

Benchmark Hospitality Reopens Historic Bedford Springs Resort, Pennsylvania

2007-07-17

Classic Springs Resort Has Hosted Presidents, Heads of State & Society Elite

Benchmark Hospitality International reopened the circa 1796 Bedford Springs Resort in a celebration honoring the property's historic past and anticipating its promising future. The opening showcased the \$120 million restoration and expansion program for the historic 'springs' resort, which yielded authentically restored public spaces, reclaimed exterior, enlarged and updated guestrooms, state-of-the-art meeting facilities, casual and fine dining in four restaurants, tavern and lobby bar, and the 30,000 square-foot Springs Eternal Spa.

Bedford Springs, which had been closed for 21 years prior to the restoration, in its glory days played host to U.S. presidents, heads of state and countless celebrities, and was where the first TransAtlantic Cable was received by President James Buchanan from Great Britain's Queen Victoria in 1858. The resort served as the Summer White House for President Buchanan.



Also part of the celebration was the reopening of the fully restored Bedford Springs Old Course, which has evolved through work originally contributed by three forefathers of American golf course design: Spencer Oldham (1895), A.W. Tillinghast (1912) and Donald Ross (1923). This unique and historic collaboration of golf holes stretches across the foot of the Allegheny Mountains through the picturesque Bedford Springs Valley.

Harkening back to the resort's original 19th century splendor, special guests arrived for today's opening at the porte cochere entrance in horse drawn carriages and to the strains of the Bedford Springs March, composed in 1878 by Adam Geibel.

"We're thrilled to welcome our new employees and very special guests to the official re-opening of the Bedford Springs Resort," said Keith Evans, managing partner, Bedford Resort Partners Ltd. "This historic property, that once was the playground of presidents, heads of state, political dignitaries and members of high society, has been restored with historic authenticity and filled with exceptional memorabilia, but offers the modern conveniences of a luxury resort. We applaud those who helped make this day a reality and invite everyone to visit this magnificent property."

Rikki Boparai, Benchmark's general manager at Bedford Springs, stated, 'It is always a privilege to open and operate an exceptional resort such as this. But it is a special honor to comprehensively restore and reopen a property of such historic importance as Bedford Springs Resort.' Boparai continued on to say, 'Over the past two centuries, this is where monumental events occurred and where people came to regain a renewed sense of well-being. Today we launch Bedford Springs into a new century of grand and gracious hospitality.'

The first guests welcomed at the restored resort were actually previous guests. They included Mr. and Mrs. Max Elbin of Bethesda, Maryland, who met at Bedford Springs in 1938 as teenagers, and Mrs. Nellie Burger Over, of nearby Somerset, Pennsylvania, who served as a waitress at Bedford Springs from 1937 to 1938. Mrs. Over's aunt was Bedford Springs' head hostess.

Celebrating Some of America's Oldest Golf Holes

Bedford Springs Old Course officially re-opened at noon today with a teeing off ceremony accompanied by heralding trumpets and golfers in plus-fours (knickers), representing the A.W. Tillinghast and Donald Ross Societies.

"This is a great day for golfers everywhere," said golf course architect Ron Forse. "This grand course retraces the steps of early American golf course architecture. We're delighted to re-open this distinguished course which is now restored for all to enjoy."

This unique and historic collaboration -- with holes thought to be among some of America's oldest -- stretches between ridges of the Allegheny Mountains along sections of the restored Shobers Run creek, a tributary of the Juniata River, weaving amid the 200-year-old oaks, serene meadows and marshes of picturesque Bedford Springs Valley. The course is now open to the public, with preferred tee times reserved for resort guests.

Bedford Springs Early Heritage

Long heralded for its healing waters and restorative environs, Bedford Springs origins date back to 1796 when its seven original mineral springs lured guests for a healing cure. One of American society's gathering places in the 1850s, Bedford Springs' guest register recorded the names of Daniel Webster, Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun, as well as Presidents Andrew Jackson, William Henry Harrison, James K. Polk and Zachary Taylor. Pennsylvanian James Buchanan, the only President from the Keystone State, was an annual guest for 25 years.

The business and social elite of Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh hailed it the "Carlsbad of America" in the 1890s because its magnesia springs were identical to those of Europe's famous Carlsbad Spa. Nineteenth-century industrialists Henry Ford, John Wanamaker and their peers arrived by carriages laden with trunks full of clothing and briefcases stuffed with meeting agendas.

