

## Chapter 15

# Arriving and Orienting Yourself in Québec City

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Getting to Québec City
  - ▶ Figuring out the city's neighborhoods
  - ▶ Traveling around the city
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You're likely to spend almost all your time in Québec City in the Old City, which is divided into a fortified **Haute-Ville** (Upper City), built behind walls on a cliff overlooking the St. Lawrence River, and a **Basse-Ville** (Lower City), at the foot of the cliff running along the riverfront, to the south and east. You can easily get lost in the winding cobblestone streets in either neighborhood, but don't worry if you do. The whole point of Québec City is strolling around and soaking up the unbelievable atmosphere. This chapter explains how to get to Québec City and how to get around after you arrive.

## *Arriving in Québec City*

No matter how you get to Canada from abroad, you have to pass through customs. See Chapter 7 for details on what to expect from the stern-faced customs agents you encounter at the border.

### *Getting from Jean Lesage Airport to your hotel*

If you arrive in Québec City by air, you will land in the small **Jean Lesage International Airport** (500 rue Principale Sainte-Foy; ☎ 418-640-2700). No shuttles are available to downtown Québec City. A taxi ride costs a fixed rate of C\$25 (US\$19). If you want to rent a car, the following major agencies have desks at the airport:

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- ✓ **Avis:** ☎ 800-879-2847 or 418-872-2861.
- ✓ **Budget:** ☎ 800-268-8900 or 418-872-9885.
- ✓ **Hertz Canada:** ☎ 800-654-3131 or 418-871-1571.
- ✓ **Thrifty:** ☎ 800-367-2277 or 418-877-2870.

### *Getting from Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport to your hotel*

You may land at the province's main international airport, which is actually in Montréal: **Trudeau International Airport** (☎ 800-465-1213 or 514-394-7377).

You have several options to get to Québec City from Montréal's main airport:

- ✓ **By car:** All of Québec's major car rental companies have counters in the arrivals area of Trudeau Airport. For tips on getting the best rental deals, see Chapter 7. For telephone numbers of rental companies, see the Appendix. To get from Montréal to Québec City, follow the signs from the airport toward Autoroute 20 Est (Highway 20 East), which goes directly to Québec City. The drive takes about two and a half hours.
- ✓ **By bus: Autocars Orléans Express** (☎ 514-842-2281) serves the Montréal-Québec City corridor. Express buses leave every hour on the hour from Montréal's **Central Bus Station**, located at 505 bd. de Maisonneuve Est to Québec City. The trip takes about three hours, and a round-trip ticket costs C\$57 (US\$43) plus taxes. For details on how to get from Trudeau Airport to the Central Bus Station in Montréal, see Chapter 8.
- ✓ **By train:** Trains leave four times daily from Montréal's **Central Station** (895 rue de la Gauchetière Ouest; ☎ 514-989-2626) to Québec City's **Gare du Palais** (450 rue Gare-du-Palais; ☎ 418-692-3940). If you reserve five days ahead of time, a roundtrip ticket costs C\$80 (US\$60). The trip takes a little over three hours.
- ✓ **By ferry:** If you have a little time to kill and want to take the truly scenic route, a ferry (mid-May–mid-Oct) runs along the St. Lawrence River between Montréal and Québec City. The trip takes four hours. Phone **Les Dauphins du Saint-Laurent** (☎ 877-648-4499 or 514-281-8000), and see Chapter 5 for more details.

### *Driving to Québec City*

**From the Canada-United States border:** From **New York City**, follow I-87 to Highway 15 to Montréal, and then pick up Autoroute 20 to

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Québec City. To get into the city, take Autoroute 73 Nord (Highway 73 North) across the Pierre-Laporte Bridge (Pont Pierre-Laporte) and exit on bd. Champlain. Turn left at rue Parc des Champs-de-Batailles and follow it to Grande-Allée. When you get to Grande-Allée, turn right and head straight into the Old City.

**From Boston**, take I-89 to I-93 in Montpelier, Vermont, which connects with Highway 55 in Québec to link up with Autoroute 20. Follow the preceding directions.

**From Montréal**, you can take either Autoroute 20, which follows the south shore of the St. Lawrence River or the more scenic, less-trafficked Autoroute 40, which follows the north shore. Either way, the trip takes about two and a half hours.

