

LEISURE & TRAVEL

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Paradise Found on P.E.I.

Moncton moms enjoy relaxing, food-filled weekend at picturesque Dalvey-by-the-Sea

BY CATHY DONALDSON
TIMES & TRANSCRIPT STAFF

Moms and other hard-working souls take note: if you're searching for a place to recharge your batteries, look no further than Prince Edward Island's Dalvey-by-the-Sea and Stanhope Beach Resorts.

Dalvey, a National Historic Site, is located at the eastern end of P.E.I.'s National Park on breathtaking Dalvey Beach, about 30 minutes from Charlottetown. It's an elegant Queen Anne revival-style home built in 1895 by Scottish-American oil tycoon Alexander MacDonald.

A summer resort hotel since the 1930s, Dalvey currently operates from June to October, offering accommodations and dining. It features 25 guest rooms in its main building, each unique space largely furnished in period antiques and offering a four-piece private bath.

But don't expect a television, radio, phone or alarm clock in your room, unless you reserve one of the resort's eight cottages.

Dalvey-by-the-Sea is all about relaxation.

"We want our guests to have an opportunity to unplug from their busy lives and step back in time," says Audrey Firth, general manager of Dalvey and its sister property, the Stanhope Beach Resort and Conference Centre. "It's a fantastic place to enjoy the peaceful ocean air, take a lakeside stroll around the property and just unwind."

To find out first-hand, I recently joined a group of Moncton moms on a two-night stay at Dalvey. After driving from the hub city (with a foray to the amazing Dunes Studio Gallery and Café in Brackley Beach), we entered the P.E.I. National Park and followed the scenic Gulf Shore Parkway, which lies adjacent to the Gulf of St. Lawrence and its sandy, dune-lined shores.

We oohed as Dalvey-by-the-Sea came into view on our right. The sprawling, well-manicured property, with its magnificent main building, could double as the set of a Victorian-era movie.

In fact, to fans of the '90s TV series *Road to Avonlea*, Dalvey will be better known as the White Sands Hotel. When the series began, the White Sands was where guests to the fictitious Avonlea Village stayed during visits to Avonlea characters. Over the years, the White Sands Hotel (aka Dalvey) was featured more each season.

Once parked, the gaggle of moms and I headed to Dalvey's main building to check in and were surprised to be greeted on the porch by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, William and Kate. (Well, at least a huge cardboard cutout of their likenesses.)

Their Royal Highnesses visited P.E.I. last year during their first trip to Canada as a married couple. They spent several hours at Dalvey-by-the-Sea, taking part in a variety of events, including a dragon boat race across Dalvey Lake and a helicopter training exercise (Will was at the helm for the latter while Kate looked on from the grounds.) It's too bad the Royals couldn't stay the night to explore more of Dalvey, including its main inn.

As the Moncton moms ventured inside, we were transported to another era, surrounded by stunning wood-paneled walls, gorgeous maple floors, interesting antiques and a multitude of period



If you go...

- Prices at Dalvey-by-the-Sea range from \$189 per night for a standard double room to \$399 per night for a three-bedroom cottage with two baths. (For more details, visit www.dalveybythesea.com.)

- Prices at the Stanhope Beach Resort and Conference Centre vary from \$129 per night for a standard double room in the main inn to \$400 per night for a three-bedroom cottage. (For more info, visit www.stanhope-beachresort.com.)

- **Getting there:** There are several ways to reach

the Dalvey and Stanhope resorts from southeastern New Brunswick. Here's one:

- **To reach Dalvey-By-The-Sea from Moncton:** take the Trans-Canada Highway East and merge onto Highway 15 East toward Shediac/Miramichi. At the roundabout in Port Elgin, take the third exit onto the Trans-Canada Highway East. Once across the Confederation Bridge, follow the Trans-Canada. In Charlottetown, turn left onto Malpeque Road, then right onto the Charlottetown Perimeter Highway. Turn left onto Brackley Point Road, which eventually be-

comes Gulf Shore Parkway. Follow the signs for Dalvey-By-The-Sea, turning right onto Dalvey Crescent.

- **To reach the Stanhope Beach Resort and Conference Centre from Moncton:** follow the above directions to the Charlottetown Perimeter Highway. At the third set of lights, turn left onto St. Peters Road. Turn left onto Highway 25 at Jewell's Country Market. Follow Highway 25 for about 15 minutes and turn left onto Bayshore Road. Stanhope Beach Resort is located two kilometres after the Stanhope Golf and Country Club.

CATHY DONALDSON/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

The main building at P.E.I.'s Dalvey-By-The-Sea, constructed in 1895, was known as the White Sands Hotel on the TV series *Road to Avonlea*.



CATHY DONALDSON/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

Two Moncton moms head back to the shores of Dalvey-By-The-Sea after a sunset kayak on Dalvey Lake.

paintings and photographs. As we sauntered through the building's large salon areas, the cozy furniture combined with the welcoming scent of the working fireplaces were antidotes to hurried lives. (Nap anyone?)

We somehow found the steam to reach our home base for the two nights, one of the resort's eight recently-constructed cottages. Four are located immediately adjacent to the inn; the others along the shore of Dalvey Lake.

