

Auberge la Montagne Coupée

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE SEPTEMBER 7, 2010



Guests from Canada and the U.S. head to the Auberge la Montagne Coupée to snow mobile.

Editor's note: Some of the details might have changed since the original publication date. Please check with the establishment before heading out!

Original publication date: Jan. 7, 2010

ST. JEAN DE MATHA – Auberge la Montagne Coupée, a landmark resort hotel in the hill country of Lanaudière, is the result of the vision of one man and the TLC of two women.

Suzie Beaudry and Marie Préfontaine were long-time managers at Montagne Coupée. When the hotel's founder, Réjean Gadoury, died, Beaudry and Préfontaine became full-fledged innkeepers. Together, they have renovated the guest rooms and expanded the spa, called the Centre de Santé de la Montagne Coupée. Factor in moderate prices, and you have a great getaway in the Quebec countryside.

La Montagne Coupée, surrounded by mountains and forests, was built beside a massive ravine that gave the inn its name – literally “the cut mountain.” The hoteliers want to make sure their guests can soak up the beauty of this natural attraction, so they have set up several belvederes overlooking the valley, the snow-covered woods and far-away farms. At times, guests can see as far as Mount Royal.

“It's like an invisible hand has cut the mountain,” Préfontaine said. “And the auberge has been built around this wonder of nature.”

Outdoors, Montagne Coupée is a country lodge. Indoors, it is more like a contemporary hotel with a spa, a gift shop, babysitting services and banquet spaces. Its 37 rooms and 10 suites are equipped

with individual temperature control, telephones and televisions with DVD players – features that are not always available in country lodges. The fanciest rooms are decked out with king-size beds, fireplaces, heated bathroom floors and double whirlpool tubs.

The dining room at Montagne Coupée is beautiful, day or night. With its two-storey cathedral ceiling and towering wall of windows, the room is bright, lively and contemporary during the morning and afternoon. Tuck into a breakfast of French toast crowned with apples, crème fraîche and maple coulis, or waffles with berries and cheese, and you are ready to tackle the great outdoors. After a bracing Nordic ski or snowshoe trek, warm up with a fireside lunch of cream of rapini soup and smoked salmon, steak or sausages marinated in beer from L'Alchimiste, a micro-brewery in Joliette.

At night, the dining room takes on a regal, romantic look, with tapestry-covered chairs and white damask tablecloths. Executive chef Daniel Komarnicki hits his stride at dinner. He used to run the kitchen at Canard Noir, arguably Joliette's top restaurant. At La Montagne Coupée, he focuses on Quebec produce, with specialities like duck from Lanaudière farms, lamb from Kamouraska braised with Labrador tea and lemon preserves, and venison from Chaudière-Appalaches.

During the winter, Montagne Coupée's guests come from Quebec, Ontario and the United States mainly for snowmobiling, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Martine Gadoury, the daughter of the hotel's founder, operates Centre Touristique de la Montagne Coupée, which has snowshoeing trails and 60 kilometres of classic and skating Nordic ski trails, all available free to hotel guests .

“We also work with the Super Glissades,” Préfontaine said, referring to the nearby giant slides. “Many families come here for the two-night package, and they (the slides) are almost next door. It's a terrific snow-sports centre with tube-sliding, sleigh rides, skating, Nordic skiing and snowshoeing.”

All that exercise in the cold and wind calls for a spa visit. The Paradisio foot beauty treatment includes a massage with moisturizing butter. For weather-beaten skin, the Orange Blossom Regenerating Care uses hydrating creams on the face. Montagne Coupée's No Stress two-night spa package includes a deeply relaxing massage with violet-infused clay, water therapy and herbal tea.

St. Jean de Matha was already on the tourist map before Gadoury built Montagne Coupée. The town is home to a museum dedicated to Louis Cyr (1863-1912), a wrestler and weightlifter who once was considered the strongest man in the world. Cyr ran a travelling road show in Boston and the Maritimes and delighted audiences with exploits like lifting a horse or a weight of more than 1,000 kilograms. The subject of a biography, *The Strongest Man in History* by exercise pioneer Ben Weider, Cyr also walked the beat as a cop in Montreal's St. Henri district, where there is a statue of him. He retired to a farm in St. Jean de Matha.

In summer, Auberge La Montagne Coupée runs creative symposiums where artists gather along the dramatic belvederes of the ravine to capture the beauty of “the cut mountain” and its surroundings.

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If you go

St. Jean de Matha is a 90-minute drive from Montreal. Take Highways 40 east and 31 to Joliette and Route 131 north.

Auberge la Montagne Coupée, 1000 chemin de la Montagne Coupée, St. Jean de Matha: 800-363-8614, 450-886-3891, www.montagnecoupee.com.

Prices: Rooms come in four categories and cost, for two people, \$110, \$200, \$252 and \$277 Sunday to Thursday, or \$130, \$200, \$252, \$277 Friday and Saturday. Add \$12 per person for breakfast and \$42 per person for a table d'hôte dinner. Two-night minimum often is requested on weekends until March 14. Free lodging for youngsters under 3. Discounts available for children's lodging and meals. Spa and outdoor sports packages available. The two-night No Stress Package starts at \$310 per person, double occupancy, with meals and treatments.

Super Glissades de St. Jean de Matha, 2650 route Louis-Cyr, 450-886-9321, www.glissadesmatha.com, runs Monday to Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, to 9 p.m.; and Sunday, to 7 p.m. Entrance costs for a whole day range from \$27 for an adult to \$21.50 for a child 4-12. Discounts available for time of day, length of stay and type of activity.

Tourisme Lanaudière: 800-363-2788, www.lanaudiere.ca.