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The Best **Full-Day** **Tours**



Previous page: Stained-glass windows inside the Oratoire St-Joseph.

Center your first day in Montréal around the sites and atmosphere of the oldest and most historic part of the city: **Vieux-Montréal**. The city was born here in 1642, down by the river at Pointe-à-Callière. Its southern boundary is Vieux-Port (Old Port), a waterfront promenade that provides welcome breathing room for cyclists, in-line skaters, and picnickers, and it extends north to rue St-Antoine, once the “Wall Street” of Montréal. Read up ahead of time at the neighborhood’s official website, www.vieux.montreal.qc.ca. **START:** Take the Métro to the Place d’Armes station and head down rue St-Sulpice to the river.

1 ★★★ kids Vieux-Port. Montréal’s Old Port has been central to its commercial and economic status over the last 200 years, but the port was a dreary area of town until it got a face-lift in the 1990s. Now the converted waterfront and its piers, or quays, are a playground year-round for families, strolling couples, and outdoor athletes. In winter, ice skating rinks are set up here. The popular children’s science museum, **Centre des Sciences de Montréal**, is located on Quai King Edward (p 58, bullet **1**). To really immerse yourself, rent a bike from **ÇaRoule/Montréal on Wheels** (27 rue de la Commune est; ☎ 877/866-0633 or 514/866-0633; www.caroulemontreal.com) and head out on the path along the adjacent Lachine Canal. There’s a summer tram called **La Balade** that scoots back and forth the length of the port, and cruise companies leave from here on daytime trips along the St. Lawrence River. ⌚ **At least 2 hr. Information booth is at the Centre des Sciences de Montréal on Quai King Edward.** ☎ 800/971-7678 or 514/496-7678. www.quaysoftheoldport.com. Tram (May–Sept) C\$5 adults, C\$3.50 seniors and children 13–17, C\$3 children 12 and under. Métro: Champ-de-Mars, Place d’Armes, or Square Victoria.

2 ★★★ Rue St-Paul. The main street of Vieux-Montréal (in English, Old Montréal) is full of restaurants,



Locals love to hang out at Vieux-Port on sunny days.

shops, bars, art galleries, and historical venues. Start at the eastern end, near the **Marché Bonsecours** (350 rue St-Paul est). Built in the mid-1800s and first used as the Parliament of United Canada, Bonsecours market is now home to restaurants, art galleries, and boutiques featuring Québécois products. As you travel west on rue St-Paul you’ll pass through Place Jacques-Cartier, the neighborhood’s main square. At the northern end of the plaza you’ll see the green turreted **Hôtel de Ville**, Montréal’s City Hall. In recent years, many decent art galleries have sprung up



Montréal's charming and historic rue St-Paul is home to numerous galleries, shops, restaurants, and bars.

alongside the loud souvenir shops on the street. Note that street numbers will get lower as you approach boulevard St-Laurent, which is the north-south thoroughfare that divides Montréal into its east and west halves. Numbers will start to rise again as you move onto rue St-Paul ouest (west). 🕒 *At least 1 hr.*
Métro: Champ-de-Mars.

It started out as an earthy bakery painted in reds, pinks, and gold curlicues, but now 🍷 **Olive et Gourmand** is a full-fledged cafe offering up perfect croissants, scones, and interesting sandwich compositions such as smoked trout with capers, sun-dried tomatoes, spinach, and herbed cream cheese. It's a pity that this eminently appealing spot is not open Sunday, Monday, or evenings. **351 rue St-Paul ouest.** ☎️ 514/350-1083. www.oliveetgourmando.com. \$.

4 ★★★ **Pointe-à-Callière.** A first visit to Montréal should include a stop at this Museum of Archaeology and History. Evidence of the area's many inhabitants—from Amerindians to French trappers to

Scottish merchants—was unearthed during archaeological digs here, the site of Montréal's original colony. Artifacts are on view in display cases set among the ancient building foundations and burial grounds below street level. After starting with the 16-minute multimedia show in an auditorium that actually stands above exposed ruins of the earlier city, you can wind your way through the subterranean complex until you find yourself in the former **Customs House**, where there are more exhibits and a well-stocked gift shop. 🕒 *1½ hr.* **350 Place Royale.**

☎️ 514/872-9150. www.pacmuseum.qc.ca. Admission C\$14 adults, C\$10 seniors, C\$8 students, C\$6 children 6–12, free for children 5 and under. *Late June to late Aug Mon–Fri 10am–6pm, Sat–Sun 11am–6pm; Sept to mid-June Tues–Fri 10am–5pm, Sat–Sun 11am–5pm. Métro: Place d'Armes.*

At the elegant 🍷 **Restaurant Bonaparte**, adroit service is provided by schooled pros who manage to be knowledgeable without being stuffy. Highlights have included snails and oyster mushrooms in

The Marche Bonsecours dominates the skyline of Vieux-Montréal.





