



Mount Greylock

Out in the Berkshires

FIND A FABULOUS INN, MAKE IT YOUR BASE CAMP AND EXPLORE THE FOUR SEASONS OF WESTERN MASS

“I like creating occasions for people.”

That’s how Scott Shortt explains his motivation for opening the Kemble Inn in Lenox, Massachusetts—the heart of the beautiful, notably gay-friendly Berkshires.

He’s quite good at his goal. The Kemble makes a striking first impression. Open the front door to this 1881-built Colonial Revival mansion and you’re met by a sparkling crystal chandelier set against a backdrop of bright “Caribbean blue” walls, a classic-contemporary juxtaposition that carries throughout the property.

In the gorgeous piano-equipped parlor, 12-foot-high ceilings soar, and flames roar in a grand fireplace framed by ornate millwork; tiger-print accent pillows keep it playful. Queens of all kinds will appreciate the regal whimsy of the dining room-style on-site restaurant, Table Six, which is filled with paintings of Canadian (and UK) monarch Elizabeth II—Shortt is an Ontario native. And the 13 guest rooms, several with their own working fireplaces, are appointed in the style of a more flair-filled Ralph Lauren.

It’s a stunner, bringing comfortable refinement—and a dose of its owner’s chic gay sensibility—to a region better known for lace and doily-stuffed B&Bs.

It didn’t always look like this. The 12,000-square foot estate on two acres was built for Frederick T. Frelinghuysen, U.S. Secretary of State under President Chester A. Arthur, and needed lots of love by the time Shortt purchased it in 2010 for \$1.65 million. It was “flowers on flowers, like bad 1980s Laura Ashley,” laughs Shortt, who at one point slept on the inn’s basement floor



Kemble Inn

while pouring \$2 million into renovating the property.

The result: a cozy-classy boutique hide-away that’s especially perfect for special events—he’s hosted a number of same-sex weddings—and buyouts for groups of gay pals. It’s even rumored that a certain monstrously famous, LGBT-favorite pop star once took the place over. In February, he’ll open a new 16-seat cocktail bar inside the inn, offering another reason for visitors to stop by.

It hasn’t been easy single-handedly transforming a historic property in the hyper-seasonal Berkshires, but Shortt has a history of ambitious enterprises. He started his first graphic design and Internet marketing company when he was 17 years old and sold it by age 25. Shortt succeeded in corporate America, climbing the ranks of financial service giants, but the hospitality bug always had a strong bite on him. He wound up enrolling in NYC’s French Culinary Institute and, in addition to his



Nick Cave exhibition at Mass MoCA. PHOTO courtesy of Mass MoCA

full-time job, even worked in a catering kitchen one day a week to learn the ropes of the industry.

Now his passion shows in every corner, giving the Berkshires gay-owned accommodations primed to update the larger region's rep.

"I fell in love with this place," says Shortt. We know the feeling.

Out in the Berkshires

Use the Kemble Inn as your home base from which to explore one of New England's most LGBT-friendly reasons. Here are a few top ideas in other towns.

Becket. Its kitsch-filled, campy-roadhouse interior recalls the B-52s' famous "Love Shack," so it's no surprise that Dream Away Lodge, a 200-year-old farmhouse on the edge of October Mountain State Forest is reputedly a former brothel. Since 1997 it has been home to former theater artist Daniel Osman, whose radical faerie philosophy informs the vibe of his eclectic eatery. Weekending Brooklyn hipsters and queer crowds converge for fabulous farm-to-fork dining, funky cocktails around a glowing fire pit and nightly live music. Wearing its quirks on its sleeve, this whimsical hideaway is a total gem hidden in the thick of Western Mass's mountains. Dream Away Lodge is seasonal, closing in late November; it reopens in March. But Becket's Jacob's Pillow, founded by pioneering modern dance artist Ted Shawn, well-known for his romances with male performers, recently extended its programming to include four seasons of events—all the more reason to visit the Berkshires institution.

Pittsfield. Berkshire County's largest city is home to Barrington Stage Company,



Ballet Hispanico Dancers at Jacob's Pillow. PHOTO courtesy of Jacob's Pillow

producing works like the 2018 world premiere of "The Royal Family of Broadway," a musical based on the life of the famed Barrymore clan. When you visit, dine at gay-owned District Kitchen & Bar for excellent New American cuisine, and toss back a few at Methuselah, a craft cocktail bar that wouldn't be out of place in Boston.

Egremont. The Berkshires' LGBT community is strong but scattered, so shout-out to folks like Oskar Hallig, who is helping to organize more consistent community events. He's a member of both Out in the Berkshires and Fourth Friday, Berkshire Queer Night Out, a Facebook-based collective that organizes everything from bowling to movie nights. Hallig also has his own Egremont-based event business

that is producing the "Miss No-Good Drag Pageant" on Friday, January 19 (8–11 p.m.) at The Barn at Egremont Village Inn, the town's rustic-cool bar and live music venue.

North Adams. Stop in to gay-owned restaurant PUBLIC Eat + Drink for elevated comfort food, then head to MASS MoCo, the nationally renowned contemporary art museum spread over a campus of brick warehouses. Through February 11 you can catch "Are You Really My Friend?" T photo exhibition that's also a meditation on social media and intimacy that saw artist Tanja Hollander travel the world to snap images of all her hundreds of Facebook connections. [x]