



Montreal World Figure Skating That Wasn't – Trip Notes **March 14 - 23, 2020**

Overview

- The best of Ice-Skating Competition is “Worlds”. Like the Olympics, this just wasn't meant to be. I've been to World's in Boston, Helsinki, Milan and now tried to do Montreal.
- Cancellation didn't happen until the last minute. Beverly canceled just a couple days before we were to depart, much on doctor's orders.
- Alone I went, because I'm a flaneur, and besides, restaurants and stores were open. Until I got there.
- Panic I got, when so much was closing down to include airlines, the U.S. Embassy, and even the necessity stores were cutting hours.
- Home I went, three days early. Very carefully due to COVID-19 and airport germ safety.

Did I go home in time? This suggests YES. From CNN: 13,000 stranded Americans struggle to find way home as pandemic surges <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/23/politics/americans-stranded-overseas/index.html>

- Will I get to World's Ice-Skating Competition Next Year? Next year is in Stockholm but I've been closed out of it – our canceled April 5 cruise could only be in March 2021.

From the start, here are my trip notes:

Montreal – Yes, I'm here

Montreal? Are you crazy, they ask? Are you taking unnecessary chances, they ask? Are you okay, they ask? Are you happy, they ask? All of which is pretty much an affirmative yet I don't dismiss the risk. I have somehow managed to never get the flu but I “touched wood” as I write that. I traveled the Far East during their epidemics where we had airport lines and temperatures taken at every check point. Is it my turn?

How did this trip happen? My sister Beverly and I, along with some friends, have been slated for a very long time to attend the world's ice-skating competition.

Then the world changed — but we thought so many people would not attend the forum would be near empty, that we would be very careful, and that we would take the risk. Even when at the last minute the skating union canceled the event, most were still going to visit Montreal as tourists. Two of them made the pre-trip to Toronto but found too much closed so went home early.

Skating Event Canceled.

<https://www.isu.org/inside-isu/isu-communications/communications/24157-isu-statement-isu-world-figure-skating-championships-2020-montreal/file>

Affected City Services & Facilities: COVID-19 – <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/>

The Newark airport was almost a twilight zone in its emptiness. The Montreal airport was quite different with hordes of nervous people getting through passport control and customs. The taxi line looked Disney-esque and could take an hour so I reverted to the limo line which wasn't a horrible price.

Me? What Is a Flaneur? Me! Starting now in Montreal and not with a lot of optimism that it will still happen, in Paris starting April 5, I felt that my best entertainment is walking through the shopping areas and "window licking" as the French call window shopping, walking through old town, and along the water, and just being careful by keeping a distance and washing my hands often and I would be happy even alone. Here I am. Alone. Nine nights in a lovely 39th floor apartment where Tom and I stayed in September, over-looking old town, the water, Chinatown, and a most glorious view at night especially. (I say alone but Tom and I communicate by email often and have a long FaceTime conversation each evening.). <https://www.departures.com/travel/what-is-flaneur>

Is it safe? Probably not totally, but I think there is a measure of safety in Canada that we are not experiencing in the United States. They have medical care for all, sick leave, heavy testing, political honesty, and getting on top of it early, all of which has hopefully been helpful to them.

Canada Coronavirus: Justin Trudeau and Sophie Trudeau are in isolation but the Canada is responding well -

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/03/13/even-with-trudeau-isolation-canada-is-responding-well-coronavirus/>

NJ Coronavirus: 19 New Cases, Statewide School Shutdown 'Close' -

<https://patch.com/new-jersey/tomsriver/nj-coronavirus-19-new-cases-statewide-school-shutdown-close>

What will I do other than walk a lot? I filled the refrigerator though I found many empty shelves in the supermarket. Thank you to Nola, I have museums to attend even if their museums are closed. I even turned on the television which is something I generally don't do and don't even know how to do at home. Hopefully their restaurants don't close down and I will have a big midday meal each day.

