

Doc version 1.3 of 18Dec22

The day numbering in this document can get confusing. To get from Christchurch to Minneapolis, we crossed date-lines, we were delayed overnight in Minneapolis and it all gets quite confusing. Our Montreal apartment rental was to begin on April 1. But, our planned flights actually had us arriving about midnight on April 1. So, we booked a room at a Montreal airport hotel for Apr 1 to Apr 2. We never ended up using that room because we'd been delayed in Minneapolis. So, the final summary is that our initial day in Montreal was April 2nd. THEREFORE I've designated April 2nd as Day 1 in this document.

Also, beginning about the end of May, the day numbering gets off and has been corrected in this document but not on FB. AND, if the text in this document and the text on FB disagree, then this document's text is the more correct.

The links after each post will, with luck, take you to the original FB post wherein you can view both the text and the photos that accompanied the original posts.

Montreal – Pre travel notes

Last day. Tonight at 4 AM we're off the the airport for 34 hours of airports and planes until we arrive in Montreal.

The last of the packing got done today and I was pleased to see that both my checked bag and my carry-on bag came in well under the limits.

We took a ride down to Sumner, another of our favorite places, to see it once more before we go. Again, beautiful weather.

Then we went by Jared and Julia's place (Colette's son and daughter-in-law) to drop off some stuff they are going to keep for us and some keys. Beautiful Sophie was there and in fine form and she made us all smile.

Now we're home after some Pad Thai take-out food and in a few minutes, I'll break my MacBook Pro system down and that will be the last of the packing. Colette's turning off the hot water and unplugging the refrigerator and all the little last minute things.

All the packing lists have been examined and checked off and we're thinking we're pretty much on top of things (other than a bit of a cold I seem to be coming down with).

At 4 AM, my son Chris will pick us up and take us to the airport and the adventure begins.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Travel Begins

Up at 3:30 AM. Chris drove us to the airport - Thanks, Chris! It's going to be a long day but then, we knew that. The next bed we'll see will be in Montreal.

[To Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal – Christchurch to Minneapolis

Well, I know that when I began this, I said that my daily entries were going to be small and succinct. Well, that's not going to be possible with the beginning of this trip. There has been far too much that's happened since we got on the plane in Christchurch.

Christchurch to Sydney was a good flight. I recall that the sun was rising behind us as we flew and I was looking out to see when the red of it was going to hit the clouds passing below us.

The next flight from Sydney to Los Angeles was the long one everyone always dreads. 13 hours from gate to gate.

The day before we left, I began to feel a cold coming on. Bummer - as I hate to get colds - but, I reflected, not such bad luck as it could have been if I had been down and out during the intense week of preparations and visiting that ensued before we left.

But it made the travel unpleasant. I took some antihistamines to keep my nose from running incessantly which was a kindness to myself, Colette and everyone around me. But the downside was that these are 'no-doze' pills and they keep you awake. So, rather than sleeping nicely on these long flights, like I usually do, I was awake most of the time.

There's nothing like a long flight when you look up and it says still 9 hours to go. Then you wait until you think several new species of animals must have evolved by now and you look up and it is still 8 hours to go. Let me say it was a long and sleepless flight to Los Angeles.

We had a long layover in Los Angeles after landing at 6:30 AM before our next flight at 1 PM (local) which took us to Minneapolis.

Flying over the USA was interesting for me as we flew over a lot of places I've been and looking at the map unfolding on the little screen that tells you where you are brought a lot of memories back.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 0 - April 1 - Adventures in Minneapolis

Our arrival into Minneapolis on April 1st was delayed 30 minutes or so because they had major winds and only one runway was operating. Well, that was going to be just the tip of the big-fun iceberg for us.

We arrived late in Minneapolis and fast-walked the entire length of their very large airport to make our next flight to Montreal. And, luck was with us in that the Montreal flight was also running late so we were still in time.

At this point, we've been in motion for about 30 hours with the various stop-overs included and we've had virtually no sleep.

So, we get on Delta's Montreal plane about 8:15 PM and pull away from the gate and as we're looking outside, lightning is flashing all around us. The Pilot pulls out away from the terminal and then sits. They tell us that we cannot go until 20 minutes have passed since the last nearby flash.

We sit for a long time and then the pilot pulls back into the gate about 10 PM and we're told the flight is cancelled. I think the lightening delay might have pushed some of the Delta plane's crew over the maximum number of hours they are allowed to work on a shift.

So, that was that.

We go back into the terminal and are told that they've put on a new flight to Montreal for us at 7:30 AM the next morning and until then, we are on our own.

On our own? We're not to be put up for the night?

Nope, the delay is weather related and the airline has no responsibility for acts of nature like that.

But over here to help make things up with you, we've put out some soft drinks and snacks for you and here's a paper with an 800 number on it which you can call and those nice folks will help you find a discount hotel room in the area.

