

lookout books

Books & Crannies

Page through summer's best reads at some of D.C.'s hidden-gem attractions

A good novel is cheaper than a plane ticket and quicker than a cross-country road trip. And yet it has the same ability to transport you to a new place. "Escapism is the general theme of summer," says Jake Cumsy-Whitlock, a buyer for Kramerbooks & Afterwords. "People are looking for something light to take them away from their everyday worries." It makes sense, then, to head to a local environment that makes it easy for you to get lost in what you're reading. For those with no vacation plans, we offer 10 of our favorite new titles along with suggestions on where to curl up with them. **HOLLEY SIMMONS (EXPRESS)**

1



Read → "The Newlyweds"

By Nell Freudenberger (\$30, Knopf; out now)
File Freudenberger under "People You Wish You Could Be." The 37-year-old Harvard grad is beautiful and brimming with talent as evidenced by her highly anticipated novel about a lonely man in Rochester, N.Y. who marries a Bangladesh woman he meets online. Aside from the obvious cultural divides, strains on the relationship include meddling in-laws, homesickness and ghosts of partners past.

At → The Blind Dog Cafe

This pop-up luncheonette operates daily in Darnell's bar from 7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. before reverting to a raucous watering hole. Take advantage of the tame clientele and free Internet as you simultaneously read and check your online dating profile. ● *The Blind Dog Cafe*, 944 Florida Ave. NW; 202-573-8272; Blinddogcafe.com.

2



Read → "Where'd You Go, Bernadette"

By Maria Semple (\$26, Little, Brown and Company; August 14)
If you read only one book this summer about an agoraphobic mother and her broken promise to take her daughter Bee on a trip to Antarctica, make it this one. A former writer for defunct favorites "Arrested Development" and "Mad About You," Semple writes like an oversized plume, finding all your tickle spots with ease. It's our favorite of the bunch, and even comes with coveted praise from Jonathan Franzen.

At → The Looking Glass Lounge

Go somewhere you can laugh out loud, like this Petworth hangout. The bar/restaurant/events venue is used to chuckles: It hosts stand-up acts as well as a monthly open-mike night. ● *The Looking Glass Lounge*, 3634 Georgia Ave. NW; 202-722-7669; TheLookingGlassLounge.com.



3

Read → "Jack 1939"

By Francine Mathews (\$27, Riverhead Books; July 5)
Little-known fact: Before he was the 35th president of the United States, John F. Kennedy served as a personal spy to Franklin Delano Roosevelt. *Sort of.* Author Francine Mathews (a former CIA analyst) exercises poetic license in her gripping historical-fiction novel, which tracks a 22-year-old JFK through Nazi Europe as he gathers intelligence that will help FDR clinch the 1940 election.

At → The Rumble Seat at Martin's Tavern

Espionage, reconnaissance and sexual tension calls for a stiff drink. Order a Campari and read in the Rumble Seat, a dark wood half-booth JFK was rumored to frequent when he was a senator for Massachusetts. ● *Martin's Tavern*, 1264 Wisconsin Ave. NW; 202-333-7370; Martins-tavern.com.

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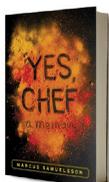
Read → "Wait"

By Frank Partnoy (\$27, PublicAffairs; June 26)
Frank Partnoy's latest is a non-threatening, science-y how-to for making better decisions. Citing fascinating studies in tennis serves and first dates, he deftly makes a case for exercising something we could all use more of: patience. Plus, you gotta love a guy who dedicates his book to his golden retriever.

At → Palena Cafe

There's so much praise for the roasted chicken at Palena Cafe it deserves its own book. Until then, stay preoccupied with Partnoy's as you sit at the table and anticipate the delicacy, which takes an agonizing 45 minutes to prepare. ● *Palena Cafe*, 3529 Connecticut Ave. NW; 202-537-9250; Palenarestaurant.com.

