



MELANIE REFFES PHOTO

Haiti may not be the first Caribbean country that comes to mind when booking a winter getaway, but tourism is one of the governments' top priorities.

## Haiti is 'open for business'

By Melanie Reffes  
The Suburban

The ride from the international airport in Port-au-Prince to the suburb of Pétionville is long and dusty. On either side of the road are snapshots of life in a country that is still recovering from an earthquake that struck one quiet January night nearly four years ago leaving more than a million people without homes.

Women and men walk purposefully down the streets balancing baskets on

their heads — baskets crammed with food items that will presumably end up in a stew pot. Roadside vendors sell T-shirts that, judging from the slogans, might have been donated by North Americans after the quake while manic minibuses, or tap-taps, are a colourful addition to the parade of traffic.

Haiti may not be the first Caribbean country that comes to mind when booking a winter getaway. The recent earthquake and the country's long history of political instability may be top of mind,

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**MY PRIORITIES FOR OUTREMONT**

- EDUCATION** Ensure the development of the Université de Montréal campus on the site of the Outremont rail yards
- HEALTH** Support the expansion of St. Mary's Hospital
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- Support initiatives for the enhancement of the third summit of the Mount Royal to improve citizens' access to the north flank of the mountain
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**Bassin Bleu** is a mountain river north of Jacmel that is surrounded by almond trees, coconut palms, lizards who roam lazily and goats that make their home in the wild.

but tourism is the governments' top priority.

"Haiti is a big country," said tourism minister Stephanie Villedrouin. "We have beautiful beaches, caves, national parks and waterfalls, but the added value is our culture, art, food, music, festivals and people."

Canada is Haiti's second-largest source of tourists, after the United States and before France, so it's no surprise Transat Tours leads the way with vacation packages from Montreal. "Tours are designed for those seeking vacations that are

centred on authenticity, culture and nature," said Transat Tours general manager Annick Guerard.

Four- and seven-day packages combine stays in the capital, Port-au-Prince, and Côte des Arcadins, which is popular for the picturesque Saut d'Eau waterfall, refreshing springs at Kay Piat and delectable Creole specialties.

Port-au-Prince offers a myriad of sights, from the Musée du Panthéon, with its impressive collection of artefacts, and the l'Observatoire de la reconstruction for panoramic views of the city

from high in the mountains.

Named after the first president of the republic, Alexandre Pétiou, Pétiouville is tourist-friendly with a smattering of galleries, restaurants, nightclubs and Haiti's only golf course. The Best Western Premier, the first branded hotel to open in 15 years, tempts with a whiskey bar, spa, French-inspired Le Michel restaurant and artwork made from car tires and cork from old wine bottles.

The only non-Haitian employee in the hotel, general manager Ronald Maidens, has worked in the hospitality industry for decades, including at the Stanhope in Manhattan. "I was, quite frankly, overwhelmed," he said, referring to the 3,000 people who applied for 100 jobs. "I did nothing else for one month but look at resumes."

Formerly a math teacher, Wednesday Rameau was offered one of those jobs and is now a server in Le Michel. "I wanted to do better in life," he said while pouring a cup of espresso brewed from the beans grown in the mountains. "When the hotel was advertising jobs, I knew I had to be lucky enough to get one."

Three hours south of Port-au-Prince in the coffee port of Jacmel where snow white beaches attract scuba divers and snorkelers. Also

worth seeing, Bassin Bleu is a mountain river north of Jacmel that is surrounded by almond trees, coconut palms, lazy lizards and goats that make their home in the wild.

"We invite people to see for themselves that Haiti is not only about poverty, disasters and earthquakes," added Villedrouin. "There is another side to the coin and we're open for business — with tourism leading the way to our future."

For Transat Tours departure date, visit [www.transatholidays.com](http://www.transatholidays.com). For more information on Haiti, go to [www.visithaiti.gouv.ht](http://www.visithaiti.gouv.ht)

For more photos of Haiti, see the upcoming Dec. 6 edition of the *Suburban Magazine* at [www.thesuburban.com](http://www.thesuburban.com). For Melanie's story on St. Maarten-St. Martin, see this week's City edition of *The Suburban Newspaper*.

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ADVERTISING FEATURE

# Le Cordon Resto Bar has something for every palate

By Mike Cohen  
The Suburban

For decades I have driven by Le Cordon Resto Bar, located at 150 Notre Dame Street at the corner of Dollard in Lachine, never venturing inside. Having heard very good things about the place, I recently encouraged my friends Neil and Glenn to join me for dinner. We were extremely pleased with the end result.

Centrally located on the Lachine-LaSalle border, Le Cordon has been in operation since 1967. Fifteen years ago the husband and wife team of Tony Zoitakis and Anna Lymperis purchased the place and as hands-on owners, the couple work with a wonderful and friendly staff.

The balanced menu has more than 50 items, with something for everyone: soups, salads, burgers, chicken and ribs, steak, seafood, pizza and pasta. There are also separate kids and lunch menus and a neo-classical reception room available for private functions and parties.

Neil and I started off with delicious bowls of cream of tomato soup (\$3) while Glenn opted for Le Cordon salad (\$13), containing shaved romaine lettuce, red onions, oregano, feta, olive oil, red vinegar and olives. It was in fact large enough for the three of us to share.

Our charming waitress, Amanda, recommended we try a few appetizers and we were happy to oblige. The fried ravioli



Tony Zoitakis and his wife Anna Lymperis make a great team at Le Cordon.

sole and trout and the langoustines, chicken teriyaki, brochettes and wings, the selection of fettucini, spaghetti, linguini, penne and tortellini.

Somehow, each of us left just enough room for some dessert. I had a small chocolate mousse (\$2), served in a shooter glass while Neil and Glenn shared Anna's very own homemade cherry cheesecake (\$6).

This is a great place to bring the entire family for lunch, supper and even breakfast on the weekends.

Le Cordon is located at 150 Notre Dame Ouest, at the corner of Dollard in Lachine. Open Mon. 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Tues. and Wed. 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Thurs. 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Fri. 5 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Sat. 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., and Sun. 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. For more information call 514-363-5555 and log on to <http://restobarlecordon.com>

(\$8) was crispy, with cheese inside and marinara sauce to dip each small piece in. Their bruschetta (\$8), chopped fresh tomatoes with garlic, basil, olive oil, and vinegar, served on toasted slices of French bread, was just right. Then there was the calamari (\$11), fresh, plump and crispy, yet not over fried and with a nice light seafood sauce.

Selecting our main courses was no easy task. I had my eye on the wood burning pizza oven from the moment we walked in and I chose a thin crust pizza with Matane shrimps, tomato sauce, fresh mozzarella and basil (\$14). A lot of young families have discovered Le Cordon and the kids in particular love the pizza, hamburgers,

cheese sticks and the home made crispy French fries.

Le Cordon is noted for its fall-off-the-bone ribs and Glenn was itching to try them. He chose the half rack (\$15), which came with crispy homemade French fries and coleslaw. Marinated in barbecue sauce, the ribs drew raves from Glenn, who described them as "meaty, tangy, soft and tender."

Neil opted for the butterfly shrimp (\$16), which came with vegetables and rice. The shrimp were cooked just right and got a big thumbs up.

Other menu items we will consider for future visits included the club sandwich, the filet mignon and steak, the filets of