

The Suburban

magazine

JULY 31, 2015

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The Games are back

Pipes and drums and dancers and bands and ...

PETER FORD PHOTO

DURING OUR BIGGEST EVENT OF THE YEAR

IT'S EASY TO GET INTO A FORD

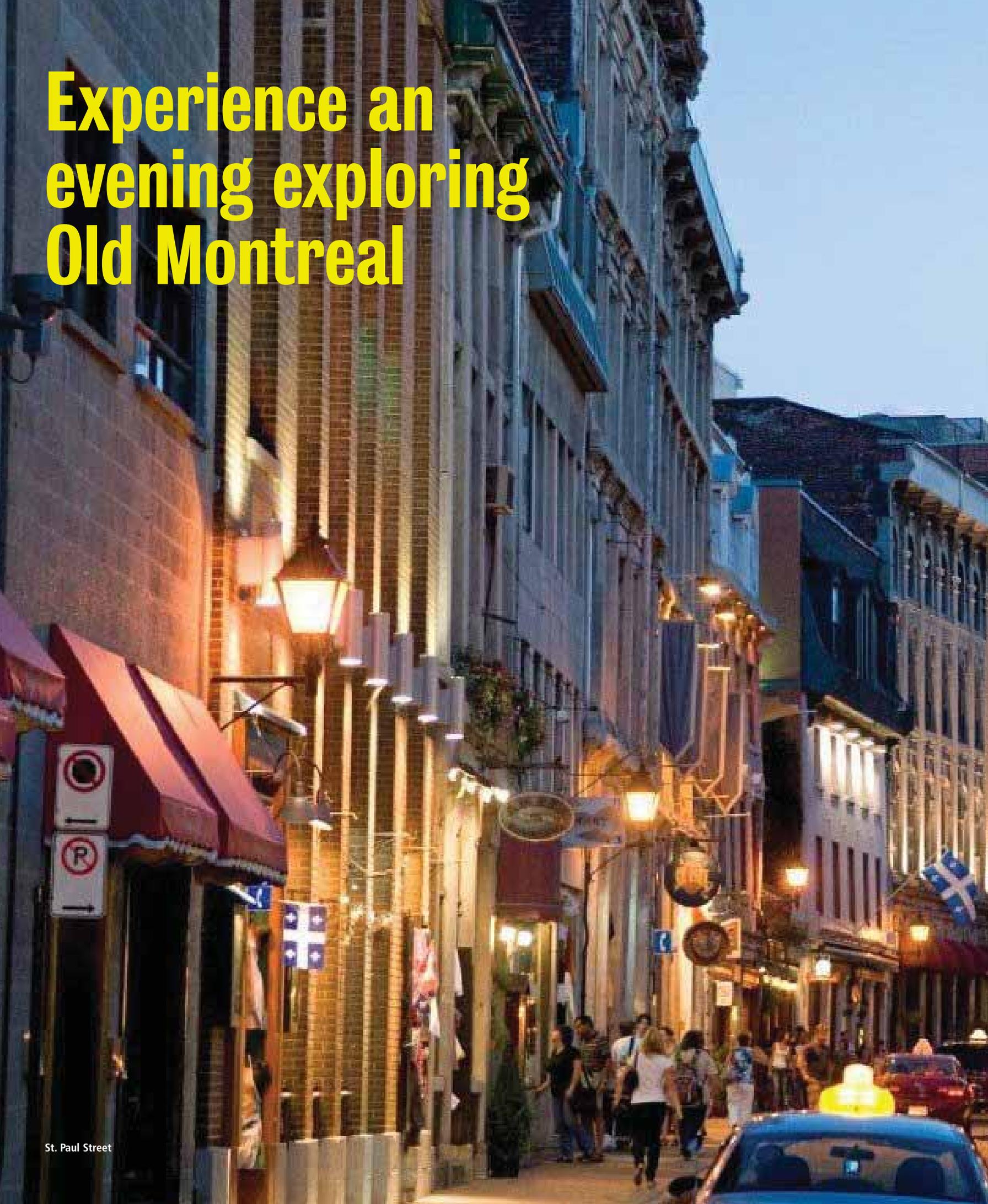
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Experience an evening exploring Old Montreal





By Mike Cohen
The Suburban

Every summer, often more than once, our family decides to become tourists in our own city. Tops on our list is an evening in beautiful Old Montreal. There is something special about walking through those cobblestone streets amid tourists from across the globe. On warm evenings, there are few places in this city I'd rather be.

Our adventure begins by finding a parking spot. There are still a number of lots to choose from and of course many people prefer to get there via public transit. We like to arrive in the late afternoon when the sun is still out and begin our experience by walking down Saint Paul Street, which is closed off to traffic at this time. In and out of all the quaint shops we go, sometimes even buying souvenirs. Artist's alley is fun to see, with all of the different renderings for sale. Unfortunately, due to construction, it is not in operation this summer.

