



Vintage Hideaway is a cluster of three Airstream trailers, created by Allison Barnes, left, and Jessie Schenk. Odin, a Great Dane-mastiff mix, helped, too. PHOTOS: ROB LITTLE

AIRSTREAMS OUTFITTED FOR ONTARIO GLAMPING



ROCHELLE LASH

Pandemic protocol: Ontario requires a vaccine passport for many public venues, including indoor restaurants (ontario.ca). But eating and drinking at this destination is outdoors.

A trio of boutique hospitality businesses have ensured you will eat well, drink well and sleep well in the tiny agricultural community of Carp, a half-hour drive west of downtown Ottawa.

Each is distinctive, moderately priced and lots of fun. Together, they add up to a unique experience in an idyllic location.

The threesome — Vintage Hideaway, Kin Vineyards and Joe's Italian Kitchen — share a ravishing setting at the heart of rolling hills and farms.

The ventures are seasonal, operating until the end of October, and possibly adding weekends for holidays or occasions in November or December. But with only three lodgings at Vintage Hideaway, the spring of 2022 is already booking up for

getaways and vineyard weddings.

Lodging: For your sleepover, the new Vintage Hideaway is a cute, retro collection of three Airstream trailers. The familiar mid-20th century aluminum motorhomes have been outfitted for glamping with kitchens, indoor loos and sleeping quarters for two to four guests.

Entrepreneurs Allison Barnes and Jessie Schenk located their little domain right inside a vineyard and beside a farm, so simply getting there is a pastoral experience, driving past haystacks and through a field. And you spend the night in total tranquillity, surrounded by greenery.

The Airstreams are decked out with kitschy accessories such as colourful throw pillows, 1940s magazines and pre-iPad board games. It's RV living, so there are fold-out dining tables and sofa beds to save space. The experience is compact, comfortable and lightly adventurous.

"Staycations are the way to go for the foreseeable future," said Schenk, "and travellers are attracted to unique accommodations that emphasize experiences. Plus, we keep rural Ottawa in the spotlight."

Outdoors, there are picnic tables, patio chairs on decks,



Joe's Italian Kitchen offers alfresco dining.

barbecues and a communal fire-pit, so it's like being in your own backyard.

If you rent all three Airstreams, you can accommodate up to 10 people, and possibly plan on events such as cocktail classes, campfire concerts, private wine tastings or outdoor movies.

You don't have to go far for yummy Italian fare and good wines. Joe's Italian Kitchen and Kin Vineyards are steps away, so no driving is necessary.

Wine: Husband and wife Shaun McEwan, a chartered accountant, and Lorraine Mastersmith, a corporate lawyer, have been nurturing Kin Vineyards for two years, with the expertise of vintner Brian Hamilton. You can shop, sip or take a vineyard tour that includes a tasting of four wines, a snack of cheese and charcuterie and a lesson on subjects such as cold-climate growing.

"We're pioneers producing Chardonnay and Pinot Noir so far north, so we bury the vines over the winter," said Mastersmith. "But we are on the same latitude as Burgundy, France, plus we have good soil composition, and drainage and sun exposure on our southwest-facing slope."

Joe's Italian Kitchen: Joe Price and Joe Princiotta operate Canada's first certified pinsaria. What's a pinsaria, you ask? It's similar to a pizzeria, except the signature dish is pinsa, a sausage-shaped pie whose crust is made with a blend of sourdough, rice, soy and wheat flour.

Joe's Italian Kitchen does pinsa with a world of toppings, including spicy soppressata, Calabrian chilies, pepperoni and banana peppers. The house favourite is the lusty Sophia Loren, with tomato sauce, mozzarella, arugula, prosciutto, Parmesan and a balsamic glaze. The resto also does classics like meatballs and a creative burrata salad with roasted grapes and rosemary-flavoured honey.

You can dine under the outdoor tent, at patio tables, or take a pinsa back to your Vintage Hideaway Airstream for a quiet meal.

What to do: Vintage Hideaway recommends several local attractions, such as the Carp farmers' market (seasonal, Saturdays) and the Diefenbunker, Canada's Cold War museum, which was an underground shelter during the 1960s for military and political bigwigs in case of an attack

IF YOU GO

All three enterprises are at 2225 Craig's Side Rd., Carp, Ont., about 235 kilometres west of Montreal (a two-hour, 40-minute drive).
Vintage Hideaway: 613-883-3133, vintagehideaway.ca. Price: \$300 for one to four people.
Joe's Italian Kitchen: 613-519-1621, joesitaliankitchen.ca; Wed.-Sun., 11:30 a.m.-8 p.m. (Other locations: Wellington West Ottawa, 613-798-1111; Almonte, 613-256-4033.)
Kin Vineyards: 613-519-1621, kinvineyards.com. Outdoor tasting room/wine shop open Wed.-Sun., 11 a.m.-8 p.m. One-hour tours, Thurs.-Sun., four times each afternoon, \$75 for two, \$30 each additional adult. Book online. Until approximately Oct. 31. Restarting in May.

