Bitcoin, home-baked bread at Charlevoix B&B

This homespun guest house comes with a modern touch: digital currency accepted

The Gîte TerreCiel in Baie-St-Paul, Charlevoix, is as revolutionary as a B&B can be in 2014, and it is also as homespun as any guest house of 1914. (TerreCiel is one word because it is a play on the synergy of Earth-sky and yin-yang.)

The revolution begins with the fact that TerreCiel is one of the few lodging establishments in North America that accepts payment in bitcoin, the new digital currency.

Why add this option in addition to good, hard cash and reliable credit cards? I asked the B&B's owner, David Mancini, who is a 30-year-old former computer program-

"I think it's the future of currency," he explained. "And bitcoin is better than credit cards because there are no transaction fees, in most cases.

"For my guests from other countries, it will mean convenience and savings. They can eliminate paying charges on currency exchanges and travellers' cheques and they don't have to carry cash."

TerreCiel hasn't had any bitcoin clients yet, possibly because most of the world is still trying to figure out how to use it. You can buy bitcoins at an ATM on St-Laurent Blvd. in Montreal or at such Web sources as www. localbitcoins.com or www. cointrader.net.

You create an online "wallet" on your computer or cellphone (but not an iPhone), and once you have deposited bitcoins (similar to filling a PayPal account with dollars), you do an e-transfer to Mancini's "wallet." If your B&B room costs about \$100, and one bitcoin equals \$700 Canadian (a recent exchange rate), you would pay about 15 per cent of a bitcoin. The value fluctuates wildly, but it has increased overall at about five-fold during the past six months.

TerreCiel operates on another revolutionary fiscal principle. The B&B has a price list for its accommoda- TerreCiel does not have any tions during the high season, from June through October.

"The rest of the year, people pay what they want," Mancini said, "but only if they book through our web-

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site, which 95 per cent of our clients do. If they come to us any other way, by phone or through Booking.com or Hotels.com, they pay the list

"It is a little crazy, but it works. Most people voluntarily pay a fair market price.'

I wondered whether any cheapskate had proffered a measly \$20.

"It happens, but it evens out," Mancini said. "My goal is not to make money at the B&B; the goal is to welcome people to Baie-St-Paul, and it works.

Now, for the cosy and homespun style at TerreCiel: Mancini was inspired to open a B&B after visiting La Conciergerie in Montreal, where he met his husband, Nicolas Pelletier.

He spent one year scouting locations and decided on Baie-St-Paul in Charlevoix because of the spectacular landscape of mountains and rivers. And after another year of searching for just the right house, he settled on a rambling 140-year-old red-brick family home with extensive grounds in a residential area.

The décor is in tune with a country style of long ago. Comforters and knotty pine walls create a woodsy cocoon. The family room, which has a private balcony, is good value for up to five people using a queen-sized bed and bunk beds. TerreCiel is no-frills, but it is friendly and well maintained.

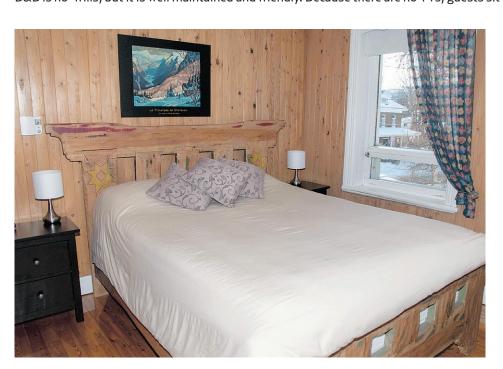
"We want it to be like coming to your friend's house," Mancini said. "You kick off your shoes and relax."

There is lots of life throughout the house. The large windows let in light, plants flourish and Mancini has opened the kitchen, a library, a sunroom and dining room so that guests can relax and mingle. televisions. The idea is to enjoy Baie-St-Paul and foster friendships.

"Right now people are sitting around the fireplace —



TerreCiel in Baie-St-Paul is in a rambling 140-year-old red-brick home with extensive grounds in a residential area. The $B\delta B$ is no-frills, but it is well maintained and friendly. Because there are no TVs, guests sit around the fireplace and talk.



Comforters and knotty pine walls create a cosy feel at Gîte TerreCiel in Baie-St-Paul.

before — and they are having tion is along the river, where french toast and waffles a conversation," Mancini said. "If there were a TV in the house, that would never happen."

banks of the Rivière du Gouffre, so it's quiet, although it's only a few blocks from such local high spots as the Musée d'art contemporain de Baiepeople who have never met St-Paul. In summer, the ac-

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people swim and kayak. Pelletier also runs Espace TerreCiel, where he gives for guests.

Mancini takes a locavore approach to breakfast, prepared with his neighbours' produce. He bakes his own bread and cooks pancakes,

using flour from the historic 1827 mill Le Moulin de la La Rémy. He adds Charlevoix classes in tai-chi, qigong and maple syrup, jams and such TerreCiel backs onto the meditation, which are free cheeses as Le Migneron and La Tomme de Brebis from Maison Maurice Dufour, and serves fair-trade coffee from Café Charlevoix Brûlerie, organic eggs from Joy-Oeufs and meat from Les Viandes

■ IF YOU GO

Baie-St-Paul is a 31/2-hour drive from Montreal via Highway 40 or Highway 20 east to Quebec City and Route 138 east.

Gîte TerreCiel: 418-435-0149, www.terreciel.ca; 113 Ste-Anne St., Baie-St-Paul.

Price: Until May 31, the room fee is pay-as-you-wish with the promotional code at www.terreciel.ca. From June to October, \$95-\$130 for two; the family room for up to five people is \$160; including breakfast, Wi-Fi, kitchen, guest computer, and tai chi, qigong and

Baie-St-Paul tourism: 418-435-4160, www.baiestpaul. com; Charlevoix region: 800-667-2276, www.tourismecharlevoix.com.

Biologiques de Charlevoix.

"I love our region, but my guests come from everywhere, so I do travel the world every morning when I serve breakfast," Mancini said.

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