



Auberge Le Havre Sutton is the country-chic reincarnation of the old Agnes Horth Inn. PHOTOS: MELISSA VINCELLI

AUBERGE LE HAVRE SUTTON UPDATES AN 1842 TREASURE



ROCHELLE LASH

A faded star of Sutton is sparkling once again.

Auberge Le Havre Sutton, the fetching new incarnation of the outdated Agnes Horth Inn, has opened under new ownership after a major overhaul to decor, dining and drinking.

It is perched high on a hill between Sutton, the village, and Mont Sutton, the ski area. An aristocratic, vintage country cottage, it has an entirely new life, with a youthful, energetic air and a lot going on.

It now has 10 guest rooms, all with private bathrooms; a casual restaurant for up to 45 patrons; and a new bar for après-skiing and après-hiking. The highlight in summer is the broad veranda with pure Sutton views of maple forests and the Appalachians. And coming in September is an outdoor whirlpool.

Elizabeth Sanderson, an interior decorator from the West Island, has taken the big, brave leap into innkeeping.

"All of my passions and talents are coming together," said Sanderson, a vivacious multi-tasker who also happens to be a triathlete and mother of three grown children. "I love to cook, bake and decorate, and I particularly love old buildings."

Le Havre Sutton is that, and then some. Sanderson scored a

hidden treasure whose core dates to 1842. And it needed lots of love. **Overhaul:** The challenge has been the interiors.

"I had to de-kitsch," said Sanderson.

It started with a process of elimination. Out, out with dainty ruffled curtains. Out with old floral wallpaper. Needlepoint settees, you are gone.

Le Havre Sutton still is country charming, but it has been thoroughly updated and refreshed.

"My specialty is mixing old with new," said Sanderson.

The dining room has captured a modern rustic spirit with stylish tables of weathered barnwood paired with ebony lacquered chairs. Another big change is that the slatted wooden walls along the corridors have been white-washed for a brighter look.

The bedrooms are charm personified, with redone retro furniture and modern perks, such as updated bathrooms, pod coffee machines, flat-screen TVs and eco-toiletries by Terra.

Sanderson was manager of the Chase Art Gallery in Beaconsfield, so art is a priority at Le Havre Sutton. She has mounted woody scenes by Julia Veenstra and Maya Eventov and action images of skiers and snowboarders by Steve Tracey.

Le Havre Sutton is intimate and cosy, but it's quite a big operation. Sanderson runs the place with her fiancé, Grant Bitcon, her daughter Lauren Ashley Rodger and Lauren's partner Josef Baumgartl Rodger, who are all on the job cooking, fixing and maintaining the house and grounds. There is also a staff of housekeepers, a

IF YOU GO

Auberge Le Havre Sutton: 866-538-7417, 450-538-7417, aubergelehavresutton.com; 435 Maple Rd., Sutton.

Prices: Rates are approximate and fluctuate with the seasons and on weekends/weekdays. Economy rooms, \$95-\$135; junior suites, \$155-\$199; including breakfast, whirlpool, Wi-Fi.

In winter: Le Havre Sutton will offer Sutton's Ski-Dodo-Ski package, starting at \$89 per night, p.p., with breakfast and 1½ days of skiing.

Bar and restaurant: Open to both the public and guests, Thurs.-Mon. from 4:30 p.m. Closed Tues.-Wed. Breakfast served daily to inn guests. Lunch box available.

Mont Sutton: 866-538-2545, montsutton.com

Tourism Sutton: 800-565-8455, tourismesutton.com

PENS trails: parcsutton.com

Plein Air Sutton: plainairsutton.ca

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

cook and servers.

Food: You can choose your lifestyle — either bar fare with sports on TV, or the restaurant for casual suppers and family nights.

Le Havre Sutton offers hearty, affordable after-sports suppers that run mostly from \$11 to \$20. Popular dishes include chicken brochettes with tzatziki; a high-topped grilled roast beef sandwich; a Mediterranean-inspired burger with brie, sun-dried



Auberge Le Havre Sutton has a casual restaurant and a bar for pub fare.

tomatoes and basil; and grilled salmon with Le Havre Sutton's signature apple-mango chutney.

The bar features beef sliders, duck wings, smoked-meat poutine and souvlaki. Food this robust calls for a drink: the house cocktail for summer is a hibiscus iced tea with vodka, wine is from Vignoble Domaine Bresee in Sutton, and microbrews come from Beau's in Vankleek Hill.

Sports: Mont Sutton and Plein Air Sutton, a network of trails through the woods, have introduced mountain biking with 25 kilometres of cross-country single- and double-track descents for all levels. If you need to warm up, there is a small bike park with a wooden "skills path" of features, like a roller-coaster and a teeter-totter.

Mountain bikers can park at Mont Sutton and use the washrooms and a bike washing station. Boutique Expérience

Sutton is open, with a snack bar and sales of biking and hiking gear, as well as tickets for the trail networks and rentals of fat bikes, mountain bikes and electric bikes. (Biking trail fee: adults \$10; students \$9; age six to 17 \$7.)

Also new this year will be a mountain bike race called the Marin Wildside Enduro, Sept. 23 and 24 (wildsideenduro.com).

For a terrific hiking experience, Parc d'environnement naturel de Sutton (PENS), on the massif of Mont Sutton, is home to more than 52 kilometres of trails. (Adults \$6; students \$4.50; age six to 17 \$3). The main trail head and parking lot are one kilometre past Mont Sutton; you also can buy tickets at Boutique Expérience Sutton.

Sutton's Fall Festival, dedicated to hiking and other outdoor activities, will take place on weekends from Sept. 16 to Oct. 15.

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