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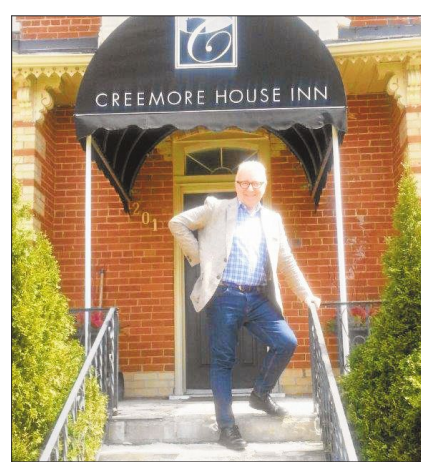
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Jennifer van Tol, right, brings her fresh pies and tarts to the Creemore Farmers Market every Saturday. Below, tours of the Creemore Springs Brewery include a sample of craft beer.



With three tiny cells and a hallway, the 1892 Creemore Jail, left, is believed to be North America's smallest jail. Below, Randall Munger, recently bought and renovated the elegant and inviting Creemore House Inn.



Laurie Copeland, above, doesn't stock video games or battery-operated gadgets at Cardboard Castles, just classic books and games and high-quality toys.

PHOTOS BY ANNE BOKMA, SPECIAL TO THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

'Big heart' town of Creemore truly lives up to its Irish name

Visit for the friendly folks, fun attractions and bucolic surroundings

ANNE BOKMA

CREEMORE MAY be best known for its specialty beer, but there are plenty of other attractions in addition to its celebrated amber brew to draw you to this small town in Simcoe County, 90 minutes north of Toronto.

For starters, the drive there is as picturesque as a Tuscan postcard, taking you along huge rolling hills, past farmland strewn with massive bales of hay and through quaint hamlets such as Avening and Mulmer. Nestled in the valley of the delightfully -named Mad and Noisy Rivers, Creemore has become a draw for tourists and city folks with country homes, as well as affluent retired professionals, but it maintains a laid-back pace where local farmers

and townsfolk mix with the weekend visitors.

Harrowsmith magazine named Creemore one of the "10 prettiest towns in Canada," which makes it a perfect spot for a Mother's Day getaway. When my two teenage daughters and I visited on a recent spring weekend, we took in everything the town has to offer — its main street is just a few blocks long but it packs in plenty of diverse dining options, unique specialty shops, arts and crafts courtesy of the many artisans in town, a bustling farmers' market and an awful lot of friendly folks.

One of them is our host, Randall Munger, proprietor of the elegant Creemore House Inn, conveniently located just steps from the town's shops

and restaurants. Munger lives in Toronto during the week but has been coming to Creemore on the weekends for decades and recently purchased and renovated the inn, which features four spacious suites and an outdoor heated pool. His B&B is located right across the street from the historic St. John's United Church, where we attend a Sunday morning service and are greeted like long-lost relatives.

One of the parishioners vigorously shakes our hands and tells us that she had spotted us in the town's bookstore the day before. "We really hope you'll come back again," she says, as if she really means it. Creemore comes from the Irish "Croí Mór," meaning "big heart." The town certainly lives up to its name.

Must-sees

Creemore Springs Brewery makes its famous craft beer in small batches in an open-flame kettle in the tradition of the old European brewmasters. The microbrewery offers free 30-minute tours every afternoon, along with a small complimentary glass of beer. The Creemore Farmers' market, held in a replica of the town's old train station, is open every Saturday from Victoria Day to Thanksgiving and has up to 50 vendors selling everything from local grass-fed beef to organic dog treats, specialty teas and fresh flowers. We treat ourselves to gooey butter tarts made by Jennifer van Tol of Happy Hen Pies and enjoy them while sitting in the adjoining parkette where there's a life-size bronze sculpture of children frolicking in dress-up clothes.

Natural beauty continues // G12



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TRAVEL

Car rental companies ramp up exotic fleets

Splurging tourists can get a Ferrari for \$900 a day

MICHELLE RINDELS

LAS VEGAS, NEV. There's a chance now for the middle class to feel like movie stars. Or for a movie star to feel like a movie star away from home.

