



The Nordic sanctuary Strøm Spa boasts a contemporary design from the LemayMichaud firm. ADRIEN WILLIAMS

# MODERN DESIGN A COOL CONTRAST TO OLD QUEBEC

Hotel, spa and bistro offer stylish stay, Nordic sanctuary and regional produce



ROCHELLE LASH

To go or not to go? Travel is opening up, with welcome changes. The establishments featured in Hotel Intel have instituted new physical distancing and sanitation protocols.

Contemporary design is rocking the 400-year-old cobblestones of Old Quebec with the contrast of warm and cool, historic and contemporary. Here is a trio that does it best: Hôtel 71, Strøm Spa and Bistro L'Orygine. With fewer international tourists at this time, Quebec City is so accessible, and without crowds.

**Hôtel 71:** This 60-room establishment is the very definition of a boutique hotel.

Behind the elaborate stone facade of a former bank beats the heart of a hip hangout, loaded with style and benefiting from a pivotal location. The interiors mix contemporary flair with vintage architectural details like exposed pipes and original hardwood floors.

Updated in 2019, Hôtel 71's chic lobby is ideal for relaxing around the contemporary fireplace. The newly transformed Espresso Lounge invites guests to help themselves to tea or cappuccino (free), as well as (not free) privately imported wines and a new gin bar with eight brands of the potent potable — mostly from Quebec, with one from B.C.

All the rooms have minimalist furniture, soft earth tones and luxe features such as new cotton sheets, plush towels and Occitane bath products. But the penthouse suite is the wow factor, with a kitchenette and a terrace facing the famed Château Frontenac.

"We aim to fulfil all requests,

## HOTEL INTEL

### IF YOU GO

#### Hôtel 71

888-692-1171, hotel71.ca; 71 St-Pierre St., Quebec City. Aeroplan points apply on certain rates.

**Price:** Online discounts for Quebecers. Rooms, approximately \$249-\$329; suites, \$369-\$409; penthouse suite, \$1,300; including late check-out if available. Wi-Fi, bicycles, soft beverages, fitness room (reservation required), massage space. Breakfast box, \$12. Strøm Spa package starts at \$297 for two.

#### Bistro L'Orygine

418-872-4386, lorygine.com; 36 1/2 St-Pierre St., Quebec City. From 5 p.m. Wed.-Sun.

#### Strøm Spa

877-761-2772, 418-425-2772, stromspa.com; 515 Champlain Blvd., Quebec City; \$54-\$69, including bathrobes, baths/lounge, parking. Restaurant Nord, from 11 a.m. daily. Treatments are extra.

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

even though we have trimmed a few services," said Hôtel 71 general manager Susan Wilkinson. "For example, instead of a sit-down breakfast, we deliver to your room — deluxe breakfast boxes with local products, juice and Illy coffee, for \$12."

**The neighbourhood:** Hôtel 71 is at the heart of Quebec City's oldest quarter, near several landmark attractions: Place



Living large in the penthouse suite at Hôtel 71 in Quebec City. STEFAN THURAIRATNAM

Royale, where Samuel de Champlain founded the community in 1608; the quaint Funiculaire, the cable car that links Basse-Ville to Haute-Ville; and the Musée de la civilisation, a delightful, accessible romp through popular history.

For an easygoing workout with a spectacular backdrop, Hôtel 71 is one block from the marvellous Promenade Samuel de Champlain, a walking and cycling path that runs for about 13 kilometres along the shore of the St. Lawrence River. You can borrow a bike at the hotel or rent at Echo Sports (locationechosports.ca).

September is Gallery Month (lemoisdesgaleries.com), and many of Old Quebec's galleries have special hours on Saturdays, from 1 to 10 p.m.

**Strøm Spa:** Strøm Spa, which operates in Sherbrooke, Mont-St-Hilaire and Nuns' Island, has brought its beautiful brand of hydro- and thermal therapy to Quebec City.

Strøm is an outstanding Nordic sanctuary that delivers

both relaxation and increased energy through a circuit of hot and cold baths. The experience is enhanced with massages and beauty and body treatments such as the mud and eucalyptus wrap, or the wild blueberry and shea butter wrap.

The spa's restaurant, Nord, serves Scandinavian-inspired gravlax and smørrebrøds (sandwiches), plus soups, salads and desserts.

The stunning contemporary look by the renowned firm LemayMichaud has won awards from Quebec's Grands Prix du Design, l'Ordre des architectes du Québec and the Design Society, an international association.

**Bistro L'Orygine:** Fresh, pure and regional produce defines the gastronomy at L'Orygine, which was recently awarded a prestigious Four Diamond rating from CAA-AAA. Part of the outstanding La Tanière culinary group run by Philippe Veilleux, this artistic restaurant serves mostly organic ingredients, with herbs used in innovative ways, even in sweets

and cocktails.

You can start with a back-to-nature, hyper-local drink like La Platebande, made with White Keys vodka from Montreal and herbs such as Labrador tea or wild rose.

