

Montreal Savoir-Faire With Old World Charm

The second largest city in Canada, Montreal is also one of the largest French-speaking cities in the world, alongside Paris and Kinshasa. The city rests on the Island of Montreal at the confluence of the Saint Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers. The Quays of the Old Port Montreal was once a thriving worldwide port 350 years ago, but shipping now exists further east, leaving the Old Port as a one of the city's most historically preserved areas.

Student group travelers gain a unique perspective of the Old Port with a cruise aboard the Bateau-Mouche. The vessel can access paths inaccessible to traditional boats on the Saint Lawrence River. Daytime cruises explore the city and its history. Excursions provide views of some of the city's most recognized sites. Specialized packages can include lunch or dinner aboard the boat. For a fresh take on the St. Lawrence River, the Les Sautes-Moutons offers jet boat excursions of the mighty and historic Lachine Rapids. Powerful jet boats offer thrilling rides, capable of 360-degree turns on the frothy waters.

Having seen Old Montreal from the seaway, students can then take a guided tour of the area. Highlights include the Notre-Dame Basilica, the magnificent Gothic Revival-style church which attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. Inside, students discover a visual feast of sculpted wood, gold leaf accents, paintings, and spectacular stained glass. Next, student travelers may head to the very site of Montreal's founding, Pointe-a-Calliere, the Montreal Museum of Archaeology and History, which recounts six centuries of history. An underground tour reveals key archaeological sites and artifacts and displays round out this fascinating museum.

Public places such as the Place Jacques-Cartier serve as a popular meeting point in Old Montreal and is entirely reserved for pedestrian traffic during the summer. During the warm months, cafes bordering the Place Jacques-Cartier are busy with patrons and musicians. Street performers and painters provide plenty of local color. Horse-drawn carriage rides are also available.

Student visitors should also consider a Lighting Tour of Old Montreal. The city's historical buildings shine in all their splendor when night falls on the city. Specialized lighting was designed to emphasize the architectural details of the structures. Adding to the atmosphere, 22 gas street lamps have been installed along Sainte-Helene Street, making the area home to many movie sets.

Montreal received its name from the mountain that watches over the city. When Jacques Cartier climbed to the top of Mount Royal in 1535, he was awe-struck by the view. Today the view from Mount Royal is equally spectacular. From there, students can see the tops of skyscrapers, across the St. Lawrence River below, and to the distance beyond. The Mount Royal Park, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, who also designed Central Park in New York City, features walking trails, plants, and birds. Guided tours are available. For a taste of "au francais," Laurier Avenue presents a delightful array of patisseries, bake shops, and fine chocolates in this mainly French-speaking neighborhood.

Built for the 1976 Summer Olympics, the Olympic Stadium is topped by the tallest inclined tower in the world. Visitors have superb views of Montreal from the top three observation floors. The sports center offers six aquatic pools as well as a multi-sports facility. Guided tours are available.

Four Montreal museums engage students in the world of ecosystems, insects, botany, and the stars. Since its opening in 1992, nearly 14 million visitors have traveled through the Biodome, or "house of life." Here, four ecosystems serve as home to thousands of animals and plants.

Experienced biologists act as guides to this oasis in the city. The Montreal Botanical Garden ranks as one of the world's largest and most spectacular gardens. A broad range of educational programs and thematic tours are available for student groups. Located at the Botanical Garden, the Montreal Insectarium invites students to discover the fascinating world of insects.

Considered the largest of its kind in North America, the museum houses a collection of several thousand living and preserved insects from every corner of the earth. Students will find themselves immersed under a celestial canopy at the Montreal Planetarium. The museum's Zeiss projector reproduces the sky as seen by the naked eye. Under the vast hemispherical dome of the Star Theatre, students may explore the splendors of the universe.

One of Canada's oldest art museums, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is among the most impressive art museums in North America. From Monet to Picasso, Matisse to Dali, the museum features collections from Canada and Europe, and spans the centuries from ancient cultures to modern. The museum also hosts temporary exhibits.

Directly under the heart of the city is the famous underground pedestrian network. Covering more than 20 miles of brightly lit passageways, the underground connects metro stations, boutiques, major hotels, restaurants, businesses, and attractions. To the locals, it's simply known as the "underground." To student visitors, it's a fascinating look at real life in Montreal. A redirected focus on arts and culture in the last several years has

resulted in display windows and alcoves presenting the riches of Montreal's museum collections.

From the heights of Mount Royal to cozy underground corners - from an ancient city center to a modern cityscape - Montreal provides student group travelers with a variety of fascinating worlds just waiting to be explored.

About the Author

[travel adventures](#) Travel Adventures is a student tour provider staffed by educators who understand the needs of teachers. It has served over one half million students since 1987 and its mission is to “empower teachers to create change by expanding the classroom to the world.”

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