## HOTEL INTEL

## MONTREAL'S MONVILLE ACCESSIBLE FOR EVERYONE

Rooms suitable for people in wheelchairs, those with auditory or visual challenges



ROCHELLE LASH

Hôtel Monville on Bleury St. is at the top of Isabelle Ducharme's hospitality list for its cool bar-resto and appealing decor, but especially for its responsiveness to people with physical challenges.

Ducharme has been a wheelchair user since she sustained a spinal-cord injury during a car crash more than 30 years ago. She always loved the outdoors, culture, dining and travel, and the accident didn't diminish any of that, so she became an expert in issues faced by people in similar situations.

As chairwoman of Kéroul, the excellent resource centre for accessible tourism in Quebec and beyond, Ducharme's main goal is to improve the accessibility of hotels and tourist and cultural venues.

What impresses her about Hôtel Monville is that the developers set out to build extensive adapted facilities from the get-go. That includes rooms and suites designed with furnishings suitable for people in wheelchairs and for those with auditory or visual challenges. Even the gym has the welcome mat out

"Accessibility is fundamental at Monville," Ducharme said. "The designers and architects consulted extensively with

Kéroul during both the planning and construction.

"It paid off — the hotel won an award for its efforts," she added, referring to a 2018 Tourism Excellence Award from the Alliance de l'industrie touristique du Québec.

**Hôtel Monville:** The 20-storey tower is halfway between Old Montreal and the Quartier des spectacles, and almost adjacent to the Palais des congrès, so it is steeped in action.

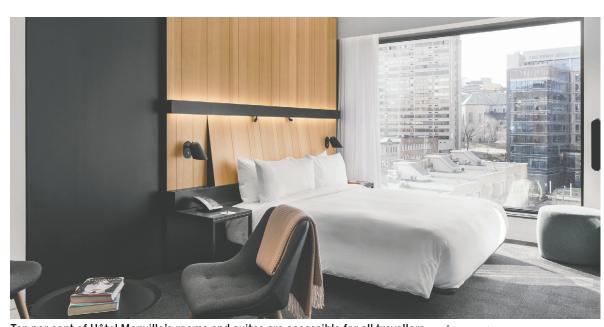
It's pure urban, airy and contemporary, and so tech-savvy that it has a kiosk for self-checkin and a robot named H2M2 that takes care of room service. Yes, there are humanoids waiting to assist and I am happier knowing I can get help.

Monville has conference and banquet rooms, as well as inviting places to chill. The lobby and bar are warmed with brass trim and leather and tweed seating, and black and white murals of vintage Montreal scenes. And the rooftop is an outdoor lounge and party space with dramatic views of downtown.

Each guest room has one king-sized bed, touch controls for drapes and lighting, and a 50-inch TV (all suites have two TVs). The look is bright and minimalist, with a stark colour contrast of black and white decor.

The accessible accommodations have peepholes at two levels on the doors, a lower-than-usual bed with extra space around it, and bathrooms with adapted showers and toilets.

Monville's team wants to make sure that all guests experience the best of the hotel.



Ten per cent of Hôtel Monville's rooms and suites are accessible for all travellers. HÔTEL MONVILLE

"Sustainability - environmental, social and economic – is part of Monville's DNA, and accessibility is part of that," said Jean-Cédric Callies, director of sales and marketing at Monville and its affiliate, Hôtel Gault, a property in Old Montreal.

'We built 10 per cent of our rooms and all of our public spaces to be fully accessible," said Callies. "That's the law, but not every hotel respects it. We want to be the best in that category and for all visitors to Montreal." Food and drink: Monème, an open-concept bar and bistro, serves breakfast and, after 5 p.m., dinner and drinks.

The chef does one-bite apps of shrimp, scallops and salmon tartare, plus plates of charcuterie or oysters. Some main courses, like the rib-eye steak, veal chops or halibut, are prepared for two people (\$55-\$70), and some dishes, like mushroom fettuccine or veal filet, are for one (\$20-\$26).

Breakfast is nicely done, with 10 riffs on barista coffee - including a short, intense shot of ristretto, which you don't see everywhere - and a choice of four feasts (\$20-\$26): the Health, the Continental, the Benedictine and the American.

Kéroul: Kéroul is Quebec's ultimate resource for accessible tourism, including lodging, cultural institutions and attractions.

It has a platoon of inspectors who rate venues, plus an annual print magazine, Québec for All, and a related website with a map and suggested itineraries. Kéroul isn't a travel agency, but it can recommend ideas for overseas jaunts, as well as agents trained for accessible needs.

One of Ducharme's favourite countries is Spain, partly because it is particularly progressive about adapted facilities.

"I've taken the TGV (train) between Madrid and Barcelona, as well as the subway, which is easier than in Montreal," she said. "But air travel is not always a smooth ride. I've been left alone for a long time when a

## IF YOU GO

Kéroul and Québec for All: 514-252-3104; keroul.qc.ca, quebecforall.com; annual membership \$25. Hôtel Monville:

514-379-2000; hotelmonville. com; 1041 Bleury St. Price: 215 rooms from \$219; 54 suites from \$309, including gym, robot room service, concierge, Wi-Fi, Nespresso, mini-fridge, gym. Valet parking available. **Tourisme Montréal:** 514-844-5400, mtl.org.

flight landed, waiting for assistance, and the airlines handle your wheelchair like luggage, so it's often broken."

The good news is that Canada enacted a law in 2019 to improve the situation in airports and on airlines.

"It won't be perfect," said Ducharme. "But it likely will be better."

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