

IT'S TIME TO GET AWAY!

➤ When the summer heat and humidity finally give way to fall's crisp, cool air, that's when we yearn for a quick break from the city. We've featured sixteen fabulous destinations—all within easy driving distance and matched to every budget. Our price points are general estimates of the cost of two nights for two people, including food and activities. However, when booking, be sure to ask about fall specials.

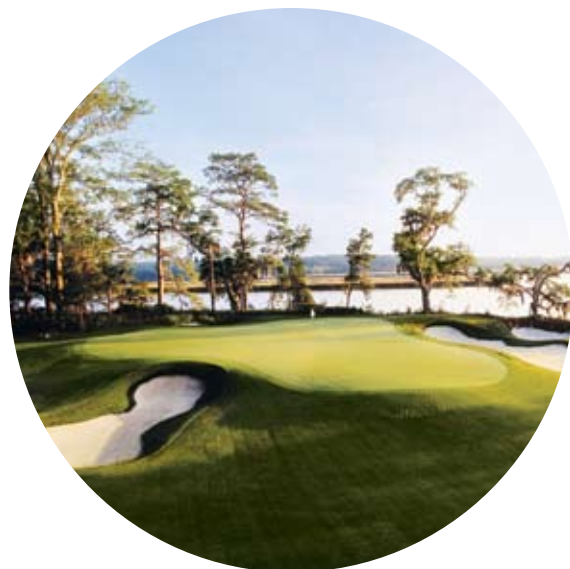
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**FALL
TRAVEL
2010**

The Swag Country Inn,
Waynesville, North Carolina
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MUSIC TO YOUR MOUTH

Fall is a perfect time to visit Palmetto Bluff. In mid-November, the property hosts Music to Your Mouth, a weeklong celebration of Southern food and music, with some of the most prominent chefs of the Southeast, including Woodfire Grill's Kevin Gillespie. music toyourmouth.com

even if you don't make it to the inn's full-service spa, where you can bathe on a private outdoor veranda.

My only real complaint was that our plasma TV was not high-def. Then again, you don't come here to watch television, especially when there are croquet lessons one day, tennis clinics another, and porching every day. (Porching, I discovered, is the fine art of sipping a cocktail—I recommend the blackberry-sage lemonade or the cucumber spritzer—on the inn's wraparound porch.) Of course, you could also choose the bar near the heated pool, where you can swim 100-foot laps in one of its three lanes. From the lounge chairs you can watch egrets soar over the lagoon toward the wide river, where the tides expose sandbars and where dolphins surface magically as they make their way back to sea.

You can also hop aboard the *Grace*, a restored century-old yacht with mahogany paneling, and Captain George York will pilot you past the party boats near the sandbar. Their occupants will wave, but the ibis and herons will ignore you. On our Saturday afternoon cruise were three other couples: vacationers from Nova Scotia, a member of the Spanish parliament and his companion, and a young executive from Goldman Sachs and his wife, who were building a house in Palmetto Bluff.

Earlier that morning I'd played a round at the May River Golf Club, a track that, like everything else about Palmetto Bluff, was designed to accommodate nature, not the other way around. The beautifully illustrated yardage book also served as a nature guide, explaining, for instance, that the inlet of water running along the seventh hole—a short dogleg left, with a green bordered by marsh grasses—was called "Greenleaf slough." Courses that accommodate so much old growth are sometimes the toughest to play, but the May River club has vast fairways and big, slick greens. You can score here.

That night we dined at the River House restaurant, a swank space in the main house. Classic entrees—such as beef tenderloin or Maine lobster with house-made pasta, May River shrimp, and Sapelo Island clams—average around \$35. More casual options are Buffalo's on the square or the Canoe Club fitness center. For a final treat, grab graham crackers, marshmallows, and chocolate from jars near the inn's front door and roast s'mores around a fire pit, a nightly tradition. —S.F.

Some of the guest cottages, left, have views of the May River—a wide estuary reaching from the ocean deep into the maze of barrier islands and marshland between Hilton Head and Savannah.



chain, operates the Inn at Palmetto Bluff, a compact and luxurious resort that serves as both a quiet retreat and advertisement to those with the means to build here.

My wife and I (and seven-month-old son) spent a weekend here in August. When I made reservations, the helpful agent explained that the fifty cottages overlook either the May River or a lagoon. We chose the latter, but thanks to the lush vegetation, we couldn't really see the lagoon from our screened-in back porch. (We did enjoy watching an armadillo poke around near our back steps before waddling off toward the water.) If I go back, I'll pay the extra \$100 a night for a river cottage, if only to see the sun rise over the May River.

