



**nileGUIDE**

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Anna Kucsma

# Montreal with Kids

## Montreal, 1 Day

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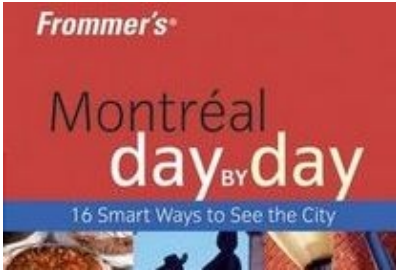
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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** At first glance, Montréal might seem more like a playground for adults than children. That perception couldn't be farther from the truth. A good number of the city's museums and attractions tailor many of their exhibits and activities to the city's tiniest sightseers, and parents are sure to hear hours of giddy shrieks and astonished gasps when they hit the spots below.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Montreal

**DAY NOTE:** La Ronde: Though many of the 37 rides at this Six Flags–owned venture—Montréal’s only amusement park—will test thrill seekers, little ones and less-adventuresome kids will find plenty of other fun options, including various multimedia extravaganzas and a slew of cutesy, slow rides. Older kids and teens (and fearless parents) should head for the extreme monstrosities, which include the 60mph (97kmph) Le Cobra coaster; and Le Vampire, a suspended coaster that does five loops at 50mph (80kmph).

**Insectarium de Montréal:** More than 3,000 species of creepy critters (either mounted, flying, or crawling in enclosed displays) call this two-story museum home. Kids especially adore the mounted butterflies and the live displays of scorpions, tarantulas, crickets, cockroaches, and praying mantises. If you’re lucky (or unlucky, depending on your appetite) and happen to visit in the months of November and December, you can take part in the museum’s Insect Tasting, where appointed experts in the field of bug cuisine fry up, bake, sauté and candy all sorts of six-legged creatures.

**Biodôme de Montréal:** Of the four ecosystems (all with their appropriate temperatures, flora, and fauna) re-created in this unusual attraction, the polar and rainforest environments are the biggest hits with young kids—penguins and macaws apparently having the innate ability to mesmerize children for hours. Once they’ve gotten tired of watching the animals, little ones can try out Naturalia, a game room just for kids. Older children and teens usually find all of the exhibits—and their wide range of animals, which include endangered species—fascinating.

**Planétarium de Montréal:** Young kids may fall asleep as they lean back and watch this planetarium’s illuminations of the night sky, but older children will be intrigued by the exciting light shows and multimedia displays. The 20m (66-ft.) dome is modest as far as planetariums go, but its presentations (staged alternatively in French and English) are still impressive and informative, and the downtown location is very convenient. A special, worthwhile holiday show is screened in December and early January.

**Le Centre des Sciences de Montréal:** This ambitious and highly interactive science museum is filled with intriguing exhibits that enlighten visitors on a wide range of topics, from biology to telecommunications. The biggest draw for kids is the center’s IMAX theater, where an enormous screen and booming speakers bombard children with vivid images of furry animals, bouncing molecules, hulking machines, and other science-related subjects.



**Insectarium de Montréal**



**Planétarium de Montréal**



**Biodôme de Montréal**



**La Ronde Amusement Park**



**Centre des Sciences de Montréal**

# Day 1 - Montreal

## QUICK NOTE

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**contact:**  
tel: 514/496-4724  
www.montrealsciencecentre.com

**location:**  
Montreal QC

**hours:**  
Weekdays from 8:30am,  
weekends from 9am; closing  
hours vary

## 1 Centre des Sciences de Montréal

**DESCRIPTION:** Running the length of a central pier in Vieux-Port (Old Port), this ambitious complex occupies a steel-and-glass building along much of Quai King Edward. Focusing on science and technology, it has interactive displays and a cinema, as well as a popular **IMAX theater**. Designed to make energy conservation, 21st-century communications, and life sciences vivid, in 2007 it hosted the touring Body Worlds exhibit. With its extensive use of computers and electronic visual displays, its displays are particularly appealing to youngsters. Admission fees vary according to combination of exhibits and movie showings you want. Pre-order tickets for special exhibits to avoid long lines. An outdoor terrace called **Origine Bistro**, offering light meals and drinks, opened in 2007 and joins an existing café selling sandwiches, salads, and sweets. © Frommer's

**contact:**

tel: 514/872-1400  
www.ville.montreal.qc.ca/insectarium

**location:**

4581 rue Sherbrooke est  
Montreal QC

**hours:**

Nov 1-May 14 daily 9am-5pm;  
May 15-Sept 6 daily  
9am-6pm; Sept 7-Oct 31 daily  
9am-9pm

## 2 Insectarium de Montréal

**DESCRIPTION:** Live exhibits featuring scorpions, tarantulas, hissing cockroaches, assassin bugs, praying mantises, and other "misunderstood creatures, which are so often wrongly feared and despised," as the Insectarium puts it, are displayed in this two-level structure near the rue Sherbrooke gate of the **Jardin Botanique** (Botanical Garden). Needless to say, kids are delighted especially by the creepy critters. More than 3,000 mounted butterflies, beetles, scarabs, maggots, locusts, and giraffe weevils also are featured, and during the summer, the Butterfly House is full of beautiful live specimens fluttering among the nectar-bearing plants. In September, visitors can watch monarch butterflies being tagged and released for their annual migration to Mexico. The annual award-winning **"Insect Tasting"** (Croque-insectes) dinner seems to have been suspended, which is a shame. But you can still buy lollipops with scorpions inside at the gift shop. © Frommer's

**contact:**

tel: 514/872-4530  
www.planetarium.montreal.qc.ca

**location:**

1000 rue St-Jacques ouest  
Montreal QC

**hours:**

Hours vary according to show schedule; call for details

## 3 Planétarium de Montréal

**DESCRIPTION:** A window on the night sky, with mythical monsters and magical heroes, Montréal's planetarium is right downtown, in the heart of the city. Shows under the 20m (66-ft.) dome dazzle and inform kids at the same time. Multimedia presentations change with the seasons, exploring time and space travel and collisions of celestial bodies, and up to five different shows are screened daily. The special Christmas show, "Season of Light," can be seen November through early January. Shows in English alternate with those in French. © Frommer's

