

Hôtels Gouverneurs' sleek OTL brand debuts in Sherbrooke



ROCHELLE LASH
Checking In

The exciting new OTL opened in September, representing the cool, next generation of the Quebec group Hôtels Gouverneurs.

The 126-room hotel has dazzling interiors, a salt-water indoor pool and Boefish, an upscale steak-and-fish house and a sexy bar that has rocked Sherbrooke with its energy. The Paus spa, a sanctuary of baths and beauty treatments with spectacular rooftop installations, will open in a few months.

The new OTL is the perfect getaway for Sherbrooke, a city that is well worth a visit for snow sports, cycling and the excellent Musée des beaux-arts de Sherbrooke. **OTL brand:** Sherbrooke is the first location of the exciting OTL brand, and the second will open this year in Saguenay/Chicoutimi. In contrast to the mostly three-star Hôtels Gouverneurs, OTL is sharply modern and decidedly upscale. The Sherbrooke branch hopes to be awarded four stars "superior" within a few months.

The prestigious firm Neuf Architectes de Montréal created a pure and pristine glass and white palette accented with shimmering panels of falling water. The lobby is sleek and design-centric, with furniture in linen and leather and lit by elegant spheres of crystal chandeliers. Plus, top materials stand out — slate around the fireplace, natural walnut and oak woodwork and white porcelain floors. OTL's signature bedding is labelled Moie, a French play on words. (Moi means "me" and oie means "goose.") The Simmons mattress is custom-made and guests can wrap themselves around a body pillow.

Among the deluxe accents are rain showers in all the rooms and jet showers in the fifth-floor Premium rooms.

Technology: "OTL is spanning new, so it's plugged in," said general manager Patrick Lagueux. "We'll even have mecha-

IF YOU GO

Sherbrooke is a one-hour, 45-minute drive from Montreal. **OTL Gouverneur Sherbrooke:** 819-780-8800, 888-910-1111; 3131 Rue King W., Sherbrooke. **Price:** Rates fluctuate. Superior and Premium (fifth floor) rooms, \$179-\$209 for two. The suite with two bathrooms, living room and meeting room, \$354. Premium rooms have body-jet showers, free calls in North America, access to spa rooftop, lounge and baths. Rates include full breakfast, Wi-Fi, in-room Nespresso, bathrobes, indoor pool/whirlpools, 24-hour fitness centre, computers/printer, microwave on every floor; washer-dryer available. If you book directly, perks include a 3 p.m. checkout, if available. Two children, five and under, stay for free. Extra: babysitting, cribs, spa access for non-Premium rooms. **Boefish restaurant-bar:** 819-780-1444, boefish.ca; drinks and dinner daily from 4 p.m. and D.J. Thurs.-Sat. **Bureau d'information touristique de Sherbrooke:** 785 King St. W., 819-821-1919, destinationsherbrooke.com; Eastern Townships: 800-355-5755, easterntownships.org.

nized wine dispensers. You only have to choose and your glass of chardonnay or cabernet will be charged to your room."

The communal workstation in the lobby has four impressive, 27-inch iMac computers and a printer. And if you bring your own laptop, the front desk can supply HDMI cables for syncing to the 50-inch smart TV.

Each room has multiple charging outlets and an iPad where guests can peruse hotel services, stream radio, read newspapers and do an express checkout.

The gym is a state-of-the-art space. There are TVs, sure, but the Matrix cardio machines



The first of the new OTL Gouverneur brand has a dazzling interior decor and deluxe guest rooms. OTL GOUVERNEUR SHERBROOKE

have screens with virtual visits through New Zealand hiking trails and the Hollywood Hills in Los Angeles. And the weight and stretching equipment have QR codes that you can scan to link up to instructional videos on YouTube.

Drinks, dinner: Boefish combines a hot bar scene and a glamorous steak-and-seafood house with all the trimmings, including a communal chef's table, high-top perches and romantic red velvet wing chairs.

A DJ spins tunes on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays and during my visit, DJ T-Row (a.k.a. Chawki Amal) made magic with upbeat lounge music. A wall of

premium spirits and a tower of wine provide liquid inspiration, and the cocktail menu features such heady libations as the Pulp Fiction with cognac and the Trone de Fer (Games of Thrones) with whisky.

But it's the cuisine that has star power. Alain Campeau, director of operations for the Boefish brand, explains: "Everyone says quality is the priority, but we actually do it. The steak and fish are never frozen, because we carefully manage what we buy — all fresh sushi-grade tuna, salmon and shellfish for the raw bar, sashimi, ceviche and tartares."

Some of the most tantalizing

starters are crab cakes (with lots of crab), grilled octopus and a show-stopping cocktail of giant shrimp (6/8 size).

If you love beef, you'll be entranced by the voluptuous steaks dry-aging in a display fridge. Boefish's food and beverage manager, Alexandre Lacombe, pointed out the 12-ounce USDA sirloin, a luscious 18-ounce rib, and the super-size 40-ounce tomahawk for two, which is dry-aged for 45 days. Pedigree counts here, so the meat is either USDA, AAA or certified Angus and the kitchen has a unique-in-Quebec broiler that sears the steaks at ultra-high temperatures.

The neighbourhood: Sherbrooke has an urban nature theme, which makes it a fun and active visit year-round. OTL is on the town's main commercial strip, King St. W., which is all about cars, but you can get an infusion of green on the nearby in-town cycling path along Rivière Magog and Lac des Nations.

And the mini-mountain of Parc du Mont Bellevue, visible from almost everywhere in town, has 30 kilometres of hiking trails and mountain biking, and in winter, fat-biking and snowshoeing, plus downhill on a modest vertical drop of about 80 metres.

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