

Peaceful B&B overlooks the Gulf of St. Lawrence

Indulge in prized food products in gorgeous region



ROCHELLE LASH
CHECKING IN

La Butte Ronde Couette & Café is high on a hill in Les Îles de la Madeleine, but it's at the centre of tourist attractions and many gourmet food producers.

The peaceful perch originally was a schoolhouse, and now is one of the most admired B&Bs in the picturesque Îles de la Madeleine. It's named for La Butte Ronde, a big, broad hill overlooking the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

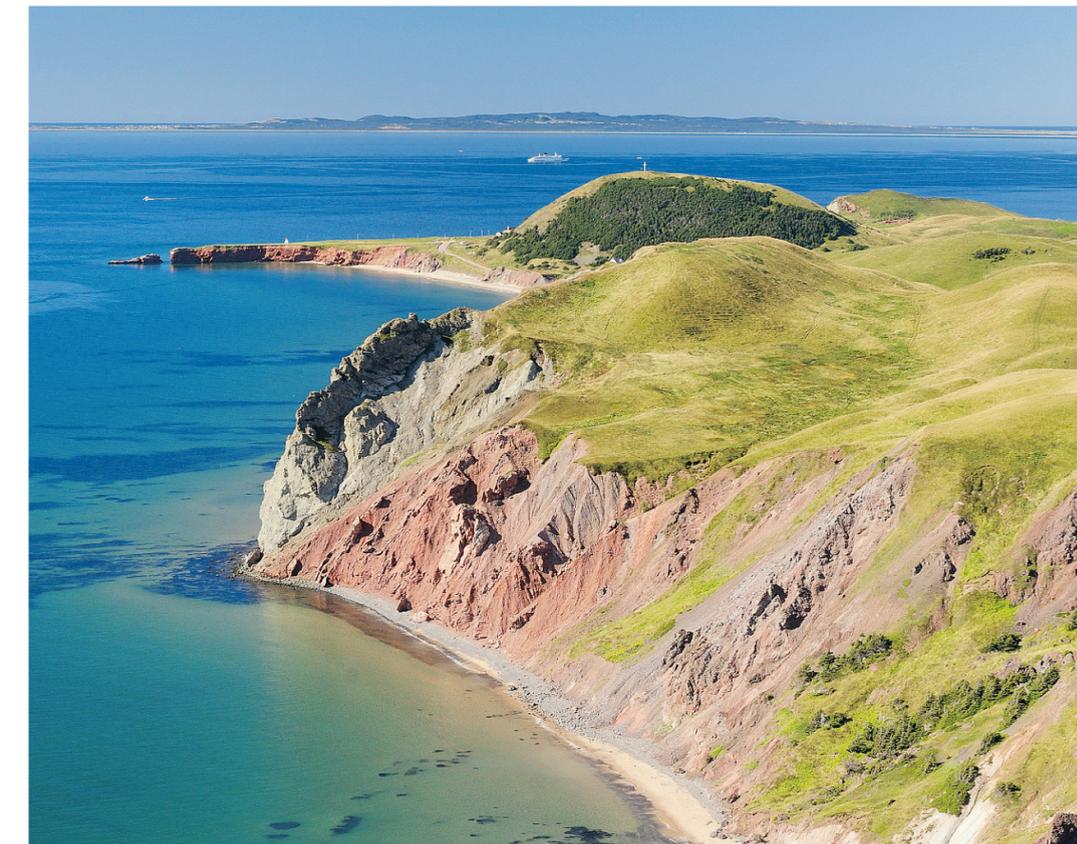
Nadine Leblanc and Christian Vigneau, owners of La Butte Ronde, recently painted their B&B a bright green with lemon yellow trim, in keeping with the islands' tradition of vividly coloured houses.

The interiors are well appointed, too. The living room, a homey place to read or chat, is a gentle clutter of plants, sofas and tables with dozens of magazines, books and tourist brochures. The coffee tables are fashioned out of lobster traps, a cute image of the islands' best-known product of the sea. A black lacquer piano is the centrepiece, and you are invited to play. Among the collectibles are impressive sand sculptures, created by regional artists with sand of the islands; they are exhibited and sold at Artisans du Sable, a mini-museum and boutique.

Another gathering place is a small sunroom with a butler's pantry for all-day coffee, plus a mini-fridge and a microwave for snacks.

La Butte Ronde has five guest rooms, all on the main floor and all sporting bathrobes, hair dryers and flat-screen televisions with cable. The bathrooms are exceptionally nice, with ultra-modern showers of stone and glass and organic toiletries by Druide of Montreal.

