



A deluxe Mashk micro-cabin at Repère Boréal in Charlevoix, which is popular in all seasons, and especially charming during the winter. REPÈRE BORÉAL

# CONNECT WITH THE WILDERNESS IN COSY CABINS AT REPÈRE BORÉAL



ROCHELLE LASH  
*Checking In*

Hospitality innovators Jonathan and Simon Galarneau are thinking outside the box. Their lodging guests, not so much.

The Galarneau brothers have created Repère Boréal, a distinctive wilderness vacation domain in the splendid woodlands of Charlevoix, halfway between Baie St-Paul and La Malbaie.

NATURAL CONCEPT

Repère Boréal is a cluster of eight micro-cabins operating in box-like structures. There are three models of cabins, all furnished like cosy chalets, and one of those models is a converted shipping container.

The Galarneau team has installed wall-sized windows, so each cabin has great views of evergreen, birch and maple trees. It's rustic glamping (glamorous camping), blended with cutting-edge design.

"We wanted to remove the walls

between our guests and nature," said Jonathan Galarneau. "Staying here is getting back to basics in a comfortable way."

It's true. The cabins are so well integrated into the woods that you almost feel as though you are sleeping outdoors — but with electric heating and a hotel-quality queen mattress. Repère Boréal is popular in all seasons, but especially charming in winter when guests can cocoon and simply watch the snowfall.

The domain also has a Spa Zone with two hot tubs, a wooden "barrel" sauna and an outdoor shower (seasonal). You can bathe Scandinavian-style, languishing and heating up in the different spa experiences, surrounded by snow banks.

Guests check in at a multi-purpose central pavilion, which has a striking view of the St. Lawrence River, about four kilometres away. This reception building has showers, WCs, running water for drinking or cooking and a gourmet corner. It's also a leisure hub, where guests can practice yoga, mingle and eat or work at a communal table.

INNOVATIVE DESIGN

Repère Boréal has eight micro-cabins — so far — in three

models. All of the structures have electricity and outdoor patios with picnic tables and fireplaces.

The Galarneaus designed the interiors themselves, cleverly configuring the furniture in a compact space: tables for three or four and comfortable beds, as well as futons for kids, or third or fourth guests. Each kitchen has a two-element stovetop, a toaster oven and a mini-fridge.

The three different styles of micro-cabins are named in Innu, the language of the Montagnais, a First Nations people: Shiship (duck), Mashk (bear) and Maikan (wolf). The cabins each have different features, so you can choose your level of rustic comfort.

Mashk, the largest and most luxe model, has a mezzanine bed space, running water, a real bathroom, a kitchen, heated floors downstairs and a rooftop terrace for sunbathing. Maikan is the smallest model, and guests have to use the WC in the main pavilion. The two Shiship models are converted shipping containers with indoor, ventilated composting toilets.

WHAT TO EAT

Guests bring most of their food, but Repère Boréal sells goodies from Baie-St-Paul: breakfast bas-

kets, as well as coffee from Café Charlevoix, cheese from Laiterie Charlevoix and bread from Chacun son pain.

Repère Boréal also stocks ready-to-eat meals from Restoboutique La Table and sheep farm Ferme Éboulmontaise. The choice varies, but dishes might be lamb pizza, lamb meatballs, moussaka or tajine, with a desert of sugar pie.

Gabrielle Cadieux-Gagnon and her partner Alain Beaudoin recently bought both Ferme Éboulmontaise and La Table from her parents, and they cater meals as well as serve in the restaurant. (La Table, 418-635-1212; La Ferme, 418-635-2682, or Facebook).

OUTDOORS  
NEIGHBOURHOOD

Repère Boréal is on the outskirts of the town of Les Éboulements, within 10 to 45 minutes of Charlevoix's famed skiing and sports areas. Winters here are known for exceptional snowfalls.

Le Musée Maritime de Charlevoix (museemaritime.com) manages La Forêt Marine, an eight-kilometre snowshoe trail — free.

For big-time sports, Le Massif du Charlevoix features the

IF YOU GO

- Les Éboulements in Charlevoix is about a five-hour drive from Montreal.
- Repère Boréal, 418-635-1153, repereboreal.com; 3141 Route Du Fleuve, Les Éboulements, Charlevoix.
- Price: Two-night minimum. Rates include Spa Zone, Wi-Fi, central pavilion facilities. High season, Maikan, \$139; Shiship, \$155; Mashk, \$229; high season includes weekends all year and June 15-Sept.12, Christmas-New Year period, mid-Feb. to mid-March, for up to three or four people. Low season, \$109-\$119-\$189, includes most weekdays from Sept. 16-June 14, some holiday exceptions.
- Charlevoix Tourism: 800-667-2276, tourisme-charlevoix.com

longest vertical downhill skiing in Quebec, as well as backcountry and lugging (lemassif.com). Adjacent to Le Massif is Le Sentier des Caps de Charlevoix, a scenic Nordic trail that follows a cliff overlooking the St. Lawrence (sentierdescaps.com).

Mont Grand-Fonds is a comfy, family-friendly area with a trio of winter sports: a superb cross-country network with heated shelters, plus downhill skiing and snowshoeing, all built around a new chalet. The Lynx is a new backcountry sector through magnificent terrain (montgrandfonds.com).

Katabatik organizes year-round adventures. One late-winter thrill is sea kayaking on the St. Lawrence. The famous land- and seascapes of Charlevoix shimmer with ice floes and cascading water, and there often are sightings of seals and ducks (March 25-April 16, katabatik.ca).

On the tamer side, Centre de Plein-air Les Sources Joyeuse, ideal for families, has snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and skating (lessourcesjoyeuses.com).

You'll need to cosy up in layers for these wild and woolly outings. Near Repère Boréal, Alpagas Charlevoix is a fun visit. The farm raises animals and sells fine alpaca-wool socks, tuques and stuffed animals (alpagascharlevoix.com). rochelle@rochellelash.com Twitter.com/rochellelash

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