

Auberge des Gallant’s transformation a labour of love

New services, rooms enhance romantic site near Mont Rigaud



ROCHELLE LASH
CHECKING IN

The irrepressible Auberge des Gallant always has news, even after 42 years in the hospitality biz. This season’s major bulletin is the opening of a wing of guest rooms (including an elevator), filling the void left when a fire roared through the property two years ago.

Now back in its groove, Auberge des Gallant is multi-tasking once again. Tucked in a forest and overlooking a pond near Mont Rigaud, the Ste-Marthe site is so picturesque that it handles about 100 weddings a year and scores of anniversary and birthday celebrations. It has fine cuisine, a lively cabane à sucre (now in full swing) and high-tech conference spaces that opened in February and are already popular with businesses in the West Island and Ottawa.

Gallant is a hotbed of romance. A 45-minute drive from downtown Montreal and a 20-minute drive from the West Island, it’s a love nest where you can share a fine dinner with your partner; relax with massages and cocoon in all-new accommodations.

“We are gradually transforming from a country inn into a country hotel with all of our new services,” said Linda Gallant, who owns the place with her husband, Gerry, the chef who founded the auberge in 1972, and her son Neil, who now handles the kitchen.

“One big addition is the elevator. Life now is easier for the guests who have been returning for decades, more welcoming for our physically challenged guests and simply more convenient for transporting luggage.”

I remember visiting Auberge des Gallant when the prevailing décor was country casual, with a Victorian-inspired collection of needlepoint cushions and settees. Today’s updated look



PHOTOS: AUBERGE DES GALLANT

Auberge des Gallant has opened a new wing of guest rooms. Among other upgrades, the site now features an elevator.

has chocolate leather sofas grouped around the fireplace and perky apple-green accessories against a steel-grey palette.

“It’s more contemporary now,” said Gallant. “In French, I say “épurée” — more pure — with fewer accessories and cleaner lines. I find it more soothing.

“We have kept a bit of the past, in the dining room and in one salon. We still have some needlepoint chairs, so our longtime customers would have a familiar touchstone.”

The new guest wing — expanded to 42 rooms, instead of the old 24 — is in a different location. It’s more secluded, so all the rooms have pretty views of trees and summer-time gardens. They’re decked out in modern, streamlined décor with walk-in showers and hypo-allergenic cork floors. The first floor has patios and the second level has private balconies.

But back to the direct route to your lover’s heart. Auberge des Gallant is a go-to spot west of Montreal for high-quality dining. It



The 42 rooms in Auberge des Gallant’s new guest wing are decked out in modern, streamlined décor.

has it all: leisurely lunches, Sunday brunches, candlelit dinners and creative maple-based feasts at its own cabane à sucre. It specializes in Quebec ingredients and stylish presentations with such delicacies as foie gras, beets with apples and blue cheese, braised lamb shank, duck magret and grilled venison.

Executive chef Neil Gallant and sommelier Thomas Le Guilly will ramp up the gastronomy with special wine-themed dinners on one Friday of each month. With

a price tag of \$120 per person for multiple courses with wine pairings, the culinary events will focus on Italy’s Piedmont region on March 28 and South Africa on April 25.

I want to give you a hint of the cuisine, but it’s all a mystery. Chef Gallant is planning “blind” discovery menus — that is, they will be unveiled only when guests are seated at the table. Other dinners will focus on Bordeaux, Chile, Australia and Champagne.

Auberge des Gallant is pet-friendly, starting with

IF YOU GO

Ste-Marthe and Rigaud are a one-hour drive from Montreal via Highway 40 west to Exit 17.

Auberge des Gallant: 1171 chemin St-Henri, Ste-Marthe, 800-641-4241, gallant.qc.ca. Dining room is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, and Sunday brunch. Spa Gallant’s nine treatment rooms are open daily, by reservation. Pet-friendly, \$35-\$50.

Price: One-night package, Sun.-Fri., with breakfast and dinner, \$250-\$275 for two. On Sat., \$325-\$350 for two, including dinner and Sunday brunch. Rooms, with breakfast only, start at \$150 Sun.-Fri., for two, or \$225 Sat., with Sunday brunch. All prices include

Wi-Fi, trails for walking/snowshoeing (snowshoes provided). The 25-kilometre Escapade cross-country trail crosses the property. In summer, there is a heated pool. Extras: spa treatments.

Other packages: Sweet Maple, with cabane à sucre dinner and snowshoeing; Girls Fun, with spa discounts; Take Time, with spa life and wildlife observation; Galloping Gourmet, with dinner and wine tours; and snowmobiling.

Sucrerie des Gallant: Reservations required; buffet lunch and dinner Sat.-Sun., \$25 per person; table service Mon.-Fri., \$20 for dinner or \$16 for lunch; children, \$5-\$15.

Roscoe, the hotel’s black lab-boxer mascot. Since Gerry Gallant has passed his tuque along, he and his best pal act as the hotel’s ambassadors, greeting guests and strolling the grounds. At cocktail hour, they’re at the bar, Gerry with a cabernet sauvignon and

Roscoe with a bowl of water and canine cookies.

The hotel supplies a leash so guests can walk the dog, if you can pry him away from the bar.

Rochelle@rochellelash.com
Twitter: rochellelash

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