

The “Rivah” awaits at The Tides Inn



This was our maiden voyage to the Tides Inn and the “Rivah.” After hearing so many rave reviews about this legendary locale, we were expecting big things.

Our first thrill came even earlier than we hoped. After only 20 minutes on Interstate 64, we turned off at West Point, missing bumper-to-bumper beach traffic. Not a bad start, eh? As we crossed over the enormously wide Rappahannock River Bridge, our remaining expectations melted away with no effort at all.

It didn't taken us long to realize the true “Rivah” experience lies in savoring the small pleasures of life and forgetting anything else beyond the mesmerizing Chesapeake Bay and the close-knit community dating back to early Colonial days. Within an hour and 15 minutes, we found ourselves transported to a whole different world — a rural one with a much slower pace, a balmy breeze, and water views abounding.

After traveling through the small-town of Irvington, we arrived at the newly renovated Tides Inn and its complimentary Par 3 nine-hole golf course (with complimentary clubs as well.) Right away the concierge greeted our kids with stuffed red crabs, setting the tone for a fun, kid-friendly stay.

Perched on a bluff overlooking Carters Creek, the lovely Tides Inn has striking water views fit for post-cards. In addition, this bluff just so happens to be its own private pen-

insula. Yes, water surrounds this compact, full-service resort on three sides.

In fact, it's hard to avoid seeing water from anywhere on its well-manicured grounds, and most rooms have balconies. The gentle waves lap against the sandy beach, secluded docks, and extensive deep-water marina. Brick pathways lead you through the lush and colorful gardens, making for a remarkably tranquil environment.

It is downright amazing how much there is to do at this picturesque resort, both on the creek and off. Thankfully the activities desk distributes a daily schedule of the many guided happenings, most included with lodging. Families can learn how to crab, kayak, or even take sailing lessons at Premier Sailing School. The Inn also has a wide range of watercraft handy for you to take a spin, including paddleboats, kayaks, canoes, as well as their legendary one-hour Cove Cruise. Various other charter boats are also available.

In addition to golf, landlubbers will find a slew of activities. There are bicycles for exploring the area, croquet on the front lawn, a heated waterfront pool, tennis courts, nature trails, bocce, disc golf, frisbee, and a handy workout facility. Once again, the resort fee includes the majority of these activities. All things considered, the Tides Inn is an excellent value, especially for families with lots of interests.

The “Fun Team” at Crab Net Kids offers adventures for kids ages 4-12, allowing time for adult adventures. It's an ideal time to take your own personal sailing lessons, experience the marine-inspired spa, or simply read a magazine by the pool.

The Inn also offers several restaurants, including a casual poolside Grille. Well equipped for kids, the Chesapeake Club offers a striking panoramic view of the marina. Wilby's Café is a local favorite, a lunch spot with a new coffee shop, serving fresh baked goodies. And let's not forget the Tides Inn's nightly tradition of S'mores, milk, and cookies. The River Market in White Stone makes sandwiches to order as well as chicken tenders, especially handy since fast food is refreshingly absent from the area.

For history buffs, right down the street you will find the Steamboat Era Museum, detailing the heyday of steamboats on the Rappahannock in the 1800s. Long before the automobile, steamboats were the main form of transportation for the Northern Neck, using Chesapeake Bay as its “highway” to transport tourists, freight, and even a floating theater. Just two miles down the road lies the

Historic Christ Church founded in 1735, now a remarkably preserved National Historic Landmark.

For a shopping fix, don't walk, run to the Dandelion. This boutique features women's clothing, decorative pieces, unique accessories, and gifts. You will not emerge empty-handed! The neighboring town of Kilmarnock is also known for its upscale antique shops.

If you need some wine and the kids need to burn off some energy, check out the newly established Hope and Glory Vineyard with its six acres of vines to explore. Once the little people (and you) are tucked out, drop by their tasting room and sample their award-winning wines.

Ah, the Rivah! We'll be back soon, especially now that we know just how close it is. Where else do big things melt away, leaving you to enjoy croquet on the lawn and cook up crabs you caught yourself? **RPM**

Libby Carty McNamee, a local freelance writer and mother, is proud to say she's been to the Rivah and already looking forward to exploring more of the Northern Neck. For more information, check out www.tidesinn.com.

