

Making tourism greener in Green Mountain state

Innkeepers offer eco-deals with their delicious breakfasts

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Innkeepers Luke and Linda Iannuzzi are trying to do something to combat the escalating cost of travel.

The owners of the Wilder Farm Inn, a B&B in northern Vermont, are offering a promotional deal called Tanks a Lot!, a project that involves discounts for eco-conscious drivers. One way for travellers to save is the reduced price for a third night. The regular room prices range from \$130 to \$145, and the Iannuzzis are offering an extra night at \$100.

"Guests get to extend their vacation and they're not driving on their third day - they're likely to be doing something outdoorsy in the neighbourhood and enjoying nature," Luke Iannuzzi said.

The inn also offers a \$10 discount for guests arriving in a hybrid car. Guests who carpool, with two couples or a group of friends in a vehicle, also receive a \$10 discount per room, per night.

"The name 'Vermont' comes from the French for 'green mountain,' and we want to keep the Green Mountain state that way," Luke Iannuzzi said. "We're taking small steps to fight the incredibly high price of gas."

The Wilder Farm Inn, originally a farm home, dates to the 1860s and is listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. The style formally is called Gothic Revival for its steeply pitched roof and overhanging eaves, but it has the look of a friendly, welcoming New England cottage, painted a soft yellow with black shutters and a welcoming white porch. The charming, high-quality B&B with lots of extras is located on the outskirts of Waitsfield, almost at the foot of the Green Mountains.

The Iannuzzis add their own personal touch. Luke offers guests free mountain biking tours. He also cooks superb, creative breakfasts, grows ingredients in an organic garden, and has refinished some of the fine furniture. Linda has decorated the B&B, giving each room a different personality and look. She bakes goodies for afternoon tea and deals with housekeeping. Together they have built a pottery studio.

Wilder Farm's eight guest rooms are large, comfortable and filled with fine collectibles. The River Room's hand-painted white cottage furniture is in a style that's called shabby chic. The Robin Room has a stately 1800s look with a distinctive checkerboard floor and a fine antique cherry sleigh bed. Each room has a private bathroom, sweetened with the aroma of lavender. This is comfortable country living with featherbeds and down comforters, along with conveniences like air conditioning, wireless Internet, a computer available for guests and cable television in the living room.

Luke Iannuzzi is in charge of the breakfast kitchen. His scones are baked with organic grains, the strawberries and blackberries come from his garden, and the cheese and butter are from nearby farms. A morning speciality is French toast stuffed with berries and sweetened cream cheese or topped with apples sautéed in butter, Vermont maple syrup and cinnamon. The poached eggs are dressed up with home-grown spinach, in season, and mushrooms that Luke foraged in the forest. His pancakes are his pride and joy, made with a six-grain batter and filled with berries and peaches, pumpkin and pecans or chocolate chips.

"I'll put anything delicious in a pancake," he said. He also wants you to save room for dessert, which might be lemon cheese strudel, blueberry cake or five-grain energy cookies.

The couple recently overhauled an old house on their property and built a pottery studio and art

gallery. Calling himself the Naked Potter - the name comes from the term for unglazed pottery - Luke gives a Stay & Clay course, which includes pottery materials, firing, wheel instruction and general lore about raku kilns and naked (unglazed) raku. During the Vermont Festival of the Arts, Aug. 1 to Sept. 1, he will run glazing sessions n Saturday afternoons (\$35) and an introductory wheel-throwing, Aug. 4 and 5 (\$60 for two days).

The Mad River Valley encompasses Waitsfield, Warren, Fayston and Moretown, all within a 10-minute drive of the Sugarbush Resort ski area. In summer, the region is popular for canoeing, kayaking, hiking, fly-fishing and golf. The Wilder Farm Inn is across the street from the Mad River Rec Path, a five-kilometre walking and cycling route. The Waitsfield farmers' market, held Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., features live music, Vermont crafts and food stands.

"We even have a swimming hole," Luke said. "Walk up the Rec Path and sink into the Mad River with a tube, and you drift back here to the inn."

Then it's time for afternoon tea, complementary sherry and brownies or cookies baked by Linda. Wilder Inn stocks books, puzzles, cards and games, and guests are invited to nap on the living room's oversized sofas.

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