

COUNTRY ROADS ROCHELLE LASH

Between a mountain and a lake

Hotel Quintessence adds star to luxury

Start your engines! Racing season kicks off tomorrow at Circuit Mont Tremblant

MONT TREMBLANT – Hotel Quintessence opened its great mahogany doors about 18 months ago and immediately set a new standard for country lodging in Quebec – one might say a six-star hotel in a five-star world.

Quintessence's staff can charter a helicopter, arrange to have guests speed around the Circuit Mont Tremblant racecourse in a Lamborghini or pluck a \$2,000 burgundy from an impressive wine cellar.

"All that opulence is in the air, but the best thing at 'Q' might just be the spectacular views of Lake Tremblant and the Laurentian mountains," said Sean O'Donnell, who co-owns Quintessence with businessman Steve Courey. "When you're gazing at the lake from your private balcony, you can forget that you're close to the busy mountain resort."

Quintessence was an instant hit, outstanding for the lavishness of its 30 exclusive rooms and suites and its glorious setting both at the foot of Mont Tremblant and on the shore of Lac Tremblant.

With its fieldstone walls, limestone floors, sumptuous decor, and fine wood and wrought iron detailing, Quintessence looks not only like it is here to stay but also like it's been here for a long time.

But that's just the bricks and mortar, an impressive and expensive design and architectural triumph. What sets great hotels apart are at least two factors: attention to service and exquisite details

that fulfill the fantasy of vacationing and avoid the harsh realities of home.

When guests arrive at Quintessence, the liveried doorman greets them by name. The housekeeper returns freshly laundered clothes gift-wrapped with gold tissue paper and blue satin ribbon. A "conciierge du bois" furnishes each suite with unlimited cedar logs. The spa director lays out bottled water, slippers and towels – as many as you want – when you head for the steam bath, sauna, hot tub and swimming pool, which is heated to 25 degrees C. The king bed duvet is so luxuriously heavy it takes three chambermaids to fluff it up. The marble bathroom floors are heated, and the guest sets the temperature – warm or warmer.

Among new features at Quintessence

this season are a jazz trio and lounge singer on Saturday nights and private yoga sessions. The spa has added hot-stone therapy, intensive foot treatments and facials with Carita beauty products from France.

The big scoop, however, is that an innovative new chef, Lindsay Petit, formerly of Profusion, Café Ferreira and Daniel Langlois' Ex-Centris, is expected to shake up the formal dining room, adding bistro fare and Asian, Italian and modern American accents to classic French cuisine.

Lunch is served on Quintessence's terrace overlooking Lac Tremblant under the shade of magnificent Laurentian spruce and birch trees. The barbecue soon will be fired up for Le Q Angus beef burger and grilled salmon teriyaki.

Quintessence is the hotel of choice for some of the drivers and pit crews who race at the Circuit Mont Tremblant. Among the milestones in the track's 41-year history, the circuit was host to Formula One Grand Prix races in 1968 and 1970 when legendary drivers like Mario



COURTESY OF HOTEL QUINTESSENCE

Hotel Quintessence offers guests 30 exclusive rooms and suites.

Andretti, Jackie Stewart and Graham Hill were behind the wheel.

The Tremblant racing season starts tomorrow with Six Hours of the Circuit, which features endurance vehi-

cles. The Festival Ferrari in June will attract up to 200 sports cars, both modern and vintage, from around the world.

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If you go

Tremblant is a 90-minute drive from Montreal. Take Highway 15 north to Ste. Agathe, Highway 117 past St. Jovite to Montée Ryan.

Hotel Quintessence:

1-(866)-425-3400, 3004 Chemin de la Chapelle, Mont Tremblant, www.hotelQuintessence.com online.

Room rates (per person based on double occupancy) range from \$160 to \$619, including full breakfast. Prices increase after June 16 to \$169 to \$769. Rooms range from 700 square feet with wood-burning fireplaces, balconies with lake views to the 1,300-square-foot presidential suite with three fireplaces and a terrace with garden and hot tub.

Quintessence's Savour & Rest Package (rates per person based on double occupancy) with breakfast, dinner and extras, starts at \$187 (Sunday and Thursday) and \$256 (Friday and Saturday). Body & Soul Pampering adds one massage for each person and prices start at \$297 (Sunday and Thursday) and \$366 (Friday and Saturday). Romantic Escapade Package adds champagne, hors d'oeuvres, breakfast in bed, one dinner, and a massage for each person; two nights start at \$619 (Sunday and Thursday) and \$719 (Friday and Saturday). The golf package, with play at Le Maitre and a massage, starts at \$399 a night (Sunday and Thursday) and \$410 (Friday and Saturday).

The Circuit Mont Tremblant:

1-(866)-802-8867, www.lecircuit.com; admission to Six Hours of the Circuit, (tomorrow and Saturday), \$20 to 30 per day; Festival Ferrari (June 24 to 26), \$10 to \$25.