

HOTEL INTEL

QUINTESSENCE SETS THE STANDARD FOR LAURENTIAN LUXURY

Tremblant sanctuary makes it a treat to stay indoors at this all-Canadian gem



ROCHELLE LASH

Swooping into Tremblant by private plane? Arriving from Hollywood? Or simply escaping to a sumptuous country hotel? Quintessence — Q to insiders — is probably your destination. When this aristocratic mountain sanctuary opened 15 years ago, I thought of an alpine schloss in a glamorous European town such as St. Moritz. But Q has an all-Canadian foundation, with its bold structure of stone and timber, its regionally inspired cuisine and its close-to-nature dreamscape, tucked between lake and forest, with sightings of deer, partridge and snow geese. Service and serenity also set Q apart. When you drive up beside the Bentleys and Lamborghinis, you enter a world of indulgence. Valets appear. Housekeepers polish and fluff. Servers deliver fine food, curated wine and a connoisseurs' selection of scotch. Masseurs are masters of their craft. Q has been marvellous since the get-go, and continues to set the standard for Laurentian luxury. The hotel's deeply cushy comforts are a sanctuary amid Quebec's capricious weather and Tremblant's strenuous sports scene. "Q is like a retreat," said general manager Sophie Racine. "You can live entirely within the hotel and be at peace. And we strive for very personal service — whatever you want, from heated ski boots to helicopter rides." **News:** Q is not the sort of place you want to change, but there are periodic updates. The suites have new delphinium-blue accents to reflect the lake and sky, and stylish black and white photogra-

IF YOU GO

QUINTESSENCE
Contact: 866-425-3400, 819-425-3400; hotelquintessence.com
Address: 3004 de la Chapelle Rd., Mont-Tremblant.
Rates fluctuate and are approximate: Five levels, currently about \$345-\$1,350, Sun.-Thurs.; Clagett's Cabin costs less. Rates higher Fri.-Sat. and approximately Dec. 1-March 31. CAA discount. Includes spa (not treatments), evening turndown, in-room Nespresso, resort shuttle, music/book libraries, valet parking, outdoor pool (not heated). Packages with meals and spa treatments. Discount of \$25 on massages until Dec. 1.
Dining: Bistro menu until 6 p.m. in wine bar or dining room. Dinner nightly. Chef's Table, seven or nine courses. Children's menu.
Spa Sans Sabots: sauna, steam, outdoor hot tub included for guests; fees apply for facials, massages, body treatments, yoga, mani-pedi.
Tremblant resort/ski/activities: 888-736-2526, tremblant.ca

phy that pops against the classic neutrals. The 13th edition of the fundraising evening Quintessence du Vin will be held Nov. 16, featuring a cocktail dinatoire and tastings of European and New World vintages, to support Club Rotary Mont-Tremblant's social causes. Admission costs \$150. Executive chef Sylvio Alonso



Quintessence offers five-star tranquility, mere steps from the bustling Tremblant mountain village. PHOTOS: COURTESY OF QUINTESSENCE



A suite at Quintessence is not simply a place to sleep.

will roll out new menus in December, with regional specialties such as Atlantic black cod and Brome Lake duck. Valectra, a smooth pianist and torchy lounge singer, will bring light jazz to the wine bar on Fridays, starting Jan. 11. **Suite life:** The hotel's concierge provides a list of seasonal activities, from alpine touring to ziplining, but I highly recommend spending a lot of time on the premises. Q is not simply a place to sleep. All 30 lavish accommodations are sublime, supersized suites that include fireplaces, balconies

with lake views, double whirlpool tubs, heated bathroom floors and divine beds. Five options range from a posh Q Suite to the extravagant Presidential, with a private penthouse terrace and outdoor hot tub. Imagine a languid afternoon. The tranquility is palpable. Veuve Clicquot Champagne is on ice, and the fireplace radiates warmth. It's prime time for an in-suite massage or a room-service request of oysters or foie gras. If it rains and you have to cancel your outdoor activities, you'll feel lucky. **Cuisine:** Chef Mathieu Casavant

creates brilliant breakfasts — thin buckwheat crepes with apricot-brandy jam; perfect eggs with tomatoes poached in oil, garlic and thyme; and the house favourite, butter-sautéed French toast with maple syrup. Head chef Alonso hails from France and has worked in Paris and Provence, so Q's cuisine at lunch and dinner is inspired by the classics. "It's refined, but it reflects countryside, with some robust dishes," he said. The current dinner menu includes quail, walleye and Angus beef. Starting Dec. 6 for high season, Alonso will add Atlantic black cod, salmon pot-au-feu, organic chicken and Brome Lake duck. The Chef's Table is the pièce de résistance — seven or nine courses of gastronomy. Alonso is already planning feasts for the wildly popular Christmas Day and New Year's Day brunches (\$55) and the glamorous Dec. 31 dinner festivities. I heard talk that bison will be one of the delicacies. Lunch at Q is a special experience — one that truly says you're on vacation. The views are inspirational: Lac Tremblant and the surrounding mountains are at their best in the mists, sunlight and colours of the season. You can choose hefty après-sports dishes such as gourmet poutine with braised venison and beer sauce, or go lighter with a sharing platter of seafood or beef tartare.

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