The Beauty of Home

Boulder: A temporary residence becomes a sanctuary
BY JENNIFER MILLER

Baltimore: Familiar paths reveal a new landscape
BY ELIZABETH EVITTS DICKINSON
The perfect getaway for spring

Teeming with parkland, mountains and outdoor adventure, this historic West Virginia town offers a relaxing warmer weather excursion.

By WP BrandStudio

A recent survey showed that 80 percent of people are dreaming about traveling once it becomes safe again. For travelers in the D.C. area, Berkeley Springs, W.Va., is an ideal spring destination. The town’s proximity to the city lets families avoid air travel, and after so many cold months inside, visitors can try numerous outdoor activities that allow for social distancing amid lush mountain scenery.

Berkeley Springs has been a choice warm weather destination since George Washington started visiting in the 18th century. This year, the town offers plenty of new adventures in the open air, from paddleboarding to mountain biking, as well as opening a new state park lodge, upgraded cabins and thought-provoking art exhibits that will satisfy repeat and first-time visitors alike.

“Once you get [people] here, they come back,” said Scott Fortney, superintendent of Cacapon and Berkeley Springs State Parks.

New adventures in the great outdoors

Set in the ridge and valley section of the Appalachians, Berkeley Springs offers easy access to two rivers and two state parks with ample hiking trails and peaceful lakes.

One of those places is Cacapon State Park, a 6,000-acre haven located about 20 minutes from town. Visitors can walk or hike along 23 miles of trails or explore about 20 miles of single-track mountain biking trails.

To soak up the scenery from another vantage, visitors can head to the water. Craft’s Adventures offers two-to-four-hour tubing trips down the nearby Cacapon and Potomac Rivers, where guests can spot abundant wildlife.

The next stop after any outdoor pursuit should be Berkeley Springs State Park, the only place in town offering direct access to the town’s unfiltered spring water, which has been attracting visitors for almost three centuries.

Updated hotels showcase local history

At the end of a long day spent outdoors, travelers can continue absorbing the unique character of Berkeley Springs by retiring to the newly-built Cacapon State Park Lodge. There, visitors can choose from 78 new rooms or stay in some of the recently-renovated historic park cabins.

Coolfont Resort, located about 10 minutes from Cacapon State Park, reopened in fall 2019 with renovated buildings and new amenities. New jacuzzi suites look out over Coolfont Lake, wooded hiking trails and picnic areas creating an altogether “serene” resort experience, according to owner Matt Omps.

Soaking up eclectic art

Art can also offer educational entertainment as travelers start to venture back out, according to Thom Rubel, executive director of Morgan Arts Council (MAC). From April 9 to May 30, the MAC co-op gallery will host “Bringing in the May,” a fantastical look at the legend that mythical fairies end their hibernation beneath the earth on May Day.

Seeking the perfect getaway this spring? Celebrate winter’s end with a restorative and rejuvenating trip to Berkeley Springs.

Learn more at BerkeleySprings.com
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Unable to travel, she approached her hometown of Baltimore as a new destination and discovered its culinary wonders. 16

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As the pandemic was hitting, her family fled their beloved Brooklyn for Boulder, Colo. 24

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On a Friday in early April, Meredith McLaughlin wrote in her journal that her family had pan-seared tuna steaks, roasted Brussels sprouts and steak fries for dinner. “As close to a restaurant meal as we will get for a while,” she noted. “The steak fries were perfect.” She also noted that the “fish market folks delivered the fish,” and that she and her husband had a “lovely walk” to Golubinjak, a wooded park in the village of Lokve, Croatia.

McLaughlin, a teacher at the University of Wyoming’s Laboratory School in Laramie, was on sabbatical in Lokve when the pandemic hit. (I connected with her through her sister-in-law, a childhood friend of mine.) When she wrote to me last August, she explained that she has long kept journals, but that she began a new one she calls “Quarantine Recipes” to record what she, her husband and their three kids ate, as well as their daily movements, in case they needed to do contact tracing. “Feeding my family was prevalent in my mind and took up a lot of time,” she added. She writes more when she’s feeling unsettled, she said, and she had noticed a “surge in entries” during the pandemic.

McLaughlin, it turns out, is like a lot of us. When the pandemic began, many people sensed that we were about to live through something historically notable, and took pains to document it. Organizations around the country and the world — historical societies, museums, libraries among them — began collecting artifacts about the pandemic, including personal narratives.

How recording our everyday thoughts during the pandemic is helping us — and historians

By Lia Kvatum

Illustration: Yadi Liu
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“To us, the details are mundane,” says Jeffrey Reznick, referring to how we might feel when writing down our musings during the pandemic. “But to a future scholar, they can tell us a little bit about how we were resilient in facing this profound change in our lives, or how we were not.”

“...”

Reznick and his colleague Christie Moffatt, the chair of NLM’s Web collecting and archiving efforts, are part of the library’s collaborative attempt to assemble artifacts from the current pandemic era — a push that started as soon as the World Health Organization declared covid-19 a global health emergency. While the archive contains analog materials — it even has an Anthony Fauci baseball card — there’s “a strong emphasis” on online content. It now has nearly 6,500 “items” from the Web, including articles, videos, press releases and personal stories. “There’s so many opportunities to collect and document this,” Moffatt says.

The library has an extensive archive of items that tell the story of significant medical events, including materials from the 1918 influenza pandemic, the 2015-2016 Zika virus outbreak and much more. But what’s happening now with covid is on a larger scale. “It’s been kind of really interesting looking back. It shows just how the story has changed since we started,” Moffatt says. “It’s really just a huge asteroid that it just does seem to get bigger and bigger with the impact that it’s having.” Reznick notes that the library believes the collection will be of significance to a wide swath of people in the future, not just historians and public health professionals, but also journalists, legal scholars, anthropologists and sociologists.

In early April, the National Women’s History Museum in Alexandria, Va., launched a covid journaling project aimed at detailing the experiences of women and girls as well as nonbinary individuals from a variety of backgrounds. “The goal was to provide a platform for participants to record their experiences,” says Lori Ann Terjesen, director of education at the museum, adding that female voices are frequently left out of the historical record. So far, she tells me, she has gotten a few hundred journals, both online and physical. The museum is planning an online exhibit and searchable database of the journals.

Submissions include art and poetry, in addition to diary entries. These run the gamut: Some are from people whose lives are inconvenienced but who are otherwise seemingly okay — while others show the devastating impact of this disease. A woman named Lakia records in her diary on April 10, 2020, that her friend is going to the hospital, and she can’t visit him because of covid restrictions. The next day, she writes, “Sadly I found out that my friend Donald, passed away [due] to the Coronavirus.” In another, a 24-year-old Massachusetts woman named Elizabeth writes that she suspects she had covid early on but was not tested because tests were limited. She writes of being frustrated that her part-time job is limited to 15 hours per week, and she hopes to have something new by the end of the month because she’s pulling in only about $240 per week. “I’m still trying to pay rent to avoid owing a bunch of money in rent once this is all over,” she writes at the end of April. “I’m also having a hard time heating my apartment because we have a [wood] pellet stove and pellets are no longer available.”

The museum suggests that women write for set amounts of time, such as 30, 60, 90 or 120 days, but is happy with any contributions. Initially, Terjesen tells me, the museum was going to accept submissions through the end of June 2020. That was then pushed to the end of December. Now, the project is ongoing. “I started getting emails from women saying, ‘You need to keep us going. There’s too much going on in the world,’” Terjesen recalls. “It was a form of therapy.”

Scientists, it turns out, believe there can be therapeutic value in keeping a record of one’s thoughts and feelings during difficult times. Adriel Boals, director of behavioral science in the department of psychology at the University of North Texas, is primarily interested in how trauma affects the brain. He says that expressive writing like journaling can be highly beneficial for people who are dealing with stressful events, such as the pandemic: “If someone has a bad experience and they keep it bottled up inside, that will eat away at your emotional health and it’ll eat away at your physical health.”

“One of the best buffers against the negative impact is social support,” he explains. “And I bet during the pandemic everyone’s social support networks have not been as present and readily available as they have been in the past.” Interestingly, he tells me, journaling about stressful things doesn’t necessarily make you feel better right away, because you’re dredging up unpleasant thoughts and emotions. But ultimately that gets offset. “It’s kind of like taking medicine that tastes bad,” he says. “But there’s a great long-term benefit that very much makes it worth your while.”

By the end of her journaling project for the National Women’s History Museum — which lasted 30 days — Elizabeth writes that she is planning to move and that she has been volunteering at a food pantry. “It feels good to be doing something helpful and to be interacting with people,” she writes. “It gives me a lot more purpose than I otherwise have been feeling.”

Lia Kvatum is a journalist in the D.C. area.
A new kind of class trip

Pack the car and head to Hagerstown, Md., for an excursion filled with fun outside-the-box learning opportunities.

By WP BrandStudio

School looks different for most children these days. It’s more important than ever that families take part in meaningful, fun activities together—like an educational field trip.

