

WEEKEND LIFE

CALIFORNIA'S 'OTHER' WINE REGION

A working vacation in Paso Robles **B6**



A BAKER'S CAPER

Mystery of the 'green bread' **B5**

MONTREAL GAZETTE SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2017

SECTION B



Mont Sutton is famous for its glade skiing. Under new ownership, Sutton now has charging stations for electric cars, an outdoor sculpture garden and expanded snow-making. **MONT SUTTON**

ROCHELLE LASH

"Ski more and pay less" could be the motto of snow-sports areas for the 2017-2018 season. Quebec is home to more than 70 snow-sports areas, which are offering bargains and events such as demo days, races, charity ski-a-thons, New Year's festivities and Santa visits.

More than 1.4 million skiers and boarders in Quebec are gearing up for days and nights on the slopes, and for alt-sports such as alpine touring, snowshoeing, luge, tubing and Nordic skiing. The majority of downhillers are skiers, but about one-third of the market is made up of snowboarders.

The Quebec Ski Areas Association (ASSQ), which represents 74 areas, has several incentives to get newcomers started. Virtually all areas offer Ini-Ski and Ini-Surf programs for fledgling skiers and riders, at \$45 to \$100 for a lesson, rentals and lift ticket. The Never Ever Day, Jan. 21, organized by the Canadian Ski Council and ASSQ, is an introduction to the slopes for all comers age five and over. It's an easygoing \$25 for a lesson and equipment at participating areas.

ASSQ has also set up suburban locations for the Mysnow Experience, a venture for newbies aged five to eight. It's free and includes gear, a Magic Carpet ride and supervised skiing down a gentle slope. Dates are approximately Jan. 6 to March 11, weekdays for school groups and weekends for the public, and locations include Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Laval, Longueuil, Gatineau and Quebec City.

Here is a look at the top mountain areas for 2017-2018. Please note that there are often date restrictions on special prices.

SAVINGS ON THE SLOPES

There's no shortage of deals to be found for Quebec's 2017-18 ski season



Stoneham Mountain Resort offers day and night skiing and plenty of après-ski options. **OLIVIER CROTEAU**

LAURENTIANS

One of **Tremblant's** best buys is the Latitude Card, which buys two to seven days of lift access, at \$59 per day, if you purchase before Nov. 30. Or, with the 2@125 offer, skiers and riders can buy two Tremblant lift tickets for \$125 (valid Monday to Friday, Jan. 8 to Feb. 16; must be purchased 72 hours in advance, online or by phone). As a bonus, 2@125 tickets are transferable.

Watch for lodging deals on multiple-night stays at several of the resort's condo-hotels. If you book the Winter Vacation deal by Nov. 30, you get 15 to 25 per cent off a two- to four-night stay (some conditions apply). Tremblant's on-resort hotels offer free First Tracks skiing, snow tubing, skate rentals and rink. And for a fee, there's alpine touring, a Kids' Club and the Activity Centre's thrills: sleigh rides, dog sledding, ice climbing, helicopter rides, snowmobiling and snowshoeing.

Mont Blanc has terrific family appeal. Parents on a mini-vacation love the accessible prices and day-care, and kids go wild for the indoor pool and the Jungle Magique indoor playground.

Founded in 1957, Mont Blanc includes three peaks with varied trails, glades and the SnoZone park. You can buy a Jupiter Card for \$99 and use it to "steal" a lift pass on Thursdays for \$1 and get 25 per cent off on other days, with some restrictions.

Mont Habitant, another darling of families, has a big heart for small budgets. The Five of Seven

Days season pass costs \$130, and the truly price-conscious Three-Evening pass costs \$69, valid Wednesday to Friday. With those savings, you can add pizza and a beer: Habitant has updated its popular après-ski bar Le Trappeur, and expanded the menu.

The dynamic **Les Sommets** group is airborne with action. **Sommet St-Sauveur** already has the longest season in Eastern Canada — it opened Nov. 11 — and has a new snow-making system to keep the white gold coming. For more snow time, the Viking Alpine Coaster will add night lights for after-dark thrills.

At **Versant Avila**, young adventurers can check out two new yurts and a new play area near the tub-sliding slope. **Sommet Morin Heights** has updated its Kicking Horse bar. And **Sommet Gabriel** has a new mountaintop terrace with breathtaking valley views.

Les Sommets offers discounted, all-area season passes that also include **Sommet Olympia** and **Sommet Edelweiss** near Ottawa and Gatineau. Good buys include the Night-Time Pass at \$149 (after 5 p.m., except at areas closed Sunday to Thursday) and the Perfect Pass, starting around \$225 for the season and valid at certain times and on certain dates.

Les Sommets' flexible Northeast Option invites you to add the Eastern Townships. If you have a season pass to either Les Sommets or Bromont, montagne d'expériences, you can pay \$30 to \$60 extra to ski the other mountain, depending on days and times.

SEE SLOPES ON **B4**



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The snow season starts this month at Tremblant, one of the largest resort developments in Eastern Canada. TREMBLANT RESORT

Tips on how to get an edge on Quebec’s new ski season

SLOPES FROM B1

EASTERN TOWNSHIPS

Bromont, montagne d’expériences sparkles both on the slopes and on the social calendar. A 50-minute drive from the Champlain Bridge, Bromont has an impressive seven mountain facades that embrace 142 trails, glades and five snow parks, all on a vertical drop of 361 metres. Its 102 night-lit runs make up the largest night skiing terrain in North America.

Prepaid e-tickets for night skiing start at \$25 if you buy a minimum of two, and they’ll be good Monday and Tuesday after 5 p.m. as of Jan. 8. Or you can snap up a multi-day Apex card and save 32 to 46 per cent, even during holidays and spring break.