Mmmm. We're tired by now for sure. But the fun's just beginning.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 0 - April 1 – A room and some semi-fraud

You're on your own now - how about a bit of fraud to go with that?

I call the 800 number and a nice fellow tells me that he can get us into the Airport Comfort Inn for \$85.40 which is non-refundable, if we opt to do it.

We talk a few minutes more and the final price rises to \$104.61. Why, I ask. U.S. taxes and fees, he says.

Ah well, we need a room, we reason, so let's just do it and I give him my credit card data. We'd discussed simply sleeping on the floor at the airport but neither of us is much into the idea of roughing it that much and the idea of a real bed after 30+ hours is very inviting.

The fellow is very nice and he even makes sure we can get a free shuttle out to the inn and then back in again at 5:30 AM when we'll need to return for our 7:30 AM flight.

Somewhere around 10 or 10:30 PM things are sorted and we go off to the far end of the airport to get to the shuttle that will take us to the Airport Comfort Inn.

Well, I don't know why it is called the 'Airport' Comfort Inn because it is literally five or ten miles from the airport. Once there, we begin the check in process. We have a confirmed reservation via the folks at the 800 number and what the Inn has is a paper that's been sent to them from Expedia citing our reservation. So, on first glance, it looks reasonable.

The Inn folks ask me to sign and initial the Expedia form and at one point, there's a place where it asks me to initial the rate we're going to pay - but there's no rate written there.

I balk at signing for a rate when the rate is not posted on the form and a long discussion ensues.

The Inn folks say that these forms that Expedia sends them never have the rates posted on them in spite of the fact that we are suppose to initial our agreement with the rate.

After some discussion, it turns out that the Inn's price for the room, if we came in with the discount form (the one with the 800 number on it that we'd called), is \$61 for the night.

Now I'm suspicious and wondering what's going on. I think that most folks, tired and sleepless, as they would be at this point, would just sign the damn thing assuming that the \$104.61 quoted is what their credit card would be charged.

But I'm not going to sign for a rate I cannot see and I'm wondering why the Inn's rate is \$61 and I'm paying \$104. Also, if I sign with no rate visible, what's to keep them from billing \$300 for the room? I said I'd agree with a rate I cannot see.

Finally, they agree that we can go to the room and call Expedia and see if we can get more clarity about what's happening. After all, they've got another 15 people standing in there lobby wanting to check in from the same plane. But they have agreed that if I can get out of paying the Expedia invoice for \$104, they'll let me have the room for \$61.

We go up to the room and I call Expedia.

Nice! Wait time, to talk to a human being, is 45 minutes and there's no guarantees that that person would be able to help me when I finally get them. Expedia is huge and everyone knows what dealing with huge companies like that is like - not good.

So, I call my credit card company and discuss things with them. They can see the charge and it is pending for \$104.61.

They tell me that I can 'cancel' the charge but that Expedia still has my credit card data so they'll probably just re-bill it to me and we'll still end up paying for it.

I've realized now what's going on. The nice folks, whose 800 number is on the discount hotel coupon that the Delta folks said we could call to get help in getting a room, they are taking a big cut out of us without mentioning it. Nor are they letting the Inn know what they are selling the room to us for. Which is why the Expedia form arrives at the Inn with no rate on it.

The Delta folks didn't mention that the 800 folks had a charge associated with linking us up with a room. The 800 number folks never mentioned that a good part of the \$104.61 we were to pay was their fee for getting us a room. And no one along the way mentioned that Expedia would be involved.

So, my conclusion is that the 800 folks are onto a good thing.

And we and the Inn are the poorer for it. And Delta's not doing too badly - they've just managed to push the entire problem of where we will stay for the night off onto other folks to worry about or to profit from and none of it will be Delta's problem or cost.

The 800 folks take our calls, they turn around and go tap tap on the Expedia site and get the room for us through Expedia. Expedia charges a fee and the 800 number folks charge a fee and soon our \$61 room costs \$104. And no one has said a word along the way about fees associated with those 'discount' rooms.

I'm not a happy camper. It is nearly midnight and I'm as tired as a dead dog and folks are playing games with me when I'm vulnerable. That makes me mad.

I talk more with the credit card people and they say that if I want to really duck the Expedia charge, that I can block the pending charge and then cancel my credit card and request a new one based on fraud. The new card will be sent out overnight and there will be no charge.

I do this and then go down and we pay the Inn the \$61 for the room.

Back up to bed and under the covers by 1 AM and the clock's set to wake us about 4:30 AM to head off for the shuttle ride back to the airport.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 1 – Thu, April 2 - Montreal Arrival

The plane took off at about 8 AM and we were finally on the last leg of our journey after 43 hours of traveling and three and a half hours of sleep.

Amazingly, when we landed we were both pumped up to finally be there!

Bus 747 carried us into the city center and to a point about six blocks from our apartment building. After that, we walked. Once there, the concierge knew we were coming and let us into the apartment where we gratefully dropped all of our stuff.

