



INN AT BAY HARBOR

The architecture of the Inn at Bay Harbor near Petoskey, Mich., recalls the elegance of the 19th century, but it was built in 1998 and is part of Marriott's Autograph Collection.

# 3 winter escapes in Midwest

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Winter days are dark and cold, but that's no excuse to hibernate. Embrace the season — and that special someone — by spending a little time tucked away in Midwest lodgings known to be warm and welcoming to couples. (P.S. Valentine's Day is fast approaching.)

Here are three places to consider, along with suggestions for nearby winter pastimes if you choose to tear yourselves away from your cozy nest.

## West Baden Springs Hotel

Jaw-dropping: That's the experience when you first enter the atrium of this four-diamond resort tucked into the hills of southern Indiana. The world's largest free-span dome when it went up at the start of the 20th century stretches 200 feet. Beneath it, guests lounge on comfortable couches and chairs, sipping cocktails and listening to live music that swells inside the expansive space. The hotel's 243 elegantly appointed guest rooms ring the atrium, some with balconies overlooking the scene below.

Guided tours delve into the property's colorful past and designation as a National Historic Landmark. In its heyday in the Roaring '20s, it attracted the rich and famous, as well as infamous characters such as Al Capone. It fell on hard times during the Depression and became a Jesuit seminary and a college before lying vacant for 13 years. Basically in ruins, it was brought back to life by a \$560 million restoration in 2005, along with its sister property, the French Lick Springs Hotel a mile away.

The West Baden property's two-level natorium with indoor pool and spa was reconstructed based on



KATHERINE RODEGHIER/FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Live music kicks off the cocktail hour in the atrium of the West Baden Springs Hotel.

photos of the original from the early 1900s. Book a couple's massage or "sprudel" bath in a sunken tub filled with the natural mineral water that first brought vacationers to the area in the 19th century.

The hotel's high-ceilinged main dining room, Sinclair's, takes its name from one of the hotel's early owners, as does Ballard's, a bar and restaurant with alfresco-like seating in the atrium. Try one of its signature drinks: hot cobbler and butter beer.

8538 West Baden Ave., West Baden Springs, Ind., winter rates from about \$269, 877-493-7822, [www.frenchlick.com](http://www.frenchlick.com)

**If you go out:** A free shuttle and rail trolley run to the French Lick Springs Hotel, where you can try your luck at its casino on slot machines, video poker and table games. In town, French Lick Wine & Spirits has tastings of its wines and white spirits: absinthe, aquavit, vodka, white bourbon. Tours of its on-site distillery are held on select Saturdays. [www.visitfrenchlickwestbaden.com](http://www.visitfrenchlickwestbaden.com)

## Goldmoor Inn

This castlelike inn rests regally on a bluff above the

Mississippi River in the countryside just a few miles from downtown Galena, Ill. Once a private estate, the inn sits amid 21 acres of woodlands offering just the right amount of seclusion for a romantic getaway.

Thirteen roomy suites, three cottages and two cabins each have a different decor, some sporting the style of Arthurian-era England, others resembling a French country chateau or Northwoods cabin. All come with a king-size bed, a two-person whirlpool tub, a fireplace and either a balcony or a patio. When you check in, homemade cookies will draw you to the kitchenette. Fill out the order form on the counter for a gourmet breakfast to be discreetly delivered to your nest the next morning.

You can opt to take breakfast in the Goldmoor Inn restaurant. Do reserve a place for dinner in its 38-seat dining room, a popular spot not only for guests but also for Galena residents and visitors Thursday through Monday nights. Come with friends, and try to snag reservations for the 10-seat chef's table in the kitchen. Chef Paul Richard's menu focuses on American classics, with beef Wellington as a favorite.

A menu of massages

promises pampering in the inn's spa room. Take turns loosening up with hot stone or aromatherapy massages, or book a couple's massage and unwind side by side.

9001 W. Sand Hill Road, Galena, Ill., average nightly rate about \$305, 815-777-3925, [www.goldmoor.com](http://www.goldmoor.com)

**If you go out:** Galena boasts more than a hundred shops and restaurants along Main Street. Take trolley tours past lovingly preserved 19th-century buildings and historic sites, including the home of Ulysses S. Grant. Visit northwest Illinois wineries, or head outdoors for skiing and snowboarding at Chestnut Mountain Resort, ice skating at the Nordic center at Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa and eagle watching on an Eagle Nature Foundation tour along the Mississippi Flyway. [www.visitgalena.org](http://www.visitgalena.org)

## Inn at Bay Harbor

One of the properties in Marriott's upscale Autograph Collection, the inn near the resort town of Petoskey, Mich., looks like a grand 19th-century hotel, its white exterior and red roof presiding over the Lake Michigan shoreline. But it actually dates from



GOLDMOOR INN

The classic beef Wellington entree is a staple on the menu in the dining room of the Goldmoor Inn in Galena, Ill.

1998, part of a modern development that replaced an old cement factory site with a yacht club, marina and golf courses. In winter, the inn and its surroundings turn to outdoor fun and indoor cocooning in guest rooms, suites and cottages ranging from 440 to 3,000 square feet.

The inn's recently renovated spa has a full menu of facials, massages and other treatments, including the 90-minute Ginger Glow, in which skin gets exfoliated with a ginger-eucalyptus mineral scrub, followed by a back, neck and shoulder massage with warm ginger oil and healing stones. Thursday evenings are Spa Happy Hour with a glass of sparkling wine and snacks included in any service.

Every day the main lobby warms up with afternoon tea. In the Vintage Chop-house|Wine Bar, meat and seafood entrees come with suggestions for wine pairings.

If you want to head outdoors, ask the concierge about renting snowshoes for clomping around the

grounds or ice skates to practice your spins on a rink in Petoskey.

3600 Village Harbor Drive, Bay Harbor, Mich., winter rates from about \$155, 855-811-4402, [www.innatbayharbor.com](http://www.innatbayharbor.com)

**If you go out:** Inn guests have exclusive use of the day-skier suite at sister property Boyne Mountain in Boyne Falls, Mich. Try downhill or cross-country skiing, or for airborne thrills, check out nine of the ski resort's zip lines that stay open in winter. Not keen to be outdoors? Head into the countryside to sample vintages at wineries on the Bay View Wine Trail, and indulge your inner foodie on the Petoskey Area Culinary Trail sampling preserves and salsas at American Spoon and checking out the coffees, spices, oils and vinegars at Symons General Store, housed in the oldest brick structure in Petoskey. [www.petoskeyarea.com](http://www.petoskeyarea.com)

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