

# ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ THE ★ ★ ★ GEORGETOWNER

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# THE ROMANCE AND WONDER OF KESWICK HALL

By Ari Post

Coming up the winding driveway, just across the railroad track and beyond a horse pasture, I was greeted by a small vineyard and a grand, three-story resort house. The sun was setting just over the Spanish tile roof and the Southwest Mountains lay stoically in the distance along an endless, green golf course. I walked into the front doors of Keswick Hall and was greeted by the hum of intimate conversations, the crackling of a wood fire and the clinking of glasses in a wide, open parlor. The parlor was warmly lit, elegant and modest, with a tin of warm cider sitting on heated bricks by the entrance. In front of the fire, couples were reading, talking, playing chess, enjoying drinks. It was just before dinnertime. This was the definition of a romantic retreat.

Sitting on 600 acres, this sprawling country estate in the lush foothills of Keswick, Virginia is perhaps one of the best-kept secrets on the East Coast. With the very best of comfort and accommodations, couples spa treatments, exceptional wines both local and international, and world-class cuisine, Keswick Hall brings together all the luxuries of the world's finest resorts with the distinct character of the Virginia region. Thomas Jefferson called this area of country the "Eden of the United States," and Keswick Hall holds true to this claim, offering the most sinfully delicious experiences you and your better

half will have this side of the Atlantic.

The accommodations are worth the trip itself. The rooms are bright and thoughtfully furnished, the wide, soft beds entice even the well rested, and a pouch of aromatic bath salts sit by the tub. The windows open to pastoral vistas on all sides. A plate of gourmet cheeses and a bottle of house wine await new visitors with a personal note from the staff. These are perhaps small details, but the intricate cares taken by the resort add up. It is this very attention to detail, this individualizing of each guest that makes Keswick stand out. You are not just another guest at Keswick, but a valued member of the family for the duration of your stay.

"There's a very comfortable beauty about Keswick," says Patricia Castelli, Keswick Hall's resident historian. "There's an incredible sense of elegance, and it's also so comfortable. It strikes the right balance, which is what makes people so astounded by it." And Keswick has surely astounded plenty of guests—Condé Nast deemed them the number one small resort in the country in 2010.

Keswick feels so intimate because it's a very real part of its surrounding community. "The estate has been here for 100 years," says Castelli, "and its history adds weight to its authenticity. You're discovering an area rather than just coming to a hotel—and it's such an outstanding place to discover. A lot of people don't know we exist, and after they visit they wonder why they



*Fosssett's Restaurant at Keswick Hall. Photographs by Joe Vaughn*

didn't know about us before."

The grounds offer a wide range of activities, from exploring the vineyards to fishing, to even archery. But the highlight is the Arnold Palmer Signature 18-hole golf course, which complements the landscape as if it is a natural part of the mountain range.

The course is an Autobot certified sanctuary,

maintaining strict standards of resources and limiting pesticides. Keswick wants the course and the estate to be as agreeable to wildlife as possible, and they go well out of their way to make the range as environmentally friendly as it is beautiful.

Meanwhile, in the kitchen of Keswick's Fos-

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*Left to right: A fireplace in one of Keswick's lounges; The golf course, overlooked by the resort; A brunch offering at Fossett's, photograph by Ari Post*

sett's Restaurant, Executive Chef Dean Maupin brings together the bounty of the local farmland with effusive vision and international inspiration to create frighteningly delicious cuisine. The food is delicate and elegant without being fussy. During the harvest months, most of the produce comes from the estate's garden, run by the Chef himself.

The menu is seasonal and changes frequently, but during the winter months you can expect such offerings as smoked trout with avocado and apple, beet salad with citrus vinaigrette and olives, pear and pecorino ravioli, pappardelle with braised lamb shoulder and tapenade, duck

breast with truffle risotto and Madeira jus, or parsnip quiche with sage, fontina and thick, fresh bacon. The food is, quite simply, as good as food gets. Each ingredient is played to its absolute perfection, each dish is perfectly balanced, and the kitchen keeps in touch with its environment, seasonally and locally.

While Keswick certainly offers the best of all general amenities—a fitness center, indoor and outdoor pools, billiards, a library, golf, tennis, horseback riding, personal and couples massage sessions, a world class wine cellar—this is all only the surface of Keswick's allure.

Keswick Hall shines not because it allows

you to escape from the surrounding area, but because it engrosses you in it, reminding you of the beauty and richness of the Virginia homeland. It invites guests to fall in love with its character, through the landscape, the food, the activities, and the memories you will surely create. There is a gentle, serene beauty about the Virginia countryside, one that is perfectly tailored for a couple looking for a quiet and intimate experience. Keswick Hall is a quiet pinnacle of romance and relaxation, and now is the perfect time of year to fall into its warm, generous arms.

*For more information, visit [Keswick.com](http://Keswick.com)*