Stuck at Home? These 12 Famous Museums Offer Virtual Tours You Can Take on Your Couch

Experience the best museums from London to Seoul in the comfort of your own

home: <https://apple.news/AoXUX57qoTzuLREnMdxoSvQ>

My apartment per www.vrbo.com/4031025ha

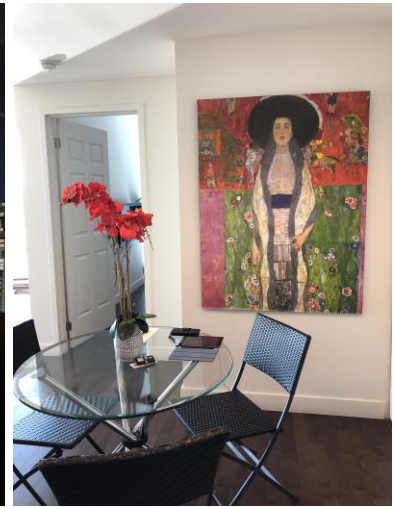
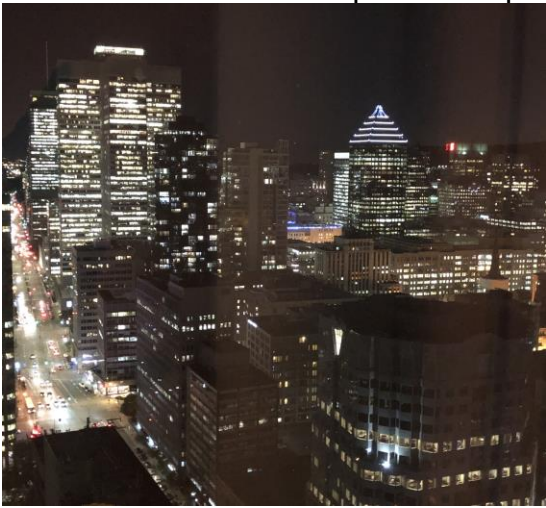
MONTREAL'S QUARTIER des SPECTACLE- LUXURY 2 BDRM, 2 BATH SUITE

Ville-Marie, Montreal - 0.3 mi to Montreal center - Apartment: 1000 sq. ft.

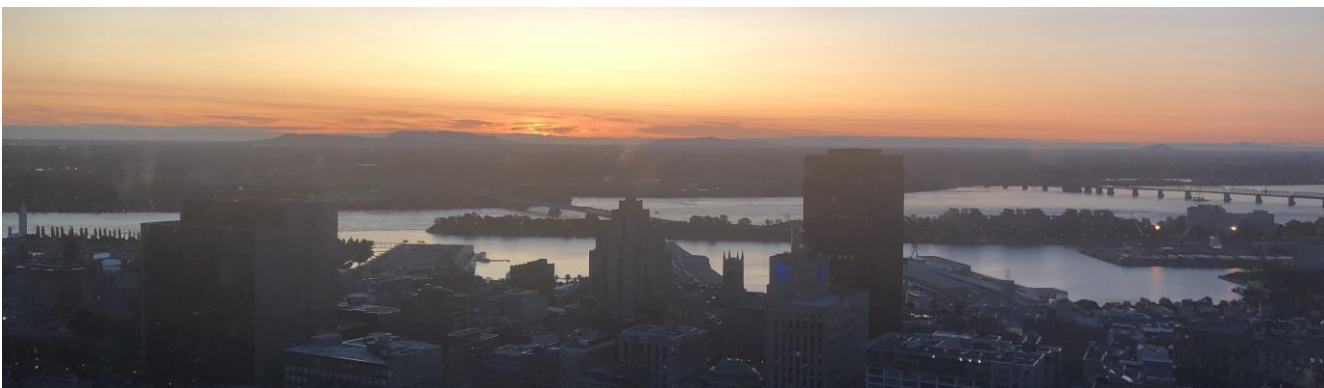
SUITE WITH AN AMAZING VIEW OF CITY AND RIVER; Our two bedroom two bath suites offer bright living spaces with floor to ceiling windows and an outstanding blend of function, comfort and style. you will have the truly relaxing feeling of home. We provide flat screen TV, cable/streaming, private local telephone line and high-speed wireless internet The bedroom sleeping areas are a comfortable place with Queen sized beds to relax you and give you a great night's sleep. All bed linen and towels are supplied along with hair dryer, iron and ironing board, All you need to bring is your personal belongings and we will take care of the rest. Our kitchens are fully equipped including microwave and dishwasher. We stock each kitchen with a full set of pots and pans, cooking tools, toaster, coffee machine, electric kettle along with china, glasses, and cutlery service for 8 persons The Washer-dryer is in-suite. We have tried to put everything at your finger-tips but if we have overlooked something we are only a phone call away 24 hours a day.

My biggest question upon arrival Saturday evening? Which bedroom to occupy!

Pictures from our last September trip.



