



Get out and enjoy the great outdoors!

## Description

# Local outing club takes the worry out of outdoor adventure

By **Judee Ganten**

Randonnée Aventure offers well-organized, affordable bus and carpool trips to choice destinations in the area. All you have to do is show up.

I recently returned from an exhilarating group ski weekend in Mont Sainte-Anne north of Québec City, energized and richer in experience. And the best part about it was I didn't have to do any of the planning or worry about logistics. Just pay a surprisingly reasonable sum, show up with my equipment and get on the bus.

The trip was organized by a local outdoor adventure club, Randonnée Aventure. The volunteer-run club was established nearly 30 years ago and boasts about 275 members in all. It runs affordable day and weekend trips from Montreal to destinations in Vermont, New York State, Ontario and all around Québec. This time it was a cross-country skiing and snowshoeing trip, with downhill skiing and snowboarding as an option (I took advantage of it all!). But in the summer season, it could well have been a hiking or a cycling adventure.

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The thing I like about Randonnée's offer (apart from the fact that the price is right) is that most trips don't rely on the catch-as-catch-can carpool model used by many other local outing clubs. A private inter-city bus transports enthusiasts straight to their destination. On the Mont Saint-Anne weekend, the bus left from the corner of Atwater and Saint-Catherine, whisking the group of 40 participants to the hotel at the base of the ski hill in just three hours. It dropped us back on the Sunday evening around 7 p.m., a nice solution for those who prefer not to a long drive



home after a day's workout.



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Quick

meetings were held in the mornings to outline logistics and activity options for the day. Trail maps were provided for cross country skiers and snowshoers, and people were encouraged to form small groups according to their levels of ability and preference.

One clear advantage of having been around for 30 years is experience: this club knows great destinations. The 2016 spring/summer season, which runs most Saturdays from May through October, is set to launch mid-April with 14 hiking and 16 cycling day trips in the lineup, including several outings in the Adirondacks and Vermont. Another nice feature: you pay only for the trips that interest you – no minimum or obligation to enroll for an entire season.

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Longer trips in the summer are frequently scheduled to coincide with the holiday long weekends. One of several on the schedule is a hiking and cycling trip to the hamlet of Lincoln New Hampshire, in the spectacular White Mountain National Forest. Another is a cycling weekend in beautiful Bay of Quinte, Prince Edward County in Ontario, the only Canadian destination featured on Travel & Leisure's listing of Where to Travel in 2015.

Randonnée bills itself as Montreal's friendly outdoor club. Volunteer trip leaders go out of the way to welcome and integrate newcomers, and the togetherness of the bus ride provides more opportunity to get to know your fellow outdoor enthusiasts. Pub stops after a day of brisk activity are a common feature, as are the cocktail get-togethers that are a routine part of the weekend getaways. In addition, the club offers regular social gatherings in the city. So it came as little surprise when I learned that a disproportionately high number of members had married a kindred



spirit whom they met in the club.

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It's important to note that this club is not set up to accommodate families. Members are single adults or couples who have a passion for the outdoors and a level of fitness needed to ski, hike or cycle at a steady pace for the better



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Despite

its French moniker and predominantly English-speaking heritage, today Randonnée Aventure is a bilingual operation that is increasingly attracting more Francophones and even a smattering of border-state Americans. On the bus, conversation flowed easily in both languages.

The best way to find out if the Randonnée Aventure formula works for you is to try it on for size. They offer prospective members an option to buy a trial trip before deciding to join. There is also a Newcomers' Invitational Hike at Mont St-Hilare in May. Cyclists can take part in the Meet and Ride event on Saturday, April 30th, or can join one of the carpool events throughout the upcoming season. For the full schedule, visit the club's website at [randonnee.ca](http://randonnee.ca)

A few more details:

- Membership is a bargain at just \$20 a year. Joining or enrolling for a trip can be done easily via the club's website at [randonnee.ca](http://randonnee.ca)
- The weekend trip to Mont Sainte-Anne was \$295, including transportation, two nights double occupancy, with two breakfasts and a dinner, plus a club-sponsored 5 à 7 on Saturday evening. Trail fees and lift tickets were extra.
- Cycling outings rely on the carpool model.



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*Aventure.*

### Category

1. Outdoors
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### Tags

1. cross country skiing
2. cycling
3. hiking
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