

# FRENCH IN MONTRÉAL

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*“Arrêt” sign in Montréal*

“I went abroad to discover a new culture. I did not want to speak or hear French anymore; I wanted to learn English. And so I visited Montréal.”

## **A City More French than France?**

The first thing that surprised me in Montréal was its “Stop” sign. Instead of using the English word “Stop” as in France, their signs boldly spell out the French word “Arrêt.”

Montréal is indeed the second largest French-speaking city. Certain separatist people of Québec even gathered in the streets when the percentage of French-speakers in Montréal dropped. By the way, here is a little tip to break the ice with Canadians when visiting Montréal: try to pronounce some words in French, they will appreciate it!

As in France, art galleries, cafés, and terraces are popular in the city. When I arrived in Montréal this summer, the lack of bars with terraces annoyed me, but I finally found them! The concept of a terrace is very famous in France. Even if you don’t have a Pierre Hermé macaroon to eat or a coffee to sip, the simple act of sitting and commenting on people wandering by is very French.

Many French restaurants animate Montréal’s culinary scene. The “bistros” are probably better than in France, revising some great classics of the French cuisine like the “filet mignon” or the warm “chèvre salad” (oh oui, du FROMAGE!).

These places obviously present different price ranges and some can turn out to be pretty expensive. Our budget eventually drove us to McDonald’s. And there again, Montréal proved to be more French than France. In Montréal’s McDonald’s, you do not order a “menu” but a “trio.”

The architecture of Montréal also tends to make the city French-looking. Paved streets and small plazas make it pleasant to walk around. You should have a look at the Old City and the Port; these parts are particularly lovely!

Obviously, a tourist cannot miss their Basilique Notre Dame after appreciating the Cathédrale Notre-Dame in Paris! The artwork is impressive and shows a great attention to details. In consequence, Montréal is advertised as a way to “experience the French culture in America.” People even describe it as the “Paris of North America.”

### This Is Wrong

The food and the language prove that Montréal is far from being truly French. In France, the importance of food does not need to be proven anymore. Food must be tasty but also classy. Texture, presentation, and colors all count. The food is an art and belongs to our culture. Therefore, for true French people, the “Poutine” is gross! (For French people who enjoy food, however, the Poutine is a must!). The Poutine depicts what a Canadian city truly is: an American city where the weather is colder and the fries softer.

Finally, a clarification on the language is necessary. French has many variations. From the South to the North, between the West and the East, without forgetting Corsica, French people speak with very different accents and have their own dialects. I even sometimes struggle to understand what French from the South say to me, yet we all agree to say that they do speak French.



The “Poutine”: Fries, Cheese, and Gravy

In Montréal, it is not always obvious! The accent I heard was extremely funny. If you watched *The Taste* on ABC and heard the French chef speaking English, you got an idea of how a proper American accent can be ruined. The Montréal’s accent in French is ten times stranger.

### Let Montréal Be Canadian

Montréal has many assets to show as a Canadian city. As a French tourist, I fell in love with its landscapes, friendly atmosphere, and the maple syrup. Go visit Montréal without any “French” expectations and discover Heaven by biting the pancakes of Eggspectations. The fruit and granola smoothies are amazing!



Eggspectation Pancakes

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*A last look at the beautiful skyline of Montréal*