

Circus in the streets of Montreal

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It's a great mix: more circus than any child could dream up, using most of Montreal as a stage. And hardly any scary clowns.

No one does summer festivals quite like Montreal (even if it's just to make up for spending half the year under 9 feet of snow), and while everyone knows the city's international events for jazz, comedy and world cinema, the most visual of the bunch is probably the least known beyond Canada's borders.

The Montreal Cirque Festival (July 7-17) features circus artists from around the globe performing a range of acrobatics, dance, comedy and visual arts, with 60 shows inside seven main venues, as well as 90 free outdoor events in nine Montreal neighborhoods. And unlike the vaguely talented street

performers who populate most alternative festivals, these are top professionals — many of whom hone their skills practicing indoors for six months. www.montrealcompletementcirque.com/en

In the neighborhood: In downtown Quebec City during the same period is the massive Festival d'Été de Québec, a mostly music festival with more than 300 shows and, usually, more than a million spectators. www.infofestival.com

— Spud Hilton