

CHECKING IN

Stowe's Edson estate is reborn as luxurious inn



ROCHELLE LASH

The treasured Edson Hill in Stowe, Vt., reopened this winter as a ravishing luxury lodge after a major overhaul.

Some of the more precious aspects didn't change. The patrician Georgian brick mansion still has gracious service, wood-stoked fireplaces in every guest room and that fabulous romantic, hilltop setting, with an intriguing driveway up through towering stands of spruce and fir trees.

From all vantage points, the views are beautiful and dramatic: the birches and maples outside the inn, the deep curves of Stowe Valley below, and in the distance, the powerful peaks of the Green Mountains.

All good, but the major bulletins at Edson Hill are about the swish new interiors, terrific cuisine and spirited cocktail scene.

NEW-OLD INTERIORS

The fine vintage inn now is stylish and chic, with the air of a beloved private mountain manor, with lightness and air flowing through. One of the new owners, Susan Stacy, also runs a prestigious design firm, Gauthier-Stacy in Boston, with her partner, Jim Gauthier, so the stunning contemporary-classic interior decor is a big cut above the rest — quirky, authentic and timeless.

The look is an inviting fusion of New England cottage style, updated with sumptuous fabrics and fresh, modern details. Be gone, faded florals. Out, out lace curtains. And take flight, old tapestry chairs. Edson Hill is now bathed in an upbeat, upscale palette of linen, mushroom and alabaster, with fresh white tulips and gentle brushes of sage, smoky truffle and earthy bark to reflect Vermont's great outdoors.

It's polished and sophisticated, but it looks serendipitous, as though generations of a family collected their favourite furniture and cherished personal mementoes. Expect the unexpected. In the living room, a contemporary painting stands out against gilded tree-trunk tables and Chippendale armchairs. I'm relaxing on a tailored pearl velvet



The inviting new interior design at Edson Hill in Stowe, Vt., is a timeless, quirky collection of styles. The look is a fusion of New England cottage style, updated with fresh, modern details. PHOTOS: SAM GRAY/EDSON HILL



The 24 luxurious guest rooms at Edson Hill have four-poster beds with heavy duvets, fireplaces and flat-screen televisions.

sofa and my feet are resting on a cowhide stool.

The guest rooms, eight in the Manor House and 16 in the separate Guest Houses, are soothing spaces in palest dove grey and ivory, with dark wood floors and bleached barn-wood walls. The four-poster beds are smothered in heavy duvets and cushy pillows. This is a paradise for sleep, tucked into the tranquil woods.

On the modern front, a barn door slides open to a pristine

white and glass bathroom, which has a heated floor and fine toiletries from the Sense Collection by William Roam. All of the guest rooms have flat-screen TVs and fireplaces, and some have soaking tubs or day beds, plus bathrobes for deluxe, cotton-wrapped comfort.

THE FOOD SCENE

The Tavern, a comfortable bistro-bar warmed by a fireplace, walls of farm collectibles and low-slung

wooden beams, is already a hit with locals and visitors. Barkeep Don Horrigan crafts his own herbal syrups, so the Thai Basil Flip is a frothy, piquant concoction of gin, chili and lime, and the #CurrentlyTrending sparkles with tequila, citrus and sharp currants.

Chef Chad Hanley, a Vermonter with French training, does a modern Tavern take on hearty country cooking: venison stew; turkey burgers topped with apple-cranberry compote; and the Edson Cobb salad, rich with butter-poached lobster.

The Restaurant, serene and proper with white tablecloths and elegant tableware, is where Hanley struts his fancier fare. Some of the farm-to-table dishes are salads with baby kale from Pete's Greens in Craftsbury, Vt., and blue cheese from Jasper Hill Farm in Greensboro, Vt., and other top dishes are jalapeño crab cakes, pistachio-encrusted salmon, rack of lamb with orzo and chickpeas.

Don't miss the dessert lineup, which might include white chocolate bread pudding, apple-cheddar spice cake or ice cream infused with rosemary, custom-blended at Stowe Ice Cream.

IF YOU GO

Stowe is a two-hour drive from Montreal via Smuggler's Notch (open as of mid-May) or a 2.5-hour drive via Vermont Highway 89 to Exit 10.

Stowe Mountain Resort: 800-253-4754, www.stowe.com.

Edson Hill: 802-253-7371, edsonhill.com; 1500 Edson Hill Rd., Stowe, Vt.

Price: opening special, until April 19, \$250-\$350 US. (Regular rates will be \$350-\$450 US.), including breakfast, high-speed Wi-Fi, bottled water, fireplace concierge, evening turn-down on request, four kilometres of cross-country ski/hiking trails and visits to the horse stable. Summer: bocce, badminton, croquet, fishing ponds, firepit. Two-night minimum on weekends; three-night minimum on U.S. holidays. Children under 12 stay for free.

WHAT TO DO

One special activity at Edson Hill, especially popular with children, is the chance to feed the estate's horses. The inn also offers lawn games and indoor board games. It's best known for its hiking and trails through the woods, which connect with Vermont's Catamount Trail, a back-country ski trail that runs from the border in the Eastern Townships south to Massachusetts.

Edson Hill is halfway between the historic village of Stowe and the Stowe Mountain Resort. In summer, the famed mountain playground operates two golf courses: The Spa at Stowe Mountain Lodge and gondola and chairlift rides and a car road to the summit.

The upcoming culture calendar at the Stowe Performing Arts Center includes the classical Sunday in France with Capital City Concerts, April 12; Animal, a fusion of dance, film and live music, April 25; and the family-friendly Vermont Vaudeville, May 16.

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