

New Storybook England

*Vermont's inimitable
Twin Farms is an elegant hideaway
of epic proportions*

FROM THE MOMENT YOU ARRIVE AT Twin Farms, in Barnard, Vt., one thing is clear: You're not a guest, you're home. Provided, that is, you've been invited to this resplendent 18th-century country estate by a wealthy and generous uncle who simply adores exquisite art and antiques, prized first-edition classics, gourmet food, and, of course, you.

Lest you think you're dreaming — and you may be after slum-

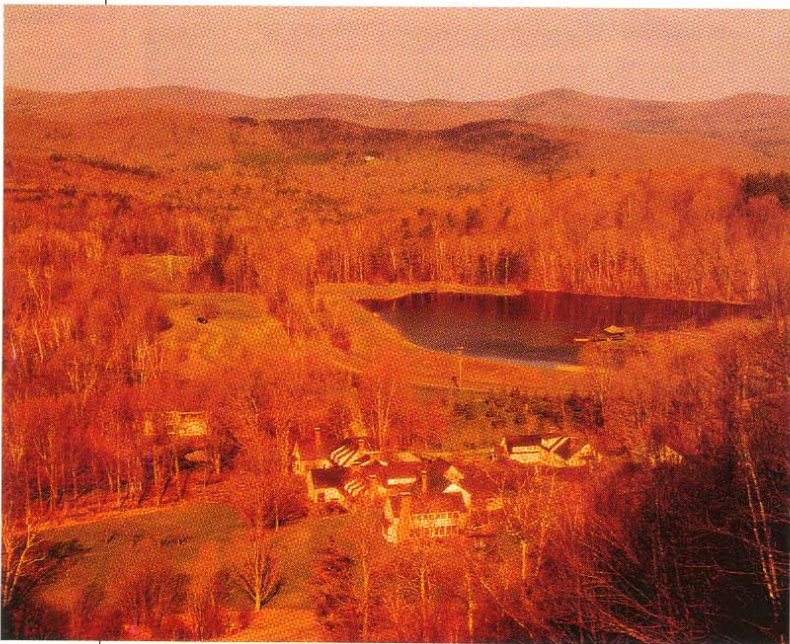
bering in one of Twin Farms' legendary featherbeds — it is all quite real. This quintessential romantic hideaway is a year-round outdoor destination for those who take their pleasure seriously.

"If this is heaven I promise to be good for the rest of my life," noted a recent occupant whose summation can be counted among two leather-bound volumes of praise from guests.

The estate was once home to America's first Nobel Prize-winning novelist, Sinclair Lewis, and his wife, Dorothy Thompson, internationally acclaimed journalist and foreign correspondent. Originally little more than a modest stone farmhouse and barn, it was the venue for informal house parties attended by some of America's most noted literary, political and social figures throughout the '30s, '40s and '50s — from a young Henry Kissinger to a brooding H.L. Mencken. One can easily imagine the heady discussions of world politics and literature held by the lone fireplace that tended to smoke a bit. Not to mention the splendid summers enjoyed amid Thompson's lovingly tended wildflowers, raspberry bushes and fragrant apple orchard. The latter two now supply Twin Farms' kitchen with a sweet array of luscious tarts, pies, butters and preserves.

Set on 300 acres of fields, forests, gardens and glens, Twin Farms offers a full range of sports year-round. Everything from swimming, canoeing and fly fishing on a trout-stocked lake, to

By Judy Alexandra DiEdwardo
Photographed by Janine Menlove



mountain biking, hiking, ice skating and sleigh riding can be found. For those who cross-country ski, Twin Farms' private slopes afford a sweeping 30-mile view to Mount Ascutney.

Seasoned runners and mountain bikers consider Twin Farms' sloping terrain a formidable challenge, and even the most ardent couch potato will find it difficult to resist a stroll through the woods or a visit to the on-site fitness center.

There were ample opportunities beyond Twin Farms' inconspicuous iron gates to exercise the four-door Tahoe I drove to Vermont. It made easy work of Twin Farms' winding lanes and sharp-sloped roadways. And the optional Autotrac 4x4 system's ability to deliver traction to the wheels that need it most, combined with the independent front suspension, made exploring Vermont's two-track roads a pleasure.

While its off-road performance is impressive, Tahoe certainly didn't ride like a truck. Its refined appointments — especially the deep padded seats and leather interior — made the ride nearly as

comfortable as a Twin Farms' feather bed. For 1998, an available ZM9 comfort and security package includes heated power driver and passenger seats (see "Truckline," page 11) to make the Tahoe even more comfortable on those crisp Vermont mornings.