L'Orygine executive chef Sabrina Lemay was named 2019 chef of the year by the Société des chefs cuisiniers et pâtisseries du Québec. Her new locavore menu includes cod with chorizo and whelks, guinea fowl with cranberries, or duck with balsamic, as well as intriguing vegetarian dishes such as beet tortellini with ricotta and maitake mushrooms.

A five-course discovery menu (with veg options) costs \$79 per person, plus wine pairings, and Lemay has crafted new gourmet takeout boxes filled with foie gras, duck confit and salmon lacquered with maple.

Even dessert is farm-friendly. L'Orygine pastry maestro Mariska Pelletier whips up hazelnut butter ice cream or rhubarb-saffron tarts.

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## TRAVEL BRIEFS

### Hemingway house staff keeping cats safe

The strange six-toed cats of Ernest Hemingway's Florida bolthole are surviving the pandemic with a little love from local visitors. As the flow of international tourists visiting the U.S. writer's home in the Florida Keys dries up, there were fears the felines would suffer amid layoffs that saw two-thirds of the home's staff let go. But remaining workers say they are committed to keeping the doors open for domestic tourists — and to keeping the cats safe. "We plan on staying open," the site's director, Andrew Morawski told AFP. "Especially making sure that all these cats get taken care of." The cat colony at the home, which became a tourist attraction after the author's death in 1961, are descended from a cat with the genetic quirk that Hemingway got as a birthday present.

### Mexican contest looks to boost tourism

Hoteliers in Mexico are offering free vacations for the next 20 years in a pandemic-inspired contest aiming at reversing a 60 per cent drop in foreign visitors. Industry leaders in the state of Quintana Roo said the winners



Billie Holiday is one of the six-toed cats at the Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum in Key West, Fla., where the American writer lived in the 1930s with his wife Pauline. LEILA MACOR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

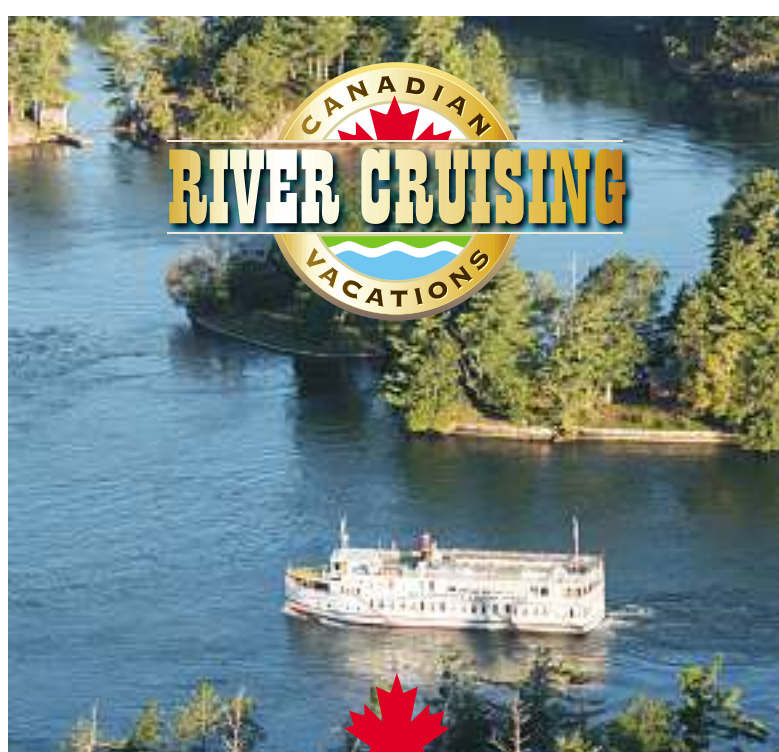
will get an all-inclusive five-day vacation every year over the next two decades. The contest and an associated online campaign — come2mexicancaribbean.com — are part of a private-sector bid to rejuvenate coronavirus-battered tourism in the region, the Mexico News Daily said. Enter through Instagram or TikTok by uploading a photo or video inspired by the Mexican Caribbean including #Come2MexicanCaribbean in the text and tagging the @Come2MexicanCaribbean account. The deadline to enter is Nov. 9.

### Bike riders go loco for old rail tunnel

It hasn't seen a locomotive for 30 years, but a disused railway

tunnel in Taiwan has never been busier. The 2.1-kilometre Caoling tunnel along the island's hilly east coast is attracting visitors whose holiday plans have been derailed by lockdown, the South China Morning Post says. Up to 2,500 cyclists clog the tunnel on weekends, prompting local authorities to stop the flow at certain times of day to prevent overcrowding. With its flat contours and cool air, the half-hour spin has proven irresistible, the paper said. Most trips start at Fulong station, a train stop about 90 minutes east of the capital, Taipei, where no less than 10 bike rental shops serve the growing clamour for domestic cycling tourism.

Andre Ramshaw



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