Make sure to check out Notre-Dame Basilica, a neo-gothic architectural masterpiece that rises above Place d'Armes. This place has exquisite woodwork, intricate stained glass, incomparable sculpted columns and offers guided tours.

Pierre du Calvet House, the Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours chapel and the Marché Bonsecours are all worth stops. The latter is deemed to be among the most beautiful heritage sites in Canada. The building houses a number of artisan studio-boutiques.

There is also Les Cours le Royer, an elegant, tree-lined pedestrian thoroughfare complete with park benches and bordered by former factory-stores (1861-1872) turned apartments and office buildings. The Pointe-à-Callière, the Montréal museum of history and archaeology, is here as well. Built directly upon the very foundation of the first colony, the museum exhibits hundreds of artefacts that retrace the history of the city, from first meetings with the Amerindians until present day.

Place Jacques-Cartier is just plain fun in the summer. I feel alive when I walk through this area, complete with street performers, wandering magicians and many artists willing to sketch your portrait.

Dining out

It is usually at this time in the evening that we seek out a place to dine and in Old Montreal there are no shortage of excellent choices. Restaurant Aux Vieux Port (<http://www.vieuxportsteakhouse.com>), owned by the Antonopoulos Group, is an absolute treasure. It is so large in size that you do not need necessarily require reservations. Would you believe it can accommodate 1,000 diners in its beautiful century-old structure? In season, the pic-

turesque terrace seats at least 250 people. This is where we decided to dine. As Maitre D' David Duchesne shared with us in the tour of the facility, this is also a popular spot for weddings, family celebrations and corporate gatherings. "On a Saturday night we have as many as 50 servers working," he said.



The terrace at Restaurant Aux Vieux Port

Located at 39 St. Paul Street, inside you are greeted by old stone walls, wood floors, cozy fireplaces and an attentive staff. The menu here is extensive to say the least.

You can start off with some cocktails, such as an excellent glass of Bellini (sparkling white wine with peach schnapps), and then consider the seafood platter, featuring shrimp, king crab scallops, half a lobster tail and fried calamari. Appetizers include salads and a homemade crab cake, salmon tartar, escargots au gratin and roast beef poutine. Steaks, served with garlic mashed potatoes and vegetable are cooked to perfection. All of their beef is AAA Canadian Certified and aged for at least 30 days. There are pasta options, rack of lamb, pork

osso buco, burgers and some delicious fish and seafood: fresh lobster, grilled shrimp, roasted halibut, grilled salmon fillet and miso-glazed black cod. The latter I must comment on specifically for it is actually very difficult to find at any Montreal restaurant and frankly one reason alone we want to come back. For

dessert, consider the crème brûlée and the chocolate mousse.

Restaurant Au Vieux Port also has a five station Sunday brunch for \$28 per person and if you come either before 6 p.m. (and order at that time) or after 9:30 p.m. you can get a full course meal for only \$23. This is actually a very popular spot year-round and has customers from all; walks of life, from a couple walking down the aisle to a large bus tour occupying an entire floor of the restaurant.

Post dinner promenade

After dinner it is time to do some walking again. Had we come earlier in the day we might have gone to the Clock Tower Beach, located at the

base of its namesake erected in 1921 to commemorate the brave Merchant Navy sailors who disappeared during World War. This new strand of coastline tranquility can accommodate up to 800 people. There is plenty of sand, but you cannot go swimming. The actual Clock Tower, at 45 m high, offers spectacular views of Montréal, while the stretch of silky sand at its base provides a fun and friendly environment with a unique holiday atmosphere, beach umbrellas, brightly coloured chairs and fixtures, showers and mist stations, a wooden boardwalk, and a refreshment stand, all accessible via a giant stairway ramp. In the evening, the Clock Tower Beach comes alive with musical happenings.

Venturing towards the Quays of the Old Port, a great spot to stakeout when it is a fireworks evening, take some time to people watch and get a good look at the St. Lawrence River and the Jacques-Cartier Bridge. You will certainly pass by the Montreal Science Centre, the high-tech educational funhouse which also includes an IMAX theatre. The vendors here in the summer are plentiful and offer all kinds of amazing deals.

If you really want to feel like a tourist, grab a ride in one of Old Montréal's horse-drawn carriages. You will hear many anecdotes and historical tidbits provided by your driver as you clip-clop along the cobblestone streets. For the more energetic, rent a four-person bicycle or paddle-boat, and explore the Quays of the Old Port. Croisières AML Cruises offer excursions aboard the Cavalier Maxim to take in the city's panorama from the majestic St. Lawrence River.

For more information log on to <http://www.vieux.montreal.qc.ca/eng/accueila.htm>.



Inside the restaurant.



Notre Dame Basilica (Courtesy Tourisme Montréal)