

# Hudson inn updated with terrasses, rooms

Auberge Willow has new owners, lots of changes



ROCHELLE LASH  
CHECKING IN

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. (The more things change, the more they stay the same). The proverb was coined circa 1850 by a journalist in France.

After more than a year of renovations by new owners, Auberge Willow has been updated and expanded.

Stay cool. Habitues of this popular fixture of Hudson hospitality don't need to worry about discomforting changes to their comfortable local hangout. It's all still there, homespun and familiar, with those wonderful lake views, but it has been refreshed with new menu items, more patio dining space, renovated guest rooms and a wedding-worthy waterfront lawn. Grandma's wallpaper has been stripped and walls are lighter.

The inn's most valuable asset remains strong: that glorious setting on the shore of Lake of Two Mountains with views across the water as far as Montreal's Mount Royal and the silvery steeped church in Oka.

In summer, the ferry between Oka and Hudson crosses regularly and pleasure boats glide by. In winter, snowmobilers zoom into the Willow Pub for onion soup, steak-frites and Irish coffee. People even stop by for lunch aboard small planes or helicopters. Me? I drove out to meet my good friend Margaret Bateman, accomplished horsewoman, Montreal General nurse and longtime St-Lazare resident. We started on the patio with martinis and moved indoors for dinner. We had steaks, lemon pie and lots of fun.

**What's new?**

Most notably, the lakefront dining area has been expanded with new decks, so on a busy summer night, the Willow can seat 400 people. With turnover, it serves as many as 600 in three indoor and outdoor spaces: the three-



RON PARKER/AUBERGE WILLOW

Auberge Willow in Hudson has been renovated and refreshed, but locals need not worry about discomforting changes to their hangout.

level Terrace, the Willow Pub and Bistro 208, which is the dining room. I was amazed at the scope. We're really talking volume.

The three owners are new to the hospitality business, but they are wildly enthusiastic. Carole Ménard and her husband, Pierre Lanctôt, both sales and marketing executives, returned to Quebec after 24 years in Toronto and bought the Willow with brother-in-law Michel Poirier, who owns local IGA supermarkets.

The white stucco cottage is still surrounded by giant shade trees and tall cedar hedges, but the veranda has been prettified with new tables and chairs, black and white, to match the shutters and roof. Out back, Ménard and her team have re-landscaped the huge lawn that spreads down to the lake and added 70 Adirondack chairs on the shore so that guests can have drinks on the waterfront or lounge in the sun.

**New food & drink**

The Terrace is bigger and better, and a platoon of summer students serves food and drinks from day to evening. Some new dishes and old faves are: wings, bruschetta, lobster rolls, fish 'n' chips (with homemade fries), artichoke dip, plus kids' stuff. The Hud-



ALAIN CLAVEAU/AUBERGE WILLOW

Auberge Willow co-owner Carole Ménard combed flea markets and antique shops, and freshened up vintage armoires, dressers and lamps.

son Burger, with Oka cheese, peameal bacon, crisp onions and house sauce, is new. And on some weekend nights, the chef fires up a barbecue for rack of lamb, steaks and fish.

Bistro 208 is the new name for the dining room, which has been redone in a more open concept with a leafy motif. It's often sold out for Sunday's buffet brunch, and it's the place for dinner — scallops, ribs, lobster pasta, filet mignon, grilled salmon or cod in white wine. The specialty is roast beef with Yorkshire pudding, served Thursdays to Sundays, but with a discounted deal on Thursdays, \$19.95 to \$25.95.

The Willow Pub has been

refitted with high cocktail tables and more brews on tap. I'm happy that the beautiful, well-worn tavern chairs survived the update. The pub's dark oak panelling still dominates, but Ménard has added a montage of Willow collectibles, so she is keen to hear from anyone who comes across old postcards or artwork. Co-owner Poirier has mounted his red hockey sweater, a prized souvenir from when he played defence on Canada's national team against Russia in 1969, with teammate Ken Dryden.

**Spend the night**

Ménard really improved the nine guest rooms up-

## IF YOU GO

**Hudson is a 40-minute drive from Montreal via Highway 40 west until Exit 28 for Hudson.**

**Auberge Willow:** 450-458-7006, [www.aubergewillow.com](http://www.aubergewillow.com); 208 Main Rd., Hudson.

**Price:** guest rooms, until Sept. 1: single, Sun.-Thurs., \$99; double, \$119; on Fri. & Sat., it's \$155 double or single; includes continental breakfast. Prices will decrease slightly on Sept. 2. The Anchorage annex also avail-

able: five bedrooms, country kitchen, video meeting set-up.

**Dining:** Willow Pub: daily from 11:30 a.m. Terrace: 11:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m., daily until mid-Oct.

