



Hôtel Oui Go! operates in a century-old building on the main street of Trois-Rivières. *HÔTEL OUI GO!*

CHECKING IN

HÔTEL OUI GO! IS PETITE, SWEET AND CONTEMPORARY



ROCHELLE LASH

Hôtel Oui Go! is the embodiment of the new and hip downtown core of Trois-Rivières. The boutique hotel is a petite, sweet fusion of yesterday and today and one of the leading businesses revitalizing the area. Hôtel Oui Go! opened in early 2016 with 16 rooms and a tiny lobby that doubles as a breakfast room. It's compact, but personal and restful. Gilles Babin, a former insurance man, and his partner, a banker, are the owners. "We have travelled a lot and we know what we like," Babin said. "The idea of a small hotel grew from 'can we?' into Oui Go!, a name that is partly anglo and partly franco because we are both."

It was a good move. Business has been "amazing," according to Babin, partly because Hôtel Oui Go! is downtown's first contemporary boutique venture. **The scene:** History, food and Quebec savoir-faire merge in Trois-Rivières, North America's second-oldest francophone city, founded in 1634. Although it is on the shore of the St. Lawrence River, it's named, not for three rivers, but for three channels of the Saint-Maurice. And tourism is booming. Summer was jammed with big events: Trois-Rivières en Blues, the brewers' Festival brassicole de la Mauricie, and the 47th Grand Prix Trois-Rivières, a NASCAR race. The Cirque du Soleil performs until the end of August and Céline Dion will rock the Amphithéâtre Cogeco, Aug. 30 and 31. Businesses are channelling the city's heritage. Magasin Général Lebrun en Ville, next door to Hôtel Oui Go!, is an emporium of everything retro — wooden toys, candies and woven table covers.

Down the street, La Meraki sells Quebec-made crafts and clothes. The city's greeting program is new. Part of the Global Greeter Network, local volunteers accompany visitors on informal customized tours, whether they are craft beer connoisseurs, explorers of New France, or religious pilgrims. Sebastien Gervais of Trois-Rivières designed the fresh, inviting interiors at Hôtel Oui Go! **The hotel:** Hôtel Oui Go! is a cool update on a fine brick and stone Neo-Renaissance building that dates to the early 1900s. The fancy architectural features — tall, arched windows and intricate eaves — reflect the prestige of long ago and add gravitas to the hotel's young vibe. Sebastien Gervais of Trois-Rivières designed the fresh, inviting interiors. I call it lightly luxe. The tiny lobby is done in soft tones — tables of bleached ash, pastel aqua club chairs and sand-hued walls. A repainted antique credenza serves as a snack corner, and the reception desk and skylight are fashioned from

recycled windows and doors. The guest rooms are bathed in soothing shades of white and grey, with dramatically tall columns of curtains, club chairs and beautiful white-draped beds. The look is pure and uncluttered, but warm and cossetting. Local design accents include framed black-and-white images by JP Normandin Photographie and concrete tables by Art Ciment Décoration. The bathrooms are sharply modern in ebony and white, with rectangular sinks, large walk-in glass showers and top-of-the-line fixtures. A variety of rooms range from a corner unit with a sweeping 180-degree view to two compact connectors that make a handy family suite. They all have mini-fridges, 43-inch flat-screen TVs and Nespresso pod machines. The elaborate continental breakfast starts with yogurt, fruit, juice, cheese, and Nespresso coffee and tea from Urbanithé, importers based in town. The artisanal bakers at Le Panetier supply bread made with corn,

IF YOU GO:

Hôtel Oui Go!: 844-840-2868, hotelouigo.com; 1413 Notre-Dame St. Centre, Trois-Rivières.
Price: Until Dec. 31, \$129-\$159 for two people or \$124-\$154 for one, including continental breakfast, Wi-Fi. Extra: parking, \$5. The Casual Package adds a beer tasting and supper at Le Temps d'une Pinte, \$198 for two.
Trois-Rivières tourism: 800-313-1123, tourismtrois-rivieres.com, 1457 Notre-Dame St. Greeters: trois-rivieres.greeters.info

kamut, buckwheat or cranberries, and Les Gâteries d'Oli sweetens the morning with chocolatinés and croissants, served with LeBrun's traditional honey-caramel spread and blueberry jam. **Where to eat:** The gastronomic Poivre Noir, a stunning modern bistro overlooking the harbour, is tops, but on this trip I was going casual. Hôtel Oui Go! offers a package with Le Temps d'une Pinte, a leading gastro-pub in the booming foodie scene. It has tavern-style tables and chairs, vintage industrial decor and an open kitchen. It's rustic, but it's more refined than it looks. Head chef Laurent Laganière starts simply with charcuterie, cheese, tartares and Scotch eggs. Then he hits stride with such mains as a gourmand po' boy sandwich heaped with oysters, chipotle butter and tartare sauce; smoked salmon with thyme mayo; hangar steak with mushrooms and lardons; a whole sea bass with lemon and fennel; and honey-licked quail with sweetbreads, apricots and a dreamy purée of turnips. Le Temps d'une Pinte (It's Time for a Pint) has 12 home microbrews pumped directly to taps, and lots of bottled imports. Bartender Francis Masson calls himself a "cocktailian" and he loves spirits, such as the products from Distillerie Mariana in Louiseville, including Azimut vodka and Canopée gin — "the nose is like walking in the forest." (Le Temps d'une Pinte, 819-694-4484, letempsdunepinte.ca; weekday lunch, nightly dinner, weekend brunch). Le Sacristain has patio and indoor service in the old stone l'Église Wesleyan, an 1800s Anglican and Presbyterian church. The menu features creative quiches, super-fresh salads, hefty grilled sandwiches and a local wine, Cavalier du Versant, from Domaine & Vins Gélinas in nearby Saint-Sévère (819-694-1344, lesacristain.ca, about 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mon.-Fri.). *Special to the Montreal Gazette*

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