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# Convenient Orford inn offers a bit of everything

Back in the day, perhaps your parents' day, a woman's touch was important around the house.



**Auberge du Mont Orford is a compact complex of 22 apartment-style units, located in the heart of a region of mountains and lakes that offers much to do in all seasons.**

Manoushka Ross, Brigitte Flamand and their colleagues have perpetuated that quaint idea. They recently bought Auberge du Mont Orford, a compact complex of 22 modern apartment-style suites, and they are in the process of sprucing it up.

Functional and well-priced, the Auberge is a convenient stopover for a sporty vacation in Parc national du Mont Orford, a jaunt to the shops and bistros of Magog or, in summer, a day at the beach on Lake Memphremagog or cycling along La Route verte. Easy to find, and close to everything, Auberge du Mont Orford is set well back from Highway 10 at the foot of the mountains. The front of the inn overlooks the parking lot and the road, but it is bathed in sunlight all day – when there is sun. The back of the inn is more pastoral, with a view of the snowy woods. The price doesn't change, just your outlook.

Ross and Flamand thought the Auberge suited just fine when they vacationed here last summer. They spent two nights, and bought the place within a month.

"We really fell in love with the region," said Ross, who had been a talent agent for fashion models in Montreal. "So we decided to change businesses and homes and make it permanent."

Flamand brought experience from a hotel she had operated in Vermont, and the couple started off with a solid base. When they made their big move, the Auberge already had been refurbished with new mattresses and a fresh paint job in all the guest rooms. Over the next few months, they will add new sheets, towels and kitchen utensils. The apartments are all the same; each has a queen-sized bed in a closed bedroom, a separate living room with a pullout sofa, a television, a fireplace, a small but complete kitchen and a private balcony. Using the sofa-bed, there is enough space for two couples or a family of four. But most of the Auberge's visitors are couples who take advantage of the moderate prices and extra space.

"We don't have anything big," said Ross. "But our goal is to have a little of everything."

To that end, the Auberge has a hot tub set inside a gazebo, a small workout room, a games room and an outdoor playground for kids. The women supply a breakfast basket of coffee, juice, fruit and a croissant or muffin. For guests who want more, they have negotiated a 10-per-cent discount at a few local restaurants.

Ross and Flamand are not alone in making Auberge du Mont Orford a handy, affordable choice. Restaurateur Marilyne Beauchemin and massage therapist Julie Langlais are part of the recipe.

Beauchemin owns Comme Chez Soi, the restaurant in the Auberge, and packs the place with a surefire, budget-conscious formula of familiar French food and BYOB (bring-your-own-beverage).

She is a 26-year-old dynamo who studied the art of serving at a school of *hôtellerie* in Sherbrooke, later worked at a major resort and now acts as *maitre d'*, *sous-chef*, waitress and bookkeeper. She leaves the cooking to chef Stéphane Pétrin.

Comme Chez Soi translates as "just like home," but this busy dining room serves up a lot more than homestyle cooking. The specialties include mussels, escargots, confit of duck, lamb with mustard sauce and, for dessert, *crème brûlée* is the most popular.

"Even our steaks are French-style," says Beauchemin. "We do a 'bavette' with fries and a *filet mignon* with *sauce au poivre*."

Massage therapist Langlais runs Eaux Petits Soins Massothérapie, a one-woman show in a quiet suite at the Auberge. Her focus is to customize treatments at prices that are reasonable compared to those at larger hotels. If city slickers arrive stressed out, she recommends a relaxing Swedish rubdown. For tight, tired muscles after a day of sports, she opts for a deeper therapeutic massage or a hot-stone treatment. If you already are thinking about your summer look, Langlais will smooth your skin with an exfoliation using sea salts. Langlais's tiny hideaway is not a full-scale spa, but you can warm up in the Auberge's hot tub.



Outdoors, Orford is a big playground for many sports, in all seasons. The beautiful, secluded Parc national du Mont Orford has an inviting chalet with a fireplace, a coffee corner and an information desk. The park's superior trails for snowshoeing, winter hiking and cross-country skiing are well-mapped. A new feature this year is the Tri-vel, a chair mounted on Nordic skis, adapted for physically challenged athletes.