

Sister B&Bs offer best of two worlds

By Joyce Rudowski
Enquirer contributor

There is a difference between accommodations and destinations. Here are two road trip worthy spots that belong in the latter category.

The Buhl Mansion in Sharon, Pa., is a luxury guesthouse that features a complete spa with an abundant menu of treatments, therapies and body care.

Nearby Tara – A Country Inn in Clark, Pa. combines a lakeside setting with fine food, including seven-course dining in Ashley's Gourmet dining room or the cozy atmosphere of the Stonewall Tavern.

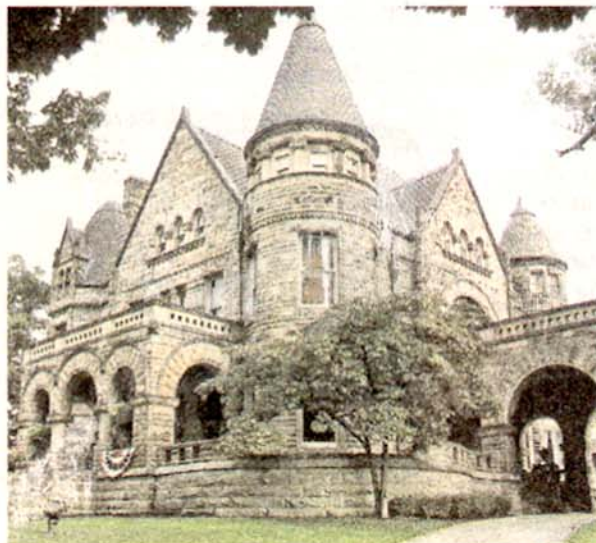
Buhl mansion

Built by steel magnate Frank Buhl in the 1890s, the mansion combines 19th-century elegance with 21st-century convenience.

The first floor parlors welcome guests to read, enjoy games and converse. Bright walls reflect light from tall windows on the north and east. Beyond the parlors is the stately, dark-wood library. Books, board games and videos are available for guests' use. The deep shades of the wood paneling and comfortable furniture invite guests to linger by one of the mansion's many working fireplaces.

The castle-like mansion was originally built as a home in roughly the same time period as Cincinnati City Hall, and the architectural style of both is Richardsonian Romanesque. It features large, rough-hewn building blocks giving the design a fortress-like quality.

After the Buhls died without children, the home passed down through the Forker family. In the late '60s and '70s,



Photos provided by Joyce Rudowski



James and Donna Winner turned Buhl Mansion (left) and Tara in B&Bs.

the mansion was divided into apartments. Later the ground floor was used as a restaurant and then a cosmetology school. The home was vacant for several years before it was bought in 1996 by James and Donna Winner. They spent millions, restoring the mansion into a quality bed and breakfast.

All the pieces in the house are antiques that have been collected by the Winners.

The breakfast room is at the rear of the house overlooking the formal gardens and waterfall fish pond.

Two words best fit the rooms at the Buhl: antiques and Jacuzzis. The rooms are individual in their size and shape, fitting the contour of the house. Nevertheless, every room is filled with what can be described as "comfortable antiques." There isn't a chair you can't sit on or a lamp that can't be turned on.

Then there are the bathrooms – spacious and luxurious. Every room has a two-person Jacuzzi tub. Most of those are large and round. In the third-floor room, the Jacuzzi is set in a platform under a grand turret.

In the basement, deep window wells allow natural light to enhance the spa lounge and heavenly-scented treatment areas. Mansion guests are invited to use the steam room, sauna and monsoon showers any time night or day.

Tara – A Country Inn

The Buhl Mansion and Tara are intended to give visitors a choice of accommodation and ambience, says manager Laura Ackley, who is also marketing director for Tara. The Winners owned and operated another local inn when they went looking for their "Tara." Fans of the movie "Gone with

the Wind," they searched the country and finally returned to Sharon, Pa., and bought a farmhouse they made into a 27-room inn on Lake Shenango near the Clark, Pa.

Tara recalls the romantic notions of the antebellum South. Built in 1854, about the time of its fictional namesake, Tara was the home of Charles Koonce who owned 1,300 acres in the town of Clarksville on the Erie Canal. The décor is Southern plantation and its ambience created by afternoon tea served by a hostess in an antebellum gown – Scarlet O'Hara-style.

The central portion of the inn is the renovated farmhouse with the backyard, a landscaped garden with walkways to the lakefront. The décor is definitely Southern plantation with pastoral scenes, busts of Southern generals and Confederate-era army gear and firearms.

IF YOU GO

Getting there: Sharon, Pa. is a drive of 4 hours and 45 minutes from Cincinnati.

What: Buhl Mansion (pictured)
Where: 422 E. State St., Sharon, Pa.

Rates: Rooms (adults only, non-smoking) range from \$350 to \$450 per night, up to \$850 for packages.

Reservations: 866-345-2845; www.buhlmansion.com

What: Tara – A Country Inn
Where: 2844 Lake Road, Clark, Pa.

Rates: Rooms range from \$250-\$425 per night. There are 27 guest rooms.

Reservations: 800-782-2803; www.tara-inn.com

