

Hot Spots

Montreal is home to several hot spots, with great restaurants and nightclubs crammed into the strips, a city of over three million people on an island in the St. Lawrence river (tenth longest in the world) and surrounds a forested mountain named Mt. Royal. The city is also a mere two hour train ride from historic Quebec City to the east or Canada's national capital Ottawa to the west. The city is also about two hours from the American border and a two hour flight from New York City, Chicago, Boston and Detroit. The great part about Montreal is that they are all easily accessible and within reasonable distance from one another whether you are driving, walking or taking the metro subway. During the summer months these are all literally within walking distance of one another and center mostly round downtown Montreal. At the very least, the clean and safe metro system will be able to drop you off just blocks from the life of the party. This is a city of opposites: the modern dance capital of North America, the gay capital of Canada, a world cosmopolitan center, and home to an absolutely legendary sex industry. Montreal is known for appealing to all tastes – whether you are looking for a raunchy night out or class all the way, Montreal is the place to be! Just remember though that the only place to buy liquor after 11pm any night of the week is going to be the bar, Quebec law prohibits alcohol sales after this time; although they have very lax public drinking laws as you'll soon read... Here are the best areas to party if you are coming in for a visit:

St. Laurent

This is where the hottest supper clubs, most expensive restaurants and biggest clash of nightclubs can be found. Running from the world-renown St. Catherine Street up ten or twelve blocks, St. Laurent is crowded and lively. Every day of the week there are masses of people moving up and down the street, but on weekends the road is a traffic jam with party goers and poor locals just trying to get home through all the mess. The place is also among the best shopping strips in Montreal with local designer boutiques – the stores are a mid-range price shopper's dream. Every storefront along St. Laurent is of interest, either a small designer boutique, nightclub, restaurant or coffee shop. Top this off with an international magazine and cigar shop and St. Laurent lacks nothing.

The restaurants have a good range in price, there are expensive supper clubs and cheap all night restaurants serving Lebanese, Thai, Vietnamese, Italian, pizza, tacos, falafel – you name it. Montreal is world famous for its poutine – a plate of fries covered in cheese curds and gravy, along with other ingredients depending on the place – and the best place to get this is always *Frit Alors* (3497 St. Laurent; \$5-\$10), with locations all over the city including right in the middle of St. Laurent. The place is known for its fries, with dozens of choices in terms of poutine recipes and special sauces for your fries (absolutely a must see). St. Laurent is also home to *Swchartz's* (3895 St. Laurent; \$5-\$10), the best place to get Montreal's other famous dish – the Montreal smoked meat sandwich. Business men from New York City fly in all the time just to lunch at this place, so you know it has to be good (trust me, it is).

The nightclubs range from great little pubs to dozens of clubs with a line two blocks down the street. These lines get so big they slow down traffic on Saturday nights in the summer. 24 hour coffee shops are another emblem of Montreal, although a 2006 law has now forbidden indoor smoking (something Montreal used to be famous for), and St. Laurent has plenty of these. If you are looking for something a little quieter, St. Laurent also offers several cobble stone side streets that are dotted with very nice, mid-range restaurants, smaller pubs and ice cream parlors. Among these Duluth Avenue and Roy Street are the quieter ones, with great ethnic cuisine and vegetarian haunts. Prince Arthur Street is the busiest and the most fun, cut off to traffic the restaurants pour out into the street in the summer with roped off portions turned into summer patios open until well after midnight.

On the South end of St. Laurent you will run into the *Just for Laughs* (2111 St. Laurent) comedy venue and museum. This venue is among the best in the world, and host to the largest comedy festival in the world the *Just for Laughs festival* every July. The busiest part of the strip is just three blocks north of St. Catherine Street and at the nexus of the two is a large indoor shopping complex for high end shoppers and is just two blocks east of the *Contemporary Art Museum* (185 St. Catherine Street West) of Montreal and the *Place des Arts* (175 St. Catherine Street West) complex which is home to the Montreal

Opera, Symphony, Ballet and the top modern dance companies in North America. On the far north end of St. Laurent, the street becomes a part of Montreal's Little Italy and on the furthest southern end is Montreal's China town. The entire distance from China town to Little Italy is probably about a fifteen minute drive or two hours stroll, however the bulk of the action is near the south end and is all about fifteen minutes walking distance from each other. Little Italy is always a happening place, especially along Bernard Street – home to many small bars and great Italian food. At the southernmost end of St. Laurent is the Old Port section, about a twenty minute walk for the bulk of the action.

