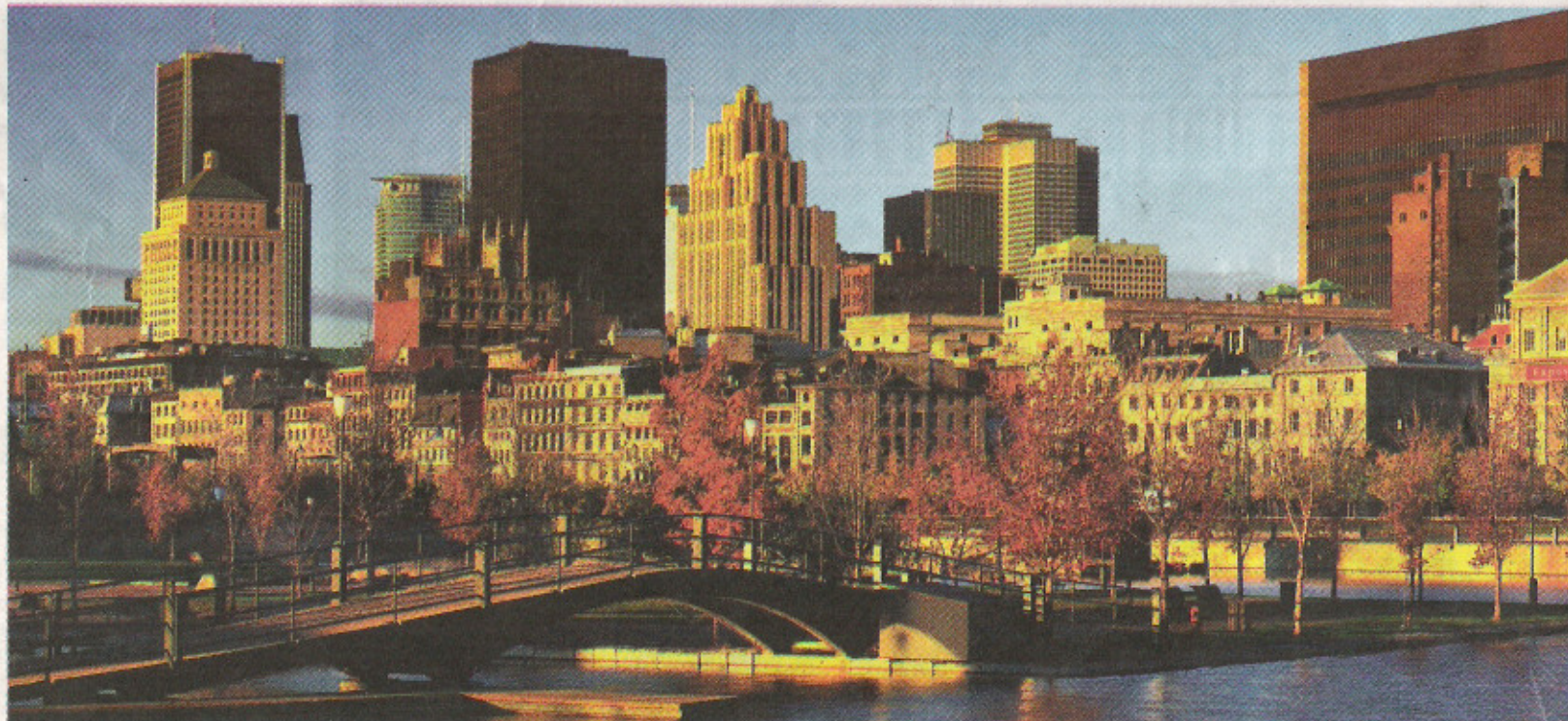




LONG WEEKEND

By Eddie Glazarev



**A NEW
LEAF**
Montreal
is aglow in
fall hues.

Canada shows its colors

Forget about New England — Montreal's fall bounty can't be beat

To avoid every peeping Tom, Dick and Mary racing through the New England corridor



Finally, the leaves. The splendor of color from the park that

to catch fall's annual light show, simply turn your compass north.

In fact, leave the car at home — gas prices being what they are — and hop a short flight to Montreal, where the fall colors are matched only by ample lodging and the city's *joie de vivre*.

