

CHECKING IN

GEESE AND TRANQUILLITY ABOUND AT UNIQUE B&B

Free of TV and Wi-Fi, Au Gîte des Oies offers guest an idyllic farm retreat



ROCHELLE LASH

My goose was cooked. But in a very good way.

I visited the unusual Au Gîte des Oies, a B&B near Granby that multi-tasks as a farm specializing in waterfowl, particularly geese and ducks.

Linda Lazure and Louis-Paul Quérel decided that their second and third careers would be as farmers. They had travelled the world and worked at other métiers, but they both eventually trained to be cooks at Pearson School in LaSalle. She graduated as a pastry chef and he as a butcher. Once they had an empty nest, they decided on the farm, the birds and the B&B.

The scene: They fell in love with an idyllic property in a picturesque farming region between Granby and St-Hyacinthe. It's no wonder. Gîte des Oies is a splendid spread with meadows, a wild blueberry patch, walking trails and four ponds, all cosseted by a forest of pine, birch, maples and spruce.

This tiny B&B is made for peace and tranquillity. The only sound you will hear is a gaggle of geese heralding your arrival — and then the occasional honk, cackle or quack.

Gîte des Oies doesn't have any TVs or Wi-Fi, although if your phone has a personal hot spot, you can connect.

"There is so much to do outside, even if it is simply sitting by the pond," said Lazure. "People don't want to spend time indoors, they come here to rejuvenate in the countryside."

The B&B: Surely one of the most intimate B&Bs I have experienced, Au Gîte des Oies operates its compact guest quarters on the main floor.

It has two rooms, one medium-size, white and pretty, and one is smaller, blue and more homespun. But everything is new and meticulously maintained, which is no small feat on a farm. The rooms share a sparkling, white porcelain bathroom with a glass shower and each



IF YOU GO

Roxton Falls is about a 90-minute drive from Montreal, via Highway 20 and Exit 147 for Upton/Acton Vale; or via Highway 10 and Exit 68, past Granby/Roxton Pond/Roxton Sud.

Au Gîte des Oies: 450-210-1122, augitedesoies.business.site, 508 rue Charlebois, Roxton Falls; \$100 for two, shared bathroom, including continental breakfast, coffee/tea corner, fruit, snacks. Dinner, \$50 per person, bring-your-own-wine.

Montréal Tourism: 450-466-4666, tourisme-monteregie.qc.ca

room has one double bed.

"We like cuddling here," says Lazure.

And, if you like the rustic side of life, the B&B also has a small guest cabin next to the house, with a double-sized bunk bed, a table and an outhouse.

The farm: Lazure and Quérel are on the job at 5:30 a.m. — to feed, clean and water the animals and to mend fences. They raise nearly 1,000 free-range birds each season: about 500 geese of various species, 400 ducks, a flock of heritage hens like Plymouth Rocks and handful of turkeys. They're all fed organic grains.

Petting is not encouraged, although I did get my chance because Lazure has nurtured them to be friendly. The biggest geese — the Emden — grow to between three and six kilos, and when you hold them, their feathers are sleek and smooth and their bellies are plump and soft.

A few are pets, including the swans named Romeo and Juliette, the wild turkeys Tristan and Isolde, and Coco, the gander, who was bullied in the general population when he was young and now lives with the goslings, playing dad and mentoring.

Food: For dinner (optional),



Linda Lazure cuddles Coco at Au Gîte des Oies, a goose farm and B&B near Granby. PHOTOS: AU GÎTE DES OIES

Lazure prepares a three-course homemade feast that might start with salad greens and tomatoes from her garden, topped with goose giblets. A main course could be a huge goose leg confit, with fresh vegetables and whipped potatoes. Then she would serve one of her signature desserts, like chocolate fondant with ice cream.

Almost all the guests opt to dine outside at a picnic table, weather permitting, because the surroundings are beautiful and the salon is tiny.

Lazure also sells her own pâtés and rillettes, available at Atwater and Jean Talon markets under the label Gîte des Oies. She also usually stocks whole geese, breasts for broiling and confit.

Lazure prepares breakfast before she heads out to the barn in the morning. The Columbian Rock chickens roost in a hen-house not 10 metres away, so the boiled eggs are farm-fresh. The copious continental spread includes fruit, cheese, goose pâté, homemade blueberry jam and bread, and coffee or tea.

What to do: If you're inclined to take it easy, Au Gîte des Oies



Au Gîte des Oies has two guest rooms with a shared bathroom.

has walking trails and sun chairs around the ponds.

Cyclists, especially those from Europe, are crazy about this B&B because it is one kilometre from La Campagnarde bike path. That's a car-free former railway segment of La Route Verte that links with the Eastern Townships' l'Estriade and La Montée-régiade.

Golfers can tee off at Club de Golf Acton Vale and sightseers

can enjoy Roxton Falls and the Granby Zoo.

Adventurers can conquer Fort Débrouillard, a series of outdoor adventures, with obstacle courses and tree-to-tree challenges that test team spirit, stamina and acrobatic ability.

There are varying levels tailored to youngsters or advanced athletes.

rochelle@rochellelash.com
twitter.com/rochellelash

WHERE TO STAY

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CALL 514-987-2279

MAINE

PLAY SHOP STAY DINE

VISIT FREEPORT

200+ SHOPS, INNS, BARS, RESTAURANTS & ATTRACTIONS

VISITFREEPORT.COM

VISIT FREEPORT

visitfreeport.com 207-865-1212

Visit us at the Freeport, Maine Train & Information Center 23 Depot St. Freeport, Maine 04032 USA

Experience why we're New England's favorite shopping destination. Located on the shores of Casco Bay, Freeport is world-famous for our hundreds of brand-name outlets and local boutiques housed in charming brick buildings, some dating back as far as the 18th century. In addition to world-class shopping, Freeport offers delectable local cuisine, four-star lodging and a diverse assortment of enjoyable activities for all ages and interests. Rich in history, nature and the arts, you'll come to shop and stay to play.

ONTARIO

GLEN HOUSE RESORT

www.glenhouseressort.com

409, 1000 Islands Parkway, Lansdowne, Ontario 1-800-268-4536

Visit The Glen House Resort — Smuggler's 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 \$167 per person based on double occupancy (+ tax and service). Enjoy our 18 hole championship golf course, onsite spa, casual fine dining, lounge, local Theatre, Boat Cruises and Casino



VERMONT

SMART SUITES

www.smartsuitesburlington.com

1700 Shelburne Rd., So. Burlington, Vt. Toll free 877-862-6800

Come and enjoy our hospitality. Spring/Summer special: Studio Efficiency at \$110 US/night or a one bedroom suite at \$120 US/night including a deluxe continental breakfast and free WIFI. Mention The Gazette special. Not valid with any other discounts and may not be available on certain week-ends. Rates effective May 1st until November 1st. Take Exit 13 off I-89, left on Rt 7/Shelburne Rd. for 1.5 miles. Same entrance as Holiday Inn Express.

NEW YORK

LEDGE ROCK AT WHITEFACE MOUNTAIN

5078 NYS ROUTE 86 WILMINGTON, NY 12997 WWW.LEDGEROCKATWHITEFACE.COM

Unforgettable and unparalleled views from your balcony and as close as you can get to the majestic Whiteface Olympic Mountain - a view you cannot find in Lake Placid. Bring your camera or drone! Our Adirondack Great Room is perfect for your large function or gathering. Firepits and barbecue grills available for guests use. World class fly-fishing within walking distance. Hospitality that will make you feel right at home.

FOR RATES AND RESERVATIONS CALL TOLL FREE 833-4-ROGERS