



The Gastonian

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BAILEY DAVIDSON

The Gastonian, located near Forsyth Park, consists of two adjoining Regency-Italianate-style mansions built in 1868. The mansions bear the marks of history, literally, in the cracks along the façade and the original kitchen fireplace, damage left by an earthquake that occurred in the Savannah area during the late 1800s.

Today, The Gastonian is owned by HLC Hotels, a Savannah-based hotel management company that operates several other prestigious hotels or inns in Savannah. *Condé Nast Traveler* included The Gastonian on its 2006 Gold List, acknowledging The Gastonian as one of the finest places to stay in the world.

The bed and breakfast features 17 guest rooms, each uniquely furnished and named after prominent Savannah natives such as Flannery O'Connor, Juliette Gordon Low and Mary Telfair. All guest rooms have working fireplaces, and most feature truly impressive (and huge) whirlpool baths. Guests are given personalized breakfast menus, and they can choose either a silver tray service or they may join other guests for family-style breakfasts.

Tea, with hors d'oeuvres and wine, is served between 4:30 and 6 p.m. Desserts and cordials are served from 8 to 10 p.m. The Gastonian employs three chefs, and everything is made in-house. Some guests enjoy extras such as chilled bottles of champagne with turndown service. Every guest enjoys the benefits of a 24-hour concierge desk.

Innkeeper Melanie Bliss says it is the service — “every attention to detail” — that makes The Gastonian such a unique place to stay.

“Our guests feel free to talk to each other. They feel like they are in someone’s house,” explained Bliss. The Gastonian is famous for its excellent food, and it has more than 20 employees to cater to the guests’ every need.

In addition to its usual attractive packages, The Gastonian offers a special Christmas shopping package that includes a walking or carriage tour and extras such as champagne.

The concierge helps guests plan their personal itineraries, with The Gastonian taking care of things such as making restaurant reservations or booking tours. “We don’t want our guests to worry about a thing,” Bliss said.

Born and raised in Homburg, Germany, Bliss studied hotel management through Kempinski Hotels. She moved to New York City eight years ago and worked as a front desk concierge at the Plaza Athenee, one of the top three hotels in the city. In 2001, Bliss married and moved to Savannah, where she was hired by The Gastonian while it was owned by Ann Landers (an innkeeper from Atlanta). When HLC Hotels purchased The Gastonian, the company asked Bliss to stay on as its manager.

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“We have most the beautiful Christmas decorations in Savannah,” said Bliss, but quickly added, “that’s my subjective opinion.”

Holiday foods include mulled wine cake, gingerbread house displays, gingerbread pancakes, an assortment of Christmas cookies and German cakes, and a spiced holiday punch. Guests can expect 30 or more items at afternoon tea. The holidays are also a popular time for special occasion teas for private parties.

