



The newly-branded Metcalfe Hotel in Ottawa has renovated and now has a chic lobby lounge. PHOTOS: DWAYNE BROWN STUDIO

Dressed up and ready to party

Ottawa’s renovated Metcalfe Hotel is near heart of the action for 150th celebrations



ROCHELLE LASH

The Metcalfe Hotel, Ottawa’s latest hotel banner, has great timing. The independently-owned boutique property took over the former Hotel Indigo and has been renovating its public areas throughout the spring. Now it is dressed up and ready for a summer of celebrations in the nation’s capital. **News:** The Metcalfe already is showing community spirit. The building originally was a YMCA and it recently hosted a party to benefit the Y. The new lobby, designed by 4TÉ of Ottawa, is a cool spot for mingling, working or posting to Instagram. It’s a stylish lounge with leather sofas and reclaimed oak floors that create a handsome vintage look. The wow feature is the striking urban courtyard under an atrium, which has a

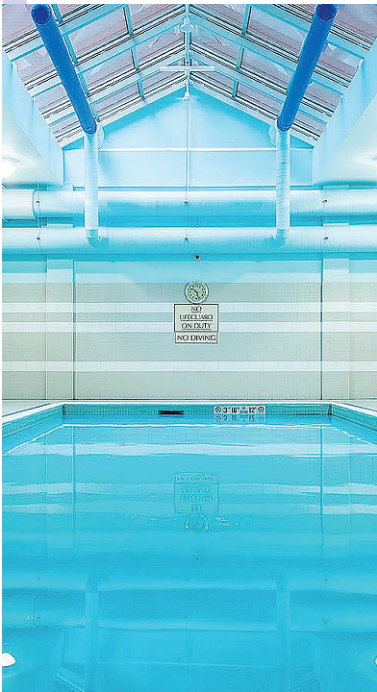
library and a communal high-topped table. **Rooms:** The 106 rooms and suites were renovated a few years ago when the Metcalfe was Hotel Indigo (an IHG boutique brand). The accommodations still are cheerful, with dark furniture a contrast to white walls and lime green accents. Every room has a 42-inch flat-screen TV, a massage-style showerhead and good beds and bedding. Some rooms have Juliet balconies and mini-fridges. **Fitness:** One special feature of the Metcalfe is the hotel’s indoor pool and fitness setup, which it shares with the hotel next door, Residence Inn by Marriott. The pool is a good size, about 12 by six metres and also nestled under an atrium, so during the day it is well-lit. It’s not huge, but is long enough for laps or an end-of-day refreshing dip. Everything is compact — the sauna, the hot tub and the locker room — but it’s all serviceable. **Food:** The Rox looks a little like a retro diner, with booths, tables and a bar with a TV. The Rox takes comfort food to a new level, then adds Canadiana: wines from Henry of Pelham of Niagara, Ki-

chesippi Beer, Happy Goat coffee and Harvey & Vern’s cream soda and root beer. Supper starts with beer-battered pork fritters with aioli, charcuterie, potato skins stuffed with smoked meat or crab cakes, then moves on to main courses of trout, steak, chicken or succotash. But the burgers, especially the Rideau burger with bacon, avocado and portobello, may be the best bet. Breakfast features whole-grain breads from Art Is In Bakery and a dozen dishes named for Ottawa luminaries, including the Anka omelette, the Morissette French toast and the Mansbridge sausage burger. **Events:** The Metcalfe is within a few blocks of the capital’s greatest attractions: Parliament Hill, the iconic site of the Changing of the Ceremonial Guard, which takes place June 25-Aug. 26; the Rideau Canal, where you can get equipped for the Capital Pathways at Rent-A-Bike or take a boat cruise; Confederation Park, home of the TD Ottawa Jazz Festival, June 22-July 2; and the National Arts Centre, which will present Canada Scene Housewarming, a day of free family-centric entertainment July 2 that includes dance, theatrics and folksinger Carmen Campagne. As part of Canada’s 150th celebrations, visitors and locals

are invited to Lansdowne Park — also free — to Ottawa Welcomes the World, a series of cultural happenings presented by 75 diplomatic missions, rolling out from now until December. La Machine, a sensational street theatre from France making its North American debut, will bring a giant robotic spider and dragon to town July 27-30. **Designer dining:** Power chefs Matthew Carmichael and Jordan Holley of the hip restaurants El Camino and Datsun have kept the cool car theme going at their latest eatery, Riviera. This stylish restaurant occupies a dramatic space in a former bank building with nearly 20-metre ceilings, rich, dark leather seating and a long brass bar. The open kitchen is an exciting scene of chefs sautéing and bartenders shaking gin martinis. Local produce, supplied by Juniper Farm in Wakefield north of Ottawa, Acorn Creek Garden Farm in Carp and Rideau Pines Farm in North Gower, makes for terrific salads and sides. Tantalizing lunches include fennel sausage with polenta, crispy confit chicken leg with sherry bacon vinaigrette, lobster pasta, mushrooms on toast, hanger steak and frothy prawn and scallop chowder. Dinner adds tomato and burrata salad, tuna crudo, beef tartare and grilled octopus, plus creative homemade pastas and main courses of black cod and braised short ribs.

IF YOU GO

Riviera: 613-233-6262, dineriviera.com; 62 Sparks St., Ottawa.
Lunch: Mon-Fri. (main dishes \$16-\$30); dinner Mon.-Sat. (mains \$32-\$44); Sun. brunch from 11 a.m. (approx. \$15-\$28).
The Metcalfe Hotel: 844-871-6555; themetcalfehotel.com; 123 Metcalfe St., Ottawa. Pet-friendly, \$75 per visit.
Price: In high season, May to October, rooms and suites cost approximately \$200-\$400, including indoor pool, sauna, fitness centre, Wi-Fi, in-room coffee. Advance purchase discounts of five to 10 per cent available online. Low season, Nov.-April, about \$150-\$250. Winterlude festival weeks, in February, cost more.
The Rox: Daily breakfast, and from 4:30 p.m. daily, drinks and supper.
Ottawa Tourism: 800-363-4465, ottawatourism.ca; Ottawa 2017: 613-232-2017, ottawa2017.ca



The Metcalfe was originally a YMCA, so it has an attractive indoor pool and fitness room.

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