### *Finding Information When You Arrive*

Québec City has two good tourist information centers in handy locations. The main office is **Centre Infotouriste**, at 12 rue Ste-Anne, just opposite the Château Frontenac at Place d'Armes (☎ 800-363-7777 or 418-692-2608). The office is well stocked with tons of brochures and is well staffed with bilingual employees who help you find information or book hotel rooms and tours for you. The **Greater Québec Area Tourism and Convention Bureau**, near the Plains of Abraham at 835 av. Laurier (not too far from Grande-Allée) (☎ 418-649-2608), offers the same services but tends to be a little less busy.

### *Québec City's Neighborhoods*

Québec's Old City is really quite small, but it's so dense and packed with interesting sites, shops, museums, cafes, restaurants, and other attractions that you can spend a lot of time wandering its winding streets and still be surprised by new sites and curiosities. The only neighborhood that you'll likely want to visit outside the Old City is the Grande-Allée, a long, wide street running west of the St-Louis Gate that's lined with restaurants, boutiques, and bars. During the summer evenings, this street is hopping, and its terraces are packed with revelers.

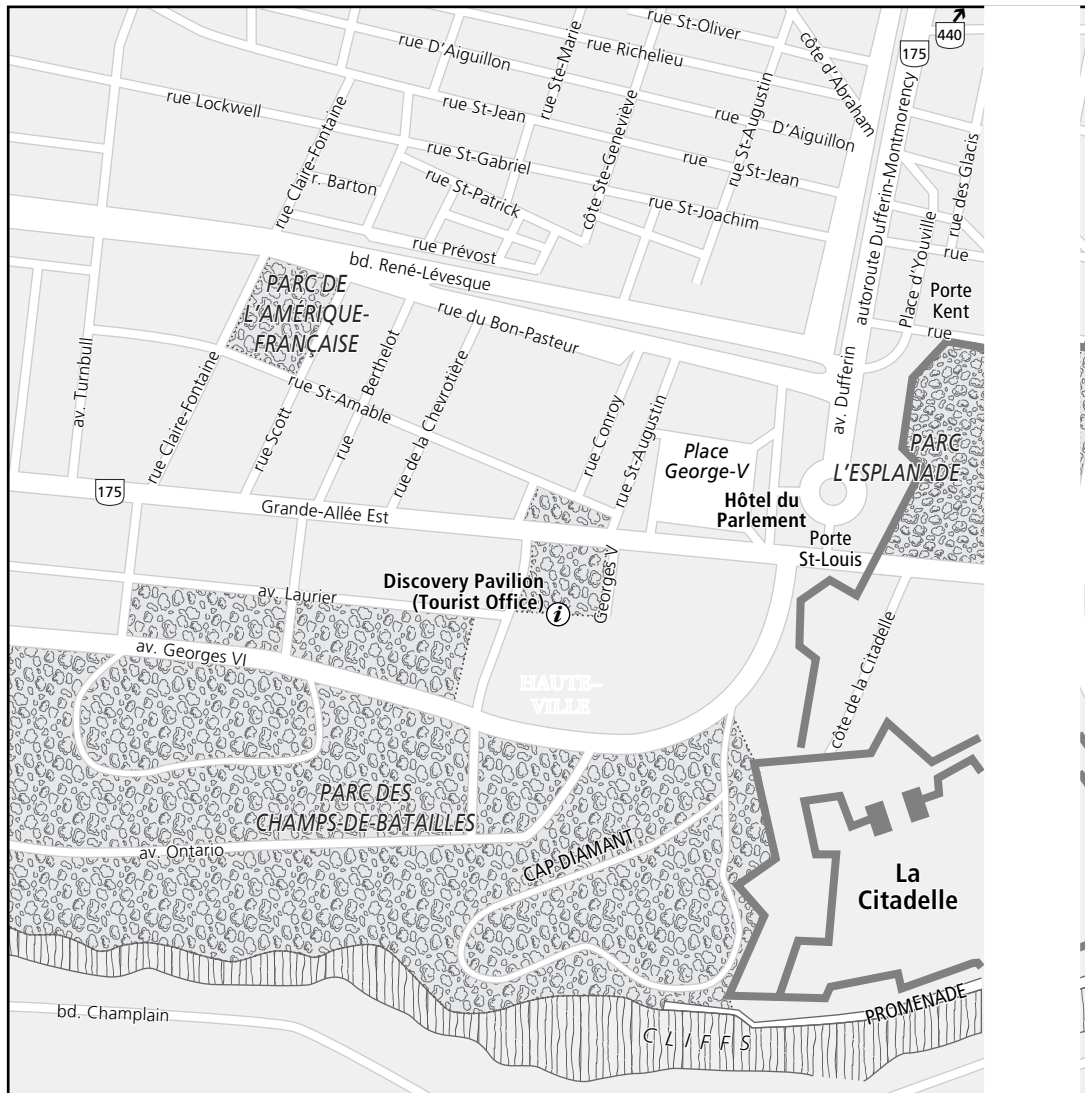
#### *Haute-Ville (Upper City)*



This is the biggest part of the Old City, a neighborhood entirely surrounded by thick ramparts. Most of Québec City's main attractions can be found here, including the **Château Frontenac**, the **Place d'Armes**, the **Basilique Notre-Dame**, the **Québec seminary and museum**, and the **terrasse Dufferin** — a long promenade with a view of the St. Lawrence

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### Québec City Orientation

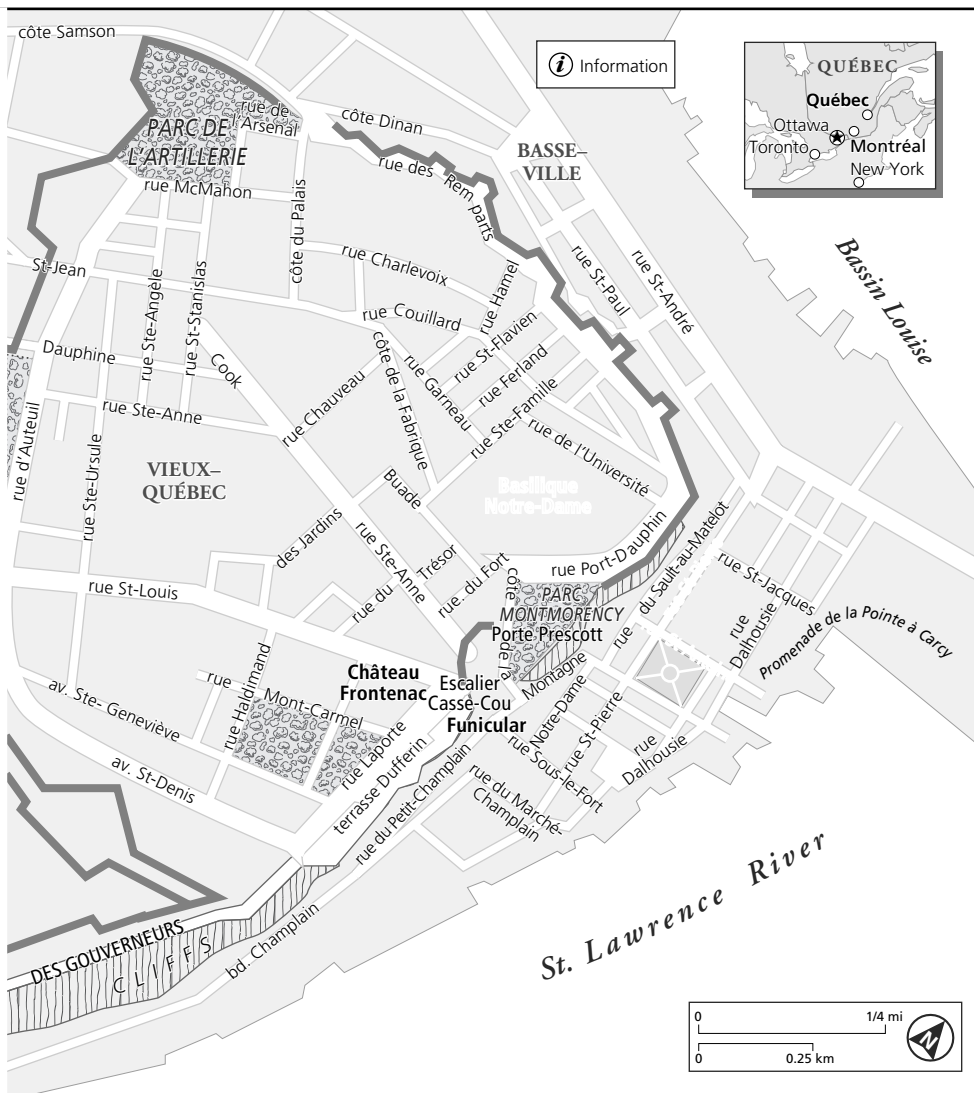


River below. Most of the buildings are at least 100 years old, some much older. The city was not built on a grid, so it can be disorienting, but don't worry; sooner or later, you'll arrive at a wall, a cliff, or a gate, and you'll be able to figure out where you are on a map.

