

CHARMING GETAWAY OFFERS ROMANCE, R&R, REFINEMENT

Trio of Sherbrooke experiences showcase top-drawer B&B, restaurant, spa sanctuary



ROCHELLE LASH

The pleasant, small city of Sherbrooke promises romance, relaxation and refinement.

It is also buzzing with businesses, two universities, including Bishop's, two hospitals and lots of culture. One highlight is the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Sherbrooke, home to the compelling landscapes of painter Frederick Simpson Coburn and photographer François Lafrance.

Here is a trio of Sherbrooke experiences that add up to a charming getaway: Auberge Marquis de Montcalm, an antique-filled B&B inspired by Versailles; La Table du Chef, the home of Alain Labrie, one of Quebec's culinary stars; and Spa Strøm, an outstanding Nordic sanctuary with beautiful baths and progressive casual cuisine.

AUBERGE MARQUIS DE MONTCALM

Thanh-Hoa Bui and her husband Sylvain Beauséjour have adopted a classic French theme at their B&B. And it's not simply French, it is France of the 1600s, 1700s and 1800s. This five-room manor house is bedecked in lace and ribbons, tapestries, silks and satins. Imagine the styles — Louis XIV, XV and XVI, French provincial and Napoleonic, to name a few.

"We love Paris and we adore the Château de Versailles," Bui said. "So Old France was our inspiration."

Guests can relax on a velvet settee, sleep on a grand canopy bed and read by the light of an ornate lamp. The murals depict the gardens of Versailles and the rooms are adorned with statues, needlepoint pillows, gilded mirrors and brocade bedcovers.

Breakfast is served on fine, gold-rimmed china at a wicker table surrounded by plants, paintings and books. The menu features fruit with maple syrup

IF YOU GO

Sherbrooke is a one-hour, 45-minute drive from Montreal. Prices below are approximate and fluctuate. Auberge Marquis de Montcalm: 866-421-7773, 819-823-7773, marquisdemontcalm.com; 797 du Général-De Montcalm St. Low season, Nov.-April, rooms/suites, \$119-\$139; high season, May-Oct., \$139-169, including breakfast, Wi-Fi, chocolates, summer garden, concierge service. Single rates available. Two-night minimum at certain times.

La Table du Chef: 819-562-2258; lataleduchef.ca; 11 Victoria St. Lunch, Tues.-Fri., two courses and tea/coffee, approximately \$16-\$25, plus optional dessert, \$6-\$8; dinner, Tues.-Sat., two courses, approximately \$39-\$49, dessert \$8-\$11; tasting menu, \$63; wine flight, \$42. Catering/gourmet products available. Closed Sun.-Mon. **Strøm Spa:** 819-481-2772, stromspa.com; 1705 Roy St. Spa access, including bathrobes, costs \$34-\$49, depending on day/time. Packages, meals and treatments are extra. **Bistro Sherbrooke,** 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., daily. **Eastern Townships:** 800-355-5755, easterntownships.org; Sherbrooke Tourism Bureau: 785 King St. W., 800-561-8331, 819-821-1919, destinationsherbrooke.com.

and ginger and such main courses as French toast with fruit, eggs with pesto, duck sausage or vegetable quiche.

The B&B has modern conveniences, as well, including mini-fridges, private bathrooms,



Le Jardin du Luxembourg suite at Auberge Marquis de Montcalm in Sherbrooke is inspired by Old France. The five-room manor itself exudes the ambience of Château de Versailles. AUBERGE MARQUIS DE MONTCALM

air-conditioning, flat-screen TVs, desks and hair dryers. The king and queen beds are covered in goose-down duvets and good quality sheets.

LA TABLE DU CHEF

Chef-owner Alain Labrie is one of Quebec's most influential and most honoured culinary talents. He was the executive chef of the late, great Relais & Châteaux Auberge Hatley, and he has collaborated with such international stars as Michel Troisgros of France. Labrie and his wife and partner, Joëlle Beauséjour, are marking 10 years at their excellent restaurant, located in a historic presbytery. Labrie works with the best Quebec produce, privately imported wines and a contemporary flair.

Lunch might feature starters of risotto with mushrooms, duck tataki, shrimp linguine and gravlax with citrus followed by venison sausage, grilled beef with rosemary or fish, and desserts like praline crème brûlée or chocolate torte.

For dinner, Labrie proposes venison tartare, feuilleté of fish with kale and lemon confit or foie gras with main courses of stuffed rabbit, osso bucco or roast lamb.

STRØM SPA

This leading leisure enterprise offers a picturesque setting

overlooking the Magog River. The name comes from the Danish word for a current, or water's strength and energy.

With affiliates on Îles des Soeurs and in Mont St-Hilaire and another opening in 2018 in Quebec City, this Nordic sanctuary is a top-drawer destination. It delivers thermotherapy in hot and cold baths, massages and esthetic treatments for body, face and nails.

You can indulge in a Satin Skin body polisher or caviar beads facial.

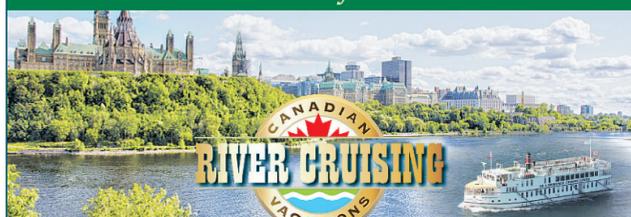
Strøm's Bistro Sherbrooke is the perfect pick-me-up for light, progressive fare — brunch, lunch, afternoon snacks or sup-

per. The menu features soups, smoothies, salads, gravlax, wrap sandwiches and a tofu and vegetable bowl.

Spas usually are for serenity, but Strøm changes the pace occasionally with social events. Wellness Mondays, on one Monday per month, are all-day getaways that include sports workshops, serenity rituals, lunch and lectures.

Cozy Thursdays, on the first Thursday of each month, are evenings with lounge music and tastings of drinks and bites. The action heats up on Fridays under the Stars, one per month, with a DJ and a martini bar. On some Sundays, Strøm offers Brunch-and-Baths and Family Brunch.

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