

CHECKING IN

TRY SOME AUTHENTIC HURON HOSPITALITY



ROCHELLE LASH

“Our philosophy is to share the best of what we have,” says Konrad Sioui, Great Chief of the Huron-Wendat Nation, a community that operates an outstanding tourism domain and has also inspired independent ventures.

Here is a peek at two getaways: Hébergement aux Cinq Sens is a rustic yurt camp where lovers of the outdoors can enjoy basic First Nations experiences. It’s set in the splendid Mégantic region of the Eastern Townships, which is rich in lakes, mountains and forests.

In contrast, the outstanding Hôtel-Musée Premières Nations is a chic fusion of contemporary design and cuisine with sophisticated installations that represent Aboriginal culture and history. It’s in Wendake, 17 kilometres north of Quebec City.

**Rustic adventure:** Paule Rochette is a Huron-Wendat woman who wants to share her First Nations culture in a wild and natural setting.

She operates Hébergement aux Cinq Sens (Lodging of the Five Senses), a cluster of yurts on the outskirts of Piopolis, a village near Lac Mégantic in the far reaches of the Eastern Townships.

The property is a place for relaxing and getting in touch with the earth, water and sky. Especially the sky. Cinq Sens is situated along the Summit Drive of the International Dark Sky Reserve, a tourist route with high-elevation lookouts and astronomy vantage points far from the lights of the city.

Set among maples and pines, Cinq Sens has hammocks strung up beside a stream, campfires flickering at night and a wellness area that incorporates an outdoor hot tub and an infrared sauna. The site has its own walking trails, and guests can enjoy the beach on Lac Mégantic one kilometre away.

Rochette has placed different objects in each yurt to fire up the five senses: a Star Wheel for sky-gazing (seeing), native tea (taste), essential oils for massage



You can experience a traditional sweat lodge at Hébergement aux Cinq Sens, near Lac Mégantic in the Eastern Townships. The area is rich in lakes, mountains and forests. *HÉBERGEMENT AUX CINQ SENS*

(touch), burning sage or scented candles (smell) and musical instruments (hearing).

This year she has added activities steeped in Aboriginal lore such as guided hikes to discover flora and a sojourn in sweat lodge, for cleansing both the body and spirit. On some evenings, a local animator chats about astronomy, drumming or native legends.

Cinq Sens offers a continental breakfast (\$7.50, or free if you are on a package) that you can prepare in your own yurt. It’s usually a ready-to-cook pancake mix with local organic maple syrup, fruit and coffee. And for lunch and dinner, you can cook in or walk to the Auberge au Soleil Levant in Piopolis.

Off-site, guests at Cinq Sens have 10-per-cent discounts for horseback riding at Centre Équestre le Vent du Sud and also at the top-drawer astronomy centre, Astrolab du parc national du Mont-Mégantic,

**Posh digs:** The Hôtel-Musée Premières Nations in Wendake is a resort that celebrates Huron traditions in design, cuisine and culture with sophisticated, contemporary style.

The deluxe 55-room hotel is at the centre of a Huron territory that reflects tourism then and now. The guest rooms have sleek and modern lines, as well



The Hôtel-Musée Premières Nations is an impressive contemporary cultural complex on Huron-Wendat territory in Wendake, 17 kilometres north of Quebec City. *HÔTEL-MUSÉE PREMIÈRES NATIONS*

as today’s trappings such as flat-screen TVs and soaking bathtubs, but they’re also cleverly decorated with fur skins, log furniture and First Nations artifacts. The newest amenities are an indoor pool and a fitness centre.

La Traite, a gourmet restaurant, serves breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner dishes that incorporate local and Indig-

enous ingredients. Some of the don’t-miss dishes are wild mushrooms with bannock croutons, stuffed pheasant, duck tartare, trout with Labrador tea froth, smoked black cod in a balsam fire nest, braised lamb and rack of venison in birch syrup.

Wendake’s Aboriginal attractions include the fascinating Musée Huron-Wendat Museum of artifacts; a long house that is a

IF YOU GO...

Quebec Aboriginal Tourism: 877-698-7827, quebecaboriginal.com.

Hébergement aux Cinq Sens: 819-583-0885, auxcinqsens.ca; open year-round; 250 Rang des Grenier, Piopolis (Mégantic region); 240 kilometres from Montreal. Five yurts, \$115 each per night for two, with kitchenettes/stoves, communal firepit/picnic tables; breakfast basket, \$7.50 p.p.; whirlpool/infrared sauna, \$25 for two. Some amenities are included in packages. Canoes, kayaks, rental bikes available in Piopolis. Animator evening, \$35 p.p.-\$75 p.p.; 60-minute massage, \$60. Packages of three, five or seven days for groups of eight to 12 people are available, June 17-22, July 13-20, Aug. 24-27. Bring towels, bedding, sandals, flashlight, food.

Hôtel-Musée Des Premières Nations: 866-551-9222, tourismwendake.ca; 15 Place de la Rencontre (Ekionkiestha), Wendake; Approximately 250 kilometres from Montreal. Rooms, \$159-\$189 for two; suites, \$229-\$259, including indoor pool, fitness, parking, Wi-Fi. Accompanied children 18 and under stay for free. Family packages include Huron attractions, dinner and breakfast with gratuities at La Traite (extra for Sunday brunch); from \$356 for two, or \$445 for four, per night (two adults, two children 12 and under).

replica of the dwelling that First Nations used for 1,000 years (you can sleep overnight here, if you want to); and a shop selling crafts made of beads, feathers and stone. You also can join several events, including the annual Wendake Pow-Wow, this year on June 29-July 1.

The Nations Spa also blends old and new, with Nordic baths linked by heated sidewalks and massage therapy.

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