

# Quebec's finest country lodge is in Mont Tremblant

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE    OCTOBER 27, 2011



Hotel Quintessence, the only establishment in Tremblant that is both lakeside and slopeside, is holding a wine-tasting and dinner in November, complete with live music.

**Photograph by:** Hotel Quintessence, Hotel Quintessence

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We live in difficult financial times, so the prospect of luxury at a discount always is welcome news.

Hotel Quintessence in Mont Tremblant has been Quebec's finest and possibly priciest country lodge since its opening eight years ago, but it has moments of accessibility. In the off-season, until Dec. 22, its sky-high rates are less expensive than usual.

Built with perfection as part of the plan, Quintessence started with a singular location. It is the only hotel on the shore of Lac Tremblant and also slopeside, steps from the ski lifts. Its most vivid feature is the splendid panorama of Laurentian nature from all 30 guest rooms and common areas, including the lobby lounge and the dining room. Even the massage rooms at Spa Sans Sabots, the sauna and the gym have windows so you can work on wellness while gazing out at a capricious landscape of water, trees and mountains.

The hotel is a steady draw for its fine cuisine, high-end suites and the priceless quality of cachet. To add value to an expensive experience, the bed-and-breakfast rate saves on a gourmet morning meal that features fabulous baked goods, French toast with homemade bread and caramelized walnuts, a croque monsieur with goat cheese and glazed ham or a classic egg Benedict, all with exquisite presentations. The hotel also offers a Gourmet Package that adds dinner, and a Romantic Getaway package that includes massages for two.

More of a big treat than a bargain, Quintessence's current Fall in Love Package bundles a few extravagances into a 24-hour visit. For a little more than \$500 per night, per person, you can dine gastronomically, melt into a massage in front of the fireplace in your sumptuous hotel room and take a helicopter jaunt over this picturesque area of mountains and lakes.

"Guests request the package because everything is taken care of," said Sean O'Donnell who founded Quintessence with Montreal businessman Steve Courey.

Quintessence specializes in that kind of privilege.

Prized for its peacefulness, privacy and the extravagant spaciousness of its accommodations, it has wined and dined Saudi princes, Brazilian jet-setters, masters of the business universe like Sir Richard Branson of Virgin, such sports legends as Mario Andretti and Mario Lemieux and entertainment royalty including Céline Dion, Cate Blanchett and Catherine Zeta-Jones.

Chef Jean-François Lalandec, who manned the kitchen when Quintessence opened in 2003, recently returned from travels in Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. The son and grandson of chefs, he blends his French background with his newly acquired international flavours, focusing on Quebec meat, seafood, cheeses and vegetables.

Lalandec has created a sumptuous new menu for the Table du Chef, a tiny private greenhouse for six diners. It's a seven-course feast with a choice of delicacies like foie gras, wild mushrooms, oysters, braised lamb, venison roasted with cloudberry and milk-fed piglet, followed by such luscious desserts as berry tarts, chocolate fondant cake and lavender-perfumed crème brûlée.

The regular dinner menu features variations on those dishes.

The hotel also will present La Quintessence du Vin on Nov. 4., a wine-tasting followed by a gastronomic dinner at food stations, all set to live music.

One of Quintessence's most accessible experiences is its Q Bistro menu because you can enjoy lunch or supper at this posh getaway for about \$20. The favourites are the Q burger and the Cobb salad, but this fall, Lalandec added cold-weather treats like chowder with lobster, duck leg confit and poutine with braised lamb and goat cheese.

New features keep the hotel's guests entertained, but Quintessence's foundation is its classic luxury and cosseting warmth created by its handsome stone and mahogany interiors, wood-burning fireplaces in each room, heated marble floors on the bathrooms and the thick duvets covering the huge four-poster beds.

It's elegant and epicurean, but Quintessence also draws serious sports enthusiasts. In summer, it is the host hotel for the thrilling Ferrari Driving Experience, which draws race-car aficionados from the U.S. and Europe, and a cyclethon in which Montreal's corporate elite ride to benefit several charities. Quintessence also will be a centre for Quebec's first Ironman competitions in summer 2012. And, in a wintry image that evokes the high-society sparkle of St. Moritz, the horsey set will convene on the hotel's terrace to watch ice polo on frozen Lac Tremblant, an event planned for 2013.

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**If you go:**

Tremblant is a 90-minute drive from Montreal via Highway 15, Route 117 north and Montée Ryan.

Hotel Quintessence: 866-425-3400 or 819-425-3400, [hotelQuintessence.com](http://hotelQuintessence.com), 3004 Chemin de la Chapelle, Mont Tremblant.

Prices: All rates include use of spa, wireless Internet, newspapers, bathrobes and slippers and valet parking: without meals, Sun. to Thurs. until Dec. 22, rates start at \$315 for a Q Suite to \$ 1,315 for the Presidential Suite with an outdoor hot tub on a private terrace. With breakfast and dinner, that is \$492-\$1,492 for two. On Fridays and Saturdays, the range starts at \$425-\$1,425 for two without meals, or \$ 547-\$1,547 with breakfast and dinner. Rates fluctuate and will be higher after Dec. 22. Packages are available with treatments at Spa Sans Sabots or in-room.

The Fall in Love Package, until Dec. 20: Sun.-Thurs.: starts at \$527 p.p., double occ., including one night, gourmet breakfast and seven-course dinner, food gifts, two massages, helicopter ride. On Fri-Sat. it starts at \$554 p.p.

La Quintessence Dining Room: Dinner nightly, \$60-100 p.p.; La Quintessence du Vin: Fri., Nov. 4: \$ 125 p.p.; Chef's Table: \$125 p.p.

Spa Sans Sabots: Facials, massages, yoga. Sessions of 60 minutes cost approximately \$125.