

# Room Envy

From the Finger Lakes to Nantucket, these boutique hotels invite you to take home the best souvenir: **design inspiration.**

By **Samantha Garbarini**



# Wildflower Farms



*Above:* Meadow Cottage  
*Below:* Ridge Suite bathroom  
*Right:* Thistle Spa Pool

To keep with the natural feel, Ward + Gray pulled in hand-hewn finishes and more than 450 custom pieces. “We wanted guests to feel as if they had wandered into a friend’s eclectic home,” say founders Staver Gray and Christie Ward. “It was very important the space felt time-worn and lived in. We didn’t want anything too perfect.” Walls were coated in hand-troweled plaster, and local carpenters were brought in for the custom millwork. In the bathrooms, handmade shower tiles sport natural variations in color and glaze, while the honed-silver travertine vanities have chiseled edges to create a natural, worn-over-time effect.

At the center of the hotel, the Great Porch is a favorite space of guests and designers, with a seating area surrounding a custom-extruded travertine tile firepit. “Throughout the seasons, it is a place to truly connect with nature,” says Bartholomew. “It is the heart of Wildflower Farms, a place to gather.”

**During Your Stay:** Wildflower Farms has a stellar, harvest-led dining program with many of the ingredients grown or raised on-site. Immerse yourself in the experience by joining daily animal feedings, farm walks, seasonal foraging expeditions, and cooking classes.

**Rates:** From \$1,000/night; [aubegeresorts.com](http://aubegeresorts.com)



**DESIGN ADVICE**  
“A great way to bring the outdoors in is through the use of color and natural materials,” say Gray and Ward. “We love the use of raw, imperfect woods mixed with antiques.”

A

s the painters of the Hudson River School did more than 100 years ago, the design team at Manhattan-based Ward + Gray surveyed the landscape and documented it. On each visit to the fallow tree nursery in Gardiner, which would eventually become Wildflower Farms, they photographed the wide-open vistas, capturing the blooming Queen Anne’s Lace, the burnt-auburn fall foliage, and the last streaks of indigo as the sunset fades into evening. Source mate-

rial now in hand, they set out to design a property that would reflect those colors and invite guests to meditate on the view.

California architecture firm Electric Bowery borrowed from Dutch, Swiss, and Coastal Californian traditions for the series of 65 cabins, cottages, and suites, which are connected by a single, asymmetrical roofline that rises and falls like the surrounding Shawangunk Mountains. “The materials create a more direct connection with nature than is typically found in traditional Hudson Valley architecture,” principal Lucia Bartholomew says of the styles. Weathered wood cladding, stacked stone, slate, and oxidized Corten steel lend an organic feel to the structures. And tall storefront glass, walls of windows that slide open to private terraces, and fin walls further draw one’s attention to groves of trees and overgrown meadows interspersed with meandering walking paths.



# The Whitby Hotel



— DESIGN ADVICE —  
“I think to have fabric on the walls feels good,” says Kemp. “It makes a room feel very tailored, rather like a jacket or something that’s made for you.”

“

It’s lovely when you’re in a large city, like New York, which is a concrete jungle, a commercial anthill of everything that’s happening, to enter into a place that captures your imagination,” says Kit Kemp, founder and creative director of Firmdale Hotels

and Kit Kemp Design Studio. Each of her hotels, from London to New York, is a kaleidoscopic jewel box of exuberantly layered colors, wallcoverings, and fabrics. Midtown Manhattan’s The Whitby Hotel is no exception.

Each of the 86 rooms and suites are utterly unique. “We’re always thinking about the five C’s: color, craft, character, curation, and comfort,” she says. “I love craft — to see something handmade within the room.” In one suite, patterned upholstery, drapes, and wallcoverings burst with berry reds, leafy greens, and pale blues. In another, red-linen walls are the backdrop for a black-and-white-paisley headboard and double-stripe drapes. Even the suite bathrooms are bold, often featuring floor-to-ceiling Arabescato Carrara marble with dramatic gray veins.

