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[trip talk](#)

[getaway ideas](#)

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City

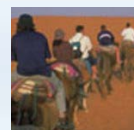
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Check-out

Room

[Hotel search](#)

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Girlfriend Getaway: Maryland is Marvellous!

By: [Jan Ross](#)

Monday, August
10th, 2015



Although we have discovered that many of the states we visit are radically different from our home state of Kentucky - think Arizona with mind boggling deserts and cactus - we actually felt very much at home on our girls' trip to Maryland.

Of course, Maryland has a beautiful coastline and mountains but [Ellicott City, Maryland](#) where the [Turf Valley Resort](#) is located reminded us very much of Kentucky with lush, green rolling hills. We were in charming little Ellicott City for a few days for a girlfriends getaway at lovely Turf Valley for the first time and we loved every single thing about this delightful place.

Turf Valley is owned and run by the Mangione family - quite literally the entire family. During our visit, the Nick Mangione Italian Classic golf tournament was being held as the resort has two of the most beautiful golf courses in Maryland and we were introduced to several generations of the Mangione family, from the youngest to the oldest who work in everything from the kitchen to public relations for the resort.

Turf Valley was originally a thoroughbred horse farm which is probably one of the reasons we felt at home as it strongly resembles the blue grass country of our home in Lexington, Kentucky. The Mangione family purchased Turf Valley in 1978 when it was just a quiet golf country club and proceeded to expand it into the luxury resort it has become. Spread out over 1,000 acres, the resort features two championship 18 hole golf courses, two swimming pools, three tennis courts, a fabulous spa, and more than 40,000 square feet of meeting and event space. It's a very popular spot for all kinds of events of all sizes, including weddings.

The resort is very close to both Baltimore and Washington, D.C.(in fact, the area is technically considered part of the Washington and Baltimore metropolitan area) and we were really tempted to take a day at one of these locations but we just

too busy at Turf Valley and nearby, idyllic little Ellicott City. From the first moment when we pulled into Turf Valley, we were immediately impressed as a pond with two lovely swans graces the entrance and provides the perfect introduction to this perfect location.



We checked in and went up to our Executive King room which was incredibly nice. In most hotels, this would be considered a suite and we definitely appreciated all the room. There was a large sitting area with a couch and a very comfy chair and ottoman so there was plenty of room for two women to relax and read or watch television. Our room also included extra amenities like a Keurig coffee maker, a little kitchenette with a fridge, microwave and sink, and a great flat screen television.

Not only was our room beautiful and comfy, we had an amazing view of one of their famous golf courses. They have plenty of other rooms and suites, including one and two bedroom suites which would be perfect for a family or a larger group of women for a girlfriends getaway. They also have some lovely villas available for longer stays.

Turf Valley is technically located in the tiny, historical town of Ellicott City, but the downtown area is a short drive from the resort and is well worth a visit. We didn't have nearly enough time to see the town and I would love to go back as there were lots of interesting little shops lining the main street, including Sweet Cascades, a candy store that had us salivating at the sight of all the handmade candies.

But we had to make a stop at the Visitor Center first as it was located in a completely charming old building. Ellicott City is a great tourist destination, with shopping, dining, and sightseeing. It's definitely a place to spend more than the two days we had allotted. The downtown area is literally tucked into the side of a mountain and you can see great hunks of it as you stroll the main street. The original buildings have been revitalized and turned into a variety of shops and restaurants which attract lots of tourists.

One of the most interesting places to visit in Ellicott City is the [B & O Museum](#) which celebrates the railroading history of the area. Even though they were technically closing, they were kind enough to allow us a quick peek and even showed us around the museum although I'm sure they were ready to go home. With lots of exhibits, model trains, and full size trains, it's a great place for families, especially those with kids who love trains.

We loved little Ellicott City and wanted to stay longer but we had arrived late in the day and it was time to head back to Turf Valley for dinner at Alexandra's Restaurant. Located to the right of the lobby with an open and airy feel, the restaurant also has a large, shaded patio with a great view of the golf course.

We had a wonderful dinner here as well as



breakfast, which was equally delicious. They have an extensive menu but I decided on something fairly simple and ordered the filet mignon with steak frites. My steak was perfectly prepared and it was the perfect choice. Chef Russell K. Svoboda does a Modern American Fusion featuring fresh and local, ingredients (which we really love at a restaurant) which are prepared simply with a culinary mastery that we really appreciated. I didn't need dessert but after I noticed a cannoli on the menu, I had to order one. And it was awesome.