Today these fabled waters flow through the new 30,000-square-foot Springs Eternal Spa fed by Spring Eternal, the property's eighth spring that gushed to the surface during restoration.

World War II and Beyond

During World War II, the U.S. Department of State used the Bedford Springs Hotel as a U.S. Naval communications training center until 1945, remodeling hotel facilities including the convention hall to accommodate more than 7,000 Navy personnel. In 1943, the posh retreat also housed 200 Japanese diplomats and their families detained after the fall of Germany. Guests of the United States, they later were exchanged for captured American POWs in Asia.

With the 1940s opening of the Pennsylvania Turnpike came greater access to the prestigious resort and it continued to prosper throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In 1984, the U.S. Department of Interior recognized the hotel and golf course as one of the best remaining examples of "springs resort architecture" and designated it a National Historic Landmark. By the mid-1980s, the once grand dame appeared old and outdated and eventual foreclosures forced her doors to close in 1986. The property was once deemed one of the most endangered sites on the National Registry of Historic Places.

The Next Generation

Slumbering for 21 years, Bedford Springs Resort has come alive -- restored and revitalized. It again offers the world its healing springs, classic golf course, and world-class hospitality. The 216-room destination resort now claims 134 queen guest rooms and 81 double/double rooms, plus two hospitality suites. All rooms have been elegantly appointed to reflect the rich and diverse history of the property. Many feature original sun and breeze-filled porches with rocking chairs and striking views of the resort's beautiful grounds. Rates range from \$249 to \$299 per night, based on views, day of week and seasonality. Spa suites start at \$309 per night.

A full-service, destination spa, Springs Eternal Spa is designed around the location's eight unique natural springs, with 30,000 square feet of treatment and service areas. The spa and lifestyle programs are designed to meet the needs of guests, provide balance for the body, mind and spirit, esthetic services and to enhance health and well being.

Six dining options are available to guests of the resort. Dressed in four hues of blue, stunning wallpaper and restored original crystal chandeliers, the Crystal Dining Room is located in the resort's classic Colonnade Building. Wood floors, rich area carpets and linen-covered tables seated with Victorian round-back chairs establish an inviting ambience for guests at every meal. The room seats 142 people in two distinct dining areas.

The Frontier Tavern takes its name from one of early Bedford's favorite eating establishments that served chicken dinners popular with Bedford Springs' guests arriving aboard the Talley-Ho Stage. The frontier-rustic Tavern is situated on the ground floor of the Stone Inn and provides a perfect atmosphere as the resort's main bar and lounge. The Frontier Tavern offers a billiards area, provides a well-stocked humidor for those wishing a good cigar, and displays an array of historic Bedford Springs artifacts, such as a bear trap, tools, old wood stove, antique china and crockery. An upscale fine dining room, The 1796 Room, is located adjacent to Frontier Tavern.

Other eateries include Che Sara Sara Cafe (as spelled on the Duke of Bedford's crest from 1765-1802), motto of the former Duke of Bedford, a specialty shop for coffee, tea, ice cream and confections, soups and sandwiches, smoothies, sodas, beers and wines. Outdoor restaurants include the Turtle Shell at the pool and the Half-way House on the golf course.

Guests at Bedford Springs Resort will discover first-class accommodations; superb cuisine; a 20,000 square-foot conference center with the most current meeting technology, nine conference and event rooms and Benchmark's Signature Conference Concierge; first-rate classic golf; a gold medal trout stream; mountain nature trails and Cannondale Bikes to traverse them; an extraordinary new spa that utilizes water from Bedford's healing springs; an elegant outdoor wedding grotto; restored indoor and new outdoor swimming pools; plus numerous winter sports and much more.

Set on 2,200 acres in the Southern Allegheny Mountains of south, central Pennsylvania, Bedford Springs Resort invites guests to experience the renewed ambience of one of America's finest Springs Hotels.

Close to the intersection of the Pennsylvania Turnpike and Interstate 70, Bedford Springs Resort is a convenient two-hour drive from Baltimore and Washington, D.C., 90 minutes from Pittsburgh, three hours from Philadelphia and four hours from New York City. Bedford Springs is just 129 miles from Pittsburgh International Airport and 113 miles from Harrisburg International Airport. Bedford County Airport offers a 5,000-foot runway and can accommodate a wide array of private aircraft.

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com>

The URL for this story is:

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/article28398.html>

© 1998 - 2007 Nevistas and the author.

Brought to you by Hotel News Resource

Distribute your news on our Network

See what all the buzz is about at:

http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/Info-news_account_info.html