

MASSIF DU SUD EXPANDS VILLAGE OF CHALETs NEAR LÉVIS



ROCHELLE LASH
Hotel Intel

“Honey, I’m snowed in” is likely the most common dispatch sent home from Station Touristique Massif du Sud, one of the best-kept secrets of Quebec’s winter sports panorama. It’s a medium-size mountain with lots of country charm, an aura of adventure and some impressive statistics. With a summit peak at 915 metres above sea level, Le Massif du Sud has the highest lift-serviced skiing and snowboarding in Quebec. As well, with an average annual snowfall of between seven and eight metres, it is one of the snowiest destinations. (By comparison, Tremblant’s elevation is 875 metres; snow-wise, usually only far-flung places like Saguenay and Gaspé receive seven metres or more).

“It’s like the west in the east because the mountain receives so much powder,” general manager Luc (Skypowder) St-Jacques said. “Plus, we have fewer crowds and a longer season than many other Quebec areas.” (He is so passionate about skiing he uses his Skypowder nickname professionally.)

The microclimate, plus exceptional glades, groomed trails, two snow parks and backcountry terrain create a slide sports wonderland. The growing village of 15 chalets also makes Station Touristique Massif du Sud a well-rounded country getaway, winter or summer.

“One special aspect is that we are tucked into the wilderness, and everything that you see from the mountain or the chalets is pure Quebec landscape,” St-Jacques said.

Another crucial thing to know about Massif du Sud is it’s a different entity than Le Massif de Charlevoix. Massif du Sud has



Massif du Sud is a medium-size mountain offering lots of country charm and adventure with its exceptional glades, groomed trails, two snow parks and backcountry terrain. STATION TOURISTIQUE MASSIF DU SUD

been operating for 30 years on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, about a three-and-a-half-hour drive from Montreal or 45 minutes southeast of Lévis. Charlevoix is on the north shore, an hour’s drive past Quebec City. **Mountain life:** Massif du Sud has 35 mostly top-to-bottom downhill runs on a 400-metre vertical (that’s four metres longer than Bromont). About half are glades snaking through a dense forest of maples and fir trees, and half are traditional trails, strong on advanced skiing and riding. Operating Fridays through Sundays, Massif du Sud limits skier capacity, so it’s not overcrowded and its sports-friendly weather means more snow and less ice.

The toughest descent is La Surprenante, one of the most gnarly challenges in eastern Canada, known for its steep factor of 65 degrees. Among the easiest are L’Écolière, a wide, relaxed boulevard, and La Familiale, a scenic route that meanders down for four scenic kilometres. The

area has invested \$2.3 million this season, part of a five-year plan that includes the expansion of backcountry terrain and a Magic Carpet lift for beginners.

The reimagined café in the skier’s lodge serves breakfast with energy drinks, as well as lunch and smoothies. Après-ski here rocks, too. The bar Le Sous-Bois has a new stage with an enhanced sound system and a large-screen TV. The sports theme prevails culturally through paintings by local artists that focus on winter in the mountains.

Chalet guests can cook in or dine out at Chez Charles in St-Philémon, which has been serving locals and visitors for more than 60 years. House favourites include pizza, brochettes and locally caught trout.

Lodging: Some of the large chalets have hot tubs, saunas, fireplaces or wood stoves (wood is supplied), barbecues, and possibly a pool table. They’re all fully equipped with linens, open kitchens or kitchenettes, coffee

machines and TVs. They’re beautifully maintained, with knotty pine trim and large windows overlooking the woods and the downhill mountain. The smallest is a studio for two people and the biggest is a five-bedroom home-away. A cluster of five new chalets has access to a walking trail that links to the downhill area.

Nearby adventures: The Quebec region of Chaudière-Appalaches is seriously outdoorsy, home to year-round attractions, including Parc des chutes d’Armagh known for waterfalls and wild-life (parcdeschutesarmagh.ca); Parc régional des Appalaches, a paradise of lakes, trails and mountains (parcappalaches.com); and Parc Massif du Sud, for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, winter hiking and fat biking (massifdusud.com).

For a taste of regional agriculture, Le Ricaneux produces rich berry wines (ricaneux.com). It’s open on weekends during winter for tastings and purchases. *rochellelash@gmail.com*

IF YOU GO

Tourisme Chaudière-Appalaches: 888-831-4411, chaudiereappalaches.com.
Hébergement Massif du Sud: 877-869 3676, ext. 115; massifdusud.net; 1989 Rte. Massif du Sud, St-Philémon. Chalets available for between two and 15 people. Sample price: starting at \$108 for two or starting at \$180 for four people in winter. Summer can be lower; holidays can be higher. Van Life zone available (fees apply).
Massif du Sud (ski/ride): Open Fri.-Sat.-Sun.; 877-869-3676, massifdusud.net; 1989 Rte. du Massif du Sud, St-Philémon; 300 lift-serviced acres (total 420 with backcountry); two terrain parks; two lifts; 400-metre vertical drop.

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