



Text by Jennifer Lee
A Place To Lay Our Heads
 It's stylish, luxurious and oh so romantic...
 welcome to the Ritz-Carlton Montreal.

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The Ritz-Carlton Montreal astonishes. To give you a sense of what we're talking about, think of any obligatory homecoming scene in a drama about a teenager that discovers they're a) of royal lineage b) the not-so-distant-relation of a well-to-do family or c) the illegitimate child and sole heir to the fortune of a recently passed business mogul. Now, picture the lead's face when they walk into their new palace or mansion for the first time; well, *that's* the same expression (i.e. a bewildered look of utter amazement) that we had on our faces, while standing in the lobby of The Ritz-Carlton Montreal upon check-in. (We are talking about the same hotel that *Travel + Leisure* magazine ranked "Top City Hotel in Canada" last year, after all.)

Everything about this hotel is a testament to luxury living. Rooms and suites here, such as the King Signature Room we stayed in, are spacious and come outfitted with the sort of technology Tony Stark would appreciate, including motion sensors that activate dim lighting to help guide you in the dark, should, for example, nature's call beckon you from bed during the night.

And on that note, we have to mention the toilet—yes, the *toilet*. Not usually what one travels for, but as the bellman shared with us while explaining the functions of the storied TOTO multifunctional toilet/bidet, the operative word here is "usually." It would seem ol' TOTO has some ardent fans, which makes the Ritz particularly appealing. Whether you be a TOTO devotee or not, you can appreciate the fact that it's not every day you see a sensor operated toilet, powered by a remote control that offers up functions like air deodorizer, heated seat and a scale of "washing" and drying options.

Like the room its housed within, the marble bathroom is open with ample space for a luxe rain shower and oversized soaking tub. With the tub being generous enough for two, couples staying at the hotel will find the Ritz knows exactly how to deliver romance; don't be surprised should you return one evening to your room and find the tub adorned with red rose petals and a bottle of the hotel's own rose-scented bath milk awaiting you.



The Accommodations
The Royal Suite

After your soak, retreat to the comfort of the room's cushiony bed. (Where you may just find matching his and her pillows with a few more rose petals!) Bedtime at the Ritz comes with the joy of the hotel's pillow menu, a handy amenity for Goldilocks types that require the *perfect* amount of support for a good night's rest.

Travel Tip: Travelling from Toronto to Montreal for a weekend getaway? Make the journey with VIA Rail and skip excruciatingly long airport lines and the exhaustion that comes with being stuck behind the wheel. We suggest upgrading to Business Class, where the meals are as delicious as the seating is comfortable. Added bonus, you get to kick-back in the Business Lounge (a magazine heaven with hot coffee and soft drinks) while waiting for your train to depart.



As guests of the Ritz-Carlton Montreal learn firsthand, luxury doesn't begin and end in the rooms here, it's a vital component throughout the hotel. Where other properties offer guests a lobby bar and a live rendition of elevator jazz, patrons of the Ritz are invited to lounge at the **Dom Pérignon Champagne Bar** in the hotel's ornately manicured Palm Court, which happens to look like the type of place Bogart and Bacall might have frequented (and could have in theory with the hotel's opening dating back to 1912).

During the afternoon hours, the Palm Court fills up with well-heeled ladies partaking in high tea (it's common to see a shower of some sort being celebrated here), while evening is ushered in to the sound of guests clinking flutes before dinner at the hotel, served up on a silver platter over at **Maison Boulud** (one part of Chef Daniel Boulud's international restaurant empire), where classic French cooking finds inspiration in artisanal Quebecois products.

When staying at the hotel, be sure to enjoy breakfast at the restaurant at least once. You'll be sorry to miss out on offerings like the St-Viateur Bagel (a local favourite), served with homemade smoked king salmon and crème fraîche or the extensive breakfast buffet, which includes charcuterie, a selection of Quebec cheeses, freshly baked viennoiseries (such as buttery croissants) and the AM staples: eggs, bacon and sausages. Aside from the delicious eats available, the restaurant offers an idyllic setting for the first meal of the day; find yourself a seat in the outdoor dining area during the summer months or in the greenhouse when temperatures are cooler, and enjoy your meal while savouring the view of the hotel's gardens.

For added romance, order mimosas for two and then continue your day date with a visit to the hotel's spa and a couple's massage. (Bonus: the treatment ends with more champagne!)



Like the rest of the Ritz, the hotel's **Spa St. James** leaves one astonished. A recent addition to the property, the 5,500 square foot facility is the hotel's first full-service spa (complete with salon and manicure and pedicure suite) and a new collaboration between the Ritz-Carlton and the city's long-running, family-owned Spa St. James. Where the spa's *Gattaca*-esque design has it looking futuristic, its treatments are a meditation on traditional healing practices with modern finesse. Between its 12 elegant treatment rooms and the sleek contemporary fireplace accenting the relaxation lounge, it's clear that while the spa might specialize in lavishness, it has a firm understanding of the simple pleasures that equip rest and relaxation—every spa-goer's end goal.

At the Spa St. James, serenity is the takeaway gift each client leaves with in hand. During the Montreal Maple Sugar Massage, serenity arrives as tension exits by way of hot stones and a soothing scalp massage, scented with locally-made maple balm, while The St. James Signature "Facelift" (another custom designed treatment for the Ritz), is a non-surgical facelift that bears serenity with the help of a gentle micro-current, that gives facial muscles a work out, while simultaneously de-stressing the body.

For us, the best part of travelling is being able to turn off and be taken care of. At the Ritz-Carlton Montreal, this is an unspoken promise. Looking to unplug cosmopolitan-style? Take a page from Irving Berlin's songbook and "go where fashion sits:" the Ritz.