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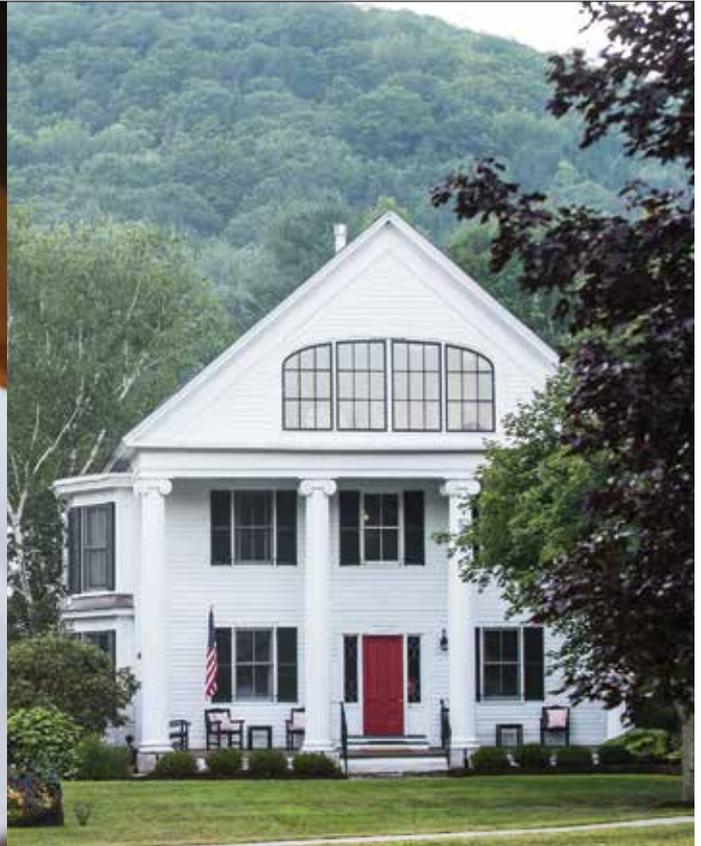
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MAR / APR



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p.33



Four Columns, Five Senses

THE THOUGHT of a Vermont inn can conjure images of creaky steps, dry scones, and shared bathrooms. But the modernization wave sweeping through the hospitality industry is tapping its wand on small New England inns as it has already done to larger luxury resorts.

The trend is enticing both people from here and cityfolk from New York and Boston to pack up a Kindle full of books, a bag stuffed with hiking gear, and a cluttered mind loaded with the workweek.

The area has many options, but my wife Martha and I targeted one, because of its culinary connection to home and slightly storied history.

Set among a jumbled layout of the Newfane, Vermont, village green, sits the Four Columns, a classy old inn, with a familiar brand delivering exquisite farm-to-table food.

Visitors at Four Columns are welcomed by a tumbled-Carrera-marble walkway into a small foyer flanked by a cozy-couched sitting room to the left and an eclectically and simply designed dining room to the right.

The sitting room sports a crackling fire and board games. The dining room is infused with the flavor and energy of Artisan, whose flagship anchors the Delamar Hotel in Southport and who

will also establish a presence in West Hartford later this year. The foyer itself dons an allusion to the inn's past, as a 1960s boutique inn attracting literati. On the wall is a mural of Newfane, and a side collaged caricature titled "They Slept Here"—with visages of Mick Jagger, Paul Newman, Henry Kissinger, and Sting, all onetime honored guests, though presumably not at the same time!

Since Delamar Hotel owner Charles Mallory purchased the property, renovations have been underway—instilling a contemporary look while maintaining its Vermont roots. The 16 rooms are spacious and tact-

fully appointed—many with oversized bathrooms, working tubs, and fireplaces.

"We wanted to maintain all that people loved about Four Columns and have taken great care to further enhance their experience," says Mallory, who added a Wellness Center and Spa that enhanced the outdoor pool. Hiking and snowshoe trails snake through the 100-plus acres.

The inn's art collection was curated by Diane Birdsall of Old Lyme and is comprised primarily of works from local New England artists. Guestrooms feature original paintings from regional artists.

What adds to the stay is



Guestrooms have been thoughtfully modernized, with spacious bathrooms, one-touch fireplaces, and a gentle nod to the past.

the Four Columns Guest Experience Manager. Asher Schlüsselberg is the modern-day innkeeper—welcoming guests, leading us to our room, introducing us to the restaurant and chef, and educating us about his orange antique Saab, regularly parked out front. It's not the typical "How can I help you?"

deferential staffers who rotate through your stay at other hotels. With West Texas roots and a New England sensibility, Asher provides a low-key, familiar touch—for your coffee at 8 am or tawny port at night's end.

Four Columns' guestrooms have been modernized with one-touch fireplaces and ours

had a Jacuzzi tub and an antique, four-post bed, as a nod to the past. There's a small spa, in a separate building, for a post-hike massage.

But the star of the stay was the dining. The Artisan Restaurant, Tavern, and Garden is overseen by its Connecticut chef Frederic Kieffer, with local talent to execute his vision. Artisan, the team likes to say, celebrates the abundance of agriculture and food craftspeople of Vermont. Much is locally sourced—from the coffee, scones, and jam at breakfast, to the venison sliders and some entrees at dinner.

To the side is a pub-like space, with a diminutive

menu, top selection of draught beers, wines, and spirits, and a small collection of locals who chat with the bartender and ask where you're from.

As cozy as the stay at the inn might be, a trip to Vermont in general and the Four Columns in particular is ultimately a launch pad for a Green Mountain adventure: hiking the endless trails, poking through the many antiques and consignment shops, exploring quaint towns and colonial churches, and charging the slopes in the winter. And that's just what we did.

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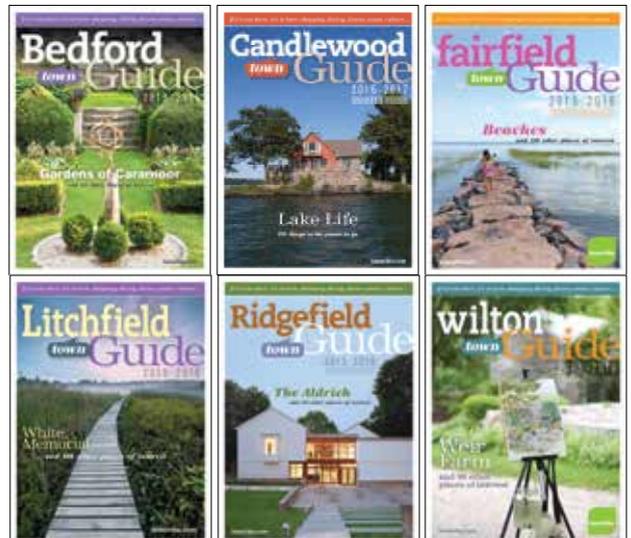
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