



PHOTOGRAPHS: MEG MCKINNEY

Retreat to This North Carolina Inn

Perfect for families as well as romantic vacations, this Flat Rock getaway offers restful nooks and outdoor activities.

We call the Highland Lake Inn a country boutique resort, but owners Jack and Linda Grup have a much more playful approach to their property. The rooms offer grown-up comforts and amenities, but outside you'll find fun activities for all ages.

Stay Simply Or With Style

The inn includes a variety of lodging options. The affordable one-room cabins offer the most basic amenities. Stay in the lodge, and you may find the wooden floors and tall ceilings a little rustic but still spacious and comfortable. The Woodward House Inn offers elegantly decorated suites with furniture pieces made from oak right off the property. The cottages are designed like small houses for those who need the space or just want to be more self-sufficient.

Fresh Seasons

In tune with the low-key ambience throughout the rest of the retreat, Season's Restaurant offers deliciously fine dining without being too fussy.

If you did any exploring before dinner, you may have noticed the organic garden. The head gardener collaborates with the chef as he creates the seasonally changing menu. The roasted thyme rack of lamb (\$26) with wild berry-jasmine rice and grilled vegetables is a perfect example of this partnership. For dessert, try the cocoa crème brûlée (\$6).



Complimentary wine and cheese greet guests during the weekly social hour.

After a restful night, return to the restaurant for the complimentary breakfast buffet (offered with all the accommodations, except for the cottages with kitchens). It's a smorgasbord of fresh fruits, yogurts, quiche, omelets, casseroles, and other homemade goodies.

You only have to walk a few steps around Highland Lake Inn to find pastoral and serene settings.

Out on the Water

The lake and 26-acre property afford several outdoor activities, such as complimentary boats, bikes, canoes, and paddleboats. On your walks down the paths and trails, you'll likely discover the goat barn and other animals.

You may think of peace and quiet when visiting such a place. "We have peace, but we don't really have quiet," says Jack. "You hear the guinea hens and the geese, and they are just natural, enjoyable sounds." —TANNER C. LATHAM

Highland Lake Inn: 180 North Highland Lake Road, Flat Rock, NC 28731; 1-800-762-1376 or www.hlinn.com. **Starting rates:** Cabins \$79 weekday, \$99 weekend; lodge \$99/\$129; Woodward House \$99/\$129; cottages \$139/\$179.