



Feature Story

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Sweet dreams, Springs' style!

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Be it business or pleasure, a romantic getaway or an unconventional adventure, Colorado Springs offers unique bed and breakfasts to fit every taste and to cater to every whim. The warm, intimate environment created by the bed and breakfast tradition has tourists and residents alike seeking a new venue for relaxing with their loved ones, romancing their partners or taking a break from the 8-to-5 work world of computers and cubicles. Below, a glimpse at three local bed and breakfasts that can accommodate even the most discriminating guests.

Rockledge Country Inn

Passing through the gates off El Paso Boulevard in Manitou Springs, a narrow dirt road greets visitors and winds its way up the hill. At the top of the hill, a main house constructed of greenstone and pebblestone welcomes guests looking to get away from it all. And that's just how innkeepers and owners Hartman and Nancy Smith want it.

"We've had so many guests comment that they feel like they're driving into a different time and place, and that's the way it should feel," Nancy says. "Rockledge is designed as a romantic getaway. The atmosphere here is peaceful and serene."

One additional adjective might include breathtaking. Rockledge Country Inn is nestled in 3.5 acres of mountains overlooking Manitou Springs. The land is sacred to the Ute Indians, who considered the springs in Manitou and the rock formations in the Garden of the Gods to offer peace, beauty and healing. The inn touts its "world-class view of Pikes Peak," and one step onto the patio makes a believer of even the harshest skeptic.

Rockledge was built in 1912 for Edward H. Heath, a millionaire who moved to Manitou Springs from Kansas because his son had tuberculosis. The local environment was thought to help patients with lung ailments. The family lived at Rockledge until 1927 when the property was acquired by Miles Frank and Pansy Yount; in six years the couple expanded the grounds to 15 acres. Their only daughter married and lived at Rockledge with her family until 1968.

After 1968 Rockledge experienced a number of owners, and portions of the estate were subdivided for residential development. After the Manitou Springs City Council passed a proposal to turn the residence into a country inn, the Smiths acquired Rockledge in March 1997 and opened the inn in June 1997.

The couple moved to Colorado Springs in 1985. They are chocolatiers and the owners of four Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factories in Colorado Springs, Pueblo and Castle Rock. Owning a bed and breakfast was the fulfillment of a dream for the Smiths.

"During our travels throughout the United States and Europe, we had the opportunity to do lots of research into bed and breakfasts," Nancy says. "We were looking for a business we could operate together, and running an inn seemed like a logical choice."



Each of the four luxury suites in Rockledge has a distinctive color and theme. While all suites include a sitting room, a fireplace and a king-size featherbed, two of the rooms include two-person jetted tubs. Robes, slippers and “tuck-in” service with a gift are also a part of the experience, along with a multi-course breakfast each morning. Complimentary cocktails and hors d’oeuvres are served each afternoon, and freshly baked cookies and chocolates are always available.

Nancy points out that Rockledge’s ambiance is not only luxurious, but casual and restful as well.

“Rockledge is an upscale inn that fills a certain niche,” she says. “Guests are generally as comfortable in their jeans as they are in their best clothes. We like to pamper our guests, but we also offer them their solitude.”

And a stroll through the living room, solarium, patio and hot tub area lends itself well to discovering the solitude required for relaxation and refreshment. The pampering is simply the icing on the cake.

Suites at Rockledge Country Inn range from \$195 to \$250 per night. For more information call (719) 685-4515 or visit www.rockledgeinn.com. Room reservations are recommended.

The Hearthstone Inn

Located on North Cascade, The Hearthstone Inn provides a refreshing moment away from the hustle and bustle of the downtown business district. According to innkeeper David Oxenhandler, the inn carries the title for being the “Oldest and Largest Bed and Breakfast in Colorado.” Visitors from around the world find their way to the inn, and the inn’s restaurant has locals making reservations to partake of the unique ambiance and cuisine.

Constructed in 1885, the Hearthstone has a rich history. One of the buildings was originally a private residence and the childhood home of Alice Bemis Taylor, a patron of the arts and many other causes. Her generous contributions led to the building of the Fine Arts Center’s Bemis School of Art. The family moved to Colorado Springs in 1882 to help Alice’s mother recover from a lung ailment.

In 1977 the Bemis house, which had previously been converted to an apartment house, was transformed into a bed and breakfast by Dot Williams and Ruth Williams, considered by many to be pioneers in the industry. The co-owners managed the business until 1999 when David and Nancy Oxenhandler purchased the property and continued running the inn. The Oxenhandlers moved to the Springs from New England in 1986.

