



TOUR UPDATE



The Travel Guide of mikesworldtours

Tour Highlight:

August 2026
Montreal, Canada



Wait, am I in Canada
or France?

Contributed by Michael Davis



A QUICK HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, & SOCIAL OVERVIEW

In 1642 a French military official, Paul De Chomedey, founded Montreal as a missionary center. It grew in importance for its fur trade, and became a part of the British empire in 1763 after surrendering to the British. After the U.S. revolutionary war many English loyalists moved to Canada. In the 19th century the city's economic role shifted to timber and agricultural products. It became an international port in 1853 when a shipping line to Liverpool was created. Manufacturing continued to grow in the 19th and 20th century leading to population growth and economic development. From 1960 to 1966 it was home to Quebec's quiet revolution which sought to increase rights for the French speaking majority. In 1974 the Quebec government declared French as the main language with the Official Language Act. The act also created a law that signage must be in French and if it includes another language, French must be dominant.

Montreal, Canada



Some quick tips for Montreal :

- The metro system is super easy to use and goes to many different places in the city
- Most conversations and signage is in French, but English is also widely spoken
- When flying back to the U.S., add some time for the airport since you go through U.S. customs in Montreal

FOOD

AREPERA

I was pleasantly surprised to find a Venezuelan restaurant in Montreal. The city has a huge international presence, so it really should not have been such a surprise. Although I am firmly on team Colombia when it comes to Arepas, I had to try Arepera's which did not disappoint. I got an Arepa with chicken along with some fried plantains. Both were so good. The restaurant was pretty crowded, but I was able to get a table for one without having to wait.



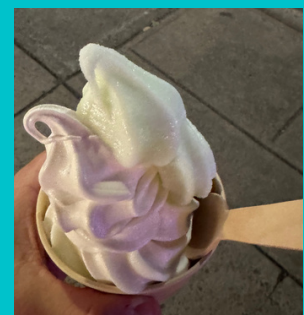
TIM HORTONS

Canada swears by Tim Hortons similarly to how Americans view Dunkin Donuts. I felt like every single street corner had a Tim Hortons and they were always packed with people at all times of the day. The coffee is good and it seems they are modernizing by offering trendy drinks like matchas. I stuck with a black cold brew and felt satisfied. We also got some donut holes since we saw everyone else getting them. The closest American equivalent is definitely Dunkin Donuts. They are beginning to expand into other countries, but they still have the majority (over 4,000 of its 5,000 locations) in Canada.



LE BLUEBOY ARTISAN ICE CREAM

I stumbled on this place my first night and was so happy that I found it. They have a really large menu of shakes, sundaes, and regular ice cream. I got a Miami themed twist which was key lime sorbet with vanilla soft serve. It was such a good combination and the soft serve tasted like custard. One of the best sweet treats that I have had in a while (and that says a lot). They use their soft serve in the shakes and sundaes as well.



Montreal, Canada

MONTREAL STYLE BAGELS



Montreal bagels are famous for being much thinner and denser than traditional bagels. The two famous shops are Fairmount and St. Viateur. Both places have separate entrances to order sandwiches/single bagels versus bulk orders. If you want a single bagel make sure you are in the right place. I split a tuna salad and lox bagel at Fairmount. St Viateur had really fun flavors so I got sea salt bagel with sun-dried tomato cream cheese. I really liked both for different reasons and could not pick a favorite. Also yes, we did have both for one meal since they are a five minute walk from each other (typical American behavior).



SCHWARTZ DELI

This historic place has been operating since 1928. It is still in its original location and was brought by Jewish immigrants from Romania. They have a secret recipe in preparing their smoked meat and it was really good. They have a super simple menu with only three options for sandwiches (smoked meat, chicken, and salami) . I went with the smoked meat sandwich which was really good and filling. It does have a line since its a major tourist attraction, but it went by super fast. I am also not a huge fan of mustard, but I was very happy with it on the sandwich (it is automatically add on).