St. Denis and Mt. Royal

St. Denis Street is only eight blocks east of St. Laurent Street. The easiest way of getting there is along the cobble stone street Prince Arthur as described in the St. Laurent section. After about five blocks down Prince Arthur in that direction, there is a large park with a wonderful stone pool and fountain that runs all summer taking up about four square blocks. On the other side of that park, which is completely safe even at night, is St. Denis. Also known for its shopping, the action at St. Denis runs over a larger area of the street and is separated by about three blocks of shopping and restaurants.

The shopping here is a bit cheaper although the stores are more alternative. This is the French area of town so all of the bookstores are in French, but one can still get by in English very well. The south end of the strip is dotted more with hot spot restaurants and a few smaller nightclubs. There are no supper clubs on St. Denis but the strip is no less busy. St. Denis also intersects with St. Catherine Street eight blocks east of where St. Catherine intersects with St. Laurent and is the entry point to what is affectionately called the Gay Village. This end of St. Denis is within striking distance of Montreal's hottest after-hours clubs which are mostly along St. Catherine Street at its easternmost end.

St. Denis is home to a French movie theatre and some more mainstream shopping in the south. St. Denis has some very interesting restaurants, including one of the best Ethiopian restaurants in eastern Canada called *Abiata* (3435 St. Denis; \$25-\$35) on the

corner of the St. Louis Park and St. Denis. If you prefer something more authentically Montreal, there is a great all chocolate restaurant called *Juliet et Chocolate* (1615 St. Denis; \$15-\$25) right in the middle of the southern hotspot too. St. Denis is a bit quieter than St. Laurent and a bit cheaper too, but the action is more spread out so you may end up walking about twenty minutes between the two hot spots. The northern end of the St. Denis hot spots is near the nexus of St. Denis and Mt. Royal Street. These two streets along with St. Catherine Street and St. Laurent form a square around which it takes about an hour and a half to walk but which is completely dotted with restaurants, cafes and clubs.

Mt. Royal Street runs for much longer than either St. Laurent or St. Denis and has in general more restaurants and bars than either one, but it is out of the way and much less busy. You may have to walk a ways in between establishments during an evening of revelry, but it is far more authentically Quebec. The street runs from the top of the mountain down parallel to the north of St. Catherine Street (about a half hour's walk north, five minutes by car). The street crosses both St. Laurent two blocks north of the hot spot and then across St. Denis right at the tip of its northern hotspot – check out the restaurant *Bayou Brazil* (4552 St. Denis; \$15-\$25) for an extraordinary mix of Cajun and Brazilian cuisine right on the corner of Mt. Royal and St. Denis. The street continues on though for quite a few blocks with increasingly French culture in its shops and bars.

Crescent Street and St. Catherine Street

St. Catherine Street is the most well known of Montreal hot spots. The strip runs a very long ways and is a lot like Times Square in New York City or Young Street in Toronto. To walk from one end of this commercial street to the other, just the hip parts with restaurants and bars (and strip clubs galore!) would take about two hours continuously. The street is really something to see. Most never see the far west end of the street with the highest end fashion in Montreal in the middle of Montreal's Westmount district. This is about twenty minutes further than most people make it.

The furthest west that most people go is Crescent Street. This small strip of about three blocks at the intersection of St. Catherine Street is a college hangout with dozens of bars that go deep into the city blocks and second story restaurants. Here is where a lot of the best pubs in Montreal sit, and the place is as packed as St. Laurent on the weekends. One of the best little cafes in the city *Paris Café* (1333 St. Catherine St. West; \$5-\$10) is on the corner of St. Catherine and Crescent, so stop in if you are looking for a nice cup of coffee. Crescent is one block away from Concordia University – one of the four major universities in the city, making it quite the university town – and is quite close to another two of the big universities.

