

Top 50 Things to Enjoy About Charlottesville *(as printed in the Real Estate Weekly)*

There are many things to enjoy about Charlottesville and it was very difficult to narrow it down to 50. The basic criterion used to develop this list was uniqueness to Charlottesville. In other words, the Top 50 are things that can only be found in Charlottesville or things that we have at least in some way put our unique stamp on. There were no scientific methods used to develop this list and there are many worthy things that are omitted. In addition, these 50 items are not ranked, but are displayed in alphabetical order. If you enjoy the list, you will enjoy Charlottesville.

#1 Fourth of July Fireworks in McIntire Park

There are two places in the country that must always celebrate the 4th of July – Philadelphia and Charlottesville. In the shadow of Thomas Jefferson’s home, Charlottesville hosts a fantastic 4th of July Festival at McIntire Park. The show is put on by the all-volunteer [Save the Fireworks Foundation](#) and up to 25,000 people enjoy the spectacular fireworks display each year.

#2 Albemarle County Fair

Thomas Jefferson was a big fan of agriculture and the [Albemarle County Fair](#) is a great celebration of his emphasis on placing your hands in the earth. The Albemarle Fair is similar to other fairs around the country, but Albemarle has a great story to tell. Throw in a funnel cake, some cotton candy, and carnival rides and you have a great time for the entire family.

#3 Bodo’s Bagels

The [number one thing people miss](#) when they move away from Charlottesville is [Bodo’s Bagels](#). Eating at Bodo’s is an experience. At peak times, there is always a line that moves amazingly quickly. Breakfast and lunch are both very popular and the price is also a hit with students and townsfolk.

#4 Charlottesville-Albemarle Rescue Squad

The [Charlottesville-Albemarle Rescue Squad](#) (CARS) is an all-volunteer service that serves the City of Charlottesville, half of Albemarle County, and the University of Virginia. With 160 volunteers they run 16,000 calls each year, which earned them the title of the busiest volunteer rescue squad in the country. Funding for CARS comes primarily from donations, making CARS a special community service.

#5 Carter’s Mountain

If you want a stunning view of the Charlottesville area, [historic Carter’s Mountain](#) is the place to go. There are many reasons to visit [Carter’s Mountain](#), but the best is the Apple Harvest Festival. Plan a few hours for this trip, because there is only one windy road in and one road out. The cider, fritters, fresh apples, and pumpkins make the trip enjoyable, but the views are worth the trip. At other times of the year you can pick peaches and nectarines.

#6 Charitable Giving

It is no secret that there is a lot of money in Charlottesville, or that locals are very generous in their support of local non-profit programs. There are two special Charlottesville twists to philanthropy that are notable. First, we have the [Charlottesville](#)

[Area Community Foundation](#) (CACF) that serves as a master foundation for many of the local funds. With only a small minimum deposit, anyone can start a charitable giving fund and have the strength of CACF behind it. There are many large and small funds held by CACF, but the most recognized is the [Bama Works Fund](#) of Dave Matthews Band. Bama Works has given millions of dollars over the years to support local activities that better the community.

#7 Charlottesville Radio Group

Radio is big in Charlottesville. We seem to have a bunch of good radio stations for a small community and most of those stations are part of the Charlottesville Radio Group. The main station in the Group is [WINA](#), which features news and talk and is the flagship station for U.Va. sports. Music, news, talk, and sports are nice, but the real great thing about the Charlottesville Radio Group is that they are very supportive of the community. From Plug Away Monday, where callers are allowed to promote their non-profit organization, to partnerships with many charity events, the Radio Group is a great corporate citizen.

#8 Charlottesville Tomorrow

Civic engagement is a tradition in the Charlottesville area. Public hearings often draw huge crowds. In 2005, a non-partisan organization called [Charlottesville Tomorrow](#) was formed to help inform the public of things going on in Charlottesville and Albemarle County. Charlottesville Tomorrow uses new media tools to bring a massive amount of information to local residents in a simple and convenient format. You can listen to a podcast of a City Council meeting or read the [blog](#) about the latest emotional public hearing.

