



Le Germain Hotel Montreal recently reopened with six new storeys of rooms at the top of the building. The newly redone guest rooms, left, have a '60s flair. LE GERMAIN HOTEL MONTREAL

HOTEL INTEL

Reopening shows what a difference a year makes

Renovated and retopped Le Germain Hotel is an elegant ode to 1960s Montreal



ROCHELLE LASH

All news of the Germain Hotels is thrilling and the fact that the latest opening is in Montreal makes it even better. Technically, the gradual opening over the past two months reflects a reopening. The establishment has been closed for one year for an overhaul from bottom to top — and it even added a new top. In an advanced structural feat by LEMAYMICHAUD Architecture and Design, the hotel expanded upwards, building an additional six glass stories of deluxe rooms and suites. Le Germain also has created an exciting dining and drinks scene. The new Le Boulevardier bistro and the new Bar Flâneur are both très Montréalais and French-inspired, designed by Atelier Zébulon Perron. Le Boulevardier is a bright Euro-brasserie with

the shimmer of mirrors, chrome, windows and lights, grounded by sturdy Canadian materials — leather, wood and stone. A sweeping glass wall looks out onto an unusually impressive view of President Kennedy Ave. The Germain Hotel's signature perks include a late-day check-out when available, in-room Nespresso, a Lexus courtesy car and eco-ventures such as a filtered water fountain on every floor. The best benefit is the buffet breakfast for all guests. And the new Montreal fitness room has the latest virtual training screens atop all the cardio machines, and even one set up for floor and Swiss ball exercises. **The look:** Le Germain Hotel Montreal operates in a 1967 building, so it has rounded retro accents in the guest rooms, such as gently curved furniture, tubular wooden walls, moulded plastic "bubble" chairs and spherical lamps. The bathrooms each sport a mural of vintage newspaper highlights, including Expo 67, Canada's Centennial (also in 1967), the new métro in 1966,

and the Montréal Canadiens winning the Stanley Cup 16 times between the 1950s and 1970s. In spite of the nostalgia, the defining visual of Germain establishments is their fresh, contemporary interiors. The renewed Montreal hotel is right on point. The décor of the 130 attractive rooms and five suites features minimalist lines, lushly layered with soft, earthy colours and sensuous textures — tubular wood panelling, woolly carpets, tweed sofas and velvet drapes. Today's features include rain showers, TVs with Chromecast, eco-lighting, charging outlets and Bluetooth. Opening soon, the new glass-walled rooms on the top extension will have great views of downtown. One super suite, meant for long-term stays, has a Miele kitchen, a washer-dryer and the hotel's only balcony. **Food-drink:** Charles Baudelaire, a French poet of the mid-1800s, coined the term "flâneur" to describe an archetypical artist-writer-philosopher who lounges and strolls, observing the passing parade. Le Germain's new street-level lobby bar, Flâneur, invites you to while away the day with a gin cocktail, absinthe or a negroni,

plus bites such as oysters, foie gras, charcuterie or beef tartare. French champagne starts at an accessible \$19 a glass. A "boulevardier" might a cousin of a "flâneur", describing a sophisticated person-about-town. Le Boulevardier is Le Germain's new brasserie, where executive chef David Pellizzari prepares French classics such as frogs' legs, escargots, pork belly with cassoulet, duck à l'orange, sweetbreads, and a special rabbit royale in pastry, with black pudding, truffle oil and foie gras. Le Boulevardier also is strong on seafood, with ceviche of clams, salmon tartare, scallops in béchamel, smoked crab and lemon-glazed octopus. Lunch features many of the same dishes, as well as beef and veggie burgers, a croque madame or a bavette with fries. **Montreal accents:** Ruby Brown created vegan bath products exclusively for Le Germain Hotel Montreal using a fragrance she calls Hemp and Amber, meant to evoke nature in the big city. Her round soap is a mini-biosphere, à la Buckminster Fuller. Local fashion leaders Marie Saint Pierre and Philippe Dubuc for Sarah Pacini Man have styled the staff members in very non-uniform uniforms. The

IF YOU GO

Le Germain Hotel Montreal: 877-333-2050, 514-849-2050; legermainhotels.com; 2050 Mansfield St. **Price:** Rooms start at \$245; suites at \$450; including deluxe continental breakfast, Lexus courtesy car, late check-out when available, fitness centre, Clefs d'or concierge, in-room Nespresso/Camellia Sinensis tea, Chromecast TV streaming, ultrafast Wi-Fi, car-charging stations. Extra: valet parking \$40 for overnight; \$22, restaurant; pets, \$30 per visit; massage on call; room service. **Le Boulevardier:** 514-985-6072, leboulevardierrestaurant.com. Closed Sat.-Sun. for lunch and Sunday for dinner. Closed Dec. 22-26. Bar Flâneur; daily, noon to midnight.

bellmen wear streetwise slouchy pants, thick angora sweaters or hoodies; and the front desk men and women have a choice of casual grey, navy or black stretchy pants, vests and jackets.

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