

Canadian dreaming

Discovering l’amour in the heart of Québec City

A honeymoon at any age is about starting anew and getting lost in love. Ben and I found each other in our forties, and after a fairytale wedding we weren't quite ready to return to the real world of jobs, children and daunting schedules; we only had seven spare days to sneak away, but we were eager to rediscover the romance that had brought us together. Knowing I was a closet Francophile, Ben surprised me with a love letter that described how he would go about sweeping me off my feet in the most romantic city in the world. By the next day, we were on a flight to Québec City and the love affair of a lifetime.

Where Old meets Nouveau

A journey into the old world awaited us in the capital of Canada's Belle Province. The colonial city echoing old Europe lies on the St. Laurence River and is nestled in a contemporary metropolis, offering the best of both worlds. The only walled city north of Mexico, Vieux-Québec holds its ancient treasures within four stone gates that date back centuries. We explored the steep and narrow alleyways beneath the lofty ramparts and storied citadel of this historic fortress. Its beauty, history and four hundred years of memories were a force for the senses and we lazily angled along the cobblestone, losing ourselves in time.

Très Romantique

A river tour proved to be one of the best ways to appreciate the spectacle of what UNESCO has deemed a World Heritage Site. From the St. Laurence we had an excellent view of the ramparts, the Citadelle, often called "the Gibraltar of America", and the majestic castle that is the world Famous Hotel Château Frontenac. After marvelling at its towers and copper roofs, we continued

our tour and happened upon a trompe l'oeil freshly painted on the side of a building and the Nôtre Dame de Victoire—we took a peek inside this church, and to our amazement heard inspiring melodies coming from a musician playing glasses filled with water. Further exploring around the corner from the Nôtre Dame led us to the Quartier Petit Champlain for some world-class shopping in its stylish boutiques.

Bonjour Québec

One of the greatest delights of enjoying French culture so close to home was the ease of communication and the eager service we experienced. In both the historic and new areas of the city, we were greeted and served by bilingual locals who chatted happily with us in English and patiently entertained our hunger for the charming French phrases we overheard and so desperately wanted to remember.

Bon Appetit

Bistro after bistro turned into an ooh-la-la affair for the remainder of our stay. From Pâtisseries wafted warm baked air and the lure of Québécois cuisine fit for a foodie. From steak and mussels to the poutine, the quintessential French Canadian comfort food, the gastronomic fare continued to delight while we said "salut!" with rich, beautiful reds from the Monteregie and Lanaudiere wine regions.

Perfect Timing

Ben and I had arrived to celebrate our union in style, but soon learned we had some heavy competition in the celebration department. This year Québec City has pulled out all the stops for its 400th birthday and the fortress has turned itself into nothing less than an extravaganza. Floating dance floors, extravagantly costumed parades,



giant multimedia shows, world-class concerts and fireworks displays are just some of what is on the agenda. When we discovered the world famous Québec native Cirque du Soleil is behind much of the fanfare, we realized this is a city that takes a good party seriously.

Nights to Remember

In Québec City, lifestyle is everything. We dined by candlelight on a romantic terrace, finding ourselves part of the ambience that included weavers working at their looms and street performers singing, dancing and juggling in the square. We were content to call it a perfect evening, but the seductive charm of old Europe was in full swing and a late night jazz bar beckoned us with its thumping bass and sprightly trumpet. The room filled with newcomers and reminded us that in Québec City, the night is always young and alive with authentic "joie de vivre". Alas, eventually we were lured by the comfort of our stately, luxurious suite in Old Québec and arrived in style by horse-drawn carriage. Ben chose this moment to reveal a silver artisan bracelet he had found earlier at the Quartier Petit Champlain, melting my heart and attaching a memory of our honeymoon never to be forgotten.



Planning this Trip

Getting to Québec City is easy as the Jean-Lesage Airport enables regular airline connections from anywhere in the world.

Visit Bonjour Québec

<http://www.bonjourquebec.com/qc-en/villesquebec0.html>

Québec City Tourism 1 877 783 1608; www.quebecregion.com

For details on the 400th anniversary celebration events visit www.MyQuebec2008.com

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Québec

City and Area

“I say, what time does the next carriage to the City Gates go by?”

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