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# AX HÔTEL MONT-TREMBLANT A TRENDY REBRAND FROM NEXT-GEN DYNAMOS

*With 92 rooms, it's family-friendly and practical, but also a cool place to chill*



**ROCHELLE LASH**  
Hotel Intel

The next generation rules at the new AX Hôtel Mont-Tremblant, in the community formerly known as St-Jovite.

A quartet of 20-something dynamos has rebranded and reimaged an old Comfort Inn with youthful energy and a trendy vibe.

The hashtag #axhoteltremblant already is a darling of Instagram and the place is "wow" on many levels, including moderate prices, contemporary interiors and an appealing lounge with a great fireplace. The MAD Grill, a bring-your-

own-beverage restaurant across the street, has steaks, seafood, pasta and a kids' menu. And AX has two personas: it is practical and family-friendly, and it's also a cool place to chill.

AX is two blocks from downtown's main street, yet it is country-quiet, perched high on a hill and surrounded by a forest of towering pines. Half of the rooms and the meeting spaces have great views of nature, as well as the ski area of Mont-Tremblant, 13 kilometres away.

I have seen this former Comfort Inn many times from Route 117, but overlooked it. Who imagined that it could become so attractive?

**Lounging:** The mini-spa is a little corner of wellness with a 16-person sauna and an outdoor pool, similar to a very large hot tub, heated to a toasty 37-to-40 degrees Celsius.

Les Sans Filtres Coffee-Bar is a large multitasking lounge with different spaces for different moods and times of the day/evening. There are communal tables for working or eating, leather sofas around a fireplace for relaxing or socializing, and high-topped bar stools for a 5 à 7 drink.

The playlist changes as the day evolves, featuring the likes of Ariana Grande, The Weeknd and Montrealers Charlotte Cardin and Milk & Bone.

Beverages include cappuccino, kombucha, privately imported wines, cocktails and local beer, and there are all-day bites: baked goods for breakfast, soup and sandwiches for lunch, and cheese and bar snacks later in the day.

**Lodging:** The 92 rooms are all quite spacious and have been redecorated with clean lines and a modular, Scandinavian-inspired minimalism. All have 55-inch TVs with 55 HD channels, mini-fridges and recessed lighting for subtle glow. The bathrooms also have been

redone with acrylic bath-shower combos. The toiletries are by Bella Pella, created in Montreal with essential oils and natural fragrances.

Different room configurations handle two or four people. Many rooms have sofa beds, especially handy for kids, and more than 40 have kitchenettes. Six rooms in the category called La Pétillante (The Bubbly) are designed for romance, with double whirlpool baths and gift bottles of sparkling wine.

**Dream team:** Three seasoned hoteliers — François Dallaire, Luc Desmarteau and Jean Beaulieu — own the AX, but it is completely operated by their children.

AX general manager, Sophieanne Dallaire, 24, is a graduate of l'Institut d'Hôtellerie du Québec and already brings experience from major hotels. Interior designer Audrey Hotte, 29, of Hotte Couture-Design in Mont-Tremblant, handled AX's décor.

Ann-Catherine Desmarteau, 26, a civil engineer trained at

## IF YOU GO

**AX Hôtel Tremblant:** 888-429-6000, 819-429-6000, 860 Lalonde St., axhotel.ca. Packages available with Mont Blanc (800-567-6715, skimontblanc.com), Tremblant (tremblant.ca, 888-738-1777); and tubing (877-671-5500, aventuresneige.com).

**Price:** Rates fluctuate. Without meals, Sun.-Fri., rooms for two start at approximately \$110, and rooms for four start at about \$140. Children stay free. Add \$10 for mountain view and \$15 for kitchenette. Add \$50 per room for Saturdays. Rates include outdoor heated pool, sauna, gym, newspapers, Wi-Fi, parking.

**Opening special until July 6:** \$89 p.p., Sun.-Fri., double occupancy, (plus \$50 per room for Sat.), adds welcome cocktail, four-course dinner at Le MAD Grill, bottle of wine, two-for-one breakfast.

**Le MAD Grill Tremblant:** 819-425-5757, madgrilltremblant.com; breakfast Mon.-Fri.; brunch, Sat.-Sun.; dinner Mon.-Sun., from 5 p.m. Bring your own beverage. Kids' menu available.

**Tremblant region:** 877-425-2434, mont-tremblant.ca.

École polytechnique of l'Université de Montréal, supervises AX's reconstruction and handled operations. And chef Marc-Antoine Desmarteau, 28, an alumnus of École Hôtelière des Laurentides, has created a menu to go with the renovations at Le MAD Grill Tremblant.

**Food:** MAD bills itself as a steak house, but it serves pretty much everything: meat, seafood, pasta, tartares and mussels many ways. Tantalizing appetizers (\$6-\$15) include salmon tataki, shrimp-crab cakes, melted Brie flambé and onion soup.

MAD's extensive menu of mains (\$22-\$39) features filet mignon, roast duck breast, seared tuna, braised short ribs, pasta and honey-glazed Cornish hen. There always is a deluxe burger (\$18) and sharing platters (\$65-\$85) of seafood and a 28-ounce tomahawk steak.

MAD also serves full breakfast, and if you bring your own sparkling wine, the restaurant supplies orange juice for mimosas. rochelle@rochellelash.com

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