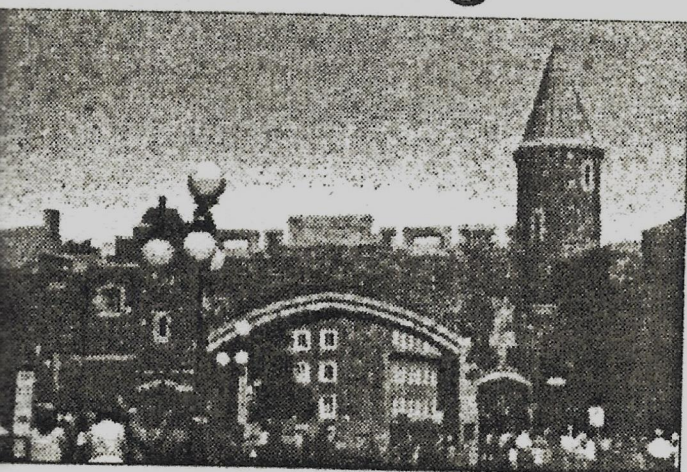


TRAVEL

Quebec City: Quelle surprise!



FORTRESS AND FESTIVITIES — A view of Quebec City's fortress (above) and into the Latin Quarter. The Montmorency Falls (top right) are 100 feet higher than Niagara.

Photos by Robert C. Rosenberg

Canada's capital of charm seems to have everything, including speakers of English

By BARBARA ANN ROSENBERG
Special to the Jewish Exponent

Summer, winter ... anytime! Quebec City can always find a reason to celebrate. And, with good reason — it has a lot to crow about. I find it one of the most exciting cities in the world. There's history galore, charm. And scenery and food and art and ... and on and on.

Take history, for example. Set on a magnifi-

cent promontory overlooking a narrow stretch of the mighty St. Lawrence River, this fortified town fairly reeks of it. It was, after all, discovered by the French explorer Jacques Cartier in 1535 and then actually founded in 1608 by Samuel Champlain as the cradle of France in the new world.

The British conquered it in 1759, and there are reminders of all that history everywhere you go, with costumed musicians, "schleppers" of old-style wagons, and lads and lassies clad in the dress of the period performing all manner of other old-style activities.

While tourists will surely enjoy such historical sites as the Place Royal, one of the oldest urban squares on the North American continent, with its narrow streets evoking four centuries of history, I find there is a great deal more to experience in the vibrant city.

The Chateau Frontenac dominates the city in grand medieval style, its turreted roofs visible from almost everywhere. Grand as it is, however, the Chateau is not actually a historic building. It is, rather, an early-20th-century, 612-room hotel, probably the grandest of the Canadian Pacific hotels. It is a natural starting place to explore the city on foot or to take a horse and buggy ride or even a bus tour.

Two major festivals

But, since I'm talking festivals, let's explore the two major ones — winter and summer.

The Winter Festival, when the city takes on a blanket of snow and elaborate ice sculptures appear all over town, is, of course, well known as a destination. The Laurentians, the oldest mountain chain on the planet, are just to the north of the city, inviting all sorts of activities appropriate to the season: skiing, snow-mobiling, ice-skating.

But it is in the summer that Quebec really shines for me. And maybe that's because of the Festival d'Ete, the International Summer Festival when more

than 600 performers from more than 20 countries converge to put on a citywide spectacle that nearly defies description.

The city erects stages all throughout the area, and stiltwalkers, musicians and jugglers perform on the sidewalks, in addition to the scheduled entertainment.

The events run the spectrum from classical to rock to jazz with "name" performers from Europe, the Caribbean, from Africa, and South and North America.

The Grande Allee

Yet, somehow, they're not rowdy, even on the Grande Allee, an exciting street with cafes and restaurants (with both indoor and outdoor facilities) lined up cheek-by-jowl, evoking the atmosphere of the Champs Elysee in its heyday.

There are, of course, shops of every description where, contrary to reports filtering back to the States in recent years, people try (and often succeed) to carry on conversations with patrons in English. There are shops for Indian art on nearly every street and boutiques selling maple products.

Okay, that's the usual tourist stuff. Then there are the shops that are offshoots of their parent companies in Paris — Rodier, for example. With the U.S. dollar at a premium, the stuff turns out to be pretty much a bargain — especially when there's a sale going on. Which happily coincides with the summer festival!

And, needless to say, the city is loaded with restaurants and bars of every description. Some of the food is strictly evocative of Paris. That is to say, great! And the chain establishments have their place as well.

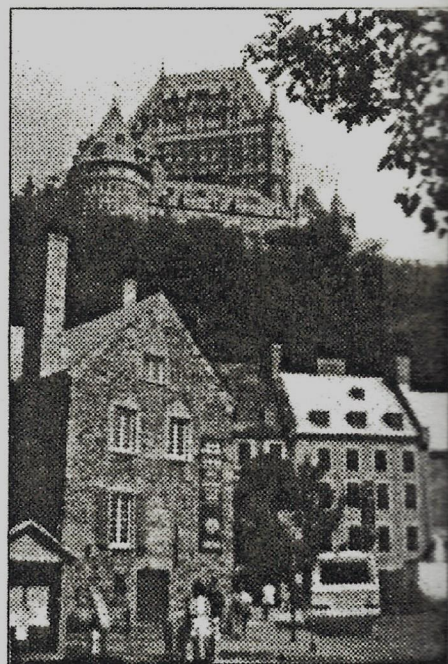
But that's not what I go to Quebec for. Instead, I pick out a little place for buttery croissants and coffee in the morning and revel in the fact that it takes me two hours by Air Alliance directly from Philadelphia to Quebec to enjoy my reverie. No jet lag!

Then, I've got to have my "chute" fix! I take a 20-minute ride to gaze in awe at the magnificent Montmorency Falls about 100 feet

higher than Niagara, in a superb park with a superb restaurant, the Manoir Montmorency, a lovely establishment that gives the lie to "never eat in a restaurant near a tourist attraction." It has smoked salmon to die — or, rather, to live for — so you can eat more of it.

The dates of the 1996 Winter Festival are Jan. 26 to Feb. 12. Next summer's festival begins July 4 and continues to July 13.

For information, contact the Greater Quebec Office of Tourism is located at One Rockefeller Plaza, 26th floor, New York, N.Y. 10020; 800-363-7777. ■



THE CHATEAU FRONTENAC, a 20th-century hotel in grand medieval style, dominates the city.

Photo by Robert C. Rosenberg