Vaulted ceilings make the spacious cottages seem even bigger. The floors are pine planks, polished to a slippery sheen. A fireplace ignites at the flip of a switch. The bathroom features Perrin & Rowe fixtures and a combination steam and shower—a soothing indulgence

PREVIOUS SPREAD, SWAG COUNTRY INN: PHOTOGRAPH BY JUMPING ROCKS; ALL RETOUCHING BY PATRICK WHITE

PALMETTO BLUFF: PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE INN AT PALMETTO BLUFF

OVER \$1000

LOW-COUNTRY LUXE

THE INN AT PALMETTO BLUFF

AFTER A FEW DAYS AT PALMETTO BLUFF, you're likely to spend the four-and-a-half-hour drive home trying to reconcile some conflicting thoughts. On the one hand, you'll be grateful that such a profoundly gorgeous piece of real estate—22,000 acres of the South Carolina Lowcountry on the banks of the May River—is being cared for so lovingly by its owners.

Sure, those owners are developers, but they're smart enough to know that any development will fail if its chief selling point—the place's innate beauty—is sacrificed for profit. Which is why a third of the acreage is off-limits to builders. About half of the existing 170 homes are clustered near the village square, where ancient oaks overlook the river, while the rest are tucked away on private roads, secluded pockets of baronial splendor. In an age when the phrase "planned community" evokes images of architectural monotony and tacky homages to a past that never existed, Palmetto Bluff is the rare and refreshing exception.

It is also an expensive exception, which is where your other thought comes in. Home prices here *start* at more than \$1 million. Initiation at the golf club, a Jack Nicklaus design so intent on not interrupting the natural setting that there are only three trash bins on the whole course, is \$75,000. Fortunately, you don't have to live at Palmetto Bluff to experience life here. Auberge, the luxury hotel



Westglow Resort & Spa
Blowing Rock, North Carolina

MORE OVER \$1000

The Swag Country Inn
WAYNESVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

The main building at Waynesville's Swag Country Inn is built of century-old, hand-hewn tulip poplar logs, formerly upholding the Lonesome Valley Primitive Baptist Church. The ecclesiastical source is appropriate given that the structure was originally built as the home of former Atlantans Dan and Deener Matthews. Dan is the retired rector of Trinity Church, Wall Street, and Deener has run the inn seasonally since the couple opened it in 1982—when they were serving at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Atlanta. Regardless of your faith, you're certain to feel closer to God on their secluded, 5,000-

foot-high mountaintop, which overlooks four of North Carolina's highest mountain ranges: the Great Smokies, the Plott Balsams, the Richland Balsams, and the Black Mountains.

Though accommodations are luxurious and creature comforts are many—such as an outdoor hot tub with awe-inspiring mountain views, a sauna, racquetball (and wallyball) courts, and wireless Internet—life is decidedly simpler up here. Recreation might be watching the sun rise, chilling in a hammock, playing board games, or singing around the player piano. Hiking is a *Sound of Music* kind of experience. Locally sourced cuisine completes the romantic ambience that has won this inn top accolades from

many travel magazines. (*from \$490 per night in October, double occupancy, includes meals, BYOB, 800-789-7672, theswag.com*)

Westglow Resort & Spa
BLOWING ROCK,
NORTH CAROLINA

You could follow the Obamas to Asheville's Grove Park Inn, but it's more exclusive to follow the Clintons to Westglow Resort & Spa—a boutique hotel with only nine rooms and three staffers per guest. The Greek Revival home, built in 1917 as the summer retreat of popular landscape painter Elliott Daingerfield, has been meticulously restored and furnished with period antiques and sumptuous silk fabrics. The western portico—sited with an artist's eye—offers mesmerizing mountain vistas. An elegant

white-tablecloth dining room and top-rated spa make the estate hard to leave.

However, take advantage of Westglow's proximity to choice locations on the Blue Ridge Parkway, including the dramatic Linn Cove Viaduct and the Parkway Craft Center at Moses Cone Manor. Also nearby are the towns of Blowing Rock and Banner Elk. The former is a charming place to shop and linger at restaurants such as the Village Cafe (thevillagecafe.com). Drive over to the latter for the thirty-third annual Woolly Worm Festival (10/16–17, woollyworm.com). (*from \$398 per person per weekend night in October, double occupancy, includes meals and spa amenities, less expensive bed-and-breakfast rates available, 800-562-0807, westglow-resortandspa.com*)

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF WESTGLOW RESORT & SPA

WENTWORTH MANSION: PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF WENTWORTH MANSION; SMOKY MOUNTAINS: PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DANCING BEAR LODGE

Wentworth Mansion
CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Sure, you can do the bohemian thing and spend less. You'll rub shoulders with plenty of students and artists enjoying culture on the cheap. But Charleston is also a great place to splurge. Pamper yourself with a stay at the five-diamond Wentworth Mansion, a Gilded Age estate with Tiffany stained-glass windows and hand-carved marble fireplaces. Tour the surrounding historic district from a horse-drawn carriage (sounds cheesy but isn't), or drive out to restored plantations along the Ashley River. The home of spring's famous Spoleto Festival is year-round home to dozens of art galleries and performing arts organizations.

