

TRAVEL TALES

HELPFUL HINTS FOR THE JEWISH TRAVELLER

By MIKE COHEN

ALBANY AND SARATOGA NEW YORK: We are developing a new routine when travelling to New York City, with stopovers in Saratoga Springs (www.saratoga.com) on the way there and Albany on the back end. For us, fabulous shopping at the Crossgates Mall and the Colonie Center always served as incentives to spend some time in the New York Capital City of Albany (http://www.albanyny.org/Visitors.aspx). Now we can add the closest Dave & Busters and Cheesecake Factory locations to Montreal to the list.

JEWISH ALBANY: There are an estimated 13,000 Jews in Albany. The hubs of Jewish life here are the Sidney Albert Albany

Jewish Community Center and the United Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York. Regionally there are five reform congregations, five Conservative and three Orthodox. There is a Hillel Foundation for Jewish life at the local university campus.

JEWISH SARATOGA: There are a number of synagogues in Saratoga. Congregation Shaara Tfilla at 84 Weibel Avenue doubles as the Jewish Community Center of Saratoga Springs. Congregation Shaara Tfilla is an inclusive, egalitarian and Conservative Synagogue that holds Monday and Thursday morning services at 7:30am and Saturday Shabbat services beginning at 9:30am. In addition to regular religious program, the Congregation offers a Hebrew School, Adult Education programs, 'Live 92nd Street Y' broadcast series, Men's Club and Sisterhood. There is also Temple Sinai and Saratoga Chabad.

ALBANY HIGHLIGHTS: Dave & Buster's (www.daveandbusters.com), recognized as America's leading venue that combines dining and entertainment, is one of the newer attractions in Albany. The 33,000 square foot restaurant and game room opened less than two years ago at the Crossgates Mall and it has served as a magnet for visitors ever since. My family has enjoyed visiting the Toronto locale, and

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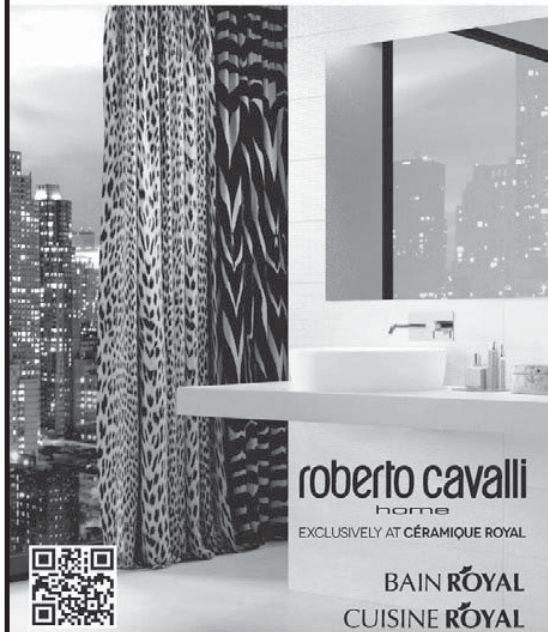


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when we heard the franchise had set up shop in Albany it did indeed serve as an incentive for us to stay over on our way back from New York City. Dave & Buster's chef-crafted menus combine fun and flavor as well. There is a special eat and play option. When choosing selected items you can add \$10 or \$20 power cards to your order, which represents an immediate saving when you hit the games area. More than two dozen large-screen, high-definition televisions provide the perfect backdrop for everyone's favorite college sporting events and professional games.

ACCOMMODATIONS: 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 are large Hannaford's and Price Chopper grocery stores nearby with kosher food items. Cresthill recently came under the auspices of a new management company, which is already sprucing the place up. There is new lighting in the main lobby and dining area, rooms have been freshly painted and new flooring installed in the kitchens and bathrooms. There is no smoking permitted in any rooms and pets are no longer permitted. Sofa beds in each room have been upgraded.

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. 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. The quality of food has been enhanced as well, with a variety of homemade meal choices such as grilled chicken, chicken parmesan and different Italian specialties. For more information call 1.888.723.1655 or email info@cresthillsuites.com. You can also register online.

WHERE TO STAY IN SARATOGA: When in Saratoga we like to stay at the Hampton Inn and Suites (www.saratogaspingsuites.hamptonninn.com). Upon checking in your room key grants you entrance to free covered parking on a multi-level garage. There are 123 guest rooms and suites featuring king-or queen-sized beds. Some suites have spacious balconies and separate living rooms with sofa beds. We booked the latter and were pleasantly surprised by how extraordinarily large the unit was. I particularly liked the ultra-comfortable chairs in front of the two TVs. You can connect to free high-speed internet access to surf the web, get some work done at the desk or set up your laptop on the convenient lap desk to work from the comfort of the clean and fresh Hampton bed. Amenities such as a mini-refrigerator, microwave and 32-inch HDTV with premium cable television make you feel at home. You can also take advantage of a delicious free hot breakfast. There is a gym, fitness centre, a nice pool and a Jacuzzi.

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