

## EXPERIENCE

# Great Escapes: The History and Charm of Old Quebec

By Tracy Kaler Jan. 7, 2022 12:31 pm ET

Cobbled streets, the sounds of French floating through the air, and the stunning architecture of Nouvelle France lend a European sensibility to Old Quebec, or Vieux-Québec, Quebec City's historical and cultural epicenter. The most intact fortified town north of Mexico, Old Quebec is straight out of a storybook and an idyllic destination for escaping the present.

The Francophone town dates to 1608, and features a patchwork of vibrant neighborhoods—each worth a visit—but the most alluring of the bunch is the Old City. In many ways, time has stood still in the historic district, which offers a snapshot of what life was like centuries ago.

A Unesco World Heritage Site since 1985, Old Quebec consists of Lower Town, or Basse-Ville, and Upper Town, or Haute-Ville. The two-level district can be traversed by several staircases, or the easier option, an electrically-powered funicular railway.

Water weaves through and around Quebec City, the provincial capital of Quebec. The St. Charles River empties into the St. Lawrence River, a robust North American trade route leading to the Atlantic Ocean. Lower Town's Petit Champlain, a historical and thriving shopping section, connects to the Old Port, a picture-worthy harbor hugging the St. Lawrence. Surrounded by fortifications, Upper Town is perched atop Cap Diamant, promising heavenly views of the river and beyond.

Equally as lovely in winter as in summer, this pocket of Quebec City is where the Old World meets modern-day, and where visitors can experience a selection of luxury hotels alongside notable restaurants and shops.

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## STAY

Auberge Saint-Antoine is a Relais & Châteaux property embracing the shores of the St. Lawrence River. This family-owned museum hotel exhibits a collection of artifacts discovered during excavation, representing more than three centuries of Quebec City history. But perhaps the most idolized property is the Fairmont Le Château Frontenac, a grand dame looming over Old Quebec. The 600-plus-key hotel boasts sophisticated décor, a slew of amenities ranging from several on-site restaurants and a cocktail bar to the Moment Spa, and captivating river views. Guided property tours are also available.

## EAT & DRINK

A charcuterie board alongside a recommended wine pairing or craft cocktail is an excellent reason to stop into Auberge Saint-Antoine's Bar Artefact, not to mention the actual artifacts decorating the bar and the spaces beyond it in the hotel. Catering to vegans, vegetarians, and omnivores in an elegantly designed space, Bistro L'Orygine features a seven-course tasting and a la carte options. The chic restaurant highlights locally-sourced, seasonal ingredients, ideally matched with its lineup of locavore wines and libations.