

## Mr Hudson



### Montreal Travel Guide

David Durán

*Montréal est une belle ville.* And if you don't speak French, you will still do just fine there. There's something truly magical about Montreal, and it's not just the poutine. When there, it's as if you've been transported to another continent, as the city is unlike anywhere else in Canada. Located on the waterfront with a healthy mixture of historical as well as modern architecture, Montreal has a little bit of everything. Visitors shouldn't miss places like the Notre-Dame Basilica, where Celine Dion was married, or the cobblestone streets of Old Montreal (where the best poutine shops are located). But beyond the obvious, there's a lot more the city has to offer.

#### The best hotels in Montreal

A great place to start is the [Ritz-Carlton](#), reopened in 2015 with a fresh new look, yet with the classic elegance and service one would expect from a Ritz-Carlton property. For that fun living room hangout vibe, the [W Montreal](#) is the trendy option. A solid option where you might run into some musical acts during concert season is [Hotel Le Crystal](#), which happens to have an outstanding outdoor rooftop hot tub.

The [Hotel Le St-James](#), though, is a tough one to beat. This landmark property with its avant-garde style has impeccably detailed guest accommodations, each room and suite possessing its own personal charm. [Le Saint-Sulpice Hotel](#) is another decadent option, only offering suites, which they describe as

personal living spaces, decorated with the perfect mix of Old World and new, showcasing the beauty and character of Old Montreal, yet fitted and finished with amenities of today. And then there is [Hotel William Gray](#), Mr Hudson's choice for upscale boutique. With only 127 rooms and suites, located in the centre of Old Montreal, this property was carefully designed to not only be aesthetically appealing but ultra-convenient for guests, with an upmarket grill restaurant, a rooftop bar, a lobby bar, café and even a high-end retailer. Additionally, the hotel offers a multi-functional Living Room with library, pool table and music station, as well as a full-service spa with outdoor pool and state-of-the-art fitness centre.



William Gray

## Things to do in Montreal

If travelling with friends, or if you make friends easily, head down to the Old Port of Montreal for a one-of-a-kind private luxury yacht experience. [Asbolü Cruises](#) is the only company to offer this type of high-end service on a commercial vessel. With two yachts to choose from, depending on needs, the company can practically customise any type of experience one can dream of. From an intimate gathering for a sunset cruise to a full-on champagne-filled hot tub party cruise that lasts all day and night, they are pretty much open to satisfy the requests of their guests. Plus, there are no better views of Montreal than by out from the waters. Nearby to where the yachts dock is [Bota Bota](#), a floating spa. Here one can book spa services or just simply enjoy the extensive outdoor water circuits and pools. There's also a bar and restaurant to help make a day of it.

When it comes to nightlife, there's no shortage of places to go, but be weary of the touristy areas that can get congested with tonnes of foot traffic. Try venturing to St. Catherine West, as it's recently seen a surge of new brewpubs and noodle joints as well as lots of places with terraces added – Montreal is really big on outdoor space once the winter officially ends! For a more French nightlife experience, East End and Mile End is where one can find mostly French bars and trendy dining, as well as live music. Known as “foufs” by locals, [Foufounes Electriques](#) is the place for some of the best live music in the city, just be sure to brush up on some basic French to help with ordering cocktails at the bar.

Two cannot miss cocktail lounges are [Agrikol](#), a Haitian bar with lots of rum based drinks, and [Maison Cloakroom](#), a speakeasy hidden within a barber and tailor combo that's hard to find, but worth the hunt. Additionally, there is a fairly large gay village in Montreal, one that is very much worth walking around, even if just during daylight. There are gay bars galore, but if you do venture out at night, [Mado](#), the infamous drag bar, is an absolute must.

For some hidden gems of Montreal, start at [Les Touilleurs](#), a chef's fantasy come true in the form of a stunning cookware shop. Check the website ahead of time as they often have cooking classes (although they tend to book immediately after posting) – regardless though, the shop will inspire the inner chef within anyone. For incredible pastries, indulge at [Libertine Bakehouse](#). For some killer vintage glasses, stop by [Vintage Frames Company](#), where one can spend hours drooling over all the frames that are available – they also happen to supply frames to some of the hottest celebrities in the world. Just down the same road is [Notorious Barbershop](#), by the same owner, where you can fix your fade or trim your beard before a night out. And of course, a not so hidden gem, but for some must have added culture, don't skip the [Montreal Museum of Fine Arts](#), an institution and staple of the extensive arts community.



Bota Bota | Photo: Bota Bota

## Shopping in Montreal

During the summer, it's easy to find retail therapy junkies up and down St. Catherine Street just west of St. Lawrence, where all the office towers are (note that St. Lawrence is known as "The Main" by locals). Downtown, the main shopping hub is centred on the plazas, and street front stores stretch a good distance. During the winter, most locals can be found scurrying around under the streets that connect the malls to one another as part of the "underground city" – where it's possible to go from metro stop to metro stop, shopping, and never have to spend time outside.

Montreal's underground city is made up of 32 kilometres of tunnels that are spread over an area of twelve kilometres of downtown. The city includes sixty residential and commercial

complexes. Some of what you will find underground include hotels, shopping malls, banks, and museums, as well as university buildings, seven metro stations, two commuter train stations and the Bell Centre Hockey Arena. More than 120 exterior access points lead to the underground city, and nearly 500,000 people use it daily, especially during the winter.

Beyond the mainstream fashion stores typically found in any major city, some high-end spots to spend some time in are located on Sherbrooke Street West, just above St. Catherine Street, where visitors can shop in places like **Holt Renfrew**, a luxury department store carrying top brands.



## Where to eat in Montreal

Let's start with the easy basics that are kind of a must. **Schwartz's** iconic smoked meats is as casual as it gets, but the meats are considered somewhat of a Montreal delicacy – just make sure to avoid rush hour times as the lines will stretch down the block. Another classic is **St-Viateur Bagel**, a haven for bagel lovers. Also, keep an eye out for random food trucks, which oddly enough, were banned in the city up about until a few years ago, but are now a thriving market (**food trucks** might also arguably be the best source for classic poutine, but you'll have to try several and come to your own conclusions). For a quick bite, stop by **Xavier Artisan**, but leave room for the crèmes glacées (ice cream).

For fine dining, the options are endless, as the Montreal food scene is as abundant as any other major city in the world. For Italian, **Le Serpent** has an incredible Bucatini with pork flank confit,

black garlic and soy. The oysters served with a maple mignonette are also a must. Hidden in the heart of the city's business district is **Jatoba**, a premier Japanese restaurant with a mouth-watering menu and to-die-for raw bar. For authentic Quebecois cuisines, Auberge Saint-Gabriel is steps from the Notre-Dame Basilica. The braised rabbit with mustard, crème fraîche, celeriac purée and Brussels sprouts is a highlight of the dinner menu. But for something totally different, experience **O.Noir**, dining in the dark. Here it's possible to order your food before entering the dark space or simply order the surprise menu, which will completely confuse anyone. Eating in the darkness is somewhat of a unique experience, and it truly enhances all the other senses – plus it's just really fun.