

Manoir Victoria a modern classic of Quebec City



ROCHELLE LASH
Checking In

Hôtel Manoir Victoria and its restaurant Chez Boulay-Bistro Boréal have earned a place on the must-do list in a city of irresistible attractions.

Like Quebec City, Hôtel Manoir Victoria is a fusion of classic allure and contemporary comfort. It's a historic centrepiece of Quebec's Upper Town — updated to sparkly status in 2016.

The establishment has the ambience of a stately inn, with its heavy stone exterior, wood entrance doors and traditional lobby lounge. But over the years — 186 years, to be exact — it has expanded and is now a full-scale hotel with 153 rooms and three suites, an indoor saltwater pool, a fitness room, banquet spaces, Le Spa du Manoir and Chez Boulay, which has been a smash success for its rich, Nordic-based Quebec cuisine.

The hotel has kept its antique charm, but recently wrapped up a four-year, \$8-million top-to-bottom modernization that transformed the accommodations and refreshed the lobby, the meeting rooms and La Table du Manoir, where breakfast is served.

"We wanted decor that is timeless but modern," said Renée Gosselin, Hôtel Manoir Victoria's general manager. "Chez Boulay's urban, trendy look set the tone, and now we are in sync."

Bedtime story: The new look of the accommodations is classic-contemporary, with clean modern lines against a backdrop of traditional crown mouldings and linen-textured walls.

All the rooms and suites have mini-bars, iPhone chargers, pod coffee machines, rain showers, and flat-screen TVs ranging from 40 to 55 inches with pay-movie channels.

Six categories of accommodations offer various sizes and price points, with different deluxe features such as bathrobes, electric fireplaces, living rooms, and heated bathroom floors and towel racks. There are tubs in addition to glass-enclosed showers.

Creative cuisine: Chez Boulay-Bistro Boréal has created a sensation with an unusual culinary mix. It's exotic yet local, and trendy but rooted in Quebec's First Nations.



Hôtel Manoir Victoria, a historic centrepiece of Quebec City's Upper Town, has modernized its rooms and suites. All have mini-bars, phone chargers and pod coffee machines. *HÔTEL MANOIR VICTORIA*

Two passionate, accomplished chefs, Jean-Luc Boulay (of Restaurant Le Saint-Amour) and Arnaud Marchand, create Nordic-inspired menus with fine Quebec produce, including bison, venison, boar, partridge, goose, foie gras and duck, as well as seafood such as pike, scallops, lobster, snow crab and mackerel.

They stick to their mission of regional ingredients, skipping olive oil and lemon in favour of celery root and cranberry seed oil.

They make magic with foraged vegetables and herbs, including wild ginger, cattail hearts and sea asparagus; fruits like sea buckthorn, cloudberry and blue honeysuckle; and herbs including green alder, pine forest spikenard and sweet clover.

That local harvest translates into dishes such as braised beef ribs with cranberries, salmon with fir tree essence, pork belly, lentil ragoût, venison and blood pudding.

Among the specialties are sharing platters of homemade charcuterie, Quebec cheeses and seafood delicacies such as smoked herring and salmon rillettes.

Spa life: Le Spa du Manoir offers 25 per cent off second treatments, discounts Mondays through Thursdays and an Express Care menu at \$45 to \$60.

"The Boréal is the newest spa package, and it is beautifully restorative," Gosselin said. "It is a trio of services, plus Inuit tea from Délice Boréal, which uses herbs foraged in Canada's North.



Chez Boulay-Bistro Boréal at Hôtel Manoir Victoria creates Nordic-inspired menus with regional ingredients. *RENÉ DERY/HÔTEL MANOIR VICTORIA*

"The Boréal facial is done with fine Payot products from France, and the massage uses a balm from Les Soins Corporels l'Herbier in Mont-St-Grégoire, which is made of pine and balsam oils.

"The latest aspect is the Neuro-Spa anti-gravity bed that vibrates for relaxation."

Quebec culture: Art lovers are aquiver at the coming opening of the Pierre Lassonde Pavilion, the fourth building of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ), named for the museum's chairman.

The MNBAQ (866-220-2150, mnbaq.org) will orchestrate

three days of opening festivities, June 24 to 26, including an artsy open-air market, plus music and dance performances, art exhibitions, evening entertainment and cocktail-hour treats by the museum's chic, contemporary Restaurant signé Marie-Chantal Lepage.

The five inaugural exhibitions of the Lassonde pavilion will feature Inuit art, masterpieces of Jean-Paul Riopelle, contemporary Quebec art, Quebec design and large-scale installations.

Quebec City is always hopping with culture — historic and contemporary, popular and classic.

IF YOU GO

Hôtel Manoir Victoria: 800-463-6283, 418-692-1030, manoir-victoria.com; 44 Côte du Palais, Quebec City.

Price: Visits of two or more nights have 10- to 30-per cent discounts. Rooms, until May 1: \$139 to \$369 for two; suites, \$350 to \$450. (May 2 to Oct. 16: rooms, \$199 to \$429; suites, \$450 to \$550.) Third adult: \$30. Parking: \$25. Children under 18 stay for free. Breakfast for children six to 12 costs 50 per cent.

Hôtel Manoir Victoria packages are available with gastronomy at Chez Boulay-Bistro Boréal and Restaurant Le Saint-Amour, as well as Le Spa du Manoir, Musée de la Civilisation, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Village Vacances Valcartier recreation centre, Aquarium du Québec and winter sports (dogsledding, snowmobiling and downhill skiing at Stoneham, Mont-Ste-Anne or Le Massif de Charlevoix). Some honeymoon packages come with horse-drawn calèche rides.

Chez Boulay-Bistro Boréal: 418-380-8166, chezboulay.com; lunch Mon.-Fri., dinner Mon.-Sun.; brunch Sat.-Sun.

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

The delightful Musée de la civilisation (866-710-8031, mcq.org) brilliantly takes the pulse of how we live, with shows from home and abroad. For animal lovers, Like Cats and Dogs will run from June 18, 2016 to Sept. 4, 2017, focusing on the science and sociology of cat and dog behaviour.

Tours Voir Québec (866-694-2001, toursvoirquebec.com) runs sightseeing excursions of the city's major sites and hidden treasures, in English and French. The Bury Your Dead walking tour, based on Louise Penny's bestselling mystery, follows fictional Chief Inspector Armand Gamache on a murder investigation through Old Quebec.

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