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Yurts offer a private retreat at Savage River Lodge.



Time to Think

Three mid-Atlantic inns where you can unplug and recharge

BY CHRISTINE KOUBEK

TUCKED AWAY IN THE foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains is the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, an artists retreat that is so quiet you can hear horses chewing grass. Artistic types have long applied for residencies there in order to take advantage of uninterrupted time and space to read, wander and create. As I discovered

during my own residency there, artists aren't the only ones who benefit from that type of disconnected time.

In his *New York Times* best-selling book *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less*, Greg McKeown spends a chapter detailing how people in many professions create escapes from their daily routines, including Bill Gates,

who takes a secluded "Think Week" by himself twice a year to read, reflect and focus.

Inspired by the concept, I set out to find places in the mid-Atlantic region that could serve as revitalizing refuges. Here are three off-the-grid hideaways where you can go to recharge and tune your senses.

PHOTO BY JENNIFER DOBSON/COURTESY SAVAGE RIVER LODGE

etc.

DRIVING RANGE



The main building at Savage River Lodge includes a restaurant and a loft library; the property's yurts (below and opposite) are outfitted with a lounge area and gas fireplace but no TV or Wi-Fi.

CABIN FEVER

RESTORATION SETTING: In western Maryland, Savage River Lodge's large post and beam structure serves as home base for the eight yurts and 18 cabins that dot the woodsy landscape around it. The peaceful 35-acre retreat is off the grid in more ways than one. A hillside of solar panels on the property provides roughly 65 percent of the annual power needed for the main lodge and the electric vehicle charging station. Room keys come with a mini-flashlight to help you navigate at night. There are no TVs or Wi-Fi in the cabins or yurts. (Wi-Fi is available in the lodge.)

The best part of my stay in one of the yurts was the sound of quiet. Rain drip-dropped on the rooftop.



PHOTOS BY JENNIFER DOBSON/
COURTESY SAVAGE RIVER LODGE
MAP BY MARY ANN SMITH

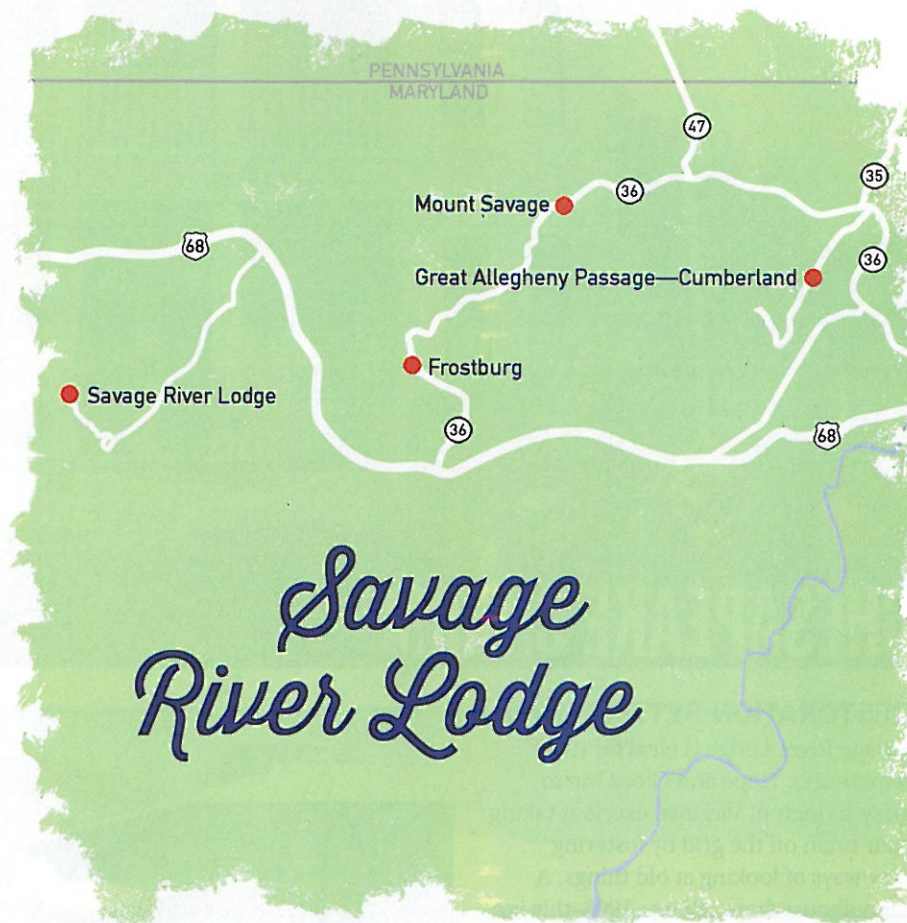
Birds sang and cawed. The wind whooshed wildly through tree branches. Previous guests appreciated the multisensory experience, too. They wrote in the yurt journal about decompressing with a book by the fire, listening to the howls of coyotes and, said one, simply "yur-tin it" and "lovin it."

Surprisingly, there's a lot to do in this woodsy paradise. You can explore 14 miles of trails, fly-fish, cross-country ski, bike the Great Allegheny Passage, read in the lodge's loft library, look out at colorful sugar maple, poplar, white oak and larch trees from an upper deck rocking chair, and have a beer at the bar, the smell of burning wood wafting from the two-story stone fireplace.

REST: Each yurt and cabin is stocked with a mini-fridge, fresh ground coffee, a jar of cocoa mix, board games and bath products with woodsy pine scents. The walls of the 30-foot diameter yurts feature a double layer of canvas with a middle layer of gel insulation, and there's a center dome skylight, heated hardwood floors and a portable air-conditioner. The interior is quite spacious and includes a comfortable king bed, a lounging area with a gas fireplace, leather and suede club chairs, a sofa, and a copy of *Life's Little Instruction Book* on the coffee table.

The two-story cabins each have a porch with rocking chairs, most overlooking the forest. Inside, you'll find knotted wood walls the color of caramel, a filled bookcase, a gas stove, a plump chair with a soft blanket, a pullout sofa, a soaking tub, and a queen or king bed in a loft. Dogs are allowed in some of the cabins.

REFUEL: Homemade muffins and juice are delivered in a basket to your porch each morning. The lodge's restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch



Savage River Lodge

and dinner on weekends; lunch and dinner on weekdays. Specialties include maple bacon-wrapped meatloaf, wild game dishes and a vegan shepherd's pie. You can also dine in your cabin or yurt, and there's a "Bone Appetit Menu" for dogs.

UNPLUGGED PERKS: Massages in your cabin or yurt can be arranged. There's a bonfire most weekend nights, when you can sit back in an Adirondack chair and nosh on skillet-made s'mores.

DETAILS: Rates begin at \$235, including coffee, cocoa and morning muffins and juice. 1600 Mount Aetna Road, Frostburg, Maryland; 301-689-3200, www.savageriverlodge.com.

