

# Hotel Tadoussac offers a whale of a time

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE    MAY 24, 2012



Hotel Tadoussac has 149 guest rooms, many with water views where guests might see whales swimming by.

**Photograph by:** Hotel Tadoussac

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The landmark Hotel Tadoussac, celebrating 70 years of hospitality this year, has it all – and then some. A spectacular setting. Terrific food. And whale-watching, which is the main attraction for the 35,000 visitors to the hotel and the 300,000 to Tadoussac who come each summer from around the world.

Hotel Tadoussac is situated at one of Quebec's most striking natural sites. Here the freshwater, 100-kilometre Saguenay Fjord and the salty, 25-kilometre wide St. Lawrence River meet and create a seascape that is humbling and beautiful.

The hotel is a great old gal, a landmark with a shiny red roof and cupola visible from the ferry when you arrive, crossing the Saguenay from Baie Ste. Catherine to Tadoussac. Facing the waterfront, in the heart of the village, Hotel Tadoussac is set amid manicured grounds and gardens. It offers 149 guest rooms, three dining rooms, a lounge and a spa.

As you walk into the large lobby, you know you are part of Quebec history. Vintage photographs, many by the renowned Notman & Sons, document the town's past. On the other side of the panoramic windows is the best seat in town, a patio chair shaded by a distinctive red and white sunbrella, with a view of the sailboats bobbing in the marina and the big water beyond.

For those who want to do more than enjoy the scenery, the hotel has an outdoor heated swimming pool, a tennis court, a free kids' club and lawn games, plus it organizes golf and hiking. But I recommend that you bypass those garden-variety resort activities and sign up for water adventures that you are not likely to experience at home. Hotel Tadoussac's packages are the most economical way to go if you like your day organized for you. The Great Adventure in Whale Kingdom and the Whale of a Time feature three-hour outings on 500-passenger cruise ships or 48-passenger Zodiacs. The Saguenay Waves excursion travels the scenic fjord where the cliffs rise dramatically, more than 300 metres. Kayaking beefs up the adventure quotient considerably, either in the tranquil bay or in the fjord where stiff winds and strong currents create whitecaps.

Hotel Tadoussac's accommodations are comfortable and plain, with country-style furniture, good closet space and inviting beds covered in fresh white-on-white striped sheets. The rooms with the water views are most popular and about \$50 more expensive.

"We upgrade every year," said general manager Tina Tremblay, who has been with the hotel for 25 years. "This year we changed the carpeting and upgraded the kitchen. The guest rooms get attention all the time, the latest additions are the flat-screen televisions."

Hotel Tadoussac's cuisine reflects its waterfront location, with a wealth of freshly caught seafood from the St. Lawrence, meat raised regionally and cheeses from throughout Quebec. With three dining rooms at different price points and a lounge for afternoon tea, the gastronomic high point is Le William, a romantic space facing the waterfront. Here, executive chef Fabrice Piquet creates multi-course tasting menus for approximately \$55-\$75 that pair shrimp and scallops with foie gras, venison, wild boar, veal and duck.

Le William is fine for a splurge, but Hotel Tadoussac's best value is Le Coverdale, where \$39 buys a chance to try Piquet's seafood salads, such house specialties as smoked trout and marinated salmon, plus seafood, roast beef and a dozen delectable desserts. The breakfast spread is great, too, featuring an omelette chef, perfect croissants on the breakfast and pastry board and heaps of homemade jams, plus generous touches like nuts and cranberries for cereal and yogurt.

The all-around Le Beaupré Restaurant, more casual, has a bistro menu of sandwiches and main courses of shrimp, snow crab, cod, lobster, mussels, scallops, pasta, baby pork chops, duck or steak. There also is a children's menu.

Tadoussac has a full-

service spa, with several beauty treatments, massages and body wraps. This is the place to try exfoliations and massages with seashells and marine salts.

If you are only now discovering Tadoussac, you're a serious latecomer. Archaeological digs have yielded evidence of civilizations going back many centuries. The beautiful bay was a landing point for Jacques Cartier in 1535 and the town was one of the first non-Native settlements in North America. After stints as a major fur-trading post for Hudson's Bay Company from the 1600s to the mid-1800s, and a logging centre after that, it became a tourist destination in the 1860s when the forerunner to this Hotel Tadoussac was built.

Tourists still are coming by the hordes during the high summer season, when whale sightings are most frequent because their food is plentiful. It's important to plan ahead. For example, the Festival de la Chanson de Tadoussac, June 14-17, is a sellout every year and Tadoussac's hotels, restaurants and cruises will be heavily booked.

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### **If You Go**

Tadoussac is a six-hour drive from Montreal via Highway 40 east and Route 138 to Baie Ste. Catherine. Take the 10-minute ferry across the Saguenay, which is free and runs frequently.

Hotel Tadoussac: 800-561-0718, [hoteltadoussac.com](http://hoteltadoussac.com); 165 Bord de l'eau, Tadoussac. Open May-Oct. Breakfast, lunch, dinner and afternoon tea served daily.

Price: Including outdoor heated pool, children's club, live music on some evenings, minigolf, tennis, lawn games, walking trails, parking and Internet; from June 1-29, rooms cost approximately \$165-\$234 for two, without meals, weekends or weekdays. Prices are highest July 21-Aug. 18: \$215-304 for two, without meals. The Great Adventure in the Whale Kingdom starts at \$384 for two, with buffet breakfast and dinner and a three-hour excursion on a 500-passenger cruise ship or a 48-passenger Zodiac ([dufour.ca](http://dufour.ca)). Extras: massages and spa treatments. Discounts offered for children's meals; no charge for those under 5.

Other packages: Health & Gastronomy includes massages and gourmet meals. Surf the Saguenay Waves features a five-hour cruise on the fjord. Whale of a Time is another whale-watching deal. The Kayak Excursion involves sea-kayaking on the Saguenay, for both beginners or advanced ([meretmonde.ca](http://meretmonde.ca)).

Regional information: Côte-Nord; 888- 463-5319, [tourismemanicouagan.com](http://tourismemanicouagan.com), or Tourism Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean: 877-253-8387, [saguenaylacsaintjean.ca](http://saguenaylacsaintjean.ca).

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