LIVING AREA



With wishes for a healthy tomorrow for all of us and as little disruption as we can safely manage.

Still in Montreal - Update #1 - Crazy? It doesn't feel crazy.

What did I do under all these restrictions? I had a lovely long walk. First through the local Chinatown in my neighborhood where seemingly everything was still open. I went through some parks and came along a Vietnamese area with a lot of small restaurants serving up the Vietnamese soup called pho. Then Saint Catherine's street is full of retail and even though it was Sunday everything seemed to be open except St James Church. There were lots of walkers, strollers, and runners despite the temperature in the low 20s.

I have been sunbathing. Though it is in the teens weatherwise, I have enjoyed the morning sitting in the sunshine but little did I realize that I've been sunbathing. My glasses turned dark which suggests the windows do not have UV protector. Snow is predicted. Just one more headline.

Comments about my travel have been quite varied:

- You're a trooper, Diana! I don't see mention of Beverly being...did she opt out? (Doctor suggested she not go. Good choice.) I also heard about Paris restrictions and was thinking of you...stay safe!! (Was the word trooper or stupor?).
- Had I not been ill, we would have most likely come. Since we were driving there it would be easier to stay or go without flight issues. Since my bronchitis has left me with a nasty sounding cough, I'm not going in public because people will assume the worst.
- My philosophy is that if you're going to get the Corona virus, it will happen where ever you are. We just need to be aware and practice the best hygiene possible.
- Wish we were keeping you company.
- Hope you get lots of "window licking" (what a great phrase) in and many wonderful mid-day meals.
- Touch wood?! Don't touch anything!
- You are not crazy; you are just playing the odds which are highly in your favor of not being symptomatic and to a lesser extent not getting stuck for an extended period of time. Being contrarian when others are fearful is usually a good bet. "You need to be you".
- I don't think you're crazy! And I was not surprised you went ahead with Canada trip (actually expected you to). Sadly, I also don't think you're going to want or be able to go to Paris in April, however.
- You may want to extend your stay or consider renting a car and driving home when your stay is over.

Notre Dame Basilica closed - I hear the lovely chimes. I see the Basilica. And I'm sorry that once again I'm not getting inside.

<https://www.basiliquenotredame.ca/fr/mesures-exceptionnelles-pour-limiter-la-propagation-du-coronavirus-covid-19>

Current Closures:

<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/coronavirus-whats-open-and-closed-in-montreal/amp>

NYKS - aka Small Parisian Bistro

<http://nyks.ca/index.en.html> - Darn. Half of my Montreal wishes just disappeared with a government mandate. This is the little Parisian style bistro. I was there at 3 PM when they were to open and the owner said that he didn't think they were going to open because they had just gotten government rules. He was going to consult staff but we agreed I would come back in about 10 minutes to see. Before five minutes had passed, he waved me down from the street corner and opened. By the time I was done with my first course, he came and sat down next to me (one-meter distance as required) and said that they were closing after all.

I was the first customer of the day and the last for at least 14 days. I then went to the supermarket again as he thought most restaurants would close instead of doing the extreme measures that were required for staying open: People kept a minimum one meter apart. Everything sterilized down. No more than 50% capacity in total. (Besides, the workers get paid well anyway.)

Why Shoppers Are Hoarding Toilet Paper - <https://time.com/5803273/hoarding-toilet-paper/> - We used to laugh during hurricane season that "you can never have too much toilet-paper". Now here's an explanation as to why people are currently hoarding. It's a comfort zone. It is one of the few things that there is no substitute.

And on that perhaps I should say THE END.

PS. Note that there are not pictures because it was simply too cold to take my double set of gloves off and manage the camera.



A cold cauliflower spiced salad before being advised the restaurant was closing. Minutes after opening. I did then have a fish dish before saying my goodbyes and noting that I was the first customer of the day and the last for at least 14 days.

I'm getting more and more comments about how some would stay longer in Canada if they were me. Time will tell if our government gets its act together.

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."- FDR

"Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."- JFK

"I don't take responsibility at all."- DJT

Look what I got! A white out today. I like it. (OK, it's a bit of hyperbole! There's more than enough of that in politics for me to add to it.)



Montreal - I'm still here with update #2

What am I doing? Not much! When skating was canceled, public forums like museums remained open. They closed about one day before my arrival. Yet I thought if I had one lovely midday meal and a bunch of walking miles that it was still worth coming. Half of that went away on my first full day when most restaurants were made to close or reverted to only take out.

