

'Accommodating' defines New Hampshire inn

Checking In

By **Sacha Pfeiffer**
 GLOBE STAFF

HAMPTON, N.H. — The mother of the bride had an emergency, and John Nyhan had a solution.

Her daughter was scheduled to get married on Hampton Beach in late April — just a few days away — and the weather was atrocious. Wind was whipping. Rain was coming down in torrents. Thunderous waves were pounding the sand.

The woman, frantic, phoned Nyhan with a question: Could he help?

He could. In less than a week, Nyhan, who with his wife, Pamela, owns the Victoria Inn, a bed-and-breakfast not far from the beach, arranged a simple wedding at the inn for about 25 people. He ordered flowers, decorated an outdoor gazebo for the ceremony, and planned a front porch champagne toast.

Crisis averted, the bride and groom got married without a hitch.

But what impressed me most about that 11th-hour rescue, which took place when we visited the Victoria Inn last month, was Nyhan's unflappable hospitality in the midst of such madness.

The wedding was held on a Saturday morning, and we were the inn's only guests on Friday night. Nyhan was clearly busy with final arrangements, but we never felt slighted in the least. Even in the morning, when he was setting up chairs for the ceremony, he took a break to casually chat. And when my husband requested egg whites for breakfast, Nyhan made a trip to the store for eggs.

There's a reason Nyhan is a pro at party planning: The Victoria Inn hosts about 80 private functions a year, from weddings to bridal and baby showers to birthday, anniversary, and retirement parties. He helps arrange caterers, florists, photographers, and other vendors, and he lets guests customize their parties however they like.

Some people reserve the whole inn and stay overnight. Others rent the property for only a few hours so they can use its gazebo and roomy covered pavilion, which is

perfect for dinner and dancing. The inn "becomes like their home," Nyhan said, "and it's like they're having a wedding in their backyard."

For a weekend trip to New Hampshire's seacoast, we chose the Victoria Inn because it's a prettier, quieter alternative to the generic hotels and motels that line Hampton Beach. When we arrived, Nyhan met us at the door with a firm handshake and hearty hello. "Hi, I'm John!" he boomed, making a charming first impression. "Welcome to the Victoria Inn!"

The inn's decor tends to be traditionally bed-and-breakfasty, meaning lots of floral patterns, lace curtains, fringed lamp shades, and period antiques. It's not suffocating, though — not the taste of an elderly grandmother, but a middle-aged aunt. Most of the house has off-white carpet that, somehow, the Nyhans keep remarkably clean.

Our spacious bedroom, called the honeymoon suite, had a four-poster king-size bed, sitting area with two chairs and a coffee table, and windowed sunporch with an antique chaise and slightly worn couch. The porch was a nice, warm spot for reading, and we loved the natural light that streamed through it. As we fell asleep, we could hear frogs peeping in the night.

Because our room faced the street, we also occasionally heard the whoosh of passing traffic. The noise wasn't too bad, at least in mid-April. But if I were to go back I'd ask for a room near the back, just to be safe.

All six guest rooms, one of which is a two-bedroom suite, have private bathrooms, color cable televisions, in-room phones, hair dryers, and ceiling fans. Downstairs, there's a living



room, a dining room where guests eat breakfast, and a glassed-in porch stocked with free beer and wine. The inn's location is ideal — about a half-mile from Hampton Beach in one direction, about 2 miles from downtown Hampton in the other.

For breakfast, my husband ate his special-request egg whites, which he raved about, and I was served mediocre apple puff pastry and an egg casserole that I suspect had been made ahead of time and microwaved. Still, Nyhan, who did the cooking that morning, tries. "I'm proud to say I'm up to 11 breakfast items," he reported, "and that's an accomplishment for me."

He's an uneven cook, but so warm and hospitable that I'm willing to cut him some slack. I might not hire him as a chef, but if I ever need a last-minute wedding, Nyan would be my first call.

Sacha Pfeiffer can be reached at spfeiffer@globe.com.



COME CHECK OUT ALL THE INNS

Browse a state-by-state archive at explorenewengland.com.

Victoria Inn

430 High St., Hampton, N.H.
603-929-1437, 800-291-2672
thevictoriainn.com

What we liked most: Innkeeper John Nyhan's unflappable hospitality.

What we liked least: Our fair-to-middling breakfast.

What surprised us: That such pretty, peaceful lodging can be found so close to honky-tonk Hampton Beach.

You know you're at the Victoria Inn when . . . the gregarious Nyhan greets you at the front door with a firm handshake and hearty hello.

Rates: \$120-\$150 in season (May 1-Oct. 31), \$100-\$125 off season (Nov. 1-April 30). Children are permitted, pets are not.

Directions: Hampton is 47 miles or about an hour from Boston. Take Interstate 95 north to exit 2 (Hampton/Exeter). Take Route 101 east to exit 13 (500 yards). Take Route 27 east to Hampton; it becomes High Street at Hampton Center. Proceed on High Street for about 2 miles to the inn, which is on the left.



PHOTOS BY HANSI KALKOFEN/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

The Victoria Inn in Hampton, N.H., hosts dozens of private functions each year and tea for many more than two.