Photo courtesy of Planétarium de Montréal

**contact:**

tel: 514/868-3000  
www.biodome.qc.ca

**location:**

4777 av. Pierre-de-Coubertin  
Montreal QC

**hours:**

Daily 9am-5pm (until 6pm late June to Aug)

## 4 Biodôme de Montréal

**DESCRIPTION:** Perhaps the most engaging attraction in the city 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 (the subsequent rooms increasingly less so), so take your time here. It's a kind of "Where's Waldo" challenge to find all the critters, from the huge groundhog called a capybara to the golden lion tamarin monkeys that swing on branches only an arm's length away; only the bats, fish, and polar penguins and puffins are behind glass. A giant tank in the St. Lawrence region has Atlantic Sturgeon nearly 1.5m (5 ft.) long, while the open-air space features hundreds of shore birds whose shrieks can transport you to the beach. The building was originally the velodrome for cycling for the 1976 Olympics. The

Biodôme de Montréal

facility also has a game room for kids called Naturalia, a shop, a bistro, and a cafeteria. © Frommer's

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**contact:**

tel: 514/397-2000  
www.laronde.com

**location:**

22 Chemin Macdonald  
Montreal QC H3C 6A3

**hours:**

Late June to Aug daily  
11am-9pm (to 11:30pm  
Sat); spring and fall Sat-Sun  
11am-7pm



## La Ronde Amusement Park

**DESCRIPTION:** Montréal's amusement park, opened as part of Expo 67, the World's Fair, was run for its first 34 years by the city. It was sold to the American-owned Six Flags theme-park empire in 2001 and at first seemed pretty much to be the same old park, minus the threat of insolvency. But new rides have since been delivered. Like hot sauces, they're categorized by "thrill rating": moderate, mild, or max. There are 11 rides in the "max thrill" category, including Le Vampire, a suspended coaster which has riders experiencing five head-over-heels loops at more than 80kmph (50 mph). Other attractions include Ferris wheels, carnival booths, and plenty of places to eat and drink. An antique carousel, Le Galopant, was built by Belgian artisans in 1885 and was part of the Belgian Pavilion at the 1964 to 1965 New York World's Fair. The Minirail is an elevated train that circles the park. Young children also have ample selection, including the Tchou Tchou Train and tasses magiques, in which they sit in one of 12 giant rotating tea cups. On 10 Wednesdays and Saturdays in June and July, La Ronde hosts a huge fireworks competition, **L'International Des Feux Loto-Québec**. Although the pyrotechnics can be enjoyed for free from almost anywhere in the city overlooking the river, tickets can be purchased to watch from the open-air theater at the amusement park and include entrance to the park. Call tel. **514/397-2000** or go to [www.internationaldesfeuxloto-quebec.com/en](http://www.internationaldesfeuxloto-quebec.com/en) for details. © Frommer's

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# Montreal Snapshot

## Local Info

Just 10 years ago, something of a bleak mood prevailed in Québec province. It was driven by lingering recession and uncertainty over the future; it seemed possible that the province would choose to fling itself into independence from the rest of Canada.

Lately, though, something else is going on. Ripples of optimism have become waves. The Canadian dollar, as every traveler will discover, has strengthened against its U.S. counterpart. In Montréal, a billion-dollar building boom has been filling up vacant lots all over downtown. Montréal has become a modern city in every regard, with skyscrapers in unexpected shapes and bright, noncorporate colors; a historic district that has been beautifully preserved; and a large area of artists' lofts, boutiques, cafés, and miles of restaurants. Québec City, more traditional and more French, is replacing its former conservatism with an ever-expanding aura of sophistication.

American and European travelers will likely find Montréal an urban near-paradise. The subway system, called the Métro, is modern and swift. Streets are safe. Montréal's best restaurants are the equals of their south-of-the-border compatriots in every way, but 20% cheaper. Québec City, meanwhile, with its impressive location above the St. Lawrence River and its virtually unblemished Old Town of 18th- and 19th-century houses, looks French and is almost impossibly romantic and Continental-feeling-- it's unlike any city in North America.

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## History

Québec is immense, the largest province in the second-largest country in the world(after Russia) at 1,667,926 sq. km(643,819 sq. miles)-- more than three times as large as France. It stretches from the northern borders of New York, Vermont, and New Hampshire up north to almost the Arctic Circle. To the east of it lie Maine and the province of New Brunswick; to the west,

the province of Ontario and James and Hudson bays. Its substantial fund of natural resources includes 16% of the world's supply of fresh water.

Most of the province's population lives in its lower regions-- the St. Lawrence lowlands and parts of the Appalachians and the Laurentians. More than 80% of its 7.5 million residents live within an area 322km(200 miles) long and 97km(60 miles) wide, one of the highest concentrations of people in sparsely populated Canada.

The greater Montréal metropolitan area is home to nearly half of the province's population. The city itself is on an island that is part of the Hochelaga Archipelago. The island is situated in the St. Lawrence(St-Laurent) River near where it joins the Ottawa River. At the city's center is a 232m(761-ft.) hill(which natives like to think of as a mountain) called Mont-Royal, from which the city takes its name. Real mountains rise nearby: the Laurentides(the Laurentians) are the oldest range in the world and the playground of the Québécois. The northern foothills of the Appalachian mountains separate Québec from the United States and add to the beauty of the Cantons-de-l'Est, the bucolic region on the opposite side of the St. Lawrence once known as the Eastern Townships, where many Montréalers have country homes. Québec City, 263km(163 miles) northeast of Montréal, commands a stunning location on the rim of a promontory overlooking the river, which is at its narrowest point here.

**The Europeans Arrive**-- The Vikings landed in Canada more than 1,000 years ago, probably followed by Irish and Basque fishermen. English explorer John Cabot stepped ashore briefly on the east coast in 1497, but it was the French who managed the first meaningful European toehold in the wilderness. When **Jacques Cartier** sailed up the St. Lawrence in 1535, he recognized at once the tremendous strategic potential of **Cape Diamond**, "the Gibraltar of the North." But he was exploring, not empire building, and after stopping briefly on land he continued on his trip upriver.