Toilets. Who would have thought that the only part of my entertainment left would be restricted by lack of toilets? Bars and restaurants! I should try hotels next. I tried office buildings but their toilets have keypad entry.

I walked into old town, numerous squares, continued further along to the huge big government buildings that I had only drove by on a tour bus and in our car, I looped around and went to the old port, walking along the water's edge.

The next day took me to the Bell Center and various parks, through lots of shopping where about half remained open. Some restaurants are open, putting their chairs on the tables as indication there was take-out only. Some malls are totally open to include food courts. Another day had me as my favorite - a flaneur through the art and museum quarter and up the hill through the university's medieval buildings. Four lovely days of about 5-6 miles walking each.

I've got NO big deal. Nothing compared to others. Even Marie, finishing her senior year at university and looking towards medical school with now her schedule up in the air. Here is one of her reports:

Upon arrival at KU from NJ, I was instructed by KU at first to self-monitor for 14 days but now it has escalated to a self-quarantine. It wasn't like I had grand plans when I got back to KC anyway but I never thought I would be told to self-quarantine. So far, I've been taking my temperature twice a day as KU has instructed and there is no indication of a fever. I'm just going to use all of this free time to study for my MCAT.

Later she learned the entire campus and her dorm would close. Fortunately, she has a place not too far away. Not all do.

A fun comment: We're all keeping close track of Diana on her latest "adventure." I am afraid we're going to have to gang up on her and forbid the early April Paris trip though if she continues to say she's going. Probably not an issue anyway as the only way she'll be able to get there will be by boat

(row-boat!)—no one will be flying there soon and no cruise ship will ever be allowed to dock anywhere ever again.

Questions? Yes! I'm receiving lots of kind questions and comments about the Canadian border closure. I find it hard to believe there is any restriction on citizens returning home. Maybe a quarantine if ill. Probably many canceled flights and difficult lines at the airport. I had accepted that. I'm currently scheduled to fly home on Monday March 23.

Don't think COVID isn't on my mind full time. I'm between stock market checks. Just like you're likely doing too. A wee bit sore throat? A feeling of maybe a temperature? Acting like every surface is heavy virus covered. Moving away from people at the traffic light. It's all so crazy and paranoid. It's all so inevitable. It's sick in its own right.

Tom and I daily FaceTime and email chat in between. We've assessed the risks and decided to accept them. He has found a "Meals on Wheels" from a good restaurant and has a mountain of wine. Not so sure about Johnny Walker

Meanwhile, as I wrote to Tom: I am very happy in the apartment with the fantastic view and the interesting streets to wander during the day. Basically, I wake up absolutely tickled to be able to be here and look out at either the sunrise or the sunset or the snow or the rivers or whatever. To sit in the sunshine on the balcony in freezing temps was a delight I will remember like I remember the Zermatt balcony. Maybe I am becoming Susie-the-homemaker as I have been able to put together a decent meal or two each day. I felt it was safer to eat at home but maybe I'm ready for a meal out or a takeout if I can find it. I did check out Hotels and damn their restaurants were closed. Room service only. So, I had my leftover fish with a whole lot of cous-cous, asparagus, and a lot of two colors of green beans. As you would say, and I would add, life remains good.

Grocery stores have restocked quickly. Only a two-package limit on TP is in effect.

From my last report: **Vietnamese Pho** -

https://www.tripadvisor.ca/Restaurants-g155032-c41-zfn7674834-Montreal_Quebec.html

Chinatown - https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinatown,_Montreal

Well said - President Emmanuel Macron declared Monday that his nation was in wartime mode. "It is of course a sanitary war," Macron said. "We are not fighting against an army, or another nation. But the enemy is here. It is invisible, elusive and it is progressing. And this requires our general mobilization."

