

Posh Naples hotel adds chic touches

DISCOUNT FOR CANADIANS is available until December. Ask for the Snowbird Special



ROCHELLE LASH

CHECKING IN

There is big news at the petite, posh Inn on Fifth in Naples, Fla.

This city of about 20,000 on the Gulf of Mexico is known for its elegant Mediterranean-style architecture and quiet, palm-lined streets. It's a more tony and reserved enclave than the busy, brash Atlantic coast and the Inn on Fifth reflects that upscale ambience.

The hotel is a boutique beauty, the centrepiece of "downtown," on fashionable Fifth Avenue South. It is so prominent in Naples that, as a guest, I felt like visiting royalty. Everywhere I went, locals would ask where I was staying and the reaction always was a swoon: "Oooh, the Inn on Fifth!"

The bulletin for 2014 encompasses two openings: Avenue5, a stylish bistro (that uses stylish typography) specializing in Atlantic lobster; and the Club Level Suites, an exclusive annex of 32 superlative accommodations.

New annex is tops

The Inn on Fifth is a Tuscan-looking villa in butter-yellow stucco, with hand-quarried stone inlays, terra cotta tiling and wrought-iron balconies.

The main building houses the plush Spa on Fifth, plus 87 recently-renovated rooms and suites featuring classic-contemporary decor, hand-some dark furniture and glamorous chandeliers. All the rooms have plush pillow-top bedding and balconies with views of palm trees waving in the breeze and a symphony of mockingbirds, sparrows and robins.

The rooftop swimming pool is surrounded by a colourful Floridian garden of miniature palms, ferns and tropical flowers blooming in scarlet and sunny yellow. If you love pool life, 10 guest rooms open directly onto the deck; the others are more secluded.

The Club Level takes the deluxe Inn on Fifth to a new



The rooftop swimming pool is surrounded by a colourful Floridian garden, with rooms opening directly onto the deck.

level. Here, the keyword "new" means the finest combed-cotton sheets and luxurious bathrobes trimmed with satin. The latest technical and hardware essentials include motion-sensor lighting, movie channels, iPod docks and white marble bathrooms with TVs, telephones and rain showers.

But, the lounge! If you are springing for a Club Level visit, you will revel in considerable perks: an excellent continental breakfast, all-day snacks, evening canapés such as Gulf shrimp and an open bar, including spirits and Champagne. Guests also have an around-town shuttle – a choice of a Cadillac Escalade or golf carts – for shopping, gallery-hopping or the beach, which is two kilometres away.

Drinks and dinner

Avenue5 (new name, progressive typography) is a flashy street-level bistro with streamlined white and glass decor and splashes of orange, silver and ebony. Connoisseurs can choose from a towering, two-storey wall of wine. Mixologists reign in an island bar, creating cocktails infused with herbs.

Avenue5 serves something delectable all the time. For lunch: turkey burgers, duck



The new Club Level annex at Inn on Fifth in Naples, Fla., is a luxurious getaway with personal service.

flatbread, vichyssoise and papaya or Cobb salads. For dinner: Maine lobster, oysters Rockefeller, Florida grouper, a gourmet burger with the works, plus meat and fish from the grill. And for Sunday Brunch: crab cakes benedict and bottomless mimosas.

Adjacent to the hotel is Truluck's Seafood, Steak and Crab House, a classic of Naples which has its own fishery delivering delicacies daily. Florida's stone crab season runs Oct. 15 to May 15 and Truluck's runs an all-you-can-eat special on Monday nights. At cocktail hour, drinks and the supper menu are half-price.

Spa life

The Spa on Fifth is feng-shui inspired, with bamboo floors, calligraphy artwork and a Buddha watching over. It's petite – only four rooms for services – but with intriguing treatments.

The pinot noir Vinotherapy Detox Wrap uses potions and lotions made from grape extracts and oils, favoured for their anti-oxidants.

The anti-aging Miracle Facial works with Israeli products from the Dead Sea whose minerals and mud penetrate the skin easing wrinkles and boosting collagen.

The Spa on Fifth runs a great girlfriends' package — Beauty and the Beach. It's a bliss-party that includes a massage, hair styling, makeup, mani-pedi, a fashion consultation, a gift beach cooler with snacks and dinner at Avenue 5 (\$289 US. p.p., double occupancy, minimum two nights, six people and three rooms).

Events galore

"Anything of significance that happens in Naples, happens on Fifth," says Cathy Christopher, the Inn on Fifth's director of Sales and Marketing.

"Our terraces are private loges overlooking the festivities."

Fifth Avenue's calendar includes an exuberant Halloween celebration with music, kids' animation and a costume party (Oct.31); the Santa Claus Parade (Dec.9); the Downtown Naples New Year's Art Fair (Jan. 3-4); the Ferrari Club (Feb. 15-16); and the St. Patrick's Day Parade (March 14).

The inn also is within a block of Naples Trolley Tours, which tootles around to local highlights, including the Naples Museum of Art, and shopping at Waterside and Third Street South.

IF YOU GO

Naples, Fla.

Naples, Fla., is a 50-km/35-minute drive south of Fort Myers and 177 km/90-minute drive west of Fort Lauderdale.

Inn on Fifth: 888-403-8778, 239-403-8777, www.innonfifth.com; 699 Fifth Ave. S., Naples, Fla.

Price: Snowbird Special for Canadians (seven nights for the price of five): based on a seven-night stay, valid until Dec. 19 (except U.S. holidays), starts at \$1,295 U.S. (or \$185 per night) or Club Level, \$2,495 U.S. (\$357 per night).

There is no resort fee. Rates include valet parking, Wi-Fi, outdoor rooftop pool, sauna and steam, fitness centre, around-town shuttle, tennis (Hydro-Grid Har-Tru courts), movie channels, newspapers. Club Level adds a luxurious lounge with continental breakfast, open bar, evening canapés, concierge and check-in, twice-daily housekeeping, rooftop sundeck. Extra: golf, treatments at Spa on Fifth, fishing or Florida Everglades boat excursions, sunset cruises on Naples Bay.

Avenue5: 239-403-7170, www.avenue5naples.com; open daily, lunch and dinner; three-course dinner specials, \$30; Happy Hour half-price, 4:30-6 p.m.; kids' menu and chef's table menus available.

Truluck's Steak Seafood & Crabhouse: 239-530-3131, www.trulucks.com; from 5 p.m. daily.

Paradise Coast Tourism: (Naples, Marco Island, Everglades): 800-688-3600, 800-2ESCAPE, www.ParadiseCoast.com.

If you want to buy into the Inn on Fifth lifestyle, there are condos on the drawing board, set to open in 2017.

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