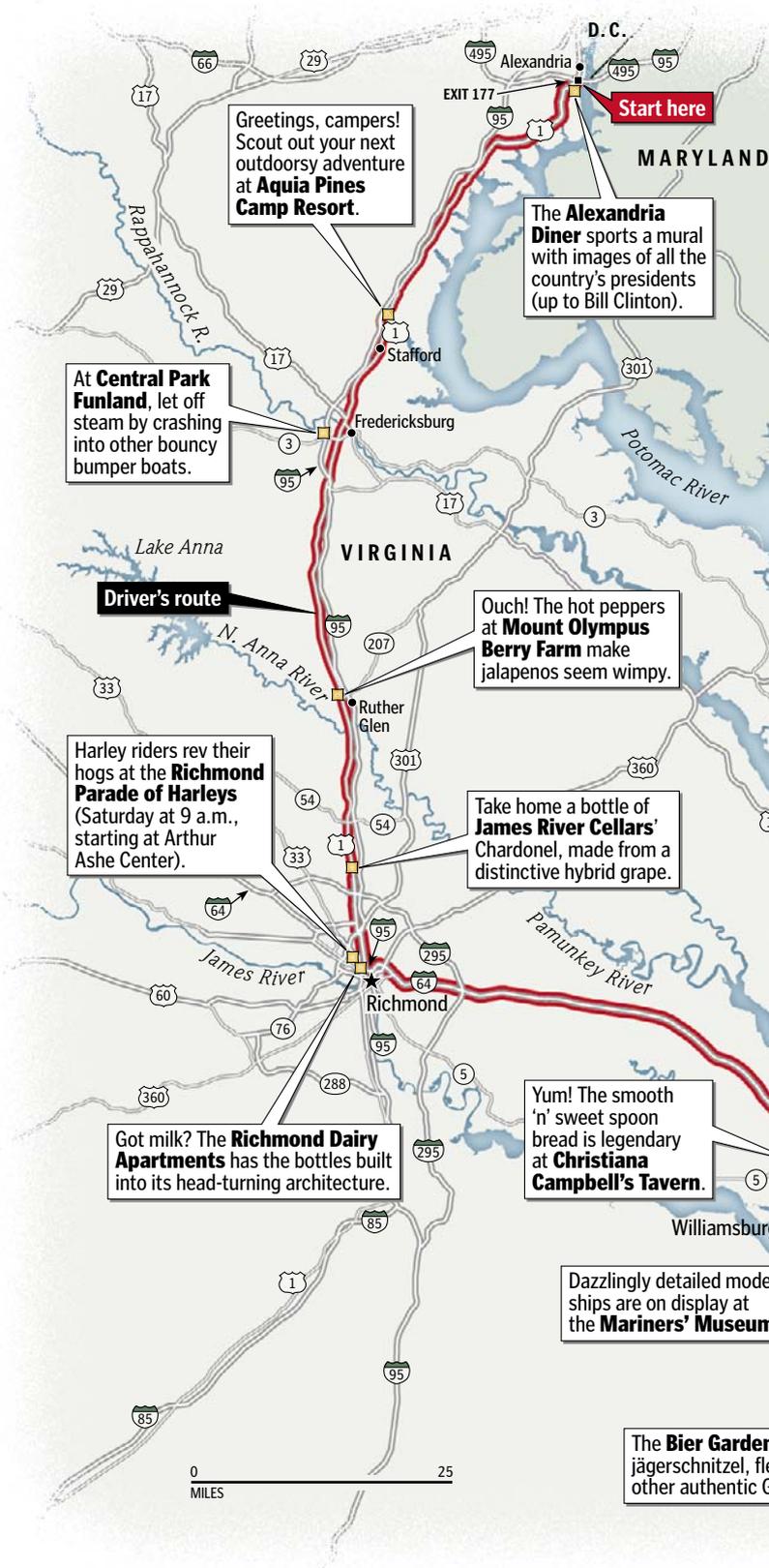


ROADTRIP

East Coast Surfing Championships



WHERE: Virginia Beach

WHY: Giant milk-bottle dwellings, tiny ships and surfin' U.S.A.

HOW FAR: About 200 miles from Alexandria, or 3.5 hours.

It's the site of North America's oldest surfing contest and the second-oldest regularly run surf competition in the world. Hawaii? Nope. California? Puh-leese. People, wake up and smell the Coppertone: This week, the guys and gals of summer will be hangin' 10 at Virginia Beach.

The 42nd annual East Coast Surfing Championships (Aug. 25 to 29) are expected to attract 300 amateur wave riders and 150 pros—the latter competing for an ego-stoking \$35,000 in cash prizes. Each day, starting at 7 a.m., visitors perched on the beachfront can watch big names including North Carolina's Tony Silvagni (last year's winner) and Florida's Falina Spires shoot the curl. Landlocked ho-daddies can also choose to play volleyball, compete in an 8K race (Saturday at 8 a.m.) or listen to live alt-rock from Lit, Cracker and the Surge. Or, go check out skateboarders Bucky Lasek and Pierre-Luc Gagnon busting "kick flips" and "180 ollies" on a ramp near the boardwalk.

To fortify yourself for the long trip, start at the Alexandria Diner, where you can breakfast on poached eggs atop crab cakes while cozying up in one of the booths separated by etched glass. Need to stretch those legs? Pull over at Central Park Funland, where you can climb a rock wall, play laser tag or brave a roller coaster ride.

Even the most jaded, seen-it-all types will do a double take at the Richmond Dairy Apartments. The building opened in 1902 as a working dairy. When it was turned into a 113-unit apartment complex in 2001, developer Alexander Alexander (yup, that's his name) kept the formation, allowing some dwellers to live inside massive milk bottles (imagine rounded living rooms). Finally, still more outre architecture can be viewed at Norfolk Botanical Gardens. Within the 155 acres of greenery, you'll find the "Tremendous Treehouses" exhibit, which showcases colossal structures fashioned into pirate ships, mazes and other mind-blowing shapes.

— Tony Sclafani

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