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**IRA P TOUR PROGRAM**

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**TRAIL  
ATLAS**

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  - ▶ RIDING IN NORTHERN QUEBEC
  - ▶ NEW BRUNSWICK'S WHITE GOLD
- TOURING BUYER'S GUIDE**





# RIDING GASPÉSIE

## We Tour The Beautiful Gaspésie Peninsula

BY WARREN GEER

THE QUÉBEC MARITIME IS A SNOWMOBILE ENTHUSIAST'S DREAMLAND, FROM THE SHORES OF THE ATLANTIC TO THE HEART OF THE INTERIOR. THIS SLEDDER'S PARADISE OFFERS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE'S RIDING DESIRE; FROM PERFECTLY GROOMED AND WELL MARKED TRAILS, TO SOME OF THE DEEPEST POWDER THAT EVERY BOONDOCKER SEEKS TO GET THEIR HEART PUMPING AND TO TEST THEIR DEEP SNOW RIDING SKILLS. BOASTING OVER 6000 KMS IN THE ENTIRE QC MARITIMES AND 2000 KMS OF TRAILS IN THE PENINSULA, THIS WINTER WONDERLAND OFFERS SOME THE MOST BREATHTAKING VIEWS THAT YOU COULD POSSIBLY IMAGINE.











**W**ith the most well structured tourism organization that I have ever dealt with, they will have you set up with a complete itinerary for lodging during your overnight stays, including restaurants and fuel stops along your tour. All it takes is one simple phone call and an email address and you will be set to tour Québec Maritime.

We at OSM did exactly that. We were looking to tour the east coast of the Maritimes and made one simple call, and within no time we had a three day backpacking tour locked and loaded.

Zoé, of Québec Maritime Tourism had us set up with lodging and suggested trails for our tour, along with contact info if we experienced any issues or sled breakdowns.....March 5th was penciled in. [www.snowmobilequebecmaritime.ca](http://www.snowmobilequebecmaritime.ca)

Having our itinerary all planned out for us and the GPS in the truck set for New Richmond QC, it was time to load the sleds at the shop and head east for 16

hours to get our adventure underway. With long time sleddin' buds Jamie Colvin and Andrew Steele with me on this tour, we could hardly wait to see what all the hype was about, riding in Gaspé.

After some very interesting driving conditions on our way east, we finally arrived in the late pm and pulled into our first night's stay and home base of return for this tour at Hôtel Le Francis in New Richmond. Having freshly renovated rooms, and of course plenty of parking for trucks and trailers, we were off to a great start. [www.hotelfrancis.qc.ca](http://www.hotelfrancis.qc.ca)

Waking in the morning to some rain in the forecast, we headed out east on main trail #5, which is the main perimeter trail that follows the shore of the Atlantic into the mouth of the St. Lawrence Seaway. New Richmond is on the south limit of the Gaspésie Peninsula in Chaleur Bay, 250 km from our second night's stay in Percé. This is where the most famous landmark in the Gaspé Region is located

- The Percé Rock.....as most would know if you are up to speed on your geography landmarks.

With our sleds warming up and some very light rain starting to fall, we started out on our 250 kms to Percé. Within miles of getting out of the town limits, we were already starting to see what all the hype was about when riding in this region, and we weren't even into the mountains yet. With Mother Nature dropping the wrong form of precipitation, we were still enjoying these awesome winding trails which were groomed to near perfection.

If you have ever been on a trail that just teases you to squeeze the gas, you know exactly what we were experiencing this early into our three days of riding.

Even with the rain falling harder on us and every mile getting sweeter, these trails make you wanna ride!

At our first rest stop, with our helmets off and grins from ear to ear, the words, "Are you kidding me?" were repeated more than once. As Will Ferrell from Step Brothers quoted, "That Good!!!"

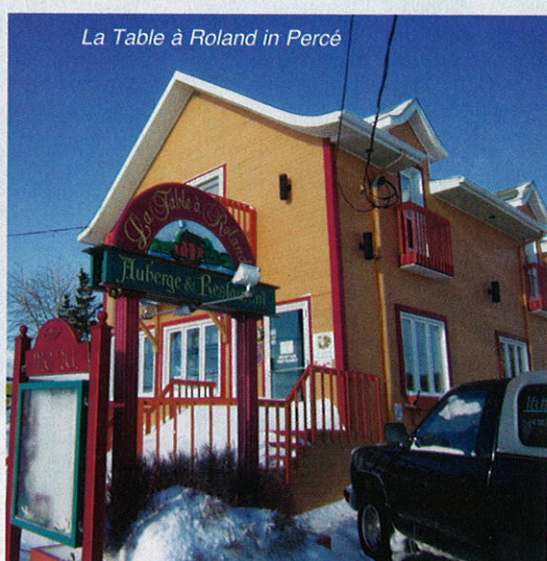
As we rolled into Percé just before dark to our lodging at Auberge La Table à Roland, we were greeted with a warm welcome and friendly service. We were shown to our rooms and our riding gear was taken to the laundry facilities for a little dry out.

