

WHERE TO STAY NOW

This Sprawling Property Is a Piece of Austin History. Now You Can Stay There.

In bustling South Austin, the new Inn at Green Pastures provides an oasis of tranquility on six acres of live oak–shaded grounds.



By David Courtney

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The entry to the Inn at Green Pastures.
Casey Dunn

For those of a certain age, the name Green Pastures will conjure memories of exquisite Sunday brunch buffets, or fancy wedding receptions, or big birthday celebrations. It began its life as a restaurant in 1946, set among a sprawling grove of ancient live oaks in South Austin and housed in an elegant Southern manor, gleaming white with a large wraparound porch and, starting in the sixties, resident peafowl. For decades, Green Pastures was a true icon of the Austin dining scene. “When it comes to putting seafood and

cream sauce inside puff pastry, the kitchen has the act down pat,” said a *Texas Monthly* review from 1983.

The brand-new **Inn at Green Pastures**, which opened its doors to guests this past December, is indeed just the latest chapter for a property with a long and rich history in the capital. The original home, constructed in the late nineteenth century, served as a farmhouse in what was then rural South Austin. In 1916, it was purchased by attorney Henry Faulk and his wife, Martha “Mattie” Faulk. Among the Faulks’ five children was **John Henry Faulk**, who was raised on the property before becoming a well-known radio host, humorist, First Amendment warrior, and one of Texas’s great raconteurs. Eventually, one of John Henry’s sisters, Mary Faulk Kooch, along with her husband, Chester Kooch, made the residence her home. And it was Mary, a talented chef (with the guidance of one James Beard, she authored the noteworthy **Texas Cookbook**), who first launched Green Pastures into its restaurantdom.



The residence that would become Green Pastures, circa 1895–1896.

Texas Historical Commission/University of North Texas Libraries/The Portal to Texas History



Green Pastures in 1980.

Texas Historical Commission/University of North Texas Libraries/The Portal to Texas History

Through the years, Green Pastures has changed hands a few times, most recently in 2015, when it was acquired by the local La Corsha Hospitality Group, which breathed new life into the restaurant with necessary and extensive renovations to the tune of \$10 million. Green Pastures became **Mattie’s**, named for Martha “Mattie” Faulk. Opened in 2017, the restaurant gained due acclaim for its Southern fare. A *Texas Monthly* review from its opening year described it as “a delightful update of that old-Austin icon” that was “carefully recrafted in a sleek yet stately way.”

Since then, in a wise move that included not attempting to fix what wasn't broke, the La Corsha folks, who are behind such projects as the **Hotel Settles**, in Big Spring; the East Austin Hotel, in Austin; and the upcoming **Baker Hotel**, in Mineral Wells, among others, have simply enhanced the property with the construction of the hotel. Mattie's remains fully intact, fully functional, and the central focus of Green Pastures' sprawling six acres. But this new draw is a standout addition.



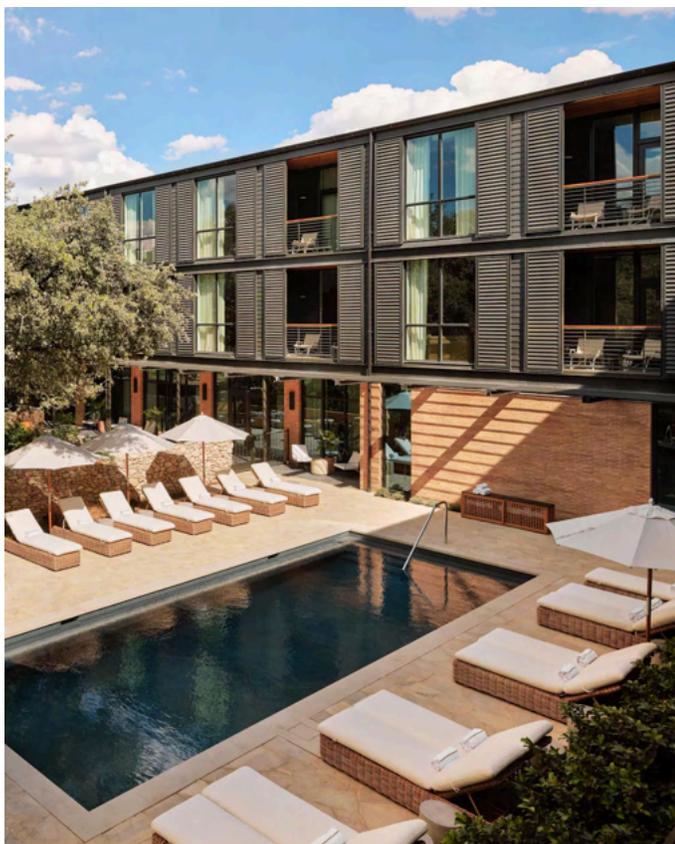
A double queen room at the Inn at Green Pastures.
Casey Dunn

