



August 6, 2007 • By Nick Burns

Milford on the Map

A gay-friendly Pennsylvania town revamps a classic, historic hotel. Ready for your weekend getaway?

When the helicopter touched down in a field at a llama farm in Milford, Pennsylvania, it was hard to believe that just 25 minutes ago, I was taking off from the helipad on West 30th Street and the West Side Highway in New York City during the roar of rush hour traffic. I've had a few stamps in my passport, so I'm not a completely inexperienced traveler, but the helicopter was definitely my favorite new kind of air travel. And the llamas (raised by a quirky local farmer) just happen to make for a lovely-if shaggy-welcome party.

This wasn't my first trip to Milford, a quiet town of 1,100 people along the Delaware River. However, my last during a corporate company picnic didn't include a tour of the town, so I was completely unaware of how charming the historic Pennsylvania village actually was. And I had a better reason to be here... My excuse for leaving the city this time was to check out the buzzworthy opening celebration for Bar Louis at the beautifully remodeled and newly reopened Hotel Fauchere.

The make-shift landing area was a freshly cut area of grass outlined with bright orange traffic cones and a tiny wind sock. A minivan whisked me and three others to the hotel after a brief tour of the town. It was clear that helicopters were not a common mode of transportation.

Located just 90 miles from Manhattan, and bordering New York and New Jersey, Milford is well on its way to becoming an ideal weekend getaway for gay men and women who crave a break from city life, but tire of the overcrowded Hamptons, Provincetown or Fire Island shares. Its small town appeal, historical areas, easy access to the Delaware River (rafting! tubing!), growing artist community and antiques mall are just a few of the village's amenities.

But the real jewel of the area is the recently reopened Hotel Fauchere, a 16-room luxury hotel in the heart of downtown Milford. The Italianate-style building with red and white striped awnings cannot be missed when passing by (whether on foot, by car or helicopter). And it's much more than just a place to rest your head.



Opened in 1852 by Louis Fauchere, a former chef of Delmonico's in New York City, the hotel was purchased five years ago by Sean Strub (the founder of Poz Magazine) and Richard Snyder. After a five-year restoration above and beyond its former glory, the reopening of the boutique hotel signaled that Milford won't remain a secret for long.

While the hotel retains the vintage feel of a country haven with antique landscape paintings hanging throughout the halls, it also embraces modern innovations by offering Kiehl's products, radiant heating, and

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heated towel racks in the marble and blue stone bathrooms, Frette bed and bath linens, high-speed wireless internet access, and iPod docking stereos in each room. Sadly, I wasn't able to experience the hotel's hospitality firsthand because they were booked solid, but that didn't keep me from stealing a bath towel and running up a tab at the bar downstairs.

Speaking of which, one of the biggest surprises of the Hotel Fauchere is its ground-floor watering hole, Bar Louis, where I settled into a booth under one of the beautiful photographs by the Hilton Brothers (the mock-artsy moniker taken on by esteemed art stars Christopher Makos and Paul Solberg for their collaboration). Contrasting the classic styling of the hotel, Bar Louis is a Manhattan pub-crawler's wet dream thanks to the chic, modern design of architect William Reue. From the sleek wood-paneled walls to the oversized Makos photograph of Andy Warhol kissing John Lennon on the cheek hanging behind the bar, Bar Louis provides an oasis for gay-friendly city-dwellers who might be in withdrawl from nightlife in the Big Apple but without the snootiness and shirtless bartenders. While Bar Louis is not a gay bar per se, it has its share of gay events (usually Saturdays) and attracts a mixed clientele of locals and weekender refugees from New York City.

While finding a chic bar at a vacation spot is always important, most people don't visit Milford to drink away the day. Luckily, the town's location on the bank of the Delaware River provides boat access, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, fishing, swimming and sun worshipping. And nearby Delaware Water Gap National Park provides 70,000 acres of natural beauty including hiking and biking trails with gorgeous lakes and waterfalls.

Guests at the Fauchere can also arrange for architectural and historical tours of the area (including seeing the very flag that Abraham Lincoln's head was wrapped in after being shot), or llama treks (yes, llama treks) for the more adventurous. And don't miss the Black Bear Film Festival in October, which attracts numerous films from around the world.

Several cocktails later, it was time to warm up the chopper and return to Manhattan. As the llama farm faded into the dark, one thing was clear, Milford was finally on the map. Before long, it may even join the ranks of Provincetown and Fire Island as a popular destination for men and women eager for a respite from city life.

Hotel Fauchere, 401 Broad St., Milford, PA; tel. 570 409 1212; <http://hotelfauchere.com>; rooms from \$200-\$350.

For more information or to plan your visit, contact the Hotel Fauchere; their website also has information on area activities, info on how to get there, etc. For general information on the town of Milford, visit <http://milfordpa.us>.