But what you really want to do in Charleston is eat. The modest-sized city has won Best Chef Southeast honors from the James Beard Foundation for an impressive three years in a row: Sean Brock of McCrady's in 2010, Mike Lata of FIG in 2009, and Robert Stehling of Hominy Grill in 2008. Can you say "shrimp and grits"? (*rooms at Wentworth Mansion from \$370 per night in October, 888-466-1886, wentworthmansion.com*) ■



Wentworth Mansion



UNDER \$1000

SMOKY MOUNTAIN HIGH

DANCING BEAR LODGE

AFTER ZIGZAGGING AMONG THE MOUNTAINS and passing through rural towns nestled against Chattahoochee National Forest, the splendor of Dancing Bear Lodge seemed a fitting culmination to our bucolic four-hour drive from Atlanta. Its main building, peering out of thick woods, looks like the granddaddy of all Lincoln Logs projects. Massive spruce trunks serve as columns in front of the main entrance. Inside, the airy lodge is all knotty beams and boards, a timber panorama interrupted only by the two-story stone fireplace. Chandeliers depict frolicking deer and maple leaves, but the owners keep the kitsch to a minimum. This is Appalachian style polished with comfortable luxury.

Dancing Bear Lodge and its thirty-six acres sit off the main highway that stretches through Townsend, Tennessee, a town known as the most tranquil of the popular tourist gateways to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The owners of nearby Blackberry Farm, plus managing partner Matt Alexander, bought the property, formerly called Maple Leaf Lodge, in 2004. Blackberry Farm has collected umpteen awards for its extravagant brand of hospitality, and though Dancing Bear is much less sumptuous (and much more affordable), it upholds that sense of next-level graciousness. I experienced it immediately upon arrival, when I needed to send a business e-mail. Alexander noticed I was having trouble connecting my aging laptop to the lodge's Wi-Fi. "Here, use our Internet connec-

tion,” he said without hesitation, ushering me behind the front desk to a computer.

With work out of the way, my friend and I could settle into the business of relaxing. The main lodge houses twelve spacious rooms, but we checked into a two-bedroom cabin. With wood floors and walls and cathedral ceilings, the cabins mirror the main lodge aesthetic. Our place had an indoor Jacuzzi and an outdoor hot tub. Rocking chairs beckoned on the deck. King-sized beds sported extra-fluffy feather duvets.

Dancing Bear accommodates languorous and adventurous types equally. Exhausted urban travelers can quietly disappear into a book or movie (DVD loaners are available), enjoy a calm walk around the tree-covered grounds, or call down to request an in-room massage. Yet this corner of the South also enthralls the outdoorsy set: The lodge offers touring and tandem bike rentals, organizes half-day or full-day guided fly-fishing trips that include all necessary equipment, and gladly suggests prime hikes among the Smoky Mountains' 800 miles of trails. A golf course is ten minutes away.

Whatever the day's activities, converge on the main lodge for dinner, when the great room fills with tables and shifts into restaurant mode. The quality of the cooking sets the lodge apart from any other dining option nearby. Chef Jeff Carter honed his technique in the Blackberry Farm kitchen, and his food resembles the cuisine at forward-thinking Southern restaurants in

BENTON'S BACON AT THE SOURCE

If you've ever eaten bacon at one of Atlanta's upscale restaurants, chances are it's from Allan Benton, the "It Boy" (though technically he's in his sixties) of cured pork. His store is in Madisonville, Tennessee, on U.S. 411, along the most direct route from Atlanta to the Smokies. Stop in to buy glorious smoked ham, bacon, and prosciutto. bentonshams.com

TRAVELERS NOTEBOOK

LODGING AND DINING
Dancing Bear Lodge
137 Apple Valley Way, Townsend, TN
865-448-6000, dancingbearlodge.com, weekends from \$209 nightly in October

DINING
Foothills Milling Company
315 Washington Street South, Maryville, TN, 865-977-8434, foothillsmillingcompany.com

Atlanta such as Cakes & Ale and Miller Union. Highlights from our meal included creamy crab and bacon soup, a charcuterie plate with two-year-aged ham from Allan Benton (see above), succulent whiskey-brined pork tenderloin with spoon bread and roasted tomato jus, pan-roasted trout with roasted mushrooms and farro (a nutty grain resembling barley), and blueberry cobbler for dessert.

