

# Old Quebec hotel reopens with new green awards

1700s nunnery is now a boutique inn



ROCHELLE LASH

CHECKING IN

Hôtel du Vieux-Québec and Tournebroche restaurant are two of the most exciting things to happen at 1190 Rue Saint-Jean since the 1700s.

The building originally was a nunnery in Old Quebec and, after several incarnations over the past 300 years and a \$2-million makeover, it reopened this spring. The news at this trendy boutique hotel includes major green ventures, a high-design reception area and lounge and the launching of Tournebroche, a gourmet rotisserie.

Hôtel du Vieux-Québec has been crafted by Chris Keating and his son, Justin, who is the managing partner. They have collaborated and created a progressive, environmentally sensitive hotel venture that they call HVQ for short.

### A 'new' 300-year-old building

"Every year, we add more comforts and services," Keating said.

This year, one of the big investments is esthetic. The prestigious architecture firm Lemay Michaud redesigned the tiny reception area and stairwell, so when guests arrive, the message is: stylish, fresh and contemporary.

The living room is another appealing new space, with stone walls, recycled barn wood and a hint of industrial chic. There are books, board games, chess, an espresso machine, tea and fruit, as well as artifacts related to the hotel's history.

Upstairs, Hôtel du Vieux-Québec has 45 rooms on five floors and six family-friendly apartments in an attached building, all accessible by elevator. The walls are wood-paneled, with many of exposed brick or old stone. The furnishings are simple and comfortable, the result of a renovation a few years ago. Each room has one or two beds with 300-thread-count sheets, a flat-screen television with a DVD player,



Hôtel du Vieux-Québec recently reopened after a major renovation, but it didn't adversely affect its historic charm.

coffee and tea, a rain shower and a mini-fridge — so handy in summer, especially with children. Some rooms have espresso machines and gas fireplaces (for use from November to April), and one spacious room, the Québécoise, has a whirlpool tub.

### The greening of a hotel

The Keatings have been awarded five out of five Green Keys by the Hotel Association of Canada for their environmentally friendly accomplishments.

Hôtel du Vieux-Québec uses solar power for certain systems. The energy-efficiency experts at Groupe EcoSynergie of Quebec City installed panels that convert sunlight into electricity and reduce energy consumption. The rooftop panels also multitask as a shelter for the hotel's own beehives; as well, the Keatings nurture an urban garden on their rooftop.

HVQ's eco-operating systems include low-mercury and LED lighting, energy-saving heat production, water-efficient bathroom systems, a water dispenser to encourage guests to refill their



Justin Keating and his dad, Chris, enjoy working on their resort's bee sanctuary and rooftop urban garden.

plastic bottles, eco-friendly cleaning products, recycled paper including tissues and toilet paper by Cascades, and biodegradable bags.

The lounge's new furniture was custom-made by Quebec craftsmen using wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, and containing no added urea or formaldehyde.

In 2009, HVQ became the first hotel in Quebec to become carbon neutral, which

means that it purchases gold-standard offsets from Planetair (planetair.com) to compensate for the hotel's greenhouse gas emissions. (An offset funds the green ventures, balancing the buyer's emissions and energy use.)

### The designer rotisserie

Guy Collin and chef Stéphane Roth run the gastronomic Le Patriarche, one of Quebec's few CAA-AAA five-diamond restaurants, and

recently felt the urge to tackle "bistronomie."

They partnered with Justin Keating, and created Tournebroche at Hôtel du Vieux-Québec. The specialties are spit-roasted poultry and pork, served with gourmet sides such as chicken liver mousse and trout gravlax with grapefruit-zested cream, and craft beer from Microbrasserie de l'Île d'Orléans.

"Tournebroche is an upscale rotisserie," Roth said. "It's not fancy food, but we still call it terroir cuisine and we use local and mostly organic produce."

It's poultry with a pedigree. The organic chicken is cooked with a lemon reduction, the guinea fowl with a smoky licorice sauce. The bread, mayonnaise, ketchup and ice cream are all homemade.

You have heard it before: Save room for dessert. But I mean it. There is a supremely rich pouding chômeur with maple ice cream and sugar cream sauce, and a divine crème brûlée of the day.

### Top summer happenings

Quebec City is jumping with summer events. There's

## IF YOU GO

**Hôtel du Vieux-Québec:** 800-361-7787, 418-692-1850, hvq.com; 1190 Rue Saint-Jean, Quebec City. Pet-friendly (limited), \$25 per night.

**Price:** Approximately \$228-\$308 for two until Oct. 31 (\$128-\$198 from Nov. 1), including in-room continental breakfast basket (juice, fruit, pastries, yogurt, cheese and honey from those hard-working in-house bees), Wi-Fi, guided walking tour (summer), flat-screen cable TV and DVD movies with popcorn. Children under 17 stay for free in rooms with two queen beds.

**Extras:** Underground parking one block away (\$17.50), boardroom with audio-visual equipment. Guests get a discount at Tournebroche. Packages are available with Le Patriarche and a museum trio (Musée de la civilisation, Amérique française and Place-Royale).

**Tournebroche:** 418-692-5524, tournebroche.com; 1190 Rue Saint-Jean, Quebec City, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily. Microbrasserie de l'Île d'Orléans: microorleans.com.

**Quebec City tourism:** 877-783-1608, quebecregion.com.

the Festival d'opéra de Québec (Wednesday to Aug. 4), and the Impressionist art exhibit Morrice and Lyman in the Company of Matisse (at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec until Sept. 7). The exciting SAQ New France Festival (Aug. 6 to 10) will transform Old Quebec into New France of the 1600s and 1700s with food tastings, plays and concerts, street entertainers, parades and costumed hosts.

History comes alive at the colourful, emotional changing of the guard, a tradition at La Citadelle since 1928 (except when the glorious Royal 22nd Regiment were fighting, 1939-1945). This manoeuvre of the Van Doos runs for 35 minutes daily at 10 a.m., until Sept. 1, depending on weather.

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