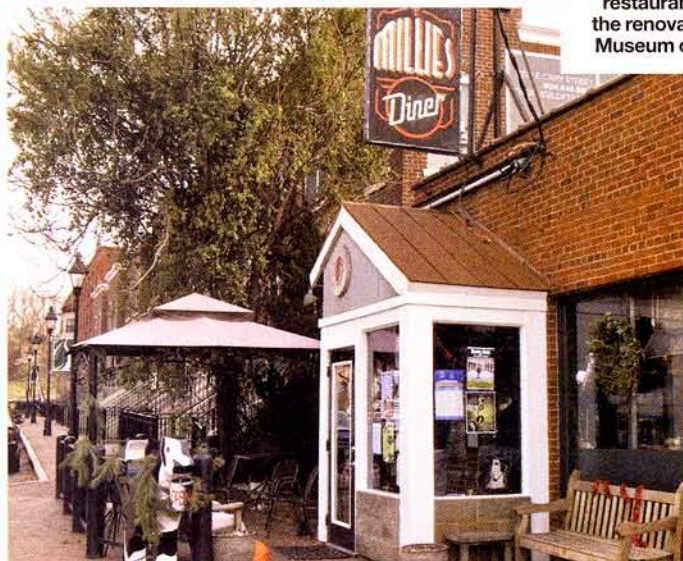


Richmond has new energy, from its restaurant scene to the renovated Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.



Revisit an Old Favorite

2 HOURS AWAY

Once the capital of the Confederacy, Richmond has been revitalized in recent years with interesting dining and nightlife choices that keep people downtown after dark.

During the day, there are 48 museums to explore. Last year, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts unveiled a renovation and expansion. Visit by May 15 to see an exhibit of 176 works by Pablo Picasso from the artist's personal collection, courtesy of Paris's Musée National Picasso. The VMFA is the only museum on the East Coast hosting the traveling exhibit.

Among the accommodations offering Picasso packages is the Linden Row Inn. The inn's original buildings date to the 1840s. Guest rooms are furnished with Victorian and Empire-period antiques and reproductions.

Another reason to visit Richmond: This is the 150th anniversary of, as some in the South still call it, the War of Northern Aggression. The American Civil War Center is unique in equally examining Union, Confederate, and African-American perspectives.

The Confederate Congress met during the war at the Virginia State Capitol, where there are excellent guided tours.

On land once owned by Patrick Henry is the 80-acre Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. If you're in Richmond for Historic Garden Week, April 16 through 23, you also can tour some glorious private gardens and homes.

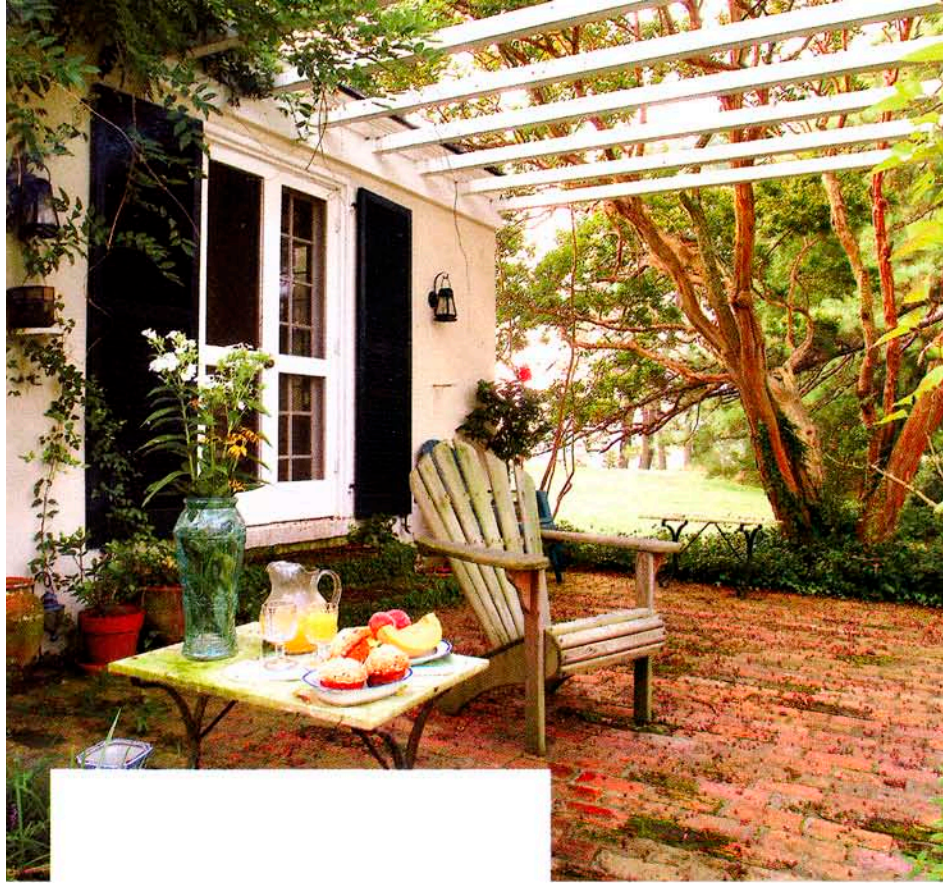
People feel at home at Millie's Diner, and many enjoy its Devil's Mess—a curried scrambled-egg-and-sausage concoction

