

ADVENTURES IN TRAVEL By Mike Cohen



We start with files from our publisher Harriet Szabo and her recent travels to four spots I have visited a number of times: Portland, Maine; Boston and Hyannis (Cape Cod), Massachusetts; and Stowe, Vermont. As for my summer holiday, Vancouver and Whistler in B.C. were the destinations.



Karsh Suite - photo credit: Fairmont Hotels & Resorts

OTTAWA

Before we get started on New England destinations, Harriet, husband Leslie and their dog Daisy, spent one night in May at the Fairmont Chateau Laurier in Ottawa. Situated right on Parliament Hill, this is a stately facility right by the Rideau Canal, Ottawa River, Congress Centre, major arts and cultural venues, the open-air Byward Market and a large mall. There are 429 guest rooms here, including 33 suites. They also have 12 meeting rooms and four elegant ballrooms. Check out Wilfrid's, an award-winning restaurant offering a wide selection of culinary creations. The beautiful dining room offers wonderful views of the Parliament Buildings and the Rideau Locks. (www.fairmont.com/laurier)

PORTLAND, MAINE

Portland is a great place to base yourself when visiting the Maine beaches. Close enough to Old Orchard Beach, but much more sedate. It offers great shopping and dining experiences.

The Portland Harbor Hotel

There is a nice Montreal connection at the Portland Harbor Hotel. Manager Gerard Kiladjian is an ex-Montrealer and he promises guests great service, starting with valet parking. If you do not have your own car, a Lincoln Town vehicle is available for guests and you can rent bicycles as well. The staff here is great and happy hour is always busy. You can enjoy the beautiful surroundings of their courtyard for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Eve's at the Garden offers a delicious menu, with lots of choices.

Menus here change seasonally. For breakfast they are well known for their Seafood Eggs Benedict and for lunch they have a nice mix of salads, chowder and sandwiches as well as light entrees. The dinner menu highlights Maine's seafood, great cuts of meat and local greens when in season. Happy Hour is offered Monday through Friday from 4-7 p.m. with wines, specialty drinks and martinis for just \$5.

A longtime supporter of the Maine Jewish Film Festival, which takes place every March, they even offer attendees discounted room rates. (www.portlandharborhotel.com)

Embassy Suites Hotel

Harriet and her husband, Leslie, also stayed at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Portland, a favourite of mine based on two previous stays. Centrally located and right next to the Portland Jetport, it is just four miles from the Old Port. Moreover, the hotel is just a few miles from Maine's beaches and scenic walking, hiking, and biking destinations.

All accommodations feature two flat-screen televisions, a refrigerator, microwave oven and

coffee maker, complimentary wireless high-speed internet access, two telephones and a comfortable work area with desk. There are 119 suites in the hotel. You can start your day with a complimentary cooked-to-order breakfast. In the evening, the atrium lobby is the site for the complimentary Manager's Reception. You also have the option of savouring fresh local seafood and American cuisine at Café Stroudwater, their casual restaurant. This is a town favourite, serving a wide variety of food to satisfy the group. It features fresh local seafood, mouth-watering salads, burgers and steaks. Bring the whole family without having to leave the hotel! They also have a fitness centre, indoor pool and business centre. (www.portland.embassysuites.com)



Portland Harbor Hotel



Embassy Suites Hotel in Portland

Petite Jacqueline

This is a casual restaurant with wonderful French cuisine, wine and great espresso. It is a typical French bistro with very friendly staff, great lively atmosphere and music. Located in the 'Arts District' of Portland, Harriet and Leslie report friendly staff serving mouth-watering food, carafe wine and good espresso. Enjoy inexpensive comfort food in a hip, boisterous surrounding with lively music. "To know my grandmother is to know warmth, compassion, and vivaciousness," says owner Michelle Corry. "For the past eight years, we have been dreaming about creating a place with an atmosphere much like the meals with our family -- boisterous, merry, and

filled with courses of wonderful French cuisine." The menu features local fish, pan roasted salmon, steak, chicken and seafood.

(www.bistropj.com)



Petite Jacqueline in Portland

BOSTON

The Ritz-Carlton Boston Common five-star hotel features outstanding service and staff.

Conveniently located on Boston Common between the Theatre and Financial Districts, this spot is front and centre to all of the excitement and activity of downtown. The hotel is a sanctuary of modern urban luxury in the heart of one of the nation's most historic cities. The property features 193 well-appointed contemporary guest rooms, including 43 suites, many with dramatic skylines and Boston Common park views.

