

A CHARMED PLACE: The Lodge in Cloudfcroft

By Charlotte Tallman **Photography** by Bill Faulkner and Jesse Ramirez

There is a mountain lodge welcoming all who enter with a warm fire, plush furniture and a resident ghost, Rebecca, who adds to the magic and mystery. Known as a very charmed place with a rich past and a characteristic that is often unmatched when it comes to a vintage feel, The Lodge Resort & Spa in Cloudfcroft offers an intriguing stay, full of comfort, necessities and luxury along with the story of Rebecca in a retreat built more than 100 years ago.

The Lodge was originally constructed in 1899 by the Alamogordo and Sacramento Mountain Railway, serving as a place of rest for railroad workers searching for timber and railroad ties. Offering a cool alternative to the often stifling heat in Texas and Southern New

Mexico, The Lodge quickly became popular with quaint rooms and entertainment such as golf, tennis, dancing, billiards, a bowling alley and burro rides until a fire destroyed it in 1909. Unable to keep something so wonderful from the pines of Cloudfcroft, The Lodge was rebuilt by 1911, and sits today with the initial appearance almost unchanged despite several renovations.

While many have come and gone through The Lodge, including Clark Gable, Judy Garland and Pancho Villa, one has stayed – Rebecca, a beautiful, young chambermaid. Legend says Rebecca, with striking blue eyes and red hair, has been seen roaming the halls since the early 1900s after she disappeared

when her lover, a rough lumberjack, found her with another man. Those who believe she wanders the halls witness unexplained events throughout the resort, including fires igniting spontaneously and lights turning on and off. What Rebecca does always seems to be in fun, not frightening or mean. The stories of Rebecca's playfulness add to the appeal of The Lodge, as does the staff that welcomes guests and the accommodations available.

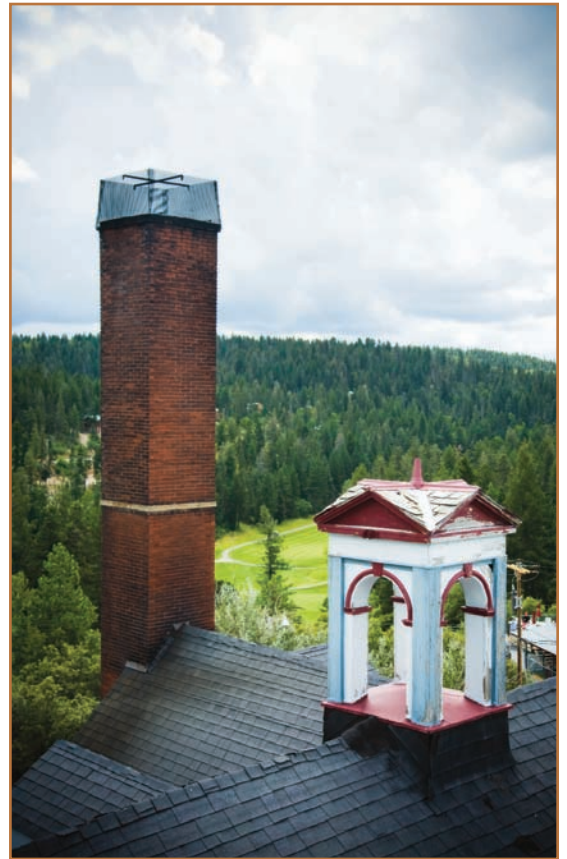
In the winter, a massive fireplace in the



parlor roars with a welcoming fire. In the spring and summer, a cool breeze lulls a deep relaxation that seems to only come in the mountains. Throughout the year a strong western motif highlights animal skins, a rich façade and antique furniture. The fact the resort has been around so long and through several renovations does not take much from the comfort it offers. The feel is not modern, by any means, but it is unique.