On our second night, we ventured to Maryville, a college town twenty minutes away, to try the Foothills Milling Company, the area's other Southern fine-dining destination. Unpretentious and packed with a cheerful crowd, it offers satisfying dishes such as fried oysters with green onion remoulade, Vidalia onion and goat cheese tart, and meatloaf stuffed with pork shoulder.

All that eating necessitated some exercise in the morning. After consulting with a lodge staffer, we headed to Cades Cove, one of the National Park's most trafficked pockets, for a five-mile round-trip hike to Abrams Falls. The diminutive falls were anticlimactic, but the invigorating hike was absolutely worth the effort—a scenic blend of even, smooth paths mixed with ascending and descending trails amid jutting rocks.

Driving through Cades Cove can be an exercise in patience. (We likened it to an Appalachian safari procession.) At times, traffic inched along at two miles an hour, with visitors literally hanging out windows to spot a bear. (We didn't glimpse one.) At least the scenery was majestic. "Cove" is an Appalachian idiom for "valley." We could imagine pioneering families trudging into this recess and saying, "Yes, we'll stay here." —B.A.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF DANCING BEAR LODGE



Dahlenega, Georgia

MORE UNDER \$1000

Serenbe CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS

The idyllic South Fulton hamlet of Serenbe was founded by foodies, so it's no surprise it remains a popular destination for food lovers. Steve Nygren, who launched the Peasant restaurants in 1973, and his wife, Marie, whose mother owned and operated Mary Mac's Tea Room, were the first homeowners here and turned their barn into a bed-and-breakfast before the 1996 Olympics. That B&B grew into the Inn at Serenbe, and Marie now runs its Farmhouse restaurant, which specializes in Southern cuisine using local ingredients—many grown on-site at Serenbe's own organic farm.

The inn's Southern Chef Series provides guests with an opportunity to cook side by side with local chefs such as Nathalie Dupree and Linton Hopkins. This

month, Virginia Willis—noted cookbook author, former kitchen director for *Martha Stewart Living*, and onetime executive producer for the Discovery Channel's *Epicurious*—will host a session the weekend of October 17 and 18. Hugh Acheson and Jonathan St. Hilaire are coming soon.

For a more hands-off approach to dining, Serenbe also offers the Hil (farm-to-table American classics) and the Blue-Eyed Daisy Bakeshop. The Serenbe Institute for Art, Culture & the Environment—headed by former Woodruff Arts Center president Shelton Stanfill—brings symphony concerts, theater, and resident artists here to provide nonculinary creative opportunities. (\$425 per person for Chef Series, includes overnight accommodations, from \$169 per additional night, 770-463-2610, serenbeinn.com)



Lakeview at Fontana
Bryson City, North Carolina

Lakeview at Fontana BRYSON CITY, NORTH CAROLINA

You've got to love a spa that claims it's "refreshingly less fitness-oriented," especially when it's also affordable and charmingly unpretentious. Lakeview at Fontana began life as a 1950s highway motel, and traces of its former identity remain. But its Mediterranean makeover—with window boxes of red geraniums, cozy gourmet coffeehouse, pristine bed linens, and cheerful service—makes it seem more like a European pensione than an American throwback.

Tucked into a hillside with a spectacular view of Fontana Lake and the Great Smoky Mountains, this secluded inn tends to serve both outdoor enthusiasts and those seeking a full-service spa retreat. Amenities such as yoga classes, hot stone massages, and complimentary afternoon wine and cheese ensure everyone relaxes. However, adventurers have mountain trails, the lake, and white-water rafting at the Nantahala Outdoor Center nearby—you can even ride the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad directly to NOC from Bryson City. (two-night spa packages from \$365 per person, less expensive bed-and-

breakfast rates available, 800-742-6492, lakeviewatfontana.com)

Dahlongega

With its bustling town square, historic courthouse, and home-spun shops, Dahlongega has always been a pleasant day trip from Atlanta. Quigley's Rare Books & Antiques is a bibliophile's nirvana of first editions and rare finds. The Dahlongega General Store offers simple pleasures such as marbles by the cup and five-cent cups of coffee. Kids can pan for gold at historic mines or visit a museum of the nation's first gold rush, which started here in 1828. Holly Theatre, a restored 1946 theater, offers a wide variety of shows.

However, Dahlongega always lacked luxury accommodations. Montaluce Winery and Estates opened in 2007, making a small dent in that void. Overnight accommodations are available at a Tuscan-style cottage designed by Atlanta architect Bill Harrison. And visitors linger at Le Vigne restaurant, savoring its elegant contemporary decor and outlook over the vineyard, along with the first young vintages. (from \$395 per night in October, 706-867-4060, montaluce.com) ■

UNDER \$750

WOODS & WATERFALLS

GLEN-ELLA SPRINGS INN

THE OWNERS OF GLEN-ELLA SPRINGS INN ADVISE first-time visitors to arrive before dark, the better to navigate those last tricky turns off Highway 441. And the better, perhaps, to stave off any ghostly thoughts city dwellers might entertain while driving down the remote, forest-fringed gravel road that leads to the historic property. Despite our best intentions, the landscape was all shadows by the time my husband and I arrived, and we were grateful for the sound of glasses clinking on the dining terrace.