Crescent is known for some of its restaurants, but really what you are looking at here is pubs and smaller nightclubs. Every club in Montreal plays Electronica in addition to the latest tracks, a lot though are really rave oriented. To hear some good rock n' roll, these pubs are your best bet. A little further east up St. Catherine is Peel Street, with one of the cheapest pubs in Montreal. *Peel Pub* (1196 Peel Street) is about the only thing on this street, but it is well known among locals as a great place to get cheap drinks at the start of the evening. This is the English part of town so don't worry if you don't speak a word of French.

Just south on Peel is the *Bell Center* (1260 De la Gauchetiere) where all the really big concerts are and where the legendary Montreal Canadiens hockey club plays its home games. If you are looking for a real taste of Canada, try to catch a game in the winter season. Drinking in public is a way of life in Montreal. Whereas in the rest of Canada drinking in the street is very cracked down upon, in Montreal drinking is not frowned upon or ticketed as long as it isn't out of a glass bottle. At the St. Patrick's Day parade every year down St. Catherine Street, the entire strip is lined with happy revelers drinking their beer from aluminum cans as the police just walk idly by.

Just past Peel is the biggest shopping complex in Montreal, which is entirely indoors. Four floors along the north side of the street for four blocks running all the way up to the next city street and across again in some places. With hundreds of stores, this is where

the more traditional retail places are. On the south side of the street though, there are still very expensive designer stores and jewelers with marked up prices. This is also where the infamous strip clubs of Montreal begin. For about a forty minute walk, pictures of naked women are plastered around the insides of doorways as barkers for the clubs are out in the street trying to pull you in. Expect to have to grease the bouncer about twenty dollars to get in, in addition to cover charge, the bouncer will tell you how much without you asking. This is because in Montreal... full contact stripping is the norm. Beyond that, for a fee... You pay the bouncer to look the other way, no matter what you plan to do in there!

The number one strip club in the city, although there are others with better reputations (*Wanda's* [1310 Maisonneuve West] has the best reputation, just up from St. Catherine on De la Montaigne), is *Super Sexe* (696 St. Catherine Street West). You can't miss it, you won't miss it. In front is a massive neon sign about two stories high and twenty meters wide with a naked superhero and the name of the club in bright red and yellow lights. It really is something to see... as you progress down the strip there are a few other things before it gets really seedy. McGill College Street intersects with St. Catherine about four blocks up to the east from Peel and leads up to McGill University (the most important university in Montreal, one of the best schools in Canada). This little strip has a few nice restaurants but isn't that special for any other reason than it marks the far end of the underground shopping complex.

There is access to one amazing nightclub – one of the best in the country – from this strip. South, down from St. Catherine along McGill College, and across the commercial block is a skyscraper which is topped by a nightclub with a patio that looks over the entire city. 737 (200-1 Place Ville-Marie) is not always known for its music, depends on the year, but its restaurant is great and the club during the summer is truly an experience. The massive roof top patio with outdoor bar is literally taller than almost every other building around it, packed with the hippest crowd in Montreal. The *Place des Arts* area along St. Catherine can be tame at times, however during the *Montreal Jazz Festival*, *International Film Festival*, *Nuit Blanche*, *Just for Laughs* and other world famous

festivals, the whole section of the city is shut down and masses of thousands pour into St. Catherine Street for live music and make-shift restaurants

As you progress down St. Catherine some of the more obvious and graphic strip clubs line the street until you come upon the *Place des Arts* center mentioned earlier in the St. Laurent section. Just before it is Bleury Street which can take you up to a few nice, small pubs and is the corner on which the French music video television channel is stationed with its on air shows done live, street level, in front of the big window. Bleury Street is specifically home to a great little bar that is the hang out for small local Electronic production companies called *Vinyl* (2109 Bleury Street). Three blocks up the street is also home to the city's most popular breakfast place, with a half hour line up nearly every morning, called *Chez Cora* (3465 Parc Avenue; \$10-\$15).

