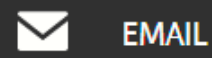
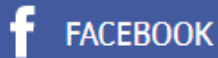


5 Reasons to Visit Quebec City

New attractions and warm weather await.



By: [Meredith Rosenberg](#)

Quebec City's European-esque charms hold court year round, especially Old Quebec, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the only walled city north of Mexico. While the city may be more than 400 years old, 2016 brings some new reasons to visit. Meanwhile, activities such as whale watching can only be experienced while the weather's still warm.

Pierre Lassonde Pavilion



Courtesy Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec

The Pierre Lassonde Pavilion just opened on June 24 at the [Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec](#). This has generated international buzz since architectural firm [OMA](#), which counts renowned Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas as a founding partner, was one of the pavilion's designers. The boxy glass and steel structure infuses every corner with natural light, while the minimalist interior showcases the artwork. Views of the surrounding park are ever present while wandering the galleries, which include a permanent collection of contemporary art from the 1960s to the present, along with decorative arts and design. Both collections highlight notable Quebec artists such as Edmund Alleyn and Marcelle Ferron. Another permanent exhibit highlights more than 100 pieces of Inuit art from the Canadian Arctic region, including the Northwest and Nunavut Territories. Pieces are from the museum's own Brousseau Inuit Art collection, which numbers more than 2,600 items. When it's time to eat, [Tempéra Québecor](#) offers casual dining just inside the pavilion's entrance.

Holy Door at Notre-Dame de Québec Basilica-Cathedral



Arpad Benedek

Pope Francis designated 2015 a Holy Year, also known as Jubilee, an ancient tradition that dates back to 1300s and traditionally calls for Catholic pilgrimage to Rome. Passing through a Holy Door has become part of the pilgrim ritual, however, there are only seven permanent Holy Doors in the world, and just three outside of Rome. Luckily, [Notre-Dame de Québec](#) is among those. Don't worry if you're not Catholic; all faiths of "goodwill" are allowed to pass through the actual door, which is located on the north side in the Chapel of the Sacred Heart. Why is this a big deal if you're not Catholic? Well, Holy Doors are normally off limits (and traditionally sealed shut with concrete), so if you don't make it by Nov. 13, when the door closes to the public, it will remain locked until the next Holy Year—in about 25 years.

Summer Festivals



Yves Tessier, Tessima



Alexandre Galliez

While Quebec is often associated with its wintry activities, notably the annual [Winter Carnival](#), the city holds festivals year round (a positive for the cold averse). For example, warm weather brings 11 days of [Festival d'été is Québec](#), a popular music festival that's under the radar outside of Canada, but attracts major talent. In fact, Sting, Peter Gabriel and Selena Gomez were among this year's headliners. There's still time to catch [Crépuscule](#), a free circus show performing nightly (except Mondays) until Sept. 4. The hour-long show features acrobats from [Flip FabriQue](#), a five-year-old company whose members have performed with the likes of [Cirque du Soleil](#). Mind you, Quebec is the birthplace of Cirque du Soleil, so circus arts are not to be missed.

Whale Watching



NetaDegany

Prime [whale watching](#) can be found north of Quebec City on the St. Lawrence River in the pristine Charlevoix region. [Croisieres AML](#) is a popular operator, running tours that last up to three hours, and options range from raft-like zodiacs that hold 24 to 48 people to three-level comfort boats that fit almost 700. The former isn't recommended if you're prone to getting seasick, but you will get a more up-close-and-personal view. The latter includes bathrooms and an indoor cafe, but there's also more competition for staking out a choice whale-viewing position. On the plus side, whale-spotting odds are high either way, and may include beluga, minke, blue, fin or humpback. In fact, you'll get a voucher for another cruise in the rare event that whales are M.I.A. It's also not uncommon to catch a seal colony or dolphin pod. However, boat tours stop operating in October, and zodiac trips stop sooner than that. FYI, when tours advise you to dress warm, even in the summer, they're not kidding. Temperatures on the water can get cold enough to warrant wearing a winter coat, hat and gloves.

Farm-to-Table Restaurants



Courtesy Le Panache - Auberge Saint-Antoine

French Canadians excel at Quebecois farm-to-table fare, and it was the M.O. of many restaurants before it became trendy. Expect menus geared toward rare and raw meat, seafood, foie gras, maple syrup and poutine, which are fries topped with gravy and cheese curds. (Tip: Eat squeaky cheese curds whenever possible.) Since winter approaches quickly in this northern city, get there sooner rather than later in order to enjoy farm-fresh summer offerings before they go out of season. [Panache](#) resides in a rustic 19th-century warehouse that's part of the historic [Auberge Saint-Antoine](#) hotel in Old Quebec. Menu items might include deer two ways with serviceberry and dune pepper, lobster from the Gaspé Peninsula, local cheeses and rhubarb with coconut and verbena. [Tournebroche](#) has made a name for itself thanks to its rotisserie chicken, rooftop garden and homemade specialties down to the very basics, including ice cream, bread, ketchup and mayonnaise. If it's available, opt for wild boar pate, semi-smoked salmon, and poor man's pudding topped with maple sauce and maple ice cream. [L'Affaire Est Ketchup](#), whose name roughly translates to "everything is cool," and not "ketchup affair," lures crowds who clamor for a seat at just eight tables. And reservations are a must. The chalkboard menu frequently changes and asparagus soup, goat shank or brownies are some of the dishes that might be prepared in the two electric-stove kitchen.