

RAISON DE CÉLÉBRER

Sitting pretty on the Saint Lawrence River, Québec City—the capital of Canada’s largest province—is a fete for all seasons.

BY BEKAH WRIGHT

There’s a joke among the Québécois that the region has two seasons: winter and everything else. When pressed, however, the French/English-speaking residents will admit it’s the *amour* of Québec’s (quebecregion.com/en/) seasons they hold dear. Subtle changes in the temperature (and amount of snow on

the ground) signify whether it’s the season for dogsledding through glacial valleys, sugar maple tapping, dancing at outdoor concerts or watching for blue whales. No matter the time of year, however, Québec invites visitors to take to the cobblestone streets of North America’s oldest colonial city and enjoy *la belle vie*!

PHOTO BY FRANCIS GAGNON

When thermometers plummet in winter months, Québec City doesn't go into hibernation. Instead, this UNESCO World Heritage Site embraces the chill with events marking the season. Québec is, after all, the worldwide capital of snow.

Winter is when Hôtel de Glace (hoteldeglace-canada.com) makes its annual appearance. The 44-room/suite hotel is like a grand igloo located at Village Vacances Valcartier. Tours begin around December 23, with stays possible from the first week of January until the last week of March. Beyond slumbering on a bed of ice, there's an ice chapel and giant ice slide to discover, an ice bar for imbibing frosty cocktails and Nordic hot tubs and a sauna from which to gaze at the stars.

With a Nordic theme in mind, book dinner reservations at Chez Boulay—Bistro Boreal (chezboulay.com), where diners are invited to discover Québec's Nordic side through regional products based on the seasons. Chefs Jean Luc Boulay and Arnaud Marchand have crafted a menu showcasing ingredients ranging from elk and trout to a duo of blood pudding and cabbage and leek blood sausage. Request a window table for people-watching the activity on rue Saint-Jean.

The region has been celebrating winter with festivals as far back as 1894, with its notorious Québec Winter Carnaval (carnaval.qc.ca) officially kicking off in 1955. During Carnaval, there's no huddling fireside and waxing poetic about the snow. Instead, tuques, traditional red attire and arrow sashes, are donned for ice canoe races, night parades, ice sculpting and gatherings at an Ice Palace. Presiding over festivities is Bonhomme, a "snowman" who represents *joie de vivre*.

Post Carnaval, keep *joie de l'hiver* at an all time high via Québec's historic Toboggan Slide, a tradition since 1884. Three runs have daredevils zooming down Dufferin Terrace's hillside at 43 miles per hour. Still to experience: ice-skating at Place D'Youville, dogsledding in Jacques-Cartier Valley and skiing the area's top four ski resorts: Mont-Sainte-Anne, Le Massif de Charlevoix, Stoneham Mountain Resort, and Le Relais Centre. *Joie de l'hiver*, indeed.



WONDEROUS WINTER

SKIING AND ICE CANOEING PHOTOS BY { OLLI CROTEAU



AVENUE SAINT-DENIS PHOTO BY { LUC-ANTOINE COUTURIER, ICE HOTEL PHOTO BY { LUC ROUSSEAU, DOGSLED PHOTO BY { FRANCIS GAGNON



Hôtel de Glace (Ice Hotel)

Snow geese returning from winter migration, blossoming magnolia trees and sugar maple tapping herald spring, when Auberge Saint-Antoine (saint-antoine.com), a museum hotel located in Québec's Old Port, opens its doors and windows to the warming climate. Part of the Relais & Châteaux collection, this unique property is built on an archeological site and is comprised of three historical buildings. The Auberge showcases its rich history with a multitude of artifacts, some displayed outside the doors of all 95 rooms and suites.

Guests are greeted with creature comforts like heated floors, goose down bedding and cheery fireplaces. While accommodations lure for lingering, Chez Muffy beckons with seasonal sustenance. During spring months, this means maple syrup. Two entrees to savor: king salmon poached in maple syrup and pan seared foie gras with apple jam.

Myriad attractions are within walking distance of Auberge Saint-Antoine. Close by is the Musée de la Civilisation (mcq.org/en/), where collections like Secrets Uncovered (400 objects from the museum's treasure trove of a storage facility) stir imaginations. Walking in the footsteps of Samuel de Champlain can be done in Place Royale whilst strolling cobblestone streets to revel in sights including North America's oldest stone church, Notre-Dame-des-Victoires (ndv.sfweconnect.com), and a mural depicting 400 years of Québec's history. At Old Port, hop aboard the AML Louis Jolliet (croisieresaml.com) from whence it's possible to soak in city panoramas and listen to stories about Québec from a costumed guide.

