

HOTEL INTEL

CHARMING ELMHIRST'S RESORT OFFERS ROMANCE, FAMILY FUN



ROCHELLE LASH

Wholesome and healthy, Elmhirst's Resort in southeastern Ontario is operated by a family, for families.

It's a year-round getaway with 30 cottages, wildly popular for vacations, weddings and conferences, and prized for its postcard-pretty waterfront setting and its generous slate of activities.

Elmhirst's has many facets. I see it as a homespun, traditional and cosy family resort with maximum recreation packed into dynamic days and evenings, almost all included in the price. The cottages — all waterfront — range from one to five bedrooms, so you can bring the entire multi-generational gang. Each has a full kitchen, which comes in handy for feeding youngsters and for family meals “at home.”

Elmhurst's is also serene and romantic. Perfect for getting in the mood for love, the sunrises and sunsets glow on Rice Lake and waves lap against the shore outside each cottage. Couples can cocoon in a one-bedroom unit and customize visits, adding on massages, boat rides, wine tastings and farm-to-table cuisine at the Hearthside Dining Room or the Wild Blue Yonder Pub and Patio.

Backstory: The resort has deep roots and a long history in a picturesque lake region called the Kawarthas, running between Oshawa and Barrie, about a five-hour drive west of Montreal. The saga began in the early 1800s,



Elmhirst's Resort has 30 waterfront cottages, featuring spa life, farm-to-table dining and year-round activities on Rice Lake. *ELMHIRST'S RESORT*

when Britain's King George IV granted to Royal Navy Lt. Philip James Elmhirst a sprawling spread in the New World as a reward for fighting Napoleon in the 1805 Battle of Trafalgar.

The rest is five generations of farming and hospitality, sustained by a love of the land and environmentally friendly operations. Three generations of the Elmhirst family still live and work at the resort.

"The changing seasons ensure that we are always on point with new ways to entertain our guests," general manager Greg Elmhirst said. "And we aim to offer the best of the Kawartha region, with farm-fresh food, a lakefront location and lots to do."

Activities: I've seen many destinations advertise that they have something for everyone. Elm-hirst's delivers in a big way.

Horse-drawn wagon rides and campfires happen year-round, and the indoor pool is a valued weatherproof amenity.

Spa life includes a hot tub, a sauna and treatments such as Asian-inspired bodywork, skin care with natural products and a pedicure so enjoyable it's called I Feel the Earth Move.

Elmhirst's farm beckons, too. Guests (notably the littlest ones) are invited to visit the cows and horses in the barns, and to feed the chickens and collect eggs. The harvest is linked to Elmhirst's Own, the ingredients that supply the resort's restaurants.

The resort's Always Free summer roster covers just about everything on water and land, including paddling, bicycles, tubing, nature hikes, water-skiing, tennis, volleyball, playgrounds on land and on the lake, and indoor

and outdoor pools, as well as special events such as fireworks.

Life around Rice Lake makes me think of Elmhirst's as a summer place, but there is energy all year. The Wild Women Weekend package (Nov. 4-6 or Nov. 18-20) is built around outdoor adventure, spa life and social gatherings. The two-night Fall for Yoga getaway (Nov. 11-13), which often sells out, will bundle meals, wellness, a cooking class and a \$50 spa voucher.

In winter, guests can try ice fishing, skating and snowshoeing. One caper — and this one's too challenging for me — features high-octane power kiting on frozen Rice Lake, plus happy hour and sleigh rides (Jan. 27-29, 2023).

One of the area's treasured resources is the Trans Canada Trail, for strollers, cyclists and

IF YOU GO

Elmhirst's Resort: 800-461-1940, elmhirst.ca; 1045 Settlers Line, Keene, Ont. Accessible. Pet-friendly, \$20 a day.

Price: Rates are approximate and depend on number of guests. Cottages usually are booked for seven nights during July and August. Sample starting prices for four people, July 2-Aug. 26: Superior \$2,144, Deluxe \$2,496, Free Spirit \$2,887. Sample starting nightly rate, if available, from \$465, \$537 and \$591, respectively. Rates are lower June-July 1 and Aug. 27-Sept. 4. All including Wi-Fi, seasonal activities, docks, lakefront decks, barbecues, firepit. Extra: meals, spa treatments, summer boat rentals.

Country Classic Meal package (breakfast and dinner): In addition to lodging, it's \$99 (Sun.-Thurs.) to \$129 (Fri.-Sat.) per adult, \$79-\$99 ages three to 12. Weekends include Sunday Best lunch instead of breakfast. Choice of full menu, including Elmhirst's Own steaks.

More savings apply Sept. 5-May 27. Couch Potato to package (Sept.-May, non-holiday): two nights for two people, \$589 Sun.-Thurs. to \$629 Fri.-Sat., with \$259-\$269 for an extra person, including breakfast/dinner from a specific menu, autumn activities, trails, fitness facilities.

Southeastern Ontario tourism: southeasternontario.ca.
Kawartha regional tourism:
thekawarthas.ca, 800-461-
6424. Ontario tourism:
destinationontario.com.

those in wheelchairs. The nearby Lang Hastings segment is flat and picturesque, running about 30 kilometres between Peterborough and Hastings (langhastingstrail.ca). The resort has bikes to lend, or you can rent at Wild Rock Outfitters in Peterborough. *Special to the Montreal Gazette*
rochelle@rochellelash.com



**city
cruises** 
⚓ by Hornblower™

CRUISING IS BACK. NOW OPEN!

It's Better on the Water.

Hop aboard iconic experiences across Ontario!

Join us for breathtaking views of the 1000 Islands from Gananoque, the amazing and mighty mist of Niagara Falls, or sightseeing and dining with unbeatable views of the Toronto Harbour. What is your next adventure?

**Your voyage starts at
citycruises.com**

#Experiencelt
#CruiseTheCity

  @CityCruises