For families in the DMV, spending a few days in Hagerstown, Md., which is filled with historic landmarks, scenic state parks, public art, museums and outdoor activities, can provide plenty of opportunities for immersive learning—no classroom required.

Travel back in time

Journey into the past by stopping at the many historic sites in and around Hagerstown. Families can begin with a short hike on the stretch of the Appalachian Trail that leads to Washington Monument State Park. From there, you can head to Antietam National Battlefield via one of the state’s scenic byways.

Fort Frederick State Park also sits on the outskirts of Hagerstown, and in downtown Hagerstown, the self-guided Underground Railroad Trail takes visitors through areas connected with people who escaped from slavery and those who helped them.

Join the cultured club

Families looking for a dose of cultural enrichment and a way to supplement online art classes will have plenty of options to choose from around Hagerstown. The Washington County Museum of Fine Arts, currently open limited hours, features a permanent collection of more than 6,000 artworks.

The museum sits at the end of the half-mile Hagerstown Cultural Trail, a big draw for families looking to stretch their legs while taking in public art and beautiful landscaping.

Enjoy the great outdoors

Not all field-trip learning needs to happen in a museum. One of the Hagerstown area’s most popular (and distancing-friendly) attractions is the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. Always open and accessible from multiple points, the canal boasts a historic park and a 184-mile-long towpath that can be enjoyed via hiking or cycling.

For families looking to practice some teamwork, the Antietam Creek and Potomac River offer adventurous activities like guided river rafting, kayaking and tubing.

Get your fill

Need a jolt to keep you going? Grab a latte to go at Rooster Moon Coffeehouse. If you’d rather take a seat, Cannon Coffee lets guests reserve its “family corner,” where up to eight people can sip or nosh indoors safely.

A little rest and relaxation

When it’s time to turn in, Hagerstown has more than 2,000 hotel rooms at a range of properties that are taking careful safety precautions.

Families looking to venture outside of traditional hotel stays can choose from charming bed-and-breakfasts such as the Bay Farms Bed & Breakfast in Williamsport. Prefer to pitch a tent? Kids will love Yogi Bear’s Jellystone Park campground and resort, which has also added guidelines to keep everyone safe.

No matter where you stay (or what you do) while visiting Hagerstown, a trip to the area can offer plenty of benefits for kids and families alike.

Learn more by visiting visithagerstown.com
If you’re getting any reaction and any amount of feedback, that’s already a kind of a success.”

Forest Willard

INTERVIEW BY KK OTTESEN
PHOTOGRAPH BY AMY LIU/INNERSLOTH

Forest Willard, also known as ForteBass online, 31, is a game developer and a co-founder of Innersloth, the three-person indie game company that created the viral hit “Among Us,” which counted at its peak late last year half a billion players worldwide.

You all are a small development company when so many of the big hit games come out of much bigger studios. What was it like, that creative process, when you started working together?

Well, we’ve released two games. But part of the process is failure, honestly. It’s just so much failure. Like, our first actual game we never released. No one knows about it. I think it never really got a proper title. We worked on it for, like, a year. And basically said, “This isn’t working.” [Laughs.]

And so we went to a much smaller idea called “Dig2China” — and released it. It’s kind of fun, but nothing to write home about, right? And we kept trying to make another game and eventually came up with the idea of “Among Us.” Marcus [Bromander, an InnerSloth co-founder] used to play, basically, Mafia, but you would run around a house and pretend to, you know, kill each other. And then you’d flop on the floor and yell out, “dead body,” when you came across a dead body. So we wanted to make a party game where you can have that sort of running around, but without the limitations of: Okay, this house needs to be so big, or you need to have a field or a good terrain for running around. So that simple concept of just a game that already exists, but add one thing on it and make that good is sort of where “Among Us” came from.

“Among Us” was released in 2018 — and only in the last six months or so went viral. How was it received when it came out?

So we’re really bad at marketing. And we sort of knew that and expected how it would be received, which was, you know, not very many people played it. When we first launched our Twitter, for example, we would make a tweet about “Among Us” on Twitter. And no reaction at all. Like, actually, zero likes. Then Marcus would retweet it — he has a decent-sized following from his past success with the Henry Stickmin games — and it would get, like, 15 likes. Something like that. But that was good enough for us to actually get feedback. And that’s, I think, the most important part about that early stage: If you’re getting any reaction and any amount of feedback, that’s already a kind of a success.

Indie games right now have really terrible visibility. There’s tons of great games coming out that just don’t get any eyes at all.

And then how did it really take off, or go viral?

We had a Twitch streamer named [SR_]Kaif who made a video. Kaif is a British Twitch streamer, so that brought us into Europe a little bit. Enough that Steam picked us up, asked us if we wanted to do one of their sales promotions. And when we did that, we saw a huge spike in sales — like, three months’ worth of sales in two days.

And I’m sure people come to you all the time: How do I make my game go viral? What advice do you give?

Make a small game. The smallest possible game. Just so you know everything that goes into it. A lot of people come up with these big ideas, and they think they’re going to make a huge game. And then you get some amount into it, and you lose your way.

One of the big reasons for the game’s success is bringing people together. What role do you think the pandemic has had on the success of “Among Us”?

It’s really hard to say. But people have come to me and said, “Thanks for making this game. It’s helped me keep in contact with this person or that person, or my family plays it together.” Lots of schools saying: “This is actually sort of replacing recess in a way.” It’s helping keep people engaged with each other as, like, a school function. My favorite is the schools that have come and asked, “How do we block this because kids are playing too much of it during class?” So it’s definitely a mutual thing. Like, it helped us grow very quickly. And we’ve helped people stay in contact.

KK Ottesen is a regular contributor to the magazine. This interview has been edited and condensed. For a longer version, visit wapo.st/magazine.
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Photograph by Amy Liu / InnereSloth

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KK Ottesen is a regular contributor to the magazine. This interview has been edited and condensed. For a longer version, visit wapo.st/magazine.
Valerie Schultz is 26 and a zookeeper at the National Zoo. She is seeking someone who is “family-oriented, likes animals and [is] a good communicator.”

Robert Karlen is 24 and works at a consulting firm. He is looking for someone who “prefers a low-key evening at a quiet bar just having a few drinks.”

Finally ... feedback we’re excited to share

Valerie Schultz, 26, is a zookeeper at the National Zoo and spends her days tending to primates. A romantic prospect not being into animals is a dealbreaker for her. So, last fall she gave a guy she had been seeing for about a month the benefit of the doubt when he said he was being unresponsive of late only because his cat had just died. Days passed, then weeks. He dodged her texts — “how are you feeling?” “are we still on for that thing we planned?” — by saying he’d been staying off his phone ever since the cat’s death. And even Valerie, professional animal lover, was like: “You’re going to blame this on your cat?”

Anyway, now he’s dating his best friend. And, Valerie said, “I actually don’t even know if his cat died.”

She was telling this story to one of the keeper aides at work for the second or third time when the aide responded, “Have you ever heard of Date Lab?”

Valerie played some country music while doing her makeup (to “psyche myself up”) and putting on a sweater “that didn’t make me look frumpy” and jeans in her Petworth apartment, which she also shares with two roommates. At the last minute, she swapped out her necklace for earrings. She ordered spaghetti from Sfoglina in Van Ness that she barely touched (“it looked super weird eating on the screen”) and

[PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE Daters]
opened a bottle of Malbec.

A win for last-minute accessory changes: Robert noticed the earrings. “She was very cute,” he said of his first impression, noting her jewelry and makeup. Once her WiFi stopped being glitchy and Valerie could see more than just Robert’s beard and the top of his head, “I thought he was super cute. He definitely looked tall [and] in shape.”

“He was just so easy to talk to,” she said. So easy that they wound up discussing everything from the TV shows they both like (“New Girl,” “Schitt’s Creek”) to the Capitol insurrection, which occurred right outside Robert’s window. “So, it got a little heavy there for a bit,” she said. Her one concern was his age; her last boyfriend (pre-Dead Cat Guy) was also younger than she is. “I’m hoping he’s at the steps that I’m at,” she said.

Though Robert usually tries “to avoid the topic of jobs, just because that’s such a D.C. thing [and] I’m tired of that,” he was fascinated by Valerie’s work. “She said she could talk about animals all day, so I figured that was a green light to talk about it,” he explained. “I learned a lot. She trains the silverback at the National Zoo! Which was really cool. It’s not a profession you expect to run into in D.C.”

“We ended up talking for three hours,” Valerie said. “I don’t think either of us noticed until it was 8:45.”

Though both reported the conversation was more friendly than flirty, neither seemed too bothered by this, chalkling it up to the fact that they were complete strangers meeting over Zoom. Once they realized how late it had gotten, Robert gave Valerie his number in the Zoom chat. She texted him as their date was ending so he’d have her number, and then he “technically” asked her out. “I’d love to get together when she feels comfortable doing so,” he told me. For Valerie, that’s after her second vaccine appointment, scheduled for the week after their first date. “I’m looking forward to it,” he said.