Cartier continued past the spot that would become Québec City under Champlain to what was then a large island with a fortified Iroquois village called **Hochelaga** and composed of 50 longhouses. As usual, he didn't linger but pushed onward in his search for the sea route to China. His progress was halted by the fierce rapids just west of what is now the Island of Montréal. In a demonstration of mingled optimism and frustration, he dubbed the rapids "La Chine" on the assumption that China was just beyond them(today, they're known as the Lachine). He then decided to check out the Indian settlement after all, landing at a spot in what is now Old Montréal, and paid his respects to the Native people before moving on. That was the extent of Cartier's contribution to the future city.

**Samuel de Champlain** arrived 73 years later, in 1608, determined to settle at Québec, a year after the Virginia Company founded its fledgling colony of Jamestown, hundreds of miles to the south. The British and French struggle for dominance in the new continent focused on their explorations, and there the French outdid the English. Their far-ranging fur trappers, navigators, soldiers, and missionaries opened up not only Canada but also most of what eventually became the United States, moving all the way south to the future New Orleans and claiming most of the territory to the west. This vast region later comprised the **Louisiana Purchase**. At least 35 of the subsequent 50 states were mapped or settled by Frenchmen, who left behind thousands of names to prove it, among them Detroit, St. Louis, New Orleans, Duluth, and Des Moines.

Champlain's first settlement, or habitation, grew to become Québec City's **Basse-Ville**, or Lower Town, on the flat riverbank beneath the cliffs of Cap Diamant(Cape Diamond). But almost from the beginning there were attacks, first by the Iroquois, then by the English, and later by the Americans. To better defend themselves, the Québécois constructed a fortress on the

## Montreal Snapshot continued

cape, and gradually the center of urban life moved to the top of the cliffs.

**The Founding of Montreal-- Paul de Chomedey, sieur de Maisonneuve,** arrived in 1642 to establish a colony and to plant a crucifix atop the hill he called Mont-Royal. He and his band of settlers came ashore and founded **Ville-Marie**, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, at the spot now marked by Place-Royale. They built a fort, a chapel, stores, and houses, and the energetic **Jeanne Mance** made her indelible mark by founding the hospital named Hotel-Dieu-de-Montréal, which still exists today.

Life was not easy. Unlike the friendly Algonquins who lived in nearby regions, the Iroquois in Montréal had no intention of living in peace with the new settlers. Fierce battles raged for years, and the settlers were lucky that their numbers included such undaunted souls as la Salle, du Luth, de la Mothe Cadillac, and the brothers Lemoyne. At **Place d'Armes** today there's a statue of de Maisonneuve, marking the spot where the settlers defeated the Iroquois in bloody hand-to-hand fighting.

From that time the settlement prospered. Until the 1800s, Montréal was contained in the area known today as **Vieux-Montréal**. Its ancient walls no longer stand, but its long and colorful past is preserved in the streets, houses, and churches of the Old City.

**England Conquers New France--** In the 1750s, the struggle between Britain and France had escalated, after a series of conflicts, beginning in 1689, that had embroiled both Europe and the New World. The latest episode was known as the **French and Indian War** in North America, an extension of Europe's Seven Years' War. Strategic Québec became a valued prize. The French appointed **Louis Joseph, Marquis de Montcalm**, to command their forces in the town. The British sent an expedition of 4,500 men in a fleet under the command of a 32-year-old general, **James Wolfe**. The British troops surprised the French by coming up and over the cliffs of Cap Diamant. The ensuing battle for Québec, fought on the **Plains of Abraham** just southwest of the city center

on September 13, 1759, is one of the most important battles in North American history: It resulted in a continent that was under British influence for over a century. (That influence carries on to today: The face of Queen Elizabeth II is still on all Canadian currency.)

The battle lasted just 18 to 25 minutes, depending on which historian you read, and resulted in 600 casualties. Both generals perished as a result wounds received. Wolfe lived just long enough to hear that the British had won. Montcalm died a few hours later. Today a memorial to both men overlooks Terrasse Dufferin in Québec City, the only statue in the world commemorating both victor and vanquished of the same battle. The inscription, in neither French nor English but Latin, says, simply, **COURAGE WAS FATAL TO THEM.**

**The United States Invades--** The capture of Québec determined the course of the war, and the **Treaty of Paris** in 1763 ceded all of French Canada to England. In a sense, this victory was a bane to Britain, however. If the French had held Canada, the British government might have been more judicious in its treatment of the American colonists. As it was, the British decided to make the colonists pay the costs of the French and Indian War, on the principle that it was their homes being defended. They slapped so many taxes on all imports that the infuriated U.S. colonists openly rebelled against the Crown.

But if the British misjudged the temper of the colonists, the Americans were equally wrong about the mood of the Canadians. **George Washington** felt sure that French Canadians would want to join the revolution, or at least be supportive. He was mistaken on both counts. The Québécois detested their British conquerors, but they were also staunch Royalists and devout Catholics, and saw their contentious neighbors as godless Republicans. Only a handful supported the Americans, and three of Washington's most competent commanders came to grief in attacks against Québec. Thirty-eight years later, in the **War of 1812**, another U.S. army marched up the banks of the Richelieu River where it flows from Lake Champlain

to the St. Lawrence. And once again, the French Canadians stuck by the British and drove back the invaders. The war ended essentially in a draw, but it had at least one encouraging result: Britain and the young United States agreed to demilitarize the Great Lakes and to extend their mutual border along the 49th parallel to the Rockies.

**Montréal and Québec City Today--** The ancient walls that protected Québec City over the centuries are still in place today, and the town within their embrace has changed little, preserving for posterity the heart of New France. Montréal, though, has gone through a metamorphosis. It was "wet" when the United States was "dry" due to Prohibition from 1920 to 1933. Bootleggers, hard drinkers, and prostitutes flocked to this large city situated so conveniently close to the American border and mixed with rowdy people from the port, much to the distress of Montréal's mainly upstanding citizenry. For half a century the city's image was decidedly racy, but in the 1950s a cleanup began, with a boom in high-rise construction and eventual restoration of much of the derelict Old Town. In 1967, Montréal welcomed the world to Expo'67, the World's Fair. The great gleaming skyscrapers and towering hotels, the superb Métro system, and the highly practical underground city date mostly from the 40 years since the Expo.

