

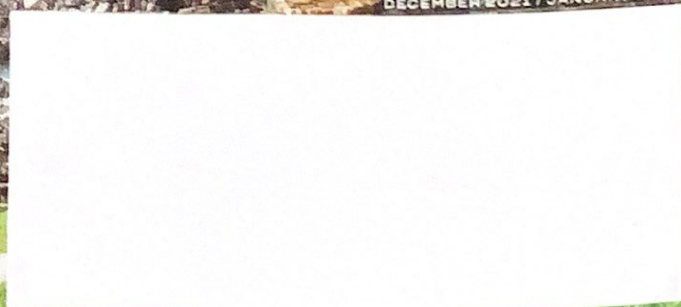
TRAVEL + LEISURE

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On the Road Again

Boutique brands and independent hoteliers are breathing new life into the American motor lodge.

By Hannah Selinger

"THERE'S SOME nostalgic about the Rob Blood, founder of Lark Hotels. "Roll up the music back." He cites the of childhood family inspiration for his sub-brand, Bluebird, launched in June, reviving the road

Bluebird purchased old properties (as "memory-mapped" or in disrepair) first opening with **Spa City Motor**



The courtyard lawn at the Skyline Lodge, in Highlands, North Carolina.

of exterior-entry rooms arranged around a communal gathering space; extensive renovations have replaced the courtyard swimming pool with a lawn outfitted with lounge seating, firepits, and games.

"A motor lodge should be clean, cozy, and easy to find," says Adriana Farmiga, co-owner, with Alix Umen,

of the 16-key **Starlite Motel** (thestarlite.com; doubles from \$200), in Kerhonkson, New York. Built in 1958, the property, on the Catskills' Route 209, is another textbook motor lodge, with exterior room access, a pool, and an outdoor lounge area. Farmiga and Umen purchased the Starlite and reimagined it with airy rooms and

a canteen that will spotlight local wines and spirits.

And travelers taking to the open road in Texas can head to the town of Salado and the 48-room **Shady Villa Hotel** (shadyvillahotel.com; doubles from \$149), a new project from the Austin-based Bunkhouse Group. First built in 1861 and expanded in the 1950s, this revamped property (formerly the Stagecoach Inn) features a swimming pool lined with native flora and a Texan-inspired restaurant.

Getting to any of these places requires getting behind the wheel. But for Blood, that's exactly the point. "A motor lodge is about how you can celebrate the entire journey," he says. Travelers, start your engines.