#9 Christian's Pizza & Crozet Pizza

If you are looking for a unique pizza experience, Charlottesville has two legendary places to take care of you. At [Christian's Pizza](#), you wait in line (often out the front door on a busy night) to select slices of exotic pizzas that are prepped in advance. You order a couple slices with fancy toppings and they cook them for you while you wait in line to pay. That may not sound good to the uninitiated, but once you've tasted the pizza, you're hooked.

The other Charlottesville pizza experience you should try is [Crozet Pizza](#). Since 1977, Crozet Pizza has been hand-making their pizza and people use to call-in days in advance to reserve oven space because demand was so high.

#10 Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport

If you are from the Charlottesville area, you laugh when you read the standard airport warning to get there two hours before your flight. If you did arrive that early at the [Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport](#) (CHO), you'd have about an hour and 45 minutes to read a book while waiting for your flight. Sure, we have to fly small planes with propellers and there are very few direct flights, but it beats wasting an hour of your life going through check-in and security in a large airport. At least one of John Grisham's books, "[The Summons](#)," features CHO and you might just run into the famous author on a flight to Dulles.

#11 Craft Shows

There are several very talented local artisans in and around Charlottesville. We also have several craft shows, with the two best being [Martha's Market](#) and [Crozet Arts and Craft](#)

[Festival](#). Martha's Market, which started in 1994 and is generally held in October, is a fundraiser for the Martha Jefferson Hospital Foundation to support women's health care issues. The 70 vendors at the Market contribute 15% of their proceeds to the charity. The Crozet Festival is held twice a year (May and October) and features 120 exhibits under large tents in Crozet Park.

#12 Dogwood Festival

Originally named the Apple Harvest Festival when it started back in 1950, the event was moved to April and renamed the [Dogwood Festival](#) in 1958. This multifaceted event is highlighted by a parade, fair rides, and fireworks. There is a little something for everyone at the Dogwood Festival.

#13 Downtown Mall

The heart of Charlottesville has to be the historic [Downtown Mall](#). It is where people of all ages go, hangout, eat, drink, and be merry. At one end of the Mall is the Ice Park, where you can play hockey or free skate and at the other end is the Pavilion, where many great concerts are held. In the middle is the Paramount Theater and great restaurants, many with outdoor dining. On a Friday night in the summer, you can barely walk down the street because so many people are strolling the Mall. This is a special place in a special city.

#14 First Fridays

On the [First Friday](#) of each month, art is front and center on the Charlottesville scene. Several downtown art galleries hold open houses and serve wine, snacks, and fun. You can walk from gallery to gallery and see local and nationally recognized works. To finish off a great evening, stop in for dessert at one of the many local restaurants on the Downtown Mall.

#15 First Night© Virginia

On December 31, Charlottesville celebrates [First Night Virginia](#) along with 130 other cities around the world. Our First Night is the second-oldest and features 75 different performances in 24 different venues, all in one night. This great community event is family friendly and a great way to welcome in the New Year.

#16 Foxfield Races

Twice a year, half of Charlottesville heads out scenic Garth Road to attend the [Foxfield Races](#), a steeplechase horse race that is really just an excuse to gather (no offense to the racers). In recent years, these two races have taken on a split personality. In the spring, the race is a combination of a frat party and a football tailgate party. In the fall, the event turns into a "Family Day."

#17 Fridays After Five

Every Friday during the spring and summer months, locals gather at the Pavilion in downtown Charlottesville for a party called [Friday's After Five](#). This free event features local and regional bands and allows spectators to bring in a picnic dinner. Thousands attend each Friday, hang out with their neighbors, and then stroll down the Downtown Mall and eat at an outdoor restaurant.

#18 Garden Week

For the past 76 years, [Historic Garden Week](#) has been celebrated in Virginia and Charlottesville has several homes on the tour each year. The Charlottesville area has

several historic estates with beautiful gardens and landscapes, and this opportunity to visit should not be missed.

