



Seasonal Splendor at The Omni Grove Park Inn

By Sandra Chambers

Nestled between the Blue Ridge Mountains and Great Smoky Mountains, this 100+ year-old, AAA Four-Diamond resort hotel is known for its elegance and southern charm. While every season is spectacular at the Omni Grove Park Inn, the winter holidays kick it up a notch with special events such as the National Gingerbread House Competition, delicious holiday dining, live music and festive decorations.

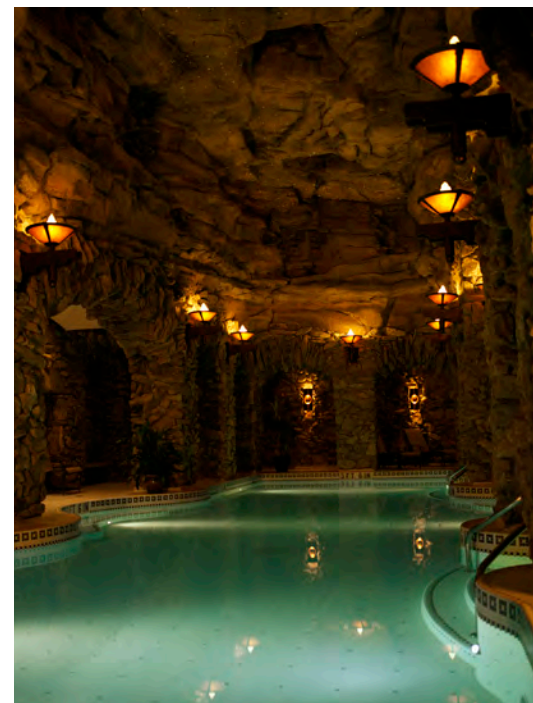
The holiday charm begins at the icicle-decorated guardhouse, followed by a driveway lined with illuminated trees. Inside, the Great

Hall is dressed in glittering seasonal colors with columns wrapped in colorful garlands and a towering magnolia Christmas tree. In addition to the main tree in the Great Hall, 80 decorated trees can be found throughout the property. Crackling 36-foot-wide stone fireplaces at both ends of the Great Hall invite visitors to grab a rocking chair and warm up with some hot chocolate or a signature cocktail.

The 23rd Annual National Gingerbread House Competition

One of the unique annual holiday displays at The Omni Grove Park Inn

includes hundreds of remarkable works of edible art from the National Gingerbread House Competition, which will be held this year on November 16, 2015. This annual event has grown over two decades and has become one of the featured holiday traditions at The Omni Grove Park Inn. The contest draws more than 200 entries from every state vying for the Grand Prize of more than \$7,500 in cash and prizes. Guests staying at The Omni Grove Park Inn, as well as the general public, can view a selection of gingerbread houses on display from November 18th through January 1st.





granite boulders from the mountains, it took 400 men, working 10-hour shifts, six days a week, to complete the construction of the Inn just three days shy of one year. The Grove Park Inn officially opened July 12, 1913, with Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, delivering the keynote address and proclaiming that the Inn "was built for the ages."

Since that time, The Grove Park Inn has hosted a long list of celebrities, inventors and ten US presidents. The distinguished guest list has included: John D. Rockefeller, Harry Houdini, Thomas Edison, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Will Rogers, William Shatner and President Barack Obama, among others.

Just before the Inn's centennial celebration in 2013, it underwent a major \$25,000,000 renovation that included a complete redesign of the Great Hall, a renovation of all guest rooms in the Vanderbilt wing and new dining outlets including the Edison, an innovative bar and restaurant focusing on local brew, handcrafted cocktails and Southern comfort food with a twist. The Grove Park Inn officially became a property of Omni Hotels & Resorts on July 1, 2013.



Other holiday specials include visits from Santa, holiday and history tours, holiday movies and The Omni Grove Park Inn's very own Employee Christmas Choir, which has been offering daily holiday carols for the past twenty years. The Holiday Chorus performs each weekday at 1 p.m. beginning December 1st.

History of The Grove Park Inn

In 1909, Edwin Wiley Grove, known as the "Father of Modern Asheville," purchased 408 acres in north Asheville, North Carolina, including what would become The Grove Park Inn's location. With only mules, wagons and ropes to haul giant

Holiday Relaxation Awaits at The Omni Grove Park Inn Spa

Rated one of the top 20 resort spas in North America by Condé Nast Traveler, the 43,000-square-foot subterranean spa at The Omni Grove Park Inn has twenty water features, including



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Surrounded by white sands, pristine waters and lush tropical flora, the resort's ambiance is as extraordinary as it is comfortable.

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numerous mineral-based pools, waterfall pools, underwater music and cavernous rock walls and arches.

The outdoor terrace whirlpool that overlooks the snow-covered mountains this time of year is almost a surreal experience. Schedule one of the spa's signature services such as the "Mountain View Massage," offered year-round in their outdoor pagoda overlooking the breathtaking Blue Ridge Mountains. Another signature treatment, "Fire, Rock, Water and Light," is a rejuvenating full body exfoliation, softening soak, healing body masque and Vichy waterfall massage. Even if you're not staying at the Inn, day passes to the spa can be purchased for weekday visits Monday through Thursday. Holidays and weekends are reserved for hotel guests only.

Exquisite Dining at The Omni Grove Park Inn

Asheville, North Carolina, is recognized for its innovative culinary scene, and restaurants at The Omni Grove Park Inn live up to that reputation. The Vue 1913 offers an American twist on European style food, while the Blue Ridge, a farm-to-table artisanal buffet overlooking the

majestic Blue Ridge Mountains, offers a Friday night Seafood Buffet, Saturday night Prime Rib Buffet and a phenomenal Sunday Brunch. The newest restaurant, the Edison, features an amazing menu of small and large plates, craft ales and tantalizing desserts. I can personally recommend their sweet soy ginger honey chicken wings, their cheese and preserves plate and their large plate of shrimp and grits. Desserts are downright decadent at the Edison. Choose from among manchego cheesecake, a chocolate lava cupcake, a chef's bucket of ice cream with local stout, chocolate ice cream, caramel drizzle and a brownie crouton, or, my recommendation: their open face apple pie with candied bacon and cinnamon ice cream.

The Grove Park Inn & Resort is truly an amazing destination any time of year, but the holidays add that special touch of glamour and childhood-like wonder that will have you returning year after year to celebrate this magical season of the year.

To learn more go to: www.omnihotels.com/hotels/asheville-grove-park.