The breathtaking interior of the Basilique Notre-Dame de Montréal.

phyllo dough, Dover sole filet with fresh herbs, and mushroom ravioli seasoned with fresh sage. Look for the table d'hôte specials for the best deal: A fixed-price meal of three courses, for instance, runs C\$16 to C\$23 at lunch and C\$28 to C\$42 at dinner. 447 rue St-François-Xavier. ☎ 514/844-4368. www.bonaparte.com. \$\$\$.

6 ★★ Basilique Notre-Dame de Montréal. This magnificent structure was designed in 1824 by James O'Donnell, an Irish-American Protestant architect from New York—who was so profoundly moved by the experience of creating this basilica that he converted to Catholicism after its completion. The impact is understandable. Of Montréal's hundreds of churches, Notre Dame's interior is the most stunning, with a wealth of exquisite details, most of them carved from rare woods that have been delicately gilded and painted. The basilica has evening light and sound shows, which are a far cry from the typical Sunday service. ⌚ 30 min. 110 rue Notre-Dame ouest. ☎ 514/842-2925. www.basiliquenddm.org.

Basilica admission C\$7 adults, C\$4 children 7–17, free for children 6 and under and for those attending services. Light show C\$10 adults, C\$9 seniors, C\$5 children 17 and under. Mon–Fri 9am–4pm, Sat 9am–3:30pm, Sun 12:30–3:30pm; light shows Tues–Thurs 6:30pm, Fri 6:30 and 8:30pm, Sat 7 and 8:30pm. Métro: Place d'Armes.

The impressive Hôtel de Ville, overlooking Place Jacques-Cartier, is especially picturesque at night.



The Best in Two Days



After soaking in the sights and sounds and tastes of the oldest section of the city on day one, spend day two in the heart of Montréal's business district. Here you'll find the bustle and energy of a city at work, and some of Montréal's grand promenades and cultural offerings. **START: McGill station, and walk north 2 blocks on rue University to rue Sherbrooke.**



Palatial buildings abound along rue Sherbrooke—many were once residences of Montréal's wealthiest citizens.

1 ★★ **kids** Rue Sherbrooke.

This broad boulevard is the heart of what's known as Montréal's "Golden Square Mile." This is where the city's most luxurious residences of the 19th and early 20th centuries were, and where the vast majority of the country's wealthiest citizens lived. (For a period of time, 79 families who lived in this neighborhood controlled 80% of

Canada's wealth.) Heading west on the street, the main campus of Canada's most prestigious school, **McGill University**, is on your right. Inside the campus is the well-regarded Redpath Museum, the oldest building in Canada (1882) built specifically as a museum. Some of the top downtown hotels are on this street, along with high-end restaurants and shops. Just past rue Stanley, take a peek at the Maison Alcan at no. 1188. It's now an office building that has nicely incorporated one of those 19th-century mansions into its late-20th-century facade. Step inside the lobby to see the results on the right. ⌚ **At least 15 min.**

2 ★★★ **Musee Beaux Arts.**

Montréal's grand Museum of Fine Arts, the city's most prominent museum, was Canada's first building designed specifically for the visual arts.

It's made up of the original neoclassical pavilion on the north side of Sherbrooke, a striking annex built in 1991 directly across the street, and, set to open in 2011, the adjacent Erskine and American Church, which is being converted into a pavilion of Canadian art. The



Artifact from the Egyptian collection at the Redpath Museum.

permanent collection is extensive, but many come for the temporary exhibitions, which can be dazzling. Past highlights have included the treasures of Catherine the Great, including her spectacular coronation coach, and a show celebrating John Lennon and Yoko Ono's anti-war Bed-In, which was held in 1969 at Montréal's Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth hotel. 🕒 **2 hr. 1339–1380 rue Sherbrooke ouest.** ☎ **514/285-2000.** www.mmfa.qc.ca. *Free admission to permanent collection.*

Temporary exhibitions C\$15 adults, C\$10 seniors, C\$7.50 students, free for children 12 and under, C\$30 family (1 adult and 3 children 16 and under, or 2 adults and 2 children 16 and under); half-price for adults Wed 5–8:30pm. Tues 11am–5pm, Wed–Fri 11am–9pm, Sat–Sun 10am–5pm. Métro: Guy-Concordia.

