



Drive to
**SAINTE-ANNE
CANYON**

BY RACHEL DE LAZZER

*Quebec's hidden
treasure is 900
million years in
the making*

Reaching Quebec's Sainte-Anne Canyon is like coming upon a tucked-away secret of nature. The dense woods reveal a gaping chasm lined by rocky, tree-lined cliffs. A plunging 271-foot waterfall, rushing through the Canadian Shield for 900 million years, splits the cliff down the centre.

More than 100,000 visitors a year, from around the world, have



visited the site.

Located about 40 kilometres east of Quebec City in the municipality of St. Joachim, the canyon is a wealth of natural splendour where the tourist regions of the Beauce Coast and Charlevoix meet.

Visitors get several impressive views of the canyon, from different heights above the water, as they travel by foot along the one

kilometre path that follows both cliffs of the canyon. A shuttle bus from the main lodge to Mestachibo Bridge takes you to where the walking tour begins at the head of the falls. Built in 1974, Mestachibo Bridge is 200 feet long and 20 feet high.

Visitors see the Rocky Flats composed of granite that is textured and polished from water swells in the spring. Here, the falls can be seen in their entire length. The Flats are perfect for picnics or just a place to relax and soak up the sun.

At the lookout, you'll probably see a rainbow. It's created by the sun shining on the waterdrops splashed from the rising river vapours.

When in Quebec

On your trip to Quebec consider staying at Château Laurier, Château Bellevue and Manoir Lafayette. They are CAA diamond-rated accommodations. Visit www.oldquebec.com for more information.

Visitors get several views of the canyon from different heights.

McNicol Bridge, built in 1979, is the second bridge on the tour. It is suspended 180 feet above the rushing water. This bridge gives visitors a dramatic view of the falls and the depth of the canyon beneath them. Here, the difference in the rock formations is visible, from metamorphic to sedimentary rock that composes the towering walls of the valley where the river flows through.

The third and most recently built bridge is the Laurent Bridge, enabling visitors to gaze up from the heart of the gorge at the height of wall surrounding them. It was built about six years ago.

Giant's Kettle Lookout is across from the canyon's largest kettle which is a hole made by water, debris, sand and gravel that swirls and, over time, pierces the rock and buffs it away. The largest kettle is 70 feet across. According to legend, on full-moon nights, the giants return to brew their soup in the kettle stirring it with tall trees.

The site has certainly impressed many people, from the 1800s to today. Cornelius Kreighoff, a famous painter, did a rendering of the canyon in 1855. It is displayed at the Musée du Québec exposition on site. American philosopher, Henry David Thoreau, visited the canyon and the Beauce Coast in the 1850s as well. In 1999, the site was selected for scenes in a John Travolta movie called "Battlefield Earth."

The tourism industry recognized Sainte-Anne Canyon with a "durable and responsible tourism" award for the McNicol family's development of the natural site. The canyon is a CAA/AAA star attraction in the Quebec area for 2001. ■

Directions

From Quebec City, follow signs to reach Sainte-Anne-de-Beauce along Road 138. Once at Sainte-Anne, remain on Road 138 east towards Baie-Saint-Paul. The canyon is located six kilometres past the Basilica. It will be open until the end of October from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$7 for 13-year-olds and up. A cafeteria, roofed terrace and picnic area are provided for visitors as well as wheel chairs and a special shuttle service that allows access to the north walkway and two bridges. Call 418-827-4057 or visit www.canyonste-anne.qc.ca.