

# Main Line Media News June 12, 2009

## Tours & Detours: The Inn at Bowman's Hill

by **Ralph Collier**

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How long has it been since a destination left you entirely speechless? In our case it was arriving on a beautiful spring afternoon at The Inn at Bowman's Hill in Bucks County, its handsomely designed iron gates opening electronically to permit entrance to the stunning property, portals flanked by fieldstone walls and imposing lanterns. Nestled on the private estate there are just six handsomely appointed rooms and suites, each with a king-sized featherbed, fireplace, Italian tile and travertine bathrooms complete with whirlpool tub, a separate shower for two, heated towel racks, luxurious bathrobes, fine linens, LCD TV, DVD and CD players, and a safe and private refrigerator awaiting each guest, stocked with a bottle of champagne, as well as an assortment of cheeses and crackers and a cutting board with its complement of cheese knives. In mid-afternoon the kitchen bakes fresh scones daily served with a rich butter and marmelade.

The Sorcerer In Charge is a former Brit who has been on this side of the pond forever. But calling Mike Amery, the widely talented proprietor an innkeeper is about as accurate as describing Cartier's as a store that sells watches. He has a wicked gleam in his eye and every aspect of The Inn at Bowman's Hill and its highly manicured grounds reflects his personal input over the years.

The Inn at Bowman's Hill's Tower Suite and Hidden Pines enjoy the privacy of a separate entrance. Pond Vista and Orchard Retreat are blessed with private verandas and look out on a charming gazebo.

A plant-filled, glass-roofed conservatory opens to the manor terrace, which overlooks the heated swimming pool and hot tub. A leisurely way to start the day is to sit quietly in the morning enjoying the morning paper, the New York Times, which arrives by eight o'clock. If the day's news is too dire, there are cherry trees in bloom at this time of the year along with the dogwoods, a magnificent magnolia tree and lots of honeysuckle to take your mind away from the headlines.

William Penn may have founded Bucks County in 1682, but little did anyone anticipate the luxuries of this destination. The Inn at Bowman's Hill may just be the ultimate escape. It is a

short walk from the Canal and you need not worry about rapids or white water — the most ruffled the water gets is when a bug or mosquito flits down for a drink.

Walking into the inn's breakfast room with individual tables set with white linen you get something of the soul-soaring lift opera buffs get when they walk into the Met in New York. It's enough to make you launch into a duet from Tosca. The well-planned menu in this ideally laid-back atmosphere enfolds signature breakfast choices including a soufflé or omelet with a rich cheddar cheese, sautéed mushrooms and tomatoes or French toast with a sweet Ricotta-cheese filling and an orange compote with superb coffee and a broad variety of cold juices. In this double whammy of a decline in travel, it is reassuring to know that escapes like this are still possible. In this inn it is immediately evident that a very sophisticated sensibility prevails. Breakfast is delightful and as you look at the furniture and take in the ambience you know that everything has been chosen with a very personal and discriminating eye. The best part of the experience is to discover what lovely people the inn's staff are to deal with.

How do you pass the charmed hours in surroundings of such opulence? There are countless bird-feeders attracting a good variety of visitors and recently the inn established its own colony of free-ranging Rhode Island Reds who are not only colorful but provide the inn's breakfast tables with the freshest henfruit in the county.

That part of the property also became a kind of conference center for the area's population of foxes and management wisely erected a secure enclosure to keep the shifty marauders out of the chicken coop.

There are miles of hiking and biking paths (Amery has first-hand knowledge as a daily biker) on either side of the Delaware River. Vis-à-vis the inn there is the Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve, and along 202 between New Hope and Lahaska for the adventurous spirits for whom antiquing is the essence of feeling alive there are endless opportunities. The area creates a total experience of such pleasures that even if you buy nothing you will have a marvelous time. Near the inn there is also the workshop of George Nakashima and in Doylestown the Mercer Museum has installed a first-rate collection of Americana.

The inn does not serve dinner but makes recommendations in varying price categories, some of these in New Hope, which is 2½ miles away, including a favorite called Taste Buds, a BYOB in an early 19th-century clapboard building on Ferry Street. It is modest with white linen tablecloths and an imaginative menu with entrées that range from asparagus ravioli with wild mushrooms in a parmesan broth to seared veal medallions with curried baby artichokes, spiked pineapple juice and pine nuts. Service is attentive and friendly, the prices are tame and the portions generous.

As for The Inn at Bowman's Hill, I don't think a day has passed without my thinking back to it. I have not spent a better night all year.

For more information access [www.theinnatbowmanshill.com](http://www.theinnatbowmanshill.com) or call 215-862-8090.