

New life on Sutton's 200-year-old main street

Boutiques, galleries bring town new life

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE FEBRUARY 14, 2013



Sutton's main street is a charming promenade

Photograph by: Michel St-Jean

Interior designer Kris Blok-Andersen gave up Montreal for the countryside outside Sutton in the Eastern Townships. Now, instead of the compact spaces and busy streets of balconville in the Plateau, she relishes her rural house, which has 28 windows, almost no curtains and tranquil views of snow-covered fields, forests and mountains. She also opened Kokûn (pronounced "ko-coon"), a chic boutique of furniture, rugs, accessories and lighting on Sutton's main street.

"We have a strong market for interior décor, a constant flow of locals and visitors," Blok-Andersen said. "Mont Sutton is an almost year-round attraction and the Pelletier pavilion is a happening arts centre."

Sutton loyalists have their favourite places, small personally run businesses that have been around for a long time, such as Atelier Bouffe, the handsome kitchen shop owned by Catherine Handfield; Traiteur Chez Matis, whose super-chef, Laurent Wiederkehr, prepares luscious duck tourtière, tarte Tatin and berry pie; and Au Coeur des Saisons, where Hélène Soucy sells flowers and pretty home essentials at accessible prices.

But even an old town — Sutton's community dates to approximately 1800 — can inspire new charms. Several enterprises have opened in the past 12 to 24 months, adding new life to the main street.

The contemporary Pixel boutique and art gallery at 12 Principale Sud exhibits photographs by Quebec artists. On display now are the dramatic black-and-white landscapes by Jonathan Sommer, the son of late Montreal poet Richard Sommer.

Anne Lord also has a Quebec theme at her eco-conscious store, Urbaine des champs at 10 Principale Nord. Everything — jewelry, accessories and clothes for men, women and children — is designed and made in la belle province, mostly of organic or recycled materials.

The latest global rage is yarn-bombing, a wool-based graffiti in which knitting fanatics drape potholes, cars and statues in crazy cosies and nubby blankets. Lucinda Iglesias, owner of Mont Tricot at 20 Principale Nord, can make sure you're on trend, too, with how-to workshops and a colourful boutique full of yarn, patterns and accessories.

Sutton's lodging options are mostly small-scale, in keeping with its village ambience, but each has its own unique character.

Le Domaine Tomali-Maniatyn is an exceptional B&B in a hilltop mansion that looks like a grand European hunting lodge.

Engineer Tom Bedowski built a home that was too large for his family, so Sutton visitors are in luck. There's an indoor pool, attractive suites and gourmet breakfasts of smoothies and dishes like crêpes with cheese and dates. The B&B's chef also uses ingredients recommended in the book *Cuisiner avec les Aliments contre le cancer* by two medical specialists from Hôpital Sainte-Justine.

More basic, but still comfortable, Auberge D&K is a minimalist, loft-style inn with eight rooms, each accommodating four people, so it's a great choice for two couples or families who want to share two open bedrooms. D&K serves continental breakfast and casual fare in a stylish lounge.

All of Sutton's inns have packages with Mont Sutton, one of Quebec's most compelling ski and snowboard mountains, and a family favourite. It's gearing up for school break with a schedule that includes snow volleyball and kids' crafts, from March 4-8.

On the entertainment front, the Salle Alec et Gérard Pelletier stages an eclectic lineup of performing arts and films in English and French. It's a 120-seat cabaret-style hall with the added attraction of a fully licensed bar. Michèle Choinière, a soulful Franco-American singer-songwriter, will perform March 2, and folk-rocker Patrice Michard is the headliner March 8.

IF YOU GO:

Sutton is a 90-minute drive from Montreal via Highway 10 to Exit 68 or 72.

Sutton Tourism: 800-565-8455, infosutton.com. Note: Some businesses are closed on Mondays, Tuesdays and/or Wednesdays.

Auberge D&K: 450- 538-0005, aubergedk.com; 27 rue Principale Sud; \$169 for two or \$219 for four, incl. breakfast; \$199/\$249 on Fri-Sat. Ski-Dodo, \$99 p.p., per night, Sun.-Thurs. Bistro open Thurs.-Sun.

Domaine Tomali-Maniatyn: 450-538-6605, maniatyn.com; 377 rue Maple; approximately \$140-\$175 for two, including breakfast. Packages available with cross-country at Sutton-en-Haut, downhill skiing at Mont Sutton, yoga, Spa Balnea or dinner at Il Duetto or “at home.”

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Previous

Next



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