



● Aska Lodge, Blue Ridge, Georgia

Rise and greet the Fall

The leaf peepers were out. And who could blame them. They were everywhere photographing the fantastic Fall colours ranging from every tone of yellow and orange to copper and gold.

Blue Ridge in America's Georgia in the autumn – or indeed any time of the year – is a corner of heaven with a gentler pace of life where people do have time to stop and stare and greet you with a smile.

If you ever get your fill of the leaves, you can go pumpkin hunting, panning for gold, ride the open-carriage train to Copperhill to stand with one foot in north Georgia and the other in Tennessee.

There are trout streams and horse back riding.



● The Jessica Lynn room at Aska Lodge

TRISHA FERMOR enjoys a golden autumn in the American south

The Toccoa River, the stunning backdrop to the film *Deliverance*, provides great canoeing, and don't forget to take your banjo. Bizarrely, there is also a Kangaroo Conservation Centre not far away.

Just under two hours away on almost deserted roads, is the tiny hamlet of Juliette and the cafe which was central to the tear jerker film *Fried Green Tomatoes* at the Whistle Stop Cafe. It looks just the same and do eat the delicious tomatoes!

At Blue Ridge, we stayed at Aska Lodge, described as a B&B but more a three-star hotel. The innkeepers, as they are known in the USA, are Mary Jo Stamper and her husband, retired police officer Bob.

Their superb home is on the side of a mountain just two miles from the town. Right out of a Western, the wooden house boasts wrap-around porches with the obligatory swings, a stars and stripes flag, a fire pit in the garden and acres of

colourful trees.

The house has four bedrooms, each en suite, plump beds and plush bath robes. The rooms are named after family members and the Jessica Lynn room has a king-sized four poster. The public areas are spacious and very comfortable, filled with the couple's knick-knacks and antiques. Their hospitality is as bottomless as Mary Jo's cookie jar, the snack centre and well-stocked fridge with complimentary sodas. Guests can also use a free machine which dispenses Georgia peach gumballs!

Mary Jo's candlelight breakfasts are renowned: Blueberry pancakes with berries picked from the garden, praline French toast, double chocolate muffins, not to mention the sausage biscuits.

Whatever season it is, everyone is sure of a true Georgia welcome from Mary Jo and Bob, and their pooch Abby, in their idyllic mountain hideaway.

Factfile

Nearest international airport: Hartsfield International, Atlanta, a 1.5 hour drive from Blue Ridge
Rates: Double occupancy rate per night is 96 dollars or 150 dollars with discounts for longer stays.
For more information log onto www.askalodge.net
Rave reviews can be seen on bedandbreakfast.com