

Lake Placid's Stagecoach Inn has a colourful history

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



The upscale Stagecoach Inn in Lake Placid, N.Y., is a bed and breakfast filled with fine country furniture and rustic collectibles.

Photograph by: Stagecoach Inn, Stagecoach Inn

Mary Pat Ormsby knew when she was 10 years old that she eventually wanted to own the historic Stagecoach Inn in Lake Placid, N.Y.

Built in 1806, the place has a colourful history, first as a farmhouse, then as a stagecoach stop, a post office and a tavern. During the 1900s, it also was the home of Melvil Dewey, who invented the Dewey Decimal System of library classification.

After living in Boston and New York City, Mary Pat returned to her hometown and eventually fulfilled her childhood dream and bought Stagecoach, the B&B that had belonged to her parents' friends where she had played as a child. She put together her passion for the house, her skill as an interior designer and the fruits of her foraging as an antique dealer. Then she and her husband, Tony Carlino, set about restoring the fine old place – the oldest house in Lake Placid, about two kilometres from the centre of town.

A rambling white clapboard farmhouse, the Stagecoach is a seven-room B&B with inviting red doors, pretty gardens and a wide and welcoming veranda shaded by maples, cedars and white pines. Indoors, it is a rustic-but-refined treasure of burnished woodwork, fine country furniture and collectibles. The wide-planked maple floors are decorated with nearly 30 colourful Oriental and kilim rugs. The glow from five fireplaces highlights the honey-stained Douglas fir walls.

Thanks to Mary Pat's good eye for collecting and her broad experience – she started to hunt for antiques when she was 15 – Stagecoach is rich with appealing accessories. She has fallen for paintings in France, porcelain in England; and from many other trips, she has lugged home candlesticks, grape baskets and leather-bound books. The look of the northern woods is well-represented with birch mantelpieces and pine cone motifs on the lampshades. It's all a beautiful, impressive mix with sturdy Mission-style furniture, country pine bedroom dressers and modern leather sofas.

"It's my own personal style," said Mary Pat. "Traditional meets the Adirondacks. It amazes me how the pieces fit together, but it does."

Mary Pat serves "a full Irish breakfast," generous and elegantly presented. Cereal, baked goods and coffee are arranged on an antique sideboard from Ireland and an 1800s English pine table is set with sterling flatware, linen napkins and fine china. You'll feast on fresh fruit and juices, three meats, herb-roasted potatoes and eggs topped with cheese and grilled tomatoes. She bakes scones and banana bread and makes her own granola, yogurt and jams.

At night, guests are spoiled with thick new mattresses and Egyptian cotton sheets. In the afternoon, you can settle down with a book and a biscotti in the TV room, the living room or the Great Room (actually a small salon with a cathedral ceiling), all warmed by fireplaces.

Stagecoach radiates another warm glow during its wine and cheese hour, circa 5 p.m.

"The wine hour sometimes expands to two or three," says Mary Pat. "Then everyone goes out to dinner or they get really comfortable and they order in."

When there is a full house, guests gather for cabernet and chardonnay and nibbles of Italian sausage, pâtés and artisan cheeses such as Grafton, Vt., cheddar and or feta from the nearby Clover Mead Farm. One of Mary Pat's favourites is the award-winning Le Cendrillon from Portneuf, Que.

If you do step out to dine, Mary Pat steers her clients to local faves such as Caffé Rustica, a first-rate Italian restaurant owned by Kevin Gregg and Chantal Vinette Gregg, who is originally from Montreal. It's lively, authentic and one of the top places in a highly competitive tourist town.

Lunch at Rustica features thin-crust pizza with fresh tomatoes, arugula, basil and mozzarella; polenta with sweet Italian sausage; bruschetta with eggplant, Parmesan and olive oil; gnocchi with lemon-basil pesto, roasted tomatoes and feta; and sandwiches such as mortadella and provolone on ciabatta. Main courses at dinner include a cioppino of seafood in white wine and garlic; pork with arugula and Gorgonzola; roasted eggplant arrabbiata with pancetta or veal scaloppine with linguine. It's all good.

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IF YOU GO

Lake Placid, N.Y., is a two-hour drive from Montreal via Highway 15 south to the U.S. border, and then Highway 87 south. Take exit 34, then Routes 9N and 86.

Stagecoach Inn, 3 Stagecoach Way, Lake Placid, 518-523-9698, lakeplacidstagecoachinn.com.
Children over 12 are welcome.

Price: Includes breakfast, afternoon wine, fruit and cheese (or fondue) and wireless Internet.
Rooms/suites cost \$145-169 U.S. for two; two-bedroom suites cost \$295 for four people. Minimum two-night stay until mid-October and from mid-December to March; minimum three or four nights on U.S. holidays or special-event weekends.

Caffé Rustica, 1936 Saranac Ave. Lake Placid, 518 523-7511, cafferustica.com; lunch Tues-Sat., pizza, salads, sandwiches, \$10-15; dinner, Mon-Sat., \$25-45.

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