

The Brave Ski Mom

*Because the Family that Skis Together,
Enjoys Life Together.*

At Québec's Le Massif, We Can All Be Lugers

Posted on [February 4, 2014](#) by [Kristen Lummis](#)



Ready to luge, with my friend Greg Snow.



When it comes to crazy winter sports, the “sliding disciplines” have to be among the craziest. **Bobsled, luge and skeleton: the names alone can give you pause**, let alone the speeds these athletes reach while careening down a solid ice course.

Exhilarating? For sure. Crazy? Even more. Especially if you're a novice.

So it wasn't totally surprising when out of a group of 15 adventurous skiers and snowboarders, journalists who have skied the world, only 3 of us raised our hands to experience luge.



The three lugers: Peter Hines, me and Greg Snow.

Not That Kind of Luge

In the Olympics, luge is the event where one or two racers lie face up on a tiny, aerodynamic sled and race downhill feet first. **Olympic speeds can exceed 90 mph – easily.**

While we didn't really know what we were volunteering for, **we were pretty sure we weren't signing up for a virtual free fall on ice.**

First of all, our hosts at [Le Massif de Charlevoix](#) had no interest in harming us. Secondly, the locals we talked to wholeheartedly recommended luge, reassuring us that we could control our speed and the descent.

When we got our lugers, we were surprised. These sleds were neither aerodynamic, nor high-tech, but works of wooden beauty: **handmade, old school sleds with fast Teflon runners and a woven seat.**

It turns out that in the French Savoy dialect, luge actually means “small coasting sled.”

Luging is sledding.

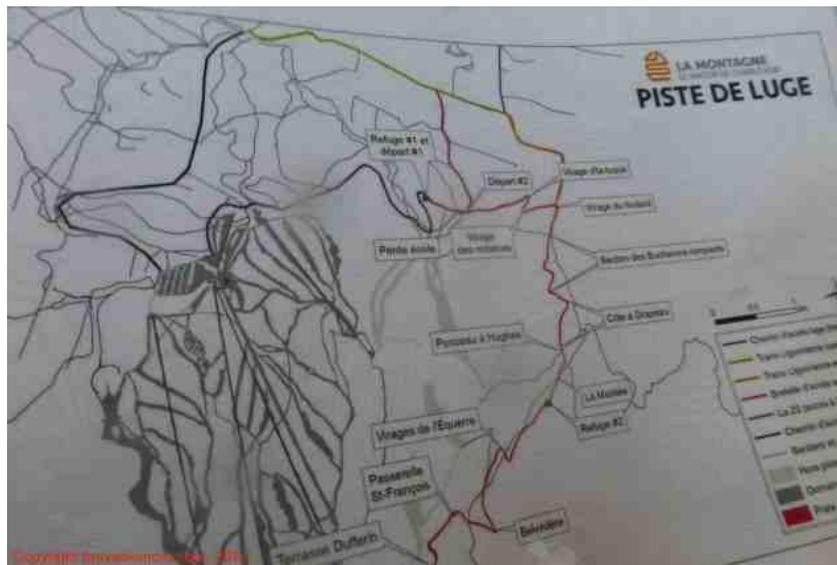


A shed full of sleds, I mean luges.

Not That Kind of Sledding

Of course, we also knew that this wasn't going to be schoolyard sledding either.

While we felt like happy children as we practice sliding, stopping and turning with our feet on the practice slope, **we were preparing to slide down a 7.5 km or 4.66 mile course.**



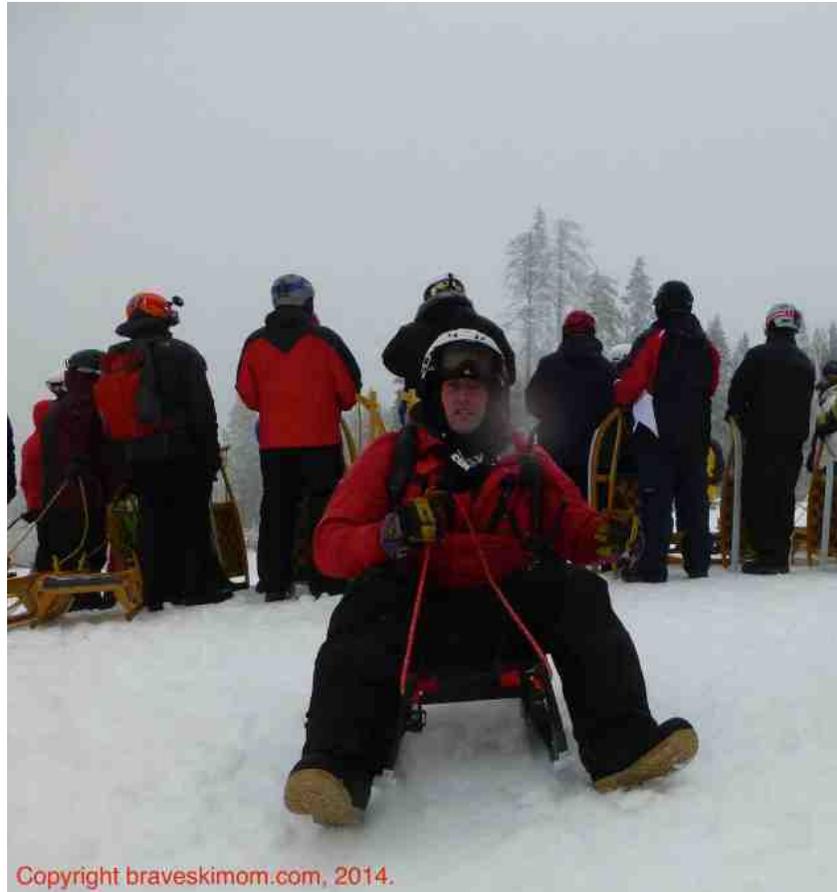
The piste de luge or map of the luge track at Le Massif de Charlevoix, Québec.

