

ELLE lifestyle

THE BIG CHILL

When did winter become a four-letter word? This year, grab your finest faux fur and hit the slopes. Or just skip straight to the après-ski—that's where you'll find us.



HEAD FOR THE HILLS

The world's hottest ski destinations are right in your own backyard. *By SYDNEY LONEY*



Clockwise, from far left: Gatineau Park; Källa pool at Nordik Spa-Nature; Nordik Spa-Nature; O'Brien House; Les Fougères



PHOTOGRAPHY: LUCCI/CCN (GATINEAU PARK)



Gatineau

THE VIBE Relaxed and refined. There are several small resorts for alpine-adrenaline junkies, but Gatineau, with its more than 50 groomed trails, is really geared to the quiet elegance of cross-country.

SIGHTSEE Gatineau's charming villages are overrun with galleries, cafés and boutiques built for browsing. In Chelsea, check to see if Le Local is still running a pop-up shop. (If not, don't despair—you'll find the store and its chic collection of Canadian-made clothing and accessories in nearby Gatineau.) Pull up a stool at the Chelsea Pub if you're craving craft beer; for something sweet and hot, Biscotti & Cie is a must. Or, if your muscles are stiffening up after some strenuous snowshoeing, a 30-minute float in Nordik Spa-Nature's Källa pool is not to be missed. (There's only one other floating saltwater pool like it, and it's in Switzerland.)

DINE You can't leave Gatineau without experiencing Les Fougères. Book a table for brunch (try the fish cakes), lunch or dinner—and bring your snowshoes,

because the woodland you see from the dining-room windows is yours to explore. The day you skip lunch because you can't drag yourself away from all that fresh powder is the day to make a dinner reservation at O'Brien House. For the six-course tasting menu, Chef Patrick Marion makes a point of sourcing Canadian ingredients, from ocean-wise trout from Quebec to matsutake mushrooms from James Bay.

STAY In Gatineau, you can literally cross-country ski from one boutique hotel to another. After a night of laid-back luxury at Wakefield

Mill, a leisurely three-hour ski takes you to the glossy-red front door of Wakefield Mill's new sister hotel, O'Brien House. Once you're chilling in front of the fieldstone fireplace in the Canadiana room, rousing yourself to do much of anything will be unthinkable. Eleven rooms lend an air of exclusivity to the lodgings—an effect heightened by a gallery on the ground floor, where every wall is hung with fine art on loan from the Crown Collection. Meanwhile, PEI-made MacAusland woollen blankets scattered invitingly about and custom La Pensée mattresses (you can choose soft or firm) add the perfect finishing touches. ➤

* PACKING LIST



The perfect après-ski accessory. Faux-fur vest, Loft (\$118, loft.com)



Winter is fun for you but not for your skin. Valmont V-Shape Filling Cream (\$425, valmontcosmetics.com)



Because you need to get that content. Touchscreen-compatible cashmere gloves, Rag & Bone (\$206, at Nordstrom, nordstrom.com)



Keep your cozy knits pill- and lint-free. Turbo extreme fabric defuzzer, Conair (\$30, at Walmart, walmart.ca)



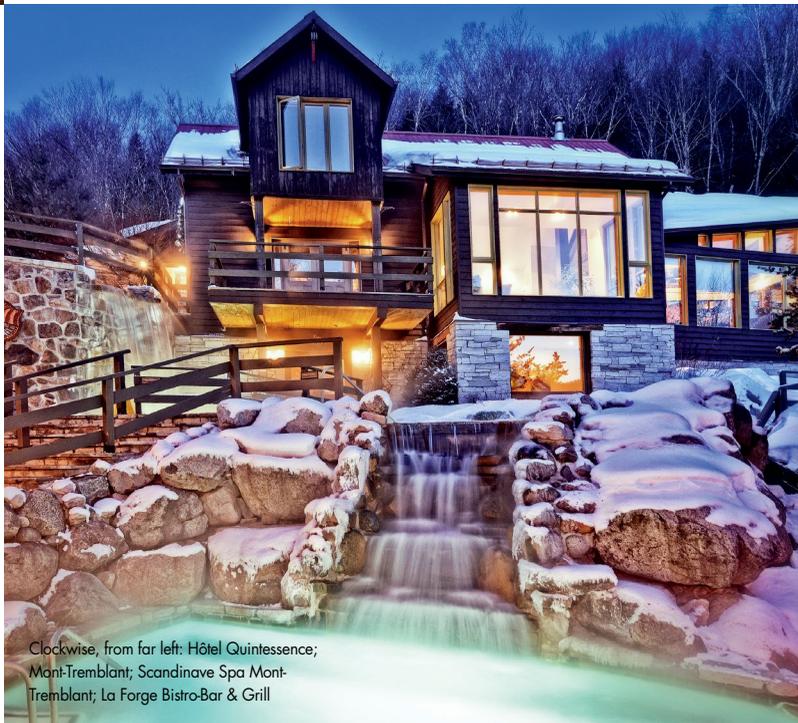
Mont-Tremblant

THE VIBE Fast, furious and fun, whether you're on the slopes or hitting the village's bumping après-ski scene. **PLAY** Mont-Tremblant boasts over 100 runs with "Should-I-stop-and-Instagram-this?" views of the Laurentians. One of the best runs for a scenic, stress-free trip down is the Algonquin, on the Soleil side. (Pause for a glass of wine and cheese fondue at Le Refuge du Trappeur log cabin along the way.) Of course, if your crew veers straight for the black-diamond hills, you can hop off the lift and head for the nearby Moment Spa at the Fairmont. Not only did I indulge in an 80-minute anti-wrinkle facial from luxury Swiss skincare brand Valmont (the perfect antidote for windburned cheeks) but I also spent an afternoon at the Scandinave Spa Mont-Tremblant. It's the best place to forget about a near miss on the moguls because it makes you relax with its strict no-talking policy—even the pockets of your plush white robe are sewn shut so you can't stash your cell.

