

# COURIER

## CONNECTING IN QUÉBEC

Québec's National Shrines are part of the province's allure for faith travelers

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Ermitage Sainte-Antoine, one of Québec's National Shrines



# FAITH IN QUÉBEC: 'THE PERFECT DESTINATION'

BY KAY SAFFARI  
COORDINATOR, FAITH TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

QUÉBEC, ONE OF 13 Canadian provinces and territories, offers a virtual treasure trove of options for the religious traveler, from its collection of famous shrines to the breathtaking beauty of its pristine natural landscapes that encourage tranquility and meditation. Québec also offers a taste of Europe on this side of the pond, thanks to its French-speaking population, its food, history, culture and art. When you plan a trip to Québec, you get it all!

Valerie Massalaz of Voyages Inter-Missions describes Québec as the perfect destination for faith travelers. "For the religious traveler, Québec is where the Christian faith took root in North America, and it offers a rich Catholic heritage," explains Massalaz. "When the French settlers arrived here, they came with priests, nuns and missionaries who spread their Catholic faith via the great waterways and rivers of the region."

In 2014 Québec celebrated the 350th anniversary of the first Catholic parish in North America's first diocese. The Québec diocese was once the largest in the world, extending down the Mississippi River all the way to New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico. To commemorate this anniversary and to recognize the origin of the Catholic Church



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in North America, Pope Francis opened a Holy Door at the Notre-Dame de Québec Basilica-Cathedral, one of only seven Holy Doors in the world and the only one in North America.

Notre-Dame de Québec is one of five famous shrines in Québec province visited by thousands of pilgrims annually. These shrines offer a glimpse into the history of the Catholic faith in Canada while also providing the faith traveler with the opportunity to observe and participate in religious services at any of these locations. Two of the shrines offer more than your typical church experience, with Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal offering stunning views of Montréal and Ermitage Sainte-Antoine located remotely in the midst of pristine natural surroundings.

## POPULAR TOURS AND NEW OFFERINGS FOR 2018

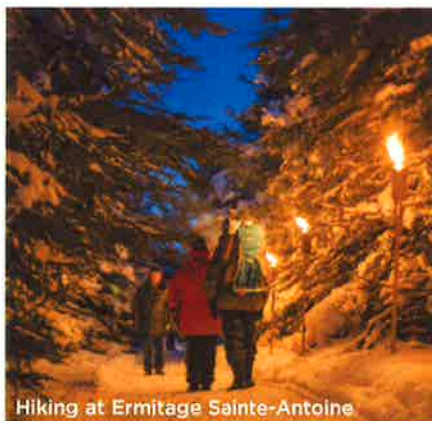
Massalaz explains that Voyages Inter-Missions' custom tours are always

popular, but the most requested of their regularly offered tours is the nine-day journey that covers all the major points of interest in the Québec province, including Ermitage Sainte-Antoine. This shrine is about 250 miles north of Québec City and requires staying at least two nights.

Says Massalaz, "This is the ideal place to connect with the sacredness of nature to understand the true meaning of Pope Francis' call to action regarding the environment."

At the shrine, you can hike in the pristine environs, take part in workshops about the local fauna and flora, and revitalize yourself in harmony with nature.

In the summer of 2018, Ermitage Sainte-Antoine will begin offering a multimedia show that will reflect spirituality, Franciscan values and the natural beauty and history of the site. According to the shrine's rector, Father France Salesse, this innovative show will combine sacredness and the environment in order to help viewers and pilgrims reach God via nature and experience beauty in a new form.



ERMITAGE SAINT-ANTOINE

Hiking at Ermitage Sainte-Antoine



CC: FLICKR/JOHN COCK BIL/2HE8KO



CC: FLICKR/JOHN KARWOWSKI BIL/2HE8KO



JEAN-FRANÇOIS FRENEL/LE

Notre-Dame de Québec Basilica-Cathedral

**MORE THAN A RELIGIOUS DESTINATION**

Do you want to visit a French-speaking city with a European feel? No need to board an overseas flight to France when you can take a quick trip to Montréal or Québec City and enjoy the eclectic architecture, boutiques and variety of food offerings that make these cities unique. Travel to Québec is especially convenient for visitors from the U.S. "Montréal is only a six-hour drive from New York City, or a two-hour flight from Chicago. By visiting us in Québec, you

get all the advantages of the European culture without the long overseas flight or exhausting jetlag," says Massalaz. "We are also a very affordable destination!"

In addition, she points to other Québec offerings:

**History and art** You can travel back to the 17th century and walk the cobbled streets of Old Montréal, admire works of art, see the stained glass of the Gothic Revival architecture and visit the Notre Dame Basilica, which tells the story of the founders of the city. Another

must-see is Québec City, founded in 1608 and the only walled city in North America north of Mexico. It is a UNESCO World Heritage site that surrounds you with old-world charm as you stroll through the romantic Petit Champlain district, a quaint neighborhood filled with unique boutiques and bistros.

For a unique art experience, visit the Albert Gilles Copper Art Studio and Museum, a family-owned business located just 15 minutes from Québec City. Based on *repoussé*, the art of metal embossing, this studio and museum

preserve the history of the founder and patriarch of the family, Albert Gilles.

Born in Paris in 1895, Gilles learned copper embossing from his aunt and brought his skills to the U.S. in the 1930s. He first created works of art for automotive executives in Detroit and for the rich and famous in California. When Pope Pius XII commissioned Gilles to create an ornate chalice of gold and silver to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Montréal, Gilles immigrated to Canada and turned his talent toward religious subjects. One of his most famous works is the main door of the Shrine of Sainte-Anne de Beaupré, an intricately embossed all-copper door that depicts Biblical scenes.