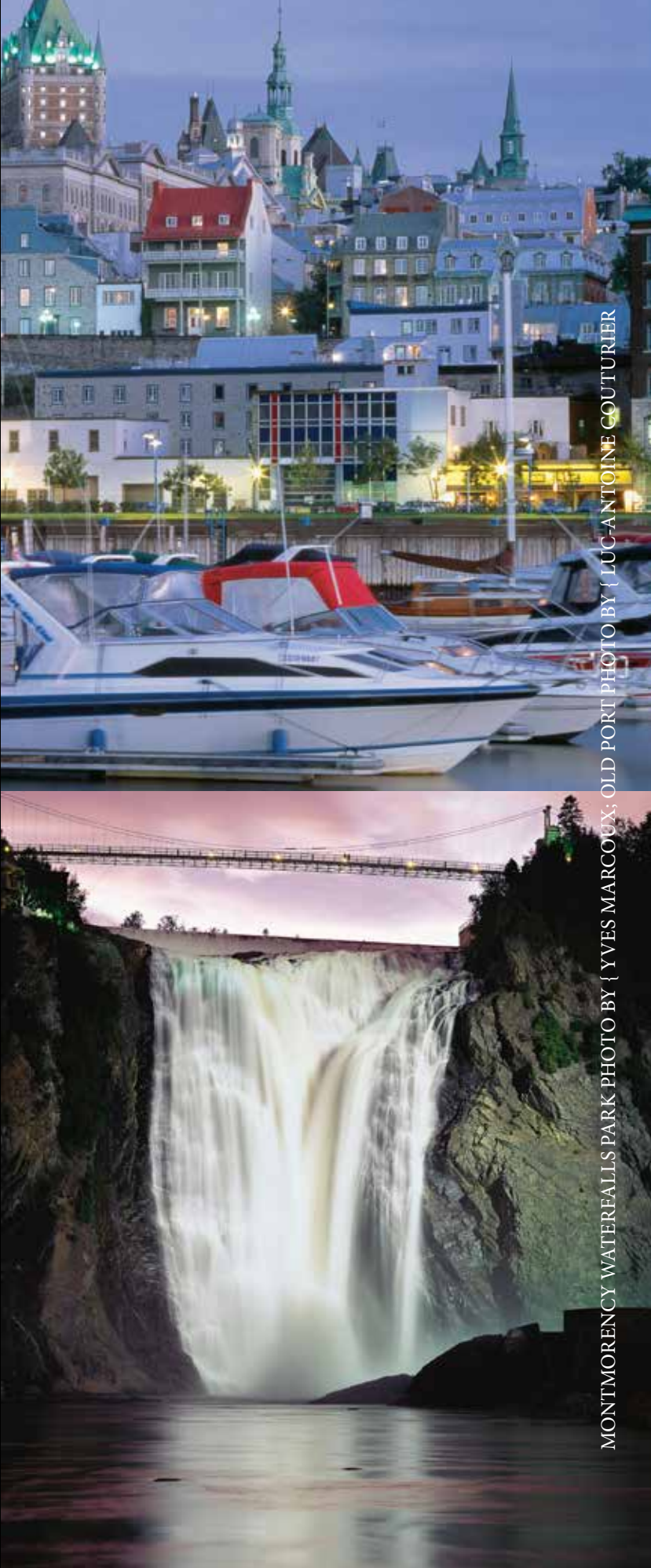
Spring encourages time spent in nature. An ideal place to do so is outside the city at Île d'Orléans (tourisme.iledorleans.com/en/), an island devoted to agriculture. The Auberge Saint-Antoine has a garden of its own here and hosts Panache, a pop-up mobile restaurant at Vignoble de Sainte-Pétronille vineyard (vs-p.ca/).

Not to be missed is indulging in the island's black currants during lunch at Maison Cassis Monna & Filles (cassismonna.com/en/). Blackcurrant-vanilla ice cream cones may entice skipping straight to dessert, but save room at the domain's restaurant, La Monnaguette, for dishes like duck confit and black currant jam paired with the signature homemade black currant sangria. Pure heaven.

Later, get lost in the beauty of Île d'Orléans' country lanes that lead right up to the St. Lawrence River. Along the way, scour fields to see what's due to be harvested next. Strawberries? Tomatoes? Undoubtedly.

