

'Tis the season for great deals in ski country



ROCHELLE LASH
Checking In

The snow sports trio of Mont-Sainte-Anne, Stoneham and Le Massif de Charlevoix is an unbeatable combo for skiers, snowboarders and anyone who likes splendid winter entertainment.

This trifecta just got better with the new St. Lawrence Summits. It's a lodging-and-lift promotion that invites slide sports fans to sample all three areas at discounts of 25 to 33 per cent off regular lift-pass prices, if they buy their tickets through a participating hotel.

St. Lawrence Summits embraces more than 30 properties around Quebec City, Stoneham, Mont-Sainte-Anne and Le Massif, ranging from intimate inns to impressive mountain lodges. Besides the discount on lift tickets, the lodgings have specials, too. The discounts depend on various factors, including the date, which hotel or condo you choose, the number of people in your group and how many nights you stay. The hard part is choosing.

The post-Christmas package, called January Souvenirs, features rock-bottom rates. The romance-inclined Heart of Winter in February is a three-night stay with three days of lift tickets and dinner out on one night; and the Happy Parents package, during March school break, includes one child's free ski ticket.

Here is a peek at three overnight choices, all ideal homes-away-from-home in ski country.

LE MASSIF DE CHARLEVOIX
Hébergement-Charlevoix.com, a reservation agency, is the gateway to nearly 200 cottages and chalets in various locations around Le Massif de Charlevoix.

The choices are vast — three-, four- and five-star dwellings with such features as hot tubs, saunas, fireplaces and pool tables. You can opt for the quaint, artsy village of Baie-St-Paul (20 km from Le Massif ski area) or snuggle into an impressive mountaintop hideaway in Petite-Rivière-St-François, near the summit entrance to the ski area.

"The price is irresistible," said Daniel Guay, the director of Hébergement-Charlevoix.com. "You can enjoy deluxe features in a lavish mountain chalet ... some



Hébergement-Charlevoix.com rents country houses around Le Massif de Charlevoix. The luxurious Villa Expo-Reno, a contemporary wood and glass mountain chalet, overlooks Baie-St-Paul. HEBERGEMENT-CHARLEVOIX.COM.



Chalets Mont-Sainte-Anne is a complex of convenient, contemporary townhouses at the mountain's base. CHALETSMONTSAINTE-ANNE

have whirlpools and most have spectacular views."

All of the St. Lawrence Summit participating hotels will issue virtual ski passes that you can download onto your mobile device, so you won't have to wait in line at the ticket counter.

On the snow: A one-hour drive northeast of Quebec City and a half-hour from Mont-Sainte-Anne, Le Massif has an exceptional snowfall and long, picturesque trails that plunge down toward the St. Lawrence River. Adventurers can try the new, guided back-country explorations, as well as rodeling, a luge-style descent.

MONT-SAINTE-ANNE
The contemporary complex Chalets Mont-Sainte-Anne is all about convenience. It has a key slopeside location facing the

gondola and you can score your lift pass at the front desk.

Not chalets at all, the accommodations are actually townhouses, 34 in all, ranging from one to five bedrooms, with full kitchens, the charm of wood-burning fireplaces and the practicality of washer-dryers.

"Townhouses are better value than hotels, partly because they are more spacious," said general manager Marco Puchol. "No one sleeps on a sofa-bed — it's two people per bedroom — and you have a living room, dining room and two bathrooms in all larger units."

The cooking-in option is a money-saver, too. You can make sociable dinners and quick lunches. And guests at the Chalets can use the indoor pool, exercise room and whirlpool at Domaine des Neiges, one kilometre away.

IF YOU GO

Lodging packages at St. Lawrence Summits: 800-463-1568, www.stlawrencesummits.com.

Le Massif de Charlevoix (mountain): www.lemassif.com, 877-536-2774. Hébergement-Charlevoix.com (lodging): 888-435-5107. Sample price: Jan 5-30, for 10 people in a five-bedroom, four-star chalet, starts at about \$87.50 p.p., double occ., per night, with a three-night minimum, lift tickets included.

Mont-Sainte-Anne (mountain): 888-827-4579, montsainte-anne.com. Chalets Mont-Sainte-Anne (lodging): 800-463-4395, chmsa.com; two-night minimum. Sample package, Jan. 5-30, for four people in a two-bedroom unit — three nights, three days of lifts tickets, \$285 p.p., or \$95 p.p., per night, incl. lifts).

Stoneham Mountain Resort (mountain and lodging): 800-463-6888, 418-848-2411, www.ski-stoneham.com. Condos & Hôtel Stoneham: Sample package, Jan. 5-30, rates start at \$667 for three nights, two adults and two children, or about \$56 p.p., per night, with lift tickets.



Stoneham Mountain Resort combines hotel, condos, and skiing and snowboarding near Quebec City. STONEHAMMOUNTAINRESORT

On the snow: In 2014, Mont-Sainte-Anne was voted Favourite Canadian Resort by readers of Snow East Magazine in the U.S. An enchanting area with beautiful views and one of Quebec's longest seasons, it's strong on night lights, novice areas and snowparks. The expert zone has a new-in-2014 detachable quad and a new-for-2015 expert trail, named for Olympic freestyler Pierre-Alexandre Rousseau. Off mountain, there are more winter thrills, such as ice-canyoning, para-gliding, ice-skating, dogsledding and cross-country skiing at one of the two largest centres in North America.

STONEHAM
Stoneham Mountain Resort is a dynamic, compact mountain with terrific après-ski and a super combination of expert, intermediate and novice slide sports.

You're a 20-minute jaunt from Quebec City, so if you stay slope-side at Condos & Hôtel Stoneham, you can pair the convenience of slopeside lodging with a night on the town — unique, historic and romantic. If you spend your time at the base of the mountain, Stoneham has fashioned various vacation scenarios, including a lifestyle for ski buddies who just want to have fun and activities for families on a budget.

On the snow: Stoneham is a powerhouse of exceptional slide experiences, including "Les 40s" (one entire mountain face of extreme black-diamond runs), plus night skiing, a gentle zone, an Olympic-size halfpipe and a competition-calibre snowpark. Nearby, winter fun continues with a visit to the Ice Hotel and snow tubing at the huge playground of Village Vacances Valcartier.

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