



Bear Amenities

Innkeeper has no trouble managing three unique properties

by Linda C. Feltman

THINK MY FIRST QUESTION WHEN I met Jim Meade, proprietor of three unique bed and breakfasts in and around Well-sboro, Tioga County, was something akin to “How in the world do you manage three bed and breakfasts?” followed quickly with “May I see them?”

Jim’s face lit up. “You want to see all of them?” he asked. Yes, I did!

He ushered me in first to Bear Meadows Lodge, the property where Jim primarily lives and where I would spend the night. He gave me a few minutes to settle in, and then off we went. Since all three properties are within proximity of each other, the travel time was minimal, but the tours were enlightening and Jim’s accompanying stories enter-

taining. This is a man who found a calling post-retirement, and he is having the time of his life.

After the whirlwind tour, we stopped at Timeless Destinations restaurant in town, and over dinner, he shared that so many people over the years have asked him the same “why and how” questions that he was inspired to write a book in 2018 about his experiences owning three unusual properties.

Each of Jim’s bed and breakfasts has a distinct vibe, from scenic rural to in-town convenience, and at each inn, he provides guests with a breakfast basket filled with fresh fruit, trail bars and large hearty muffins. For someone like me, whose favorite meal

of the day is breakfast, I wondered about this “no-cooked-breakfast” concept.

Jim explained that when he decided to convert his then-home into Bear Mountain Lodge, he didn’t want to cook breakfast, so he came up with a different meal plan. In addition to a basket of treats, guests are provided access to a mini-frig stocked with yogurt and bottled water. There is a variety of Keurig coffee and teas available, and the common guest area has a microwave and ice maker.

After staying the night, I realized why this arrangement works so well. My guest room featured a private balcony, complete with hot tub, that overlooked a vast meadow edged in the distance by a dense stand of trees. In the late evening,





LINDA C. FELTMAN

A large indoor common area gives an area for guests to relax and unwind at Bear Mountain Lodge, located about six miles from downtown Wellsboro, Tioga County, in Pennsylvania's Northern Tier.

I sat outside with a cup of tea while spotting a herd of deer feeding in the brush and later a black bear strolling along the distant path.

I woke early the next morning—much earlier than any breakfast would normally be served—and brewed some coffee, grabbed a muffin and some fruit, and headed outside again to enjoy the quiet. As I watched the sun rise, I spied a flock of turkeys, watched a few deer prancing across the meadow and heard a woodpecker getting to work somewhere.

Later, when I met up with Jim around 8:30 a.m., I shared how I now understood the allure of his no-cooked-breakfast concept. His rooms provide a level of privacy that allows guests to enjoy the

A Tasty Tour of Highland Chocolates

The Wellsboro area is known for the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon, and during my stay, I made a point of visiting Leonard Harrison State Park, located on the eastern rim of the canyon. But after hitting the trails and then browsing a few of the downtown shops, I felt like a stop at Highland Chocolates was well-deserved.

I arrived in time for a tour and soon discovered why this place has received national recognition for its community service. The chocolate company provides jobs for differently abled citizens in the county, and as I chatted with a few friendly employees, they completed their specialized part in the candy-making process.

Highland Chocolates has quite a few corporate contracts and uses 10,000 pounds of chocolate a year to make its confections. The tour was fascinating, and it was hard to believe that in such a relatively small space so much product was manufactured.

Afterwards, I picked out some tasty-looking chocolates from the amply stocked display cases. Upon tasting my purchases, I had to agree that Highland Chocolates makes the best chocolate in the northern tier. Sheepishly, I must admit that

ambience of a bed and breakfast while keeping their own schedules.

He acknowledged that his unconventional method works for a niche market that prefers less interaction and who appreciates the beauty and convenience of what he has to offer. Many of his guests come to take advantage of the local recreational opportunities and are on the trails as dawn is breaking, preferring to eat breakfast early or take their goodies with them. He also books local couples who come seeking a special one-night getaway. He says he is always surprised at the number of guests who want to visit in the winter months.

“I had no idea how many people would book when a snowstorm was coming in so they could sit outside in their hot tub and watch the snow from the privacy of their own balcony,” he says.

Before I left, I met one of the two women that Jim employs to help him manage the three properties, and I complimented her on the level of cleanliness



COURTESY OF HIGHLAND CHOCOLATE

Kaitlyn (in blue), a line supervisor / direct support professional, works with Roberta to make Highland Chocolates' popular Cherry Springs Dark Skies bark. The direct support professionals help individuals with disabilities learn job skills and lead independent lives.

much of the candy I purchased for gifts never quite made it to the recipients I had in mind.

Highland Chocolates, located at 11724 Route 6, Wellsboro, is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Free 25-minute tours are available weekdays year-round from 9:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. and on select Saturdays from mid-June until the end of October. highlandchocolates.org; 570-724-9334

I encountered at every corner.

“I could not do it without them,” Jim tells me. “They are invaluable to me.”

My guess is that they feel just as fortunate to be working for Jim on lovely properties in such beautiful settings. ♥

—Linda C. Feltman has been visiting B&Bs throughout the state since 1991.

DETAILS

The Bear Lodges, P.O. Box 216, Wellsboro 16901-0216; 570-724-2428; bearlodgeswellsboro.com; relax@bearmeadowmountainbb.com

All three lodges are situated in and around Wellsboro, Tioga County. Bear Midtown is located at 131 Main St., about two blocks from the village green. Bear Mountain Lodge is six miles and Bear Meadows Lodge is two miles from downtown Wellsboro. Among the many amenities of the 11 rooms at the three properties, all have fireplaces and large flat-screen televisions with satellite TV and wi-fi. Five feature a hot tub, and two have a whirlpool tub. Several have private balconies. Both lodges have bike barns. Rates range from \$129 to \$299 per night, depending upon property, room, day of week and season.