

QUEBEC CITY TOURISM CONTENT NOT ONLY WITH POPE'S VISIT



All in all, the year that is about to end is a good one for Quebec City tourism. "Quebecers have not lost the desire to visit their beautiful capital. Among Canadians, there is demand more than ever," said the director of Destination Quebec City, Robert Mercure.

He presented the detailed budget of his organization - formerly the Quebec City Tourism Office - to the elected officials at the City Hall.

And even if the city is not yet "out of the woods" with the recovery, enthusiasm was at the rendezvous, **since Quebec City has approached, in recent months, a flow of tourists close to pre-pandemic levels.**

In the summer and fall, it actually returned to about 90 percent of the volume of tourists that had visited in 2019. "We didn't think we'd get to 75%," informs Mr. Mercure. Proud of such encouraging signals, he still regrets that the shortage of labor "holds back" somewhat the volume, especially in hotels and restaurants.

Despite this, among the "nice surprises" of the past year, the director of Destination Québec notes the influx of Canadian tourists. "It exceeded our expectations," he said.

The signal is the same among Quebecers. Despite the apprehension that they are going abroad "faster" than visitors from elsewhere are coming back to the capital, intra-Quebec tourism has proven to be "stronger than ever", with 63% of total traffic.

"There is a buzz for our region and for Quebec City tourism," says Mr. Mercure, who attributes these successes in part to a certain "fear" of big trips that persists among the travelers.

As proof, the further away we go, the less the markets have shown a marked presence in Quebec City. Asia remains "weaker" than it has been in the past. The North-Eastern United States shows the lowest rate. If we compare 2022 with 2019, the rate for this category was only 73%. The next promotional campaigns to come will therefore be aimed at the Quebec neighbors to the south.

Even the visit of Pope Francis in July did not necessarily help to attract them. On the contrary, the large-scale event even put off non-religious clients, for fear of overcrowding in the city. "On the other hand, Quebec City will come out a winner, thanks to the extraordinary "visibility" it has received internationally," says Mercure. He added that special attention will be paid to religious tourism, which represents 600,000 to 700,000 visitors per year.

Moreover, the management of Destination Québec cité says it is "very much in line" with Mayor Bruno Marchand's desire to avoid overtourism.

"When there are too many people, it's a lose-lose situation for everyone. Tourists are frustrated, residents are certainly not in a good mood and even shopkeepers get comments. We don't want that," confirmed Mr. Mercure.

The "challenge of managing traffic" remains at the heart of the concerns in order to spread out the tourism season in time and space, outside of Old Quebec. Mr. Mercure insisted on the importance of the cruise market while admitting that it is important to direct tourists to different places in Quebec City to avoid them being concentrated in the same places. He also said that he was working to "better balance the (cruise) seasons to make it less cyclical.

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