

Heading north to Laval

Laval, Montréal's sister island, may not be far away, but it's like another world! At the Cosmodôme's Space Science Centre, with its model rockets and multimedia show, you can blast off while keeping your feet firmly on the ground. Back here on Earth, the Parc de la Rivière-des-Mille-Îles is a lovely meandering river, a bit of wilderness on the city's doorstep. Go exploring by canoe, kayak or pedalboat.

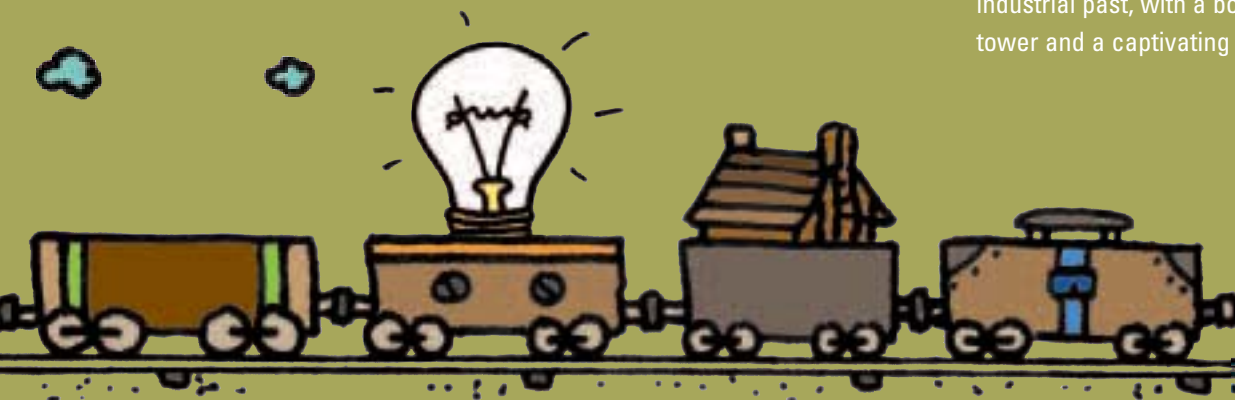


The Wild West

Just two hours from Montréal, across the river from Ottawa, are the Canadian Museum of Civilization and its Children's Museum. They're well worth the trip! While you're there, you can explore magnificent Gatineau Park, right nearby, and even take a ride on a fun steam-engine train that wends its way through the Gatineau Valley. On the way back, stop in at the Parc Oméga in Montebello, and admire deer, moose and other large mammals wandering free, all from the comfort of your car.

Energy to burn!

Halfway between Montréal and Québec City is Trois-Rivières, founded in 1634. Its sites and museums bring history to life. You can stroll through its historic quarter and visit a jail converted into a museum. From there it's just a short hop to the Cité de l'énergie in Shawinigan, a theme park that recounts the region's industrial past, with a boat ride, an amazing tower and a captivating nighttime show.



Québec City

Tell me about Québec City!

Québec City is home to 650,000 residents, on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River about 250 km (155 mi) northeast of Montréal. It is the capital of Québec. The city is actually made up of two parts, called the Upper Town and the Lower Town. Its name comes from an Indian word meaning “where the river narrows.” Even this far up the St. Lawrence, the tides can reach five metres!

Tell me about its history

When it was founded in 1608 by Samuel de Champlain, Québec was the heart of New France. Did you know that in the 18th century the French empire in North America stretched south to Louisiana, east to Acadia and the Atlantic, and west to the Rockies? It was here, on the Plains of Abraham (now part of Battlefields Park) that the French and British armies faced off in 1759, in one of the most decisive battles in the continent’s history.

What makes Québec City unique?

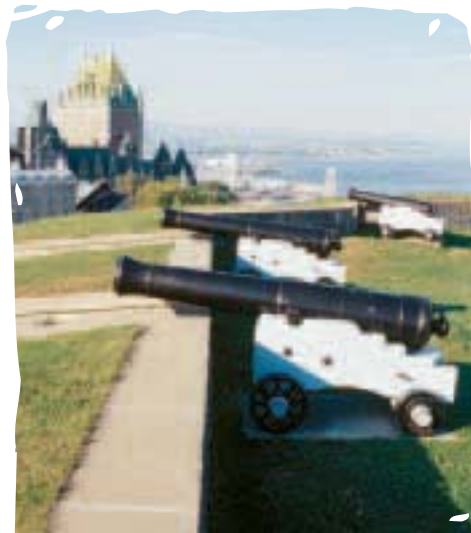
Québec City is the only fortified city north of Mexico. UNESCO recognized the importance of its historic quarter by making it a world heritage site, just like the Statue of Liberty! It combines the charms of old Europe and all the conveniences of a bustling North American city, and the great outdoors is just minutes away.



