

PHOTO BY COWGIRL RULES

# Québec outfitters beckon spring bear hunters

## SPRING BEAR HUNT AND LODGING GUIDE



DON WILCOX

**O**utfitters in Québec have convincing reasons for spring bear hunters to head off to La Belle Province.

Not only is there a wide selection of options for out-of-province visitors, but sportsmen also have a high probability of actually getting a shot at their quarry. And, many outfitters are just a few hours driving time from major population centres – including those along Québec’s borders with Ontario and the U.S.

The No. 1 attraction, according to Domaine Shannon operator Serge Danis, is hunter success.

“In bear hunting, it is very high,” said Danis, whose family has operated this Maniwaki-area lodge for over 40 years. He said 98 per cent of Domaine Shannon’s hunters over the past 15 years got a shot at a bear, and those who didn’t were invited back the next year – free.

The Québec Outfitters Federation lists 50 members in the Outaouais and Abitibi-Temiscaming regions alone (hunting Zones 10, 11, 12 and 13) offering bear hunt packages during the season, which runs from mid-May through June.

“The spring bear hunt is very popular here,” said QOF Spokesman Alain Parenteau. “They know we have really good outfitters who sell really good packages.”

Québec requires non-resident hunters to purchase the services of an outfitter, and a strong

Canadian dollar hit the U.S. side of the business hard in recent years. Québec’s non-resident licence sales fell to less than half of the peak of 4,301 in 2004, but that number is on the rise again as the U.S. greenback rebounds and the loonie sinks.

There are other reasons to use an outfitter.

“First you are going to have professional service,” said Siegfried Gagnon of Tourism Québec. “Furthermore being part of the QOF they have to apply high standards and an ethical code. You are going with a guy who knows his territory, he has been baiting for years, and they know their bear population.”

Many outfitters buy exclusive hunting-territory rights from the Québec government, which helps control how many animals are taken each year, and protects the population for future seasons.

With fewer American hunters and careful management in recent years, Gagnon said the bear population has “exploded,” so hunter success rates remain very high.

The options are many and varied.

“Usually the outfitters are offering all-inclusive trips. Six or seven nights, guides, lodges, some of them have food, others you can rent a cottage and have your own food. It depends on what you are looking for,” Parenteau said.

Basic packages start around \$700 and range up to \$2,000 or more for a luxurious, all-inclusive experience. While some bear outfitters offer just one package, many offer several options including



length of stay, type of accommodations, fishing access, meals, etc.

“It’s really important to ask questions and if you don’t get the answer, ask two times, or three times until it is very clear,” Parenteau said. “If everything is clear and understood by both parties, then the trip will be good.”

Find out the size of the territory, how many bait sites are available, how many hunters they accept each season. What is the success rate? Is a guide included?

“Usually you want to know what is going to be the success rate, and you should ask for references,” Danis said. “Most (outfitters) are very honest, but there are always a few ... and if they are members of the federation there are rules to follow. If they are members it is a big plus.”

If you haven’t used outfitters in the past, it’s important to understand what you are paying for. Is a licence included? Are bedding, meals, boat and motor, fuel and life jackets (if combining the hunt with a fishing option) and if you are anglophone, do at least some staff speak English?

The federation also administers a provincewide rating system for all outfitters. Note, however, it’s based on the facilities and services provided – not on consumer feedback such as complaints or success rates.



As for hunting methods, while about 75 per cent prefer a rifle, a significant number are attracted by the additional challenge of taking a bear with a bow.

“You have to be closer to try your shot, (the hunter) is more in the action,” Parenteau said. Harvesting a bear with a bow he said, is “priceless.”

Which is how any hunter would feel at the end of a successful trip.

You can check out the Québec Outfitters Federation at [www.pourvoiries.com/en/](http://www.pourvoiries.com/en/).

## Stay safe in bear country

By Jeff Morrison

When camping and travelling in bear country during spring, safety is always a concern. Although encounters with black bears are rare, they do occur, so keep things clean and tidy around camp. These animals are fearsome omnivores and their sense of smell rivals any animal alive.

Don’t kid yourself. Any bear under three miles away will pick up the scent of your cooking fire within minutes. Tent campers need to take garbage seriously: keep the campsites free of it. Store all food products in the trunk of your vehicle at night, or suspended by ropes in a tree away from your tent. Don’t invite unwanted guests for dinner this spring.



# MOOSE MCGUIRE'S

PUB & GRILL

ONE GREAT LOCATION!

3320 McCarthy Rd.  
Ottawa, ON 613.680.4411

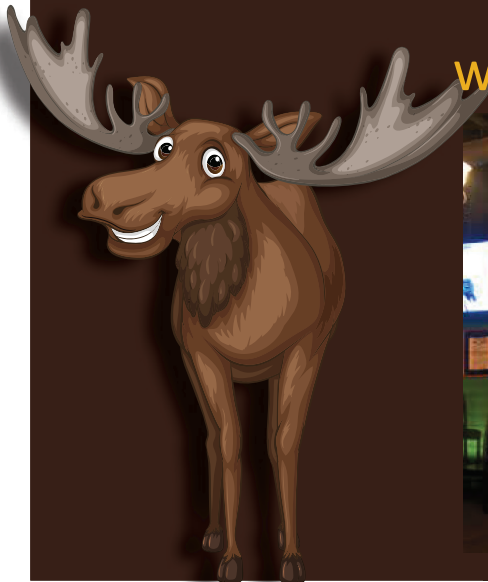
[www.moosemcguires.com](http://www.moosemcguires.com)

- HIGH-DEF TVs and PROJECTOR SCREEN for sports!
- HOT DISHES & COLD BEER!
- GREAT SPORTS & LIVE MUSIC

BOOK OUR PARTY ROOMS.

- THREE PUBS IN ONE! Distinct rooms provide something for everyone. Call to book!
- MINGLE with friends
- LIVE MUSIC Fridays & Saturdays

TEAM SPONSORSHIPS.



- Moose McGuire’s is a popular family-owned neighbourhood pub in Ottawa South.
- Serving the freshest and tastiest pub fare in the city. An always-delicious and reasonably-priced 5-star experience.