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## Montreal, Canada: Island of French Flair

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DENVER — Every so often one dreams of escaping to another country to experience different sights, sounds and cultures. While France possesses all of these elements, so does the little island of Montréal, Canada. Tucked just over the U.S. border, close to Vermont and New York, this destination offers all the big city charms and ambiance with a hefty dose of French style.

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Having the distinction of being the only Canadian city completely surrounded by water, Montréal is approximately 30 miles long and only 10 miles wide. But what it may lack in mass, is more than made up for by its people who have made it the second most visited tourist destination in the country, just behind Toronto.

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While I may have had to brush up on my French while visiting France, there were no such concerns in Montréal where roughly half of its citizens are bilingual with English as their second language. In fact, the city is a melting pot with neighborhoods offering distinctive shopping and dining options from every culture.

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The Metro system is a snap to learn as it has far fewer lines than that of Paris and can take you to most destinations in the city. At the Square Victoria station, you will find an authentic Parisian metro grille, which was donated to the city by Paris during Expo 67.

Exploring downtown Montréal on foot is a fun and enjoyable experience. Along popular Sainte-Catherine Street, you will find restaurants, department stores, boutiques, and movie theaters, all brimming with locals and tourists enjoying the best the city has to offer.

Once you get your fill of topside attractions, enter one of the access points and head down to the Underground Pedestrian Network, also known as RÉSO—one of the city's most remarkable treasures. With 20 miles of walkways, including 1,700 boutiques, 7 hotels, 200 restaurants, museums, and common spaces, RÉSO is the largest man-made underground network in the world. Most maps have these areas in blue and you can see much of the city via this marvelous underground system, perfect for rainy days or colder weather.

Montrealers love the outdoors, and in the Old Port area, you can find them strolling along the Saint Lawrence River waterfront, biking or skating. There is also an IMAX theater at the Science Center.

Located slightly uphill from Old Port, Old Montréal is a beehive of activity, especially in Place Jacques-Cartier, named after the French explorer who claimed Canada for France. This public market with brick-lined streets and Victorian lamps has been transformed into a cornucopia of specialty shops, restaurants and sidewalk bistros. There are also plenty of street performers, caricature artists and musicians, all