Harriet considers this to be one of the best places to stay in Boston. She made a point of mentioning that her dog, Daisy, felt very welcome. The location is great, right around the corner from a main park. If staying in the VIP section, there is access to the Club lounge where a great breakfast is served.

(www.ritzcarlton.com/en/properties/bostoncommon)



The lobby at the Ritz-Carlton in Boston Common

Hotel Commonwealth

Harriet and Leslie also stayed at the Hotel Commonwealth, which is situated across the street from the Chabad House. The hotel features elegant guest rooms offering a luxurious sense of space with

exceptional amenities that include DVD/CD and iPod players, a 32" plasma TV, plush robes, a DVD lending library and a Fresh product beauty bar. Complimentary wireless internet access is available throughout the hotel. They have a gallery of shops and a state-of-the-art fitness centre. Adam Sperling is the General Manager.

(www.hotelcommonwealth.com)



A suite at the Hotel Commonwealth

Eastern Standard

Harriet and Leslie dined at the Eastern Standard Restaurant at the Hotel Commonwealth. Eastern Standard's lively mix of locals and out-of-towners assures a vibrant scene nearly 24 hours a day. The high-ceilinged room features an impressive dining area, an intimate private dining room, and a lounge surrounding the longest marble bar in Boston. Nationally recognized for their award-winning cocktail program, their dining options are just as impressive and span the gamut of everything from a burger to the daily offal. Whether you stop in for breakfast, lunch, a mid-afternoon snack, dinner or late night eats, you will be warmly greeted by a staff whose main goal is to make your dining experience among the best you have ever had.

Harriet and Leslie describe it as "an electric happening place." Their waiter, Thomas Spaeth, was a true professional. He knew his menus and wines. It is well known how Bostonians really like their food. This place was hopping on a Monday night! Try their cocktails and check out their extensive wine list. The food was scrumptious and the desserts were delectable! "A real award winner," insists Harriet, tipping her hat to restaurant manager, Molly Hopper. (www.hotelcommonwealth.com)



Eastern Standard Restaurant at the Hotel Commonwealth

Atlantic Fish Co.

Atlantic Fish Co. is another great dining spot, indeed a landmark for Boston's best seafood. The menus are printed every day to reflect only the freshest seafood available such as tuna bolognese, barbecue glazed salmon, sea bass chowder and smoked salmon pate. Don't forget to leave room for dessert selections like a brulée cheesecake and their signature chocolate cake. The enchanting outdoor patio is the perfect spot for enjoying cocktails and lunch or dinner. General Manager Mike Bainton and Executive Chef Danny K. Levesque provide a most welcoming atmosphere. From start to finish, Harriet and Leslie say it was excellent. The waiters and other staff are very accommodating, especially to Montrealers and Canadians. (www.atlanticfishco.com)



Atlantic Fish Company in Boston

Teatro Restaurant

The Teatro Restaurant provides vibrant, casual elegance at the heart of the Theatre District. At Teatro, Chef Jamie Mammano offers up an inviting dining and bar scene in the heart of the city. Experience a craft cocktail, and stay to experience Chef Mammano's contemporary approach to classic Italian dishes. General manager Mario Contreras greeted Harriet and Leslie and assigned Danny Hernandez to serve as their waiter. They tell me he was very friendly and efficient. This spot offers a casual, elegant and romantic atmosphere. Harriet points to the Cilantro Marguerita and Pineapple Express. A busy and exciting restaurant, with a nice bar atmosphere, the appetizers and main dishes are a fusion of flavours and are scrumptious! The desserts and coffee are superb. Here is an interesting tidbit -- the building is 120 years old and used to be a synagogue. (www.teatroboston.com)



Teatro

HYANNIS

Considered by New Englanders to be the hub and heart of Cape Cod, Hyannis (www.hyannis.com) is known internationally as the "All-American City."

The Paddock Restaurant

The restaurant is owned and managed by Jeff Zartarian. This place has been family-owned for over 44 years, and boasts a very interesting wine list and wonderful cocktails. The Paddock's regular dinner menu selections include current innovations inspired by what's prevalent in the culinary world today, along with classic favourites customers have come to expect. (www.paddockcapecode.com)



Paddock Restaurant in Cape Cod

Alberto's Ristorante

Alberto's Ristorante has been around since 1984. Since then, the restaurant, with its extensive menu, has continued a tradition of all fresh ingredients and in-house preparation of every course from their soups to their desserts.