3 ★ Rue Crescent. Downtown's party central. Crescent's most northern block is stocked with boutiques and jewelers, but the next 2 blocks are a gumbo of terraced bars and dance clubs, inexpensive pizza joints, and upscale restaurants.

Newtown (no. 1476), **Sir Winston Churchill Pub** (no. 1459), **Hard Rock Cafe** (no. 1458), **Hurley's**

Irish Pub (no. 1225), and **Brutopia** (no. 1219) are among the venues that draw hundreds (and often thousands) to the street in the afternoons and evenings. The fun spills over onto nearby streets, with both **Maison du Jazz** (2060 rue Aylmer; ☎ 514/842-8656; www.houseofjazz.ca) and **Upstairs Jazz Bar & Grill** (1254 rue Mackay; ☎ 514/931-6808; www.upstairsjazz.com) presenting great music options. 🕒 **At least 30 min. See chapter 6 for venue details. Métro: Peel.**

Since moving downtown in 2008 from its original tiny venue in Plateau Mont-Royal, **4 🍷 La Montée** has spruced up and become a bit more refined. Curved white leather banquettes and a purple ceiling add pop to the beige and brown decor. Connections are original: bison cannelloni with foie gras cream, blood pudding and mushroom risotto, and beef short rib and tartare with “parsnip different ways,” for instance. Pricing is simple: C\$15 for one course, C\$55 for four courses, and C\$65 for seven courses. **1424 rue Bishop.** ☎ **514/289-9921.** www.lamontee.ca. \$\$\$\$.

Montréal's Musée Beaux Arts is home to over 30,000 works.





Rue Crescent is heart of Downtown Montréal's nightlife.

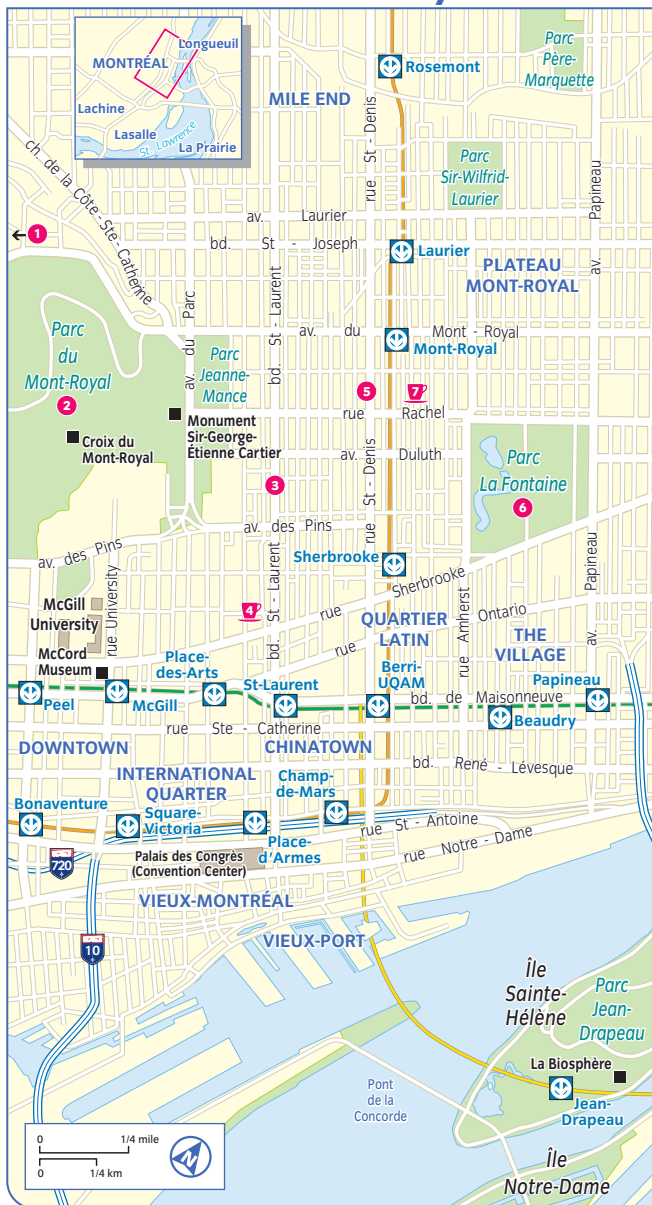
5 ★ Cathédrale Christ Church and La Baie. This Anglican cathedral, which is reflected in the shiny exterior of the pink-glassed postmodern Tour KPMG office tower nearby, stands in glorious Gothic contrast to the city's downtown skyscrapers. It's sometimes called the "floating cathedral" because of the many tiers of malls and corridors in the underground city beneath it and the way it was elevated on stilts during their construction. It's located on rue Ste-Catherine, the heart of the downtown shopping district. Just next door is the celebrated La Baie, a department store that was incorporated in Canada in 1670 as the Hudson's Bay Company. Its name was shortened to "The Bay" and then, after Québec language laws decreed French the lingua franca, transformed into "La Baie." 🕒 **30 min.** **Church:** 635 rue Ste-Catherine ouest. ☎ 514/843-6577. www.montrealcathedral.ca. **Free admission.** **La Baie:** 585 rue Ste-Catherine ouest. ☎ 514/281-4422. www.hbc.com. **Métro:** McGill.

