

Enjoy the flavors of France close to home in Montréal

By David L. Hughes

Many Americans are understandably reluctant to travel overseas to Europe this year. Why not enjoy the flavor of France in Montreal, Canada! Only about 350 miles from northern New Jersey, Montreal combines the old world charm of a French town with the cosmopolitan chic of a world city.

On a recent visit, I was able to enjoy both aspects of this lovely city. As an added bonus, my visit coincided with "Le Festival Montreal en Lumiere," which is an ongoing effort to light up many interesting buildings in the city with creative and colorful lighting effects. The impact of the city's efforts is stunning.



Montreal High Lights Festival
(Le Festival Montréal en Lumière)

When visiting Montreal, I encourage you to stay in or near one of the charming older districts of the city, Vieux Montreal or Old Montreal. This compact area of narrow cobblestone streets, small chapels and lively squares epitomizes the French quality of the city. Notre Dame Basilica on Place d'Armes is one of the most beautiful churches I've ever seen. There are many small restaurants in this area, as well as several very

European-style cafes. Artists and galleries have focused on Vieux Montreal, and it has a very lively cultural scene.

Peel Street, which is just west of downtown is a several-block-long row of restaurants and bars which appeal to all types. Some are quiet, some are anything but quiet! The Winston Churchill Pub, affectionately known as "Winnies," is popular, as well as many others. Stroll through the area, and I'm sure you will find a spot that appeals to your tastes.

The main shopping hub is Rue St.-Catherine, arguably the longest shopping street in the world. Ranging from chic to glitzy to gauche to raunchy, it's all on Rue St.-Catherine.

I visited several wonderful restaurants while on my recent trip. *Les Deux Gamins*, located at 170 Prince Arthur Street East near the Sherbrook metro stop, is a charming bistro French setting. Chef Guillaume Sparks-Beaulé creates wonderfully diverse dishes in a very comfortable and relaxed location on a pedestrian avenue. On my visit, the entire 5-course meal centered around pork and the variety of individual presentations was truly inspired. Owners Tim and Valery Girard will be happy to welcome you to their charming bistro, but plan on relaxing and enjoying an entire evening. My dinner experience, as well as most of the other diners, was in excess of 3 hours!

On the next evening, I was treated to a truly world class dinner at one of Montreal's finest restaurants. *Verses Restaurant*, in the Nelligan Hotel offered a 6-course tasting menu of remarkable variety and creativity.



Terrace on Saint-Denis Street

Chefs Lauren Prosper and Guillaume Colmon took us on a unique journey through a foodies paradise. Matched with separate wines for each course and very professional and attentive service, led by Chantal Souliere, this was one of the greatest dining experiences I've ever had. Try Verses Restaurant on your next trip to Montreal.

Speaking of the Nelligan Hotel, while staying in Old Montreal consider it for your lodging place. The Nelligan, along with its sister hotel, the Place d'Armes only 2 blocks away, offers wonderful accommodations in recently renovated stone and brick buildings at least 100 years old. Owned by the Antonopolous Hotel Group, both hotels are recommended for anyone visiting Old Montreal.

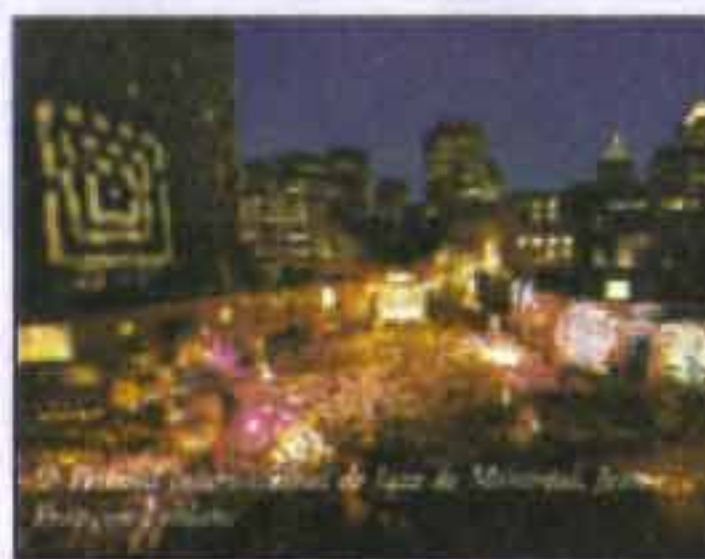
In late June and early July, Montreal plays host to a world-renowned jazz festival. This 10-day, multi-venue music



Terrace on Place Jacques-Cartier

festival brings many of the jazz scene's popular performers to the city. Even when the festival is over, Montreal has a very lively music scene with many night spots featuring live groups.

And even with all that I have mentioned, this only gives you a small taste of what Montreal has to offer. Whether you like art and culture, history, fine dining, or shopping, Montreal can deliver all of this and more.



Montréal International Jazz Festival