In front of *Place des Arts* is one of the best sushi places in Canada called *Sushi Shop* (170 St. Catherine Street West). This is one of many in the chain around Montreal, but the most accessible from the various strips. Its brown rice sushi and sushi to go is perfect for a mid-evening snack. Between here and St. Denis is a long strip of cheap restaurants, discount shops and strip clubs. It is safe to walk through and the people aren't creepy, however the décor is obviously, well... a few of the really nice rock venues (*Metropolis* [59 St. Catherine St. East] is the best, known for its eclectic choice in live acts and major concerts) are through this area and one of the nicest nightclubs in town called *Opera* (32 St. Catherine West).

By the time you get to St. Denis, you are now entering the Gay Village. Here is where all the good after hours venues are, packed every night however the rave scene has suffered some in recent years. The restaurants are good, the strip clubs become kink shops and the international rainbow flag is draped just about everywhere. The gay scene in Montreal is one of the best in the world, with dozens of great clubs that anyone can enjoy. The really good Electronica is of course down in this area, although in Montreal it can be heard anywhere. If you are coming down for one of the world renown mega-raves held here in Montreal, tickets are usually on sale in this area. And if you are looking for cheaper

men's clothing, this is the place to be – although you are now in an area where it is common to run into people who don't speak English.

Old Montreal/ The Port and Isle St. Helene

Montreal's old port is about twenty minutes down the street from St. Denis, St. Laurent and Peel Street. After all, Montreal is located on an island in the middle of Canada's major commercial river. You can take a cruise down to Quebec City from here, but the area itself is very hip. Right down along the river is a major tourist area, filled with expensive restaurants and very cool nightclubs. The area spreads itself through about seven blocks along the port and north three blocks. This is the Old Montreal, with cobble stone streets and horse carriages. The shops are geared towards tourists, but some fashion is available.

The Old Port is most happening during the day, with its main center filled with buskers in the summer. The Science center is along the port with an Imax screen, and in the winter there is late night skating. For restaurants, the best is *Jarden Nelson* (407 Place Jacques-Cartier), known for its crepes and other foods. The place sits in the middle of a beautiful courtyard strewn with vines and offers live jazz music every night of the week. Nightclubs within striking range of here are well known but sometimes difficult to find. *W Hotel* (901 Victoria Square) is just off the port and is perhaps the most exclusive. St. Paul Street is the major strip for pubs and restaurants, the crowded cobble stone street is home to some of the best French music in the city.

Just across the river is Isle St. Helene, home to the old Six Flags theme park *La Ronde* (22 Chemin MacDonald, Isle St. Helene) and many different festivals. In the summer there is a rave every Sunday afternoon on the island which overlooks a vista of the entire Montreal skyline that is an absolutely stunning experience. The portside itself though has major festivals all year round, where they shut down the area for outdoor raves.

Supper Clubs

Originating in the New York and Miami club scenes, these new venues are the hottest thing going in Montreal today. Featuring stellar gastronomy from the best chefs in eastern Canada, the menus are a little pricey but the food is worth the price. Dinner is typically served until ten o'clock before the floor opens up to dancing and the best DJs in the city start to crank out the music. Bottle service is fully available and at some places ordering bottles is almost expected of its patrons. Here is a list of the top supper clubs in Montreal 2007:

The Globe

One of the hottest spots in Montreal for thirteen years, this place is one of the celebrity hangouts for movie stars filming on set in the city. As one of the top filming locations anywhere in the world and the home of one of the best fashion scenes anywhere, don't be surprised if you look over to the other table and see some familiar faces... However there are a lot of supper clubs in this area, the competition sometimes raises the bar but other times the establishment can get complacent.

www.restaurantglobe.com

1-514-284-3823

3455 St. Laurent

Med

A good supper club right across the street from *The Globe*, this place always has a line up so call for reservations. Probably the busiest of the clubs, it doesn't have the really expensive bottles that other have but the food is better than at *Globe* and the music is always really great.

