

# 5 Places to Visit In Baltimore

The New York Times



John Waters at home in Baltimore, a city that has played a major role in his films, including “Pink Flamingos,” “Polyester” and “Hairspray.” Christopher Myers for The New York Times

By Megan McCreia  
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The 1998 John Waters film “[Pecker](#)” ends with an unlikely crowd carousing in a seedy basement bar/impromptu photo gallery in Baltimore. Strippers and one busty, enthusiastic art collector dance on tables as a talking Virgin Mary icon watches. It’s a jubilant, chaotic and naughty party open to anyone with a sense of humor, just the way the director likes it.

Mr. Waters, 78, gained a cult following in the 1970s with delightfully shocking films like “[Multiple Maniacs](#),” “[Female Trouble](#)” and, of course, the raunchy “[Pink Flamingos](#)” before breaking big with “[Hairspray](#)” in 1988.

Since then, Mr. Waters has built an empire of camp, now comprising more than a dozen films, spoken-word shows and numerous books, including his 2022 debut novel, “[Liarmouth](#),” which has been [optioned for a movie that Mr. Waters hopes will star Aubrey Plaza](#).

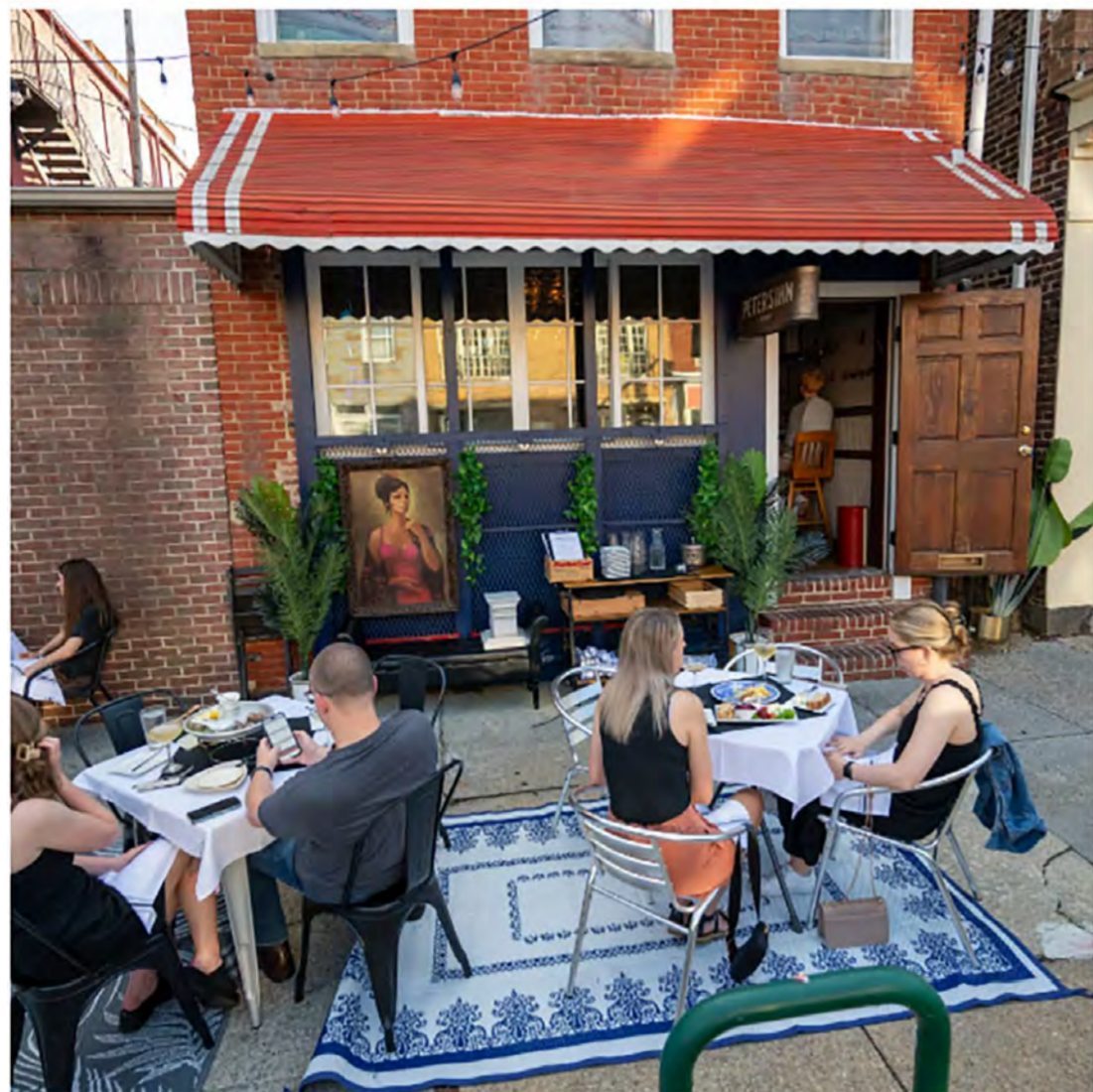
Mr. Waters, a Baltimore native, grew up in Lutherville, Md., a suburb he described in a recent phone interview as “upper-middle-class everything.” Yearning for escape, he had his mom drop him off at a Baltimore beatnik hangout called [Martick’s](#), even though he was underage. “She said, ‘Maybe you’ll meet your people here,’” he recalled.

Since those days, Mr. Waters has become an unofficial spokesman for all things Baltimore, which was one of The New York Times’s [52 Places to Go in 2024](#). The city has embraced him, too. It honored him with an [official day, Feb. 7, 1985](#) (it was a one-off), and the [all-gender restrooms](#) at the Baltimore Museum of Art, the institution to which he has [bequeathed his sizable art collection](#), are named for him.

Though Mr. Waters has apartments in San Francisco and New York and spends summers in Provincetown, Mass., he lives primarily in North Baltimore and has no plans to change that. “If I had to give up everywhere,” Mr. Waters said, “this is where I’d live.”

Here are his five favorite places in Baltimore.

## 2. Peter’s Inn



Peter’s Inn, a restaurant whose former owner, Peter Denzer, played one of the goons in the 1977 John Waters film “[Desperate Living](#).” Christopher Myers for The New York Times



The menu at Peter’s Inn, now owned by Bud and Karin Tiffany, is locally sourced and seasonally driven, though the restaurant retains a bit of its former edge. Christopher Myers for The New York Times

When he first started visiting [Peter’s Inn](#), Mr. Waters knew it as Motorcycle Pete’s, after the owner, his friend Peter Denzer. “He was a biker; and he was in ‘[Desperate Living](#),’” Mr. Waters said, recalling his 1977 dark comedy. “He played one of Edith Massey’s goons.” Mr. Denzer later sold the place to Bud and Karin Tiffany, who transformed it from dive bar to locally sourced eatery. Today, Mr. Waters said, “it still looks like a biker bar,” but “the food is absolutely amazing.” A mounted blue marlin hangs behind the bar (Mr. Tiffany caught it on his 16th birthday, Ms. Tiffany said) and Ms. Tiffany writes the menu by hand. But Peter’s also makes a mean martini and serves a pâté — beloved by Mr. Waters — that arrives in a lidded glass container; its smooth surface artfully arrayed with herbs and fruit.



Peter’s Inn still looks like a biker bar, Mr. Waters said, but “the food is absolutely amazing.” Christopher Myers for The New York Times



The décor at Peter’s Inn includes a mounted blue marlin that one of the restaurant’s owners caught on his 16th birthday. Christopher Myers for The New York Times