

# entertainment GUIDE

Thursday, April 11, 2002

[main page](#)[bars & clubs](#) SEARCH[books](#) SEARCH[movies](#) SEARCH[museums & galleries](#) SEARCH[music](#) SEARCH[restaurants](#) SEARCH[shopping](#) SEARCH[sports & recreation](#) SEARCH[television](#) SEARCH[theater & dance](#) SEARCH

SEARCH ALL

**WITH KIDS****Tweet Idea:**

"Birding for Beginners" starts in a library and moves to a park.

[more with kids](#)**DATING****Earth Treks Climbing Center:**Add a little challenge to your relationship. | [more dating](#)[Personals Plus](#) | [Boards](#) | [Carolyn Hax](#)**BARS & CLUBS****Toka Cafe:** Sleek bar serves delicious cocktails and gourmet snacks.**RESTAURANTS****Tara Asia:** Thai me down.**MUSIC****Blues Alley:** Just jazz -- every night of the week at this Georgetown institution.**GETTING THERE**[Maps and Directions](#)[Metro Map](#)**SPORTS & RECREATION**[Events](#) [Today](#) [Fri 12](#) [Sat 13](#) [Sun 14](#) [Calendar](#)**Virginia Gold Cup**[our pick](#) [help](#) [print this page](#)

**Where:** **Great Meadow**  
5089 Old Tavern Rd.  
The Plains, VA

**When:** 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. Saturday, May 4

**Price:** \$45 - \$6,000

**Information:** 540/347-1215

More than just an annual steeplechase race, the Gold Cup has become one of the year's key social events for young Washingtonians.

**Reader Reviews:** [Write yours now](#)

[read profile](#)

**Editorial Profile**

The Virginia Gold Cup is more than just an annual steeplechase race. It has become one of the year's key social events, a sort of Ascot or Epsom Downs for Washington's twenty-and-thirty-something set. Talk about a great way to make friends: Singles and groups mix and mingle at pre-race tailgate parties, enjoy the weather, the food and drink and (maybe) the horses while checking out the opposite sex.

Since this is a society event, "appropriate afternoon dress" is required. What that means is up to you. The official Gold Cup Web site recommends "a sportswear look for women and khakis for men." But hey, if you have a white linen suit in your closet, this is a good time to bring it out. Women often opt for sundresses or stylish skirts and flowery hats -- there's an annual hat competition that rewards the most outlandish and most stylish. However, dress codes differ, especially along the youthful North Rail (more below).

Gates open at 10 a.m., and opening ceremonies begin at 12:30. Tickets are not available at the gate, so visit the Gold Cup Web site or call 800/69-RACES in advance. The ticket situation is interesting. There are three areas for watching the race: Members Hill (exclusive, for serious race fans), the North Rail (where younger Washingtonians gather) and the South Rail (family atmosphere). There are a limited number of tickets for each area, available through various groups or with a car pass, which admits up to six people in one car.

A week or two before the event, the Web site might say that car

passes for the North Rail are "sold out." That's partially true. The Gold Cup ticket office usually sells all the tickets it has for the North Rail area. However, there's no Ticketmaster-style central distribution system, so some of the 37 ticket outlets in Northern Virginia may still have passes. Call around -- there is a list of ticket outlets on the Gold Cup Web site.

Sound like too much work? Several area groups are organizing trips to Gold Cup.

#### University Row

In 2001, more than 900 alumni from 17 schools gathered in seven tents along the North Rail. This year, University Row has more than doubled its space to 15 tents, allowing 38 schools to be represented. They range from local universities to Notre Dame, Arizona State and the University of Texas. The "anchor" schools - the ones that host tents -- are the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, William & Mary, the University of Richmond, James Madison, Purdue, Wake Forest, the University of Texas, the University of Central Florida, the University of Michigan, Penn State, Notre Dame, Boston College, George Washington University and American University. Other schools share space with these anchors. However, all tents on University Row are fenced together, so you're not stuck with alumni from your school -- it's possible to wander between areas or mingle on the common terrace. All guests can partake of the open bars and buffets throughout the tents.

Each alumni group sets ticket prices for its tent, so it's best to contact the specific alumni associations through the University Row ticket clearinghouse for more information. Buses to The Plains leave Ballston Common Mall between 10:30 and 11:30 on Saturday morning, returning around 6 p.m. - University Row closes at 5:30.

#### D.C. Society of Young Professionals

The D.C. Society of Young Professionals makes its first appearance on the Gold Cup Scene this year, with tents on both the North and South rails - one ticket gets you into both. The cost is \$95 for a bus trip, full open bar, lunch buffet and afterparty at the Capitol City Brewing Company. It's \$70 if you get to The Plains under your own steam, but that involves buying a car pass from the Gold Cup association. Buses leave Union Station at 10 a.m. and leave the Gold Cup at 5.

#### Party DC

Buses leave at 10 a.m. from three area bars: Clarendon Ballroom, Champps Americana in Reston and the Bottom Line downtown. They depart from The Plains at 6 p.m. The all-inclusive bus-trip package includes luxury buses to and from Gold Cup; four North Rail chalet tents; a lunch buffet; an open bar with beer, wine, liquor and soda; and post-race parties at all three bars. Tickets start at \$79.50 for bus tickets and \$59.50 for walk-up tickets, which provide access to the party but do not include transportation. Visit the Party DC Web site for more

information.

-- Fritz Hahn

#### Related Links

[Gold Cup Web site](#)

[University Row Web site](#)

[Young Professionals' Web site](#)

[Party DC Web site](#)

#### Reader Reviews

Average reader rating: ★★★★★ (1 review)

[Write a review](#)

---

### Decoding Gold Cup's Rails

★★★★★

Posted by An Anonymous User on Mar. 21, 2002

The Virginia Gold Cup has been around for a long time, and they keep tweaking it. It is a big social gathering, a festival, and, of course, a GREAT series of horse races. Here is the key to understanding the social layout: The railside tents are the bigger events. The inner rings are for cars with tailgates. Member's Hill is near Winner's Circle and is the oldest demographic. Tents there use fine silverware! North Rail is for the 20s and 30s crowd. A large part of North Rail is dedicated to University Row, a big alumni gathering that is a more tasteful alternative to some of the cheesy North Rail offerings. South Rail is mostly for families. A few corporate tents not on Member's Hill also set up shop there. Of course, one of the best things about the day is to walk the entire course and see it all!

[request removal](#)

---

#### Find a user review that is inappropriate?

If you would like it removed, please click on [request removal](#) and our editors will look over the review. It will be removed promptly if it does not conform to [our review guidelines](#).