

A CITY IN THE MOUNTAINS

Asheville, North Carolina

By Margaret Word Burnside and Aaron R. Fodiman
Photography by Noraa



THERE ARE MANY REASONS why Asheville draws so many visitors. Another reason has recently been added to the list with the opening of the new Grand Bohemian Hotel from the Kessler Collection. Located in the city's historic and charming Biltmore Village, adjacent to the renowned Biltmore Estate, the hotel is surrounded by boutique shopping, art galleries and fine dining. The 104-room, four-star luxury boutique hotel is designed to recreate a grand hunting lodge that might have been built for an estate such as the Biltmore. The hotel is permeated with the style, design and intuitive service that has been the signature for the Kessler Collection with its natural and traditional elements. The dynamic setting, unique art, luxurious Poseidon Spa, 24-hour fitness center, covered valet parking and ornate public rooms, such as their ballroom and Tyrolean Terrace, make the hotel a must for anyone traveling to Asheville.

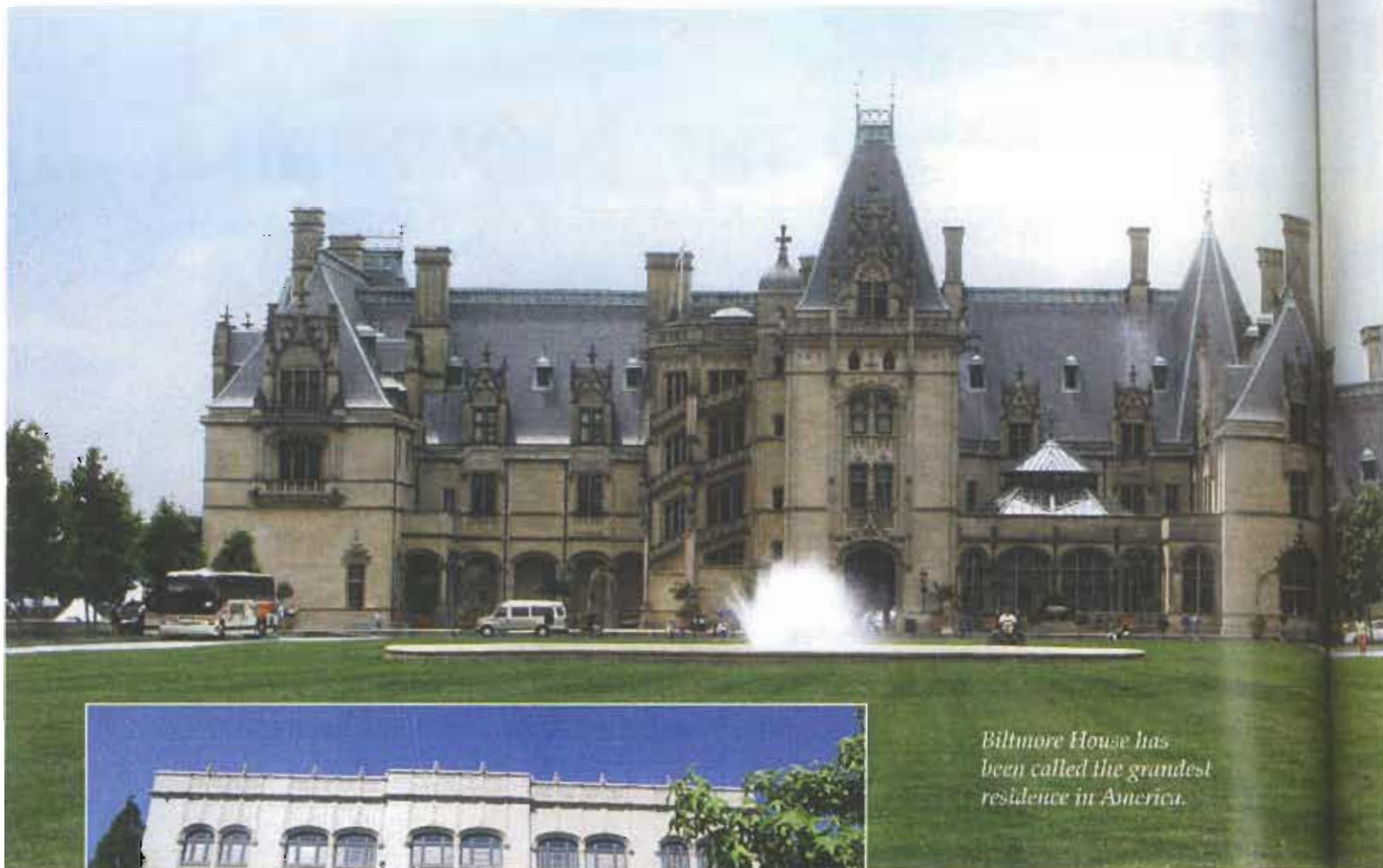
In addition to the Grand Bohemian, we also stayed at the 1900 Inn on Montford, a bed and breakfast, where we were pampered with comfort and hospitality in an arts and crafts-style home with a new carriage house that offers pet-friendly accommodations. This AAA Four-Diamond Inn has all the amenities, from king-size beds and jacuzzi-style whirlpools to fireplaces and wired and wireless high-speed internet in each room or suite. The delicious three-course breakfast and a social hour each evening, that often includes wine and live mountain music, make this inn, which is operated by Ron and Lynn Carlson, a romantic spot that is both relaxing and invigorating.

