

# COVID CREATIVITY AT TREMBLANT

Operators put pandemic protocols first and offer top-notch visitor experiences

To go or not to go? Please follow government guidelines, which permit Quebec hotels to operate outdoor-only aquatic facilities and offer massages. For ski rules, refer to the Association des stations de ski du Québec's website ([mysnow.ski](http://mysnow.ski)). If you are sharing a room, chalet or condo, everyone in your group must live at the same address. Quebec's curfew rules apply.



ROCHELLE LASH

Here's a look at some creative COVID planning at two lodges in the Mont-Tremblant area.

**Slopeside South:** "Innovation is key," said Anne Marie Johns, general manager of Fairmont Tremblant, "and keeping youngsters entertained is one of our goals, while maintaining our pandemic protocol."

The hotel has reduced its guest capacity to maximize distancing, instituted gaps of 24 to 48 hours between visitors, and added details like TV remotes wrapped in plastic, a kit of hygiene essentials, a health questionnaire and a temperature check.

Fairmont Tremblant's heated outdoor pool, the hotel's exceptional attraction, is meticulously sanitized hourly, and there is a cap on the number of users.

With lots of family-friendly things to do — even within current limitations — and the ski lifts only steps away, the Fairmont is seeing more extended stays than usual.

One big perk is that the Fairmont and many on-mountain hotels invite those 17 and younger to stay for free.

Johns's team has organized kid-friendly activities in private

spaces, mostly free and by reservation for single-family bubbles: a cinema, games rooms and an arts and crafts lounge. The big hit (fees apply for this one) is the magical Igloo Experience, an outdoor mini-playroom with a firepit, s'mores and hot chocolate.

Executive chef Jonathan Legris, formerly of Montreal bistros L'Express and Laloux, has shifted his excellent cuisine from the Fairmont's Choux Gras Brasserie Culinare to Choux Gras Chez Soi. His gastronomic meal kits (for takeout, and possibly for guests on Valentine's Day) include wild mushroom pasta, roast lamb or tomahawk steaks. The more accessible in-room dining menu features suppersize burgers, poutine, veal chops au jus, duck confit, steak and stone-baked pizza.

**Tremblant North:** The petite and personal Plumes et Glisse — one of the top-rated B&Bs in the Tremblant area — has instituted strict sanitization practices, plus contact tracing and a health questionnaire. It is operating only two rooms on different floors, with a two-night minimum and at least a 28-hour gap between bookings. Owners Jenny Pearson-Millar and Craig Millar have created private dining spaces for each couple, also on separate floors, with gourmet cuisine and artful presentations by candlelight. Plumes et Glisse has been consistently awarded close to a perfect score on Booking.com.

Pearson-Millar is a trained Cordon Bleu chef, so meals (for guests only) are amazing. Your sumptuous breakfast might be a soufflé-crêpe with roasted apples and ice cider; or poached, farm-fresh eggs with wilted spinach, local feta cheese and hollandaise drizzle. Dinner features dishes such as an all-Atlantic bouillabaisse with salmon, cod, scallops



The woodland B&B Plumes et Glisse is one kilometre from Tremblant's North Side lifts. PLUMES ET GLISSE



Igloo Experience at Fairmont Tremblant offers a private outdoor family play space with a firepit, s'mores and hot chocolate. FAIRMONT TREMBLANT

and shrimps perfumed with local saffron; a fragrant tagine of organic root vegetables; or lamb shank braised in red wine and scented with balsam fir. Bring your own beverage.

Are you celebrating? Plumes et Glisse is secluded and romantic, making it a popular Valentine's destination. Pearson-Millar and Millar were born in Ireland, so March is alive with the authentic lilt of the Emerald Isle.

The B&B is one kilometre from Tremblant's North Side ski

lifts, in the municipality of Lac-Supérieur, the insider area for convenient parking, better snow and shorter lift lines. Tucked in the woods, Plumes et Glisse has bird feeders all around, so guests are serenaded by songs of the forest.

#### IF YOU GO

**Tremblant resort/ski:** [tremblant.ca](http://tremblant.ca); 888-738-1777.

On-resort participating hotels, including Fairmont, invite children 17 and younger to stay for

free (with adults, under certain conditions), and offer free First Tracks skiing, skate rentals/rink. Extra: lift tickets, alpine touring (uphill trek, downhill ski) and activity centre (massages, virtual reality games, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing access/rentals at Domaine St-Barnard, Parc national du Mont-Tremblant and Ski de fond Mont-Tremblant at Golf Manitou, which connects with Linear Park of Le P'tit Train du Nord).

