



12 Reasons Why Heritage Hunt is the Best Retirement Community In Northern Virginia

Heritage Hunt, in the Gainesville and Haymarket area of Virginia, is a 55+ active living community with nearly 2,000 homes and about 3,000 residents.

We first came upon the community in early 2015 after having spent the better part of year looking throughout northern Virginia for retirement locations. We visited many and were thinking about making a purchase in Loudoun County when we did one last search and came across the Heritage Hunt community. It is 32 miles west of Washington DC (two minutes off Route 66) between Bull Run Mountain and the Manassas National Battlefield Park. The location appealed to us because it was accessible to Washington DC but also on the edge of the beautiful rural Virginia horse country. Part of our quest was to find a place that had some of the beauty and elegance of an out-of-state community, such as in North or South Carolina, but that was close to the world class cultural resources of the Washington area and to our children.



Our initial examination of Heritage Hunt also revealed that the community had been listed as the best retirement community in America by the Senior Housing Council and it was a two-time winner of best designed adult community. We simply had to take a look.

Here are our 12 reasons why it is surely the best retirement community in northern Virginia.

1. **Striking beauty:** On our very first drive into the community, we were immediately struck with how gorgeous the place is. The entry road, called Heritage Hunt Drive, offers a long and unfolding view of the community. This view is dominated by its elegantly landscaped golf course and the profile of Bull Run Mountain off to the West. The way its wooded areas, open lands and housing are all so well-integrated makes it a real visual pleasure to drive or walk around. It is like a large park with people living in it. We had not seen an active living community, then or since, that had such a large and lovely pastoral appearance.
2. **Quality homes:** As soon as we started looking inside the places that were having open houses during our initial visits, we noted several attractive features. To begin with, they were not as cramped as the homes we had seen in other senior communities. Many models had open floor plans and every home in the place had master suites, kitchen and baths all on the main level. It is standard for these homes. We also discovered that many of the homes had basements for added living space and *extra* storage. The reality of needing to dispose of so many of our belongings prior to moving had been slowing down our moving plans but Heritage Hunt gave us the option to take our stuff with us and more slowly and carefully relinquish it over time.



As we drove around the community in those early days, we also realized how many of the houses had lots that either bordered on the golf course or the woodlands surrounding the community. The homes were all of sound construction, with outdoor spaces, and right-sized lawns and, we discovered after a few visits, how many different floor plans, sizes and prices there were ranging from two bedroom condominiums to full-scale four and five bedroom homes.

3. **First rate community centers:** A few weeks after we began looking into Heritage Hunt, we attended a community open house to learn more about the shared facilities and other amenities. There is a large and quite impressive clubhouse with game rooms, a craft room, a reading library, a golf pro shop and a quality recently remodeled restaurant and bar for formal and informal dining. The food is fresh and well-prepared and the staff works hard at making it a quality experience. They also put on special deals each week such as a buffet night, Shrimp Bonanza nights, and holiday-themed meals, where the emphasis is on a friendly atmosphere and hearty eating. The clubhouse is grandly appointed and we really liked its large balconies where you can sit out with a coffee and take in the view. It has a large ballroom with a stage and lighting for community plays, concerts, magic shows, dances, banquets and more. There are also traditional rooms in the club for billiards, card games, meetings, crafts and woodworking. The main club house is next to the outdoor pool and the fitness center and Tennis courts, but more about them later.



Heritage Hunt has a second community center called Marsh Mansion, named after the family that owned part of the property before it was developed. Mr. Marsh, who originally built this house, was an insurance company magnate with a deep love of thoroughbred race horses. The renovated mansion is a large, traditional plantation-style home that serves as headquarters for the community's association staff and has additional community meeting rooms, and a library. The property also has Pickle-ball courts and Bocce Ball courts and is sometimes an outdoor concert venue and place for evening lectures, parties, and activities.



4. **Active, caring and involved people:** It takes no time at all, when touring the community, to see how well-kept everything is. The homeowners keep their gardens, lawns and properties well-groomed and the houses, built between 2001 and 2008, look like new. The people who live at Heritage Hunt are about as conscientious and committed as they come. The common grounds and facilities are well-maintained too. Heritage Hunt has hundreds of people who volunteer for committees to help the community with maintenance and improvement projects. They oversee common spaces, plant gardens, monitor food services and more. The quality of this community is keenly reflected in the quality of its people.



