

Some Vermont resorts accept loonie at par

Crossing the border won't break bank



ROCHELLE LASH
CHECKING IN

With the Canadian dollar slipping, we are frantically seeking attractive options that won't cost an extra 10 per cent if we choose to travel to the United States. Some tech-savvy hotels, few and far between, accept bitcoin, the new digital currency that handily transcends banks, credit cards and exchange rates. But a handful of other hotels go for the old-fashioned, hands-across-the-border system of accepting Canadian dollars at par.

Here are two neighbourly Vermont resorts that welcome our loonie as being equal to a greenback.

The Inn at Buck Hollow Farm is as purely Vermont as maple syrup and mountains.

The four-room B&B is a pastel yellow clapboard cottage, the centrepiece of a former dairy farm that dates to the 1790s. Off the beaten track, 15 minutes outside of St. Albans, it's nestled in the rolling foothills of the Green Mountains.

Owners Brad and Jacquie Schwartz have an open door for Canadian visitors, with the dollar accepted at par. But Buck Hollow is great value in any currency. It has walking trails and snowshoe trails on a sprawling 400-acre property, and guests can tramp through the snow to the farm's sugar shack. There is a year-round outdoor hot tub, and in summer there's a swimming pool, shaded by apple and pear trees.

"We're so close to the U.S. border at Highgate, Vt., about 30 minutes south," said Jacquie, who is from Montreal and also speaks French and Spanish, "so we really like to encourage people from Quebec."

Buck Hollow Farm is pastoral and peaceful on the outside, but lively and warm inside. The Schwartzes run an antique shop — mostly furniture, but also such Vermont treasures as pine-framed windows, maple moulds and sap buckets. Jacquie also sells



The Inn at Buck Hollow Farm is a quaint B&B in northern Vermont with ski trails, a sugar shack and an antique shop.



The new Stateside Hotel at Jay Peak Resort is part of a \$40-million expansion.

her art, unique paintings on glass that capture Vermont's landscapes.

She is an accomplished cook and a vegan, and Brad is an omnivore, so breakfast is a creative combo of hearty and healthy, with extras like low-fat zucchini bread and muesli. Jacquie bakes her own bread, and Buck Hollow has a maple-syrup operation on the property, so go for the pancakes or french toast. Among her favourite

dishes are breakfast calzones folded over eggs, sausage and cheese, topped with hollandaise; and orange-vanilla pancakes with vegetarian sausages.

The guest rooms are B&B style, with four-poster beds and country quilts, plus satellite TV, iPod chargers and, in two rooms, outdoor decks.

The Schwartzes have their own menagerie: two ponies, five cats and two dogs (who have their own Facebook

page, elmoandgrover, and write the Pet Peeves column for Buck Hollow's newsletter). The couple keep their pets on their private side of the house, away from the public spaces and guest quarters, so the inn is able to accept guest pets.

What is there to do in this pretty, somewhat remote corner of northern Vermont? The incomparably family-friendly ski area Smugglers' Notch is 30 minutes south

via Route 15. The shopping and dining scenes of Essex and Burlington are nearby. The Schwartzes recommend a few dinner spots in St. Albans, but Jacquie also has branched out into cooking casual suppers — pasta, pizza, cheese fondue or chili — by reservation only.

Just across the border from the Eastern Townships outpost of Mansonville, **Jay Peak Resort** has been beloved by Canadian vacationers almost since its opening more than 50 years ago. In true neighbourly spirit, Jay Peak accepts the loonie at par if you pay cash, and that's valid for all of its resort offerings: lodging, food, skiing, golf, sports facilities and spa.

The major news this year is the \$40-million expansion of Stateside, Jay's secondary area, with the 85-room Stateside Hotel and base lodge adjacent to the Bonaventure and Taxi chairlifts.

Jay Peak has rebuilt and modernized its entire resort over the past few years, to the tune of more than \$330 million. With family-friendly Hotel Jay, upscale Tram Haus

IF YOU GO

Tourism Vermont: visit-vermont.com or vermontvacation.com

The Inn at Buck Hollow Farm: 800-849-7985, buckhollow.com; 2150 Buck Hollow Rd., Fairfax, Vt. Canadian dollar accepted at par; \$110 for two in a room; suites at \$130 for three or \$150 for four; includes breakfast, Internet, walking trails. Pet fee is \$20 per day. Eighty-minute drive from Montreal.

Jay Peak Resort: 800-451-4449, jaypeakresort.com; Route 242, Jay, Vt. Canadian dollar accepted at par (with cash only). Prices fluctuate, but a family of four can stay at the new Stateside Hotel starting at \$105 per person, including lift tickets and Pump House Water Park access. Jay Peak offers learn-to-ski weeks and meal packages. On certain deals, children 14 and under ski, stay and "splash" for free. Ski-Snowboard: \$69 lift tickets for adults. With a season pass to any North American ski area, an adult ticket costs \$56. Two-hour drive from Montreal.

Lodge and the dazzling Pump House Water Park at its principal base area, the resort has created a weatherproof getaway, complete with a tunnel that connects lodging, dining, the spa, sports shops and a large video arcade. Outdoors, the expansion has included a nordic ski centre and the Ice Haus, an NHL-sized arena for year-round skating, ice shows and hockey.

Let's just say this is a busy resort. You'll see kids and parents in swimwear and bathrobes on their way to the chutes and pools of the Pump House. Others are bundled up in snow-sports gear heading to terrain parks and ski trails, still the main draw for most winter visitors.

A new partnership with Disney and Burton Snowboards has resulted in a unique children's snowboard park with artistic carvings and features from the Toy Story movies. There's afternoon action too. Adults have a choice of seven pubs for après-ski.

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