served at brunch. For dinner, try Six Burner, one of the few Virginia restaurants government-approved for *sous-vide*, a low-temperature water-bath cooking method that retains more aroma and flavor. Chef Philip Denny, formerly of DC's Citronelle, changes the menu weekly.

For information on the **Picasso** show, go to vmfa.museum; admission is \$20. Rooms at the **Linden Row Inn** (804-783-7000; lindenrowinn.com) are \$99 to \$269 including continental breakfast. ontorichmond.com has information about activities surrounding the Civil War's 150th anniversary, and visitrichmondva.com provides a general visitor guide. For reservations at **Six Burner**, call 804-353-4060 or go to sixburner.net.

—Ann Cochran

Photograph of Richmond city view by Tony Shi Photography/flickr; Daily Images; museum by Travis Fullerton/Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; Millie's Diner by John G. Walter; J.E.B. Stuart statue by Independent Picture Service



Savor the Serenity

3 HOURS AWAY

Calm descends when you arrive at the North River Inn, driving on a lane lined with towering red maples. Once a 17th-century sea captain's estate, the 100-acre property is surrounded on three sides by water. It has an unhurried, graceful ambience.

Guest rooms are in three buildings, each with water views, luxe linens, and antiques. Steps from a dock, a horse pasture, and a walled garden is the cozy two-story Toddsbury Guest House. The sitting room has a fireplace and floor-to-ceiling bookcases; in the bedroom are another fireplace and a canopy bed. At Creek House, with four guest rooms, French doors lead to a terrace by the water where you can watch herons amid the hollies, cedars, and dogwood on the far shore.

Read, rest, or explore the quiet waters in canoes and kayaks. On weekends, join like-minded peace seekers for chef Marjorie Hayes's bountiful breakfasts. **North River Inn** (877-693-1616; northriverinn.com) is in Gloucester, Virginia. Rates: \$165 to \$255 for two on weekends, including breakfast. —Ann Cochran



Treat Your Kids

2 HOURS AWAY

Beyond the obvious allure of a town built on chocolate, there's much for families in Hershey, Pennsylvania, including an amusement park, a zoo, gardens, and golf.

The Boardwalk at Hersheypark's water-based attractions open May 28, but Hersheypark—with more than 65 rides and attractions, including 11 roller coasters—comes back to life in April. At Hershey's museums, kids can taste chocolate from around the world and create their own candy bars.

The historic Hotel Hershey has lots of activities—falconry, paintball, Segway tours, s'mores roasts. At the more casual Hershey Lodge, activities include "family chocolate bingo," all-weather ice skating, and an indoor pool. Hershey also has a campground open all year.

For information on **Hershey**, see hersheypa.com or call 800-437-7439. Spring and early-summer weekend rates at Hotel Hershey start at \$319; at Hershey Lodge, \$219.

—Ann Cochran