

PURE SNOWMOBILING!

Prime Trail Riding in Quebec's Abitibi-Témiscamingue Region

STORY & PHOTOS BY CRAIG NICHOLSON,
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Pure Snowmobiling = Tons of snow and table top trails.

It's not as easy as it used to be to plan your annual snowmobiling getaway. Sure, you've always had to coordinate people's busy schedules so everyone is off at the same time. And you've always had to choose a good destination. But here's the rub – the variable snow conditions of recent years have made it more difficult to pick a location with reliable snow so you aren't faced with a last minute change of plans or worse, a cancelled trip.

Generally, the farther north you go, the more you can depend on snow conditions. And for many snowmobilers residing around the Great Lakes, that means trailering to Northern Ontario or Quebec for that one special ride of the season. If that's your intention, the Quebec region known as Abitibi-Témiscamingue should top your list. Our Supertrax crew rode there last January and here's why it's one of our favourite go-to destinations.

Closer Than You Think

For US-based snowmobilers crossing into Canada at Buffalo, Detroit or Sault Ste. Marie, Abitibi-Témiscamingue is the closest Quebec destination. Same goes for anyone staging from Southern Ontario. Surprised? From Buffalo, it's just 343 miles to trailer north to snow at the town of Témiscaming in Abitibi-Témiscamingue. From Detroit, it's 463 miles and from Sault Ste Marie, 315.

Every other popular Quebec snowmobiling region is a longer (or much longer) drive to the east. From Toronto, Abitibi-Témiscamingue is only 420 kilometres (277 miles).

Abitibi-Témiscamingue is located along a section of Quebec's provincial boundary with Ontario that runs from North Bay to Cochrane. It's actually closer to Ontario than it is to other Quebec regions and is isolated by largely unpopulated territories from the main body of Quebec.

Staging Choices

Its almost 2,500 miles (3,700 km) of impeccable snowmobile trails are as good as you'll find elsewhere in La Belle Province, and given that Abitibi-Témiscamingue is among the farthest north of the best Quebec trail riding destinations, the snow there is reliable and long-lasting enough to make planning a ride pretty much a sure bet.

Depending on when and how long your getaway is, you can trailer to Abitibi-Témiscamingue in mid-winter to stage from its more southerly towns like Témiscaming, Ville Marie or Notre-Dame-du-Nord. Or you can snowmobile into the region from Ontario towns with trail connections like North Bay, New Liskeard or Kirkland Lake. Later in March or early April, plan on moving your launch north to Rouyn-Noranda, Val d'Or or Amos.

With so many staging choices, you can plan a loop or multiple loops as long or as short as your time allows. There are more than enough trails that you can either do saddlebag overnights or day loops from the same hotel or a combination of each as we did. Whatever your preference, you'll be exploring trails that

are consistently well groomed, interesting to ride and with plenty of food and fuel services.

Great Planning Tools

Now let's talk about the elephant in the room. I know some English-speaking snowmobilers are hesitant to try riding in Quebec for fear of not being understood. From personal experience, I can assure you that this is not the case in Abitibi-Témiscamingue. From its informative website to its excellent paper trail map to what you encounter on trail and in towns, you'll have no trouble communicating in English.

In fact, so great is their commitment to welcoming every snowmobiler that last season the Abitibi-Témiscamingue tourism folks introduced an app called "My Snow Guide". It's easy to use, with a very complete compilation of all the info a visiting snowmobiler needs. Handy for pre-planning, daily route affirmation, scheduling gas and lunch stops, it shows exactly where you are on the trail at any time.

Because it includes many visuals, My Snow Guide takes all the guesswork out of visiting the region, so download it for free to plan and ride with more comfort and confidence. With this app



With sign boards like this at most intersections, navigation is easy.

in hand, try Abitibi-Témiscamingue for yourself this winter and discover why it's on my top 5 list of best Quebec trail riding destinations! ■

PLANNING WEBSITES

TOURISME ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE // abitibi-temiscamingue-tourism.org/activities/snowmobiling
QUEBEC FEDERATION OF SNOWMOBILE CLUBS (FCMQ) // fcmq.qc.ca/en

MAPS NEEDED

ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE (MySnow Guide, see URL above)
Download the Trans Quebec app: iMotoneige

WHERE WE STAYED

QUALITY INN, ROUYN NORANDA // qualityinnrn.ca/en
(trail accessible, parking available)
AMOSPHÈRE COMPLEX HOTELIER, AMOS // amosphere.com (trail accessible, parking available)