

inn-side story

Take advantage of off-season rates at Rockland's Berry Manor Inn, and other coastal B&Bs.
by Susan Milisa

AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, TRAVELERS have left Maine's coastal towns, trees are nearly bare, and summer cottages stand shuttered. There are no more lines at coffee shops or long waits at traffic lights on Main Street. During the colder months, some flee south, while others head for the mountains to go skiing. But there's a great late-fall excursion here in Maine: coastal B&Bs. From November through April, bed-and-breakfasts, like the historic Berry Manor Inn in Rockland, offer their highly coveted (and expensive) rooms for deeply discounted off-season prices.

Located on a narrow, tree-lined street with views of both Rockland village and the harbor, Berry Manor Inn shares the town's Residential Historic District with other well-preserved Victorian mansions. In 1898, when Charles Berry, a wealthy merchant and nephew of Civil War general Hiram Berry, built his home as a wedding present for his wife, the neighborhood sported the town's most fashionable residences of the day, as it still does. Like other influential residents, Berry wanted his home accessible to Main Street businesses, but removed from the burning limekilns on the other side of the harbor and the dusty granite quarry roads outside of town. Unlike other residents, Berry not only built a home with a bold, symmetrical design, but also painted the exterior deep burgundy and gold—not your typical sea captain's mansion.

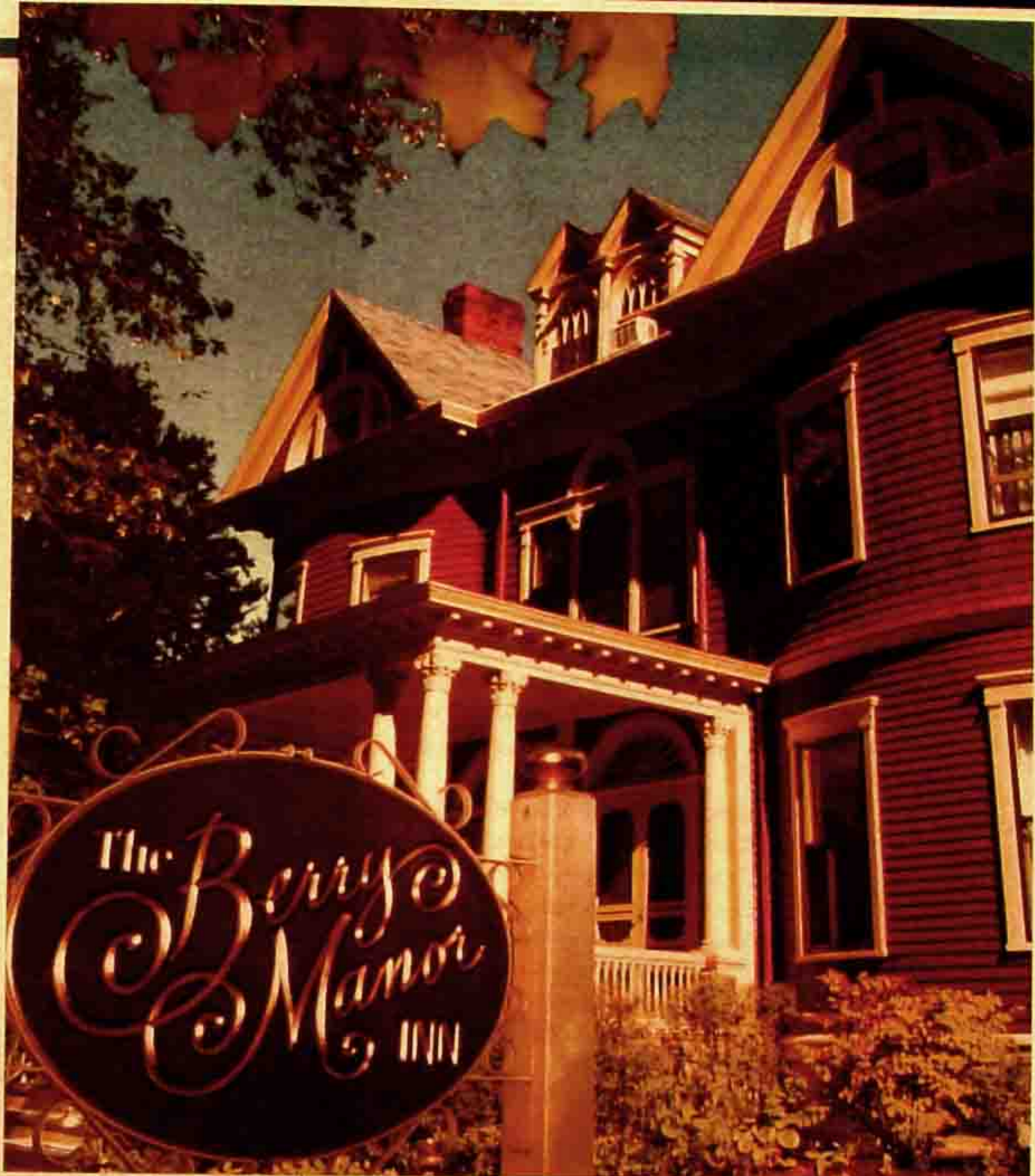
Current owners Cheryl Michaelsen and her husband, Michael LaPosta, bought the Berry a hundred years after it was built. In addition to the established bed-and-breakfast business they were looking for, the couple ended up buying a B&B that is 16th out of the neighborhood's 142 buildings on the National Registry of Historic Places. And Rockland, a booming coastal community with the attendant shops and restaurants,

