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TRAVEL

# Check In: A divine stay at Le Monastere des Augustines in Quebec City



LE MONASTERE DES AUGUSTINES PHOTOS

**Contemporary rooms at Le Monastere des Augustines are sparse and modern.**

**By Diane Bair and Pamela Wright** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT MARCH 25, 2016

Walk into the recently opened Le Monastere des Augustines, through a connecting entry of glass and steel grid, and you'll sense immediately that you're in a unique space. What will strike you most is its tranquillity, which causes you to immediately slow your step, take a deep breath, and relax. The property, housed in the wings of an ancient cloister dating to the 17th century, is a true oasis in the heart of the city — part hotel, part museum, and part retreat.



LE MONASTERE DES AUGUSTINES

**The museum has more than 1,000 artifacts.**

Totally renovated, the historic property was once home to the Augustinian Sisters, who arrived here in 1639 to open the Hotel-Dieu de Quebec, the first hospital on the continent north of Mexico. The cloistered sisters were dedicated to healing the body and the soul, and helped lay the foundation for modern medicine. Honoring this heritage is at the very heart of Le Monastere des Augustines, which includes hotel rooms, restaurant, boutique, museum, choir and chapel, courtyards and gardens, holistic treatments and activities, and an archive and reserve housing some 40,000 artifacts drawn from the Augustinian Sisters' 12 monastery hospitals.

There are 65 rooms, 33 authentic and 32 contemporary. The austere and small authentic rooms have low ceilings and doors, a single sink, and some original furnishings. The ultra-comfortable iron beds are replicas, made by a local craftsperson and topped with artisan-made quilts. The dorm-like authentic rooms share six bathrooms. The renovation designers had more leeway with the contemporary rooms, as the spaces had already been modified through the years. They're sparse and modern, with neutral palettes, cushy

beds, and private baths. Both room styles are super comfy and white-glove clean, but none has a TV or other high-tech distractions. (Though they offer WiFi throughout the hotel, we had a tough time getting Internet access.)



LE MONASTÈRE DES AUGUSTINES

**The property is housed in the wings of an ancient cloister dating to the 17th century.**

After settling in, take a guided tour to learn more about the history of the Augustinian Sisters and their way of life while living in the monastery. The museum contains more than 1,000 artifacts from the collection, including early medical instruments, clothing, and old photographs. You'll visit the parlor where nuns were allowed to speak to visitors through a grid and the dining room where they ate their meals in silence.

The hotel offers a silent Vitality breakfast to honor the tradition. It sounded a bit too New Age-y to us at first, but turned out to be a wonderful, relaxing start to the day. The bright and airy dining room serves breakfast, lunch, and



dinner, showcasing fresh-from-the-garden, healthy cuisine. It's not just grains and sprouts: Diners have a choice of meat, fish, or a vegetarian option at lunch and dinner, along with an extensive salad buffet.

Those seeking a more inclusive retreat can take advantage of a variety of daily classes, like meditation, yoga, pilates, and more. There are also workshops and activities like knitting, painting, or scrapbooking, and wellness treatments, including massages and reflexology.

You could stay within the protective walls of Le Monastere des Augustines, much like the cloistered sisters once did, but the sights and sounds of Old Quebec are at your doorstep. Go explore, then return to this calm, contemplative oasis to renew for the next day's journey.



LE MONASTERE DES AUGUSTINES

**Yoga, meditation, and other classes are offered.**

**LE MONASTERE DES AUGUSTINES**, 77 rue des Remparts, Quebec City, 844-694-1639, [www.monastere.ca/en](http://www.monastere.ca/en). Rates start around \$150 for a double room.

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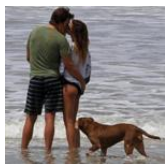
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