



Le Viking Resort & Marina has 40 deluxe, modern-rustic lakefront suites where half the units have lake views and almost all have terraces or balconies. *LE VIKING RESORT & MARINA*

CHECKING IN

Le Viking Resort reflects then-and-now of Ste-Marguerite

Do-it-yourself boutique hotel an ideal place to set out for boat trips and picnics



ROCHELLE LASH

Le Viking Resort & Marina is the new cornerstone of Ste-Marguerite-du-Lac-Masson, as well as the biggest tourism project to hit the city in a long time — maybe ever.

The handsome boutique hotel fronts on the main street and backs onto the shore of Lac Masson, at the centre of the tranquil city. It encompasses 40 upscale apartments and an Italian restaurant with a lively terrace. The resort itself is an impressive, sturdy structure of stone and timber, with different configurations of condos for rent — from studios to one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments.

The interior decor features creamy walls, earthy coloured fabrics and raw wood panelling that gives the rooms a country accent. There is also a hint of viking style in the wrought iron light fixtures and the rough-hewn, handmade dining tables.

Practical and uncluttered, each condo has an electric fireplace, one or two televisions, queen-size and sofa beds, one to three bathrooms and an attractive open kitchen with stainless steel appliances, wood cabinets

and granite countertops. About half the units have lake views, and almost all have terraces or balconies.

Guests have access to a fitness room, sauna and massage space on the lower level, as well as a rooftop whirlpool on the third floor with a view of the water.

Le Viking is more of a do-it-yourself condo than a hotel, but guests can pay for services such as grocery orders, bellhop assistance and housekeeping.

The hotel's appealing rustic-contemporary design reflects the then-and-now of Ste-Marguerite. The corridors are lined with beautiful, vintage photos of skiers and swimmers from the early 1900s. In contrast, as of June, the nomadic Le Local gallery will be exhibiting vivid, contemporary paintings by regional artists throughout the resort.

It's all about the lakefront, though — whether you are having cocktails at the marina bar, renting a pontoon for an afternoon cruise or relaxing in a lawn chair, soothed by the sound of water lapping against the shore.

The marina provides full boat-aiding services, including cleaning, mechanics, fuel and docking for the day or for the season. Visitors can rent motorized rowboats, standup paddleboards, kayaks, pedalos or pontoons. Since Lac Masson connects with Lac Dupuis and Lac du Nord, you can pack a lunch and plan a daylong

cruise. Le Viking also has areas set up for wakeboarding and water-skiing.

The marina's terrace is a hot spot for cocktails and charcuterie, as well as dining al fresco. Le Viking Restaurant & Bar has an Italian accent — from bruschetta to tiramisu — and the marina setting adds a summery feel.

Dinner features a table d'hôte (\$35-\$45) and a large à la carte menu with antipasto, such as arugula salad and beef carpaccio; pasta with prosciutto, mushrooms, clams or shrimp (\$18-\$22); veal scalloppini done eight ways (\$27-\$28) and fancy fare such as filet mignon, seafood or rack of lamb (\$32-\$39).

Le Petit Viking, a snack bar, serves pizza and paninis for lunch that can be packed up in to-go boxes for picnics.

The neighbourhood: Lac Masson en fête 2017 will feature family activities, shows, a fishing tournament, workshops, a food fair and a bazaar — all free and at the heart of the village — on the weekends of July 8 to 9 and Aug. 18 to 19.

In addition to the lake and the municipal beach, the area boasts a local golf club, walking trails at Sentiers du Galais and the P'tit Train du Nord linear park cycling path.

A local poultry farm, Les cailles du Lac Masson, and the town of Ste-Marguerite operate a farmers' market every Sunday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. until Sept. 3. La Foire Bio Paysanne Équitable will be selling vegetables, cheeses and baked goods at a market on Saturday and Sunday.

The history: I did a heritage

tour with the consummate local citizen, Yvon Gauthier, whose family has been in Ste-Marguerite for seven generations, before the town was even founded in 1864. Among other enterprises, the Gauthiers owned the former Belmont Hotel Lac Masson, built in the early 1900s.

We visited the site of Chalet Cochand, one of North America's first snow-sports resorts, developed circa 1915 by the Swiss-born ski instructor and champion, Émile Cochand.

A pioneer, Cochand blazed Nordic trails and set up a ski jump, while his wife, Lea, made fondue for the Montreal Ski Club. These winter-loving sportsmen and women travelled by train and were picked up at the station in horse-drawn sleighs loaded with fur blankets.

During the late 1920s, Cochand worked with Herman Smith-Johannsen to expand the Laurentians' Nordic trail system in order to link villages. And for downhillers, Cochand installed a J-bar and a rope tow during the late-1930s.

Gauthier and I also checked out Ste-Marguerite's cultural centre, a towering Art Deco relic that opened in 1938 with a show by jazz clarinetist and bandleader Benny Goodman.

The Epicurean Bistro à Champlain put the town on the map from the 1980s to 2014, famous for its French cuisine, displayed artworks by Jean-Paul Riopelle and sophisticated wine collection, now housed at Estérel Resort.

Rochelle@rochellelash.com
Twitter.com/rochellelash

IF YOU GO

Le Viking Resort & Marina: 844-928-4400, 450-228-3316, levikingresort.com; 50 chemin Masson, Ste-Marguerite-du-Lac-Masson. Pets, fees apply.

Price: Includes outdoor parking, rooftop hot tub, gym, sauna and lakefront lawn. Prices are approximate and fluctuate. High season, June 16 to Sept. 14, Dec. 16 to Feb. 28, studios for two, approximately \$229 on weekdays; \$275 on weekends (extra guest, \$75). Add one-time housekeeping fee, \$40-\$70. Larger condos available. Extra: daily housekeeping; indoor parking, \$19; marina services, watercraft.

Le Viking Restaurant & Bar: Open Tuesday to Sunday from 12 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Le Petit Viking: Open daily, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Terrace: Open as of 3 p.m.

Ste-Marguerite-du-Lac-Masson: 855-228-2545, 450-228-2543, ste-marguerite.qc.ca; Société d'Histoire Sainte-Marguerite-du-Lac-Masson et Ville d'Estérel, 450-744-3109, shsme.ca. Laurentians: 800-561-NORD (6673), laurentides.com.

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