

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



PHOTOS BY PATRICIA HARRIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** The Woodlands Grill lit for the holidays; a cozy fire in one of the resort's cottages; tables in front of the fireplace are popular; even though the rooms are open to the sky, decorators go all out in the 1848 mansion; taking in the lights at Barnsley Resort is a holiday tradition for many families.

## AN OLD MANSION GLOWS at the Barnsley Resort in Georgia

BY PATRICIA HARRIS | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

I'm always a sucker for an atmospheric ruin with a romantic backstory. But the Barnsley Resort, about 60 miles northwest of Atlanta, went one better. When my friend Patti and I arrived last December for a short getaway, the shell of the old manor house at the heart of the property was festooned with holiday lights. The moody ruin had an incongruously cheerful glow.

The family estate turned resort has enough tales to fill a Charles Frazier saga. But the foundation story involves young Godfrey Barnsley, who left England in 1824 for a better life in the American South. By the 1840s he was a married man with enough wealth from his cotton and shipping enterprises to purchase land in the rolling hills of north Georgia. Inspired by landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing, Barnsley planned to create a mansion and gardens for his wife, Julia. When Julia died in 1845, Barnsley abandoned the project. Legend holds that Julia appeared to her husband and insisted that he finish what he had started. By 1848 an Italianate mansion and formal gardens had risen in the Georgia high country.

Clent Coker, the resort's historian, loves to tell that story. With a natural gift for a good yarn, Coker leads tours of the property and oversees a small museum in the original kitchen wing.

"This was the first house in the state to have modern plumbing before the Civil War," he told us. Although the house has fallen to skeletal ruin, the landscape has fared better. "These boxwoods were standing before the Civil War," Coker said. "They were standing when Union troops camped here and when Union and Confederate soldiers

tramped through these woods." Family lore holds that Barnsley's daughter, also named Julia, might have been one of the models for the strong Southern women in "Gone With the Wind."

Coker is a fount of family gossip, but he can also be succinct. "Wars, storms, and depressions took their toll," he said, swiftly summarizing more than 150 years of history.

The mansion's roof was blown off in a tornado and the property passed out of family hands in the 1940s. The future looked grim until 1988 when Prince Hubertus Fugger of Bavaria bought the property and set about bringing it back to life. By 1999 he had created a resort of cottages clustered in an English-style village. Thirty-six cottages range from one to seven bedrooms. Many feature wood-burning fireplaces and front porches with rockers. This year, a 55-room inn opened to offer even more lodging options.

During the day, I felt like I had the run of a private estate. I followed one of the hiking trails to the family cemetery where Godfrey Barnsley is buried and visited the goats and horses in the barnyard. Patti signed up for a horseback outing while I opted to try my hand at the sporting clays course.

"It's like golf with a shotgun," my instructor Joe Gimelli told me. Alas, my hand-eye coordination was not up to the challenge. Even though the shotgun fired 359 pellets, not one of them ever managed to hit a target. Neither Patti nor I care much for golf or fishing, but we did find our way to the spa in an English-style carriage house. I swear that a facial took 10 years of wear and tear off my face, at least for a day or two.

In many ways the property is best when the sun goes down. When more than a million lights wink on, the grounds become enchanted. The outline of the old mansion and the boxwood parterre is especially dramatic — and a big draw for many Georgians who consider a visit to the suddenly festive mansion to be a holiday tradition. Under-terred by the missing roof, determined decorators even fill some of the empty rooms with trees encrusted with ornaments and lights.

After chatting with several families, Patti and I made our way to Dugan's Tavern, named for Barnsley's great grandson, a heavyweight boxer who fought under the name K.O. Dugan. The bar has its own craft beer on tap, and we tried a spicy seasonal offering that the bar staff jokingly dubbed "gingerbread beer." We snagged a table by the fireplace in the adjacent Woodlands Grill, which offers a lesson in refined Southern cuisine with offerings such as pork chop brined in molasses and pan-roasted Georgia trout. After dinner, we settled at one of the outdoor fire pits and ended the evening with glasses of wine and roasted marshmallows.

Patti, a Texan who now lives in Lexington, Ky., has been on a campaign to make me an honorary Southerner. My stay at Barnsley might have sealed the deal.

**BARNESLEY RESORT** 597 Barnsley Gardens Road, Adairsville, Ga., 877-773-2447 or 707-773-7480, [barnsleyresort.com](http://barnsleyresort.com). Rates in December from \$219 for an inn room and \$349 for a one-bedroom cottage suite.

