

Laurel Point Retreat

Bed & Breakfast



My boyhood vision of the Shenandoah Valley and western Virginia was greatly influenced by James Stewart's epic movie, *Shenandoah*, and the stirring rendition of the movie's theme by the Virginia Military Institute's choir. The vision is of a simple, honest lifestyle lived by gentle people of friendly persuasion against a background of stunning natural beauty. When you have the highlands of Virginia, who needs the Canadian Rockies?

Occasionally, I find a bed and breakfast (B&B) that makes the experience even more meaningful. One of those destinations is Laurel Point Retreat. Laurel Point is owned and operated by Jim and Lorraine White. "Operating a bed and breakfast was a natural transition for us because we loved hard work and being

around people," says Lorraine. Early in their 50 years of marriage, they were farmers and Jim was also a teacher. They owned and operated the Sugar Tree Country Store where they sold their homemade maple syrup, which continues to be a popular stop for travelers in Highland County.

To develop their dream, Jim and Lorraine purchased a hillside overlooking Devil's Backbone, part of the beautiful Allegheny Mountain range. Jim and Lorraine bought a hand-cut log cabin originally built in the 1700s and moved it piece by piece to their site. "We lived in the reconstructed cabin for several years while we built our guest rooms and completed our dream," says Lorraine. The completed structure has three guest rooms and baths upstairs and two guest rooms

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Above: Jim and Lorraine White, owners of Laurel Point Retreat. Left: View of Laurel Point looking toward the Allegheny Mountains. Background: Panoramic view of Devil's Backbone from the deck of the B&B. Top: The front porch, one of many outdoor seating areas.

downstairs. In addition, the comfortable facility has a large gathering room with two huge fireplaces and a large great room where breakfast is served. Near the main house are two smaller cabins for guests. One cabin has a kitchen and can sleep six, while the second cabin has a single bed. Outside are several sitting areas to enjoy the panoramic vistas of the Allegheny Mountains. Laurel Point is also a working farm where Jim and Lorraine raise a herd of Highland cows and a vegetable garden.

What would a good B&B be without a great breakfast? "We want our guests to feel like family so we try to be as flexible as possible with breakfast choices," says Lorraine. Our first breakfast was an egg omelet with sides of local sausage and bacon. Lorraine makes all the breads and muffins. The rhubarb, strawberry and raspberry jams are also made in her kitchen. The second day our breakfast was light and fluffy pancakes. This is Jim's specialty in that the "eyes" of the pancakes are made with buckwheat flour. As you might guess, the maple syrup is also a house specialty.

Travelers to Laurel Point and Monterey have several good options for lunch and dinner. On Main Street are High's Restaurant and The Highland Inn. High's Restaurant serves area favorites of burgers, sandwiches and entrées of fried trout and country-fried steak. For a white tablecloth dinner, The Highland Inn is a legendary favorite. They pride themselves with seasonal menus featuring local trout, lamb, beef and produce from local farms.

For me, a great B&B experience needs a nice location, friendly and engaging hosts, comfortable accommodations and a good breakfast. The experience should be as special as it was for me. In my opinion, Laurel Point gets extra points for great photography opportunities and rekindling my boyhood visions of the Virginia highlands.

I would like to thank *Cooperative Living* reader, Art Ryan, for recommending Laurel Point. Write me at dwalker123@comcast.net and let me know of your favorite restaurant or lodge in the Old Dominion. ■



From top: The Whites raise a herd of Highland cows. Breakfast choices are flexible with buckwheat pancakes served with homemade maple syrup and fried apples, and egg omelets with local sausage and bacon, served with homemade bread and jams.



Above: The large gathering room at Laurel Point Retreat was part of the original 1700 structure. Right: One of the B&B's guest rooms with fireplace and local antiques.

