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FINDING SERENITY INSAINT ANDREWS

Seaside town a mindful retreat for first-time visitor

CATHY DONALDSON TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

Sometimes you don't get what you expect out of a trip. If you're lucky, you get much more.

I was happy to experience the latter last weekend while in Saint Andrews to write a feature about my inaugural stay in the picturesque town. Hubby came along and while it was meant to be a work trip for me, I later discovered it had been a mindful retreat for both of us, a getaway that left us feeling far more relaxed and refreshed than we'd expected. We're raring to return sooner than

later.
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Our excursion began with a pleasant, two-and-a-half-hour drive from Moncton along Highway 1 west towards St. Stephen, a path we'd taken repeatedly over the years en route to a family cottage in Maine. This time, we veered from our normal course, taking Exit 39 to Highway 127 south and Saint Andrews (a.k.a. St. Andrews by-the-Sea).

Algonquin Resort, a 233-room, Tudorstyle hotel that overlooks Passamaquoddy Bay. From our room, we could see across the St. Croix River to our neighbouring country.

Originally opened in 1889 and once owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Algonquin relaunched in 2014 after a \$50-million renovation. Now part of the Marriott's luxury-brand "Autograph Collection," the hotel continues to welcome dignitaries and everyday travellers alike, and is consistently ranked as one of the world's best resorts.

As hubby situated our car in the hotel's free, on-site parking area, I strolled through the Algonquin's impressive entrance, eyeing dark woods and glittering chandeliers, swept up by the elegance, charm and historical feel of the place. When we found our well-appointed room, decorated in neutral tones, quality linens and fresh carpeting, I made a bathroom check to see how it compared to the rest of the stylish interiors. The reveal included a granite countertop, spacious glass-and-tile shower and best of all – some of my favourite Aveda products. A sniff of the Rosemary Mint Shampoo brought a smile to my lips and alleviated any tension from



St. Andrews features many outdoor murals, including this one of the town as it appeared in 1907. The image is located on the side of the Home Hardware store on Water Street, PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL



at Kingsbrae Garden, prepared an

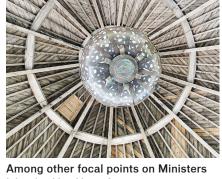
exquisite breakfast for the author

and her hubby, including this

spectacular egg and smoked

trout dish. PHOTO: CATHY

DONALDSON/TELE-



Among other focal points on Ministers Island is Van Horne's stunning two-storey circular bathhouse.

PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

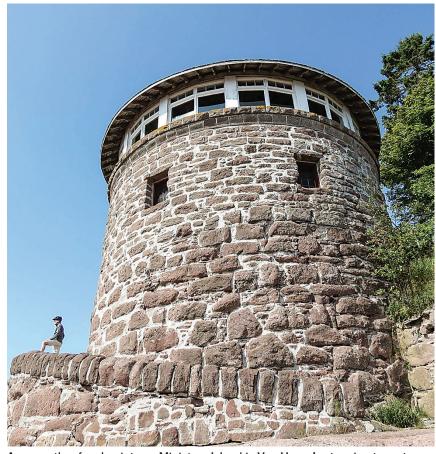


A porch provides a quiet retreat at the Algonquin
Resort. PHOTO: CATHY
DONALDSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL



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Among other focal points on Ministers Island is Van Horne's stunning two-storey circular bathhouse, where the transportation magnate would spend hours partaking in his hobby - drawing and painting. The author's husband stands outside the structure to provide a sense of the building's scale. PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL



Many of the shops in downtown Saint Andrews feature classical architecture, pretty colours and other décor that give the area a quaint, friendly vibe. Read about the town at telegraphjournal.com today. PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

Finding serenity in beautiful Saint Andrews

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A walk around the hotel's spectacular grounds with brief stops at the spa, pool, fitness centre and restaurants had me even more at ease and enthused about the property, as did the kilted concierge staff. There's just something about men

My tranquil, happy state continued when hubby and I made the short trek to the downtown core. We paused on Water Street to read a plaque about how Saint Andrews – a National Historic District – was founded by Loyalists in 1783 and how it retains key elements of a British colonial settlement, including a grid layout, public spaces and "well-defined sites for defensive works."

We would later learn more about those sites at the town's Blockhouse, a small fort with a distinctive overhanging upper level. The building is one of three constructed to defend guns that protected the once-busy seaport.