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### HERE

#### HOLIDAY WEEKENDS IN MAINE

Ring in the holidays throughout December at An Old Fashioned Christmas in Bath. Every Friday and Saturday evening, starting Dec. 7, downtown Bath, Maine, will be a lively spot to stroll, shop and dine amid twinkling lights. Fans of caroling will want to grab a blanket, hop aboard, and sing on the Christmas Caroling Trolley. Head to the ticket booth at City Hall to nab some free tickets, available on a first-come, first-served basis, beginning at 4 p.m. each day, and running through 8 p.m. (Trolleys depart every 30 minutes.) On Dec. 14, Bright Night Bath features merchants and restaurants who welcome shoppers with festive holiday music, refreshments and one-of-a-kind gifts. Stroll the festive downtown streets and waterfront park — with new light displays — and make sure to cast a vote for your favorite downtown storefront in the Christmas window decorating contest. Kids can mail their letters to Santa, guaranteed to be delivered to the North Pole, in two red, house-shaped boxes in town. [Free.visitbath.com/events/an-old-fashioned-christmas-in-bath](http://Free.visitbath.com/events/an-old-fashioned-christmas-in-bath)

#### NEW BREWS IN RHODE ISLAND

Ready for a brew break? Apponaug Brewery recently made its hoppy debut in Warwick. Located in the historic Pontiac Mill, just outside of Providence, the community-driven brewery crafts a variety of classic styles and uniquely flavored beers they serve directly from the tanks in four, eight and 16-ounce sizes. A full kitchen offers tasty bites to accompany your beverage,



es, including wings, nachos, tacos, sliders, and such. For those who don't like beer (yet), you can choose from a selection of wines and crafty whiskeys, gins, vodkas, rum, and more. 401-681-4321, [www.apponaugbrewing.com](http://www.apponaugbrewing.com)

### THERE

#### PHOTO TOUR OF PORTUGAL WITH PETE SOUZA

Pack your camera and walking shoes for a new travel tour offered by New England-based Sagres Vacations. A Photo Tour of Portugal with Pete Souza offers photo buffs at all levels a rare opportunity for hands-on training and critiques with the photographer who served as the official White House photographer during the presidencies of Ronald Regan and Barack Obama. A Massachusetts native of Portuguese ancestry, Souza will accompany guests on a nine-night trip through his ancestral homeland, from north to south, including Porto, the wine region of the Douro Valley, Aviero (the

"Venice of Portugal"), UNESCO World Heritage Site of Sintra, the seaside villages of Cascais and Estoril, Lisbon and the island of São Miguel in the Azores. Includes round-trip airfare from Boston, meals, deluxe transportation and lodging, and a local, English-speaking tour guide. \$4,999. 877-412-4394, [www.sagresvacations.com/itinerary/en/525](http://www.sagresvacations.com/itinerary/en/525)

#### COLORADO RESORT POWDER-HAPPY PACKAGES

Ski season is here, and Vail Mountain Marriott Resort is debuting its \$25 million renovations to guest rooms and transformed meeting and event spaces.



New winter packages include a collaboration with Colorado ski brand, Icelantic Skis. Guests who book the package can demo select Icelantic All-Mountain and Backcountry Touring skis (mens and womens) while enjoying overnight accommodations in one of the ski-themed Junior Timberline Suites. From \$549. Or, book the You Snow It package by Dec. 15 and enjoy up to 30-percent savings, and two complimentary passes to the resort's Oxygen Bar. Rates from \$211. Also new this year: a non-traditional (non-ice) curling rink with two lanes, measuring 7 feet by 57 feet. *The rink is complimentary from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Reservations and fees are required from 4 to 8 p.m.* 970-476-4444, [www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/whrco-vail-marriott-mountain-resort](http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/whrco-vail-marriott-mountain-resort)

### EVERYWHERE

#### INSULATED MULTIUSE TRAVEL GEAR

Don't let the cold keep you from enjoying outside activities. When hiking, camping, or at sports tailgating parties, stay warm with Kubie, the newest offering by Kijaro, an innovative outdoor gear company. The multi-purpose Kubie can be used as an insulated poncho with hood, ground cover, sleeping bag, pillow, hammock or hammock liner, underquilt, and shade canopy. Made of nylon ripstop fabric with water resistant coating and fleece lined hood. Use double zipper pulls to convert into porta-



ble carry pouch. Available in red, purple, and gray. \$80. 877-454-5276, [www.kijaro.com/kubie](http://www.kijaro.com/kubie)

#### DETER SHARK ATTACKS

With rising numbers of sharks in favorite surfing destinations around the world, avid surfers, paddlers, swimmers, and recreational waders might want to check out Sharkbanz, a wrist or ankle band designed to minimize the risk of being attacked. Based on 10 years of research and testing by marine biologists, Sharkbanz uses patented magnetic technology that takes advantage of predator shark species' powerful electrical sense (electroreception) to cause a highly unpleasant sensation that turns sharks away. This cause and effect is much like to having a bright light suddenly shined in your eyes in a dark room, creating the impulse to turn away — without being hurt. The powerful permanent magnets are always on, and require no batteries or charging. Research highlights and test videos available online. *Universal fit for ages 5 and up.* \$74, [www.sharkbanz.com](http://www.sharkbanz.com).

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