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To the Manor Dorn

by Sonya Terjanian

Get ready to hike. Get ready to bike. Get ready to lie comatose in a hammock. Get ready to shoot skeet, or trap or nearby trees. Get ready to eat a seven-course dinner in the Big House, or s'mores by Skipper Lake. And not just any s'mores – gourmet s'mores crafted by a Culinary Institute of America-trained chef, who makes his own marshmallows and serves them with Champagne.

Get ready. You're going to Glendorn.

Glendorn was built in the 1920s as a retreat for the Dorn family, and the first thing you'll learn about them is that they loved to be outdoors. The second thing you'll learn is that they lived pretty well indoors, too. As you explore your cypress-lined cabin full of good books, fluffy sofas and ubiquitous fireplaces, you might wonder why anyone would rather spend their time hip-deep in a trout pond. But the Dorns were crazy about fishing, swimming, hiking and any other excuse to be among the trees and wildlife of the Alleghenies – a spirit that is alive and well at Glendorn today.

If you stay in the cabin called The Roost, and are inclined to be nosy, you'll discover a collection of costume jewelry in one of the bedrooms. Among the pieces is a Glendorn swimming medal from 1953 – a relic from the time when the Dorns formed their own locally competing swim team. That's the kind of family this was: they had their own swim team. They also started a fish hatchery. They built an ice cream parlor for the kids, a tennis complex called Wimble-Dorn and a lodge with a fireplace big enough to roast a buffalo.

Staying at Glendorn is like visiting your healthy, energetic friends who always talk you into outdoorsy activities you wouldn't normally attempt. Suddenly, you're mountain biking at breakneck speeds down the Grouse Trail, or paddling a canoe across Bondieu Lake. You might even find yourself cracking open a shotgun to expel a smoking shell, having just obliterated a pigeon. A clay pigeon, yes, but this won't stop you from feeling a primitive sort of rush as you hoist the shotgun back up to your shoulder, getting ready to pulverize your next victim. Your husband starts looking at you with new respect. Possibly even fear.

Cocktails are served promptly at seven in the Big House, followed by dinner – a six- to eight-course tasting menu. If you order the wine package, sommelier Andrew Jay will pair each dish with a complementing glass of wine. Somewhere around the fourth course you may find yourself getting chatty with the staff. By the time you finish your dessert wine, you might feel like hugging Natalia, the friendly Ukrainian waitress. She seems to be used to this.

Even without the wine, the food will make you giddy. Chef Jason Gulisano lives on the property, and during mushroom season he scatters fireplace ashes around his yard to encourage the growth of morels. He also picks fiddlehead ferns, wild leeks, fresh watercress, crunchy apples and fat berries, transforming them into elegant, forthright dishes that taste of the earth, and will make you vow never to touch another ingredient packaged in cellophane.

Really, the food captures everything that is magical about Glendorn: respect for the earth, refined sensibilities and a wholehearted commitment to having a good time. It doesn't take long to get swept up in the spirit of the place. As you sip a glass of cognac in front of the roaring fire in the Big House, paging through family photo albums, you'll almost feel like you've become one of the fun-loving Dorns.

And like a Dorn, you'll want to keep coming back, year after year. Bringing your children. And their children, too.

Get Hooked

Glendorn is an Orvis-endorsed fly fishing lodge complete with a privately managed trout stream, three trophy trout ponds and a fish hatchery – meaning it is virtually impossible to avoid catching a fish while you're there. If you've never fly cast, take a lesson from one of the Orvis guides, who are remarkably patient and uncomplaining, no matter how often you hook nearby trees, bushes and bystanders. Once you start getting the hang of it, you can schedule a day-long drift down the Allegheny River that includes a gourmet lunch grilled and served right on the riverbank.

IF YOU GO

Glendorn, part of the Relais & Chateaux association, is located near Bradford, Pennsylvania. Children and pets are welcome; inquire for more details. Autumn is the resort's busiest season, so book early. www.glendorn.com, 800.843.8568

To plan your trip to the Pennsylvania Wilds, go to www.visitpa.com and click on "PA Regions."



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