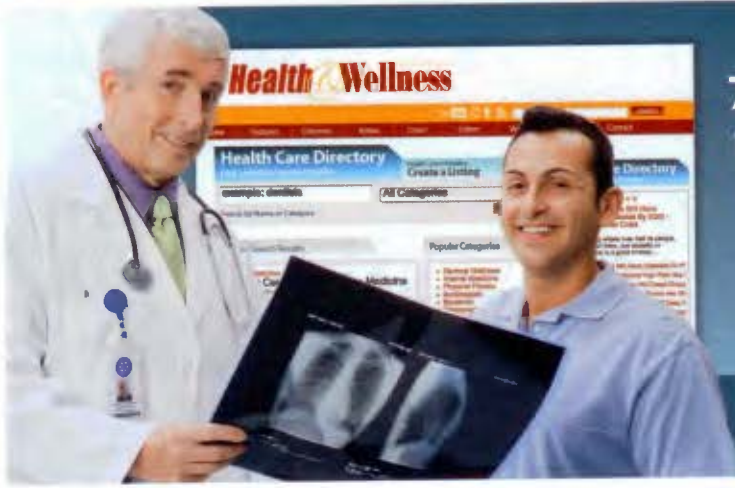


▶ The Olympic stadium and tower were built for the 1976 Olympic Games and are quite spectacular. A tram or "funicular" takes you up to the top of the tower, which is the tallest inclined tower in the world and has a fantastic view of the city.

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by Jan Ross, Staff Writer

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Drive from the Montreal, Quebec airport into Old Montreal, and it's like journeying from the 21st Century back to the 15th and into a story from Grimm's Fairy Tales.

Towering skyscrapers comprise the modern cityscape of Montreal, but suddenly you are driving down narrow alleys hemmed in by small buildings hewn of rough stone with your tires bumping over cobblestones.

When we reached the Auberge Bonaparte Hotel, we fully appreciated the timeless beauty and fairy-tale quality of this part of Montreal. This lovely little boutique hotel is the perfect place to stay.

Montreal is an historical city with many different neighborhoods, each delineated by different shaped lamp posts — how to tell when you have moved from one neighborhood to another. The first thing is to have a tour of the city. There are several excellent tour companies that will give you some ideas about what else you want to see.

After the tour, our guide dropped us off at the Montreal Botanical Garden where we saw gorgeous orchids, teeny tiny bonsai trees and the largest cactus I have ever seen. It covers 180 acres, has 10 exhibition greenhouses and over 30 outdoor gardens. It should be on the must-see list for everyone who visits Montreal.

From there, it's an easy walk to the Montreal Tower. The Olympic stadium and tower were built for the 1976 Olympic Games and are quite spectacular. A tram or "funicular" takes you up to the top of the tower, which is the

tallest inclined tower in the world and has a fantastic view of the city. From the tower, it's an even easier walk to the closest metro station and from there, you can go anywhere in the city.

To get around the city, use the metro. The trains are clean, run every few minutes and are very safe and fast — you should not hesitate to travel around Montreal using them.

We also visited Pointe-a-Calliere, the Montreal Museum of Archaeology and History. This is a national historic site above the actual remains of early Montreal. I was intrigued by the description of "cutting-edge technology and a multimedia show that bring Montreal's past to life."

If you don't visit one other museum while you are in Montreal, you must visit this one. That show was the most incredible thing we have ever experienced in a museum. We sat down in our seats with what looked like an archaeological dig sunk down in front of us. We were instructed to put on our headphones and tune to whatever number corresponded to our language. Then the show began. For a few seconds, the light show was so realistic, I actually thought the stones were moving but, of course, it was an illusion. Using lights, music, narration and pictures projected onto several screens, they told the story of the city. Seriously, it was incredible. You have to see it.

We went then to the Notre Dame Basilica. We stood in awe for a few minutes at the design of the back of cathedral. With candles flickering and the tourists murmuring quietly and respectfully, it was truly a breath-taking place.

Our last night in Montreal, we went to the Casino de Montreal. Located on the shore of the St. Lawrence River, this fabulous building was originally the French Pavilion for the Expo'67 but was inaugurated as the Casino de Montréal on October 9, 1993.

But we were here to eat dinner at Nuances, the only 5 Diamond CAA-AAA restaurant in Montreal and one which has maintained this status since 2000. The contemporary beauty of the small restaurant located on the fifth floor of the casino is set off by the huge windows which overlook the St. Lawrence River and the reflected lights of Montreal.

Nuances presents a truly unique dining experience with modern and classic French cuisine. We decided on a special tasting or decouverte (discovery) menu. The food was all served in tiny portions beautifully arranged on the plate and it was just the right amount.

It was a quick and easy flight to Montreal from Lexington and would be a great place for a weekend getaway!

About the Author

Jan Ross is a freelance writer specializing in travel. You can contact Jan at kentuckygal53@gmail.com with comments or suggestions for article topics.

"If you don't visit one other museum while you are in Montreal, you must visit this one."

(Pointe-a-Calliere, the Montreal Museum of Archaeology and History.)



Doctors orders? Usually steak or seafood.

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