

# Suns shine on exceptional Laurentians B&B

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE MARCH 24, 2012



The building that houses the Au Clos Rolland Couette & Café in Ste. Adèle was originally built by the family who owned the Rolland paper company.

**Photograph by:** Au Clos Rolland Couette & Café

Way back in the 1880s, long before Kindles and Kobos, bookseller and newspaper publisher Jean-Baptiste Rolland opened a paper factory in the Lower Laurentians.

The Rollands became prominent, the community became a company town and eventually Mont Rolland was born. The family built a stately home, an aristocratic treasure that still stands and is thriving as a B&B. But just as it was not just any house in the early 1900s, it is not just any B&B today.

Le Clos Rolland is a “five-sun” B&B, which means that it is one of 16 exceptional small inns in Quebec and one of four in the Laurentians to be rated as “the best” by Quebec Tourism. (The others “up north” are Escale du Nord and Les Dames du Lac in Mont Tremblant and Le Petit Clocher in St. Sauveur.)

Typically, to merit five suns, a B&B would have most of the following strong points: an attractive setting with green-thumb landscaping, an exceptional house with an interesting history, superior decor and elaborate breakfasts.

Le Clos Rolland fills the bill on all counts. The Rolland family built their elegant mansion on a hill a mere half-block from the train station so their guests could come and go easily, especially in the snowy winters. The house has an aristocratic bearing, with spacious rooms, high ceilings, such top-drawer touches as maple floors and burnished wood trim and large windows looking out onto the peaceful

copse of maples and pines.

Indoors, very little of the decor is original, perhaps only a few light fixtures and one wall of Rolland family photos, but the owners, Lauraine Cyr and Sylvain Maher, have maintained the house's historic charm with some of their own heirlooms and a collection of English, French and Canadian antiques and reproductions. To their credit, they have avoided the Victorian trend toward clutter, except for a few doilies and lace curtains. What's also appealing is that the furniture is big and bold, so you feel that you can truly settle back and relax. A welcoming eight-person dining table fills the breakfast room. The living room is the perfect place to nestle on an over-sized chenille sofa, in front of a fieldstone fireplace.

One thing about great old houses is that they have wonderful extra spaces. Here at Rolland, you can opt for breakfast in the tiny sunroom and afternoon drinks around the bar in the drawing room. The house's colours work beautifully, too. The dining room is a soft canary yellow. Guest rooms are done in dove grey, antique blue or soothing sage.

Entirely self-taught in the kitchen, Maher is a keen breakfast chef who has concocted enough recipes so that even guests who stay five days will never repeat the same four-course feast – unless there are calls for encores. He blends his own yogurt and bakes a yogurt brûlée with fruit. His freshly squeezed orange juice is mixed with mango for extra froth and sweetness. His scrumptious homemade bread defies classification. It's crusty like a baguette, as tasty as sourdough. Now is the time to do a jam tasting. Maher presents shooter glasses filled with the morning's sweets: tangy marmalade, sweet peach and tart raspberry. For me, the raspberry was the winner. More bread, please? And pass the caramel spread.

Main courses might be eggs Benedict with pancetta, crepes with cheese sauce or Maher's signature tulip-shaped biscuit filled with ham and eggs. There are such sides as cretons and Quebec cheeses and – surely you are not full yet – lemon loaf with crème anglaise, grilled pineapple with whipped cream, blueberry pancakes or baked apples with maple syrup.

Au Clos Rolland's appeal also lies in its location, almost across the street from the Linear Park of the P'tit Train du Nord. The train through the Laurentians arrived at Mont Rolland in the 1890s and brought life, commerce and people to the village. By 1904, the Rolland factory started production and added impetus. By the 1930s, the train had a new mandate: ferrying weekend sporting enthusiasts to the new lift-serviced ski centres and resort hotels that sprang up from Piedmont to points north.

The train has been defunct since the 1970s, overtaken by the development of the Laurentian Autoroute, but the track still is a lifeblood of tourism, drawing thousands of visitors year-round. Once again, Au Clos Rolland is perfectly situated. Whether cycling in summer or cross-country skiing in winter, it's six kilometres north to "downtown" Ste. Adèle and nine more kilometres to Val David, both visitor-friendly towns with lots of cafés for a well-deserved lunch break.

### **If You Go**

Ste. Adèle is a one hour and 15 minute drive from Montreal via Highway 15 north to Exit 67.

Au Clos Rolland Couette & Café: 450-229-1939; [auclosrolland.com](http://auclosrolland.com); 1200 rue St. Jean, Ste. Adèle.

Price: \$ 95-\$120 for two, incl. breakfast. Discount of 15 per cent for a third night or more.

Le P'tit Train du Nord Linear Park: winter, \$10 or free for 17 and under; in summer, the linear park is free from May to October for cycling or strolling.

Laurentians regional information: 800-561-6673, [laurentians.com](http://laurentians.com); or Ste. Adèle, 450-229-2644, [sainte-adele.net](http://sainte-adele.net).

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