



[home](#) / [destinations](#) / [usa - canada](#) / [hotel news & reviews](#)

Hotel Review: Le Monastere des Augustines

November 01, 2017

Unwinding in a monastery-turned-wellness retreat in the heart of Quebec City

By: Dana Rebmann



Le Monastere des Augustines is located within a historic building in Quebec City. // © 2017 Le Monastere des Augustines

It was well after midnight when I arrived at Le Monastere des Augustines in Quebec City. More than four hours late, I had experienced the type of travel day that makes even the most frequent fliers wince. It started with hours onboard a grounded plane in San Francisco, followed by nearly as long of a stretch standing in line, slowly inching forward my luggage while contorting my neck and shoulder to cradle my cellphone. When I finally checked into the monastery-turned-wellness retreat, I could not have been any readier for a total body reset.

In a bit of a blur, I made my way through the quiet halls of a building that dates to the 17th century. When I found myself face-to-face with a life-size religious statue, the introduction was almost hallucinatory. Hurrying on, I somehow missed the elevator and tackled nearly an entire flight of a centuries-old stairway.

Feature image (above): There are 33 authentic guestrooms in the hotel (depicted in the image), as well as 32 redesigned contemporary rooms. // © 2017 Le Monastere des Augustines

Related Content

Want a different type of accommodation option? Here are [three strong reasons to go glamping in Quebec](#).

The Details

Le Monastere des Augustines
monastere.ca

Crooked stairs are a simple, small reminder of the history that lies within the walls of Le Monastere des Augustines. Its story dates to 1639 when three young Augustinian sisters arrived from France and, in time, established North America's first hospital north of Mexico. Pioneers in healthcare, the women served as nurses and pharmacists, founding a dozen hospitals that are all still a part of Quebec's public healthcare system. It takes some navigating to find the way (or in my case, getting utterly lost), but hallways still connect the monastery to the neighboring hospital, Hotel-Dieu de Quebec.

For centuries, Augustinian sisters have called the historic site home, but facing declining numbers, the monastery was restored and adapted to offer hotel accommodations, opening its doors to guests in August 2015. Great care was taken to preserve the historical integrity of the building. Added spaces and updates are modern in style, making it easy to tell old from new.

For example, the third floor is the Augustinian sisters' former cloister and features 33 authentic rooms. Depending on how tall guests are, they may need to duck when entering these once monastic cells. The simplistic, yet cozy, rooms feature single beds, antique furnishings, a sink and a mirror. Shared bathrooms are down the hall.

For those looking to unwind in more modern surroundings, the fourth floor features 32 redesigned contemporary rooms with full, private bathrooms and a king-size bed, a queen bed or two single beds. None of the rooms at Le Monastere des Augustines have televisions, telephones or even clocks. A sign of the times, Wi-Fi access is complimentary, but guests are encouraged to unplug; they can leave their phones at reception for safe keeping.

Alarm clocks can be requested, but if I wanted to be up in time to make my first wellness activity, I knew I would need my phone to provide the necessary loud early morning wake-up call. After a moment or two debating the day's schedule (and the possibility of squeezing in more sleep), I dressed quickly and was out the door. The hallways were so quiet that I noticed the squeak of my flip-flops as I passed a glowing stained-glass window. Exploring would have to wait — my "Awakening" activity began at 7 a.m., and I didn't want to be late.

Three daily events comprise the core of the wellness program at Le Monastere des Augustines. The yoga-esque Awakening series is designed to help guests gently greet the day. The midday, more active Vitality series is designed to get guests moving with classes such as yoga dance and guided energy walks. Through activities including tai chi and qi gong, the evening Relaxation series encourages guests to slow down. Massage, reflexology and nutrition consultations round out the property's holistic approach to good health.

After rolling up my yoga mat, I set out to find breakfast, only to be thrown off course by an echo in the halls. I followed the melody back to the illuminated stained-glass window and caught my first glimpse of the dozen Augustinian sisters who still call the monastery home and live in a separate, yet still adjoining, wing. Though they might not realize it, they're something of celebrities here. French-speaking travelers have better odds of scoring longer conversations, but guests can expect to at least exchange "bonjours" with the sisters in the hallway or smiles and waves in the garden.

Mindful eating is part of the Augustinian sisters' spiritual approach to healing the body and soul. The on-site restaurant serves mostly organic and local products. Meals are heavier at lunch and lighter at dinner. Breakfast is included with every stay, and other than the occasional whispered request for coffee or tea, the meal is eaten in silence.

The first-floor museum houses a portion of 40,000 artifacts collected from a number of monastery hospitals. Pieces on display include everything from the sisters' bathing schedules and medical devices to the original monastery entrance, which is complete with a revolving shelf. Supposedly, some 1,300 babies were left on said shelf for the sisters to find a loving home.

All travelers don't come to Le Monastere des Augustines seeking solitude. Many are attracted by the monastery's prime location. Restaurant- and shop-lined rue Saint-Jean is just a block away, and the festive district of Petit-Champlain— complete with a scenic funicular — is only a 15-minute walk.