

## The serene simplicity of Quebec City's newest hotel



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(Photo: Ellen Creager/Detroit Free Press)

### City's newest hotel

Simplicity rules at the new Le Monastère des Augustines hotel.

This summer, Quebec City's newest lodging opened, located in a former monastery operated by the Augustinian order of Catholic sisters.

It opened July 21 after a \$42-million makeover.

The lodging focuses on a holistic wellness experience. It has 65 rooms, some modern and some the original nun's rooms. There's an ultra-modern lobby and meeting space, plus an intriguing museum devoted to the history of the Augustinian order in Quebec since the 1600s.

The rooms have no TV. No music. All around are signs urging you to unplug from the Internet (although the property does have free Wi-Fi.)

The buffet breakfast is to be taken in silence, which I found curiously relaxing. The restaurant also serves lunch and dinner.

My room, in the modern 4th-floor wing, had a king size bed and two end tables; all that fit in the room. It had a window seat and an old arched, double-pane window with shutters that overlooked the entryway to the hotel. The walls were bare and white. The modern bathroom had one small mirror above the sink.

The Augustinian order of nuns are nurses, so now their hotel aims to heal the frazzled people of the world. Guests also can partake of free yoga, meditation, art classes and discussion nights (in French).

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New hotel, Le Monastère des Augustines, in Quebec City used to be an Augustinian monastery. (Photo: Ellen Creager/Detroit Free Press)

One day I met a nun in the elevator. She wore her white veil and white dress and she spoke excellent English.

The hotel is beautiful, I said.

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How is the restaurant? she asked. I told her it was wonderful. She smiled, happy to hear it. The nuns here made the decision a few years ago that they had to do something, with their dwindling numbers, vast real estate and historic artifacts languishing. They didn't just want to disappear. So they created a partnership to make this unique hotel that made use of the space and protected their legacy. The hotel is run by a nonprofit but there still are 12 nuns living on the property, she said. Once upon a time there were more than 200.

This hotel is very well located, just a couple blocks from a main shopping street of Old Quebec.

But it is probably not for everyone. Some couples may find it romantic while others won't. It is not exactly for the business traveler; I used the window seat for my "desk". It's not for the restless because there's no HBO or TV. It is not for the person who requires a giant room or tons of comfort. And not for people who love to gab at breakfast. (Also, very tall people probably won't like having to stoop to get through the short doors into the traditional nun's rooms.)

I got the all-inclusive plan that included three meals a day in the hotel's phenomenal restaurant, but most people would not want that in this city that is full of interesting restaurants.

Still, Le Monastère des Augustines is unique. It speaks of Quebec City's religious roots, the sturdy double windows that protect from the cold winds of life, the modern sensibility of the Canadian architecture scene that mixes creative old and new, the bravery of a religious order that did not change for more than 300 years but finally knew they had to, and could.

It is an authentic experience not replicated elsewhere.

And that's something notable in this increasingly monochromatic world.

**For more:** *Le Monastère des Augustines is at 77, rue des Ramparts, Quebec City, 416-694-1639, For more information, see [www.augustines.ca/en/monastery](http://www.augustines.ca/en/monastery) (<http://www.augustines.ca/en/monastery>).*

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