

HOTEL INTEL

PRIVACY IS PARAMOUNT AT GLAMPING DOMES

Peaceful retreat perfect for unwinding and enjoying local wine, gourmet treats



ROCHELLE LASH

To go or not to go? This new glamping domain offers isolated living steeped in nature year-round. Please follow government guidelines, which currently discourage inter-regional travel in Quebec, but won't forever.

Do you want to be alone? Do you like wine? Do you love the great outdoors?

If you answered “yes” to any of those questions, Éric Blouin and Annie Trépanier invite you to Mauricie, a vast and woody region about a two-hour drive northeast of Montreal.

Blouin and Trépanier operate CAMPagne au Clos Sainte-Thècle, an eco-conscious glamping site with a trio of domes nestled between the forest and their vineyard, Vignoble Clos Sainte-Thècle.

The couple spent 20 years in the West Coast wine world of Oregon and B.C., but home is home, and they decided to return to Quebec, where they have been producing wine for two years.

“Wine came to me naturally,” said Blouin, “and eventually I trained at the International Sommelier Guild in Vancouver.”

Visitors came to sip and buy, but many wanted to stay overnight, so Blouin and Trépanier opened lodging this month.

Lodging: “The domes are in the glamping category, it’s true, but they are more deluxe than people think,” said Trépanier,

IF YOU GO

From Montreal, it is 200 kilometres to Ste-Thècle via Highway 40 east to Trois-Rivières and Routes 155 and 153 north. While the route is currently not in operation, travellers can usually take Via Rail to Hervey-Jonction (five kilometres from Ste-Thècle) and Blouin offers pickup service.

CAMPagne au Clos Sainte-Thècle (domes) and Vignoble Clos Sainte-Thècle (wine): 581-781-8468; gocampagne.com; 171 Vignoble St., Ste-Thècle, Mauricie region. Recommended for couples, but cots are available for children. Bring your own beverages. (Wine stocks are currently sold out; the wine from October’s harvest will be ready in spring.)

Lodging: \$219-\$299 for two (depending on season), including Wi-Fi, access to trails, snowshoes, Hok skis (shorties), electric fat-bikes and, in summer, standup paddle boards for Lac Croche. Tourisme Mauricie: 800-567-7603, tourismemauricie.com. MRC Mékinac: 418-365-5151, mrcmekinac.com.

who designed the interiors. “The decor and comforts are like hotel rooms. We even supply bathrobes.

“It’s quite romantic. ... It’s a light adventure and ideal for couples.”

The domes are intended for two people, and each has a king bed and good linens, a bathroom with a shower, a mini-fridge and a pod coffee machine. They are heated with electricity and a



The year-round glamping domes of CAMPagne au Clos Sainte-Thècle are adjacent to a vineyard in the woody Mauricie region and perfect for unwinding with that special someone. *CAMPAGNE AU CLOS SAINTE-THÈCLE*

wood stove, and they are waterproof and well insulated. But slippers and pyjamas are recommended.

“CAMPagne is ‘camping deluxe,’ but it’s still camping,” said Blouin.

Spa life includes an outdoor cedar hot tub and a wood-fired Finnish sauna (operating according to government guidelines). Summer plans include covered decks for massages in the woods, yoga classes and workshops on winemaking. CAMPagne’s concierge, Julie Champagne, can set up activities as well as food from nearby restaurants and producers, most with delivery or takeout.

Local flavours: Blouin and Trépanier collaborate with other indie entrepreneurs, promoting local foods and crafts. Boulangerie Germain prepares continental breakfast (\$11.50); lunch boxes with cheese, tofu, salad, bagels and smoked salmon or turkey wraps (\$14-\$17); and hot suppers of lasagna or beef bourguignon, with pouding chômeur for dessert (\$17-\$20).

Other suppliers include Christian Béland and Marie-Claude Fournier of Lignée RR2, who

vegetarian food. At the heart of the main street, Roxanne Monfette and Olivier Myre took over the 100-year-old general store and opened Le Café Aux Cinq Sœurs, an emporium of fanciful crafts, gourmet products and coffee.

Wine: Vignoble Clos Sainte-Thècle produces reds, whites, rosés and a sparkling wine with adalmina, sabrevoine, radisson and pionnier grapes. Pinot noir and chardonnay will be planted this summer.

“We’re at an altitude of 182 metres in the foothills of the Laurentians,” said Blouin, “so cultivating wine is unusual, but we have maximum sun exposure and a unique terroir.

“The soil is loam over a base of clay with marine deposits, so it is well aerated and drained, and the relatively dry climate helps to avoid any pests. The vineyard is insulated with snow, so we are protected even with a shorter growing season than southern Quebec.

“We are artisanal producers, bottling only small amounts ... and rarely the same wines from season to season, because we make the wine that is best suited to the changing conditions.”

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