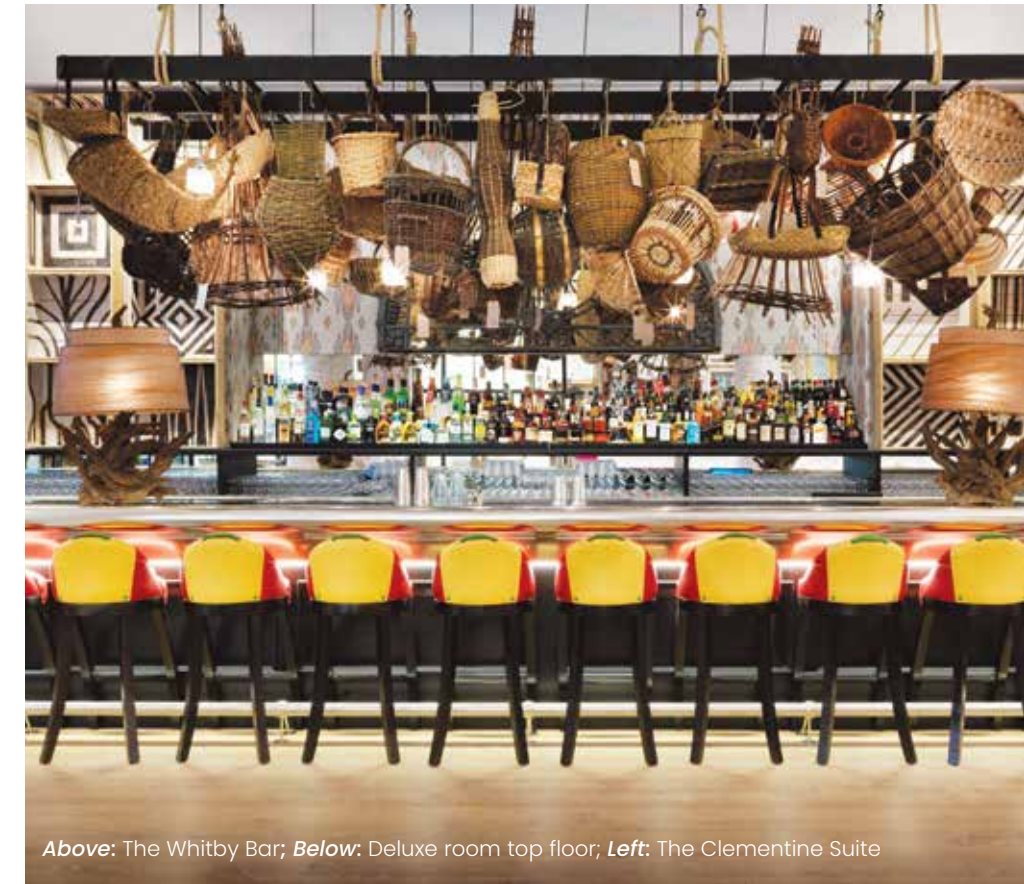
Appropriately for a hotel that’s just three blocks from MoMA, The Whitby drips with art pieces. A mixed-media canvas by Dutch artist Carla Kranendonk hangs in the restaurant, celebrating influential figures in Black history; a tangled installation of 52 baskets floats above the bar; Martha Freud’s illuminated porcelain pots, etched with images of New York landmarks, line a wall in the orangery; and guest rooms sport eclectic pieces, from a collection of blue-and-white antique plates to illustrated pages from an adventure annual.

Tall headboards — a hallmark of Kemp’s designs — grace each bedroom and serve as works of art, as well. One might be upholstered in a custom-designed fabric erupting with spring irises and daffodils, while another is embroidered with images of Russian folk art. “We love high beds. They give you an opportunity to do a high headboard,” says Kemp. “You can really enjoy the beauty of the fabric.”

**During Your Stay:** As befits owners Kit and Tim Kemp’s British pedigree, The Whitby serves afternoon tea in its orangery and restaurant. For an ultra-luxurious experience, splurge on the Royal Tea for Two, accompanied by caviar and Champagne.

**Rates:** From \$925/night; [firmdalehotels.com](http://firmdalehotels.com)

Photos by Simon Brown



Above: The Whitby Bar; Below: Deluxe room top floor; Left: The Clementine Suite



# Life House Berkshires



For the opening of its Berkshires property in Lenox, boutique-hotel brand Life House had to overcome a design dilemma: how to transform a 1970s Days Inn motor lodge into a luxury retreat steeped in the character and history of the Berkshires. The in-house design team ditched the dated exterior, adding new, painted-wood cladding, and an extension to house the artful lobby and bar. But inside, they chose to honor aspects of the building's retro heritage. "We wanted to acknowledge that, historically, the property was an old, '70s motel," says Henriette Kockum, vice president of design at Life House. "We brought in some curved furniture, funky fabrics, and color palettes."



**DESIGN ADVICE**  
"Pinpoint exactly what inspires you about a design from the past versus what doesn't," says Kockum. "You can pull elements and combine them in a way that feels fresh and not antiquated."



Left: Library Lounge and guest room; Above: The Club Room

To ground the flamboyant fabrics and sexy '70s silhouettes, the design team looked to the surrounding landscape and leaned into the region's literary history as a retreat for writers, including Melville, Hawthorne, and Fanny Kemble. In the library, flame-stitch upholstered sofas, patterned kilim pillows, and Italian marbled paper lamp shades are juxtaposed with traditional gabled ceilings, open wood shelves brimming with vintage books, sage-green window coverings, and a rust-colored Murano glass chandelier that recalls the hues of local fall foliage. The mix of traditional and unexpected carries into the Club Room, featuring a leather-paneled bar topped with earthy, green marble, windowpane plaid banquettes, a custom pastoral mural, and doors that open out onto the patio.

