

Forbes

A Storied Virginia Countryside Resort Unveils A Fresh Design And A New Jean-Georges Restaurant



Revamping a storied property is a daunting task, but Molly and Robert Hardie, the owners of Virginia Countryside's [Keswick Hall](#), took the challenge in stride by balancing the refined, old-world charm of the resort – former owner Sir Bernard Ashley (designer Laura Ashley's widower) had decorated it with his wife's textiles and wallpaper, alongside British and Belgian furnishings – with contemporary flourishes. "It was important for loyal guests to want to come back," says Molly. "Things may look different, but it's absolutely better, more current, and still Keswick Hall."

After reopening in October following a multi-million dollar, multi-year renovation, it's clear the Hardies succeeded. Now, there's [80 rooms and suites](#) that extend into a new, soon-to-be-unveiled wing. All the accommodations are appointed with modern comforts such as intuitive Lutron light control panels and HVAC systems for air purification, while leather nailbed headboards and classic wood furniture nod to the property's past. (The main structure was built in 1912, and transitioned to a hotel in 1933.)



Though no detail was overlooked in Keswick Hall’s redesign, Molly is especially proud of the custom amenities scent created in collaboration with the organic beauty brand Red Flower. Called Dawn Meadow, the crisp blend of grass, local florals, and hay, in Molly’s words, “appeals to all, and really represents the foothills of the Southwest Mountains.”

There’s plenty to discover in the common areas, too. Adjacent to the lobby is the new Garden Room, which offers expansive views of the Blue Ridge Mountains with floor-to-ceiling windows, and down the hall is [The Counter](#), a daytime cafe selling coffee, baked goods, and sundries like the resort’s signature bath products and Marvis toothpaste. The 80-foot, infinity pool is poised to be a guest favorite when the weather warms up, as is the highly anticipated spa slated to open in May.



Art lovers will flip for the property's extensive art collection, which includes San Francisco-based photographer Sharon Beals' works documenting birds' nests, and area photographer Andrew Shurtleff's stirring pieces of the local landscape. Molly explains, "Everything we picked connects the indoors to the outdoors, and the ecosystem of the flora and fauna." And to spark a sense of rediscovery for returning guests, Molly thoughtfully salvaged and reinstalled some of Sir Bernard Ashley's original pieces "to give them new life."



But arguably, the most exciting addition to Keswick Hall is [Marigold](#). The freestanding restaurant is celebrated chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten's first foray into Virginia, and has quickly become a hot spot for hotel guests and locals. Molly says the design is reminiscent of an "upscale rustic barn," and is anchored by the striking bar where "the fun energy just spills out." Foodwise, expect Jean-George staples like black truffle pizza and butternut squash soup – made with vegetables plucked from the resort's garden – and original creations like the umami-rich pumpkin potstickers and monkfish piccata.

No matter your reasons for staying at Keswick Hall – whether it's to tee up at the award-winning Pete Dye golf course, or escape urbanity to a serene setting – you'll find what you're looking for. As Molly put it: "We're a country retreat from the crazy world we're living in these days, where you can unplug from technology and connect with the outdoors."