



# LOOPING MONT-LAURIER

## Day Riding in Central Quebec

BY CRAIG NICHOLSON, THE INTREPID SNOWMOBILER

*It was a frigid January day, much too cold to ride a brisk pace. Better to just cruise along, hunkered down behind my windshield, handlebar heaters and thumb warmer cranked to the max. Heated seat and FXR heated Recon gloves on fry.*

The temperature dropped even more as the trail climbed higher uphill. And suddenly, it happened - the startling transition to a unique winter wonderland. An ethereal world of deep snow and snow ghosts, those frozen evergreens encased in white stuff like silent sentinel sculptures.

Just as abruptly, I reached the crest and looked out over a breathtaking swath of territory stretching to the distant horizon in panoramic array. Like so many others before me, I had snowmobiled to the top of Devil's Mountain.

### Visiting Mont-Laurier

Several winters ago, while saddlebagging through Quebec's Laurentides Region, our Supertrax crew overnighted in Mont-Laurier. I remember being very impressed with trail access into the town and the snowmobile-friendly

feel of the place. I'd also heard about the nearby Montagne du Diable, Devil's Mountain. So when the time came last winter for a destination article about staging day rides from a Quebec location, Mont-Laurier was a top choice.

The Town of Mont-Laurier (pop. 13,799) is located centrally in the Province of Quebec in what's known as the Upper Laurentians. The Laurentian Mountain range extends from the Adirondacks in New York State and runs north of and parallel to the St. Lawrence River.

### About The Trails

We quickly discovered why Mont-Laurier and area is such a popular snowmobiling destination. Such renown starts with reliable and lasting, elevation-generated snow that averages 137 in (350 cm) each season. This wintry phenomenon enables over 1,560 mi (2,512 km) of well-maintained

snowmobile trails, including several exceptional day loop options out of Mont-Laurier.

These trail circuits are part of the provincial system operated by the Quebec Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (FCMQ). As such, trails marked in blue, with numbers ending in the numeral "3", are Trans Quebec Trails that connect various regions. Regional Trails connect Trans Quebec trails at various points and show green on trail signs and maps with three-digit numbers beginning with a "3". In both cases, the "3" is also the designation for all Trans Quebec trails in all regions north of the St. Lawrence River; those to the south in other regions use the number "5" instead. All local trails are colored orange.

### Where We Snowmobiled

For our day ride visit, we looped north one day (see pink line on map on next spread) for lunch at Pourvoirie Meekos (Regional Trail 319) after checking out the Kiamika Reservoir (Local Trail 253). Another day we circled east (see blue line on map) to The Town of Nominique on Trans Quebec Trail 63 and took in the Chutes du Lac-Cunières (Local Trail 221). Then we embarked on a third day's ride westward (see green line on map) to the Basketong Reservoir (Regional Trail 322), Chutes du Windigo (Windigo Falls - Local Trail 228) and the aforementioned Montagne du Diable (Devil's Mountain - Local Trail 229).

Each one of the loops we rode could range from about 125 miles to more than double that, depending on which trails you choose. Most of these routes follow forest access roads and old logging corridors, and it makes exploring the Laurentian uplands even more of a treat. Meanwhile, for those with more time, or who enjoy even bigger miles and wilderness riding, a network north of Mont-Laurier known as the "Wood Runner Trails" offers several longer circuits serviced by remote outfitters ("Pourvoiries" in French).

**BELOW: The three-day adventure (or more) around the Mont Laurier area is an ideal choice for those wanting to take advantage of Quebec's Free Weekend (no permit fees necessary) on January 18 & 19, 2020.**



