



The Eastern Township's Bromont, montagne d'expériences, which boasts of more night skiing and riding than any area in North America, has teamed up with Mont Saint-Sauveur in the Laurentians to offer a shared supplement to season passes. *MATHIEU DUPUIS*

Mont Saint-Sauveur, Bromont offer shared season passes

Leaders in night skiing want to give downhillers ‘broader experiences’

ROCHELLE LASH
SPECIAL TO MONTREAL GAZETTE

For Quebec's estimated 1.5 million skiers and snowboarders, this bulletin is as good as a deep-winter storm of powder snow. Groupe Mont Saint-Sauveur and Bromont, montagne d'expériences (that's the area's new name), both

less than an hour's drive from Montreal, are co-operating on a shared pass for the first time. Option Northeast, new for the 2015-2016 season, is a major alpine skiing bargain and an accessible way to broaden skiers' experiences to both the Eastern Townships and the Laurentians. Option Northeast is a new sup-

plement you can add to an existing season pass that will cost \$20 to \$60, depending on when you buy, and for what ski days and times. Skiers and riders who opt in will have access to Bromont and the six affiliated mountains of Groupe Mont Saint-Sauveur (Mont Saint-Sauveur, Mont Avila, Mont Olympia, Morin-Heights and Mont-Gabriel in the Laurentians and Edelweiss in the Gatineau Hills.) "Last year, 270,000 skiers and riders in Quebec bought season passes," said Charles Désourdy,

president of Bromont, montagne d'expériences. "This dual pass is a major innovation that will appeal to those committed downhillers and give them broader experiences." Both companies are family-run and both have been pioneers in tourism and leisure. With 69 per cent of its 143 trails and glades equipped for after-dark thrills, Bromont has the most night-skiing and snowboarding terrain in North America. It has become a social hub with its nearly

all-night Nuits Blanches when the lifts run until 2 a.m. and the bar until 3 a.m. The ever-dynamic Bromont modified its name for the 2015-2016 season to Bromont, montagne d'expériences to better reflect its variety of year-round sports, including mountain biking and a water park in summer. "Skiers will get more for their money with the two-mountain Option Northeast," said Louis-Philippe Hébert, president and CEO of Groupe Mont Saint-Sauveur, which has the longest season in Quebec, an average of 160 days a year, as a result of extensive snow-making. "Bromont and Mont Saint-Sauveur are equidistant from Montreal and have similar appeal." Mont Saint-Sauveur also is strong on night-skiing and après-ski at T-BAR-70, plus it is a fave of juniors for its creative snow school and the Rockstar MSS Snoprk, a gnarly obstacle course. During the summer, there are more downhill thrills — tobogganing on The Viking track and zip-lining on The Dragon. The 2014-2015 Quebec ski season counted 5.9 million skier visits, of which 17 per cent are from outside the province. The Quebec Ski Areas Association (ASSQ) reports 1.4 million, or 22 per cent, of Quebec's residents who are 15 years and older are active skiers and snowboarders, making alpine action the No. 1 winter activity. Snowboarders are about 20 per cent of the market. The ASSQ doesn't count youngsters, but ski areas welcome an estimated 160,000 additional juniors between five and 15 years old, making the total estimated of skiers and riders about 1.5 million. The ski industry generated \$800 million in economic benefits during the 2013-2014 season, and \$137 million in provincial and federal tax revenues, with an annual payroll of about \$367 million and the equivalent of 12,000 full-time jobs. The \$800 million represents 6.4 per cent of Quebec's total tourism GDP. The figures are from a study commissioned by the ASSQ and run by Michel Archambault, professor emeritus of the school of management at UQAM.

Princess compensates disappointed passengers



PHIL REIMER
Ports + Bows

If I searched my emails from unhappy cruisers, "compensation" would be among the most dominant words. Cruisers feel they deserve more when their trip is interrupted — and maybe they're right. For river cruisers, low or high water can be the trigger that disrupts a trip. At sea, it's mechanical issues or severe weather. Cruise lines have a tight contract that you (we) sign and probably don't read. However, some lines seem fairer than others in compensating cruisers. Like Princess Cruises. The Grand Princess was on a 15-day return cruise from San Francisco to Hawaii when it was stricken by a circuit-breaker malfunction while cruising off the Hawaiian coast. There was smoke from a small fire but, within an hour, the ship was back on line. However, the problem couldn't be completely fixed. That meant reduced speed for the rest of the cruise and that meant missing ports in order to return to San Francisco in time to be ready for the next scheduled cruise. Princess stepped up. All 2,500 passengers were offered a full refund plus they had two options: stay on board or fly back to San Francisco. For those cruisers, Princess did the right thing. The cruise line made more happy news this month. The 50th anniversary of the very first Princess cruise was on Dec. 3, which was a cause for celebration in Los Angeles, near the line's head office. The original cast of The Love Boat, which played a key part in success of Princess and cruising, was on hand. While cruise lines offer attrac-

tive (and sometimes expensive) shore excursions, there are other options and my Cruising Done Right colleagues, Bob and Nancy Dunn, found a winner with Viator in Vietnam after disembarking from the AmaWaterways river ship AmaDara. What started with a 60-kilometre trip up the Saigon River included a visit to the famous Cu Chi Tunnels, a cricket farm and a local restaurant. Nine hours in all, and the price is just US\$106. Read their complete report on Viator in Vietnam next week at portsandbows.com. And finally, Cruise Atlantic Canada and the Cruise the Saint Lawrence Group have worked diligently to build cruising in their part of the world. Some years ago, then-president of Celebrity Cruises, Dan Hanrahan, told them at a conference that to grow they'd have to work at promoting their region. This year, Atlantic Canada and the Quebec region are up from 2014. That's a good example of taking advice from someone who knows and then getting the job done.

PHIL'S PICK OF THE WEEK Tying into Atlantic Canada and Quebec, here's a spring cruise from the Florida sunshine to Canada on Holland America's Veendam. **Departs:** April 24 **Duration:** 13 days, Fort Lauderdale to Montreal **Ports:** Boston, Bar Harbor, Halifax, Sydney, Charlottetown, Gaspé, scenic cruising through Saguenay Fjord, Saguenay, Quebec City **Starting price:** \$1,948 Visit a cruise agent or hollandamerica.com. Visit portsandbows.com, sponsored by [Expedia CruiseShipCenters.com](http://ExpediaCruiseShipCenters.com), 1-800-707-7327, www.cruiseshipcenters.com, for daily updates on cruise news, best deals and behind-the-scenes stories. You can also sign up for an email newsletter for even more information. Phil Reimer may be contacted at portsandbows@gmail.com.

MONTREAL GAZETTE

What to serve with goose? Looking for bargain bubbly? Wine columnist Bill Zacharkiw can help Saturdays in the Weekend Life section.



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