

Cross the border

PLANNING a holiday vacation? Think Quebec City. Think Montreal. Unique and vibrant, they seem to come into their own this time of year. Starting even before the holidays. With the first snowflake, in fact.

Quebec, captivating with its Gallic ambience, is a split-level metropolis that's pure Europe.

Perched atop a 350-foot cliff is the walled Upper Town with its many historic buildings, including the Citadel - a fortress of brilliant design, muscums, shops, atmospheric eateries and hotels. An encircling art nouveau boardwalk provides transcendental panoramas of the St. Lawrence River.

Lawrence River. Below, at river level, Lower Town's cobbled streets - a picturesque melange of restorations, cafes and boutiques - radiate from Place Royale, where Champlain founded the city.

HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES take off in December with a two-week crafts show and sale featuring the works of 200 artists. Then come glittering festivities that include Christmas church services, concerts and celebratory dinners in restaurants and hotels. Between the sightseeing, side trips and winter sports, there's plenty of action for all ages. During January (through April), Quebec's the scene of great winter competition and games — hockey, curling, skiing, skating and more. The really big show, the famous Quebec Winter Carnival, takes place in February.

For the carnival's 10 memorable days, the city fairly explodes with exhilarating recreational, cultural and sporting events, indoors and out.

FOR AMERICAN visitors, a bonus is the favorable exchange for American dollars and the relatively lower cost of things in Canada. Among hotels, Chateau Frontenne

Among hotels, Chateau Frontenne is best known, but its heretofore exalted position is being challenged by newcomers. The only one officially rated in the same category, however, is the contemporary Hilton International Quebec, across from the walled Upper Town. Here hospitality, comfort and con-

Here hospitality, comfort and convenience reign supreme, especially in the plush accommodations on the "executive" floors. Hotel amenities include a health club and pool.

Executive chef Jean Soulard's cuisine, savored amid the provincial elegance of Le Croquembroche, the hotel's formal dining room, is a very special experience. The food is sophisticated, original and totally delectable, whether it be salmon, lobster, holiday turkey, flambeed pep-