Quick Facts



Charles Dickens, author of *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*, called Québec City the “Gibraltar of America.”



Urban explorers

A real walled city

There's so much to see! The Citadel, perched on Cap Diamant, dominating the fortified 18th- and 19th-century stronghold. The walls themselves, with their four huge gates and the cannons still pointing out toward the St. Lawrence. Overlooking the River and the promenade is the magnificent Château Frontenac, easily the city's best-recognized landmark. Venture down "breakneck stairs" into the Lower Town, to visit Place Royale, brimming with life just as it was in the early days of the colony. Poke around the Petit Champlain district with its picturesque cobblestone streets, and the Old Port.

Two fabulous museums

There are plenty of museums in Québec City, but two of them are especially worth a visit. The Musée de la civilisation puts on terrific exhibitions for the general public, and lots of fun entertainment for kids, too. And the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, located partly in an old prison, displays the best and brightest of Québec art.

Seeing things from a different angle

Perhaps you'd like to start or end your visit with a different take on the city? You can get a superb panorama from the observation deck atop the Observatoire de la capitale. Or take the ferry across the River to Lévis and admire the striking cityscape. And speaking of boats, you can also enjoy a half-day or day-long cruise (best to reserve!) from the Old Port to the Grosse-Île National Historic Site or go whale watching in the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park.

Go wild

A family vacation in Québec City wouldn't be complete without a visit to the freshly renovated Jardin zoologique du Québec and Parc Aquarium. Come spend some time with animal species from throughout the Americas and around the globe.



Québec City

Nearby



PARTY TIME

Québec City Summer Festival
(July)

Grands Feux Loto-Québec
(fireworks) (July-August)

Fêtes de la Nouvelle-France
(history festival) (August)



A water wonderland

The Valcartier Vacation Village, 20 minutes from Québec City, is a super aquatic park featuring about twenty-five slides of all shapes and sizes, a huge wave pool, a tropical river and water games.





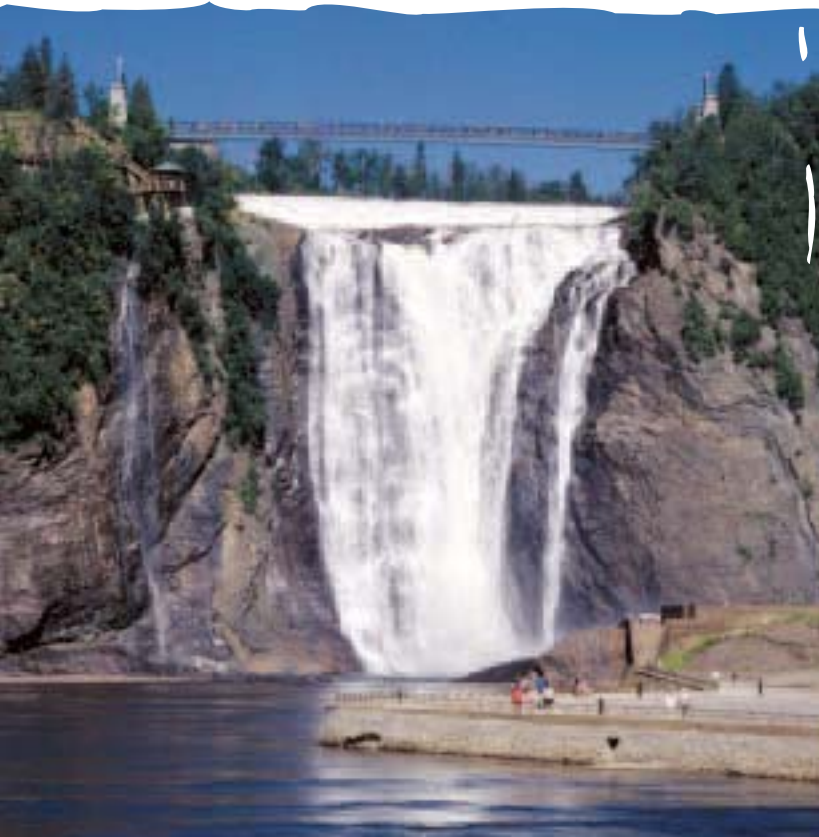
Glorious nature

As you leave Québec City, on your way toward Charlevoix, you'll come to three magnificent and easily accessible natural attractions: the famous Montmorency Falls, the Sainte-Anne canyon and the Sept-Chutes waterfalls. Mont-Sainte-Anne (820 m/2690 ft), in nearby Beaufré, is a four-season resort area with something for everyone.



