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By Mandy Flynn

B&Bs Abound! *Providing a Home Away From Home*

There are drive up motels and multi-floor hotels. Camp sites and cabins and luxury resorts. Hundreds of miles from home or just for a change of scenery, travelers have a multitude of choices as to where they can lay their heads at night. Yet according to studies by leading travel magazines, more and more people are flocking to homes away from home — bed and breakfast inns (also known as B&Bs). It's a comfort enjoyed by more than 50 million guests each year in more than 28,000 bed and breakfasts across the United States, and countless others worldwide.



Plains Historic Inn ▲

"It's not just a place to sleep, it's an experience," says Jan Williams of the appeal of the bed and breakfast over a traditional motel or hotel. As manager of the Plains Historic Inn, one of a handful of bed and breakfasts operated in the area, she has welcomed guests from around the world to the Inn's seven period suites, authentically furnished from the 1920s to the 1980s. "After all this time, I have never taken anyone to their room for the first time and had them find what they expected. It's a unique, warm experience that leaves people feeling like they have made friends, sometimes ones that are everlasting."

Whether a historic home built in the mid 1800s or renovated rooms overlooking Main Street, the appeal of the bed and breakfast has held true through the ages, first introduced in the United States long before traditional hotels and motels when homeowners would offer rooms in their homes for weary travelers passing through town. The price and the amenities may have changed, but the concept remains the same — to provide guests a level of comfort and quiet attention to detail that makes them feel at home.



Americus Garden Inn

It took Kim and Susan Egelseer years of scouring the country searching for what they called the perfect place to live before they settled on Americus and became innkeepers of the Americus Garden Inn eight years ago. "We decided to give up our other careers and devote 100 percent of our money and time to making people happy." She believes it takes two kinds of people to make the perfect innkeeper.

"It's what makes my husband and me a matched set," she says. "He is the business-savvy one, takes care of the numbers and the finances. I am the one with the soft touch, like folding the towels in a special way, and baking. And we both love people. It works for us."

It works for their guests, as well.

"Some people come every year, either visiting family members or just passing through," Egelseer says. And she never tires of introducing the 1847 Inn and its eight guest rooms, located at Americus' historic Rees Park, to newcomers.



Traveler's Rest ▲

Like the Egelseers, Adele Goodman with the Traveler's Rest in Montezuma has grown accustomed to seeing the same friendly faces year in and year out. Sixty percent of her business is return business.

"Not just friends, many are like my family," she says of the guests who come to stay in her 1898 Victorian home featuring three themed guest rooms and a carriage house. Goodman chose to theme two rooms the Civil War Room and the Captain's Quarters for the inn's proximity to Andersonville National Historic Site, and the Garden Room as a nod to the gardens surrounding the home and its closeness to the American Camellia Society in nearby Marshallville. The Carriage House's light African theme is a nod to her South African roots.



A Place Away ▲

The only bed and breakfast located in the Civil War village of Andersonville and a stone's throw from the Andersonville National Historic Site, is, itself, a part of local history. The two-room cottage that makes up A Place Away Bed and Breakfast was originally built in the early 1920s as the residence of the local school's principal and his family. The schoolhouse, located across the street from the cottage, is now the home of innkeeper Peggy Sheppard.

"I would call it laid back, country living," says Sheppard of the small bed and breakfast she has operated for seven years. The well-known history buff says it delights her to see guests who return time and time again.

"They say it's quiet and cozy and comfy," she says. "They're all such nice people."



1906 Pathway Inn ▲

Like the Plains Historic Inn, the 1906 Pathway Inn in Americus features themed rooms, including the Carter Room, the Rosalynn Room, the Lindbergh Room, the Bell Room, the Roosevelt Room and the Presidential Room. They also have a Lake View Cottage just a short distance from the main house, located on South Lee Street.

All of the area bed and breakfasts are fortunate to have two National Historic Sites — the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site in Plains and Andersonville National Historic Site in Andersonville — within easy driving distance, both popular day visits for many guests. Other popular attractions include Habitat for Humanity in Americus, Georgia Fair Grounds and Agricenter in Perry, and the simple pleasure of antiquing throughout south Georgia's small towns.

"Many of our guests are enamored with Plains and its small-town charm," says Williams, who assures each room at the Plains Historic Inn stays true to its era in its furnishings and little extras. "They can't believe when they unexpectedly run into President or Mrs. Carter on the street, and practically every guest talks about how friendly everyone they meet is. It really makes you feel good to see people enjoying themselves and truly having a unique time. That's what keeps them coming back year after year, and telling their friends."

