

Country Roads: L'Adolphin is a charming Laurentian retreat

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE JUNE 5, 2013



L'Adolphin is a new six-room inn with an idyllic lakefront location in St. Adolphe d'Howard.

Photograph by: Daniel Vézeau, L'Adolphin

An adorable auberge, l'Adolphin is the latest addition to St. Adolphe d'Howard, a picturesque mountain village on the shore of Lake St. Joseph in the Laurentians.

Jean-Charles Halgand, a hotelier from France who also works as a film extra, and Daniel Vézeau, an industrial production manager, recently bought a vintage Tyrolean-style chalet, gutted it and turned it into an appealing guest house with six rooms, three shared bathrooms and an idyllic lakefront location.

L'Adolphin is at the end of the commercial stretch of the main street, with the back of the house and the lawn facing the lake, shaded by huge cedars, maples and pines. Halgand and Vézeau have set up lounge chairs so guests can have front-row seats for the passing parade of kayaks, pontoons and motorboats. The gentle waves lap against the shore and the only sounds are faint, happy cries from the municipal beach down the shore.

The interiors are fresh and soothing, with the intimate, personal air of a B&B. Each room has an individual thermostat, bottled water, a generous pile of thick, white towels and chocolate truffles. Besides the porches and lawn, guests can use the television lounge with a DVD library, a refrigerator and all-day coffee and tea.

The accommodations on the second and third floors – up a steep staircase – are done in pristine white bead-boarding with contrasting walls of apricot, powder blue, coral and lemon. Favourites include No. 3, which looks out toward Mt. Avalanche, St. Adolphe's mountain-bike and ski area, and No. 1, a tiny hideaway with an authentic 1800s sleigh bed for one person and a lake view. The inn is brightened by pale wood floors and abstract watercolours by artist Isabelle Le Vergos.

Vézeau is in charge of the kitchen. His breakfast specialties include maple granola with nuts and yogourt, quiche with apples and bacon, and his own version of eggs Savoyard, baked with cheese, crème fraîche, chives, bacon and roast potatoes. And with advance notice, he'll also do a barbecue dinner. In addition to breakfast tables, Halgand and Vézeau have set up a bar with cute white bar stools, for lots of conversation and mingling before and after dinner.

If you're not dining chez Halgand and Vézeau, they recommend Restaurant 111 (pronounced cent-onze), a darling 24-seat mom and pop operation run by chef Jean-Pierre Wolford and his wife, Danielle Pagé. The decor and cuisine are formally French, featuring escargots, duck à l'orange, scallops in white wine, veal chops with sauce moutarde, sweetbreads and the house specialty, aged beef, served as steaks or roasts.

Restaurant 111 is expanding exponentially this weekend with a tent on the lawn for the 13th annual wine and food extravaganza, La Grande Dégustation de Vin de St. Adolphe d'Howard. One of the village's biggest annual events, La Dégustation will feature all-day tastings of wine, Armagnac and Champagne with advice from some of Quebec's best sommeliers as well as cool music by pianist Slim Wood, the dynamic group Les Jazzbin, Audrey Paquin on lyre and Luc Lopez on accordion. Guests can visit nearly 20 wine kiosks and also partake in a gastronomic Italian dinner Saturday, July 7.

Who knew that tranquil St. Adolphe was such a hotbed of nightlife? The rustic bar-bistro l'Ange Vagabond is open Thursdays through Sundays from 3 p.m. for après-sports cocktails,

McAuslan micro-brews and paninis on the terrace.

Owner Michèle Méthot also orchestrates a lineup of singer-songwriters on Saturdays, including country guitarist Pilgrim tonight (July 7); and singing trio Vander on July 14. (Tickets, \$10-\$25, 819-714-0213, facebook.com/langevagabond.)

The Dégustation, l'Ange Vagabond and Restaurant 111 are for bon vivants, but St. Adolphe is best-known for its outdoors options. The Centre de plein air (866-236-5743, stadolphedhoward.qc.ca) is a one-stop hub for information, including boat rentals, fishing, mountain biking and camping. The pet-friendly local hiking trails link up with those of Ste. Agathe, Morin Heights and Val Morin.

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IF YOU GO

St. Adolphe d'Howard is a one-hour, 15-minute drive from Montreal via Highway 15 north to exit 60 (St. Sauveur) and Routes 364 west and 329 north.

L'Adolphin: 819-714-0229, 514-267-4435, ladolphin.com, 2022 Chemin du village, St. Adolphe d'Howard. Closed Oct. 9 to Dec. 13. Including breakfast, \$48-\$65 singles or \$65-\$85 for two; private lakefront with swimming, pedalos, canoes. Dinner on request, \$18.

Restaurant 111: 819-327-3064, (no website); 111 rue du Collège, St. Adolphe d'Howard; dinner, Thurs.-Sun., \$30-\$50.

La Grande Dégustation de Vin de St. Adolphe d'Howard: July 7-8, 819-327-2044; grandedegustation.ca; tastings and musical performances from 11 a.m. Sat.-Sun.; \$20 per day; gastronomic dinner, \$100 p.p. VIP package for two, \$225 with pontoon boat ride, site access and dinner for two.

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