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[Day Tripping: The Omni Grove Park Inn](#)

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Coming around the bend, my first glimpse of the historic Omni Grove Park Inn nearly made me swoon. Perched on the side of a mountain, the exquisite granite building with its red clay roof looked straight out of a fairy tale. With a row of rocking chairs in front and the city of Asheville below, the sight was a feast for my road-weary eyes.

Entering the Great Hall was an equally stunning experience. With its cavernous fourteen-foot fireplaces and original “arts and crafts” furniture, it was truly awe-inspiring. A stroll onto the adjoining Sunset Terrace showcased a panoramic view of the glorious Blue Ridge Mountains lining the horizon like a postcard. Displayed in all their breathtaking glory, they do indeed have a distinct blue-ish haze.

Brimming with old world charm, it's no wonder F. Scott Fitzgerald stayed at the Inn for months at a time to carouse under the guise of seeking inspiration. His former room, Suite 441, is still up for grabs. Alas, the damage he caused by firing his handgun has been repaired. The Inn has also received many other famous visitors including several American Presidents, Henry Ford, and Thomas Edison for whom their superb new bar-kitchen is named. In addition, there are a number of other restaurants on the grounds, ranging from fine dining to casual. All are nothing short of superb. It was a wonder my pants could button at the end of the trip.

If you have the opportunity, the Christmas Season is an especially wonderful time to visit. With the scent of evergreen, sugar, and spice in the air, the Inn decks the halls in spectacular style. With enormous wreaths above, the massive fireplaces glow and crackle as they burn massive logs up to 12-feet long. The holiday cheer is abundant with elaborate decorations and 80 decorated trees throughout the property with daily carols sung by the employee choir.

In addition, the Omni Grove Park Inn has the distinct honor of hosting the Annual National Gingerbread House Competition through January 1. Come see the many over-the-top creations vying for first prize! There are well over 200 of them! This would be a great activity for the week before New Year's Eve when crowds have dwindled.



Even if you are not a “spa person,” a trip to the Inn’s 43,000 square foot spa is an unforgettable experience. Plus an amazing treatment could help you forget the stress of Christmas! A long dark cave-like tunnel leads you towards the entrance, and that is only the beginning. Be sure to bring a suit to luxuriate in the multiple mineral pools and waterfalls complete with underwater music.

Well, in all honesty, there is one downside to a stay at the Inn. No matter where you go, your next hotel will seem downright shabby. Trust me, though, the disappointment will be sooo worth it! The drive to Asheville is an easy one, but be sure to allocate six hours from Midlo. Don’t dawdle along the way because you will want to savor every moment at this amazing destination.

While you are there, don’t miss out on the city of Asheville! Home of the legendary Biltmore Estate, it’s amazingly hip and artsy with a funky, urban vibe. The bustling downtown is teeming with refreshingly eclectic shops and art galleries without a chain store in sight. There is even a bakery for dogs! That’s one to mull over that at the local “chocolate lounge” with some salted caramel hot chocolate. After a trip like that, you may never come home!

Libby McNamee is plotting her return to the Omni Grove Park Inn. They haven’t seen the last of her yet! Check out her blog “Libby With a Y” at www.libbymcnamee.com



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