

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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Insiders' Guide to Montreal

The best places to eat, shop, stay and see the abundant local color in this Canadian cultural center, with expert advice from fashion designer Marie Saint Pierre, ringmaster Daniel Lamarre, musician Martha Wainwright and author Josip Novakovich



7 of 21

By JEFF CHU

July 10, 2015 11:44 a.m. ET

MONTREAL IS A CITY of contrasts. Spreading out across an island at the confluence of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers, it's a town of close to 1.7 million people in which Old World elegance and New World dynamism, French and English, and art and commerce (Air Canada and Bombardier are among the companies based here) exist side-by-side, sometimes blending into something entirely new.

The city that has given the world an eclectic sound track that includes Leonard Cohen, Arcade Fire and the Wainwright family hums with creative energy. Performance spaces, for example, draw top talent. Later this year, Cirque du Soleil, which makes its home in Montreal, will premiere a show based on the film "Avatar." And the city's culinary scene showcases an ever-evolving mélange of North American and Gallic traditions.

In anticipation of the city's 375th anniversary, in 2017, officials have begun a buff-and-polish campaign, sprucing up parks and creating new pedestrian paths and planning public spaces, such as a plaza at downtown's Esplanade Clark that will have an ice-skating rink in winter. But they don't really need to lift a finger: Montreal already lives up to one of its nicknames: La Belle Ville, the beautiful city.

The Designer | Marie Saint Pierre

Montreal native and creative director of her eponymous fashion label.



Marie Saint Pierre

SOMETHING FISHY // Muvbox
Lobster Roll. From May to September, this restaurant in a shipping container in Old Montreal, just in front of the old grain silos, serves seafood that tastes like it came straight off the boat. The lobster roll with fresh herbs is not to be missed, and the views of the port are amazing. *Place du Génie; muvbox.ca*

ELEMENTAL ART // Place Jean-Paul Riopelle. My very favorite place in Montreal is the Place Jean-Paul Riopelle, in the International Quarter. The big fountain there, originally created for the 1976 Olympics by Quebecois artist Riopelle, shoots fire and water and is like a symphony.

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- Denver (<http://www.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304178104579535981446550324>)

BEAU BATEAU // Bota Bota. You have to spend a few hours on this old boat that has been refurbished into a spa, where you can swim, get massages or just relax. It's unique—and I've done a lot of spas. *358 Rue de la Commune Ouest; botabota.ca*

LIGHTS FANTASTIC // Lampi Lampa. Lighting designer Emmanuel Cognée creates breathtakingly beautiful lamps from industrial objects normally used in plumbing, machinery and cooking. You can buy them at the boutique of the Contemporary Art Museum. *185 Rue Ste-Catherine Ouest; lampilampa.com*

The Ringmaster | Daniel Lamarre

President and CEO of Cirque du Soleil, based in Montreal, and a native of the city.



Daniel Lamarre

LOCAL FAVORITE // Brasserie Bernard. I enjoy going to this French-style brasserie for brunch on weekends. The eggs Benedict, café au lait and service are all perfect. *1249 Avenue Bernard; brasseriebernard.com*

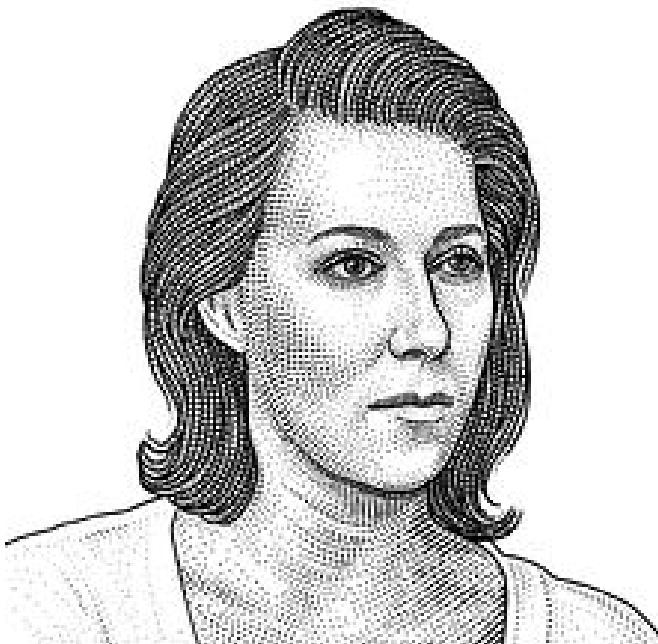
RETAIL THERAPY // Holt Renfrew. This department store doesn't feel like a department store. It's like having all the best boutiques under one roof. I like Tom Ford and Ralph Lauren, but I also wear some Quebec designers, such as Philippe Dubuc and Denis Gagnon. *1300 Rue Sherbrooke Ouest; holtrenfrew.com*

