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WHAT'S DOING IN

# WHAT'S DOING IN; Montreal

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The people of Montreal are steeled for snow from October to May. They can't beat their long Canadian winter, so they do the only sensible thing: They adapt to it - outdoors or in.

Outdoors, Montrealers ski, toboggan and take horse-drawn sleighs on Mount Royal. There is ice-skating on the site of the 1976 Olympic Games' rowing basin in the St. Lawrence River, and 50 miles of cross-country ski trails border the island metropolis, some following the fur-trading route of the 1600's to Lachine, so named because Robert Cavalier, Sieur de LaSalle, was looking for China.

Indoors, a weatherproof underground city thrives. Smart shops, Continental-style cafes and cinemas with films in French and English line indoor promenades beneath office buildings like the cruciform-shaped Place Ville Marie, and hotels like the Bonaventure Hilton. Those centers of commerce as well as virtually every important site for sports or civic events are linked by the Metro, whose bright blue cars run quietly on rubber tires. Stations are decorated with ceramic murals and sculpture, and one subway stop, at McGill University, has a small lending library.

Montreal feels like Europe, but it's only 400 miles (about an hour's flight) from New York. Conversation is mostly in French, and theater is more likely to be Moliere than Shakespeare.

As spring approaches and the maple sap begins to flow, Montrealers head to a cabane a sucre outside town for a sugaring-off party. AROUND TOWN

The buildings of Old Montreal near the port settled by Samuel de Champlain in 1608 are being renovated and restored. A fast-food franchise serves burgers in what was the residence in the late 1600's of the explorer Cadillac, founder of Detroit. The Montreal History Center (514-845-4236), in a former fire station at 335 Place d'Youville, has an exhibit of early tramways as well as permanent displays and films.

Save Montreal (514-282-2069), an architectural conservationist group, and Les Montrealistes (514-744-3009), a tour company, conduct walking tours through many neighborhoods as well as the underground city. Fees range from \$30 to \$45 for fewer than 10 people for two hours. These and all other prices are given in United States dollars, converted at the rate of \$1.40 for a Canadian dollar.

Another area worth exploring is the Square Mile, bounded by Sherbrooke, Peel and Guy Streets and

Pine Avenue. In the sector are some of the stone mansions and town houses built by industrialists in the late 1800's.

The district known as Plateau Mont-Royal stretches 20 blocks north of Sherbrooke and the same distance east of Mount Royal. Bistros and boutiques are dressing up factories and row housing along St. Denis and Laurier Streets and St. Lawrence Boulevard. Renovations are rampant on Victorian walk-ups with outdoor spiral staircases giving rise to the term balconville. **COMING EVENTS**

At Place des Arts, Charles Dutoit conducts l'Orchestre Symphonique de Montreal (514-842-3402) most Tuesday and Wednesday nights and Sunday afternoons. The 30-year-old Les Grands Ballets Canadiens (514-849-8681) will offer Soirees des Montrealais, with works by local choreographers from March 12 to 14, and a varied program including "Les Noces" from March 26 to 28. L'Opera de Montreal (514-521-5577) stages Bellini's "Puritani" on April 14, 18, 23, 25 and 29 and May 2. The Quebecois singer and comedian Jean Lapointe, an annual sell out, is performing until April 4. Tickets range from \$7 to \$35 at Place des Arts.

At the Forum (514-932-6131), tickets are \$7 to \$12 to see hockey's great Les Canadiens, who with 23 Stanley Cups, have set a record for championships by North American professional sports teams. Opponents include the New York Islanders on March 16.

This month, the 80-year-old Galerie Morency (1564 St. Denis Street, 514-845-6442) is exhibiting the primitive oils and drawings of Arthur Villeneuve while the contemporary Galerie John A. Schweitzer (42 Pine Avenue West, 514-289-9262) is showing abstract steel-and-cement sculpture by Liliana Berezowsky. **WHERE TO STAY**

Hotel Quatre Saisons (1050 Sherbrooke Street West, 514-284-1110), a 31-story tower, has large rooms decorated with Georgian-style writing desks and pastel chintz. Rates are \$140 to \$155 for two in a room during the week, \$88 on weekends, and there's a rate of \$85 a night for a minimum two-night stay. Rates include access to a Gymtech health club and a year-round outdoor heated pool.

The three-month-old Delta Hotel (475 President Kennedy Street, 514-286-1986) is a best buy at \$50 a night on weekdays, \$43 on weekends, until April 21. A fireplace warms the lobby, each room has a balcony, and there is a business center, day-care services and a health club with two pools.

The Old World-style Ritz Carlton (1228 Sherbrooke Street West, 514-842-4212) opened 75 years ago. Rooms are \$115 to \$140 a night, and there's a weekend package for \$83 a night, which includes a 25 percent discount on a rental car.

At the rococo-style l'Hotel de la Montagne (1430 rue de la Montagne, 514-288-5656), the owner, Bernard Ragueneau, personally manages the lodgings, restaurants, bars and discotheque. Rooms are \$75 a night, and there's a weekend rate of \$55 a night for two nights, including breakfast Saturday and brunch Sunday.

The Lord Berri (1199 Berri Street, 514-845-9236) is a new no-frills hotel that offers good-size,

simply furnished rooms at \$40 or one-bedroom suites at \$65. There's no bellman or room service, only a coffee shop. **WHERE TO DINE**

Restaurant prices are for one person, without wine, tax or service.

