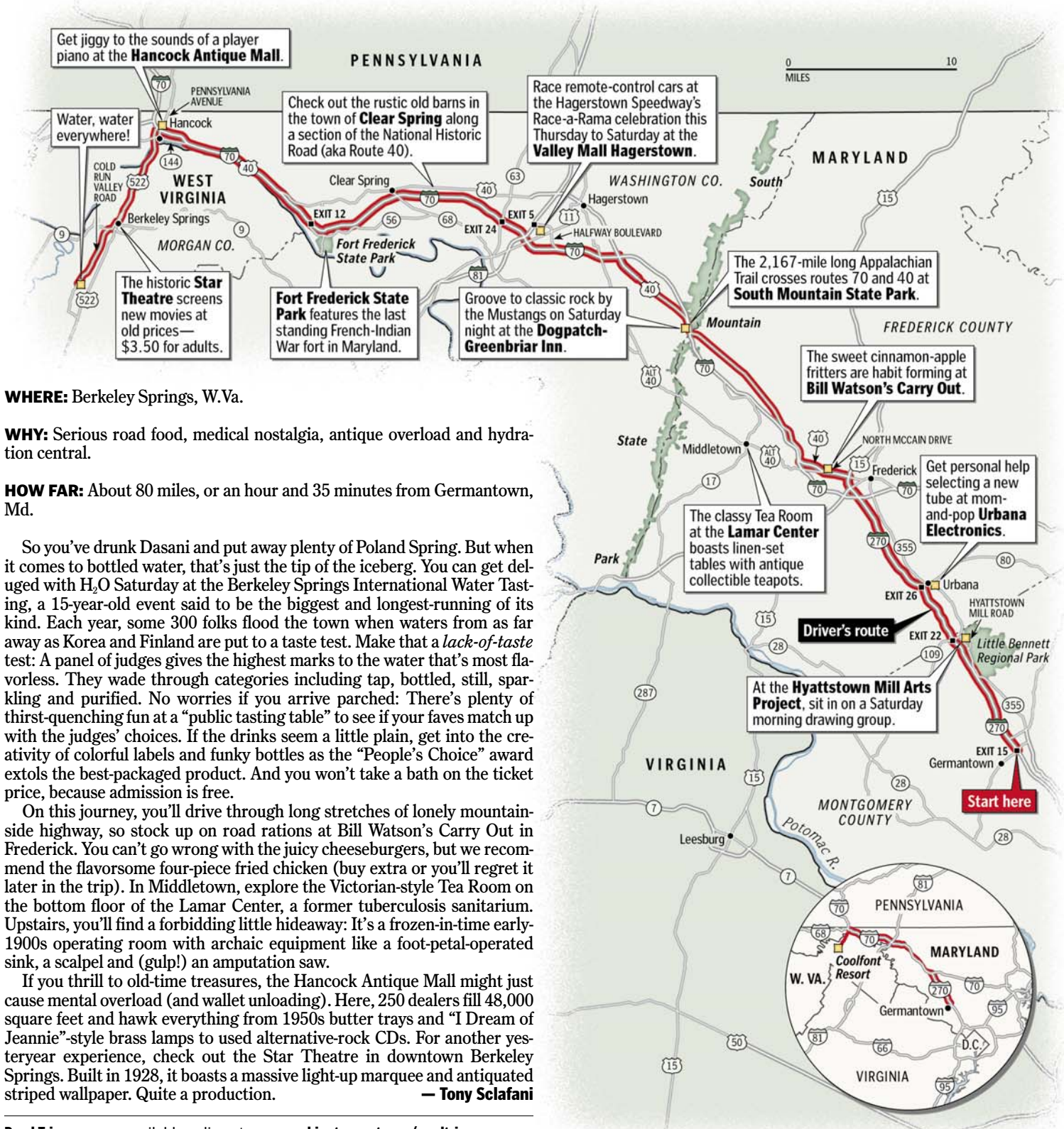


ROADTRIP | Quench Your Thirst



So you've drunk Dasani and put away plenty of Poland Spring. But when it comes to bottled water, that's just the tip of the iceberg. You can get deluged with H₂O Saturday at the Berkeley Springs International Water Tasting, a 15-year-old event said to be the biggest and longest-running of its kind. Each year, some 300 folks flood the town when waters from as far away as Korea and Finland are put to a taste test. Make that a *lack-of-taste* test: A panel of judges gives the highest marks to the water that's most flavorless. They wade through categories including tap, bottled, still, sparkling and purified. No worries if you arrive parched: There's plenty of thirst-quenching fun at a "public tasting table" to see if your faves match up with the judges' choices. If the drinks seem a little plain, get into the creativity of colorful labels and funky bottles as the "People's Choice" award extols the best-packaged product. And you won't take a bath on the ticket price, because admission is free.

On this journey, you'll drive through long stretches of lonely mountain-side highway, so stock up on road rations at Bill Watson's Carry Out in Frederick. You can't go wrong with the juicy cheeseburgers, but we recommend the flavorsome four-piece fried chicken (buy extra or you'll regret it later in the trip). In Middletown, explore the Victorian-style Tea Room on the bottom floor of the Lamar Center, a former tuberculosis sanitarium. Upstairs, you'll find a forbidding little hideaway: It's a frozen-in-time early-1900s operating room with archaic equipment like a foot-petal-operated sink, a scalpel and (gulp!) an amputation saw.

If you thrill to old-time treasures, the Hancock Antique Mall might just cause mental overload (and wallet unloading). Here, 250 dealers fill 48,000 square feet and hawk everything from 1950s butter trays and "I Dream of Jeannie"-style brass lamps to used alternative-rock CDs. For another yesteryear experience, check out the Star Theatre in downtown Berkeley Springs. Built in 1928, it boasts a massive light-up marquee and antiquated striped wallpaper. Quite a production.

— Tony Sclafani

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