“I’m really excited about it,” Valerie said. “This was a fantastic experience.”

RATE THE DATE

Robert: 4.5 [out of 5]. “Just because of the Zoom.”
Valerie: 5.

UPDATE

They braved an ice storm for an in-person date and are still talking.

Jessica M. Goldstein is a regular contributor to the magazine and The Post’s Style section.
The Chesapeake Bay, a Trail System Second-to-None, the Underground Railroad Story, crabs and oysters—be open for all of it in Maryland!

What’s a day like in Maryland? A day in Maryland means a hike along the C&O Canal on a scenic Trail System Second-to-None, before cooling your feet in the clean, calm waters of the Chesapeake Bay. A Maryland day means the hoof beats of wild Assateague horses pounding an accompaniment to the mighty rhythms of the Atlantic Ocean, and a four-star meal set to the glittering lights of Baltimore’s world-famous Inner Harbor. And yes, in Maryland, you can do it all in the same, magical day.

Explore the legacies and landscapes of Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass and all the heroes who placed their lives on the line for freedom right here in Maryland, the Most Powerful Underground Railroad Storytelling Destination in the World. Then contemplate your experiences over frothy local brews, delicate Chesapeake oysters and perfectly seasoned Maryland crabs while enjoying an inspired evening’s conversation along Maryland’s Crab & Oyster Trail.

NOW IS TRULY THE BEST TIME for local travel. By hitting the road in your own car—or even a rental—you’ll have more control over your trip, from who you travel with to where you stop along the way. You can also take comfort in knowing that communities around the greater D.C. area have been working hard to provide a safe and socially distanced environment for visitors.

So, get to know Virginia and Maryland a little better this spring and discover what makes our region unique. Travel back in time to one of many historic locales, from Civil War battlefields to Underground Railroad sites, to learn more about our nation. Stroll through small towns and browse their farmers markets, shop for handcrafted wares and dine on local specialties. And take advantage of opportunities to spend time in nature, whether on a trail or on the water.

If you’re ready for a getaway, these local destinations will satisfy your itch for adventure.

Take a bike ride through Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge.

Go fly fishing at Gunpowder River.

Sail the waters of the Chesapeake Bay.
If checking the mail is “getting out of the house”, it’s time to get away.

Experience a day or weekend of adventure. Take a guided tour. Visit our world-class art museums. Relax and play. Enjoy fine cuisine. Then, unwind at one of our official hotels. Make memories knowing we’re abiding by CDC guidelines for your safety.

Take advantage of our Spring Getaway Package with savings up to $500.* Package includes: 4th night free, $350 in resort outlet savings, Kids Eat Free**, and up to two complimentary Colonial Williamsburg length-of-stay admission tickets.

*Offer Valid: March 19, 2021 - May 29, 2021, 4 night min. stay. **Kids 12 and under, eat free with each paying adult from the child’s menu in participating Colonial Williamsburg restaurants.
Calvert County, Maryland

Unforgettable adventure awaits in picturesque Calvert County! Located on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay, Calvert County’s breathtaking landscape is home to historic lighthouses, miles of hiking trails, stunning beaches, award-winning cuisine and unique shopping opportunities. During your visit, explore the Layers of Time Trail at Jefferson Patterson Park & Museum and reflect on colonial life and culture. Discover the county’s unique maritime history and watch the otters play at the Calvert Marine Museum. Stroll the wooded paths at Annmarie Sculpture Garden and Arts Center, where you’ll find new exhibitions and classes for all ages. Create family memories while combing the Calvert Cliffs beaches for fossils from the Miocene era.

Get your steps in on beachfront boardwalks or charter a fishing boat and reel in the “big one”! Top off your visit with an award-winning, locally crafted beverage, as well as dinner from one of the many waterfront restaurants. With so much to enjoy, you may never want to leave!

Cecil County, Maryland

Escape to Cecil County—just between Philadelphia and Baltimore on I-95—to experience vibrant towns, waterways, foodie destinations and scenic countryside. Discover 80 miles of trails for hiking, biking and horseback riding. Experience slots and table games at Hollywood Casino. Make new furry friends at Plumptom Park Zoo, or play foot golf and Frisbee golf with the family. Take in an art show, or head for a farm to pick fruit, purchase fresh produce or eat mouthwatering homemade ice cream. Cecil County boasts five rivers, the C&D Canal and the Upper Chesapeake Bay. Bring your boat, book a tour or paddle along the shorelines. Be sure to save time at the end of the day to watch a brilliant sunset burst across a river horizon.

Dream & Discover!
Add a touch of days gone by to your Cecil County adventure. Venture onto roads less traveled to discover manor homes, 18th- and 19th-century churches and numerous National Register historic markers. Catch the echo-o-o of your voice in a covered bridge, or step back in time with a visit to Mount Harmon Plantation. Hike the trail to Turkey Point Lighthouse—circa 1833—and experience the magnificent view from a cliff overlooking the headwaters of Chesapeake Bay.

**Frederick County, Maryland**

Downtown Frederick boasts a thriving historic district full of specialty shops, a lively and diverse art scene, and celebrity-chef culinary experiences. History buffs can explore a Civil War battlefield, walk in the footsteps of Francis Scott Key, and learn about healing and compassion at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine. Venture outside the city to see three historic covered bridges and wander picturesque mountain trails in National and State parks. It’s only a short hike to Cunningham Falls waterfall, Maryland’s largest cascading waterfall. Take in some fresh air while hiking and biking along the C&O Canal National Historical Park.

From nationally acclaimed breweries to small emerging distilleries, the variety of beer, wine and spirits in Frederick will please enthusiasts and casual fans alike. Grab a seat in one of the area’s dozens of specialty shops, a lively and diverse art scene, and celebrity-chef culinary experiences. History buffs can explore a Civil War battlefield, walk in the footsteps of Francis Scott Key, and learn about healing and compassion at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine. Venture outside the city to see three historic covered bridges and wander picturesque mountain trails in National and State parks. It’s only a short hike to Cunningham Falls waterfall, Maryland’s largest cascading waterfall. Take in some fresh air while hiking and biking along the C&O Canal National Historical Park.

From catching up over steamed crabs to seeking culinary adventure on the Crab and Oyster Trail, Maryland is open for making every dining experience an opportunity for connection. Be open for an overnight trip. Go to visitmaryland.org.
of tasting rooms, more than anywhere in Maryland, and sample exclusive drinks with unique flavors.

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Enjoy afternoon tea at the Williamsburg Inn.

Enjoy a walk or bike ride along the C&O Canal and visit Lockhouse #28.

PHOTO CREDIT: Courtesy of Frederick Magazine

Spring in the Colonial Williamsburg historic area offers a range of fun experiences for the whole family (not to mention an unbeatable Spring Getaway Package offered by the resorts). You’ll dine on colonial inspired fare at historic taverns, take aim and fire a flintlock musket, and let someone else do the driving during a horse drawn carriage ride. ►

Go back in history at the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area.

PHOTO CREDIT: Colonial Williamsburg Resorts

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Unable to travel, she approached her hometown of Baltimore as a new destination and discovered a city of culinary wonders.

Last spring I was supposed to travel to the west coast of Ireland for work, and while there I planned to return to one of the Aran Islands, Inis Mór, a place I'd visited in my 20s. I have memories of a particular meal, served at a whitewashed cottage perched on the craggy, windswept shoreline. A chef opened her home to one seating a night, and inside the warm, candlelit dining room I ate fish caught that morning and seasoned with dulse from the sea, fennel and potatoes pulled from her garden and warm brown bread served with cheese courtesy of the local goats. I read recently that the culinary offerings on the Aran Islands have prospered, and I could practically taste that meal all over again.

For me, place has always been intricately tied to food. I spent years working in food service, putting myself through college and supporting my early years as a freelance writer. I served hot dogs from a truck, waited tables at fine-dining restaurants and spent a few peripatetic years living on a tour bus, seeing the country as a caterer for rock bands. I learned how to chiffonade and braise, how to pair wines, but most important, I learned how meals made with care resonate with people, and how recipes offer a glimpse into geography, history, politics and culture. When I travel I seek off-the-beaten-path spots where the locals eat — or I talk my way into a private kitchen — because I believe that how we cook, and what we have stocked in our pantries, is one of the surest ways to understand a place and connect with its people and their stories.

I never made it back to Ireland because of the pandemic. Instead, I stayed landlocked in my hometown of Baltimore. My husband set up office in the dining room, my daughter finished third grade online, and our puppy, miffed that everyone was in his space all day, took to eating the rugs. I took to traveling in my head. I reread the books of author Tim Robinson, who drew intricate maps of the Aran Islands, where he lived. Robinson made his home the place of his exploration through a study that has been called a “deep map”; looking not just at what exists on current cartographies, but...
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probing the phyllo layers of history, landscape, nature and folklore. Sadly, his explorations ended last year in April when he died of COVID-19. As the pandemic circumscribed our movements, I found myself aching for travel, for fresh scenery — for a literal stream in nature, beyond the Wi-Fi-enabled cough into my home. For my travel has always meant escaping the city where I live, but what if, like Robinson, I approached Baltimore as the destination? Could I begin to see the landscape of my city again?

