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MARIE VOYER



Auberge Saint-Antoine



Marie Voyer

Concierge Marie Voyer at Auberge Saint-Antoine

BY CHRIS RYALL

Blending old-style charm and elegance with contemporary comfort and youthful exuberance may not seem like a hotel's perfect match. However, at the Auberge Saint-Antoine, a four-diamond boutique Relais & Châteaux property located in Québec City's Old Port, it works seamlessly. Hundreds of centuries-old French and British colonial regime artifacts are displayed throughout this "Museum Hotel" built on a historically significant archaeological site dating from the 1600s.

Leading the charge, showcasing Auberge Saint-Antoine's youthful side, is concierge Marie Voyer. At 22, Marie is one of the world's youngest concierges to receive the profession's prized Les Clefs d'Or designation signifying the highest level of professionalism and service. Providing exceptional and personalized guest service is a tradition that is older than the artifacts adorning the hotel's walls, but Voyer adds a modern touch. She is more than up to the task to address the myriad of requests and needs of guests.

Voyer embraces the sacred ground the hotel rests on, its rich history and how the hotel's owner, the sixth-generation Price family, a fixture in Québec society and business for 200 years, proudly displays it. "This important tribute to our heritage, as well as our focus on providing a modern and luxurious experience, has always been at the heart of the Price family concerns," she explains. "It is our way to have an impact on Québec's course of contemporary history."

Each of the 95 guest rooms is individually designed and appointed. It's the same way Voyer approaches each guest's request—customized to their requirements. It's a challenge Voyer relishes. "One day you get to orchestrate a most elaborate [marriage] proposal and the next day you arrange for a guest to visit the workshop of an artist [whose work they enjoyed] in an exhibition years ago.

Auberge Saint-Antoine's location is a bastion of history, culture and art, and features Québec's finest culinary offerings. The mighty St. Lawrence is its scenic neighbour. Being at the centre of it all gives Voyer the ideal opportunity to seek out the best restaurants, cafés, photo spots and neighbourhoods to handle her guests' varied requests. Here are Voyer's suggestions in getting the most out of a visit to this beautiful and historic World Heritage city.

5 Québec City must-dos

- 1. LEARN THE HISTORY:** Take a guided tour, walk along the fortifications and visit the Citadelle.
- 2. IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE CULTURE:** Visit the Musée de la civilisation; discover internationally renowned artists at the Fine Arts Museum (MNBAQ); go see a local musician's concert.
- 3. TASTE THE FOOD:** Have a poutine, try the ice cider and enjoy modern Québécois cuisine in a local bistro.
- 4. SEE NATURE'S BEAUTY:** Admire the Montmorency Falls, sail or cruise on the St. Lawrence River, hike at Jacques Cartier National Park.
- 5. ACT LIKE A LOCAL:** Shop in a design boutique in the Montcalm neighbourhood.

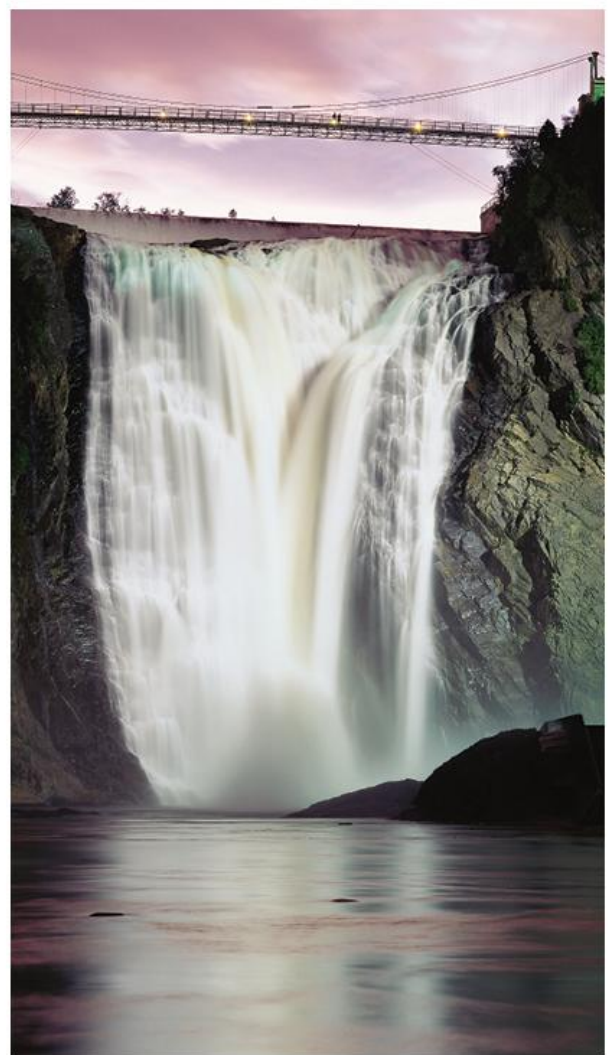
Québec City's hidden gems

There is a lot to discover in Québec City when you take the unusual pathways:

- La Cour Arrière du Festibière (The Beerfest Backyard), an outdoor beer pub in a pool.
- La Maison de la Littérature, an old church converted into a library.
- Le SPOT (Sympathetic Place Open to Everyone), an ephemeral meeting point created by architectural students and offering a summer-long program of free activities, concerts, barbecues, etc.