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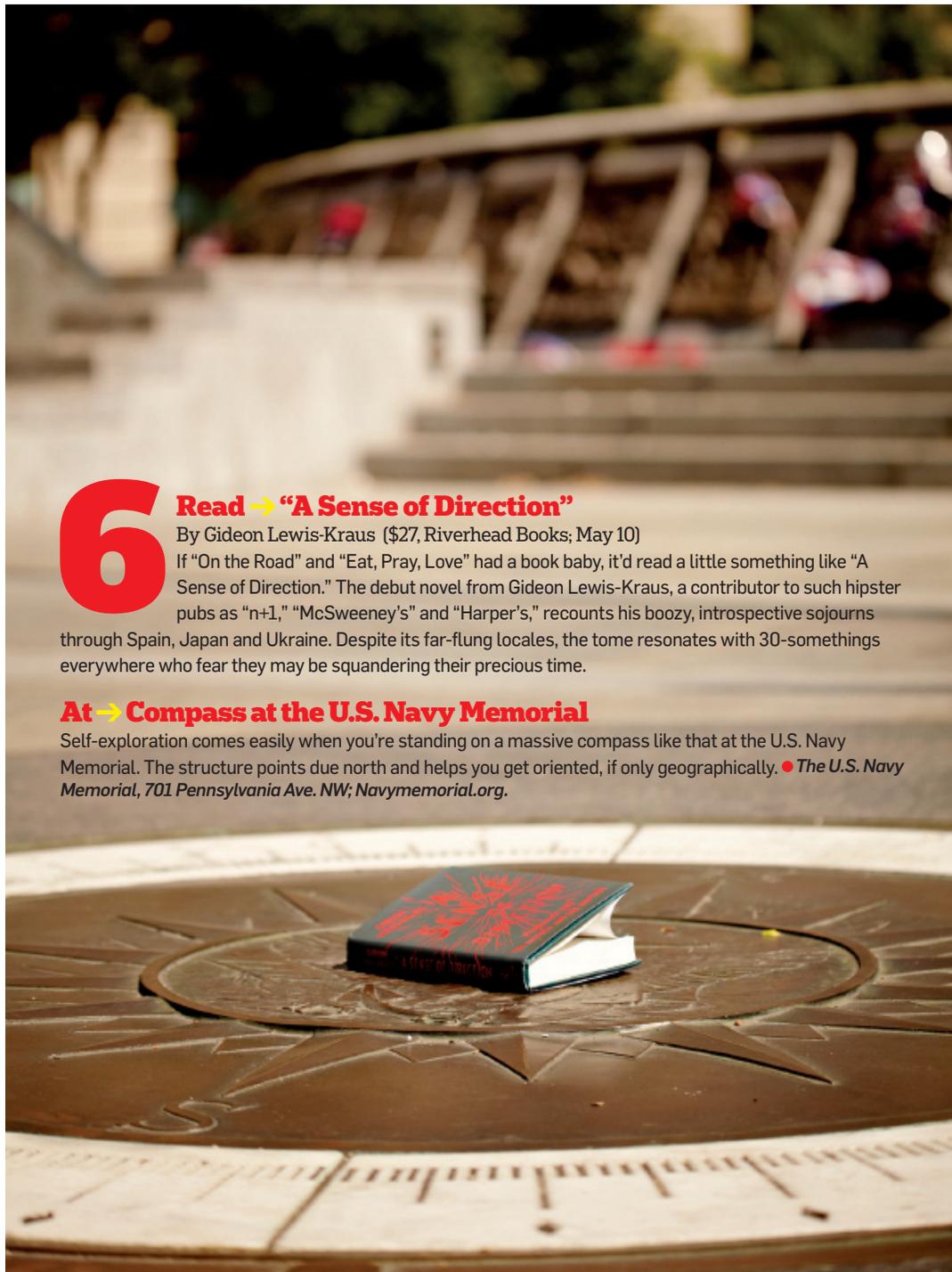


Read → "Yes, Chef"

By Marcus Samuelson (\$27, Random House; June 26)
Halfway through Samuelson's memoir, we had to check we hadn't picked up a book of fiction by accident. His unbelievable life story begins at age 3, when he and his mom make a 75-mile trek to a hospital in Ethiopia to treat matching cases of tuberculosis. The remainder chronicles how he came to be a James Beard Award-winning chef and the owner of Harlem's celebrated Red Rooster.

At → Howard Theatre gospel brunch

One survival story deserves another. Following a renovation, the Howard Theatre reopened in April. In addition to concerts, it hosts gospel brunch on Sundays with a buffet created by — who else? — Marcus Samuelson. ● *Howard Theatre*, 620 T St. NW; 202-803-2899; TheHowardTheatre.com.

books **lookout**

6 Read → “A Sense of Direction”

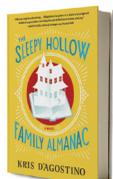
By Gideon Lewis-Kraus (\$27, Riverhead Books; May 10)

If “On the Road” and “Eat, Pray, Love” had a book baby, it’d read a little something like “A Sense of Direction.” The debut novel from Gideon Lewis-Kraus, a contributor to such hipster pubs as “n+1,” “McSweeney’s” and “Harper’s,” recounts his boozy, introspective sojourns through Spain, Japan and Ukraine. Despite its far-flung locales, the tome resonates with 30-somethings everywhere who fear they may be squandering their precious time.