The inviting, three-bedroom units (with exceptionally comfy beds) feature floor-to-ceiling hardwood, a loft, one or two bathrooms, a wood-burning

fireplace, fridge, coffee maker, and, yes, a television (though untouched during our stay.)

The cottages were built as part of an expansion ongoing since 1995 at the property, named for its owner's boyhood home in Scotland.

After he died in 1910, Alexander MacDonald left most of his oil fortune – including Dalvey – to his granddaughters, Helena and Laura, who eventually married European royalty. Records indicate that their ample inheritance was badly managed and, before long, dwindled to almost nothing.

William Hughes, who served

► See BIKE, G3



CATHY DONALDSON/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

A runner treks along the shores of spectacular Dalvey Beach, located across the street from Dalvey-By-The-Sea.



CATHY DONALDSON/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

A father and son play in the waves at Dalvey Beach.

Bike rentals offer visitors a healthy way to explore gulf shore

Continued From G1

as Dalvay's caretaker after MacDonald's death, later purchased the property for what was owed in back taxes - \$486.57. It was resold over the years to various individuals, including a Prohibition rumrunner, Captain Edward Dicks, who was looking for a 'legitimate' business to cover his illicit activities off P.E.I.'s north shore. That venture failed and Dalvay was given to one of Dicks' creditors, former P.E.I. Lieutenant-Governor George DeBlois.

In 1938, DeBlois — apparently aware of plans to build a National Park in the area — sold the property to the federal government. Dalvay has since operated as a leased private concession from Parks Canada. It's now run by DP Murphy Hotels & Resorts.

After my mom pals and I freshened up from our drive, we checked out Dalvay's dining room, which is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner all season.

Afternoon 'high tea' had ended not long before we arrived. High tea is available daily from 2 to 4 p.m. in July and August, with a selection of tea sandwiches, scones, pastries and real lemon curd.

In the beautiful curved dining room, added about 12 years ago, we enjoyed spectacular views of Dalvay Lake. The moms and I took in the surroundings as we munched on fresh beet and goat cheese salad as well as rich seafood chowder brimming with scallops, lobster, halibut and salmon.

We also had the chance during our trip to lunch at The Red Dory, the dining room of Dalvay's sister property, the Stanhope Beach Resort and Conference Centre, located five minutes away and open from May to October.

Dating back to 1860, the Stanhope — overlooking Covehead Bay — offers a variety of accommodation styles, including a main inn, 'cliffside hideaway' building, Higgens, Davis and MacMillan houses, Harbour House executive cottages and other private cottages.

The highlight of our lunch at The Red Dory was unquestionably the first items we received — paper lunch bags containing fresh-from-the-oven tea biscuits which we smothered in molasses. We could have left happy after devouring



CATHY DONALDSON/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

Visitors to Dalvay can cycle along a paved path that runs parallel to the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

those, but stayed to enjoy our actual lunch, which ranged from lobster daws (tender local lobster with a dill and chive aioli on a toasted bun topped with lettuce and tomato) to Belle River crab rolls (local crab, micro cress, roast beets and orange in a rice paper wrap with mango vinaigrette).

By far, the favourite treat on our all-too-brief stay was had during a light dinner in the lounge area at Dalvay. Shawn Zwarun, executive chef at the Dalvay and Stanhope resorts, surprised our table with two fabulous desserts — an ultra-rich, walnut-rimmed brownie and Dalvay's signature sticky date pudding, served warm with toffee sauce and ice cream.

While the brownie was delicious, the date pudding was heavenly. We practically inhaled the cake and every drop of its ridiculously-yummy sugar, butter and cream drizzle.

Chef Zwarun's penchant for keeping guests happy appears to be well-known. He was asked to make a picnic lunch for the Duchess of Cambridge during last year's royal visit. Kate was able to choose from a variety of goodies, including many home-grown items.

"Our goal is to provide guests with the freshest offerings from Island farms and waters," says Zwarun. "Each year that I have been chef at the resorts we have

increased our herb gardens and continue to broaden the on-site gardens. The dream and the goal is to provide most of our herbs and vegetables (from our gardens.)"

Suffice to say that with all of the good eats during our junket, the Moncton moms needed some exercise. And while the Dalvay and Stanhope resorts are settings of tranquility, there are lots of ways to stay active.

With the help of the staff at Dalvay's bike rental shop, our group headed out for a morning ride along the paved trail that runs parallel to Gulf Shore Parkway. We later made use of the resort's kayaks and canoes but ran out of time to play tennis, croquet, lawn bowling, work on our golf swings in the practice area or hike the numerous trails in the area.

We did take some peaceful walks along the almost-deserted beach across the street, even venturing out to play in the waves.

Next time, the golfers in our group are keen to try a round at the Stanhope Golf and Country Club, two kilometres from the Stanhope Beach Resort, or make use of its heated pool, yoga offerings or the spa services available at either resort.

No worries. The moms agreed there will definitely be a next time.

■ Cathy Donaldson is a writer and editor living in Moncton.



CATHY DONALDSON/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

Dalvay's sister property, the Stanhope Beach Resort and Conference Centre, is another excellent choice for accommodation and dining.

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