The inn's 63 rooms and suites (rates start at \$325 a night) are strategically tucked into the southeastern rear of the lot (Mattie's is located in the center), and the three-story structure is barely visible from the street. The surrounding portion of the Bouldin Creek neighborhood is a quiet, mostly residential enclave in the midst of otherwise-bustling South Austin. The hotel's bucolic setting appealingly belies the fact that the inn sits adjacent to busy-ish South First Street and within walking distance of pulsing South Congress Avenue.

I had the pleasure of experiencing an overnight stay in early January. Upon entering Green Pastures from West Live Oak Street, I meandered beneath a leafy canopy along a twisty drive to a valet stand (valet parking is mandatory). From there, a slightly elevated wooden walkway took me to the hotel's front doors and small lobby. La Corsha teamed up with Austin design firm Clayton Korte (the **Commodore Perry Estate**, in Austin; **Albert Hotel**, in Fredericksburg; **Pullman Market**, at Pearl in San Antonio), and the result is a stylishly polished yet somewhat understated space, both inside and out. Natural woods, mostly blond oaks, and mid-century-modern-ish furniture and decor are warmly welcoming, as is the wood-burning fireplace found in

Henry's Nite & Day, a hip space that functions as the hotel's bar and casual restaurant, serving coffee, breakfast, lunch, and dinner late into the night.

Henry's is an accessible supplement to Mattie's (which was closed for a short winter break while I was there), and I can personally vouch for the excellent service, caviar-and-dill-enhanced deviled eggs, delicious smashburger, out-of-this-world cornmeal pancakes and slab bacon, and generally relaxed vibes. Bartenders double as deejays, tending to the vinyl collection and accompanying turntable.



The modest, inviting pool.
Casey Dunn



Henry's Nite & Day, where guests can fuel up.
Casey Dunn

Though the early-January temperatures did not allow me to indulge, the hotel has a perfectly modest swimming pool, which will surely be a draw in the warmer months. Food and drinks are serviced by Henry's Poolside, Henry's Nite & Day's alfresco alter ego. On the wellness front, a better-than-average hotel fitness studio featured Technogym equipment, and the next enhancement for Green Pastures, a luxury spa, is set to open in 2028.

The rooms are similarly mid-century-modern-ish. My standard king pool-view room had a combination of oak hardwood flooring and rich green carpeting, Sferra linens, a fluffy bathrobe and slippers, a spacious walk-in shower, bath products by Lather, a flat-screen television, a Tivoli Bluetooth speaker, and a minibar with mostly locally sourced beverages and snacks. True boutique-hotel bona fides were displayed by way of a kind and welcoming handwritten note left for me on my coffee table, along with two complimentary bottles of water and a “small indulgence,” which consisted of a pair of gluten-free vanilla bean shortbread cookies with caramelized white chocolate.

Though I live in Austin, I took the opportunity to get out after my dinner at Henry’s and sample a little of what South Austin has to offer. The hotel provides complimentary bicycles, but it was nice out, so I chose to walk the short distance to South Congress. As I made my way there (twenty or so minutes), with an eye toward catching some local music at the venerable **Continental Club**, I passed plentiful good dining options along South First. Right near Green Pastures are the casual, vegetarian Bouldin Creek Café; the upscale, farm-to-table Lenoir; and the always-great Vietnamese boulangerie Elizabeth Street Café. Visitors wanting to experience South Congress will find plenty more there: excellent restaurants (Perla’s, Home Slice Pizza, Aba, **Maie Day**, and Joann’s Fine Foods, to highlight just a few), live-music venues (the Continental Club, C-Boy’s Heart and Soul), and high-end shopping (**Hermès**).

As it was Wednesday night, I took in a set from Austin stalwart Jon Dee Graham, who maintains a residency at the Continental. As I made my way back to Green Pastures on foot, I felt invigorated by the evening and my whole in-town excursion. I would be a little sad at checkout time.

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