

QUEBEC WINTER FUN

TRAVEL

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**SALUT, BONHOMME!** Canada's largest pre-Lenten festival, the Carnaval, in Quebec City, turns 60 this year. Tighten your ceintures fléchées. **Page h2**

**OLD-FASHIONED FUN** The Saguenay area is arguably Quebec's winter heartland, where one can enjoy snowshoeing and ice fishing. **Page h3**

**TREMBLANT OASIS** The news chez Interwest is the \$5-million renovation of Le Westin Resort and Spa in Mont-Tremblant. **Page h7**

From festivals to adventures, there are plenty of cool ways to enjoy the year's longest season



**AU PETIT POUCKET**  
Sonya Lefebvre delivers breakfast at the rustic restaurant Au Petit Poucet in Val-David, which has been serving traditional Québécois cuisine for nearly 70 years.

Quebec's  
**Wonders**  
of **WINTER**



**HÔTEL DE GLACE**  
The lobby at the Hôtel de glace near Quebec City offers a warm welcome, even though the temperature is about -3 C. The hotel, with 44 guest rooms, includes thermal sleeping bags and four hot tubs.

**ROCHELLE LASH**  
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

**W**hen Gilles Vigneault, Quebec singer and folk hero, wrote "mon pays ... c'est l'hiver," he wasn't kidding.

It was the revolutionary 1960s, and Vigneault linked Quebecers' identity, resilience and pride to the rugged, raw climate in which they live.

It is a profound image. But winter's bracing air and heavy snowfall also define our playtime. Festivals, sugaring off, après-ski and outdoor hot tubs—as long as there is a fireplace in our future, we are pumped.

Did Vigneault mention that the mercury often dips below -30 C? Pas de problème, we say. The colder it gets, the better it is for such thrilling escapades as dogsledding and kite-skiing on frozen lakes. Not to mention our glacial gourmandises, such as ice apple cider and maple taffy on snow.

Here are some of the most wondrous winter experiences chez nous. Regrets, Montreal, we're hitting the road.

**Celebrate:** An enduring symbol of Quebec and one of the province's most raucous parties, the Carnaval de Québec will shake the capital with a day-and-night extravaganza Jan. 31 to Feb. 16. The festivities will rock our precious, 406-year-old capital from the cobblestone streets of the Old Port to the majestic Plains of Abraham. Don a red tuque and

enjoy dance parties in the Ice Palace, concerts, ice sculpture, snow baths and the Ice Canoe Race, the famed and treacherous competition across the St. Lawrence River. Bonhomme Carnaval will be there, and for more girl power, the Carnaval duchesses are returning this year.

**Cuddle:** The coolest lodging in Quebec is the Hôtel de Glace, a mighty and innovative engineering feat entirely constructed of tons of ice and snow. Invite someone you love because you'll be cuddling in frosty temps between -3 C and -5 C throughout the 44 guest rooms, the Ice Bar, the Grand Hall and the Chapel. On the warm front, there are thermal sleeping bags, four hot tubs, a sauna and heated loos next door.

**Trek:** The spectacular Parc national des Monts-Valin in the Saguenay region is a winter-white paradise of snowshoeing and back-country skiing that receives up to seven metres of powder annually. A shuttle runs from the Discovery and Visitors' Centre to the base of an enchanting forest, the Vallée des fantômes, named for the ghostly shapes of snow sculpted by the wind on the boughs of trees. Then, outdoor lovers trek three snowy kilometres to the lofty mountain lookout, Pic-de-la-Hutte. Strenuous, but the workout is good training for the taxing Tour du Mont-Valin, an international rally to be held March 15.

Please see ACTIVITIES, Page H4

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QUEBEC WINTER FUN

ACTIVITIES Celebrate with great dining, partying, skiing, dogsledding

CONTINUED FROM H1

**Feast:** More gourmand than gourmet, and more rustic than refined, Au Petit Poucet in Val-David has been dishing out traditional Québécois cuisine for nearly 70 years. The wood-beamed restaurant sells thousands of tourtières a year, plus baked beans, pea soup, cretons, maple-smoked ham and the home-spun stew, ragout de boulettes et pattes de cochon. Old-time skiers say the sinfully rich sugar pie is an antidote to cold climes. Lineups are common on weekends for the Ogre's Breakfast, which is served until closing at 4 p.m.

