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HÔTEL BEATNIK IS CASUAL, COMFY AND AFFORDABLE

Guests encouraged to mingle in TV lounge, communal kitchen and summer-time patio



ROCHELLE LASH

If a lodging establishment is called Hôtel Beatnik, it's gotta be cool, right?

The new Hôtel Beatnik outside Bromont in the Eastern Townships lives up to its handle. It's a funky makeover of a former summer camp with rustic-modern cottage decor and whimsical 1950s-inspired accessories.

The Beatnik is a casual, comfortable, affordable getaway. And yes, it's cool.

Beatnik's outstanding aspect is its exquisite, tranquil setting — all of the guest rooms overlook forests, meadows and mountains.

The hotel is high in the hills near Bromont's Olympic Equestrian Centre, and if you admire fancy real estate, you'll love the scenic drive past sprawling horse farms and elegant country estates.

The hotel, which held poetry and jazz events over the winter, attracts creative types of all

stripes. In April, there will be an exhibit of works by Bromont painters — the moody landscapes of Melle Artist (Mélanie Lefebvre) and the vivid acrylics of Cindy Toulouse.

BEAT GENERATION

When I heard of Hôtel Beatnik, I immediately thought of the great writer-philosophers of the 1950s, including Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs and especially Jack Kerouac. Anti-establishment and fuelled by drugs and booze, they represented a dark, revolutionary voice.

But Hôtel Beatnik is folksy, wholesome and pure as the driven snow. What's up with that?

"We both love the 1950s," said Geneviève Marois, who owns Hôtel Beatnik with her husband, Sylvain Bélanger, a designer and builder.

"We're partial to the Beatniks, not because of their dark side, but because they enabled people to feel free, and everyone today is a little bit more liberated because of them."

THE HOTEL

The Beatnik has been open only a few months, but it already has been booked for weddings — the outdoor photo ops are great and

the vintage hay barn is a gorgeous party space.

The 23 rooms can each accommodate between two and six people.

If you take over the entire property, it can handle up to 83 guests.

The accommodations come in a few styles: regular queen rooms or larger king rooms; family rooms with bunk beds; and compact studios with kitchenettes for between two and six people.

"We're not an inn and we're not a hotel, we don't fit a formal definition," said Marois. "It is really like a huge cottage, friendly and homey."

The rooms don't have TVs, or telephones, so the hotel encourages mingling. Guests gather in the TV lounge, the communal kitchen and dining area and on the summer-time patio, which has a barbecue available.

Bélanger handled the decor, using lots of stone, concrete and wood for a natural look.

He created the entrance mural, which is a large free-form sketch of a beatnik. The Comfort Zone rooms have cute retro accessories like a 45-r.p.m. record player or a poster of Elvis.

Breakfast is a continental buffet of cereal, baked goods, boiled eggs, fruit, yogurt, and coffee or cappuccino. On weekends, it's expanded with such local products as tomato pie by Désirables

Gâtéries on Shefford Rd. in the Vieux-Village de Bromont, cupcakes from by Si petit soit-il, as well as banana bread and sucre à la crème by a secret private source.

BALNEA SPA

The Beatnik shares a country road with Balnea spa + thermal reserve, one of the finest and largest Nordic spas in Quebec, so hotel guests can expand their visits with hot and cold Nordic baths, massages, lounges, lake activities and fine dining at the gorgeous Lumami restaurant.

In addition to steam rooms, saunas and bubbling baths, Balnea adds summertime walking trails and a beach club on the lake with yoga on paddle boards and air mattresses floating amid lily pads.

Among the special spa treatments are the signature Balnea massage, with chocolate and grape-seed oils, and Kobido, a Japanese anti-wrinkle massage and facial.

LUMAMI CUISINE

You don't have to be a spa guest to dine at Lumami, and this intimate secret treasure is well worth a lunch or dinner visit. The food is beautifully executed, the space is gorgeous and the menu is well-priced (approximately \$25 for the table d'hôte).

The menu changes constantly, but often features such Asian-inspired dishes as a soup of sweet potato, curry and coconut milk, or organic salmon with soba noodles; plus Quebec-centric dishes like Brussels sprouts and cheese fondue, rabbit tajine and occasional specials like breast of duck.

Chef Jay Gladue studied in Vancouver and spent four years

IF YOU GO

Hôtel Beatnik

450-534-2212, 866-934-2212, beatnikhotel.com; 279 Chemin du Lac Gale, Bromont.

Price: Sun.-Thurs., for two people, including Wi-Fi, summer-time pool, access to a common kitchen: \$115 for a queen room; \$135 for a king; \$139 for a family room; \$179 for a studio with a private kitchen (and two more people would pay \$20 per person extra). On Sat.-Sun., those three categories are \$139-\$159-\$199. Prices will be higher May to October. Breakfast costs \$10, Sun.-Thurs., and Sat.-Sun. (expanded choices), \$15.

Balnea spa+thermal reserve 866-734-2110, balnea.ca (for ages 14 and up); Bromont-sur-le-Lac; thermal baths, \$60 on Mon.-Fri.; \$70 on Sat.-Sun., plus Mon.-Sun. in summer (June 23-Sept. 4) and holidays; \$40 evenings. Rates include robe, towel, locker, bottled water. Bathing suit and sandals required. With a spa treatment or fitness class, the baths cost \$35-\$45. The gourmet table d'hôte at Lumami Restaurant costs \$25.

Eastern Townships tourism 800-355-5755, easterntownships.org.

at Les Enfants Terribles in Montreal. He has a vegan/vegetarian background and likes the healthy, food-as-medicine ethos of the First Nations. He has channelled all that into Lumami's appealing cuisine and added fine wines. rochelle@rochellelash.com twitter.com/rochellelash

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