On the return drive to the city, a stop is called for at Montmorency Falls (sepaq.com). It's possible to take in this 272-foot waterfall while hiking or riding the cable car. A better suggestion—soaring beside it on the park's zip line spanning 985 feet.

Back in Québec City, end an evening with a funicular trip to the top of the hill en route to La Buche (restolabuche.com), known for "all cuisine maple syrup." It is, after all, maple syrup season, and this restaurant knows how to bring out its flavor in full force. Some menu suggestions: deer tartare with black garlic and bacon dressing, caramelized walnuts, fresh savory and maple butter paired with a glass of Québec's finest Kalibu; and pan-fried foie gras and Poor Man's Pudding and bacon. Oh, happy spring!



MONTMORENCY WATERFALLS PARK PHOTO BY { YVES MARCOUX; OLD PORT PHOTO BY { LUC-ANTOINE COUTURIER



ÎLE DE ORLEANS PHOTO BY { SEBASTIEN LAROSE; SNOW-GESE PHOTO { LUC-ANTOINE COUTURIER

RESPLENDENT SPRING

Auberge Saint-Antoine

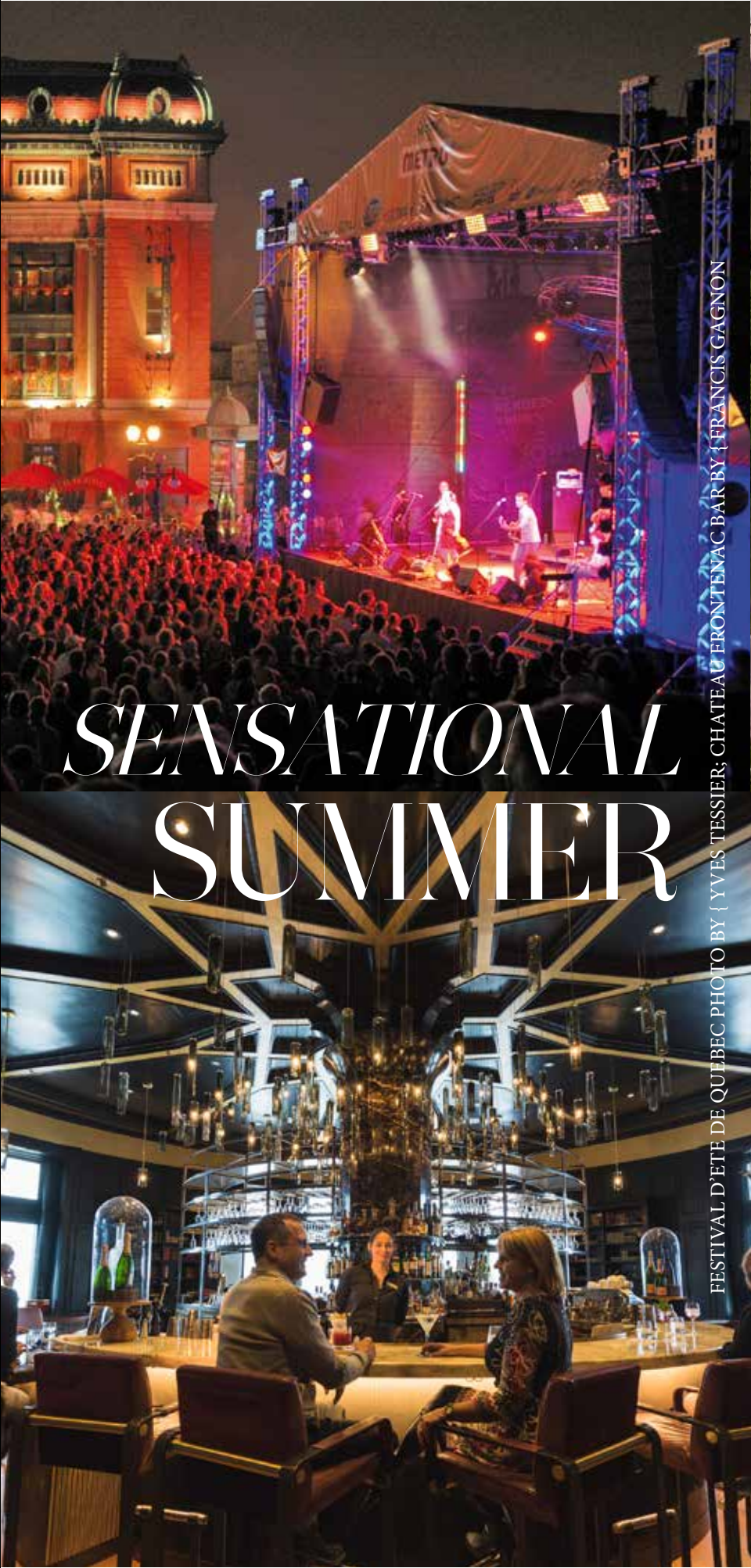
Québécois know how to celebrate summer—at high volume. The best time to immerse oneself in the city’s party-like atmosphere is in July during Festival d’été de Québec (FEQ; infofestival.com/en/), Canada’s largest music festival. Over the course of 11 days, 2,500 performances get underway at 10 different venues. Lovers of rock, hip-hop, blues and jazz hear grooves from emerging artists, as well as music’s most stellar artists. Taking to the Bell Stage on the historic Plains of Abraham (ccbn-nbc.gc.ca/en/) battlefield since 1968 have been acts ranging from The Rolling Stones and Lady Gaga to Neil Young and Bruno Mars.

