

Eastern Canada's highest peak attracts thousands

Mont Tremblant, 80 miles north-west of Montreal rises gently, undulating ridges from the Laurentian Plateau to a height of 3,001 feet. It is a venerable mountain. Its White Peak is the highest promontory of what is said to be the oldest mountain range in the world.

And it is a mountain that men have traveled distances to ski for nearly 50 years, according to faithful old skiers.

Men like Jim who with whom I rode the chairlift to the top of Mont Tremblant on a glorious day of bright sun, fluffy little white clouds dotting the blue sky, a day of

packed powder snow, a day you wait for all season.

Jim grew expansive and told me about the first time he skied Tremblant, in the early thirties.

There were no lifts, and Jim and his party climbed the mountain with seal skins in order to ski down one of the two existing trails of the time: The Kandahar and the Taschereau.

The mountain was there of course, long before men ever climbed its flanks with skis. Tremblant was formed during the first glacial age, and rose originally to several times its present

height.

Thousands of intervening years of seismic upheaval, glaciation and erosion have given Tremblant the gently contoured, weathered appearance of a venerable old lady.

To the Algonquin Indians, who were there first, Mont Tremblant came to be known as Manitou-Ewitchi-Saga, the Mountain of the Dread Manitou, Indian God of the Wilderness, who would cause the mountain to tremble with great storms and falling rock when man violated the sanctity of the wilds.

The Indians stayed away and the legend they created would later give the mountain its name, MONT TREMBLANT, the Trembling Mountain.

In February 1938, another party of skiers elected to climb to the top of Mont Tremblant. Among them was Joseph Bondurant Ryan, Irish from Philadelphia and several times a millionaire, and Lowell Thomas.

As Thomas later told it in a radio broadcast from the Mont Tremblant

Lodge "When we got to the top we found ourselves in a glistening fairyland of ice crystals and pine trees, either coated with rime ice or buried deep in snow. It was sunny and clear, and we could see an immense distance with the snow-covered mountains and frozen lakes of that part of the Province of Quebec spread out before us.

We got a thrill out of it and especially young Joe Ryan.

Said he, "This surely is one of the most glorious spots in the world and there is only one thing wrong with it; it is too difficult getting up here".

Ryan added, according to Thomas, "I believe I'll fix that."

A casual remark — but not in Ryan's mind. With a doggedness that would later become his trademark, Joe Ryan succeeded in purchasing the land he could not lease; he hired crews of "habitants", the French-Canadian farmers and lumbermen of the region; cut trails and put up a 4,500-foot chairlift (the first in America)

designed by U.S. Steel; and in February 1939, just one year after his climb to the summit with Lowell Thomas, opened the doors of the Mont Tremblant to the skiing public, mostly for his wealthy Philadelphia friends at first, who would come up to enjoy skiing, singing and story-telling.

In 1950 Joe Ryan died and in 1965, the Ryan family sold the entire complex to three Montreal businessmen Messrs. Andre Charron, Roger Beauchemin and Jean-Louis Levesque who were joined later by Mr. Roger DeSerres.

Among the four of them they have over the past decade, installed lifts, widened trails and cut new ones, put in an extensive snowmaking system, opened up more novice-intermediate terrain to counter Tremblant's reputation as an expert mountain, and opened the door, democratically, to the true skiing public.

I knew nothing of this history when I visited Mont Tremblant last season. I knew only that Tremblant was a for-

midable mountain, one of the great names in Eastern skidom, and that its ski school gave lessons four hours a day, morning and afternoon.

An intermediate, I wanted the experience of spending most of the day, every day, on the hill, with a good instructor.

The first thing I learned about Tremblant is that if you go by air, it is remarkably close to home and easy to reach. The flight from Toronto to Montreal's Dorval airport took slightly less than an hour.

I rented a car at the airport, got on the Laurentian Autoroute — a six-lane, 70-mph superhighway — and followed it past towns with french-catholic names, onto Quebec 117 to St. Jovite and followed the signs for about seven miles to Tremblant — a 90-minute leisurely drive in all.

The second thing I learned, on arrival, is that the Mont Tremblant Lodge is but the centerpiece of a cluster of large wooden buildings and smaller cottages, set in among the trees, that form a compact skiing village right at the base of Mont Tremblant.

It is all done in the early settlers' style, with

characteristic overhanging eaves and brightly colored gables.

There is a base area just up the road, called the Chalet Circle, where the arrangement of its buildings, with a ski shop-repair shop, the Magasin de la Place, the Chalet des Voyageurs cafeteria and separate Disco-Bar, a lift-ticket building, a check-room with lockers for season pass holders and ski racks; and a ski school office.

There is even a church nearby, the Chapelle St-Bernard where in times

past children could go to have their skis blessed.

The ski school classes form up in the morning at the Chalet Circle, where brightly colored flags fly from the Chalet des Voyageurs and red-suited ski instructors direct traffic for the Mont Tremblant Lodge guests.

Three other lodges nearby — Manoir Pinoteau, Cuttle's Tremblant Club and Villa Bellevue — operate their own ski-schools at Tremblant, which leads to a profusion of ski-school-parka colors on the hill.

Orlando, Tampa convenient fly-in points to Florida

For Ontario travellers planning to fly to central Florida, the most convenient fly-in points are Orlando and Tampa.

Eastern Airlines operates a daily service from Toronto International Airport to the Orlando Jetport. The basic one-way economy fare is \$111, and the round-trip seven- to 30-day excursion fare is \$199.

By car, Orlando is about 2,400 kilometres from Toronto via U.S. Route 75. For anyone planning to drive, the Ontario Motor League's tour planning service is a decided advantage. This is available only to OML members.

Membership in most OML clubs is \$30 a year. For information on joining the OML, phone 964-3120 or write OML, 2 Carlton Street, Toronto.

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The same resort offers a three-day, two-night package that includes breakfast and gourmet dinner daily and accommodation in the kitchenette suite for \$94 (golf) or \$78 (tennis)

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