

# 'Rustic modern' Field Guide is a natural success



**ROCHELLE LASH**  
Checking In

Stowe, Vt., is so popular with Montrealers that a visit to the historic New England town is almost like a stay-cation, so the opening of a hotel there in early October was like news from home.

Field Guide, a stylish establishment with a range of rooms and suites, is the modern incarnation of Ye Olde England Inne, a vintage hostelry and pub that closed about two years ago.

The footprint of the buildings and the property is the same, but everything else is new and exciting. That includes the soft bark-coloured exterior, colourful landscaping and all interiors.

The decor throughout is fresh, pure and woody. It's evocative of Vermont's four seasons, with an appealing mix of avant-garde, vintage urban cool and country warmth.

The name Field Guide refers to the hotel's policy of introducing its guests to the region. When I checked in, I was handed an iPad so I could peruse Stowe's restaurants, brew pubs, shops, craft fairs and galleries, and other arrivals chatted with the front-desk clerk about where to go and what to do.

Former Montrealer Marie-Pier Hébert — a graduate of McGill University and the Institut de tourisme et d'hôtellerie du Québec — is Field Guide's co-manager, bringing a soupçon of French savoir faire as well as experience in the U.S. and Qatar. She shares the job with the equally worldly Nikola Jasprica, who has worked in South Africa and Croatia.

The adorable Field Guide has it all, and is already a hit thanks to its accessible prices, hip style, playful decor and terrific location.

**BED AND BREAKFAST:** The hotel has 30 varied accommodations, with totally new fittings, from the plush beds to the pristine white bathrooms. There are 17 guest rooms in the main lodge, ideal for singles or couples and ranging from cosy to deluxe; three darling cottages with private entrances, each for up to eight people; and 10 luxurious suites for families or friends in the Trail House. The spacious Trail House suites — with



Some of Field Guide's suites in Stowe, Vt., have balconies with mountain views. PHOTOS: LARK HOTELS



Stowe, Vt.'s Field Guide has whimsical decor, a hip ambience and a terrific location.

one to three bedrooms — have balconies offering views of Mount Mansfield, the pool and the woods; TVs in every room; bathtubs and glass showers; plus fireplaces in the living rooms.

Field Guide also has an outdoor whirlpool tucked into a gazebo, steps from the lobby.

For the interiors, the designers chose white or dove grey walls and nature motifs like leaves, barns and birds, plus amusing accessories like faux-antler mountings. The lobby lounge sports a snowy birchbark mural, recycled barn wood beams and cute, contemporary furniture in beiges and greys with colour pops of orange, furry white pillows and original patterned rugs.

"We call it 'rustic modern,'" said Hébert. "We reflect Vermont's forests, mountains and

traditions, but the feeling is new."

All the rooms have pod coffee machines, white waffle cotton robes and flat-screen TVs, complete with Netflix, iTunes and HBO. (You have to sign into your own accounts, so bring your passwords.) The beds, layered in soft microfibre sheets, cushy duvets and fluffy pillows, are divine.

The bathrooms are well equipped with top-of-the-line Kohler and Grohe fixtures and lovely lime-infused toiletries by Lather from California.

On the food front, Field Guide delivers a delectable breakfast basket — a multi-course meal in small Mason jars — to every room around 8 a.m.

"We're on the healthier side of breakfast," said Hébert. "We bake with maple syrup, honey, yogurt

## IF YOU GO

Stowe is a two-hour, 45-minute drive from Montreal. Field Guide is on Mountain Rd. (Route 108), one kilometre from Main Street (Route 100) and about nine kilometres from Stowe Mountain Resort (stowe.com, 888-253-4849). Ski lifts will start running on Nov. 21. The local shuttle stops at Field Guide about every 20 minutes.

**Field Guide:** 802-253-8088, fieldguidestowe.com; 433 Mountain Rd., Stowe, Vt. The On a Lark loyalty program for Lark Hotels offers benefits (larkhotels.com).

**Price:** The booking code NEWBIE (valid Sun.-Thurs. until Nov. 25) offers a 20 per cent reduction and a \$20 dining credit at Doc Ponds. Rates fluctuate, depending on season and weekday/weekend: main lodge, US\$139-\$259 for two people; Trail House suites, US\$279-\$519 for two to eight people; cottages, US\$309-\$459 for up to eight people. Rates include Wi-Fi, coffee corner, breakfast basket, hot tub and summer-time pool. Some rooms have refrigerators and/or fireplaces, and all have wine glasses, irons and hair dryers.

and coconut oil, and we can accommodate vegan or gluten-free requests."

Your bountiful basket of homemade goodies might include

freshly baked blueberry scones with lemon glaze or banana-chocolate bread, plus smoothies, orange juice, cantaloupe-grape salad, as well as hot baked eggs or frittatas. Field Guide's breakfast is creative and nutritious, and I attribute my successful Mount Mansfield hike to the team's unique dish of "overnight" oats and maple syrup.

**NEW IN TOWN:** The hotel's New in Town opening deal offers discounts on room rates, plus a \$20 credit at Doc Ponds, a first-rate beer bar and pub that opened recently almost across the street and features a modern twist on comfort food.

The best bets here are the juicy smoked chicken, spicy braised greens, blackened pork chop and the hearty Doc burger with cheddar, along with 75 kinds of beer (including 10 from Quebec), quality wines and craft cocktails.

How good is Doc Ponds? I'll simply say it is operated by the owners of the renowned Hen of the Wood, arguably the No. 1 dining spot in both Waterbury, Vt., and Burlington. Packed to the rafters nightly for food, drink and mingling, Doc Ponds channels a retro vibe with selections from a collection of 1,000 vinyl records spinning on a turntable.

Field Guide will debut its own restaurant, Picnic Social, in early 2016, and the hotel also will operate a heated outdoor swimming pool next summer.

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