



Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



Our one day visit in Canada...

by Amaru & Suzanne, June 27rd 2006

So it was now time for us to visit Canada, getting to the airport in Boston was fairly simple, we just caught the subway all the way. Once there, we checked in (no queues as we flew with AirCanada but we could see the United desks next to ours.....long lines there) made our way to the gate and left.

The flight was short and soon enough we were flying over Montreal. While descending we got some really good views over the Olympic Park, the downtown area and Mount Royal.

Since neither of us had been to Montreal before and as we didn't have any guide book we were a little lost for a few minutes until we found an information desk where we could get a free map of the city and directions on how to get to and from the airport. The options were - with taxi, shuttle or by public transport which meant 2 buses and a subway ride.....guess which one we chose? Public transport of course, if you have to pay 35 or 5 dollars which one would you choose?!?



Montreal looking out over McGill University and Mount Royal

Before we left for the city though we did something here that we didn't do in Boston.....first of all, when we left Sydney a few months ago Suz and I had a backpack each but in Sweden after going through my storage I took an additional suitcase with me, quite heavy I might add. In Boston I had to carry that with me and it was an annoyance. So here in Montreal we decided to store it during the day which we would spend in the city (and it turned out to be one of the best choices we've done during this whole trip).



La basilique Notre-Dame de Montréal Over in Montreal Old Town

Once that was done we waited for the bus and started talking to a person about the bus fares and such, he then gave us two tickets for the bus, wouldn't accept money for them and told us exactly where to go. He was in fact also going all the way to the subway station so he said he would show us the way.....thank you very much!!

We got to talk to him and he had just arrived from Paris where he had stayed at relatives and also driven by car to all the games in which the Ivory Coast played during the World Cup in Germany. He said it was one of the best things he had ever done....(rub it in will you, we will have to catch it in South Africa in 4 years).

We made it to our bed and breakfast, the "Petit Auberge - Les Bons Matins", and it was a great place. We couldn't check in yet though since we were a bit early so we just stored our luggage and left to explore the city. Before we go any further though I need to explain a thing (for those of you who don't follow Ice Hockey), a lot of people always say that Canada is the best Ice Hockey nation in the world, but during the winter olympics in February and the World Championships in May, Sweden took the gold! So obviously I had to show off, therefore I chose to wear my Swedish Ice Hockey t-shirt!!



Place du Canada and Mary Queen of the World Cathedral



Basilique Cathédrale Marie Reine du Monde
Mary Queen of the World Cathedral

Anyways, we walked through downtown Montreal for a while, explored a very very small area of the "Underground city", which is a tunnel network that runs for 32 km under the city and includes shopping malls, hotels, banks, offices, museums, universities, metro stations, commuter train stations, a bus terminal and the Bell Centre hockey arena (which was located about 200m from our bed and breakfast.....too bad there wasn't an Ice Hockey game to watch).

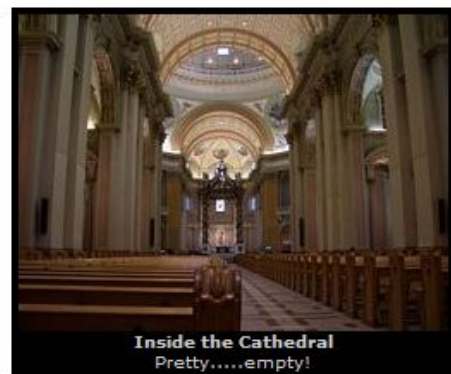
After a while we decided it was time to have some lunch and at the same time watch the World Cup game between Spain and France. We found a very nice place which was also a microbrewery. I always love to visit microbreweries to try their own drop. We got some good seats in front of a big screen tv, ordered food and drink and watched the game.

We were actually quite surprised to find out that so many were cheering for France. I mean, sure, they all speak French here (English is the second language and not every sign is in English) but for some reason we almost thought that the Canadians would have more in common with the British.....well, I guess in the rest of Canada that might be true. In the area of Quebec, it isn't!

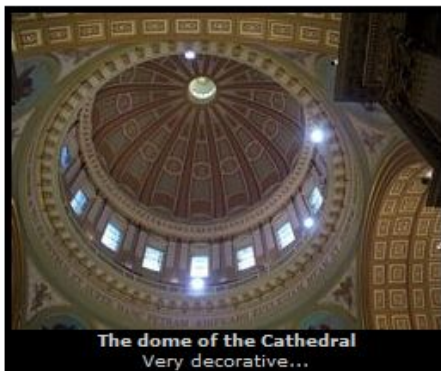
Well, as most of you already know, the French won over Spain and around 90% of the place was happy....there were some people wearing the Spanish colours who didn't look very happy. I was going for the Spanish as well since I thought they were playing some of the best football of the World Cup but.....football isn't always fair!!

