

# Hotel Portsmouth updates a Queen Anne treasure

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**ROCHELLE LASH**  
CHECKING IN

At The Hotel Portsmouth in New Hampshire's Seacoast Region, everything old is new again.

Hoteliers Doug Palardy and Dan Innis have crafted a fetching fusion of vintage and modern — a boutique babe that opened three months ago in an elegant 1881 Queen Anne mansion. The Hotel Portsmouth is a deluxe B & B-style hotel with handsome living rooms, a beautiful sunroom for breakfast, a boardroom and 32 remodelled rooms and suites, accessed by an elevator.

The Hotel Portsmouth is within a few blocks of Portsmouth's Market Square and its historic harbour, both promenades of delightful shopping and dining. The hotel has its own tiny boutique of nautical-inspired gifts, but Portsmouth has so much to do that each guest room is equipped with an iPad so visitors can plan their stay.

## The hotel owners

The owners of The Hotel Portsmouth are pros, and this virtually guarantees a pleasant visit. The restoration is top-drawer, the interiors are attractive, the continental breakfast is yummy, and the staff is helpful.

Palardy and Innis previously owned Portsmouth's Ale House Inn. Now, Palardy manages the new hotel, and Innis is multi-tasking: He is a professor of marketing and hospitality management at University of New Hampshire as well as a candidate in the state's First Congressional District in the U.S. Congress.

The couple has spent more than \$1 million on the hotel's makeover, and Palardy supervised the top-to-bottom restoration, which included refurbishing fine hardwood floors, landscaping and gardening, overhauling operating systems and modernizing the accommodations.

## The building, circa 1881

The hotel, originally the home of a shipping merchant, stands out on a resi-



Hotel Portsmouth in New Hampshire's Seacoast region is an example of the Queen Anne "stick style" of architecture.

dential street with its New England blue clapboard, dark shutters and cream trim.

Architectural aficionados will appreciate the rarefied Queen Anne "stick style," notable for vertical beams on the pointed gables. The "sticks" are more austere and angular than other ornate Queen Anne designs.

Indoors, the highlight is the mansion's splendid woodwork. The study and the parlour each have spectacular built-in breakfronts that are carefully carved with spindles, decorative swirls, tiny arches, mouldings and glass cabinets for china and collectibles.

## The interiors, 2014

Where many vintage inns are floral and frilly, The Hotel Portsmouth is monochromatic and subtle.

Palardy handled the interior decor. He started with carpets in patterns of grey and walls in dusky blues and greys of the sea that change with the daylight.

His pieces de résistance are the two ground-floor common



The hotel's study features handsome furnishings.

rooms: the study and the parlour. The study is an intimate, masculine hideaway with navy walls, smart tufted-leather sofas and bold seascape prints. The parlour is courtly, with graceful charcoal velvet couches and tweedy wing chairs surrounding a working fireplace. A crystal and black onyx chandelier adds a dress-up Victorian touch.

"We kept the public areas traditional to reflect the

house's history, but the guest rooms have a more modern spin," Palardy said.

The Hotel Portsmouth has several room styles, all with simple, functional furnishings such as Shaker-blue painted desks and duvets covered in sporty, striped mattress ticking. There are spacious suites for two or four people, as well as one adapted for physically challenged visitors and one pet-friendly suite, with its own

fenced patio.

Palardy and Innis know about conveniences, so each room has a large flat-screen television, iPod docking station, air conditioning (plus windows that open) and good linens over pillow-top mattresses. The bathrooms, small but deluxe spaces, sparkle with marble walls and floors, walk-in glass showers and sturdy, superior faucets. Stylish Malin+Goetz bath amenities from Italy add another contemporary touch.

The cute, bright yellow telephones are retro collectibles refitted with push-buttons instead of the old dials. Why the alteration? The newer buttons are more efficient, yes, but the manufacturer found that young people don't know how to use the dials.

## A West Island connection

Portsmouth was settled in the early 1600s and has a population of about 22,000. It's a captivating city prized for its exceptional Federal, Georgian and Colonial architecture.

It's also a foodie haven. Some of The Hotel Ports-

## IF YOU GO

Portsmouth, N.H. is a 4.5-hour drive (480 km) from Montreal.

The Hotel Portsmouth: 603-433-1200, www.thehotelportsmouth.com; 40 Court St., Portsmouth, N.H. Pets are permitted in the Garden Suite, no extra charge. Price: rooms \$189-\$369 U.S., including continental breakfast, Wi-Fi, parking, in-room iPad. From Oct. 20-May 15, approximately \$109-\$269.

mouth's recommendations are the Portsmouth Brewery, Cava, Black Birch, The Wellington Room and Geno's, a waterfront shack with terrific lobster rolls.

All impeccable suggestions, but I dashed to the Black Trumpet Bistro & Wine Bar to meet co-owners Evan and Denise Mallett (before marriage, she was Denise Dwinells from Beaconsfield on the West Island).

Black Trumpet is a gastro-nomic restaurant in a charming, rustic warehouse nestled in the historic port. Everything is fresh from the farm, the market and the sea, so the menu changes frequently.

"We simply call it creative cuisine," said Denise, "but the dishes have American, Mediterranean and Latin influences, and we go with the seasons."

My table lucked into delectable soft-shell crab, lobster agnolotti and paella chock full of the best catch of the Atlantic Ocean. Mallett, a finalist at the annual James Beard Society chef competition, also cooks up perky treats such as sesame duck breast, octopus with lemon aioli, shrimp escabeche, and braised lamb shortribs with radicchio gremolata. The grass-fed Angus beef is from Archer Farm in Maine. Among the unique desserts is the mango-basil crêpe with lemon grass yogurt and oat crumble.

The writer was a guest of the hotel which did not review or approve the story.

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