My first stop early in the pandemic was the bakery called Motzi Bread, run by husband and wife Russell Trimmer and Maya Muñoz and located in the Harwood neighborhood of north-central Baltimore. When flour disappeared from store shelves last spring owing to global demand, I read a story of a 1,000-year-old mill in England returning to its roots and milling flour. It got me wondering where my flour comes from. At Motzi (pronounced “MOAT-zi”), all of the bread and pastries are made from grains grown in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and milled on-site, making it one of the few storefront bakeries in the country to exclusively use local whole grains.

For my first visit I decided to take the slow path and walk instead of drive. I didn’t follow the grid of sidewalks running across busy streets, but walked the water. Baltimore is so often portrayed as a city of grit and crime that we can forget its rich topography. It sits in a fertile stretch of the Piedmont Plateau and is laced by rivers and streams sluicing their way to the Chesapeake Bay. Just off the busy four-lane road near my house is a trail that follows a stream called Stony Run. I emerged from the path at the edge of Johns Hopkins University’s Homewood campus, and from there I cut past the Baltimore Museum of Art, where the outdoor sculpture garden offers a view of Alexander Calder and Auguste Rodin. In a car Motzi is easy to miss. But walking, the bakery hit me a full block away with the exquisite scent of fresh bread. Then I saw the line of people, about 20 of them, waiting six feet apart on a busy city street. It wasn’t until I turned the corner onto East 28th Street that I saw the bakery itself, tucked into the first floor of an old Goucher neighborhood, it sits in a fertile stretch of the Old Goucher neighborhood, it sits in a fertile stretch of the Old Goucher neighborhood. A sign reminiscent of a European shop hangs in the doorway, and a big glass window.”

I walked over one day and, mask on, spent an afternoon in the bakery. “When it comes to something like bread, it should be accessible to people,” she said. Interestingly, Muñoz said customers sometimes feel like they can’t pay a lesser price. “People aren’t used to being given that kind of power.”

As the pandemic persisted, they began offering online orders from the front porch. “It’s a way to the Chesapeake Bay. Just off the busy four-lane road near my house is a trail that follows a stream called Stony Run. I watched as Trimmer opened the kitchen to international chefs living in Baltimore for pop-ups and have hosted classes about lacto-fermentation and pickling. Since opening, Larder has offered a sliding scale of prices for their food so that people can pay what they can afford. Amid various city lockdowns last year, the couple started a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) — a community-supported restaurant — last fall. Customers pay for a month of meals in advance and pick up the food each week along with fresh produce from local farms. The day I visited, Helena and her staff were busy preparing a duck cassoulet for the 80 members of the CSA (there’s a waiting list). Helena’s dishes are riffs on the traditional — comforting and complex at the same time. Larder is a reflection of the layering of flavors. The duck cassoulet, for instance, has a base of creamy coco bianco beans and is similar to a true French cassoulet, but is topped with her Quarantine Krait, a surprising, pickle-infused addition. As she experimented with a vegan dressing, I watched her loosely follow a recipe but add her own ingredients, including a salty, slightly spicy brine from pickled habanada peppers. Helena makes her own dry spice blends using local ingredients and sells them in her store. Every spice, every dish, has a story. The bay leaves that she added into a stock dish are an example. “I didn’t just add them,” she said. “I cut them from a plant that I happened to figure out how to create a microclimate in your yard and grow a bay laurel tree,” she said.

Helen has forged a relationship with all the farmers she partners with, and when I asked her whom I should visit next, she sent me to someone with an eye-opening take on nurturing the local landscape.

Marvin Hayes is the program director of the Baltimore Compost Collective, an organization that collects food scraps from Baltimore residents in seven South Baltimore neighborhoods and composts those scraps at the Filbert Street Community Garden. I don’t know anybody who has “visited a composting site” on their travel wish list, but this place is wholly different. It’s the heart of a community garden, located in South Baltimore’s Curtis Bay neighborhood, was founded in 2010 as a part of the city’s Adopt-a-Lot (Continued on Page 22)
probing the phyllo layers of history, landscape, nature and folklore. But what if, like Robinson, I approached Baltimore as the destination? Could I begin to see the landscape of my city again?

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Motzi began in 2019 as a subscription-only bread business. As the pandemic persisted, they began offering a loaf a week while also supplying restaurants. Muñoz, wearing a range from puckish sourdough to slightly spicy brine from pickled habanada peppers. Helena makes her own dry spice blends using local ingredients and sells them in her store. Every spice, every dish, has a story. The bay leaves that she added into a stewing pot, for instance, “came from a neighbor who figured out how to create a microclimate in his yard and grow a bay laurel tree,” she said.

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Marvin Hayes is the program director of the Baltimore Compost Collective, an organization that collects and distributes animal-manure-rich compost. The couple then donates. “Pay-it-forward is a way to support from her spouse, Joseph del Pesco, 45, an artist and cook who spent time in kitchens like Alice Waters’s famed Chez Panisse. One of her first endeavors in Baltimore was touring farms. “There is such an amazing small-farm collective in Maryland,” she said. “I wanted to buy kids to learn how to compost those scraps at the Filbert Street Community Garden. I don’t know anybody who has a composting site on their travel wish list, but this place is wholly different. It’s a city’s Adopt-a-Lot Chez Panisse. One of her first endeavors in Baltimore was touring farms. “There is such an amazing small-farm collective in Maryland,” she said. “I wanted to buy kids to learn how to compost those scraps at the Filbert Street Community Garden. I don’t know anybody who has a composting site on their travel wish list, but this place is wholly different. It’s a city’s Adopt-a-Lot community garden, located in South Baltimore’s Curtis Bay neighborhood, was founded in 2010 as a part of the city’s Adopt-a-Lot program. It sits in a fertile stretch of farm that grew grains and practiced sustainable agriculture, part of an alliance of farmers endeavoring to take the soil back from decades of industrial farming, before he began baking in restaurants. “I saw that there was a need for bakers who could work with whole-grain flour,” he said. “I couldn’t find the bakery itself, tucked into the first floor of an exceptional bread business out of the couple’s kitchen. People signed up for a loaf a week and picked up their orders from the front porch. In spring 2020 they opened the bakery in the Piedmont Plateau and is laced by rivers and streams sluicing their way to the Chesapeake Bay. Just off the busy four-lane road near my house is a trail that follows a stream called Stony Run.

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reliable Internet access—so solar power fires a WiFi router. Hayes called the city’s 311 system about swarms. Hayes’s namesake arrived in the incinerator and the landfill every week. Hayes has a hope: that his modest enterprise spreads to community gardens across the city, that people learn to compost their food scraps, and that he can help move the fruit and flowers they grow here, including native black-eyed Susan.

He brought me to a chicken coop where the waterford—a ducks, geese, turkeys and chickens—chased my cheering alarm at the approach of the first. Hayes built two three-bin compost lots. Hayes's namesake arrived in the incinerator and the landfill every week. Hayes has a hope: that his modest enterprise spreads to community gardens across the city, that people learn to compost their food scraps, and that he can help move the fruit and flowers they grow here, including native black-eyed Susan.

The honeycomb they harvest from the bees is scented with the pollen of hazelnut and fig trees. Hayes’s favorite are the papaws, which are native to South Carolina. His grandson is named for the honey bee who stung him: "Pumpkin Spice." Hayes is a tall 48-year-old, and his hair is short and white. He crumbled a bit of the damp humus into my palm. It smelled of black gold, I thought of how the French fiercely protect the notion of terroir, and in a city like Baltimore, we forget that we have it, too.

Across the water from Curtis Bay, as the crow flies, is the historic East Baltimore waterfront neighborhood of Fell’s Point. This is a place I believed I knew well. My maternal grandfather grew up on Ann Street, just blocks from the water, and he spent his early years there. His family was from Germany through my mother’s father, a German-Canadian named Christian von Lowe. My maternal grandmother’s family emigrated from Germany through the Port of Baltimore. I can trace my interest in cooking to my grandmother’s sauerbraten, slow-simmered beef and dumplings that I watched her make at every holiday meal.

Portions of Baltimore, particularly the land here along the Chesapeake Bay, belonged to the Thackeray family for more than 200 years before colonization. From the 1940s to ‘60s, East Baltimore also became home to a large population of Lumbee Indians from Robeson County, N.C. They migrated north to escape the Jim Crow South, where many were sharecropping on what was once their tribal homeland and unable to make a living. So many Lumbee people lived in a handful of blocks in East Baltimore at mid-century that it was dubbed “the reservation.” Only a few Lumbee people live in a handful of blocks in East Baltimore at mid-century that it was dubbed “the reservation.”

