

Almost Heaven

Photo credit: Linda Barrett

BY LINDA BARRETT

EXPERIENCE A GOOD OLD-FASHIONED FAMILY VACATION AT WEST VIRGINIA'S CAPON SPRINGS & FARMS' ALL-INCLUSIVE RESORT.

Remember the scene in the movie *Brigadoon* where the “blessed village rises out of the mists every hundred years for only a day?” That’s how I felt after ascending the winding road into the West Virginia mountains and entering Capon Springs & Farms.

I wasn’t sure what to expect, but I surely didn’t anticipate the overwhelming old-fashioned charm of this family-friendly 19th-century resort that simply took my breath away. Or perhaps it was that clean, cool mountain air in that provided me with the heady oxygen. How have I not heard of this place?

A family-owned operation, Capon Springs has been cared for by generations of the Austin family and more than 140 co-workers, many of whose families have been with the resort for generations, as have the guests. “It not unusual to see the same multi-generational families here year after year,” explained Jonathan Bellingham, a third-generation family member himself and current marketing and recreation manager, or “chief host,” as he likes to say.

Capon Springs is an all-inclusive historic mountain resort surrounded by 4,700 acres

of West Virginia wilderness—the perfect place to get away from it all. Meals, lodging, activities, and complete access to the resort facilities and farms are all included (golf and spa are extra for a tiny fee).

Leave your stress and your electronics behind. This resort encourages family togetherness with a multitude of fun daily activities in a kind of fusion between a summer camp and a pampering bed and breakfast. You won’t have a care in the world except when to show up for meals. And even that is taken care of for you with inspiring music through the trees and the ringing of the dinner bell to announce meals three times a day.

Arrive early for the pre-breakfast flag-raising ceremony to hoist a flag that previously flew over the U.S. Capitol, or help lower it after the hilltop barbeque. Those who assist receive an official certificate suitable for framing...like mine!

There is a renewed focus on livestock farm-to-table, like the eggs from free-range chickens and pork products from the resident pig herd. “We serve comfort-style foods presented family-style and several buffets throughout the week, with three of the meals at the outdoor lodge,” Bellingham explained.

“And all the breads, rolls, pies, cakes, and cookies are all baked daily onsite.”

“Guests can walk down to visit with the hogs, dig for fossils, or fish in the stocked pond and bring their fish to the kitchens to serve with breakfast the next day,” he continued. “And anything you need—from equipment to bathing suits—is available for you to borrow.”

There are a variety of room options, from the quaint Pavilion, to the centrally-located Main House, to 14 wonderful and unique cottages. Each historic building has its own special attributes that makes it perfect for a family, couple, individual or groups. We were lucky enough to stay in the Pavilion, with its two wide porches, front and back, and a babbling brook just beyond that lulled us to la-la-land through the screen door.

To help you disconnect from the outside world, guest rooms do not have televisions or phones. (Cell service depends on your carrier.) Old-fashioned ceiling and box fans cool the rooms, while air conditioning is available in public spaces. Guests are encouraged to unplug; go outside and play! If you need internet connectivity, ultra-high-speed access is now available



Best ball golf captains



throughout the Meeting House facility.

Capon's Healing Waters

It wouldn't be right to talk about Capon Springs without mentioning the waters around which it was built. (The name "Capon" itself comes from the Native American language, meaning "medicine or healing waters.") In the early 1800s, up and down the Appalachian region, many resorts like Capon Springs were first developed based on underground springs. When the popularity of these resorts began to die off in the early 1900s, Capon Springs began bottling and delivering its water up and down the East coast. Extremely popular for its purported healing powers, it was used by the 1924 and 1928 U.S. Olympic teams in training, and in the 1930s-40s was the "official" and only water used by the entire U.S. Congress.

Guests can enjoy this natural spring water in the swimming pool and spa, and for drinking, cooking and bathing. All the water at Capon Springs comes entirely from the spring itself.

Spa

The entire essence of Capon Springs was founded on its water, so it is only natural that co-founder Lou Austin envisioned a "spa for the practice of natural healing" in its future. Opened in 2006, the Hygeia Bath House and Spa offers a variety of body treatments, from massage to facials to reflexology, but the highlight is a hot soak in the Capon water. Your aches and pains will vanish. A Wellness Room and endless pool are also housed within the Hygeia Spa. Tip: Schedule your appointments before you arrive for the best times.

Golf

The two distinct golf courses include The Golf Course at Capon Springs, a nine-hole regulation course with tees placed for golfers of all ages, and a nine-hole Par 3 course to hone your short game. Golf carts and sets of clubs are available for rent daily or for your stay; single clubs and other equipment are free.

In 2016, Capon Springs added Fling Golf. A hybrid between lacrosse and golf, this family-

friendly game involves "flinging" the golf ball. 2018 welcomes the new U.S. Kids Golf Family Course layout and upgrades to the locker house. Try a round of Hickory Golf, as golf was played when the course opened in 1936, named for the sport's original use of Hickory-Shafted clubs. Or take a lesson or clinic from resident golf professional Mike Rogers.

For more than a century, Capon Springs has served as a hidden gem, a secluded refuge from the world, yet it is less than a two-hour's drive from Northern Virginia, and the ideal spring, summer or fall getaway for the entire family. ❖

Resource

CAPON SPRINGS

304-784-3695

www.caponsprings.net

2018 Season: April 22-November 11, 2018

Open Houses for day visits: 2-7pm, Sundays, April 22 & 29