#19 Gourmet Gas Stations

When asked where to get the best sandwich in Charlottesville, [many locals will answer a local gas station](#). Huh? No, we are not talking about a pre-packaged egg salad on white bread. How does chicken salad with a cranberry relish on sourdough bread sound? Several local gas stations have a sandwich shop inside called [The Market](#) where you can get what they call [Gourmet to Go](#). If you can get over the ambiance, these are truly great sandwiches.

#20 Great Local Musical Talent

The local music scene in Charlottesville is deep in talent and diversity. There is a ton of support in both teaching programs and in small venues for musicians to play. The local high school programs are very solid and the young talent seems to never end. In addition to great local bands, many national acts that visit Charlottesville feature a local musician as part of the band. The reach of the Charlottesville music scene appears to be never-ending.

#21 Great Running Events

This is a big running town. In 2006, Outside Magazine rated Charlottesville as one of the towns with the [best running trails](#). We have some great charity races like the [Women's 4 Miler](#) to benefit the U.Va. Cancer Center Breast Care Program and the [Charlottesville 10 Miler](#) that collected 1,000 pounds of food for the local food bank. A newer event, the [Charlottesville Marathon/Half Marathon](#), has become very popular. This event has a marvelous historic course to follow and has 3,500 participants.

#22 Hot Air Balloons

If you live in Charlottesville, you get to enjoy beautiful vistas as you walk or drive around town. But, there is another way to see the natural beauty of the area – from a hot air balloon. Even if you are afraid of heights, just seeing these colorful and graceful crafts floating around town is a thrill. Often you will see three balloons drifting about, sometimes low enough to yell a friendly hello, and they have been known to land in a cul-de-sac or parking lot.

#23 Insurance Institute for Highway Safety

Have you ever seen a car commercial that shows footage of crash test dummies demonstrating air bags? It is likely that that test-crash was filmed in the Charlottesville area at the research facility of the [Insurance Institute for Highway Safety \(IIHS\)](#). Unfortunately, they do not allow spectators, but they do publish [great videos](#) of the crashes and their efforts help make us all safer on the road.

#24 JABA and The Senior Center

Charlottesville has often been [rated as a top place](#) for seniors, and two significant factors in earning those accolades are the [Jefferson Area Board for Aging \(JABA\)](#) and [The Senior Center](#). JABA's mission is to create a sustainable community for healthy aging and they have developed a [2020 Plan](#) to help prepare our community to be livable for all ages by 2020. The Senior Center was Virginia's [first nationally accredited senior center](#) and serves as a wonderful social and cultural center for seniors.

#25 JAUNT

The [award-winning JAUNT](#) transportation service was organized in 1975 to offer a unique solution to Central Virginia's transit needs. If you need a ride to work, the doctor, or shopping, you can schedule a JAUNT van to take care of the driving for a very low cost. This great community service helps prevent road congestion and benefits the environment.

#26 John Paul Jones Arena

U.Va.'s [John Paul Jones Arena](#) (JPJ) is perhaps the best new addition to the awesome facilities in this community in many years. In fact, JPJ was named the Best New Concert Venue in 2007. Of course concerts are just one of the uses to which JPJ has already been adapted. U.Va.'s basketball team has enjoyed a significant home court advantage in the Arena and events as diverse as monster truck shows and Broadway plays have been scheduled in JPJ. Concerts, however, are the real addition that JPJ has brought to the community. Big names like Billy Joel, Bruce Springsteen, and Kenny Chesney would never have come to Charlottesville until JPJ was built.

#27 Kluge Children's Rehabilitation Center

If you have a special-needs child, or your child has been seriously injured, the [Kluge Children's Rehabilitation Center](#) (KCRC) will be a huge asset for you and your child. KCRC is part of [U.Va.'s Children Hospital](#) and works with children from all over the world. The staff at KCRC works holistically with the patient and the family to help the child become as independent and competent as possible. The [family-centered approach](#) to patient care recognizes that the family is the one constant in the child's life.

