

LIVING

Head to the Berkshires for a culture-packed summer

By Barbara Hoffman

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Who needs the Hamptons?

Marisa Tomei, Dolly Parton and a passel of nudes are headed to the Berkshires this summer — and you should, too. Here in the hills of Western Massachusetts, music, art and Shakespeare play out against forests and streams.



Marisa Tomei (right) heads back to The Williamstown Theatre Festival this season.

Photo: Richard Feldman

The great cultural smorgasbord starts just 2½ hours from Midtown, in Great Barrington. Saturdays from 9 am to 1 pm, **the farmer's market** on Church Street is a movable feast. Missed it? Fuel up at **Martin's**: Nestled in the crook of Railroad Street, overlooking Main Street and the mountains beyond, this homey eatery's been dishing up Eggs Benedict, Johnny Mash's hard cider and homemade pie since 1989. Grab a scoop of Dirty Chocolate ice cream at **SoCo Creamery**, a few doors down, and you're ready to

hit the trails: **The Berkshires Natural Resources Council** has plenty to choose from.

The big name in these parts is **Tanglewood**, where the Boston Symphony Orchestra summers, James Taylor moonlights and the rest of us picnic on the lawn and listen. The season kicks off June 17 on a country note with Parton, making her Tanglewood debut. Hard on her high heels come Jackson Browne, Brian Wilson and a salute to Jerry Garcia, plus a galaxy of classical stars — notably Yo-Yo Ma, Renee Fleming and pianist Yuja Wang. If you're under 40, tickets are just \$20.

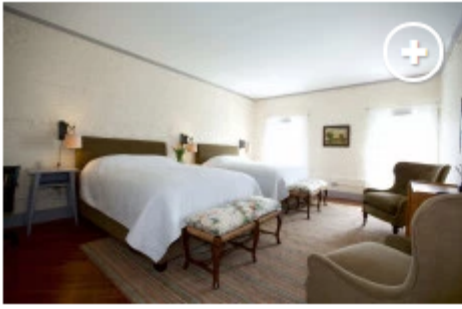
Nearby, in the postcard-pretty town of Stockbridge — birthplace of Arlo Guthrie's "Alice's Restaurant" — the **Norman Rockwell Museum** is marking its centenary of the artist's first Saturday Evening Post cover. From 1916's "Boy with Baby Carriage" comes "Build a Better Baby Carriage," a kicky show of contemporary sculpture on its lush grounds. Then duck inside "the room where it happened": Rockwell's own, perfectly preserved studio.

Over in Lenox, **Shakespeare & Company** is marking the 400th anniversary of the Bard's death with three plays, "The Merchant of Venice" (July 1-Aug. 21) among them. Tina Packer, who literally wrote the book on Shakespeare's heroines (the new "Women of Will") directs, and there'll be a few contemporary plays as well, most of them by women.



Country music legend Dolly Parton makes her debut at Tanglewood on June 17.

Pittsfield, an historic city brought low by industrial bailouts (thanks, GE!), is finally reviving, thanks to a boutique hotel, fine restaurants, a new multiplex and an ideal location, perched as it is between Tanglewood and Williamstown.



A chic bedroom inside Hotel on North.

Photo: Martin Albert/Hotel on North

Hotel on North (from about \$179) opened last summer, splayed cross two 19th century buildings that were home variously to a furniture store, Salvation Army and sporting goods store. (Check out the birdcage-like elevator carriage in the lobby). It also has a sky-lit atrium, party rooms — a bar mitzvah was underway when we visited, replete with stilt-walkers and jugglers — and 45 quirkily appointed, spacious guest rooms, many of them dog-friendly, which explains those Milkbones on your night stand. And yes, there's a restaurant: the

locally sourced Eat on North — run by the folks behind Stockbridge's Red Lion Inn — serves sparkling oysters, duck in cherry sauce and a salmon dish as prettily composed as an Old Master painting.



A colorful salmon dish at Eat on North.

Photo: Barbara Hoffman