www.medgrill.com

514-844-0027

3500 St. Laurent

Sofia

Another St. Laurent supper club, this one isn't very busy and the food is awful. The service is pretty bad too, and slow. There was a fire here in 2005 and they've newly renovated, but business has yet to really pick up. I went here and would not recommend it.

www.sofiagrill.com

514-284-0092

3600 St. Laurent

Buona Notte

Right next to *Med*, this is the biggest and hottest of the supper clubs, known for its fashionista crowd and its beautiful people. This is the best supper club in town according to locals, although you'll have to spend a pretty penny to keep up with this crowd of local success stories.

www.buonanotte.com

3518 St. Laurent

514-848-0644

Time

I went here for a New Year's Day Tiesto concert in 2007 and the place is definitely impressive. It may take some time to get in if you are not willing to put down a thousand dollars on a table (two bottle minimum during major events for bottle service) and the bottles can get very pricey (most expensive here is \$5000 for champagne, mid range would be \$900 for Johnny Walker blue, low end Grey Goose vodka for a little under \$300). The cuisine is admittedly very contrived for such an establishment, but the atmosphere rocks and the staff is *absolutely gorgeous*. However *Time* is very out of the way if you aren't driving, although the metro stops quite close to it. This place is an all night kind of place near the port, so if you are looking to fit in more than one place you may need to look elsewhere.

www.timesupperclub.com

514-392-9292

997 St. Jacques Street

Pubs

Sir Winston Churchill

This is the largest pub on the Crescent strip and the most well advertised. It is part of a complex with a nightclub above it and restaurant adjoined. Definitely a party in here and filled with college aged kids looking to have some fun. If you like busy pubs, go here. If you like something special, go somewhere else.

1459 Crescent Street

Sainte-Elizabeth Pub

The best pub in town in terms of ambiance, the high walled courtyard is cozy and the people are very good looking. A bit out of the fray, this St. Catherine Street pub is right by the festivities during *Just for Laughs* and the place is really something special.

1412 St. Elizabeth Street

Peel Pub

The cheapest beer in town, packed with every kind of person you would expect in a major downtown watering hole. Sometimes considered a major meat market, this place is honestly a great place to go for a little bit of merry making. Pitchers of long island ice tea, beer and sangria at the most reasonable prices in town alongside the best pub food in the city make it a great place to start out the night.

1196 Peel Street

St-Sulpice

This is where the in-crowd goes after a hard days work, it is a McGill hang out with a great patio. Right in the heart of the southern St. Denis hot spot, some people say this section reminds more of Paris than any other place in Montreal.

1680 St. Denis Street

James Rooster Pub

This favorite is just off the port and located in a centuries old stone grotto. In from gated courtyard, this place has the best food out of any pub in the city (Peel pub grub aside) and a great selection of beer.

3 De La Commune Street West

Nightclubs

737

Simply put... go here at least once. The crowd is often pretty good, although it can be a bit young at times. However partying on the roof of one of the highest skyscrapers in Montreal totally makes up for this – the view and the experience is stunning. If this is one of the first bars you ever go to, nothing will stand up in comparison. They have an adjacent restaurant which is pretty good. The music at 737 really depends on the year, but is never bad. To get it you have to line up in the basement and wait for the elevator.

Very cool place, unique.

<http://www.promoclub737.com/>

514-397-0737

200-1 Place Ville-Marie (Located on Rene-Levesque Boulevard)

Opera

A new nightclub in the Montreal scene and the inside is gorgeous. The music is pretty good, the drinks are reasonable and the people are great. With large white masks adorning the walls and a great assortment of special effects, this is one of the best clubs in Montreal no matter what you are looking for.

www.operamtl.com

514-842-2836

32 St. Catherine West

House

A new club in a legendary venue, this place is home to great electronica and a great crowd of people. A bit out of the way, up St. Laurent from Mt. Royal, it is one of the best bars around – beautiful interior is also a plus.

www.housenightclub.ca

514-286-9986

4521 St. Laurent

Tokyo

Upscale bar is not as busy as it used to be, but still puts on descent hip hop music. However this place can kick into high gear at a moments notice and has a great reputation, keep it in mind if you are in the area.

