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weekend getaway

landrum, south carolina



by alison storm

Weekend getaways sound magnificent in theory. But often time constraints, tight budgets and vanishing vacation days make going anywhere remote highly unlikely. Thankfully there's a place that won't leave your gas tank or your bank account dry. It's a place with rolling hills, mountain views and small town charm. It's a place where ponies seem to outnumber people and charm is never-ending: Landrum, South Carolina.

Lodging: The Red Horse Inn

At first it may seem odd taking a getaway so close to home, but once you arrive at The Red Horse Inn you'll feel like you've entered a faraway place without the hassle of a lengthy road trip. Whether you're in Greenville or Spartanburg, this destination is only about 30 minutes away. The property contains six cozy Victorian cottages, each with unique and romantic features like cathedral ceilings and mountain views. In addition there are six comfy inn rooms, complete with whirlpools and fireplaces,

starting at \$175 a night. Out in the field munching or exploring you'll see the owners' filly Secret, granddaughter to Triple Crown winner Secretariat.

The property is the realization of Mary and Roger Walters' long-time dream. After working together renovating a string of what Mary calls "handyman specials" in New York, they decided to buy property in Landrum. The pair served as architects, designers, general contractors



and builders for the entire project. “We broke ground on our 21st anniversary,” says Mary, now celebrating her 37th year of marriage. “[My husband Roger] gave me a bulldozer.” Mary even taught herself how to sew, creating many of the window treatments, pillows and bedspreads in the guest rooms. Her personal attention to detail is what gives this place its allure.

Entertainment: Historical Sites, Shopping and Winery

Just a few minutes down the road from The Red Horse Inn is South Carolina’s only remaining covered bridge. Built in 1909, Campbell’s Covered Bridge spans Beaverdam Creek. Named for Lafayette Campbell, a local landowner of the time, the bridge and surrounding acreage are now owned by the Greenville County Recreation District. It’s perfect spot for photos, picnics and reading a historical novel.

If you prefer history that you can purchase, visit downtown Landrum. Lined with antique stores and quaint shops, it’s a great place for browsing. While many communities seem to have ignored their past, Landrum embraces it. Holding on to the historic charm appears to have been a priority, which makes an afternoon stroll here such a delight.

Just a few minutes outside of Landrum is the Victoria Valley Vineyards. Open year round, this 47-acre piece of Europe plopped down in the American South offers

wine tastings for just \$5. You’ll get to sample six varieties of your choice and for a dollar extra you can keep your logo glass. All types are invited—from the novice to the connoisseur. Beyond wine, an on-site deli offers grilled Panini, fresh salad and creamy cheesecake.

Food: Stone Soup

While your stay at the inn includes homemade breakfast in your room, lunch and dinner will have to come

from somewhere else. Stone Soup is about a 15 minute drive away, just outside of downtown Landrum. Owner Suzanne Strickland opened the place eight years ago, evolving it from a gourmet market to a full-fledged restaurant. “We’re really very much into supporting the local community,” says Strickland. “We buy as much as possible from local farmers.”

Even the photos on the wall feature locals—many posing with their beloved horses. Framed vintage jockey uniforms and snapshots of horse show winners make it feel

friendly and personal. But the atmosphere only supports the cuisine, fresh and hearty dishes like Black Eyed Pea Cakes and mushroom lasagna. An extensive wine list and desserts made locally round out this unique culinary experience.

Your weekend trip to Landrum is sure to have all of the benefits of an escape—good food and romance in a picturesque setting—without the downfall of a draining drive. It proves getting away has more to do with the destination you choose than the length of your journey.

