

StoneHaven's evolution includes new culinary offerings, guest wing

Refinement meets serenity at luxe Laurentians resort



ROCHELLE LASH

StoneHaven Le Manoir Relais & Châteaux, a leader in upmarket Laurentian hospitality, continues to evolve. General manager Percy Carriapen recently presided over the construction of a new wing of luxurious guest suites and executive chef Marc-Antoine Lacasse has revamped the culinary program.

StoneHaven is a venerable hilltop estate overlooking Lac des Sables in Ste-Agathe. The mansion was built in the early 1900s by entrepreneur and philanthropist Douglas Lorne McGibbon (who also established the Laurentian Sanitorium for respiratory patients) and it has had many lives since, from opulent to austere.

Throughout its history, the aura of peacefulness, the surrounding forest and the gorgeous views of mountains and the lake have stayed constant.

StoneHaven's current co-owners, Georges Coulombe and Guylaine Brault, are developers specializing in heritage projects and have taken StoneHaven to lofty heights as a member of Relais & Châteaux, a global group of small hotels known for fine cuisine, deluxe interiors, local influences and genteel service.

"Our task is to act as stewards of this exceptional domain, to showcase our staff's talents and to deliver a very personal guest experience," said Carriapen, who brings high-level experience from Mauritius, France, the Seychelles, the Maldives and Dubai,



StoneHaven Le Manoir is a gorgeous Laurentian getaway in Ste-Agathe, which features elaborate grounds in a serene setting and lavish interiors. STONEHAVEN LE MANOIR RELAIS & CHATEAUX

as well as Fairmont Le Manoir Richelieu in Charlevoix and the Royal St. Lawrence Yacht Club in the West Island.

The scene: StoneHaven is lavish, indoors and out. The elaborate grounds encompass a year-round outdoor whirlpool, classical stone statuary and walking trails. In summer, there is a heated swimming pool, terraces and formal Italian gardens.

The hotel is outstanding for its prodigious collection of 19th- and 20th-century furniture, mostly English and French and in several styles, including art deco and art nouveau, as well as eye-popping oil paintings, classical statuettes and rare chandeliers, many crafted of stained glass by Louis Tiffany.

The interiors are eye candy for esthetes, with splendidly appointed spaces for every mood, including a fireplace foyer, a library, a piano lounge, a wine-tasting corner, reading nooks, salons for cards or chess and a small ballroom.

StoneHaven has 34 antique-filled guest rooms in the main

hotel. It recently opened 17 more in the Pavilion, an adjacent building. Modern comforts include flat-screen TVs, pillow-top mattresses and heavy down duvets.

The white tiled bathrooms are equipped with bathrobes, Molton Brown toiletries and showers with rain fixtures and spray arms. Some rooms have bathtubs and some have gas fireplaces. StoneHaven is so rich and refined, and so full of stories, it offers history tours several times a week.

Dining: Part of StoneHaven's experience is the serenity of the beautiful dining room and the pastoral views of the forest. The service and table settings are formal, and a sommelier is ready to choose and pour. Executive chef Lacasse brings culinary know-how from Toqué and Au Pied de Cochon in Montreal, as well as from three Michelin star luminaries — Manresa near San Francisco, Maemo in Oslo and Flocons de Sel in Megève, France.

Lacasse sprinkles a little

Michelin magic onto this Ste-Agathe hilltop, too. His elegant cuisine de terroir marries fine ingredients with artful presentations. Many dishes have a unique twist — foie gras with a chestnut tarte, Quebec trout glazed with ginger and spruce, scallop mousse with squash risotto, and venison carpaccio with Japanese accents of soy and wakame.

"We keep the menu moving," Lacasse said.

"We change dishes seasonally and even sometimes weekly."

Evening main courses might include beef from P.E.I., stuffed rabbit or a local catch like Atlantic striped bass. Lunch is just as delectable, with salmon tartare, grilled octopus, Icelandic cod or cavatelli with mushrooms and pork.

The chef grows his own herbs and vegetables seasonally and also sources delicacies from Quebec suppliers, like lamb from Bergerie du Cap à L'Orignal, boar bacon from Ferme Sanglier des Bois, seafood from the St. Lawrence Gulf, and fruit and vegetables from Ferme aux petits

IF YOU GO

Tourism Laurentians: 800-561-6673, laurentians.com; **Ste-Agathe-des-Monts:** vsadm.ca.

StoneHaven Le Manoir Relais & Châteaux: 844-774-1991, 819-774-1991; stonehavenlemanoir.com; 40 Lac-des-Sables Rd., Ste-Agathe-des-Monts. Accessible. Pet friendly, \$75 per stay. Laurentians residents have 20 per cent off lodging until May 31.

Price: Fluctuate. From Sun.-Thurs., \$210-\$400 in winter or \$300-\$600 in summer, depending on room/suite. Weekends and holidays are higher. April-May might be lower. Including in-room Nespresso, Molton Brown toiletries, bedding by Marie l'Oie, bathrobes, Wi-Fi, outdoor hot tub/steam, fitness room, snowshoe/walking trail. Packages available with breakfast or gastronomic dinner, dog sledding, ice fishing, access to Sentier des cimes (a one-kilometre aerial trail at Mont-Blanc).

Dining (daily): Breakfast, lunch, bar menu. Dinner, à la carte or seven course discovery menu, \$165 p.p. Wine pairings available.

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StoneHaven is very much a special occasion place. It's popular for weddings and anniversary parties.

Upcoming dates include afternoon tea, March 10; Easter brunch, March 31; Mother's Day brunch, May 12; Father's Day brunch, June 16.

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