

# Quebec City, Quebec: For the Holiday Cheer

Winter charm and holiday spirit make this Canadian city the place to visit in winter.



By **Maryellen Kennedy Duckett**

**Why:** Thanks to dazzling outdoor light displays and the [Quebec Winter Carnival](#)—the largest of its kind in the world—Quebec’s provincial capital basks in a holiday glow long after Christmas Day. Ride the illuminated Ferris wheel, belly up to the outdoor bars (and warm up on the heated terraces), and enjoy a free New Year’s Eve concert and pyrotechnic show at the [Le Jour de l’An](#) (New Year’s) festival, December 27-31. For a sure-fire infusion of holiday cheer any winter day, stroll the [Historic District of Old Quebec, a UNESCO World Heritage site](#), says Solmaz Khosrowshahian (aka [the Curious Creature](#)), a full-time food and travel blogger based in Toronto. “Cobblestone streets blanketed with powdery snow, frosted windows casting a warm glow, and the smell of freshly baked goods permeating through the air—these are some memories that come to mind when I think of Quebec City in the winter. It’s something out of a fairy tale, really: a small city bursting with old-world, European charm.”

**Where:** Quebec City is located on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River in southern Quebec, 155 miles northeast of Montreal. (The Orléans Express bus and [VIA Rail Canada](#) run between Montreal and Quebec City.) The closest [international airport](#) is 10 miles west of downtown.

**When to Go:** Visit December 26 to January 8, January 13 to February 25, and March 3-11 for the annual [Festi Lumière](#) (Light Festival) at the [Aquarium du Québec](#); December 27-31 for [Le Jour de l’An](#); and January 27 to February 12 for the Quebec Winter Carnival.

**What to Pack:** If it won't help keep you warm and dry, leave it at home. Must-haves include moisture-wicking base layers (leggings and long-sleeved shirts), fleece and wool sweaters, an insulated jacket or lined coat (preferably with a hood), wool mittens or lined gloves, and waterproof, warm, and comfortable boots—and a close-fitting knitted cap that Canadians call a tuque.

**Cheapest Route:** Buy a five-day Métrobus pass for unlimited public bus rides around Quebec City. Walk around the historic Upper Town and Lower Town districts. Ride the public Quebec City-Lévis ferry (\$3.55 Canadian dollars one-way) to see iconic attractions like Old Quebec and the Château Frontenac from the water.

**Music for the Flight (Curated by Spotify):**

Paradis City  
Jean Leloup  
Best Winter Trips 2017: Quebec City by National Geographic Travel

1	Paradis City Jean Leloup	2:48
2	No Cars Go Arcade Fire	5:43
3	Firestorm (feat. Sara Diamond) Adventure Club, Sara Diamond	3:27
4	Bien réel - radio edit Peter Peter	3:25
5	Nightmusic Grimes, Majical Cloudz	3:58

Where They @

**Best Places to Eat and Drink:** Quebec City's go-to winter brew—and the official drink of the Quebec Winter Carnival—is a potent concoction called Caribou. The official version, sold by the bottle in the SAQ (government alcohol commission) liquor stores, is a wine-liquor punch. Caribou cocktails and shooters served (warm or cold) at local bars typically contain some combination of vodka, brandy, sherry, and port, plus spices, and sometimes maple syrup. If you're visiting during the carnival, buy a Caribou shooter (served in a molded-ice shot glass) at one of the ubiquitous ice-block bars erected for the festival.

**Currency to Bring:** The Canadian dollar is the official currency. One United States dollar is worth about \$1.30 Canadian. There are currency exchange bureaus in Old Quebec and at the airport. Credit cards are widely accepted.

**Cultural Tip:** Brush up on some basic French phrases, such as "*Pardon, parlez-vous anglais?*" ("Excuse me, do you speak English?") Quebec City may be less than a hundred miles from the U.S. border, but French is the official language.

**Inside Tip:** One of the cheapest winter thrills in Quebec City is night sledding at the Dufferin Terrace toboggan slide. Zip down the ice run at speeds of up to 43 miles an hour for only three Canadian dollars a run. The seasonal slide (open mid-December to mid-March or later, weather permitting) operates during the day too, but going after dark amps up the fun and fear levels.

**Helpful Links:** [Quebec City Tourism](#) and [Quebec Original](#)