INDULGE Fresh air makes fresh food taste even better, like that on offer at La Forge Bistro-Bar & Grill. For a cozy après-ski tingle, stay downstairs at the bar; a Bourbon Chai will warm you up. Or, if you're in a white-tablecloth mood, shed your ski boots and head up to the steak house on the second floor, where your sirloin is grilled over a maple-wood fire in the open kitchen.

CHILL There's no better reward for surviving the slopes than sinking into a soft couch in front of a fire with a glass of champagne in hand. That's precisely what I did when I returned to my suite (one of 30) at Hôtel Quintessence—but first I enjoyed a soothing soak in the room's sunken spa tub while watching the sun set over Lake Tremblant. Personalized service is a hallmark at this boutique hotel: You can ditch your gear at the door and don a pair of slippers, and your ski boots will be returned to you the next day—pre-warmed.

Clockwise, from far left: Hôtel Quintessence; Mont-Tremblant; Scandinave Spa Mont-Tremblant; La Forge Bistro-Bar & Grill



* IN FROM THE COLD

KINDA CHILLY

New boutique ski hotel The Josie sits right at the base of Red Mountain in Rossland, B.C.—all the better to hit the slopes as soon as you wake up. When the temperature drops in late afternoon, head indoors for pampering at the hotel's intimate spa, which offers a full menu of wellness treatments.

BRING YOUR THERMALS

No need to be overly concerned about the sub-zero temps outside Alberta's new Kananaskis Nordic Spa. The 4,600-square-metre indoor-outdoor haven's focus on hydrotherapy and massage will have you so blissfully relaxed that you'll forget all about the Prairies' bitter chill—until you leave.

WHY AM I OUTSIDE?

Don't forget your Canada Goose when you visit Northern Lights Resort & Spa's new Aurora Glass Chalets in Yukon. The cozy cabins are built with floor-to-ceiling windows designed specifically for viewing the aurora borealis. And while they are heated, access to the full resort is, happily, just steps away.

IN FROM THE COLD, PATRICIA KAROUNOS; PHOTOGRAPHY, COURTESY TREMBLANT (MONT-TREMBLANT)

COLD COMFORTS, PATRICIA KAROUNOS; PHOTOGRAPHY, KUVIO (LÖYLY)

* COLD COMFORTS



IF A SOAK IN ICELAND'S BLUE LAGOON IS ON YOUR BUCKET LIST...

...but fighting through the hordes for a spot in the mineral-rich geothermal waters stresses you out, problem solved: The Retreat Hotel right down the street gives its guests private access to a portion of the lagoon, where they can also receive in-water massages.



IF YOU CRAVE QUIET ALONE TIME...

...visit Alaska's Sheldon Chalet. The five-room octagon-shaped property is more than 80 kilometres from the nearest town, can be accessed only by helicopter and, oh yeah, sits atop a glacial island.



IF YOU THINK YOU BELONG ON THE IRON THRONE...

...the team behind the Treehotel (you know the one) is back with a new see-it-to-believe-it resort. The log-covered Arctic Bath hotel in Swedish Lapland (opening this year) looks like something straight out of King's Landing, and the resto, spa and heated river pool are pure fantasy too.

ONE FIN DAY

Have a stopover in Helsinki? Do these 3 things.

1 SAUNA Now that we're hip to *hygge*, there's a new Scandi word in town: *sisu*. *Sisu* is Finnish, and it's the polar opposite of *hygge*. Where *hygge* is about cozy sweaters by candlelight, *sisu* is the thing that propels you naked into an icy lake after a scorching sauna session. It's about true grit and being hard-core, which is what makes the sauna the quintessential Finnish parlour room. Everyone has their favourite one, and most go at least once a week. The very hippest sauna looks like a giant birch-timbered fortune cookie. Co-owned by actor Jasper Pääkkönen (*Vikings*, *BlacKkKlansman*), Löyly merges sleek architecture with rustic wood-stove sauna life. You can take a break from the heat

in the communal coed shower (everyone wears a bathing suit)—just pull on a rope to douse yourself with a bucket of cold water. Hardier types pass the lounge chairs on the vast cocktail patio and make a beeline for the sparkling Baltic. Aside from the outdoor bar, there is a restaurant that serves, among other things, only sustainably caught fish; salmon soup is a menu favourite.

2 EAT The restaurant that everyone was impressed we got into in Helsinki was Nolla, which, btw, is reopening this month after a major reno. A zero-waste restaurant with a dark-patinated-wood interior and epic photos of ship crewmen on the walls, Nolla is run by three chefs. There's

Carlos Henriques, who is Portuguese, Albert Franch Sunyer, who hails from Barcelona, and Luka Balac, who is Serbian and served us the most delicious bottle of Serbian wine, which, he told us, is impossible to procure.

3 EXPLORE Helsinki's grittiest neighbourhood is Kallio, which used to boast a place called Amphetamine Square. Now it's the neighbourhood with cheap and thrilling thrift shops, like Hoochie Mama Jane and Ansa, and possibly the best bar in the world, Pulmu, a tiny spot overshadowed by an airplane engine attached to the ceiling. A word of advice? If you try the Finnish cognac, be prepared for a crash landing. CLARA YOUNG ♦



Löyly in Helsinki