

Bed & Breakfasts Add Charm to Small Towns

By Gwen Thurmond

You've enjoyed an exhilarating final round at the Master's Golf Tournament in Augusta, GA., and it's time to wind down. You pop the car's sunroof and begin a pleasant but short drive down Hwy. 125 to Jackson, SC, to savor the remains of the day at Valentine Sagefield Bed and Breakfast.

Set in the midst of a vineyard, Valentine Sagefield is an imposing site as you come upon it. Recently built in the Georgian Greek-Revival style, the three-story brick home features a second-floor veranda flanked by stairs on each side. Beautiful red oak hardwood floors covered with an assortment of Oriental rugs lead visitors inside the house. Owner Guy Valentine says guests immediately migrate toward the 1,000-square foot gathering room with its large marble fireplace and 12-foot ceilings. Here, in the comfort of 18th- and 19th-century Country French antique furnishings, guests enjoy a reception that includes the vineyard's home grown wines. Among the B&B's six guestrooms are two suites; the master suite opens to a small porch overlooking the vineyard. Guest rooms have 10-foot ceilings and are elegantly furnished with 19th- and early 20th-century antiques.

Valentine takes pride in Sagefield, which he built himself. He also tends the 12-acre vineyard, where American bunch and Suwanee grapes are harvested to produce a variety of wines such as Blanc du Bois, Muscadine Red, Muscadine Blanc, Blush, and Blackstraw, a blend of blackberries and strawberries. Guests can tour the vineyard, and there is access to biking, golf and other activities.

Midway between Aiken and Columbia in Wagener, SC, you'll find the Claridge House Bed and Breakfast which was built in 1897 by the owner of the town's first general store. In later years the

property was divided into apartments, and it housed boarders in the 1950s when the Savannah River Site nuclear facility opened in neighboring New Ellenton.

The two-story white Victorian house features front and back porches where guests can relax. Inside, 11-foot-wide hallways run the length of the house on both floors. Formal rooms downstairs are furnished with 18th-century antiques. A large kitchen, den and library provide other spaces where guests can linger a while. Upstairs are four guest rooms with Queen Anne-style and antique furnishings.

Wagener is about a 40-minute drive to Augusta making the century-old house ideal lodging for visitors to the Masters. Once guests arrive, owner Heather Collum makes sure it's a visit they won't soon forget. "We truly like to spoil our guests," said Collum. "We offer a full breakfast if they desire, or we can do a continental breakfast. We offer home baked cookies and other goodies."

Claridge House is only six minutes from Coopers Creek Golf Club in Leesville and Collum said there are a number of wonderful horse farms around. For a quiet pastime however, Collum recommends you sit in the swing on the upper porch of the B&B or in a rocking chair on the lower porch and "watch life go by in a real Southern small town."

Find out more....

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