



## The Best Things to Do in Quebec City in the Winter

### Au 1884 Toboggan Slide

Riding the Au 1884 toboggan slide was so much fun! This wooden ice track was built in 1884 (hence the name) and has been in operation for over 140 years. The slide stretches over 800 feet long, and riders can reach speeds of up to 43 mph.

The slide sits in the shadows of the Fairmont Le Château Frontenac Hotel on the historic Dufferin Terrace. The terrace was constructed in 1879 and overlooks the beautiful St. Lawrence River.

What many visitors don't realize is that beneath the terrace lie the archaeological remains of several defensive forts and castles dating back to the 1600s.

Tickets are around \$5 CAD for one ride, but you can purchase multiple tickets for a discounted price. You can purchase online, but it isn't necessary to buy them in advance. Tickets are always available onsite at the small cafe at the bottom of the slide. Just note that the ticket booth typically closes about one hour before the slide shuts down.

The slide is generally open from early December through the end of March, operating daily from 10 AM to 5 PM, with extended hours Thursday through Saturday. It does close during bad weather. Check the [Au 1884 website](#) for updated visitor information and estimated wait time.

### Rue du Petit Champlain

Rue du Petit Champlain is the beating heart of Old Town and is one of the oldest commercial streets in North America.

This charming cobblestone street in the Lower Town is lined with boutique shops, cafés, and historic buildings that look like they belong in a storybook.

This street is absolutely magical during Christmas time and looks like a Thomas Kinkade painting. The street is actually decorated with wreaths and the glow of holiday lights all

throughout the winter months. We were surprised to see Christmas trees still up when we visited in February, but it does help combat the gloom of a long, gray winter.

We spent a few hours browsing the shops and taking photos along this incredibly picturesque street.

One of our favorite shops is La Petite Cabane à Sucre de Quebec. They sell a variety of maple products, but are known for their traditional maple taffy sticks that are made on snow.

They were a little pricey at \$4 CAD for a small stick, but they're a classic Quebec treat you have to try at least once.

The La Fudgerie is another popular sweet shop specializing in artisan fudge and handmade candies.

We enjoyed a delicious lunch at Sapisiti Bistro Bar. This Italian restaurant backs up to Rue du Petit Champlain and can be accessed by a small alley. You can also try a classic Canadian dessert at BeaverTails right next door.

Le Petit Dep is a popular Instagrammable cafe located just around the corner from Rue du Petit Champlain. They have a wide selection of buttery, flaky pastries that pair perfectly with a steaming cup of hot cocoa on a cold winter day. We loved it so much that we went here twice!

The famous "Umbrella Alley" is also located around the corner, although the narrow alley was hung with hockey sticks instead of umbrellas when we were there.

## Breakneck Steps

The Breakneck Steps, formally known as Escalier Casse-Cou, were constructed around 1680, and it is the oldest staircase in Quebec City.

This historic staircase is located on the northern end of Rue du Petit Champlain and connects the Lower Town to the Upper Town at Dufferin Terrace.

Breakneck Steps is one of the most photographed spots in Old Town. From the top of the stairs, you'll get a great birds-eye view over the postcard-perfect Rue du Petit Champlain.

We woke up early one morning to photograph the street without the crowds. It was worth braving the cold and early wake-up call to experience this popular tourist street completely empty and bathed in a beautiful morning light.

## Funiculaire du Vieux-Québec

Funiculaire du Vieux-Québec is one of Old Quebec's most recognizable attractions. The original funicular was built in 1879, with several renovations completed over the years.

Not only is the funicular itself historic, but the lower station where you purchase tickets is also significant. It is located inside the historic home of Louis Jolliet, a cartographer who helped discover the Mississippi River and was the first Canadian-born explorer from Quebec to make history.

The short ride connects Rue du Petit Champlain in the Lower Town to Dufferin Terrace above, while offering great views of the St. Lawrence River along the way.

The funicular operates daily from 9 AM to 9 PM. Tickets cost \$6 CAD, cash only. There is an ATM on-site if needed.

## Fairmont Le Château Frontenac

The Fairmont Le Château Frontenac is known as the most photographed hotel in the world, and it's easy to see why!

