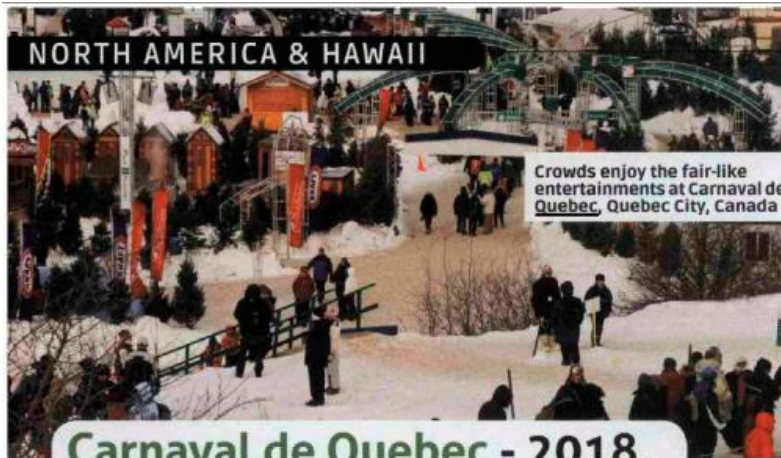


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NORTH AMERICA & HAWAII

Crowds enjoy the fair-like entertainments at Carnaval de Quebec, Quebec City, Canada

Carnaval de Quebec - 2018, Joy in the Winter

By Stillman Rogers

The Quebecois know how to do winter. For two weeks, in late January through mid-February, Quebec City throws a party full of dancing, music, ice slides, sleigh rides, snow swimming, parades and other activities for all ages. In 2018 the Carnaval de Quebec will run from January 26 through February 11.

The best part is that it all takes place in the only walled city in the whole of North America. Dramatically sited on top of a high cliff overlooking the St. Lawrence River, Quebec's 16th-19th century core is hidden behind massive granite walls, much like those of major European cities of that time. The most French place on the continental mainland, Quebec rings with a uniquely Old World ambiance.

Narrow streets in the heart of the old city are lined with stone and brick buildings that date back centuries, many of them housing places for shopping and dining. But, winter celebrations are one of the things that Canadians do best and the party that the Quebecois throw every year at the end of January lifts a trip to the city to a new level.

CELEBRATE!

Gala Night Parades add even more excitement to the two-week-long party. The first is on February 3 in the lower town and the second is February 10 in the upper town. These parades are truly spectacular and the night lighting effects make them magical as they wind through the streets of Quebec City and Charlesbourg. More than 15 floats and 900 musicians, clowns and other performers will enthrall the thousands of spectators who stand in the cold night to watch. A hint to clients: one of the best places to see the parade is at the fountain in front of the National Assembly building.

Snow sculpture is another of the highlights that makes this event so popular. Dozens of these huge artworks in snow line a boulevard on the Plains of Abraham. Each year this competition draws the finest of international and national snow artists. Suggest that clients arrive in time to watch these giant sculptures as they are being built; they should plan to be in

Quebec January 26 through 28 to see the making of the creations for the Canadian National competition, and from January 30 through February 4 to see the making of the creations for the International competitions.

These massive sculptures of snow line both sides of the Grand Allee from the opening of Carnaval through its end on February 11. Another bit of excitement on the Grand Allee is a chance for clients to watch - and try their hand at curling, a major Canadian winter pastime.

The Plains of Abraham, a sprawling park at the top of the bluffs above the St. Lawrence River, become a giant winter playground during Carnaval, with snow tubing, games and snow castles for kids and live entertainment, dog sledding and sleigh rides for everyone. Camp Jos, which has the spirit and joie de vivre of an old-time lumberman's camp, is filled with entertainment. Clients can watch competitions like ax throwing, ride a mechanical moose, and sit around a warming fire as they listen to a live storyteller with tales of Canadian lore. The can enjoy a snack of sausage paired with beer in Jos' Cabin. While there, make sure they visit the traditional Canadian Sugar Shack.

At the Port of Quebec adults and kids visiting the Village Nordik have a chance to try ice fishing both outside and inside, in a heated inflatable igloo. Streets of Ice takes place in the Petit Champlain area in the old lower part of the city where visitors can admire more ice sculpture provided by local merchants, enjoy drinks and music at the Carnival bar in Parc Felix Leclerc and warm their feet in front of a welcoming fire at that park and at Parc Quartier Petit Champlain.

A highlight of the carnival is the traditional Canoe Race across the ice-filled St Lawrence River. Big crowds cheer their favorite team as it races across the frozen river. More than 60 teams, in four categories, will alternately paddle through the frigid water and push their huge canoes over the tilting ice flows. The ice canoe race is held at Rue St Joseph on Sunday, February 4 and the best place to view it is from the Terrace Dufferin overlooking the river.

The Terrace Dufferin is also a place for family fun. A big open space on top of the cliff overlooking the St Lawrence River, it is filled with excitement. At the west end is an exciting toboggan ride and a skating rink with entertainment. This is a good place to a rest around the fire pit and to listen to tales from a "wood runner," a fur trader from the early New France times.

KING OF CARNAVAL

The symbol of Carnaval is Bonhomme Carnaval, a lively snowman with a red sock cap and multi-colored sash typical of French settlers. Bonhomme is the leader of the celebrations and you will find him wherever there is Carnaval activity. Look for him on Place Desjardins and on the Plains of Abraham, where there are games of skill, giant tubing hills, snow slides, snow rafting, the zip line, and an Arctic Spa Village with hot tubs. Opposite the historic National Assembly Building is the Palais de Bonhomme, a spectacular palace made of ice. Located right at the historic city walls, it is open all day for visitors to explore; this year they can watch Quebec's graffiti muralists creating art inside it. These include Phelipe Soldevila, the artist who has created many of these works around the city.

GETTING THERE

Quebec is easy to get to, with flights from most major American cities. Although most people speak some English - which is spoken fluently in hotels and restaurants - the local language is French, giving Quebec an exotic flavor that heightens the experience even more.

A funicular between the old town on the riverfront and the walled upper town makes Quebec a walkable place where visitors can enjoy a culture and history that dates back to the 16th century. For lodging suggest the historic **Chateau Frontenac** (www.fairmont.com/frontenac-quebec) at the center of activities, or the **Hilton-Quebec**, outside the old town but also within walking distance of most Carnaval activities (www3.hilton.com). For a more intimate experience suggest the elegant **Auberge Louis Hebert** (www.louishebert.com/auberge) which also has an outstanding restaurant.

Located in the beautiful Old Town at the foot of the cliff, the **Auberge St Antoine** (www.saint-antoine.com) is another excellent choice and it too has a superb restaurant and lounge. Adjoining the beautiful Art Deco lobby of **Hotel Manoir Victoria** (www.manoir-victoria.com) is Chef Jean-Luc Boulay's innovative restaurant **Chez Boulay bistro boreal** (<https://chezboulay.com>), where outstanding dinners are created solely from ingredients grown in the far north. While many programs of the carnival are free and open to the public, clients will want to have an "Effigy" for admission to the many that are only open to ticket holders. "Effigy" are available at the Carnaval website (<http://carnaval.qc.ca/home#>) and at **Couche-Trad** locations in Quebec.

Editors note: *Carnaval* is the Canadian spelling of Carnival.