

Cooperstown: Much More Than Baseball

By Mindy J. Ginley

Cooperstown, N.Y., may be best known for baseball, but I recently discovered there is much more to experience in the area. The village has a centuries-old history of fine drink, going back well before baseball became America's pastime. Once the hops-growing capital of North America, Cooperstown now boasts breweries, wineries, a distillery and a historical cider mill, each one making world-class beverages for all to enjoy.

Rich in history, art, architecture and natural beauty, Cooperstown's key attractions include the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, the Fenimore Art Museum, the Farmers' Museum and the Glimmerglass Festival. Located an easy two-and-a-half-hour drive from western Massachusetts, Cooperstown offers something for every age and interest.

We stayed at the AAA Four Diamond Rated Otesaga Resort Hotel, located on the banks of Lake Otsego (the "Glimmerglass" of James Fenimore Cooper's novels). Selected as a member of the prestigious Historic Hotels of America by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Otesaga exudes the charm and gracious hospitality of a bygone era.

The resort hotel is a federal-style property dating from 1909. Today, the Otesaga is still owned by the original Clark family and serves as a captivating setting for exploring



Cooperstown. The elegant rooms and suites feature country-house style furnishings, and all of the modern amenities. The Otesaga is home to the 18-hole Leatherstocking Golf Course, a full-service spa, outdoor heated pool, fitness center and plenty of sports and recreational activities.

As we turned into the long winding driveway and set eyes on the magnificent hotel, we were captivated. The service we received from the minute we stepped out of the car was exceptional. Everyone was friendly and professional and went out of their way to make sure all of our needs were met.

We dined in the casual Hawkeye Bar and Grill, which features local, seasonal fare and comfort food. We started with the Welsh rarebit, which had a regional twist. The savory, cheesy beer fondue made with Ommegang Witte (a favorite local beer) and roasted mushrooms was served with charred homemade rye bread for dipping. It was delightful! After dinner, we had a cocktail at the Fire Bar on the patio, the ideal spot to enjoy some conversation and watch the sun set over Lake Otsego.

After a delicious breakfast buffet in the elegant Glimmerglass restaurant, it was time to hit the trail. The Cooperstown Beverage Trail, that is. We hired a driver to explore New York's first official cuisine trail. Kelly, our driver from Adonis-Avanti Transportation, explained that this area was once the hops-growing capital of North America. Our journey began with tastings at Bear Pond Winery, Cooperstown Brewing Company and Cooperstown Distillery. Our next stop was Brewery Ommegang for a tasty lunch of Belgian-style mussels and hand-cut fries. After lunch, we toured the historic Fly Creek Cider Mill, where we had an up-close look at the cider-making operation and specialty shop.

We weren't able to explore the entire length of the 37-mile trail in one visit, so we'll have to plan another trip!



CLOCKWISE FROM LOWER LEFT: The outdoor Fire Bar at Otesaga Resort Hotel; the Fly Creek Cider Mill, where visitors can learn how cider is pressed; the resort's circa 1909 exterior; the hotel's Hawkeye Bar and Grill, which serves local fare.

Image credits: Otesaga Resort Hotel; Fly Creek Cider Mill

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