

# Art of the Matter

By Mary Haban  
Photography by Dale Sanders

Magnificent mansions are just one of the highlights of Winter Park's Scenic Boat Tour

**C**an you hear it? That certain hum? It's on the streets of one particular bohemian city just outside Orlando. It's a beat so distinct it permeates the very core of your soul. And on any given day that's precisely what you'll encounter. That rhythm is a kind of impromptu melody, that sings within the hearts of visitors and locals alike. Though it's not audible to most, it's there. It is. Look closely and you'll see it for yourself, in the syncopated footsteps, overt skips, and even the over-zealously playful nature of the people strolling down an avenue called Park in a city named Winter Park. This colorful corridor has a style all its own: walkways dotted with sassy shops and cozy cafes, and

in the air, the most heavenly, delectable scents. Rich, dark, robust aromas waft over the crowded, art inspired streets making one wonder if it's the coffee, the international cuisine, or the best nourishment of all: food for thought.

## **A Work of Heart**

Clean lines, soaring windows, and angular shapes mark the entrance to one of the most thoughtful structures to make its debut in this creative city: The Alford Inn. Part hotel, part art gallery, this 112-room boutique property boasts an elevated pool, award-winning cuisine, lush gardens, and a roaring outdoor fire pit. The hotel has received rave

reviews since opening its doors last fall, and for good reason. At the center of this "holistic style" hotel is its mission of giving back to the very community it serves, which unlike most, is both rare and noble.

Owned by Rollins College, The Alford Inn was designed and constructed with a \$12.5-million grant from the Harold Alford Foundation. This philanthropic mantra of "giving back" rings true in what's done with the net operating income from the Inn; it's directed to a scholarship endowment fund to help students pursuing their educational dreams. Full scholarships and ample financial assistance are awarded to a number of



Warm, soft glows surround The Alfond Inn when night falls

deserving students from this hotel's proceeds. And whether or not they know it, guests are also receiving their own education — in art — as paintings, sculptures, photos and artistic creations greet them in the hallways, walkways and public spaces of the hotel.

"It's exciting when a boutique hotel like ours can serve as an extension of a fine arts museum," says Deanne Gabel, General Manager of the hotel. "The Alfond family has given Rollins College a world-class collection of important 21st-century works that we are

delighted to have on display for our guests."

Guided tours of the collection, never before on view publicly, are offered daily at 10 am and 2 pm by a Concierge trained by Barbara Alfond and Dr. Ena Heller, the Bruce A. Beal director of the Cornell Fine Arts Museum at Rollins College. The tour is free but reservations are requested.

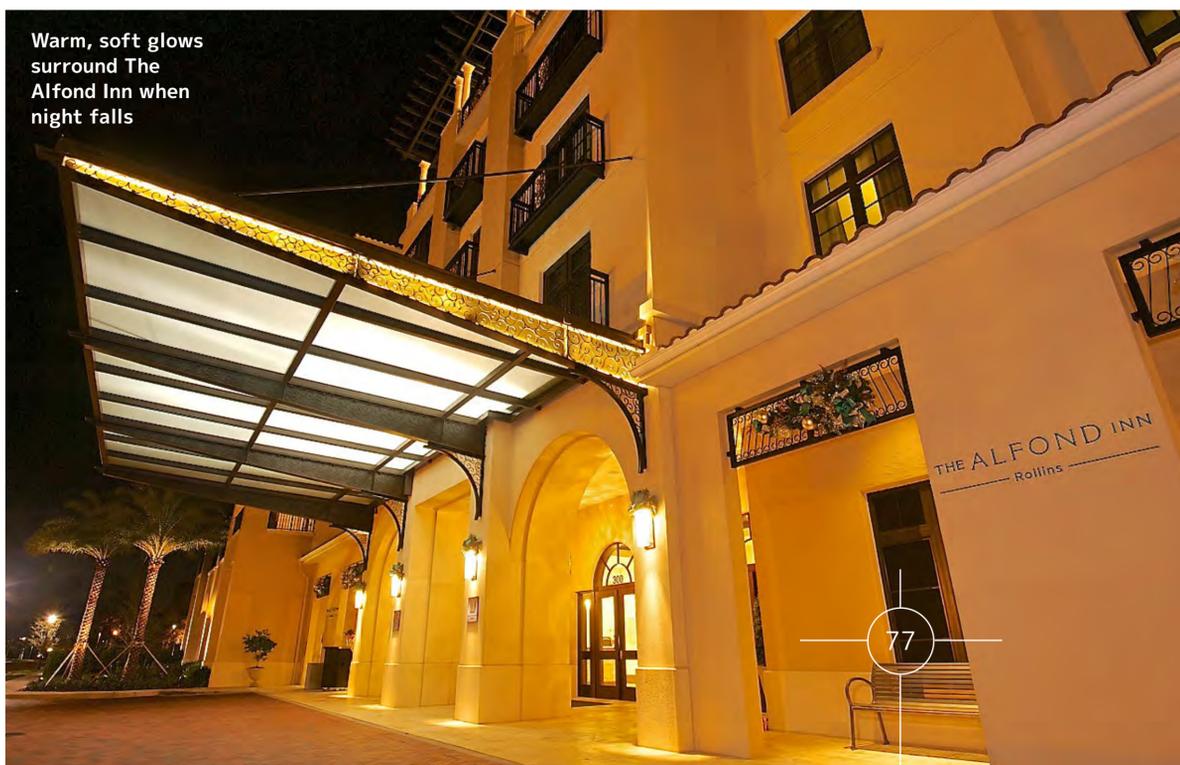
Frequent guests will also see that the collection changes every few months, with a hands-on rotation by Barbara Alfond and