is not only home to artistic strongholds like the Farnsworth Art Museum, but also home to a growing number of year-round galleries.

The Berry Manor's interior is vast, with design elements that create intimate, nearly soundproof enclaves. Perfect for people who dislike the more typical bed-and-breakfasts with atmospheres so cozy that the guests often bump into each other, the inn so successfully projects an aura of privacy that some guests think they have it all to themselves. More than a few times, Michaelsen has been asked, "Is there anyone else here?" on a day when there was no vacancy.

Architecturally, the mansion is as solid as a fortress—with corner rooms and sturdy doors, and heavily insulated floors and common walls, which also make for warmer winter stays. Carriage house rooms—making use of gables, barn doors and a cupola—are ingeniously designed to connect as suites. Each of the large guest rooms has its own private bath (another rarity among bed-and-breakfasts), and the décor and furnishings are lavish yet practical.

The Berry Manor's eclectic design also seems to encourage eclectic behavior. Some people find the spacious settings and



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diligent service comforting enough to stay in their rooms for days at a time. For those who venture outside their rooms but have no desire to leave the inn, the common areas—including the double parlors, the library, and a fully stocked guest pantry—provide plenty to do. Solitary nooks throughout the inn display nostalgic books and board games. LaPosta's toy collection is in the dining room.

Just as impressive as Berry Manor's physical presence is its brand of mid-coast hospitality and Yankee efficiency. A hands-free headset allows Michaelsen, a natural multitasker in constant motion, to take reservations while she rearranges the books or plans a breakfast menu. A well-maintained B&B requires, well, maintenance, and maintenance requires someone who knows how things tick. At Berry Manor, that's LaPosta. Like many B&Bs, Berry is a family affair—LaPosta's dad takes care of laundry and paperwork, while his mom serves breakfast, makes pies, and cleans.

During the high season, this kind of accommodation costs around \$215 a night. But now, room five, for example—the former ballroom which now comes with a whirlpool tub—goes for only \$135 a night. Or, you can spend an evening in room eight—the former nanny's room, which is decorated in calming shades of blue—for just \$85.

Now is the time to experience a B&B on Maine's coast. And, if the B&B is anything like Rockland's Berry Manor Inn, the experience will include fireplaces and thick fluffy robes on those nights unlike any the summer visitors have ever known.