#28 The Lawn and Rotunda

To get a true feel for the history and magnificence of the University of Virginia, you must visit the famous [Rotunda and The Lawn](#) that lies hidden behind the distinct façade. Taking one of the daily [historic tours](#) is a must to understand the foundation of the University of Virginia. The Rotunda and The Lawn, Jefferson's Academic Village, were truly his life's work and they were completed in the last year of his life in 1826. To live in one of the rustic dorm rooms on The Lawn is a major honor and graduation ceremonies are held in this amazing setting. On a lighter side, [trick-or-treating](#) at Halloween and streaking The Lawn at the first snow are also Lawn traditions.

#29 Live Arts Charlottesville

With an annual attendance of 20,000 and 500 volunteers, [Live Arts](#) has made its mark on Charlottesville since its beginning in 1990. This unique performing arts organization blurs the lines of artistic genres and is truly part of the community. Live Arts does not accept government subsidies and is totally dependent on the support of the community.

#30 Local Celebrities

One of the cool aspects of life in Charlottesville is the random celebrity sightings. Seldom do you see locals mobbing the local celebrities for autographs and pictures. For the most part, locals just act cool and then brag later about their brush with fame. You might see [Dave Matthews](#) in a local bookstore, or [John Grisham](#) dining at a local restaurant, or play golf in a local charity tournament with [Howie Long](#). It is just part of life in this small community.

#31 Local Winery Tours

Nationally, Virginia ranks 6th in wine production and that was the [vision of Thomas Jefferson](#). Jefferson brought back many vines from France and is credited with being one of the fathers of wine production in the United States. The Charlottesville area is rich with [wineries](#) and a great way to spend a day is to meander through the beautiful countryside and taste the local wines.

#32 MACAA's Men Who Cook

[MACAA](#), the Monticello Area Community Action Agency, works to eradicate poverty and improve the lives of people living in our community. One of the major fundraisers for this non-profit is an event called [Men Who Cook](#). The event involves 50 male chefs (mostly amateurs, some celebrities) cooking their favorite dish and serving it to paying customers. This very fun evening also includes a silent auction and after-dinner dance.

#33 McCormick Observatory

In 1885, when the [McCormick Observatory](#) was dedicated on Thomas Jefferson's birthday (April 13), the 26-inch refractor telescope was the second largest in the world. On the first and third Friday of each month, the Observatory is [open to the public](#) for two hours. When the weather is nice, expect a long line.

#34 Monticello and Ash Lawn

Virginia was home to seven presidents, and two of them were neighbors in the Charlottesville area. [Monticello](#), home of our 3rd President, Thomas Jefferson, is arguably the most famous home in the United States (just look at the back side of most nickels). Just around the corner (literally) is [Ash Lawn](#), home of the 5th President, James Monroe. Both homes are open for tours. If that is not enough, Montpelier, the home of our 4th President, James Madison, is located a few miles north of the Charlottesville area and the boyhood home of 28th President Woodrow Wilson is located a few miles to the west. An ambitious tourist could see all four homes in one day. For the best historic reality check, [walk up to Monticello](#) and stop at [Michie Tavern](#) for lunch.

#35 Music Resource Center

This town not only supports young local musicians with great venues and training, but also with the [Music Resource Center](#). In typical Charlottesville style, we did this one BIG. Membership in the MRC is limited to 7th – 12th grade students who are currently enrolled in local area schools. Originally the Center was housed in the old practice space for the Dave Matthews Band (DMB), but was moved into its own space--a renovated church on Ridge Street. In addition to [support from DMB](#), the main driver to the Center back in 1992 was John Hornsby, who co-wrote songs with his brother Bruce while he attended U.Va.

#36 National Ground Intelligence Center

This one is a secret, so don't share this with anyone. One of the area's largest employers is the National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC). No one really knows what goes on in their secluded compound off 29 North, or at least, no one talks about it. That's good, because we assume our national security and the safety of our troops depends on what goes on there. Over the next few years, the facility [will be expanded](#) to include 800 to 1,000 more government employees that are being relocated to the area. By the way, we would NOT suggest calling ahead for tour times and prices.

#37 Paramount Theater

The historic [Paramount Theater](#) originally opened in 1931 and was renovated and re-opened in December 2004. Located on the Downtown Mall, it is the perfect set-up for a date featuring dinner and a show. The Paramount hosts a variety of shows including plays, comedians, and many different types of music. The intent is to provide a little something for everyone.

