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CLAUDE BOUCHARD

La Belle Ville

Old Québec City is a step back in time to an era of European grandeur

BY CHELLE KOSTER WALTON

There's something undeniably romantic about Québec City. Take Le Château Frontenac, *par exemple*. Whether it's your first or hundredth visit to this charming Canadian metropolis, an initial glimpse of Frontenac catches your breath like a fairy tale come to life. Cue Beauty. Cue Beast.

most gloriously its breads, pastries, and sweets. Head to Paillard (paillard.ca), where divine croissants make a strong case for abandoning sensible dining. True Québécois cuisine, however, has its own character. Think: Lumberjack



LE CHÂTEAU FRONTENAC (ABOVE RIGHT) IS A GREAT BASE FOR EXPLORING OLD QUÉBEC, TO INCLUDE WITNESSING THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD AND SAVORING LOCAL FOODS AND SPIRITS, LIKE AUX ANCIENS CANADIENS' PEA SOUP GRAND-MÈRE AND BISTRO L'ATELIER'S COWGIRL COCKTAIL.

Though nowhere near the colonial French city's oldest structure, Frontenac has been a star of the Québec riverfront skyline for more than 100 years. Much like the Floridian hotels Henry Flagler built, Frontenac opened in 1893 as a luxury stopover for wealthy railroad patrons. Now a Fairmont hotel (fairmont.com/frontenac-quebec), it continues to dominate the premium market and set a cosmopolitan tone for a city as European as it gets in North America.

meets Escoffier. La Buche Cuisine Québécoise (restolabuche.com) excels in the genre. It one-ups folk staple poutine by adding duck confit to the requisite french fries topped with cheese curds and gravy. Another gem, Aux Anciens Canadiens (auxancienscanadiens.qc.ca), a culinary tradition, resides nearby in a circa-1675 home.

Québec's heritage rests on its military past. Walk the wall around the old city for an overview of its many fortifications, including the still-functioning citadel. In summer, time your visit to the changing of the guard ceremony, complete with a marching band, bear-skin hats, and a goat mascot named Batisse.

Escape the city walls to discover the vibrant nightlife and nouvelle cuisine of nearby Grande Allée. For a contemporary contrast, try ultra-modern Bistro L'Atelier (bistrolatelier.com), which touts craft cocktails and tartare tapas.

Afterward, let Old Québec's steep, twisty cobblestone streets take you where they will—to monuments, green parks, gardens, churches, art and history museums, galleries, furriers, and restaurants, microbreweries, cafés, and bakeries that are worth the trip alone.

In Lower Town, art galleries, more superb restaurants, the excellent Musée de la Civilisation (mcq.org), and day cruises along the St. Lawrence River await. Two trendy lodgings in historic digs—Hotel 71 (hotel71.ca) and Auberge Saint-Antoine (saint-antoine.com)—exude the hip vibe that keeps Old Québec young and travelers of all ages ever enchanted. <<

Naturally, New France, as it was once known, is heavy on continental cuisine,

