

HOTEL INTEL

PLACE D'ARMES FUSES FUN, FINESSE IN OLD MONTREAL



ROCHELLE LASH

Hôtel Place d'Armes is a treasure of Old Montreal that is perfect for a staycation or celebratory dinner on Feb. 14, or any time you feel the urge for romance.

I found it a cut above many in the historic quarter, featuring superior dining and cocktails at the creative Kyo Bar Japonais and substantial wellness options at RainSpa.

The stellar Brasserie701 would be the envy of Paris for its delectable French-Quebec cuisine, excellent service and prices that are fair for the upmarket scene. The spa and restaurants are all open seven days a week, which is a welcome professional touch.

Rated one of Montreal's top getaways in Condé Nast Traveler's 2022 readers' survey, Hôtel Place d'Armes is loaded with charm, history and warmth.

It's housed in four 19th-century, neoclassical greystone buildings that incorporate Old Montreal's appealing architectural elements such as brick walls, fine wooden floors, high ceilings and towering windows with wonderful views of the centuries-old surroundings.

Rooms: All the rooms and suites are well-appointed with down comforters and pillows by Marie L'Oie of Saint-Jérôme, fine sheeting and Le Labo bath amenities.

The junior suites each have a spacious salon and TV area, plus a floor-to-ceiling patio door opening onto a terrace. I also really like the least expensive



Brasserie701 glows with rich decor and serves gourmet French-Quebec cuisine. HOTEL PLACE D'ARMES

"Classic" rooms that have a vintage air created by parchment-hued walls, wood-slat blinds and antique prints.

Modern conveniences throughout include individual climate control, mini-bars, Bluetooth and TVs with streaming (you need your own account). Some bathrooms have jetted tubs or rain showers.

Brasserie 701: Brasserie 701 is an architectural delight that positively sparkles in black-and-white decor and glows with burnished brass accessories and large pendant lamps.

Dinner, rich and satisfying, features mushroom toast, mushroom ravioli, bouillabaisse, salmon or beef tartare, escargots, burrata, as well as pricier classics such as foie gras, filet mignon, lobster risotto and caviar with all the trimmings.

Lunch might be smoked salmon, Quebec trout, Niçoise salad, fish 'n' chips or flank steak. There are cocktails and wine to match.

For breakfast, you can choose from a buffet or à la carte dishes like avocado-tomato tartine, salmon, veggie or eggs benedict, with barista coffee and mimosas.

Weekend brunch — so popular reservations are required well in advance — adds waffles with chicken or fruit, the 701 burger, 701 poutine and cocktails like Maple Sunrise.

514-904-1201, brasserie701.com

Kyo Bar Japonais: Dining at Kyo is a treat of fresh, flavourful cuisine, artfully presented. The food is Japanese, but the look is not. Kyo has a cosy mix of velvet and leather seating at bars, high-tops and tables, and a decor mélange of butcher blocks, industrial fittings and a few Japanese accessories.

The sommelier will guide you through Japanese whisky, beer and gin, as well as sake tastings with wine-like descriptions such as bold, round, woody or floral.

Lunch can be a sumo-sized bento box of salmon, chicken,

beef or tofu, with tempura and edamame salad, or a choice of sushi, sashimi, maki, bowls of spicy udon noodles or hamachi over rice.

Dinner, mostly small plates, adds delicacies like scallop spring rolls, beef sashimi, shrimp, filet mignon and poached cod. One outstanding dessert is bread pudding, a deconstructed plate of chocolate, matcha sauce and ice cream.

514-282-2711, kyobar.com

Spa life: RainSpa is particularly known for its steam treatments in private rooms, such as body scrubs with black soap (made with olive oil and eucalyptus) and body wraps with Moroccan mud. Facials are done with fine lotions and serums by Dermatologica and Biologique Recherche.

At this writing, RainSpa's large 10- to 15-person steam room is under repair and is expected to open soon.

514-282-2727, rainspa.ca

The way it was: Hôtel Place

IF YOU GO

Hôtel Place d'Armes: 888-450-1887, 514-842-1887, hotelplacedarmes.com. 55 St-Jacques St., Old Montreal. Part of the Corner Collection, which includes Hôtel Nelligan.

Price: rooms from \$229, suites from \$399, incl. three lobby lounges, pool table, guest computers, Wi-Fi, in-room Nespresso, gym. Fees apply for steam room (hammam). Valet parking is free for lunch, \$12 for dinner. Weekends and summer rates might be higher.

Dining: Vegetarian, dairy- and gluten-free available. On holidays (Valentine's Day, Mother's Day et al.), regular menus might not be served. Rooftop Terrasse Place d'Armes is open in summer.

d'Armes is near Old Montreal's most cherished landmarks, including Notre-Dame Basilica, Bonsecours Market and Place Jacques Cartier, as well as La Grande Roue and archeology and history museum Pointe-à-Callière.

In addition, St-Jacques St.'s ornate buildings recall the city's powerful past of head offices, including those of Bank of Montreal, Molson Bank, Canadian Bank of Commerce, Montreal City and District Savings Bank, Merchants Bank and Royal Bank of Canada.

The Hôtel Place d'Armes complex operates in what once housed Great Scottish Life Insurance Company, Peoples' Bank, Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society of Montreal and the Caisse Nationale d'Economie.

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*Adaptogenic and Anxiolytic Effects of Ashwagandha Root Extract in Healthy Adults: A Double-blind, Randomized, Placebo-controlled Clinical Study, Alexander Muacevic and John R. Adler, Cureus. 2019 Dec; 11(12): e6466. PMID: PMC6979308

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