



Le Germain Charlevoix's avant-garde design by industry leader LemayMichaud Architecture Design is open, modern and minimalist.

IF YOU GO

Le Germain Charlevoix Hotel & Spa: 418-240-4100, 844-240-4700, germain-charlevoix.com; Baie-St-Paul.
Price: Rates fluctuate. Nine levels of rooms, suites, studios and lofts range, for two, from \$199-\$206 (Sun.-Thurs., current low season); or \$257-\$485 (Fri.-Sat., high season, starting end of May). Extra adult, \$30. Children six and under stay free. Discounts for prepaid visits. Thermal experience at Spa Nordic Le Germain: \$27 for guests; \$30-\$50 for non-guests. Flexible checkout time when booked directly, upon availability. Rates include swimming pool, in-room tea/ Nespresso, bathrobes/slippers, parking, car charging stations, Wi-Fi, computer stations, gym, winter skating, walking trail, fire pit. **On request:** baby gear, yoga mat, snowshoes. Pet-friendly, \$30 per stay. Children's menu.
Charlevoix region: 800-667-2276, tourisme-charlevoix.com.

HOTEL INTEL

LE GERMAIN CHARLEVOIX SHOWS SAVOIR-FAIRE DE CHEZ NOUS



ROCHELLE LASH

Le Germain Charlevoix Hotel & Spa represents Quebec at its most pure and progressive.

A showcase of savoir faire de chez nous, Le Germain Charlevoix is a contemporary architectural sensation in the historic, folksy village of Baie-St-Paul. Its offerings include excellent regional cuisine by executive chef Alexis Jegou; an impressive Nordic spa, which is a Quebec specialty; and artwork from the Musée d'art contemporain de Baie-St-Paul.

We could call Le Germain Charlevoix a boutique resort, but it really is a community, encompassing its own animal farm, a summertime market on Sundays and an adorable country railway station for the

touristic Train de Charlevoix.

Outdoors, Le Germain's guests enjoy a swimming pool (in summer), a trail to the St. Lawrence River (by foot or fat-bike) and a fire pit. Indoors, there is a full gym with a kids' play area and the Arseno & Co. gift shop, run by Josée Arsenault (aka Mme. Jean-Yves Germain). Holiday weeks are busy with yoga, aqua-exercise, kiting, painting and craft workshops, nature walks, garden tours or seasonal visits to the menagerie of Highland cattle, sheep, ducks and pigs.

This sounds like a lot of action, but the hotel is surrounded by meadows and mountains, so its views are serene and the ambience is tranquil.

Contrasts: The avant-garde design by industry leader Lemay-Michaud Architecture Design is open, modern and minimalist, using glass, slate and steel as a backdrop to rustic elements such as raw timber and murals of country scenes.

The hotel is sharply upscale, with top-drawer furnishings,

valet parking and luxuries like an attentive concierge, heated bathroom floors and bathrobes in every room.

But it also is casual and relaxed in style, as well as good value. The exceptional buffet breakfast costs an easygoing \$20; a gourmet evening table d'hôte starts at \$52; and guests are treated to holiday programs and the use of a Lexus SUV, when available.

Another fusion of styles: Le Germain is a delight for kids, and sophisticated enough for the most savvy travellers.

Rooms: The 145 units in several buildings cover a range of prices and styles. There are a few king and mostly queen hotel rooms, plus suites, lofts, family rooms with bunk beds and even dorms — probably the most attractive dorms you have ever seen.

The functional, modular and spare design plays on nature with wood panelling and earthy fabrics. The furnishings highlight Quebec's talents, too. The mattresses are from Matelas Dauphin in Quebec City; woven bed throws



Le Germain Charlevoix is an enchanting hotel community with an animal farm, a Nordic spa and gourmet bistro cuisine.

and decorative pillows are by Anne-Marie Hamel of Clermont; and the down comforters and pillows are made by Marie l'Oie of Saint-Jérôme.

Cuisine: Chef Jegou calls his lusty cuisine "bistronomy," which means he serves delectable gourmet dishes and uses farm-fresh ingredients. Jegou sources the finest Charlevoix meat and produce, as well as Atlantic seafood, and his team even manages an organic garden and beehives for fresh honey.

At Les Labours, the dining room specialities include foie gras, lamb with ratatouille, pheasant and pork cheeks braised with beer. Among Jegou's favourites are a delicate "surf and turf" of pork and scallops, rare breast of duck and a fancy poutine made with sweetbreads.

Le Bercail, a bistro-lounge, combines fireside socializing, cocktails, family suppers and

casual bites such as Charlevoix charcuterie and cheeses, tartares, pizza and pasta. Le Bercail presents a DJ on Fridays and live music on Saturdays.

Spa life: Spa Nordic Le Germain is boutique-sized, accommodating up to 60 people at one time, compared to some larger installations with a capacity for 100 to 200 patrons. And they're spread throughout the hot and cold baths and steam, sauna and relaxation rooms, so you can be almost solo at times.

Spa director Chantal Barnwell recommends the newest treatment, The Detox, for athletes who want to flush out lactic acid or for bon vivants who have indulged in rich food and wine. The Head-to-Toe, ideal for spa newbies, combines a Swedish rubdown and a facial, with products from Payot, Valmont, Cuccio or Sparitual.

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