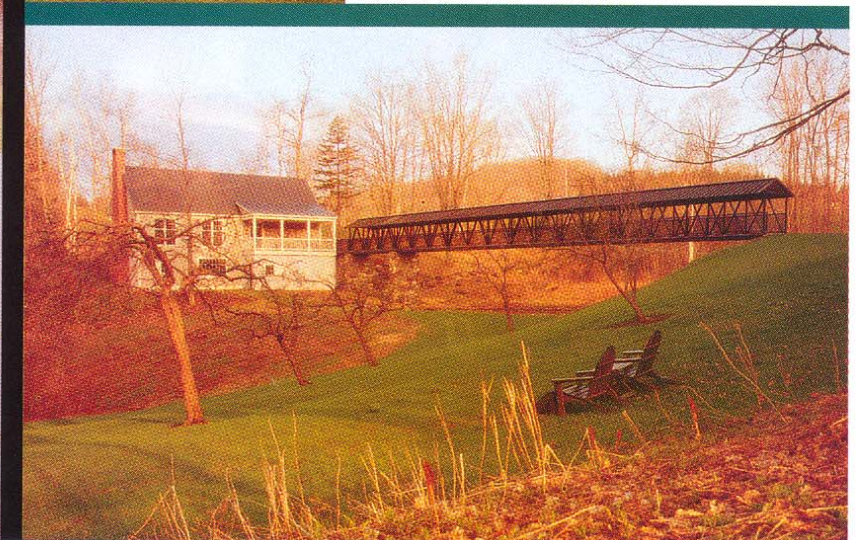
Vermont's quaint towns, legendary covered bridges (five in a 20-mile radius of Twin Farms), numerous fishing opportunities and the world-famous Orvis Company's fly-fishing museum were good reasons to plan a day trip. The 4-door Tahoe had room for luggage, fishing rods and more. Its up to 118.2 cubic feet of cargo space left room to store the treasures found at the area's world-class antique stores and artisan centers.

Not that you have to leave Twin Farms to view antiques. Many of the rare books and collectibles throughout the property are from the owners' private collections. In fact, it's common to find first-edition Hemingways (*Men Without Women*, 1927), Twains (*Connecticut Yankee*, 1889), Manns (*Joseph and His Brothers*, 1934) and, of course, virtually every novel penned by

Lewis — *Arrowsmith*, *Main Street*, *Elmer Gantry*, *Babbitt*, *Dodsworth*. And there are numerous places to curl up with your favorite: the snug reading loft above the original fireplace in the Barn Room or a luxurious window box tucked beneath the nine-square-foot window that Lewis installed.

After numerous changes in ownership, Twin Farms was purchased in the 1970s as a summer home for its current owners, Thurston Twigg-Smith, a prominent businessman, and

► **Tucked away in the woods** of central Vermont, the grounds of Twin Farms estate provide winding roads, sharp-sloped roadways and ample opportunity to hike, bike, fish or just plain relax.



his wife, Laila. But they couldn't imagine keeping the Green Mountain State's best-kept secret to themselves — especially since they were able to visit only a few weeks each year. They decided upon a transformation. In the fall of 1993, Twin Farms opened to its first guests with an extraordinary collection of cottages thoughtfully tucked along cozy private lanes that wind their way through a thick forest of handsome birch, pine and fir.

Developed by New York architect Alan Wanzenberg and the late internationally renowned tastemaker Jed Johnson, the main house features four suites. And there are 10 separate guest cottages built at a cost of more than \$1 million apiece. Johnson died in the 1996 crash of TWA Flight 800, en route from New York to Paris, but he leaves behind a tribute to his design talent.

I was privileged to stay in Johnson's final contribution to Twin Farms: the Log Cabin — a reconstructed 19th-century Appalachian homestead built from 100-year-old hickory. "It was probably Jed's favorite; it reflected his love for dogs," recalls Twin Farms general manager Shaun Matthews of Johnson's tasteful yet whimsical design tribute to man's best friend. There are bone-shaped peepholes in the doors, paw-print carpeting and tomato-red cafe curtains splashed with tiny dog faces. There's even an elegantly coat-tailed dog-manservant statue offering a tray of — what else? — dog biscuits.

Along with his wife and business partner, Beverley, Matthews oversees this graceful estate with a steady balance of wholesome good manners and casual refinement — minus the oft-times stuffy pretensions of a five-star property. The estate earned the prestigious Mobil award after only two years of operation. This comes as no surprise to those who know Twin Farms — and the Matthews, who have run some of the world's most distinguished resort properties: Amanresort in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and Richard Branson's Necker Island in the British Virgin Islands among them.

"Seeing a guest lazily stretched out on a couch in the reception room with the morning's newspaper strewn about is the highest compliment we could possibly be paid," smiles Beverley Matthews. "We want guests to feel as though this is their second home — a fabulous country estate designed for entertaining."

All of Twin Farms' cottages share a sturdy New England farm-



► **Twin Farms** graceful estate is overseen by resort veterans Shaun and Beverly Matthews. The Log Cabin (at left) boasts a canine design theme that's a tasteful, whimsical tribute to "man's best friend."

house vernacular of stone, pine, maple and brick, warmed by the tangerine glow of floor-to-ceiling fireplaces and textured surfaces of pewter, brushed stainless and soapstone. Natural hand-crafted cotton quilts and woven woolen rugs coddle the spirit, while thick German-made organic cotton bathrobes and butter-soft 310-count bed linens will have you scouring the next white sale.

In the bath, intimate alcoves house oversized claw-foot, copper or sunken bath tubs that open to private full-window portholes of postcard-perfect meadow and wooded views. Beeswax candles and a generous collection of aromatherapy soaps, scrubs and wooden body massagers are joined by a bright yellow rubber duck — or an equally seaworthy tugboat — whimsical reminders that true luxury is best served with a dollop of good humor.

But that is where the continuity ends: Like a prized Fabergé, each guest room and cottage is a distinctive work of art infused with its own identity. Yet nothing is predictable. Each cottage