All this activity helped to fuel a phenomenon later labeled the "**Quiet Revolution.**" The movement was to transform the largely rural, agricultural province into an urbanized, industrial entity with a pronounced secular outlook. French Canadians, long denied access to the upper echelons of desirable corporate careers, started to insist upon equal opportunity with the powerful Anglophone minority.

Inevitably, a radical fringe movement of separatists emerged, signaling its intentions by bombing Anglophone businesses. The **FLQ** (Québec Liberation Front), as it was known, was behind most of the terrorist attacks, reaching its nadir with the kidnapping and murder of a cabinet minister, Pierre Laporte.

## Montreal Snapshot continued

Most Québécois separatists, though, were not violent, and most French-speaking Québécois were not even separatists.

**Pierre Trudeau**, a bilingual Québécois, became prime minister in 1968. More flamboyant, eccentric, and brilliant than any Canadian who ever held the post, he necessarily devoted much of his time to trying to placate voters on both sides of the issue. In 1969, the **Official Languages Act** mandated that all federal agencies provide services in both French and English. But succession remained a dream for many people; in 1980, a provincial referendum on separation from the confederation was defeated by only 60% of the vote. Subsequent attempts to assuage the chafed sensibilities of French Québécois failed again and again, as often at the hands of other provincial premiers as by the Québécois, hounding at least three prime ministers from office.

In 1993, the governing Tories were defeated by the opposition Liberals. The new Prime Minister, **Jean Chrétien**, a federalist, was not aided in his task of national reconciliation by representation in the House of Commons of the militantly separatist **Bloc Québécois**, which became the largest opposition party in the same election.

On a regional level, the issue continued to simmer. In Québec the following year, the **Parti Québécois** won provincial elections to end 9 years of Liberal control. The new premier, **Jacques Parizeau**, vowed to hold an early referendum on sovereignty. In October 1995, the referendum lost by a mere 1% of the total vote. Parizeau resigned the next day, after making intemperate remarks about the negative role of ethnic voters in the results.

An unsettled mood prevailed in the province, thanks to a recession and general uncertainty over the future. But by 2000 things began to change. The Canadian dollar strengthened against the U.S. dollar. Unemployment, long in double digits, shrank to under 6%, the lowest percentage in more than 2 decades. Crime in Montréal (already one of the safest cities in North America) hit a 20-year low.

Nationally, the Liberal Party was racked by an ongoing corruption scandal. A vote of confidence was held in May 2005. The governing Liberals won by a single vote, but redemption was short-lived. In January 2006, the opposition Conservatives led by **Stephen Harper** ousted the long incumbent Liberals.

Meanwhile, the presence of skilled workers made much of Canada a favored site for Hollywood film and TV production. The rash of FOR RENT and FOR SALE signs that disfigured Montréal in the 1990s continued evaporating, replaced by a welcome shortage of store and office space.

Today, the quest for separatism seems to be fading. Conversations with ordinary Québécois suggest they are weary of the argument. As significantly, in provincial elections in March 2007, the Liberal Party, headed by **Jean Charest**, won just a minority government, with an out-of-nowhere second-place victory for the new **Action démocratique du Québec** party and its young leader **Mario Dumont**. The separatist Parti Québécois placed a distant third with just 28% of the vote marking, many think, the beginning of the end of the PQ's 40-year political movement and campaign for independence.

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### Hotel Insights

**Hotel Le St-James** (355 rue St-Jacques ouest; tel. 866/841-3111): Setting the standard against which any boutique hotel in town must measure itself, this former 19th-century bank in Vieux-Montreal lets no luxurious detail escape its attention. From its opulent main hall to the sybaritic subterranean spa to its immaculately trained staff, this is an experience that may well be the highlight of your visit.

**W Montreal** (901 rue Square Victoria; tel. 888/627-7081): If you qualify as hip, aware, and on the fast track to somewhere good (or like to think you do), waste no time booking a suite at this local entry in the spreading chain. It won't hurt if your platinum card is paid up and you don't need much sleep, either. There are three bars and lounges, a hyper-chic restaurant, and a clientele composed of knockouts of both sexes. Also in Vieux-Montreal.

**Auberge Bonaparte** (447 rue St-Francois-Xavier; tel. 514/844-1448): The long-established restaurant on the ground floor was accorded a massive rehab and expansion a few years back, and now includes the comely inn upstairs. Rooms are simply furnished, but four out of the eight on each floor have whirlpool tubs and the rooftop terrace overlooks Vieux-Montreal's Basilique Notre-Dame. **Auberge Les Passants du Sans Soucy** (171 rue St-Paul ouest; tel. 514/842-2634): Just around the corner from Bonaparte, this charming little B&B helped pioneer the recovery of Vieux-Montreal to its current status as the must-see quarter of the city. The lobby is an art gallery with changing exhibits. Fireplaces and jet tubs have been added to the nine bedrooms. **Best Historic Hotel**: No contest. The **Ritz-Carlton Montreal**, 1228 rue Sherbrooke ouest (tel. 800/363-0366 or 514/842-4212), has been around since 1913, giving it a half-century lead on the closest competition. **Best for Business Travelers**: A closer call, with several worthy candidates, but **Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth**, 900 bd. Rene-Levesque ouest (tel. 800/441-1414 or 514/861-3511), gets the nod for its central location atop the railroad station, concierge floors, a fully equipped health club, and excellent bus connections to the airport. **Best New(ish) Luxury Hotel Downtown**: The nearby Omni, Ritz, and Vogue are challenged by the first Canadian branch of a pervasive French chain, the **Sofitel**, 1155 rue Sherbrooke ouest (tel. 514/285-9000), which matches its rivals in every detail. **Best for a Romantic Getaway**: With ancient cut-stone walls, swags of velvet and brocade, and tilting floors that Benjamin Franklin once trod upon-- not to mention a baronial dining room and stonewalled outdoor terrace, the **Hostellerie Pierre du Calvet**, 405 rue Bonsecours (tel. 866/544-1725 or 514/282-1725), provokes memories of lovers' hotels by the Seine. **Best Established Boutique Hotel**: When it opened, **Hotel Le Germain**, 2050 rue Mansfield (tel. 877/333-2050 or 514/849-2050), brought a needed jolt of panache to the too-often-stodgy corps of downtown business hotels, and helped inspire a boom in similarly small, stylish hotels in Vieux-Montreal. **Best New Boutique Hotels (Posh Category)**: The **Hotel Le St-James**, 355 rue St-Jacques ouest, Vieux-Montreal (tel. 866/841-3111 or 514/841-3111), raises the bar to an almost

