

BERKSHIRES

Stage a Playful Escape in the Berkshires

Indulge your inner child before the curtain closes on summer.

Kim Knox Beckius · June 8, 2018 ·

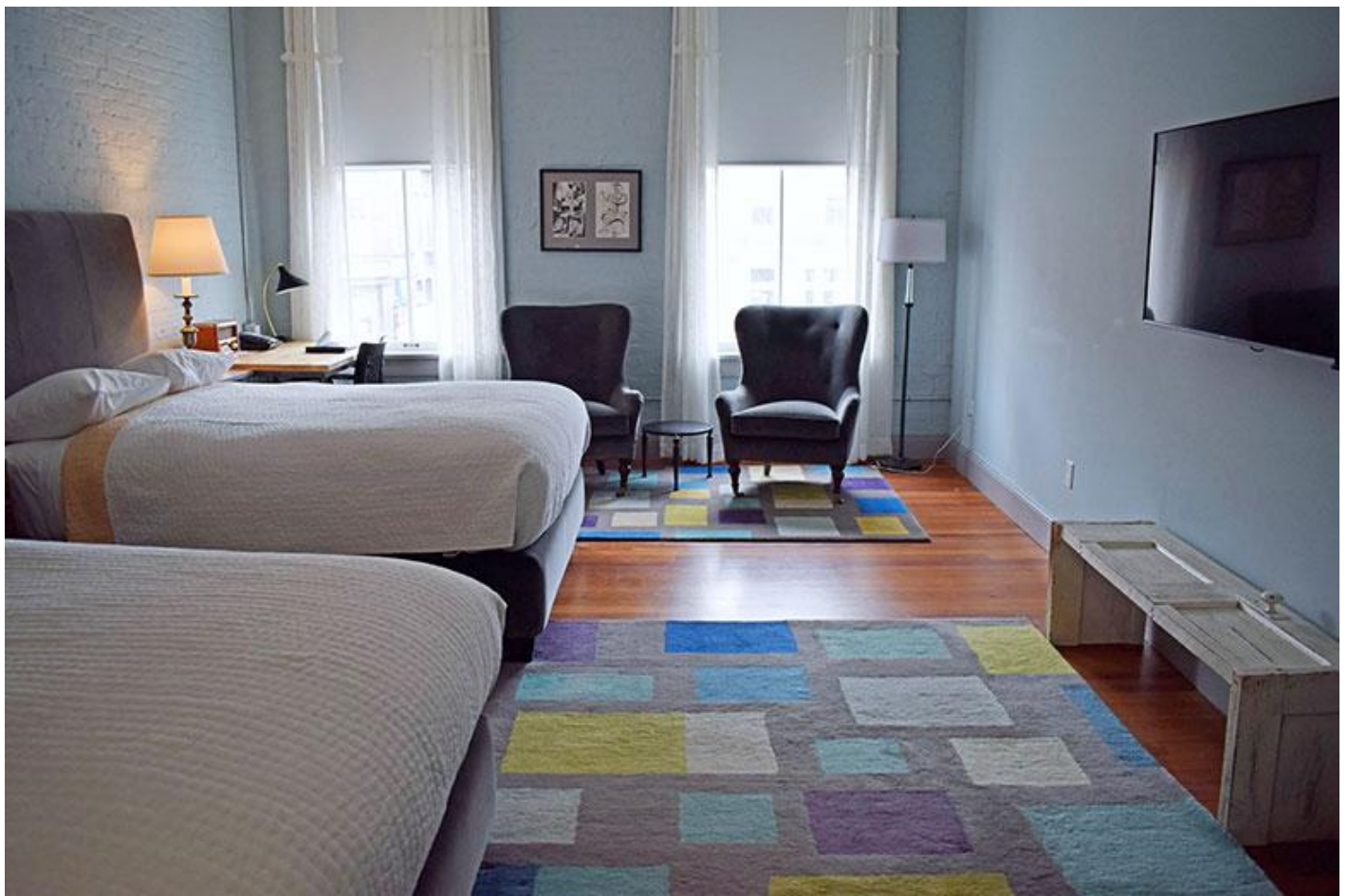


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Sponsored by Hotel on North

You don't need to be an escape artist to stage a dramatic break from your overscheduled, constantly scrambling, always-connected existence. This summer, when it seems like the sands of time are disappearing too fast, the Berkshires' newest boutique hotel will help you turn the hourglass on its side for a spell. Stay at Hotel on North, and you're standing in the wings of a captivating getaway in three acts. Immerse yourself in outdoorsy, delicious, and theatrical experiences, and you'll erase the constraints that too often keep grown-ups from embracing summer with wild exuberance.