I met Ashley Minner one day on South Broadway, in the heart of what was once the Lumbee “reservation.” Only a few Lumbee people live in the original neighborhood now; most moved to the suburbs decades ago, like Minner’s grandmother. Minner’s family is an important part of the Lumbee story in Baltimore, but few Baltimoreans today know anything of this history.

Minner is a Lumbee preacher from North Carolina in charge, and there are stories she tells that she calls this her own Lumbee ghost tour: “Most of the places we visit will have either been razed by urban renewal or no longer exist as a Lumbee business.”

“Being in the skin I’m in, people look at me and assume I’m everything I am,” Minner told me. "When you don’t see yourself represented in the landscape, it messes with you. You start to wonder: Am I really Indian? Am I really Lumbee? But when you see pictures of what was and understand for yourself by walking through much of what was and how many of us there were — just to know you have that history here — is important.”

T o walk across our overbuilt urban terrain, Tim Robinson wrote in his book “Stone of Aran: Pilgrimage,” is to remember that “every step carries us across centuries, histories, politics. . . To forget these dimensions of the step is to forgo our honour as human beings.” Traveling my city these past several months with people like Minner has reminded me of the myriad ways we are shaped by the landscape, both present and past. Travel, at its best, shakes us from the stupor of everyday life and returns us home again more alert and aware. It reminds us of what we truly are. It helps us find the landscape we take for granted, the cultural and biological wealth upon which we depend, to transmute everyday life into an adventure. I opened myself up to my city with the curiosity of a tourist and the wonder of a traveler, and I realized that what I really want in my life is not just another adventure, but to keep it alive through food.

Baltimore-based artist Ashley Minner has been keeping the Lumbee-Baltimore story alive through historical research and oral storytelling. She recently produced a new Lumbee archive named the Ashley Minner Collection, which will be housed within the Maryland folk-life archive at the University of Maryland Baltimore County’s Alan O. Kuhn Library.

From top: Marvin Hayes, program director of the Baltimore Compost Collective at Filbert Street Community Garden. Minner is a Lumbee artist and public historian who is collecting histories and artifacts of the Lumbee who lived in Baltimore. You can taste the landscape in the honey. As I left, my fingers stained from black gold, I thought of how the French fiercely protect the notion of terroir, and in a city like Baltimore, we forget that we have it, too.

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From top: Marvin Hayes, program director of the Baltimore Compost Collective at Filbert Street Community Garden. Goats at the garden. Atina Minner, a Lumbee artist and public historian who is collecting histories and artifacts of the Lumbee who lived in Baltimore. You can taste the landscape in the honey. As I left, my fingers stained from black gold. I thought of how the French fiercely protect the notion of terroir, and in a city like Baltimore, we forget that we have it, too.

Across the water from Curtis Bay, as the crows fly, is the historic East Baltimore waterfront neighborhood of Fell's Point. This is a place I believed I knew well. My family lived here for America, and it’s a place I have connections to. My maternal grandfather grew up on Ann Street, just blocks from the water, and he spent his life building stuff.-city—like the Port of Baltimore. I can trace my interest in cooking to my grandmother’s sauerbraten, slow-cooked beef and dumplings that I watched her make at every holiday meal.

Portions of Baltimore, particularly the land here along the Chesapeake Bay, belonged to Germany before colonization. From the 1940s to ’60s, East Baltimore also became home to a large population of Lumbee Indians from Robeson County, N.C. They migrated north to escape the Jim Crow South, where many were sharecropping on what was once their tribal homeland and unable to make a living. So many Lumbee people lived in a handful of blocks in East Baltimore at mid-century that it was dubbed the “Tommy Thompson.” It remains an important part of the Lumbee story in Baltimore, but few Baltimoreans today know anything of this history.

I met Ashley Minner one day on South Broadway, in the heart of what was once the Lumbee “reservation.” Only a few people live in the original neighborhood now; most moved to the suburbs decades ago, like Minner herself. Minner is an award-winning poet and journalist, and since 2003 she has been collecting oral histories and artifacts related to the Lumbee family in Baltimore, mapping their existence in East Baltimore. Her scholarly work for her PhD program at the University of Maryland, for example, is called “City of 312: Baltimore stories, and for the Lumbee diaspora. One dish, the Lumbee chicken and pastry, reminds her of her time working as a folklorist, has resulted in a new Lumbee archive named the Ashley Minner Collection, which will be housed within the National Folk-life archives at the University of Maryland Baltimore County’s Albin O. Kuhn Library. Minner has also made it her mission to educate the public about the Lumbee people living in the city; her lecture series, “Stones of Aran: Pilgrimage,” is to remember that “every step carries us across centuries, histories, and political. … To forget these dimensions of the step is to forgo our honor as human beings.” Traveling my city these past several months with people like Minner has reminded me of the myriad ways we are shaped by the landscape, both present and past.

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owalk across our overbuilt urban terrain, Tim Robinson wrote in his book “Stones of Aran: Pilgrimage,” is to remember that “every step carries us across centuries, histories, and political. … To forget these dimensions of the step is to forgo our honor as human beings.” Traveling my city these past several months with people like Minner has reminded me of the myriad ways we are shaped by the landscape, both present and past.

Travel, at its best, shakes us from the stupor of everyday life and returns us home again more alert and aware. It reminds us of who we truly are: the same person at home, but transformed everyday life into an adventure. I opened myself up to my city with the curiosity of a tourist and the wonder of a traveler, and I realized that what I really want in my life is not to be reinvigorated again by daily life. To feel connected to the place I live. It wasn’t all those years of leaving and returning that got me there. It was the staying.

Elizabeth Etts Dickinson is a writer in Baltimore.
As the pandemic was hitting, her family fled their beloved Brooklyn for Boulder, Colo. Could they embrace an entirely different way of living?
As the pandemic was hitting, her family fled their beloved Brooklyn for Boulder, Colo. Could they embrace an entirely different way of living?

STORY BY JENNIFER MILLER / PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL CIAGLO
n the spring of 2020, my 4-year-old son, Fenn, sat on a rock at the Walter Orr Roberts trailhead, shoeless and wailing. He waited as a steady stream of hikers passed by, chatting beneath their gaiters and masks. He waited as other small children skipped alongside their parents. He waited as I heged, imploded and, ultimately, threatened him to put on his shoes or else he’d lose his iPad privileges. This being Boulder, Colo. — a place that remained preternaturally relaxed, even at the height of a pandemic — nobody seemed especially judgmental. But I felt terrible. These Coloradans had come to enjoy the Flatirons, those majestic stone waves frozen mid-crest against the sky. Instead, they found a couple of New Yorkers throwing a tantrum.

Fenn was refusing to put on his hiking sandals, shoes that most of the population — including children — wear like second skin. The sandals had good treads, were breathable and dried quickly when wet. In short, perfect for a town where you could rock-climb, mountain-bike and tube a river in a single afternoon. Fenn wore cheap Target sneakers, rubber slick. This seemed to invite a pruned ankle or worse. Why, I moaned to myself, couldn’t he just be like a Boulder kid? But I knew the answer. This wasn’t his home. He was a Brooklynite, a boy who had been abruptly taken west at the onset of the pandemic.

Before we got here, Fenn had never been on a hike. Aside from the three flights of stairs required to reach our apartment, his existence was primarily horizontal. We’d gotten him on the trail only by promising videos and ice cream. Now I hoped our Boulder sojourn might motivate him to try some new adventures, appreciate a different kind of childhood. Instead he’d become a grouch, hunkering down in the safety of his proverbial Brooklyn trash can.

Our friends back home were trapped in their apartments, their daily soundtrack filled with sirens. Sure, Boulder playgrounds were shuttered all spring, just as they were in Brooklyn. But it didn’t matter because we had seemingly infinite space: plains to the east, mountains to the west, big sky overhead. In other words, an ideal place to ride out a quarantine. It was an opportunity for us to test-drive a new kind of existence, even a different kind of family. But not if we refused to do things the Boulder way.

O ur family of four — our two sons, then 4 and 14 months; my husband, Jason; and I — were among the roughly 420,000 New Yorkers who left town when the pandemic struck. We lived in a 1,000-square-foot apartment in the northern end of Park Slope, Brooklyn, relatively spacious digs by New York standards. Then, in mid-March, we learned that schools were shutting down. Jason and I were incredibly fortunate to keep our jobs, which meant we’d both be working from home — while running virtual school and caring for our baby. The apartment had four rooms. It was going to be terrible.

Our parents begged us to leave. Mine live in the D.C. suburbs, who had been abruptly taken west at the onset of the pandemic. We are sorry (and also not sorry) to be sheltered from the “real” America. You see a lot of Black Lives Matter signs, though Boulderites have actual lawns in which to stake this claim. I found one, while walking on a rural stretch of 47th Street in northern Boulder. The view was breathtaking: fields stretching toward the lush foothills, scattered tractors and barns. I felt a flash of surprise, if only because the other places I’d been that looked like this place — certain parts of West Virginia and rural Maine — often had signs suggesting a very different political viewpoint. It reminded me that a swath of rural farmland wasn’t itself a political thing. It was merely land. We imposed our values and perceptions on it. Standing before the Black Lives Matter sign, I turned in a full circle, taking in the expanse. I suddenly understood how lucky and privileged we were to be here.