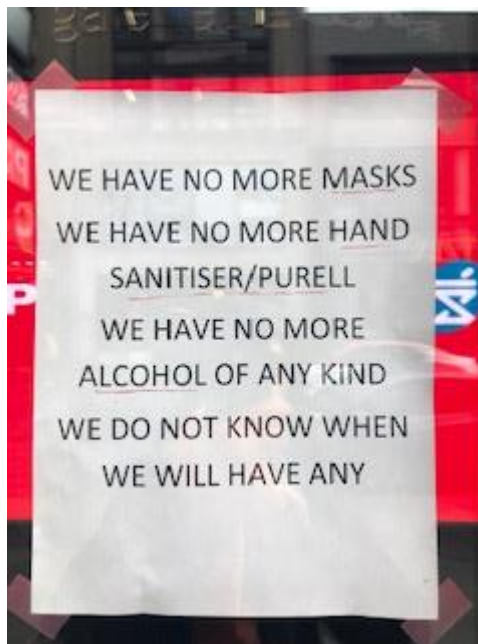
As a result, borders are closed to outsiders. Don't they understand that I don't feel like an outsider? Our April 1 cruise out of Venice is off. My substitute April 5 to Paris is off. Tom's 85th birthday bash to the Châteaux of the Loire on April 29 would take a miracle. And I worry about mid-May graduation as well as May 25 Viking Homelands cruise. June to Azores? Not a thing we can do but WASH OUR HANDS!



The ever-changing skies out my 39th floor windows are a delight. Despite freezing temperatures, when the sun shines, I can warmly sit outside on the balcony.
Thank you, Vivian, for this cartoon as it reminds us what not to do when we need comfort. Eat!



A walk along museum mile and some sculptures show the loneliness - though there were many more people out walking and running than I expected.



There are little colored origami birds attached to this sculpture and many more about town. As are closure signs and "no inventory" signs.

The End. Now go wash your hands as there's nothing more to be done.

Leaving Montreal in the morning - Montreal a little bit longer or forever? Update #3

Life has seemed to be much more normal in Montreal than I am reading about in the US. There are plenty of people on the streets and only the very rare mask. Public transport continues to run (though it does not look full). Construction is alive and well and wakes me in the morning.

Will I be stuck here? I first didn't think it possible. Yet I have been very touched by friends voicing that concern but my hope has been that the Canadian - American border is too important to totally close. Plus, I thought I had other options for getting home. I knew it might not be easy but maybe easier as the panic subsides.

We are all getting used to the heavy amount of news coming fast and furiously. Today was no exception for me and as a result of the following I am on my way home, hopefully, in the morning.

- Trudeau has called back the parliament and some think it's to declare an emergency.
- I saw that Ottawa had more of a warning on CV. Shorter hours for grocery stores and OMG - liquor stores too!
- Many flights into Toronto have been canceled.
- Stories abound of our US Embassies pretty much closing down and abandoning Americans.
- The two Marriott hotels on either side of me are shut down for the foreseeable future.
- The state department just warned Americans to return home immediately.
- All this means I was having no fun and My most exercise was just pacing the floor worried.

To hedge my bet, I am now on a United flight instead of Air Canada and there are four scheduled flights after mine.

New Jersey here I come. Despite semi-quarantine, curfew, restaurants, gyms, and OMG, hair and nail salons closed. We are all onto learning a new way of life and I can't see it ending anytime soon. As to the stock market, I've been poor before and I can be poor again and I'll remember how to do it. On not having the gym open, I never exercised before I was near 60 years old, so surely there is another life that I'll adapt to.

From one of my Camino Pilgrims: A few days ago, I had an epiphany of sorts. Dealing with the corona virus is like the Camino in many ways. It is part of our life journey, and it is difficult. I am definitely experiencing downs as well as ups, as I did in Spain. But I'm trying to keep this image in mind as the journey continues.

More from an astute friend who is feeling her way to a new norm too: I feel especially for Diana and the way the spread of the corona virus will interfere with your extensive travel schedule. My thoughts and love are with you. You are a tough fighter, so I know you will find other ways to explore, even under these restrictive conditions.

Off we go! This is not The End.

I'm home. For a long while.

Was it only six nights in Montreal? So much has happened in our world since I left on March 14. I arrived to that beautiful waterside city to find the stores and restaurants open. I left seeing a stunningly empty, twilight zone, airport with the flight cancel-board lighting up like a Christmas tree.

In the Montreal Air Canada lounge, there was one other customer and soon there was a meeting of the management with the employees asking for furlough. Air Canada was just announcing a 5000-employee layoff and many of their flights were popping up as "non-operational" and more and more

flights were listed in red as “canceled.” Obviously, my flight went - there were a surprisingly 10 people on it. I hadn’t seen that many people in the airport. Landing in Newark was another ghost town with the lounge closed and just like Montreal, no stores open.

