



Somewhere Inn is a revamped motel tucked between the lake and the woods in Calabogie, west of Ottawa. PHOTOS: NIAMH BARRY

Ottawa Valley motel is a country hideaway



ROCHELLE LASH

Pandemic protocol: Ontario requires a vaccine passport for many public venues (ontario.ca).

Comfort meets country at the new Somewhere Inn in the Ottawa Valley, about 3 1/2 hours west of Montreal.

This engaging establishment is a reincarnation of a mid-1900s motor lodge. It's a hip, somewhat upscale venture in a vintage holiday area that seems like a throwback to summer camp.

Life revolves around beautiful forests, rivers and lakes, as well as the village of Calabogie, where Charbonneau's gas station and the Calabogie Brewing Co. are landmarks.

The Ottawa Valley is known as Ontario's Adventure Playground, and visitors come to the Lake Calabogie area for everything outdoorsy.

In winter, there are snow sports at Calabogie Peaks Resort



Somewhere Inn has 11 redesigned rooms, some with extra beds or bunks.

and Madawaska Nordic Ski, and in summer it's beach life, superb hiking, cycling, ATV-ing, golf, fishing, swimming, paddling and whitewater.

Country style: Somewhere Inn is the vision of the husband-and-wife team of Joel Greaves and Devon Vaillancourt, who traded Toronto's big-city frenzy for the sounds and scents of nature.

(As a side note: Vaillancourt's father, Michel Vaillancourt, was the silver medallist in equestrian show jumping at Montreal's 1976 Summer Olympics. He's a Quebecer, and the first Canadian to have won an equestrian medal.)

Somewhere Inn is authentical-

ly rural. It is set against a backdrop of flourishing oaks, elms, maples and pines, and Lake Calabogie is just across the street.

Life at the motel is laid-back. This is the sort of place where you will cocoon in winter, or in summer you might simply laze in a hammock and watch the sun or moon shimmer on the water.

The motel has a private patch of sand and a pebble beach, and there are lawn games and evening bonfires.

Calabogie depends on its attractive environment for tourism, so the Somewhere Inn team has pledged one per cent of its revenue to local eco-ventures,

such as the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust, through 1% for the Planet.

Urban input: Greaves and Vaillancourt have brought considerable urban experience with them, and they collaborated with prominent designers Keri MacLellan and Andrea Pierre — friends of Vaillancourt since university — of Westgrove in Toronto.

The inn's Bottle Shop sells a connoisseur's choice of organic wines, fruit sodas and Ontario craft beer, all selected by Gibson & Co., a fancy watering hole north of Toronto.

Other boutique goodies include fine alpaca blankets, woollen socks, aromatic candles and lotions (somewhere.shop).

To liven up your ride, the front desk texts a Spotify playlist. There's a room service menu, so if you're peckish when you check in, you'll have snacks and beverages waiting.

Rooms: The guest room decor speaks of the innocence of a bygone era. The look is natural, with clean and contemporary lines. A simple decorative basket or a lone rattan chair makes a statement. The walls are creamy white, the floors are pale hardwood and most of the fabrics are linen.

IF YOU GO

Calabogie is a 3 1/2-hour (300 kilometre) drive west of Montreal. Somewhere Inn: 613-696-9600, somewhereinn.ca; 5254 Calabogie Rd., Calabogie, Ont.

Price: King rooms (some with stand-alone tub), double queens or the Super Suite with king bed and bunks. Starting at \$300 in summer/winter, or \$230 in autumn/spring. Includes parking, Wi-Fi, firepits. Minimum two nights. Pet-friendly, \$30 per night, includes doggie perks.

Ottawa Valley Tourist Association: 800-757-6580, 613-732-4364, ottawavalley.travel.

The rooms are extra large, so each has breathable space for a sitting area, a gas fireplace and a mini-fridge with a coffee corner. The bedding is well chosen, too. The mattresses — thick, firm layers of foam — are made in Canada by Endy and topped with Endy duvets and pillows.

Food and drink (hours subject to change): The front desk delivers a continental breakfast from the delightful Oh-el-la Café at 9 a.m. Wednesdays through Sundays (\$15 per person). It's a set menu of overnight muesli, a pastry, an apple and juice, and there are Nespresso machines in the rooms.

Oh-el-la Café is also open for in-person dining, with smoked salmon, brioches or omelettes for breakfast, plus cookies and cakes, and lunches of smoked meat sandwiches, salads or specials like seared salmon on a spinach-potato mash. (The café is closed this month.)

Operated by the same owners, On the Rocks serves a limited menu of pizza, pasta and salads, only for takeout for the moment (calabogielodge.com).

Guests can bring their meals back to Somewhere Inn — a peaceful and private option — perhaps adding a beverage from the Bottle Shop.

In Burnstown, about 15 kilometres down the road, the popular Neat Coffee Shop presents concerts and casual fare like Reuben sandwiches and veggie wraps, along with beer, sangria and cocktails (neatmusicandcoffee.ca; closed Mondays).

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