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How to Visit Québec City on a Budget

August 4, 2016 by Teresa Bitler

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With its cobblestone streets and Old World charm, Québec City can be a budget-friendly alternative to a European vacation, as long as you know what's worth the splurge (and what's not). If you don't, though, the expenses (minus airfare) can rival their overseas counterparts.

Keep your budget in check on your next trip to [Québec City](#), by arming yourself with these tips on where to stay, what to do, and where to eat.

Where to Stay

For a European vacation without the jet lag, plan your vacation around Vieux-Québec, or Old Québec, the only remaining fortified city in North America, outside of Mexico, and a UNESCO World site. Vieux-Québec is divided into two parts: the Upper Town, a 400-year-old neighborhood surrounded by the fortifications, and the Lower Town, located along the St. Lawrence River below.

The sections are connected by stairs, funicular, and a [hop-on, hop-off bus tour](#), so you don't need to rent a car. However, some of the hotels in Old Québec can blow a more modest budget. Rooms at the historic [Fairmont Le Château Frontenac](#) can easily top the average, summer rate of \$375 per night. That said, it's one of the most photographed hotels in the world, and everyone from Queen Elizabeth and Ronald Reagan to Charles Lindbergh and Alfred Hitchcock have stayed there over the years.

For something more wallet-friendly, a stay at the nearby [Hotel Clarendon](#), the oldest hotel in Old Québec with lovely 19th century English décor, goes for just \$120 per night. Or, opt for less expensive chain options just outside the ramparts. The [Hôtel Delta Québec](#) or [Hilton Québec](#) both offer rooms for \$155 per night and are less than a 10-minute walk from Old Québec.

What to do

In Upper Town, walk along the fortifications (free), stopping at [La Citadelle de Québec](#). The \$12 (\$16 CAD) charge for a tour of the active British garrison is well worth it and includes the Changing of the Guard. Make a point to also visit Notre-Dame de Québec, where you can pass through the only Holy Door outside of Europe now through November 13 (free).

You could spend an entire day strolling past the stone buildings of Lower Town, popping in and out of art galleries and shops. The best part: it's free. Unless you're a fan of museums, though, the [Musée de la Civilisation](#) may not be worth a visit \$12 (\$16 CAD). The same goes for the other museums in Old Quebec. To be frank, they're a bit underwhelming. Watch for reenactors in period clothing near the [Place Royal](#), the birthplace of Québec, in Lower Town. And just beyond the fortifications, take the free, guided tour of the [Parliament Building](#) in downtown Québec.

Where to eat

Poutine — French fries blanketed with cheese curds and drowned in brown gravy — is a Québec staple. Try it at [Chez Ashton](#), a fast food chain where poutine is considered the city's best and can be ordered with meat for a more hearty meal (from \$7 USD).

[Casse-Crêpe Breton](#) serves another local favorite: crêpes. Savory crepes start at \$5 (\$6.95 CAD), cheap enough to add a dessert crepe for \$4 (\$5.25 CAD). The restaurant almost always has a line out the door — even during the winter — but turns tables quickly.

For breakfast, head to [Paillard](#) where you can enjoy fresh pastries and coffee at long, communal tables. Later in the day, order soups, sandwiches, and salads but save room for macaroons, those one-bite sandwich cookies that come in a rainbow of colors.

Another option: Bring a bottle of wine, baguette, and fresh cheeses to the Plains of Abraham, the Québec equivalent of Central Park just outside the fortifications, for a picnic.