

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

MONTREAL: SNOWSHOER'S-EYE VIEW



Traditional moonlight trek dates to 1840, resurrected to look out over a modern city

We're perched in our snowshoes atop Mount Royal, gathered around Montreal's iconic illuminated cross, which stands sentry over Plateau Mont Royal and the eastern end of the island. Our guide, Antoné, is an affable, bearded fellow in his mid-20s, clad in a lumberjack coat and a traditional arrowhead sash knotted around his skinny waist. He's assembled our 20-strong group for a short history lesson.

"In 1642, I think it was, there was a big flood in Montreal. The river rose so high, Montreal's first mayor, Paul de Chomedey, Sieur de Maisonneuve, was afraid for the people and the

crops, so he prayed to the Virgin Mary. He promised to erect a cross if she ended the flood. So, when the flood stopped, he harangued someone to drag a wooden cross up to the top of the mountain and planted it up here."

Antoné works for Les amis de la montagne, a charitable organization that works on nature conservation projects to protect the park. Eighteen years ago the group revived the tradition of the now-defunct Montreal Snow Shoe Club, founded in 1840, whose members would traipse 12 miles up to the mountain, lighting their way with lanterns or by the light of the moon.

There's no moon tonight, but it's hardly necessary given the white opal-

escence of the cloudy sky reflecting off the whiteness of the snow. The air, a balmy 14 degrees, has that quality I most love about winter: a fresh, crisp purity.

As we shuffle along the wooded back trails, Antoné points out various sites of interest, like the gigantic twisted pine that was felled after an electric storm, but was still growing, and deep holes in the snow where squirrels had dug tunnels to get at their hidden provisions. "There are hares, raccoons, groundhogs and foxes here," he says. It's a good little ecosystem."

Later, as we sip hot chocolate in the shelter of an oak grove, I ask Antoné if he knows the story of Hans Marotte, who, in 1988, scaled the cross,

wrapping a Bill 101 (Quebec's pro-French-language bill) banner around it and camping overnight in minus 13-degree temperatures. Marotte got frostbitten feet and had to be carried down, earning him notoriety across Canada and hero status amongst Quebec separatists. No, Antoné had never heard that one.

LES AMIS DE LA MONTAGNE www.lemontroyal.qc.ca, 514-843-8240. The organization runs moonlight snowshoe tours (of about 1½ hours) in English on Friday evenings, Jan. 9-March 13; in French, Saturday evenings, Jan. 10-March 14. Reservations required. About \$16 US ages 16 and older, about \$14 US, ages 12-15. ELIZABETH WARKENTIN

HERE

NEW APP FOR FINDING GREAT TRAILS STATEWIDE

Download the new Go Trustees app, produced by The Trustees of Reservations, and discover some of the top places in the state to hike, cross-country ski, and snowshoe. The free app, which works on Apple and Android devices, currently highlights 20 Trustees properties that have established trail networks, from Windsor's Notch-view Reservation to World's End in Hingham. Each listing includes info on flora, fauna, current weather conditions, and events, such as kayak trips and special vacation programs. Find a property using the GPS-powered map, or a ZIP code search and integrated driving directions. The interactive app tracks your progress using smartphone mapping technology, and provides real-time guidance and trail options while you're on the go. An added benefit: The app works offline, meaning trail maps and other features are available to you even if you lose cell reception. www.thetrustees.org

GET COOKING IN MAINE

Learn how to cure and smoke your own bacon and how to create the perfect popover in a series of cooking classes at the Alden House Inn in Belfast, Maine. The inn in an 1840 Greek Revival-style house hosts its winter classes through March, appealing to cooks of all levels. Three different Chinese cooking classes focus on stir



frying; soups, appetizers, and veggies; and other traditional techniques, such as steaming and slow cooking. Or consider classes on fish, soups and chowders, or eggs. Alden House chefs and proprietors Larry Marshall and Rose Cyr lead the classes, which range from \$35 to \$60; advance reservations required. Lodging available to out-of-town visitors taking a class; room rates start at \$159 per night. 207-338-2151, www.thealdenhouse.com

THERE

HALF-PRICE DEALS FOR SEATTLE MUSEUM MONTH

Visit two dozen of Seattle's top museums for 50 percent off admission during the month of February if you stay at one of 54 participating downtown Seattle hotels (another 16 museums offer free admission). The inaugural Seattle Museum Month runs through Feb. 28, and gives up to four guests half-price deals to the Seattle Art Museum, Chihuly Garden and Glass, Museum of Flight, Pacific Science Center (excluding the



Pompeii exhibition), Seattle Aquarium, Woodland Park Zoo, and Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum. Or visit a few regional museums, including the USS Turner Joy in Bremerton and Tacoma's Museum of Glass. See the website for a full list of participating museums and hotels. www.seattlemuseummonth.com

TASTES TOURS OF MONTREAL

Discover the flavors of Montreal through new culinary tours that will run Feb. 20-March 1. Montreal en Lumiere's walking tours include A Tour of Quebec's Local Cheeses, dur-

ing which you'll discover the city's finest cheese shops (pictured) and enjoy a cheese fondue in Old Montreal; Flavours and Aromas of Old Montreal, when you'll stop to sample creations at boutiques in the city's oldest neighborhood; Chocolate Montreal, which includes a visit to Montreal's most respected chocolate maker, a cooking school demonstration, and a stop at a chocolate factory (pictured); A Culinary Experience: The Progressive Dinner, which includes a three-course meal divided into three different locations; and Food Tour in Little Burgundy/St-Henri, Montreal's Cradle for Culinary Innovation, which includes visits to some of the city's trendiest restaurants and boutiques. Rates range from \$52 to \$110 per person; reservations required. 855-864-3737, www.montrealenlumiere.com

EVERYWHERE

BIG MEMORY IN A SMALL DEVICE

Samsung's new solid state drive, called the Samsung Portable SSD T1, measures about the size of a smartphone battery and can hold up to one terabyte of information. The featherweight drive is blazing fast, able to transfer a 3GB movie in about eight seconds with USB 3.0. Set a password so that no one can access your data and other info if your device gets lost or stolen. Since the device is a solid state drive, you don't have to worry if it gets dropped or banged around during your travels. The drive must be activated on first use: Plug it into your computer, name the device, choose to set a password, and then it's ready to use. \$179.99 (250GB) to \$599.99 (1TB). 866-726-4249, www.samsung.com/us

RECORD YOUR ADVENTURES WITH 360-DEGREE VIEWS

Take the V.360° on your next summit hike, ski outing, or other adventure and capture 360-degree views. The device records outstanding, high-quality images in all directions, with a vertical angle of 45 degrees up and 15 degrees down. Best of all, there's no distortion, and no stitching involved. The 8 megapixel camera takes still shots at up to 30 frames per second, and shoots high-def videos at up to 6480 x 1080 pixels. Use the included remote control to operate the camera on the go. The Bluetooth- and WiFi-compatible V.360° works with Apple and Android devices, and is waterproof, and shock, dust, and vibration resistant. It comes with two strong adhesive mounts that let you easily attach the camera to helmets, skis, or kayaks, for instance, and a GoPro adapter (all pictured) so you can use it with GoPro's many mounts. Or attach a tripod to the camera using the tripod mount thread. \$399. www.v360life.com

KARI BODNARCHUK

