

QUÉBEC CITY & CHARLEVOIX

A city-meets-countryside getaway
that feeds body and spirit

Count Michelin stars in a UNESCO World Heritage city,
then explore dramatic rural landscapes and charming
towns along the St. Lawrence River.

Le Fairmont Le Château Frontenac, opened in 1893, is within
the walls of Vieux-Québec. (Photo: Destination Québec-cité)



By Linda Barnard

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History lives within
the walls that
encircle 400-year-
old Québec City.

Stone houses with bell-cast metal roofs and deep-set dormer windows line narrow cobblestone streets of the Petit-Champlain district and Place Royale square in Vieux-Québec's Lower Town, where Samuel de Champlain founded the first permanent settlement in New France in 1608. The castle-like Fairmont Le Château Frontenac overlooks the scene from Dufferin Terrace above.

Petit-Champlain is known as the prettiest street in Québec's capital city, a pedestrian-only cobblestone shopping route that inspires fairytale daydreams.

Vieux-Québec is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that seems to be more northern France than Canada. And Canadians may like the idea of a taste of Europe without a passport appealing this summer.

The historic city has many hidden surprises. Walk through one of the city gates to Montmorency Park where a pair of iron lampposts are entwined in a dancing embrace in artist Alex Chinneck's "First kiss at last light." It's one of the city's numerous EXMURO public art pieces.



Left: Restaurant Tanière³ in Quebec City's historic Place Royal has two Michelin stars (Photo: Destination Québec-cite) **Top Right:** Alex Chinneck's "First kiss at last light" is one of the city's numerous EXMURO public art pieces. (Photo: Linda Barnard) **Bottom Right:** Relax in the pools at Fairmont Le Manoir Richelieu, which overlooks the St. Lawrence. (Photo: Tourisme Charlevoix)



Often missed by visitors, fanciful Rue Sous-le-Cap also deserves a place on the most-beautiful-streets list. The buildings on one side of the narrow street snug up against the vertical Cap Diamant cliff. Brightly painted wooden walkways link the upper floors of apartments over the curved road.

GET YOUR STEPS IN

Even if you can't recall much of your high school French, *escalier* (stairs) soon becomes a familiar signpost. Climb a few flights from Rue Sous-le-Cap to the top of Rue des Remparts to visit Le Monastère des Augustines.

Founded by Augustinian nuns who arrived from France in 1639 to care for the sick in the New World outpost, it serves a similar, secular purpose today. Since 2015 it's been a restorative retreat. Guests stay for one night or several to restore and reset with massage, yoga, breath work and mindful eating.

WELLNESS ON THE ST. LAWRENCE

Strøm Nordic Spa on the St. Lawrence River cultivates another approach to wellness with pools, a glass-walled sauna, steam rooms, waterfalls and a tranquil Epsom salt floating pool that makes tensions melt.

SEEING MICHELIN STARS

Québec City is a food-lovers' dream, especially at Tanière³ where every course on chef-owner François-Emmanuel Nicol's high-concept gastronomic journey underlines why it was awarded two Michelin stars.

More than a dozen dishes are served on the tasting menu, each showcasing Québec's boreal foods from farms, foragers, the land and sea.

"We are trying to see people disconnect and be in our world for a while," said

dining room director and co-owner, Roxan Bourdelais.

Eric Lavoie is connected to what he calls the "crazy good" restaurant culture here. He recently launched Québec Foodie Experience (quebecfoodieexperience.com), food tours that introduce visitors to restaurants in neighbourhoods.

THE ROAD TO CHARLEVOIX

Pair Québec City with Charlevoix, about an hour away by car, for a relaxing city-meets-countryside trip that's uniquely Québécois.

With the St. Lawrence River on one side and dramatic mountains shaped some 450 million years ago by a massive meteorite strike on the other, route 362 to Charlevoix leads into a panoramic rural landscape. The road rises and drops sharply, passing small towns and rich farmland with picture-perfect barns in a

place that feels as storybook surreal as Vieux-Québec.

There are an extraordinary number of artists and art galleries in Charlevoix, the painters drawn by the special light that also lured the Group of Seven. As comfy as your hotel bed may be, you'll be glad you got up for sunrise.

Look for the round signs outside business that designate a delicious stop on La Route des Saveurs. The agritourism flavour trail was the first one in Québec at its start 30 years ago.

A NEW GENERATION OF CHEESEMAKERS

Madeline Dufour's family started Famille Migneron de Charlevoix in 1994 as one of Québec's first artisanal cheesemakers. Today, Madeline, 31, and her brother Alexandre, 35, run the business, including the cheese dairy and winery. Drop by the farm for a tasting or stay for dinner.

BUSY BEES

After lunch at Le Saint-Pub and brewery in Baie-Saint-Paul, check out the shops and galleries along picturesque Saint-Jean-Baptist Street. Drop in at the tasting room at honey wines and spirits maker Hydromel Charlevoix.

