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Orford resort gears up for spring break and kids: Hotel Cheribourg has a special program for children and lots for their parents, too

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Open spaces and lots of activities can make for a children's paradise, and the Hotel Cheribourg in Orford has a special program for spring break.

Located on an 80-hectare wooded estate, Cheribourg is a full-scale resort with a spa, indoor pool, sports centre, ballroom, business meeting rooms and gift shop. However, the kids' club comes to the forefront during school holidays.

"While the grown-ups are having a good meal or relaxing at Le Spa, the kids are playing at Le Cheri Club," said Patrick Lagueux, Cheribourg's general manager. "If it's too cold or stormy to spend a lot of time outdoors, Le Cheri Club makes us weatherproof."

The Cheri Club is a two-storey, indoor playground with 140 square metres of fun. On the first floor, monitors supervise children 4 to 12 playing with inflatable toys, doll houses and Lego. Older kids head for the second-floor video games and movie theatre. Next door is the hotel's sports centre - an indoor pool, exercise room, whirlpool, saunas, badminton, and volleyball courts. Le Cheri Club is free for children of hotel guests and operates daily, from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., on weekends, today and tomorrow, and March 2-18. Child care for toddlers under 4 years of age costs \$10 an hour.

The dining room's kid-friendly menu ranges from salads to sundaes, and includes chicken fingers, spaghetti and pizza. Adults can sample such adventurous cuisine choices as rabbit in coconut milk and Chinese spices, Asian duck roll, beef carpaccio with Parmesan and lime, duck leg confit with apple chutney and ice cider, venison with maple glaze, veal with orange sauce or shrimps flambees. Healthy choices include tofu marinated in port, roast turkey and vegetable dishes.

Cheribourg's main lodge, with its angled roofs, is a quirky building that dates from the 1970s. Indoors, there's a hodgepodge of well-worn styles - white stucco walls and sturdy wooden floors have a rustic air, yet the dining room is gussied up and formal.

Cheribourg's rooms and suites range from a basic hotel room to a bedroom on a mezzanine and a suite with a whirlpool bath. The main lodge has 65 hotel rooms and suites. Scattered throughout the property are 52 two- and three-bedroom cottages, many of them cozy, private getaways with fireplaces and full kitchens.

Le Spa Cheribourg has 17 treatment rooms. The wide range of services includes pressotherapy, hot-stone therapy, waterfall massage, paraffin treatments for the skin, lymphatic drainage, reflexology, seaweed wrap, massotherapy and facials. Aromavedic massage from ancient India, which uses aromatic oils to change moods and hydrate skin, and Aromamineral Golden Spa Treatment, an exfoliation and body wrap with a dusting of gold-flecked powder to give the skin a glow, are two of the more unusual treatments.

Le Spa Cheribourg offers chocolate baths and massages for kids 6 years and older. Massages for mothers and daughters and facials for teenagers are on the menu.

"It's usually a new experience," said Doris Bissonnette, the spa director, "but we are not trying to be therapeutic, just fun and to start good grooming habits."

The total relaxation package is an all-day affair. It includes a seaweed wrap, balneotherapy with essential oils, a facial and beauty treatment for hands and feet, pressotherapy, massage, herbal tea break, and light lunch. The cost, not including lodging, is \$263.

Cheribourg is part of the Hotels Villegia, which also owns the Manoir des Sables, a resort next door. Guests at the Cheribourg can use the manoir's skating rink, snow-tubing hill, and snow-shoe and cross-country trails that snake over the golf course. The cost of a whole day of kid-friendly outdoor sports is \$20 for all the guests staying in the same hotel room.

More advanced cross-country skiers head for Mont Orford Park's superb Nordic trails; downhillers can get discounted lift tickets at Ski Mont Orford. Both centres are only a few kilometres from Cheribourg. If a family wants to split up for the day, a shuttle bus runs every hour, doing a loop from the town of Magog, whose main street is lined with shops, past Cheribourg to Mont Orford.

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If You Go

Orford and Magog are a one-hour, 15-minute drive from Montreal. Take Highway 10 to Exit 118 and Route 141.

Hotel Cheribourg, www.cheribourg.com, 800-567-6132, 2603 chemin du Parc, Orford, has many levels of rooms and suites. Prices (per person, double occupancy, per night) range from \$77 for a simple room to \$115 for a two-storey suite with a mezzanine bedroom, whirlpool tub, living room with fireplace with breakfast, to \$102-\$140 with breakfast and bistro dinner; \$112-\$151 with breakfast and lift ticket at Mont Orford; and \$160-\$245 with breakfast, dinner and one-hour massage. Special rates for children. Gastronomic dinners are available.

Le Spa Cheribourg: www.spacheribourg.com, 877-868-0101.

Magog-Orford tourism: www.tourismememphremagog.com, 800-267-2744.

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