At → Compass at the U.S. Navy Memorial

Self-exploration comes easily when you’re standing on a massive compass like that at the U.S. Navy Memorial. The structure points due north and helps you get oriented, if only geographically. ● *The U.S. Navy Memorial*, 701 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; Navymemorial.org.

7



Read → “The Sleepy Hollow Family Almanac”

By Kris D’Agostino (\$14, Algonquin Books; out now)

No matter how bad you think you have it, the family in D’Agostino’s debut novel have it worse. The characters are paradigms of dysfunction: a flailing 24-year-old film-school dropout with a pot problem, his kid sister who’s pregnant and still in high school, his pilot father who’s paralyzed by a fear of death and his financially burdened mother who tries to hold everything together. And did we mention they’re all living under the same roof?

At → The Meridian Hill Park drum circle

Chaos loves company. You’ll find plenty of it in the book and at the drum circle that convenes every Sunday around noon in Meridian Hill Park. Bongos, djembes, timbales and other noisemakers delight dancers and not-easily-distracted readers with mad concentration skills. ● *Meridian Hill Park*, Euclid and 15 Streets. NW; Nps.gov/mehi.

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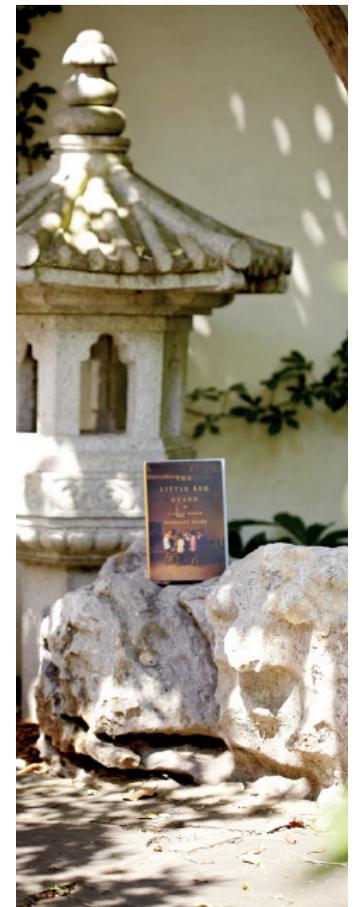
Read → “History of a Pleasure Seeker”

By Richard Mason (\$26, Knopf; out now)

Our hearts quickened every time we encountered Piet Barol, the urbane turn-of-the-century protagonist in Richard Mason’s seductive coming-of-age novel. The relationship between the handsome hedonist and the troubled boy he tutors is touching, especially when Barol shows the young’un a world beyond his family’s mansion.

At → Farragut Square

All this talk of handsome men will have you seeking pleasure of your own. Get distracted by the stream of dapper dandies that parades through the park after shopping sprees at Thomas Pink, Charles Tyrwhitt and other high-end men’s clothiers along Connecticut Ave. ● *Farragut Square*



9



Read → “Enchantments”

By Kathryn Harrison (\$27, Random House; out now)

If only all your high-school history books read like Kathryn Harrison’s. “Enchantments,” her meticulously researched fictional account of the fall of Russia’s Romanov Empire, manages to enlighten and educate at the same time. It’s dense with detail, but the swift plot and precious bond between a young Prince Alyosha and Neva River (Rasputin’s daughter) help you wade through all the Bolsheviks.

At → Russia House

There’s no shortage of Russian curiosities (or vodka) at this Dupont hang, making it an ideal spot to lose yourself in your reading. Hours may pass before you realize you haven’t eaten. We recommend the borscht. ● *Russia House*, 1800 Connecticut Ave. NW; 202-234-9433; Russiahouse.com.

10

Read → “The Little Red Guard”

By Wenguang Huang (\$26

Riverhead Books; out now) Tuberculosis. Plagues of locusts. Japanese invasions. These are just some of the setbacks Wenguang Huang’s grandmother faced growing up in China, which he eloquently details in his family memoir. Still, the real victims are the poor relatives who have to deal with the obdurate old woman’s dying wish: to be buried with her late husband in Xi’an — an act illegal under Mao’s reign.

At → The National Arboretum’s Chinese Garden

Enter the towering pagoda and pass through bonsai-like penjing to a nook where rustling Chinese maples provide a fitting soundtrack. ● *The National Arboretum*, 3501 New York Ave. NE; 202-245-2726; Usna.usda.gov.