

Quebec City's own Griffintown

If you like newly hip neighbourhoods born out of working-class, industrial roots, you'll like nouvo St-Roch

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE FEBRUARY 15, 2013 10:43 AM



The old buildings and factories of rue Saint-Joseph in Nouvo Saint-Roch have been recycled into boutiques and bistros.

Photograph by: La SociÉTÉ de DÈveloppement, The Gazette

Everything old is new again in the Quebec City quartier of Nouvo St-Roch.

Nouvo is text-speak for “nouveau” and refers to the new hip, happening renaissance of St-Roch. It’s a 15-square-block urban village where 150-year-old factories and tenements have been recycled into indie boutiques, tiny bistros and avant-garde art spaces.

Le Cercle, originally a garage, now embraces a sleek resto-bar, a gallery and a stage for rock, funk and techno acts. A one-time print shop has become Auberge Le Vincent, which calls itself an “urban inn.” And the majestic Notre-Dame-de-Jacques-Cartier Church has had a second coming as Espace

Hypérion, a creative performance centre.

A Lower Town district less than two kilometres north of Hôtel du Parlement, Saint-Roch has working-class and industrial roots, like Montreal's Griffintown, Toronto's Cabbagetown, or Gastown in Vancouver. But the St-Roch of the 2000s is driven by the young and nouvo, the students and profs of the Universités de Laval and Québec and the gaming wizards of Ubisoft, CGI and Beenox, whose offices have made the area a tech sector.

They're spending time at friendly neighbourhood places like Le Nektar, where coffee is an art, and La Korrigane, a micro-brasserie where chefs gather after work.

But there is a lot more. Here's a guide to the best of Nouvo St-Roch. It's all walkable, either along rue St. Joseph or within a block of it.

SLEEP: St-Roch has spawned several hotels that are loaded with character, all darlings of Trip Advisor in their own way. Auberge Le Vincent is an intimate, 10-room hideaway with brick walls, flat-screen televisions and good breakfasts of crêpes and omelettes. Auberge l'Autre Jardin is an unassuming 28-room inn with fair trade practices, a gift shop and earthy decor inspired by Asia, Africa and Latin America.

If your style is contemporary, nothing beats the dazzling TRYP Québec Hôtel Pur, which ratchets up the concept of cool. The TRYP-by-Wyndham brand embraces about 90 boutique hotels in Europe and Latin America, plus one in Manhattan and one in Canada — the Pur in Nouvo St-Roch. Less is so much more at this 230-room tower of magazine-worthy design, with its minimalist palette of charcoal furniture and chalk walls. Hôtel Pur currently has accessible low-season rates of \$110-\$169, free espresso in the lobby, valet parking and a stunning indoor pool heated to 28 C. Hôtel Pur's tapas and wine restaurant, La Table, is a striking vision of warm wood and polished glass, with long communal tables for group gastronomy.

EAT: Le Clocher Penché Bistrot, operating in a former bank building, just might be the perfect French bistro. Two passionate and talented owners, sommelier Thomas Pélissier and chef Mathieu Brisson, a graduate of Montreal's Toqué!, wow their crowd with farm-to-table fare. Brisson's updated, inventive classics include calf's liver, braised beef, saumon tartare and cassoulet, plus a dreamy dessert of creamy homemade cheese gently sweetened with fruit and maple. The winner at the weekend brunch is blood pudding in a mustard cream sauce.

St-Roch also is brimming with quick bites. Le Clocher Penché's new baby sister, La Luncheonette, serves comfort food like old-fashioned pea soup and grilled cheese sandwiches with duck, lamb or blue cheese. Jef Poissonnerie does ready-to-gulp shrimp rolls, oyster pie, lobster cakes and General Tao's salmon.

DO: You can boost your own cuisine quotient at Ateliers & Saveurs, which offers cooking, wine and cocktail lessons. The workshops on Friday will focus on trendy drinks and homestyle dishes like pork roast and pea soup. This is not your grandmother's soupe aux pois. This progressive potage has

been updated with goat cheese ravioli and crispy bacon. Next Saturday, the menu is tapas, and clients will learn how to entertain with chicken satay, quails' eggs en cocotte and duck confit. Entre nous, Ateliers & Saveurs has a branch in Old Montreal.

CULTURE: St-Roch's flourishing arts scene is its secret garden. The elegant old cinemas with their loges and crystal chandeliers have new roles. L'Impérial de Québec will present Quattro, a modern jazz night, on March 2. A French version of Hamlet will run at Le Théâtre de la Bordée, April 16-May 11. At Espace Hypérion, a Sunday children's series features Appartement à louer on March 10. It's a story about cultural tolerance by Yehezkel Braun, narrated by Braun with music by pianist Maurice Laforest and flautist Jean-Sébastien Bernier.

SHOP: The neo-Gothic landmark l'Église St-Roch is my kind of church. Priests say mass daily, of course, but the church also rents street-level space to a designer boutique. Signatures Québécoises carries about 20 labels, including the furry fashions of Harricana by Mariouche, the Bohemian eco-styles of Myco Anna, sexy delicates by Sokoloff Lingerie and Cosmétiques Lili Rouge by Élisabeth Alarie, which debuted this month.

The Festival Québec Mode runs April 29-May 5 with stylish 5 à 7s at Signatures Québécoises and through Nouvo St-Roch.

IF YOU GO:

Tourism info: 877-783-1608, quebecregion.com, quartiersaintroch.com.

TRYP Québec Hôtel Pur: 800-267-2002, hotelpur.com; 395 rue de la Couronne; Quebec City; until May 31, \$109-\$169 and June 1-Sept. 31, \$139-\$229.

Le Clocher Penché Bistro: 418-640-0597, clocherpenche.ca; 203 rue Saint-Joseph E. Lunch and Saturday-Sunday brunch, \$16-\$20, dinner, \$28-\$40. Closed Monday.

Ateliers & Saveurs: 418-380-8167, ateliersetsaveurs.com; culinary workshops, \$35-\$80; 830 rue St Joseph E.

© Copyright (c) The Montreal Gazette

Previous

Next



The old buildings and factories of rue Saint-Joseph in Nouvo Saint-Roch have been recycled into boutiques and bistros.

Photograph by: La SociÉTÈ de DÈveloppement, The Gazette