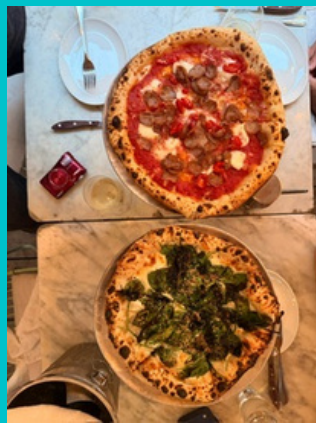
BAR ST-DENIS

Located near Jean Talon Market, this restaurant has a pretty contemporary menu with shared plates. We got a bunch of things and everything was really great. The best surprise was the eggplant. We almost didn't order it, but were so happy we did. It was on top of a sauce and had different nuts and pomegranates. The pasta and cod were also really great. All of the dishes were beautiful and plated so well.



RESTAURANT ELENA

An Italian restaurant that has a classic menu but with a modern flair. We sat outside in the back on their patio and the vibes were immaculate. There are only a few tables out there and it feels like you are eating at someone's house. We got a Caesar salad and pizzas. The Caesar salad was one of the best parmesan ratios I have seen. We also got a pizza that had hot honey on it which I was a huge fan of. They also give a chili oil for the pizza which I definitely used way too much of, but it was too good not to.



Montreal, Canada

NIGHTLIFE

Montreal is a very young city with many different areas to go out in. There are also a wide range of experiences from dive bars to techno clubs. Every night we did something different and had a lot of fun at each place we went to. Drink prices fluctuate based on the place, but expect to pay the same as American bars and clubs.

NEW CITY GAS

This EDM/Techno venue is massive with multiple floors. You have to buy a ticket for entry, and we paid ~\$25 USD for the tickets. The crowd was a little subdued due to the music festival but it was still lively and we were there for a long time. They have a massive stage with lights and it is more like a concert venue than a traditional club.



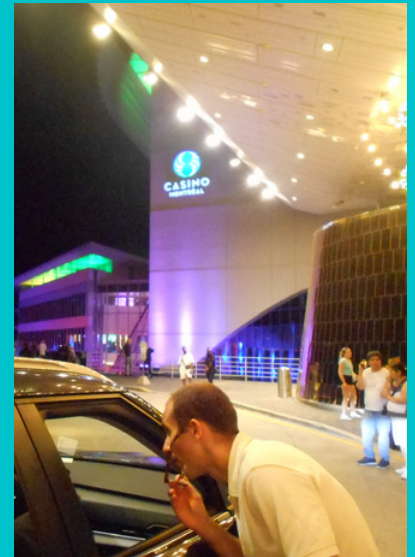
CAPPELLA

I found this place on TikTok and it is really cool. There is a bar upstairs and behind a wall takes you underground to a huge bar/club that feels like you are in a cave. They had an area with a DJ and another area where you can play board games (talk about contrast). There can sometimes be a line, but we had no problem getting in right away.



CASINO

I do not condone gambling, but this was one of the nicest casinos I have seen. It has multiple floors and bars on each floor. It also has a dance floor which I appreciated having other activities besides gambling. The age to gamble in Canada is 18 which may explain why college-aged Americans want to go spend their weekend in Montreal.



EXPERIENCES AND SITES

Montreal is a very historic city with a wide range of activities including hiking and visiting famous landmarks. Old Montreal and the Port are where many of the historic sites are located, but there are also trendy boutique stores in the Mile End and Le Plateau-Mont Royal neighborhoods. The metro makes it easy to jump back and forth between each neighborhood.



CITY HALL

Built between 1872 to 1878 this building is the seat for the local government in Quebec. The inside was ruined by a fire in 1922 where many of the historic records were lost. They decided to re-build an entirely new building based on the city hall in Tours, France. It reopened in 1926. It is also home to the Montreal Mayor and the City Council.

Montreal, Canada

NOTRE-DAME BASILICA

A group of Roman Catholics arrived in Montreal in 1657. They received the title to the land six years later and ruled until 1840. They dedicated the site to the Holy Name of Mary and built the Notre-Dame cathedral in 1672. The interior was decorated from 1785 to 1795 and the facade was built in 1818. In the 19th century the church was too small for its congregants so a new one (the current one) was built which was the largest in North America at the time. Throughout the 1800s work was done inside and on the facade with the organ being the final item completed in 1891. The church has been home to many famous events including the state funeral of Canadian Hockey Legend Maurice "Rocket" Richard in 2000 and the wedding of Celine Dion in 1994. The Pope raised it to the status of minor basilica in 1982.



