



Living the High Life

SAVOR THE ARTS, OUTDOORS, AND MORE AT AN INN
NESTLED AMID THE VIBRANT FALL VISTA OF
NORTH ALABAMA'S HIGH ELEVATIONS, A STONE'S THROW
FROM GEORGIA AND TENNESSEE.



Perched in a spot best known for its abundance of kids' camps and picturesque views from Lookout Mountain, the hamlet of Mentone boasts a new getaway for adults-only dubbed Andiamo! Lodge. Yes, the exclamation point is intended and apropos—not only for the Italian expression, which translates to “let’s go,” but for the joie de vivre of owner Colleen Duffley, a world traveler, professional photographer, and bicyclist extraordinaire.

With a gung-ho swing of her fist, Colleen explains the name: “Let’s go hike, let’s go bike, let’s go relax, let’s go learn. I just thought it was an amazing word for ‘let’s go,’ and we wanted to create something that wasn’t just a lodge.” It’s with this motto and three decades in advertising and photography that she and her husband, chef and restaurateur Steve Carpenter, opened the resort last year with its six cozy, well-appointed rooms—each with a stacked-stone fireplace and en suite bath. Fresh flowers

grown on-site as well as luxury linens add to the ambience, while the distinctive burnt orange hue on each door contributes a dash of color that echoes the fiery changing scenery in autumn.

“It’s all about the experience,” says Colleen, whose attention to detail is evident in everything from the turndown chocolates labeled with the tagline “small bite . . . sleep tight” to the artful array of antique cameras sprinkled throughout the lodge. “We do everything from cooking, art, gardening—it’s anything creative really. But we also do guided hikes; we have paddleboards, we have bikes.” With enough notice, Colleen and Steve will fulfill visitors’ requests for food, beverages, flowers, and adventures like rock climbing, horseback riding, golf, glass-blowing, and hang gliding, all of which can be arranged in the area.

The Cottage at Andiamo, a separate dwelling with a kitchen, two bedrooms, and two bathrooms, welcomes guests with pets. Gathering spots are found throughout the property, whether in the Great Room with its soaring ceiling,

stone fireplace, and plump furnishings, or around a firepit on the forest’s edge.

Colleen has curated the soothing neutral décor to incorporate vintage pieces such as a cabinet turned into a bar and a wryly amusing boar’s head crowned with a distant cousin’s British police cap. In the dining and kitchen area, a traveling display of 40 artists’ smartphone photography graces a wall near top-notch appliances arranged for hands-on classes taught by visiting chefs, including four so far with James Beard Award distinctions. A pair of commissioned paintings in the entrance depicts Colleen and Steve’s cherished pets: a dog, Petey, and cats, Pippa and Stella.

Andiamo! Lodge maintains two additional venues a short drive away to enhance your stay. The Gallery, a freshly refurbished studio, offers works by regional artisans and hosts a wide range of courses from line drawing and silk dyeing to encaustics and watercolor. The cheerful space also features pop-up clothing boutiques, book signings, and other events. A second retreat on the



(Clockwise from above) As many as 16 guests at a time are welcomed at the entrance of Andiamo! Lodge, where you may enjoy scrumptious meals prepared by proprietors Colleen Duffley and Steve Carpenter or by a visiting chef. Colleen, a professional photographer and publicist, is attentive to details like bespoke monogrammed linens and coffee, a delectable five-bean blend roasted each Monday just for the lodge. The soothing neutral décor includes Colleen’s collection of vintage cameras as well as arrowheads found in the area around Mentone, Alabama. Patrons can explore the spectacular vibrant vistas of fall by bike, hike, or paddle. (Opposite) The kitchen is set up for hands-on cooking classes, one of dozens of experiences from painting to horseback riding that can be arranged for individuals or groups.





(Clockwise from left) The Gallery, Andiamo's recently refurbished art studio in the Shops at Moon Lake Village, offers works by regional artists in addition to art classes like leather painting and watercolor. It also hosts pop-up events for clothing boutiques, book signings, and more. The lodge's rooms, each with its own fireplace, are cozy and embellished with flora from the on-premise garden.

blue waters of the Little River opened this year for fêtes as well as classes.

More than a dozen stunning waterfalls entice hikers of all skill levels in nearby DeSoto State Park and Cloudland Canyon State Park in north-west Georgia. The Little River Canyon Rim Parkway is one of Alabama's most scenic routes with lookouts perfect for leaf-peeping and panoramic views.

Colleen and Steve—who met in the Florida panhandle, where he owns several restaurants and she ran an eclectic art studio—bought a home on Alabama's Little River as a weekend escape. During the pandemic, it became their refuge. After they posted gorgeous photos of the area on social media, family and friends wanted to visit, and the search for a location to accommodate them began.

As the pair bicycled into town for

supplies, a run-down church camp caught their attention. "There, in all these weeds, was a For Sale sign laying down," says Colleen. That's when the idea for public lodging percolated. It took about a year to trim the overgrown land and convert the building's dated surfaces into the subtle interiors that mark the lodge's décor, but it was well worth it. "It's magical," she says of Mentone, which she first discovered while training for Olympic cycling trials in the '90s.

Colleen urges those interested in a stay to view the website for upcoming diversions or contact her to fashion a custom visit, whether alone or with a group. "If you have something you want to do and you have a group, we can make it work. Basically, we curate people's memories," she says.

For information, visit andiamolodge.com.

