

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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A full-bodied wine-country inn

The Jordan, Ont., Inn on the Twenty offers luxury rooms and sophisticated dining

BY LASZLO BUHASZ
TRAVEL WRITER, JORDAN, ONT.

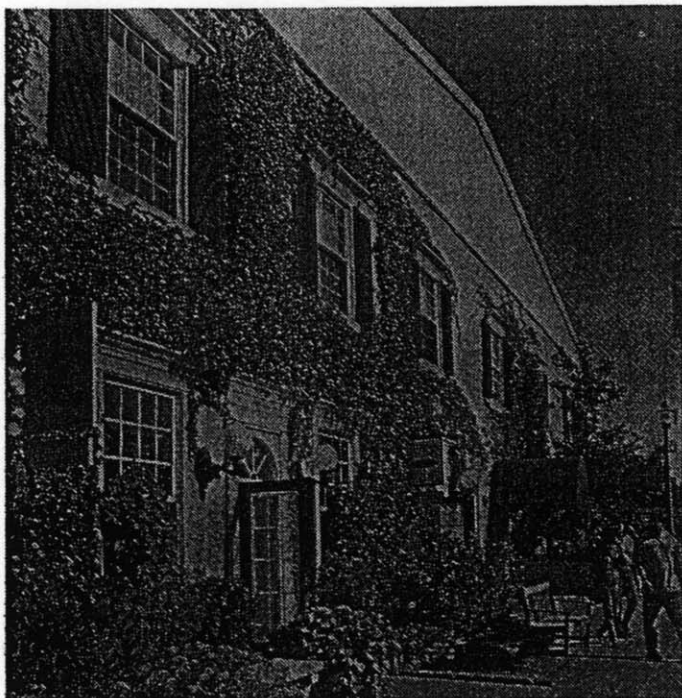
There is no better time to visit the Niagara Peninsula than autumn. The summer tourist crush is over and it's harvest time in the fertile crescent between the Niagara River and Hamilton.

Orchards are yielding the last of their fruits and the peninsula's back roads are dotted with stands heaped with ripe peaches, apples and pears. And, from mid-September through October, still warm days and cooler nights nudge grapes to the right balance of sugar and acidity. The region's 37 wineries are busy with the work of picking, pressing and bottling to produce wines that seem to improve with each season. Area boutiques, restaurants, tasting rooms and theatres bustle with activity.

For the past five years, one of the best places to use as a base for a leisurely exploration of the peninsula has been the Inn on the Twenty in Jordan, a tiny village of 160 in Niagara West, a leafy, rolling region often overlooked by those who crowd Niagara-on-the-Lake's hotels and the dozens of B & Bs strung along the Niagara Parkway.

The inn opened in 1996, shortly after the founding partners of Cave Spring Cellars — the Pennachetti family and Angelo Pavan — bought the old warehouse across from their winery on the village's Main Street. The inn was a logical expansion after the success of the On the Twenty Restaurant and Wine Bar the group opened in the winery building in 1993.

With Helen Young, Cave Spring president Leonard Pennachetti's wife, in charge, the warehouse was gutted and transformed into one of the most luxurious and intimate inns in the region. Twenty-six high-ceilinged single-storey and two-



SUZANNE BUHASZ

A former warehouse, the Inn offers 26 high-ceilinged, single-storey and two-level suites decorated with a tasteful combination of contemporary and antique furniture.

level suites are decorated with a tasteful combination of contemporary and antique furnishings and original art. Each has a gas fireplace, Jacuzzi tub and comfortable sitting areas. Each is accented with marble hearths, carved mahogany headboards and decorative columns collected from heritage buildings throughout the Niagara region and Western New York.

Some of the main inn's suites, like the Rittenhouse, where I spent two nights recently, have access to a private garden area reached through French doors. It is the perfect place to sip that first morning

coffee or a last glass of wine before tucking under the down comforter in the king-size bed.

The inn was recognized this month as one of the top 10 in Canada by North American Inns Bed & Breakfast magazine, in company with notable establishments such as Ontario's Millcroft Inn, Quebec's Auberge Hatley, B.C.'s Sooke Harbour House and Alberta's Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge.

On the Twenty Restaurant (the name denotes the nearby Twenty Mile Creek coursing through a wooded valley below the winery) is a worthy companion to the inn.

The main room is high-ceilinged with great wooden beams, pastel walls and accents of travertine marble and limestone. Floor-to-ceiling windows overlook the treetops of the Twenty Mile Creek Valley, ablaze with colour in the late fall.

Under chef Michael Olson, the restaurant has built up a deserved reputation as one of the best places to eat on the Niagara Peninsula. Now, under the direction of executive chef Roberto Fracchioni, who trained under Olson, its kitchen still offers sophisticated cooking using first-class ingredients collected from local producers.

And, of course, there is no better place to taste Cave Spring's excellent vintages with, say, roasted garlic and olive-coated rack of lamb with Jordan Valley asparagus in rosemary sauce. Cave Spring has earned a reputation during the past 15 vintages as one of Ontario's leading producers of premium wine. All its wines bear the Vintners Quality Alliance mark and Leonard Pennachetti was a founding board member of the VQA at its inception in 1988.

The winery, inn and restaurant that line Jordan's main street have attracted a half-dozen upscale boutiques and antique stores that have colonized additional space in the renovated buildings. Also worthy of an afternoon's exploration is Jordan itself, with its museum dedicated to early settlers, an old schoolhouse and preserved buildings that still echo its heyday 150 years ago.

Best of all, Jordan is no more than a 30-minute drive from attractions such as Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and its Shaw Festival, the Niagara Parks Butterfly Conservatory and a number of golf courses.

Inn on the Twenty: (905) 562-5336 or (800) 701-8074