

Title:

Québec City, A Taste of Old Europe in North America

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Summary:

Overview of Québec City, which is a taste of old Europe right here in North America.

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Article Body:

One can get a taste of old Europe right in North America when visiting Québec City in Canada. Québec City is the capital of the province of Québec. It can be easily reached by a short flight from points in the northeastern United States and eastern Canada. It is a three hour drive from Montreal. The high season is the summer when visitors from all over the world visit. Recently, the number of tourists from the United States and Europe has increased dramatically. This may be partly due to the fact that even some cruise ships originating from eastern US ports are now including Québec City as a port of call.

Back in 1608, explorer Samuel de Champlain saw the potential of the natural citadel here and founded a fur trading post. With the fortifications of the Upper Town of Québec City became the area where government and religious institutions set up. Meanwhile, merchants and craftsmen settled in the Lower Town along the St. Lawrence River. Québec City was fought over by the English and the French many times during wars in the 17th and 18th centuries. The English finally took the city over in 1759 resulting with New France becoming a British colony. Québec City is still considered as the cradle of French civilization in North America. The old quarter of the city was declared a world heritage site by UNESCO in 1985 and is the only fortified city in North America.

Today, the winding streets and alleys of the old quarter of Québec City is filled with elegant restaurants, bistros, cafes, museums, art galleries and retail shops. There are artists selling their artwork in some of the alleys. Most of the restaurants in the old quarter are smaller, independent business rather than large chains and they fill up quickly during busy periods so advance reservations are recommended. One of the landmarks of Québec City is the huge medieval looking hotel, the Château Frontenac which along with the adjacent

Terrasse Dufferin, overlooks the St. Lawrence River. A one of a kind funicular connects the Upper Town with the Lower Town. There are also several smaller hotels right in the old quarter. The old quarter can be visited by car and there are parking areas strategically located.

Just outside the walls of the old quarter is the rest of downtown Québec City where newer high rise hotels such as the Hilton and Loews are located. Along the main street of Grand Allée is another section of restaurants and cafes, many of them priced a bit lower than the ones within the old quarter which gives visitors more dining choices. It is a very easy walk from Grand Allée to the old quarter.

Still another alternative for both accommodation and dining is in the Sainte Foy area which is a 10 minute drive west of downtown Québec City. In fact, Sainte Foy is actually closer to the airport and is well represented by lower priced hotels such as Best Western, Travelodge, Comfort Inn and Days Inn. During the high season, some of the hotels in Sainte Foy offer free shuttle bus service to the old quarter of Québec City. Sainte Foy also has two shopping malls side by side along the main street of Laurier Boulevard.

Visitors may also want to drive 30 minutes east of Québec City to the small village of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré which has one of the most famous churches in North America, Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré Basilica. This site was built in the mid 17th century and receives 1.5 million visitors per year. Along the way is a 272 foot high water falls visible from the highway called the Chute Montmorency.

Although the summer is the high season, Québec City gets a fair number of visitors to its Carnaval festival in February and the major ski resort Mont Sainte-Anne is busy with the ski and snowboard crowds all winter. Most skiers and snowboarders going to Mont Sainte-Anne use Québec City as the base for accommodations and dining. An added winter attraction during the last few years has been the Ice Hotel near Lac Sainte-Joseph which was modeled after the one in Europe.

Québec City has become one of Canada's top tourist destinations with attractions all year round catering to both summer and winter visitors. With the added old European charm, it is the closest thing to being in Europe without actually leaving North America.