Quick Facts

Montmorency Falls are among the ten highest in Canada, at 85 metres (275 feet). That's one and a half times higher than Niagara Falls!



Among the Hurons

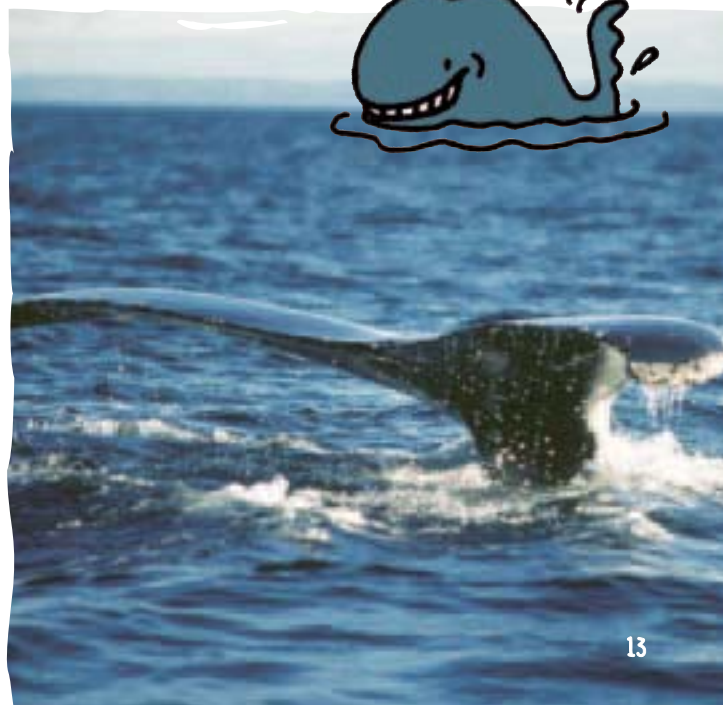
The Wendake Huron village, just 15 km (9 mi) from Québec City, is a terrific opportunity to learn about Huron history and culture. You can enjoy dancing, storytelling and other performances, test your skills with a bow and arrow, and sample some authentic Huron cuisine.

On the south shore

Take the ferry or one of the two bridges: the cantilever Québec Bridge, nearly a century old, or the more modern suspended Pierre Laporte Bridge, and make the trip out to the Forts-de-Lévis National Historic Site or the Parc des Chutes-de-la-Chaudière. The fun tourist train through the pretty Chaudière valley is a great way to spend an afternoon, too.

The River Route

If you have a day or two, take the time to explore the Charlevoix region. The steep, rugged shoreline and spectacular views will take your breath away — you can see why UNESCO designated the region a biosphere reserve. At Saint-Siméon and Baie-Sainte-Catherine, hop a boat for a close-up view of the marine mammals that gather where the Saguenay empties into the St. Lawrence.



Québec national parks

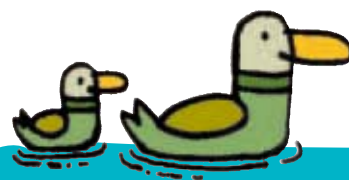
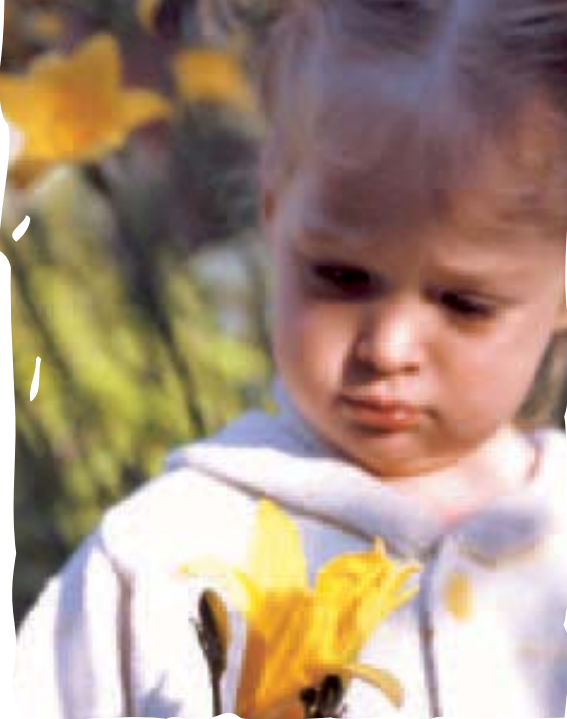
How many national parks are there in Québec?

There are no fewer than 27 Québec national parks dotted across the province. Many of them are within easy driving distance of Montréal and Québec City.

