



*A fall weekend getaway
at The Red Horse Inn*

HORSE COUNTRY

Tucked in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in South Carolina, The Red Horse Inn has one whopper of a Secret — as in Secretariat’s great-granddaughter, Secret.

Part of our stay at this AAA Four Diamond B&B included watching innkeeper/horsewoman Mary Walters take Secret through her morning exercises — not so easy given that the horse is feral.

The breeder had allowed Secret to stay in her pasture and “just be a horse,” which is fine until

someone wants to ride her. So Mary has taken on the task of training Secret through natural horsemanship (think *The Horse Whisperer*).

We marveled as Mary — a jockey-sized 5’2” — coaxed the large buckskin mare to trot around the ring, patiently pausing as the horse sprung into fits of bucking. It was better than the rodeo. Finally, once Secret had calmed down and completed her exercises, Mary rewarded her with lemon-lime Gatorade, some brushing, and a cool splash under the hose.

Mary’s quest to train Secret is synonymous with the development of The Red Horse Inn property — all 192 acres of it. For her 21st wedding anniversary, her husband and fellow innkeeper, Roger, gave her a strand of Walmart pearls and a used bulldozer.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE RED HORSE INN




By Waynette Goodson



“I had handled tractors and farm equipment, so I figured it would be a piece of cake to drive a bulldozer,” she recalls. “I cried for the first three days trying to learn.” But learn she did: Mary cleared all the land herself, roughed in the drives, and installed the culverts. The inn opened in 1996 and has garnered rave reviews, including One of America’s Most Romantic Hotels by TravelandLeisure.com and Best Honeymoon or Anniversary Getaway by *Inn Traveler Magazine*.

Guests choose from six private cottages (three with outdoor whirlpools) and six comfy inn rooms with fireplaces and jetted deep-soaking tubs. Most rooms come in soft white palettes to project the focus to the mountains. But don’t expect breakfast in the dining room. “We’re a very un-breakfasty bed-and-breakfast,” Mary admits. After discovering that guests didn’t want to leave their quarters for a morning meal, she began stocking their fridges with baskets of jumbo muffins, granola, fresh fruit, juice, coffee, and even quiche and egg casseroles.

When guests can peel themselves away from their peaceful decks with sweeping mountain views, they set out on Scenic Highway 11 to explore the covered bridges, hike the myriad trails dotted with waterfalls, and sip wines at family-owned vineyards such as Victoria Valley Vineyards and Overmountain Vineyards & Winery. Just ten minutes away, downtown Landrum is chock-a-block with antique stores and casual fine-dining spots such as the farm-to-table Stone Soup, Zenzera Italian Trattoria, and The Hare & Hound, a favorite pub with the locals.

And don’t forget this is horse country: The inn also provides a horseback riding and waterfalls tour. Not an equestrian? Then just the simple pleasure of watching Secret in the pasture will suffice. “There’s something endearing about her presence,” Mary says. Just like there’s something endearing about this place that both rejuvenates and calms the spirit. No doubt one day we’ll see Mary riding high atop Secret, the new mascot of The Red Horse Inn — an inn of a refreshingly different color. 

Left to right: Secret, great-granddaughter of Secretariat; view of cottages from inn; The Croft guestroom; the main inn



THE RED HORSE INN

For more information about The Red Horse Inn, call 864.895.4968 or visit theredhorseinn.com.