

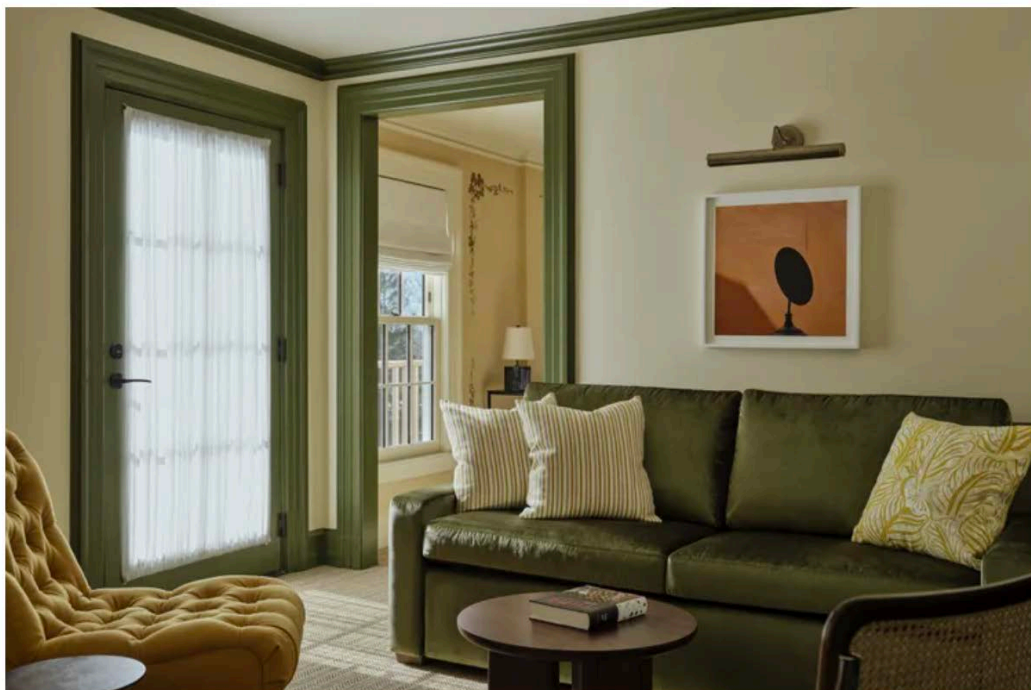
# TRAVEL+ LEISURE

 FIRST IN

## A Dreamy Countryside Hotel Just Opened in One of Connecticut's Most Charming Towns—Only a 2-hour Drive From NYC

Once upon a time, Litchfield was dubbed “the queen of all Connecticut towns”—and this new hotel is helping the enclave reclaim that title.

By [Marcia DeSanctis](#) | Published on June 20, 2025



The living room space in a one-bedroom suite.  
Credit: Read McKendree/Belden House & Mews

### WHAT WE LIKE

- The hotel is a half-minute walk from Litchfield center, where you will find hearty but casual restaurants and small, sophisticated shops flanking the village green.
- The acid-green bar with a zinc countertop and alluring cheetah lamp is the most inspired hotel space I have encountered in years.
- The three-acre property's natural light is extraordinary, especially when it pours through the original bay windows that curve over banquettes in the dining and living rooms.
- Some guest rooms in the main house feature handsome recessed minibars that are refashioned original washbasins; the amenities are hyperlocal, from Litchfield Candy Company and Litchfield Distillery, among others.
- Works from Litchfield County creators appear throughout Belden House, including custom wall coverings by twenty2 Wallpaper & Grasscloth, and ceramic lamps by Dumais Made. This serves to emphasize northwest Connecticut's status as a nerve center for world-class artistic talent, as well as the hotels' commitment to that tradition.

BELDEN HOUSE AND MEWS



Over a century ago, Litchfield, Connecticut, which was then the seat of the county with the same name, was destroyed by a series of fires. *The New York Times* dubbed Litchfield “the queen of all Connecticut towns” in its coverage of the conflagration and lamented the businesses that were wiped out in the stylish resort, among them a posh hotel on the corner of West and Main Streets. The town rebuilt, mostly in brick, and today Litchfield is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

It took more than a hundred years, and a bold vision led by developer Anthony Champalimaud, for a new, high-street, full-service hotel to rise from those ashes. [Belden House and Mews](#) has done so magnificently, with the singular flair that can only emerge when a structure’s splendid, vital, and deeply historic bones are tended to by Champalimaud Designs (founded by Anthony’s mother, Alexandra), the powerhouse behind many of the world’s most gorgeous hotels, including [Raffles Singapore](#), [Hotel Bel-Air](#) in Los Angeles, and London’s The Emory.



