

**NEWS RELEASE**

**For immediate release**

**Clad in its winter glory, the Eastern Townships is ready to welcome visitors!**

**Sherbrooke, November 21, 2021 –** Winter in the Eastern Townships offers visitors an abundance of things to see and do – outdoor activities, gourmet food, excellent wine, spa breaks and the opportunity to have a blissful night’s sleep in rustic or cozy accommodation. Moreover, our local entrepreneurs have been outdoing themselves to come up with new tourist offerings all across the region, making this season more appealing than ever!

***Time to hit the slopes!***

$12 million has been invested in [**Bromont, montagne d’expériences**](https://www.bromontmontagne.com/)**,** and it really shows! Mont Soleil, which is popular with families, now has a new facility – Chalet Soleil. It has a 200-seat restaurant and a rental outlet where the inventory has been improved and expanded. Slope side, the ski school is being enlarged, doubling its surface area. As well, two ‘magic carpets’ have each been installed on the Versant Soleil, the Remontée des Épinettes and du Midi. The Bistro-Bar la Débarque has been given a makeover and its menu redesigned with dishes certified ‘Aliments du Québec’ (local and regional food) exclusive to Bromont. The Chalet du Village also houses the Boutique & Café.

At [**Mont Orford**](https://montorford.com/fr-ca/accueil)**,** skiers who are devotees of Mont Alfred Desrochers will be delighted to learn that a new quadruple ski lift will whizz them to the top much faster than before. The new lift can transport 1,800 skiers per hour – an increase of 60% on previous years. Mont Orford is also opening a new glade run, adding to the 17 glade runs already in existence, as well as a new trail groomer which will make maintaining Orford’s 62 trails more efficient. Responding to the growing popularity of alpine touring, Mont Orford is adding three more downhill trails for this activity and they will be laid out through wooded terrain. Shelters are being constructed at the top of each of these trails.

At **Destination** [**Owl's Head**](https://owlshead.com/), the snowmaking equipment will be upgraded and new features added for youngsters, in the sector reserved for ski lessons. The off-piste areas that offer breathtaking views, will be expanded. Other improvements are self-service machines where skiers can book their tickets instead of having to line up at the counter.

Come January, three new snow parks are going to be added to Owl’s Head facilities. One will be geared to children aged 10 and under, while the other two are designed for ‘beginners/intermediate’ and ‘intermediate/advanced’ skiers with jumps, rails and other challenging obstacles.

[**Mont SUTTON**](https://montsutton.com/) has prioritized improvements (and a substantial investment) on its snowmaking system. This will increase the resort’s ability to make more of the white stuff, beef up the quality of the snow and create better trail conditions than in the past. The ski station has also invested in Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology. This allows skiers to buy an access card online. The card is fitted with a chip that identifies you as a day visitor or season pass holder which, once details have been read (including the vaccination passport), allows skiers to go straight to the chairlifts without having to wait in a line-up.

A second Alpine touring trail has been added this season, as well as extended opening hours and a supply of new rental equipment for learners. Improvements to the four-season resort were also made last summer. Mont Sutton added new mountain bike trails, additional campsites and a double Giant zipline (1,400 metres) across two sections. The chairlift operated every day.

***L’EST GO – an all-in-one ski pass***

Occasional skiers who want to visit the region’s four ski stations can purchase the all-in-one [**L’EST GO**](https://www.cantonsdelest.com/lestgo) card. This card entitles holders to between two and eight tickets, giving access to Destination Owl’s Head, Bromont, montagne d’expériences, Mont-Orford and Mont SUTTON. Not only does the card offer an easy, flexible way to enjoy the ski slopes, there is a considerable saving on the cost of the regular ticket prices – **up to 30% in some cases**. Moreover, tickets are redeemable at any time during the winter season, even over the Christmas/New Year holidays and the Spring Break.