I wished my husband shared this appreciation. Jason grew up in South Florida but never failed to mention that he was born in New York. (But, I mean, Westchester?) In 2008, when he moved to Manhattan, he happily rented an apartment in grimy Midtown East, just blocks from the Queensboro Bridge on-ramp. He was a New York City snob and proud of it. I finally hired him to Brooklyn in 2010. Over the next decade, he grew to love its small-town feel, where you frequently ran into neighbors on the street. The same thing was true of Boulder; after meeting someone at a socially distanced barbecue, we saw that same person the next day — halfway up a mountain.

Of course, there were plenty of differences. Boulder is more hippie than hipster, more leggings than skinny jeans. Sushi in Boulder is insanely overpriced, and for reasons we still don’t understand, the jam bands whose marathon concerts had been canceled. He had nothing to say about the trails, or the gear, or the jam bands whose marathon concerts had been canceled. For him, New York is a way of life: defined by drive, ambition and endless professional curiosity. Yes, Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. But Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity.
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The boutiques are cute if overpriced. CBD, the cannabis derivative, is everywhere and in everything. Kombucha is on tap. A lot of brands you might associate with Brooklyn are based in Boulder, like Justin’s nut butters and Bobo’s snack bars. The Whole Foods Market near my in-laws’ house carries Gotham Greens pesto, made from Brooklyn-grown basil. One Boulder cafe carried a weird wellness item called “broth tonic.” I hadn’t seen some pages: Downtown Breckenridge, Colo., known for its ski slopes. Previous pages: from left: Skiers at sunset at Breckenridge. The author with her family: husband Jason Feifer; Collin, 2; and Fenn, 5.

City snob and proud of it. I finally lured him to Brooklyn in 2010. Over the next decade, he grew to love its small-town feel, where you frequently ran into neighbors on the street. The same thing was true in Boulder; after meeting someone at a socially distant barbecue, we saw that same person the next day — halfway up a mountain. Of course, there were plenty of differences. Boulder is more hippie than hipster, more leggings than skinny jeans. Sushi in Boulder is insanely overpriced, and for reasons we still don’t understand, the bagel shops in town insist on referring to everything “bagels” as “baggies.” But during our early months in Colorado, Jason was struggling to connect. He had nothing to say about the trails, or the gear, or the jam bands whose marathon concerts had been canceled. For him, New York is a way of life: defined by drive, ambition and endless professional curiosity. Yes, Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. Yes, Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. Yes, Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. Yes, Boulderites are driven. The city has endless professional curiosity. Yes, Boulderites are driven. The city has
because why would you endure a freezing, rain-drenched daily commute when you could drive a Subaru and never have to parallel-park it? Boulder drive was encircled by the T-shirt my father-in-law gave Jason. It said: JESUS LOVES US FOR SHAKERS.

There was plenty to be engaged by in Boulder. It just looked — and sounded — different. Instead of New York’s 7 p.m. clap for front-line workers, Boulderites howled like wolves every evening at 8. I thought it — and I'd gained a unique kind of independence and self-assurance. In Brooklyn, you couldn’t let a kindergartner out alone. Here, he frequently fled my in-laws’ house to play with dogs or kids in the nearby park. He stayed until after dark. We didn’t worry.

In my own pathetic way, though, I tried to be similarly adventurous. When my parents came to visit in October, my dad begged to see “real” mountains. As a temporary Boulderite, I took offense: weren’t the Flatirons beautiful enough? It’s not like you got anything higher than a small hill in Bethesda, Md. Still, the closest I’d been to the actual Rockies was the brief view of distant snow-covered peaks on display from Arapahoe Road in town. We drove an hour northwest to Rocky Mountain National Park, stopping for sandwiches at the St. Vrain Market in Lyons. Our destination was Trail Ridge Road, a 48-mile highway whose highest elevation is over 12,000 feet. Eleven of those miles are above the tree line. My dad was definitely getting his “real” mountains.

Up and up we climbed — 4,000 feet in just a few minutes — until a vista of jagged peaks opened up wide before us. The road was well paved and not especially narrow, but it was labyrinthine and often without guardrails. I hugged the double-yellow lines as best I could, going slow and, when a car came from the opposite direction, even slower. My heart pounded, and my palms grew slippery against the wheel. I was starting to feel as though this entire drive was one continuous accident scene — where you don’t want to look but can’t look away. And every time I glanced outward, at the swirling abyss of gray slopes and green foliage, my stomach dropped. Finally, I’d had enough. I pulled over and made my dad get behind the wheel. After that, I could relax. A little. We pulled above the tree line and into tundra, a palette of tans, dim yellows and dull greens, its grasses whipping in the wind. Many miles away, a crystalline lake sat in the basin between two sharp slopes. It was astonishing — and the first time I understood the term “picture perfect.”

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After we’d been in town for a few months, people started asking if we planned to stay there permanently. Fenn loved scrambling around Arapahoe Ridge. He would free-climb up a rock face or dangle over ledges. At some point, I realized that he’d gained a unique kind of independence and self-assurance. In Brooklyn, you couldn’t let a kindergartner out alone. Here, he frequently flew my in-laws’ house to play with dogs or kids in the nearby park. He stayed until after dark. We didn’t worry.

On a weekend trip to the mountains, we canoed the Dillon Reservoir, charting a course toward a series of tiny islands. Afterward, we headed to Breckenridge, a former mining town in the Rocky Mountains known for its ski slopes. The pandemic had shuttered many of the attractions, like the gondola and the alpine slide, but Fenn found the perfect substitute: rock scrambling in the Blue River, which bisected the town. He still lacked hiking sandals, so he shocked his shoes and jumped in. We watched from the Blue River Lawn, where picnickers were being serenaded by an acoustic guitarist.

Before long, Fenn set off down the river bank. We followed him from the pathway above, keeping one eye on him and another on the quaint shops and cafes. Soon, though, I started to get nervous. The water looked increasingly deep. The rocks had created small rapids. And the bank was getting steeper. Fenn seemed oblivious to any of these dangers. Finally, I’d had enough and made Jason climb down to get him. I was relieved when they were both standing beside me on the sidewalk.

Boulder has a modest showing of Biden-Harris supporters, including a handful of Latino first-time voters from the University of Colorado. Opposite was a massive Trump-Pence bus and a throng of MAGA folk, led by an organizer in an Indian headdress. On the ground beside him, someone was a man in drag dancing to Taylor Swift and Rihanna. Skinny and critical of anything that smacked of wokeness — use a word like intersectional — it didn’t get more Boulder than that.

The Working Class is Intersectional in yellow chalk.

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The same was true of the city’s political expression. Before the November elections, three corners on a stretch of 28th Street were monopolized every Saturday by advocates. On one corner, there was a modest showing of Biden-Harris supporters, including a handful of Latino first-time voters from the University of Colorado. Opposite was a massive Trump-Pence bus and a throng of MAGA folk, led by an organizer in an Indian headdress. On the ground beside him, someone was a man in drag dancing to Taylor Swift and Rihanna. Skinny and critical of anything that smacked of wokeness — use a word like intersectional — it didn’t get more Boulder than that.

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residents. I cooked dinner for the family every night and was loving my mother-in-law’s pressure cooker-air fryer, which could only fit in a suburban kitchen. Jason had taken to working outside on the patio and going on daily bike rides. He’d even started waxing poetic. One afternoon on our way to Arapahoe Ridge, I pointed out that we must be Boulder-ites if we had a go-to playground. “To visit a place is to constantly explore,” he said. “To live in a place is to constantly return.”

We’d also found people to be incredibly friendly. Quarantine fatigue was likely responsible, but so was Boulder’s “the more, the merrier” vibe. Socially speaking, people were as open and inviting as the landscape. We befriended the cello professors across the street, two former New Yorkers who’d first met on the C train, and some recent techie transplants from San Francisco. We managed to socialize safely even in winter, because everyone either had a fire pit or propane heaters.

Boulder weather is hands-down the country’s best. It is sunny nearly every day, even in the dead of winter. And even when it is technically cold, it feels warmer because at 5,430 feet above sea level, the sun’s rays are that much stronger. The weather is also interesting. It can easily snow two feet one day and then reach 65 degrees the next. The average humidity in summer is zero. When I mentioned all this to a Colorado native, he begged me not to blow the state’s best-kept secret. But no, we told everyone, we weren’t moving to Colorado. We were committed to Brooklyn, at least for now.

Many months into our stay, we returned to the Walter Orr Roberts trailhead to give the hike another try. Fenn was still wearing his Target sneakers, and Jason carried the increasingly heavy toddler on his back. We’d managed to slather the kids in sunscreen without too much complaint, which struck me as a big win. It was another beautiful day.

