

Good deals and family fun offered at hotels



ROCHELLE LASH
Checking In

With economic chatter swirling about the R-word, we're all looking for travel deals, especially with the kids.

If you're heading down the 401 to visit family — and who isn't? — Canada's largest hotel has a big soft spot for children.

The Chelsea Hotel Toronto has crafted a playground full of fun experiences, including a new food truck, a beach on the Toronto Islands, patio dining and family-friendly accommodations.

Regulars already know about Chelsea's Family Fun Zone, which embraces an indoor rooftop swimming pool with its popular Corkscrew water slide, plus Camp Chelsea, a year-round Kids' Centre and the Club 33 Teen Lounge. It's an unbeatable package that is great for keeping youngsters entertained.

And it's not all downtown. The hotel organizes a 30-minute bus/boat ride to Chelsea Beach on one of the Toronto islands near downtown, and families can swim and sun on a real sand beach by Lake Ontario, as well as visit the interactive Franklin Children's Garden and the Centreville amusement park.

A new food truck at the Chelsea's Yonge St. entrance dishes out tacos, corn and burritos, and beer from the Mill Street Brewery. The Chelsea's casual fresh-food café, Market Garden, also has terrace dining.

The hotel is winding up a \$30-million, three-year renovation that has updated the lobby and the restaurants, and in 2015,



Child-friendly Chelsea Hotel Toronto offers the Family Fun Zone, which includes a rooftop swimming pool, Camp Chelsea and the Club 33 Teen Lounge. **CHELSEA HOTEL TORONTO**

half of its 1,590 guest rooms — one- and two-bedroom suites, family suites with kitchenettes and bunk beds, and wheelchair accessible rooms.

The Chelsea offers discounts at most local sights, including Canada's Wonderland, the Lego-land Discovery Centre, Segway Ontario and the new-in-2015 adventure on the high seas of Lake Ontario — Pirate Life: Adventure Theatre Cruise.

The national leader in the bou-

tique business, Group Germain embraces the stylish, chic Le Germain Hotels and the cool, dollar-wise Alt Hotels. Both are popping with news and good value.

The group's new hospitality star is the former Hotel La Ferme in Baie Saint-Paul, Charlevoix, which now is called Le Germain Hotel Charlevoix. This creative, outdoorsy getaway recently installed a heated swimming pool and vehicle-charging stations.

The Charlevoix hotel is on the edge of charming, artsy Baie Saint-Paul, facing a forest, one kilometre from the St. Lawrence River and a few blocks from the main street of boutiques and galleries.

It is a revolutionary design winner for its contemporary rustic style, with casual terroir cuisine in three restaurants and a farm-inspired Foodie Package. The 145 varied rooms appeal to both backpackers and sophisticates, with a choice of lodging: dormitories for up to four people, family rooms with bunk beds, junior suites and lofts.

This hotel has so many special features. On Sundays, artisans, food producers and musicians gather at the hotel's Marché Public. Le Germain's Spa du Verger has Nordic-style installations

and a dreamy signature massage that uses soy-scented candle wax, warm oil and passive stretching to boost circulation and relax muscles.

One good deal is that you can stay at the stylish Le Germain Québec in historic Old Quebec and pair it with a sojourn in the countryside at Le Germain Charlevoix. This duo features a pass to the Charlevoix hotel's thermal spa (a savings of \$25).

More budget-conscious, the Alt collection sports bright minimalist designs, free Wi-Fi and eco-operating systems. Acts are few-frills, but guests enjoy the same fine bedding, towels and robes as they do at Le Germain's. ALTs don't have restaurants, but the Altetera snack corners are handy for on-the-go bites — juices, yogurt, nuts and gourmet chocolate.

The newest Alt opened in Winnipeg in spring 2015, in the Sports, Hospitality and Entertainment District (SHED), near the Winnipeg Jets' home ice, the MTS Centre, and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

In Winnipeg, the rate of \$149 features a choice of packages: a relaxing sojourn for two at Thermea, a Nordic spa with hot

IF YOU GO

Chelsea Hotel
Toronto: 800-CHELSEA/800-243-5732, 416-595-1975, www.chelseatoronto.com; Toronto. Rooms, suites, some with kitchenettes and bunk beds, from approximately \$149, for up to four people; including Wi-Fi, Family Fun Zone, two swimming pools, adult sundeck, fitness centre. Children under 17 stay for free; children six and under eat for free; 7-12 are at half-price. Baby gear available. Camp Chelsea runs until Sept. 7 and also on weekends year-round, with pre-booking. The Back-to-School special has a \$20 gift card to Old Navy and underground parking, from \$195 until Sept. 7.

Le Germain Charlevoix, Baie-Saint-Paul: 844-240-4700; legermainhotels.com; rooms and suites start at \$229, including Wi-Fi, swimming pool, gym; access to Spa du Verger thermal baths, \$25; Le Germain Charlevoix Foodie Package starts at \$395 per night for two and includes breakfast, dinner at Les Labours, meal gratuities, and the spa experience. Germain hotels are pet-friendly, \$30 per stay. To book with Le Germain Québec, Quebec City: 888-833-5253.

Alt Hotel Winnipeg: 844-946-6258, althotels.com; 310 Donald St., Winnipeg; \$149 year-round, includes fitness room, Wi-Fi. Choice of package available until approx. mid-Sept. Pet-friendly, \$30 per stay.

and cold baths; or a family visit for two adults and two children, with tickets to the Assiniboine Zoo's Journey to Churchill theme park of northern landscapes and animals.

The Winnipeg Alt's striking lobby decor features Altexpo, a mural composed of thousands of photos of local sites by photographer Bryan Scott. Guests can add their own photos to a live LCD feed by posting on Instagram using hashtag Altexpo.



The newest Alt Hotel of Group Germain opened in Winnipeg in spring with minimalist decor and affordable prices. **GROUP GERMAIN HOTELS**

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