***Outdoor fun in the snow!***

[**Parc du Mont Hatley**](https://www.monthatley.com/8_montagne.html)(formerly known as Montjoye) is opening two new trails for runners and hikers. The trails wind through wooded and open terrain, offering views over the surrounding countryside and Lake Massawippi. This winter, visitors will be able to go snowshoeing, as well as off-piste Alpine touring.

[**Au Diable Vert**](https://audiablevert.com/) in Sutton, is undergoing an expansion. The owners recently acquired two large parcels of wooded terrain adjacent to their own property, thus greatly increasing the size of the mountain resort and its network of trails. Future plans include a four-bedroom unit whose style will be in keeping with its natural surroundings, as well as an 8-km trail that will wind through some old-growth forest with four lookout points. (This new trail brings the total network of trails to 22 km.)

In Bromont, the [**Parc des Sommets**](https://parcdessommets.com/) has finally seen the light of day. A tale of love and a group of people determined to protect the natural environment, as well as input from the local community, this recreational area was many years in the making. The 150-hectare recreational park has 140 km of nature trails, spread over five sectors, offering a multitude of activities – hiking, horseback riding, mounting biking, snow biking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. This winter, outdoor lovers will be able to warm up at a new Visitor Centre where they can also hire Fat bikes and snowshoes (available in rental segments of 2-hours, 4-hours or the entire day).

This winter, the four Eastern Townships parks operated by **Sépaq** - [**Yamaska**](https://www.sepaq.com/pq/yam/)**,** [**Mont-Orford**](https://www.sepaq.com/pq/mor/)**,** [**Frontenac**](https://www.sepaq.com/pq/fro/) and [**Mont-Mégantic**](https://www.sepaq.com/pq/mme/) will be offering a range of outdoor activities. Mont Megantic National Park will once again be running its astronomy evenings at [**ASTROLab**](https://www.sepaq.com/pq/mme/astrolab.dot) - good news for stargazers!

A walk illuminated by flaming torches is a wonderful way to enjoy the long winter nights! Mont Megantic National Park offers a torchlit walk every Saturday evening (January 22-March 26, 2022). The **Centre Quatre Saisons** in Val-de-Sources is also organizing a walk(Saturday, February 12, 2022)as isthe [**station touristique Baie-des-Sables**](http://www.tourisme-megantic.com/fr/evenements/ski-de-fond-et-raquette-aux-flambeaux-a-la-baie-des-sables-megantic)at its outdoor centre(January14-15 and February 4-5, 2022).

And for a change of pace, why not swop your hiking boots and snowshoes for a pair of skates? The Eastern Townships has **several ice rinks** (natural and in arenas). One of the most popular is in Magog, along the shoreline of Lake Memphremagog, where the bike trail turns into one (almost 3-km) long ice rink (with several new side loops). Then there are the three illuminated ice runs in Granby, one of which flanks picturesque Lake Boivin, as well as the frozen pond at Domaine Howard in Sherbrooke – a favourite with young and old alike.

***Here today, gone tomorrow!***

In **Sherbrooke**, **Moment Factory** is creating a temporary light installation at Jacques Cartier Park.

It will cover three themed areas – contemplative, interactive and relaxation. The installation are typical of Moment Factory’s innovative creations and will be in place from December 10 – January 9, 2022.

***Now open year-round***

Opened last summer, [**Acoatica**](https://decouvertenature.qc.ca/activites/acoatica/)**,** at **Parc Découverte Natur**e,is adding a winter activity – namely ice fishing! Acoatica is a giant interactive video game that challenges participants (wearing electronic wristbands) to accumulate as many points as possible to ‘save’ fish species that are endangered in Quebec. While you’re in the park, you can also try your hand at the aforementioned ice fishing. Equipment is provided.

