

five cozy inns

Aimee Lee Ball crisscrosses five states, from Pennsylvania to Vermont, in search of the quintessential winter inn (fireplace and hot cider required).

Photographed by Malú Alvarez





The library at the Pitcher Inn, in Warren, Vermont. Opposite: A view of the mountains and water from Lake Placid Lodge, in upstate New York.

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he snow, sleet, and general dishabille of winter are working my last nerve, and a tiny, plaintive voice in the depth of my soul whimpers, "Take care of me." This sort of caretaking is the express purpose of a great country inn, so I'm on a quest, traveling by plane, train, and automobile to find the perfect specimen. The five finalists range from contemporary to classic, cozy to chic. All of them are a quick jaunt (but worlds away) from major cities, and any of them might cure the cold-weather blahs.

Pitcher Inn, Warren, Vermont

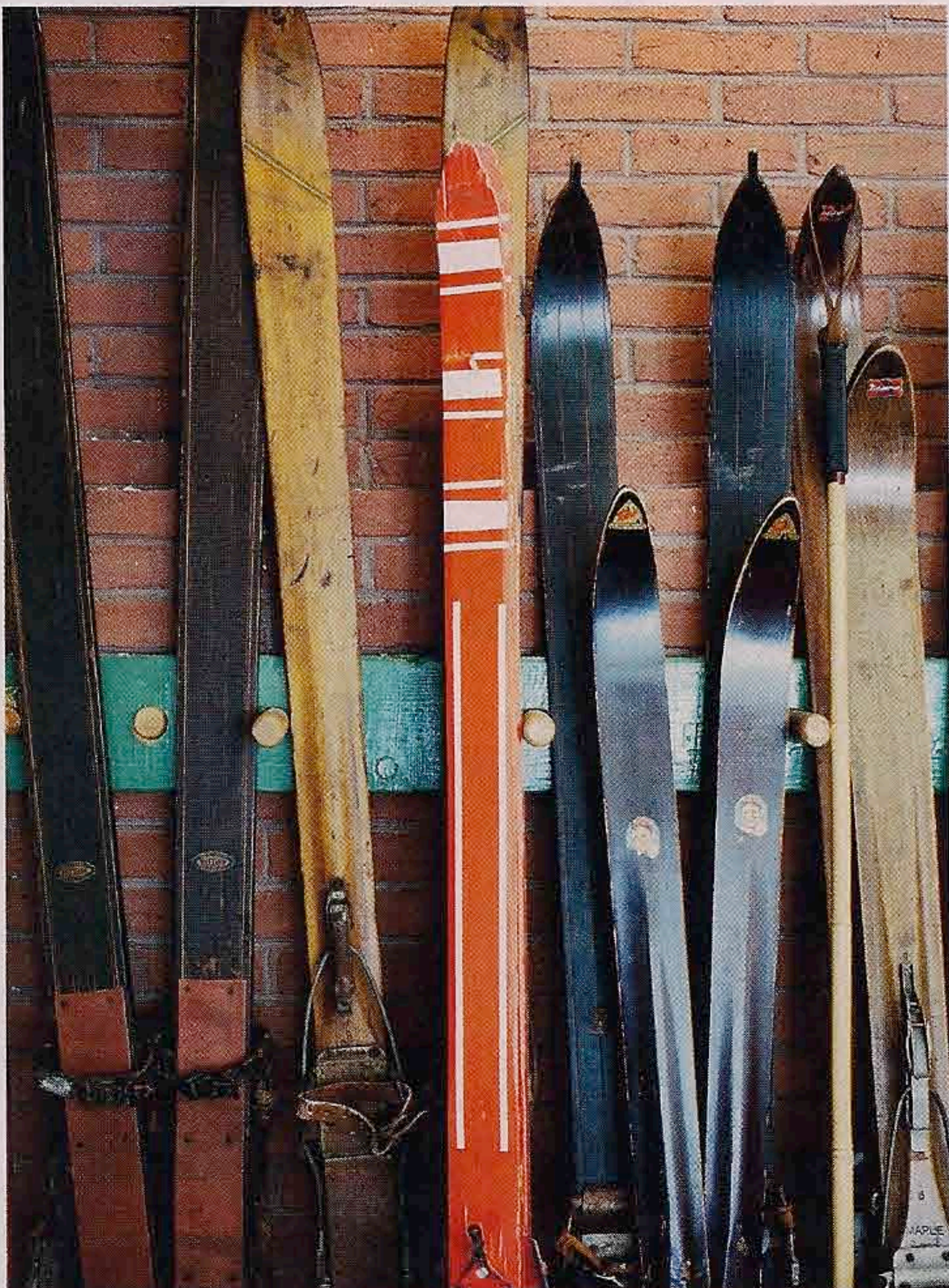
I'M SLEEPING WITH THE PRESIDENT. ACTUALLY, "THE DUDE PRESIDENT." EACH OF THE 11 rooms and suites at the Pitcher Inn represents some essential aspect of Vermont life, and my room is a tribute to Chester Arthur, a native son who acquired his moniker because of his taste for luxury. The original inn burned to the ground in 1993, and the replacement was designed to suggest an old white clapboard farmhouse, with myriad bits of whimsy. (The Mallard Room has a wake-up call that mimics the cacophony of ducks at sunrise.) Disaster struck again last summer when Hurricane Irene hit. The basement level looked like it was filled with chocolate pudding, and a quarter-million dollars' worth of wine was lost. By the time you read this, restorations will be complete, and general manager Ari Sadri, fanatically well-informed, can direct you to a bottle from Austria's Schloss Gobelsburg winery that has been in continuous production since the 12th century. Or perhaps a bottle of Sapsucker hard cider from the Warren Store across the street, which brings to mind the kind of country market where Diane Keaton's character in *Baby Boom* sold homemade applesauce. Sweets for the inn's afternoon tea are baked there and served in the library. The inn belongs to the Vermont Fresh Network, a partnership of farmers and chefs promoting locally grown food, and your breakfast omelette, with eggs provided by free-range hens, will be the shocking color of marigolds. Five minutes away, there's skiing at Sugarbush (once so popular with the jet set that it was dubbed Mascara Mountain), or try Mad River Rocket Sleds at the inn, made of recycled plastic (trimmings from garbage-can lids). You kneel with your legs strapped down and use your knees to steer. Doesn't that sound like the ideal excuse for a massage? 802/496-6350; pitcherinn.com; doubles from \$325, including breakfast and afternoon tea.

