

Cozy Ste. Adèle B&B is close to skiing

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE NOVEMBER 17, 2011



The Cafe O Lit B&B has four guest rooms on the second floor, each with a homespun feel.

Photograph by: Cafe O Lit, Cafe O Lit

Café Ô Lit is enjoying almost instant success. Within months of getting into the inn-keeping business, Marie-André Thollon and Priscilla Lapointe scooped up Quebec Tourism's annual prize for top B&B in the Laurentians for 2011.

Two show-business veterans, they bought Café Ô Lit, a cottage hidden in the hills on the outskirts of Ste. Adèle, and applied a time-honoured philosophy of hospitality.

"It's simple," said Thollon. "We offer a warm welcome and a great breakfast. Plus, we think we have a beautiful setting."

All true. But take note. That warmth is enhanced by Café Ô Lit's signature welcome drink. Although the B&B has a coffee theme, it isn't coffee at all. When you arrive here you'll glow after sipping a potent, sweet-and-tart cocktail of dark rum, a splash of white cranberry juice, a dash of blueberry juice and raspberries.

"We add ice cubes in the shape of hearts because we have a lot of lovers staying here," said Lapointe. "They come because we are hidden in the woods, so we try to make it even more romantic."

Café Ô Lit is a traditional two-storey cottage tucked into the forest and surrounded by rock gardens and a pond with a tiny waterfall that still is gurgling even though there are frosts at night. Both women had mothers who were mad for antiques, so Café Ô Lit is filled with country-style furniture: old Quebec armoires, a big buffet in the dining room and sofas and tables from Thollon's grandmother that date from the late 1800s. The B&B has four guest rooms on the second floor, each with a homespun feel. You'll be snug and comfy under soft cotton sheets and floral coverlets, but if it is romance you are after, choose the striking room La Cappuccino, which has a dramatic white canopy-draped bed.

Breakfast is a serious affair at Café Ô Lit. The table is set with white Wedgwood china trimmed with silver, and you sit down to smoothies served in cut crystal glasses. Thollon, the chief cook, starts off with yogourt and fruit topped with granola and follows with one of her specialties: pancakes stuffed with ham and cheese, quiche with tomato and goat cheese, or eggs Benedict with a recipe from one of her favourite bistros, Café Cherrier in Montreal's Plateau district. If you stay a few days, you'll have a different main course every morning, but you always have yummy baked goods, like homemade banana cake or whole-wheat croissants, Thollon's strawberry-

rhubarb jam and almond butter, honey from Val David, as well as such fine Quebec cheeses as Cendrillon from Portneuf.

Both women are irrepressible culture vultures.

"Showbiz is in our blood," says Lapointe, who is a songwriter and folksinger best-known for her tunes during the '70s and '80s, like *Mon Bon Pays* and *Dis-Moi* and her collaborations with her sister, actress Louise Portal, and guitarist Claude Dubois.

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A tireless impresario, Thollon is the founder and artistic director of Vue sur la Relève, an arts festival whose 17th edition will be held in Montreal, April 4-21, 2012. Vue sur la Relève showcases more than 40 young dancers, actors and musicians.

But first comes ski season. The ski and snowboard areas around Ste. Adèle are relatively modest in size, but they're big on family fun and easy on the pocketbook. Ski Chantecler and Ski Mont Gabriel each have vertical drops of about 200 metres, or about one-third as long as Mont Tremblant, but they also have flexible four-hour tickets and night-skiing. At Ski Chantecler, the Chemin Magique is an easy ride through glades and the snowpark named for Olympian Alexandre Despatie is full of thrills and chills. Ski Mont Gabriel, small but feisty, is Quebec's top training ground for acrobatic skiing and also the host mountain of the Canada Post Freestyle Grand Prix (Jan. 7-8 and 14-15). Most of Café Ô Lit's experienced skiers head for Mont Blanc, 25 minutes north in St. Faustin, which has three mountain faces on the second-highest peak in the Laurentians, after Tremblant.

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If you go:

Ste. Adèle is a one-hour, 10-minute drive from Montreal via Highway 15 north to exit 69.

Café Ô Lit: 450- 229-4068, 514-805-4192, cafeolit.com;

1375 rue du Mont-Hibou, Ste. Adèle. Reopens Dec. 1.

Price: Including breakfast, wireless Internet, DVD library and tea corner, \$99-109 for two. Extra guests: no charge for children under 5; \$25 for children under 12; \$35 for ages 12 to 17 and \$50 for 18 and over.

With lodging, breakfast and dinner at Chez Milot or Chez Esmerelda in Ste. Adèle, it's \$155-165 for two; at Recto-Verso or l'Express Gourmand, it's \$203-213, for two.

Vue sur la Relève: 514-278-3941, vuesurlareleve.com.

Ski Chantecler: 888-916-1616, skichantecler.com. Highway 15,

exit 72.

Ski Mont Gabriel: 450-227-1100, 514-871-0101, skimontgabriel.com. Highway 15, exit 64.

Mont Blanc: 800- 567-6715, skimontblanc.com, St. Faustin-Lac-Carré. Highway 15 to route 117 and exit 107.

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