

Presidential Homes

PARENTAL GUIDE

George Washington's Mount Vernon, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, and James Madison's Montpelier are centers of our nation's history, places for parents to bring their children to learn about the Presidents and the American story. This document is a quick guide to The Heritage Foundation's detailed assessment of the three houses. Mount Vernon is the gold standard and the site where we recommend parents take their children.

MOUNT VERNON

- Regular house tour takes 20 minutes; more in-depth tour takes 45 minutes.
- Numerous additional tours, including self-guided audio tour, Enslaved People of Mount Vernon, and Mrs. Washington's Mount Vernon.
- Extensive grounds with reconstructed slave quarters and buildings, tombs of George and Martha Washington, cemetery for enslaved people.
- Overall, slavery is discussed during the main house tour and Enslaved Peoples tour in a manner that is historically driven and fair.
- Museum and Education Center has extensive series of galleries, movies, and interactive exhibits on the house, those who lived on the estate, and Washington's life and accomplishments.

MONTICELLO

- 45-minute house tour on the contents of the mansion, Jefferson, and enslaved people; 90-minute behind-the-scenes tour.
- Additional tours: 2.5-hour From Slavery to Freedom Tour, family tour, VIP and private, gardens and grounds, scavenger hunts, Slavery at Monticello, and Jefferson impersonator.
- Exhibits in the cellars on purpose of each room and enslaved individuals and families and Mulberry Row: reconstructed enslaved people's quarters and workshops.
- Rubenstein Visitor Center includes 7.5-minute film on Jefferson, slavery, and Monticello and exhibits on constructing Monticello, Jefferson as architect and scientist, and enslaved people.
- Omits that historians disagree about Jefferson's relationship with Sally Hemings.
- Limited information on Thomas Jefferson's accomplishments.
- Puts forth that "all men are created equal" did not apply to everyone rather than "men" being a substitute for "mankind."

MONTPELIER

- 60-minute house tour on James and Dolley Madison, enslaved people, and Constitution.
- Additional Enslaved Community Tour, giving history of slavery and what life was like for the enslaved.
- Exhibits include The Mere Distinction of Colour on slavery in the cellars and reconstructed south yard; Mysteries at Montpelier archeological exhibit (currently closed); DuPont family exhibit; Train Depot (currently closed); and Gilmore Cabin (currently closed).
- 2.5-minute introductory video and 8-minute video on Madison's ideas in the Visitor Center.
- Limited time dedicated to Madison and no exhibits on Madison's contributions.
- Claims "all men are created equal" did not apply to everyone rather than including all of mankind.
- Some exhibits on slavery give a historical account of the institution and identify individuals and families who were enslaved.
- Contemporary 11-minute video in the cellar connecting "the history of slavery to many of the racial and cultural issues we still contend with today."
- Misleading exhibit on the Constitution: Does not explain that the delegates refused to enshrine property in men and leaves the impression the Constitution is pro-slavery.
- Exhibit in the south yard aimed at children with books for "introducing young children to topics like race, identity, and justice;" books by critical race theory authors sold in bookstore.
- Guide for engaging descendent communities and on how slavery should be taught claims that "it is not enough simply to discuss the humanity and contributions of the enslaved. It is imperative that these institutions also unpack and interrogate white privilege and supremacy and systemic racism."
- Overlap between the exhibits and Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) materials; SPLC associates involved in leadership and in development of guide and video.