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Claude Monet (French, 1840–1926), "Women in the Garden" 1906, Oil on canvas, 100 3/8 x 80 11/16 in. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. The Metropolitan Museum, New York

FRANCE / AMERIQUE

Quebec in summer is a movable feast.

by Sara Evans

Last time I looked, the airfares between New York and Paris this summer were somewhere north of \$1700. Not on the cards. But a lovely drive north takes me to Quebec, which is not only the next best option, but a great choice for summer travel in and of itself.

The city is filled with a variety of hotels, from the famous and imposing Chateau Frontenac, which towers over the city, to the usual chain offerings, to many small and charming auberges in the Old Porte. We stayed at the quirky and delightful Hotel Du Capitole, perched just outside the stone gates of the Old City. It was charming and comfortable, with a lovely bar and restaurant, and perfectly located for exploring the city.

While Quebec City is smaller and arguably more provincial than Montreal, it is filled with absolute delights throughout the summer season. It is a truly beautiful city, filled with huge parks and varied neighborhoods, and with some of the best food this side of the Atlantic. Serious foodies can not only sample the wonderful fare offered by the city's many



Deschambault_Pierre Joosten

restaurants, but can also follow the Gourmet Route, businesses in the region. Farmers, chefs, winemakers, fine grocers and other food experts



La promenade Samuel-De Champlain. In the background : Québec's bridges (Pont de Québec and Pont Pierre-Laporte)

View from the marina. In the background: Québec's upper town.



Dufferin Terrace animated by street entertainers. In the background : Fairmont Le Château Frontenac

have prepared a unique tourist experience that showcases their know-how, dedication and passion for their craft.

Old Quebec is really old, some of the oldest habitation on the North American continent, reaching back more than 400 years. The Old City really does feel like some distant town in provincial France, with beautifully restored buildings, inns and restaurants. Starting this summer of 2013, Tours de Vieille Quebec will provide double-decker bus tours along a route with 14 stops. During each 1 h 40 min tour, visitors will be allowed to get on or off the bus at whichever stops they choose. Each stop is close to anywhere from five to ten attractions. This is the latest tour offered by Tours du Vieux-Québec in Québec City and the surrounding region.

The Old Port section of the city is a particular delight. Throughout the summer, it is filled with street musicians; its narrow lanes filled with enticing shops and eateries. Once a rundown slum, the Old Port has been meticulously restored. It is a walker's paradise, and a way to experience the unique ways in which the old and new worlds blend



St-Louis Gate: one of the four remaining gates of the wall surrounding the city.



Place Royale and La Fresque des Québécois

in Quebec City. Restored hotels, antiques shops and trendy boutiques all make the Old Port worth several visits.

During the summer, Quebec City rolls out many aspects of its culture. One event unique to the city is the Image Mill, a series of projections at night against the walls of buildings. This summer, the Image Mill is featuring the work of film director Norman McLaren. The Musée de la Civilisation, the city's ethnography museum, has an extensive exhibit dealing with the Maori people of New Zealand, while the Musée de Beaux Arts features the lively and graphic work of Quebecois artist Albert Pellán (1906-1988). The Musée Huron-Wendat explores the lives and history of the province's first peoples. When you set foot in the longhouse here, you will be able to appreciate the Wendat people's traditional way of life. Completed in the spring of 2013, this longhouse is where you will meet Andicha and Okia, proud female guardians of the wisdom and knowledge of their people. They tell Huron-Wendat myths and legends, teach the art of cooking bannock (traditional Aboriginal bread) and share the know-how of their ancestors with visitors.

In summer, Quebec City is an outdoor arts venue, with street performers from all over Canada and other parts of the world. There are roving musicians, flame-eaters, stilt-walkers, and acrobats. There are parades celebrating the province, with costumed participants representing all aspects of Quebec's rich history. In alleys in the Old City, local artists paint and sell their work, much of which is extremely impressive.

This summer, there will be a Bordeaux Festival in Quebec City, featuring some of the finest wines of France. The relationship to France will also be on display in "Paris on Stage," a series of performances that reference the Belle Époque. In August, the city has fireworks along the St. Lawrence River that

literally light up the city at night.

Quebec City is a walker's delight, with extensive, beautifully planted parks throughout. But to get a taste of the Quebecois countryside, drive west out of the city, along the banks of the beautiful St. Lawrence River. After about an hour and a half, you will come to an area that truly evokes the French countryside. Tiny provincial villages, old churches and country inns dot the area. One of these inns, La Maison Deschambeaux, is a beautiful 18th century, stone-built auberge, filled with antiques. It is typical of the architecture of the region, surrounded by exuberant gardens and open fields leading down to the river. The breakfasts and dinners are traditionally French, but with a Canadian accent, redolent of maple and elk. There are old mills and villages to explore, along with some truly spectacular regional food. It was heaven. We did not want to leave.

(To plan your trip to Quebec and learn more about what's on for Summer 2013, Contact Quebec City Tourism or check out www.quebecregion.com.) ♦



View from the Citadelle looking over the Fairmont Château Frontenac and the St. Lawrence River