

# A Victorian grande dame on Île d'Orléans

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE    OCTOBER 14, 2011



Auberge La Goéliche on Île d'Orléans dates back, through various incarnations, to the late 1800s.

**Photograph by:** Auberge La Goéliche, Auberge La Goéliche

French explorer Jacques Cartier had seen a few intriguing places in his day, in the early 1500s, but he was beguiled by the beauty of Île d'Orléans and its splendid setting in the St. Lawrence River.

Modern-day visitors to Auberge la Goéliche and its Restaurant Vue enjoy similar pastoral land and river views, plus a panorama of spectacular sights that have sprung up on the shores of Old Quebec and the historic waterfront of Lévis. The era has passed for the hard-working “goéliches,” the schooners that once were used to transfer goods to and from larger ships that could not sail close to shore. Today’s view across the impressive breadth of Quebec’s defining waterway features ocean-going cruise ships, transport vessels and sailboats out for fun.

La Goéliche dates back, through various incarnations, to the late 1800s. In the early days, the swells of Quebec City and Montreal arrived at this Victorian grande dame by ship, danced on the deck and dined in the romantic waterfront sunroom.

The inn still gets a good crowd, and Restaurant Vue still is a highlight, although the scene is considerably more casual, even for fine dining. Île d'Orléans is more than 80 per cent agricultural and is known as the “garden of Quebec,” so menus feature lots of farm-fresh food. The breakfast eggs, sausages, maple syrup and fruit for pancakes and omelettes are produced on the island. For dinner, salmon is topped with a sauce of crème de cassis, distilled in the neighbouring village of St. Pierre by Cassis Monna et Filles, who are specialists in black currant liqueur. Pork is sweetened with the island’s famous strawberries, and lamb, raised at the Bergerie Saute-Mouton, is served with baby carrots, potatoes and leeks and an accent of mint and raspberries.

La Goéliche rates four stars out of a possible five on Quebec Tourism’s scale. It has the look and feel of a vintage inn, with lots of sitting areas, niches and a fine old staircase leading upstairs to second- and third-floor rooms. It also has some of the features of a small hotel, particularly the summertime swimming pool, set in a charming lounging area surrounded by greenery.

Guests can choose from 14 rooms in the main building that have been renovated regularly and, recently, were equipped with LCD televisions, but still have a homespun, rustic style. My favourites are the three patio-level rooms, which have little gardens facing the riverfront, gas fireplaces and upgraded fabrics. There still is time this season to sit outside for breakfast or afternoon drinks. La Goéliche also

has a pair of modern two-bedroom apartments in an adjacent pavilion. They're convenient for two couples or a family who might want to cook in, but with their odd collection of latter-day furniture from the '50s, '60s and '70s, they don't have the same country charm as the main building.

La Goéliche is a family operation. Andrée Marchand is the hotel's director and her husband, Alain Turgeon, presides over decor. Their daughter, Marie-Andrée Turgeon, is Goéliche's general manager and her sister, Geneviève, works in marketing.

It is Alain Turgeon's passion for interior decoration and antique furniture that created La Goéliche's look. The lobby is a grandmotherly vision with lace curtains against dark oak woodwork and a collection of furniture of various periods – a French provincial style writing desk, Queen Anne tea trolley and a Victorian coat stand are among the pieces.

**Ecstatic about his discovery** of a beautiful island, Jacques Cartier named it Île de Bacchus, because of all the wild grapevines, although he eventually changed it to Île d'Orléans.

It is a relatively untouched community that thrives without any fast-food chains, supermarkets or shopping malls. Your first stop should be the handy tourism office, the first building at the end of the Pont de l'Île that crosses the St. Lawrence from the waterfalls at Montmorency. A tour of the entire island is do-able in a day if you follow the maps that outline all of the farm food shops, lunch spots and historic sites, including Espace Félix-Leclerc, a small museum dedicated to the Quebec singer, writer and folk hero who called Île d'Orléans "une fleur dans l'eau" (a flower in the water).

You can drive or cycle your way along the 76-km Chemin Royal, which circles the island, through historic villages and past farm-stands and fields. Autumn is a compelling time to visit. The riches of the island have been harvested and the time is ripe for buying gourmet jams and cider. Apples and root vegetables are in full swing, but there still are lots of berries, which are Île d'Orléans' signature crop.

The spirit of Bacchus lives on at Vignoble Isle de Bacchus, a 30-year-old winery that produces whites, rosés and reds and ice wine, which is the house favourite. Tastings are \$2 for seven different wines and Bacchus's terrace is a great place to picnic.

The food stands are seasonal, but some treasures are available all year-round. You'll love the truffles and ice cream at Chocolaterie de l'Île d'Orléans in Ste. Pétronille and apple products and strawberry liqueurs at Domaine d'Orléans, an orchard in St. Pierre that has won many awards.

*Rochelle@rochellelash.com*

### **If You Go**

Île d'Orléans is a three-hour drive from Montreal via Highway 40 east past Quebec City toward Ste. Anne de Beaupré. Take Exit 325.

Auberge la Goéliche: 888-511-2248, goeliche.ca and Restaurant Vue, restovue.ca; 22 chemin du Quai, Ste. Pétronille, Île d'Orléans.

Price: During high season (until Oct. 31) rooms are \$94-139 for two, without meals. Friday Bistro Package: one night, breakfast and dinner, starts at \$199 p.p., double occ. The Two-Night Escape Package (valid Thurs.-Sun., until Dec. 19): two nights, one dinner, two breakfasts, starts at \$338 for two. A two-bedroom apartment for four costs \$260 per night, until Oct. 31.

Île d'Orléans Tourism: 866-941-9411, ileдорleans.com