Fenn ran ahead of us down the dusty trail, jumping on top of and over every rock he could find. We managed to hike for nearly 20 minutes before he announced that he was tired and wanted to turn around. Jason and I looked at each other. “Forty minutes total isn’t terrible,” I said. “Right?”

“It’s not like we have a choice,” Jason said.

We headed back the way we’d come. By the time we neared the parking lot, our toddler had fallen asleep in the carrier, and Fenn was asking for his iPad when we got home. Nearby, someone’s kid was throwing a fit. A Boulder kid, not my kid. “Sure,” I said to Fenn. “Watch as much as you want.”

Jennifer Miller is the author of four books. Her next, about first-generation college students, will be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux Books for Young Readers.
Experience Annapolis, MD, without the crowds

The historic city has taken steps to reduce crowding, from restaurants to the waterfront, to help ensure safe and stress-free visits.

This year, road trips are about more than just adventure and escape. About a third of U.S. tourists said their destination must be uncrowded and that they’re not willing to compromise on safety.

That means attractions and activity providers will have to “make it easy for [visitors] to social distance,” said Nancy McGehee, head of the Hospitality and Tourism Management graduate program at Virginia Tech Falls Church.

Annapolis, Md., fits the bill, especially for people in the D.C. area, which is just 45 minutes outside of the city. The area’s historic waterfront setting and open-air activities let travelers relax and feel transported away from their everyday lives, largely because locals and businesses have been making consistent efforts to limit crowds and protect each other’s safety.

One such business is Schooner Woodwind Annapolis Sailing Cruises, which offers public and private cruises into the Chesapeake Bay aboard replicas of 18th-century wooden schooners. Safety protocols in place include mask-wearing until the sails go up, contactless beverage service (including local craft beers) and boats operating at reduced capacity. Guests who want even more room can reserve zones just for themselves, like the area at the bow of the ship with unobstructed views of the water.

Visitors can also experience Annapolis during walking tours with Watermark, a local company that “celebrates the history, culture and fun of the Chesapeake area,” according to owner Debbie Gosselin. Guests will explore the city’s architecture or colonial-era historic district on foot, led by enthusiastic guides in period dress with thorough knowledge of Annapolis’s past and present.

After a tour, whether it be on water or on land, travelers can stroll to the iconic City Dock to watch boats bobbing in the harbor. Nearby is the city’s walkable Main Street and historic district, including State Circle and the Maryland State House—the oldest state house in continuous legislative use and once the nation’s capital, according to Carrie Kiewitt, the senior vice president for membership, communications and engagement at Historic Annapolis. It’s also where George Washington resigned his commission from the continental army and the Treaty of Paris was ratified, officially ending the Revolutionary War.

Main Street itself is lined with plenty of quaint retail shops, as well as restaurants serving outdoor dining. Red Red Wine Bar serves dozens of wines by the glass and more than 100 by the bottle, as well as food—the crab melt sandwich with cheddar and smoked bacon is a crowd favorite. Just next door is Dry 85, which specializes in bourbon and gourmet comfort food. Other safe offerings include live music and outdoor art classes.

The city’s cozy dining, shopping scenes and compact size are part of its charm. While that may be true no matter the circumstances, Annapolis feels especially escape-worthy now, as people seek a break from “the new normal”—but a safe one. Amid the crowd-free streets, there are nooks and crannies to find and call your own.

Learn more at visitannapolis.org
Round House Theatre Shines Despite Shutdown Preventing In-Person Shows

In a year with devastating impact on the nation’s cultural institutions, Bethesda’s Round House Theatre has stood out among local arts organizations following a quick pivot to unique and wide-ranging digital programming.

“In early 2020, our board and staff approved a new mission, proclaiming us a Theatre For Everyone,” said Round House Managing Director Ed Zakreski. “So when the pandemic hit, that alignment of purpose allowed us to quickly adapt our operations to keep serving our community.”

Shortly after COVID hit, Round House created a free web series called “Homebound,” providing employment for actors whose shows at Round House had been cancelled. The theatre commissioned ten local playwrights and gave them complete latitude to respond to the pandemic. Covering topics from Zoom filters to unemployment to the murder of George Floyd, the series gained a cult following.

“In 2020, Round House—like so many — had to explore new ways of making art and building a sense of community while we are unable to gather physically,” said Artistic Director Ryan Rilette. “Our priority has been to create new art and to provide employment for as many artists as possible.” The work paid off, garnering reviews in major newspapers across the country and an increased leadership role among American theatres.

More recently, Round House convened more than 40 artists to safely film a four-show festival of the influential but infrequently performed playwright Adrienne Kennedy, including a world premiere by the 89-year-old writer, as well as premiering Lauren Gunderson’s new play “The Catastrophist” with California’s Marin Theatre Company. “Aside from the artistic achievement, I’m particularly proud that we have been able to continue our Free Play program by providing more than 3,500 free student tickets in the last six months,” Zakreski added.
A particularly **INSPIRED** deployment of a theatre company’s resources during the shutdown."
—The Washington Post

“Round House is [responding] to this destabilizing moment with **IMMEDIACY AND ARTISTRY.**”
—The New York Times

“A welcome opportunity to experience Kennedy’s **DRAMATIC RESPLENDENCE** beyond the page.”
—Los Angeles Times

**FREE PLAY**

FREE TICKETS FOR STUDENTS AGE 13-COLLEGE

Learn more at RoundHouseTheatre.org or 240.644.1100

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**HOMEBOUND**

**THE WORK OF ADRIENNE KENNEDY:**

**INSPIRATION AND INFLUENCE**

**SPRING 2021 VIRTUAL SEASON**

**A BOY AND HIS SOUL**

**FREE PLAY**

**COMMUNITY ACCESS TICKET PROGRAM**

**TICKETS & VIRTUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS ON SALE NOW!**

RoundHouseTheatre.org | 240.644.1100
Beginning this month, Round House will present three additional productions recorded live on its stage and streamed online: award-winning actor, director, and writer Colman Domingo’s “A Boy and His Soul”; Academy Award-nominee Lucy Alibar’s “Throw Me on the Burnpile and Light Me Up”; and Young Jean Lee’s “We’re Gonna Die”. Tickets and information are available at RoundHouseTheatre.org.

George Mason University’s Center for the Arts Offers Variety of Programs

George Mason University’s Center for the Arts plans a busy spring season. Streamed live from the Hylton Center will be the family-friendly performance of “Broadway Princess Party,” on Sunday, March 21, at 4:00 p.m. This charming digital concert features four of Broadway’s original and most beloved princesses as they perform their signature songs along with other treasured musical theater numbers. Susan Egan (Disney’s original Belle in Disney’s “Beauty and the Beast”), Aisha Jackson (Standby for Anna in Disney’s “Frozen” on Broadway), Laura Osnes (Broadway’s original “Cinderella”), and Courtney Reed (Broadway’s original Jasmine in “Aladdin”) join forces to host this fun-loving royal soiree alongside resident Prince Adam J. Levy and Fairy GodFairy Benjamin Rauhala (Broadway’s “Fiddler on the Roof”). Critics are calling this show “spectacular,” “enchanting,” and “empowering.” Tickets are $15-$45 (pay-what-you-wish in $5 increments).

“Broadway Princess Party” is part of the Mason Arts at Home (MAAH) program, which includes not only performances, but events such as “The Artist-Activist: Centering Black Voices,” a new speaker series that provides an opportunity for Mason students, faculty, and staff, as well as the greater community, to engage in dialogue around creative process, activism, and racism.

Later this spring, the Center for the Arts looks forward to welcoming audiences to Mason Pond Lawn, its new outdoor performance space, where audiences will be able to enjoy these performances in their own seating area, physically distanced from other audience members. The first performance will be “Collision of Rhythm,” a dynamic duo made up of a tap-dancing percussion virtuoso and a beatboxing, juggling comedian, on Sunday, April 25.
Through these sites, visitors can gain intimate perspectives on local as well as U.S. history. Learn about 20th-century labor leader John L. Lewis at the Lee-Fendall House in Alexandria. Tour the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site in D.C. and see the books that inspired Douglass, the dumbbells he lifted daily to stay strong in the face of constant threat of racist attacks, and the violin he taught himself to play. Explore the 200-year-old Colvin Run Mill and grounds in Fairfax County. Experience President Lincoln’s Cottage, where Lincoln looked up at the unfinished Capitol dome as he drafted the Emancipation Proclamation. Whether in Virginia, Maryland, or D.C. – our local history is our nation’s history.

Use this time during the pandemic to explore and experience your hometown history. Some museums are open, while others plan to reopen later this spring. Many have grounds to explore and some have outdoor exhibits. All have wonderful resources and programs online and are sharing their diverse stories through social media. Visit DCHousemuseums.org to explore the historic house museums near you.

