

Mini-Vacations

Kenneth R. "Ken" Plum

As you are reading this I am away with Jane on our regular vacation. While our trip to Yellowstone National Park and surrounding areas involves lengthy travel and more than a week of time, Jane and I have throughout the year taken what we refer to as "mini-vacations." Vacations to us are more a state of mind than a place or time. Reston and Virginia are ideal places for mini-vacations.

Recently we spent a couple of early morning hours exploring the area around the National Wildlife headquarters in the back of Reston Business Park. The rain gardens to accommodate runoff from the parking lots are filled with interesting plants and flowers. The ponds and waterfalls in front of the office are very attractive with a wonderful sound of rushing waters. The rustic trails behind the headquarters take you into the heavily wooded and fern-filled parts of Lake Fairfax Park. While we were only ten minutes from home, we could have been thousands of miles away.

Other delightful mini-vacations around Reston include a visit to Sunrise Valley Park where the ponds and wetlands are filled with beautiful lotus, water lilies, and other interesting bog plants. Birds abound and include a large crane. For beautiful woodlands, take the Ridge Heights Trail towards Vienna, the Glade Trail, or any of the trails into the Nature Center. We continue to visit trails in Reston new to us where delightful new adventures unfold. We are amazed at the number of years we have lived in Reston but are still discovering its beauty and opportunities for mini-vacations. We always enjoy a visit to Margaret's Garden on Lawyer's Road.

But mini-vacations can also extend to out-of-town visits and to several days rather than just hours. The Virginia countryside provides vast opportunities. Get off the Interstates and take the smallest of country roads. Western Loudoun County is a great area for exploration – log cabins, old farms, lush countryside. Take Route 11 south through the Shenandoah Valley and stop in the shops of the little bergs on the "Valley Turnpike," a HOT-lane of yesteryear. One of our favorite stops is Raphine where we like to visit Buffalo Springs Herb Farm and Wade's Mill, an operating grist mill.

Mini-vacations are not just going places; they are fully enjoying what you are doing. We go to the farmers' markets in cities we visit throughout the world. But we also go to the farmers' market at Lake Anne Plaza regularly. Besides fresh produce and fresh flowers, we get inspired and refreshed and have wonderful visits with friends.

Mini-vacations are a state of mind; they are enjoying life to the fullest. We are certain to enjoy the beauty and majesty of Yellowstone, but we will also enjoy getting back home where each day presents new vacation opportunities.