PLACE D'ARMES



Located across from the Notre-Dame Basilica. This square is home to the Maisonnette statue which was created in honor of Paul de Chomedey, the founder of Montreal. It was called the Place de Fabrique in 1693 and then renamed to the Place D'Armes in 1721 after military events held in the square. From 1781 to 1813 it was a hay and wood market. In 1863 the city bought the land and transformed it into a Victorian garden. During the Great Depression, the mayor of Montreal had public works project which brought a public restroom beneath the square in 1934. In 2009 the city renovated the square which brought the public restroom back to light. Originally, the statue in the center was of George III. However, in 1775 his head was destroyed as a way to protest the Quebec Act.

PORT OF MONTREAL



The port is used to ship goods and for cruise ships. It is the shortest direct route between the US Midwest and Europe. The docks were originally built in 1830, and the government has dredged the channel to increase its depth. This enables larger ships to be able to pass through to the port. In 1962 the government decided to use icebreakers to keep access between Montreal and Quebec City available through the port. Montreal is an inland city, but boats can access the ocean through the St. Lawrence River. The port is a freshwater port, and the water consists of runoff from the great lakes.



CLOCK TOWER



The clock tower is located at the end of the Montreal port. It is also known as the Sailor's memorial clock. It marks the entrance to the port, and the Montreal Harbor Commission decided to build the clock tower in dedication of the seamen that died during World War I. It was constructed from 1919 to 1922. Montreal was known for its grain exports and the clock tower was next to a large system of silos that stored grain for shipment. In 1977, the city removed the grain silos as the role of the port changed. It is now a memorial site for the city. It is about a 30 to 45 minute walk from the main port area and there is a "secret" beach that people can access directly next to the clock tower. The inside and stairs are closed to the public,

Montreal, Canada

LE PLATEAU MONT ROYAL / MILE END



These two densely populated areas of the city are full of bars, restaurants, and vintage shops. A lot of the side streets are pedestrian only so you can expect to see people outside enjoying their day or evening. It is full of artistic expression and there are murals on walls of buildings throughout the area. We found ourselves walking here during the day and in the night as many restaurants and cool stores were here. It was really fun to window shop all the different stores. They have many different options from homeware stores to second hand sports jerseys. The area originally was home to many French immigrants, and now is home to the newer immigrants groups to the city including those from Portugal and Vietnam.

MOUNT ROYAL PARK

Technically a mountain in the middle of the city, they decided to build a park on top of it in 1876. There are many different entrances to the park. We entered the park from the Plateau neighborhood. The park is massive and there are many different running groups and people enjoying the park. We walked to the top which includes many stairs and takes about 20 minutes. You get great city views here from the top. We exited the park onto McGill's campus.



MCGILL UNIVERSITY



Considered one of the best (or the best) Canadian university. The campus is beautiful and awesome to walk around. It felt like we were at Hogwarts with historic looking architecture and lots of green spaces. Classes here are taught in English which surprised me and they have almost 40,000 total students. The school opened in 1821 and is named after James McGill who was a merchant from Scotland. When he died he left part of his estate to create the University. The school has some famous alumni which includes three Canadian Prime Ministers and 15 Nobel laureates.

MCCORD STEWART MUSEUM

The museum is dedicated to the social history of Canada. They have many important social artifacts to the city. We explored the exhibits of the Montreal Olympics in 1976, Celine Dion, and restaurant culture in the city. My favorite was the olympics exhibit. When the city hosted the games, many African nations boycotted it due to New Zealand's inclusion who had toured apartheid South Africa for rugby matches. The games also left the city in excessive debt. Mayor Jean Drapeau led the charge in securing the games for the city. The museum has a \$12 entry fee for visitors.



See You On the Next Stop on the Tour!