



KiNipi Spa Nordique & Hébergement outside of Trois-Rivières is perfect for relaxing. PHOTOS: KINIPi SPA NORDIQUE & HÉBERGEMENT

TROIS-RIVIÈRES SPA IS A PLACE TO LUXURIATE – AND LINGER



ROCHELLE LASH
Checking In

KiNipi Spa Nordique & Hébergement, on the outskirts of Trois-Rivières, is inviting you to spend a few days, not simply a few hours.

The attractive Scandinavian-style getaway has evolved into a mini-resort of wellness with the opening of 24 deluxe suites, in addition to its indoor-outdoor spa, gourmet bistro and conference rooms designed for blissed-out meetings.

The main building is a striking example of rustic-contemporary architecture, with a soaring cathedral ceiling, stairways of glass and walls of stone and timber. The wow factor here is the splendid setting in the rugged area of Mauricie. The property is surrounded by the region's famous forests of towering pines and firs, so serenity rules, both at the spa and in the spanking new guest suites. KiNipi has comfort, nature and beauty all around.

Trois-Rivières, halfway



The suites are well-equipped and offer serene views of nature.

between Montreal and Quebec City, and seven kilometres from KiNipi, is a worthy destination on its own or a great stopover if you're driving to the capital.

Founded in 1634, Trois-Rivières is the province's second oldest city, with history reflected through the Musée québécois de culture populaire and the Old Prison, which offers tours guided by a former inmate. There also is a scenic bustle of summer activity along the Parc Portuaire, a promenade overlooking the St. Lawrence River that includes views of ocean-going ships, leisure sailboats and working tugs.

Lodging: KiNipi's new suites are minimalist, modern and equipped with the best. The attractive contemporary decor has a nature motif, with glass balconies looking out onto the forest, and lots of ultra-modern lighting. The kitchens sport stainless steel appliances, pod coffee makers and juicers, and the sharp bathrooms cosy up with heated towel racks.

The living room is all about open space and air, and the bedroom has a glass wall so you can gaze at the trees and sky.

Spa life: KiNipi is an Algonquin word loosely meaning "your water," so the spa experience fea-

tures hot whirlpools, cold basins and therapeutic soaks under waterfalls, all connected by heated stone pathways. You can tiptoe around fire pits and lounge on a deck with hammocks.

From there, spa-goers head indoors to the eucalyptus steam room, the dry sauna and the relaxation lounges. The ideal system is to do the circuit three times over two to three hours, with the hot and cold therapy boosting circulation and easing tense muscles.

Spa treatments include exfoliation, massages for moms-to-be, facials for men and collagen masks.

Dining in: The suites have full kitchens, but this spa resort also serves top-drawer cuisine at its bistro, KiNipi à la Bouche. Most people are wrapped and hooded in white terry spa robes, so it definitely is informal, as well as bright and cheerful. The menu is ambitious, with large portions of gourmet food, as well as fancy pizza and burgers, all available for either lunch or dinner. Starters might be cheese fondue with fennel, salmon tartare, duck pâté or a specialty, wild mushrooms with shrimp. Main courses include pasta with duck confit, bison steak, seafood cassoulet and an interesting chili-curry of chickpeas and potatoes.

Dining out: One gastronomic must-stop in Trois-Rivières is Poivre Noir, a chic, contemporary restaurant on the Port Portuaire, with glorious views of the St. Lawrence and a popular terrace in summer. Chef-owner José-Pierre Durand studied in

IF YOU GO

Trois-Rivières is a 90-minute drive from Montreal via Highway 40 East and exit for des Cheneaux Blvd. to des Forges Blvd.

Restaurant Le Poivre Noir: 819-378-5772, poivre noir.com; 1300 du Fleuve St., Trois-Rivières. Two-course lunch \$20-\$24, Wed.-Fri.; dinner small/medium plates, \$18-\$29, Tues.-Sat., and after May 1, also Sun.

KiNipi Spa Nordique & Hébergement: 819-693-9999, 888-954-6474, kinipi.ca; 8210 des Forges Blvd., Trois-Rivières. Spa (without lodging), \$38-\$48. Spa treatments are extra.

Lodging: Prices are approximate and fluctuate. One-bedroom suite starts at \$179 per person, for two people, Sun.-Thurs.; or \$209 per person, on Fri.-Sat./holidays/high-season dates. In a two-bedroom suite (with two bathrooms), the third and fourth guests pay \$139 per person, weekdays or \$169 per person weekends. Rates include breakfast, indoor parking, and spa access on day of arrival and departure, with bathrobe, towel, blanket, locker, Wi-Fi.

Tourisme Mauricie: 800-567-7603, tourismemauricie.com. Trois-Rivières: 800-313-1123, tourismetroisrivieres.com.

France after learning the basics at l'Institut de Tourisme et d'Hôtellerie du Québec (ITHQ) in Montreal. Poivre Noir's food is outstanding, original and market-fresh, so the offerings change weekly. A recent haute cuisine dinner menu featured oysters and a tiny Quebec sea urchin blended with cream and "caviar" of herring. The small-to-medium-sized plates of mostly Quebec delicacies included: beef from Wagyu Québec near Drummondville, scallops and lobster from Îles de la Madeleine, milk-fed baby pork from Ferme Gaspor in St-Jérôme and foie gras from Montérégie.

The presentations are a big part of such distinctive dishes as bison tartare, which comes with a tiny glass vial of tomato oil. And creativity bubbles in fusions like shrimp with piri-iri and "black yogurt" with squid ink.

Poivre Noir has an important list of privately imported wine, by the bottle or by the glass, and signature cocktails like the Poivre Martini and the Aurora Boréal, with Quebec-distilled Ungava gin, Labrador tea, white spruce and rosemary.

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