

Serenity and indulgence at Church Landing

New Hampshire hotel has it all



ROCHELLE LASH
CHECKING IN

Businessman Rusty McLearn has created a New England resort community almost from scratch, complete with four hotels of varying styles and budgets. I say “almost from scratch” because McLearn had a leg up; he built around one great natural resource: Lake Winnepesaukee, a long stretch of cold, clear water that has drawn tourists for more than 100 years.

Meredith, N.H., is a former textile town that has led a double life as a vacation getaway. The main draw has always been Lake Winni, a.k.a. the Big Lake, which is wildly popular for water-skiing, jet-skiing, boating, fishing and paddling, as well as the basics — sunning and swimming. Still, Meredith Bay manages to be peaceful, because power boats have to go slower than 10 km/h, so there is no buzz of surging motors.

McLearn started with one restaurant in an old mill, and over the past 30 years, his fledgling enterprise has grown to a mini-empire called Mill Falls at the Lake. It embraces four hotels, plus a shopping complex called Mill Falls Marketplace, as well as Cascade Spa, which unveiled new facilities this spring. McLearn even bought the local Meredith gas station and spruced it up with a cute, colourful retro look to fit into his new tourist-friendly landscape.

Church Landing is the newest and most deluxe of Mill Falls’ hotels. It’s at the heart of Meredith, but because its guest rooms, common rooms and spa face the lake, it actually is a tranquil resort with waterfront dining and gardens along the shore.

Church Landing’s accommodations are among the most sumptuous I have seen in New England, and I’m not the only one who thinks so. When it opened three years ago, Trip Advisor rated it among the most romantic hotels in the U.S. Perhaps it’s the four-poster beds smothered in thick duvets, so comfort-



The deluxe rooms at Church Landing in Meredith, N.H., are decked out in Adirondack décor.

BOB MANLEY/MILL FALLS AT THE LAKE

able and heavy that staying under the covers all morning seems like the only thing to do. If and when you surface, you might plan a private afternoon, curled up in the window seat.

Church Landing’s designers went all out with rustic-but-rich Adirondack-style décor (yes, the renowned New York log and birchbark style has crossed state lines into New Hampshire). The workmanship is superlative. The comforting colours of forest green, cranberry and bark recall the great forests outdoors. And McLearn hasn’t overlooked any indulgence. In certain rooms, a flat-screen television will rise mechanically from a cabinet with the push of a button.

To keep pace with the beautiful guest rooms, Cascade Spa has been renovated in art deco-inspired style using lots of glass and marble. It has created signature services, such as the Cascade Massage, which features body and scalp rubdowns; the Lavender-Dream body treatment, a soothing and hydrating scrub and massage; and the caviar facial, which uses anti-oxidants to tighten and nourish the skin. And, again, the views of Lake Winni add a deep serenity factor.

Outside of the hotel, Mere-



Mill Falls at the Lake, built by businessman Rusty McLearn, encompasses four hotels built around Meredith Bay in Meredith, N.H., on Lake Winnepesaukee.

dith simply pulses with activity. You can rent all manner of water-sports equipment and craft on Lake Winni, but one of the most appealing options in Meredith is renting a Harley-Davidson motorcycle for the day. Laconia Harley-Davidson supplies bikes, equipment and maps.

Lakehouse is the hotel’s big, busy and friendly restaurant, also done in upscale summer-camp style, with a wood-slat ceiling, chairs fashioned

from branches, and twigs and walls of cedar planks.

Lakehouse perpetuates the local theme, offering fresh farm-and-sea fare from suppliers, including Portsmouth Lobster Co., New Hampshire Mushroom Company and the Sandwich Creamery.

It serves hearty American cuisine featuring appetizers with international accents such as pork tacos, pizza with Gorgonzola, figs and prosciutto; plus side dishes of

rosemary-roasted potatoes and creamy polenta; and main courses of cedar-brined pork chops, braised lamb, beef tenderloin, duck breast or vegetarian peppers stuffed with tomato cream, goat cheese and mushrooms.

It’s a challenge to imagine dessert after such fulsome fare, but irresistible at the same time. The chef’s specialties are comfort-style bread pudding and apple crisp.

For all of Church Land-

IF YOU GO

Meredith, N.H., is a three-and-a-half-hour drive from Montreal via U.S. highways 91 and 93 to Exit 23.

Mill Falls at the Lake: 800-622-6455, www.millfalls.com. The four hotels are: Church Landing and Bay Point (both lakefront) and Mill Falls and Chase House (both across the street from the lake). Each has its own restaurant serving dinner.

Church Landing at Mill Falls: 800-622-6455, www.millfalls.com; 281 Daniel Webster Highway, Meredith, N.H.

