Old Québec

This historical walking tour encompasses a mix of well-known and lesser-known Vieux-Québec attractions. Set off early, before tour buses fill the streets.

Start Porte St-Louis
Distance 2km
Duration 1 to 2 hours

1 Begin at Porte St-Louis, an impressive gate first erected in 1693 (though this version dates from 1878). Follow Rue St-Louis to the corner of Rue du Corps-de-Garde, where a cannonball sits embedded in a tree (allegedly since 1759). Nearby, 47 Rue St-Louis is where French general Montcalm died, a day after being shot by the British during the destiny-changing Plains of Abraham Battle in September 1759.

2 At 34 Rue St-Louis, a 1676 home houses the Québécois restaurant Aux Anciens Canadiens. Its steeply slanted roof was typical of 17th-century French architecture. Follow Rue des Jardins to the Ursuline Convent and Museum, where generations of nuns educated both French and Aboriginal girls starting in 1641.

3 Left down Rue St-Anne is Edifice Price, one of Canada’s first skyscrapers, built in 1929 for $1 million. Next door is the elegant 1870 Hotel Clarendon, the city’s oldest hotel, currently undergoing renovations after a bad fire in 2019.

4 Further up Rue des Jardins, Rue de Buade brings you face-to-face with the heavily restored Notre-Dame-de-Québec cathedral; just to the left is the entrance to the Québec Seminary, founded in 1663; American officers were imprisoned here after their unsuccessful siege of Québec in 1775–76. Detour down pretty Rue Garneau, then descend to Rue des Remparts for fine views over Québec City’s waterfront factory district.

5 Descend Côte de la Canoterie, a longtime link between the Lower and Upper Towns. Hope Gate stood atop the cote until 1873 to keep the riffraff from entering the Upper Town. Turn right onto Rue St-Paul, the heart of Québec’s antique district, then take a peek at Rue Sous-le-Cap, a former red-light district.

6 Turn right and follow Rue Sault-au-Matelot to the 420-sq-meter trompe-l’œil Fresque des Québécois, where you can pose for the requisite tourist pic alongside historical figures such as Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain.

Classic Photo
Fresque des Québécois.