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2009 ANNUAL GUIDE TO HOST AGENCIES, CO-OPS AND CONSORTIA

It's Time to Discover... QUEBEC!

By Jerry Soverinsky



It's the client request that seems nearly impossible to fulfill. "I want culture—you know, big city life—but beautiful countryside, too. . ." they begin. You nod, waiting for more.

"I love Europe—the food, the pace, the lifestyle—but can't afford to go overseas this year. . ." they continue, looking you square in the eyes, as if to test your resolve.

"And I want to stay close to home, but want an experience that's completely foreign—yet also familiar," they say, a contradiction that they lob tauntingly, waiting for you to react.

You'd have better luck trying to convince airlines to raise their commission rates, you think.

But there's actually a solution: Québec. Sharing many of the characteristics of the world's most appealing destinations, all falling within one easily accessible region, Québec, Canada offers the perfect mix of big-city culture and Old World charm.

Located in Northeast Canada within a territory nearly four times larger than California, Québec, one of Canada's ten provinces, is bursting with strikingly cosmopolitan city centers, dramatic, unspoiled scenery, and four-seasons of non-stop, outdoor adventure. Initially a French colony that was later ceded to England, Québec is one of Canada's founding provinces.

MONTRÉAL: As the world's second-largest French-speaking city, Montréal is a vibrant, international city that seamlessly preserves its refined, international heritage.

Located between the St. Lawrence River and city center, Old Montréal and the Old Port showcase many of the physical highlights that trace their history to the city's founding in 1642. Notre Dame Basilica is a masterpiece of Gothic revival architecture, and Marche Bonsecours showcases a rich assortment of the works of Québec artists and designers.

Shopping is world-class in Montréal, with above- and below-ground options that appeal to every taste and budget. The city's main shopping street, Sainte Catherine, is the longest commercial artery in North America. And when weather is inclement (and even when it's accommodating), there are 20 miles of pedestrian passageways underground that house thousands of shops, boutiques, and department stores. Upscale boutiques and restaurants can be found along and around Saint Denis Street, with bountiful outdoor cafes that are teeming with visitors spring through fall.

The city houses world-class cultural centers and facilities, including a Science Center, Museum of Fine Arts, Contemporary Art Museum, Canadian Center for Architecture, Stewart Museum, Botanical Garden, and Olympic Park (site of Montréal's 1976 Olympic Games). And make sure that they reserve time to ride in a horse-drawn carriage, the perfect way to admire Old Montréal's 18th-century architecture. Outdoor enthusiasts will want to hike or bike or drive through the Laurentian Mountains just one hour from Montréal.

QUÉBEC CITY: A short train ride away from Montréal lies 400-year old Québec City, capital of the province, and a city

seemingly lost in time. Cobblestone streets form an intricate web that nestles European-style shops, bistros and cafés that will transport you seemingly far beyond the North American border. The city's oldest neighborhoods, Petit Champlain, Place-Royale, and the Old Port, integrate romantic charm with historic significance, accommodating a year-round progression of festivals and exhibitions. For a limited period each year (January-March) and less than a 30-minute drive from Québec City, the Ice Hotel, an ice-snow structure is unveiled.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Both Montréal and Québec City are teeming with first-class lodging choices, each with its own character and style, ensuring a range of options that collectively satisfy any business or leisure clients' tastes.

Montréal's **Hotel Nelligan** blends harmoniously into its Old Montréal neighborhood, its unobtrusive façade belying its internal elegance and European charm. It's a luxury choice for the most discerning traveler, and its French restaurant also serves up admirable entrees. Call **514-788-2040**; www.hotelnelligan.com

Hotel Le Crystal conveniently located in Montréal's business district, provides easy access to the city's best shopping and dining venues. It offers luxurious, well-appointed rooms, one of the best hotel fitness centers this journalist has seen, and an attentive staff well-versed in the service expectations of experienced business and leisure travelers. Call **514-861-5550**; www.hotelcrystal.com

Hotel Champlain provides comfort and personal attention in a neighborhood location that provides walking distance access to all of Québec City's major sites. Onsite parking, complimentary breakfast and 24/7 espresso, are welcomed touches. Call **418-694-0106**; www.champlainhotel.com

Hotel de Glace serves as an arctic hotel for the most adventurous travelers. Visit www.icehotel-canada.com

Themed Travel

Québec offers a long list of activities that enable you to easily plan theme or activity-based itineraries including golf with more than 400 courses. The province's Route Verte leads cyclists along nearly 2,000 miles of bike paths through cities and countryside.

In September, the Laurentian and Appalachian mountains exhibit striking hues that provide the perfect backdrop for countryside driving tours.

Spas and Wellness: World-class spas and resorts are concentrated throughout the province and boast fine dining, upscale lodging, and facilities that pamper and indulge.

Whatever your passions, Québec overflows with soft-spoken decadence and graceful hospitality that will exceed the expectations of the most discriminating clients.

Contact **Tourisme Québec, 877-BONJOUR**; or visit www.bonjourquebec.com; www.quebecregion.com