In recent years, some of the biggest car rental companies have added the finest cars money can buy to their fleets. Alongside the practical Toyotas and Fords are Ferraris, Lamborghinis, Bentleys, Aston Martins and Teslas, to name a few.

They don't come cheaply, of course. But, in some ways, that's beside the point.

"We try to sell a lifestyle, not just an exotic vehicle," said Vince Sample, location manager for Beverly

Hills Rent A Car in Las Vegas. And it's one that wows: "People stop and stare. They ask, 'Can I take a picture?' They want to see if it's someone famous."

Sample's firm, which has worked with royals, famous singers and casino whales, will deliver a \$900-per-day candy apple red Ferrari California or a \$2,200-per-day Rolls-Royce Wraith directly to the customer. There's no licence plate frame to mark it as a rental. He will even take off the dealership's key chain so customers feel it's totally theirs.

Independent rental companies in flashy cities such as Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Miami Beach aren't the only ones offering the high-end

rides. The big firms are doing it, too, and in places less known for glamour.

Last summer, Hertz launched its Dream Cars line in 35 locations, including Pittsburgh and Milwaukee. Enterprise's Exotic Collection, which launched in Southern California, operates in 13 locations and is planning to open West Hollywood and Atlanta branches later this spring. Budget offers a range of BMWs and American sports cars in its Street Fleet, and Avis has similar selection in its Signature Series, although the finest vehicles are found in the Avis Prestige collection in Europe.

Sharon Faulkner, executive director of the American Car Rental



DAMIAN DOVARGANES, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Douglas Sawyer, 23, right, and Michael Clark, 22, in a Dodge Viper.

Association, said the growth in the upscale rental market differs from years past because it's no longer limited to beach and tourist towns.

Enterprise's move into the exotics market in 2006 came as customers

started asking for more rarefied vehicles — ones beyond the realm of the company's existing luxury collection of Lincolns and Cadillacs.

The Associated Press

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NATURAL BEAUTY

CONTINUED FROM // G10

Off the beaten track

Creemore boasts North America's smallest jail — just three tiny cells that once served as holding tanks for drunks and vagrants until they could be put on a train to Alliston and incarcerated there.

It's open in the summer for those curious about the ways of old-style confinement. Another draw is the nearby Magnetic Hill, one of just nine "gravity hills" in Canada. Travel down the gravel road, put your car in neutral and feel it pulled backward uphill, a trick of optical illusion created by the rising and descending terrain.

Shopping

My girls are teens now, but they spent almost an hour oohing and aahing over childhood playthings in the well-curated Cardboard Castles toy store (so named by owner Laurie Copeland when she realized how much fun her young daughter could

have with an empty cardboard box). You won't find any video games or battery-operated gadgets here, just classic books and games and high-quality toys.

We spend another hour next door in the Curiosity House bookstore — nominated by the Retail Council of Canada as one of the best booksellers in Canada — before moving on to the award-winning 100-Mile Store, which specializes in locally grown, mostly organic, food, including elk chops, artisanal cheeses and milk in old-fashioned glass bottles.

Seasons is another shop worth a stop — it has lots of new, vintage and antique furniture and accessories to dress up your home.

Dining

Affairs Bakery is a lively lunch spot with homemade paninis and a soup of the day. It's also a good place for afternoon tea and a treat, such as carrot cake or gluten-free pecan tarts.

The Old Mill House, which has been a village staple for 70 years, is popular for its pub fare, especially the generous servings of wings and fish and chips (my daughter and I split an order and still couldn't finish our plates). In the Provence-inspired surroundings of Chez Michel, we dined like

queens on escargot, fresh salmon with saffron sauce, confit of duck and baked brie with caramelized onions and Cumberland sauce, before rolling back to our B&B in an overstuffed stupor.

Outdoor exploring

The Bruce Trail and a host of other local trails are all within a few kilometres of Creemore — pick up guide maps at Curiosity House Books. Fish the wide, rushing Mad River and picnic at the pavilion in the Carruthers Conservation Area, a 45-acre estate bequeathed to the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority.

Why the locals love it

"Here, there are newcomers drawn toward the outdoor lifestyle and families who have lived on the same piece of land for almost two centuries," says Kristi Green, editor of the Creemore Echo and a recent Toronto transplant who moved to Creemore with her photographer husband and two kids in search of a quieter pace of life.