During our snow cat ride to the top of the course, our guide Matthieu (or as the guides call him Matt-luge) showed us a detailed map, **pointing out curves where we would want to slow down, places to let it rip and**

two mandatory stopping points, one at a cabin to get water and warm up and another at bridge crossing a rushing creek.

At the top, the course is flat, giving new lugers a few minutes, and meters, to practice turning before heading downhill.

Then, when you're comfortable, **you let it rip, dragging your feet or shifting your weight to turn and digging in your feet to stop**. The technique is easy, relatively intuitive and surprisingly nuanced. A little weight change here, a slight foot drag there made a lot of difference in controlling a line and moderating speed.



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Our guide, Matthieu, or Matt-Luge, telling us how it's done.

Plenty of Room

Before we started down the mountain, one of my main concerns was were we would be in relation to the other lugers. I like speed, and I can race a mean alpine slide, going full throttle all the way down.

I thought luge might be a bit like that: a narrow track, participants going one-by-one, with no room to pass. **I did not want to be the “slow” person, holding everyone back, nor did I want to be behind the slow person.**

Luckily, luge at **Le Massif de Charlevoix** is nothing like I imagined.

Rather than a narrow track, **the trail is broad, more like a cat trail on a ski run.** There is plenty of room to pass and in most places the trail runs into deep snow, so if you do get off course, you'll just slowly slide off and easily get back on. In several sections, the trail has some exposure, but barrier netting protects riders. **No one is going to get hurt.**



Lugers on the wide track at Le Massif de Charlevoix.

And, no one is going to hold anyone else up. If you wanted to go slow, you went slow. If you wanted to go fast, you went fast. If you wanted to stop and take a photo, no problem. We were in a **group of about 25 lugers and I don't think anyone felt crowded or pressured.**

We were having way too much fun to be bothered by anything.



Bridge crossing on the luge track at Le Massif.

Over Too Soon

The moment we reached the end of the luge track, we all wanted to do it again. If we'd been able to re-up on the spot, we would have. We'd traveled 7.5 km downhill, just inches above the snow. **We were drenched, covered in snowspray from dragging and turning with our boots, and, surprisingly, we had been gone two hours.**

Still, my friends and I agreed, if we could just take another run, we'd go faster, turn better and yell louder.

We are lugers.

When You Go...

I'm told that [Le Massif de Charlevoix, in Québec](#), is the only place in North America offering recreational [luge](#). About one hour northeast from Québec City, Le Massif is also a famous ski resort, renowned for its steep, difficult terrain and views over the broad, frozen Saint Lawrence River. It's an easy day trip from the city, or you can stay at the beautiful, très moderne [Hôtel La Ferme](#) and [take the ski train to the resort](#).



The ski train from Hôtel la Ferme to Le Massif. The train runs along the Saint Lawrence River.

We were there on a cloudy, wet day with zero visibility. I'm told that the views from the luge track are also breathtaking, but I can't vouch for that. Besides, my goggles were covered in snowspray!

Since it was a wet day, it was a better day for lugging than skiing. The rain/snow combination that was falling actually sped up the luge track, and our guides, Matthieu, Jessica and Jerome, **estimated that we were usually going between 30-50 kph (19-31 mph). It was a great day for luge, they told us!**

The luge track, or *piste de luge*, is well removed from the rest of the resort and has an exquisite deep woods feel. We didn't see the moose as the snowcat approached the top, but they were there and, apparently, so are wolves, beavers and other woodland creatures.



A pretty shot of the northern woods in Québec. Moose, wolves and beavers — they're out there!

Le Massif runs several luge sessions each day from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. **Reservations are recommended and bookings are usually necessary about one month in advance.** The minimum age is 10, and there is no maximum age!

Enjoy!

For a taste of luge at Le Massif, along with shots of the lovely Hôtel La Ferme and the ski train, check out this fun video by my friend Greg Snow.

Enjoy!

Sledding at Le Massif YouTube sharing



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About Kristen Lummis

I am the owner, writer and head ski tech at www.braveskimom.com. The mom of two boys in a busy outdoor family, I write about skiing all year round, tossing in some biking, hiking, parenting and even a bit of reflection during the off-season. While my recreational passion is for all things snow, my real passion is for my family.

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