curator Abigail Ross Goodman.

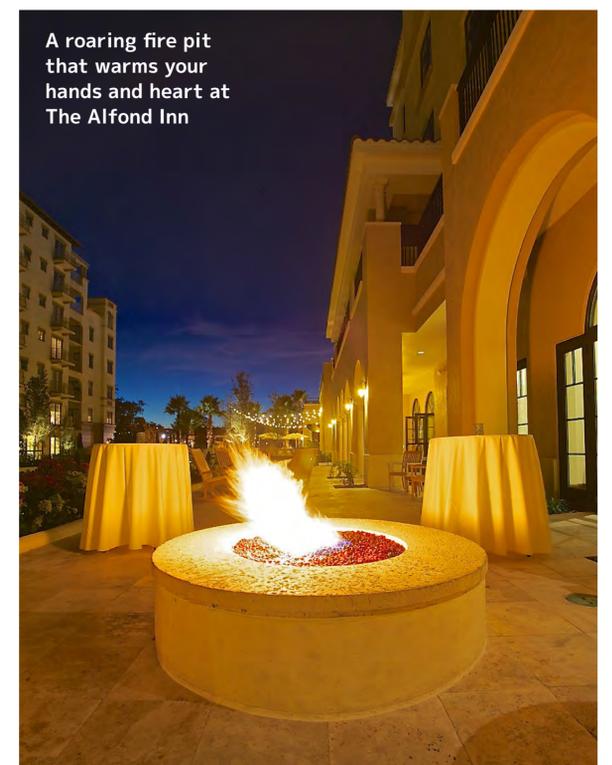
"The collection is dynamic," says Goodman, "and the rotations of artworks will keep the visitor experience ever-evolving as new connections are made between the objects on the view."

### Creative Cuisine

The thought process kicks into high gear upon entering Hamilton's Kitchen, the signature restaurant at the Alfond Inn. Named after the seventh president at Rollin's College, the



Warm, soft glows surround The Alfond Inn when night falls



A roaring fire pit that warms your hands and heart at The Alfond Inn

A palatial rooftop pool beckons guests to take a dip at The Alford Inn

It's exciting when a boutique hotel like ours can serve as an extension of a fine arts museum



Sleek, chic and oh so mod raises the guest experience to new heights at The Alford Inn.



Warm and inviting interiors envelop your senses at The Alford Inn



Impressive décor greets diners at Cocina 214 Restaurant & Bar

eatery embodies that same spirit of ingenuity and generosity the college is known for. Certain touches put in place on purpose demand your attention. Chairs of different shapes and styles surround each table. Candles, infused with olive oil and garlic clove, flicker warmly upon distressed dark wood surfaces. And the cuisine, the mouthwatering, flavorful, creatively constructed cuisine, is both revered and celebrated.

