

Here's a trio to welcome the new year

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE APRIL 7, 2010



The top-of-the-line Hotel Quintessence will celebrate Dec. 31 in five-star, five-ring style with an Olympic-themed New Year's Eve.

Big spender or penny pincher, travellers have lots of options for a festive Dec. 31 in the countryside. Choose your favourite winter sport, follow with a chaser of après-ski revelry and top with a delectable dinner. Ring in midnight with a sip of bubbly and get ready for the great outdoors again on Jan. 1.

Monique Miller, owner of Les Grands Balcons auberge in Val Morin, will be celebrating this season. Miller has had one goal recently – to upgrade her five-room inn from three “suns” to four, out of a possible five on Quebec Tourism’s rating scale. With refreshed decor in the guest rooms, bright new private bathrooms and an updated, sunny breakfast room, Les Grands Balcons has earned its fourth sun.

Cross-country skiers, and anyone who likes low-budget lodging, adore Les Grands Balcons. In a quaint Val Morin farmhouse that dates from the 1920s, it’s located across the street from the Laurentians’ landmark Nordic ski trail, the Linear Park of the P’tit Train du Nord.

Les Grands Balcons is a homey place, with lacy, feminine fabrics, an assortment of country furniture and a inviting fireplace in the living room. New Year’s Eve will be dinner as usual, a simple affair featuring Miller’s home cooking of onion soup, pasta, turkey tourtière, seafood or veal.

Les Grands Balcons, 1803 Chemin de la Gare, Val Morin, 888-322-7818, www.lesgrandsbalcons.com: \$60 to \$95 for two, including breakfast; for singles, it’s \$10 less; dinner costs \$13 to \$26 for three courses. Packages available with Nordic skiing, downhill skiing at Belle Neige and dogsledding.

Val David Tourism: 888-322-7030, www.valdavid.com.

Another establishment that has upgraded is Auberge des Appalaches, a rustic 14-room lodge near Mont