"I like the tranquility of the B&B," said José Parent, a former pharmacy owner who was visiting from Montreal with her husband, François Teasdale, a pediatrician in



The B&B is named for its perch on La Butte Ronde, a big, broad hill.

MICHEL BONATO/TOURISME ÎLES DE LA MADELEINE

neonatology at Ste-Justine.

"Watching the sun gradually set over the water is a luxury, a pleasure that I shared with François.

"We have a dramatic overview from La Butte Ronde and we are getting the pulse of the islands with good friends from Montreal, Jean and Louise Saint-Cyr, who have summered here for many years.

"We are staying one week, but I wish it could be longer. We could cycle every day to a different beach or to lunch. I feel very safe on the roads."

The tourism season is short and sweet, and many locals multi-task. After breakfast, Leblanc goes off to her day job at Escale Îles de la Madeleine, a company that co-ordinates cruises. The Silversea Silver Whisper will leave Montreal Sept. 26 for Boston with a stop in the islands.

The luxurious Crystal Serenity will sail to the islands Sept. 29 from Quebec City, and other ocean liners come from Boston, New York, Britain and Germany. The Madeleine-based company Croisi-



La Butte Ronde Couette & Café operates in a former schoolhouse.

NIGEL QUINN/LA BUTTE RONDE COUETTE & CAFÉ

ères CTMA travels weekly from Montreal, with the last departure on Sept. 19.

Breakfast

Breakfast, served at rustic wooden tables of two, four or six, includes juice, a yogurt parfait and baked goods with homemade jam. The main dish changes every day; it might be pancakes with ber-

ries, or quiche, omelettes or baked eggs with cheeses from Fromagerie du Pied-de-Vent just down the road.

Île du Havre-aux-Maisons is known as the island of terroir, and La Butte Ronde is within one or two kilometres of prized food products. Fromagerie du Pied-de-Vent is known for several cheeses: soft, buttery Le Pied-du-Vent,

the brie-like Jeune Coeur and the firm, aged La Tomme des Demoiselles. There is no doubt about the local provenance. La Ferme Léo & Fils's cows graze near the cheese shop, and if you pass by at milking time, the road will be closed for a few minutes as these big dairy queens lumber across from pasture to barn.

IF YOU GO

Air Canada (aircanada.com) flies from Montreal to Les Îles de la Madeleine, non-stop (approximately 2½ hours) or with stops in Quebec City and Gaspé. Pascin (pascin.com) flies with stops from the St-Hubert airport on the South Shore. Round-trip flights cost approximately \$700 to \$900. La Butte Ronde is 3.5 kilometres from the airport.

La Butte Ronde Couette & Café: 866-969-2047, 418-969-2047, labutteronde.com; 70 chemin des Buttes, Île du Havre-aux-Maisons, Les Îles de la Madeleine. Open year-round.

Price: \$120 to \$165 for two (after Oct. 1, it's \$90 to \$145), including breakfast, bicycles, Wi-Fi, local telephone calls, airport transfer. Additional adult: \$30, in room No. 3 or No. 5.

Les Îles de la Madeleine: 877-624-4437, tourisme.ilesdelamadeleine.com.

Le Fumoir d'Antan, with its own smoke house and a sizable shop of gourmet products, specializes in smoked fish, especially herring, salmon and scallops.

Also in the area is Le Barbocheux, which makes artisanal digestifs and apéritifs called bagosses. Distilled from strawberries, raspberries and cranberries, the liqueurs are based on old-time recipes dating back to the days when each house made its own hooch because the islands were so isolated.

Vigneau's day job is fishing for lobster and mussels. He also harvests the only oysters growing in Quebec waters, the Trésor du Large, which are available at Montreal fish markets including Les Délices de la Mer in Jean Talon Market, La Mer on René-Lévesque Blvd. at Papi-neau Ave., and the Madeleine specialists Poissonnerie Fou des Îles, 1253 Beaubien St. E. You can buy Fumoir products and other Madeleine delicacies at Le Maître Boucher, 5719 Monkland Ave.

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

Rochelle@rochellelash.com
Twitter: rochellelash

WHERE TO STAY

ALSO FIND US ON 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.glenhouseressort.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 & 80th Street. For more info, call 800-724-3136 or visit 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

MAINE

KENNEBUNK BEACH, MAINE

Franciscan Guest House Hotel

Affordable, simple rooms with private bath. 10 minute walk to beach and Kennebunkport. Free continental breakfast, WiFi, AC, mini-fridge, CTV. Saltwater pool. On beautiful Monastery grounds. Weekdays two twins or full bed rooms start \$119 USD August 24-31, all Sept \$79 (207)967-4865, www.franciscanguesthouse.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