#38 Pavilion

The [Charlottesville Pavilion](#) is an outdoor amphitheater that hosts great concerts ranging from local bands to national recording stars like Willie Nelson and Crosby, Stills, and Nash. The Pavilion also hosts the Fridays After Five events and an occasional [political rally](#).

#39 Piedmont Housing Alliance

Just like every community, Charlottesville has issues with housing. Fortunately, we have the [Piedmont Housing Alliance](#) (PHA) to help with credit issues, down payment assistance, and special financing options. PHA helps hundreds of local residents and first-time homebuyers navigate the complicated processes and programs. In addition, PHA provides training and counseling in Fair Housing to make sure all members of the community have an equal opportunity to obtain suitable living quarters.

#40 Rivanna Trail

The [Rivanna Trail](#) is like the Underground Railroad for nature lovers in Charlottesville. The trail winds along the Rivanna River and other scenic sections of the city to form a beltway around Charlottesville. As you walk along the trail when the leaves are on the trees, you can hardly notice that houses and office buildings are just a few hundred feet away. From the opposite viewpoint, you can be sitting in your office or home and not even realize this hidden jewel is so accessible.

#41 Skyline Drive / Blue Ridge Parkway

In 2006, the [Skyline Drive](#) celebrated its [75th anniversary](#). The Blue Ridge Parkway is an early name given to the stretch of the road that runs from Jarman Gap to Rockfish Gap (8.5 miles). The complete Skyline Drive follows the peaks of the Blue Ridge Mountains from Front Royal to Rockfish Gap (105.5 miles) and is one of the most scenic cruises you will ever take. There are many designated overlooks along the way and on a clear day you just might be able to see heaven.

#42 Spudnuts

[Spudnuts](#) is Charlottesville's most famous doughnut shop. As the name implies, the tasty fried treats are actually made from potato flour. The local Spudnuts location was opened in 1969 and is still owned by the same family. The original founder, [Richard Wingfield](#), passed away in 2005, but the shop and the legend live on. If you have never had a warm, chocolate-glazed Spudnut, you haven't really lived.

#43 Starr Hill Brewery

The [mission](#) of [Starr Hill Brewery](#) is to "bring the gift of great beer to the world." Since the brewery was founded in 1999, it has become the most award-winning brewery on the East Coast and is well respected nationally. The brewery started in a little storefront on East Main Street and has since moved to a much larger facility in Crozet. There are big plans for the facility in Crozet, but already it is well worth a visit to the tasting room and

tour of the brewery. If you love beer, you'll love Starr Hill and Master Brewer [Mark Thompson](#).

#44 The Corner

[The Corner](#) is literally across the street from U.Va.'s Grounds and the Medical Center and is both a symbolic and actual center of life for students, faculty, and employees of U.Va. Shops, restaurants, banks, and bookstores line one side of the street as it migrates from a north/south to an east/west route and becomes Main Street. On the other side of the street are the Rotunda and the Medical Center.

Be careful if you drive The Corner, because students are trained to step out into the crosswalks without regard for traffic. Cars magically stop to allow pedestrians to pass. If you want to experience what being a U.Va. employee or student feels like, visit The Corner at lunchtime on a sunny day and watch students, faculty, and locals mingle.

#45 The White Spot

Look up "greasy spoon" in the dictionary and you will likely see a picture of the White Spot Restaurant. Located on The Corner adjacent to the U.Va. Grounds is this 50+-year-old classic diner that is perhaps the secret to U.Va.'s rise to the top ranks of academic institutions. Students studying or partying late into the night will stop in The White Spot for a famous [Gus Burger](#) and a Grillswith (fried doughnut topped with ice cream). Every college town probably has such a place that provides students the chance to fill their belly and keep on going when most places have shut down.

Legend has it that The White Spot got its name from the previous business in the space – a barbershop. Evidently, when the barber chair was removed it left a white spot on the floor. There is much more history and legend associated with the Spot – just ask any U.Va. alum from the past 50 years.

