

# Montreal, c'est magnifique!

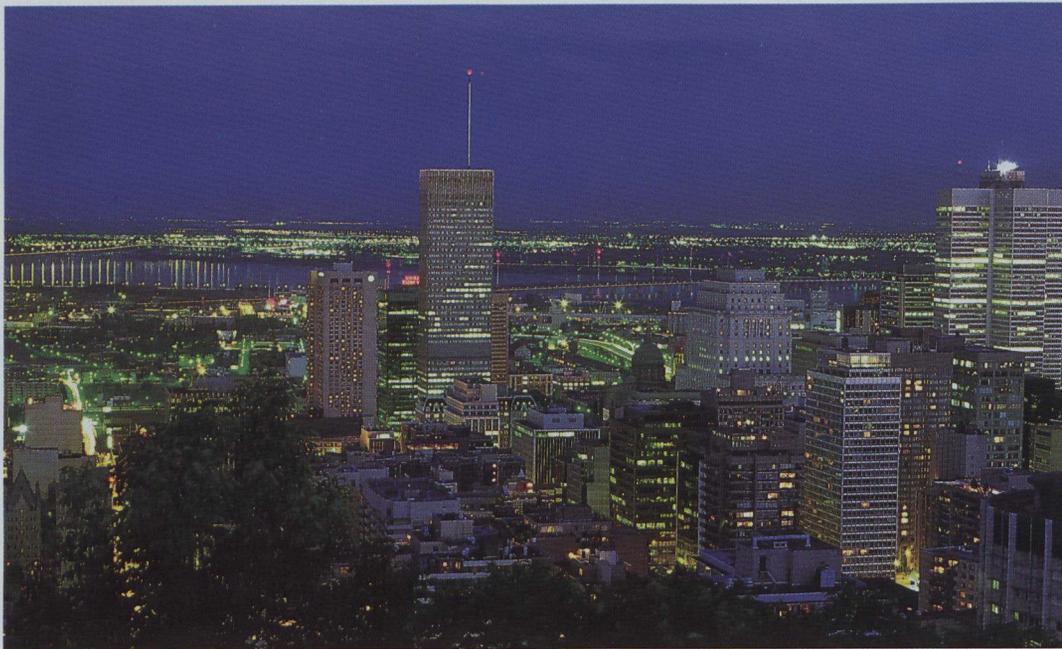


Photo: Malak

A spectacular night view of Montreal from the top of Mount Royal.



**A**t the crossroads of Europe and America, Montreal evinces an indescribable charm. With its two distinct personalities, it embraces at the same time the glittering new city of soaring skyscrapers and the quaint old city of cobblestone streets and 300-year-old buildings, affectionately known as "Vieux Montréal."

Montreal is widely acknowledged as one of North America's most cosmopolitan centres. During its development — particularly the

unprecedented and dynamic growth of the last 20 years — the city has truly become an international metropolis, open to all world cultures.

## In the Beginning

Although its heart beats to the rhythm of North America, two-thirds of the city's three million inhabitants boast French roots and have clung to the culture of the original settlers.

Setting out to discover the northwest passage to India from France, navigator Jacques Cartier set foot in 1535 on the site of Hochelaga, an Iroquois village of several thousand inhabitants, and became the first recorded European to visit the Island of Montreal. A century later, the Société de Notre-Dame formed a settlement in Montreal.

Fur trading became the ultimate means of survival for the tiny colony and it slowly

developed into a large commercial concern. A peace treaty signed with the five Indian nations of the region at the outset of the eighteenth century led to a boom in economic growth that made Montreal the business capital of New France.

## Industrial Expansion

During the years that followed, prosperous fur and lumber trade with Britain led to massive immigration from the British Isles and resulted in unprecedented economic growth. Then, fundamental changes began to take place in transportation and industry. Expansion of the St. Lawrence canal system and deepening of the channel to Quebec City made Montreal the principal seaport, and rail construction turned the city into the hub of the railway system.

Today, Montreal is considered one of North America's primary urban centres. Strategically located at the con-

fluence of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers between the Atlantic Ocean and the Great Lakes, its great international port is ranked second in North America — after New York and before Baltimore.

Although the greater Montreal region makes up slightly less than 3 per cent of Quebec's total land surface, it is home to more than half the population and 70 per cent of the province's manufacturing industries (9 000 firms).

More than 200 large companies have their head offices in Montreal, and these are joined by new ones every year. Included are 12 banks, 15 major insurance companies, several notable brokerage firms, the Montreal Stock Exchange and three of Canada's major engineering consultant firms: SNC, Lavalin and Monenco.

In summer the streets of Montreal come alive with the laughter and chatter of the sidewalk cafés.



Photo: Affaires Corporatives, MTL