



Primland, Auberge Resorts Collection Review

By [Katherine Rodeghier](#)

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It sounded childish, but I couldn't resist: "Are we there yet?"

How I rolled my eyes when my children once whined on road trips, but as we passed through the north gate of Primland, Auberge Resorts Collection, my patience — like theirs — and my curiosity were tested. Up we drove on narrow roads slicing through thick forest and wrapping around hairpin turns. The minutes ticked by: five, then eight, and 10 before the luxury main lodge came into view perched atop a summit in the Blue Ridge Mountains of southwest Virginia.

We'd had just a small taste of the vastness of Primland's 12,000-acre mountain estate. French billionaire Didier Primat began acquiring the land in the 1970s as a private retreat for his family. In the early 2000s, he decided to construct an eco-conscious resort. A golf course came first in 2006, then the lodge and clusters of luxury accommodations for guests who come to partake in a lengthy list of outdoor adventures. The resort has also won a slew of accolades. On June 1, 2021, Primland joined the Auberge Resorts Collection, furthering its notoriety as a luxury property.

The view from our guestroom in the Pinnacle Cottages made me gasp. From oversized windows and a private balcony, it overlooked Pinnacles of Dan, wooded peaks rising above the deep Dan River Gorge. Fairway Cottages overlook the golf course, as does the lodge where the most distinctive feature is a faux grain silo topped by one of the largest observatories in the East. The roof slides open for nightly stargazing through two high-powered telescopes.

Among other lodging options, 11 mountain homes sleep two–22 and three treehouses for adults only overlook a gorge from an elevation of 3,000 feet and must be accessed with a 4×4 vehicle. Guestroom rates for all types of accommodations have a wide range, depending on the time of year, availability and room type. The starting rate during peak season, beginning in May, is \$939 midweek.

The lodge serves as the focal point of the resort with a great hall, 26 guestrooms and suites, the golf pro shop, a fitness center, pool and spa offering a combination of Native American healing rituals and European spa techniques. The Schlumberger Wine Cellar with walls of wormy American chestnut salvaged from old barns is a new venue for private events. Elements, Primland's fine-dining restaurant, serves the farm-to-table cuisine of new Executive Chef Elliot Cunniff who came from New York City's Soho House. The 19th Pub has a casual food and drink menu featuring moonshine cocktails.

Elsewhere on the property, Stables Saloon has Southern cooking and live bluegrass music in Primland's former horse stables. Woodland Grill offers grab-and-go fare in the Outdoor Activities Center.

Those activities are many and varied: horseback riding, mountain biking, yoga, archery, tennis and disc golf. You can go kayaking and paddle boarding on Talbott Reservoir, hike 18 miles of private trails self-guided or led by a naturalist, and try your luck fly fishing for trout on three stocked ponds and a six-mile stretch of the Dan River. Thrill seekers take guided RTV excursions on dedicated off-roading trails. The resort organizes seasonal shooting sports, has an air rifle range and clay shooting.

Golf remains a big draw on the 18-hole Highlands, an Audubon-certified links-style course. Designed by golf-course architect Donald Steel, *Golf Digest* rated it among America's 100 greatest public courses.

The majority of Primland guests come from around the Southeast: Atlanta; Washington, D.C.; Richmond, Virginia; and cities in North and South Carolina. The recent affiliation with luxury brand Auberge Resorts Collection is expected to draw more fly-in guests. The closest international airports are in Charlotte (CLT), North Carolina, two hours away and Washington, D.C., five hours. Regional airports in Roanoke (ROA), Virginia, and Greensboro (GSO), North Carolina, are about 90 minutes away and there are two private airports within 45 minutes of the resort. A helipad lies next to the north gate just before that long, winding road through what once was a French billionaire's private estate.

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