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FRENCH QUARTER ITINERARY

St. Boniface Cathedral-Basilica and cemetery, photo courtesy Tara Kenny

HALF DAY

Discover the heart of Manitoba's Métis culture—art, music and food—in Winnipeg's French Quarter. St. Boniface, located just east of downtown over the Provencher Bridge, is the birthplace of Manitoba and final resting place of Louis Riel, the founder of the province, who was later accused of treason and hanged as punishment.

Start your immersion in Winnipeg's French culture with a brisk morning walk along the Red River on Tache Avenue. But first pick up an espresso or a latte to go from **Café Postal**, a postage-stamp sized coffee purveyor in the heart of downtown St. Boniface.

Walk south on Tache Avenue along the riverside to the **St. Boniface Cathedral-Basilica and cemetery**. Architecture and history buffs will revel in the grand stone cathedral and grounds. The original 1906 cathedral burned to the ground in the late 60s. A new cathedral and basilica rose from the ashes but the original stone facade still stands today.

After your morning stroll, breakfast awaits at **Red Top Diner**, a circa-1960 greasy spoon that serves big plates of homestyle food with no fear of the deep fryer. Order an epic omelette loaded with gooey cheese and heaps of hash browns. Mingle with the locals and practice your French, which is spoken throughout the community in local shops and restaurants.

After breakfast, work off your meal with a stroll or drive along the Red River on Lyndale Drive. Technically on the border of St. Boniface, this picturesque river walk and residential neighbourhood delivers great views and quiet moments. In the heart of winter, take one of the paths to the frozen river, lace up some skates or just walk along the ice trails. Get cozy in the warming huts that dot the river walk ice trail. These temporary structures are designed by local and international architecture firms and run to down to **The Forks** and then along the Assiniboine River.

FULL DAY

Head to **Promenade Café** and Wine for traditional French eats like coq au vin and beef bourguignon or lighten up with a warm pear, prosciutto and brie croissant. This popular eatery serves clever and comforting French and Manitoba fusion food. For more casual fare, head next door to **Café 22** (a.k.a. Pizza Hotline) for a whole wheat thin crust pizza with grilled chicken, feta, bacon, mozzarella and pineapple. This old- and new-school pizzeria serves all the classic pies alongside modern hybrids.

After lunch, stroll along Provencher and slip into the local shops and boutiques along the avenue. Inside **Bijou**, pick out a statement necklace or bangle, made with precious or semi-precious gems by the in-house jeweller and designer.

FULL DAY 2

Fill your belly with classic breakfast fare inside **Seine River Café**, a breakfast, lunch and dinner diner which is a favourite among locals. For big appetites, tuck into a breakfast skillet, a melange of scrambled eggs, bacon, ham, sausage, tomatoes, onions and green peppers loaded on top a bed of hash browns and capped with melted cheese. Breakfast is also served at **Chez Cora**. Devour one of the many signature waffles on the menu, piled high with fresh fruit and crowned with whipped cream. **Chez Cora** is located inside the Centre culturel franco-manitobain, a multi-use facility and art gallery.

Check out the latest exhibition before heading across the street to explore the contemporary sculpture garden on the grounds of **La Maison** des artistes visuels francophones. The sculpture garden is open year round and is adjacent to **St. Boniface City Hall**, which has been transformed into La Maison des artistes. Today, the centre houses contemporary art by francophone artists.

Pick up some pop culture inside the gift shop at **Festival du Voyageur** headquarters. This annual festival celebrates to "joie di vivre" of Manitoba Métis culture each February in Winnipeg. The gift shop is open year round. Pick up a "Keeping it Riel" T-shirt, a voyageur sash or buckskin moccasins for posterity. Join in the festivities during Western Canada's largest winter celebration from February

At **CKW**, pick up an on-trend clutch, messenger bag, tote or handbag. If you're in the market for some fancy and fabulous undergarments head to **Bra Bar and Panterie**. Satin and lace is the specialty inside this Des Meurons Street boutique.

Remember your French Quarter adventure though the creativity of a Manitoba artist. Find original works of art (paintings, prints, photographs, sculpture and more) inside **Wayne Arthur Gallery**.

Finish your day with dinner at **Chez Sophie Bistro**, a Parisian-style bistro. Eat like the French and savour rich cheeses and the dense and divine sauces peppering the menu of classic and modern cuisine. Practice your conversational French with the fluent staff.

15-24, 2013, where you can take in entertainment, sample authentic eats, experience winter games and view gorgeous winter snow sculptures.

Next, delve into Manitoba's colonial history inside **Le Musée de St. Boniface**, the former home of the Grey Nuns, who arrived in the Red River Colony in 1844. This three-storey white board building is a treasure trove loaded with artifacts recalling the history of francophones and the Métis in Manitoba. The trials and tribulations of the birth of the province and the contribution of Métis hero Louis Riel are also documented inside.

Lunch calls at **Le Garage**, a casual eatery and live music venue serving a mash-up of global cuisine, including aloo curry, jambalaya and straight-up steak and fries, among salads, soups and mussels. Settle into a leisurely lunch with friends and family.

Make your final stop at **Fort Gibraltar**, a replica of a circa-1810 North West Company fur-trading post. Set on the banks of the Red River, this fort hosts many weddings and events throughout the year and is open for tours throughout summer. The site is also home to Festival du Voyageur.

Savour a late dinner at **In Ferno's Bistro** or **Resto Gare**. Both dining rooms strike a casually elegant mood and serve modern French cuisine with regional twists.