

best health



**THIS IS
CANADA'S
BEST GYM**

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**FALL
ASLEEP
FAST.**

HERE'S HOW

HEADACHE?
TRY ACUPRESSURE

**WHAT TO EAT
BEFORE YOU
WORKOUT**

GENIUS MEALS

15-MINUTE PREP,
**ONE PAN
CLEANUP**

**MEET
HEATHER OGDEN***
**THE
INSPO
BEHIND
OUR**

BODY STRONG ISSUE

*
PRINCIPAL DANCER,
NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA

SISTER ACT

Quebec City has lots of cool wellness offerings, not the least of which is a monastery turned retreat | by COURTNEY REILLY-LARKE

MOST OF US PLAN GETAWAYS WITH ONE INTENTION: to renew ourselves. But between layovers, navigating streets with our eyes glued to Google Maps, and in-room HBO (why yes, I'd love to re-watch *Big Little Lies*), we find our much-needed escape has, instead, escaped us. Enter: Le Monastère des Augustines (monastere.ca), a historical retreat that's known for its unique approach to wellness.

We'll make the history lesson quick: In 1639, three Augustinian nuns travelled to Quebec City to open the first hospital in the new world north of Mexico. For centuries, generations of nuns did amazing work as nurses, residing in the adjoining monastery. Now, with a declining population, the Augustinian nuns have decided to continue their legacy by opening the space to the public as a wellness retreat and hotel. Located in the historic wings of the monastery, the newly renovated Monastère



THE ARTIFACT-LINED HALLS OF THE MONASTERY

des Augustines gives renewed purpose to this heritage property.

Whether you opt to stay in the quaint (and seriously cozy) traditional nurse's quarters or the simple-yet-modern guest rooms, the nurturing mood of the monastery is palpable. Adding to the wellness vibes, unplugging in this hotel is easy — the rooms have no phones or televisions and the winding halls are full of artefacts and paintings that beg you to linger. You can visit the museum, which houses everything from ancient apothecary items and battlefield surgical tools to handwritten letters.

While the monastery is full of activities (aromatherapy and reflexology are on the roster), we'll admit that it's hard to stay cooped up when you're in the heart of breathtaking Quebec City. So, in the name of compro-



VIEW OF QUEBEC CITY FROM LE MONASTÈRE

MORNING YOGA SESSION; THE AUTHENTIC ROOM OPTION, MODELLED AFTER THE NUNS' ORIGINAL LIVING QUARTERS



mise, opt to use the centrally-located Monastère as base camp for your daily adventures. Days of exploration, followed by nights and mornings of quiet contemplation? Amen.

NAMASTE HERE

Get into the right headspace by beginning your day with a 90-minute morning meditation. Looking to work up a bit of a sweat? Opt for a yoga class with one of their skilled instructors, who will move you through your practice in both English and French. If your class takes place in the cellar, you'll likely be fixing your eyes on little pieces of history, like cannonballs that were shot into the building during the conquest war of 1759, while you try to hold your crow pose.

NOURISH HERE

Fuel up on local, organic food by eating breakfast on-site. The menu varies since it's centred on seasonal ingredients, but it always serves up an abundance of raw and vegetarian dishes. Load up on a buffet-style breakfast, but shh, the monastery encourages guests to nosh in silence. Why? Traditionally, the Augustinian nuns partook in a breakfast sans chatter to mentally prepare for a day of service. We'll wager that silently sipping your morning java is a practice you'll take home with you.

DAY TRIP HERE

Explore Île d'Orléans, the small island nestled in the middle of the St. Lawrence River, about a 30-minute drive from Quebec City. It was once considered the cradle of New France (fun fact: the entire island is considered a historical district), and it shows. The island is renowned for its agriculture and idyllic beauty.

JAM OUT HERE

Check out Confiturerie Tigidou (tigidou.ca), where they create traditional jams exclusively from berries grown on the island, organic fair-trade sugar, and herbs from their garden. The agro-tourism dream all takes place in a 200-year-old restored house decorated with gems from the '20s, and is made better by the warm, welcoming service. Treat yourself to their Strawberry-Mint Jam on a fresh scone with coffee, or stock up on their Espresso and Apple Caramel as a souvenir.

SIP HERE

Head to Cassis Monna & Filles (cassismonna.com), a family-run business known for their award-winning black currant wine and spirits. On this gorgeous property, they make just about everything imaginable with black currants (a.k.a. cassis or *gadelle noire* as the Québécois say),



from chocolate to honey and even mustard. These little berries are known for their healthiness — they're anti-inflammatory and loaded with vitamin C and other antioxidants — so don't feel bad about trying their artisanal black currant vanilla soft serve. Do a wine tasting or settle in for lunch at their restaurant, La Monnaguette. Just make sure you have a flexible schedule — the view of the cassis fields by the river will make it hard to leave.

THRILL HERE

Ride the cable car up to Montmorency Falls. Located where the mouth of the Montmorency River drops over the cliff shore and into the St. Lawrence, the falls are 83 metres high (roughly 30 higher than Niagara Falls). If you're just a mild thrill-seeker, take in some nature as you cross the suspension bridge across the falls. If you want the real deal, zip line (sepaq.com). But be warned, the 300-metre zip is a fast one!

DINE HERE

In search of a unique meal? Hop over to Chez Boulay (chezboulay.com), just a short jaunt from Le Monastère. The menu is inspired by Norway, where food is traditionally focused on the cycle of the seasons and on fish, game meat, vegetables and berries. It's a natural connection — the Nordic climate is similar to that of Quebec. Start with the creamy Crottin de Fanny goat cheese with roasted beets, black currants, and confit shallots before moving on to the fish (this varies with the catch of the day), which is served with sauerkraut, fried clams, and steamed potatoes from Île d'Orléans. And don't think they forgot about syrup. Opt for the profiterole with maple and peppery green alder, pumpkin seeds praline, and a maple caramel sauce for dessert. *bt*