

# 17th-century Quebec City monastery transformed into boutique hotel

CTV Montreal

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A Quebec City monastery is welcoming a new clientele within its old stone walls.

Le Monastere des Augustines has gained international attention by being transformed into a boutique hotel.

The latest issue of National Geographic Traveller magazine named the heritage site the world's number one travel experience for a physical and mental reboot.

The Augustinian Sisters founded the Hotel Dieu Hospital at the site in the 17th century -- the first hospital in North America outside of Mexico.

"The Augustinian Sisters arrived in 1639. They were sent by King Louis XIII from France with the mission of caring for the bodies and souls of New France," said the hotel's executive director Isabelle Duchesneau.

Nearly four centuries later, the community of Augustinian Sisters is shrinking.

"As of today, we have about 100 sisters alive in Quebec in the province, and attached to the Hotel Dieu de Quebec, there's about nine of them alive today," said Duchesneau. "The sisters started to think about what they could do or what they should do with their heritage."

The solution was to open a 65-room hotel with an emphasis on wellness – rest, relaxation and healthy eating – in a secular space.

"We decided to go on with this mission in a contemporary way, in a modern way," explained Duchesneau.

New is mixed with old to preserve the building's character – including a crooked wooden strair case dating back 1757.

There's also a museum filled with artifacts and religious relics, as well as a vault downstairs with more to explore.

Guests are encouraged to disconnect from technology and reconnect with themselves.

There are modern rooms, but those who want the true convent experience opt for the more authentic rooms, much like the ones the nuns slept in – complete with original low door frames and a single bed.

There are also plenty of communal spaces for quiet reflection.

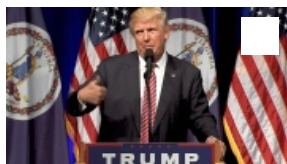
While this may be a hotel for paying guests, it's run by a non-profit organization.

"All our surplus funds are just reinvested in our social mission and cultural mission," said Duchesneau.

It took three years to renovate the monastery and convert it into the wellness hotel it is today.

The renovation, which finished last year, cost \$40 million, split between the federal and provincial governments, the city of Quebec and the Augustinian Sisters themselves.

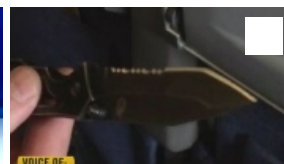
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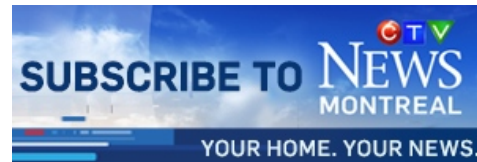
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