Located near Clarkesville on the outskirts of the Chatahoochee National Forest, Glen-Ella is the ideal retreat for that traveler who seeks quiet sky and land and woods but not bugs and freeze-dried food and beds that zip up. Built in 1875, the cozy, three-story inn has long been a family operation—first under Glen and Ella Davidson, when it was a summertime refuge for the wealthy, and much later under Bobby and Barrie Aycock, a Decatur couple who bought and restored the property in 1986 and earned its current spot on the Select Registry of Distinguished Inns. (The building did a stint as an orphanage in between.) In 2008, the Aycocks sold Glen-Ella to first-time innkeepers Ed and Luci Kivett, who gently updated the decor and continue to nurture an atmosphere of simplicity and sophistication.

Guest rooms, which range from smallish queens to spacious king suites, are old-fashioned and elegant, with heart-pine walls, antique furnishings, white matel-

TRAVELERS NOTEBOOK

LODGING AND DINING
Glen-Ella Springs Inn & Meeting Place
1789 Bear Gap Road
Clarkesville
706-754-7295
glenella.com
Room rates from \$150 nightly

DINING
Lake Rabun Hotel & Restaurant
35 Andrew Lane
Lakemont
800-398-5134
lakerabunhotel.com

Oinkers BBQ
2353 Highway 441
South, Clayton
706-782-7010

ACTIVITIES
Tallulah Gorge State Park
706-754-7981
gastateparks.org/
tallulahgorge

Winegrowers Association of Georgia; visit website to download a brochure and map to ten area wineries
706-878-9463
georgiawine.com

asse bed coverlets, cheerful chintz, and surprisingly large bathrooms. Each of the sixteen rooms opens onto a shared porch lined with rocking chairs, and that's where we got our first daylight view of the place. We ventured outside and beheld a mist-covered meadow, a flower garden abuzz with butterflies and hummingbirds, and, on the terrace steps, a plump gray cat stretched out in the sun. Our fish-out-of-water nerves from the night before dissolved.

It's easy to spend a weekend at Glen-Ella and never leave the grounds. The rocking chairs have an almost magnetic pull. You can walk the newly forged trails along Panther Creek or, on a hot day, take a dip in the well-water pool. The complimentary hot breakfast is available for just one hour (8:30 to 9:30), but you're free to linger on the terrace and savor made-from-scratch biscuits and cinnamon buns. The restaurant opens to the public at dinner. A loyal clientele drives for miles to sample fresh, regional dishes such as trout sprinkled with Georgia pecans or shrimp and andouille sausage served atop fried grits. As a designated "farm tasting room" of Helen's Habersham Winery, Glen-Ella sells only a few Georgia wines. But the Kivetts have applied for a wine and beer license—permissible as of June in the formerly dry county—and plan to diversify their offerings.

When you do leave the grounds, you'll likely be on a quest for waterfalls, wineries, or both. The most famous collection of falls is in Tallulah Gorge, a must-visit state park just ten minutes away. The gentle north rim trail affords spectacular views of the 1,000-foot gorge, which Karl Wallenda traversed via tightrope in 1970. Adventurers will want to tackle the two-hour round-trip hike to the bottom—a privilege reserved for early risers who snatch up the daily allotted 100 permits (see green box below). After descending some 600 stairs and crossing a knee-buckling suspension bridge, permit holders are left to blaze their own trail on boulders along the Tallulah River. Unfortunately, Georgia Power now slows water flow for most of the year, but the two-mile-long canyon is dramatic itself, particularly when ablaze with fall color. Count on finishing the hike wet and hungry. Fortunately, nearby Oinkers BBQ serves heaping plates of pork plus sweet tea by the pitcher.

Another must-see waterfall is Minnehaha, located precisely 3.3 miles up Bear Gap Road from the inn. After a string of hairpin turns, look for an unmarked wooden staircase in the woods to your left. Park your car and follow the trail about a half mile until the cascading beauty greets you with a rush of cool air. It's an easy stop on your way to ogle the opulent homes and boathouses on Lake Rabun, or to eat dinner at the small but classy Lake Rabun Hotel, where the deck overlooks the water.