For me, the rustic charm of New England can't compare with this sophisticated metropolis. As well as autumn's colors, the tastes and traditions of fall are also on full display.

With rural farmers bringing their harvest to Montreal's four main street markets, the air is filled with seasonal scents. That sweet aroma carries to the top of Mont-Royal, a 532-acre swath of the island covered with a canopy of ocher, orange and crimson.

Here's a tried-and-true itinerary for those overwhelmed by the city's wealth of dining and lodging.

You're in lux

I made my headquarters in Old Montreal, just far enough away from the college-age mayhem of Crescent St. The Place d'Armes is a bit costly (\$225 and up), but is one of several hotels recently renovated within the old city's walls. The Hotel De XIX Siècle is another good choice, with rooms starting at \$195. Each offers luxury without the pomposity found at some boutique hotels.

Both are also close to the famed Notre Dame Basilica and the Old Port at the southern end

of the island. From here you'll have spectacular views of Mont-Royal rising to its 764-foot peek to the south and the kaleidoscope of colors from the Laurentian Alps in the not-too-distant north.

Skip the hotel breakfast and grab a cab up Saint-Laurent Blvd., which runs north-to-south across the island, until you get to Fairmount St. in the trendy Plateau district. Keep the meter running and grab a bagel straight from the oven at Fairmount Bagels. Montreal is renowned for bagels that rival New York's. Their process of soaking them in honey water and cooking them in wood-burning ovens keeps the crust crunchy without the center being doughy.

Then it's back to the cab for another couple of miles until you reach the market in Little Italy. Montrealers pride themselves on produce, and this four-square-block market teems with fruits and vegetables fresh from the farm. Walking from stall to stall, I tasted vegetables I never heard of before. Each stand had its goods meticulously laid out, with samples at the ready. After a few hours of healthy gorging,



URBAN GREENERY Farm-fresh produce at an outdoor market

it's time to head back toward the port, where you can stop by Schwartz's on Saint-Laurent near St.-Cuthbert, Montreal's answer to Katz's Deli. Smoked meat is a point of pride for the city, and nobody serves it better than this hole in the wall. Sit at the counter and order a hot and lean on rye with mustard, a side of fries and a black cherry soda.

Onward & upward

Now you're ready for the foliage. Mont-Royal, for which the city is named, beckons close by, but first you must stop for dessert. That's the only problem with this town — there's just too much good food on every corner.

Saint-Laurent is well-known for its gastro-clubs, combining fine dining with a chic af-

ter-dinner crowd, but the neighborhoods off Saint-Laurent are filled with little treasures. One such place is Le Bilboquet. This artisanal ice cream parlor signifies its deliciousness by the length of the line snaking outside its doors and the smiles on French-speaking toddlers lapping up the creamy goodness. Le Bilboquet is on a wide street lined with sugar maples and benches in the beautiful neighborhood called Outremont, a perfect place from which to admire the fall colors.

Aside from the food, the Plateau district and Outremont are packed with fashionable stores to fulfill that other craving: shopping. My wife delighted in the variety of European imports along Laurier Ave. as well as the shops on Mont-Royal Blvd.

surrounds Mont-Royal hammers at the senses, and the best way to the top of this Frederick Law Olmsted-inspired haven is by Vespa. You can rent one for the day and have it brought to your hotel or, if that's too adventurous, take a cab to the top.

The park was the first that Olmsted designed after he and Calvert Vaux ended a partnership that begat such jewels as Central Park and Prospect Park. Sugar maples, white ash and red oaks stand as multi-hued sentries at the entrance to the mountain, and the city's oldest cemetery is located midway up.

The tranquility atop Mont-Royal will make you forget you are in a bustling city. As you reach the summit, Montreal's spectacular skyline comes into view, as does the St. Lawrence River, to form the most romantic of fall backdrops.

Hungry again? Your daytime activities were pretty light on the wallet so splurge for dinner in Old Montreal at Verses Restaurant. This French eatery in the lobby of the Nelligan Hotel offers elegance and sophistication without the stuffiness of many high-end French places. The food was divine. My wife settled on the seafood risotto with lobster, while I feasted on Angus beef filet topped with foie gras.

And for dessert there was maple cheesecake, an apropos finishing touch to the quintessential autumn getaway.

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