ART HOUSE // The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. We have incredible creative and artistic talent in Quebec, and you can find a lot of them here. The museum not only shows art but creates staged "scenography"—which are more events than exhibits. At the 2013 Dale Chihuly exhibit, which was the talk of the town, one of the main pieces was outside the museum, so it was accessible to all. *1380 Rue Sherbrooke Ouest; mbam.qc.ca*

HISTORIC 'HOOD // Old Montreal. Old Montreal is where I go for inspiration. It combines the richness of our cultural heritage with the modern vibrancy of the best and coolest restaurants. Many startups and dot-coms also are located there, so it has a youthful, energetic crowd that's a reflection of the city's joie de vivre. *vieux.montreal.qc.ca*

The Chanteuse | Martha Wainwright

Montreal resident and scion of one of Canada's most famous musical families.



Martha Wainwright

PIPE DREAM // Montreal Symphony House. The symphony hall is gorgeous. Its new organ is one of the biggest in the world, with about 6,500 pipes. When the organist operates certain stops, wood panels come out of the walls like guns—it's absolutely bizarre and beautiful. *1600 Rue St-Urbain; osm.ca/en/discover-osm/hall*

EYE CANDY // Leméac. The waiters here are great and great to look at. A prix fixe menu after 10 p.m. brings the price down considerably. The oysters and duck confit are very good, but I usually just order the waiter. *1045 Avenue Laurier Ouest; restaurantlemeac.com*

TOGS FOR TOTS // Le Nid de la Cigogne. This shop, whose name translates to “The Nest of the Stork,” sells beautiful hippie-mama European baby clothing. No little pink ruffles or baby blue puppies here, just gorgeous woolen things that hark back to another time.
268 Rue St-Viateur Ouest; leniddelacigogne.ca

FOODIE FEST // The Marché Jean-Talon. Filled to the brim—especially in warmer months—with local produce and gorgeous meats and cheeses, this market in Little Italy is also brimming with French Canadians who really care about what’s going on their plates. I always get fiddleheads in the spring. In summer, I like to ride my bike there.
7070 Avenue Henri Julien; marchespublics-mtl.com/jean-talon

The Author | Josip Novakovich



Josip Novakovich

Croatian-born writer who currently teaches at the city’s Concordia University.

BOOK NOOK // Argo. At only about 200 square feet, this tiny English-language book shop packs a surprisingly robust selection of titles by local authors and others you won’t find at most large bookstores. *1915 Rue Ste-Catherine Ouest; argobookshop.ca*

LA VIE BOHÈME // Résonance Café. The young, hip and neglected types Leonard Cohen called “beautiful losers” frequent this fun bohemian restaurant and jazz club. The

clientele are mostly performers and really don’t have much money, so their torn clothes are authentic—not like the kids in places like Harvard Square who are trying to look hip but are just way too clean. Maybe it has something to do with the French influence.
5175A Avenue du Parc; resonancecafe.com

DRUM CIRCLE // The Tam-Tams. This informal festival starts before noon every Sunday in the Mont-Royal park and goes until sunset. It’s very festive and fun to watch—lots of drums and young people dancing—especially when the weather is good.
George-Étienne Cartier Monument, Parc du Mont-Royal

MELTING SPOT // Vices & Versa. With more than 30 different craft brews from the broader Montreal area, this pub and restaurant is a place where a city that can be divided by language comes together. You can have a good time here, no matter how bad your French or your English is. *6631 Blvd St-Laurent; vicesetversa.com*

Plus Don't Miss...



Hotel Gault | Housed in a 19th-century Old Montreal mansion, the Gault mixes modern touches such as Arne Jacobsen fixtures with architecture inspired by Haussmann-era Paris. *From about \$230; 449 Rue Ste-Hélène, hotelgault.com*

Olive et Gourmando | This Old Montreal bakery offers what might be the most decadent bite in town: a \$3 maple-pecan brioche. *351 Rue St-Paul Ouest, oliveetgourmando.com*

Les 400 Coups serves thoughtful, innovative cuisine emphasizing Canadian ingredients. *400 Rue Notre-Dame Est, les400coups.ca/en*

À Table Tout le Monde in Old Montreal, offers an exquisite array of products centered on what it calls “the art of the table.” *361 Rue St-Paul Ouest, atabletoutlemonde.com*

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