## Montreal Snapshot continued

impossibly high level, with a superbly sybaritic spa and gorgeous grand hall. The **Hotel Nelligan**, 106 rue St-Paul ouest, Vieux-Montreal (tel. 877/788-2040 or 514/788-2040), which expanded from 63 to 105 units in 2007, counters with a great full-service restaurant and rooftop terrace. **Best New Boutique Hotels (Minimalist Category):** Also in Vieux-Montreal, **Hotel St-Paul**, 355 rue McGill (tel. 866/380-2202 or 514/380-2222), softens its austere lines with pale cream walls and fur throws, while the **Hotel Gault**, at 449 rue Ste-Helene (tel. 866/904-1616 or 514/904-1616), leaves its raw concrete walls uncovered and uses candy-colored furniture that was startlingly modern in the 1950s. **Best Lobby for Pretending That You're Rich:** A tie-- the woody, hushed **Ritz-Carlton Montreal** exudes old money, while the newer **Hotel Le St-James** caters to the international Bluetooth-using bespoke-suit-wearing set. **Best B&B:** Located in a 1723 house in Vieux-Montreal, **Auberge Les Passants du Sans Soucy**, 171 rue St-Paul ouest (tel. 514/842-2634), is more upscale and stylish than most of its peers, and it's located near the top restaurants and clubs in the old town. **Best Service:** It's tough to choose among the troops at the **Hotel Le St-James**, the **Ritz-Carlton Montreal**, and the **Hotel InterContinental Montreal**, 360 rue St-Antoine ouest (tel. 514/987-9900). All three teams display an almost equal amount of grace and care when it comes to tending to their guests. **Best Hotel Health Club:** **Hotel Omni Mont-Royal**, 1050 rue Sherbrooke ouest (tel. 800/843-6664 or 514/284-1110), lays on yoga classes, free weights and weight machines, saunas, a steam room, whirlpools, a year-round heated outdoor pool, and massages to recover from the workout. A close second: **Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth**.

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### Restaurants Insights

**Nuances** (1 av. du Casino, in the Casino de Montreal; tel. 514/392-2708): This gourmet resto at the top of the city's casino got an impressive face-lift in early 2007 that made the decor as contemporary and elegant as the food-- all creamy walls, white linen, and pale-green leather banquettes. A room with real star power. **Toque!** (900 Place Jean-Paul-Riopelle; tel. 514/499-2084): Superstar chef/owner Norman Laprise has been thrilling Montreal

gourmands for years. In dishes of startling innovation, he brings together diverse ingredients that have rarely appeared before on restaurant plates. There's little point in describing individual dishes, for he moves on before any of his food achieves signature status. **Best Budget Restaurant:** The tapas phenomenon gave rise to the rampant small plates fashion, and **Pintxo**, in Plateau Mont-Royal at 256 rue Roy est, 2 blocks west of rue St-Denis (tel. 514/844-0222), does its own variations on the Spanish Basque originals. It has a second, smaller resto at 2 rue Sherbrooke est, at the corner of boulevard St-Laurent. **Best Expensive Restaurant:** Among several candidates, this vote goes to Vieux-Montreal's **Version Laurent Goubout**, 295 rue St-Paul est (at rue St-Claude; tel. 514/871-9135). This chef-entrepreneur has an astonishingly sure hand with the innovations he brings to the Mediterranean canon. **Best Restaurant, Period:** Ever-questing Normand Laprise and partner Christine Lamarche keep Vieux-Montreal's **Toque!**, 900 Place Jean-Paul Riopelle, near rue St-Antoine (tel. 514/499-2084), in a league of its own. Postmodern and dazzling. **Best Classic French Bistro:** Plateau Mont-Royal's most Parisian bistro, **L'Express**, 3927 rue St-Denis (at rue Roy; tel. 514/845-5333), is where you come to see what the Francophone part of this city is all about. From the black-and-white checked floor to the grand, high ceilings, this is where Old France meets New France. **Best for a Low-Key Date Night:** The charming bistro **La Montee de Lait**, tucked in on a nondescript side street in Plateau Mont-Royal at 371 rue Villeneuve est (at the corner of rue Drolet; tel. 514/289-9921), keeps you close to your honey-- and puts you elbow-to-elbow with neighbors. **Best for a Celebration: Nuances**, 1 av. du Casino (tel. 514/392-2708), got a dazzling face-lift in 2007 and now looks as contemporary as the food on its plates. A gracious, multi-starred temple de cuisine atop the Montreal casino on Ile Ste-Helene. **Best Value:** Even the most expensive four-course table d'hote dinner at **Le Bourlingueur**, in Vieux-Montreal at 363 St-Francois-Xavier (near rue St-Paul; tel. 514/845-3646), comes in under C\$17 (US\$15/#7.30). **Best Guilty Treat:** Poutine is a plate of french fries--frites-- drenched with gravy afloat with cheese curds, a bedrock Quebec comfort food that's better than it sounds. Many