During FEQ, a certain mood prevails, particularly once the sun goes down. Rue Saint-Jean shuts down to vehicles and comes alive with concertgoers gathering around nearby stages. At every turn, delights wait to be discovered: art installations, street performers displaying feats of derring-do and buskers getting couples dancing cheek-to-cheek. If temps are sultry, another favorite spot is the fountain outside the Parliament Building, where a quick run through will leave one drenched, yet cool.

Idyllic summer accommodations are within Fairmont Le Château Frontenac (fairmont.com/frontenac-quebec/). The iconic, 125-year-old castle located on the Promenade des Gouverneurs and Terrasse Dufferin is a mix of elegance, whimsy, luxury and history. Not a cookie-cutter establishment, the hotel’s 611 rooms and suites are as filled with personality as the property is with history. Specialty rooms are named after noteworthy guests, among them Winston Churchill, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Queen Elizabeth II and Celine Dion. Settings straight from novels of yore are Signature Rooms with vistas of both the city and St. Lawrence River.

Wander the premises to discover a rooftop mecca. Turn a corner to find a chef’s garden and “bee hotels.” And then there are the dining establishments. Dreamy describes Le SAM Bistro, where a table overlooking Terrasse Dufferin is just right for watching summer storms replete with heat lightning. An event unto itself is dinner at the exquisite Champlain. Where to toast over a Sazerac: the 1608 Wine and Cheese Bar.

There’s plenty to do in walking distance of Le Château Frontenac, such as the Funiculaire du Vieux-Québec (funiculaire.ca), which transports adventure seekers down to Place Royale (see spring). Highly recommended is window-shopping in the Quartier Petit-Champlain, exploring the 1899-constructed La Citadelle de Québec (lacitydelle.qc.ca/en/) atop Cap-aux-Diamants and checking out Plains of Abraham’s museums and gardens. Long live, summer!



FESTIVAL D'ETE DE QUEBEC PHOTO BY { YVES TESSIER; CHATEAU FRONTENAC BAR BY { FRANCIS GAGNON



Fairmont Le Château Frontenac



CHATEAU FRONTENAC PHOTO BY { MARIO FAUBERT; DUFFERIN TERRACE PHOTO BY { STEPHANE AUDET

A Québec fall contains a special magic all its own. Capture the enchantment by taking a road trip on Route 138 to the Côte-Nord region (quebecmaritime.ca). The destination: Tadoussac (tadoussac.com/en/culture-tourism).

Plan to visit in mid to late September for catching the countryside awash in the reds, yellows and oranges of fall foliage. Popping up during the three-hour drive are river bends, craggy rocks, grazing horses and weathered barns. In Baie-Sainte Catherine, the road ends where a ferry awaits to transport vehicles across the Saguenay Fjord to Tadoussac. Welcoming upon disembarkation... wildlife.

Bird lovers should make a beeline to the Dunes of Tadoussac, home of the annual Côte-Nord Migratory Bird Festival (mid September). Not only is it possible to spy up to 10,000 birds a day, but the Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac (OOT) can be observed conducting migratory banding of boreal owls, hawks and passerines.

The place for getting the 411 on Tadoussac's marine life is the Marine Mammal Interpretation Center (CIMM; gremm.org). Beyond exhibitions, films and sound recordings, experts are on hand to educate guests about the region's sea inhabitants. To see these wondrous creatures up close, book a Croisières AML Zodiac (croisieresaml.com/en/our-boats/zodiac/), whale-watching excursion in Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park. From spotting belugas and blue whales in the open water, to cruising close to seals sunning in the fjord, the two- and three-hour adventures are filled with nonstop thrills.

