

Looking for a cure to the pandemic blues? Read on!

by Sandra Phinney

You've heard the proverbial phrase, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." Patrick and Pamela Wallace are experts at this. They own Trout Point Lodge, a luxury wilderness lodge and hotel situated in a remote area of East Kemptville in the interior of Southwest Nova Scotia. Normally, their clients would be from Europe and various parts of Canada and the U.S. Due to the pandemic, this is not possible. Most innkeepers in their shoes would pull up stakes for the season. Not so for Pamela and Patrick.

But first, how did a couple living in Montreal, working in the corporate sector, end up operating a lodge in the middle of a forest in a remote part of Nova Scotia? Patrick says, "We had friends who stayed here years ago and raved about the place so it was on our hit-list for some time before we actually booked a stay in 2017." Pamela adds, "As we made the final turn on the dirt road leading to our destination, the moment we saw the lodge we were captivated."

Serendipity stepped in – Trout Point Lodge was for sale. The Wallaces couldn't resist. They made an offer, and opened without skipping a beat the following season. Challenges are no strangers to this couple. The region lost its ferry service to the U.S. for the entire 2019 season. Then hurricane Dorian hit in September the same year, forcing them to shut down for eight days in the height of their fall season. Patrick says, "But we are blessed to have a wonderful team of talented and caring staff who make Trout Point Lodge what it is. Everyone rallied, and we came back stronger than ever."

If you wonder what the key is to their success (aside from having a stellar staff, stunning property, exquisitely appointed rooms, and impeccable but not stuffy service) – it's the word local. Pamela says, "The 'local' concept guides everything we do, and we have worked hard to nurture local partnerships with small suppliers – from meat to seafood to produce, wine, beer, and more. We love telling our guests the stories about these partnerships."

GIVING BACK

In the spring of 2018 Paulette Sweeney-Goodwin and her husband drove from their home in the village of Kemptville, to welcome the new owners of Trout Point Lodge to the community. "We were immediately struck by the warmth of their personalities and their enthusiasm for their new adventure in Nova Scotia."

In the course of their conversation, because Sweeney-Goodwin is the Managing Director of Yarmouth Hospital





Courtesy of Tobin Martin

Foundation, she mentioned that Trout Point Lodge had been one of the sponsors for the foundation's annual Spring Gala. "Without hesitation," Sweeney says, "the new owners wanted not only to continue with the sponsorship, but they also wanted to raise it to a whole new level."

The result? The Wallaces offered the entire lodge for a party of 16 people. Valued at \$7,000, the package included one

night's accommodation including breakfast, and an evening of fine dining. Stargazing, use of the hot tub, kayaking, and other activities were also on tap.

This year, although the Spring Gala was cancelled due to COVID-19, much to Sweeney-Goodwin's surprise, Patrick reached out and offered the same package. "This wonderful gesture is a shining example of the willingness to give back



to the community that Patrick and Pamela now call home.” A virtual promotion/auction is in the works and information will be posted later this summer on the Yarmouth Hospital Foundation website.

The Wallaces also partner with other entrepreneurs to offer niche programs. For example, Nikki Martin, a writer and yoga teacher from the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia heard about Trout Point Lodge about the same time she and her business partner, Liseanne MacPherson were looking for a place to hold a yoga retreat. “But we had very specific needs,” Nikki says.

“We love luxury service and experience, but with a relaxed and comfortable feel so people can indulge – but not feel suffocated.”

It didn’t take long for them to make arrangements. “It’s the perfect backdrop for people to show up, do yoga, meditate, and sometimes meet themselves in the quiet for the first time in a long while. It’s an immensely special place; one that we’ll continue to return to as long as we can.” The only caveat is that they now choose times when they don’t have to share the property with Black flies in May.



Walk on the wild side

No doubt this “COVID summer” has tossed a few lemons your way. Perhaps you planned to take the trip of a lifetime, or attend a large festival, family reunion, or concert. What better way to turn lemons into lemonade than by spoiling yourself with a unique experience at Trout Point Lodge?

Stargazing is huge here as the lodge is situated in the Acadian Skies & Mi’kmaq Lands Starlight Tourism Destination and Reserve, and borders on the Tobeatic Wilderness Area, also a certified Starlight Reserve. There’s a special observation deck and guests are privy to the lodge’s new Meade 10-inch

telescope, astronomical binoculars, portable Celestron Sky-Prodigy 130 mm, and a Coronado 60 mm solar telescope.

Another must-do activity is forest bathing. The Japanese coined the term “shinrin-yoku,” in 1982 (meaning a visit to the forest for relaxation.) But don’t let the name fool you. The “bathing” part doesn’t mean you swim or strip. It’s merely the practice of taking some time to wander slowly in the woods, tuning in to all your senses. You can do this on your own, or with a staff person who will gladly lead you on a wee forest bathing adventure. The health benefits are legendary.