



Hôtel 71, a contemporary 60-room boutique hotel in Old Quebec, has a fresh and minimalist look. PHOTOS: HÔTEL 71

IN SYNC WITH HISTORY

Hôtel 71 brings contemporary touch to the venerable vibe of Old Quebec



ROCHELLE LASH

Vogue meets vintage. The modern Hôtel 71 is in seamless sync with historic Quebec City. The venerable neighbourhood around the Old Port is known for its cobblestone streets and quaint shops. It's living history. Not so at Hôtel 71. True, it operates in a solemn, neoclassical former bank building, but the rest of this boutique property is contemporary and colourful. And although it is at the heart of a culinary cornucopia of French cuisine, Hôtel 71 is home to Ristorante Il Matto, which is Italian from antipasto to tiramisu.

BEYOND BOUTIQUE

Hôtel 71 enhances the basic boutique template with valet parking and a business office, plus such new features as a serve-yourself wine bar that stocks private imports and a partnership with Aeroplan. There are mingling spaces, too. The Espresso Lounge serves complementary hot beverages and doubles as a gift shop that stocks romantic essentials like Champagne glasses, candles, fine chocolates, bathrobes and

bedding. In fact, if you are fond of anything in your guest room, including the mattress, you can buy it. One floor up, the Galerie Vincent et Moi has a distinctive cultural mandate. It showcases the works of professional artists who share a bond — they live with mental illness — so a portion of sales goes to a non-profit social service. With so much sightseeing and culture in one of the top tourism destinations in Canada, Hôtel 71 has two Clés d'Or concierges to organize tickets and tables. It is adjacent to the Musée de la Civilisation and within a block or two of the landmark Place Royale, the Funiculaire Québec, the Quebec-to-Lévis ferry across the St Lawrence River, cycling paths and the Marché du Vieux-Port, a year-round farmers' market. Many clients also board cruises along the Eastern Seaboard, and Hôtel 71 is so close to the terminal that the valets bring guests' luggage directly to the departure lounge.

THE LOOK

Hôtel 71 is fresh and minimalist without being cold. It's decorated in soothing greys and whites and warmed by nubby modern sofas, colour pops of red, walnut paneling and a double-sided fireplace powered by candles. The south-side upper floors have splendid views of the St. Lawrence, and the north side

faces the rocky cliffs that rise to Upper Town. The 60 rooms and suites have white beds, honey-coloured furniture, original pine-slatted floors and velvet curtains cascading from nearly five-metre-high ceilings. Perks include bathrobes, mini-fridges, Nespresso machines, work desks, rain showers, good bedside lighting and fine toiletries by Occitane of France. The rooms are particularly well maintained. It's politically incorrect to suggest, but maybe that's a result of a woman's touch. "We're always updating, and I believe details count as much as the big picture," said general manager Susan Wilkinson, who brings experience from Fairmont and Wyndham.

IL MATTO

The lively Ristorante Il Matto also blends old and new. Owner Rocco Cortina has updated his mother's traditional Italian recipes in a modern space decorated with family photos, from then and now. Il Matto's highlights are the privately imported wines and dynamic open kitchen. The price is right, too. A two-course lunch costs \$16-\$19 and features such dishes as crème of mushroom soup or roasted red pepper soup and mains of pasta, veal or chicken, salmon and pizza. At dinner, Il Matto serves its signature dish of pappardelle and wild mushrooms, as well as Cortina's family classics of aubergine Parmesan, minestrone, mushroom risotto, lasagna, seafood linguine and veal scaloppini, plus modern twists on salmon tartare and filet mignon.

MUSEUM TRIO

Hôtel 71 offers a package with

three must-see museums that are deeply rooted in Quebec's history. The hotel is across the street from Musée de la Civilisation, which is a perennial delight. The current exhibit, Like Cats and Dogs, runs until Sept. 4 with videos and interactive games for kids. One exceptional permanent display, for all ages, is This is Our Story— First Nations and Inuit in the 21st Century. Another exhibit, People of Quebec...Then and Now, reopened this month and chronicles various eras: the life of New France in the 1600s, British rule of the 1700s, the Patriote rebellion of 1837 and the Quiet Revolution of the 1900s. Musée de la Place Royale marks the site where Quebec was founded in the early 1600s. A 3D video focuses on explorer Samuel de Champlain, and archeological artifacts unearthed in Old Quebec tell of life back in the day. The Musée de l'Amérique francophone, in the historic former Séminaire de Québec, follows French culture in North America with glimpses of Acadia and Louisiana, as well as a close-up on Quebec. The Rediscovered Colony, Prelude to New France 1541-1543 looks at the first French colony in the Americas, 60 years before Champlain. Rochelle@rochellelash.com Twitter.com/rochellelash



Hôtel 71, which features a lively Italian restaurant, is in a former neoclassical bank building in the city's historic Old Port district.

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