

First In: Keswick Hall

A resort made for D.C.-area urbanites looking for a weekend getaway with entertainment for the whole family.



AMENITIES

Family
Free Wifi

Golf
Pool

ROOMS

38

Reviewed by **STEPHANIE WU**

Why book?

Virginia's Keswick Hall brings together everything you'd want out of a weekend getaway—a serene countryside setting, a pool you could spend hours in, activities for the whole family, and impeccable food.

Set the scene

If driving up to the grand entrance of Keswick Hall, in Charlottesville, Virginia, feels like arriving at a friend's incredibly fancy private home, it's because that's exactly what it used to be. The hotel's most recent renovation, which took nearly four years and wraps in October 2021, pays homage to the original architecture of the historic property while modernizing it and adding pops of whimsy. Structure aside, the property is full of wow moments, from the sprawling Pete Dye–designed golf course to the infinity pool that wouldn't be out of place in the Caribbean. You'll likely see the D.C. politicians using this retreat as a weekend getaway—Bill and Hillary Clinton were some of the first guests post-renovation.

The backstory

Built for the Crawford family in 1912, the property has changed hands several times, with former lives as a country club, an Orient-Express hotel, and the home of Sir Bernard Ashley—husband and business partner of designer Laura Ashley. Owners Robert and Molly Hardie took over in 2017, and soon after embarked on a top-to-toe renovation, with hopes of transforming and expanding the historic property. No detail was spared in the renovation, which took the building down to its studs and redid everything from the plumbing and technology to the individual footprint of the various rooms. Original fireplaces were restored where possible, as was the intricate millwork and crown molding. Throughout the space, there are nods to the property's history, including a snooker table owned by Sir Bernard Ashley (much of his antique furniture, now carefully restored, is peppered throughout the space too).

The rooms

The renovation brought the guest room count from 48 rooms down to 38, and each room feels refreshingly unique. The room layouts and furniture differ immensely, so if you prefer a desk to work at or a walk-in closet with plenty of storage space or both, be sure to request it when booking. The rooms are decorated in shades of white and cream, putting the focus on the art, which in many cases is photography of the surrounding area by local artists. The bathrooms are spacious, with showers big enough that you can turn the showerhead on without getting splashed by a drop of cold water. The minibar in each room includes complimentary snacks and drinks, including Clif bars, La Ferriere yogurt, and cans of La Colombe cold brew. The technology has been upgraded in a subtle but effective way, with plenty of outlets, motion sensor lights under the bed, and panels that offer varying levels of dimness for the lights in the room. Many rooms have private terraces that overlook the golf course. Another 42 rooms will open up in the near future, bringing the total to 80. Rooms start at \$995.

Food and drink

There are a few places to eat and drink in the hotel, including The Counter, a grab-and-go spot with pastries, coffee, and snacks; Crawford's, the all-day restaurant and bar named after the building's original owners; and the star of the show, Jean-Georges Vongerichten's Marigold. The Marigold menu relies heavily on herbs and vegetables from the owners' nearby farm, Oakdale, and dishes rotate seasonally. Some highlights from our visit included the burrata, served with housemade ciabatta and cherries, the spicy fried chicken served on a bed of garden greens, and the pizzas, made in a wood-fire oven. Don't skip the bread served at the beginning of the meal, especially if the briny olive-studded bread is available.

The neighborhood/area

The property is located about 15 minutes away from Charlottesville, home to the University of Virginia. Other nearby attractions include [Thomas Jefferson's Monticello](#), James Madison and James Monroe's homes, as well as several excellent vineyards, orchards, and breweries. You're in the foothills of the [Blue Ridge Mountains](#), and driving up just about any peak will lead to fantastic views.

The service

Southern hospitality at its best—friendly and welcoming, but with a casual, never-pushy feel.

For families

Our room had a walk-in closet that was ideally sized to fit the Pack 'n Play the hotel provided. I loved that the closet had its own light controls and a sliding door that we could leave slightly ajar, as well as outlets for the baby monitor and white noise machine. If you're traveling with a baby, it's a fantastic set-up for a little bit of separation. Those with older children might want to opt for a full suite or rooms with connecting doors. But there are plenty of family-friendly layouts among the rooms.

Eco-friendly efforts

As someone who always brings a water bottle when I travel, I really appreciated the filtered water stations located on each guest floor, which were great for filling up water bottles on our way out each day.

Accessibility

The renovation made the property completely ADA-accessible, from the food and drink spots to various rooms. Keswick Hall hosts tons of events, and the beautifully designed, ADA-accessible bathroom in the event space is a source of pride.

Anything left to mention?

A percentage of each night's stay goes toward the Thomas Jefferson Foundation. The owners are longtime Charlottesville locals and felt it was important to work with the nonprofit, which owns Monticello. You'll find a smattering of Monticello items in the gift shop, from educational books to cards.