Price: Deluxe rooms and suites, approx. \$310-\$450 U.S. for two; The Birch and Boathouse suites, approx. \$470 per night for two, with pullout sofas, larger balconies, whirlpool tubs and wet bars. A two-night minimum applies on weekends. Rates include Wi-Fi, takeout coffee and muffins, two indoor-outdoor swimming pools (one is for adults), fitness centre, sauna, hot tub, lakefront and beach. Extras: canoes, kayaks, standup paddleboards.

Cascade Spa: 866-719-0161, www.millfalls.com.

Lakehouse restaurant: 603-279-5221, www.thecman.com; breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, and Sunday brunch buffet.

New Hampshire Lakes Region Tourism: 800-605-2537, www.lakesregion.org.

ing’s luxuries, McLearn stuck to homeland values in construction, meeting the Made-in-America Challenge. This is a series broadcast by Diane Sawyer on ABC World News that encourages Americans to buy products made in the U.S.A. According to ABC, during the 1960s, roughly eight per cent of purchases in the U.S. were manufactured overseas, while today about 60 per cent come from abroad.

“We are proud to say Church Landing is 95 per cent American made,” McLearn said. “Everything, including the nails, the steel, the lumber and the bathtubs, are made in the U.S.A., except for some electrical panels and one elevator, which came from Canada.”

WHERE TO STAY

ALSO FIND US ON montrealgazette.com/wheretostay

TO ADVERTISE please call 514-987-2350

1000 ISLANDS

GLEN HOUSE RESORT – SMUGGLERS GLEN GOLF COURSE

In the Heart of the 1000 Islands and choose from one of our many Stay and Play or Romance Packages, starting at \$136 per night based on double occupancy. Enjoy our 18 hole championship golf course, onsite spa, casual fine dining, local Theatre, Boat Cruises and Casino. Visit www.glenhouseressort.com or Call 1-800-268-4536 for details.

NEW YORK

RIVERSIDE TOWER HOTEL – NEW YORK CITY

Singles USD \$134. Doubles USD \$139. Suites USD \$149.-\$169. Lincoln Center area. Hudson River views, 18 floors, kitchenette, 5 minutes to midtown. Safe, quiet luxury area. Riverside Drive & 80th Street. For more info, call 800-724-3136 or visit www.riversidetowerhotel.com

AMERICA’S BEST VALUE INN

In wonderful Plattsburgh, NY. Only \$140 for 2 nights. Canadian cash. Up to 2 people, additional pers. add \$10 more per night. Free continental breakfast. Located conveniently off exit 37 on I-87. Some holidays, wknds & spec. events do not apply. Up to 70% occ. daily. Based on availability. Call 518.563.0222 or toll free 1.800.358.2137

NEW HAMPSHIRE

WHITE MOUNTAINS • NORTH CONWAY

Enjoy the comforts of our historic “country elegant” boutique hotel with panoramic mountain views, cozy Martini Library Lounge, renowned international dining. Some guest rooms with fireplaces and/or Jacuzzi. Golf, hiking & tax-free outlet shopping nearby. From \$78ppdo(US) includes Full Breakfast & Dinner (off regular full menu). Photos, amenities & menu online. 603-421-6146 www.StonehurstManor.com

MAINE

OCEAN WOODS RESORT

Goose Rocks Beach Kennebunkport

RELAX, peaceful, affordable lodging near sandy beach. Spacious rooms include full bath, cable TV, wireless, AC, mini-fridge, coffeemakers, hairdryers and FREE breakfast. Outdoor pool, hot tub, shuffleboard. Complimentary beach towels, chairs & umbrellas. 10% discount for 5 or more nights. Call Kathleen Spang @ 207-967-1928. www.oceanwoodsresort.com

VERMONT

SMART SUITES

Summer Special. Come and enjoy our hospitality in either a studio efficiency at US \$92.95 or a more spacious one bedroom suite at US \$102.95/night, including a deluxe continental breakfast and free WIFI. Call toll free 877.862.6800 and mention the Gazette special. Not valid with other discounts and subject to availability. Effective 05/02/14. 1700 Shelburne Rd., So. Burlington, Vt. Take Exit 13 off I-89, left on rt. 7 for 1.5 miles, same entrance as Holiday Inn Express.

NEW JERSEY

DIAMOND CREST MOTEL Across The Street From The Beach Book Now And Save

2 Room kitchenette suites sleeps up to 6. All rooms have pool/ocean views. Daily maid service/bbq facilities/sun decks. July summer specials 7/3-7/13 – 7/13-7/20 5 Night special 750.00 Plus tax 7 Night special 1050.00 Plus tax (4 Person) a & b suites Extra person add 12.00 Per night August special please visit our website. Rates only apply to new reservations Diamond Crest Motel, 7011 Atlantic ave, Wildwood Crest, NJ 08260 (609) 522 1700 www.diamondcrestmotel.com