

Weekend escapes

The boating center of St. Michaels, Maryland: A quick getaway from Washington

The rat race ends within a couple of hours of D.C., London or Singapore. • By Lois Madison Reamy

Need to get out of town for a few days to watch the seasons change, golf with a buddy, hold a business retreat or do a deal? The getaway should be within a couple of hours by car, train or boat (no commercial flights, please); and it should be set in a distinctive locale and offer unusual recreations, such as the chance to tour a great president's home or slice a few balls into the South China Sea. The hotels must be well run, but not too fussy. So if you happen to be in Washington, D.C., Singapore or London, where do you go? Following are several alluring destinations. All have year-round appeal and can handle at least a basic meeting.

Chesapeake haven. When friends ask Farmington Asset Management president Arturo Brillembourg about weekend getaways from the U.S. capital, he thinks immediately of the flat delta country around the boating center of St. Michaels on Maryland's Eastern Shore along the Chesapeake Bay. "It's a beautiful location with a lot of little rivers, migrating ducks and geese in the fall . . . and one of the better hotels in the world," he says. The hotel he prefers — one of several in the area — is the Inn at Perry Cabin, which, despite its rustic name, is owned by world-class Orient-Express Hotels. He and his wife, Hilda Brillembourg,

president of Strategic Investments, live in nearby Easton.

Brillembourg favors late October to mid-November in this rural, green lacework of watery inlets on the Atlantic flyway, a time when more than 50,000 migrating ducks and Canadian geese descend on the area. At least half will winter there. The Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, an hour's drive from St. Michaels, conducts seasonal bird-watching tours. As welcome as the swallows to San Juan Capistrano, the return of these birds is celebrated with country music, retriever demonstrations and exhibits of wildlife paintings and highly prized hand-carved decoys in a Waterfowl Festival (November 12 to 14), whose hub is Easton. The participating towns and villages, which were isolated from Maryland proper until the 4.3-mile Bay Bridge connected this remote peninsula to the mainland in 1952, re-

From Washington, D.C.: Maritime or mountains?

Destination: St. Michaels, Maryland

Travel time: One and a half hours by car

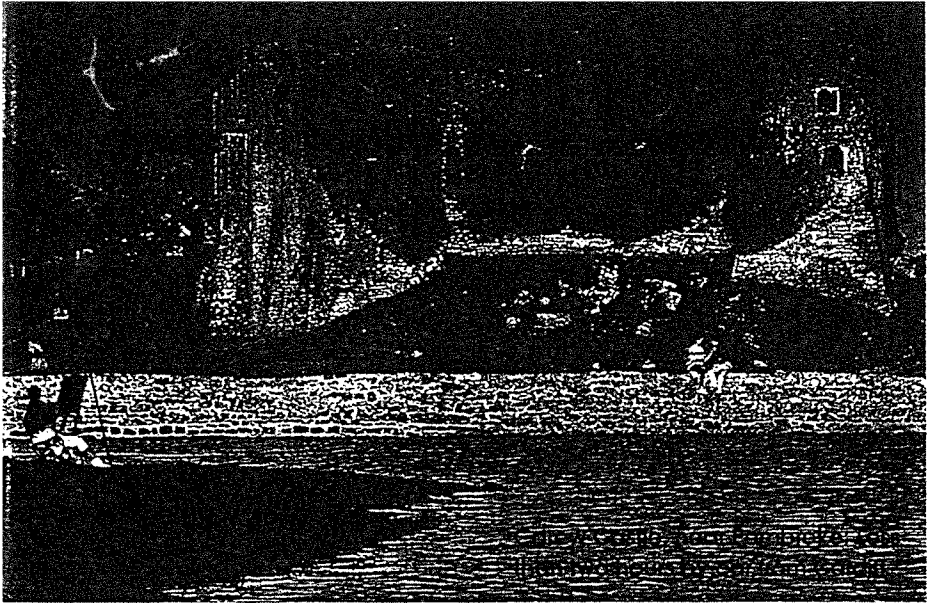
Lodging: Inn at Perry Cabin; daily rates from \$175*; information: www.perrycabin.com; reservations: (410) 745-2200

Destination: Charlottesville, Virginia

Travel time: Two hours by car

Lodging: Keswick Hall; daily rates from \$175*; information: www.keswick.com; reservations: (804) 979-3440

* Either single or double occupancy.



British Tourist Authority

perfect for small corporate meetings, which may reserve the whole hotel.

The Blue Ridge alternative. Thomas Jefferson, the third U.S. president, took three days to commute from Washington to his Monticello home in Charlottesville, Virginia, but today it's a breeze for weekenders. Guests at Keswick Hall, another Orient-Express hotel, get a breathtaking view of the majestic Blue Ridge Mountains, gilded in autumn and brushed in white dogwood and redbud in spring, from the golf greens at the affiliated Keswick Club.

Keswick Hall is a 1912 manor house built in the Italianate style. Groups can reserve all or part of the 48-room hotel, which includes six meeting rooms, one of which is a 34-seat, high-tech boardroom. The original Villa Crawford wing is perfect for elegant receptions.

The Keswick Club's 18-hole course was designed by Arnold Palmer, who is said to have called it the "finest in Virginia." Keswick also boasts clay and all-weather tennis courts, an indoor-outdoor swimming pool, a spa, croquet lawn, gardens and scenic lakes. There is skiing at Wintergreen Resort 30 minutes away.

For those with the leisure to venture outside Keswick Hall, Charlottesville offers the ultimate in Jeffersonia: his spectacular self-designed mountaintop home with its antique gardens, and the colon-

naded pavilions, towering trees and Rotunda of the University of Virginia, which Jefferson also designed.

As a university and medical center, Charlottesville has its fair share of restaurants. Among them: the C&O Restaurant, of French country origins, and its popular lunch-only Bistro, and Oregon Joe's, a modest spot popular with the local community. Keswick Hall's restaurants range from the Pool Pavilion for al fresco meals on warm days to the Palmer Room overlooking the golf course to the proper, white-napped Ashley Room, whose French doors open on to the garden.

Out from Singapore. A high-speed catamaran ferries passengers from bustling Singapore to "fantasy island," Prudential Assurance Singapore CEO Edmund Koh's label for Bintan Island in the South China Sea. "It's far away but so close," the insurance executive says of the Indonesian island of fishing villages and sea gypsy lore 28 miles off the Malay Peninsula. The Bintan Resorts concept development here has just completed half a dozen Baliesque hotels on 57,000 acres of the northern coast; the new resort features some of the best golfing in Asia.

It gets better. Koh's "second to none" hotel choice is the Banyan Tree Bintan, whose granite, timber and thatch construction blends with its natural surround-

Join us
Hotel New Otani Osaka
 welcomes the world's VIPs
 for its many international
 conferences, including the
APEC Osaka Meetings.
 Our top-level service is one
 of many reasons to choose
 us and we make sure
everything is remembered.
 Not much gets wasted
 either, since we're an
ecologically minded hotel.
The Hotel New Otani
Osaka is truly one step
ahead in every way.



The New Otani

HOTEL NEW OTANI OSAKA

1-4-1 Shiromi, Chuo-ku,
 Osaka 540-8578, Japan

Call 6-6941-1111/ Facsimile: 6-6941-9769
<http://www.newotani.co.jp/osaka/index-e.htm>

Members of

The Leading Hotels of the World

● GDS Access Code: "LW"

● Airline Mileage Service Partners:
 Northwest Airlines/American Airlines /
 United Airlines/Japan Airlines/
 All Nippon Airways/Japan Air System