



Story by
Lucas Shivers

Photography by
Jason Dailey, Aaron Patton, and Kalli Smith

URBAN & small-town
getaways

ESCAPE FROM THE ROUTINE WITH THESE UNIQUE RETREATS





“Local interests in nature, history and antiques allow guests to unplug from city life, reconnect with one another, and enjoy a slower pace of living.”

- TAMMY ENSEY -

Escaping daily routines is essential for many people, particularly during the sweltering summer months. Across urban and rural towns in Kansas, numerous locales offer rich retreat sites. Check out these destinations that focus on fostering community well-being and offer affordable self-care practices to uplift the mind, body and spirit.

Historic Elgin Hotel with Jeremy & Tammy Ensey

Featured as a boutique hotel on the National Register of Historic Places, the Elgin creates a space to rest, relax and reconnect in an atmosphere that blends the nostalgia of earlier eras with the luxuries of today.

“The Elgin has a full-service restaurant and bar, five living rooms, an outdoor veranda, a fitness center and a game lounge complementing 12 unique suites to create an exceptional getaway,” says owner Tammy Ensey. Tammy’s husband and co-owner, Jeremy, echoes this sentiment.

Located in the Flint Hills, just 50 miles northeast of Wichita, the hotel exudes the elegance of the 1800s while offering overnight stays, a full-service restaurant, small library, 12 uniquely decorated suites, and both indoor and outdoor venues.

“We blend the highest-quality amenities to be Kansas’ most sought-after vacation destination,” Tammy says. “Local interests in nature, history and antiques allow guests to unplug from city life, reconnect with one another, and enjoy a slower pace of living.”

Both having grown up in Kansas, the Enseys relocated to Marion in 2013 for Jeremy’s role as chief nursing officer and later as the chief executive officer at St. Luke’s Hospital.

Tammy’s professional background is in human resources and information technology. She started a business called Vacation Getaway while she and Jeremy raised three children: Peyton, Paige and Abree.



One of the primary bathrooms is uniquely decorated and a favorite for newlyweds staying overnight.





Top Herbal spa treatments line the shelves.
Bottom Guests enjoy the newly opened Cloud Room—a three station circuit designed to balance the whole body.

Level up to luxury

The Elgin went up for sale in 2015. The Enseys sought to leverage Tammy's business and travel experience. Their mission was to create a remarkable and memorable experience by sharing a unique destination and serving guests in a way that exceeds their expectations.

"We checked it out and when we walked through the doors, our mouths fell open," Tammy says. "We immediately decided we had to reopen it as a hotel, which is what it was originally designed to be in 1886. It took a while for me to convince my husband and get all the numbers right."

The hotel was constructed with local limestone in an "L" shape with a shorter east-west side and a longer north-south side.

"It was magnificent for the time period. With two railroad lines crossing the community, [the people of] Marion knew that a magnificent hotel would encourage people to stay," Tammy says.

The Elgin operated as a hotel until the 1960s. It sat empty for many years and was almost torn down. It was renovated into apartments and then nominated and accepted to the National Register of Historic Places. In 2006, it was picked up again for renovations before the Enseys' purchase.

Parlor 1886, the hotel's full-service restaurant and bar, is slated to reopen in June. Chefs Luis and Alicia Pena will lead the operation.

The Penas intend to create a delightful culinary experience for guests. The fine-dining restaurant will serve breakfast from 8 to 11 a.m. and dinner from 5 to 9 p.m., Thursday to Monday.

The Enseys gave the Elgin a fresh look, with the 12 themed suites, a blend of new and antique furniture, and modern comforts to blend today's amenities with the nostalgia of the past.

"One of the most special places is the staircase with the monumental chandelier, as well as the original veranda in the front," Tammy says. "A game lounge is housed in a separate building that allows for a space for late-night parties. The courtyard and ballroom host everything from weddings to business meetings."

Jennifer McDonald is the current hotel manager, and she is known for her excellent guest service.

"All of our guests love and know Jennifer," Tammy says. "The hospitality and service are second to none. We work to make everyone a part of our Elgin family."

Mud & Lotus with Shahida Spann-Ryan

Mud & Lotus offers a calming sanctuary hidden in downtown Lawrence. Fueled by her love for herbal medicine, adventure and hot springs, Shahida Spann-Ryan's experience with traditional Chinese medicine enriches her mission to introduce holistic health care.