say it should stay unadorned, but at **Au Pied de Cochon**, 536 rue Duluth, near rue St-Hubert in Plateau Mont-Royal (tel. 514/281-1114), the dish is elevated to mid-haute levels with the addition of foie gras. **Best Smoked Meat:** There are other contenders, but **Chez Schwartz Charcuterie Hebraique de Montreal**, known simply as Schwartz's, at 3895 bd. St-Laurent, north of rue Prince-Arthur in Plateau Mont-Royal (tel. 514/842-4813), serves up the definitive version of regional brisket. **Best Seafood:** Few Montreal restos focus on fish, but **Ferreira Cafe**, 1446 rue Peel near boulevard Maisonnueve downtown (tel. 514/848-0988), does extremely well by its repertoire of marine-focused Portuguese cuisine. **Best Burgers:** Local conviction is that the biggest, juiciest burgers are assembled at the Latin Quarter's **La Paryse**, 302 rue Ontario est, at rue Sanguinet (tel. 514/842-2040). Nipping at its heels, though, is the young **MeatMarket**, 4415 bd. St-Laurent just south of avenue du Mont-Royal (tel. 514/223-2292), a gourmet burger joint in Mile End. **Best Vegan:** A standard-bearer since 1997, Plateau Mont-Royal's **Aux Vivres** moved to new digs at 4631 bd. St-Laurent, near avenue du Mont-Royal (tel. 514/842-3479) in 2006 and has been packing in vegans, vegetarians, and the meat-eaters who love them ever since. **Best Pizza:** The name says it all: **Pizzedelic**, 39 rue Notre-Dame ouest (near bd. St-Laurent; tel. 514/286-1200), where they do anything from same-old tomato and cheese to designer concoctions with "shrimp satay ginger." **Best Bagels:** Even native New Yorkers have to give it up for Montreal's bagels, which are clearly superior to versions produced south of the border. Both **St-Viateur Bagel & Cafe**, at 1127 av. Mont-Royal est, near avenue Christophe-Colomb in Plateau Mont-Royal (tel. 514/528-6361), and **Fairmont Bagel**, at 74 av. Fairmont ouest, near rue St-Urbain in Mile End (tel. 514/272-0667), are the places to assess that claim. **Best Outdoor Terrace:** Serious food isn't the lure at **Le Jardin Nelson**, 407 Place Jacques-Cartier (tel. 514/861-5731). Music-- classical or jazz-- is what draws the crowds to this central Vieux-Montreal locale to partake of crepes and pizzas under the crabapple tree in the garden. **Best Late-Night Eats:** If the bagels from **Fairmont Bagel** won't do the trick (the hole-in-the-wall shop is open 24 hr.), our heart is still

## Montreal Snapshot continued

with **L'Express**. It's in the center of the Plateau neighborhood and serves until 3am. **Best Wine Bar: Aszu**, in Vieux-Montreal at 212 rue Notre Dame ouest near rue St-Francois-Xavier (tel. **514/845-5436**), features between 60 and 70 wines by the glass every night.

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### Nightlife Insights

Montréal's reputation for effervescent nightlife reaches back to the Roaring Twenties-- specifically to the United States' 13-year experiment with Prohibition from 1920 to 1933. Americans streamed into Montréal for temporary relief from alcohol deprivation (while Canadian distillers and brewers made fortunes-- few of them with meticulous regard for legalistic niceties). Montréal already enjoyed a sophisticated and slightly naughty reputation as the Paris of North America, which added to the allure.

Nearly a century later, clubbing and barhopping remain popular activities, with nightspots keeping much later hours in Montréal than in arch-rival Toronto, which still heeds Calvinist notions of propriety and early bedtimes.

Nocturnal pursuits are often as cultural as they are social. The city boasts its own outstanding symphony, dozens of French- and English-language theater companies, and the incomparable performance company Cirque du Soleil. It's also on the standard concert circuit that includes Chicago, Boston, and New York, so internationally known entertainers, music groups, and dance companies pass through frequently. A decidedly French enthusiasm for film, as well as the city's ever-increasing reputation as a movie-production center, ensures support for cinemas showcasing experimental, offbeat, and foreign films.

A new discount ticket office for Montréal cultural events opened in summer 2007. Called **Vitrine culturelle de Montréal** ("cultural window of Montréal"; tel. **514/285-4545**; [www.vitrineculturelle.com](http://www.vitrineculturelle.com)), it's located at 145 rue Sainte-Catherine ouest in Place des Arts. It includes a central information office and full-price tickets as well as last-minute deals.

In summer, the city becomes even livelier than usual. The biggest of the bunch is the 3-day Grand Prix du Canada, the country's only Formula 1 auto race that roars onto Ile Notre-Dame and brings the partying into downtown in June.

Concentrations of pubs and discos underscore the city's linguistic dichotomy. While there's a great deal of crossover, the parallel blocks of **rue Crescent**, rue Bishop, and rue de la Montagne north of rue Ste-Catherine have a pronounced Anglophone (English-speaking) character, while Francophones (French speakers) dominate the **Quartier Latin**, with college-age patrons most evident along the lower reaches of rue St-Denis and their yuppie elders gravitating to the nightspots of the slightly more uptown blocks of the same street. **Vieux-Montréal (Old Montréal)**, especially along rue St-Paul, has a more universal quality, and many of the bars and clubs there feature live jazz, blues, and folk music. In the **Plateau Mont-Royal** area, boulevard St-Laurent, parallel to St-Denis and known locally as "The Main," has become a miles-long haven of hip restaurants and clubs, roughly from rue Sherbrooke up to rue Laurier. It's a good place to wind up in the wee hours, as there's always someplace with the welcome mat still out, even after the official 3am closings.

Most bars and clubs don't charge cover, and when they do, it's rarely more than C\$10 (US\$8.70/£4.30). Beer is usually in the C\$4-to-C\$7 (US\$3.50-US\$6.10/£1.70-£3) range, while cocktails are typically C\$7 to C\$12 (US\$6.10-US\$10/£3-£5.15).

Smoking has been banned in bars and restaurants throughout the province since 2006.

**Checking What's On**-- For details on performances or special events when you're in town, pick up a free copy of **Montréal Scope** ([www.montrealscope.com](http://www.montrealscope.com)), a weekly ads-and-events booklet usually available in hotel receptions, or the free weekly papers **Mirror** ([www.montrealmirror.com](http://www.montrealmirror.com)) and **Hour** ([www.hour.ca](http://www.hour.ca)), both in English, or **Voir** ([www.voir.ca](http://www.voir.ca)) and

**Ici** ([www.icimontreal.com](http://www.icimontreal.com)), both in French, available all over town. Also in French is the free monthly **Nightlife** magazine ([www.nightlifemagazine.ca](http://www.nightlifemagazine.ca)).

**Fugues** ([www.fugues.com](http://www.fugues.com)), available at the tourist information office in the Gay Village, provides news and views of gay and lesbian events, clubs, restaurants, and activities. Extensive listings of largely mainstream cultural and entertainment events are posted at [www.canada.com](http://www.canada.com) and [www.montrealplus.ca](http://www.montrealplus.ca).

