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JULY/AUGUST 2019

HIDEAWAY

Two days in the Valley

Less than an hour from Manhattan, the Valley Rock Inn & Mountain Club offers a bucolic escape filled with natural splendor and high design

I figure I might be the first visitor to take the bus from Manhattan to the Valley Rock Inn & Mountain Club, and indeed I am. Happily, the Short Line coach from Port Authority stops smack in front of this Sloatsburg, New York, newcomer.

“So sorry,” I apologize to my seatmate, as I hurriedly trundle off with an overstuffed weekender bag. “Most folks arrive by car,” notes Emily, the efficient general manager of the inn, nodding to a green Range Rover parked behind the property’s postcard-perfect general store, “and someone took the train. Uber is popular, too.” A 30-minute drive from the George Washington Bridge, the Valley Rock boasts a New Jersey Transit train station outside its back gate, but that journey requires several transfers, and who needs that?

Regardless of how you arrive, stepping through the Valley Rock’s tall, Hamptons-like privet hedges transfixes and transports. My two-day trip coincides with final touches being put on the inn in preparation for its unveiling, and workers are busy finishing the complex’s gallery space and new restaurant. And yet even during my soft-opening visit, the Valley Rock is already capable of



Clockwise: One of four 19th-century guest houses; a living room incorporates 20th-century antiques; a terrace and surrounding parkland

conjuring an otherworldly spell.

The brainchild of 1stdibs.com antiques portal founder and real-estate impresario Michael Bruno, the inn-cum-private-club sits on a mere three acres but packs a punch in a diminutive footprint thanks to clever landscaping with gravel paths that open onto outdoor “rooms.” Fronting the property are four original

19th-century houses that have been meticulously restored into three- and five-bedroom retreats filled with world-class 20th-century antiques culled from Bruno’s personal collection and pulled together by designer Lisa Bowles of Roark Modern. Think Florence Knoll and Jean-Michel Frank tables, Franco Albini lighting, Eames chairs and





PHOTOS: LUXPRODUCTIONS (3)



“THIS MAY BE THE LAST PROTECTED PLACE ANYWHERE NEAR NEW YORK CITY.”

Noguchi sculptures that create a spare-luxe vibe. There’s a 75-foot lap pool, 7,000-square-foot gym and yoga studio, massage “house,” screening room, game room and bar, organic market and indoor and alfresco dining with a menu that celebrates seasonal dishes and locally grown produce.

But it’s really the 70,000 acres of adjacent state parkland that allow the property to shine. Says Bruno, “It provides a buffer from the outside world. I wanted to create something that was not going to be destroyed by development. This may be the last protected place anywhere near New York City.”

A day at the inn can lead from a morning spin class to exceptional bike rides and hiking past rushing streams in Harriman and Sterling Forest state parks. Nearby is the charming village of Tuxedo with its stores and eateries tucked into historic Tudor-style buildings. Bruno lives in the adjacent Tuxedo Park neighborhood and handles real estate in the enclave. Guests

can sign up for a tour of one of the listed properties—from carriage houses to sprawling estates—in the Park, which was once the home of design luminary Dorothy Draper.

“Be as active—or as inactive—as you’d like,” Bruno says. “That’s the MO at the property. Folks say they feel like they are on vacation even when they just join us for lunch.”

I take Bruno up on the house rules and plunk down in the inn’s walled garden with a glass of Provençal rosé before a dinner of wilted radicchio wedge salad and Italian-white-truffle pizza. Afterward I retire to my Adirondack-style guest house with modernist leanings and Frette linens and sit on the back porch with stars sparkling overhead.

Tucked into bed, I ponder what I will do in the morning. Perhaps I’ll head for the gym or a bike ride or yoga class. Doubtful, I decide, turning off the lights. Chances are I’ll conk out beside the pool under a Bunny Mellon-worthy straw hat and call it a day. —JASON OLIVER NIXON



THE CELEBRATED SEASON

Six essential diary entries

Chicago Sprints Regatta July 5-7

Enthusiasts thrill to three full days of racing in the city’s Lincoln Park lagoon. lboatclub.org

Festival Napa Valley July 12-21

More than 200 international music artists perform at Napa’s premier venues. festivalnapavalley.org

Festa del Renaixement Tortosa July 18-21

The Catalan city stages an opulent celebration of the 16th century. festadelrenaixement.org

Wanderlust Whistler Aug. 1-4

Canada’s immersive wellness event features renowned instructors and speakers. wanderlust.com

Edinburgh International Festival Aug. 2-26

Since 1947, this arts institution has attracted the world’s finest performers. eif.co.uk

US Open Aug. 26-Sept. 8

Top-ranking tennis players face off at NYC’s prestigious hard-court tournament. usopen.org