

Romance in the country

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE JANUARY 29, 2009



Auberge Couleurs de France is a charming log-cabin getaway north of Gatineau.

Photograph by: Auberge Couleurs de France,

If the way to your lover's heart is through fine food and wine, consider these charming country hotels that have some of the best tables in their areas. And imagine flickering fireplaces, bubbling hot tubs and heavy quilts to balance the chilly, snowy Quebec outdoors. Here is a look at three romantic getaways: a log chalet in the woods, a luxurious country lodge and a genteel English inn.

You can make a showy entrance by snowmobile or arrive by car at Auberge Couleurs de France, a charming log-cabin getaway north of Gatineau. Here, good French food combines with the great outdoors for a sojourn that is romantic, if you like nature, winter sports and lots of bracing fresh air.

"We are totally remote at the end of a road in the woods," said Jean-Jacques Rech, who owns Couleurs de France with his wife, Lea Rousseau, both former Parisians. "But we have massage service and all rooms have fireplaces and whirlpool tubs, so people can cuddle and stay warm."

Couleurs de France also recently opened an outdoor Nordic spa surrounded by snowbanks and forests.

The place accommodates up to 50 guests in a cluster of attractive, bright log chalets set in the wilderness, overlooking Petit Lac Preston. It's rustic, but without hardship. The rooms have raw pine walls, comfy beds covered in thick white cotton duvets, fireplaces and televisions. There are great views of the lake, now frozen, and the snowy forest.

Rousseau, a professional chef from France, changes her menu nightly and focuses on creative cooking with bison, lamb, venison, boar, duck and fish.

In the region, there is also ice-fishing at Lac à la Ferme and dog-sledding in Cheneville. Snowmobile

