

Château Cartier gives itself a birthday gift

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE DECEMBER 16, 2010



The Château Cartier Hotel is just 10 kilometres from Parliament Hill.

Photograph by: Château Cartier Hotel

The Château Cartier Hotel in Gatineau is marking its 20th anniversary in 2011, and to celebrate the milestone, the hotel is giving itself a birthday update.

The Cartier is a blend of styles - suburban, country and urban. It combines a convenient setting (about 10 kilometres from Parliament Hill in Ottawa) with a pastoral ambience: it's surrounded by rolling fairways that border the Ottawa River. Now it is adding a city-chic element in dining and decor.

It is a lively, bright resort hotel with a spa, summertime tennis courts and its own golf course, which soon will turn into a family snow-sports playground. The indoor pool and fitness centre are glassed in, offering views of trees and sky. The Château also has an 800-guest ballroom, which handles up to 100 weddings a year and many embassy parties.

The lobby mirrors the look of a grand, formal château, with a large, shimmering chandelier and marble floors. Studded leather wing chairs face a stone fireplace and a baby grand piano.

What's notable about the Château Cartier's guest rooms, standard or superior, is that they all are spacious. Of about 130 accommodations, 86 are full suites with French doors separating the salon from the bedroom. As part of the 20th-anniversary makeover, the hotel has overhauled the fifth and sixth floors with sleek, modern decor. That means new beds, large flat-screen televisions and glassed-in showers. The first four floors have been refreshed, although they have the old televisions and darker, more traditional, decor. The Cartier's best-buy rooms are the patio-level "bachelors," which open onto the golf course.

The other big news at the Cartier is its dining scene, which promises to shake up Gatineau's style. The hotel's Ekko de Brasil is a sexy new hot spot, a nightclub with a colourful tropical decor, servers in gaucho costumes and samba dancers on Fridays and Saturdays. The signature cocktail is a martini of vodka and cachaça, a Brazilian liqueur distilled from sugar cane and the food formula is a churrascaria, a South American grill specializing in heaping servings of lamb, beef and pork.

For most travellers, the new lobby bistro is the place to be. It has been renamed La Table Vingt, a nod