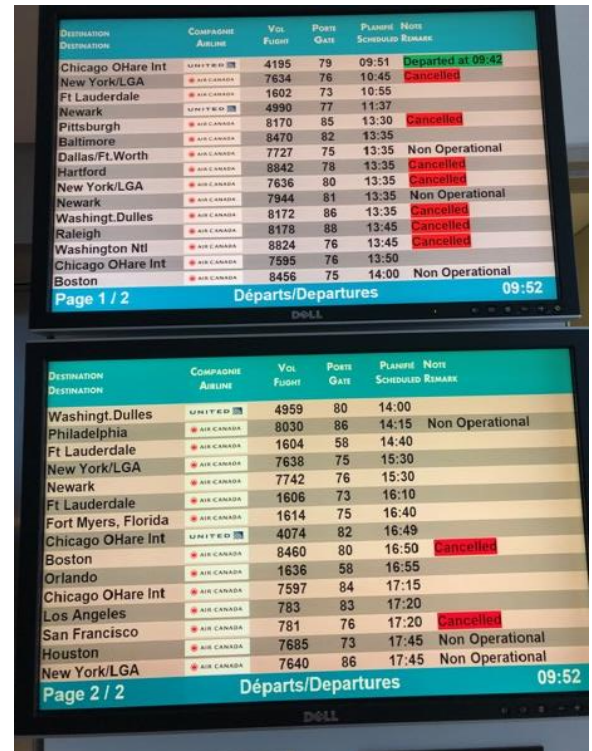
With guidance from some knowledgeable TSA and medical people in Montreal I decided to take Uber home and not risk Tom picking me up. My Montreal taxi and my Newark Uber were outfitted with sanitizers, quizzing if I felt well, and windows mostly open for heavy air ventilation.

Tom sure smiled when I arrived home to continue the Montreal medical folks’ advice: I totally stripped at the door, went immediately to scrub down in the shower, as I declared “scrub before hug”.

Most of you know that I had not anticipated coming home until Monday. Friends kindly encouraged me to consider abandoning Montreal, as more and more spooky stories erupted of closures, abandonment at airports, hotel closures, and Embassy closures. I’d spent Thursday pacing, and Friday grateful to those friends.

And grateful to get home but suddenly sobered to be home “forever”. We are all wondering what our new life will be like but realizing that this too WE CAN DO.

This board pic was from when I arrived at the airport. It lit red considerably more before I left.



Itinerary

Sat Mar 14 - Beverly

- 11:55am Depart St Louis STL via UA#4593
- 1:20pm Arrive Chicago ORD for plane change with 1:00 connect time
- 2:20pm Depart Chicago ORD via UA#4189
- 5:40pm Arrive Montreal YUL

Taxi to apartment - in same building as Courtyard by Marriott on Rene Levesque West and Bleary. Call Steve, landlord, when heading out.

- Diana

- 3:55pm Depart Newark EWR via Air Canada/UA#8157 – what terminal?
- 5:25pm Arrive Montreal YUL

Check in, grocery shop and set up. Local IGA open until 9pm. SAQ closes at 6pm.

Apartment 2 Bedroom, 2 Bath – 9 nights
 360 Boulevard Rene Levesque West, Montreal QC H2Z0A7 - 39th Floor
 Apt Tele: 514 875 2283 - Mgr Steve Tele: 514 990 2000
info@MontreatExecutiveApartments.com or 888-990 2988
 WiFi: Use MEA network, SM171900 password

Reservation HA-5ZV24D – <https://www.vrbo.com/4031025ha>

MONTREAL'S QUARTIER des SPECTACLE- LUXURY 2 BDRM, 2 BATH SUITE

Ville-Marie, Montreal - 0.3 mi to Montreal center - Apartment: 1000 sq. ft.; Sleeps: 4; Bedrooms: 2; Bathrooms: 2

SUITE WITH AN AMAZING VIEW OF CITY AND RIVER; Our two bedroom two bath suites offer bright living spaces with floor to ceiling windows and an outstanding blend of function, comfort and style. you will have the truly relaxing feeling of home. We provide flat screen TV, cable/streaming, private local telephone line and high-speed wireless internet The bedroom sleeping areas are a comfortable place with Queen sized beds to relax you and give you a great night's sleep. All bed linen and towels are supplied along with hair dryer, iron and ironing board, All you need to bring is your personal belongings and we will take care of the rest. Our kitchens are fully equipped including microwave and dishwasher. We stock each kitchen with a full set of pots and pans, cooking tools, toaster, coffee machine, electric kettle along with china, glasses, and cutlery service for 8 persons The Washer-dryer is in-suite. Our apartments are fully equipped to meet your every need. We have tried to put everything at your finger-tips but if we have overlooked something we are only a phone call away 24 hours a day.

