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Dom Lardy: French Village In Russian Countryside

The Dom Lardy family project was born out of the desire to create a special place in the Russian countryside, to which one would want to return over and over again. Elena Lardy told the story of how their whole family moved to “work remotely” to her parents in the village of Lomy in Yaroslavl region. While she and her French husband Benoit Lardy worked, their children filmed TikTok videos in the vicinity. In one of the videos the family saw a beautiful timber house in the neighborhood and fell in love with it. This is how the Dom Lardy family business project got started.

Essentially, we created a Russian village with a French accent, - said Elena Lardy, the owner of Dom Lardy. – We have built it with love for Russia, its culture, history and nature. In 2004 Benoit and I started TSAR Voyages tourism company, organizing trips across Russia for foreigners and other tourists. We saw our travelers amazed at discovering Russia in a different way, quite unlike to the image that exists abroad.

And then came the year of 2020, the pandemic, tourism came to a halt and we had faced a choice: wait it out or create something new. We decided to take on this challenge and to build a place that will serve as a bridge between cultures, but very deep in the Russian countryside. This is how we found a village not far from Rostov Veliky, bought an old but very beautiful house and started renovating it.

We were creating a space for haste-free recreation, for those who want to feel the real rural Russia, but with European comfort

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and attention to detail.

Please, tell us the secret: who designed Dom Lardy – Russian or French architects?

We entrusted the interior design to Catherine Bagnalasta, a French architect and designer, who previously lived and worked in Brazil. This project was a real challenge for her: how to make a French person, dreaming of a Russian village, to see the image he has created, but to keep the space authentic without turning it into an “art poster”?

Catherine worked with Russian craftsmen: wood carvers, restoration experts, fabric painters. She studied the Russian rural life traditions and introduced subtle French details: bed clothing made from flax, interior items discovered at flea markets, special lighting.

Upon completion of her work, Catherine presented to us her “View of the Amazon River from above” picture, which she had painted back in Brazil. The painting is now featured at the verandah of the main house. And this is symbolic: as rivers connect countries, so Dom Lardy has become a crossover point for cultures.

I myself have been collecting tableware and interior items, bought at French and Russian flea markets. In our village one could drink tea from a cup just like in your childhood or taste French cuisine on plates from my husband’s grandmother.

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How do you entertain tourists when it is raining or snowing outside?

I support “slowdown philosophy” — not seeking entertainment for the purpose of entertainment only, but mindful recreation, when you could just sit by a fireplace, drink Rostov mead and watch snow falling outside.

Nevertheless, our tourists could see and find out many interesting things deep inside Russia. Let us say, The Big Life museum is located in a real Russian izba that we have renovated. Here you can learn about the life of local residents and the history of the Russian countryside.

We are conducting guided tours and even perform master classes on … lighting up a Russian stove. By the way, this master class is in great demand with both Russian and foreign tourists. Our guests could try on peasant clothes from the mid- XX century, feel themselves a part of the village and try to use a shoulder yoke the way rural women did.

In summer we have tractor tours in the country and sightseeing walks to ancient churches, watch birds.

Dom Lardy is popular with businesses for corporate events — they can hold off-site conferences, since we have a conference hall and all required equipment. Our experience in tourism enables us to organize turnkey events, including farm product tasting events, historic excursions and even participation in a chase of mechanical “hare” by borzoi dogs.

When it stops raining and sun comes out, you could play a game of petanque. This year in summer I want to build a petanque pitch for this popular French outdoor game. Now guests are playing the game on a grass lawn, but soon we will have a proper pitch.

What can you say about the menu? They say that at your “countryside” restaurant guests could order French Raclette cheese, the house specialty?

We pay special attention to our cooking. We cook with the local products, but once again, with French notes. Though, we do not call it a “restaurant” — we treat our guests as if they were at home. We use Russian products, for example, we cook snails a la Bourguignonne with the best Russian snails, from a farm in Pskov region. These snails are grown by our friend Alexei, with whom we studied together at Sorbonne.

Our chefs cook a chocolate mousse by a recipe from my French mother-in-law, which I gladly share, apple clafouti and

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crumble.

Our French Raclette is also a farm product! It is made at Filimonovo Razdolie farm nearby by a recipe of Patrice Normann, a French cheesemaker, who regularly visits the farm and monitors product quality. By the way, the cheese is made from milk of happy cows exclusively. And why the cows are happy and how they are selected, we explain at our cheese tasting, which we could set up for our guests or during a tour of Filimonovo Razdolie.

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How many guests can your hospitality complex accommodate?

We are intentionally keeping this a low-key project. At the same time, it is very important for us to maintain balance and good relations with our neighbors, local residents and not to disturb their quiet life.

In summer we could accommodate up to 28 guests, because during the warm season we open tents. And the maximum number of guests in winter is about 18 – 20 people. This format allows everyone to feel as a unique guest and we could devote our attention to every guest. We focus on individual approach and balance with the rural life.

What about your prices? Do you offer “all inclusive” services?

We are flexible and offer many options “on demand”, what would be comfortable for our guests. They could order food, a tour program and master classes in advance or on the spot. The rates for stay with breakfasts start out at 5500 per room a day. Lunches, dinners, excursions, master classes could be booked in advance or chosen on the spot.

What do foreigners think of your project?

For the French guests our village is very Russian and they are excited to recognize French serving details or tableware, featured in all traditional French families. Guests from the Middle East and Asia mark cordiality and hospitality of the Dom Lardy team, beautiful nature of Yaroslavl region and non-intrusive authenticity.

About 70% of our guests are from Moscow. These are families with children under 12 yo and “young” pensioners, looking for a quiet time, high-quality food and a special atmosphere. We have started our summer booking and happy that our young project is already finding its audience.

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Will Dom Lardy expand? What are the plans of your team for near future?

Demand begets supply. Of course, we would like to expand, but to go the intensive, and not the expansive way. We are

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improving the existing spaces, working over details. We are introducing exclusive events: gastronomy weekends, retreats. We are continuing to work to make each our guest at home. Luxury in the XXI century means a personalized approach to each guest. We create a place where one would want to stay and to come back to.

Boxes.

What is Raclette?

This is a traditional French dish from melted cheese. The name comes from the French word racler, which means “to scratch” or “to scrape”. The key feature of the dish is that cheese has to be placed close to a fire and then to scrape off slowly melting cheese.

As a base for Raclette, potatoes, sausages, ham, mushrooms, olives or seafood could be used.

A special fatty cheese under the same name is used to cook the dish, it is available in medium-sized round wheels or blocks. Genuine Raclette should be firm but springy: it would not get foamy or leaky during heating.

What do they eat Crumble with?

Crumble is an English dessert, a pie made with baked fruit or berries, covered with shortbread pastry crumbles.

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Ho to play petanque?

Petanque could be conditionally called a mixture of curling and bowling. This game could be played by almost anyone, since it does not require any special physical training. Originating from France, petanque has reached around the world and in Russia this would be an ideal fit for active summer recreation.

Translated from French, petanque means keeping your feet together, which is one of the rules — when throwing a metal ball, player’s feet should not get outside of the throw area.

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