Hotel on North Accommodations
Kim Knox Beckius

When a hotel promises “Quirks” on its website menu, it’s a dead giveaway this won’t just be a place to plop your head for a few nights. A renovated late-19th-century department store, Hotel on North sits smack in the midst of Pittsfield, Massachusetts’ walkable downtown arts district. Its design preserves the building’s character while transforming brick walls and wood and tiled floors into a gallery for contemporary creations. You’ll find a cocktail table for two inside the original, curlicued metal elevator: It’s a favorite backdrop for selfies. In the hotel’s one-of-a-kind shop, Dory & Ginger, you’ll swoon for stylish home and gift items. There’s a ping-pong table for old-school competitive fun in the game room, and the second-floor atrium is so comfy, inviting, and overstocked with books and board games, you’ll be tempted to stay in and relive childhood days, when endless time to read and roll the dice was part of summer’s magic.

Venture outdoors, though, because “Act 1” of this escapade takes place behind a curtain of fragrant pines in a treetop realm that would make even Tom Sawyer’s eyes pop. Ramblewild, less than 20 minutes away in Lanesborough, is a tree-to-tree adventure park deep within a 1,400-acre wood, and most of the exhilarating aerial challenges are far from child’s play. Jiminy Peak’s Mountain Adventure Park in nearby Hancock gets hearts of all ages racing, too, with summer-fun attractions including a mountain coaster, giant swing, alpine slide, and high-flying chairlift ride. If you prefer to get your outdoors on without leaving solid ground, Berkshire Bike and Board or Plaine’s in Pittsfield can set you up with rental bikes for a ride along the scenic Ashuwillticook Rail Trail. Plans are in place to extend this wide, paved trail to Pittsfield, but for now, Cheshire is your starting point, and you can pedal all or part of the 11.2-mile route to Adams.

At Hancock Shaker Village, just over five miles west of the hotel, you'll step into the pure and simple rhythms of a community that relied upon the land. There is Wi-Fi throughout this living history museum and working farm: Unlike the Amish, the Shakers embrace technology. But you'll feel as compelled to leave your cell phone out of reach as you did while biking or roaming through the trees. The adorable bleating of barnyard animals, the scent of overturned earth and the edibles it yields, the beauty of a round stone barn and furnishings built by hand, the peacefulness of Shaker holy sites reached via a vigorous Mt. Sinai climb—these are things to appreciate with your senses fully engaged. And, if you register for a Maker Day workshop or goat yoga, you'll experience a level of joy that can't be achieved by tapping a screen.