40+ SITES TO BUILD YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL AND PRESIDENTIAL HISTORY

Learn about our sites and what is currently open at www.dchousemuseums.org
Dining  WITH TOM SIETSEMA

SHARBAT BAKERY 2473 18th St. NW. 202-843-5252. sharbatbakery.business.site. Open for takeout, delivery and indoor dining daily from 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Prices: sweet and savory pastries $2.49 to $6.69, cake by the slice $5.99 to $6.49, whole 8-inch cakes $54.95. Delivery via Grubhub. Accessibility: Steps and stairs within the bakery discourage wheelchair use.

At Azerbaijani bakery, sweets worth savoring

B abysitting turns out to be as much a part of my routine as chewing and telling. Part of a critic’s job is to keep tabs on what’s opening, menu changes, chef moves, even what’s been overlooked.

Thus, in an industry (still) as large as the one I cover, tips are always welcome. Sometimes, suggestions come from strangers, readers imploring me to help rescue a place they love, typically one that’s hungry for more customers. Other days, prompts to check out a business are more subtle, a stroke of happy chance.

Consider the night I invited my Iranian American colleague and friend, Jason Rezaian, and his wife, Yegi, over for a socially distanced dinner in my backyard. Rezaian hoped to introduce me to an Azerbaijani bakery and its Russian-inspired honey cake. But the dessert was gone by the time he got there, so he scooped up some pakhlava, as in baklava, instead.

The host gift was memorable on two counts. The shiny, diamond-shaped pastries, each four-inch slice set off with an almond, were reason enough to head to its source. I couldn’t wait to taste more from Sharbat Bakery in Adams Morgan. The Azerbaijani bakery opened in July.

The women connected with the Rezaians, gifting them a honey cake. The couple were so smitten with the many-layered creation, they urged Safarova to make it known to a wider audience and open a bakery.

Safarova listened, hurrah, and the idea became a 20-seat reality in July. The name Sharbat pays homage to a refreshing Azerbaijani drink made from fruit and flavorings of rose petals or saffron, says Shukrana, 19, who acts as interpreter for her mother and a helpmate in the bakery. Sharbat also refers to the simple syrup to sweeten the pakhlava, versus the honey used by other countries.

Young as it is, the bakery has friends in high places. The Azerbaijani ambassador to the United States, Elin Suleymanov, says pakhlava is one of several things he seeks out on his multiple weekly trips to Sharbat. Its shape, its light pastry layers and comparatively gentle sweetness distinguish it from the foreign competition back home, a country that shares borders with Armenia, Georgia, Iran and Russia.

The ambassador jokes when he says, “We have three epic battles” in the region: “Who makes the best tea, dolma and baklava.” Suleymanov also sings the praises of the Azerbaijani style of tea service at Sharbat, where loose tea is offered with rock sugar, which is meant to be bitten before sipping the drink, and a pear-shaped glass designed to keep the tea hot.

Reminding the diplomat even more of home is the shorgoghal, a bun-shaped pastry whose flaky exterior gives way to a center seasoned with anise, black pepper and cumin. Both Suleymanov and Safarova are from Azerbaijan’s capital and largest city, Baku, where shorgoghal is a featured attraction at the upcoming Nowruz, the five-day holiday celebrating both the new year and the arrival of spring.

Sharbat’s shorgoghal, glossy from a wash of egg yolk and speckled with black sesame seeds, calls to all the senses. Bite down, and the treat shatters...
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Rezaian, whose account of being jailed in Tehran is detailed in his book, “Prisoner: My 544 Days in Iranian Prison,” shared that the pakhlava was part of the care packages his Azerbaijani cellmate, whom he knew as Mirsani, received from his family several times a year.

Mirsani’s sister, Ilhama Safarova, was among the contributing cooks. When her daughter, Shukrana, moved from Azerbaijan to Washington two years ago to attend college, Safarova, a trained nurse, came along.

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Sharbat’s gurza (beef dumplings) served with yogurt and tomato sauce.

Both the dough (made from honey, eggs, butter and flour) and the filling (coaxed from milk, egg and sugar) are whipped up on the stove and later alternated in a brown beauty rising as high as 30 thin layers. The combined flavor is similar to graham crackers and creamy white filling — pleasantly mysterious. The surface of the cake reinforces its name, with the hexagon pattern of a honeycomb.

On the days I’ve had treats from Sharbat delivered, I’ve been met by the fragrance of a busy bakery at my door. The aroma from the brown bags finds me dropping whatever I’m doing and arranging their contents on my counter for a spontaneous graze-athon.

Forgive me while I tear into borek, a bready turban veined with shredded boiled chicken, sweet carrots and bell peppers and as weighty an icon as a muffuletta. Apologies for not wanting to share xachapuri, a crackling-crisp golden sleeve lightly stuffed with minced beef.

I claim not to have a serious sweet tooth. My eagerness to order takeout from Sharbat suggests otherwise. The crescent-shaped pastries called shekerbura, filled with crushed hazelnuts, sugar and cardamom, look more like something to admire as art than ravage with fingers and teeth. Their delicate stitching design is aided by a tweezer-like tool called maggash. Diced apples and walnuts go into the mutaki, whose filling you can spy through the slashes made in the baked dough, curved as a Slinky toy. The bakery’s simpler pleasures include a raised white sugar cookie with a sunny dot of yolk on the top.

Sharbat does pleasing dumplings, too. The gurza, rippled like the bakery’s walls and filled with juicy minced beef, come with swabs of tangy Greek yogurt and a thick tomato sauce. Throw in a crisp green salad of your own design, and you have a fine supper.

Through her daughter, Safarova says she hopes her hard-won debut business in Washington adds to a better idea of what she refers to as a little and relatively unknown country. With all due respect to Azerbaijan’s ambassador, he has competition in Sharbat.
Eyes on the wall

BY RANDY MAYS

Find the 12 differences in the photo of art at a residence in Washington in April.

PUZZLE ANSWERS
See them online now at washingtonpost.com/secondglance or in next week’s issue of the magazine.

SEE YOUR PHOTO
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The Asinine Comedy

Exclusive! I have obtained the minutes of a meeting with Satan and his loyal staff, the Legions of Darkness, following the death of Donald John Trump on April 1, 2031. (I have very good sources.)

Satan: Where shall we place the sinner? To which concentric circle of The Abode of the Damned does he rightly belong?

Theophrastus the Pederast: Surely in mine, the second ring, which is reserved for “carnal malefactors” — people consumed by lust. Behold his crimes: serial marriages to connubially attractive, vastly younger, generously bosomed women with silky yellow hair. Groping! Porn stars! Uninvited kissy-face. Plus, the sinner has been known to wear mirrors on the tops of his shoes for wanton upskirting.

Evilthorpe the Degenerate: YOU MADE THAT LAST THING UP.

Theophrastus the Pederast: Well, he made up many things, so who cares? My circle includes liars. Also, panderers, seducers, traffickers in flattery, false prophets, braggarts and thieves. He called the porcine baby-faced beast of North Korea, a man who has exploded his political enemies with antiaircraft rockets, “terrific.” He once held a meeting in which his fawning Cabinet members called him “great” 32 times. Also Cleopatra and Helen of Troy are residents of my circle. He’ll like it there.

Satan: We don’t WANT him to like it there, you imbecile.

Evilthorpe the Degenerate: It is moot, o Foul One. The realm of lust is rightly a province of my domain, the fourth circle, that of Greed. This man spent his life accumulating unconscionable material wealth through deceit and double-dealing treachery, his only goal — his only religion — being personal enrichment.

Satan: Prove it.

Evilthorpe the Degenerate: I am quoting now from a speech of his from late January 2016: “My whole life I’ve been greedy, greedy, greedy. I’ve grabbed all the money I could get.”

Satan: Point taken.

(Hogarth the Wicked and Iniquitous: control the seventh ring, containing the Violent and Blasphemers. This man encouraged a deadly riot. He once told a crowd to beat up a guy who was heckling him, promising to pay the legal fees for anyone delivering a knuckle sandwich. Also he says “goddamn” regularly.

Satan: That last thing doesn’t seem so bad. I mean, by comparison.

Hogarth the Wicked and Iniquitous: Goddamn you, Satan.

Satan: Anyone else?

Theophilus the Really Pissed Off: Anger! I rule the fifth circle, the realm of the angry. There has never been an angrier man. There are 2 million Google hits for “Trump” and “lashed out.”

Fred the Fat: My ring, number three! Gluttony! The man is shaped like a manatee. He eats like a swine. He probably has bacon-soaked lard for breakfast.

Arnold the Treasonous Miscreant: Treachery, ring nine! Ukraine! (Crosstalk. Banshee wailing.)

Satan: Gentlemen, I have reached a decision. If there are no objections, the sinner will be sliced up and chunks of him will be distributed among the rings.

Barnabus the Mildly Disappointing: I am afraid that might be considered divisive ...

(Satan slays Barnabus with a shoulder-mounted bazooka. The motion carries without further objection.)

A special thanks to Dante Alighieri. Email Gene Weingarten at gene.weingarten@washpost.com. Find chats and updates at wapo.st/magazine.
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