But before our Blockhouse stint, we meandered past downtown shops and homes, many of them historic and featuring design motifs inspired by classical architecture. Most of the structures are wooden, the commercial ones embellished with cute signage, pretty colours and other décor that gives the vicinity a quaint, friendly vibe. Of course, the sociable people we met also had a lot to do with the welcoming ambiance.

With dinner-hour nearing, hubby and I debated where to grab a bite, opting to follow a friend's recommendation and try The Gables Restaurant on Water Street. We lucked out with a table on its outdoor deck, settling in just in time to watch the sun begin to dip, making the water sparkle and my photo-loving soul fill with glee. I'm sure the stellar view was a factor, but the platters of tender fish and tasty scallops we gobbled that evening were some of the best I've ever had.

As the sunset deepened, giving the sky and its cloudy bits a range of purplish hues, we left The Gables and wandered past a guitar-playing entertainer on the deck of the Red Herring Pub, another stop suggested to us. But we moseyed on, heading to the town wharf and eventually down a ramp to a floating dock. It was low tide and, from the dock, we looked up at the pier, marvelling at the height the tide would reach when waters rolled in, as evidenced by a dark-stained line far above our heads.

the impact of Mother Nature, captivichair of the Chamber of Commerce. ated by our surroundings - it all left : hubby and me feeling incredibly peaceful, content just to enjoy the moment, something increasingly challenging in our hurried, technology-driven lives. "One of those magical sunset evenings you wish would last forever," read the caption to a picture I posted on my Facebook page.

My enchantment with Saint Andrews persisted on our way back to the Algonquin, darkness spilling onto the quiet side streets that led up the hill to our castle-like lodging. The hotel's soft exterior lights created a warm beacon for our arrival.

The next morning, after a delicious breakfast sandwich of cured peameal bacon, chipotle onions, fried egg and smoked cheddar at the Algonquin's Braxton Restaurant, we drove to Ministers Island, a popular tourist attraction accessible only at low tide. Just after 10 a.m., we traversed a gravel road connecting Saint Andrews to the island and noted a sign that indicated we had to leave by 11:45 a.m. to ensure a safe departure.

Once on the 202-hectare island and after stopping at the ticket booth (\$10 admission per adult; children under eight admitted free), we parked our vehicle and hopped aboard bikes we'd toted, though most visitors travelled around the island's various buildings by foot. We began our outing at Covenhoven, a 50-room summer estate built in the 1890s and owned by Sir William Van Horne, president of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Site interpreters provided interesting info as we ventured through some of the property's 17 bedrooms and 11 bathrooms. From Covenhoven, we biked to other focal points, including Van Horne's stunning two-storey circular bathhouse, where the transportation magnate would spend hours partaking in his hobby – drawing and painting.

With time growing short before the tides shifted, we packed up our bikes and drove back to Saint Andrews, pausing for a wonderful lunch of chowder, fish cakes and scrumptious desserts at the Niger Reef Tea House before exploring the Blockhouse and, later, Kingsbrae Garden.

I could write an entire story on Kingsbrae, on the beauty of its many gardens, sculptures and fauna, all of which hubby and I explored with its sales director, Brad Henderson, who also serves Being close to the water, witnessing : as a Saint Andrews town councillor and : to publication.

Henderson beamed as he described the history of the 11-hectare Kingsbrae property, created by John and Lucinda Flemer to preserve and maintain the family's former estate.

Opened in 1998, Kingsbrae Garden features 50,000 perennials in themed gardens, as well as ponds, streams, an old-growth Acadian forest, and various animals and birds. It has been recognized with numerous awards and is ranked a top area attraction. No wonder. When hubby and I toured solo after Brad left to assist with a wedding set-up, we drifted from garden to garden quietly, breathing in the stillness, absorbing the vivid colours, taking in another magical Saint Andrews moment.

While the gardens were superb, I could pen an entirely separate piece on the fabulous delicacies we sampled by chef Alex Haun, a soft-spoken guy originally from the area who oversees dining at Kingsbrae, creating award-winning cuisine at the property's Garden Café and Savour in the Garden. He concentrates on using fresh, local ingredients, even foraging for items like mushrooms himself.

I was blown away by the exquisite breakfast Haun prepared, from fluffy French toast with a tangy peach chutney to a heavenly egg and smoked trout dish that this non-foodie is completely oversimplifying. Suffice to say, it was almost too attractive to eat. Almost.