Hancock Shaker Village Calf
Kim Knox Beckius



Hancock Shaker Village Mother Sheep and Lambs
Kim Knox Beckius

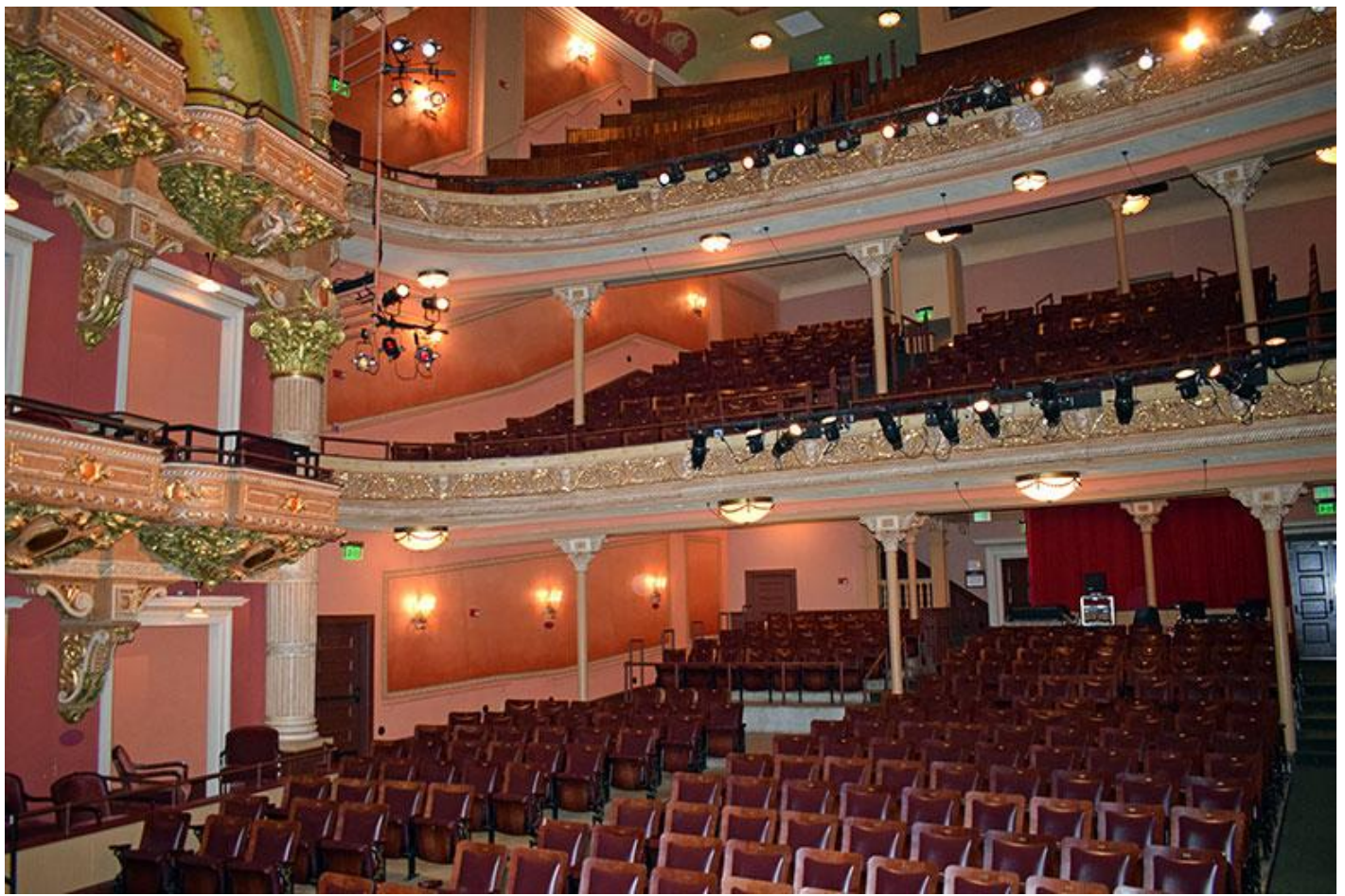
It's no plot twist that all of this adventuring will ignite your appetite. What you might not see coming in "Act 2" is the struggle to choose from a line-up of interesting dining experiences. Don't overlook Hancock Shaker Village's own Seeds Market Cafe, where chef Brian Alberg channels Shaker sensibilities as he puts his innovative spin on fare crafted with just-harvested herbs and heirloom vegetables. Open for lunch and sometimes dinner, Seeds also will package up a to-go picnic that might be the yummiest of your life. Another fun, casual, art-filled stop for breakfast, lunch, dinner, or a caffeinated pick-me-up is No. 6 Depot Roastery and Cafe in Stockbridge, housed in the Berkshires' oldest train station.

Book one of Hotel on North's special packages, and you can eliminate some of the where-to-eat guesswork. All include dining at Eat on North inside the hotel. The industrial-chic bar and restaurant's kitchen is helmed by Clinton White House Chef Ron Reda, whose love for his native Berkshires shines through in the hearty dishes he concocts from locally procured ingredients. You'll also find global cuisines including Italian, Malaysian, Mexican, and Japanese a short walk from the hotel. Popular tapas bar Mission jumps with live music on Mondays, Thursdays, and most Fridays and Saturdays.



Eat on North restaurant inside Hotel on North, Pittsfield, Massachusetts
Kim Knox Beckius

Wherever you dine, be sure to tell your server you have show tickets. You won't want to be late for "Act 3" of your reality-dodging escape. Hotel on North is walking distance from two acclaimed Pittsfield theatres, and the transportive power of a live stage show is undeniable. Berkshire Theatre Group, celebrating 90 years this summer, presents *Tarzan* at the Colonial Theatre (July 26-August 16), featuring a young, local cast and Phil Collins' memorable songs. Barrington Stage Company kicks off its virtually non-stop summer season with the world premiere of a new musical, *The Royal Family of Broadway* (June 7-July 7). With three venues, including an intimate, 99-seat cabaret and bar, BSC gives Pittsfield a cultural richness unexpected for a city of its size.



Colonial Theatre, Pittsfield, Massachusetts

Kim Knox Beckius

If you're fortunate to see BSC's production of *West Side Story* (August 3-September 1) during this 100th anniversary of composer Leonard Bernstein's birth, you may still hear Tony's soaring tenor in your head as you drift off to sleep: "*Peace and quiet and open air... wait for us... somewhere.*" It's a poignant reminder you were wise to run away to this enchanting "somewhere" before summer's inevitable end.



Comments