Traditional, Southern cooking intersects with modern day preparation in this spacious, open style kitchen. Dishes infused with citrus, strawberries, corn, tomatoes, beef and fresh seafood from the Gulf of Mexico pay homage the rich history of local agriculture. Produce from a variety of vendors at the farmers market that's just up the street, are thoughtfully incorporated into the kitchen's nightly recipes. The culinary team here is deliberate about food and fiercely loyal to the folks who grow the very ingredients they use. It's their passion. Cooking, to them, has always been a sort of refuge, a place to create and express. Like two beautifully built bookends, meals are approached with a comprehensive theme. Appetizers like the deconstructed oysters Rockefeller tantalize taste buds, while endings like the warm, mixed berry cobbler, topped with vanilla bean ice cream melt hearts.

From the rustic farmers tables, to the heavy serving pieces, to the warm, inviting staff, the commitment to serving locally sourced ingredients shines through in each dish. Call it informal dining with a dash of formality. Whatever it is, it keeps diners coming back again and again to experience that certain something that seems to be missing at many cookie-cutter type establishments. Soulful artistry springs eternal here.

### Wonderful Waterways

One of the best ways to get the lay of the land in Winter Park isn't by walking, biking or even driving. Located just five minutes from trendy Park Avenue is one of the most breathtaking views you'll ever find, and this ride is all about relaxation with swaying palms, lush landscapes, exquisite estates, magnificent mansions and that's just the first 20 minutes of your journey along Lake Osceola. Welcome to the Winter Park Scenic Boat Tour. This hour-long, 18-passenger pontoon boat ride won't disappoint. What it will do is provide a rich history of this cozy community, and leave you yearning to explore it.

Guided cruises take visitors through three of the seven lakes and two, narrow man-made canals on the tranquil Winter Park chain. Each ride features towering cypress trees, subtropical flowers, and that perfect piece of serenity we're all in search of. Open 364 days a year, this popular attraction is the furthest thing from a tourist trap. In fact, I'd consider it a museum on water. The historic homes, lush ferns, and curious birds are the ultimate works of art.



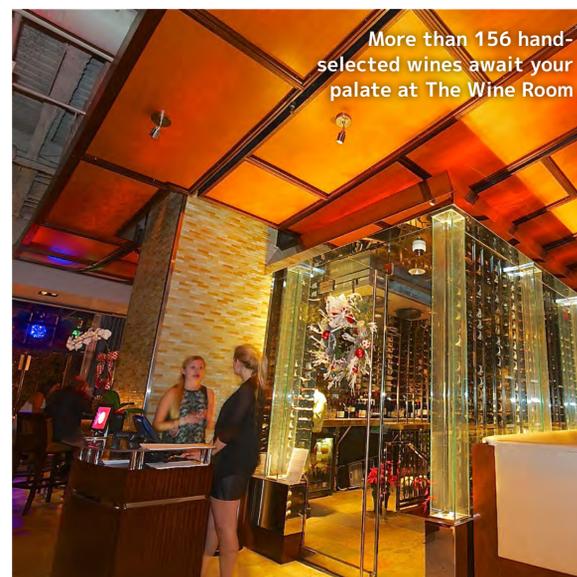
Dine in the lap of luxury at Luma on Park

From the rustic farmers tables, to the heavy serving pieces, to the warm, inviting staff, the commitment to serving locally sourced ingredients shines through in each dish

