

## ESCAPES &amp; GETAWAYS COLUMNS

Seniors on the Go / *By Ed Perkins*

# Finding a bed and breakfast for a beautiful autumn trip

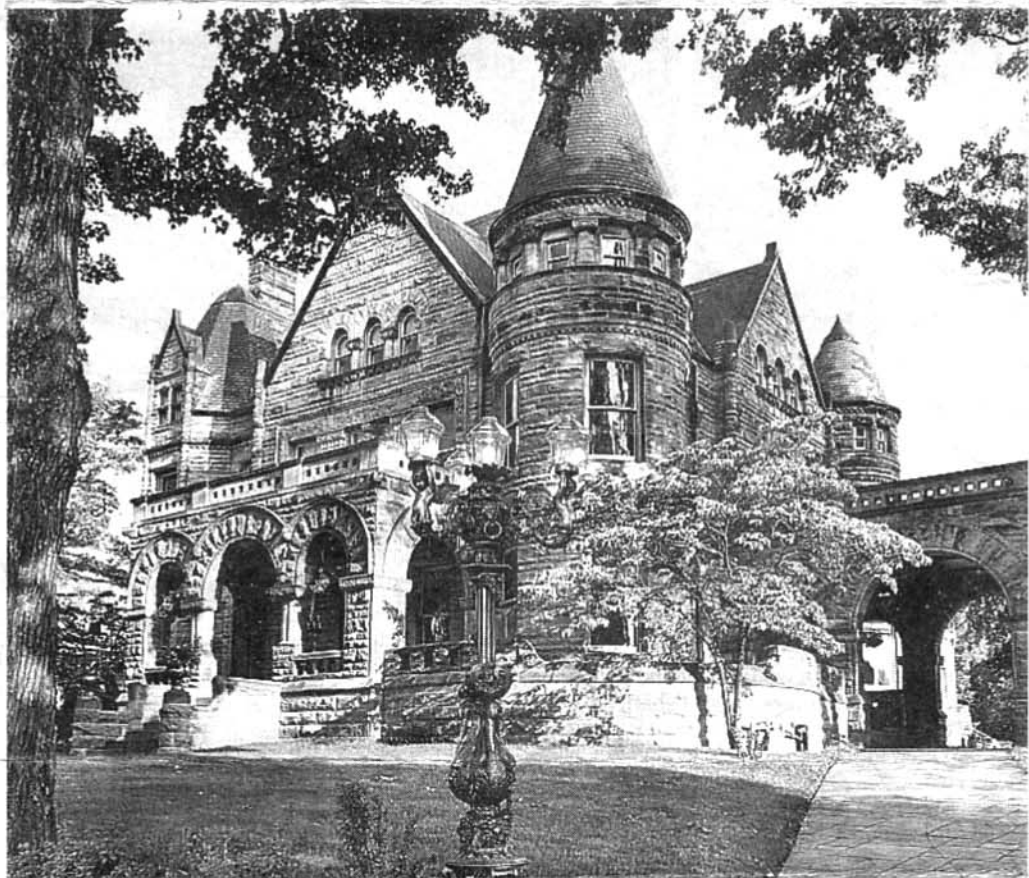
If you're planning a fall trip and like to stay at bed and breakfast accommodations, the Internet is the best place to start looking. Last year, I checked out some of the more promising online sites for booking B and Bs; here's an update.

Let me repeat my usual bed and breakfast disclaimer. I don't stay at B and Bs, at least not in the United States. Specifically, I don't like schedule inflexibility, limited menu selections, being thrust together with strangers I really don't want to meet; an atmosphere that makes me think I have to whisper, and often poor TV and phone options. I don't want quaint; I want MSNBC and ESPN. But I know that's a minority position among senior travelers, and my bias won't stand in the way of taking a hard look at the subject.

To locate a bed and breakfast in a destination you plan to visit, start by checking with one of the Web sites that specialize in bed and breakfast listings, the best of which cover thousands of individual establishments. As with so many such searches, the Internet has taken over as a traveler's best resource.

Over several years, I've found that my hometown, Ashland, Ore., is a good barometer for evaluating online bed and breakfast sites. We have more than 40 local B and Bs, and our town's theater, music, art, and outdoor activities tend to attract a bed and breakfast crowd — and a senior crowd. Ashland listings are therefore a good test of the coverage in other vacation destinations. I test the sites by (1) number of local listings, (2) whether they include any extraneous conventional motels or resorts, and (3) whether they list Chanticleer and Arden Forest Inn, the town's top-rated B and Bs by Trip Advisor.

The results of this year's test are sharply different from 2006, which were a big change from 2005. This time, I found four online sites that seem to offer the most useful mix of extensive listings and details on individu-



Buhl Mansion, Washington Post.  
**Buhl Mansion, built by steel magnate Frank H. Buhl in 1898, is now a bed and breakfast located in Sharon, Pa., and is well worth a fall visit.**

al inns in the area. Each lists at least 10 B and Bs in or near Ashland, with enough information about each bed and breakfast — either directly or through a link, to allow you to make an informed choice. Each lists the top-rates spots:

- Inn Site ([www.innsite.com](http://www.innsite.com)) has the most Ashland listings, at 38, with two extraneous listings.
- InnSeekers ([www.innseekers.com](http://www.innseekers.com)) has 32 Ashland listings, four extraneous.
- Pamela Lanier's bed and breakfast ([www.lanierbb.com](http://www.lanierbb.com)) has 17 Ashland listings, none extraneous.
- InnSite Bed and Breakfasts ([www.innsite.com](http://www.innsite.com)) has 10 Ashland listings, none extraneous.

Pamela Lanier's is the only carryover from last year's top four list. Apparently there's a lot of upheaval among the bed and breakfast sites every year. I

checked another dozen or so sites, but their Ashland listings fall short of the top sites. For the most part, the top sites are similar; many of the same local B and Bs appear on each.

As far as I can tell, all four of the sites I describe cover the entire United States plus many popular destination areas throughout the world. All present enough information, or link you to enough, for you to make a purchase decision: rates, room characteristics, location, and such.

Beyond those bed and breakfast search sites, of course, be sure to take a look at TripAdvisor ([www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)), the Internet's top source for accommodations reviews written by travelers. TripAdvisor lists 35 B and Bs in Ashland with reviews for about half of them. Again, the Ashland entry is probably a good indication of

what you'll find for other destinations.

Those of you who are not online can find useful bed and breakfast guidebooks. Pamela Lanier (the Web site sponsor) also publishes "The Complete Guide to Bed and Breakfasts, Inns and Guesthouses: In the United States, Canada, and Worldwide." And most of the big guidebook series, such as AAA, Fodors and Frommers, include bed and breakfasts in their accommodations recommendations.

(Send e-mail to Ed Perkins at [eperkins\(at\)mind.net](mailto:eperkins(at)mind.net). Perkins' new book for small business and independent professionals, "Business Travel When It's Your Money," is now available through [www.mybusinesstravel.com](http://www.mybusinesstravel.com) or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).)