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INDIAN SUMMER OASIS

Savoring OREGON WINE COUNTRY

“Everything is SO green,” I remark to my husband, Nick, from the passenger seat of our rental car as we pass tiny towns with populations the size of some high schools. We’re en route to McMinnville in Oregon’s Willamette Valley, where we’ll spend the next couple nights at a brand new boutique hotel, The Atticus Hotel. I gaze out the car window as we whiz past cows enjoying green pastures, vineyards with brightly colored green cover crop, and miles and miles of gently rolling hills displaying different shades of green. We’re certainly not in Southern California anymore.

We left Portland earlier this morning and, eager to taste some pinot noir, planned ahead to stop at a couple of wineries along the way. We are in Oregon Wine Country, after all. Our first stop of the weekend is at Big Table Farm, a working farm and winery off the beaten path outside of Gaston, a town which I notice has a population of less than 700. I comment that we have no cell reception, and while Nick looks slightly panicked for a second at the thought of being unavailable for possible work calls, I welcome a rare break from the connected world.

We pull into the dirt driveway of the 70-acre farm, a trail of dust following behind us, and are greeted by two friendly dogs and an indifferent goat, providing us a glimpse of what life on the farm looks like for owners Brian Marcy and Clare Carver.

As if knowing why we’re here, the dogs lead us to the modest farmhouse which also serves as the tasting room. Inside, we taste through a line-up that includes an outstanding rosé, expressive chardonnay, and several delicious pinots while chatting with Clare, who is friendly and witty with a down-to-earth vibe that I’m immediately drawn to. Just as our welcome committee dogs, whose names are Clementine and Levi, show us several impressive tricks, we realize the time; our hour-long tasting has flown by way too quickly and Clare and her team need to get the farm crew’s lunch ready.

Though we could have easily spent another hour there, we say our goodbyes, load up the wine we’ve purchased, and hit the road again.

Before we know it, we’re exiting toward McMinnville—a charming and quaint town, with a maple tree-lined main street filled with historic brick buildings that are now home to tasting rooms, restaurants, and shops. A block from the main drag, we spot the four-story Atticus Hotel. It stands out with its contemporary exterior painted white and dark gray, yet doesn’t seem out of place thanks to its historic-looking facade.

The chic lobby has a moody ambiance that is classy and inviting. Stacks of books sit upon wooden coffee tables surrounded by deeply hued velvet sofas and slate gray walls—the darkness of which is offset by the natural light pouring in through the large arched windows. There’s local artwork on the walls, as well as live plants scattered tastefully throughout. I dig it.

We make our way to the front desk that doubles as an espresso bar and are immediately welcomed by two women who get us checked in, then offer us a complimentary glass of sparkling wine. We happily accept and, drink in hand, head to the elevator to our fourth-floor room.



Written by Hana-Lee Sedgwick



As the elevator doors open, I notice the floor mat reads “Friday.” How cute, I think, that they swap out the mat to align with the day of the week. It’s the first of many small, curated details at The Atticus, I would come to find out.

We open the door to our suite with a large, old school key adorned with a black tassel and walk into the chic, inviting space. I set my Champagne flute down on the table near the window before looking around our home for the next two days. There’s a living area with a couch and fireplace, and on the coffee table, a dish with local hazelnuts and walnuts set beside a nutcracker and a stack of books. I pick up one of the books and find a note tucked inside explaining the book selection has been chosen by a local.



The room feels oddly familiar, like I’ve been here before, but maybe it’s just the small “homey” touches, like books I might actually read, that make it feel more personalized than a cookie cutter hotel room. In fact, no two of the hotel’s 36 rooms are the same.

Large barn-like sliding doors open to the minimalist bedroom where Nick immediately plants himself on the bed with his sparkling wine. As I unpack, I notice the built-in, temperature controlled wine fridge and am immediately impressed and glad to see it. How convenient! Above it is a french press, coffee and tea, and bottle opener—all the essentials. We’ve been in the room for maybe five minutes but at this point it is already clear, every detail of this place has been thoughtfully and carefully selected. Everything serves a purpose, whether it adds character and functionality (like the Pendleton robes I can’t wait to cozy up in) or showcases the hotel’s ties to the local community (like the Flag & Wire coffee made right here in McMinnville—also functional).

After polishing off our glasses of sparkling wine and taking a few minutes to relax on the couch, we head downstairs to explore McMinnville. For the rest of the afternoon, we wander around downtown, popping into a shop or two before our dinner reservation at Thistle. I’d heard this is one of the top restaurants in Oregon and, being a huge fan of all things food and wine, was excited to try it. We arrive ahead of time to grab a drink, finding two stools at the tiny bar next to the restaurant, which is housed in a building from the 1880s. Within minutes, I’m sipping a craft cocktail made custom for me by Patrick the bartender, who obviously saw the torn look on my face when eyeing the cocktail list and asked if he could make me something. Though I don’t know what it is exactly, it’s reminiscent of a French 75, so he clearly read me well.



We chat with the couple sitting next to us at the bar, and being locals, they fill us in on which wineries are their favorite as we mention we’re planning to go wine tasting the next day. Before we can finish our conversation, our table is ready, so we bid them adieu and walk a few steps into the restaurant.

We sit at a table next to the window in the simple and unpretentious space, perusing the wine list as we glance up at the menu which is handwritten on a large scrolled piece of paper on the wall. Nick and I both feel an immediate air of disappointment that we can’t order one of everything. Alas, we settle on a few items, like pork terrine with pickles and mustard and gnocchi with fava beans, and proceed to enjoy a long dinner of nose-to-tail, farm-to-fork dishes that leave us completely and utterly satisfied.

After a restful night of sleep, we wake up to the slightest hint of morning light coming through below the blackout curtain I didn’t close all the way. Glad to see the sun out after yesterday’s cloudy weather, Nick and I slowly get ready to tackle a day of wine tasting in the Willamette Valley. First on the agenda, though, is coffee and food at Community Plate a few blocks down. It’s early, yet the place is already bustling—a good sign. We order at the counter, take a seat at one of the communal tables, and within minutes our lattes and food are ready.

I sip my hazelnut milk latte made with house-made vanilla syrup, relishing the creamy sweetness that lingers on my tongue. It’s not my usual order, but Oregon produces 99% of the United States’ hazelnuts and I can’t help but feel pleased with myself for trying it. As we enjoy our first bites, I look around and take in the lively, casual restaurant, filled with out-of-towners and what I would guess are faithful



regulars. I ask how Nick’s biscuits and sausage gravy dish is as I savor my perfectly cooked scramble, each delicious bite showcasing the perfect ratio of bacon, veggies, and goat cheese. Just the fuel I need for the day.

While we’ve just scratched the surface on Oregon Wine Country, the permanent smiles on our faces as we pull away from The Atticus on our way to taste more wine is proof that we’ve already fallen a little bit in love with this place. ✨

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