A new formal French restaurant, Les Mignardises (2035 St. Denis Street, 514-842-1151) has created a sensation since it was opened a year ago by Peter Steiger with the haute cuisine of Jean-Pierre Monnet, formerly a chef at Les Halles, Montreal's best-known dining spot for 15 years. Specialties include salmon tartare, roasted shelled lobster, sliced steak with marrow and for dessert fruit blanketed with warm sabayon. The table d'hote for lunch begins at \$10; dinner is about \$35. The wine list ranges from a red Bordeaux, Labottiere 1984 (\$17), to Chateau Cheval-Blanc, Premier Grand Cru, St. Emilion 1983 (\$153).

Mr. Monnet's departure hasn't hurt Les Halles (1450 Crescent Street, 514-844-2328), and the owners, Jacques Landurie and Jean-Pierre Beauquier, nurture a bustling atmosphere and classical cuisine. There is a list of 220 wines (\$15 to \$400), and the large menu offers a mousseline of shrimp, spicy fish soup, quail with almonds, rack of lamb and mousse of white and dark chocolates (lunch \$7 to \$15, dinner \$30).

Le St. Germain (1458 Crescent Street, 514-282-9003) is a new bistro with black and white decor and nouvelle cuisine, including snails in watercress, veal kidneys with mustard and filet mignon with black pepper sauce (lunch \$7 to \$10, dinner \$20). Chablis Bichot 1980 costs \$32. For something almost as good, try the functional dining room of l'Institut de Tourisme et d'Hotellerie (3535 St. Denis Street, 514-282-5120) run by students of Quebec's hotel school. The nouvelle Quebecoise cuisine includes foie gras in caribou sauce or duck with locally made apple liqueur. (Lunch \$7 to \$15, dinner \$20 to \$30). The house wine is a Cuvee of Burgandies (\$12 a bottle).

Not every Montreal restaurant is French. George Lau, owner of the Sichuan restaurant Le Chrysantheme (1208 Crescent Street, 514-397-1408) recently opened l'Orchidee de Chine (2017 Peel Street, 514-287-1878), offering dishes from five different regions of China. (Lunch \$7 to \$10, dinner \$25 to \$30).

Ten-year-old La Sila (2040 St. Denis Street, 514-844-5083) offers an Italian menu (dinner \$20) of meat and seafood, but also look for homemade pasta such as trinitte al pesto.

Bagel, etc. (4320 St. Lawrence Boulevard, 514-845-9462), is a diner that is open round the clock for supper, cheese blintzes and eight kinds of bagels. Just about everything, except caviar and Champagne, is less than \$10.

The international fast-food stalls on the top floor of Faubourg Ste. Catherine, Montreal's newest indoor shopping plaza at Ste. Catherine and Guy Streets, provide snacks or lunches from around the world, including Vietnam, India and Lebanon. There are four cinemas in the basement and small groceries and bakeries on the first floor.

Old Coca-Cola signs and ketchup bottles on Formica tabletops help make La Paryse (302 Ontario East, 514-842-2040) an authentic hamburger joint. The basic burger (\$2.75) is a heap of ground

beef, sauteed onions, mushrooms, pickles, lettuce and mozzarella. = ON THE TOWN

Night life, in a lull for a few years, is picking up with the opening of big dance clubs. More than \$1.5 million was spent to open L'Esprit (1234 de la Montagne, 514-397-1711), a bar and disco in what was, during the late 1800's, a mansion belonging to Sir Alexander Tilloch Gault, one of the founding fathers of Canada, and during the mid-1900's, a funeral parlor.

High-fashion dress and punk hairdos are the passwords at the door of Bar Business (3500 St. Lawrence Boulevard, 514-849-3988), a small club behind the run-down facade of an old factory.

Club Soda (5240 Park Avenue, 514-270-7848) offers live rock bands and comedy groups, including a French revue by Le Group Sanguin from March 19 to 22 and March 25 to 29. SHOPPING

Certain shops offer better-than-retail prices on name-brand merchandise. Bedo (1253 Ste. Catherine Street West, 514-284-0822) is popular with under-30's for sportswear for men and women and inexpensive spoofs of names like Chanel. Most separates are \$20 to \$60. J. Schreter (4350 St. Lawrence Boulevard, 514-845-4231) is a holdover from the time when Montreal's main street was the center of its garment industry and has been selling men's clothing for 60 years. Harris tweed jackets cost \$60, Levi's jeans \$22, Reebok sneakers \$33 and up. At Caplan-Duval (Plaza Cote des Neiges or Cavendish Mall, 514-483-4040), a busy emporium of housewares, a five-piece place setting of Royal Doulton bone china in the Sonnet pattern costs \$41. Mink's (1383 Green Avenue, 514-937-0642) carries haute couture fabrics from Italy, Switzerland and France. Cottons by Giorgio Armani start at \$35 a yard, and there is a hand-beaded Valentino silk at \$1,500 a yard.

At Pratesi (1448 Sherbrooke Street West, 514-285-8909), which has a New York branch, queen-size bed sheets from Italy range from \$265 in cotton to \$760 in silk. Norma (1456 Sherbrooke Street West, 514-842-4377) sells leatherwear for women designed by Norma Lepofsky, the owner. Lambskin jackets trimmed in wool, fabric or fur are \$400 to \$1,600. At Orientations Objets d'Art (1460 Sherbrooke Street West, 514-844-5500), antiques from the Orient range from \$200 to \$20,000.

Spring styles have arrived from France at Boutique Bruno-Laurent (2070 Crescent, 514-842-1519), a regular stop for some of the city's best-dressed women.

Zoo Options (1250 Crescent, 514-397-2674) and Mousseline (1228 Ste. Catherine Street West, 514-878-0661) sell avant-garde designer clothes from Europe and Canada for men and women.

Photos of Montreal; Map of Montreal