“We toyed with the idea of running a bed and breakfast when we retired, then we realized it was way too much work for a retired couple,” David says. He previously served as the Chief Financial Officer for Colorado Technical University and was seeking a new position, and Nancy worked for the City of Colorado Springs when they learned the inn was being sold. Six months later, they found themselves innkeepers/proprietors for the first time in their lives.

According to Nancy, the couple’s vision is to establish The Hearthstone Inn as a “downtown landmark. We want to offer an intimate atmosphere and customized service for guests whether



they're here for a business meeting, an overnight stay or a delicious meal."

David refers to the inn as "a boutique level hotel and a full-service inn for small venue meetings." Those meetings include weddings, receptions, office retreats and day-long seminars in the conference room, which can seat up to 65. In the spirit of the Bemis family's community contributions, the inn waives conference room charges for non-profit organizations, school districts, military groups and religious groups.

One welcome addition to the couple's new management was the opening of the restaurant. The couple invested heavily in upgrading the kitchen and invited Executive Chef Marcel Chene Le Francais, formerly of The Swiss Chalet and Le Creperie, to join them in their venture. The chef began serving breakfast for guests, and now offers an extraordinary menu in the restaurant three times a day.

"All dressings, soups and sauces are made from scratch in-house," David says. "Marcel's strengths lie in traditional French and continental cuisine — his family ran a small hotel in Paris. He understands the importance of the details in meal preparation and presentation."

In the future David and Nancy plan to increase the technological amenities offered to business travelers while maintaining personalized service for all their guests. Each of the inn's 25 rooms is unique in color and theme; some rooms include fireplaces and private porches.

The Hearthstone Inn provides casual, Victorian elegance for vacationers, tourists and business travelers. Under new management, the inn is quickly fulfilling its owners' vision of becoming a downtown landmark.

Room rates range from \$69 to \$199 and include a full gourmet breakfast every morning. For more information, call (719) 473-4413 or visit www.hearthstoneinn.com. Room and restaurant reservations are recommended.

The Lion and the Rose

*"Tall castle walls and stately halls of ornate gilded splendor,
Hear rhapsodies of fantasies that ivory keys surrender.
Candlelight and crystals bright grace rosewood in the parlor,
Statuettes dance pirouettes past knights in shining armor.
So linger here when evening's near and a mountain sunset glows.
A stolen kiss, a night of bliss at The Lion and The Rose."*

— A poem penned by a guest at The Lion and The Rose Castle

So begins the journey into The Lion and The Rose Castle, a luxury bed and breakfast located near Woodland Park on 20 mountaintop acres adjacent to Pike National Forest. The castle steps back into time as innkeepers Eric and Nancy Glanzer assist their guests in "recapturing Camelot and a bygone era of nobility, refinement and elegance."

The name of the castle, "The Lion and The Rose," was selected to reflect the couple's vision of romance and elegance, as denoted by "The Rose," while noting their affection for animals, particularly felines. And the castle itself is just that: a castle.



“We’ve always been fascinated with castles from our European travels,” Eric says. “We would visit and stay overnight in them. While others may visit museums, we visit castles.

“During our eighth trip to Europe, we stayed at the Ashford Castle in Ireland,” he continues. “The Ashford is a 13th-century castle that has been modernized into an 82-room bed and breakfast. It includes heated towel bars and Jacuzzis. We were impressed and inspired.”

In 1991 the couple began taking time from their schedules to research the external styles and architecture of castles. Eric is an emergency room physician, and Nancy is an active participant in cat rescue and animal welfare. The couple examined every facet from the turrets and minarets to the crenellations atop the castle.

As collectors of antiques, the Glanzers wanted to establish an elegantly furnished castle for guests to participate in their own fairy tales from the moment they enter — fairy tales complete with crystal chandeliers, a gilded fireplace and magnificent furniture. They took liberties with one area of the exterior, however. They softened up the entrance with a 15-foot waterfall instead of an ominous moat. Additionally, the castle is in such a remote location that a detailed map is sent only after reservations are made.

The couple opened the inn in 1997 with a clear vision for their unique bed and breakfast.

“We wanted to provide guests with the ambiance, elegance, solitude and romance of Europe without the travel,” Eric says. “The Lion and The Rose Castle is an elegant getaway designed for special occasions.”

The Lion and The Rose Castle’s enchanting atmosphere has guests visiting from all over the world. The castle is home to romantic, magical dreams where guests can live happily ever after.

The two rooms available for overnight stays range from \$250 to \$275 and include a four-course breakfast each morning. For more information call (719) 687-9745 or visit www.lionrosecastle.com. Reservations are recommended.

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