Alberto's serves lunch and dinner, and you can enjoy a variety of salads, Italian dishes, seafood, prime aged beef, lamb and chicken. Complement your meal with a wonderful glass of wine chosen from their great wine selection. (www.albertos.net)



Alberto's Ristorante in Hyannis

Pain D'Avignon

At Pain D'Avignon Café Restaurant, open from June to October, you can enjoy breakfast, lunch and dinner inside or on a beautiful outdoor patio with a garden setting. Mario Mariani is the manager of this wonderful café, where handmade breads are baked daily. Great soups, salads, sandwiches, grilled pizzas, etc. are served at lunchtime. By night, the bakery/café transforms into a Parisian bistro with music Wednesdays and Friday nights. Candlelit tables evoke a casual elegance and draw a sophisticated clientele for traditional French and Mediterranean cuisine. (www.paindavignon.com)

STOWE, VERMONT

Trapp Family Lodge

Only Stowe combines a classic 200-year-old village with Mt. Mansfield, Vermont's highest peak. Situated on 2,500 acres the Trapp Family Lodge is a mountain resort in the European tradition by the von Trapp family that inspired the motion picture *The Sound of Music*. Open year-round, it offers superb mountain views, old world comforts and impeccable service, along with activities for every season. What was originally the Stowe, Vermont home of the von Trapp family has evolved over the years into today's three lodging options -- spacious hotel rooms and suites, two-bedroom guest houses, and 2,500 square foot villas -- catering to the varying accommodation needs of singles, couples, and extended families. While you are there, experience a great Vermont breakfast. (www.gostowe.com) (www.trappfamily.com)



Trapp Family Lodge

Harrison's Restaurant

Kathy Neale and her son Andrew own and operate Harrison's Restaurant, which has a great signature cocktail – the Pomegranate martini. This place boasts a cozy, comfortable and great atmosphere. Harriet and Leslie loved the cream of mushroom soup and the pecan-encrusted tuna starter, saying they were first rate. All of the food, they insist, was delicious. With over 35 years of experience creating the freshest dishes for locals and visitors alike, Harrison's has a diverse menu including seafood, pastas, steaks and vegetarian options. (www.harrisonsstowe.com)



Harrison's Restaurant in Stowe

All of the hotels Harriet and Leslie stayed at are pet friendly and their dog, Daisy, was welcomed and greeted as a family member! She was treated very well and given goodies.

VANCOUVER AND WHISTLER

The third largest Jewish community in Canada continues to grow. Vancouver - is home to 25,740 Jews. (www.tourismvancouver.com). Vancouver is

also a very popular spot to vacation. The Rosedale on Robson, which offers 217 one- and two-bedroom suites for the price of a conventional hotel room, is one great spot. Jodi Sprackman serves as the director of community relations. She is the daughter of Jewish cookbook legend, Noreen Gilletz. (www.rosedaleonrobson.com)

Vancouver Aquarium

At the Vancouver Aquarium, you come face-to-fin with over 70,000 animals, including beluga whales, steller sea lions, dolphins, seals and more! The Jewish director of Arctic Connections is Eric Solomon. (www.vanaqua.org)



Vancouver Aquarium-the dolphin show

There are some superb restaurants in Vancouver. Joe Fortes Seafood & Chop House on downtown Thurlow Street is one. The place is owned by noted Jewish restaurateur, David Aisenstat. Tori Simons, a 19-year-old member of the Vancouver Jewish community, served as a hostess at the restaurant last summer before heading to Montreal to resume her studies in Anatomy and Cell Biology at McGill University. (www.joefortes.ca)

Meanwhile, from Vancouver, my family and I made our first visit to Whistler, B.C. There are many things to do in the Village, the heart of Whistler. The ski season here typically begins around the third weekend in November and lasts until late April. Blackcomb Mountain stays open for spring skiing and snowboarding until mid-May. Summer glacier skiing and riding on Blackcomb Mountain start the third week of June. In summer, Whistler Mountain Bike Park opens as a haven for riders of all levels, and the Village Gondola, Peak 2 Peak Gondola and Peak Chair are open for sightseeing. (www.tourismwhistler.com)

We always appreciate exploring Fairmont hotels. We had a great experience at The Fairmont Chateau Whistler Resort Hotel, which does indeed define mountain luxury. For dinner, the Wildflower and the Grill Room are particularly popular. (www.fairmont.com/whistler)

We heard some very good things about the Jewish-owned Brewhouse Restaurant and our party of five was not disappointed. This is one of the busiest spots in the Whistler Village all year round. (www.markjamesgroup.com/brewhouse)

Mike Cohen's email address is info@mikecohen.ca. Follow his travels at www.sandboxworld.com/travel and on Twitter @mikecohensl.