This castle-like landmark has dominated Quebec City's skyline since 1893 and is full of history, beauty, intrigue, and even a few ghosts. In fact, it is considered one of the most haunted hotels in Canada!

The hotel is approximately 700,000 square feet with more than 600 rooms and over 2,000 windows. There are even four active beehives on the roof producing around 170 gallons of honey per year!

The hotel has hosted royalty, celebrities, and world leaders for more than a century. During World War II, Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt held pivotal meetings here while planning the invasion of Normandy.

The château has also appeared in several films, including Alfred Hitchcock's 1953 thriller, *I Confess*, *Cinderella Man*, starring Russell Crowe, and *Taking Lives*, starring Angelina Jolie.

Notable guests over the years have included Queen Elizabeth II, Charles de Gaulle, Grace Kelly, Paul McCartney, Sting, Steven Spielberg, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Céline Dion, who even has an entire suite dedicated to her.

If you're planning a trip to Quebec City, the [Fairmont Frontenac](#) is one of the most iconic places to stay. Room rates actually aren't too bad if you visit in the off-season.

When we visited, prices were still high after the winter festival, so we stayed at [Les Lofts Notre-Dame](#) instead, and I highly recommend it. It is located just steps from Place Royale and

offers spacious, modern apartments at a more affordable price.

## Place Royal

Place Royal is the most darling town square and feels like it belongs in a scene from *Beauty and the Beast*.

This historic public square is considered the birthplace of French North America. It was here that the city's founder, Samuel de Champlain, built his home and storehouse. The plaza soon became the colony's bustling marketplace and commercial center.

Today, the square is surrounded by beautifully preserved 17th and 18th-century French colonial buildings, making it feel like you've stepped back in time.

The square is particularly festive during the holidays and boasts a giant Christmas tree.

Place Royal is anchored by Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, the oldest stone church in North America. It was built in 1688 and is still in use today.

The church is typically open daily, and visitors are welcome to step inside when services are not being held.

## Place D'Youville Ice Skating

Each winter, Place D'Youville transforms into a magical outdoor ice skating rink. This historic public square sits at the entrance of the Saint-Jean Gate, one of the historic entry points through the fortified city wall

The ice rink is also surrounded by the photogenic Palais Montcalm and the historic Théâtre Capitole, which make for a beautiful backdrop.

The rink is open to the public at no charge, and skate rentals are available on-site. It is typically open from mid-November through mid-March, from noon to 10 PM Monday-Thursday, and 10 AM to 10 PM Friday-Sunday.

After you're done skating, head to Café Boulangerie Paillard to warm up with handmade European pastries and hot chocolate.

## Canot À Glace

Quebec City is the only place in the world where you can experience the adrenaline-filled sport of ice canoeing, and it is one of the most unique winter adventures you'll ever have!

Ice canoeing is woven into Quebec's history and dates back to the 1600s when early settlers used canoes to transport people and goods across the icy St. Lawrence River.

Today, the tradition lives on through guided tours with [Canot À Glace](#). Ice canoeing combines rowing through open water and scootering across ice floes. It is both exhilarating and physically challenging, and it made us feel so alive!

When we first arrived, we got suited up in special gear to keep us dry and warm. We then had a safety briefing and demonstration before it was time to launch our canoe into the icy river.

We worked together as a team, led by our amazing guides, to maneuver our canoe across the frozen river. We alternated between rowing through the water and scootering across the shifting ice floes.

These heavy-duty canoes are specially designed to cut through the ice, but it was still quite the workout. I'm so impressed that these guides run this tour multiple times a day, every day of the week!

Halfway through the experience, we stopped for a well-deserved hot chocolate and snack break. It was such a surreal moment to be sipping hot cocoa on a floating chunk of ice in the middle of the river. Not many people will be able to experience what that feels like, and it's something we'll never forget!

We made our way back and even hitched a ride on a fast-moving ice floe. Once we returned, we relaxed and warmed up in the sauna overlooking the river. It was the perfect way to end our amazing winter adventure!

Tours last about 3 hours total, with around 1.5-2 hours spent on the river. Canot À Glace is located a short drive from Old Quebec, so I recommend taking an Uber if you don't have a car.