

HOTEL INTEL



From left, Ronnie, Tetsu, Nika, Akila and Yuko Yung with the house dog at one of Domaine Yamaska's cosy chalets in Bromont.

RUSTIC LUXURY AT DOMAINE YAMASKA CAN BE FOUND FROM FOREST TO FIELD



ROCHELLE LASH

Domaine Yamaska is a picturesque spread of rustic chalets built by a family, for families.

A sprawling, tranquil estate of pine and birch forests and meadows, Domaine Yamaska is on the outskirts of Bromont, minutes from all the sports, activities and dining that create one of the most exciting tourist towns around Montreal.

"In winter, most families come to downhill ski at Bromont, and the kids also are crazy about fat-biking," said Stéphane Carbonneau, who owns Domaine Yamaska with his wife, Monique Charette. "In summer, people come for golf, cycling and the Granby Zoo."

Bromont is home to terrific country dining, starting with Le Cellier du Roi at Golf Royal Bromont, which has a new executive chef from Europe.

Simple life: Domaine Yamaska is part of a wave of do-it-yourself vacations. Guests arrive at iron gates and enter a property that was designed almost entirely

by hand. Life here is laid back, and even the on-site activities are traditional — a skating rink and tobogganing in winter, and in summer, a playground and a heated pool with zany toys.

Guests can bring their own food and each chalet has a fully equipped kitchen and a propane BBQ. The chalets also have TVs, electric fireplaces and sofa beds in the living room. The walls are pine panelled and the floors are heated concrete, so everything is toasty, even in winter. The ceilings are more than three-and-half-metres high, which gives the compact spaces a feeling of air and space.

"It's convenient and economical," Carbonneau said. "And we planned it all to be low-maintenance, so it's always perfectly clean."

Craftsmanship: What makes Domaine Yamaska distinctive is that Carbonneau, Charette who is a nurse, and daughter Alexandra, a student, built the entire place by themselves, with only about 10 per cent of the work being done by outside contractors. Carbonneau is well versed in the construction arts, from building to plumbing to electricity.

The family started the Yamaska project by clearing part of the forest. They worked together, chopping wood, driving the

tractor, laying pipes for water and sanitation and finally landscaping, which included planting more trees so that each cabin could be private.

Carbonneau is unstoppable. He installed modern kitchens and bathrooms and built most of the furniture himself, down to varnished pine dining tables. I toured the property with him in his small truck, and he was most proud of his new trees, the winding pathways cleared of snow, and a clearing in the woods that he has prepared for a new venture: RVs will arrive this summer. **Sporting life:** Bromont, montagne d'expériences is at the heart of Bromont's sporting life, with skiing and snowboarding in winter and mountain biking and water slides in summer.

For action — a lot more action — Bromont has developed exciting municipal trail systems for mountain biking and hiking in summer and fat biking and snowshoeing in winter. Adventurers can explore scenic hills and valleys around town on several interconnected networks: Réseau du Mont Oak, Réseau du Lac Gale, Réseau de la montagne and Parc des Sommets.

In summer, Bromont also is home to four golf courses, extensive walking trails and lots of options for cyclists. There are

gravel trails for cruising around town or La Villageoise, a paved, car-free bike path that links to l'Estriade, which leads to Waterloo or Granby.

Indoor fun: A don't-miss attraction for youngsters is Wow Moms World. It's a modern family play and health centre, particularly for mothers and toddlers, "but dads come, too," said Danielle Lavigne, who owns it with her daughter Joelle.

Wow Moms World has a heated mini-pool for both flotation therapy and private swimming lessons, play areas, a baby care section, a health café and exercise classes and massages for kids

IF YOU GO

Domaine Yamaska: 514-248-6655, domineyamaska.com; 45 rue des Soulanges, Bromont. Price: Chalets for up to four people, \$175; chalets for four adults and two children, \$220; including Wi-Fi, bedding/towels, natural skating rink, summertime heated pool/water games.

Cellier du Roi: 888-281-0017, ext. 221, royalmont.com; closed Sun.-Mon.-Tues. three-course lunch, Wed.-Fri., \$29.50; dinner, Wed.-Sat., from \$42.50. Tasting menu \$64.50; three-course lunch, \$29.50 or dinner; Valentine's, \$75.

Wow Moms World: 450-305-6518, wowmomsworld.com, Bromont; fees apply for activities; café clients have access to play areas.

Tourisme Bromont: 877-BROMONT (877-276-6667), tourismebromont.com; Eastern Townships: 800-355-5755, eastern-townships.org; Bromont, montagne d'expériences: 866-276-6668, skibromont.com. Trail info: bromont.net, estriade.net.

and parents.

Dining out: Le Cellier du Roi at Golf Royal Bromont has a new executive chef, Olivier Crételle, who has worked in Paris and Monaco, and alongside Alain Ducasse, a three-Michelin-starred luminary.

Delicacies for lunch or dinner include foie gras, venison, sweetbreads, cod, scallops and braised beef cheeks. The Valentine's dinner (Feb. 14-15-16) will feature lobster salad, seafood, venison and strawberry chantilly.

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