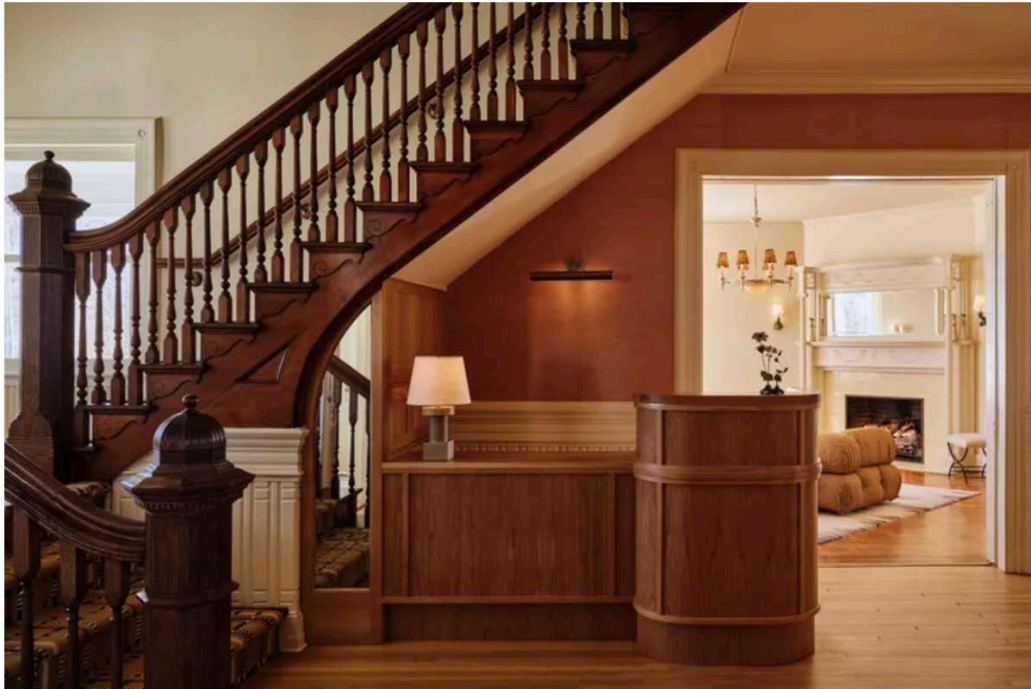
The living room.

Credit: Read McKendree/Belden House & Mews

After opening [Troutbeck](#), the definitive estate hotel in Amenia, New York, Champalimaud *fi/s* had a conviction that Litchfield the town, and Litchfield the county, lacked a hotel that properly honored its significance — architectural, cultural, and otherwise. His original passion for the project, and intuition into what the hotel could be, grew in part from the fact that he is a full-time resident (via Portugal, Montreal, England, and New York), whose home is five doors from Belden House. “Also, it helps having kind of a seasoned newcomer perspective on this part of the world,” he says. “With fresh eyes, we can plainly see the qualities and extraordinary attributes of the community and these surroundings, not least of which is the natural beauty of Litchfield County. We felt strongly that we were uniquely equipped to take this on.”



Litchfield is a quintessential [New England town](#), full of grand homes resting in the shade of constitution oaks. The nation's first law school was established there, as was the first all-female academy. The abolitionist author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe, grew up on North Street with her firebrand minister father, Lyman Beecher. In the 20th century, that weighty heritage was leavened by the hands of modernist architects Marcel Breuer, Richard Neutra, and Eliot Noyes, who scattered glass-walled masterpieces around Litchfield, the latter notably in the form of an annex to the public library.



A staircase in the main house.  
Credit: Read McKendree/Belden House & Mews

With a refined sense of color and play, Belden House embodies and unites those two distinctly American identities. The main building, a handsome white Victorian/Colonial revival mansion with a broad, pillared porch, was constructed by Dr. Charles O. Belden in 1888. A low-slung mid-century mews was added in 1959 behind the main house. Now, both contain guest rooms, whose common DNA is the warm but oh-so-cool Champalimaud style, that deploys (and combines) colors, patterns, contours, and fabrics in a manner that is simultaneously glamorous and unpretentious. The living room is a marvel of pink and gold, old, and new, accented with chic green-patterned fringed banquettes and the 137-year old fireplace with its original butter yellow tiles.

