

# ajcLiving&Arts

## TRAVEL

# Hospitality reigns at mountain inns

Unique personality makes each a special getaway in N. Carolina.

By Lynn and Cele Seldon  
For the AJC

Come spring (or any time of year), heading to the mountains of North Carolina provides a high-elevation getaway from "Flatlanta." The bar is raised even higher when the trip includes a stay at a unique mountain inn.

Mountain inns have a long tradition in North Carolina, where hospitality starts at the welcome mat. Old Edwards Inn (Highlands), High Hampton

Inn (Cashiers), Balsam Mountain Inn (Balsam) and Bob Timberlake Inn at Chetola Resort all provide elevating experiences.

### Bob Timberlake Inn at Chetola Resort

As an artist, Bob Timberlake is known for his realistic paintings that depict the simple life in his native North Carolina. As a designer, he's known for his distinctive style of home furnishings and accessories. Kent Tarbutton, owner of Blowing Rock's Chetola Resort, is one of those fans – and that's why he partnered with Timberlake in 2004 to create a mountain inn

Hospitality continued on E17



The terrace overlooks Rock Mountain and Hampton Lake at High Hampton Inn in Cashiers, N.C. Eduardo Moriera

## Mountain inns breath of fresh air

### Hospitality

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that's also a work of art.

"There is such a strong heritage of craftsmanship in the North Carolina mountains, and my collection has always drawn inspiration from the craftsmen, potters and artisans native to North Carolina," says Timberlake, who selected the inn's furniture, artwork and accessories.

Located on the top two floors of an 1846 home, the eight-room bed-and-breakfast combines historic elegance with modern amenities and Timberlake style, including king or queen beds, flat-screen TVs, fireplaces and whirlpool tubs (most rooms also have Chetola Lake views).

Each room is named for a past Chetola Estate owner or another North Carolina luminary (like legendary mountain preservationist Hugh Morton). Guests of the inn enjoy full resort privileges. Other highlights include: dining at Manor House Restaurant (breakfast is served here or delivered to the room); new spa; indoor pool; hiking; and boating on the lake.

### Balsam Mountain Inn

For more than 100 years, Balsam Mountain Inn has been welcoming visitors with very little change. Though guests now find private baths in each of the 50

### If you go

**Old Edwards Inn and Spa.** Rates start around \$195 for a double. 445 Main St., Highlands; 828-526-8008, 1-866-526-8008, www.oldedwardsinn.com.

**High Hampton Inn & Country Club.** Rates start around \$125 per person, American plan (three meals daily). The nightly rate (including meals) for children aged four to eight staying in a room with one or two adults is \$41 during any season (children 3 and under are free). 1525 Hwy. 107 South, Cashiers; 828-743-2411, 1-800-334-2551, www.highhamptoninn.com.

**Balsam Mountain Inn.** Rates start around \$145 for a double (breakfast included). Five-day specials start at \$495 (Sunday to Friday only). 68 Seven Springs Drive, Balsam; 828-456-9498, 1-800-224-9498, www.balsammountaininn.com.

**Bob Timberlake Inn at Chetola Resort.** Rates start around \$209 for a double. North Main St., Blowing Rock; 828-295-5500, 1-800-243-8652, www.bobtimberlakeinn.com or www.chetola.com

rooms and suites, they still won't find a phone or television.

Owned and operated by the friendly husband-and-wife team of Kim and Sharon Shailer, the 1908 inn is on the National Register of Historic Places. The three-story inn has a 100-foot-long, two-tier porch with North Carolina-made Troutman rockers.

Each room and suite is uniquely furnished, with mini-suites, suites and tower suites all offering more space and separate sitting areas or rooms. The 10-foot-wide hallways leading to the



The pool beckons at the Old Edwards Inn and Spa, where Mother Nature and man-made indulgence mix artfully. Old Edwards Inn

rooms were originally intended to accommodate large steamer trunks of early travelers, but now hold the work of 75 local artists.

Other Balsam Mountain highlights include: regional cuisine at the Restaurant at Balsam; a 2,000-volume library; hiking trails; monthly musician and songwriter performances; and popular five-day stay specials (Sunday to Friday only).

### Old Edwards Inn and Spa

Located in the heart of the charming town of Highlands, Old Edwards Inn and Spa is a mountain inn that includes the "cited" culture of a small mountain town. The result is an ideal combination of Mother Nature and man-made indulgence.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Old Edwards Inn has been welcoming guests for more than a century (in 2007 it completed a \$50 million renovation and expansion).

With the feel of an English country manor house, the inn offers 57 individually designed guest rooms, suites, and cottages. All feature rich wood paneling, period antiques, state-of-the-

art entertainment systems (and Wi-Fi), twice-daily housekeeping, and bathrooms with plush robes, rainfall showers and heated tile floors (welcome on cool evenings and mornings). Across the street, two three-bedroom cottages provide a luxurious home away from home.

Additional highlights of Old Edwards Inn include: the luxurious European-style spa; an outdoor heated mineral pool; golf at the private Old Edwards Club; dining – including complimentary gourmet continental breakfast – at Madison's Restaurant (where new executive chef Johannes Klapdohr is already receiving rave reviews); two 24-hour "butler's pantries" with complimentary Dove bars, fresh fruit, soft drinks and more; the Wine Garden, an al fresco oasis for cocktails, coffee or tapas-style plates; and home accessories at Acorns (Highlands has great shopping).

Other highlights: golf on the George Cobb-designed links; tennis on six clay courts; swimming and boating on Hampton Lake; a wide range of summer children's programs; an invigorating workout or relaxing treatment at the Hampton Health Club & Spa; American plan dining (three meals daily included in the rate); and drinking in the view and an adult beverage at Rock Mountain Tavern & Terrace. Those who do choose to leave High Hampton Inn (many don't) will find all of Cashiers Valley an outdoors lover's paradise.

### High Hampton Inn & Country Club

Established in the early-19th century as a summer retreat by an aristocratic South Carolina planter family, High Hamp-

ton Inn has evolved into a spring-to-fall getaway that continues to lure families attracted to a simpler way of life.

Also on the National Register of Historic Places and set on a pastoral estate of 1,400 acres near the shabby-chic mountain village of Cashiers, High Hampton Inn is anchored by Chimney Top Mountain and Rock Mountain.

With one-of-a-kind accommodations, plenty of porches for rocking away a mountain morning, a unique four-sided fireplace in the main lodge for crisp nights, and the dining room's country cuisine (think fresh rainbow trout, baked ham and fried chicken), High Hampton Inn is a true mountain retreat.

The accommodations options are definitely a highlight, with inn rooms, cottages and rental homes (veteran visitors know to ask for their favorite choice well in advance, including a lakeside cabin with a waterwheel). Every option has a private bath and unique furnishings, but there are no telephones, televisions, computers or air-conditioning (though the Main Lodge does give guests access to TV, telephones and Wi-Fi).

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