



destinations

majestic
monteagle

Escape to this Tennessee
retreat high above it all.

BY LOYD MCINTOSH
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF
MONTEAGLE INN



spring break:

For many undergrads, it's a time to run wild along the beaches of Mexico. But for those couples and families seeking a more low-key respite, the Monteagle Inn in Tennessee is one place that fits the bill. Set atop Monteagle Mountain, the 13-room bed-and-breakfast is a relaxing haven just minutes from the campus of the University of the South (also known as Sewanee), one of the Southeast's most historic and beautiful small colleges. Resembling an English manor with its red brick exterior, hunter green trim and six stately gables, the Monteagle Inn is almost fortress-like, protecting visitors from the stresses of the world. Originally built as a private home in 1940, the structure has had some additions through the years. In 2004, Jim and Donna Harmon transformed it into the stunning inn it is today.

A dazzling array of foliage lines the grounds, while herbs such as lavender, rosemary and thyme provide a unique and fragrant welcome to visitors. "We wanted to plant the herb gardens at the entrance so that people's first experience with us would be something pleasant," Jim says. Many of the herbs and vegetables grown in the inn's gardens are incorporated in breakfast specialties, such as the breakfast quesadilla with corn pudding. (This must-try dish features free-range scrambled eggs tucked inside a spinach tortilla with fresh herbs and a side of white kernel corn pudding with a hint of cilantro, cumin and lime.)

The Monteagle Inn's grounds offer guests plenty of room to relax outdoors. Add in a glass or bottle of wine from the inn's collection—one of the largest in the Southeast with more than 3,000 bottles on hand—and the perfect weekend in the Appalachians begins to take shape. Several times a year, the inn hosts five-course wine dinners, allowing experienced wine enthusiasts and newcomers alike the opportunity to

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sample some of the world's finest wines with accompanying food from the inn's kitchen. Of course, you don't have to wait until mealtime to pop a cork: Enjoy a bottle of Sancerre while gently swaying in one of three hammocks under a stately oak tree on the corner of the estate, sip on a glass of Caymus while reading a book from the inn's library, or enjoy a glass of Alliance Chiraz while browsing through one of the inn's two organic gardens as the sun sets in a fiery display of red and orange over the mountain.

Inside, the inn is bright and colorful, but never busy, incorporating antique and period-style furnishings with an occasional modernist touch (like glass bowl sinks, some of which are hand-made originals by local artists). Plush sofas, antique tables, bookcases and period art invite visitors to relax in the

living room, where you can enjoy an evening in front of the inn's beautiful fireplace or a view of the courtyard through the large windows and French doors leading out onto the patio. Guest rooms offer a balance of old and new, with some rooms, such as the Honeymoon Suite, housing a flat-screen TV along with an enormous king-size, four-poster bed that requires a wood stool to climb atop in the evening. (And yes, workaholics, Wi-Fi is available throughout the inn.)

All four seasons are spectacular on Monteagle Mountain, with cooler temperatures than the lower altitudes in the summer and plenty of beautiful color as the seasons change in autumn. So whichever season you travel in, the Monteagle Inn is sure to offer a restful retreat—crazy college-kid free.



take a hike

No matter what your level of experience, Monteagle has a hiking area for you. So lace up your boots and hit the trails. Here are some don't-miss destinations:

FIERY GIZZARD TRAIL

One of the most popular and picturesque trails, this 3-mile hike runs along the edge of the Cumberland Plateau. The trail offers an abundance of shade for comfortable hiking even in summer months. Along the path, hikers will encounter Blue Hole Falls, a 10-foot waterfall, as well as the junction of Big and Little Fiery Gizzard Creeks, a small area with rapids that can accommodate kayaks if conditions are right.

PERIMETER PARK TRAIL

This trail, which offers breathtaking views along a bluff overlooking the Cumberland Plateau, is a favorite hiking secret among students at Sewanee, so don't tell anyone where you heard about it. Though it's easily accessible from the center of campus, the 20-mile trail may prove daunting for beginners. Hiking is available for everyone, but only students, staff and faculty are allowed to camp overnight on the trail. Caving and climbing are also available at various points.

FOSTER FALLS

In nearby Tracy City, Foster Falls are easy to access with the look-out point just a few feet from the parking lot. A trail leads to the base of the 60-foot falls—however, decent shoes are a must as the trail has been left natural for the most part.

FALLS CREEK

This even more scenic wonder is located in Falls Creek Falls State Park approximately 75 minutes from Monteagle. Falls Creek Falls takes more effort to access, but the reward is a stunning 256-foot drop—the highest plunge waterfall east of the Mississippi River. Managed by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, the hiking path features wooden footing for much of the descent. Remember to take a towel and your swimsuit with you—visitors are allowed to swim at the base of Foster Falls and Falls Creek Falls.



High Point Restaurant serves up history and fine dining in Monteagle. (Photos by Tennessee Department Of Tourist Development)



eat up!

Try one of these sure-to-please dining destinations in Monteagle and the surrounding areas.

SHENANIGANS

A legendary spot just off the campus of The University of the South, this one-of-a-kind rustic eatery might leave diners a little off balance. That's because the building leans toward the left to such an extent that the front door was sawed at an angle to match the floor's sharp tilt. Shenanigans offers dozens of sandwiches, burgers, soups and quiche in a quirky space that attracts students, locals and out-of-towners alike.

HIGH POINT RESTAURANT

Legend has it that this stone house, built in 1929 and allegedly financed by notorious gangster Al Capone, was where Scarface and John Dillinger often played cards over drinks and cigars. Now as the area's most elegant restaurant, High Point is notorious for its criminally good food. Inch-and-a-half-thick steaks and seafood dishes such as blackened salmon Oscar and almond-crusted mahi-mahi are tasty staples, while the lobster bisque and the buttermilk Bibb salad with herbs, grape tomatoes and Gorgonzola are—well—high points.

DUTCH MAID BAKERY

Visiting Dutch Maid Bakery, just a 15-minute drive away in Tracy City, is like stepping back in time. The oldest family-owned bakery in Tennessee, this bake shop and eatery dates back to 1902 when the Swedish Baggenstoss family began crafting bread and other baked goods based on recipes from the old country. Though the ownership has changed, the recipes are exactly as they were when the bakery opened. Stop in to try their popular cookies, pastries and a dizzying array of artisan breads, including their famous salt-rising bread—the Dutch Maid's original variety.

PAPA RON'S

Located in a converted gas station just a five-minute walk from the Monteagle Inn, Papa Ron's is a sunny, stylish and fun Italian bistro. With an extensive menu, it would take months, or even years, to sample everything the eatery offers. From dozens of pasta choices and standards such as eggplant parmigiana and filet mignon to unusual options such as Hawaiian salmon, balsamic-glazed steak and stellar specialty pizzas, the restaurant has something for everyone.

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