3709 St. Laurent

Tribe Hyperclub

A newer venue down by the port, this place has some of the best DJs in town and quite an exclusive crowd.

390 St. Jacques West

Rouge

This place like many along St. Laurent has a line around the block, but it is one of the more impressive ones. While others like *Orchid* and *Ballroom* seem hip but end up quite lame, *Rouge* is worth the wait.

7 Prince Arthur Street

Go Go Lounge

A great little place which is a bit cheesy, but the décor is something you don't see very many places and the martinis will knock you out of the park.

3682 St. Laurent

House of Jazz

If you are looking for some great ribs and the best live jazz in downtown Montreal, go here before you head out for an evening of partying with Montreal's hottest and most exclusive.

2060 Aylmer Street

Lodge

For some reason all of the locals go here, and the hottest crowd always shows up. The music is iffy though and the place is packed to the brim. If your taste in music is a little more mainstream though, you will have a blast.

3612 St. Laurent

Shed Café

Not a supper club per say, but it has a restaurant open during the day that is very, very good and not very expensive. They feature a build your own salad option on their menu.

The music is good at night and the place isn't too crowded.

3515 St. Laurent

Mile End Bar

A local favorite that is very out of the way, if you are looking for a more authentic Montreal bar you will not find it.

5322 St. Laurent

Café Chaos

This St. Denis bar is often home to great drum n' bass music, sometimes home to the cream of the punk scene, sometimes dead. Worth checking out if your in the area.

2031 St. Denis

Vatican

This place in the heart of Crescent Street is probably the best club along this particular strip. Definitely a good place to go if St. Laurent is too far away for you on this particular evening. Particularly good...

1432 Crescent Street

After-hours Clubs

Millennium Complex

This place is not near any of the strips, but is the best after hours in town outside of the Gay Village. It is housed in a complex with a nightclub and restaurant, so one can really make an entire day of it out here.

7500 Viau Street

Stereo

This club has long held the title of best after-hours club in the city, and it ranks among the very best in the world (this is not an exaggeration, it really is among the best). Right in the heart of the Gay Village, the residents at this place include part owner David Morales, Chus, Hector Romero, Danny Torrence, DJ Vibe and Victor Calderone.

www.stereo-nightclub.com

848 St. Catherine Street East

Circus

The French after-hours club is open most days of the week and is very clean. Not the best after-hours club in Montreal, but it puts those in most cities to shame. Also in the Gay Village and it is half a block from *Stereo*.

915 St. Catherine Street East

Montreal's Best Kept Secrets

Bal en Blanc

This is one of the largest raves in the world, and brings in the world's top DJs. Held every Easter Sunday at the *Palais de Congres*, come be one of the tens of thousands to experience one of the most spectacular annual raves ever imagined.

Café Santropol

This vegetarian restaurant is to die for.

3990 St. Urbain Street

International Fireworks Festival

For a string of weeks over June and July, the Montreal fireworks festival attracts the world's very top fireworks designers. They can be seen from the port and are very impressive from there but that's not the secret... At the *La Ronde* theme park every summer they set up about a thousand seats right along the lake in the middle of the park.

From the middle of that lake they release half hour long displays to music just a few hundred yards in front of you. These shows are designed for the judges sitting right in the middle of you and therefore this show was literally created for you in your seat as you watch with jaw dropping. You can feel the explosions in your chest, the heat of the explosions coming raining down on you. With the most expensive seats there is free wine and beer, and this spectacle is among the most impressive things I have ever seen in my entire life.

Abiata

The best restaurant in Montreal is this Ethiopian paradise. Out of this world.

3435 St. Denis

La Iguana

This restaurant is incredible, a Mexican menu with the best margaritas and sangria in town.

51 Roy Street East