

TRAVEL & LEISURE

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Cultural Taste of Concord



The Hotel Concord, one of Concord's newest boutique hotels

Photo by Peggy Newland

By Peggy Newland
For The Telegraph

Where can you go on an icy weekend when you aren't up for snow sports? Downtown Concord, that's where. Especially when you find a hotel, with special winter rates that include covered parking, dinner for two, breakfast, arthouse movie tickets/popcorn at the in-hotel theatre, and a location smack center in the arts district of Concord.

My husband and I run, not walk, into the lobby of The Hotel Concord, one of Concord's newest boutique hotels. With couches, deep-seated lounge chairs, and an active bar crowd next door at the attached O Steak and Seafood Restaurant, we are in our "weekend living room."

"Fifteen below tonight," the concierge tells us.

"Good night to stay in," I say. She hands us our complimentary movie passes for the Red River Theatre on the hotel's lower level.

We grab a drink at the bar and head up to the room. Light-filled, even on a dark afternoon, with wood floors, granite window seating, and a plush bed with six feather pillows, the room is classic New Hampshire with an urban flair. Especially with original artwork on the walls. We have two watercolors and one modern sculptured piece. The hallways are lined with presidential primary photos from 1948 through present and it's a lesson in civics.

We sit in a curved booth at O Steak and Seafood and survey the crowd coming out of the cold. Sweaters, ski jackets, tweed are layered with boots and wool hats, and all we had to do was walk downstairs. I start with lump crab cake with sweet chili sauce and Brian orders fried oysters Rockefeller with cream spinach, bacon, and asiago cheese. Patrons laugh as candles are lit and the wind howls outside. We order salads

made of eight local NH greens, balsamic vinaigrette, sunflower seeds, VT cheddar, and dried black figs. I have their Monkfish special with shrimp couscous and winter beet and Brian chooses a Wagyu-American Kobe Steak with cheddar grits. We finish with house-made lemon sorbets.

Downstairs, at Red River's Indie Café, we select two New Hampshire wines-by-the-glass, and settle into the intimate, gorgeously outfitted theatre to watch "Mary Queen of Scots." The free movie popcorn is a bonus.

The next morning, after a quick bite of pastries, coffee, and fresh fruit, we head to Gibson's bookstore, one block away, to peruse the titles and find some sale books. Founded in 1898, Gibson's is the oldest operating retailer and bookstore in Northern New England. Hosting author events, with such luminaries as Erik Larson, Jonathan Franzen, and Sy Montgomery, this is the place to hang out for a late morning. We settle in with some coffees from True Brew and explore the literary landscape before zipping around town to the League of New Hampshire Crafts, Bread and Chocolate, the Barley House, and Hermanos for an early dinner.

That evening, we walk four, quick blocks to catch Darlingside performing at the Capitol Center for the Arts. This is a gem of a theatre. Built in 1924, this concert hall was a stop on the Vaudeville circuit, but today, with its renovated Egyptian motif and elegant art deco appeal, it hosts touring Broadway productions, bands, ballets, symposia, and school-series performances. Running back after the concert, we head to the bar and order a couple of Hot Toddlies.

The next morning, we continue our cultural escape by heading to the moon and the stars at the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center. Staring at the constellations on a planetarium's winter sky is an ideal way to warmly welcome winter's beauty. Especially if it includes Orion.



Complimentary movie passes for the Red River Theatre on the hotel's lower level.

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IF YOU GO

Capitol Center for the Arts

44 South Main Street, Concord, NH. (603) 225-1111. www.ccanh.com. Full schedule of events, year-round.

The Hotel Concord.

11 South Main Street, Concord, NH. (603) 504-3500. www.hotelconcordnh.com. Ask for the "When in Concord" special: \$80 gift certificate for dinner at O Steak and Seafood, turn down service with robes, slippers, Astor chocolate, and two tickets/two popcorns to Red River Theatres. Close proximity: Capitol Center for the Arts for concerts and events.

Gibson's Bookstore.

45 South Main Street, Concord, NH. (603) 224-0562. Largest independent bookstore in Northern New England. Hosts over 100 author events.

McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center.

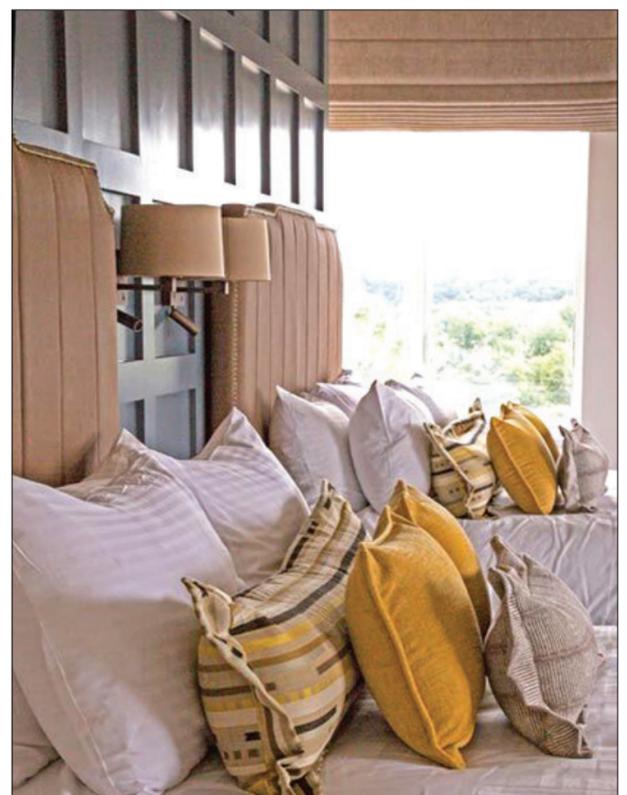
2 Institute Way, Concord, NH. www.starhop.com. Open 10:30-4 p.m. with First Friday of the month: 6:30-9 p.m.

O Steak and Seafood.

Located through the hotel lobby. Contemporary American cuisine with excellent wine menu. 24 wines by the glass.

Red River Theatres.

Art house/documentary three-screen cinema featuring independent films, small screenings, and workshops. Conveniently located on lower level of hotel.



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