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TELEVISION

Inside the 'Heated Rivalry' Cottage: we toured the Muskoka getaway that fans are flying across the world to see

"This is one of those experiences you remember forever," said super fan Marjorie Beaugad about visiting arguably the most famous cottage on the planet.

Updated May 20, 2026 at 3:46 p.m. | May 13, 2026  



The Barlochan Cottage, designed by Ontario architect Trevor McIvor, may be the most famous cottage in the world, thanks to "Heated Rivalry."

Richard Lautens/Toronto Star

By David Friend Culture Reporter

Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov weren't inside the ["Heated Rivalry"](#) cottage when the fans arrived one late afternoon in May — but the characters' presence lingered anyway.

Driving through the Muskoka woods, down a muddied gravel driveway and toward the 2,500-square-foot lakefront home with massive windows shimmering in the sun, is like stepping into a scene from Crave's hit hockey romance.

This is, after all, the secluded structure at the centre of a cultural phenomenon, the spot where Shane ([Hudson Williams](#)) and Ilya (Connor Storrie) conducted much of their love story. It's arguably the most famous cottage on the planet.

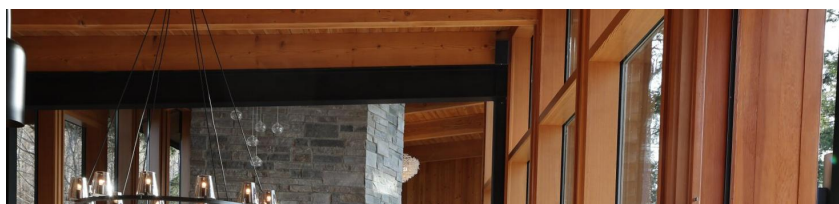


We step inside the cottage that's at the centre of a cultural phenomenon. Located in Muskoka and arguably the most famous cottage on the planet, this secluded gem is a major setting of the hit Crave series "Heated Rivalry." Culture Reporter David Friend tours the iconic location, giving fans a closer look at the home behind the show's legendary romance.

Many "Heated Rivalry" fans dream of stepping onto the sacred ground tucked away in a bay off Lake Muskoka's Walkers Point. Barlochan Cottage has become this generation's "Home Alone" house or Carrie Bradshaw's brownstone stoop, except all the more untouchable because it's hours away from city life, in Torrance, Ont., a tiny town west of Gravenhurst with a population of 67.

Rozanov's now iconic line, "I'm coming to the cottage," lands differently here, because the place feels suspended between fiction and reality.

Over the next several weeks, a few lucky fans will have a chance to live in Shane and Ilya's hideaway. They snagged the stay on Airbnb on a first-come first-serve basis for a deeply discounted rate of \$248.10 a night (a nod to the hockey players' jersey numbers), before the property hits the market in June. Jayne's Cottage, the luxury rentals manager handling the property, told the Star it expects the property could fetch upwards of \$25,000 per week during peak season.





Inside the famous "cottage," Jenn Wagner, Marjorie Beaugad and Barbara Pasquelin hold a blanket featuring the stars of "Heated Rivalry."

Richard Lautens/Toronto Star

Marjorie Beaugad, a 36-year-old Boston resident, was the first fan to secure a spot at the cottage. Last weekend, she flew in with two lifelong friends — Barbara Pasquelin from Brisbane, Australia and Jenn Wagner from Vernon, B.C. — to live out their fantasy getaway together.

The trio started their "Heated Rivalry" pilgrimage in Hamilton, where much of the series was filmed, before driving nearly two-and-a-half hours outside Toronto. The friends came prepared: Pasquelin created a menu inspired by the show's lore, including double banana smoothies, tuna melts and "Shane's burgers" — which the hockey player famously grilled at the cottage. Wagner described the cottage as "silence in the chaos," both for Shane and Ilya, and for the real-life group of friends who hadn't seen each other in years.

"This is one of those experiences you remember forever," Beaugad told the Star while staring out onto the water.



"Heated Rivalry" super fans, from left to right: Barbara Pasquelin, Marjorie Beaugad and Jenn Wagner: "One of those experiences you remember forever."

Richard Lautens/Toronto Star

The home behind the show

In person, the fabled cottage looks almost exactly as it did on the show.



Barlochan Cottage on Lake Muskoka played an important role in "Heated Rivalry."

Richard Lautens/Toronto Star

Out front, a spiralling abstract art piece remains in place, leading to the entranceway where Shane first welcomed Ilya into his refuge.

Inside, the space is immediately familiar: the couch where Shana and Ilya touched toes and pledged loyalty to each other; the medieval chandelier hanging above the dining table; the open-concept kitchen, which is stocked with cans of tuna and Canada Dry.

In the backyard, a pathway leads to the waterfront where the couple waded into the lake; the rock where Shane watched Ilya swim rises just above the waves.

Everything seems carefully preserved, almost reverently so, as if the story might resume at any moment.

For years, Barlochan Cottage existed simply as one of many rustic modern homes designed by Ontario architect Trevor McIvor. A decade ago, McIvor was hired to create the getaway for a prominent heart surgeon who wanted a cottage escape.





The shoreline outside Barlochan Cottage, where Shane Hollander famously watched Ilya Rozanov swim.

