

SPLURGE

What: Bora Bora Lagoon Resort and Spa in Bora Bora, French Polynesia

How much: \$655 to \$1,160 per night depending upon accommodations

Why: Guests can admire or even feed beautiful underwater sea life through glass-topped coffee tables inside Bora Bora Lagoon Resort and Spa's bungalows. Situated over the water, each bungalow features a private deck leading to an alluring blue lagoon. Arranged in three separate villages, the bungalows offer unobstructed views of Mount Otemanu. Each village is near the beach, communal pavilions and swimming areas. In the middle of the resort, surrounded by lush gardens, guests can take a refreshing dip in a freshwater, free-form pool deep enough for practicing scuba diving. For more details about Bora Bora Lagoon Resort and Spa's amenities, visit orient-express.com/web/obor/obor_a2a_home.jsp.

BARGAIN

What: Silver Lake Guest House in Rehoboth Beach, Del.

How much: \$140 to \$275 per night for two in a guest room, or \$280 to \$400 per night for four in a two-bedroom apartment

Why: The romantic bed and breakfast The Washington Post refers to as "The Jewel of the Delaware Shore" provides spectacular views of Rehoboth's Silver Lake from its decks, balconies and sprawling veranda. All the rooms inside the Silver Lake Guest House offer a full private bath, cable TV, wireless Internet and central air-conditioning. Enjoy complimentary muffins, fresh fruit, juice, tea and coffee every morning in the second-floor sun-room or third-floor sundeck. For guests who like the attention that comes from bed and breakfast staff, but want the privacy that comes with staying at a hotel, the Silver Lake Guest House offers two two-bedroom apartments in its Carriage House. To book your stay, visit silverlakeguesthouse.com/index.html.

LAST-MINUTE DEALS

MORE THAN 4,000 HOTELS OFFER FREE NIGHT STAY

Thousands of people across the world jumped on hotel beds May 7 as part of a marketing plan to help start IHG's biggest free-night offer, available until July 3. The deal provides guests with one free night at any of IHG's 4,000 hotels worldwide (except Japan) when they stay any two nights through July 3. Guests' free night may be applied to stays July 3 through Dec. 26. Guests can earn up to four free nights. IHG hotels include InterContinental Hotels & Resorts, Crowne Plaza, Hotel Indigo, Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Express, Express by Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Club Vacations, Staybridge Suites and Candlewood Suites hotels. For more information, visit www.GetAFreeNight.com. — *Compiled by Jessica Novak*

The lure of the Spam Trail *Foodies follow the canned meat across U.S.*

By **Andrea Farnum**
Examiner Correspondent

On the Web

spam.com
spamtownusa.com
shadycoveinfo.com

Die-hard foodies have been known to travel far and wide for the lure of an authentic or unusual food festival or attraction. But traveling cross-country in search of America's "miracle meat in a can?" Now that's hard-core devotion.

"The bottom line is that Spam just tastes good," explained Joe Benitez, a self-proclaimed "road foodie" from Bethesda who just returned from visiting the Spam Museum in Austin, Minn. "It's an American icon — love it or hate, everyone has an opinion about Spam."

A museum dedicated to all things Spam is housed in a renovated former K-Mart location, along with Hormel headquarters — Spam's parent company — in Austin. Hormel keeps a wry sense of humor about its canned meat product, with billboards leading up to the museum that read "The Spam Museum — Even We Don't Really Understand."

"The museum was a blast — very funky, very retro," Benitez said. "Let's face it, Spam is an American institution and deserves its own museum to honor it."

America's mystery meat in a can has also inspired devotees from Hawaii to Oregon to celebrate the luncheon meat with Spam festivals. With a population of just over 2,000, the southern Oregon town of Shady Cove will celebrate its annual Spam Festival on Aug. 22 — complete with a Spam queen, Spam burgers

and a Spam cook-off.

