

Stylish boutique hotels are elevating the Berkshires

A string of elegant properties connects the beautiful Berkshires with the historic Hudson Valley

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When Ben Svenson’s father was a boy, his family would take the same vacation every summer, driving west out of [Boston](#) and taking the Mohawk Trail through the Berkshires. “They were a very 1950s family, and that was their getaway—driving America’s first Scenic Highway,” says Svenson, lead partner at [Tourists](#) hotel, which sits on the Mohawk Trail (Route 2) and is currently open for its second summer in the postcard town of North Adams, Massachusetts, about an hour east of [Albany](#). “I feel so connected to that idea; as a Boston guy myself, I grew up knowing about the Berkshires.”



Photography by Nicole Franzen

The family road trip, the warm comfort of returning to the same mountain inn or lakeside cabin year after year—these very American traditions, perhaps considered quaint midcentury relics, have new import today, and dovetail with a string of stylish boutique hotels in the hills and valleys that connect Upstate New York with western Massachusetts. Part of the charm of the entire region is that there's more to do there now than ever before. But also, crucially, there's also the option to do less.

For Tourists, Svenson and his partners, who include John Stirratt, bassist for the Grammy-winning rock band, Wilco, renovated and added onto the midcentury Redwoods Motel—the kind of place his father's family would have stayed—creating a compound of low-slung structures detailed with lots of blond wood and oversized windows, and blending into the surrounding woods like dwellings from a modern fairy tale (complete with a suspension bridge strung across the Hoosic River). The 16-acre campus of MASS MoCa, the famed museum and creative drumbeat of the Berkshires, is just three miles away with dozens of extraordinary galleries and near-nightly outdoor performances, and the Appalachian Trail passes less than a mile up the road.



Miraval's Life in Balance Spa relaxation lounge / Photography by James Baigrie

An hour south on Route 7, in the town of Lenox, home to Edith Wharton's estate and the Berkshire Botanical Garden, the new [Miraval Berkshires Resort and Spa](#) brings its Arizona-born breed of luxury wellness to the northern mountain enclave. Upon check-in, each guest receives a cell phone "sleeping bag" as part of a digital detox program designed to recalibrate relationships with technology. Don't worry; discreet photos on hikes to Ice Glen and Monk's Pond, two activities in an exhaustive menu of all-inclusive programming, are permissible. Just keep the Instagramming to your cottage—though the Life in Balance Spa's relaxation lounge, with its floating fireplace and skylight views of the dusky hills, is so, well, relaxing, you might want to sleep there.



Image courtesy of The Maker

From Lenox, it's just a few miles west over the border into New York to enter the resplendent and resurgent Hudson Valley. Drive through Harvey Mountain and Bebe Hill State Forests to reach the town of Ghent and the Hudson-Chatham Winery, where you can make a pitstop for tastings of old-vine baco noir and bourbon barrel-aged fino "sherry" with the resident French bulldog, Gracie. While in town, pick up a loaf of sourdough and jar of house-made strawberry-marigold or blueberry-rose jam at Bartlett House, which Lev Glazman and Alina Roytberg of natural beauty brand, Fresh, and hospitality veteran Damien Janowicz opened four years ago at the height of Hudson Valley fever. The trio's newest project, opened this month, is [The Maker](#) hotel in the historic riverfront town of Hudson, the first city chartered in the U.S. after the Revolution, and a former whaling port. The property, spread between a 19th-century carriage house, Greek Revival building, and Georgian mansion is walking distance to the River and home to 11 studios, suites and bedrooms featuring both one-of-a-kind vintage pieces and the works of Hudson Valley craftspeople.

The region is certainly more sophisticated than it was when Svenson's father was road tripping to the mountains, but it also offers a slower pace and simple pleasures. "Many of us are displaced in different realms of our lives right now," Svenson says, but he sees a silver lining. "To be displaced is to reconsider—*Ahh, right, I know what matters in the summer, hanging out with my family on a body of water.*"