The region's burgeoning wine industry has become a popular draw in recent years, and Glen-Ella is in a prime



Glen-Ella Springs Inn



Lake Rabun



LAKE RABUN AND TALLULAH GORGE: PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMEY GUY; GLEN-ELLA: COURTESY OF GLEN-ELLA SPRINGS INN



Tallulah Gorge

HIKING TALLULAH GORGE

If you plan to hike to the bottom of Tallulah Gorge, arrive at the Jane Hurt Yarn Interpretive Center no later than 9:30 a.m., license plate number in hand and closed-toe shoes on your feet. Only 100 permits are issued per day, and the front-desk staff is militant about first come, first served.

position to access Tiger Mountain and Persimmon Creek vineyards to the northeast, two of the state's most award-winning producers, and the valley of Santee Nacoochee to the west, home to tasting rooms for Yonah Mountain and the brand-new Santee Nacoochee vineyards. With the Santee Nacoochee community's historic general store, elegant folk pottery museum, and artsy boutiques, the area makes for a pleasant day trip. Bookend your afternoon with a glass of Cabernet on the tasting room porch, or take a bottle back to Glen-Ella and enjoy it by the fire pit in the meadow, contemplating the black-as-night forest's edge and a sky lit up with stars. —E.F.

Azurea Restaurant at One Ocean Resort
Atlantic Beach, Florida

MORE UNDER \$750

High Hampton Inn & Country Club CASHIERS, NORTH CAROLINA

The next time you find yourself wistful for the days when kids just ran outside and played, book a room at the High Hampton Inn. The resort is like summer camp for adults and children alike—that is, if camp had a golf course and state-of-the-art spa. Chestnut-paneled guest rooms at this nearly century-old inn are intentionally rustic, without televisions, phones, or even air-conditioning. The pool is a thirty-five-acre lake. However, new furnishings make the bedrooms feel fresh, clean, and inviting. Besides, open windows and cool evening breezes have become rarer amenities than hot tubs.

Recreational opportunities include tetherball, shuffleboard, badminton, and the ever-popular evening bingo. Wander the dahlia garden and snip a few blooms for your room. Take your kids golfing and call in a lunch order from the phone on the eighth tee. Explore miles of mountain trails, and

you might even spot the fabled bear-shaped shadow that appears across the face of Whiteside Mountain every October. The most contemporary facility is a new spa and health club, where innovative services range from hoop fitness classes to Ashiatsu massage, provided at a private station set deep in a woody laurel thicket.

Buffet-style meals are ridiculously generous and delicious—locavore without the pretense. Men are required to wear coats and ties for dinner, echoing the compound's Adirondack flavor—established by the poplar- and chestnut-bark exteriors, towering hardwoods, rocking-chair porches, stone fireplaces, and chilly highland temperatures. (from \$250 per night in October, double occupancy, includes all meals, 800-334-2551, highhamptoninn.com)

Pirate Festival TYBEE ISLAND

This month, turtles won't be the only seafarers flocking to Tybee

Island's coast, as thousands of buccaneer wannabes trek to the island's annual **Pirate Fest** (10/8–9, tybeeisland.com/piratefest). Swing by the Thieves Market for treasure, or catch doubloons tossed from the swashbuckling parade along Butler Avenue. Enjoy a weekend of dancing and live music headlined Saturday night by seventies star Eddie Money. Children romp in Little Matey's Cove, a kid-friendly haven with a petting zoo and costume contest.

If you don't get your fill of grog and grub from the festival's vendors, head for **Sundae Cafe** (sundaecafe.com). Don't let the strip-mall location fool you; the cafe offers sophisticated fare such as stuffed shrimp and pistachio tuna.

After a day of revelry, relax in one of the brightly colored cottages from **Mermaid Cottages Vacation Rentals** (mermaidcottages.com, from \$150 per night plus fees in October). Scattered across the island, the vintage cottages are quintessential cozy beach hideaways. Or check into the **DeSoto Beach Hotel** (desotobeachhotel.com, from \$179.95 per night during *Pirate Fest*), the island's only beachfront hotel.



One Ocean Resort Hotel & Spa

ATLANTIC BEACH, FLORIDA

If you're attending this month's Georgia versus Florida football game in Jacksonville and want respite from the drunken masses, nearby (and relatively quiet) Atlantic Beach's One Ocean Resort Hotel & Spa offers a lovely escape. The resort is a brand-new, \$37 million renovation of the beloved Sea Turtle Inn, built in 1973—which is how the high-rise escaped this picturesque town's current thirty-foot height limit. The benefit is that every guest room, the dining room, and the spa have unimpeded views of the white-sand beach. The hotel's award-winning contemporary decor is in soothing shades of azure, sand, and pearl. Each guest is assigned a "docent" (aka personal butler). Activities range from horseback riding on the beach to championship golf to marine-inspired spa treatments. Amelia Island, Ponte Vedra, and even St. Augustine are easy field trips.