### Cinema

In Montréal, English-language films are usually presented with subtitles in French. However, when the initials "VF" (for version française) follow the title of a non-Francophone movie, it means that the movie has been dubbed into French. Policies vary on English subtitles on non-English-language films-- the best idea is to ask at the box office. Besides the many first-run movie houses that advertise in the daily newspapers, Montréal is rich in "ciné-clubs," which tend to be slightly older and show second-run, foreign, and art films at reduced prices.

Admission to films is usually about C\$10 (US\$8.70/£4.30) for adults, and less for students, seniors, children, and afternoon shows.

Foreign-language and independent films are the menu at **Ex-Centris**, 3536 bd. St-Laurent (tel. **514/847-2206**; [www.ex-centris.com](http://www.ex-centris.com)), and the architectural surroundings are at least as interesting-- sort of a post-machine-age spaceship. Go inside and try to find the ticket booth to ask about showtimes just to see what we mean. A casual and nifty bar-café, Café Méliès, is on the premises. The films are in English about half the time.

The **National Film Board of Canada (Cinema ONF)** at 1564 rue St-Denis (tel. **514/496-6887**), shows Canadian and international films, primarily in English and French, particularly classics. Also at the theater/office is the unique CinéRobothèque, a high-tech screening center that lets visitors browse a multimedia catalog and then watch a film at a personal viewing station.

## Montreal Snapshot continued

Imposing, sometimes visually disorienting images confront viewers of the five-story screen in the **IMAX Theatre** in the Centre des Sciences de Montréal in the Vieux-Port (tel. **877/496-4724**). Many of the films are suitable for the entire family.

### Gambling

The **Casino de Montréal** (tel. **800/665-2274** or 514/392-2746; [www.casino-de-montreal.com](http://www.casino-de-montreal.com)), Québec's first, is housed in recycled space: The complex re-uses what were the French and Québec Pavilions on Ile Notre-Dame during Expo'67 (the World's Fair that Montréal hosted). Asymmetrical and groovy, the buildings provide a dramatic setting for games of chance. Four floors contain more than 115 game tables, including roulette, craps, blackjack, baccarat, and varieties of poker, and there are more than 3,200 slot machines. Its four restaurants get good reviews, especially the elegant **Nuances**. There are also live shows in the Cabaret, a 500-seat performance hall. No alcoholic beverages are served in the gambling areas, and patrons must be 18 and dressed neatly (the full dress code is posted online). Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, the Casino is entirely smoke-free, with outside smoking areas. Overnight packages are available.

To get there you can drive or take the Métro to the Parc Jean-Drapeau stop and then walk or take the Casino shuttle bus (no. 167). From May through October, there's also a free shuttle bus (navette) that leaves on the hour from the downtown Infotouriste Centre at 1001 rue du Square-Dorchester. Call tel. **514/392-2746** for information on the shuttle and its other downtown stops. © 2000-2010 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

### Things to Do Insights

**Listen to Jazz:** Downtown, Old Town, the Latin Quarter, all over, this is a favorite pastime of locals and visitors alike, especially in late June and early July during the renowned Montreal Jazz Festival.

**Savor Top-Notch Cuisine at Affordable**

**Prices:** Experience all of French cuisine's permutations-- traditional, haute, bistro, original Quebecois-- along with the city's fusion hybrids and ethnic restaurants the way the locals do: by ordering the table

d'hoie specials. You'll get to indulge in three or more courses for a fixed price that is only slightly more than the cost of an a la carte main course alone. Most full-service restaurants offer the option, if only at midday. **Explore Vieux-Montreal:** The old quarter has an overwhelmingly European flavor. Wander Place Jacques-Cartier, the most engaging of the district's squares; explore museums and the stunning architecture of the churches; stroll or meander on a bike along the revitalized waterfront. **Shop:** Browse the shops of world-class domestic designers, from the up-and-coming to the well established; search for Inuit (Eskimo) sculptures of the highest order (with prices to match); and take in the scores of eclectic antiques shops along rue Notre-Dame between rue Guy and avenue Atwater. © 2000-2010 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

### Travel Tips

#### By Metro

For speed and economy, nothing beats Montréal's Métro system for getting around. The stations are marked on the street by blue-and-white signs that show a circle enclosing a down-pointing arrow. Although starting to show its age (the system has run at a deficit in recent years), and recently afflicted with waves of graffiti, the Métro's relatively clean, quiet trains whisk passengers through an expanding network of underground tunnels. In April 2007, the orange line (no. 2 on our map) was extended three stops farther into the north. The new end station is Montmorency, making it the train "direction" you'll see on platforms (instead of Henri-Bourassa).

Fares are by the ride, not by distance. **Single rides** cost C\$2.75 (US\$2.40/£1.15), a **strip of six tickets** is C\$12 (US\$10/£5.05), and a **weekly pass**, good for unlimited rides, is C\$19 (US\$17/£8.15). Reduced fares are available to children and, with special Métro ID cards, seniors and students. **Tourist passes** are good for short visits: unlimited rides for 1 day for C\$9 (US\$7.85/£3.85) or 3 days for C\$17 (US\$15/£7.30). Buy tickets at the booth in any station or from a convenience store.

To enter the system, slip your ticket into the slot in the turnstile or show your pass to the attendant in the booth. If you plan to transfer to a bus, take a transfer ticket (correspondence) from the machine just inside the turnstile; every Métro station has one, and it allows you a free transfer to a bus wherever you exit the subway. Remember to take the transfer ticket at the station where you first enter the system. If you start a trip by bus and intend to continue on the Métro, ask the driver for a transfer.

The Métro runs from about 5:30am to 12:30am. If you plan to be out late, check the website at [www.stm.info](http://www.stm.info) or call tel. **514/786-4636** for the exact times of the last train on each line.

The Métro is not immune to transit strikes; an action in May 2007 led to reduced hours of operation for several days. And one caveat: Convenient as the Métro is, there can be substantial distances between stations, and accessibility is sometimes difficult for people with mobility problems. For example, to get from the lobby of the centrally located Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth hotel to the platform of the Bonaventure station "directly beneath" takes the equivalent of 3 city blocks and the use of 4 escalators.

#### By Bus

Buses cost the same as Métro trains, and Métro tickets are good on buses, too. Exact change is required to pay bus fares in cash. Although they run throughout the city (and give riders the decided advantage of traveling aboveground), buses don't run as frequently or as swiftly as the Métro. If you start a trip on the bus and want to transfer to the Métro, ask the bus driver for a transfer ticket.

