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## Tangier

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TANGIER ISLAND  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY CADE MARTIN

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A photograph of a restaurant interior. The walls are made of rough-hewn stone. Two large arched windows are set into the wall, one of which has an 'EXIT' sign above it. A large, ornate chandelier hangs from the ceiling. Several tables are set with white tablecloths, white napkins, and glassware. The chairs are upholstered in a patterned fabric. The floor is covered in a red and gold patterned carpet.

# Carefree in Casanova

Self-confessed spa junkie TYLER SCOTT discovers the art of living at Poplar Springs, a Warrenton-area farm that combines artful food and blue-sky relaxation.



Thursday morning, early. Slush on the ground. Not a good day to visit a spa, because my 4-year-old daughter has kept me up for two nights running and now I have a chest cold. A few hours later, as my van winds through the hunt country of Fauquier County, my spirits start to lift. When I drive up a snow-covered hill and stop in front of Poplar Springs, The Inn Spa, I tell myself, *I could get used to this.*

Last September, Howard Foer and Lauren Levine's talked-of dream became a reality when they opened a luxury inn in Casanova, Va., a one-post office town southeast of Warrenton. For 15 years they had run the mega-successful Festive Foods catering business out of Bethesda and been searching for a property like Poplar Springs. Foer, 41 years old, admits that finding the property was a "fluke;" a client of Festive Foods rented the estate for her wedding, and when Foer and Levine met the owner, they found out she was interested in selling. Seven years later, the couple have built a home for themselves and their small children and opened the new \$10 million high-end spa.

What strikes you first about Poplar Springs is the setting. Surrounded by good old Virginia farmland, the inn rests on a hilltop with 200 acres of lawn; cedar,

**Facing page: the dining room. This page, clockwise from top left: guest transport; peppercorn encrusted tuna; the path to an outdoor massage.**

white oak and poplar forests; two ponds with good fishing; and a winding creek. The European-style

building has 22 bedrooms and suites, each with balconies and decorated in soft hues and comfy French Country furniture. To the right are a full-service spa, cardio room and outdoor pool.

Part of Poplar Springs' charm is that the owners have managed to tie the old in with the new: The setting is very natural and the spa and pool overlook a picturesque old barn. Walk down the country lane (or be whisked along in a golf cart) and you'll find The Manor House Restaurant, a ca.-1928 gabled fieldstone mansion that, despite renovations, has remained true to its original design; the dining room has 30-foot ceilings and rough-hewn beams, balconies, stone walls and one very baronial fireplace.

My English teacher at Chatham Hall used to say, "Only the boring are bored." One will never be bored at Poplar Springs. Besides the spa, fitness room and pool, the property offers tennis, walking and bike trails and fishing. If guests need a change of pace, there are a nearby golf course, excellent shopping and antiques in Warrenton, and a year-round calendar of festivals and equestrian events, not to mention Civil War and vineyard tours. The staff can also make arrangements for trips to the theater, restaurants and museums in Washington, D.C., only 55 minutes away, or classes in cooking, massage techniques, skin care, yoga, nutrition and water aerobics. The Inn Spa also hosts special events, meetings and weddings.

Though Poplar Springs caters to more upscale patrons, the staff reflects

**PHOTOGRAPHY By ERIC JOHNSON**