Citadelle de Québec



Parc de la Chute-Montmorency



Québec City's Old Port

The best neighbourhoods that capture the essence of Québec City

- **Saint-Jean Baptiste**
Continue past the Old City on Saint-Jean Street to discover this local neighbourhood offering a selection of funky boutiques, old markets and quirky bars, cafés and restaurants.
- **Saint-Roch**
An up-and-coming neighbourhood offering funky restaurants, bars and hip boutiques, all on Saint-Joseph Street.
- **Montcalm**
Cartier Street offers a selection of unique design boutiques, fine groceries and small intellectual society-type cafés.
- **La Cité-Limoilu**
Off-the-beaten-path neighbourhood in constant evolution. Discover its cool restaurants and cafés.

Cue the romance

Chez Muffy (8 rue Saint-Antoine) Set within a historic maritime warehouse dating back to 1822, with natural stone walls and wooden beams, the dining room offers a warm atmosphere along with stunning views of the St. Lawrence River to enjoy modern Québécois cuisine.

Laurie-Raphaël (117 rue Dalhousie) The intimate dining room is the perfect setting to enjoy the inventive cuisine, where local



Rue Saint-Louis



Rue du Trésor



Night life, Québec City

products and flavours meet international inspirations, on a menu that pays tribute to the richness and beauty of the products of our land.

Picnic time

Gather a picnic basket and enjoy it at Parc du Bastion de la Reine. Slightly off the beaten path, this park offers gorgeous views of the Château Frontenac and the St. Lawrence River.

A romantic stroll

Wander around the cobblestone streets of Quartier Petit Champlain. It is a busy daytime neighbourhood, but when the sun goes down, you will feel like the city is

yours! Take your better half to Passage de la Batterie (27 rue Sous le Fort), a secret passageway that takes you to a hidden terrace overlooking the river and watch the colourful sky at sunset.

A toast to Québec City's best bars

Le Maelstorm (181 rue Saint-Vallier Est) Great for the millennial couple. It looks like your typical neighbourhood coffee place, however, by 5 p.m. every day, the lights are dimmed and the baristas become mixologists, as the café turns into one of Québec's finest cocktail bars.

The Clarendon (57 rue Sainte-Anne) Ideal for a couple wanting a quieter atmosphere, it is a mythical place for Québec's jazz scene. Local artists, cocktails and views of Old Québec will charm you, for sure.

The best places for ambiance and your morning brew

Café Saint-Henri (849 rue Saint-Joseph Est) A micro roaster located in the Saint-Roch neighbourhood. With its oversized glass doors, the café is drenched in natural sunlight, making it the perfect place to peacefully enjoy your first cup of coffee of the day.

Café les Cousins (1029 avenue Cartier) Located in the heart of Montcalm, the arts district, enjoy a gourmet lunch, or coffee and a dessert, in a neighbourhood atmosphere, while admiring the painting exhibit of their artist of the month.

Shops and socks

Want something authentically Québec? On cold winter days, everyone in Québec wears the exact same wool socks—the bottom is gray, the top white, with a red line on the upper part. It was created in the 1970s by Duray, a local wool company in operation since 1939. You can find Duray socks at Latulippe, an outdoor works supply store at 637 rue Saint-Vallier Ouest.

Quartier Petit-Champlain

Great shopping is the main attraction of Quartier Petit-Champlain, the oldest commercial street of Québec City. It offers original fashion, crafts, decorations, gifts and great food.

The Old Port

A neighbourhood famous for art galleries (on Saint-Pierre Street) and antique lovers (on Saint-Paul Street), and where you can enjoy local delights at the Farmer's Market.

Old Québec (upper town section)

Local craftspeople, boutiques and popular restaurants. The biggest part of the Old City is a number of smaller museums, such as Musée du Fort, le Monastère des Augustines, Musée des Ursulines and Musée de l'Amérique Francophone.

Of course no Québec City concierge would complete the day without answering this frequent question: "Where's the best poutine?" Voyer's favourite is at Snack Bar (780 rue Saint-Jean). As she says: "Their sauce is delicious and vegetarian." Bon appétit!