

# SLEEPOVER BLUEBERRY LAKE RESORT, MONT-TREMBLANT, QUE.

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When explorer-priest Curé Labelle first set eyes on Quebec's bucolic Mont Tremblant region more than 100 years ago, he envisaged it as the promised land for French Canadians. His dream of avenging the British conquest by founding a new French empire never came to pass. But it did help open up the stunningly beautiful chunk of Laurentian wilderness, about 140 kilometres north of Montreal.

Today, the area is a four-seasons playground of international cachet, an iconic piece of pure Canadiana. The Mont Tremblant ski centre is frequently rated the No. 1 ski destination in eastern North America. In all its boreal forest splendour, the locale has also become a hot real-estate spot for foreign investors. Curé Labelle might well be moaning in his grave at the thought of all those Brits snapping up prime properties hither and yon.

Indeed, British buyers have bought all four dozen or so luxury log homes at a new resort — the 121-hectare Blueberry Lake, about 15 minutes from Tremblant. The three-to-five-bedroom homes are also for rent, and the resort offers

full hotel services, including a kids' club, bar and restaurant, not to mention a spa offering Swedish massages to soothe those aching, skied-out muscles.

## Ambience

A sanctuary of woodland peace and quiet within easy reach of the action at the surrounding ski hills and villages.

As soon as you enter the Blueberry Lake compound — with its hilly terrain, two small private lakes and sprawling expanse of birch and maple trees — a sense of serenity overtakes you. The log homes are all spaced widely apart, so you don't get the overcrowded feeling found at some of the more densely packed resorts.

Brit-Canadian John Porritt and his son, Alexander — whose Vivaldi Resorts invested about \$25-million in the development — are pitching Blueberry Lake to the North American and European high-end vacation markets as a year-round getaway.

They are committed to developing no more than 40 per cent of the site, so as not to ruin the unspoiled natural setting, which offers a private network of trails for hiking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing as well as skating on the main lake.

The resort can arrange for off-

site activities such as dogsledding and sleigh riding. It also offers a complimentary shuttle service to Mont Tremblant.

For motorheads, there is off-site snowmobiling in the winter and water-skiing and motorboating in the summer on a larger lake nearby.

On-site, as well, is a floodlit skating rink and — for warmer days — an outdoor clay tennis court.

## Clientele

Families, groups, retirees. The different-sized homes range from a three-bedroom that can sleep six, to a five-bedroom for up to 10 people. Families and friends are encouraged to get together and share the cost of a home for a weekend or longer.

Blueberry Lake is also targeting the corporate set, proposing a secluded working retreat with all the required amenities (including wireless phone and desktop PCs with high-speed Internet in every house).

## Design

There is a melding of rusticity and comfort yet no ostentatious detailing.

Each home boasts a generous wraparound deck and walkout balconies off some of the bedrooms.

The main lodge — featuring the

restaurant, outdoor heated pool, bar, spa, gym and kids' centre — and the log homes are made entirely of B.C. fir and set on stone-faced foundations.

Big picture windows at the lodge let in lots of natural light and permit a tree-screened view of Blueberry Lake.

In the homes, the overall effect is one of warmth and comfort in a soothing design space that favours simple, clean lines and minimalist decoration.

## Rooms

Features include cathedral ceilings, panoramic windows, engineered-stone fireplaces and fully equipped kitchens, including spice rack.

A typical living-room layout is three overstuffed sofas arrayed around a chunky dark-wood table facing the hearth. An opening off the second-floor hallway offers a sweeping view of the open living-dining space below.

The basement rec rooms in the larger cottages are equipped with pool table, 42-inch plasma TV with satellite feed, DVD player, deep whirlpool soaker tub in the bathroom and washer-dryer.

There is a gas barbecue on the deck for all-season cookouts and an outdoor hot tub for melting away the hurt after the days' exertions.

## Food and drink

The options abound. You can bring your own groceries for home cooking, or order them via the on-line concierge service ahead of your arrival if you wish.

You can choose from the menu of pre-prepared meals, whose offerings include coq au vin and salmon-and-scallop pie.

Or, you can have one of the resort's executive chefs prepare a five-star repast right in your kitchen. The in-house five-course dinner — which we did not have the opportunity to try — might include carrot-and-curry soup, Asian-style shrimp with lemon and vodka. Wine is not included.

## Bottom line

The resort offers stylish, subdued design and serious attention to the rest and recreation needs of guests.



Blueberry Lake's log homes provide soothing spaces that favour simple, clean lines and minimalist decoration.

## Hotel vitals

### ESSENTIALS

Blueberry Lake Resort: Mont-Tremblant, Que.; 1-800-908-1413; blueberrylake.com. The resort is open year-round.

### ROOMS AND RATES

Seasonal rates range from \$285 to \$550 a night.

### TOP DRAW

A slice of fresh, country living in the

heart of some of the best skiing country in the East.

### NEEDS WORK

The intrusive sounds of helicopters overhead broke the sublime Sunday-morning stillness. Thankfully, it was short-lived, but there really should be a concerted effort by the local hospitality providers to have the infernal heli-tours out of nearby Mont Tremblant banned.