



out of town

by Andrew Collins



Innkeepers Lisa Feistel and Doreen Birdsell outside their Provincetown B&B, the elegant Inn at Cook Street.

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Accommodations are in six handsomely appointed rooms and suites, some with working fireplaces and rustic wood-beam ceilings. Some rooms can be connected, and others accommodate up to four guests, making this a great option for friends traveling together or parents with children. Rates include a hearty full breakfast, where you might dine on apricot French toast with kielbasa and farm potatoes.

Clientele: Mixed gay/straight. <www.gettysburgbattlefield.com>

BYWATER B&B, NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

Set inside a rambling "double shotgun"-style 19th Century cottage in the Big Easy's up-and-coming Bywater neighborhood, this B&B operated by Marti Burt and Betty-Carol Sellen is also a gallery of folk and "outsider" art collected from throughout the South. The inn lies about a mile downriver from the French Quarter, in an intriguing residential

Photo by Andrew Collins

GREAT WOMEN-OWNED INNS OF THE EAST

Here's a look at 10 of the more appealing women-owned accommodations east of the Mississippi River.

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YOU MIGHT THINK PRIMARILY OF Provincetown when you consider where to find lesbian-owned and -operated accommodations in the eastern United States. Indeed, you'll find several lesbian-owned B&Bs and inns in that favorite gay getaway.

But other popular GLBT vacation spots, including Rehoboth Beach and Key West, have women-owned inns, and you'll also find them in a number of surprisingly rural and remote communities, from Bethlehem, in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, to Saratoga, in upstate New York. Here's a look at 10 of the more appealing women-owned accommodations east of the Mississippi River.

BATTLEFIELD B&B, GETTYSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

Whether you're a Civil War history buff or you're just looking for a romantic, secluded getaway in the country that's within an afternoon's drive of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Washington, DC, this 1809 farmhouse inn makes an excellent choice. This women-owned property sits on 30 acres of meadows and woodland just a mile from Gettysburg National Military Park.

historic district, and has four art-filled rooms with well-chosen country antiques.

With rates starting at just \$65 nightly, this is one of the best bargains in the city (as long as you don't mind that the four rooms share two baths). There's a terrific collection of Louisiana-music CDs in the cheery sitting room, which is where Continental breakfast is served each morning.

Clientele: Mixed gay/straight. <www.bywaterbnb.com>

CHARLES STREET INN, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

One of Boston's swankiest and most luxurious small hotels, the Charles Street Inn is in the heart of regal Beacon Hill, a short walk from Boston Common and steps from countless boutiques, galleries, and restaurants. The nine guestrooms here are over-the-top sumptuous, with whirlpool tubs, antique European armoires, Turkish rugs, and cable TV with DVD players. Each is named for a local luminary, such as Henry James and Edith Wharton. This is the perfect urban oasis when you're planning a Boston getaway with someone special.

Clientele: Mixed gay/straight. <www.charlesstreetinn.com>

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charlesstreetinn.com>

FAIRBANKS INN, PROVINCETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS

This grand, atmospheric house is one of the oldest in town, dating to 1776. Apart from the main house—which has several lovely old rooms with four-poster or canopy beds, Oriental rugs on wide-board floors, and antique furnishings—there are outbuildings containing larger and more modern units (some have fireplaces and kitchens). Bathrooms aren't especially large here, but they're in keeping with the home's history.

On cool days (the inn is open year-round), you can relax inside the parlor, with its 18th Century wallpaper, and warm up by the fire. In summer, the sun porch, decorated with wicker furniture, is the perfect spot for complimentary breakfast and evening refreshments. The inn is centrally located, a short walk from many bars and restaurants.

Clientele: Mostly mixed gay/lesbian. <www.fairbanksinn.com>

HIGHLANDS INN, BETHLEHEM, NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire's only lesbian-exclusive resort, the Highlands Inn also ranks among the most popular and well-operated women's inns in the country. It's been serving the community since 1983 and consists of a main inn (with 13 guest rooms), a farmhouse (with five guest rooms and a full kitchen), and a secluded cottage that can sleep up to four and has a sleeping loft, fridge, microwave, and dining area.