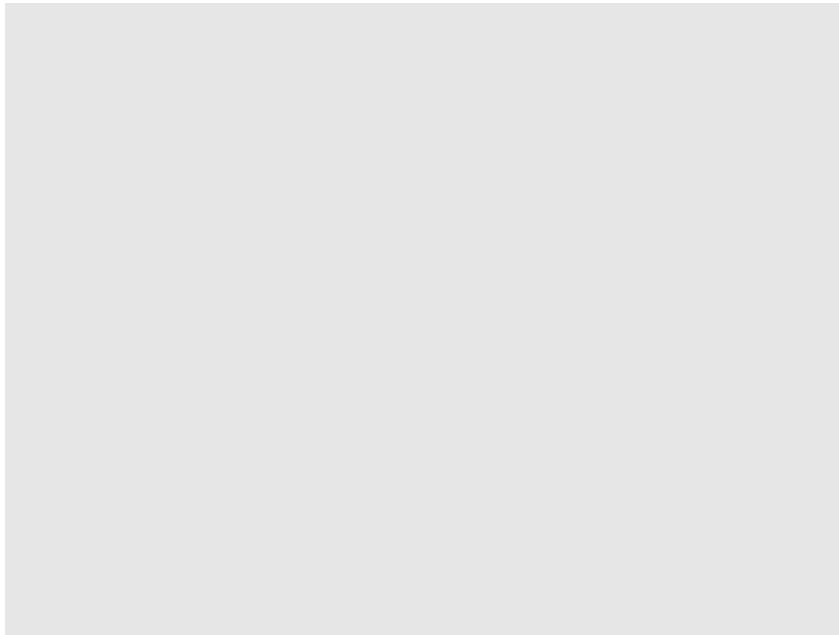
Richard Lautens/Toronto Star

When a TV location scout contacted McIvor, seeking standout Muskoka cottages, McIvor suggested a few, including the nine-room house with its unique open concept and prominent Douglas fir beams.

“I hadn’t read the books. I didn’t have a script,” said McIvor. “And I didn’t know the epic episode was going to be called ‘The Cottage.’”

It wasn’t until after the release of the show’s season finale last Boxing Day that McIvor recognized the obsession growing around his cottage.

“People started talking like it was the third character of the show,” he said.



The master bedroom played an important role in Shane and Ilya's blossoming relationship in “Heated Rivalry.”

Richard Lautens/Toronto Star

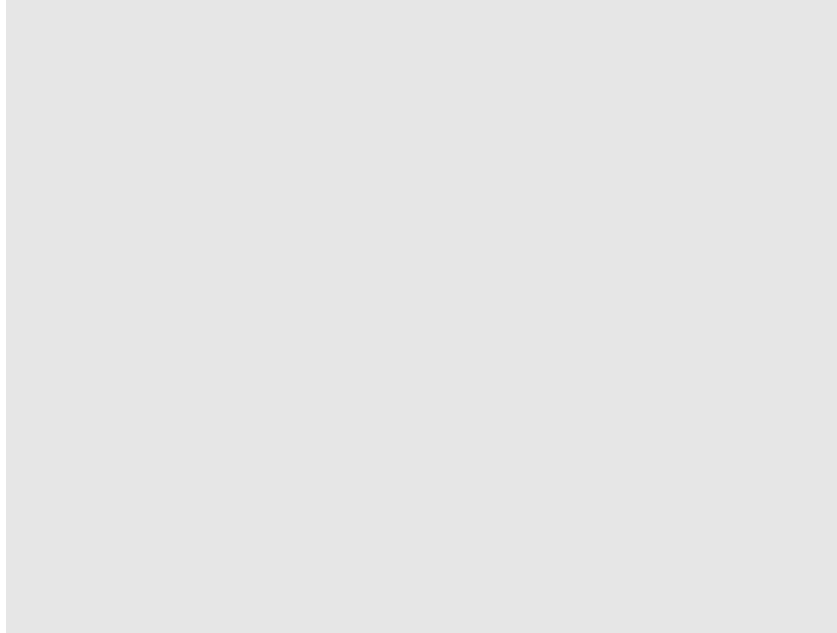
One day, McIvor came across a photograph altered to show a crowd of hundreds gathered outside it. That’s when he called the owner to apologize. “I know you want your privacy,” McIvor said he told the surgeon. “But I think you’re going to be inundated.”

McIvor said the surgeon was “good natured” about the cottage’s popularity. Within weeks, he signed an agreement to rent out the property.

Muskoka faces its new-found superfame

Val Hamilton, executive director of Muskoka Tourism, says curiosity about cottage country has reached levels she's never seen before. Since the cottage episode's premiere, Hamilton said traffic to the tourism site website has spiked, with visitors making inquiries from as far away as Singapore.

Hoping to capture some of that interest, the tourism board is partnering with Destination Canada to bring a van of international travel journalists into the region. In the coming weeks, media will explore the sites of Muskoka, including Barlochan Cottage.



Hudson Williams, left, and Connor Storrie at the Lake Muskoka cottage in an episode of "Heated Rivalry."

Crave/Bell Media

Hamilton said some locals have expressed concerns that the tranquil bay could be flooded with people trying to snap selfies around the waterfront property.

"Anyone can rent a boat or a Sea-Doo, and I've had a lot of people trying to find out where it is on the water," said Hamilton.

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But Muskoka has been tested before, she pointed out. The region has a long-standing reputation as a sanctuary for public figures, from Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell to Edmonton Oilers star Connor McDavid.

"People have certainly respected their privacy," said Hamilton.

"Our hope is we continue to see that with the buzz of 'Heated Rivalry.'"



David Friend writes about arts and culture in Toronto and beyond.

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