

French Immersion à la Canadienne

Kate Sommers-Dawes explores Québec's destinations for French language learners

The École de langue française et de culture québécoise of the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi



Located in Canada's eastern region and home to some of the country's most cosmopolitan cities and pristine wilderness expanses, Québec attracts urbanites and outdoor adventurers alike. Thanks to its francophone history dating back to the 16th century, the province endures as a stronghold of French language and culture.

French colonization of Québec began in 1534 with the arrival of explorer Jacques Cartier, yet the site of the province's future capital city remained uninhabited by immigrants until three quarters of a century later. Navigator Samuel de Champlain, known as "The Father of New France," then established the cliff top fort that would later become known as Québec City.

Distinct in its sweeping views of the St. Lawrence River and remaining the only walled North American city outside of Mexico, Québec City is rife with Old World history: 17th century dwellings line cobblestone streets in this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The historic city's narrow, winding streets, the European cachet of its Latin Quarter, and its spectacular surroundings combine with the warmth and hospitality of its people to make it one of the most picturesque tourist destinations in North America. Renowned for its museums, universities, and cultural events, Québec City also affords easy access to the outdoors with its parks and the nearby Laurentian Mountains.

Montréal, Québec's largest city, resides further inland on the Île de Montréal at the confluence of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers. This second largest French-speaking city in the world derives its name from Mont Royal, a small mountain of volcanic origin that overlooks the city from 233 meters above sea level.

Mont Royal lures visitors with its eponymous chalet and dramatic vistas of the rivers and city below. Montréal's renowned 1829 cathedral,

Notre-Dame-de-Montréal, is another noteworthy sight whose twelve-ton bell is North America's largest. Cultural and outdoor activities include snowshoeing, camping, rafting, ice fishing, the Montréal International Jazz Festival, hiking in the Laurentians, and a plethora of museums to visit.

While roughly 80 percent of Québécois claim French as their native language, French students should note the use of québécois (French words local to Québec), and pronunciations unique to the province. Such distinctions from European French may require minor linguistic adjustments of Québec's visitors.

From French colonization through the British conquest to the present, Québec has maintained its roots in French culture, exudes European charm, and thrives as an ideal environment for the French language traveler.

The École de langue française et de culture québécoise of the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (UQAC) was founded in 1975 in order to offer students quality instruction as well as an in-depth cultural experience through numerous activities while living with host families. Chicoutimi is a small friendly city about 150 miles north of Québec City that was founded in 1842 on the site of a fur trading post where the Chicoutimi and Saguenay rivers meet, the placename is derived from Shkoutimeou, meaning "the end of the deep water" in the Montagnais dialect.

Over the last 30 years, more than 17,000 students from all around the world and of all language levels have come to the school, which offers short, medium and long-term immersion programs throughout the year. Students receive university credits,