

Travel CRUISING

Luxury in logs at Blueberry Lake Resort

Travel Talk

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The Blueberry Lake Resort is so new that in late November the property was still a hive of activity with construction teams working furiously to meet a Christmas deadline. The final push meant putting the finishing touches on the main reception building and a some of its 20 impressive log chalets. While holiday cabins in the Laurentians are hardly a new concept, this resort 90 minutes north of Montreal rises to an exemplary level. In fact, nothing about it is typical including its hands-on owners.

The heart of the Laurentians scarcely seems like the place you'd find two Brits and a woman from Northern Ireland buying 300 acres of Quebec forest and turning it into a \$20 million upscale resort. However, this is exactly what has taken place. John and Alex Porritt, father and son respectively, together with Irish daughter-in-law, Gillian Ritchie, have planned and developed what they have positioned to be one of the finest chalet resorts in the Laurentian Mountains.

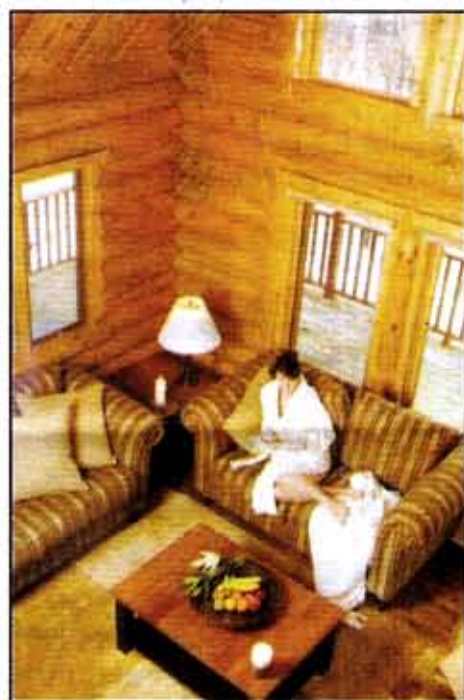
Most of the chalets have been completed for several months, and consequently I was able to try one out in the latter part of November. Not only did accommodations represent the ultimate log cabin experience, the resort's location is likewise ideal. Situated just 20 minutes north of Mont-Tremblant and minutes from the small village of Labelle, the ultra spacious chalets that range in size from three to five bedrooms were designed with luxury-seeking guests in mind but not at the expense of comfort. While each of them is imbued with rustic elegance, they are entirely warm and welcoming. Design features include immense floor-to-ceiling stone fireplaces, cathedral ceilings, completely wood-lined interiors, wrap-around porches, hardwood and slate flooring and panoramic windows overlooking Blueberry Lake. Everything in the chalets from fully equipped kitchens to furnishings is top-of-

The Blueberry Lake Resort's cluster of log chalets is the newest addition to the Laurentians playground.

the-line making it obvious no corners were cut. The décor overall is rustic chic, said Gillian, who was the sole decorator for the entire project. Even though interior furnishings bear the distinct stamp of luxury, remarkably they manage to project the image of a Quebec log cabin environment that is warm and inviting.

What's particularly appealing about all of the chalets is the privacy they offer. "We didn't want to develop more than 40 percent of the property and we didn't want to turn it into a housing complex," said Alex. "If we crammed the chalets together it would be like killing the golden goose." Consequently, each chalet sits on anywhere from a 1.5- to three-acre lot, a site plan that provides an air of complete seclusion and solitude. The same plan will be followed through phases two and three of the resort's development which calls for the construction of an additional 40 chalets.

Blueberry Lake Resort is an all-seasons property that boasts two private lakes (Blueberry Lake and Lac Pyrit) in addition to access to Lac Alphonse. On the doorstep of the chalets are 12 km of hiking trails that weave through an unspoiled natural environment where indigenous wildlife sightings include deer, beaver and a variety of bird species. During summer, resort guests can indulge in kayaking, canoeing, fishing, biking, swimming and tennis on the property's on-site court—a surface that is flooded in winter for an ice-skating rink. Other winter activities include cross-country skiing, snowshoeing plus access to 33,000 km of snowmobile trails. In addition, the well known downhill ski areas of Mont-Tremblant, Gray Rocks and Mont-Blanc are just 20 minutes away. Planning is underway for a resort shuttle that will transport guests to Mont-Tremblant and should demand dictate, shuttles will also go to Gray Rocks and Mont-Blanc.



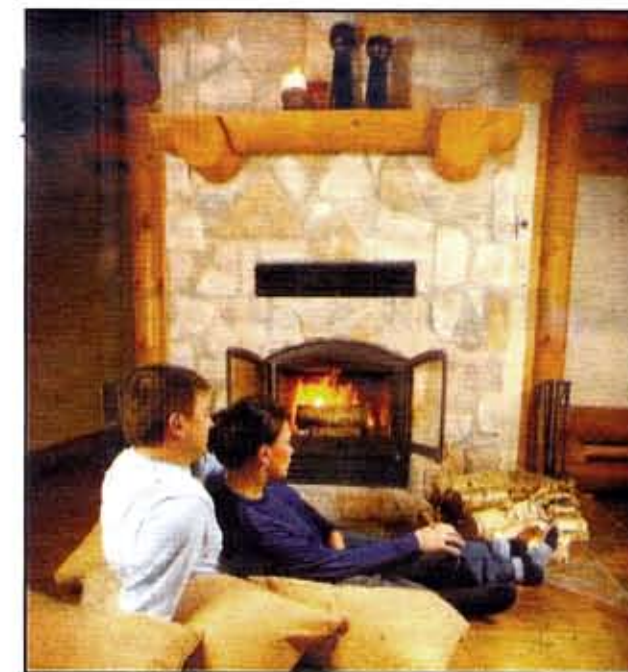
Cathedral ceilings and the warmth of natural wood.



Chalets offer 3 to 5 bedrooms and fully equipped kitchens.



Each chalet is on a 1.5 acre lot – plenty of space.



Floor-to-ceiling stone fireplaces in each chalet.

Although the chalets are fully equipped for meal preparation the resort offers several options. Wednesday through Sunday, an on-site restaurant features gourmet dinners (plus a children's menu) prepared by French chef Jean Miché Poirier, renowned in the area for the several years he previously spent at the popular restaurant, Bermards, in Old Tremblant Village. Guests can also order chef-prepared dinners to be delivered to their chalets from a selection that includes dishes such as coq au vin, salmon and scallop pie, veal stew, lasagna and gratin of chicory and ham.

In addition, one of the most attractive dining options the resort offers is an in-chalet chef service. One of several contracted area chefs will literally take over a chalet kitchen and prepare a gourmet, five-course dinner at a cost of \$75 per person. I tried this service called "chef at home" and was treated to a culinary feast that included curried carrot soup, shrimp on a bed of salad greens, filet mignon and crème brûlée. Do it yourself cooks can also take advantage of the resort's provisioning service whereby guests can arrive to an already pre-stocked chalet.

Although Blueberry Lake Resort is already a viable getaway destination, it will continue to grow. While guests can currently book a spa treatment in the privacy of their own chalets, a full-service spa in the main building is scheduled to be launched in February and as soon as the ground permits, the spring construction of three swimming pools will get underway. In the meantime, until all of the resort's planned amenities are fully completed, guests can take advantage of reduced rates for a vacation break at what promises to become known as one of the Tremblant region's most exclusive rental chalet properties.

For more information, brochures and current rates call 1-800-908-1413 or check the resort's website at www.blueberrylake.com.