The rooms share the rustic feel of the lobby area, many providing a sitting room, hallway, bathroom and bedroom. The furniture is reminiscent of quilts and lace table runners I always loved in my grandmother's home. The resort provides 59 rooms, each with a variety of antique furniture, making every room different, including the Honeymoon and Governor's Suites. Guests looking for more than the typical resort room, can stay in a retreat suite. The retreat suites offer three one-bedroom suites and one two-bedroom suite with a sitting area, gas fireplace, wet bar and a covered deck. Perfect for family or company retreats, the common area provides a conference table, kitchen facilities and a pool table. The Pavilion Bed & Breakfast Inn provides nine rustic rooms.

The spa specializes in a variety of massages, including deep tissue, mountain stone and even a couples' massage. To provide even more relaxation, they offer body treatments like a Salt Glow with Herbal Wrap, Skin Renewal, Best Friends Package for Two and Raindrop Technique (a deep tissue massage followed by seven different essential oils released like raindrops along the



Weekend Getaway



spine, followed by a warm compress.) Facials, waxing and nail services are available in the quaint spa, along with licensed professionals ready to charm you and your body with luxury treatments.

If the spa doesn't grab your attention, maybe The Lodge Golf Course will. Built in 1899, the golf course sits 9,000 feet above sea level, and remains one of the highest courses in North America. The 9-hole course was created with the old Scottish tradition of playing different tees and separate flags for each hole, and the layout accommodates a challenging 18-hole round of golf (during a seven-month season mid-April through mid-November).

Rebecca's Restaurant (named after the resident ghost for fondness and perhaps as a peace offering) allows diners to become instantly mesmerized by the view. Sitting high in the Sacramento Mountains of Cloudcroft, The Lodge is surrounded by trees, unveiling a natural environment and the restaurant's open windows capture it all. The restaurant serves fine southwestern and continental cuisine (and an incredible Sunday Brunch) under the talent of Executive Chef Tim McManus. In the lounge, you can sit at a bar actually once owned by Al Capone while pianist Charles Johnson soothes with music.

While The Lodge has plenty to offer on the grounds, including a fitness room, swimming pool, sauna, hot tub, lawn games and shopping at The Mercantile, Seasons Boutique and The

Lodge Gift Shop, it is highly recommended to step out for a visit in the Village of Cloudcroft.

Cloudcroft is small, but that one fact is what makes it so big. Village men and women are welcoming. Cloudcroft proudly boasts their motto "9,000 feet above stress level," and for so many who visit the lovely village, they are right. The stress seems to float away in this slow-paced place devoted solely, it seems, to visitors. The high mountain meadows offer glimpses of wildflowers in the spring and summer from often daily rain showers, and the intriguing snow makes it a beautiful mountain town in the winter.

Shortly after The Lodge was constructed, the railroad arrived in Cloudcroft, leading to the construction of a depot in June 1900, just west of the Pavilion at The Lodge. From the beginning, the train hauled logs down the mountain, but as time went on, the train began carrying passengers who wanted to experience the scenery and weather in the mountain town.

Currently, Cloudcroft's Chamber of Commerce provides a wide variety of events every month, including big events like the village-wide Mardi Gras Weekend and Cloudcroft Music Festival. Along with scheduled events, you can find many hiking trails through the Sacramento Mountains and the Lincoln National Forest, the Trestle Recreation Area which highlights the effort to build the railroad up the mountain and incredible shopping at local boutiques and stores. The gorgeous area is perfect for horseback riding, mountain biking or riding ATVs. In the winter, find skiing at Snow Canyon Ski Resort, ice skating, snowmobiling and inner tubing.

All in all, The Lodge Resort & Spa in Cloudcroft offers everything you might need for a weekend getaway – luxury, fine food, gorgeous rooms, a quaint village and a resident ghost, who must agree the entire place is indeed charmed. ■



The Lodge Resort & Spa

601 Corona Place
Cloudcroft, NM
575.682.2566
800.395.6343
www.TheLodgeResort.com

Cloudcroft Chamber of Commerce

575.682.2733
866.874.4447
www.cloudcroft.net