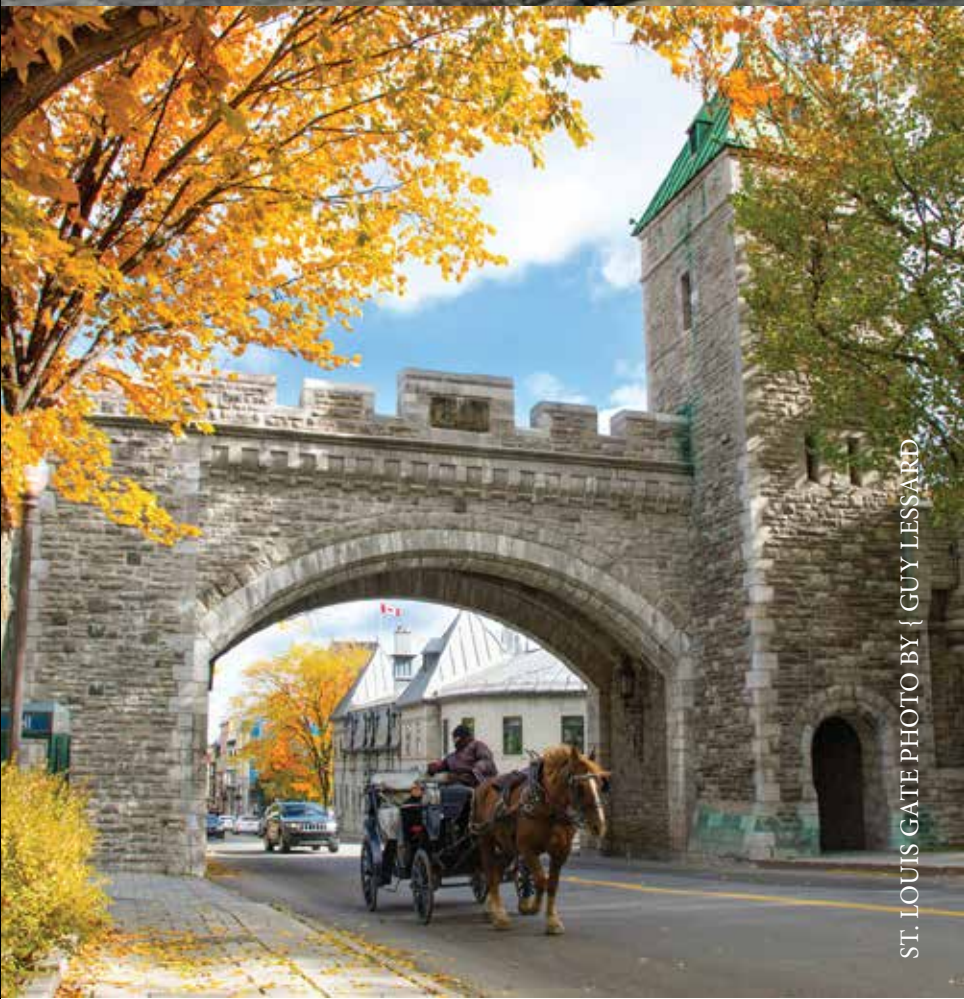
When the sun makes its daily dip, stake out an Adirondack chair on Hotel Tadoussac's (hoteltadoussac.com) lawn. On a hillside above Tadoussac Bay and St. Lawrence River, this grand dame, with its whitewashed exterior, red roof and cupola, first hit the scene in 1864, bringing with it sheer seaside romance. Keep those views coming from the hotel's accommodations and common areas.

Hotel Tadoussac has one bar and two restaurants on-site, including the AAA Four Diamond Award Le Coverdale, an elegant throwback to the past. Within walking distance are other dining options to consider. Highly recommended is the front porch of the charming Le Café Bohème (lecafeboheme.com). Then there's Chez Mathilde (chezmathildebistro.com), which mixes local art and flavorful cuisine.

A pastime not to miss is strolling the boardwalk with a stop at Microbrasserie Tadoussac (microtadoussac.com) to snag an IPA. At low tide, meander down to the beach to scout tide pools and share seaside kisses in an attempt to prolong the perfect fall.



FABULOUS FALL



ST. LOUIS GATE PHOTO BY { GUY LESSARD }



Hotel Tadoussac