Forty 1° North, Newport, Rhode Island

WHO ORDERED THE PARTY IN MY ROOM? INSTEAD OF A MINI-BAR, THERE'S A SIX-FOOT-long wet bar, with enough liquor bottles to slake a serious thirst. I could easily choose from among the monochromatic books (curiously all bound in blue), take to the big bed with its view of a spare winter waterfront, and forget why people come to Newport in warmer weather. It's almost counterintuitive in a city whose many boats burn exorbitant amounts of fossil fuels, but the contemporary Forty 1° North is impressively environmentally conscious. Newspapers are delivered via each room's iPad, and the

A cedar walkway at Lake Placid Lodge, below. Opposite, clockwise from top: Forty 1° North, a seaside hotel in Newport, Rhode Island; the Tamarack Room in Lake Placid Lodge; vintage skis line the walls outside the Ski Room at the Pitcher Inn.







PLAN A WEEKEND GETAWAY

LOOKING FOR MORE WINTER ESCAPES ALONG THE EAST COAST? GO TO TRAVELANDLEISURE.COM AND SEARCH "COZY INNS."



Lake Placid Lodge is like a fantastic tree house. Beds have fanciful wood carvings, and the dining tables and chairs are assembled from logs and branches—no nails. Every room and cabin gets a lake view and a fireplace laid by local masons stone-by-stone.

hallway's big mirrors serve as eco-friendly message boards to announce activities such as yoga and cooking classes. Bathrooms are equipped with low-flow showerheads, chemical-free toiletries, and towels made from a superfine cotton that dries quickly, which encourages reuse rather than replacement. Okay, so the compact fluorescent bulbs require squinting to find your contact lenses, but it's a small price to pay so that the polar ice caps don't melt. The inn is only about a year old (with a staff that seems not much older). Other new kids on this block are Thames Street Kitchen and Tallulah on Thames, two restaurants with young tattooed chefs and farm-to-fork menus, but the locals line up for sweet-bread French toast at the Corner Café (made not from calf's in-nards but from the Portuguese version of challah).

The Newport Winter Festival takes over the town from February 17 to 26, with ice sculpting, beach polo, and a chili cook-off. The International Tennis Hall of Fame & Museum is open year-round (the Williams sisters have nothing on Gertrude "Gorgeous Gussie" Moran, whose lace-trimmed knickers at Wimbledon prompted a debate in Parliament). If the weather is mild, you could even bundle up for the glorious Cliff Walk along the water, channeling *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. During the Colonial era, Newport was the world's rum capital, with more than 20 distilleries, and Coastal Extreme Brewing Company still makes Thomas Tew rum, named for a famous 17th-century pirate. If that doesn't warm you up, head for the Caribbean. 401/846-8018; 41north.com; doubles from \$395.

Lake Placid Lodge, Lake Placid, New York

THOSE ROCKEFELLERS, CARNEGIES, AND VANDERBILTS REALLY KNEW HOW TO LIVE. Around the turn of the last century, the American aristocracy began to stake out the Adirondacks as their personal paradise—the primeval forest and billion-year-old rock formations made the perfect setting for their splendid vacation homes, known as the Great Camps. Lake Placid Lodge, built three years ago in the Arts and Crafts tradition, is a Great Camp for the new century, supplying a similar experience for those of us not of the ruling classes. The whole place is like a fantastic tree house. Beds have fanciful wood carvings, and the dining tables and chairs are assembled from logs and branches—no nails. Every room and cabin gets a lake view and a fireplace laid by local masons stone-by-stone.

