

HOTEL INTEL

HANDS UP FOR CANADA’S FIRST CLUB MED

Charlevoix resort opens on Dec. 3



ROCHELLE LASH

Pandemic protocol: Club Med Québec Charlevoix will feature temperature checks, distanced seating, deep cleaning, capped guest capacity and a mask mandate.

Sold out, baby, sold out! That might be the jingle for Club Med Québec Charlevoix, opening Dec. 3 at Le Massif de Charlevoix, the mountain playground known for its rugged landscape, captivating views of the St. Lawrence River and year-round adventure sports.

The booking website shows that rooms for certain times are selling faster than you can make Club Med’s “crazy signs.” This new resort, Canada’s first Club Med, is destined to be a phenomenon that will expand tourism around Charlevoix and Quebec City, which has the closest international airport.

The resort: The new venture is a powerful alliance of two ambitious developers.

Club Med, primarily owned by the Chinese conglomerate Fosun Group, operates about 70 properties in 26 countries, from the Americas to Asia. The only Club Med in the U.S. is in Florida. A snow resort built in the 1990s in Colorado closed in short order; no doubt, Quebec’s joie de vivre will make for a more popular venture.

Le Massif is owned by über-entrepreneur Daniel Gauthier, co-founder of Cirque du Soleil and a major developer of Charlevoix, who created the touristic Train de Charlevoix and Hôtel & Spa Le Germain Charlevoix (originally Hôtel La Ferme and one of Eastern Canada’s most progressive hotels). After the Cirque’s stunning triumphs and an unsuccessful bid for the Olympics at Le Massif, Gauthier still craved an international presence. It’s done, and this region of Quebec is on the tourism map in a big way.

The scene: Club Med Québec Charlevoix expects up to 50,000 guests per year, from many countries. Millions of other potential travellers will browse the



The new Club Med Québec Charlevoix is on the lower slope of Le Massif de Charlevoix, a short slide from the mountain’s riverfront gondola.

PHOTOS: CLUB MED QUÉBEC CHARLEVOIX

company’s website, in a dozen languages or more. The resort is generating 350 in-house jobs and about 400 in the region as shops, restaurants and excursion outfitters welcome the newcomers.

Many patrons will be from Quebec and Ontario, but Club Med also has a global reach.

Gastronomes will swoon over Charlevoix cheese and charcuterie. Eco-fans can explore the wilderness of Le Massif, located in a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, and admire Club Med’s environmental operations, which are in line for certification by Green Globe.

Instagrammers and TikTokkers will post oh so Canadian images of vivid maple forests in autumn. Beer lovers will quaff Quebec’s potent local microbrews. And art aficionados will invade Baie-St-Paul’s galleries in search of Charlevoix landscapes by masters such as René Richard and Clarence Gagnon.

What else is irresistible for all these international travellers? Everything is priced in Canadian currency.

The visit: The engaging antics of the brand’s famous hosts, the gentils organisateurs (GOs), are a defining, irresistibly fun aspect of Club Med. On the practical side, the resort will house 302 rooms rated “four-trident,”



Club Med Québec Charlevoix will include 302 “four-trident” rooms, as well as 25 “five-trident” suites.

including singles and connectors, as well as 25 “five-trident” suites with access to a private lounge, evening Champagne and continental breakfast in bed.

Guests can choose from four dining/drinking venues: The central Bar Le Météore, which will be the day-to-evening social hub; Terroir & Co., a family restaurant; Le Chalet, an inviting lounge; and Le Marché, the classic large Club Med buffet.

If you can swing it budget-wise, and if you take advantage of the entire offering, Club Med is good value. Figure on an all-inclusive starting price of \$245 to \$500 per person, per night in winter or summer, depending on accommodations and dates. Spring and fall might be lower, and holidays might be higher. It encompasses ski-in/ski-out lodging, convivial après-ski, evening entertain-

ment, a Nordic spa, an indoor pool and a kids’ pool, copious meals, alcoholic drinks, lift tickets, group lessons, children’s activities, skating, snowshoeing and the all-important tips and taxes.

A sample three-night week-day visit from Dec. 7 to 10 starts at \$2,403 for two, with a river view. For a family of four, rates start at \$7,900 for a four-night Christmas visit, Dec. 24 to 28, with a mountain view. Visits will be sold in two-, three-, four- or seven-night packages.

Le Massif: The ski area’s claims to fame include the splendid setting, rising from the St. Lawrence River, and its impressive vertical drop — at 770 metres, the longest in Eastern Canada — making for leisurely, meandering runs. Still, at least two areas, Tremblant and Mont-Ste-Anne, have consider-

IF YOU GO

Club Med Québec Charlevoix: 800-CLUB-MED (800-258-2633), clubmed.ca; 1 de la Montagne-Secrète St., Petite-Rivière-St-François. Accessible rooms and facilities. Flexible cancellation. Emergency medical insurance, including COVID-19, until December 2022. Petite-Rivière-St-François is a four-hour drive (350 kilometres) northeast of Montreal.
Le Massif de Charlevoix: 877-536-2774, 418-632-5876, lemassif.com.
Petite-Rivière-St-François tourism: 418-632-1058, petiteriviere.com/tourisme/sites-et-attraits. Charlevoix tourism: 800-667-2276, tourisme-charlevoix.com.

ably more skiable terrain. Le Massif is also an exceptional destination for guided back-country skiing, alpine touring, cross-country skiing, luge, sledding day and night, as well as summer activities. (Some might be included in Club Med visits.)
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TRAVEL BRIEFS

Climb brings Big Apple into nerve-tingling focus

Want to see how big the Big Apple really is? You’ll need a head for heights. Adventurous sightseers can now view Manhattan from 400 metres up at the highest outdoor sky deck in the western hemisphere. Starting Nov. 9, City Climb at the Edge will allow those bold enough to

clamber up a series of open-air platforms and stairs along the outside crown of a skyscraper at New York’s Hudson Yards. Though it sounds scary, organizers say everything has been designed with safety in mind.

Saudis bet big on oil-rig theme park

Saudi Arabia has announced its latest bid to wean its economy off oil exports — by creating

an oil rig theme park. Images released by the country’s Public Investment Fund show ziplines between platforms, water slides, steel-and-glass hotel atriums, a concert venue and stunning rooms under the sea, the National newspaper reported. The fund said the resort was “inspired by” Saudi oil platforms and will contain about 800 rooms spread over 150,000 sq. m. It’s not known if the resort will be a stand-alone structure or adapted

from one of the country’s many oil rigs off its Arabian Gulf east coast, the paper said.

‘Sleepy bus tours’ are a lullaby for stress

An Asian travel firm is promising the ultimate dream trips for stressed-out pandemic refugees — a five-hour bus tour to the Land of Nod. The Sleeping Bus Tour of Hong Kong — a five-hour ride on a double-decker coach

that covers 83 kilometres, the city’s longest route — is being billed as an antidote to our hectic and anxious lives. Kenneth Kong, whose ulu travel company is behind the concept, said he was inspired by a friend who was so stressed out by his job that he couldn’t sleep at night. “But when he was travelling on the bus, he was able to sleep well,” he explained to The Associated Press.

Andre Ramshaw, For Postmedia News

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