During our weekend stay in Saint Andrews, hubby and I also enjoyed fine dining at the Algonquin and the Rossmount Inn, as well as takeout fare at the renowned Clam Digger. There was a fun stop at the Fundy Discovery Aquarium, where we learned a great deal about marine life and local fisheries as well as more details about the region's history and first settlers.

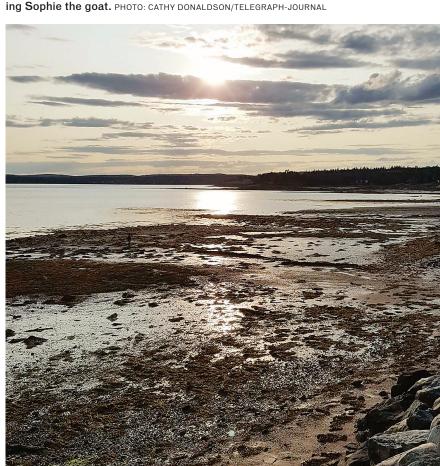
We could have wrapped up the trip by going whale watching, as many do at some point in their visit. Instead, we ended it in a way that seemed more fitting: sitting by the river's edge, staring out at the sun-dappled waters a bit longer, soaking up every last ounce of serenity before we hit the road.

Cathy Donaldson

is a writer based in Moncton. She travelled to Saint Andrews as a guest of the Algonquin Hotel and with assistance from Tourism New Brunswick, none of whom reviewed or approved this article prior



Kingsbrae Garden features 50 themed gardens, as well as various animals, includ-



The sun begins to set over Saint Andrews, causing tidal waters to sparkle and golden hues to appear in the sky. PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL



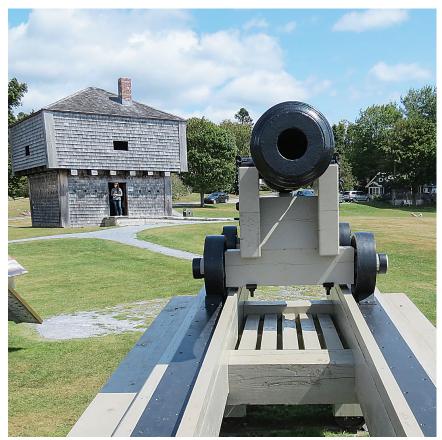
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Opened in 1889 and once owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway, the beautiful Algonquin Resort relaunched in 2014 after a \$50-million renovation. It is now part of the Marriott's luxury-brand 'Autograph Collection.' PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

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This Blockhouse, a small fort with a distinctive overhanging upper level, is one of three constructed in Saint Andrews to defend guns that protected the once-busy seaport. PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL



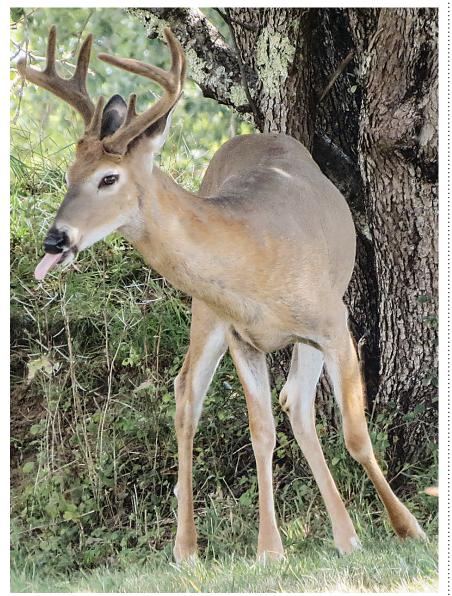
Fredericton visitors Heather Henry, left, and Michele MacGregor, right, sample the wares at Toose's Bijoux on Water Street.

PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL



Constructed in 1833, the Saint Andrews Lighthouse - also known as Pendlebury Lighthouse - is the oldest remaining mainland lighthouse in New Brunswick.

PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL



Deer abound in Saint Andrews are a nuisance for residents but a welcome sight for some tourists, especially when the four-legged animals appear to stick their tongue out at the camera. PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL



A stroll along the dock below the town wharf provides a clear picture of the area's high tides.



The author, right, and her husband, Keith, feast on tender fish and tasty scallops at The Gables Restaurant. PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL



Large windows open to beautiful views at the Garden Café in Kingsbrae Garden. PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL



Tourists and locals congregate outside Honeybeans Coffee, Tea and Treats on Water Street.

PHOTO: CATHY DONALDSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL