

Step inside the oasis, where summer reigns all year long

by Carrie Breckenridge
Central Interior Business

Esther's Inn celebrates its 21st anniversary this year. A well-renowned business in Prince George, the Inn's Director of Sales and Marketing, Michelle Taylor, says this foundation is not something the staff takes for granted.

"We constantly strive to improve on what we do," says Taylor. "There is a great deal of flexibility in what we offer, which serves to meet people's needs."

Esther's Inn is the first stop off the highway for many guests, says Taylor. Located at 1151 Commercial Crescent, just off Highway 97, Esther's is not only family-friendly, but very business oriented, as well.

Henry Creuzot, long time Prince George resident, first opened Grama's Inn - located a stone's throw from Esther's - 30 years ago. It was following the establishment of this inn that he developed the idea for Esther's, which he named after his beautiful wife.

"After opening Grama's Inn, Henry had a vision to create a tropical oasis in Northern B.C.," says Taylor.

Esther's still maintains the look of that first vision. A regional hotel, which attracts a lot of repeat business, it is decorated with lush tropical plants, rattan chairs, patios and skylights. As well as families, Esther's Inn caters to traveling business people.

"It's very encompassing for people coming here for business meetings to be able to bring their families along," says Taylor.

"The location is near other amenities, and the hotel offers many services."

Guests can dine among the palm trees in the Orchid Room or the Dining Room. The tropical oasis is perfect to unwind in, complete with an indoor pool, five Jacuzzis in total, and a steam sauna. Also on location are the infamous waterslides, and Esther's Health and Fitness Club.

"The hotel is really deceiving from the outside," laughs Taylor. "People are especially surprised when they see our second courtyard in the back, with the huge fountain."

Emil Repak is the catering manager at Esther's. He says the restaurant is famous for its legendary Sunday brunch.

"The food is wonderful," says Repak. "Sunday brunch is smoked salmon, eggs Benedict, roast turkey, ham and seafood, and plenty of fruit, as well as mimosas (champagne and orange juice), and excellent coffee." As well, you can choose from tasty dishes such as herb crusted hip of beef, carved right in front of you, as well as roast suckling pig, and sinfully delicious desserts.

"We cater to the family market with our luncheon buffet, and Sunday's we offer a prime rib dinner," adds Repak.

Repak also works with clients coming into this community, seeking spaces for their meetings and workshops.

"We have various sizes of meeting rooms, which seat 10 to 200," he explains. "Many coffee groups meet here weekly, for example, the Canfor Coffee Club made up of about 40 to 50 retired Canfor employees, and the BC Power Pioneers, who are retired

The back courtyard at Esther's Inn is a wonderful place to relax, with its fountain, pool, Jacuzzis, and steam room. The suites surrounding this courtyard are quiet, roomy and comfortable.

photo submitted



BC Hydro employees. Also, the Yellowhead Rotary Club meets here, the Prince George Homebuilder's Association, and others."

The neat thing about the catering program, says Repak, is that you can book online at www.estersinn.com.

There are 126 rooms in the hotel, which range from the standard, with two Queen-sized beds, to family units and kitchen suites, executive suites and bridal suites. Taylor says the housekeeping staff does an excellent job of taking care of these rooms, most of which were renovated during the past five years.

Taylor says you can find many long-term employees at Esther's, and adds that this says a lot about the Creuzots themselves.

"The loyalty of both customers and staff is amazing," says Taylor. "Mr. and Mrs. Creuzot are in here every day, talking to people. It adds a real personalized touch to the hotel."

Esther's staff puts a lot of time and effort into helping guests create good memories, says Taylor. Aside from the workshops, seminars and general meetings which take place all year round at the inn, many people choose to have their weddings in the palm tree haven inside. Esther's is equipped to hold the ceremony, as well as the

reception all in one place.

"In the fall and spring, we also have a lot of sports teams who come to town - old and young - and stay here," adds Taylor.

"As we look to the future, one of our endeavours is to help people who come to the hotel, to recognize the other amenities of Prince George," she says. This involves working with Tourism Prince George, the city, and other groups in town to encourage people to stay longer than one night in our city.

"It all draws into the community, and we all benefit," states Taylor.

Locally, Esther's also works with students from the CNC Hospitality program.

"Students from CNC do practicums here," says Taylor, who teaches in the program and is on the advisory board for the program as well. "Last year, the second year CNC Hospitality students did a customer service audit for Esther's. They acted as mystery shoppers, and compiled their findings and presented us with a written/oral report. They did a great job, and we would recommend using them for similar projects."

Discover Esther's Inn, your tropical oasis in Northern B.C., home of friendly faces, swaying palm trees, and memories that will last a lifetime.



Emil Repak, left, is the catering manager at Esther's Inn, and Michelle Taylor, right, is the director of sales and marketing at this well-renowned Prince George hotel.

Carrie Breckenridge photo

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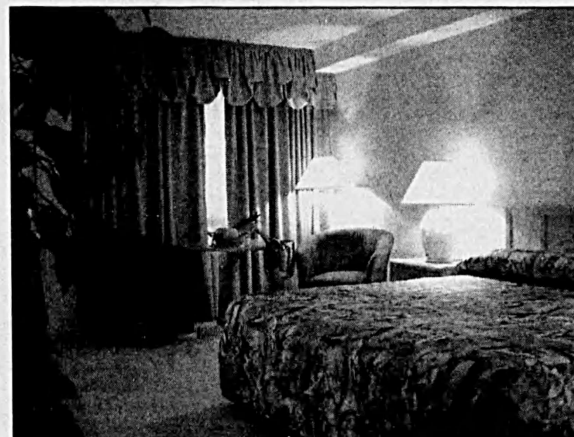
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The executive suites at Esther's Inn, like the rest of the 126 rooms the hotel has to offer, were all renovated during the past five years.

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