Each of the 65 guest rooms is set up like a writer's studio, with warm-toned wood furnishings, lush green-velvet upholstery, secretary-style writing desks, and original art. "It was important to let our design inspiration seep through to all elements, including the art," says Kockum. "We had the opportunity to collaborate with a few artists, such as Russell Markus, whose hand-typed poetry is framed in each guest room, and Annie Lynch, whose retro-inspired collages are featured in the bar and guest rooms."

**During Your Stay:** Life House partners with local businesses to give guests a true Berkshires experience. Sign up for an art tour with The Berkshires House or a guided hike with Berkshire Camino.

**Rates:** From \$95/night; [lifehousehotels.com](http://lifehousehotels.com)

# The Lake House on Canandaigua

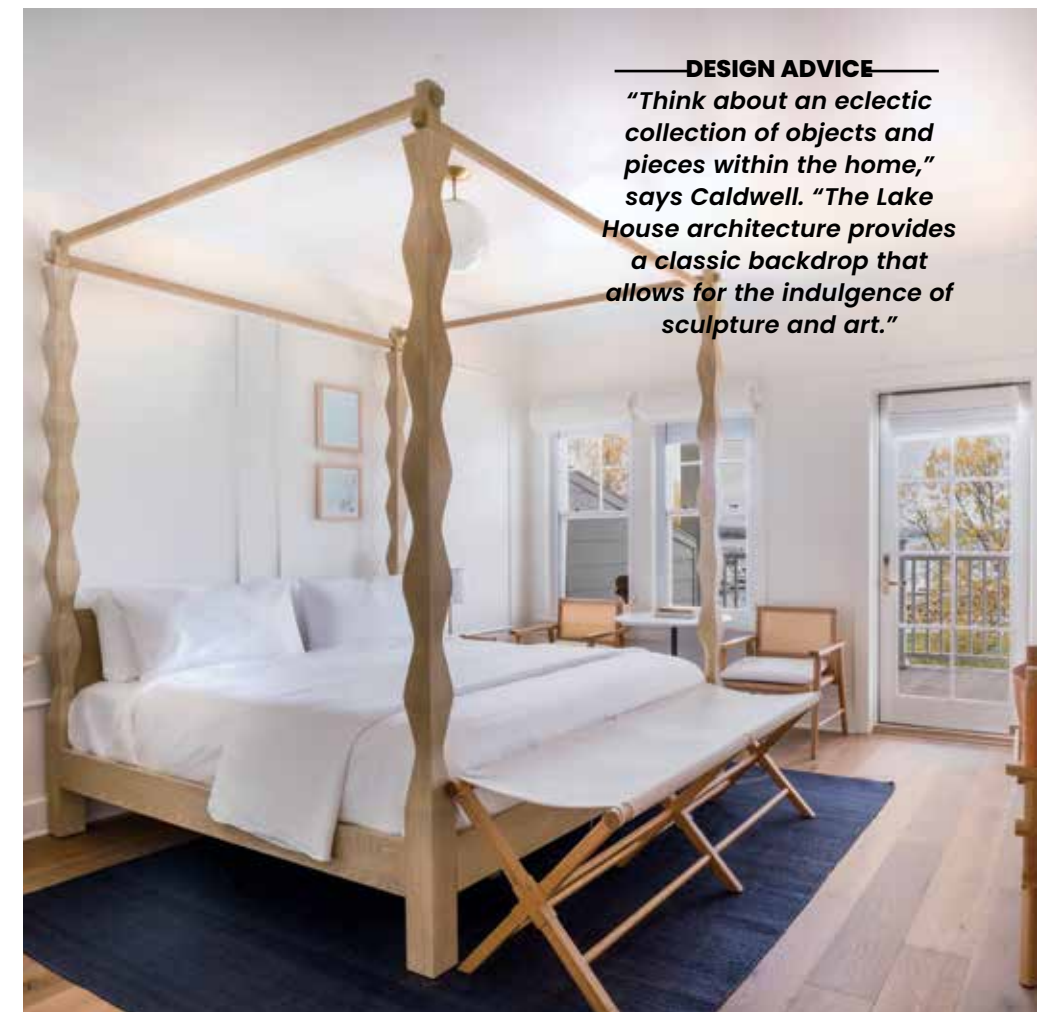
first hospitality project for their real estate development firm, The Brooklyn Home Company, they decided to tear down the old structure to make way for a high-end design property that would put their beloved lake on the luxury-hotel map.