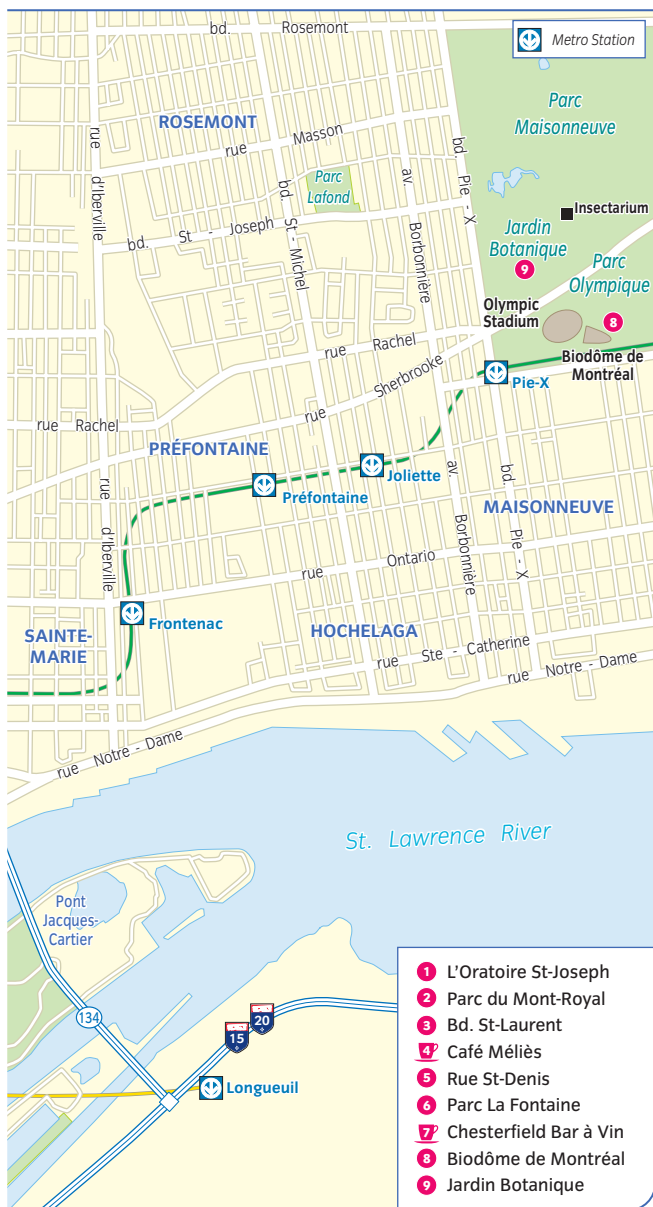
6 Le Commensal presents vegetarian fare buffet style, and you pay by weight—about C\$10 for an ample portion. Dishes include garbanzo curry, tofu with ginger sauce, salads, and so on. Beer and wine are available. Tables have white tablecloths, and a second-floor location at the corner of rue Ste-Catherine lets you watch the world go by. **1204 av. McGill College.** ☎ 514/871-1480. www.commensal.com. \$.

The Anglican Cathédrale Christ Church, set in the heart of downtown Montréal.



The Best in Three Days





The first two recommended days of sightseeing are focused around two relatively compact neighborhoods of the city. For the third day, pick and choose among some of the best parks and strolling areas north of the city's downtown. Like with any great city, people-watching and soaking up its outdoor spirit are as rewarding as visiting its cultural institutions.



Religious pilgrims flock to the L'Oratoire St-Joseph in search of miraculous healing.

