

# ROADTRIP | A Paean to Poe

**WHERE:** Edgar Allan Poe Museum in Richmond.

**WHY:** A historic apothecary, tattooed eyebrows and a birthday bash for the master of the macabre.

**HOW FAR:** About 100 miles, or 2½ hours, from Alexandria.

S ometime not too long after the holidays, the winter blahs begin to take hold: It's cold and damp, and the days are dark and short. Instead of prescribing yourself a weekend getaway to a tropical beach, give yourself over to the dreary winter days. In fact, celebrate them at the Edgar Allan Poe Museum in Richmond.

The father of modern mystery, horror and detective novels (some say science fiction, too) would have celebrated his 197th birthday on Thursday, and the Poe Museum has scheduled its annual day-long fete for Jan. 22. The festivities include a performance of "The Cask of Amontillado" by spooky professionals from the Haunts of Richmond, a screening of Poe-themed silent films in the blood-red Raven Room and birthday cake sliced by president of the Poe Foundation, Harry Lee Poe (yes, that's right, he's a distant relation). To top it all off, admission to the museum has been waived for the day — but you may be cursed if you don't make a donation.

Even without the thrill-fest, a trip to the Poe Museum — housed in the oldest standing house in downtown Richmond — is a quick fix for a dreadful day. Not only can you see rare manuscripts and letters written in Poe's own hand, but the collection includes the writer's socks, a lock of hair, and his traveling trunk and its key, which was retrieved from his pocket after his death.

Before heading for the Commonwealth's capital, make note of some suitably eccentric diversions along the way. Last week, Signature Theatre in Arlington opened "Nevermore," a world-premiere musical that

explores a selection of Poe's haunting stories and poems as well as his disturbing autobiography. Then, as you head down Route 1, take in the sublimely decayed signs of long-gone motels and restaurants. Formerly known as the Potomac Path, the historic road was once a trail of trade and transportation for the Dogue Indian tribe, which just happened to give the riverside town of Occoquan its name. In Occoquan today, Permanent Make-Up by Angela is the place to get a facial tattoo — then you can sleep in every morning to your telltale heart's content.

Roadside sculpture gardens abound on this drive, but the best pieces — pink elephants, bucking broncos, bathing beauties and giant roosters — are at Domestic Concrete. Prices range from pocket change (\$10) to simply extraordinary (\$5,000). Further south, a short jaunt off Route 1 will take you to the quaint Stonewall Jackson Shrine. The house where Jackson died is the centerpiece of the rural estate, which is run by the National Park Service. From there, rangers can give you directions to a graveyard about 30 miles northwest that boasts a single gravestone. It reads: "Arm of Stonewall Jackson; May 3, 1863." Jackson had his left arm amputated before he was moved to the house, well behind enemy lines.

Worried about winter boredom, you say? Nevermore.

— Allison Devers

Edgar Allan Poe Museum, 1914-1916 E. Main St., Richmond, 804-648-5523, [www.poemuseum.org](http://www.poemuseum.org). Open Sunday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. \$6, seniors and students: \$5, 8 and younger free. Edgar Allan Poe's 197th Birthday Celebration, Jan. 22, free, but donations welcome.

Road Trip maps are available online at [www.washingtonpost.com/roadtrip](http://www.washingtonpost.com/roadtrip), as are addresses and hours of operation (be sure to check before you go). Have an idea for a trip? E-mail [roadtrip@washpost.com](mailto:roadtrip@washpost.com).