The 1900 Inn on Montford offers luxurious accommodations for guests, as well as their pets.

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Biltmore House has been called the grandest residence in America.



The Grove Arcade was built in Downtown Asheville in 1929 and was restored in 2002. It now has shops, restaurants, offices and apartments.

Biltmore House, built by George Vanderbilt on 8,000 acres, is America's largest home. It has been open to the public since 1930, and it is still operated as a family business that continues to preserve this 250-room national treasure. The self-guided tour of the home, taken with or without the available audio, begins on the main floor, with its spectacular Winter Garden Conservatory, Banquet Hall and Library. It then proceeds to the second floor, where the Vanderbilts had their bedrooms and sitting rooms. Guest bedrooms and a living hall for the guests are on the third floor. From there, the tour

of the fourth floor includes servants' bedrooms, an architectural model that was used to propose the house to the Vanderbilts in 1889, and the observatory that leads to the rooftop balconies. Returning to the third floor, you are treated to more guest rooms, as you descend to the second floor, where newly-restored guest rooms are on display. You then take the grand staircase down, past the main floor, into the basement, with its bowling alley, swimming pool, kitchens and other work spaces. After that, you return to the Bachelor's Wing on the main level, before exiting the house into the Stable

Courtyard for dining, shopping, and a tour of the gardens and grounds.

Asheville is a town for foodies. Everywhere we went, there was an emphasis on food, that involved the use of local fresh products, as well as flavors and preparations. At the Grand Bohemian's Red Stag Grill, we enjoyed a wonderful meal that featured fine wines and gourmet fare, ensconced in the Old World ambience of antlers, hand-hewn tables and intimate lighting. The next evening, we dined in Biltmore Village at the Corner Kitchen, a Tudor-style cottage, where we enjoyed local Hickory Nut Gap Pork and mountain trout, before finishing our meal with the co-owner Chef Joe Scully's souffle of the day. Our next dinner was at Table in downtown Asheville, where Chef/Owner Jacob Sessoms prepares local fish, meats and other products in tasty sauces, accompanied by locally raised vegetables.

Breakfast at the Early Girl Eatery was a treat with special dishes, such as Shrimp and Grit Sauté and Sausage and Sweet Potato Scramble. Lunch at the Biltmore Estate's Stable Cafe, which occupies the space where the horses and carriages



▲ Breakfast is a treat at the 1900 Inn on Montford.



▲ Bill Foley creates award-winning handcrafted chocolates at the Chocolate Fetish.

were once kept, showcased Appalachian cooking at its finest and served wines from the Estate's vineyards. Another joy was lunch at Laurey's, where their motto is "Don't Postpone Joy." Laurey Masterson has been serving gourmet comfort food in Asheville since 1987, when she began her quest to use as much locally grown or produced food as possible in her ever-changing menu, which is based upon what is available, or what she and her staff are in the mood to make. The result is awesome, and if you get to meet Laurey, you'll understand why.

Downtown Asheville is filled with things to see and do. The Grove Arcade, conceived and built in the 1920s by E.W. Grove after the completion of his landmark Grove Park Inn, is an architectural wonder filled with retail stores, eateries and other businesses. At the nearby Chocolate Fetish, you can watch the marvelous candies, including 23 kinds of truffles, being hand made from a wide variety of chocolates and other ingredients. The owners, Bill and Sue Foley, are passionate about chocolate, and you will be too, once you visit their shop. Among the many

interesting downtown destinations are those belonging to one of the city's development pioneers, John Cram. His Bellagio Everyday offers innovative clothing for women; while next door at his Blue Spiral 1 Gallery, you can find fine, contemporary Southern art and studio crafts in a wide variety of mediums in a stunning three-level, 15,000 square-foot space. Thanks to John, there is even a newly restored Fine Arts Theatre dedicated to first-run art and independent films. This deco-modern treasure is open daily and premieres over fifty films a year.

A Reference Guide

Lodging

Grand Bohemian Hotel

11 Boston Way
(828) 505-2949

1900 Inn on Montford

296 Montford Avenue
(828) 254-9569

Dining

Red Stag Grill

Grand Bohemian Hotel
11 Boston Way
(828) 505-2949

Corner Kitchen

3 Boston Way
(828) 274-2439

Table

48 College Street
(828) 254-8980

Savoy

641 Merrimon Avenue
(828) 253-1077

Stable Cafe

Biltmore Estate
1 Approach Road
(828) 274-6333

Laurey's

67 Biltmore Avenue
(828) 252-1500

Early Girl Eatery

8 Wall Street
(828) 259-9292

The Chocolate Fetish

36 Haywood Street
(828) 258-0999





▲ The stunning ballroom in the Grand Bohemian Hotel exudes European tradition.



KESSLER COLLECTION

◀ The Grand Bohemian Hotel was created by the Kessler Collection to resemble a grand hunting lodge.

Biltmore Village also offers unique shopping opportunities. At John Craw's Bellagio - Art to Wear, you will find elegant and unique wearable art by American artists. And, at his New Morning Gallery, you can choose from handcrafted furniture, home accessories, glass, jewelry and other imaginative gifts that have been hand made by American artists.

Asheville truly is a destination for art, food and history lovers, as well as for anyone who appreciates the natural grandeur of the nearby Great Smokey Mountains and all that they have to offer. ■■■



◀ The Blue Spiral 1 Gallery is filled with exhibitions of fine art in a variety of mediums.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For additional information, contact the Asheville Convention and Visitor's Bureau, 877-GO.TO.AVL