Afterwards we continued making our way across the city and walked all the way to "Vieux Montreal" (Old Town). The streets were narrow and paved with cobble stones, quite nice as always in "Old Towns".

One funny thing that happened - we were sitting on a park bench when a couple approached us and asked in Swedish if we were Swedish (remember the t-shirt I was wearing...), we talked for a while, just explaining that I just wanted to rub it all in a little bit (you who know the Canadians know that they love to show off their colors and shirts so I just had to return the favour). I also told him that I had a Swedish football shirt in my backpack at the B&B but didn't want to use that one for obvious reasons =))



Inside the Cathedral
Pretty.....empty!



The dome of the Cathedral
Very decorative...

During the day the weather had shifted in between some light rain and some sunshine....mostly clouded though. Now it started coming down again and we just decided to head back to the B&B and then use the next day to explore the rest that we wanted to see.

Since our flight didn't leave until 5pm the next day we decided to wake up early to have as much time as possible. We slept like babies in a very comfortable bed and the breakfast that we got was just superb!! There were a few people tending to you, asking if we wanted eggs, how we wanted them made, serving good coffee, pancakes. Well, to say the least we ate well!!

Now, the weather was really bad, it was raining.....just a little bit too much. So since we had some time we decided to wait it out for a while.

The B&B offered free Internet so we sat for a few hours writing and doing some of our blogs waiting for the weather to clear. It was soon very obvious to us that it wasn't going to clear and around 2pm we just left the place and headed for the subway to go to the airport.

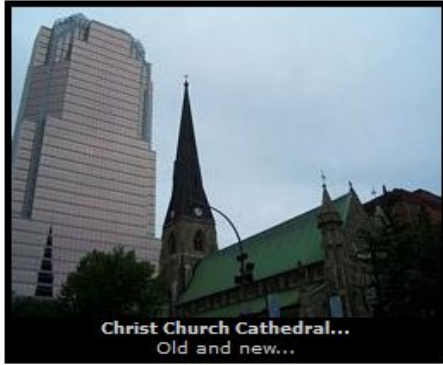
The subway ride was for 2 stops and when we got out of the subway the sun was shining.....figures!!!

We caught our bus and not long after were at the airport. After picking up my suitcase we went to check in, and here we were supposed to use an electronic self check-in version. We used our frequent flying number and got to insert details such as where we were staying in the states and such and then our boarding passes were printed. We got row number 1..... nice!!

Once we had our boarding passes we just had to show the pieces of luggage we had. Two for me and one for Suz. The lady behind the desk told me that I had to weigh the suitcase since it might be heavy. Well, I lifted it up onto the scale and she said "Oh, I guess it wasn't very heavy", she then looked at the scale which read out 25kg. Her reaction now was "It was heavy, you just lifted it up so easily that I thought it weighed nothing".....yup, that's me....Superman!!



Looking up towards McGill University
You can also make out part of the hill



Well, anyway, after that we had to pass US immigration (saved us doing it after we landed) and then we handed our luggage over. While waiting for our flight an announcement was made saying that the flight to Boston was cancelled due to weather.....damn! Since Boston is so close to New York we were a bit worried that our flight would be cancelled as well. Luckily it wasn't and we arrived at Newark airport without any problems where we were picked up by my parents and now Suz finally got to meet them.

So, Montreal.....the city was very beautiful and the people were nice. The only setback was obviously the weather, due to it we missed out on the Olympic Park, the botanical garden, the Latin Quarter and Mount Royal.....just to name a few. But we've been very lucky with the weather so far so we can't really complain. We'll just have to make another visit

to Montreal another time and then explore whatever we missed on this trip.

For now.....we'll just have to settle with New Jersey and New York....I think we'll survive!





Bonsecours Market
A two-storey domed tower public market



Another church in Old Town
There were a few of them...



In front of the B&B
In Canada I had to showed off my colours



"Petit Auberge - Les Bons Matins"
Our B&B was great, we highly recommend it!



Montreal Olympic Park
...as seen from the air

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