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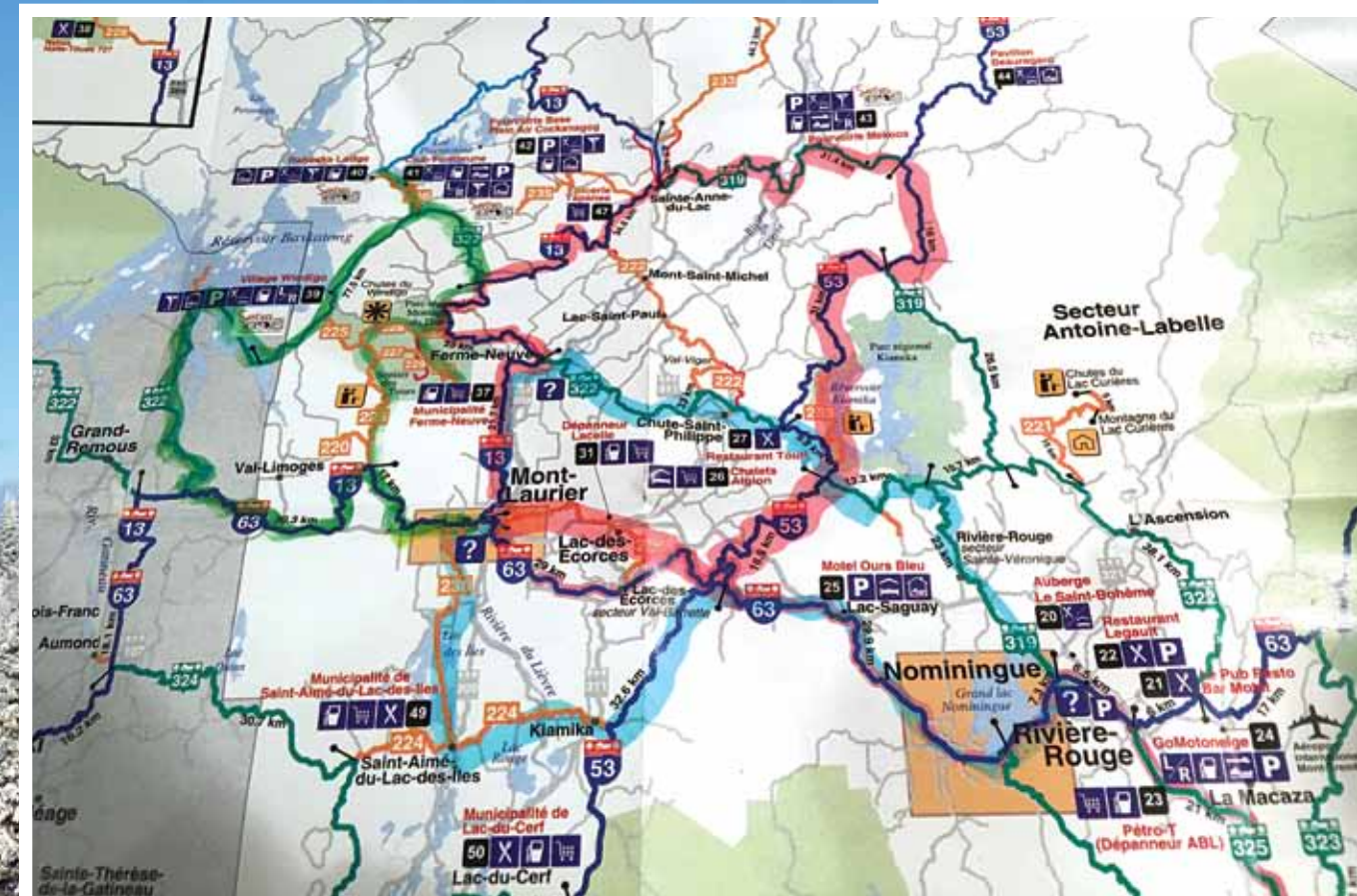


## SLEDDING TO THE PEAK

Devil's Mountain is the area's premier attraction for snowmobilers. As the second highest elevation in the Laurentians after Mont-Tremblant, this peak features a south-facing lookout complimented by basic refreshments at the rustic relais perched on the mountain's edge.



RIGHT: For those trailering in, Mont-Laurier is only 187 miles from Massena, NY and 238 miles from Burlington VT. It's also 160 miles (250 km) northwest of Montreal and 134 miles (216 km) north of Ottawa, most of it uphill.



## WHERE WE STAYED

Comfort Inn, [comfortinn-ml.ca/comfort/en/home/](http://comfortinn-ml.ca/comfort/en/home/) or (819) 623-6465

Located across the road from a gas station and attached to Restaurant La Cage sports bar, the Comfort Inn offers many well-appointed, ground floor rooms with snowmobile parking in front of the exterior doors. Good lighting, video cams and an electronic cable connected alarm system provides good sled security overnight. There's also sufficient truck and trailer parking in designated spaces, with a special area reserved for longer-term vehicle parking. Other hotel offerings include whirlpool and sauna and 24-hr front desk with English speaking staff, plus room amenities such as reliable WIFI, multiple plugs for USB and electronics, fridge and coffee machine. Restaurant La Cage is open early for breakfast and late for dinner.

## Staging Day Rides

One of the major benefits of staging day rides from one location is not having to search for new lodging every night. Another is not having to pack up and leave each morning. But best of all is finding one location, for both town and lodging, that makes returning after a memorable day's ride even more enjoyable. And that's what we experienced in Mont-Laurier and at the Comfort Inn.

The Comfort Inn Mont-Laurier is located at the east end of town

on the main street, Boulevard Albiny Paquette (Highway 117), beside Trans Quebec Trail 63. Snowmobiles are allowed to travel on the south side sidewalk, so there's good access to the same services available to automobiles along this thoroughfare. Local residents are generally very welcoming of snowmobilers riding here, stepping aside or offering warm smiles. Meanwhile, snowmobile access to all the area trails and loops is just north or east of the Comfort Inn.

Mont-Laurier isn't the only snowmobile-friendly town in Quebec.

And Laurentides is only one of their eight regional choices of snowmobiling destinations. But both are top-notch examples of what makes La Belle Province so special. And why so many touring riders choose to snowmobile from Mont-Laurier in Laurentides again and again.

And for those who love both snowmobiling and downhill skiing, why not combine them into one fun-filled family vacation? Mont-Tremblant is only 65 miles (105 km) down the road from Mont-Laurier! ■

## GET MORE INFO

- SNOWMOBILE IN QUEBEC - [snowmobileinquebec.com/region/the-laurentians/](http://snowmobileinquebec.com/region/the-laurentians/)
- TOURISME LAURENTIDES - [laurentides.com/en](http://laurentides.com/en)
- QUEBEC FEDERATION OF SNOWMOBILE CLUBS (TRAIL PERMITS & ONLINE MAP) - [FCMQ.QC.CA/EN/](http://FCMQ.QC.CA/EN/)
- MONT-LAURIER SNOWMOBILE RENTALS - [fconstantineau.com/en/](http://fconstantineau.com/en/)