**[Espaces Bleu Lavande](https://bleulavande.com/)** moved to Magog last summer and it now welcomes visitors all year long. It has an interpretation centre featuring an immersive experience (Champs Chromatiques) designed by Moment Factory, where visitors can learn all about the many benefits of lavender and the challenges of growing this pretty blue plant in Quebec’s harsh climate. Bleu Lavande also has an elegant boutique, a soap manufacturing area and walking trails, laid out among the lavender fields.

***For a change of pace***

[**Mont Sutton**](https://montsutton.com/yooner-et-snowscoot-en-videos/) is offering a couple of novel sliding experiences this winter - the ‘Yooner’ and snowcross. The former is a hybrid of a sled and a ski and because the seat is only 20 cm from the ground, the person who rides the device has a lot of control when swooshing down the slopes, even if they’ve never ridden a Yooner before! Snowcross is a sport that combines snowboarding and BMX. The resort offers a 90-minute introduction to this fast-paced activity.

The[**Parc de la Gorge de Coaticook**](https://gorgedecoaticook.qc.ca/) is known as a venue for snowshoeing (21 km of trails), winter hiking (6.5 km of trails), skating and snow biking (17 km of trails) but it also offer other winter attractions such as **Liéri (an outdoor ‘escape’ game)** and **snow scooters**. These simple scooters, to which (of all things!) you can attach your dog, originated in Scandinavia and they are becoming very popular in Quebec. Unusually for the park, dog sledding will added to the winter offerings (February 25-28, 2022) – the ideal opportunity to experience the thrill of driving a team of enthusiastic canines!

More adventurous souls can try ice climbing. The park has eight walls for this activity, ranging from 25 to 50 metres. Anybody - from beginners to experts - can learn how to scale the heights at the ChamoX Climbiing and Mountaineering School in Sherbrooke.

The Baie-Des-Sables tourist resort in the Megantic region, has an ice-fishing ‘village’ on site, but outdoor lovers can also enjoy other winter activities – cross- country skiing, snowshoeing and tubing.

***Educational exhibitions***

In mid-November, the Interpretation Centre at the [**Marais de la Rivière aux Cerises**](http://Communiqué_NouveautesHIVER_2021_10_29.docx) in Magog was renamed the **Espace** **muséal Desmarais**. It now houses a unique international exhibition - ***Entre Ciel et Terre –*** a 21-piece collection of carved wooden birds belonging to Paul and Hélène Desmarais. These stunning artworks depict birds that are endangered and are the creations of sculptor Louis St-Cyr and painter Brenda Fry. The larger-than-life exhibition will change the displays according to the seasons.

Visitors can now take a guided, behind-the-scenes tour of the Museum of Ingenuity J. Armand Bombardier. The Museum houses 71 vehicles, including the early experiments of Joseph-Armand Bombardier and his team, which evolved into sophisticated snow machines that launched a brand-new winter sport! Part of the tour includes the opportunity to play the role of ‘machine tester’ by participating in an exhibition entitled ‘*Confortable? Testez vos transports’*. It explains how, down the decades, engineers and designers have fine-tuned the machines to ensure maximum comfort to the user. Snowmobile fans can also visit the nearby plant and learn about the manufacturing and assembly of these amazing machines (Ski-Doos® in summer and fall) and Can-Am® Spyders® (winter and spring).

***And should the cold whet your appetite…***

[**Fromagerie La Station**](https://fromagerielastation.com/) in Compton is renowned for its high-quality, artisanal cheese made from raw milk and it recently opened an Économusée dedicated to ‘farmhouse’ cheese. Tbe museum, in addition to the usual interpretative panels, houses an immersive room where visitors can inhale the aromas coming from the adjoining refining area. A perfume organ reveals the scents of the local terroir, which permeates the cheeses, giving them a unique flavour. There’s also a tasting area where visitors can sample the cheese and other regional products.