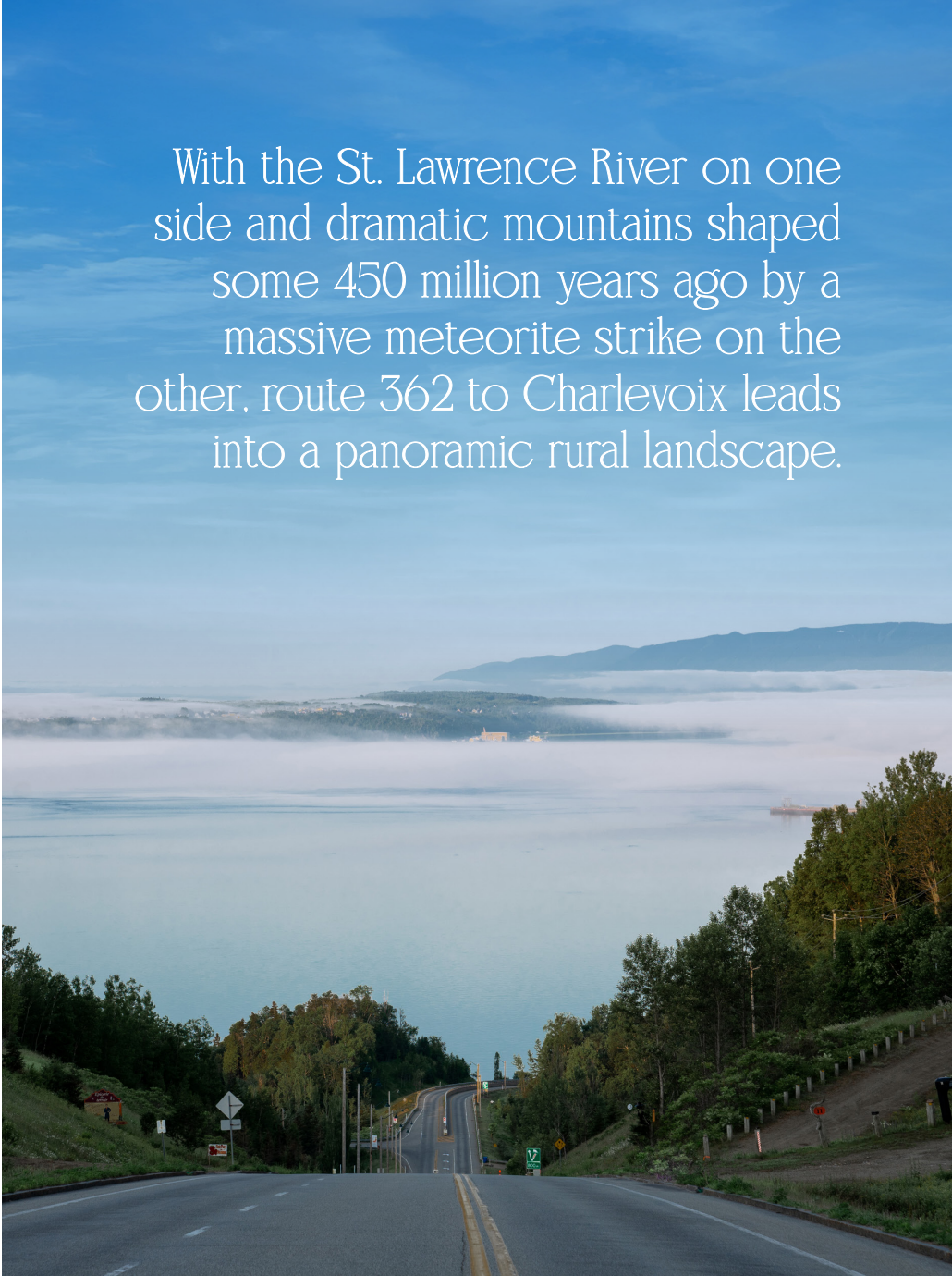
The shop also sells honey laced with saffron grown a half hour away at Safran Nordique in Clermont, which has a tasting room and gift shop.

SCHOONERS & SKYWATCHING

Learn some local history at the Musée maritime de Charlevoix in the village of Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive, about how mariners once spent long winters hand-building wooden schooners used to ship goods around St. Lawrence River communities.

The steep drive down to the museum begins at Les Éboulements where the landscape dramatically shows this municipality was the centre of the Astroblème de Charlevoix, the Charlevoix impact crater created 450 million years ago by the massive meteorite strike.

Get a good understanding of how the meteorite created Charlevoix's unique landscape with guided tours at the Observatoire de l'Astroblème interpretive



Above: The road to Charlevoix leads into a panoramic rural landscape with the St. Lawrence River on one side and mountains on the other. (Photo: Simon Jodoin for Tourisme Charlevoix)

centre in La Malbaie. It partners with neighbouring Fairmont Le Manoir Richelieu Hotel on activities, including stargazing.

WHERE TO STAY IN QUÉBEC CITY

Auberge Saint-Antoine: The family owned Relais & Chateau hotel is in a quiet street in the old city and has two Michelin Keys. In-house restaurant Coteau, which has a Michelin Green star, plans menus around its namesake farm on Île d'Orléans.

WHERE TO STAY IN CHARLEVOIX

Le Germain Chalevoix Hotel & Spa: Farmhouse chic meets Scandi-style in this

Baie-Saint-Paul hotel. The Michelin Key hotel has a farm with pet Highland cattle. Spa Nordique Le Germain is on site.

Fairmont Le Manoir Richelieu Hotel: This historic Michelin Key hotel faces the St. Lawrence River from the crest of the Pointe-au-Pic bluffs. Watch for beluga whales from the restaurants and terraces.

Linda Barnard was a guest of Bonjour Quebec, which did not preview this story.

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