"We welcome 80,000-100,000 visitors of many faiths each year from all over the world," explains Palmyre Gilles of Copper Art Studio and Museum.

"Many faith travelers are inspired by Christorama, the museum exhibit of my father's 50 hand-embossed copper panels depicting the life of Christ, I have seen some even moved to tears."

Visitors can also see Albert Gilles' work in area churches. "Many tour groups visit our studio and museum before continuing on to the Basilica of Sainte-Anne de Beaupré just 10 minutes away. My father designed the massive and intricately decorated copper door of this basilica as well as some interior accent pieces."

When asked what visitors like the most about visiting her family's studio and museum, Gilles replied, "Maybe what they most enjoy ... and admire, is to see our family carrying on 91 years of tradition, from father to daughter to granddaughter."

**Food** Québec City offers more restaurants per capita than any other city in North America. It has its own culinary identity that combines formal French cuisine with rich, meat-heavy Québec staples. You can try local delicacies such as smoked meat or *tarte au sucre* (sugar pie) made with Québec's famous maple syrup. At Saint-Benoit Abbey in the

## SHRINES OF QUÉBEC

Québec's National Shrines was founded in 2009 to promote awareness and tourism of the five Catholic shrines located in the Canadian province. Visited by more than four million pilgrims and tourists each year, the following sites offer a glimpse into the history of the Christian faith in Canada and North America.



MICHEL CANTY

### Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal

This shrine, founded in 1904, is the largest in the world dedicated to Saint Joseph. Visitors are treated to beautiful music, exhibits of more than 200 nativity scenes from 100 different countries, and unmatched views of Montréal from the shrine's mountainside location.

### Our Lady of the Cape

This shrine is located in the Mauricie region on the shores of the Saint Lawrence River and is dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Welcoming more than a half million pilgrims every year, the site includes a chapel built in 1714 and a modern basilica, completed in 1964, with beautiful stained glass windows.

### Notre-Dame de Québec Basilica-Cathedral

A UNESCO World Heritage site, Notre-Dame de Québec is located in Old Québec City and was founded in 1647. The first cathedral and Catholic place of worship founded north of Mexico, it was instrumental in the development of Québec, Canada and North America over the years and

stands as evidence of the perseverance and faith of the early pioneers and pilgrims who settled in Canada.

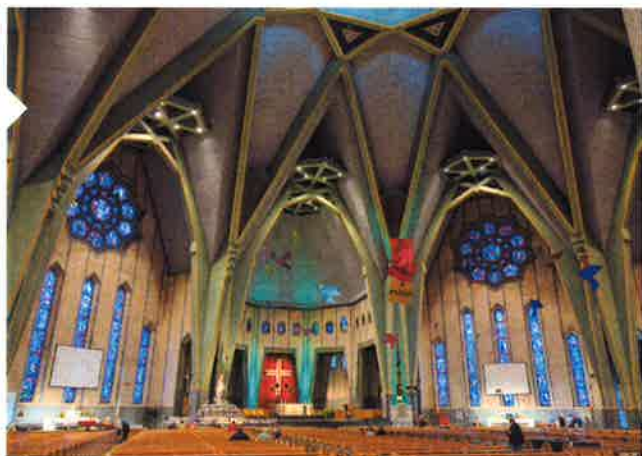
### Shrine of Sainte-Anne de Beaupré

Founded in 1658, this shrine, the second-oldest pilgrimage site in North America, is dedicated to Saint Anne, the grandmother of Jesus. With more than 350 years of history, this cathedral welcomes almost 1 million visitors annually from all over the world, regardless of race or religion. It is located 20 minutes outside of Québec City.

### Ermitage Sainte-Antoine de Lac-Bouchette

This shrine was founded in 1907 and is located 250 miles north of Québec City in the midst of a breathtaking landscape of evergreens and rolling hills. Visitors can take a guided tour, visit the museum, hike parts of the 130-mile Kapatakan Trail or simply enjoy the tranquility of nature surrounding this shrine.

For more information about the Shrines of Québec, contact Francois Jean Viel at [francois@vielmarketing.com](mailto:francois@vielmarketing.com) or visit [sanctuairequebec.com](http://sanctuairequebec.com).



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Albert Gilles Copper Art Studio and Museum



Copper etching

idyllic town of Saint-Benoit-Du-Lac, you can observe the monks producing more than a dozen varieties of fresh cheese.

**Nature** Québec has 24 national parks, which include forests, mountains, lakes and fjords, caribou, moose, black bear and whales. Says Massalaz, "The Québec province has magnificent landscapes where you can experience the greatness and beauty of nature."

**FIRST-TIME VISITOR? SEE WHAT A TOUR EXPERT SUGGESTS.**

As an introduction to the Québec province, Massalaz suggests a six-day tour including two nights in Montréal, one night in Trois-Rivières and the last two nights in Québec City. This itinerary will allow you to follow the path of the founders of the Catholic Church in North America while experiencing the history, art and

culture of the area. As an add-on, you can arrive via Toronto, which would allow you to also experience Niagara Falls and the 1000 Island area before heading to Québec.

To learn more, contact Massalaz at [valerie@voyagesintermissions.com](mailto:valerie@voyagesintermissions.com) or visit [voyagesintermissions.com](http://voyagesintermissions.com). And reach out to Gilles at [palmyre@cuivres-albertgilles.com](mailto:palmyre@cuivres-albertgilles.com) or go to [albertgilles.com](http://albertgilles.com).

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