



Québec

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Best Places to Eat

- » L'Express (p235)
- » Le Lapin Sauté (p269)
- » Manoir Hovey (p253)
- » Visa Versa (p282)
- » Les Saveurs Oubliées (p280)

Best Places to Stay

- » Auberge Saint Antoine (p268)
- » Hotel Gault (p231)
- » Maison Historique James Thompson (p267)
- » ALT Québec (p268)

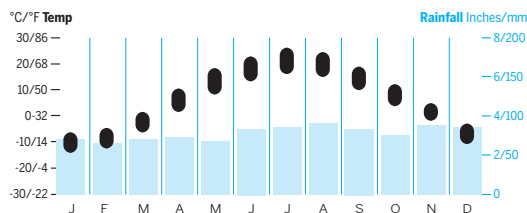
Why Go?

Once an outpost of Catholic conservatism, an isolated island of *francophonie* languishing in a sea of anglo culture, Québec has finally come into its own, and has crafted a rich, spirited culture independent of its European motherland. The people of Québec are as vibrant and inviting as the colorful Victorian facades, lush rolling hills and romantic bistros strewn across the province.

And there's plenty to choose from. Montréal and Québec City are bustling metropolises with a perfect mixture of sophistication and playfulness, and history-soaked preserved quarters tucked away in their back pockets. The rustic allurements of old Québec are scattered among the Eastern Townships, and produce from bucolic Charlevoix graces the tables of the region's stellar restaurants. The Laurentians abound with ski resorts and peaks, while the jagged coasts of the unblemished Gaspé Peninsula and the cliffs soaring high above the Saguenay River are equally as breathtaking.

When to Go

Montréal



December & January Head to Mont-Tremblant – one of North America's best ski hills

February & March Maple syrup production is in full swing at local sugar shacks

July Montréal's summer-long party gets under way with the Festival International de Jazz

Local Culture

Quebecers are passionate folks; just bring up the subject of separatism if you're keen to test the theory. Life here is sipped slowly, like its strong rich coffee, which is often accompanied by a *chocolatine* (chocolate croissant) and engaging conversation with friends or family.

The Québécois drink more alcohol than the average Canadian, and predominantly liberal views contribute to a laid-back atmosphere that feeds an effervescent nightlife in Montréal and Québec City. On weekend evenings, city streets are often packed with pedestrians well into the early hours of the morning.

QUÉBEC ITINERARIES

One Day

Start with brunch in Montréal at **L'Express** and work the calories off on a hike up **Parc du Mont Royal**. Descend through **Mile End** or the **Plateau Mont-Royal** where you'll be spoiled for choice for dinner and drinks.

Three Days

Limit your time savoring **Montréal's** chilled-out vibe to one day, and then drive through the Laurentians to **Mont-Tremblant**. Leave a day to stroll within **Québec City's** walls in the **Old Upper Town**, before searching for the ultimate table d'hôte in the **Old Lower Town**.

Seven Days

Follow the three-day itinerary then ramble through **Charlevoix** en route to the **Saguenay River** for two days. Stop for lunch in **Baie St Paul** or **La Malbaie**. Spend the last two nights in welcoming **Tadoussac**, whale-watching or cruising the fjord.

What the...?

Le français québécois (Québec French), the mother tongue of nearly a quarter of all Canadians, is discernible from standard French by its accent, vocabulary and expressions, but it's the jarring use of profanity that tends to leave a more lasting impression on new learners. Frustrated Francophones have turned to the most sacred of their institutions – the once all-powerful Catholic church – for curse word inspiration, resorting to such deplorable obscenities as *tabernac* (tabernacle), *câlisse* (chalice) and *ciboire* (ciborium).

If you want to really turn heads, practice saying *câlisse de crisse de tabernac d'ostie de ciboire de testament* (the chalice of Christ of the tabernacle of the Host of the ciborium of the testament). It's the granddaddy of all swear words.

Funnily enough, *fucké*, an adaptation of the English, is mild enough for prime time and means 'broken' or 'crazy.'

QUÉBEC À PIED

If you're visiting either Montréal or Québec City, consider leaving the car at home. Unlike other North American cities, Québec's metropolises are European in design – easily navigated on foot, with bustling sidewalks lined with outdoor cafes.

Fast Facts

- » Population: 7,870,000
- » Area: 1,540,687 sq km
- » Capital: Québec City
- » Quirky fact: The Château Frontenac in Québec City is the most photographed hotel in the world

Québec Creations

- » Birthplace of: Trivial Pursuit, AM radio, Ski-Doo snowmobile, Plexiglas
- » Home of: Leonard Cohen, Brian Mulroney, Jacques Villeneuve, Rufus Wainwright
- » Kitschiest souvenir: Cow-shaped maple syrup lollipops

Resources

- » Montréal Lifestyle: www.midnightpoutine.ca
- » Spacing Montréal: spacingmontreal.ca
- » Tourism Montréal: www.tourism-montreal.org
- » Tourism Québec: www.bonjourquebec.com
- » Tourism Québec City: www.quebecregion.com