

Oasis near Montreal includes a spa and bistro

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE AUGUST 13, 2012



Auberge Sante Oasis de L'Île has a Nordic spa.

Photograph by: Melanie Ste-Marie, Auberge Sante Oasis de l'Île

Auberge Santé Oasis de l'Île is a hidden gem, a place with many surprises.

This agreeable getaway combines a 22-room inn, a sprawling Nordic spa and enjoyable dining, indoors or on the front porch.

It sounds like pleasant, predictable fare, but Oasis de l'Île stands out for its location only a five-minute drive from Highway 13, its moderate prices – dinner is a \$35 table d'hôte – and the Nordic spa is a downright steal at certain times. If you go after 5 p.m. on weekdays, it costs \$20 and you can splash and soak in the hot tubs and cold pools for hours.

All good, but Oasis's most outstanding feature is its unique setting on one of two private islands in Rivière des Mille Îles, just north of Laval. This was the vision of Michel St. Jacques, a real estate developer who created a tiny waterfront paradise of houses that start at \$1 million and condos that cost \$300,000 to \$500,000.

Oasis de l'Île is a three-star establishment (out of a possible five stars on Quebec Tourism's rating scale), so expect practicality and convenience, with options to trade up for a fireplace, river view and a king bed. The inn is close enough to town that you can do a spa day with lunch or dinner, or both, without staying overnight. This is a beautiful, relaxing, indoor-outdoor day of leisure. Gazebos hiding

jet whirlpools, steam baths and saunas are spread out over a sprawling river-front lawn, many shaded by towering trees. Oasis de l'Île has a policy of silence throughout most of the poolside lounge area, so it is truly a peaceful place.

Proprietor St. Jacques leads the spa life as often as he can, opting for favourites like a steam bath followed by a Swedish or hot stone massage. Besides facials, body wraps and exfoliations, Oasis also offers advanced spa treatments including an electrolyte bath that increases energy, reduces inflammation and claims to release toxins from the body's organs. There also is an anti-cellulite treatment called Lumicell Touch which is said to firm the skin, boost circulation and re-oxygenate the blood. Oasis can start you on a 14-day weight-loss program using protein-rich Inovacure ready-to-eat foods.

The Bistro Oasis de l'Île is run by a two-man team, Frédéric Cicioli is the manager and sommelier who is only too proud to uncork his private imports from Italy and California. Chef Stéphan Boissonneault has worked at two of the hottest boutique hotels in Montreal – Hôtel de la Montagne and Hôtel Vogue, both on Mountain St. and both infused with a high hip quotient. At Oasis de l'Île, he serves what he calls a blend of “Euro, French, California, Italian and Quebec terroir” cuisines. That might be starters of Italian egg drop soup, smoked salmon, pesto shrimp or prosciutto and melon, and such main courses as braised leg of lamb, confit of duck, grilled fish or filet mignon.

Those who lunch and spa can choose from a terrace-bistro menu of salad of duck confit, a platter of Quebec cheeses or Boissonneault's latest two cool creations – grilled burgers of fresh salmon and halibut topped with a mayonnaise flavoured with chai tea; and braised beef burgers with a barbecue sauce that uses Guinness as a base.

rochelle@rochellelash.com

If You Go

The eastern point of St. Eustache is 20-minute drive from central Montreal via Highway 40 west, Highway 13 north and Route 344 west.

Auberge Santé Oasis de l'Île: 450- 472-0263, oasisdelile.com; 25 chemin des Îles Yale, St. Eustache.

Bistro Oasis de l'Île: Lunch is served daily. Dinner is served Tues.-Sun. (but the lunch menu is available Mon. evening).

Price: One night, including continental breakfast and Nordic spa, costs \$129-159 in a queen room for two (or \$109-129 for one). Add \$25 for a king bed and \$25 for a fireplace (in winter). Packages are available with spa treatments and dinner.

Spa: For non-guests, the Nordic spa costs \$20-30, depending on the time and day. Massages cost \$69-119. Day packages are available with Nordic spa and treatments. The Nordic spa is open 10 a.m.-10 p.m. daily, and until 11 p.m., through the summer.

