

A Rural Raleigh Retreat

Candy B. Harrington

Staying at Christine Harrison's Northshore Lake House (919-665-6700, www.NorthshoreLakeHouse.com) is like staying with family - and that's a very good thing. I sensed this from my very first contact with Christine, and as time passed, we became internet friends. When it was finally time for my visit, she gave me detailed arrival instructions. "Just park in the driveway behind the uncovered car," she said. "Then walk around the house to the side gate, and wind your way around to the ramped back door."

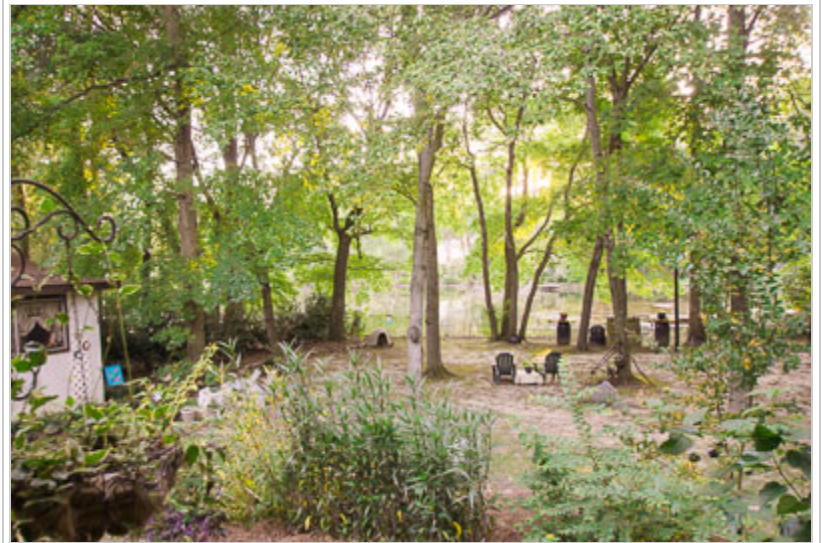
After all, family doesn't use the front door in the south — a lesson I learned many years ago from my husband's clan.

Located just 10 minutes from downtown Raleigh, the Northshore Lake House is an urban oasis; but make no mistake about it, it's not for everyone. If you are looking for a cookie-cutter chain motel with a waffle maker in the breakfast room and the *USA Today* at the front desk, then this place isn't for you. But if you're craving the creature comforts of home, and would like to experience a little Southern hospitality, then the Northshore Lake House is just what the doctor ordered.

And there's a reason this two-story duplex seems homey — it is Christine's home. That said, she occupies the upstairs space, while the downstairs is closed off for guests. Although it would be difficult for anyone in a power wheelchair, this three-bedroom home is a good choice for slow walkers, as well as some manual wheelchair-users; in fact Christine's mom (who used a manual wheelchair) spent a good deal of time on the first floor.



The Lakeview bedroom at Northshore Lake House



Yard and lake view from the Lakeview bedroom

Lakeview is the largest bedroom, and it's furnished with a 26-inch high queen-sized bed. Seagrass (the next largest bedroom) has a 22-inch high queen-sized bed, and Cottage (the smallest bedroom) has a 23-inch high twin bed. Christine is also happy to move or remove furniture, so speak up if something is in the way. A wheelchair and walker are also available upon advance request.

The hallway is 26 inches wide and the bathroom has a wide door and includes a tub-shower combination, with a hand-held showerhead and shower grab bars. It's a bit tight for a wheelchair with the door closed, but you can close off the hallway and leave the bathroom door open for a little more room.

There's also a large living room with a fireplace, sofa and chairs; and an adjacent dining area with a dining room table, and a bookshelf full of games, books and other diversions. The wet bar area is not large enough for a wheelchair, but Christine is happy to move the small refrigerator and microwave to another area if requested. Although breakfast isn't included, guests are provided with a breakfast basket, which includes cereal, fruit, bread and other goodies.

There's also a grill out back, and of course a comfortable porch with a nice view of the lake. And if you're lucky — and come at the right time of the year — you'll also share the backyard with the resident geese.

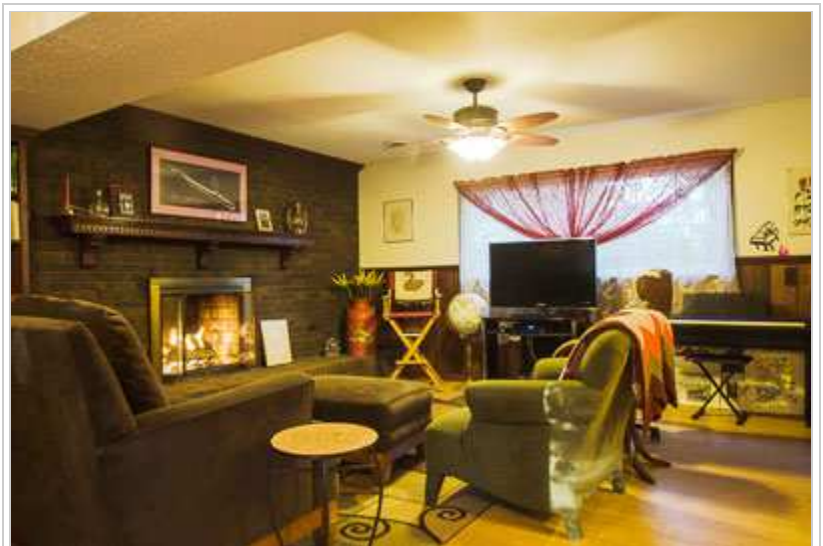
This property is a good choice for a family, as it can easily sleep five. The downstairs unit rents for \$300 per night, and if you mention my name or *Emerging Horizons*, you'll get a 20 percent discount. Then figure in the seven percent discount for renting out the whole downstairs, and that brings it down to \$223.20 per night. There is also a two-night minimum, but you'll at least want to linger that long in Raleigh.



The Seagrass bedroom at Northshore Lake House



Hallway and bathroom at Northshore Lake House



Living room at Northshore Lake House

Staying at the Northshore Lakehouse is like coming home. Says Christine, "As a private residence, we cater to guests who are referred to us or who wish to become new friends of our home." That's why you won't find the home's address plastered all over the internet, or any tacky neon signs hanging out front. You'll just find a healthy dose of good old fashioned hospitality there — and that's a very refreshing change from your average chain hotel.

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The breakfast basket
Photos by Charles Pannell