Belden House and Mews gives a master class in balance, as in how to preserve the structure and soul of a place within its physical location and historical context, while elevating it for a new time and a new purpose. From the street, the physical building blends in inconspicuously with the other grand homes on North Street. Inside, it is clear that the common spaces were designed in the 19th-century with socializing in mind.

In these rooms, as elsewhere, is evidence of the teams’ reverence for original fixtures, décor, and craftsmanship. And though they remain intact, the woodwork, moldings, windows, sconces, chandeliers, and floors have been revived and brightened, and now have fresh stories to tell. One of these treasures appears upon entering the lobby. Etched in stone on the fireplace is a quote from *Macbeth* urging humanity toward perseverance. Shakespeare’s message is as alive today as it was in 1888. At Belden House, the past serves to advance the narrative forward, resulting in a new gold standard for the contemporary, historic, country-house hotel.

My review of Belden House and Mews follows.

## The Rooms



Belden House Grand Room 202 looks over historic North Street.

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Of the 31 rooms and suites, 10 are in the main house, reachable by two separate carpeted staircases, as is typical in Victorian homes. It took an hour for me to photograph the many delectable details in my 2,100-square-foot, three-bedroom penthouse suite. In the living area, velvet sofas in warm blue and pink frame a patinaed leather gymnastics bench that doubles as a coffee table. Windows over cushioned nooks bring the leafy outdoors inside, as does a sweet balcony. The marble and tiled bathroom contain a massive shower and soaking tub. My kitchen went unused, but the Marcel Breuer chairs around the table are an homage to modernism, and Yellow Ware mixing bowls, to vintage New England.

All rooms exemplify easy elegance, and seem to prioritize comfort—not informality per se, but clean lines, plush carpets underfoot, and cozy easy chairs. The design team has carefully preserved the buildings’ essence and history through small, sometimes imperceptible details. For example, some custom wallcoverings contain patterns duplicated from old fabric remnants uncovered during renovation.





Most of the hotels' beds (with mattresses sheathed in Frette linens) are hand made by Litchfield County woodworker Ian Ingersoll. All the 21 Mews guest rooms and suites (averaging 430 square-feet) feature these creations which, though super sleek, evoke traditional design. Here, the modernist aesthetic emerges from the pale and pleasing palette, with details such as Vitsoe built-ins. Accessed via private terraced gardens, these rooms have a zen calm, and are quiet as a forest.

## Food and Drink



A lunch spread in the dining room at Belden House & Mews.  
Credit: Jim Henkens/Belden House & Mews

Chef Tyler Heckman left New York City after 10 years at Farris, Chelsea Hotel, and Villanelle, among others, to return to his native Connecticut. He describes his cuisine as “light, approachable, but hopefully will make you wonder, what are these ingredients?”

After my superb dinner entrée of beef sliced from the short rib and grilled slow, hot, and smokelessly over Japanese charcoal, my salad had refreshing flavors I could not identify. Heckman's answer: palm sugar, lime zest and juice, Thai chili, and fish sauce – inspired by a Vietnamese *nộm*. Dessert was milk ice cream, bee pollen, with Earl Gray oil, so yummy, I stole a few bites from my husband's bowl.

Meals are served on pink-topped wooden tables in Belden House's bright, original dining room. The 26-seat space is not large but, like the hotel itself, intimate, with a feeling that is elegant but not stuffy. At breakfast, I heaped house-made butter and jam over hefty slices of sourdough toast. For lunch, I loved his chewy and sweet lobster roll, a nod to the New England seacoast.



The green bar at Belden House & Mews has details like a cheetah lamp and a zinc countertop.  
Credit: Read McKendree/Belden House & Mews

The sexy green bar whispers “cocktail,” and it’s easy to take it slow with the house’s One Sip Martini, served in a chic little coupe. This corner of the hotel transported me to an exquisite European hotel; the display bottles were Chinotto, Bitter Bianco, Sicilian Amara, and other spirits. Italian Food and Beverage manager Michele Alfonso, who is also a master mixologist, poured me a fingerful of Caffé Ligure, a coffee-flavored liqueur from Taranto, and it was divine.

