

Passport Newsletter

December 2010

Canoe Bay, Wisconsin

The Midwest has only one Relais & Chateaux lodging, and it's in an unlikely place, hidden among bait shops and taverns in the North Woods of Wisconsin.

[Canoe Bay](#) is a small, independently owned property full of rustic charm and known among its coterie of fans for its superior culinary standards. There are just six rooms and 17 cottages, tucked among tall stands of pine, surrounding a private lake.

The rooms, located in the **Lodge** or the **Inn**, include three categories — Fireplace, with wooded views; Deluxe, with lake views; and the Heavenly Suite, a two-room accommodation that stands close to the lake. All rooms have king beds and oversized whirlpool tubs. Most of the cottages were designed in Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie Style, with strong horizontal lines, cantilevered roofs and natural wood and stone.

Inside, there are spacious sitting areas and king-size bedrooms with stone fireplaces, flat screen TVs and spa bathrooms fitted with oversize steam showers, whirlpool tubs and heated floors. There are no phones in the rooms and most cell phones work poorly, if at all, in this remote area. On the other hand, Wi-Fi is available. Complimentary continental breakfasts – with freshly baked rolls – are placed outside the door each morning; a full breakfast and lunch can be delivered at extra cost.

Dinner is served in the dining room, where Chef Anthony Schultz, who worked at several of Chicago's top restaurants, presents a set, three-course, prix fixe menu at \$75 per person. Wines, from an award-winning list, are extra. Our dinner started with an *amuse bouche* of salmon with cabbage and Béarnaise sauce. This was followed by sweet corn soup; a watermelon and heirloom tomato salad on an avocado purée; confit of duck on pappardelle with butternut squash, maitake mushrooms and sage; and a nectarine upside-down cake with cherries, vanilla ice cream and honey tuile. With this we drank a Malbec, Colome 2006, from organic vineyards in the Salta province of Argentina.

Each evening there is also a Wine Cellar Dinner, limited to one reservation at \$240 per couple, including aperitif, dinner wines and dessert wine. The resort does not serve hard liquor or mixed drinks. It isn't necessary for men to wear a jacket at dinner, but faded jeans, shorts, fleece, tennis shoes and flip-flops are not appropriate. The dining room is closed on Tuesdays throughout the year and also on Wednesdays from November through April.

Recreational activities at Canoe Bay include canoeing and kayaking; swimming in the clear, spring-fed lake; sunning on the small beach; and hiking or snowshoeing on trails winding through the property's 280 acres. There's a fitness center and in-room massages can be arranged. Also, golf, horseback riding, skiing and carriage or sleigh rides are available nearby. Smoking is not permitted indoors or out, and the resort does not accommodate children or pets.

Canoe Bay is located just east of Chetek, WI, about 90 miles from Minneapolis and about 300 miles from Chicago. Doubles from about \$350. Tel: 800-568-1995. www.canoebay.com.