two-week stay in the Shenandoah region, mostly as a guide to bicycle-friendly roads. It's organized by section (the Shenandoah region is fairly extensive), with a suggested route for each section. That means that it's not that great for planning bike rides, unless you're willing to either string together several of the routes, staying in different places each night. We're not, so it gives very limited insight into the roads within my riding radius of our accommodations. Despite that minor disappointment, I found the book to be very useful - chock-full of tidbits of local history and places to visit. I read much of it, then loaned it to a friend who is also planning a stay in the region around the same time. Since we haven't made the trip, I can't attest to the accuracy of the information, but I expect it will be quite accurate. I was impressed with the depth and scope of knowledge of the area by the author. She is a transplant to the area, having lived there for about 25 years. She has obviously immersed herself in the culture and history of the region. It's quite likely that we won't do any of the author's suggested tours, but we will benefit from the wealth of tips on places to visit, using parts of a number of her tours. I know it will add immensely to the enjoyment of our visit. If you intend to visit Shenandoah Valley, or if you live there and want to know more about your region, this book will make an excellent addition to your library. Don't buy it if you're looking for the best water park or roller coaster though - this book has none of those commercial attractions. It does have a wealth of attractions - some well-known, but many more that would be easily overlooked and are probably known mostly to locals - drawn from the deep well of history, culture and natural beauty the area has to offer.

We started with Martinsburg, WV and followed the tour. We had some problems at first with the driving directions but quickly caught on. We were more familiar with Winchester so skipped over to Strassburg staying at the Strassburg Hotel. I would recommend this tour to anyone who loves small towns and history. Staunton was a jewel, we were there the end of August for the Music Festival and the Shakespearean Theater..

For those who want an indepth and historically interesting book to help explore the Shenandoah Valley area, this is the book to buy. It has a number of short (up to two hours) car tours complete with maps, historical facts and places of interest to visit or drive by. I highly recommend this book to locals and visitors alike. I gave this book as a gift to friends who live just north of the Shenandoah

Valley area for their own use and that of visitors to their area.

This book has a wealth of well-researched information that is thoughtfully organized. It brings back many memories from long ago, which I miss. Thank you.

This book is well written with clear directions and interesting historical notes. There are many tours with a lot of variety.

Great resource! Book is in great shape and arrived earlier than expected!

Very good Thanks

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