



Vieux-Port de Montréal / PHILIPPE BOUQUET

# Montreal

Writer Vicki Williams

A fascinating, culturally diverse Canadian city with a distinctly French heart and soul

**B**ienvenue à Montréal! This year the city is celebrating its 375th birthday with special events all year, so there has never been a better time to visit or to potentially spot the pin-up prime minister, Justin Trudeau.



8AM

Time for breakfast after enjoying a blissful night in a suite at the city's beacon of refinement, the much-awarded The Ritz-Carlton Montréal, originally opened in 1912. Breakfast takes place at the hotel's Maison Boulud (a Daniel Boulud restaurant); secure a table in the greenhouse or on the terrace, with its view of the petit garden and the famous duck pond. It is also a preferred spot for socialites and A-list celebrities for a champagne lunch, with its sensational selection of fine French fare, highlighting local produce.



9:30AM

Grab a hat and explore this vibrant city's distinct neighbourhoods. From historic Old Montreal with its cobblestone streets, cultural and heritage attractions to the trendy



boho-chic Plateau Mont-Royal, each offers something different. An intriguing mix of the old, new, hip and cultural is found in the area of Saint Laurent Boulevard known as The Main, which straddles several neighbourhoods. Food, art and fashion (including vintage) are all waiting to be discovered along this defining street.



1PM

It is also home to a quintessential historic lunch hotspot, Schwartz's Deli, a Montreal institution since 1928. The always-busy deli is decorated with images of all the celebrities and politicians who have enjoyed a sandwich here. The classic Reuben is heaven, with a generous amount of smoked brisket that has been cured in an original secret mix before being smoked in an old brick smokehouse. Another option is Aux Vivres, the city's longest running vegan restaurant, known for Indian, Mediterranean, Moroccan and Thai cuisine. Its BLT (coconut bacon) is legendary.



2PM

Shop local. Montreal is perfect for scoring some head-turning homegrown brands. For gorgeous jewellery with exquisite packaging, Birks, the Montreal equivalent of Tiffany, was established in 1879. For fabulous footwear, La Canadienne, a family-owned company known for its ethical practices and handcrafted Montreal-made footwear. Also designing and crafting its products in Montreal is m0851, best known for its chic leather goods, handbags and jackets. For yoga wear, swimwear and fashionable daywear try Lolë, considered a rival to Lululemon. Or treat yourself to a spa experience using local ingredients, such as the two-hour Maple Sugar body treatment using handcrafted organic maple products (and clay) at luxurious Spa St. James.



6PM

Whether or not you are staying at The Ritz-Carlton, get the evening off to a bubbly start with a pre-dinner glass or two of champagne at the hotel's exclusive Dom Perignon Champagne Bar, the first of its kind in Canada.



8PM

Now for dinner at one of the many outstanding restaurants, such as the critic's favourite award-winning, Restaurant Le Fantôme. The bijou restaurant serves an exciting, constantly changing degustation menu that demonstrates exceptional creativity, and perfectly executed dishes that are as playful as they are refined. Sit at the bar for an intimate view of the kitchen and ask co-owner Kabir to tell you the ghostly true story behind the name. Or try Hvor, fine dining with a focus on seasonal, organic, local, with its own vegetable garden and beehives, with other produce sourced from local artisans.



10PM

Finish the day with a cocktail or two in the key party neighbourhoods, including the Latin Quarter, Old Montreal, Mile End and the regenerated area of Griffintown. One of the more unusual is Resonance Cafe, an artist-run vegan cafe that also happens to serve classic cocktails and a decent range of whiskey. Plus there is live music (jazz, classical and experimental) every night after 9pm. Or for more cutting-edge nightcaps try the Atwater Cocktail Club, with an ambience inspired by a speakeasy and French discos. 🍸

## Concierge Insider

- Enjoy the summer weather at Clock Tower Beach, a pop-up beach by St Lawrence River open until September, with fireworks throughout July.
- Digital art tells the history of Montreal through Cité Mémoire, a series of 22 tableaux projected on various surfaces in Old Montreal. Download the free app to enjoy dramatised content, points of interest and augmented reality experiences.
- With great views of the city, going for a walk or run at beautiful Mount Royal is a real pleasure.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Take a stroll along the historic Old Port of Montreal; The Ritz-Carlton Montréal boasts elegant suites. THIS PAGE: Dine at Restaurant Le Fantôme, where a creative degustation menu is served

