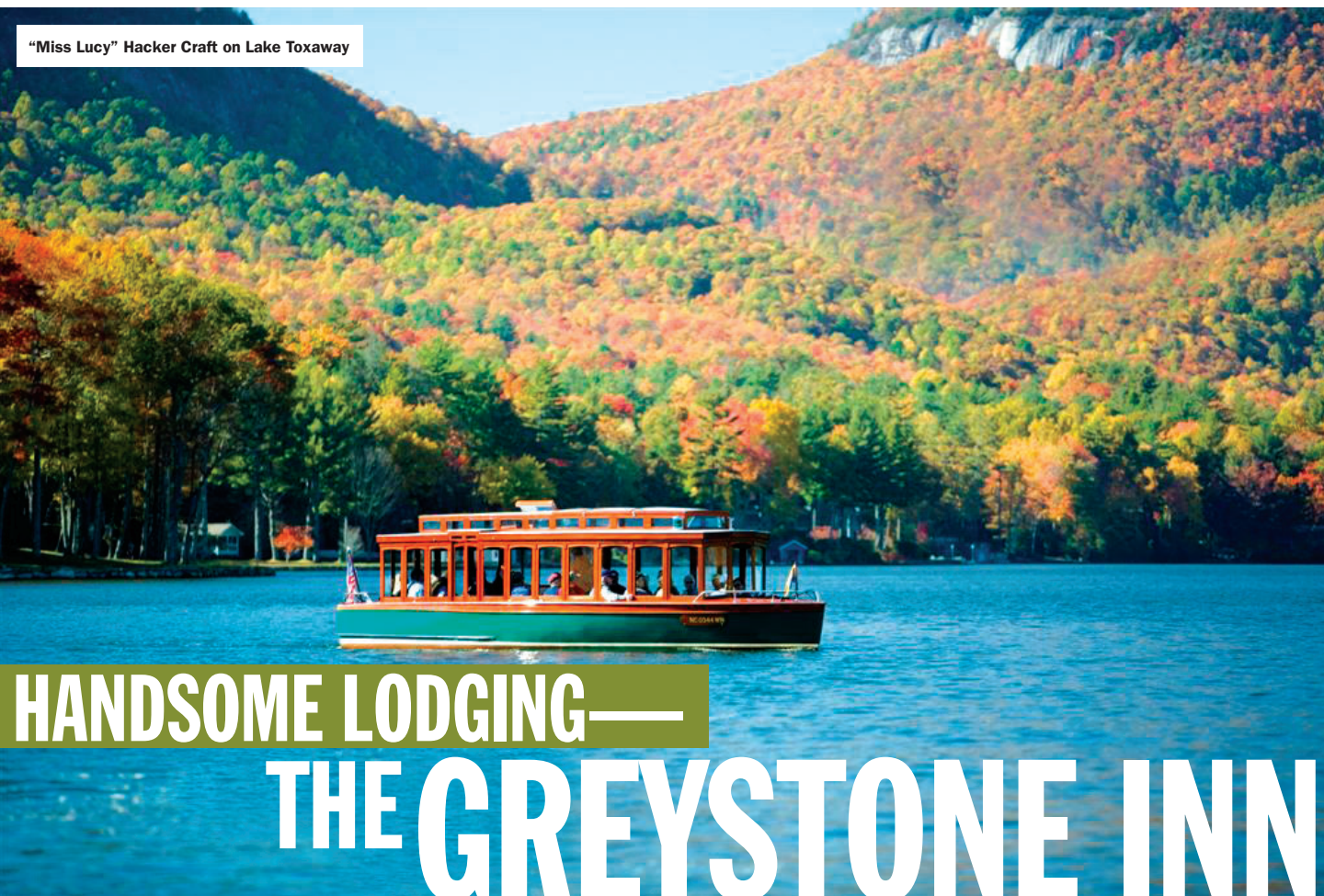


"Miss Lucy" Hacker Craft on Lake Toxaway



COURTESY OF THE GREYSTONE INN

HANDSOME LODGING— THE GREYSTONE INN

BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK

Months in advance, you scheduled a weekend getaway to celebrate your birthday. Two weeks before the trip, your husband has intestinal surgery. Do you cancel the trip or go anyway? Faced with this dilemma, Dean and I opted to go anyway: He was feeling well enough to make the three-hour road trip, could nap as easily in a hotel bed as in ours at home, and would be spared the challenge of dreaming up an alternate gift for me. I assumed responsibility for all the driving and heavy lifting, and off we went to the Greystone Inn on Lake Toxaway in North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains. We didn't quite know what to expect.