**Represent:** The Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau is showcasing 250 artifacts that portray how the drama of winter has shaped our nation's identity. Titled Snow, it's a cultural history that starts with survival techniques of aboriginal peoples and European pioneers, then progresses to depict snow as a forum for sports, an artistic muse and an economic driver. Snow, the show, runs until Sept. 28.

**Party:** Ski Bromont sparkles with the largest terrain in North America lit for night skiing and snowboarding when the snow is lighter and the air is warmer, or it feels that way. The ultimate after-dark experiences are Ski Bromont's Nuits Blanches, when the lifts run until 2 a.m. for skiing, riding, plus snow-cross competitions and freestyle coaching. The après-ski bar dances until 3 a.m., with prizes, live music and a heady coffee spiked with Coureur des Bois, a maple cream liqueur blended at nearby Domaine Pinnacle.

**Adventure:** You can channel your inner coureur des bois at Kinadapt near Rawdon. Kinesiologist Peter Boutin, psycho-educator Carole Turcotte and their 60 huskies have merged skills and passions to create an exceptional adventure playground with customized dogsledding for all. Nimble athletes rocket their dog teams through the woods at a breathtaking 35 or 45 km/h. Physically challenged sportsmen promenade leisurely with a guide. You can intensify the pioneering



FORWARD VISUALS/SKI BROMONT.

Ski Bromont has more night-lit terrain than any downhill area in North America for skiing and snowboarding.

New France spirit if you sleep overnight in a prospector's tent in the snowy woods, with a catered dinner of bison steaks, foie gras and Lanaudière wine and cheese. Just like the 1600s. But better.

**Chill:** With more than 40 exhilarating Nordic spas throughout the province, Quebecers are hooked on the therapy. We want to purify our bodies and stimulate our circulation, so we'll strip down to swimsuits in the middle of winter, frolic around snowbanks and pop in and out of hot chambers and cold baths. Station Blü-bains nordiques is a splendid spa in a vast near-wilderness of mountains and forests just north of Beaufort. You'll feel bouncy and brisk after a slow bake in a 100 C sauna, a fleeting dip in the frigid -5 C Rivière Lombrète and a soak in the bubbling hot tub, where you'll poach at about 38 C, along with 60 of your new best friends.



STATION BLÜ

A guest takes a refreshing dip in winter at Station Blü- bains nordiques north of Beaufort.

IF YOU GO

**For complete information on Quebec Tourism:** 877-bon-jour/877-266-5687, www.bon-jourquebec.com.

**Au Petit Poucet:** 888-334-2246, www.aupetitpoucet.com, Val-David. Laurentians Tourism: 800-561-NORD/6673, www.laurentides.com.

**Canadian Museum of Civilization:** 800-555-5621, www.civilization.ca; Gatineau. Outaouais Tourism: 800-265-7822, www.tourisme-outaouais.com.

**Carnaval de Québec:** Carnaval de Québec: 418-626-3716, www.carnaval.qc.ca. Quebec City regional tourism: 877-783-1608, www.quebecregion.com.

**Hôtel de Glace:** 877-505-0423, www.hoteldeglace-canada.com, Charlebourg/Quebec City.

**Kinadapt:** 450-834-4441, www.kinadapt.com; Rawdon. Lanaudière Tourism: 800-363-2788, www.lanaudiere.ca.

**Parc national des Monts-Valin, Saint-Fulgence, 800-665-6527, 418-674-1200, parksquebec.com/montsvalin; Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean Tourism:** 877-253-8387, www.saguenaylacsaintjean.ca.

**Ski Bromont:** 866-276-6668, skibromont.com, Bromont; Eastern Townships Tourism: 800-355-5755, www.easterntownships.org.

**Station Blü - nordic baths:** 855-261-0508, www.stationblu.ca, St-Tite-des-Caps; Beaufort Coast: 877-611-6145, www.cotedebeaupre.com.

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