After a great night's sleep in our lovely room, we had a full day planned and had to be back to the resort by 3:00 for my spa appointment, so we spent some time at [Savage Mill](#) which is truly a fascinating place - I was just frustrated that we didn't have an entire day to shop! Originally a working textile mill making canvas used mostly for ship sails from 1822 - 1947, this historic mill and outbuildings has been converted into charming shops and restaurants. With the original flooring in many areas and charming little nooks and corners that were part of the original mill, it's a great place to spend a day.

Soft shell blue crabs are only in season for a very short time and we just happened to be in Maryland during that time so we had to try them for the first time. They are available at several restaurants in the area - you just might want to call first to make sure they are not sold out!

But in between lunch and dinner, we had a very important reason to get back to the resort - my spa appointment! The Turf Valley Spa is a lovely place with a wonderful lounge area which looks out over the beautiful property. I relaxed in the lounge area for a while, which was perfect after our long day, then had an amazing massage which could not have been more perfect.

We were sad to leave Turf Valley but lucky enough during our Maryland visit to check out a completely different part of Maryland in the Allegheny Mountains. Nothing like our home city but equally as gorgeous as Turf Valley, [Rocky Gap Casino Resort](#) is a prime example of a lovely resort offering a host of amenities which also happens to be in one of the most beautiful locations we have ever visited. Forget those casinos in Las Vegas which, at best, overlook a luxurious pool - this resort overlooks 3,000 acres of the gorgeous Allegheny mountains and the clear and beautiful, 243 acre Lake Habeeb because it is perched right beside Rocky Gap State Park. How many of those Vegas resorts can also boast miles of hiking trails, swimming beaches, access to kayaking and canoeing a lake, and mountain views?

We were honestly a little taken aback to discover a casino resort hidden away in the middle of Maryland. Tucked away near the historic town of Cumberland, Maryland, the resort expanded in May, 2013 to include an expansive casino with 550 slot machines, 10 table games, a casino bar, and live Texas Hold'em poker with both Limit and No Limit stakes. In 2014, the resort also spent money to renovate the hotel rooms, lobby, restaurants, and the Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course. They also recently opened a new conference and event

center featuring an executive boardroom, breakout meeting rooms, business center and flexible-use meeting space and they opened a comedy club on the lower level.

We really did not know what to expect when we pulled up to the entrance. We have been to Vegas so would this be an uber-glitzy, sort of tacky casino hotel? No, just the opposite in fact. While we did see slot machines immediately in the lobby, the view of the lake and mountains is your first hint that this is not only a resort with a casino but that it has lots more to offer.

We had just made a long drive so were just interested in checking in and relaxing for the evening and not going back down for a meal, but there are plenty of dining options at the resort. After we had settled in, I headed downstairs to find some sandwiches to take back up and found the perfect, light meals at Signatures Bar and Grill.



The next morning we were well rested and ready for a tour of the property which opened our eyes even more to all that is available at this location. It's truly a great place for families, couples, groups, girlfriends getaways - you name it. We started, appropriately enough, with what is the highlight of the resort for many visitors - the casino. Although we are not gamblers and have actually been those rare people who go to Vegas and never gamble, we could certainly appreciate the allure of this place. We were actually much more interested in the other amenities of the resort including the Garden Spa where I fully intend to return so I can experience one of their many relaxing treatments.

We also paid a quick visit to all the restaurants, including Signatures Bar and Grill where I had not fully appreciated the fact that they have one of the biggest televisions we have ever seen

- how great to watch a game here! We also love all the outside dining options with the amazing views. The resort has a really appealing pool with a roof that retracts so it can be used throughout all the seasons.

Beautiful Lake Habeeb is truly one of the best parts of this resort and they have taken full advantage of it by offering beachside lounge chairs and plenty of kayaks and canoes available for rent. We watched as someone paddled by leisurely in one of the canoes. There's also plenty of comfortable outside seating and a nice view of the beach across the lake at the state park.

The other big draw for the resort is their Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course. Membership is available but guests of the resort are also welcome to play a few holes - and they certainly have plenty of golf carts available.

Our room for the night had been lovely but we were curious to see some of the other lodging options and were not disappointed when we checked out one of the beautiful suites. After spending the morning seeing everything the Rocky Gap Casino Resort has to offer, we were pretty sad to leave after only one night. I am making a list of everything I want to experience on my next visit - and it's pretty long!

Whether you choose Turf Valley or the Rocky Gap Casino Resort for a getaway (or both, like us!) you will enjoy a visit to Maryland for the perfect girlfriends getaway!



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