**Fairmont Tremblant:** 819-681-7000, 866-540-4415; [fairmont.com/tremblant](http://fairmont.com/tremblant). Ski-in/ski-out. Children 17 and under stay for free, with conditions. Starting at approximately \$199 (Sun-Thurs.) with packages (on availability) such as Ski-In Ski-Out Office (\$10 credit on food per day, late checkout, 20 per cent discount at Moment Spa); weekends start at \$299; all rates include outdoor pools, Wi-Fi in public spaces, most activities, ski valet. Igloo Experience, \$100 for 90 minutes, per family.

**Plumes et Glisse B&B:** 819-688-3444; [plumesetglisse.com](http://plumesetglisse.com); Lac-Supérieur/Tremblant North. Room for two with gourmet breakfast, \$338 for two nights (min. two nights). Adding dinner on one night, it's \$456 for two people, two nights. Singles' rates and multiple-night discounts available. No self-catering. **Mont-Tremblant tourism:** 877-425-2434, [mont-tremblant.ca](http://mont-tremblant.ca).



Bicycles are the preferred way of getting around in Amsterdam as first-class bike lane infrastructure makes cycling a breeze. DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCELLI/RICK STEVES' EUROPE

## COMMENT

# POWER OF THE PEDAL

Cycling through Amsterdam is a pleasure for the senses, *Rick Steves* writes.

As we've had to postpone our travels because of the pandemic, I believe a weekly dose of travel dreaming can be good medicine. Here's a reminder of the fun that awaits us in Europe at the other end of this crisis.

Sightseeing is more than just seeing. To get the full experience of a place, you need to feel, hear, taste, and smell it. On this visit to Amsterdam, I'm making a point to focus on sensual travel. It's a city made to engage all the senses.

I always rent a bike here. I want

to feel the bricks and pavement beneath two wheels. The lack of hills and the first-class bike lane infrastructure makes biking here a breeze. The clerk at the rental shop must be tired of explaining why they don't carry mountain bikes in this flat land. When I ask, he responds — in classic Dutch directness — "Mountain bikes in the Netherlands make no sense at all. When a dog takes a dump, we have a new mountain. You pedal around it ... not over. It's no problem."

I ride off along the shiny wet cobbles, my Amsterdam experi-

ence framed by my black bike's handlebars. I get pinged by passing bikes and ping my bell to pass others. When it comes to bike bells, there's no language barrier. For my own safety, I wish I had a bigger periphery, as cars, trams, bikers, and pedestrians seem to float by from all directions in silence — their noise lost in the white noise of breezing through this dreamy city on two wheels.

Reaching the Red Light District, I stop to use a classic old street-corner urinal. It's painted a deep green and designed to give the user plenty of privacy from the neck down and a slice-of-Amsterdam view at the same time. The pungent smells of pot smoke and someone else's urine compete with the dank smell of the

canal. I remember one of the new Amsterdam facts I've learned: A handful of people drown in the canals each year. When their bodies are finally dredged up, very often, their zippers are down. They were very drunk and, rather than using the civilized urinal as I did, they used the canal ... their final mistake. Across the lane, an abundant woman in a cliché of lingerie eyes me seductively from a window, framed in red. I think to myself, "This is probably the most unforgettable trip to a urinal I'll ever have in my life."

Continuing on my ride, it strikes me that much of Amsterdam still looks like it did three or four centuries ago, during the Dutch Golden Age, when this was the world's richest city.

I continue on to a square called Museumplein where Amsterdam's three big art museums are gathered.

I stop a moment to take in the square. Long lines plague the Dutch Master-filled Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh Museum — both understandably popular. There's rarely a wait at the Stedelijk Museum, nicknamed "the bathtub" because of the striking shape of its modern architecture. Inside are 20th-century favourites (Dalí, Picasso, Kandinsky) and crazy contemporary art. I'm not a big

fan of the abstract style, but the artwork at the Stedelijk is really fun (perhaps really, really fun if you're into marijuana — sold with a smile in the city's many "coffee shops").

The city's biggest green space, Vondelpark, is just a short pedal away. I roll by snippets of Dutch conversation — families with kids, romantic couples, strolling seniors, and hippies sharing blankets and beers.

By now my sense of taste is ready for a little attention. Last night I enjoyed a grand rijsttafel (literally "rice table"), a ritual dish for tourists in Holland. Not a true Indonesian meal, it's a Dutch innovation designed to highlight the best food of its former colony — specifically all the spices that in some ways originally motivated the colonial age. The dinner includes 20 dishes and a rainbow of spices with white rice to mix and mingle on your plate and palate. Working your way through this tasty experience, it's clear why the Dutch called Indonesia "The Spice Islands."

This article was adapted from Rick's new book, *For the Love of Europe*. Rick Steves ([www.ricksteves.com](http://www.ricksteves.com)) writes European guidebooks, hosts travel shows on public TV and radio, and organizes European tours. You can email Rick at [rick@ricksteves.com](mailto:rick@ricksteves.com) and follow his blog on Facebook.

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