## Activities and Experiences



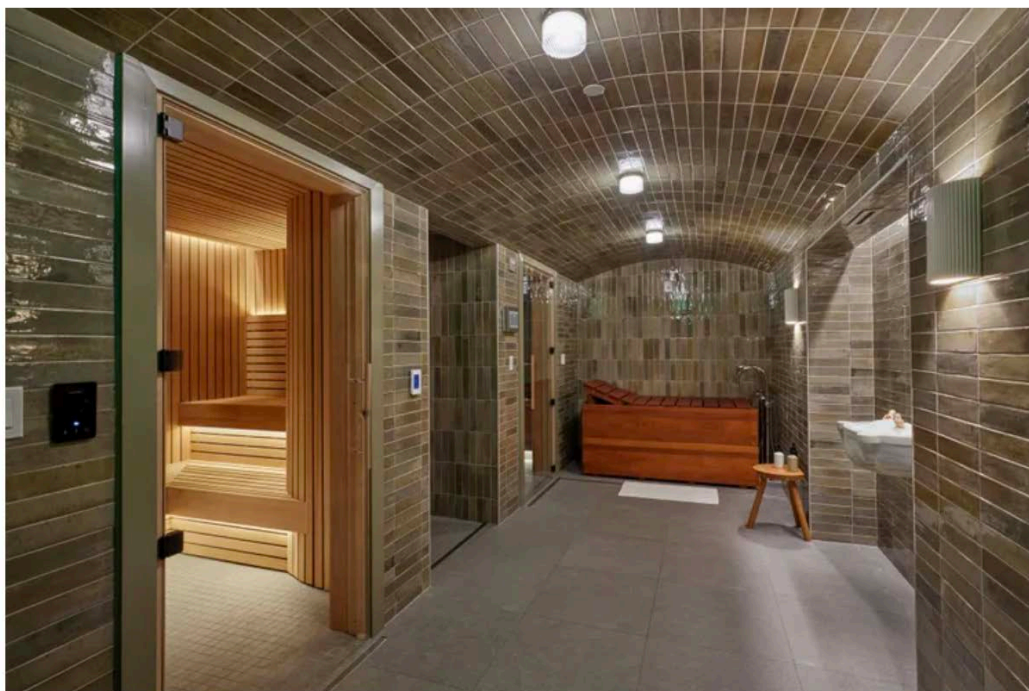
The Belden House & Mews outdoor pool.  
Credit: Scott Parker/Belden House & Mews





There are gardens, a lawn court, and a beautifully landscaped, 50-foot heated pool flanked by arbor vitae. The spa contains a small but full gym with a Pilates reformer, and private instruction is available. Best of all is Belden House's location right in town, steps away from the center and its remarkable history. Litchfield is a paradigmatic New England village, with terrific restaurants and plenty of worldly shops. Some highlights: estate jewelry at [Lawrence Jeffrey](#); Scottish cashmere at [R. Derwin](#), the gorgeous hair salon Byrde and the B; and [Milton Market](#), where you can take home a Dumais Made ceramic lamp.

## The Spa



Inside Bathhouse, the spa and wellness space at Belden House & Mews.  
Credit: Scott Parker/Belden House & Mews

Bathhouse is an enchanted spot which sparkles with newness. Blond wood cabinets, warm brown tiles, and stone floors give the space a lustrous feeling. The wet room consists of a sauna and a steam room clad in deep-blue tiles; at one end is a Japanese *Ofuru* tub for hydrotherapy. The whole below-ground complex is infused with the scent of cruelty free Wildsmith face and body products used in treatments. My 120-minute Thermal Experience treatment was designed to move between temperatures while detoxifying, renewing my skin, and stimulating circulation. My therapist, Agnieszka Domurad, was kind enough to adapt a bit: I'm not a cold plunge lover, so after my body scrub, I soaked in the tub, and then had a truly great massage.

## Family-friendly Offerings

Belden House welcomes kids age 12 and older. While it's not the type of resort that revolves around children, the proximity to downtown Litchfield, the pool, and the three-acre grounds will give kids plenty to do.

## Accessibility

Two of the guestrooms are ADA accessible, one in the main house and the other in the Mews.

## Location



Litchfield's Main Street.

Belden House is a two-hour drive from New York City and 45 minutes from Hartford's Bradley Airport. The town of Litchfield is the crossroads of northwest Connecticut, which is loaded with stunning forested vistas, flowering meadows, and canoe-able rivers. Many hiking paths are in this part of New England, including a stretch of the Appalachian Trail. There are numerous preserves for contemplation and brushes with wildlife, such as the [Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy](#); and orchards, such as [March Farm](#) in Bethlehem, for apple and blueberry picking. [Thornhill Farm and Milkhouse](#) is a dairy farm down the road, and crafts superb chocolate. White Memorial, most of which is in Litchfield, encompasses 4,000 acres of protected wilderness. A car is useful for the backroads of Litchfield County, and Uber is not dependable in the area.

## How to Get the Most Value Out of Your Stay

Belden House is an independent hotel and not yet part of any loyalty programs. Nightly rates at Belden House and Mews start at \$500.