It turns out we found an ideal place to both celebrate and recuperate. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Greystone Inn offers a relaxing atmosphere with modern luxuries and superior service—it's won the AAA Four Diamond award for 21 consecutive years. It's the kind of place adults go to treat themselves: Among our fellow guests were couples celebrating their first, 15th and 60th anniversaries, honeymooners, a family reunion, and a couple on their seventh getaway to the inn.

Though the landscape is now dominated by Lake Toxaway, in the late 1800s, the area was simply a forest with a river running through it. The 640-acre lake—which is about three miles long and one mile wide, with 14.5 miles of shoreline—was created by entrepreneur E. H. Jennings and was the first manmade lake in the Appalachians. The Greystone Inn is not the first

The Greystone Inn's historic charm makes it the perfect spot for getting away from it all.

COURTESY OF THE GREYSTONE INN



inn on its shores: "In 1903, the Toxaway Inn was an impressive six-story building with 250 guest rooms," says Clark Lovelace, general manager of the Greystone Inn, which has 33 guest rooms. "The Edisons, Fords, Vanderbilts, Firestones and Rockefellers stayed there." But the Toxaway Inn's heyday was short-lived. On Aug. 13, 1916, extreme rains flooded the region, wiping the dam away and emptying the lake overnight. Without the attraction of the lake, the Toxaway Inn stood empty until it was torn down in 1948. In the '60s, Reginald D. Heinitch Sr. purchased 9,000 acres with the vision of recreating Lake Toxaway and developing a new mountain community around it.

The Greystone Inn is housed in a mansion built in 1915 for Savannah's Lucy Armstrong, who lived in it until 1963.

During the '70s, it served as the community clubhouse. It became the Greystone Inn in 1985 after a \$5 million renovation.

"I grew up working here," says Lovelace, whose parents Tim and Boo Boo opened the Greystone Inn when he was 10. "I came back five years ago so my parents could retire." Among his current duties is piloting the 26-passenger "Miss Lucy" Hacker Craft each evening, as guests sip champagne and listen to his historical tales about the inn and lake community. "It's a favorite part of my job," he admits with a broad smile.

The relaxed mood and friendly tone we found onboard the champagne cruise were consistent throughout the country inn. From the front desk to the dining room, service was exceptional.

TIMOTHY L. SCHERMERHORN



The presidential suite at the Greystone Inn

IF YOU GO

GETTING THERE

The Greystone Inn is located in Western North Carolina about 50 miles southwest of Asheville and three hours from Atlanta. Take I-85 north to Highway 11 in South Carolina and turn left. Turn left onto Highway 130, which becomes Highway 281 in North Carolina. Turn right onto Highway 64. Turn left into Lake Toxaway Estates and follow the signs.

WHAT TO DO

Cost includes overnight accommodations, afternoon tea, champagne lake cruise, hors d'oeuvres, multi-course gourmet dinner, evening turndown service and breakfast. Guests also enjoy complimentary access to lake activities, ski boat with driver, mountain bikes, tennis courts, health and fitness center, the Tom Fazio-designed golf learning center and hiking trails. Golf green fees are also complimentary at certain times of the year. Treatments at Sothys Signature Spa are available at an additional cost. Standard rates start at \$290 per night November through April. Standard rates are \$360 Sunday through Thursday or \$410 Friday and Saturday from May through October.

More Information

THE GREYSTONE INN

Greystone Lane
Lake Toxaway, NC 28747
800-824-5766 or 828-966-4700
www.greystoneinn.com

One morning, we toured the new Kris Spence-designed golf course. When complete—the back nine opened last May; the front nine will open in July—the 6,600-yard, 71-par course will "be challenging yet playable for all levels," says Christine Jarrett, golf pro. In the afternoon, we cruised around the lake on a pontoon boat. Had we been more energetic, we might have played tennis, gone water skiing or hiked up Mount Toxaway. But we preferred lounging in front of the fireplace in our room.

The satisfaction of each gourmet meal was rivaled only by that of drifting off to sleep in the cozy bed while listening to tree frogs.

Even if you only need to recover from stress, a getaway to the Greystone Inn can cure what ails you—and that alone is reason to celebrate. **SP**