Mont Sutton is in the second year of new ownership and is going full tilt with projects: new charging stations for electric cars, an outdoor sculpture garden, snowboarding gear at Boutique Expérience Sutton and expanded snow-making.

Sutton’s \$25 lift tickets are back for skiers over 50 on Tuesdays, men on Wednesdays and women on Thursdays. With Sutton’s terrific glades, mogul runs and intermediate cruisers, you could stay a while. The Ski-Dodo-Ski lodging package is great value Monday to Thursday. For one night, breakfast and a day and a half of skiing at Mont Sutton, sample rates start at \$95 p.p., double occupancy at Auberge Le Havre Sutton, or at \$115 p.p. at Auberge Sutton Brou  rie, with restrictions on some holidays.

Owl’s Head has beauty and budget prices — a great snow combo. Starting Jan. 9, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, adults can ski and ride for \$21.74, with discounts for juniors and seniors. Children five and under ski for free. The overnight special at Auberge Owl’s Head is \$99 p.p., double occupancy, with breakfast, a three-course dinner and lifts, available Monday to Thursday, with lifts on Tuesday and Wednesday from Jan. 9.

Mont Orford has opened an exciting new junior snow park, with obstacles geared toward beginners. There is a new alpine touring



It’s a thrill to snowboard at Le Massif de Charlevoix, overlooking the Saint Lawrence River. At 770 metres, it boasts Eastern Canada’s longest vertical drop. LE MASSIF DE CHARLEVOIX

trail starting at Mont Giroux that connects with the woody network at S  paq Mont-Orford (Soci  t   des   tablissements de plein air du Qu  bec), then descends along the downhill trails.

Mont Orford’s Ski & Eat package, valid from Jan. 9, Tuesday to Thursday, is a tasty treat. You can ski or ride for a full day and warm up with a hearty lunch. It’s a set menu, \$27 for juniors/students or \$37 for adults at the cafeteria, or \$3 more at the Slalom Pub.

There are great savings if you buy tickets online, including up to 51 per cent off a daily pass.

LANAUDI  RE

This snowy sector is strong on family values. And Mont La R  serve, Ski Garceau and Val St-C  me have three of the four highest vertical drops north of Montreal, all more than 300 metres (behind Tremblant, at 645 metres, and slightly ahead of Mont Blanc, at 208 metres).

At thrilling **Val St-C  me**, often a stop on the FIS World Ski Championships circuit, you can follow in the tracks of champions including Alexandre Bilodeau, Mikael Kingsbury and the fabulous Dufour-Lapointe sisters.

Along with an excellent snow school, Val St-C  me is home to the Freestyle Excellence Centre, a world-class training ground for moguls and acrobatic skiing.

This season, watch for Val St-C  me’s new trail, a new beginners’ snow park, more glades, slopeside lodging and Tuesdays at a price-conscious \$23.05.

QUEBEC CITY/CHARLEVOIX

Stoneham Mountain Resort rocks with terrific skiing, riding and apr  s-ski. A 25-minute drive north of Quebec City, Stoneham has three peaks of trails, a new high-speed quad, the only Olympic-sized halfpipe in the province and one of the longest night skiing areas

in North America. Stoneham’s beloved sister mountain **Mont Ste-Anne** combines a romantic air with serious downhill and superior snow conditions. The mountain-top chalet is a special experience, with dramatic views of the Saint Lawrence River.

Both Stoneham and Mont Ste-Anne offer the In the Heart of Winter Ski Package, Jan. 8 to Feb. 18, which features a third night of lodging and a third day of skiing for free.

The Ski Quebec City + Charlevoix partnership packages action on the slopes with lodging, including many choices such as Fairmont Le Ch  teau Frontenac and inns around the ski areas and Baie-St-Paul.

Le Massif de Charlevoix is home to exceptional skiing and riding, with an abundant snowfall and Eastern Canada’s longest vertical drop, at 770 metres. And Le Massif’s luge is a wildly popular alt-sport in the area’s backcountry. Trails here are so long that Le Massif is almost Western in scope.

IF YOU GO

- Quebec Ski Areas Association:** 877-614-2777, mysnow.ski
- LAURENTIANS:**
- Les Sommets (formerly Sauveur):** 450-227-4671, sommets.com
- Mont Blanc:** 800-567-6715, skimontblanc.com
- Tremblant:** 888-736-2526, tremblant.ca
- Mont Habitant:** 450-227-2637, monthabitant.com
- EASTERN TOWNSHIPS**
- Bromont:** 866-276-6668, skibromont.com
- Mont Sutton:** 866-538-2545, montsutton.com
- Owl’s Head:** 800-363-3342, owlshead.com
- Mont Orford:** 866-673-6731, orford.com
- LANAUDI  RE**
- Ski La R  serve:** 877-424-1373, skilareserve.com
- Val St-C  me:** 800-363-2766, valsaintcome.com
- Ski Garceau:** 800-427-2328, skigarceau.com
- QUEBEC CITY/CHARLEVOIX**
- Ski Quebec City + Charlevoix (lodging packages):** 800-463-1568, skiquebec-charlevoix.com
- Mont Ste-Anne:** 888-827-4579, mont-sainte-anne.com
- Stoneham Mountain Resort:** 800-463-6888, ski-stoneham.com
- Le Massif de Charlevoix:** 877-536-2774, lemassif.com
- Mont Grand-Fonds:** 418-665-0095, montgrandfonds.com

One great perk at Le Massif is that children under 17 get free lift tickets during an extended spring break, Feb. 12 to March 26, with conditions.

Booked before March 1 and based on a minimum three-night family lodging package, one junior can ski for free for each adult who has a three-day lift ticket.

Bon ski.