

Colonial Quebec City

The only walled city in North America, **Québec City**, celebrated its 400th anniversary in 2008, founded by Samuel de Champlain in 1608! The year was to be filled with concerts, festivals and celebrations throughout the city. What better place to start our journey? September seems to be one of the best travel months when touring Canada. The extreme heat of the summer is waning and the moderate temperatures make it comfortable for walking and more enjoyable when visiting outdoor attractions.

Our group set out on September 6th, 2008 from Edmonton, arriving in Quebec City close to midnight. We decided to stay the first night near the airport and get up early the next day to continue our drive in the daylight to the Old Town of Quebec City. The **Times Hotel and Suites** located only minutes from the Jean-Lesage International Airport offers tastefully decorated rooms with a New York inspired design & decorative elements from Zen international style providing guests with first class comfort and relaxed atmosphere.



Cruise Terminal, Quebec City
View from L'Auberge Saint-Antoine Hotel

Arriving mid-morning by taxi at the **L'Auberge Saint-Antoine Hotel** at 8 Saint-Antoine Street in Old Town Quebec City (only a 20 minute drive from the Times Hotel) we were greeted curbside by gracious hotel staff ready to assist us from the taxi to the front desk with our luggage. The Saint-Antoine boasts the honour and distinction of being listed in *Relais & Chateau* Luxury Hotel Guide (a collection of luxury hotels and restaurants around the world) and acknowledged on the *Travel & Leisure's World's Best List of the Top 100 Best Hotels on the Planet*.

The property is nestled in the heart of the first city to be founded in North America and the archaeological relics found from French and English colonial times when the hotel was being built are now on display in the exquisitely decorated guest rooms. Facing the magnificent St. Lawrence River we could watch from our rooms as the cruise ships docked in the evening and slowly departed in the morning for their next port. Guest room amenities include luxury linens, goose down duvets, exclusive toiletries, bathrobes, Bose sound systems, coffee maker and much more! Hotel services include a Concierge desk with knowledgeable and obliging staff, indoor parking, valet, car wash, exercise room, massage and esthetics. Everyday, a short guided tour of the hotel is offered to guests with commentary on the history of the site the hotel is built on. The quaint, irresistible charm of the Saint-Antoine coupled with Québec City's hospitality makes this a supreme vacation destination!

The **Panache Restaurant**, located in the hotel, was presented with the *"Best of Award of Excellence"* from the Wine Spectator in 2008. We enjoyed breakfast and 2 dinners and all were beyond our expectations in service and cuisine. The Foie gras was named 'one of the best in the world' from a member of our group who has travelled extensively in search of the ultimate Foie gras! The Atlantic fresh halibut and Arctic char were delectable! The wine list is extensive and features some excellent French vintages. The Panache is an absolute 'must' for anyone looking for the best-of-the-best in modern French cuisine. The more casual **Café Artefact** on the first floor is the perfect spot for a light snack and soothing caffè latte after a day of touring or specialty cocktail before dinner - all served in a quiet, relaxing setting with comfortable sofas and cheerful staff.



L'Auberge Saint-Antoine Hotel

The highlight of our visit was a presentation on the waterfront at the Port of Québec to commemorate the city's birthday; a massive projection show that told the 400 year story of Québec City. After dark the sights from Québec City's 400-year past were projected onto a viewing surface that stretched 600 metres wide and rose 30 metres above the port's Louise Basin. The 40-minute multimedia exhibition, designed by Robert Lepage (Québec City's own international theatre giant) with images from museums, TV, paintings, photos and computer graphics was beamed (all set to music) onto the side of the immense grain warehouse, with an area the size of 25 IMAX screens. Luckily, the night was clear and warm and we were able to secure 'front row' viewing for this spectacular production – a sight none of us will ever forget!

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Connecting Upper and Lower Town is a charming meandering lane, *Côte de la Montagne*. For a fun ride to the top, use the **Funiculaire** (a vertical rail tram \$1.75 ea) located near '**Breakneck Stairs**' (*l'Escalier Casse-Cou*) in Lower Town and will drop you at the Chateau Frontenac Hotel.

On the way up, you'll enjoy a panoramic view of the Old Port and quaint cobblestoned streets below!

After touring the Old Town enjoying the boutiques and markets we climbed 'Breakneck Stairs' to the Upper Town and visited the famed 'Château Frontenac Hotel'. We then set out through the narrow, winding streets in the old quarter of Upper Town (above the bluffs atop Cap-Diamant) in search of a famous little eatery located in a building that has the distinct title of "The Oldest House in Quebec City". **Aux Anciens Canadiens** (34 rue St-Louis) is as colonial as it comes. Cheerful servers are dressed in period costume and much of the structure is exactly as it was in 1677.



Old Town
(Funiculaire in background/top)

Elbow-room is limited – tables are set close together in order to accommodate the large number of patrons that visit this quaint, authentic French Canadian restaurant every year. Yes, *French Canadian* – not traditional European 'French'. The menu boasts many dishes from colonial times when the city was a fur trading post. The French Canadian pea soup is probably the best you will ever taste – you can't get any more authentic than this. Caribou, maple syrup, goat cheese and, my favourite, sugar pie, are all part of their old-fashioned Québécois recipes. Prices are reasonable and portions are large enough to keep any fur trader happy! Enjoy this journey back to Colonial times to the best old-world restaurant in New France!

After our very pleasant and satisfying experience at Aux Anciens Canadiens we set out again to explore more of the area surrounding the restaurant. A beautiful park is just a block away where we enjoyed the sunshine and watched the many passers-by including horse-drawn buggies carrying excited tourists anxious to explore the sights. Another block away stands the Québec Parliament Building. A regal structure built on Québec's national historic site completed in 1886. Guided tours are offered, but our group chose to explore the grounds around the building which are absolutely stunning. From here we walked to the Citadelle de Québec, the most important fortification built in Canada under British rule and still an active military garrison. Also called the Gibraltar of the Americas, the Citadelle sits on top of the highest point of Cap Diamant. The view of the St. Lawrence River is breathtaking. Don't forget your camera for this visit!



Aux Anciens Canadiens Restaurant
"Oldest House in Quebec City"
Built circa 1677

Other points of interest and historic sights to visit while in Québec City:

- **Plaines d'Abraham**
- **Basilique-Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Québec**
- **Place Royale**
- **The Fortifications of Québec City**
- **Historic Dinner Cruise on the St. Lawrence River to Ile d'Orleans**

We said *au revoir* to Québec City after 3 days of wonderful Québécois cuisine, colonial history, European-style shopping and French Canadian refinement and hospitality!

Our Leisure Travel Consultants will be pleased to speak with you about a wonderful historical tour of this fascinating Canadian city!