

Revived Cornwall B&B has 200-year history

Offers attractive rest stop in easygoing city



ROCHELLE LASH
CHECKING IN

When Robert Prowse was 14, he spent his hard-earned paper-route profits on an ornate grand piano. Decades later, the prized rosewood piano is the centrepiece of Prowse's new lodging establishment in Cornwall, Ont.

Prowse recently revived Chesley's Inn, a handsome B&B in a distinguished red brick Georgian house on a residential street. As far back as 1814, Chesley's was an overnight stagecoach stop for people travelling between Montreal and Kingston, which was a port for ships crossing Lake Ontario to Toronto.

Prowse has given Chesley's a tasteful makeover, with woodwork painted in pristine white and walls in a soothing palette of pastels.

The piano that started his antique collection commands the azure-blue music room. Guests have breakfast at a Victorian-style mahogany table in a dining room bathed in the pretty light of canary-yellow walls. And the sitting room is a serene dove-grey backdrop to colourful collectibles from Asia.

Antique heaven continues upstairs in the three guest rooms. The Tudor Room, with its king-sized, four-poster bed, is worthy of any English king. The Governor's Suite has a private sitting room. The 18th-century-style French Room features twin beds and rococo accessories, and an ornate make-up cabinet. The down duvets are from Montreal's luxurious linens shop Au Lit.

To keep the ambience calm and cultured in the B&B's main house, Prowse directs families with children and pets to a separate apartment. This is a home-away, with two bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen.

Prowse relocated to Cornwall after a career in Toronto as a producer and director in radio and television, mostly



Chesley's Inn in Cornwall, Ont., dates to 1814, but was recently renovated and redecorated with fine antiques.

JASON MCNAMARA/CHESLEY'S INN

with the CBC, TVOntario and CityTV. He worked with such greats as Peter Gzowski and Moses Znaimer, and liked the big city. But he also likes the change.

"Before I moved to Cornwall, I thought it was simply a place to stop for gas," Prowse said. "But now I love it, and there is a lot for visitors. Plus, it's only one hour from both Montreal and Ottawa, in different directions."

With a growing roster of tourist attractions and an easygoing lifestyle on the border of the St. Lawrence River, Cornwall is increasingly appealing.

Dominique Gilgen and her husband, Ahmad Mansori, are émigrés from Montreal. They are restaurateurs par excellence, leaders in the market of upscale, contemporary dining. They own the Table 21 steak house and oyster bar, and its companion bistro, Truffles Burger Bar.

While Prowse has helped revitalize and preserve historic Cornwall, Gilgen and

Mansori have helped infuse the city with modern style and tasty, accessible cuisine. In the process, they have won business-excellence awards from Cornwall's Chamber of Commerce.

Table 21 is a fashionable fine-dining spot with a delectable menu of fresh oysters, rack of lamb and black cod. But there is no denying the specialty is beef: tender filet mignon and robust rib or porterhouse steaks. Thursdays are "buck a shuck" nights: \$1 an oyster, between 5 and 7 p.m.

Truffles Burger Bar cooks up hefty beef patties with such accents as Cajun spices, goat cheese and, of course, truffles. The menu also features exotica like kangaroo, alligator, camel and elk, and all those sell well. Truffles is good value on any night, but especially on Tuesdays for wings, Wednesdays for martinis and Saturdays for ribs.

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Table 21 is an upscale, stylish steak house and oyster bar in Cornwall, owned by émigrés from Montreal.

TABLE 21

IF YOU GO

Chesley's Inn: 855-936-1112, 613-936-1111; 40 First St. W., Cornwall, Ont.

Price: Fri.-Sat. \$175-\$200, Sun.-Thurs. \$150-\$175, for two, incl. breakfast, Wi-Fi and parking. Low season, Nov. 1 to May 1, 2015: Fri.-Sat. \$150-\$175, Sun.-Thurs. \$129-\$154. A two-bedroom apartment, the Innkeepers Quarters, welcomes children and pets.

Table 21 oyster and steak bar: 613-933-9117; 157 Pitt St., Cornwall; Thurs.-Sat. from 5 p.m.

Truffles Burger Bar: 613-933-9112, trufflesbgrbar.com; 155 Pitt St., Cornwall; closed Mon., open 11 a.m. to 10 or 11 p.m. Tues.-Sat. and from 4 p.m. Sun.

Tourism info, Cornwall and the Counties (Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry): 800-937-4748, cornwall-tourism.com.

Cornwall is a 75-minute drive from Montreal via Highway 40 west to Ontario Highway 401. Take Brookdale exit.

Founded in the 1780s, Cornwall is one of Ontario's oldest settlements and celebrates its culture and setting throughout the summer in town and in neighbouring villages.

The tourism office, around the corner from Chesley's, is housed in an 1833 jail, which is open for tours. The local calendar includes: the Medieval Festival, June 7 to 9 in Morrisburg, with camel rides, jousting and puppet shows; the Kinsmen Cornwall Lift-Off, July 10 to 13, a balloon festival with music and rides in Lamoureux Park, one block from the inn; and the international Glengarry Highland Games in nearby Maxville, Aug. 1 and 2, arguably the largest such event outside of Scotland, featuring haggis, caber-tossing and dancing.

Canadian history comes alive at Upper Canada Village in Morrisburg, a theme park that depicts life in the 1860s. And if you can spend a few days, the Ontario Waterfront Trail is a picturesque cycling path that borders the St. Lawrence River in Cornwall. This connects to several routes along county roads to nearby communities. The tourism office issues a detailed map.

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