

Quebec City: a world class destination comparable to its historically-rich European counterparts

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The most photographed hotel in the world, Quebec City's Fairmont Le Chateau Frontenac, majestically adorns the city's skyline.



Horse driven carriage rides have become a tourist attraction in Quebec City.



Quebec City is a popular stopover for many cruise liners.



Quebec City's famous Ensemble de Quebec, a group of 20 singers, entertain tourists.

visit this Canadian city that feels like Europe. Quebec City is a historic capital city, a UNESCO world heritage site and the only fortified city north of Mexico.

With a population of 800,296 people in the metropolitan area, Quebec City offers bustling streets, magnificent architecture, numerous festivals and plenty of nature, making it a desired tourist destination in both winter and summer.

A staunch guardian of French culture in North America, Quebec City proudly showcases the rich and unique French heritage in its history, museums, fine art, interpretation centres and walking tours. Quebec City is Quebec's second largest city after Montreal. Landmarks include the majestic Chateau Frontenac, which dominates the skyline and La Citadelle, an active military installation and official residence of the Governor General of Canada.

There are three additional remarkable characteristics of Quebec City that should induce any ardent tourist to

Like the Great Wall of China, the Leaning Tower of Pisa or the Eiffel Tower, the Fairmont Chateau Frontenac has become a tourist destination of its own. It is the most photographed hotel in the world, with an imposing view of the mighty St. Lawrence River. It is designated a National Historic Site of Canada. There are estimated to be 37 National Historic Sites in Quebec City.

The landmark hotel, which opened in 1893, has had the distinction of hosting many heads of state and VIPs including King George VI, Queen Elizabeth, Princess Grace of Monaco and many others. During World War II, Chateau Frontenac became famous for hosting the Allies' Quebec Conferences attended by President Franklin Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King.

It is also believed that

Canada was born on the Plains of Abraham, outside the walls of the old city where a decisive battle between France and Britain was fought, influencing the creation of Canada.

With over 200 travel writers, public relations and tourism officials from all over Canada, I attended the Travel Media Association of Canada (TMAC) annual convention in Quebec City. We were pampered for five glorious days at the renowned Fairmont Hotel. Quebec tourism officials went all out to ensure red carpet treatment for the visiting media and tourism industry personnel.

On the first day, we were divided into smaller groups, each batch matched up with a chef to enjoy a farm to table dining experience. I was grouped with Chef Simon Renaud of Hilton who bought all the necessary ingredients for cooking fresh from the market in our presence. The group then walked to the Hilton for a cooking class with instruction by the chef. After that we enjoyed a delicious meal prepared by the class. Cooking classes are becoming fashionable in many five-star hotels, and hotel officials confirm that patrons are demanding such culinary experience from renowned chefs during their stay.

Tourists are also given an opportunity to experience Quebec's authentic aboriginal tradition and culture. Close to Quebec City is the Huron-Wendat reservation, Onhoua Chetek8e, offering a unique history, culture and traditions of the Hurons.

Quebec City is renowned for its gourmet cuisine and restaurants which use local products with creativity and finesse. It boasts world-class restaurants, bistros, inns and farms specializing in local produce.

The mighty St. Lawrence River which begins from Lake Ontario, flows through historically rich cities of Montreal, Quebec City and Trois-Rivieres, which have capitalized and unveiled tourism initiatives increasing cruise travel along the waterway. Quebec City is a popular stopover for cruise ships, enroute to other destinations. Cruise passengers have stayed in Quebec City before or after their cruise to experience the unique character of the city.

However, one doesn't have to be a cruise passenger to enjoy the St. Lawrence River. There are plenty of local cruises available, among them is Croisieres AML, a leading cruise company offering various cruise packages on AML *Louis Jolliet*.

The boat, which can carry up to 1000 passengers, passes through some of Quebec City's points of interest, allowing passengers to enjoy panoramic views in the comfort of its glassed-in dining rooms. The boat has three distinctive terraces, where entertainment and dancing is provided. They serve meals entirely cooked on board.

The last day in Quebec City for us was a memorable one. Escorted by a full RCMP band, the whole entourage walked through the streets of the city to a culinary experience of a lifetime. We had delicious dinner at La Chapelle du Seminaire, which has been deconsecrated since 1992 and is available for private parties and fund-raising events. The seminaire provides a unique setting and magical atmosphere for the event, with entertainment offered by the Ensemble de Quebec, a dynamic group of 20 singers and four musicians, playing and singing universal gospel music. The group comprises experienced performers who regularly participate for special public, corporate and fund-raising events. As gospel music pioneers, the Ensemble, which was established in 1995, has performed to sold-out shows and has also released their first album. □

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A favourite place for tourists is Quebec City's Old Town streets which resemble European streets.



Open-air cafes dominate Quebec City's streets.



Some people in the audience found the music too loud for them.