Enter the hotel's Azurea Restaurant through a pebbled blue tunnel reminiscent of an aquarium, and ask for an intimate table in one of the high-backed circular booths. Enjoy "First Coast" cuisine (a blend of American, Caribbean, and European flavors), which chef Ted Peters recently demonstrated at the James Beard House in New York.

The resort is located in a busy pedestrian village of shops and restaurants. For a nightcap, wander over to Pete's Bar (petesbar.net), home of twenty-five-cent billiards, founded by a storied bootlegger at the end of Prohibition and a favorite haunt of novelist John Grisham. (from \$179 per night in October, 904-249-7402, oneoceanresort.com) ■



F.D. Roosevelt State Park

A WINDING TWO-LANE HIGHWAY SNAKES BENEATH a canopy of longleaf pines and old-growth hardwoods. Beneath the towering evergreens, smaller sourwood, sumac, and rare Georgia oak trees dazzle with their rich red and orange foliage. The leaves along this Meriwether County road are some of the last in the country to reach their peak color.

Ask any Atlantan, "How do I get to the mountains?" and most will send you north via I-575, 400, or I-985 to familiar towns such as Blue Ridge, Ellijay, and Clayton. However, a less-crowded stretch of Appalachian foothills lies south of the metro area at the southern edge of the Piedmont plateau—just a few miles north of the gnat line.

Everyone and every place along Georgia Highway 190 between Warm Springs and Pine Mountain has a story to tell about the man whose legacy left a lasting impression on this area: President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The local buildings and structures, which now make up F.D. Roosevelt State Park and the Little White House Historic Site, stand as narrative and testament to the leadership and hard work that delivered the nation from the burden of the Great Depression.

Roosevelt first visited Warm Springs in 1924, and he returned many times before dying here in 1945. Seeking relief from polio in the naturally warm mineral springs, he built his home away from home, which eventually became

UNDER \$500

FDR'S MOUNTAIN REFUGE

F.D. ROOSEVELT STATE PARK



TRAVELERS NOTEBOOK

LODGING
F.D. Roosevelt State Park
 706-663-4858
gastateparks.org
 (CCC cottages from \$110 nightly in October)

DINING
Mac's Barbeque
 1 Main Street
 Warm Springs
 706-655-2472

Bulloch House Restaurant
 47 Bulloch Street
 Warm Springs
 706-655-9068

Sages Soda Fountain
 153 North Main Avenue
 Pine Mountain
 706-663-7734

ACTIVITIES
Roosevelt Stables
 706-628-7463
rooseveltstables.com

Little White House Historic Site
 706-655-5870
gastateparks.org/littlewhite



CALLAWAY GARDENS

At the edge of Pine Mountain is 13,000-acre Callaway Gardens. Behind the iron gates lie exquisite gardens, lakes, a butterfly conservatory, a nature preserve, golf courses, inns, cottages, and more than ten restaurants. The relatively new Lodge and Spa offers the most upscale dining and accommodations. callawaygardens.com

known as the Little White House.

As part of his New Deal, Roosevelt founded the Civilian Conservation Corps and dispatched workers to the area in 1935. The CCC established Camp Kimbrough in Chipley, known today as Pine Mountain. With only shovels, pickaxes, and brute strength, CCC workers built what is now Georgia's largest state park. By hand, they dug two lakes and a swimming pool shaped like the Liberty Bell. They also constructed a fish hatchery, an inn, and a boathouse.

The log or stone cabins where they resided remain and provide today's guests with an intimate connection to the region and the Yankee president who loved it. My wife and I recently spent a weekend in one of the original Depression-era CCC cabins. The cabins have fireplaces, kitchens, bathrooms, and air-conditioning. The ranger on duty could not recall when the modern conveniences were added, but judging from the furnishings and the explosion of names and dates carved into the walls, the improvements date back to at least the sixties.

The park's main attraction is the challenging twenty-three-mile Pine Mountain Trail. It extends from property in Warm Springs once owned by Roosevelt to the intersection of Georgia Highway 190 and U.S. Highway 27 in Pine Mountain, with short loops through every section. The Roosevelt Stables also provide guided tours on twenty-eight miles of horse trails.

We decided to hike a two-mile trail from the cabin to the Liberty Bell pool. The 572,000-gallon, spring-fed pool is closed after Labor Day, but it is worth the hike to see the handmade flagstone pool.

In the morning, we visited Roosevelt's Little White House and the Historic Pools Museum in Warm Springs. The Little White House Museum displays artifacts from throughout the president's life, including his 1938 Ford. During stops in the area, he would remove the car's backseat and sit on it while chatting with neighbors. The blinding-white therapy pools are available for tours, but they are filled and opened to the public only twice each year.

