

Checking In: Quiet B&B is a hub for Beaupré coast activities

Guests' needs have been anticipated

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE AUGUST 16, 2013



Le Royal Champêtre has idyllic views of the St. Lawrence, Île d'Orléans and Quebec City.

Photograph by: Le Royal Champêtre

A good book and suntan lotion are essential equipment for Le Royal Champêtre B&B, the ideal place to chill out and simply enjoy the splendid views of the St. Lawrence River, Île d'Orléans and Quebec City.

The little inn is situated along Avenue Royale, also known as La Route de la Nouvelle France or Route 360, the province's oldest road, and a continuation of the venerable Chemin du Roy. Avenue Royale travels through bucolic countryside, with picturesque pastures and fields nestled between mountains and the St. Lawrence. Le Royal Champêtre overlooks a dairy farm with a barn that dates to the 1700s.

Throughout the inn are the paintings of local artist Pauline Nadeau, who captures the changing seasons, the history of Old Quebec and the landscapes of the Beaupré coast and Charlevoix.

Le Royal Champêtre was purpose-built in 2001 to be a B&B, so guests' needs have been anticipated. There are varnished wood floors throughout, giving it a fresh and clean look, and a welcoming, bright

breakfast area with those mesmerizing river views. It's soundproofed and air-conditioned, and each room has a private bathroom with shower. For small gatherings, guests can use a tiny television salon and the terrace.

Brigitte Bélanger and Christophe Tissier, husband and wife and business partners, offer a choice of three guest rooms and two family suites, with hand-painted furniture and pastel walls and a mélange of double, queen and king beds. The room called Rozi the Artist is a bloom of floral décor and lavender walls. Eliot the Captain is nautical blue and white décor and opens onto the inn's terrace. Lucas le Sportif is decorated with sports memorabilia.

The two family suites that have two bedrooms are Maïna the Amerindian, festooned with First Nations pelts and feathers, and Mélanie the Globetrotter, decorated with travel souvenirs.

One look at Le Royal Champêtre's kitchen and you know that breakfast will be delectable. The centrepiece is an antique cast-iron stove crafted in Quebec in 1905. It's a masterpiece of intricate metalwork with lions' head carvings and ceramic designs. It's also the source of the mellow aroma of maple wood that wafts through the house and piques your appetite for the morning feast.

Bélanger serves fruit, juice, main courses such as baked eggs, pancakes with caramelized apples, French toast with strawberries and maple syrup or frittatas, plus extras like toast with Bélanger's homemade raspberry and strawberry jams and spreads from Mylliam Délice Maison: raspberry and apple butter, fudge or maple caramel. It's a rich and indulgent meal, but Bélanger also can adapt to food allergies and vegetarian or gluten-free needs.

For dinner, Brigitte Bélanger recommends regional restaurants, including Auberge Baker and inns on Île d'Orléans, but during winter she will cook "in" for a minimum of four.

"After skiing or a visit to the Ice Hotel, people want to warm up and cocoon," she said.

Her menu might be something hearty like potage of leeks or cauliflower, filet of beef with goat cheese and spinach and, for dessert, spicy pumpkin pie.

More than 80 per cent of Royal Champêtre's guests come from Europe and Asia to see some of the great sights of Quebec. Montmorency Falls, one kilometre down the road, is at the top of everyone's list. With water cascading dramatically down from the Montmorency River to the St Lawrence, the falls are 83 metres high, about 30 metres higher than Niagara, although nowhere near as wide.

There are various ways to experience this beautiful phenomenon, the second-most visited attraction in the province after Quebec City's Old Town. You can start with an easygoing cable car ride to the summit or pump up to a cardio-intense climb up stairs. The treat is lunch or dinner — delightful, different and romantic — on the terrace of Manoir Montmorency overlooking the falls. The suspension bridge that spans the crashing water offers the most compelling close-up view. And the ultimate challenge is the new Via Ferrata, part hiking and part rock-climbing on the face of the escarpment, stepping on iron supports anchored to the cliff. Not for the faint-hearted.

Le Royal Champêtre is a tranquil getaway but it is at the centre of so many happenings.

La Grande Fête de la Côte-de-Beaupré, Aug. 23-25, will bring together food producers and artisans in a village of tents on the grounds of one of Quebec's most revered sites, the Shrine of Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré. Locals will run a farmers' market, food kiosks and children's animation, and beloved Quebec chanteuse Ginette Reno will be the marquee act on the Friday and Saturday nights.

In September and October, Mont-Ste-Anne's annual autumn fest, La Grande virée des couleurs, will feature activities both tame and adventurous, including hiking, mountain biking, disc golf, thrilling paragliding and sedate gondola rides, all against a backdrop of mountains and forests.

IF YOU GO

Boischatel is a three-hour drive from Montreal via Highway 40 or 20 to Quebec City and then Route 440 and 138 east. It is 12 kilometres past Quebec City.

Le Royal Champêtre: 866-762-1800, 418-822-3500, www.leroyalchampetre.com; 5494 Ave. Royale, Boischatel.

Price: \$120-\$130 until Oct. 10, for two incl. breakfast; or \$85-\$110 Oct. 11-June 20, 2014; 20 per cent discount for five or more nights; 25 per cent to 30 per cent discounts on third night; dinner, \$35, plus supplement on holidays.

Parc de la Chute-Montmorency/Montmorency Falls Park: 800-665-6527, www.sepaq.com; 5300 Boul. Ste-Anne (Route 138); breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, bistro or dining room, both have terraces. Cable car: \$10.95, with discounts for juniors. Some activities are limited after Oct. 27.

Tourism info: Beaupré: 877-611-6145, www.cotedebeaupre.com; Quebec City region: 877-783-1608, www.quebecregion.com, www.routenouvelle-france.com. La Grande Fête de la Côte-de-Beaupré: Aug. 23-25, www.lagrandefete.com, Shrine of Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré; Grande virée des couleurs, Mont-Ste-Anne, Sept. 21-Oct. 14, www.mont-sainte-anne.com.

Rochelle@rochellelash.com

Twitter: rochellelash



Le Royal Champêtre has idyllic view s of the St. Lawrence, Île d'Orléans and Quebec City.

Photograph by: Le Royal Champêtre

