



Mont-Rigaud ski resort has installed five container-style Coolboxes for ski-in-ski-out slope-side stays. They're expected to be ready for occupancy in a few weeks. PHOTOS: MONT-RIGAUD

HOTEL INTEL

# MONT-RIGAUD RESORT INSTALLS COOLBOX SLOPE-SIDE LODGING

Charming new chalets will allow visitors to broaden ski days into vacation getaways



ROCHELLE LASH

The new lodging at Mont-Rigaud just might be the most charming countryside opening of the year. Mont-Rigaud has been known for decades as the consummate learning area for newbie skiers and snowboarders, as well as seasoned downhillers seeking an easygoing day or evening. Now, this popular snow-sports area about 70 kilometres west of downtown Montreal has an overnight aspect, too. It has installed five cabins — two at the summit and three at the base — for casual ski-in-ski-out lodging, as well as year-round vacation getaways. They're expected to be ready for occupancy in a few weeks. "This opens a new world for our regulars," said Charles Jolicoeur-Côté, Mont-Rigaud's general manager and snow-school director. "And newcomers

IF YOU GO

**Ski Mont-Rigaud & Coolbox lodging:** 450-451-0000, montrigaud.com; 321 des Érables, Rigaud. Ski lifts currently run on the weekend; and full-time starting Dec. 14. **Price:** Coolbox lodging, approximately \$150 Sun.-Thurs. or \$225 Fri.-Sat., for up to four people; including Wi-Fi, bedding, kitchen utensils, indoor compost toilet, shower. Packages available with lift tickets, rentals and ski-lodge meals. **Tourisme Montérégie:** 450-466-4666, 866-469-0069, monteregiejustperfect.ca.

can broaden their ski days into vacation getaways.



Each Mont-Rigaud Coolbox chalet has a small kitchen, a bathroom with a compost toilet and shower, and two queen-sized bunk beds.

"We want to offer something different in the region," said Jolicoeur-Côté. "The Coolbox is part of a new trend of lodging in nature, a bit like glamping, but with a lot more comfort than a tent." **Coolbox vacation:** The Coolbox is a prefabricated cabin, similar in size and shape to a converted shipping container. The structure is made of well-insulated panels, equipped with electric heat, and in some units, propane fireplaces. Outdoors, the environment is all about nature. Mont-Rigaud is adjacent to a conservation area of maple and birch forests, and its other neighbours are corn and wheat fields. So, three cabins are nestled in this environment, a few metres from the lifts at the ski area's base. Now, think higher. Imagine the wonderful location at Mont-Rigaud's summit where two Coolboxes perch atop the mountain. You will be sleeping in abso-

lute tranquillity at night, with stars twinkling above. And guests would have a first-track opportunity to glide down the mountain before anyone else. These summit cabins are accessible only by chairlift, which runs until 9 p.m. nightly. If you like a cardio blast, you are welcome to hike uphill to your accommodations. And the mountain is exploring ways to get your luggage to the top. Guests can eat breakfast, lunch and supper at the skiers' lodge at the base (the cafeteria is open until 8:30 p.m., nightly) or they can bring their own provisions. Each Coolbox has a mini-kitchen with an electric oven, microwave, a small fridge and a dining table. After dinner, it's nighty-night in your own cosy container-style chalet, which has two queen bunk beds, for a maximum of four people, and a bathroom with a compost toilet and a shower. **On mountain:** Mont-Rigaud encompasses 188 acres of skiable terrain, with an expert snow

park and a range of novice to advanced runs. It is known for its snow school of 180 instructors who teach skiing and riding, plus freestyle and racing techniques. There are intensive eight-week learning programs, January to March, and also kids' camps in December and March. Here are some stats for this popular mountain. Rigaud has three lifts — a quad chair and two Magic Carpets for youngsters, one of which is new this season. There is snow-making on 100 per cent of trails; daily skiing and riding from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and a vertical drop of about 120 metres. (By comparison, Sommet St-Sauveur has a vertical of 213 metres, and Mont-St-Bruno has 134 metres.) In summer, Mont-Rigaud operates more than 15 kilometres of mountain bike trails. New eight-week programs called Sprockids, for ages five and up, run May-June and September-October, all focused on mountain biking. **Off-mountain:** For a non-downhill day, the Sentiers de L'escapade, a parkland also in Rigaud, encompasses five trails of all levels for a total of 27-kilometres of hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and fat-biking (year-round, free, ville.rigaud.qc.ca). Nearby, the Sucrerie de la Montagne is an entertaining and outdoorsy family excursion, with traditional Quebec sugar shack meals, country gastronomy at the domain's La Bête Sauvage and tours of the maple forests (year-round, sucreriedelamontagne.com). In summer, Arbraska Rigaud has zip-lining and climbing adventures on treetop obstacle courses and suspension bridges (April to October; ages five and over, arbraska.com/parc/river). Rochelle@rochellelash.com

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