

# STYLE

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## THE DC PAGE

by Joe Sugarman

### Dining

Autumn not only signals the return of Congress, it also marks the exodus of Washingtonians to the Virginia countryside for a little leaf-watching and R&R. Virginia's winding roads, tasty wineries and explosive fall foliage make a good road trip for vacation-minded Baltimoreans, too. Here's where to dine or overnight while you're taking it all in.

Feel like a splurge? The ultimate Virginia countryside retreat remains the **Inn at Little Washington**, where the five-course prix fixe dinner starts at \$108 per person and a suite can top \$900 per night. But what's a few hundred bucks to eat at a restaurant that's been honored as the nation's best by the James Beard Awards, the "Oscar" of the food biz? Chef/co-owner Patrick O'Connell has been "wowing" guests and food critics for 25 years. He's had to—there's not much else to the town of Washington, Va., all of four blocks long. New at the Inn is a row of gift shops with locally made handicrafts and a new suite set in a circa-1790 cabin. 540-675-3800



Actor Robert Duvall may have sold **The Rail Stop** to his partner and chef, Tom Kee, in 2000, but Kee's food has always been the star of this show. Kee has earned a reputation for his gourmet country fare: lobster stew in a tomato-fennel broth, braised rabbit and quail with duck sausage, grilled shrimp and polenta. Set in the heart of Virginia hunt country, The Rail Stop doesn't accommodate overnight visitors, but the nearby **Grey Horse Inn**, a historic six-room B&B, makes a good place to bunk. (877-253-7020, [www.greyhorseinn.com](http://www.greyhorseinn.com)). Both are located in The Plains. Reach The Rail Stop at 540-253-5644, [www.railstoprestaurant.com](http://www.railstoprestaurant.com).



For a taste of the French countryside Virginia-style, try Great Falls' L'Auberge Chez Francois or White Post's L'Auberge Provençale. **L'Auberge Chez Francois** is the prototypical Alsatian country inn, with a dining room of heavy wooden beams, stained glass windows and pressed white linens. The restaurant has topped so many "Best of Washington" lists since its opening in 1956, Chef Jacques Haeringer might as well pack up his knives and head back to

France. He's got nothing left to prove. (703-759-3800, [www.laubergechezfrancois.com](http://www.laubergechezfrancois.com)). **L'Auberge Provençale**, a tres romantique six-room inn at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains near a half-dozen wineries, also scores high on the foodie meter. The six-course prix fixe menu (starting at \$50 per person), offers plenty of high-cholesterol cooking, like seared sea bass in a butter sauce or roast pheasant with duck and foie gras stuffing. 800-638-1702, [www.laubergeprovencale.com](http://www.laubergeprovencale.com).

They paved over any trace of the country in Tyson's Corner years ago, but the **Ritz-Carlton** is included in this list because more and more Baltimoreans are heading to this busy 'burbs just to eat at **Maestro**, the hotel's marquee restaurant. Chef Fabio Trabocchi is the 29-year-old conductor you'll see orchestrating the staff behind the sprawling exhibition kitchen. He divides his menu into traditional Italian dishes from his native Ancona and modern interpretations on the theme. Everything involves stunning, avante-garde presentations. Nowhere else will you receive your filet of smoked turbot plated and presented on a bed of hay, or your Dover sole rolled in basil leaves and served in a small glass. Tasting menus of three to seven courses range from \$74 to \$112. 703-917-5498, [www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com).



Visit the **Ashby Inn** and tell friends you're going to Paris for the weekend. Never mind its Paris, Va., population, 49. Innkeepers Roma and John Sherman are refugees of the D.C. rat race who opened the inn in 1984. Chef Christopher Carey prepares thoughtful country meals— herb-marinated lamb, pork loin with leeks— complemented by a notable wine list that changes weekly. You can bet it's the best meal you'll find in

this Paris. 540-592-3900, [www.ashbyinn.com](http://www.ashbyinn.com).

## On Stage

Pulitzer Prize-winner Paula Vogel's comedy, **The Mineola Twins**, involves two sisters battling over feminism, Vietnam, sexuality, family values and lovers both male and female. *Aug. 25 through Oct. 5. Presented by the Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company at the D.C. Jewish Community Center. 202-393-3939.*

Arena Stage's world premiere of "**Shakespeare in Hollywood**" by Ken Ludwig ("Lend Me a Tenor," "Crazy for You") brings Tarzan, Groucho Marx and one of Shakespeare's greatest mistaken romances together in one anything-goes

production. *Sept. 5 through Oct. 16. 202-488-3300.*

Stephen Sondheim's first new musical in nine years, "**Bounce**," has its debut at the Kennedy Center. The true story follows two 1920s con men as they swindle their way from the Alaskan Gold Rush to the Florida land boom. *Aug. 29 through Sept. 28. 202-737-4215.*

Emmy- and Tony Award-winning comedian Eddie Izzard brings his one-man show, "**Sexie**," to the Warner Theatre. *Oct. 27 and 28. 800-551-7328.*

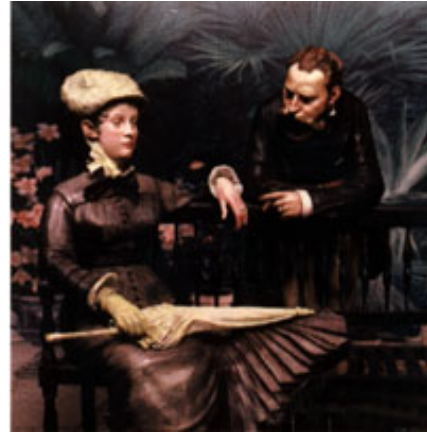
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## On The Walls

"**Beyond the Frame: The Sculptures of Seward Johnson**" showcases 18 life-sized vignettes inspired by the masterpieces of Renoir, Caillebotte, Manet, Monet and van Gogh. *Sept. 13 through Jan. 5. The Corcoran Gallery. 202-639-1700.*

Between spring and fall of 1909, Pablo Picasso produced 60 portraits of his companion, Fernande Olivier, in different mediums. All of the works, plus 50 related items, are on display in "**Picasso: The Cubist Portraits of Ferande Olivier**," at the National Gallery of Art. *Oct. 1 through Jan. 18. 202-737-4215.*

—Allison Houseworth



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