But no other Spam festival can top the Waikiki Spam Jam Festival held every spring in Hawaii. On a per capita basis, Hawaiians are the leading consumers of Spam products in the United States. "Waikiki Spam Jam Festival is one of the island's most popular street festivals and a perfect illustration of the vibrant Spam community in Hawaii," said Jaynee Sherman, product manager at Spam.

Spam Jam festivities include a culinary competition with Spam recipes that are uniquely Hawaiian, including interpretations of Spam musubi — Hawaii's version of Spam sushi and one of the most popular luncheon dishes on the islands. "Hawaiian residents recognize the distinct taste of Spam and have made it part of their everyday family meals and culture," Sherman explained.

Would the love of Spam entice a "mystery meat" aficionado to travel from Maryland to Hawaii just to celebrate Spam Jam? "You betcha," said Benitez. "I'm serious about my Spam."



COURTESY PHOTO

Located in a renovated former K-Mart location, the Spam Museum building also houses parent company Hormel's headquarters.

GAS TANK AWAY

Federal Hill is Baltimore's small-town jewel

By **Marie Gullard**
Examiner Correspondent

A great green bank sits one block south of Baltimore's Inner Harbor high above one of the city's most beloved neighborhoods. With its streets of 19th century row houses, churches, schools and thriving businesses, "quaint," "charming" and "diverse" are adjectives often used to describe this burgeoning place called Federal Hill.

Steeped in history, Federal Hill earned its name in 1788 as the site of much feasting and revelry upon the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. The city government acquired the hill after the Civil War and turned it into a park — as it remains to this day.

It is the Federal Hill neighborhood, though, south of the clay mound that calls to the small-town voyager. On Riverside and Cross Streets, miniature dollhouse-like dwellings, built around 1840, sport brightly colored shutters placed against deep red or painted brick facades.

The Federal Hill community is centered commercially on mom-and-pop businesses; with everything from great restaurants to trendy salons, antique shops and bookstores.

"The boutiques really help Federal Hill shine," said Jane Seebold of Federal Hill Main Street Inc. "We have many



COURTESY OF THE BALTIMORE AREA CONVENTION AND VISITORS ASSOCIATION

Federal Hill gives a small-town feel separate from Baltimore's bustling city life.

cute shops, most locally owned, that carry a wide range of items and offer excellent customer service, without exorbitant prices associated with small boutiques.

Amy's Boutique, with an interesting mix of artful and sophisticated fashion and jewelry, suits my taste. I also love Zella Zen for purses and accessories, Funky Beehive for unique gifts, and Babe and Whimsy/Reason when I am shopping for my grown children. And Ladybugs & Fireflies

has great stuff for kids. SoBotanical carries wonderful natural body products, with custom-designed scents concocted on-site by the owner. That's what's so great: I can get everything I need within walking distance of home!"

Light and Charles Streets comprise the neighborhood's two parallel main drags. Wedged between them at Cross Street is the heart of Federal Hill: Cross Street Market. Since 1846, the market, with its variety of

If you go

- **Where:** Federal Hill in South Baltimore
- **Distance:** 40 miles from D.C.
- **Info:** historicfederalhill.org

food and flower stalls, has offered up a potpourri of sights, sounds and delectable scents for consumers from every walk of life.

The dining is superb in Federal Hill. Dozens of good restaurants — everything from Indian fare to seafood to New American cuisine lie within a 10-block radius.

This past March, Federal Hill Main Street received a prestigious national 2009 Great American Main Street Award. The honor was bestowed in recognition of its exceptional accomplishments in revitalizing the central business district of the Federal Hill neighborhood of Baltimore.

"Our business district is a viable and exciting place, even in these challenging economic times," said Federal Hill Business Association President Sonny Morstein, who accepted the award.

Visit the hill and the 'hood and experience the friendliness of the locals, the lively conversation in the cafes and pubs and — perhaps most striking — community pride manifested in every aspect of this revitalized part of Baltimore.