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But every few months, I’d find myself falling into predictable rhythms and routines, and I would long for the open road. I’d hop in my car and drive to, say, California, stopping in small towns, exploring by bike and meeting strangers. I came to understand that adventure fuels me; I need to keep pursuing new things, or I wilt.

Adrift in the District
Armed with a paddleboard, a native sees her hometown from a new perspective

BY MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN
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Paddling to dream new views of D.C.

BY JIM BARRON

A weekend stay last month at the Blackburn Inn in Staunton, Va., gave me fuel and an appreciation for a breakaway from the usual, simply to think about the romance of the river.

After checking in, we were free to wander the inn’s own Art Nouveau-style building, down to the stately grounds and to the river’s edge. Jim Blackburn, a Thomas Jefferson protege who owns the historic property, provided a backdrop of a 19th-century escape.

The grounds was something that jolted me as a writer. Blackburn Inn, in some ways, is what I imagined as the time I’d love to return to a place.

Before our early check-in, we stopped at the docks. A little boat was tied up, and I walked on the dock, and I stepped off.

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