

HOTEL INTEL

STONEHAVEN MARKS A MAGNIFICENT NEW CHAPTER

Exquisitely restored 1906 gem shines amid boreal beauty of the Laurentians



ROCHELLE LASH

Georges Coulombe has a keen eye for aging beauties. He is an antique connoisseur and real estate developer specializing in heritage projects, and has revitalized nearly 50 treasures in Old Montreal. Now Coulombe has tackled his first hotel, StoneHaven Le Manoir, a prestigious, pastoral domain high atop a hill in Ste-Agathe-des-Monts, overlooking Lac des Sables in the Laurentians. Open since May, the palatial 1906 mansion and its exquisite grounds have been transformed into one of the most captivating properties in Quebec, likely to be rated five stars. The establishment has had many lives: a private hunting lodge, a country club, a monastery and a spa getaway.

“This is a new beginning in StoneHaven’s great journey,” said general manager Michel Tremblay, who has run the top-tier Hôtel Quintessence in Tremblant. I visited on a stormy day, and it was simply grand lounging around the sumptuous spaces — the library, the salon, the Cognac room, the piano bar and the veranda. And there was pure peacefulness gazing at the boreal beauty of the mountains, the soaring pine trees and the lake that has drawn visitors for more than 100 years.

The scene: The new StoneHaven embraces 34 deluxe guest rooms and several splendid public spaces, all redecorated with a remarkable collection of furnishings, light fixtures and oil paintings. The scope of Coulombe’s restoration of this gem is astounding. With his construction savvy and his passion for perfection, he installed new air conditioning,

IF YOU GO

STONEHAVEN LE MANOIR

Contact: 844-774-1991, 819-774-1991; stonehavenlemanoir.com
Address: 40 Lac-des-Sables Rd., Ste-Agathe-des-Monts.
Prices: fluctuate. Approximately June-Sept.: \$249-\$465; Oct.-May: \$175-\$375; including Wi-Fi, gardens, fitness room, business centre and (opening soon) a heated pool, whirlpools. Spa treatments will be extra.

eco-systems, electricity and plumbing. He built vast new kitchens and a full bar with an impressive glass wine display. He is shoring up the formal gardens and building a heated outdoor swimming pool and hot tubs. A spa with eight treatment rooms will open this summer.

The dining room specializes in gourmet French-Quebec fare by executive chef Sylvio Alonso, another alumnus of Quintessence. And the top-floor ballroom, with panoramic views and a terrasse, is a stunner — so special that it has bookings for weddings and Christmas parties until 2020.

“StoneHaven already is known for social happenings,” said Tremblay. “We’ve had several weddings and we’re planning brunch, afternoon tea, wine tastings, alfresco lunches and Friday night gatherings.”

Among the first events will be: brunch on June 16 (Father’s Day), July 21, Aug. 18 and Sept. 8; Sunday tea on July 7 and Sept. 1; and lobster night on June 7



StoneHaven Le Manoir’s peaceful setting includes formal gardens. PHOTOS: STONEHAVEN LE MANOIR



Heritage specialist Georges Coulombe has tracked down the perfect antique pieces for the spacious guest rooms.

and July 5, followed by oyster parties in October and November, and December holiday festivities.

Interiors: Coulombe is determined to stay as authentic as possible, decorating almost exclusively with antiques from 1900 to 1920.

“It is a focused period and it’s taken me three years to find the right pieces, and I am still on the hunt,” said Coulombe. He bought at auctions throughout Quebec, and down the U.S. east coast.

Each room and suite is graced with antique desks, mirrors, artwork, chairs and bed frames, with walls in pearl grey. The corridors are wide and the guest

rooms are spacious, inspired by the elaborate gowns of La Belle Époque.

Modern comforts include flat-screen TVs, pillow-top mattresses and heavy down duvets. The all-new white tiled bathrooms are equipped with Molton Brown toiletries, bathrobes and glass showers with both rain fixtures and spray arms. Some rooms have bathtubs and some have gas fireplaces. They all have inspirational Laurentian views.

Cuisine: The dining room is formal, decked out with lacquered walnut walls and velvet art-deco chairs, and enriched with niceties like white tablecloths, fresh flowers and heated plates.

It’s all a backdrop for Alonso’s gastronomy and artful presentations. Born in Provence, he cooks in an elaborate French style, with Quebec poultry, duck, lobster, cheeses and microgreens.

“I season with my own inspiration, and I love lemon, yuzu and Espelette,” said Alonso.

StoneHaven’s delicacies include foie gras, marrow bone with black trumpet mushrooms, scallops with a squid ink crisp, shrimp atop black risotto and market cuts of beef for two.

Alonso’s divine desserts are a light lemon square sprinkled with pumpkin seed crumble, and an intense chocolate cake layered with peanuts and cream.

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