[**Fromagerie Nouvelle-France**](https://fromagerienouvellefrance.com/)**,** a prize-winning cheesemaker (50 awards at last count!) has opened a new boutique in Racine. The store showcases local artisans, offering, among other things, handcrafted wooden furniture, gourmet products and its own delicious cheeses – ideal for a picnic, dinner or a snack on the go! The production of the cheese is also done on site. (Previously, the manufacturing centre was in Sainte-Élizabeth-de-Warwick).

 ***Apres-ski - microbrewery style!***

[**À l’Abordage**](http://www.brasseriealabordage.com/), a microbrewery in Sutton, recently opened a second site not far from the original restaurant on rue Principale Sud (Main Street South). Production has been moved to the new premises where the beer is being sold in cans. The brewery, with its increased tank capacity, will now be able to produce some 100,000 litres of beer annually. Those who enjoy the cocktail hour can order an aperitif and snack after a day on the slopes at the [**Taproom & Buvette**](http://alabordage.beer/?page_id=25). At the original restaurant, the menu is more geared towards those want to dine, especially families.

In January 2021, although it was in the midst of the pandemic, Robin Le Sage and Shirley Anne Smyth nonetheless decided to open [**Le Sage Brasseur**](https://www.lesagebrasseur.com/)**,** the very first artisanal microbrewery in Cowansville. Housed in a former ambulance station, it’s a cozy spot where folk can gather to enjoy a good, hearty beer, brewed on site. Inspired by the steady growth of the brewing community, the couple constantly experiment with different varieties of hops and spices, changing their manufacturing methods and partnering with other local businesses. Visitors can sample their products in the tasting room or pick up supplies to take home.

***Distilleries are on the march…***

Housed in an attractive, converted church dating back to 1870, the new [**Distillerie Cherry Rive**r](https://cherryriver.ca/) in downtown Magog makes a range of gins, vodkas, bitters and hard seltzers (carbonated water with alcohol). The distillery uses the best possible ingredients, such as crystal clear water from underground springs in the village of Cherry River.

[**Vignoble du Ruisseau**](https://www.levignobleduruisseau.com/distillerie/)in Dunham, whose distillery opened only three years ago, has already won three medals awarded by the prestigious *International Spirits Challenge 2021.* The winery/cidery makes Eaux-de-vie (fruit brandy) from the marc of its grapes, maple syrup and apples, as well as gin, liqueurs and syrups. The distillers plan to add three more products to their range of spirits quite soon and are in the process of developing several other unique small-batch products.

***A unique property***

**L’Hotel Étoile-sur-le-lac** has undergone a complete transformation and is now **Versō**, a unique

boutique hotel. Situated on the shoreline of scenic Lake Memphremagog, it’s a stone’s throw from downtown Magog and the views and mid-century décor make this a memorable property, loaded with charm. The hotel is close to a multitude of activities that can be enjoyed by all age groups - one of which is the long (almost 3km) ice rink that runs alongside the lake, right outside **Versō’s** doors. Part of the hotel complex is [**Bistro Kóz**](https://hotelverso.ca/restaurant/) which, as well as offering the same spectacular views from its outdoor terrasse, specializes in Mediterranean cuisine. The menu features flavourful, aromatic dishes inspired by the cuisines of Greece and Turkey, served in a warm, welcoming ambience.

***About Tourism Eastern Townships***

*Tourism Eastern Townships (TCE) is the umbrella organization for a network of tourism enterprises (ATRs) that represent the tourism and travel industry to the outside world. Since 1978, TCE has worked hard to develop the region’s tourism industry, promoting its tourism offer, services and products around the province, across Canada and in international markets. The ATR’s focus is on the sustainable development favoured by local communities, promoting the region’s natural environment and excellent quality of life. Within Quebec, the Eastern Townships ranks fourth as the most visited region in the province, accounting for 10.3 million visitors and 6.5 million bed nights in 2017. That same year, tourism revenues garnered $909 million. The region is home to 2,112 tourism businesses. They account for 20,000 jobs, making tourism the fourth largest employer in the Townships after the retail sector,* *manufacturing and health care.*

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**Source :**

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