

AEROPLAN ARRIVAL

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CityGuide - Montreal

THINGS TO DO IN MONTREAL

BY PATRICIA GAJO

Anchored by its central mountain (Mont Royal), Canada's island city is a harmonious dichotomy of English and French, past and future. Dotted with church steeples and wrought-iron balconies, the colourful landscape is home to one of the hottest arts scenes in the country, with international events like the Jazz Festival and Just for Laughs and homegrown phenomena like Cirque du Soleil. Add to this a liberal-thinking, multicultural society with a longstanding passion for terroir and a penchant for avant-garde fashion, and you have a city worth celebrating.



The cobblestone paths of Old Montreal.

PHOTOGRAPHY SHAYNE LAVERDIÈRE

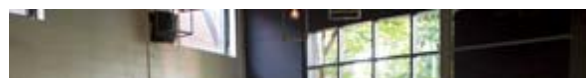


The lobby of Le Westin Montréal.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY LE WESTIN MONTRÉAL

WHERE TO STAY

Le Westin Montréal rose from parking-lot ashes in May 2009, erected in the booming Quartier International. It faces the multi-hued Palais de congrès, with 424 elegantly appointed rooms, 30 luxurious suites and a stunning front entrance that opens beneath the hotel's glass-bottom swimming pool. The property includes the adjacent heritage building along rue St-Jacques, former site of the *Montreal Gazette* printing plant. Its history is observed by its new culinary tenants: Gazette restaurant (for refined dining) and the Reporter lounge (for nibbles and drinks). A short cobblestone path leads you to Old Montreal and the St. Lawrence waterfront. Or explore the subterranean corridor connected to the famous underground city, a network of shops, cinemas and restaurants. You can **redeem Aeroplan Miles** for your stay — or **earn miles here** (or at other Aeroplan Hotel Partners) by showing your Aeroplan Card when you check in.



WHERE TO DINE

Le Local draws refined palates.
PHOTOGRAPHY SHAYNE LAVERDIÈRE

In the heart of Old Montreal's multimedia district, **Le Local** draws refined palates and those who wish to see and be seen. Housed in a former architect's office, the contemporary space of brick walls and concrete flooring showcases chef Charles-Emmanuel Pariseau's open-style kitchen and a glass *cave à vin* of mainly private imports. On Thursday evenings, hip professionals come for the lively 5 à 7 (Quebec's version of happy hour). The wines are selected by award-winning sommelier Élyse Lambert, and the bistro-inspired dinners include a pork-ribs-and-lobster *guédille*, an honoured Quebecois recipe. Locals know the owner, Louis-François Marcotte, from his other restaurant, Simpléhic, and as star of *Le goût de Louis*, a cooking show on Canal Vie.

For foodies on the hunt, the classic **Au Pied de Cochon** is a can't-miss eatery, as are **Chasse et Pêche** (upscale surf 'n' turf) and **M:BRGR** (the best burgers and sweet-potato fries in town).



Reborn, a new boutique in Old Montreal.
PHOTOGRAPHY SHAYNE LAVERDIÈRE

WHERE TO SHOP

A petite owner for a petite boutique, Brigitte Chartrand was a fashion stylist before she opened **Reborn** in Old Montreal with her French bulldog, Pema. One of the city's fashion finds, her designer offerings reflect Chartrand's own avant-garde style, typically two or three steps ahead of the pack. Check out the imported lambskin leathers by Belgian-Italian Natalia Brilli, asymmetrical cotton basics by Rick Owens, experimental couture by Bless or the daring pants and tunics by local wunderkind Rad Hourani.



Farm-fresh picks at the Marché Jean Talon.
PHOTOGRAPHY SHAYNE LAVERDIÈRE

WHAT TO DO

If you've gone as far north as Little Italy — an ideal spot for an authentic *caffè italiano* — you're just a hop, skip and espresso away from the **Marché Jean Talon**. Opened in 1933, this is where many of Montreal's top chefs, such as Normand Laprise of Toqué, start their day to source the freshest produce for their kitchens. Farmers from across Quebec come to sell their terroir goods, many of them directly out of their trucks. Local highlights include duck from Lac Brome, bison sausages and Le Riopelle de l'Isle, a nutty, triple-cream cheese. The arcades also offer a multi-ethnic feast: the finest fresh baklava, French-style crepes and Indian bhajis, all of which can be enjoyed while seated in the central hall or strolling the stalls. Just make sure to come with an

empty stomach.



The Balnea spa in the Eastern Townships.
PHOTOGRAPHY © THOMAS ASSELIN, 2005

WHERE TO DETOUR

Just under an hour from downtown Montreal, **Balnea** is a trendy spa based in a modern cabin overlooking Lake Gale in the Eastern Townships. Sprawled across several flat tiers, the spa offers plenty of ways to mingle or melt your cares away, from waterfall baths to rooftop yoga to lounge chairs for lazy naps. It has hot and cold dipping pools (indoors and out), a detoxifying sweat cave, Turkish steam bath and Finnish sauna, the latter with a panoramic view of the peaceful surroundings. A café serves soups, salads and hot meals. In warmer weather, soak up the sun in style at the *Club de plage* ("beach club"), with cedar Jacuzzi tubs, pillow beds and a juice bar.

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