From Steve, landlord: The suite is considered to be in the heart of downtown Montreal.

5 minute walk to Place des Artes metro /Complex des Jardin.

10 minute walk to Sherbrooke W and rue Bleury.

One block off St Catherine on Renee le Vevesque, a new high-rise in 2016.

Same building as Courtyard by Marriott Downtown

16 minute walk, 1.2 km, to Bell Center from Apartment

Bell Center at 1909 Avenue des St Antoine Street West or 1225 Canadiens de Montreal.

www.centrebelle.ca - Schedule from www.montreal2020.com

Diana has tickets.

Mon Mar 16

All day Official Practice

Tue Mar 17

All day Official Practice

Wed Mar 18

10:30am Pairs Short Program

2:45pm Opening Ceremony

3:45pm Ladies Short Program

Thu Mar 19

10:45am Men Short Program

6:00pm Pairs Free Skating

Fri Mar 20

11:25am Ice Dance Rhythm Dance

6:00pm Ladies Free Skating

Sat Mar 21

2:30pm Ice Dance Free Dance

7:00pm Men Free Skating

Sun Mar 22

4:00pm ISU Skating Awards to 6:30pm

Mon Mar 23 - Diana

3:30pm Depart Montreal YUL via Air Canada UA#8170
5:14pm Arrive Newark EWR

- Beverly

4:49pm Depart Montreal YUL via Express Jet UA#4074
6:50pm Arrive Chicago ORD for plane change with :50 connect

7:40pm Depart Chicago ORD via Wisconsin Airlines UA#4833
9:10pm Arrive Columbia COU

Emergency Info:

Registered with STEP at travel.state.gov
Carl Greeson, brother in law, point of contact, 573 999 2119

Randy Fritts 732 671 5510 Neighbor to the west – has key
Kathy/Gary Kestler 732 671 5311 Neighbor to the east – has key

Emergency Assistance Plus Program – 24/7 – card in Diana’s wallet
United Mileage Plus member #0186014
Tele: 866 816 2073 or 60 328 1752 collect

United States Consulate General - Montréal

155 St Alexander St, Montreal, QC H2Z 1Z2 Tele: 619) 675-7317

Other participants:

Nancy Porter – with Uniworld, staying at Sheraton, arriving 3/16 from Toronto via train.
Itinerary for March 13 – 25: Arriving in Montreal on Monday, March 16 by train from Toronto at 1:35 pm and then proceed to our hotel for check in. The balance of that day is free (so that would be a good day to get together assuming that Richard and Ginna are free). On Tuesday, we have a full day tour from 9-4:30 followed by our welcome cocktail function from 7:30-9:30. Wednesday through Saturday is competition - no practices for me! Sunday we have a farewell brunch from 9:30-11:30 and then the ISU Skating Awards show is from 4-6:30. Monday we depart for Quebec City at 8:30 am.

Ginna and Richard – with Silver Blades, staying at Marriott Chateau Champlain within 2 blocks of rink, arriving Monday March 16 from CT home via car.

Packing:

Passport
Bar soap and washcloth
2 Grocery bags
Slippers and robe
Top Ten tourist book

Links for Montreal tourist:

Montreal public transport - <https://ville.montreal.qc.ca/nouveaudepart/en/getting-around>

17+ Very Unique Things to Do in Montreal [Exclusive list 2019]
<https://localfoodtours.com/montreal/top-13-things-to-do-in-montreal-summer/>

Montreal things to do and travel tips for Americans

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/destinations/2019/08/21/montreal-canada-visit-here-five-travel-tips-americans-quebec/2056798001/>

What to do in Montreal in winter

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/travel/why-montreal-wants-you-to-visit-in-the-winter/2019/12/12/77ad561c-16de-11ea-8406-df3c54b3253e_story.html

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/27/travel/what-to-do-in-montreal.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article>

Why People in Montreal Hitch Mattresses to the Backs of Their Bicycles on July 1

<https://www.travelandleisure.com/culture-design/montreal-canada-moving-day-july-1>

Bus tour: https://www.grayline.com/tours/montreal/montreal-city-tour-5867_1_12130_821/