

Montreal, Quebec and New England

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Weather often determines whether you like a destination and we had exceptional weather. My husband and I loved everything we did as we explored new destinations.

Montreal: The city is vibrant and interesting. Our hotel, the Sheraton La Centre is on Renee Levesque in West Montreal. More of the high-end properties and shops are located in this area as is McGill University. “Old Montreal” is a wonderful area along the Saint Lawrence with history, art galleries, excellent restaurants and shops. We visited the Basilica Notre Dame, which is hands down one of the most beautiful basilicas I have ever seen. We were able to enter for free since it was a Sunday prior to services and a bonus was listening to the organ as people were arriving for the 10AM service. We walked a lot of the city including noted streets of Rue St Laurent, Rue St Denis, Rue Duluth and Rue Prince Arthur all in the Northeast quadrant – these all offered ethnic restaurants, bohemian ambiance and the footprint of the immigrant population. Another area to explore are the underground walkways and shops that go for miles! Subway tickets are \$2.75 a ride.



Basilica Notre Dame, Montreal

US dollars accepted everywhere at par...which saved us the foreign transaction fees our credit card companies would have charged.

French is spoken first always but when they realized we were English speaking, they switched quickly to American English. Everyone was friendly and accommodating everywhere.

Favorite coffee shop chain: Second Cup

Wonderful wine bar: Aszu located in Old Montreal

Good lunch restaurant on Rue Crescent: Thursdays on the balcony

Jazz club: Upstairs on Rue Mackay.

Wonderful city! We didn't have time to explore the museums or Olympic Village or take a boat ride, so will have to go back.

Via Rail to Quebec City: 3 hour trip. Comfortable and pleasant journey. 2nd class is fine for this – we experienced both and feel there was no need to go 1st class on this short journey. Bags can be kept in storage at both rail stations for \$3 per bag and they will check your luggage for the train if you wish.

Quebec City: Beautiful setting. Great views to the river. Lots of fantastic restaurants, art galleries, shops and museums to see. The Lower Town was our favorite area to explore. Would like to have taken a tour to Isle d'Orleans further up the river had we had time...noted for it's quaint country ambiance. Wonderful lunch: Café Conti. Excellent food and reasonably priced, located within the walls of the old city on Rue St Louis.



Chateau Frontenac, Quebec City

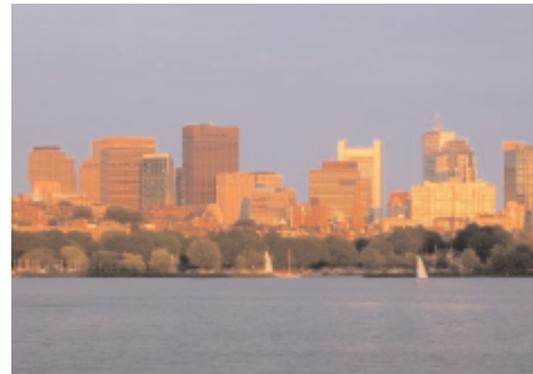
We spent one last night in Montreal at the Fairmont so that we could take the morning Amtrak from Montreal to Albany, New York. The central Rail Station is just below the hotel.

Amtrak: No baggage service and no advance seating, but comfortable ride. Border crossing took 2 hours while everyone was questioned. This was pretty normal according to the conductor. Views of farms and woods primarily – nothing spectacular to see from the train, but still pleasant.

Albany: Used Albany as our base for our trip to Saratoga Springs and on to Western Massachusetts. We picked up a car at the Albany airport and drove it for the rest of our trip, dropping it at JFK. Drove an hour north of Albany to Saratoga Springs to the horse races...it was Travers Day, which is a big deal there. I can't describe how amazing it was to watch the people and the races. After about 4 races, we left to drive to Lenox, Mass, where we had tickets for the Boston Pops at Tanglewood.

The drive was quite enjoyable as we ventured into a corner of Vermont and down...it took us about 3 hours. We again were amazed at the people coming into the Tanglewood grounds with their food, chairs, tables, tablecloths, candelabras and flower centerpieces! We ordered a catered dinner through the Tanglewood website and it was excellent. The concert was wonderful too with John Williams conducting and playing movie themes. What an amazing day! Back to Albany at 1AM.

Boston: Spent one night at the Royal Sonesta in Cambridge to see MIT and Harvard and then moved into town to the Fairmont for two nights to explore Boston. We loved the city – it is very manageable and walkable – not as frenetic as New York City. Great meals at the Cambridge Brew Pub, Union Oyster House, Olives and a small neighborhood restaurant near our hotel. Freedom Trail is a must. Watched Meg Ryan film a movie along Newberry Street, enjoyed a tour of the State House and took a hydrofoil up to Salem Massachusetts, which was a lot of fun. "Charlie tickets" on their subway were \$2 a trip and very easy to use.



Boston skyline

Nantucket: Fast ferry tickets from Hyannis cost us \$118 for two but we enjoyed exploring the little town for a day. The town is full of high end shops with artwork in some shops starting at \$16,000 and some were over \$100,000. The glass shop had some Chihuly pieces along with some other amazing works. A touristy but fun place to explore. Renting a bike would have been fun. The fast ferry took an hour each way. The "traditional" ferry took 2 hours and 15 minutes each way.

Providence Rhode Island: Stayed at the Westin in town. Enjoyed walking around the downtown area along the river. If you go, check to see if it is around the time of "Waterfire" where they light hundreds of cauldrons in the river and set to music. This takes place every other Saturday from May to October. Newport, Rhode Island: Drove down from Providence and visited 4 of the mansions built during the "gilded age" in the 1880s to 1920s. We felt Marble House was the most amazing and then Breakers, Elms and Rosecliff. Each offered something new, different and interesting. Walking "Cliff Walk" along the ocean with the mansions inland was also enjoyable.

Long Island: We took a ferry from New London, Connecticut to Orient Point, New York, at the tip of Long Island. We enjoyed the rural ambiance of North Fork, took a short ferry from Greenport to Shelter Island and another from there over to Sag Harbor. Drove through the Hamptons and then the Expressway down to our destination near Oyster Bay to attend a wedding. Visited Sagamore Hill, Teddy Roosevelt's home and summer White House in Oyster Bay – the museum there was especially interesting to us.

Finally took Jet Blue from JFK to Portland.

This was a good itinerary – we clearly covered a lot of territory and could have used more time to explore more in depth. Please contact me for further details.