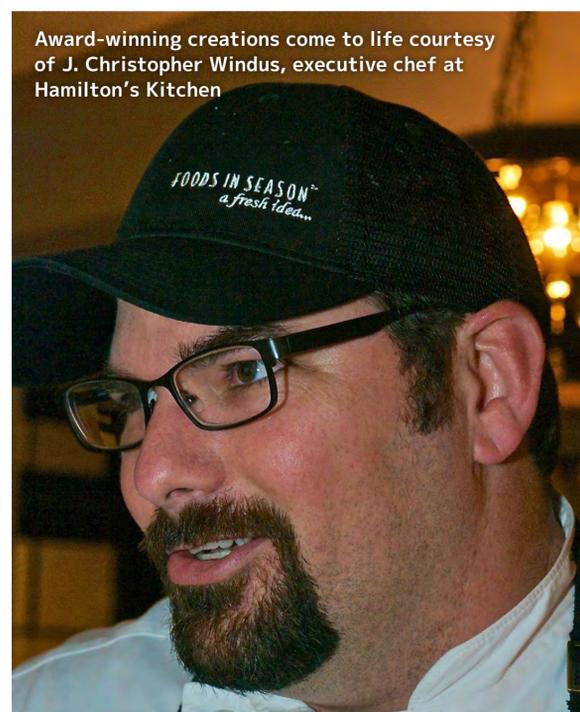
### A Worthy Walk

Slip on your favorite pair of shoes for this stroll. And make sure they're comfortable. Taking this trek is a no-brainer. Block after block of sheer, unabashed bliss awaits eager shoppers, diners, and those "just looking" for that perfect place to plop down and people watch. Park Avenue is Winter Park's version of Rodeo Drive, without all the hoopla. The vibe here is, "I'm trendy, not flashy." Sidewalks become real life billboards for nirvana. To the right are wine bars and coffee shops, across the street, unique accessories, fashionable favorites, and a nationally known museum.

As the sun begins to shift, I quickly realize time is slipping away and my need to explore the Morse Museum is outweighing all other options for the moment.



More than 156 hand-selected wines await your palate at The Wine Room



Award-winning creations come to life courtesy of J. Christopher Windus, executive chef at Hamilton's Kitchen

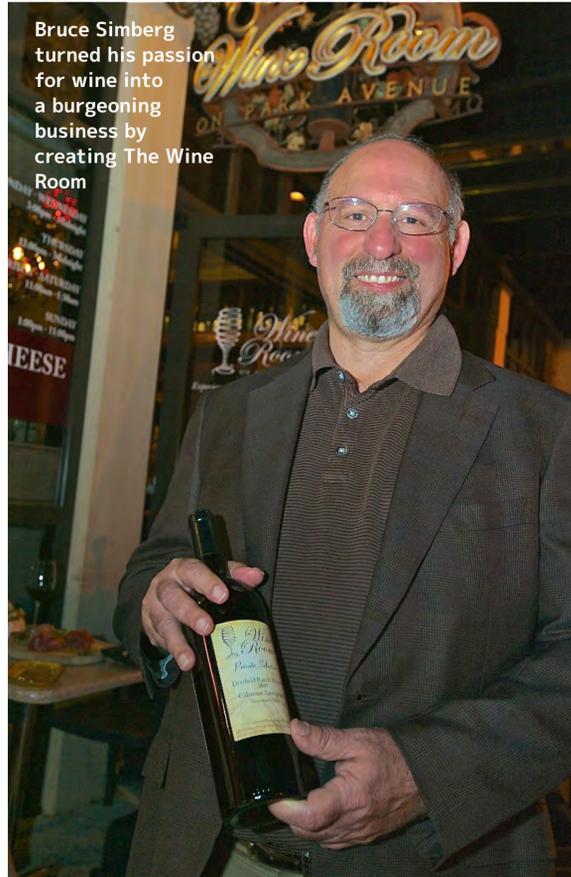


Glorious glass creations draw in the crowds at the Morse Museum

The centerpiece of the museum is the work of Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933.) Make sure you allow plenty of time to see this collection, as room after room showcases the magnificence and splendor. This collection has been referred to as, “The most comprehensive and most interesting collection of Tiffany anywhere.” In her book *The Art of Louis Tiffany*, Vivienne Couldrey described the Morse’s holdings as “The most important collection of Tiffany material in the world today.”

Just a few blocks away from the Museum, is an establishment also dedicated to the celebration of glass, or shall we say glasses. Beautiful, dainty, long-stemmed wine glasses may never make their way into any museum, but that won’t matter to the steady stream of locals and gaggles of visitors who keep this place brimming excitement nearly every night of the week. The Wine Room showcases over 156 hand-selected wines that can be sampled by 1oz, 2.5oz or 5oz pour sizes on new state-of-the-art Enomatic wine dispensing machines. All wines are available to purchase.