1 ★ L'Oratoire St-Joseph. This enormous copper-domed structure is one of the most recognizable in Montréal, although to see it in person you'll need to trek to the northern side of Mont-Royal (the small mountain just north of downtown, from which the city derives its

name). Consecrated as a basilica in 2004, it came into being through the efforts of Brother André, a lay brother in the Holy Cross order who earned a reputation as a healer. By the time he had built a small wooden chapel in 1904 on the mountain, he was said to have performed hundreds of cures. He performed his work until his death in 1937. Many still visit in the hopes of a miracle, sometimes climbing the 99 steps on their knees. Others come to hear the 56-bell carillon, which plays Wednesday through Friday at noon and 3pm and Saturday and Sunday at noon and 2:30pm, all months but February. 🕒 **1 hr. 3800** *chemin Queen Mary (north slope of Mont-Royal).* ☎ **514/733-8211.** www.saint-joseph.org. *Admission and tours are free, but donations*

Picturesque Parc du Mont-Royal draws visitors year-round.



are requested. Open daily 7am–5:30pm (until 9pm May–Oct). Métro: Côte-des-Neiges.

2 ★★ Parc du Mont-Royal.

Renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted (1822–1903), who designed New York's Central Park, left his mark on Montréal in Parc du Mont-Royal (Royal Mountain Park). The 232m (761-ft.) peak for which the city is named provides Montréalers with a slew of options for recreational activities. Hikers and joggers trek the miles of paths that snake through the park, sunbathers and Frisbee tossers hang out near man-made Beaver Lake in summer, winter sports fans cross-country ski and go tobogganing, and shutterbugs snap panoramic photos from the Chalet du Mont-Royal's terrace at the crest of the hill. **Maison Smith** (1260 chemin Remembrance; ☎ 514/843-8240; www.lemontroyal.com), an information center on the road that runs between the park and the Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery to the north, has maps for hiking or birding. We offer a suggested walking tour on p 76. ⌚ *At least 2 hr. There are several entry points to the park, including at av. des Pins and rue Peel.* ☎ 514/843-8240. www.lemontroyal.com. Métro: Peel for the south side, Côte-des-Neiges for the north. Bus: #11 travels down chemin Remembrance.

3 ★★ Boulevard St-Laurent.

Also known as “the Main,” St-Laurent hums with off-beat boutiques and trendy restaurants, packing sidewalks with shoppers, students, and sightseers. Spend some time strolling, snacking, and people-watching your way along the boulevard, starting at rue Sherbrooke and heading north. When the sun goes down, the street becomes a 20-somethings’ playground—the



The view from the top of Mont-Royal is one of the best in the city.

dive bars and dance clubs here are immensely popular with the city's college undergrads. St-Laurent is the dividing line of the city: Addresses to its left are all on the west side, and to the right all on the east. ⌚ *At least 1½ hr. Bd. St-Laurent, north of rue Sherbrooke to av. du Mont-Royal.* Métro: St-Laurent.

The first block of boulevard St-Laurent north of rue Sherbrooke bristles with hipness and money.

4? **Café Méliès** is a lower-key café-lounge and can be good for a quick dinner, but people also drop in for bountiful breakfasts on the weekends, a midday meal such as arugula lobster salad, or simply an espresso or a glass of wine. Its electric-red decor can best be described as “space-age submarine”—there are portholes throughout. Méliès is open nearly round-the-clock. **3540 bd. St-Laurent.** ☎ 514/847-9218. www.cafemelies.com. \$\$\$.

5 ★★ Rue St-Denis. Parallel to boulevard St-Laurent and 8 short blocks to the east, rue St-Denis also runs the length of the Plateau Mont-Royal district. It is to Montréal what boulevard St-Germain is to Paris, with shopkeepers and people on the street more likely to speak just French here than on other major boulevards in town. It extends from the Quartier Latin straight north, with some of the most interesting blocks between rue Sherbrooke and av. du Mont-Royal. ⌚ **At least 1½ hr.** *Rue St-Denis, north of rue Sherbrooke to av. du Mont-Royal. Métro: Sherbrooke.*

6 ★ Parc La Fontaine. One of the city's oldest and most popular parks, and especially pretty and well used on its northern side. Illustrating the traditional dual identities of the city's populace, half the park is landscaped in the formal French manner, the other in the more casual English style. A small, picturesque lake is used for ice skating in winter, when snowshoe and cross-country trails wind through trees. In summer, these trails are well-used bike paths. ⌚ **1 hr.** *The park can be entered anywhere on its perimeter. Métro: Mont-Royal.*

There are a ton of great food possibilities in this area—food, after all, is one of the big reasons people gravitate in the Plateau in their free time.