#46 University of Virginia

We'll never know what Charlottesville would be without the [University of Virginia](#), but we do know that U.Va. is a large part of what makes this community a special place. Founded by Thomas Jefferson and opened in 1825, there is so much [history](#) we cannot begin to cover it here. What is not covered in the history books is that The University is the heart and soul of the community.

U.Va. is the area's largest employer (by far) and provides the local economy with a steady, reliable engine that insulates us from the dramatic swings often seen in the national economy. With so many local families tied to a [top-rated University](#), there is a lot of pride that spills over into the entire community. This pride is what inspires such a small community to think big and act big.

#47 U.Va. Medical Center and Martha Jefferson Hospital

Two of the main reasons Charlottesville has been ranked nationally as the [7th-healthiest place to live](#) are the two outstanding hospitals we have in town. In fact, Charlottesville ranks 4th in the number of physicians per capita for metro areas in the U.S. The [U.Va. Health System](#) is a regional trauma center and is served by [Pegasus](#), an air and ground medical transport service. [Martha Jefferson](#) has a very popular Women's Health Center and has been serving the community for over 100 years.

#48 U.Va. Sports

This is a small town, but we are fortunate to host some big-time college sporting events thanks to the [University of Virginia](#). The ultimate fun is tailgating at a U.Va. football game on a sunny fall Saturday, but the real treats of U.Va. sports are found watching the U.Va. soccer, lacrosse, and baseball/softball teams play other national powerhouses. The weather is often fantastic for these sports and the competition is top notch. And when the weather gets too cold, the recently built John Paul Jones Arena is a great place to take in an ACC basketball game and root for the Hoos!

Homepage: <http://www.virginiasports.com/>

Independent news on U.VA. sports: <http://www.thesabre.com/home>

#49 Virginia Festival of the Book

Did you know that Charlottesville has the [second-highest concentration](#) of authors of any metropolitan area in the United States? [John Grisham](#), the most popular local writer, is also [very active](#) in the community. What better place to hold the [Virginia Festival of the Book](#)?

The stated [mission](#) of the Virginia Festival of the Book is “to bring together writers and readers and to promote and celebrate books, reading, literacy, and literary culture.” This annual March event is in its 15th year and is scheduled for March 18-22, 2009. The [statistics](#) for this year’s event were impressive, with over 23,000 attendees, 170 different events, and participation by 373 literary professionals.

One of the most popular events during the festival is the Business Book Breakfast that sells out quickly and features well-known writers like Malcolm Gladwell (“[Blink](#)”) and this year’s speaker Roger Mudd, (“[The Place to Be](#)”). Charlottesville, it seems, is the place to be if you love to read or write.

#50 Virginia Film Festival

The Charlottesville area has long been known for having a strong link to Hollywood. There are many movie stars that either live or spend time here on a regular basis. We won’t drop any names because we are bound to leave someone BIG out, but these celebrities would probably prefer not to be mentioned anyway. In fact, one of the reasons they choose to live here is that the local residents leave them alone.

With this plethora of movie stars, it only seems natural that Charlottesville hosts an annual film festival. Technically, the [Virginia Film Festival](#) is a program of the College of Arts and Sciences at the [University of Virginia](#) and is generally held in late October or early November. This year’s events will be held October 30 to November 2, 2008 with an “Alien” theme. [Past themes](#) include last year’s “Kin Flicks” and the very first Festival in 1990, “Music and the Movies.”

The event features dozens of films each year and celebrity speakers that have included Hollywood elites like Jimmy Stewart, Sandra Bullock, and Morgan Freeman.

If you or anyone you know is thinking about buying, selling, or investing in real estate, please let me know ... I value referrals and do them nationwide! Or if you know someone who'd like to pay off their mortgage in a fraction of the time, please let me know!

For more information about the housing market in Charlottesville and the surrounding counties, please contact me! I have more than 20 years of experience in the real estate industry and would be glad to share my expertise on this part of Virginia with you.

THANK YOU!

Cynthia Hash, Realtor/SRES

Keller Williams Realty, Charlottesville VA

Cell: (434) 531-5351 -- Email: hash@kw.com

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Matthew 7:12 is NAR Golden Rule