The antiques-filled, pet-friendly Highlands is nestled in the woods with hiking and cross-country skiing trails, a huge outdoor heated pool, two hot tubs, and an inviting library-living room with a guest computer, WiFi, a fireplace, and extensive book and video collections (all guest rooms have TVs and VCRs). The Highlands is in quaint Bethlehem, and there's great downhill skiing in winter or scenic hiking in summer within a 20-minute drive.

Clientele: Lesbian. <www.highlandsinn-nh.com>

INN AT COOK STREET, PROVINCETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS

Friendly Connecticut transplants Lisa Feistel and Doreen Birdsell bought this wonderful B&B in winter, 2006. It had been owned by a gay couple that had sold it to

a developer, who subsequently planned to convert it into condos (as has happened to many inns on the Cape in recent years). Feistel and Birdsell stepped in at the last minute to keep it running as a B&B. They've not only done a good deed by keeping the Inn at Cook Street open, they've also improved the place with a beautiful makeover.

The guest rooms in this 1836 Greek Revival house in which author Michael Cunningham wrote *A Home at the End of the World* are done with upscale antiques and contemporary pieces, and have such cushy amenities as flat-screen TVs, high-thread-count linens, and handy reading lights. Some units have private entrances and fireplaces; two have decks. The house is surrounded by colorful gardens, and is a short walk to the many cafés and galleries in Provincetown's East End.

Clientele: Mixed gay/straight. <www.innatcookstreet.com>

NEWNHAM SUNCATCHER INN, SAUGATUCK, MICHIGAN

Poised on the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, roughly a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Chicago and Detroit, the dapper town of Saugatuck has become one of the premier weekend getaways among gay travelers in the Midwest. On the edge of this attractive village of inviting restaurants and boutiques, you'll find the Newnham Suncatcher Inn, a courtly brown clapboard house with a wraparound porch.

Everyone is welcome here, but hostesses Barb and Nancy make an especially strong effort to encourage lesbians and same-sex couples traveling with children. They treat guests like old friends, yet afford them plenty of privacy. The inn is decorated with whimsical touches, such as stuffed animals, toys, and trinkets, and comprises eight rooms and suites, including a two-bedroom cottage on a nearby street.

Clientele: Mostly mixed gay/lesbian. <www.suncatcherinn.com>

PEARL'S RAINBOW, KEY WEST, FLORIDA

This sprawling 38-room resort built around a former cigar factory is Key West's only lesbian-exclusive accommodation, and it's a beauty, following major renovations and improvements in recent years. The rooms have rattan and wicker furniture,

freshly painted pastel-hued walls, large TVs, and refrigerators.

Many configurations are available, from simple budget-oriented units set away from the noise of the pools and decks, to more spacious rooms closer to the action, some with kitchenettes or separate sitting areas. There are two heated pools, spacious sun-decks, and lots of opportunities to chat with other guests. This is a wonderful hideaway, whether you're looking to make new friends or enjoy a little peace and quiet with your honey.

Clientele: Lesbian. <www.pearlsrainbow.com>

SARATOGA FARMSTEAD, SARATOGA, NEW YORK

Just outside the sophisticated, collegiate town of Saratoga Springs—long famous for mineral spas, the Saratoga Race Course, Skidmore College, and Saratoga Performing Arts Center—this rambling late-18th-Century farmhouse inn is operated by Mariana DiToro and Rosemary Jensen.

The airy rooms, some with canopy beds, provide guests with a mix of creature comforts, such as individually zoned heating and air conditioning, and fine art and antiques. Fragrant gardens, verdant meadows, and rustic farm buildings surround the inn.

Clientele: Mixed gay/straight. <www.saratogafarmstead.com>

SEA WITCH MANOR INN, REHOBOTH, DELAWARE

This cheerful compound of three neighboring houses is in the famously gay resort town of Rehoboth Beach, a popular weekend destination with Washingtonians and Philadelphians. Each house is different, from a high-style Victorian manor to '60s retro-hip clapboard beach house.

Rooms are named for characters from the campy sitcom *Bewitched*—you might stay in the Abner & Gladys Kravitz or Dr. Bombay room, for instance. Innkeepers Inez and Kathleen have clearly had a great time developing this whimsical property, and their enthusiasm is apparent, from the festive decor to the delicious breakfasts their staff serves each morning.

Clientele: Mixed gay/straight. <www.seawitchmanor.com>

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