**Bistro 208 dining room:** Wed.-Sun., dinner from 5:30 p.m.; Saturday lunch from 11:30 a.m.; Sunday brunch buffet from 11 a.m. (brunch, adults, \$29; ages 11 and under, \$16; five and under, \$7).

dor along Highway 40.

**The neighbourhood**

Currently at the Hudson Village Theatre, Nicholas Pynes is directing *The 39 Steps*, a fast-paced British spy thriller. It's a classic based on the 1915 novel by the multi-talented Scottish author John Buchan, a member of Parliament, Oxford alumnus and First World War historian. Alfred Hitchcock's film version hit the big screen in 1935, around the time that Buchan was appointed Baron Tweedsmuir of Elsfield and governor general of Canada ([www.village theatre.ca](http://www.village theatre.ca), 450-458-2743, on stage until Aug. 24).

# WHERE TO STAY

ALSO FIND US ON [montrealgazette.com/wheretostay](http://montrealgazette.com/wheretostay)

TO ADVERTISE please call 514-987-2350

## 1000 ISLANDS

### GLEN HOUSE RESORT – SMUGGLERS GLEN GOLF COURSE

In the Heart of the 1000 Islands and choose from one of our many Stay and Play or Romance Packages, starting at \$136 per night based on double occupancy. Enjoy our 18 hole championship golf course, onsite spa, casual fine dining, local Theatre, Boat Cruises and Casino. Visit [www.glenhouserescort.com](http://www.glenhouserescort.com) or Call 1-800-268-4536 for details.

## NEW YORK

### RIVERSIDE TOWER HOTEL – NEW YORK CITY

Singles USD \$134. Doubles USD \$139. Suites USD \$149.-\$169. Lincoln Center area. Hudson River views, 18 floors, kitchenette, 5 minutes to midtown. Safe, quiet luxury area. Riverside Drive & 80<sup>th</sup> Street. For more info, call 800-724-3136 or visit [www.riversidetowerhotel.com](http://www.riversidetowerhotel.com)

### AMERICA'S BEST VALUE INN

In wonderful Plattsburgh, NY. Only \$140 for 2 nights. Canadian cash. Up to 2 people, additional pers. add \$10 more per night. Free continental breakfast. Located conveniently off exit 37 on I-87. Some holidays, wknds & spec. events do not apply. Up to 70% occ. daily. Based on availability. Call 518.563.0222 or toll free 1.800.358.2137

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

### WHITE MOUNTAINS • NORTH CONWAY

Enjoy the comforts of our historic "country elegant" boutique hotel with panoramic mountain views, cozy Martini Library Lounge, renowned international dining. Some guest rooms with fireplaces and/or Jacuzzi. Golf, hiking & tax-free outlet shopping nearby. From \$78ppdo(US) includes Full Breakfast & Dinner (off regular full menu). Photos, amenities & menu online. 603-421-6146

[www.StonehurstManor.com](http://www.StonehurstManor.com)

## MAINE

### OCEAN WOODS RESORT

#### Goose Rocks Beach Kennebunkport

RELAX, peaceful, affordable lodging near sandy beach. Spacious rooms include full bath, cable TV, wireless, AC, mini-fridge, coffeemakers, hairdryers and FREE breakfast. Outdoor pool, hot tub, shuffleboard. Complimentary beach towels, chairs & umbrellas. 10% discount for 5 or more nights. Call Kathleen Spang @ 207-967-1928. [www.oceanwoodsresort.com](http://www.oceanwoodsresort.com)

## VERMONT

### SMART SUITES

Summer Special. Come and enjoy our hospitality in either a studio efficiency at US \$92.95 or a more spacious one bedroom suite at US \$102.95/night, including a deluxe continental breakfast and free WIFI. Call toll free 877.862.6800 and mention the Gazette special. Not valid with other discounts and subject to availability. Effective 05/02/14. 1700 Shelburne Rd., So. Burlington, Vt. Take Exit 13 off I-89, left on rt. 7 for 1.5 miles, same entrance as Holiday Inn Express.

## NEW JERSEY

### DIAMOND CREST MOTEL

#### Across The Street From The Beach Book Now And Save

All rooms have pool/ocean view. Includes daily maid service, BBQ facilities, sun decks. August specials and Labour Day packages available. Kitchenettes and rooms starting from 5 nights for \$795. All rates based on 4 people, additional person per night \$10. For more details please visit our website.

Diamond Crest Motel, 7011 Atlantic ave, Wildwood Crest, NJ 08260

(609) 522 1700

[www.Diamondcrestmotel.Com](http://www.Diamondcrestmotel.Com)