We had a quick shower and headed to the restaurant for a fabulous, home cooked seafood dinner. During our meal the weather decided to change and starting dropping white gold, and did it ever come down. Within minutes we could not see the ocean and we were just a few hundred yards from it!

We woke in the morning to snow still falling, and blowing in so hard that we



Trail #5 In New Richmond





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## RIDING THE GASPÉSIE PENINSULA

had to relax at the hotel the entire next day while Mother Nature decided to dump 70 cms of snow that shut the entire town down for the day. As you can see by the pictures of our sleds, (that were protected by the way) we had seen a lot of snow.



After sitting out a day's riding, we were more than eager to hit the trails the next morning, and tackle the interior trail # 597 through Murdochville, north onto Mont Saint Pierre.

This 350 km route that was set out for us was one of the most challenging tours I have been on. With 70 cms of fresh snow that had fallen the night before, we were finding out that our flatlander sleds were not quite suitable for what these trails were demanding from us, without a groomer passing through.

While breaking trail for the first 30 km and sighting some awesome views and terrain that you just don't find in Ontario, we finally reached Murdochville for a fuel top up and a few mouthfuls of trail



Trail 597

mix, all while admiring this very small community in the middle of nowhere.

Exiting out of Murdochville, we found ourselves riding a freshly laid ribbon by the groomer, and we were in paradise. But unfortunately, that lasted all of 10 km and we caught the groomer, then found ourselves following a single track that was obviously broken by someone riding a long track mountain sled with an experienced pilot. If it wasn't for this lone track, we could have found ourselves staying right in Murdochville for the night. As we pushed higher and deeper into the mountains, it was more than obvious that there was even more fresh snow here, and the challenges were getting greater with every corner. The trail signs were now buried in snow





and we were completely relying on the solo track that was before us. We were only hoping that this guy was on the same route that we were heading, to Mont Saint Pierre. After pushing through for 300 kms, our lead track had dropped close to 10 ft from the trail, down to an access road, with no chance of getting up the bank across the road. We had to

gamble and start looking for a way off the mountain, through a maze of construction access roads that were there for the electric generating windmills. BTW....the roads are not plowed in there; they are blown out by the hydro electric company to allow service to their windmills, creating a 10 ft vertical wall.

With luck on our side, we found a gentleman in a hydro pickup truck, and after a few minutes of trying to resolve the language barrier, he used his CB in the truck and guided us to someone that could overcome our inability to speak French. Once we established that we were lost, they kindly guided us through the maze of access roads to the main trail, leaving us about 35 kms from our hotel in Mont Saint Pierre on the mouth of the St. Lawrence.



One of several large bridge crossings in the region



## Snowmobile Hood Cleaner & Polish

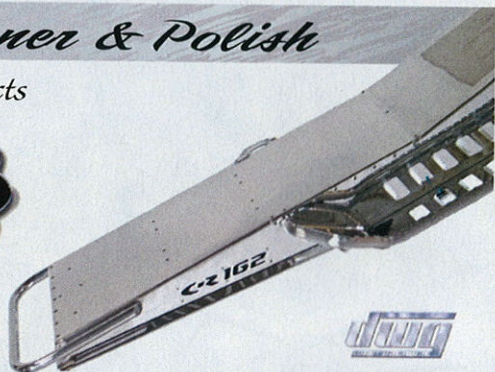
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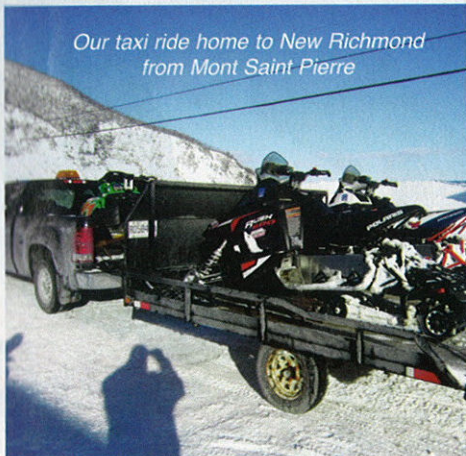


During our last 35 kms to our hotel, we had some very steep vertical climbs and descents, which make you appreciate and respect what this mountainous countryside has to offer.

Finally reaching our destination at Hôtel Mont Saint Pierre, we settled in for a great seafood dinner and some not surprising news that the Gaspé Peninsula had closed down their trail system due to the inability of the groomers to pass through most of their trails. This just happened to be the most snow to fall in 15 years in the Peninsula.

**Yes!! Too Much Snow to Ride!!**

After hearing this news, we were forced to schedule a taxi truck and trailer for the next morning to take us back to our truck in New Richmond; a 4 hour truck ride south. We drove through the Chic Choc mountains and we had thought we had seen countryside on our adventure north. But this scenic route has us going back in 2012 to re-ride trail 597 and experience what the westerly region has to offer...I'm sure we won't be disappointed.



The trail system here is like no other I have experienced, and the hospitality is geared towards us sledding enthusiasts. What more could we ask for?

If you're looking to organize a sled trip with your buddies and want some awesome riding and lodging, then look no further - "The Gaspé Peninsula is your ticket to Adventure."

**Have a Great 2012 Riding season, and I will see you on the trails!! ☺**

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