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Weekends: Eastern Townships, Que



The culinary exploits complement the skiing in this undervisited part of Quebec

By Joe Cutts, Deputy Editor, SKI Magazine

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If you were a Loyalist American seeking to relocate after the Revolution, the King had just the place for you. That explains all the Anglophone place names in a location so thoroughly French. Just north of Vermont, with Jay Peak never far from view, the Eastern Townships—or Cantons-de-l'Est—draw summer visitors to their lakes and vineyards and winter visitors to their four ski areas, Bromont, Mont Orford, Mont Sutton and Owl's Head. None qualify as “major”—even by New England standards—but each has its charms, and skiing makes a perfect excuse to visit the region and enjoy the gastronomical delights, which rival—and often shame—those of U.S. ski regions. Plus, you'll have this summer hot spot all to your winter-loving self.



SKI

The four Township resorts offer a range of experiences, from rowdy après fun to soulful tree-skiing. Bromont, an hour from Montreal, bustles with nightlife, including miles of lighted trails and plenty of action. The view from the front is deceptive: The place lacks big vertical (1,152 feet), but it goes forever on successive peaks; \$28–\$45; [skibromont.com \(http://skibromont.com/\)](#). Mont Orford has a peaceful ambience and nice vibe; \$25–\$47; [orford.com](#). More remote Mont Sutton, prized for its glades and treeskiing, is close to Jay Peak and similarly powder-endowed. \$24–\$55; [montsutton.com \(http://montsutton.com/fr/index.php\)](#). And tiny Owl's Head serves up views of Lake Memphremagog from its south-facing slopes. \$30–\$40; [owlshead.com \(http://owlshead.com/\)](#)

The restaurant in Manoir Hovey, even by Quebec standards, is nothing short of extraordinary, with regional cuisine complemented by a thousand-label wine list and the largest artisanal cheese cart in the province

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Courtesy of Manoir Hovey

STAY

Master Hovey, a Southern gent, is said to have kept the shades of his railcar drawn lest his eyes be offended by views of Union territory during postbellum trips north to his summer mansion on Lake Massawippi. Today, Manoir Hovey guests enjoy his richly paneled library and the lovely grounds of his estate, now a Relais et Chateaux property, but even he didn't dine this well. The restaurant, even by Quebec standards, is nothing short of extraordinary, with regional cuisine complemented by a thousand-label wine list and the largest artisanal cheese cart in the province. Diners with refined palates should try the tasting menu, available with or without wine pairings, for a sample of the chef's freshest bounty. \$140–\$355 per person, with dinner; [manoirhovey.com \(http://www.manoirhovey.com/\)](#)

RELAX

Cheese lovers rejoice: The artisanal creations in these parts are works of art—and they cost half the price of European imports available in the U.S. Visit St. Benoit du Lac, a monastery where the award-winning blue cheese is perfection; [st-benoit-du-lac.com \(http://st-benoit-du-lac.com/\)](#). Icewine is another local specialty worth sampling. Head to La'Orpailleur, built in 1845 in Dunham, for a tour capped with samples of their ice and other wines. [orpailleur.ca \(http://orpailleur.ca/\)](#)

MUST TRY

If you enjoy the beautifully groomed runs of Bromont or Orford, tip your cap to local genius Joseph-Armand Bombardier. After inventing the Ski-Doo, the snowmobile patented in 1960, he set to work on the snowcat, and snow-buffing machines worldwide still bear his name. Check out the Bombardier Museum in Valcourt. Or take a tour of the factory where snowmobiles are manufactured. [museebombardier.com \(http://orpailleur.ca/\)](#)

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