### *Basse-Ville (Lower City)*

Historically, this part of the city was reserved mainly for poor families that worked in the docks. Now it's pretty much a continuation of the

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Haute-Ville. In the Basse-Ville, you find similar architecture, many restaurants, some small inns, and several major attractions, including the spectacular **Musée de la Civilisation** (Museum of Civilization). Rue St-Paul is a lovely strip with many art galleries and antiques stores and some very cute accommodations.

Take the elevator or the stairs down from the terrasse Dufferin or Place d'Armes, and you wind up on the delightful rue Petit Champlain, a pedestrian alley full of shops of varying quality. Don't forget to stroll along the

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port area. Recent development and an interest by the cruise industry has made the area more attractive and festive. You'll be in awe of the massive cruise ships from around the world that dock at the port.

### *Grande-Allée*

If you exit the Haute-Ville at the St-Louis Gate and keep walking west past Québec's Parliament Buildings, you end up on Grande-Allée. Although this street offers a lot of hotels and accommodations, it is known mainly for its many restaurants and bars with sidewalk terraces. It's a meeting point for the city's young, and it's lively all summer long. Keep heading west for about 15 minutes on foot and you'll reach avenue Cartier on your right — another lively street with many B&Bs, restaurants, shops, and bars.

## *Getting around Québec City*

Québec City's small size makes it a snap to get around. By foot is best; however, at some point, you have to contend with the steep hill between the Haute-Ville and Basse-Ville. This is when the *funiculaire* (elevator) comes in handy.

### *By foot*

If you're in reasonably good shape and have comfortable walking shoes, you can probably dispense with all motorized transport while in Québec City, especially if your hotel is in the Old City. Walking is definitely the best way to travel; the only challenge on foot is getting between the Upper and Lower Cities. To do so, you have to climb the steep stairs that join Côte de la Montagne (near the Petit Champlain) to the Dufferin Terrace. If you want, you can take the *funiculaire* (elevator) that leaves from the head of rue Petit-Champlain and also arrives on the Dufferin Terrace. In the north part of the Old City, near rue St-Jean, you can take advantage of a more gradual decline to get to the Basse-Ville by following rue Côte-du-Palais down a gentle slope to rue St-Paul.

### *By public transportation*

We have only one exception to the rule of walking: if you're staying too far away from the Old City to make the trip in by foot. In that case, several buses run frequently into the Old City. Bus no. 7 runs up and down rue St-Jean; no. 11 runs along Grande-Allée and rue St-Louis. Both take you into the Old City, making stops all the way to Place d'Youville, just outside the walls on the north side of town. These buses pass about

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every ten minutes. Fares are C\$2.25 (US\$1.70) exact change, or you can purchase tickets at a *dépanneur* (convenience store) for C\$1.90 (US\$1.40).

### *By taxi*

Taxis are plentiful in Québec City, and they're pretty easy to flag down around the big hotels and outside the gates of the Old City. Inside the Old City, you can find taxi stands at Place d'Armes and in front of the Hôtel-de-Ville (City Hall). The fares are the same as in Montréal, which can be a little expensive for short distances. The starting rate is C\$2.50 (US\$1.90), and then C\$1.20 (US90¢) per kilometer. To call a taxi, try **Taxi Coop** (☎ 418-525-5191) or **Taxi Québec** (☎ 418-525-8123).

### *By car*

It really makes no sense to try to get around Québec City by car. You'll have great difficulty parking on the street in the Old City, which is so compact that you can walk everywhere easily on foot. That said, if you arrive at your hotel by car, you can find plenty of places to leave it while you stroll about the city. Hotels either have parking lots or have worked out deals with parking lots nearby, and most will be able to direct where to go to find a spot. For most parking lots, expect to pay around C\$10 to C\$12 (US\$7.50–US\$9) per day. Some lots even allow you to come and go during the day at no extra charge.

### *By bicycle*

Given how hilly and dense the Old City is, cycling isn't a very attractive option. Still, you can rent bikes for the day at several locations. Try **Cyclo Service**, 160 rue St-André in the Basse-Ville (☎ 418-692-4052) or **Vélo Passe-Sport Plein Air**, at 22 rue Côte-du-Palais, near rue St-Jean (☎ 418-692-3643). The cost is around C\$20 (US\$15) for 12 hours.

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