When winter comes to these parts, it stays—you can throw boiling water in the air, and it will freeze before it hits the ground—so it's tempting to huddle indoors, perusing one of the largest collections of Hudson River School paintings outside of a museum. There are billiards and backgammon (and the property's only TV) in Maggie's Pub, a casual restaurant named for the resident golden retriever. Dine on the enclosed terrace, warmed by heating lamps and lap blankets. If you do skate on the frozen lake, you're rewarded at the nightly bonfire with hot chocolate or more serious liquids. Or take a spin on the skating oval in the village—Lake Placid has hosted the Winter Olympics twice, and this is where Eric Heiden won a record five gold medals in the 1980 games. Almost any sport done on snow or ice is available, from a dogsled through the woods pulled by huskies to a bobsled around the Olympic track through the Labyrinth, the Heart, and the Zigzag turns. Back at the lodge, a soaking tub awaits, along with a brown bag of cookies on the turned-down bed. Rockefeller, eat your hearts out. 518/523-2700; lakeplacidlodge.com; doubles from \$500, including breakfast and activities. (Continued on page 124)

Lakeside at Lake Placid Lodge with the inn's golden retriever, Maggie. Opposite: A bed constructed from logs and branches in the Saddleback Room at the lodge.



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Cozy Inns

(Continued from page 109)

Falls Village Inn, Falls Village, Connecticut

RUMOR HAS IT THAT THE FALLS VILLAGE Inn was once a brothel. Two years ago, when Susan Sweetapple and Colin Chambers bought the dilapidated 1834 property in Litchfield County, garish flocked wallpaper lined a warren of unused upstairs rooms. Happily, the fledgling innkeepers found a godmother: the celebrated interior designer Bunny Williams lives down the road and offered her decorating services gratis.

Williams is known for providing a place to put your feet up and your drink down. For the inn's two rooms and two suites, she selected patterned quilts and coverlets, botanical prints, and crisp linen upholstery. New bathrooms with graphic black-and-white tiles were carved out of closets. (But hold out for the Green Room if you want an actual tub. Doesn't anybody take a bath anymore?) The dining room showcases the canvases of local artists, and casual table coverings are ripped from a fat roll of brown butcher paper. It takes a village to feed the crowds here: hamburgers are made from the grass-fed beef of nearby Whippoorwill Farm; carrot cake is supplied by a busboy's mother; and on Fridays, weather permitting, a retired helicopter pilot from Sharon, Connecticut, brings in 30 squirming specimens from Rosie the Lobster Lady.

The Appalachian Trail is right outside the door, ready for snowshoeing, and the cascading falls that give the town its name are a short hike away. But Falls Village has an almost defiantly laid-back personality, conducive to indulgent sloth and going off the grid—cell-phone reception is virtually nonexistent. Main Street commerce consists of a country store, which holds Saturday open-mike nights for native talent, and Toymakers Café, which used to sell hardware but now pushes sweet-potato waffles. (The breakfast menu is divided into "indulgences,"

"classics," and "fast.") 860/824-0033; thefallsvillageinn.com; doubles from \$199.

Lodge at Glendorn, Bradford, Pennsylvania

THE SOUND OF GUNFIRE CRACKING THE air at a Relais & Châteaux property might suggest a prosperous feuding couple settling a palimony suit the old-fashioned way. At Glendorn, a (mostly tranquil) enclave of more than 1,200 acres outside Bradford, Pennsylvania, it just means that guests are shooting skeet. Bradford was a boomtown in the state's oil rush of the late 1800's, and Clayton Glenville Dorn made a fortune extracting oil from long-abandoned fields (using a controversial method similar to fracking). Glendorn was the "oasis in the woods" created for his family in 1929.

The Dorns were genteel jocks who loved trap and skeet, canoeing and fishing, biking and hiking. One family scion dubbed the estate the largest adult kindergarten in the world. It still is, but now you can play too.

Rooms in the Big House and a dozen cabins have original details such as built-in tie racks and the recipe for a martini painted on a kitchenette cabinet. Road signs in this area warn not of deer crossing but of bears. They're hibernating for the winter, and you may choose to do so too, by one of Glendorn's 50 fireplaces; the staff will leave the makings for s'mores. But if you're up for Dorn-ish sports, activities director Shane Appleby will provide heated goggles and lead a caravan of snowmobiles through the woods, or cut a hole in the ice on Skipper Lake and help you catch a bass, which can be cooked for your breakfast. Dinner features the kind of "fancy" cooking that the Dorns must have thought elegant, sometimes successful (velvety lobster bisque), sometimes overwrought.

If your visit includes a Tuesday, you can venture into town for the weekly square dance. The locals bring covered dishes, and your \$3 admission supports the Bradford Landmark Society. 841/362-6511; glendorn.com; doubles from \$430. +