

Travel

Milford, PA



A new hotel reinvigorates a Gilded Age resort town.
By Drew Limsky

Back in the 1820s, when fine dining existed only in the homes of the rich and a meal out meant a bowl of soup in a roadhouse, Delmonico's, America's first bona fide restaurant, opened in New York, dazzling its patrons with such delicacies as lobster Newburg and chicken à la king. In 1852 Delmonico's master chef, Louis Fauchère, bought a hotel in Milford, Pennsylvania, a summer resort enclave 75 miles from New York, which became increasingly fashionable as stately buildings by Charles McKim, Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted began to spring up in town. By 1880 the chef replaced the old hotel with the three-story Italianate **Hotel Fauchère** that stands today (401 Broad St at Catherine St, 570-409-1212, hotelfauchere.com; rooms from \$275).

In its Gilded Age heyday and into the 20th century, Milford weekenders included Sarah Bernhardt, FDR, JFK and even the notorious "girl in the red velvet swing," Evelyn Nesbit (whose husband, Harry Thaw, shot her former lover Stanford White on the roof of Madison Square Garden). Eventually, the town fell off the social map until gay activist Sean Strub (founder of

POZ magazine) spearheaded a local beautification effort in 2001, which brought pocket parks and plantings to the main road of Broad Street.

He also started buying up properties like the Fauchère, which he acquired in 2001 and began to painstakingly restore two years later. Many locals wondered why he delayed the renovation, to which Strub replies, "They didn't understand that I had to let the building breathe." Strub, who is also an avid art collector and preservationist (his partner is best-selling author John Berendt, of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* fame), tried to maintain as much of the structure as possible, though "little of the original architecture could be preserved." Today the Fauchère, which debuted in July 2006, houses 15 beautifully designed, neutral-hued rooms, all featuring wall-mounted plasma TVs, beds swathed in Frette, and bathrooms that boast warming towel racks and heated slate floors. Rooms 3 and 10 are choice for their claw-foot soaking tubs; 11 offers a double rainfall shower; and Room 2 is a suite with a private sitting area.

Beyond the hotel, the historic town of Milford (pop. 1,200) has reemerged as a year-round destination, chic enough to tempt celebrity architects—including Fred Schwartz, a WTC finalist—to compete to design the new library. The area boasts a slew of

galleries like **The Golden Fish Gallery** (307 Broad St at Ann St, 570-296-0413), which features the ink drawings and pastels of primarily area artists, along with the 70,000-acre **Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area**. To locals like Derek Roberts, a kitchen and bath designer in town, "the natural beauty of the area, given its proximity to New York" is the location's biggest draw. "My mountain bike is well used," he says, "and after work I like to take the dog and swim in a waterfall. I heard it's the least visited of all our national parks, so if one swimming hole is occupied, you can always find another." You don't have to rough it foodwise if you're out for a long hike. **Fretta's** (223 Broad St at Pear Alley, 570-296-7863) rivals any gourmet Italian deli in New York and will load you up with cheeses, breads, olives and prepared foods for the afternoon.

Serious foodies will appreciate the stylings of the Hotel Fauchère's Michael Glatz, the star chef who helped put Vieques, Puerto Rico on the culinary map with the Inn on the Blue Horizon and FoodSpace at the Bravo Beach Hotel. In the romantic **Delmonico Room**, indulge in the caramel-glazed rockfish fillet or the roasted guinea hen with wild-mushroom *stagionato* risotto. For a more casual experience, settle into a booth in the hotel's **Bar Louis**, under a

huge Christopher Makos photo of Andy Warhol kissing John Lennon. Strub motions toward the blowup. "I was thinking it might be too much for the town," he says, "but so far, nobody has complained." The Thai grilled spare ribs are excellent, but the real star here is the sushi pizza, made with rice tempura crust and tuna tartare. As Strub walks around the bar, he recalls the arduousness of the renovation. "We had to lift the building and extend the foundation—otherwise the bar would have been too small."

It has proved too small for some events: The bimonthly dance parties at Bar Louis (on the first and third Saturdays of the month) draw a mixed crowd (though they are predominantly gay), and NYC DJs (Sin Morera spins from 9pm to 2am on the third Saturday) and are now so popular that the revelry had to relocate next door to **The Emerson House** (403 Broad St at Catherine St; contact the Hotel Fauchère for more info). Meanwhile, this summer, Roberts is hoping to bring Milford's first Hotlanta-style float party to the Delaware River, which, by the way, is the longest free-flowing river in the country.

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THE TAB

Hotel	\$275
Car rental (including gas)	130
+ Meals	200

TOTAL COST: \$605
(one night, two people)



Take the Lincoln Tunnel to I-95 South/NJ Tpke South; take Exit 15W to Rte 280 West; take exit on the left to Rte 80 West; merge onto Rte 15 North via Exit 34B; Rte 15 becomes Rte 206; make slight right to Rte 209/Federal Rd; turn right onto Rte 209/US-6/Broad St.

TRAVEL TIME
1hr 30mins