

# STUDENTS GET GOLD STAR AT QUEBEC HOTEL SCHOOL

With four-star lodging and two restaurants, Montreal's ITHQ offers ultimate staycation



ROCHELLE LASH  
Checking In

I have seen the future of hospitality and it is inspirational. It's also delicious.

L'Institut de tourisme et d'hôtellerie du Québec (ITHQ), one of Canada's top tourism schools, runs a four-star hotel, plus two fine restaurants, four banquet rooms and a bar, all staffed by a blended family of students, professors and professionals.

ITHQ is brimming with the spirit and talent of Quebec, and if you would like to celebrate Montreal's 375th anniversary with a staycation, I can't think of a more fitting destination, especially if you have epicurean tastes. You will dine superbly and sleep in modern comfort. And you can play tourist and add a visit to a top spa or a local landmark.

THE SCHOOL

Marking its 50th year in 2018, the school and its public hospitality sectors are operated by the Quebec Ministry of Education.

The culinary workshops are so engaging that Prince William and Kate, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, made ITHQ's kitchen a royal stopover on their tour of 2011.

The school graduates about 1,300 domestic and international students a year, who will build careers throughout Quebec and around the world as sommeliers, chefs, pastry chefs, servers and hotel and tourism managers. Many ITHQ prodigies go on to intern or work at prestigious Michelin-starred establishments, Caribbean resorts and French vineyards, and the school also partners with such luxury groups as Relais & Châteaux, Fairmont and Sofitel.

It's no wonder these kids wind up in the big leagues. Apprentice chefs learn French-inspired Quebec cuisine in 16 state-of-the-art kitchens. Aspiring table servers master the art of flambé with cherries jubilee and crêpes Suzette. Fledgling sommeliers absorb bouquet and body in a high-tech sensory analysis laboratory. And pupils in Inter-

IF YOU GO ...

**Hôtel de l'ITHQ:** 800-361-5111, 514-282-5111, ithq.qc.ca; 3535 St-Denis St. **Price:** starting at \$179/\$199 for rooms, or \$279/\$299 for suites, including full breakfast, Wi-Fi, in-room coffee. Prices are higher June-Oct. Some rooms have free local calls, newspapers. Children 12 and under stay for free. Employees of Canadian and Quebec governments get discounts. Extra: indoor parking, \$19 a day; packages with Rio Tinto Alcan Planetarium, Biodôme Montréal, ScandinaVe Les Bains Vieux-Montréal, Strom spa on Nuns' Island.

**Restaurant de l'ITHQ:** Breakfast daily; lunch Mon.-Fri., à la carte or two-course menu, \$20; dinner Tues.-Sat., à la carte or five-course menu, \$55, or \$90 with wine pairings.

**Restaurant-école La Relève gourmande:** Tues.-Fri. (Sept.-May), lunch and dinner.

national Hotel Management go full immersion, all the way to making beds with precise hospital corners worthy of a gold star. Graduates can earn accreditation at three levels — trade school, CEGEP or university.

L'Institut's alumni include some of Montreal's most prominent chefs and restaurateurs, including Christine Lamarche of Toqué!, Claude Pelletier of Club Chasse et Pêche and Le Filet, Emma Cardarelli of Nora Gray, Matthieu Cloutier of Kitchen Galerie, Helena Loureiro of Portus 360 and Helena, Martin Picard of Au Pied de Cochon and Jonathan Rassi of 400 Coups.

**THE HOTEL** Guests of l'ITHQ include savvy Montrealers as well as business, government and leisure travelers who know a good thing at a good price.

The hotel is on the border of the Quartier des Spectacles, facing historic Carré St-Louis



Students cook and serve creative, exquisitely presented cuisine at the elegant Restaurant de l'ITHQ. ITHQ

near Sherbrooke Street. Forty of the 42 rooms have balconies with views of Mount Royal or Le Plateau.

The accommodations, decorated in soothing earth tones, are comfortable, contemporary and fully equipped. All four categories have work desks, Nespresso machines, mini-fridges, extra bedside lighting and flat screens, and some have hypoallergenic wood floors and bedding.

**FOOD AND DRINK** The Restaurant de l'ITHQ is the formal culinary showcase where students work (during the school year) as chefs, servers and sommeliers. Professors and professionals hover in the background as maitre d's and supervising chefs.

Everything is just so at Le Restaurant. The service plates are custom-designed by Porce-laines Bousquet, the white linen

napkins are folded with care, and a choreographed team serves dinner with a flourish of silver domes.

The cuisine is creative, inviting and exquisitely presented. The ingredients are market-fresh and Quebec-centric. Oenophiles are in paradise. The sommelier career path is popular, so the wine list is rich with private imports as well as such regional choices as Cuvée Vidal from Vigneron Léon Courville in Lac Brome.

The dinner menu changes, but might feature an amuse-bouche of tartare, appetizers like wafer-thin shrimp ravioli or marinated salmon, and flavourful mains including seared scallops, pork belly, Arctic char, roast venison, guinea fowl and vegetables with quinoa and candied lemons.

Students work independently at the Lobby Bar, so every cocktail is an adventure. If you opt for specialty drinks like l'Ungava Gin

Sour or Le Minaki Kir Bleuët, \$1 of your \$10 tab will support ITHQ scholarships.

Dining at ITHQ's second restaurant, La Relève gourmande, has dual benefits. One, patrons enjoy two-course menus of cuisine raffinée cooked with passion for \$12 to \$17. And two, the students gain valuable experience preparing impressive dishes like duck confit roll with fig compote, wild mushroom risotto, filet of pike with pecan butter or strip loin steak with shallot sauce.

**WORKSHOPS** You, too, can sharpen your skills. Amateur cooks can reserve ITHQ culinary workshops (about \$100-\$150 per person) in groups of 15 to 20 on everything from soups to sweets. Courses in wine and spirits, from Vins 101 to Bubbles or Scotch, are presented in partnership with the SAQ (about \$85-\$195 per person).

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