

# Stylish Vieux Hull is a far cry from old Hull

Goodbye warehouses, factories and smokestacks. Downtown Gatineau has morphed into a cool quarter of boutiques and bistros with a stylish spin and major appeal for food fans, beverage buffs and families.

In good weather, terraces are packed with fun-seekers and strollers are out browsing along Promenade du Portage, Eddy St. and Laval St. Locals still refer to Vieux Hull, an old name that predates the municipal merger, but there is a fresh new feeling here.

Nathalie Borne, the owner of Miss Chocolat, is a ringier for Juliette Binoche in the French film Chocolat. Pretty, charming and sporting a colourful pastry chef's head wrap, Borne creates truffles spiked with port or her signature maki, a sushi-inspired chocolate treat with coriander and ginger, all delicately bundled in a sheet of Nori (dried seaweed).

Borne's classes for children are history made fun, starting with the ancient Mayans and winding up with taste treats.

For grown-ups, Borne's evening workshops include It's Time for Truffles on May 26 and The Infusions on June 1.

Gatineau's shops are filled with artisanal goods. Boutique Le Local sells handmade creations by about 80 Canadian designers, especially jewellery, gifts and clothes.

You won't find department store wares here. Everything at Le Local is one of a kind and a lot of it is eco-conscious, handmade of recycled or natural fabrics. Kolontai, a feminine collection of lacy, ruffled dresses and tops, is designed by Montrealer Gabrielle Tousignant. For children, Elektrik Kidz,



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COUNTRY ROADS**

## COUNTRY ROADS

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also from Montreal, produces T-shirts and baby paraphernalia using silkscreened cotton.

It's time for a break. Piz'za-za, a restaurant and wine bar, has a family-friendly menu of salads, pasta and pizzas with fine ingredients like pesto, merguez, mango and prosciutto – although not all at the same time. Next door, the lively bar Aux 4 Jedis is a single stop for drinks, art shows and a wildly popular outdoor cinema that shows top flicks.

Gatineau has had an intimate relationship with beer dating back to the early 1800s.

Then known as Hull, the city's off-the-record name was Beertown because of the many fine producers like Hull Brewery, Moor's and Robson's.

A keeper of tradition, Les Brasseurs du Temps takes the art of beer to lofty, reverential heights.

Located in an old stone industrial building, the appealing Les Brasseurs incorporates a micro-brewery, a busy



Auberge Un Pied à Terre is a B&B whose rooms have kitchenettes, so guests can eat in.



Micro-brewery Les Brasseurs du Temps has good food and a fine mini-museum dedicated to beer.

restaurant, a boutique and a first-rate mini-museum exploring the history of beer. The menu features upmarket choices like bison, filet mignon, wapiti stew and fresh fish, most of it delicately and

deliciously flavoured with beer.

On the casual side, faves include smoked meatoutine and burgers. Folk-rock artist Shawn Phillips is next on Les Brasseurs's schedule

## IF YOU GO

Gatineau is a two-hour drive from Montreal. Take Highway 40 west and Route 417 west. Once in Ottawa, take Exit 118 for Mann Ave., then follow Lees Ave. to King Edward Ave. Heading north on King Edward Ave. will lead you to the Autoroute de la Gatineau.

Auberge Un Pied à Terre: 819-772-4364, [www.unpiedaterre.com](http://www.unpiedaterre.com), 245 Papineau St., Gatineau. Rooms with kitchenettes cost \$90-120 per night, including continental breakfast and bicycle storage.

Miss Chocolat: 819-775-3499, [www.misschocolat.com](http://www.misschocolat.com), 173 Promenade du Portage, Gatineau. Closed Sunday. Workshops at l'École Culinaire de Gatineau, 819-329-1228, \$79.

Les Brasseurs du Temps: 819-205-4999, [www.brasseursdutemps.com](http://www.brasseursdutemps.com), 170 Montcalm St., Gatineau. Open daily at 11:30 a.m. A children's menu is available in the family section.

Piz'za-za: 819-771-0565, [www.pizzaza.ca](http://www.pizzaza.ca); 36 Laval St., Gatineau; Open Mon.-Fri. from 11:30 a.m. & Sat.-Sun: from 5 p.m.

Festibièrre de Gatineau, 819-205-1782, [www.festibièrredegatineau.ca](http://www.festibièrredegatineau.ca); Parc du Lac Leamy, Gatineau, May 27-29.

More info: 800-265-7822, [www.tourismeoutaouais.com](http://www.tourismeoutaouais.com).

the Hilton Lac-Leamy. Expect an intense immersion into the world of 100 types of ale, lager and stout, plus spirited debates about bottle or draft, dark or light and artisanal or industrially produced.

Go figure, the multi-generational Festibièrre is meant to attract all ages. It will include kids' stuff like inflatable toys, face-painting and snack pairings with root beer, as well as concerts by Junkyard Dogs and Les Moindres, bands that are success stories of the Gatineau show scene and beyond.

"Festibièrre actually is a family weekend," said Mario d'Eer, the fest's president. "Our philosophy is 'drink less, drink the best' and we want to show kids that a fun time is synonymous with a responsible approach to beer."

"Beer has been part of civilization since the beginning and we don't want to demonize it."

After all of that exploring, you'll want to stay overnight. Auberge Un Pied à Terre is a centrally located B&B across the street from Gatineau's best-known tourist site, the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

This four-room inn has a place in Quebec history. The aged white stucco cottage once was the home of Guy Sanche, better known to generations of children as Bobino, the star of a French-language television show that ran from the 1950s to the 1980s.

Pied à Terre's owner, Isabelle Benoit, has set up an homage to Bobino with a photograph and display of his trademark hat, cane and gloves. The inn's four rooms have kitchenettes, so many guests bring in lunch or dinner.

[rochelle@rochelleash.com](mailto:rochelle@rochelleash.com)

of live music. He's set for May 24.

Still thirsty? Gatineau will be hopping during the first Le Festibièrre de Gatineau, to be held May 27 to 29 on the banks of Lac Leamy, next to

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