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# 7 Reasons To Go To Montreal This Fall



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Travel

*I cover singular, luxury travel and food experiences around the world*

- f** The crowds are gone (and there was a massive number of visitors this summer), and in the cooler weather, appetites increase for sampling the
- 🐦** French/Quebécois/multicultural cuisine for which Montreal is famous. Vieux Montreal, the nearly 400 year old original part of town, has the
- in** charm, historic architecture, cobblestone streets and many good restaurants, galleries and shops to justify a visit on its own.

If you base at the [Hotel William Gray](#), a fusion of two 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings, one a former warehouse, the other a residence both built by Edward-William Gray, an interesting combination of sheriff and merchant. Restored to their original

exteriors with renovated interiors, the buildings opened as a hotel in 2016 in a location that couldn't be more central: its back door from the hotel restaurant opens onto Place Jacques Cartier, a lively square filled with cafes. Inside, the rooms are modern, minimal but cossetting and some have terraces overlooking the historic streets, Old Port and the Grand Roue, the city's ferris wheel. The hotel's rooftop café also shares the view, a reason it's particularly popular at sunset.



The view from the roof terrace of the Hotel William Gray. LAURIE WERNER

A short walk down the area's shop filled main thoroughfare Rue Saint- Paul (a worthwhile stop: [l'Empreinte Cooperative](#) for one of a kind clothing and accessories) brings you to McGill Street and the restaurant [Pastel](#) which opened in June.

The look is industrial with patchy exposed brick contrasted with light pink banquettes and the menu, modern Canadian showcasing the products of Quebec. The menu pares down to elements—bucatini, cacio e pepe, lobster emulsion; salmon, tomatoes, sherry vinegar-but the dishes that emerge from the open kitchen are more complex than they sound and all are vividly flavored.



Salmon with sherry vinegar and tomatoes at Restaurant Pastel. LAURIE WERNER

A few blocks in the other direction, just across the Place Jacques Cartier from the William Gray, [Le Club Chasse et Peche](#) isn't a new arrival but it routinely makes best of the city lists for its clubby setting, well-executed, elevated menu and top level service. Every dish, even ones that sound familiar, hits different notes than you would expect: seared scallops have an herby crunch from a puree of fennel and lemon confit, duck two ways is complemented by cauliflower and raspberries.



The sauteed scallops at Le Club Chasse et Peche. LAURIE WERNER

Another perennial favorite on best of Montreal lists is [Restaurant Toque!](#) (exclamation point theirs) due to chef Normand Laprise's ingredient perfectionism and sense of adventure. Whether it's beckoning a diner into his kitchen to see a massive just-caught tuna in the cold room to plating perfectly tender and rare lamb saddle with habanero pepper puree, chanterelles, eggplant, tomatoes and zucchini in a red wine sauce, his sheer enthusiasm is always on display.



The saddle of lamb with habanero pepper puree, chanterelles, eggplant, tomatoes and zucchini in red wine sauce Restaurant Toque! LAURIE WERNER

To get an overview of the food scene in the neighborhood, it's helpful to walk with a guide from [VDM Food Tours](#). They can customize by interest (I wasn't up for poutine, Quebec's famous mélange of French fries, cheese curds and brown gravy, for instance) and so instead we went after pates and cheese at [Marche de la Vilette](#), pastries at [Christian Faure](#), maple syrup in all of its varieties and condiments at [Delices Erable et Cie](#), Portuguese specialties such as croquettes and egg tarts at [Cantinho de Lisboa](#) among others.



The macarons at Maison Christian Faure. LAURIE WERNER



To get a taste of another Montreal specialty, smoked meat (cured and spiced brisket) it's best to go up to Boulevard Saint-Laurent and [Schwartz's](#), the place that made the meat famous. If the line is too long, as it often is, some duck across the street to [Main Deli Steak House](#). Bagels, another city specialty but smaller, softer and sweeter than New York's, are the subject of an intense rivalry between [St- Viateur](#) and [Fairmount](#), whose shops are open 24 hours a day farther north in the Mile End neighborhood. (The William Gray comes down on the side of St. Viateur; guests can try their bagels at breakfast.)



The smoked meat at Schwartz's. LAURIE WERNER

While in the area for food exploration, it's worth walking up several blocks of Boulevard Saint-Laurent to admire the massive street art paintings on buildings created for this year's [Mural Festival](#).



One of the street art paintings around Boulevard Saint Laurent. LAURIE WERNER

Back in  
Vieux



A Cite Memoire projection on the walls of a Vieux Montreal building. LAURIE WERNER

Montreal, even more animated images are projected on buildings as part of the project [Cite Memoire](#) that tells the history of the city through its characters. Syncing with the app, you can follow a circuit or simply look up the story of an image you've happened upon, as I did walking down Rue Saint Paul and looking into the alleyways. At this time of year, the projections are up between dusk and 11 PM on Fridays and Saturdays through the end of December. One looked positively ghostly, perfect for Halloween. Another, showing monumental waves, deals with no less than the creation of the world.

*I've been covering luxury/experiential travel and food for the last 20 years, for Forbes since 2004 and previously for Departures. I'm also currently contributing to the Robb Report and Centurion.*

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