“It was a project rooted in nostalgia, while also eyeing the future,” says Ruben Caldwell, partner at design firm Post Company, which oversaw the project. “We’re lucky our collaborators had a personal connection to the Finger Lakes that helped drive the narrative.” To not distract from the waterfront setting, they brought in natural textiles, raw woods, and a palette of creamy whites. The soaring lobby, with floor-to-ceiling windows, is anchored at one end by a monolithic reception desk made of stacked dried willow trees. White shiplap, sofas and leather chairs, woven baskets piled with rugs, and a Miro-esque chandelier

like many children of affluent Rochester families, Lyndsay Caleo Karol and Bill Caleo spent childhood summers running wild along the shores of Lake Canandaigua. In the mid-1990s, their grandfather bought a rundown motel on the lake, which remained in the family until 2018, when the siblings decided it was time for a change. As the



Library Bar  
Left: Lobby and  
Right: Town King  
guest room



**DESIGN ADVICE**  
“Think about an eclectic collection of objects and pieces within the home,” says Caldwell. “The Lake House architecture provides a classic backdrop that allows for the indulgence of sculpture and art.”

designed by Lyndsay’s husband, artist-in-residence Fitzhugh Karol, add to the clean yet comfortable feel.

The same aesthetic carries into the 124 sunlight-dappled guest rooms. “The off-white walls and neutral furnishings are not only in reverence to the landscape but also a reference to childhood memories of summer vacations. You see this in the director’s chairs, foldaway cots, French cocktail tables, and campaign desks,” says Caldwell. Karol designed custom, four-poster beds for each of the rooms, inspired by Romanian sculptor Constantin Brâncuși’s twisted *Endless Column*. Natural-fiber area rugs, woven bedspreads, and blond-wood accents

round out the look. “The goal of the Lake House was to craft a story about enduring tradition,” says Caldwell. “That now, and for years to come, this place could have existed in some distant, happy memory.”

**During Your Stay:** The Willowbrook Spa and Nordic-style barrel saunas make The Lake House on Canandaigua one of region’s premier wellness destinations, focused on comprehensive treatments that go beyond the standard massages and facials.

**Rates:** From \$200/night; [thelakehousecanandaigua.com](http://thelakehousecanandaigua.com)



Outdoor patio  
**Right:** Guest suite and Quad Room bunkbeds for kids

**DESIGN ADVICE**  
 “[For outdoor spaces,] an easy tip is to focus on lighting,” says Guidi. “Keep the lights dim and use candlelight and lanterns to create atmosphere. There’s something magical about eating outside with candles as your light source.”



## G

ray shingled buildings, beachy rattan, and soothing blues — Nantucket is an iconic New England destination with a recognizable aesthetic. But for Faraway’s Hotel property on the island, Boston-based development group Blue Flag Partners wanted to breathe new life into the oft-replicated motif. “We drew inspiration from the story of a young woman who grew up on Nantucket, stole away on a ship in her teens, and then arrived back on the island decades later with a pile of treasures and stories to tell,” says managing partner and co-founder of Faraway Hotels Brad Guidi.

Four 19th-century buildings, connected by a weathered brick patio, were converted into 62 rooms and suites to house the fictional doyenne’s trove, imagined to be acquired along the historic spice and rum routes. Period elements were painstakingly preserved in the restoration process, including original wood floors, stately banisters, and millwork painted in oceanic blue. Public spaces are filled with a dazzling assortment of wallcoverings, furnishings, and knickknacks. Silver and brocade mingle with raw wood and rattan. A sepia chinoiserie mural runs along the walls of the reception, where a fireplace with a deep-blue mantle and robustly veined marble hearth is flanked by two wooden chairs upholstered in pink-striped fabric. Vintage lamps and paper lanterns, patterned velvets, handcrafted Asian baskets, and tasseled armchairs are strewn throughout the property with maximalist abandon.

Guest rooms are more restrained with a blend of blond wood, rattan light fixtures, and pastel-blue accents that help the sometimes-small spaces feel airy and light. One exception is the kid-friendly Quad Room, where four built-in bunkbeds are awash in swirling, blue and green jellyfish wallcoverings.

Downstairs, the on-site restaurant spills out onto the buzzy patio with clusters of rattan furniture and bohemian, white-fringe umbrellas. “Sister Ship and its courtyard are truly the heartbeat of the hotel,” says Guidi. “It’s really about a sense of taking a journey. You want to be transported.”

**During Your Stay:** Smell that? Faraway created its own signature scent inspired by the exotic aromas of the fictional owner’s travels, including notes of rosewood, lemon tree, dates, sweet orange, cardamom, and incense.

**Rates:** From \$850/night; [farawayhotels.com](http://farawayhotels.com) **WIH**