Susan Milisa is a freelance writer living in Rockland.

PLAN "B"

If you can't make it to the Berry Manor Inn, there are a multitude of other options along the coast, including the three we list here.

CHILTERN INN, Bar Harbor (800-404-0114, www.chilterninn.com). Winter season: Nov. 1–Apr. 14, \$275–\$315 (up to 49% off high-season rates). AAA Four Diamond Award. This restored carriage house built in 1906 offers Old World luxury, a heated swimming pool, spa, and sauna.

THE MANOR, Castine (207-326-861, www.manor-inn.com). Winter season: Nov. 1–Mar. 30, \$85–\$110 (up to 50% off high-season rates). This Victorian Shingle-style mansion, built in 1895 by Commodore Arthur Fuller of the South Boston Yacht Club, borders a 130-acre nature preserve.

INN AT SUNRISE POINT, Camden (207-236-7716, www.sunrisepoint.com). Winter season: Dec. 1–Apr. 14, \$185–\$340 AAA Four Diamond Award. Breathtaking views of Penobscot Bay and islands from four ocean-side guest cottages and three rooms located in an intimate 1920s Shingle-style cottage.

Rates quoted are per room, per night, and include breakfast, but do not include taxes and gratuities.

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EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW to enjoy your stay at the Berry Manor Inn

WHEN TO GO Off-season rates run mid-Oct. to mid-June. Check with innkeepers for any blocked-out periods when discount rates do not apply. The Berry Manor Inn is closed Nov. 4–13, but reservations can still be made during this time.

WHAT TO DO

During the day: The Farnsworth Art Museum and Wyeth Center in Rockland (207-596-6457) showcase the works of three generations of Wyeths, 19th-century American art, and more. Nearby, the Owls Head Transportation Museum displays working motor buggies, wagons, bicycles, early airplanes, and engines, all ready to roll at a moments notice (207-594-4418). Downtown Rockland's retail stores and galleries include Archipelago (800-339-9209), offering fine crafts made by Maine's island artisans; fine art and jewelry at Harbor Square Gallery (877-594-8700); marine fine art at Art of the Sea (207-594-9396); and rooms of eclectic antiques at Antiques Marketplace (207-596-9972).

At night: Sunday evenings swing to big band sounds at the Samoset Resort (207-594-2511) in Rockport; Monday evenings catch nationally and regionally known blues acts at Time Out Pub, Rockland (207-593-9336); nightly shows at Bay View Street Cinema, Camden (207-236-8722) feature art-house, international, and mainstream films; enjoy Bay Chamber Concerts (888-707-2770) at the Rockport Opera House, and music and theatrical fare at the Camden Opera House (207-236-7963).

RATES Rooms in the mansion range from \$85 to \$135 a night during the off-season—up to 37% off high-season rates. All come with private baths and working fireplaces. Rates include multicourse breakfast and evening snacks.

HOW TO GET THERE From points south: Take I-95 to Coastal Rte. 1, exit 22. Follow Rte. 1 approximately 55 miles to Rockland. Turn left at Broadway, right onto Talbot Avenue. The Berry Manor Inn is #81 on the left. From points north: Take I-95 to Augusta, exit 30. Follow Rte. 202 east, to Rte. 9, to Rte. 17. Follow Rte. 17 approximately 42 miles to Rte. 1. In Rockland, turn right on Rte. 1, then right onto Talbot Avenue.

WHERE TO EAT The Rockland area is a mecca for restaurants catering to every taste. Stop in at the Black Bull Tavern (207-593-9060) on Main Street; make reservations to taste Amalfi's (207-596-0012) Mediterranean specialties; or try farm-fresh regional cuisine prepared by nationally acclaimed chef Melissa Kelly of Primo (207-596-0770).

CONTACT 207-596-7696; innkeepers Cheryl Michaelsen and Michael LaPosta. AAA Four Diamond Award. www.berrymanorinn.com.