Innkeepers and managers agree that not all of their guests have traveled long distances for a night's stay. Some come from just down the road.

"We recently had a couple from Americus who came to stay with us," says Egelseer. "They couldn't afford or take time to go farther away on a larger vacation, but they wanted to get away from it all, away from home, for a little while. At a bed and breakfast, you can feel like you're a world away, even if you're a few miles from home."

Jessica and Harold Dean admit they were skeptical at first about staying in a traditional bed and breakfast. "We heard horror stories from friends who stayed in them years ago and had to share bathrooms with other guests. Not how we wanted to spend our vacation," Jessica Dean says. But an overnight stay at a bed and breakfast in Alabama not long ago changed their minds. Each room had its own in-suite bath, with amenities and bedding that could be found "in any fancy hotel," she says. "It was fabulous. We will definitely stay in bed and breakfasts as often as we can when we travel."

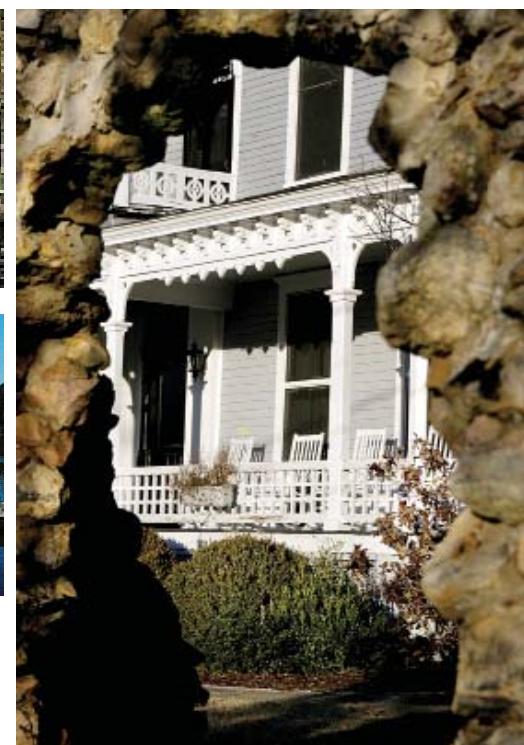
The beds are comfortable and warm, but it's another part of the popular overnight-stay alternative that appeals to many: Menus including muffins, eggs, fresh fruit, grits, homemade breads, ham. "It's fun to bake and cook for the guests," says Goodman, who also offers a full-course dinner and sack lunches for day trips.

While bed and breakfasts share many commonalities, it's important to know that they do have their differences. Some bed and breakfasts don't allow small children, while others do. Some even allow pets. Most restrict smoking except in designated areas. Prices range locally from about \$75 to \$160 per night.

"It's important to go to their website and see what they allow and what they don't," suggests Dean. "That way, you won't be surprised and you can enjoy your stay."

Making sure guests enjoy their stays have led the local bed and breakfasts to be recognized by numerous national and international bed and breakfast and travel organizations. And potential guests can always check websites such as www.bedandbreakfast.com and www.tripadvisor.com to view information, comments and ratings for various inns.

Learn more about these B&Bs by visiting their websites: www.americusgardeninn.com, www.plainsinn.net, www.1906pathwayinn.com, www.travelersrestbb.com



Above: Lakeview Cottage of 1906 Pathway Inn; Right: View from the garden of Americus Garden Inn; Below: 1970s room at Plain's Historic Inn






**Plains
Community
Center**

Plains Historic Inn & Antique Mall

The Plains Community Center is now accepting reservations for 2011. This charming, historic venue is perfect for weddings, receptions, banquets, parties, etc.

- 2,000+ sq. ft. hall
- Catering kitchen
- Seats 200+
- Heated and cooled
- Lighted with dimmers
- Courtyard with lights
- Exceptional value:
\$150 event rental
\$200 rental with kitchen

The Historic Inn boasts seven rooms, each depicting a decade in Pres. Jimmy Carter's life. Each room has a separate bath and sitting area.

Memorize this ad and receive 10% OFF your stay at the Inn. Good thru 2011.

The Antique Mall has over 20 booths and cases and is open 7 days a week.



(229) 824-4517 • pinn@sowega.net • 106 Main Street • Plains