

Albany is the closest spot for good US shopping

Travel Spotlight

MIKE COHEN



During the recent Christmas holiday period my family and I had a decision to make. We wanted to get away for just a few days, somewhere close enough by car where we could take advantage of the Canadian dollar still being at par with the American greenback. Oh yes, there had to be a good Macy's Department store.

The New York capital of Albany, with no less than two Macy's locations and less than four hours away, was the runaway choice. Albany has two great shopping centers, the very large Crossgates Mall (250 stores and kiosks) and the smaller, but equally impressive Colonie Center.

When in Albany we enjoy staying at the Cresthill Suites (www.cresthillsuites.com), an extended stay hotel located at 1415 Washington Avenue. It turned out to be most convenient for us. There were large Hannaford's and Price Chopper grocery stores nearby, as well as plenty of restaurants. Cresthill is in fact part of a small chain, with other locales in Syracuse, NY and Wichita, Kansas.

I would strongly recommend this place for families. Our spacious two bedroom suite had all of the comforts of home, including a fully equipped kitchen with a fridge and appliances and free wireless internet. We had a comfortable living room, with a couch, chair, table and chairs, three flat screen TVs and plenty of cupboard space. Whether you're staying for a night or a month in any one of these suites, the hotel offers an array of services

to accommodate your travel needs. In the morning, you can enjoy a complimentary breakfast, and in the evening, a light fare reception and social hour is available every Monday through Thursday. There is daily housekeeping, same-day valet service, a grocery shopping service, free guest laundry, a fully equipped fitness center and a seasonal courtyard with a pool, patio and grills.

I found the staff at the front desk exceptionally helpful. While the room was very comfy, I also enjoyed spending time in the large lobby area and sinking into the big sofa in front of a TV. A self service coffee, tea and hot chocolate is available 24 hours a day. For more information call 1.888.723.1655 or email info@cresthillsuites.com. You can also register online.

We had a marvelous meal at Simpson's Grille, where five chefs have shared 83 years of experience to create menus for breakfast, lunch and dinner to tantalize even the most discriminating taste buds. This is the type of place where sole Françoise and grilled Atlantic salmon meet New York sirloin and filet mignon. The restaurant is located at The Desmond Hotel & Conference Center (www.desmondhotelsalbany.com), a magnificent facility at 660 Albany Shaker Road. The Desmond is also home to the AAA four diamond-rated Scrimshaw Restaurant and The Tavern, an English style pub. There is free parking.

I started off with a warm bowl of New England clam chowder. For the main course, we selected three different items: the seafood penne alfredo, a combination of Alaskan crabmeat, jumbo gulf shrimp and Georges Bank sea scallops tossed in a garlic cream sauce; pesto herb sea scallops, coated with basil pesto and fresh herbs, broiled and finished with tomato vinaigrette; and a char grilled ribeye, 14 ounces, well marbled and full of flavor. All main courses come with a signature house



A look at a spacious two bedroom suite at the Cresthill Suites in Albany.

or Caesar salad, choice of potato or rice pilaf and the chef's fresh vegetable of the day.

The menu also includes chicken, different fish entrees, prime rib of beef, filet mignon and veal piccata.

The Albany area has some wonderful movie theatre complexes, each operated by the Regal Entertainment Group (www.regmovies.com). We have a particular fondness towards the Regal Colonie Center Stadium 13. This four year old movie complex encompasses around 64,000 square feet, with more than 2,800 seats in a total of 13 auditoriums. It is right next to two of my favorite restaurants, PF Chang's and the Cheesecake Factory and a huge Barnes & Noble, great to know when you are planning an outing. The seats at this theatre are very comfortable as they swivel. We actually stopped by the evening before our show to pick up tickets in advance. You can also purchase them online at fandango.com.

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TO REGISTER: YOU NEED **ONE** OF THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS (originals only)

- BIRTH CERTIFICATE (Long Form: compulsory for Canadian born)
- CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP CARD
- PERMANENT RESIDENT CARD
- IMM 5292 / IMM 1000 (Confirmation of permanent residence)
- CERTIFICAT DE SELECTION DU QUEBEC (R8 or RA) (plus a study permit)

AND YOU ALSO NEED PROOF OF QUEBEC RESIDENCY

VALID MEDICARE CARD or DRIVER'S LICENSE **OR**
OTHER (Please call the centre for details)

AS WELL AS

RECENT RELEVÉ DE NOTES (Marks from the Ministry)
ONE SMALL PHOTO (compulsory for all students)

N.B. STUDENTS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY ONE OF THEIR PARENTS.