

Weather and Winter

Four Seasons

In Québec, weather varies significantly over the year. We have four seasons, which are quite unique: spring, summer, fall and winter.

Spring (March, April, May)



The weather becomes warmer. Gradually, the snow melts. Lakes and rivers are no longer covered in ice. It is « sugar shack time »: the maple trees' sap flows and is boiled to produce maple syrup.

Summer (June, July, August)



Days are longer and the weather is hotter. In this season, schools are closed and important entertainment events occur all across the province. Outdoor terraces are open, and people can enjoy many outdoor facilities such as parks, swimming pools, bike trails, soccer fields, etc.

Fall (September, October, November)



Tree leaves turn yellow, orange and red. This is when the new school year begins. It is also harvest time: markets are filled with local goods, and people go apple-picking in orchards. Days are getting shorter, and the weather is cooling down.

Winter (December, January, February)



These are the coldest months of the year. Snow covers the ground, and winter activities start again: skating, sliding, skiing, snowshoeing, etc. Schools are closed for the holidays, from late December to early January.















Temperature

Temperature is calculated in degrees Celsius (°C).

In summer, it can go up to 30 °C. Adding the humidex factor, which accounts for the humidity index in the air, the perceived temperature sometimes exceeds 40 °C.

In winter, it can drop to -30 °C. Taking into account the wind-chill factor, the perceived temperature sometimes drops down below -40 °C.

Températures moyennes (°C)

	 JAN	 FEB	 MAR	 APR	 MAY	 JUN	 JUL	 AUG	 SEP	 OCT	 NOV	 DEC
MAXIMUM	-8	-6	-1	8	16	22	24	23	17	10	2	-5
MINIMUM	-18	-16	-10	-2	-5	10	13	12	7	1	-5	-13

Weather Forecasts

Quebecers frequently consult weather forecasts to plan how they will dress, travel and their activities. Weather forecasts are updated very often, sometimes every hour. You can find them:

- On television (news reports and specialized channels like MétéoMédia);
- On the radio; and
- Online.

Closing of School and Daycare Services During Snow Storms

In the event of a major snow storm, freezing rain or other extreme weather conditions, schools and daycare services may close. Local radio stations will announce the list of closed institutions. Le Centre de services scolaire de la Côte-du-Sud and the schools also publish this notice on their website, Facebook page and on their voice mail.



Decoding Weather Reports



High: Indicates the maximum temperature for the day (usually reached during the daytime).



Low: Indicates the minimum temperature for the day (usually reached during nighttime).



Probability of Precipitation (POP): Indicates the likelihood of rain or snow in a given region.

- 30%: Local showers over a short period
- 40%: Scattered showers
- 70%: Showers affecting a larger zone for a longer period
- More than 70%: Rain or snow affecting a larger zone for a longer period



Humidity: Indicates the level of humidity in the air. When the weather is very humid in wintertime, the cold feels more intense. In summertime, heat is more overwhelming when it is very humid.



Wind Speed: There are often two values: the average wind speed and the speed of wind gusts.



Rain Quantity: Indicates the amount of rain, in millimetres (mm), expected to fall on the ground.



Snow Quantity: Indicates the amount of snow, in centimetres (cm), expected to fall on the ground.



Sunrise and Sunset: Correspond to the time when the sun crosses the horizon in the morning and in the evening. Days are longer in summer and shorter in winter.



Air Quality: Indicates the quantity of pollutants in the air in a given region. Next to this number is a rating: good, acceptable or poor.



UV Index: Measures the intensity of ultraviolet (UV) rays emitted by the sun and the related health risks (sunburn, skin cancer, etc.). Next to this number is a rating: low, moderate, high, very high, extreme. Snow, sand and water reflect UV rays, increasing skin exposure. Therefore, protect yourself accordingly (hat, sunscreen, long sleeves, reduced exposure between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.).

Dressing for Winter

In Québec, the cold season extends from November to April. The months of December, January and February are the coldest. To stay comfortable, avoid frostbite and enjoy winter, it is best to wear warm and waterproof clothes.

Be Extra Careful With Babies

Since babies are less active, their bodies generate less heat. Thus, they are at greater risk of getting frostbite. Make sure that your baby wears warm clothes (hat, mittens and footwear). During cold spells, do not hesitate to wrap your baby in a blanket in its sleigh or stroller. Properly protected from the cold, your baby will enjoy the beauties of winter!

Layering (or The Onion Peel Principle)

A good way to protect yourself from the cold is to dress in multiple layers by overlaying warm and comfortable clothes, which you can remove or add as needed.

- **The base layer allows perspiration to dry off.** It may be made of merino wool, polyester or other synthetic fibres. Avoid cotton as it absorbs perspiration and keeps humidity close to the skin, which makes it freeze quickly.
- **The middle layer retains heat.** It is made of polyester, polar wool, fleece, etc.
- **The external layer protects from cold, water and wind.** It must also allow humidity to evacuate. Gore-Tex® is a good example.

