

RoadTrip

Treat Your Sweet Tooth to Maryland's Candy Land

WHERE: Harford County, Md.

WHY: Chocolate crabs, ice cream fresh from the cow and free dessert.

HOW FAR: About 22 miles from start to finish, and about 65 miles from Washington.

Maryland is known for crabs, but Harford County is the place for chocolate crabs. Located about 20 miles northeast of Baltimore and where the Susquehanna River meets the Chesapeake Bay, the Maryland county has more family-owned bakeries, homemade-chocolate stores, creameries and sweet shops than should be permitted in one jurisdiction. (Let's hope they have an inordinate number of dentists, too.) The towns there include Bel Air, Aberdeen and Havre de Grace. Each has its own flavor, but all move at a wonderfully slow pace, like a lazy chocolate river in Candy Land. Bel Air, the county seat, has a lively, re-

cently redeveloped Main Street and, most important, is the site of the annual Bel Air Chocolate Festival in March. Aberdeen is the home of the Ripken baseball dynasty and Ripken Stadium, where you can find peanuts, Cracker Jack and cotton candy. And Havre de Grace, on the waterfront, is filled with antiques shops, boutiques and duck decoys. Despite the towns' differences, they all share a taste for the sweet things in life. "It's unusual to have chocolate shops or old-fashioned bakeries these days," says Jimmy Hamilton, owner of the 54-year-old Bel Air Bakery. "They're kind of a thing of the past." Fortunately, candy never goes out of style.

— Melanie D.G. Kaplan

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You name it, the Bel Air Bakery probably bakes it, from cannolis to chocolate whipped cream logs to sugar-free cookies.

The family-owned chain **Wockenfuss Homemade Candies** has "crabby pops," chocolate-covered Oreos, saltwater taffy, caramel apples and nonpareils the size of Reese's peanut butter cups.

Bomboy's Home Made Candy makes chocolate fish and ducks, Havre de Mints, fudge, chocolate-covered pretzels and chocolate-caramel-cashew crabs. The treats are crafted in the shop basement, which has a 400-pound chocolate melter.

When Montreal-born Lucie Yeakel couldn't find all her favorite French treats in northern Maryland, she opened **Patisserie Lucie**, which carries napoleons, eclairs, brioches, chocolate croissants and quiches.

What tastes better than dessert? Free dessert! Every diner at **Mamie's Cafe** gets cake, rice pudding or bread pudding on the house.

Fido will beg for the snacks at **Pampered Paws Gourmet Treats Pet Bakery & Boutique**, including filet mignon-flavored Woofy Pop (microwave popcorn), Bark Bars and Buck's Bodacious Brownies.

Slurp down some caffeinated candy at **Java by the Bay**. Its Milky Way is espresso with foamy steamed milk, caramel chocolate and whipped cream.

Get your two to three daily servings of dairy at **Broom's Bloom**, which makes ice cream in such flavors as peanut butter, green tea mango and maraschino cherry chip. The shop also sells homemade farmstead cheese and milk in glass bottles.

Get a three-scoop ice cream sundae at the **Promenade Grille**, overlooking the City Yacht Basin.

Practice your ABCs at 78-year-old **Goll's Bakery**, which etches on its pie crusts the first letter of the fruit inside (lemon, peach, raisin, pineapple).

Moore's Candies, a family business since 1919, sells handcrafted chocolates, including chocolate crabs and chocolate crab cups.

How sweet it is to stroll or sit on the **Promenade** at 22-acre Tydings Park, at the head of Chesapeake Bay.