The newest addition, the Parc national des Pingualuit, was just recently created way up north around the 61st parallel, while the oldest, Parc national du Mont-Tremblant, was opened in 1894. At the foot of its magnificent mountain (930 m/3050 ft) lies Tremblant, one of northeastern North America's top ski resorts. This is also the largest Québec national park; the smallest, Miguasha, in the Gaspé, is barely 87 ha (215 acres). There you'll find a fascinating museum displaying fossils of fish from 370 million years ago. The park itself has been named a UNESCO world heritage site.

Quick Facts

Québec has a huge marine park (1135 km²/438 sq. mi) at the mouth of the Saguenay Fjord. You can take a boat tour out to see various marine mammals or even spot them from lookouts on the shore. Québec is one of the few places in the world where you can get such a close-up look at a dozen species of whales (finbacks, humpbacks, blue whales, belugas and others) between June and September.





What's there to do in Québec's parks?

Lots! There's outdoor fun in every season, a chance to get up close and personal with nature in carefully preserved and protected environments. Explore some splendid ecosystems and help us take care of this priceless heritage for future generations.

In summer and fall, you can swim, paddle a canoe or kayak, cycle and hike. You can even take boat trips in some parks. And things don't come to a stop when the snow falls: you can go cross-country and downhill skiing, snowshoeing and even winter camping. Most parks have well-equipped or more rustic campgrounds, or even chalets and huts.



Four-Season Fun

Red for fall

The woods burst into colour in fall, blazing with yellows, oranges and reds. Indian summer brings a last spell of warm weather, the perfect time to take a ski lift up a mountainside and stroll back down. Kids are sure to have fun visiting an apple orchard to pick their own, while parents might find a tour of one of Québec's vineyards tempting, too. There are crunchy apples, juice, jelly and pie for the younger members of the family, and cider or wine for the grown-ups. Fall is a time of plenty, no doubt about it!



Green for spring

When the maple sap starts to rise, it's time for a trip to a sugar shack. Many of them, set right next to maple stands, do their best to recreate that old-time spirit. Come sample some family-style cooking from bygone days, accompanied by rousing fiddle music: pea soup, baked beans, maple-cured ham, tourtière (meat pie), omelettes and fried delicacies dubbed *oreilles de crisse*. Save room for some syrup-drenched desserts, and the traditional taffy, of course. You won't go away hungry!





White for winter

It's amazing to think of all the things you can do only in winter! Snowboarding, skiing and all their offshoots, of course, but skating, too, and tubing, tobogganing and snow rafting, not to mention dogsledding, ice fishing and even snowmobiling. And everybody loves a party! The famous Québec City Winter Carnival has been drawing enchanted crowds for half a century now, and the Fête des neiges in Montréal is a great excuse to enjoy some fresh-air fun.



Québec winters are milder than they used to be! Years ago, they inspired this humorous limerick by Rudyard Kipling.

There was a small boy of Québec
Who was buried in snow to the neck.
When they asked: "Are you frizz?"
He replied: "Yes I is,
But we don't call this cold in Québec."



The outdoors is truly great!

Once you've filled up on city life, get out and see another side of Québec. The tourist regions have all sorts of wonderful surprises waiting for you!

Fur and feathers

Migratory birds put on a tremendous show when they stop for a rest on the shores of the St. Lawrence. There's also an impressive gannet colony in the Parc national du Rocher-Percé-et-de-l'Île-Bonaventure, in the Gaspé.

If country living appeals to you, there are lots of farms to visit. You can even stay at some of them. At the Saint-Félicien zoo, in the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean region, a little train takes you around and lets you admire plenty of exotic and local species. And for horseback-riding fans, many camps organize guided trail rides through some of Québec's loveliest countrysides.



Quick Facts



There are 400 species of animals in Québec (not counting insects), 130,000 streams and rivers and, believe it or not, a million lakes. Crossing the St. Lawrence can take 20 minutes in some places and two and a half hours in others!

Wet and wild

Québec has thousands of lakes and rivers, so it's never hard to find somewhere to swim! There are also a number of rafting rivers suited even to young children. You can take a relaxed cruise on some lakes and rivers, and a ferry trip across the St. Lawrence is a great way to get a taste of the open water and its grand vistas.



Leaves and rocks



Forests are everywhere in Québec, and one of the most exciting ways to explore them is along canopy trails built right up in the treetops, far above the ground. Mountain biking is popular, too, and you can find some world-class trails.

The Route Verte, a bike route that extends almost across Québec, lets cyclists map out their own safe routes. And for young adventurers in search of challenges, there are outdoor climbing walls and lots of caves to explore.