Winter Clothing

1. A warm tuque covering your head and ears.
2. A neck warmer or scarf to block cold air from coming in and to keep the heat inside.
3. A well-insulated, waterproof and windproof jacket. During cold spells, the hood keeps the neck warm and protects your face from the snow.
4. Lined and waterproof mittens. Since fingers are in a sole compartment, mittens are warmer than gloves.
5. Lined and waterproof pants that keep your legs warm and comfortable when staying outdoors for extended periods of time. For children, pants and jackets are often sold together. This ensemble is called a snow suit.
6. Warm, lined and waterproof boots, which are high enough to protect your ankles from cold drafts.

Thermal undergarments, also called “long johns”

keep the body warm. They are very useful when practising outdoor sports. Opt for polyester, polypropylene or merino wool, which are breathable synthetic fibres that efficiently evacuate body moisture.

Wool or thermal socks will keep your feet warm in cold weather. If you plan to stay inside for a while, at work or at school for example, take your boots and your thick socks off. This way, you will not perspire and have humid feet, which would make your feet cold once back outside. Indoors, it is better to wear lighter shoes and socks.



A Few Boot Tips

- The soles must be thick enough to protect your feet from the cold ground. They must also have deep threads or cleats to prevent slipping on icy ground.
- If your boots are slippery, add removable cleats. You will find some for less than \$20 in sports shops and department stores.
- Your boots must be big enough so your toes have room to move a little. If your boots are too tight, your feet may get cold.
- Thermal insoles can be added at the bottom of your boots to enhance their insulating properties. You can find some for about \$10 where you can buy shoes.
- Do not forget to change your shoes when going indoors (work, training, etc.). If you spend all day in your boots, your feet will become moist and freeze when you go back outside.
- Make sure your boots dry well every night. If they have removable felt liners, take them out to evacuate any humidity.

Doorway Maintenance

You must clear the snow and the ice from your doorways:

- For the security of all occupants and visitors.
- To keep secondary exits free in case of an emergency.

To do so, get:

- A shovel to clear the snow from your steps, doorways and balconies (do not throw the snow in the street).
- Salt, sand or a mix of both to spread on your steps and in front of your apartment's doorways. Salt makes the ice melt, while sand makes surfaces less slippery.

Road Conditions

Weather also affects road conditions, especially in winter. Consult specialized news to plan your trips ahead. You will save time. In fact, when the weather gets bad, traffic worsens. If conditions are too challenging (snow storm, freezing rain, severe thunderstorms, etc.), it is safer to stay off the road.

Québec 511 Service

Québec 511 is a free service.

It provides all the necessary information to plan safe trips on the province's roads, regardless of the season.

You will find information on:

- Winter road conditions;
- Temporary hindrances caused by roadwork;
- Major incidents; and
- The ferry status (open or closed).

Dial 511, Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.

This service is available at all times online: www.quebec511.info

CAA Québec

CAA Québec provides roadside assistance and advice on the sale and buy of a vehicle, maintenance and mechanical repairs, gas, driving and highway safety.






CAA can also help plan your itinerary for longer trips or to explore other regions of the province, for example. It is a good reference on driving in Québec all year long.

www.caaquebec.com



Your Car in Winter

If you plan on driving a vehicle during winter, you must know this:

-  • Winter tires are mandatory from December 1st to March 15th.
-  • You should only use winter windshield washer (for it does not freeze).
-  • To clear the snow and ice from your windows, buy a snow broom and an ice scraper.
-  • Always keep a shovel in your trunk in case you get stuck in the snow.
-  • Traction aids may be useful if you are stuck in the snow or on ice.
-  • During cold weather, keep your gas tank at least a quarter full.
-  • Drive slower and anticipate greater braking distances. In fact, the cold, snow and ice make roads slippery.

Street Snowplowing

During winter, municipal services are in charge of removing snow in the streets.

Your collaboration is key to facilitate the work of snowplows.

To facilitate their operations, from November 15th to April 15th inclusively, it is forbidden to park your vehicle on public roads between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m., except during the holidays (usually from December 23rd to January 3rd).

*Bylaws differ from one municipality to another. Please consult your municipal office directly.

Snow in the Street or on the Sidewalk

It is forbidden to shovel snow over on to the street or the sidewalk. It constitutes a bylaw infraction and can lead to a fine being issued.

Rolling Bins

On pick-up day, be sure to set your blue or green bin at the edge of your property or driveway and not on the street. That will help the snowplows and ensure your bins will not get damaged.

Careful not to get towed!

Before leaving your vehicle on the street, check for parking bans. In case of a parking violation, you will have to pay a fine, and your vehicle could be towed.

Useful Resources

Urgence Québec, Tempête hivernale et grands froids
<https://www.urgencequebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/situation-urgence/Pages/tempete-hivernale-et-grands-froids.aspx>

SAAQ, Conduite hivernale et pneus d'hiver
<https://saaq.gouv.qc.ca/securite-routiere/comportements/adapter-conduite/>

