



Flotel is an innovative micro-lodging concept, with six compact cabins housed in three shipping containers. PHOTOS: FLOTEL

HOTEL INTEL

FLOAT AWAY TO RELAXATION

Part boat, part hotel, eco-conscious Flotel is docked at lively Salaberry-de-Valleyfield



ROCHELLE LASH

The delightful new Flotel in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield is an innovative combination of land and sea. It offers micro-lodging in stylish converted shipping containers docked in a marina, so the nights are blissful and soothing, similar to sleeping aboard a boat. But sports, entertainment and restaurants are at the doorstep. Developer Bruno Lefebvre hails from this picturesque island region about 75 kilometres west of downtown Montreal, and he has spent most of his life cruising these waters. He knows the ebb and flow of the St. Lawrence River from Montreal to the west, and he chose an exciting, entertaining location in a protected bay of Lac St-François.

“Our guests have the experience of sleeping on a boat, but without having to buy one,” said Lefebvre. Flotel is a great light adventure — beautifully situated, well executed and eco-conscious. About 80 per cent of Flotel’s guests arrive by car, and the rest by boat or bicycle. Flotel could be the site of a romantic getaway for two or a sociable yacht-style gathering for a group of friends who can reserve multiple cabins. It’s also inspirational for a fun family staycation — kids are enthralled with the unusual environment. Lefebvre offers packages with boating and water sports such as kayaking, paddle boarding and even scuba diving to shipwrecks. Plus, you can simply climb down a ladder from your cabin’s patio and swim in a lake that’s known to be clean and clear. One thing is almost certain: you won’t need any sleep aids here. You’ll be lulled into dream-land by the rocking motion of the floating cabin. And Flotel is at the far end of Baie St-François,

secluded enough that even if it’s windy, the waves don’t get too high or choppy. **The concept:** Flotel is made up of six compact cabins housed in three shipping containers. Durable, recycled and weather-proof, the 12-metre structures are hitched together alongside a dock, so they make one long floating hotel. Flotel is on a platform that is seven metres wide, so it’s very stable. Reserve and check in online, and Lefebvre will contact you by phone, text or email to give you a door key code and instructions. Each cabin has two patio doors opening onto a semi-private terrace with futons facing west — especially beautiful with the sun setting over the water. For a secluded lounge ambience, guests can hang out on the rooftop decks, day or night. “Each unit is a little like a houseboat, but the mechanics, configuration and engineering are very different,” said Lefebvre. “And we have high-quality sanitary facilities.” Flotel is totally independent of land-based utilities. It has large solar panels that provide electricity and a propane device for hot water and heated floors.

The interiors: Compact and convenient, each Flotel cabin has a queen-size bed with a hotel-quality Simmons mattress and a small sofa that folds out into a single, for a maximum of three guests. The solar panels power the bedside reading light, a mini-fridge and a 24-inch TV that streams Netflix and YouTube. Guests are issued iPads to look up newspapers and check out details on local attractions. The acrylic bathrooms (or heads, as they say in the nautical world) are tiny and clean. Each is equipped with thick white towels; a mini-sink with drinkable, purified lake water; a toilet with dual flushes; and a shower. Lefebvre even thought of a full-length mirror and a hair dryer. **The neighbourhood:** Salaberry-de-Valleyfield is a fun, energetic town built along the lakeshore. Flotel is situated along a boardwalk and near a floating dock where concerts are often held from Thursdays to Sundays. You can have as well-rounded a vacation as you would at any resort. The fantastic Parc Delpha-Sauvé has a water park with slides, a heated pool and tennis — all free for Flotel’s guests. My favourite activity is the cycling path of Parc régional de Beauharnois; part of La Route Verte, it runs in front of Flotel and links with 70 kilometres of waterfront trails. If you hop a ferry with your bike across the St. Lawrence River to Les

IF YOU GO

Salaberry-de-Valleyfield is a 45-minute drive from downtown Montreal. **Flotel:** 514-808-5346, flotel.ca; 240 Victoria St., Salaberry-de-Valleyfield. Open year-round. **Price:** \$149-\$249 for up to three guests, depending on the date, including Wi-Fi, parking, in-room pod coffee, granola bar. Packages available with kayaks, paddle boards, scuba, bikes, e-bikes, pontoon rides, massage/spa treatments. **Local tourism:** 844-373-2214, beauharnois-salaberry.com, quartiergourmand.org

Cèdres or Les Coteaux, you can continue along the Soulanges Canal route. At Flotel, you start your day with in-room coffee and a granola bar, and you’re one block away from dining options. The town’s Quartier gourmand is home to several restaurants, including Mimosa in the Plaza Valleyfield Hotel and Club Touriste. You can dine on a leafy patio or organize a picnic lunch from La Petite Grange for a boat or bike ride.

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