

george clooney slept here

Travel Astronomy Or Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous

About Up In The Air O Sister, Where Art Thou? Was That ___? O.M.G.

"Hurry Hard" To Le Chateau Montebello For Free Olympic Curling Lessons

Chateau Montebello offers what may be the most unusual hotel amenity yet. Free curling lessons offered every morning at 10 a.m.



If you're not up on the Olympic sport that the IOC added to its official roster in 1998, this baronial log castle in the wilds of Canada is the perfect place to polish your skills or at least the lingo.

Curling, the sport that clutters the Pyeongchang calendar for longer than any other (18 full days), uses special brooms, special shoes and special commands ("hurry hard" is an exuberant exhortation shouted at the skips), all of which can be mastered at Le Chateau Montebello.



Of course, if you don't relish the idea of hurling a 42-pound polished granite orb across a long sheet of ice, this romantic getaway also offers cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, dog-sledding as well as Land Rover Off-Road Driving school. And that's just in the winter.

But here are four more reasons to "hurry hard" to Le Chateau Montebello:

1. Le Chateau Montebello is set on 65,000 acres of ooh-la-la wilderness. Bordered on one side by the wide waters of the Ottawa River, it's one of the last surviving land grants from a 17th-century French king and it is gorgeous, a true respite from big city life. Harold Saddlemyre, the Swiss-American entrepreneur who built it in 1930 as a private club for prime ministers, bank presidents and foreign dignitaries, conceived it as Lucerne-in-Quebec.

2. From the beginning Le Chateau Montebello has inspired awe and an anything-is-possible mentality. In order to open on July 1, Canada's Independence Day, Finnish master builder Victor Nymark, hired an army of 3500 laborers to work around the clock. To assuage the local cure' who insisted it was a sin to work on the Sabbath, Nymark sent him to Rome to get a dispensation from the Pope. Of course, by the time he returned (going by boat, it took a while) the 10,000 huge pine logs and the cathedral-like lobby with its massive six-sided, six-story stone fireplace were already in place, just in time for the grand opening masquerade ball.

3. It regularly hosts bigwigs. Although it's no longer a private club (it's now part of the luxury Fairmont chain, a AAA Four Diamond hotel), it still attracts people you read about in the headlines. It has hosted the G7 Summit, a NATO Summit, the Bilderberg Group and lots of movie stars.

4. The food, the food. Suffice it to say, you don't find many fine French restaurants in the middle of rustic wilderness. Aux Chantignoles offers an extensive wine list to accompany such dishes as pan seared foie gras with pear tarte, goat's cheese crusted rack of lamb, pan-seared Arctic char and wild mushroom roasted beef tenderloin. Whatever you do, don't miss the maple crepes at breakfast or the Sunday brunch that's probably more famous than the celebrity clientele.

«Sphère» une fondue

