

OLD EDWARDS INN AND SPA

ESCAPE TO THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS FOR A ROMANTIC RETREAT

Words by Vanessa Pascale



Rolling hills, lush foliage, cascading waterfalls, sweeping mountain views -- *this* is Highlands, North Carolina. Here, you will find Old Edwards Inn and Spa, a luxurious Relais & Chateaux property nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The resort's old-world charm and upscale amenities breed romance --from the blazing fireplaces (or outdoor fire pit) that encourage snuggling in the winter to the private balconies where fine bottles of wine and sunsets are meant to be enjoyed during the warmer months.



Old Edwards Inn and Spa takes exceptional care of their guests. While we check in at the The Lodge, we are offered flutes of champagne. Complimentary Dove ice cream bars are also available. The Lodge is a warm and inviting milieu with its exposed wood beams, stone features, and cozy seating area focused around a lit fireplace. In the morning, Art's at the Lodge serves coffee and light breakfast offerings; when night falls, a full cocktail menu, along with live music on Friday and Saturday nights are served up. The original part of Old Edwards Inn and Spa, which overlooks Main Street, houses the spa and salon, Hummingbird Lounge (a piano bar and library with a full bar, light bites, and live music on Friday and Saturday), and Historic Inn.

There are a range of accommodations at Old Edwards, from guest rooms and suites to cottages and vacation homes. The most romantic of them all are the Falls Cottages; they're intimate, rustic, and chic. Every inch of our cottage is thoughtfully appointed. A package of cookies (an Old Edwards tradition) and a complimentary bottle of wine and plate of charcuterie welcome our arrival. A refreshing blue and

white color palette and rustic touches are sprinkled throughout the idyllic cottage. The living room has a working fireplace, a bar with a mini fridge (stocked with water bottles), a desk, and a couch with a pullout bed, perfect for cuddling up in while enjoying a movie and a roaring fire. The private balcony, accessed from the living room and bedroom, is equipped with patio furniture, so that you can luxuriate in the gorgeous view and breathe in the fresh mountain air.

The generous-sized bedroom is appointed with a king-sized wrought-iron, four-poster bed outfitted in fine Italian linens. Blackout drapes, a mounted flatscreen TV, and convenient USB outlets complete the room. The bathroom is possibly the most impressive room in the cottage with its heated marble floors, towel warmer, grand freestanding tub, quality Molton Brown toiletries, multiple-jet shower, and comfy bathrobe-and-slipper sets.

While it's tempting to hole up in our cozy cottage and subsist on in-room dining (cheeseburger and fries are excellent) our entire stay, there is much to experience beyond our chic accommodations. A neat

row of antique shops, quaint eateries, and an old-fashioned confectionery are steps away on Main Street. When you're finished window shopping, explore the great outdoors. A wealth of outdoor activities are within driving distance: fly fishing, horseback riding, mountain biking, tennis, ziplining, rafting... The nearby hiking trails and waterfalls (Dry Falls and Bridal Veil Falls) are a must. Or, stay onsite and take advantage of the state-of-the-art fitness center (fitness/yoga classes, hikes are offered); mineral pools with cabanas; and 18-hole golf course at Old Edwards Club.





Hungry? Old Edwards has you covered. Four65 Woodfire Bistro + Bar and Madison's Restaurant & Wine Garden boast excellent menus. Four65 Woodfire Bistro + Bar is a casual eatery that serves wood-fired pizzas and sandwiches with ingredients from the property's gardens and local purveyors. We had dinner at Four65 one night, and started off with the Warm Wood-Fired Brussels Sprout Salad, which was incredibly delicious. Of course we had to try one of their "authentic wood-fired neapolitan pizzas," so we ordered the Prosciutto: san marzano, mozzarella, prosciutto, arugula, hot pecan honey. This satiated my craving for something sweet, salty, and crunchy.

Foodies are in for a genuine treat when they dine at Madison's Restaurant & Wine Garden. The award-winning restaurant serves exceptional farm-to-table fare. My compliments to the chef, who presented us with dishes that were innovative, delicious, and perfectly plated. Made with the finest and freshest local ingredients, we devoured every bite of our romantic

dinner. Everything, from the Fideos & Butter Poached Lobster, Crispy Leg of Duck Confit, Bourbon Maple Glazed Pork Belly and Grilled Lamb Merguez Flatbread, to the Truffled Macaroni and Cheese, Pimento Cheese with Spicy Buttermilk Crackers, and Chocolate Chip Cookie Pie, was cooked to perfection. Madison's offers an unrivaled dining experience greatly credited to their sophisticated ambiance, stellar service, and masterfully-prepared dishes. Right outside is the picturesque Wine Garden, their seasonal alfresco dining space featuring a patio-side water feature and lush greenery.

Madison's also serves breakfast and lunch, including southern staples, like House-made Buttermilk Biscuits with Country Sausage Gravy, Spicy Fried Chicken and Buttermilk Biscuits, Traditional Southern Benedict, and Thick-Cut Country White French Toast with powdered sugar, lemon curd, and berry compote. Does it get any better than this?

No vacation is complete without a visit to the spa. The Spa and Salon at Old

Edwards was rated "Top Hotel Spa in North America" by Condé Nast, so you can trust that you're in good hands. The beautiful European-style spa boasts a mineral whirlpool, steam room, sauna, and offers a list of rejuvenating services: massages, therapeutic bodywork (polishes, scrubs, masks), and facials. I highly recommend the Sweet Mountain Metamorphosis, a 110-minute treatment that includes a foot wash, relaxing dry brushing (they send you home with the dry brush), CranioSacral Therapy, and a soothing massage. The experience was pure bliss and left me completely relaxed. If you want a light bite to eat, stop by The Spa Café for a smoothie or salad. Or better yet, pop by the front desk for a Dove bar. Yep, Old Edwards definitely knows how to spoil their guests.

Old Edwards Inn and Spa is located at 445 Main Street, Highlands, NC 28741. For more information and reservations, visit www.oldedwardsinn.com or call 866-526-8008

