

TRAVELER

All Travel, All the Time
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THE BEST SHORT TRIPS IN THE WORLD - EDITED by SHEILA F. BUCKMASTER

THE LONG WEEKEND



Virginia Real: A Revolutionary Rendezvous

In Colonial Williamsburg, the past is something you can hear, see, and touch. By BETH LIZARDO

The best way to feel like a timeless Williamsburg local is to book a room in one of the Colonial Houses. These spend-the-night haunts are scattered throughout the city's famous historic area encompassing 301 acres of buildings, homes, and shops reconstructed on their original 18th-century foundations and populated by a staff of costumed interpreters who bring the past to life. The Colonial House accommodations gracefully merge wood-burning fireplaces and canopy beds with modern bathrooms, lights, and telephones. ¶ For your first stroll, head to Duke of Gloucester Street,

the tree-lined main drag where you'll find yourself saying "good day" to townsfolk going about their business just as they would have more than two centuries ago. Eerie how real it all feels. More than just actors in period costumes, the interpreters (many of them professional histori-

Old and new (clockwise from above, left): A Revolutionary City reenactment, playing with classic toys, and light fare at Dudley's Farmhouse.



ans) undergo intensive training to create multidimensional characters poised to launch into debates about women's rights and taxes or simply chat about their daily lives. (The political tensions hinted at in these passing conversations reach a peak during "Revolutionary City," the two-hour reenactment of events leading up to the American Revolution.)

For a break from the colonial, walk to nearby Merchants Square, where art galleries and Williams-Sonoma sorts of shops gently break the spell. The family-run Cheese Shop, a local favorite, has the kinds of fine cheeses and handmade

crackers that inspire picnics (enjoy yours by the canal behind the Governor's Palace or on the Mount, a breezy retreat that overlooks the palace and its gardens). Aromas, a colorfully decorated coffeehouse known for its decadent baked goods, is a great place to grab morning provisions.

Off campus, as it were, Dudley's, set in a 1905 farmhouse in Toano (a 25-minute drive from Williamsburg), should be the site of at least one lunch (burger, crab cake sandwiches) or dinner (specials can include boar chops, quail breast, lavender-rubbed lamb). Dudley's Sunday meal—served between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.—has a comfort-food theme: chowder, filet mignon meatloaf, fried chicken, mac and cheese.

After dark, Colonial Williamsburg's candlelit evening programs are the place to be. Take a ghost tour of the town or slip into the role of jury member at the chilling trial of a woman accused of witchcraft (you will be playing your part in a drama called *Cry Witch*). Sweet dreams.

LOGISTICS: Williamsburg, 150 miles south of Washington, D.C., is served by Richmond, Norfolk, and Newport News international airports and by Amtrak. Buy tickets for evening programs at www.history.org. Colonial Houses, www.colonialwilliamsburgresort.com; rooms from \$149. The Cheese Shop, www.cheeseshopwilliamsburg.com. Aromas, www.aromasworld.com. Dudley's Farmhouse Grille, www.dudleysfarmhousegrille.com.



Present tense: At the edge of Colonial Williamsburg, Aromas draws locals and travelers for coffee, tea, breakfast, lunch, and dinner. **Back in time:** All's quiet at the milliner's (top).