"Creemore is a place of natural beauty and the community spirit is really strong."

Anne Bokma is a travel writer based in Hamilton.

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<p>LES MISÉRABLES At the Dunfield Theatre Cambridge Tuesday July 8, 2014</p> <p>Les Misérables is the most celebrated musicals of our time. Enjoy a delicious lunch buffet at At The Crossroads Restaurant in Elmira.</p> <p>\$108.00 pp</p>	<p>JULY MYSTERY TOUR Thursday July 17, 2014</p> <p>Come and Join us for our July Mystery Tour. You don't know where you are going. Or Where you will be enjoying lunch. But we do know you will have plenty of fun... Trust Us!</p> <p>\$99.00 pp</p>	<p>CASINO RAMA & BOAT CRUISE Thursday August 21, 2014</p> <p>1 1/2 hour sightseeing cruise on the Island Princess in Orillia. 4 hours of gaming at Casino Rama. \$10.00 coin voucher from Casino Rama (subject to change)</p> <p>\$57.00 pp</p>	<p>Lunch Cruise & Theatre in Orillia "NUNSENSE" Wednesday August 13, 2014</p> <p>All aboard the Island Princess for a delectable hot buffet served on the enclosed main deck of the ship. Enjoy the leisurely cruise before disembarking and making your way to the theatre for the performance of "Nunsense".</p> <p>\$120.00 pp</p>	
<p>MAN OF LA MANCHA At the Avon Theatre Wednesday September 17, 2014</p> <p>Awaiting by the Inquisition, poet and playwright Miguel de Cervantes is assailed by his fellow prisoners, who try to seize the manuscript of his masterpiece, Don Quixote. Enjoy a delicious lunch at Demetre's Eatery</p> <p>\$149.00 pp</p>	<p>THE PHILADELPHIA STORY At the Festival Theatre Thursday September 25, 2014</p> <p>A classic romantic comedy, the play was a huge turnaround success for Katharine Hepburn in the late 1930's. Enjoy a delicious lunch at the Pillar & Post Restaurant in Niagara On the Lake.</p> <p>\$139.00 pp</p>	<p>A NEW MUSICAL WICKED At the Ed Mirvish Theatre (formerly the Canon Theatre) Wednesday October 29, 2014</p> <p>Winner of the major awards including a Grammy Award and three Tony Awards. Wicked is the untold story of the witches of Oz. Enjoy a delicious lunch at the Hot House Cafe.</p> <p>\$159.00 pp</p>	<p>JERSEY BOYS At the Ed Mirvish Theatre Tuesday, December 23, 2014</p> <p>This Tony Award winning Best Musical is Back. Lunch at the Hot House Cafe prior to the performance. HURRY!!</p> <p>\$149.00 pp</p>	
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Greek exhibit to debut in Montreal

MONTREAL A major exhibition on ancient Greece will premiere late this year at Montreal's Pointe-à-Callière museum, the first stop on a North American tour, the museum announced.

"The Greeks — Agamemnon to Alexander the Great" will bring together more than 500 artifacts from 22 Greek museums, spanning more than 5,000 years of history. The National Archaeological Museum and the Acropolis Museum, both in Athens, are among major institutions contributing objects.

Eleftherios Anghelopoulos, Greek ambassador to Canada, said it will be the largest exhibition of its kind ever held outside of Greece.

Pointe-à-Callière, the Montreal Museum of Archaeology and History, is part of a consortium led by the Canadian Museum of History that has been formed for the North American tour. Other consortium members include the Field Museum in Chicago and the National Geographic Museum in Washington, D.C.

The exhibition will explore milestones in Greek history, including the birth of democracy, philosophy, theatre, science and medicine, said a news release.

Among exceptional pieces to be displayed are an iconic portrait of Alexander the Great found near Pella, kouros statues of men and women dating from the sixth century BC, and gold jewellery from royal tombs.

The Greeks will run at Pointe-à-Callière from Dec. 12, 2014, to April 26, 2015, and at the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Que., from June 5 to Oct. 12, 2015.

The Canadian Press

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