(diefenbunker.ca; Wed.-Sun., by reservation).

Barnes and Schenk also run the Thursty Pedaler, a crazy pub-crawl in downtown Ottawa. Your group boards a 14-person, pedal-powered party bike — which is a hoot in itself — and a designated "party pilot" cycles the group to three locales (613-889-3552, thurstypedaler.com; until Oct. 31).
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Dutch tolerance

Liberal Amsterdam
accepts pot shops
and red light
districts in its
canal-bordered
neighbourhoods,
Rick Steves writes.

Until European travel becomes fully open to North Americans, here's a reminder of the fun that awaits us in Europe:

Amsterdam is a laboratory of progressive living, bottled inside Europe's finest 17th-century city. Like Venice, this city is a patchwork quilt of elegant architecture and canal-bordered islands anchored upon millions of wooden pilings. But unlike its dwelling-in-the-past, canal-filled cousin, Amsterdam sees itself as a city of the future, built on good living, cosy cafés, great art, street-corner jazz — and a persistent spirit of live and let live.

During its Golden Age in the 1600s, Amsterdam was the world's richest city, an international sea-trading port and



In charming Amsterdam neighbourhoods, cosy coffee shops sell marijuana, trim seniors sip beer and people make sure to look out for their neighbours. RICK STEVES

a cradle of capitalism. Wealthy burghers built a planned city of tree-shaded canals lined with townhouses topped with fancy gables. The atmosphere they created attracted a high-energy mix of humanity: Immigrants, Jews, outcasts and political rebels were drawn here by its tolerant atmosphere. Sailors — so famously hard-living and rowdy — were needed to run the vast fleet of merchant ships. And painters like a young Rembrandt found work capturing that atmosphere on canvas.

I approach Amsterdam as an ethnologist observing a unique culture. A stroll through any neighbourhood is rewarded with slice-of-life scenes that could rarely be found elsewhere. Carillons chime from church towers in neighbourhoods where sex is sold in red-lit windows.

Young professionals smoke pot with impunity next to old ladies in bonnets selling flowers. Each block has a quirky and informal custom of neighbours looking out for neighbours, where an elderly man feels safe in his home knowing he's being watched over by the sex workers next door.

Prostitution has been legal since the 1980s (although street-walking is still forbidden). The women are often entrepreneurs, running their own businesses and paying taxes. Women usually rent their space for eight-hour shifts. A good spot costs US\$150 for a day shift and \$250 for an evening. Popular prostitutes charge \$50 to \$70 for a 20-minute visit. Many belong to a union called the Red Thread.

The rooms look tiny from the street, but most are just display

windows, opening onto a room behind or upstairs with a bed, a sink and little else. Prostitutes are required to keep their premises hygienic, avoid minors and make sure their clients use condoms.

If a prostitute has a dangerous client, she pushes her emergency button and is rescued not by a pimp, but by the police.

The Dutch are a handsome people — tall, healthy, and with good posture. They're open, honest, refreshingly blunt and ready to laugh. As connoisseurs of world culture, they appreciate Rembrandt paintings, Indonesian food and the latest French films, but with a down-to-earth, blue-jeans attitude.

While smoking tobacco is not allowed indoors, the Dutch seem to smoke more cigarettes than anyone in Europe. Yet somehow, they are among the healthiest people in the world. Trim and wiry Dutch seniors sip beers, have fun blowing smoke rings, and ask me why Americans have a love affair with guns and kill themselves with fast food.

While the Dutch smoke a lot of tobacco, they smoke less marijuana than the European average. Hard drugs are illegal, but a joint causes about as much excitement here as a bottle of beer. Following an ethic of pragmatic harm reduction rather than legislating morality and pushing incarceration, the government allows the retail sale of pot.

Throughout Amsterdam, you'll see "coffee shops" — pubs selling

marijuana — with menus that look like the inventory of a drug bust.

Most of downtown Amsterdam's coffee shops feel grungy and foreboding to travellers who aren't part of the youth-hostel crowd. But the places in local neighbourhoods and small towns around the countryside feel much more inviting to people without piercings and tattoos.

Paradox is the most gezellig (cosy) coffee shop I've found in Amsterdam — a mellow, graceful place. The managers, Ludo and Wiljan, and their staff are patient with descriptions. With each visit, they happily walk me through their menu. The juice is fresh, the music is easy and the neighbourhood is charming.

It's become a ritual for me now to drop by Paradox and check in with Ludo and Wiljan with each visit to Amsterdam. I grab a wicker chair just outside their door. Framed in the jungle of lush vines that decorates the storefront, I sit and observe the metabolism of the neighbourhood. I think about how challenging societal norms — with a pinch of shock here and a dash of tolerance there — leads to progress. I'm grateful that this city's bold experiment in freedom continues.

This article was adapted from Rick's new book, For the Love of Europe. Rick Steves (ricksteves.com) writes European guidebooks, hosts travel shows on public TV and radio, and organizes European tours. You can email Rick at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.