Grab a seat inside the chateau-styled interior, or venture downstairs to the vault to relax in a lounge-type atmosphere. If people watching is your ultimate goal, then let your thoughts take flight in the outdoor seating area. Select



Bruce Simberg turned his passion for wine into a burgeoning business by creating The Wine Room



Charcuterie paired with the best selection of reserves at The Wine Room

from an assortment of charcuterie trays complete with artisan meats and cheeses, pickled vegetables, and grain mustards. A new tapas-style menu features Mimosas and Champagnes as well as ice-cold microbrew or draft beer from the bar.

To help you narrow down your dining dilemma, here’s a trio of them you must try:

Mexican merges with modern magnificence at Cocina 214 where bold favors collide with fresh, authentic recipes in an elegant, ultra-hip setting. This contemporary Mexican kitchen and bar was created when two of the owners from Texas missed the Tex-Mex and Mexican food they had grown up eating. They wanted the same authentic, fresh and quality food here in Winter Park. Now, their favorites are part of a creative, healthy list of tasty choices on a menu complete with gluten free and vegan choices.

Fragrant aromas and Turkish music fill the air at Bosphorous Turkish Cuisine. The name, which originates from the strait that lies in the center of Istanbul and connects Europe to Asia, serves authentic Turkish cuisine in a welcoming, classy style. Crisp, white table linens, white china, crystal wine glasses greet hungry diners as they delight in tabbali, lavas, imported feta cheese, and hand chopped chicken seasoned with fresh garlic, light hot peppers, and parsley.

When a brilliant bowl of popcorn arrives at your table topped with truffle oil, Parmesan cheese, chives and truffle salt, you know something pretty amazing is about to follow. LUMA on Park has that quintessential quality of making diners feel special. From the sweeping entrance, complete with cascading wine cellar, to the luxuriously warm lighting, to food that’s prepared with such care and creativity, you aren’t sure whether to eat it or frame it, LUMA has all the star qualities it takes to shine. Under the direction of Chef Brandon McGlamery, LUMA is dedicated to using artisanal producers, sustainable purveyors, and local and organic farmers whenever possible. A stellar selection of wines by the bottle, glass and ½ glass, offers



Dessert that’s worth every calorie at Hamilton’s Kitchen

What once began as the private wine collection of owner Bruce Simberg has now become the winner of the “Best of Award of Excellence” from the Wine Spectator.

### A Diner’s Dream

Finding a great place to eat in Winter Park isn’t easy. After all, there are serious factors to consider. And depending on which type of cuisine strikes your fancy, you could find yourself in a real predicament. Which wildly popular restaurant should you try tonight? With scores of them serving up stellar tasting dishes, this decision may require a real thought process to ensue which in turn, could work up a real appetite.



Bite into sheer nirvana at Hamilton’s Kitchen



Spend an afternoon gliding through paradise on the Winter Park Scenic Boat Tour



Get up close with nature on Winter Park's Scenic Boat Tour

diners the chance to taste and try a variety of vineyards. Perfect your palate with the house-made infusions, old and new world wines, sipping spirits, or the in-depth reserve menu.

The vibe of this creative city beats a little stronger with each passing day as the love of art and design intersect with a passion for food and fashion. Perhaps that was the thought process all along. To create a community that embraced thoughtfulness. Where giving of oneself was the ultimate gift to oneself...in more ways than ever imagined.

**If you go:**

- The Alford Inn** – [www.thealfordinn.com](http://www.thealfordinn.com)
- Hamilton's Kitchen** – [www.thealfordinn.com/dining/hamiltons\\_kitchen/](http://www.thealfordinn.com/dining/hamiltons_kitchen/)
- Luma on Park** – [www.lumaonpark.com](http://www.lumaonpark.com)
- The Wine Room** – [www.thewineroomonline.com](http://www.thewineroomonline.com)
- Bosphorous Turkish Cuisine** – [www.BosphorousRestaurant.com](http://www.BosphorousRestaurant.com)
- Cocina 214** – [www.cocina214.com](http://www.cocina214.com)
- Winter Park Scenic Boat Tour** – [www.](http://www.)