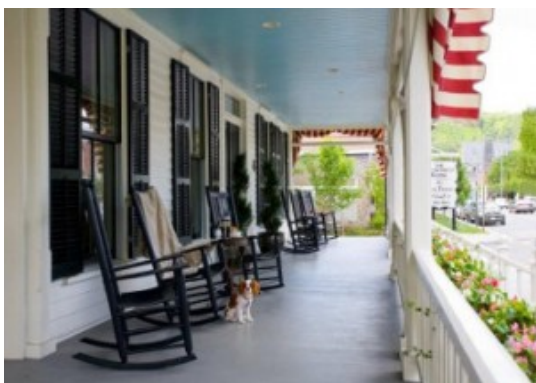




WEEKEND JAUNT

Milford: A Different Kind of Poconos

by Robert DiGiacomo • October 23, 2009 • 1 Comment



Hotel Fauchere

The cheese doesn't just stand alone in the Poconos. It's there in abundance — the motels with the heartshaped tubs, flashy billboards for the area's "attractions" and the ski areas overflowing with hotdogging teens— all threatening to override any appreciation of the remaining unspoiled landscape. At the same time, there is another side emerging in [Milford](#), a small town on the Delaware River in northeastern Pennsylvania that offers a more civilized Poconos experience. There, a revival is in full swing that will go a long way toward making you forget the cheese factor.

My country weekend HQ was the [Hotel Fauchere](#), a stately Italianate grand dame holding court on Broad Street, the town's main drag. The circa 1882 building was a wreck

when entrepreneur Sean Strub acquired it in the spring of 2001. Five years later, after a careful restoration, the former New Yorker reopened the Fauchere as a 16-room boutique hotel, pairing its grand period charm with modern-day, in-room bells and whistles such as flatscreen TVs, marble-lined bathrooms, Frette linens and Kiehl's bath products. Now part of the [Relais & Chateaux](#) collection, the property also includes a fine-dining restaurant, a lively bar, its own patisserie and an affiliated day spa.

Still, one swank hotel does not a destination make. Milford, which is about 90 minutes' drive from Manhattan, also has history on its side, as well as good shopping and easy access to the [Delaware River Water Gap National Recreation Area](#).

As the seat of Pike County, the town has long commanded a certain level of local importance. In the 19th century, its well-to-do denizens commissioned a who's who of American architects (notably Richard Morris Hunt, Calvert Vaux and McKim, Mead & White) to build their homes and major public buildings. Although local fortunes have

waxed and waned since, many of the buildings are intact in Milford's nationally registered historic district, which makes for a pleasant stroll.

Perhaps most impressive of Milford's historic homes is [Grey Towers](#), the estate of native son Gifford Pinchot, a two-term Pennsylvania governor who palled around with Teddy Roosevelt and was the first head of the U.S. Forest Service. The property, which includes a rambling stone mansion and 102 acres, is now a national historic site. The house is open for tours from May through November (and by appointment during the off season) and offers special holiday events in December; its manicured gardens and unspoiled parkland, are open year-round.

But Milford's most important claim to fame — and one that surprisingly connects this small town to one of the nation's greatest tragedies — can be found at [The Columns](#), a museum operated by the Pike County Historical Society. Prominently displayed among its somewhat musty collection of old photographs and donated bric a brac, is an American flag that was said to be hanging in Ford's Theatre the night President Abraham Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth on April 14, 1865.

After Lincoln was wounded, the stage manager, Thomas Gourlay, a Milford native, ripped the flag down and used it to cradle the president's head. Later, he passed on the flag to his daughter, Jeannie Gourlay, who was a performer in the fateful production of "Our American Cousin." In 1954, the flag was donated to the historical society. With the vestiges of bloodstains still in evidence, the flag offers a startling link to this still potent chapter in our history.

Feeling just a little creeped out by this "CSI" moment, my partner and I were happy to return to the sunshine and take a short drive to some of the Delaware Water Gap's waterfalls, including Dingmans and Raymondskill, each of which plunges down into a ravine from a height of more than 100 feet, for an invigorating walk-about.

However, if your weekend "goal" is do as little structured as possible, that's easily accommodated, too. Broad Street's brick-lined sidewalks, with several blocks of galleries and shops, are good for a wander. Around town, more retail awaits in the converted buildings of the Old Lumberyard and The Upper Mill — testimony all to Milford's growing appeal as a regular weekend retreat for New Yorkers and others.

Ready to rest before dinner? Milford is compact enough that you'll be hard-pressed to end up more than an easy walk or quick drive from naptime or a relaxing soak in the tub. And I can promise — it won't be heartshaped.



Tags: [DiGiacomo](#) [U.S.](#)

[← Philadelphia: Chestnut Hill Takes The Cake](#)