7 **Chesterfield Bar à Vin** is a terrific new option. A wall of wine labels provides some of the decor, and windows open to the street in warm months. In the early evening, patrons tuck around tall tables on stools and try wines, Pinchos (small plates of food), and, occasionally, C\$10 lobsters. *See p 111.*

8 ★★ kids Biodôme de Montréal. A terrifically engaging attraction for children of any age, the delightful Biodôme houses replications of four ecosystems: a tropical rainforest, a Laurentian forest, the St. Lawrence marine system, and a polar environment. Visitors walk through each and hear the animals, smell the flora, and, except in the polar region, which is behind glass, feel the changes in temperature. The rainforest area is the most engrossing and includes golden lion tamarin monkeys that swing on branches only an arm's length away (only the bats, fish, penguins, and puffins are behind glass). It's next to

Biodôme and Stade Olympique were both built for the 1976 Summer Olympics and are now two of the top attractions in the city.





The captivating rainforest section of the Biodôme de Montréal.

the Stade Olympique (Olympic Stadium) in the Parc Olympique. ⌚ 2 hr. 4777 av. Pierre-de-Coubertin. ☎ 514/868-3000. www.biodome.qc.ca. Admission C\$16 adults, C\$12 seniors and students, C\$8 children 5–17, C\$2.50 children 2–4. Discount combination tickets available for Biodôme, Jardin Botanique, Insectarium, and Stade Olympique. Daily 9am–5pm (until 6pm from late June to Aug). Closed most Mon Sept–Dec. Métro: Viau.

9 ★★★ Jardin Botanique.

Montréal's sprawling 75-hectare (185-acre) botanical garden is home to 10 themed exhibition greenhouses. One houses orchids; another has tropical food and spice plants, including coffee, cashews, pineapples, and vanilla; and another features rainforest flora. In a special exhibit each spring, live butterflies flutter among the nectar-bearing plants, occasionally landing on visitors. Its **Chinese Garden** is a joint project of Montréal and Shanghai and incorporates pavilions, inner courtyards, ponds, and plants, while the serene **Japanese Garden** includes a tearoom where ancient ceremonies are performed, a stunning bonsai collection, and a Zen garden. Also on-site is the **Insectarium** (p 60, bullet 8), designed

especially for kids. ⌚ At least 2 hr. 4101 rue Sherbrooke est. (opposite Olympic Stadium). ☎ 514/872-1400. www.ville.montreal.qc.ca/jardin. Admission C\$16.50 adults, C\$12.50 seniors and students, C\$8.25 children 5–17, C\$2.50 children 2–4. Combination tickets available for Jardin Botanique, Insectarium, Biodôme, and Stade Olympique. Daily 9am–5pm (until 6pm May 15 to mid-Sept, until 9pm mid-Sept to Oct). Closed Mon Nov to mid-May. Métro: Pie-IX.

Penguins are one of the many species of animals that call the Biodôme home.



City of Festivals

Few cities in North America can rival Montréal when it comes to celebrations. Throughout the year, the city is home to some of the biggest and most heralded festivals in the world, and attending one can make for a very memorable vacation. Among the options to plan around: **Bal en Blanc Party Week**, a 5-day rave that draws an estimated 15,000 people (Apr); **Montréal Bike Fest**, which includes a nocturnal bike ride (Tour la Nuit) and the grueling Tour de l'Île, a 52km (32-mile) race around the island's rim (May); **Mondial de la Bière**, a 5-day beer festival featuring "courses" for earning a "Diploma in Beer Tasting" (June); and the city's signature event, the **Festival International de Jazz**, which for 11 days brings in huge acts and hosts 450 free outdoor performances, many right on downtown's streets and plazas (July). Book a hotel room well in advance if you're planning to visit for Jazz Fest or one of the bigger parties, or you may have to settle for some roadside motel in Vermont. For dates and more information, see "Festivals & Special Events" on p 156.

Travel Tip

In the summertime, a free shuttle bus takes visitors between the Biodôme, the Jardin Botanique and Insectarium, and the Stade

Olympique. It's possible to walk from site to site, but the shuttle is handy when it's hot, as it often is in summer. Schedules are available at all of the participating attractions. ●

Montréal's botanical gardens are among the largest and most beautiful in the world.

