

SWEET DREAMS ALONG THE C&O CANAL

ARTICLE BY SHUAN BUTCHER



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The Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) Canal, a 184-mile towpath, is actually one of the top 10 most visited national parks.

I've had the pleasure of walking it, biking it and using it as an access point to canoe the Potomac River. And recently, my wife and I had the opportunity to connect with the C&O Canal in a different way, by staying in one of its lockhouses. These buildings are a small sampling of the more than 1,300 historic structures within the linear park.

Staying at a lockhouse allows you to experience history in a unique way. Six lockhouses have been restored and are available for rent. Overnight accommodations range from rustic to nostalgic and are located anywhere from just a few miles outside Washington, D.C., all the way out to Clear Spring in Washington County. One exists in Frederick County, near Point of Rocks.

We stayed the night in Lockhouse 10, near Cabin John. Our accommodations were inviting,

warm and cozy, reminding me of the comforts of grandma's house. It had a 1930s décor, from the kitchen appliances to the bathroom fixtures, as well as electricity, heating and air and running water.

In an age when most households have multiple television sets and electronic devices everywhere, it was nice to get away from that for a short period of time. It truly felt as if we were miles away from civilization. I loved the old-fashioned radio, even if it just picked up one station. We enjoyed playing old board games, flipping through the classic recipe book, checking out the Civilian Conservation Corps memorabilia adorning the various rooms, and sitting inside the screened-in front porch taking in the cool night air. Although I must admit the bed did not conjure up thoughts of a five-star hotel.

Staying in a lockhouse can be a perfect romantic getaway for a couple or a family with kids. It could also make for a great group outing, such as a girls weekend or scout overnight.

Lockhouse 10 was our first Canal Quarters experience, but it won't be our last. Since each has been furnished to represent a different time period, we plan to experience the evolution and story of the canal by staying in others. Hopefully, you will as well.

The Canal Quarters program is operated by the C&O Canal Trust, the official nonprofit partner of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park, whose mission is to work in partnership with the National Park Service to protect, restore and promote the C&O Canal. To learn more about the program and the six lockhouses available, visit www.canaltrust.org.

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