

# Orford's Estrimont has a winning formula

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE MARCH 1, 2012



Estrimont has a lot to offer, but the great outdoors also beckons.

**Photograph by:** Estrimont Suites & Spa

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Estrimont Suites and Spa in the Eastern Townships has a formula that works so well, it is one of the most successful resorts in Quebec.

It has been named the top hotel in the province by Tourisme Québec for several consecutive years and it also has one of the highest occupancy rates.

Estrimont has an unusual approach. At the heart of one of Quebec's most sports-centric and family-friendly outdoor areas – the outstanding Ski Mont Orford and Parc national du Mont Orford are just next door – Estrimont actually attracts mostly adults who come to eat, drink and spa.

To boost the appeal of staying on the property, Estrimont has an indoor salt water pool, a summertime outdoor pool and a compact Nordic spa set up outside: hot tubs, cold dips, a sauna and a yurt for lounging. Many guests continue on to the in-house Amerispa, where the signature treatment is a blend of Swedish and California massages done with warm oils. The Haute Couture Pedicure is a pricey indulgence – \$145 for an 80-minute pampering with shea butter and honey. But you still can treat yourself to a pleasurable beauty treatment for your hands at \$30, or a back massage at \$45.

The hotel also has fashioned several new incentives. The Girls' Getaway features a wine and cheese

party in the suite and a spa spree of soaking tubs, manicures, pedicures or leg treatments. The Pleasures to Share bistro menu offers a choice of cheese and dessert fondues so a table of friends can reach, dunk and nibble.

Estrimont's bistro is a strong point. It's open for lunch, après-ski, supper or simply a St. Ambroise on tap, a rum punch or a glass of shiraz from the list of privately imported wines. Besides the fondues, the bistro serves an appealing menu of duck confit, sizzling Thai chicken, brie flambé or burgers.

You can have a more elegant evening in the dining room with classic French-Quebec dishes of meat and fish. Chef Olivier St. Arnaud also spreads his wings with a Wine Route menu of such Eastern Townships specialties as venison, quail, cheese and maple mousse all paired with wines from regional vineyards, like Orpailleur or Côtes d'Ardoise in Dunham and La Bauge in Brigham.

A few years ago, Estrimont swept away all its old guest rooms and traditional furniture and launched a fresh, new minimalist style. At almost the same time, a fire destroyed the central common areas, which were rebuilt into a smart-looking lobby, dining room, bar and banquet rooms.

Now, most of the 95 guest rooms are contemporary-country apartments with queen-sized beds, open-concept living rooms, fireplaces and kitchenettes. They are mini-suites, just big enough to settle into for a few nights, but not quite roomy enough to call home. It all spells comfort if you are two people, and compact living if you are a family, with the kids using the Murphy bed in the salon. Two spa suites – and only two – are a little more plush, with king beds and double whirlpool tubs.

Even with the in-house pursuits, the great outdoors beckons. Estrimont offers deals on lift tickets at three Eastern Townships ski areas as well as Parc national du Mont-Orford. With an entrance two kilometres from Estrimont, the park has an excellent network of trails for snowshoeing, winter walking and both classic cross-country skiing and ski-skating.

Downhillers can drive up the road to Mont Orford, a landmark family ski and boarding area which has improved a lot in recent years, adding snow-making and even increasing its vertical drop by re-contouring some trails. Since a controversy a few years ago about building condos at the mountain's base, Mont Orford now is owned by a group of 17 local municipalities. With three distinct peaks, Orford has gentle terrain on Mont Alfred-Desrochers, edgy glades and trails on Mont Orford and long, winding runs on Mont Giroux.

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## IF YOU GO

Orford is a one-hour, 20-minute drive from Montreal via Highway 10 east and exit 118 to Route 141 north.

Estrimont Suites & Spa: 800-567-7320, [estrimont.ca](http://estrimont.ca); 44 ave. de l'Auberge, Orford.

Price: An open-concept suite with full buffet breakfast, swimming pools and Scandinavian spa baths starts at about \$85 p.p., double occ., without dinner. The Gourmet Getaway adds a five-course dinner and starts at \$134 p.p., double occ., for one night or \$218 p.p., for two nights. Girls' Getaway starts at

\$159 p.p., double or quad occ., including breakfast, dinner, baths and spa treatments. Watch for discounts on Sundays, a third night at half-price or a fifth night free.

Amerispa at Estrimont: 866-263-7477, 819-843-5439, [amerispa.ca](http://amerispa.ca); the Amerispa Experience Day Package starts at \$136 p.p., for a day package (no lodging) with lunch, spa baths and two treatments. Spa treatments cost \$30-\$160.

Downhill lift tickets can be added: Mont Orford, \$42; Ski Bromont, \$48; Ski Owl's Head, \$39.

Mont Orford: 866-673-6731, [orford.com](http://orford.com); 589-metre vertical drop (1,933 ft.), 245 acres of terrain, incl. glades and a snowpark; an adult day ticket is \$52 (without a package) and half-day tickets are available mornings and afternoons. Mondays to Wednesdays, there is a half-day with lunch at the Slalom Pub, \$29. Family Sundays: \$129 for four (any ages), and rentals available.

Parc national du Mont-Orford: 819- 843-9855, [sepaq.com](http://sepaq.com); admission and trail fees apply if not on a package.

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