

FAMED SKI RESORT GETS INTO FAT-BIKING



Mont Sainte-Anne has created groomed trails for a thrilling new activity – fat-biking through the snowy woods. The trails all depart from the St-Julien Main Lodge. FRANÇOIS CARRIER/MONT SAINTE-ANNE

Mont Sainte-Anne creates three groomed loops that add up to 11 kilometres for riders

ROCHELLE LASH
MONTREAL GAZETTE

Mont Sainte-Anne has expanded its snow sports roster with a new activity — fat-biking. You might have seen fat bikes around town. They look like mountain bikes, but with thicker tires to tackle snow. The fat bikes can make it through lots of varied terrain, but the experts at Mont Sainte-Anne figure this new generation of wheels works best on packed surfaces. Fat-biking is not permitted on cross-country ski and snowshoe trails, so Mont Sainte-Anne has created three dedicated, groomed loops that add up to 11 kilometres of cardio fun. The trails all depart from the St-Julien Main Lodge, which is the cross-country ski centre, and wind through the woods and along the mountainside. Mont Sainte-Anne is a leader in winter sport. With 200 kilometres of expertly groomed classic and skating trails, its Nordic centre is one of the two most comprehensive in North America. Royal Gorge in California also has 200 km of trails. Pierre Vézina, the centre's director, concedes that the western mountains have more elevation and more snow, "but Mont Sainte-

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Anne has a well-equipped waxing room, a spacious chalet and exceptional competition facilities. We have hosted the World Junior Championship and many Canadian competitions." The World Masters Championships is coming up Feb 1 to 7. The Mont Sainte-Anne cross-country centre is the home training ground of father-and-son champions Pierre and Alex Harvey, who both have competed at the Olympics. Mont Sainte-Anne also embraces a picturesque camping area. If you bring your overnight gear, organizers will ferry it by snowmobile to a trailside refuge where you can spend the night warmed by a gas stove for heat and cooking. The trail network is home to five such

camping cabins as well as the group-travel getaway, Chalet du Fondeur, a dorm-style chalet ideal for a gathering of family, friends or colleagues who want to escape into nature. Mont Sainte-Anne's downhill mountain has three peaks, a summit restaurant, exceptional night-skiing and snowboarding and splendid views of the St. Lawrence River. And within a few kilometres, visitors can experience snowshoeing, ice-skating, dogsledding, ice-climbing and para-gliding, as well as off-snow fun such as spa life. The new central reservation service called St. Lawrence Summits is the best contact for sports packages and lodging for 1,500 visitors around Mont-Sainte-Anne in condos, chalets and hotel rooms, plus Stoneham and Le Massif du Charlevoix. DETAILS Mont Sainte-Anne: 888-827-4579, www.mont-sainte-anne.com; fat-biking trail fee, \$10-\$11; families, \$25; fat-bike rentals, \$55; lodging through St. Lawrence Summits: 800-463-1568, www.stlawrencesummits.com.

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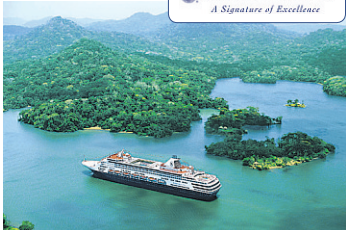
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