#### By Taxi

There are plenty of taxis run by several different companies. Cabs come in a variety of colors and styles, so their principal distinguishing feature is the plastic sign on the roof. At night, the sign is illuminated when the cab is available. Fares continue to increase, largely due to hikes in gas prices, with an initial charge of C\$3.15 (US\$2.75) at the flag drop, C\$1.45 (US\$1.25)

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per kilometer (2/3 mile), and C55¢(US48¢) per minute of waiting. A short ride from one point to another downtown usually costs about C\$6(US\$5.20). Tip about 10% to 15%. Members of hotel and restaurant staffs can call cabs, many of which are dispatched by radio. They line up outside most large hotels or can be hailed on the street.

Montréal taxi drivers range in temperament from sullen cranks to the unstoppably loquacious. Some know their city well, others have sketchy knowledge and poor language skills, so it's a good idea to have your destination written down-- with the cross street-- to show your driver.

Cyclists will be glad to know that several taxi companies participate in the "Taxi +Vélo"(vélo means bicycle) program. Call one of them, specify that you have a bike to transport, and a cab with a specially designed rack arrives. Up to three bikes can be carried for an extra fee of C\$3(US \$2.60/£1.30) each. The companies are listed at [www.velo.qc.ca](http://www.velo.qc.ca)(search for "taxi"), or call tel. **514/521-8356**.

### By Car

Montréal is an easy city to navigate by car. Visitors arriving by plane or train, however, will probably want to rely on public transportation and cabs. A rental car can come in handy, though, for trips outside of town or if you plan to drive to Québec City.

**Rentals**-- Terms, cars, and prices for rentals are similar to those in the United States, and all the larger U.S. companies operate in Canada. Basic rates are about the same from company to company, although a little comparison shopping can unearth modest savings. A charge is usually levied when you return a car in a city other than the one in which it was rented.

All the companies listed here have counters at Trudeau Airport(the local numbers at the terminal are listed here). Major car-rental companies include **Avis**(tel. **800/437-0358** or 514/636-1902); **Budget**(tel. **800/268-8900** or 514/636-0052); **Hertz**(tel. **800/263-0600** or 514/636-9530); **National**(tel.

**800/387-4747** or 514/636-9030); and **Thrifty**(tel. **800/367-2277** or 514/631-5567).

If you'll be doing much driving in Montréal, pick up the pocket-size atlas by JDM Géo. It's published by MapArt([www.mapart.com](http://www.mapart.com)) and sold at gas stations throughout Canada.

**Gasoline**-- Gasoline and diesel fuel are sold by the liter, and are significantly more expensive than in the United States(Europeans will find the prices less of a shock). With recent prices of C\$1.15 a liter(US\$1/49p), and 3.78 liters to 1 gallon, that comes out to about US\$4.35 a gallon. It costs about C\$40(US\$35/£17) to fill the tank of a small car with the lowest grade of unleaded gasoline.

**Parking**-- It can be difficult to park for free on the heavily trafficked streets of downtown Montréal, but there are plenty of metered spaces. Look around before walking off without paying. Meters are set well back from the curb so they won't be buried by plowed snow in winter. Parking costs C\$1 an hour, and meters are in effect weekdays until 9pm and weekends until 6pm. If there are no parking meters in sight, you're not off the hook. The city has started to install new black metal kiosks that serve a number of spaces on a street. Look for a column about 6 feet tall with a white "P" in a blue circle. Press the "English" button, enter the letter from the space where you are parked, then pay with cash or a credit card, following instructions on the screen.

In addition, check for signs noting restrictions, usually showing a red circle with a diagonal slash. The words LIVRAISON SEULEMENT, for example, mean "delivery only." Most downtown shopping complexes have underground parking lots, as do the big downtown hotels. Some of the hotels don't charge extra if you want to take your car in and out during the day-- useful if you plan to do some sightseeing by car.

**Driving Rules**-- The limited-access expressways in Québec are called autoroutes, distances are given in kilometers(km), and speed limits are given in kilometers per hour(kmph). Because French is the official language of the

province, some highway signs are in French only, although Montréal's autoroutes and bridges often bear dual-language signs.

One traffic signal function often confuses newcomers: Should you wish to make a turn and you know that the street runs in the correct direction, you may be surprised to initially see just a green arrow pointing straight ahead instead of a green light permitting the turn. The arrow is just to give pedestrians time to cross the intersection. After a few moments, the light will turn from an arrow to a regular green light and you can proceed.

Turning right on a red light is prohibited on the island of Montréal, except where specifically allowed by an additional green arrow. Outside the island of Montréal, it is now legal to turn right after stopping at red lights. The change has caused authorities to put up numerous signs at what they believe to be dangerous intersections specifically prohibiting that move.

Seat-belt use is required by law while driving or riding in a car in Québec province.

**Note:** Too many of the region's drivers take perverse pride in their reputation as dangerously fast at the wheel and are prone to such maneuvers as sudden U-turns or cutting across two lanes to snare a parking space. Growing indignation at such practices, with newspapers decrying excess speed and the accidents that result from it, doesn't seem to have curbed the behavior. Be aware.

**July 1: Citywide Moving Day!**-- Montréal is an island of renters, and close to 100,000 of them move from old apartments to new ones every July 1-- that date, and only that date. It coincides with Canada's National Day, ensuring that separatist-minded Francophone Québécois won't have time to celebrate a holiday they have no intention of observing anyway.

All but certain to be miserably hot and humid, July 1 is a trial that can, nevertheless, be hilarious to observe. See families struggle to get bedroom sets and large appliances down narrow outdoor staircases! Watch sidewalks become

## Montreal Snapshot continued

obstacle courses of baby cribs, bicycles, and overflowing cardboard boxes! Hear the cacophony of horns as streets become clogged with every serviceable van, truck, and SUV!

Later in the day, hundreds of people get to their new digs and discover gifts of junk

no longer desired by their predecessors--busted furniture, pantries of old food, pitiful plants.

No one can explain why reason didn't prevail long ago in the form of a mandated staggered schedule. One thing that doesn't

take much thought, though, is that you'll want to either be someplace else on that day, or put on a strong backpack to walk around and do some good trash-picking.  
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