5. **A top flight golf course:** There are quite a number of golf courses in Northern Virginia, but we were impressed to learn that renowned golf course designer [Arthur Hills](#), who passed away in 2021, designed the [Heritage Hunt course](#). Hills had designed 185 courses around the world and had redesigned 125 more including some of the most renowned in professional golfing. Heritage Hunt's championship course measures up to the best in the region but it has many thoughtful features for beginners as well. These include its layout and adaptability to different skill levels, clear options for both nine and 18 whole players, a paved and a continuous golf cart trail, that doubles as a walking path in the off hours, and a classic links-like design. The golf experience is supported by a fully-stocked golf pro shop, a cart center, a putting and practice green and a regulation driving range.



6. **Health, recreation and exercise:** Heritage Hunt surely lends itself to staying active. It has miles of beautiful walking trails, a fully equipped newly-expanded 2-story fitness center, fitness classes and yoga, an indoor pool, aqua-fit programs, and an outdoor pool designed with a special section for walking through the water against a steady current. It is also a popular gathering spot for the neighbors in warmer weather. The community has regulation Bocce, Pickle-ball and tennis courts and residents can also take advantage of a low-cost discounted membership at the Sport and Health club across the street from the entrance to the community. There are many more parks and trails in the area but there is plenty to do right on site.



7. **Food, shopping and movies:** The location has a major regional shopping center about two miles away. The [Virginia Gateway Center](#) is truly immense and has grocery shopping, a Target, a Best Buy and shoe outlet, and a Lowes along with dozens of other major stores restaurants and pharmacies. It has a popular walking mall called the Atlas Walk with sandwich shops, pubs, restaurants, and, of course, a Starbucks. There are designer clothing stores and accessory shops there too. Across from the Gateway Center there is another large center with a [movie theatre](#), another walking mall, more shops and restaurants and a BJ's discount store. If going a couple of miles is too far, there is a 24 hour/7day Harris Teeter supermarket half a mile from the Heritage Hunt entrance, with a gas station and several restaurants, across the street. The renowned food market, Wegmans, is four miles away and there is also a Kohls and Walmart center about three miles in the other direction in Haymarket. The Leesburg regional outlets are a pleasant 30 minute drive up route 15, there is a Trader Joes in Centreville. Ten miles away is the City of Manassas with Sudley Road shopping areas with another major movie house, a Barnes and Noble, and half a dozen malls and shopping centers.

8. **Nearby health care:** We wondered, just in case, if there were good health care and good hospitals with emergency services nearby and found there are. The two area hospitals are both in the [Novant University of Virginia Network](#). One is about two miles from the community's front entrance and the other is just eight miles away in Manassas. Both are highly rated for patient care and for being able to handle cardiac emergencies, surgery, intensive care and more. There is also a specialized cancer care facility within a few miles and a several urgent care facilities (including one across the street from the Heritage Hunt entrance) along with a multitude of dental offices, primary care practitioners, numerous specialists and several good physical therapy facilities with skillful people nearby.



9. **Clubs and activities:** Heritage Hunt is a busy community. It prides itself on having over 100 different clubs, for hiking, biking, wine tasting, book clubs, cards, dining, tennis, golf, genealogy, singing, acting, music and more. One leader in the community likes to say that if you don't see a club you would like to join, you should feel free to start one. There are activities every day and most nights at Heritage Hunt. The clubhouse does, indeed, serve as an active entertainment center with concerts, dance nights, movies and a number of different entertainment events. There are also frequent excursions to the Kennedy Center, and other regional attractions. Heritage Hunt even makes it easy to vote. The local polling place is right in the main clubhouse. Residents keep up with goings on through its excellent and comprehensive newsletter, the Heritage Horn.



10. **Sound finances and security:** There is much to be said about how well run and financially sound Heritage Hunt is. The community has reasonable homeowner association fees compared to many and they seem even more reasonable when one realizes that the fee includes phone, internet, trash and recycling pick-up, and premium cable service. The day to day management is done by a [respected management firm](#) that is quite responsive and the HOA's budget and balance sheet show significant health and ability to cover major capital needs. As a gated community with 24 hour gate house service, there is the right balance between being open to visitors and providing security so that the people here feel quite safe.

11. Nature: In addition to being an attractive location the community has a number of natural areas that add to its value including many ponds, a creek that crosses and then borders the property (Little Bull Run) and many mature wooded areas. This makes it a bird watcher's heaven and a place with abundant wildlife.



12. Surrounded by wonders: The Heritage Hunt location is excellent launch point for many surrounding attractions. There is a 400 acre state forest that actually borders the community and the beautiful 5,000 acre Manassas National Battlefield Park is just three minutes away. The Shenandoah National Park is 45 minutes to the west and Washington DC and its museums, monuments and other attractions is 45 minutes in the other direction. The Virginia Horse country is close by and historic towns like Warrenton, The Plains, Aldie and Middleburg are an easy drive.

