Frieze Frame
To see some of Monticello’s most elaborate details, look up. Friezes rim the ceilings in the Parlor, Dining Room, Bedchamber and Entrance Hall. The Dining Room frieze pictured here is decorated with rosettes and ox skulls — a common architectural element in classic Roman temples.

BE my GUIDE
A Fuller Picture
Introduced this past summer, the new Highlights Tour provides an opportunity for guides to show more of Monticello than ever before. The tour still includes the house’s iconic rooms, but it also adds the South Wing and the West Lawn. The South Wing contains the post-1809 kitchen, cook’s room, smokehouse, living quarters for enslaved workers, the dairy and the Life of Sally Hemings exhibit.

Guides and historians have been working for several years to develop the new tour. “A lot of behind-the-scenes work went into it,” says Justin Bates, a guide and tour supervisor. “This has been part of a long discussion happening at Monticello about how to tell a more accurate and inclusive history of all who lived and labored on this plantation.”

The Highlights Tour helps us show that Monticello was more than just a house. The expanded scope lends itself to conversations about the American Revolution, the legacy of the Declaration of Independence, and Jefferson’s ideas regarding a healthy and successful democracy, along with the legacy of slavery and race in America. I think people appreciate the broad, balanced and complex view of American history we can provide.

— Justin Bates, guide and tour supervisor

Hidden Gems
Taking a tour with an experienced Monticello guide provides a nuanced perspective on Jefferson’s historic home. They can also share interesting sights that might otherwise be overlooked — here are a few of guide and tour supervisor Karen Quillen’s favorites.

Morning Glory
In 1819, Jefferson wrote, “But whether I retire to bed early or late, I rise with the sun.” He may have admired the sunrise through this framed view looking southeast from the all-weather passageway. This beautiful view changes with the time of day and the seasons.

Light Show
After living in France for five years, Jefferson returned home and redesigned his home to maximize the use of natural light. The sunlight streaming through the windows creates beautiful shapes on the floors and walls inside.

Time Is Short
On Fridays and Saturdays, the cannonball weights that power the Great Clock in the Entrance Hall descend through a hole in the floor to the basement. The weights mark the days of the week as they move, but there’s not enough wall space for all seven days. Jefferson ordered the clock while he lived in Philadelphia, but intended for it to come to Monticello. When he finally had the clock installed in the newly finished Entrance Hall, the weights didn’t quite fit.

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Guided tours of Monticello this winter season include our Highlights, Behind-the-Scenes, and Slavery at Monticello tours. We also offer private guided tours. For more information, visit monticello.org/visit/tickets-tours.