

THE LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE OF THE CAROLINAS

MAY | JUNE 2011

CHARLOTTE LIVING



\$5.95 charlotteliving.com

[editorial]



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THE UMSTEAD

Absolutely Outstanding

TEXT BY CHARLES JENKIN

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SPRINGTIME IN CHARLOTTE, AND ALL OF NORTH CAROLINA, is a magnificently beautiful season. The days grow warmer, and our desire grows stronger to get away for a weekend to relax and rejuvenate. That includes enjoying the great outdoors. I have just the destination that will have you hearing Tony Bennett in the background singing "... oh, the good life."

Reception, and to the other is the Concierge, who will cheerfully be of assistance in any way possible, with a positive 'absolutely.' By the way, the luggage cart will arrive at your room via a service elevator, and the bell person will show how everything in the room works to be sure that you are completely set.

Absolutely. It is a word that you will undoubtedly

hear more than once. It has become one of my favorite words. Absolutely. I first heard it while checking in as I asked for a small refrigerator in our room; she enthusiastically responded 'absolutely.' She asked if I needed a wake-up call and which newspapers I preferred to receive in the morning. I stated my preference, and the reply was a gracious 'absolutely.' I



In this case, the best life; it just doesn't get any better. The Umstead Hotel and Spa in Cary received the coveted AAA 5 Diamond Award, and Forbes has also bestowed 5 Stars upon this dreamy oasis. I'll tell you why.

Barely three hours from Charlotte on the eastern edge of Raleigh, the Umstead is just off I-40 in Cary. As you drive up to the large overhang, a bell person or two will open your doors and greet you with a warm welcome. They will take your luggage from the vehicle and bring it to your room as you enter the lobby to check in. Don't even think about putting a hand on the two massive sets of glass entry doors. There are two or three people ready to help each time you enter and leave through the main lobby. I know, you already want to live here.

The lobby and sitting areas are richly appointed with artwork that kisses the eyes with its beauty. Who wouldn't want to live here, and you haven't even checked in. To one side is the



heard that music-to-my-ears response on a few more occasions, from the time we checked in on Friday until we drove off on Sunday.

Do you want to talk about very spacious guest rooms with the highest quality furnishings and luxurious bedding? Soft oversized bath towels and deluxe soaps and shampoos? In the all marble bath there's a deep soaking tub and a large shower with a rainwater showerhead; both have hand-held shower attachments as well. Let's add dimmer switches on lighting in the bathroom and bedside and a very large high quality flat screen TV on a swivel. Each room has a live plant, just as they are found throughout the property. Not fake plants. You've got to love it. Be sure to get a room with a balcony overlooking the lake.

Ah, the lake. You see, behind the hotel, past the pool and beyond the manicured lawns begging for the next wedding, is the lake. Surrounded by trees and a walking path, well lit at night, you can

Simply Exquisite.

take a leisurely stroll for what feels like just the right length. With beautifully maintained natural landscaping and a fountain to one side, there are benches and tables where you can just relax and take in the amazing magnificence.

From your balcony, you look down and across the lake, as picturesque as an Audubon framed masterpiece. The serenity fades away all of life's concerns and reminds you of the sheer beauty of nature, along with an appreciation for being enveloped in such plush surroundings. Sit in the padded chairs on your balcony, take in the lake and the sky and just sigh.

In case you need another reason to stay at the Umstead, think Spa. Like the rest of the hotel, the spa is richly appointed and furnished with every conceivable amenity and service. Separate men's and

treatment is immeasurable. Do they totally pamper you and make you feel fantastic? Absolutely.

Now that you have indulged yourself at the spa, it's time to go back to your room and relax. You want to be ready for a cocktail in the lobby bar followed by dinner at Herons. You did make reservations, I hope. The restaurant is fine dining in high demand from hotel guests as well as others in the area. You'll find guests at the bar and in the lounge throughout the evening, taking in the live piano music and enjoying each other's company in a perfectly relaxed setting.

Heron's restaurant is a truly gourmet dining destination in its own right; that much nicer when your room is just upstairs. Aesthetically very pleasing, of course; rich woods and an etched-glass framed open kitchen. Immaculately dressed, professional cour-

tesy, attention to detail, warm personality, a strong attitude of gratitude towards each guest, tremendous knowledge of the menu and wines, and always a smile. That's the serving staff at Herons.

The menu at Herons is a gourmand's delight of the freshest, locally available highest premium ingredients, expertly and artfully prepared. Each dish presented is an absolute culinary masterpiece. Executive Chef Scott Crawford and Chef de Cuisine Steven Greene, along with their staff, are very gifted and dedicated to their craft. You can see it and taste it with every bite.

Just to whet your appetite, consider these selections: Buttered Maine Lobster with sun chokes, poached white asparagus, rhubarb and hazelnut brown butter; Cucumber Gazpacho with marinated blue crab, com-



women's areas include private lockers with robes, showers that are pre-set with bath mats, towels and washcloths. Each gender has their own dry sauna, steam sauna and whirlpool hot tub. Towels are so strategically placed so you don't even have to think about it. There are his and her lounges with cucumber water, assorted dry fruits and mixed nuts. Additionally, there is an outdoor meditation courtyard and a co-ed lounge to meet up with your spouse or friends before or after your massage.

Be sure to take advantage of the highly trained staff and get a massage. They offer all types of spa treatments, including a couple's massage, which I highly recommend. It's an opportunity for you both to experience the time together in the same room. Two therapists perform their magic and melt away any stress the sauna and whirlpool didn't discard. The value of the inner peace achieved by a wonderful spa and massage



pressed honeydew, mint, radish and Meyer lemon; and Rib-eye of Natural Beef with Vidalia onion confit, Yukon potato, chanterelles, asparagus and sherry. The rib-eye is deconstructed to remove extra fat and then tied back into two rectangles of the best beef you can taste. From the fresh made apricot and goat cheese scones to the pastry chef's ultimate creations for dessert, along with an extensive wine list, everything at Herons is simply exquisite.

The Umstead Hotel and Spa is so much more than an upscale property. It's that elusive and wonderful combination of the ultimate in service and a passionate attention to detail combined with the luxury and finer appointments of gorgeous guest rooms, the picture postcard lake, the peaceful and inviting pool area, an amazing spa and the finest of dining at Herons. It all begs the question, will I return to the Umstead as soon and as often as possible? Absolutely! *

More information available at theumstead.com.