

Washington Soaked Here

--- BERKELEY SPRINGS, ---
WEST VIRGINIA



Berkeley Springs, W. Va., is a different world. It's a small town (barely 600 residents), of the sort that have spent the last few decades disappearing. And it's an artsy town, with as many quirky identities as there are colors of autumn leaves.

The population of this tiny burg triples during weekends in season — it's practically a stone's throw from Washington D.C. and Baltimore. Nestled in the Sleepy Creek Mountains — a leafy, rolling expanse of land near the Potomac River — mineral water flows in prodigious quantities. Visitors have come for its healing qualities since George Washington himself came to have a soak, making Berkeley Springs the country's first spa.

The spa theme continues to this day. It's home to Atasia Spa, one of the largest day spas in West Virginia, and several other spots in town offer exposure to the famed water.

The heart of town, though, is the state park, where visitors can soak in mineral water springs at its bathhouses. It's flanked on all sides by shopping and dining. Artsy stores and galleries abound; stop in at the Icehouse Gallery, which presents a healthy sampling of works from local artists. And be sure to check out The Written Word, a stationery store that uses the traditional letterpress method to create funky and elegant paper goods. Around the corner is Tari's Café, where diners are treated to down-to-earth regional fare including buttery crab cakes bursting with juicy, lump blue crab meat. Head for the adjoining tavern for a Southern-rock-inspired jam session that's been going for almost 20 years. You'll probably see the proprietor of your B&B, the salesperson from Written Word and your massage therapist.

You can walk almost everywhere in Berkeley Springs, except up to Panorama at the Peak, a res-

taurant with the best views in the area, and a mean apple-smoked short rib. 1-800-447-8797, www.berkeleysprings.com; if you like Victorian style, brave the very steep hill and stay at the Highlawn Inn, where frills and lace — and really good breakfast — are standard fare. www.highlawninn.com

— Tori Woods



THE DRIVE:

Berkeley Springs, West Virginia

MILES: **280**

EXTRA INDULGENCE: Save some of your appetite for the annual Apple Butter Festival Oct. 6 and 7. www.berkeleysprings.com/apple