After touring the Little White House, we stopped by local roadside favorite Mac's Barbeque—known for delicious standards such as pulled pork, Brunswick stew, and coleslaw—for lunch, then perused the Art in Motion Museum, a quirky but intriguing collection of vintage motorcycles (the area is popular with bikers), Tiffany lamps, jukeboxes, and other ephemera that feels like a carnival sideshow. (Another popular Warm Springs eatery, the Bulloch House, is famous for fried chicken and fried green tomatoes.)

The following day, we explored Pine Mountain, with its quaint antique stores and restaurants. We visited Rose Cottage (rosecottagega.com), where the line between teahouse and antique store is indistinguishable. Nearby Sages Soda Fountain is a throwback to days gone by with its menu of deli sandwiches and frozen desserts.

To really understand what Roosevelt loved about Georgia's southern mountains, we drove out Highway 190 and turned at the Dowdell's Knob sign to visit the president's favorite picnic area. As we reached the park's highest peak, a bronze figure came into view beneath the autumn leaves. It's the president, looking south toward the coastal plain in the Pine Mountain Valley. He's still there, not far from his grill, sitting on the removed backseat from his '38 Ford with a little room to spare. —K.W.

MORE UNDER \$500

Amicalola Falls State Park

DAWSONVILLE

Amicalola is Cherokee for "tumbling waters," and this 729-foot cascade is the highest waterfall (or, more accurately, series of waterfalls) east of the Mississippi. Trails descend from the top and ascend from the bottom, and some are quite challenging, involving hundreds of steps. But the best view, from a bridge spanning the falls, can be reached easily from the West Ridge Trail, a one-third-mile paved path leading from a handicap-accessible parking lot. This state park is also the access point for the 8.5-mile approach trail leading to Springer Mountain, the Southern terminus of the Appalachian Trail.

The park offers a comfortable full-service lodge, simple cottages with stone fireplaces, and campsites. The lodge's glass walls and verandas afford spectacular views, and its Southern-style buffets keep guests fueled for hiking. A unique alternative is the adjacent Len Foote Hike Inn, a quiet, state-owned retreat accessible only via a five-mile trail.

Complete your fall fix by picking pumpkins at nearby Burt's Farm (burtsfarm.com). And on the way home, stop by the Ellijay Georgia Apple Festival (georgiaapplefestival.org). (from \$105 per night for lodge, 800-573-9656, georgiastateparks.org/amicalolafalls)

Alabama Shakespeare Festival

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

The play's the thing. Really. Montgomery isn't a foodie destination (for dining, go to Birmingham),



Amicalola Falls State Park

and the hotels are mostly chains. But the ASF (asf.net) is the sixth-largest Shakespeare festival in the world, drawing more than 300,000 visitors annually to its sprawling campus—which NPR described as a "theater junkie's nirvana." The twenty-fifth season kicks off with a world premiere coproduced by Atlanta's Alliance Theatre (through 10/3 before moving to Atlanta 10/20–11/14). Pearl Cleage's *The Nacirema Society Requests the Honor of Your Presence at a Celebration of Their First One Hundred Years* stars Atlantan Jasmine Guy. The current ten-show season will reprise three bestselling shows and stage two Shakespeare productions.

Aside from the ASF, Montgomery boasts an unlikely array of museums, including the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts (mmfa.org) and shrines to Hank Williams, Rosa Parks, and F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. Nearby Capitol Hill is a stop on the state's vaunted Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail (rtjgolf.com).

Pisgah Inn
 BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY, BETWEEN MILE MARKERS 408 AND 409, NORTH CAROLINA

This year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Blue Ridge Parkway, a 469-mile scenic byway started during FDR's New Deal era. The most visited unit of all National Parks, the parkway doesn't have a grand lodge like the Grand Canyon's El Tovar or Yellowstone's Old Faithful Inn. But it does have a nostalgic motel called the Pisgah Inn, located at a dramatic elevation of 5,000 feet, with breathtaking views from the private balconies and porches attached to every room. Its clientele are so loyal that the inn addresses daily dispatches to "Pisgahteers."

Simple, clean facilities and a full-service restaurant make this an ideal home base for exploring the parkway by car, bicycle, or motorcycle. Well-maintained trails lead in all directions. If you hit a warm fall day, take the kids



Pisgah Inn

to the sixty-foot natural water-slide at Sliding Rock. Asheville, Brevard, Waynesville, Cherokee, and Flat Rock are all feasible day trips. The latter is home to Connermara, Carl Sandburg's long-time residence and a National Historic Site (nps.gov/carl). Though written about Chicago, the poet's words are an apt description of the Blue Ridge, where the fog also seems to come "on little cat feet." (from \$144 per night in October, 828-235-8228, pisgahinn.com) ■

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