But, we were not done yet. We had to go to a branch of the HSBC bank so we could get the first month's rent out for our host, Amir.

20 minutes of walking brought us to the HSBC I'd seen from the bus on the way in. A few minutes inside with my passport and my HSBC card and we were on our way.

There was no particular need to return to the apartment as Amir was away and we were downtown with an entire city to explore. When we emerged from HSBC, we found ourselves in Montreal's Chinatown and we walked through it for awhile playing tourists.

One thing we were both eager to see was some of Montreal's underground city. The winters are so hard that much of the central city's core is interconnected by tunnels so that folks needn't go above ground, if they choose not to. Close by Chinatown was an entrance to the underground city (though 'underground' city is a bit of a misnomer because much of it is fully above ground and it is mostly the tunnels, which take you under the streets to the next complex, are underground).

What we saw that afternoon was pretty fabulous. And the mix of shops is unlike those in other cities we've seen - at least in the areas of the underground city we've been to so far. Lots of nice shops but not, typically, the big names you'd commonly see in the U.S. or Austral-Asia. But then, we haven't see all of it by any means. We are really looking forward to exploring more of the underground city in the days to come.

Another bus ride on the 747 bus took us to Berri Blvd but it did not turn left/North towards our apartment as we expected so, puzzled, we got off and began to walk up towards our place.

We soon found out why. The route passes the UQAM (The University of Quebec At Montreal).

Ahead of us were hundreds of police and we could hear that a big demonstration was in progress. I remember thinking how incredibly fortunate we were that in our first day in the city, we should happen upon such an event.

As we walked in close to the action, I recalled seeing just a few days ago when I was still in New Zealand, a photo of a policeman here in Montreal firing a tear-gas grenade point-blank into a crowd of people from about 10 feet away.

I've also been distantly aware that students here in Canada, much like those in numerous places around the world, are deeply unhappy with the Neoliberal trends afoot to monetize universities and to judge everything universities do in the light of is it good for business and the economy.

There's also been a lot of backlash against the steady growth in the numbers of university administrators and their larger and larger salaries at the same time that student tuitions are growing and the quality of their instruction is decreasing.

Some of this loss in quality can be seen in the fact that universities are now preferentially hiring part-time non-tenured instructors in place of tenured professors as a cost-saving strategy. They are also rumored to be ejecting non-tenured people if the university doesn't like their political views.

So regarding all of this - the game was afoot here in Montreal and we were front and center.

We stood a distance away from the action and discussed a plan that if things broke loose and surged towards us, we were going to simply run and not dilly-dally. Night-sticks and tear-gas are not our thing.

But, that didn't happen. Nearby police asked many of us to move on and we would for a few feet and then stop again. But, they didn't push it.

Up the street, at one point, the noise increased dramatically and we could see tear-gas briefly.

But, in the time we were there, things seemed to stay mostly under control - as if both sides were taunting each other. A rock and roll band was playing and hundreds of people were shouting and dancing and the police were standing in lines sort of holding them all within the university grounds while a number of busses were parked on adjacent streets ready to haul people away if it all went pear-shaped.

We walked on home after awhile and I called Amir and made a plan with him to come over and meet us and we could give him the rent money.

We did a bit of unpacking and then decided that if we wanted to eat, we should go back out and buy something before he came over. So, we walked back out into the city again and discovered another inside shopping center/food court with the big Canadian Supermarket called IGA there.

We bought some granola for breakfast and had some Singapore Noodles at a take-away place and carried half of that home for lunch the next day.

After we walked back home, Amir came by and met us and familiarized us with the ins and outs of the apartment and told us a bit about the neighborhood. He's a really nice guy and I liked him immediately.

A shower and to bed for our first real night's sleep in over 50 hours. Did I mention that we fell asleep easily?

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 2 – Fri, April 3 - of Bagels, Parks and Shopping

Just plumb full of sleep we burst from the bed looking for a city to conquer. Or at least to go out and have a look at. And, luckily enough, we found one just outside our windows.

We're still unpacking and organizing but soon the call of Coffee echoing through the streets below was too much to resist. It could also be that the spirit of Marcia (minor coffee maven) still inhabits these rooms. So, out we went for some excellent coffee and a good look at the city map we have (thanks be to Jared).

Back and more organizing but soon Colette's feet were twitching and tapping - and I know what that means. So I girded my loins for another walk about (not that I was unhappy about it, though).

This time we went for a walk to the east to Parc La Fontaine and we had a good stroll around it. Winter is just loosening its grip and everything is undergoing the transition. What a beautiful place and just two or three blocks from here.

From the Parc, we cut across through new neighborhoods and got back to the local IGA store and laid in some provisions for the next day or two and then walked home. It is indeed nice to be in a beautiful place, well rested, healthy and happy with someone you love. And did I mention that it is nice to hear French spoken everywhere? This all is reminding me so much of our time in Paris. But also with such an intriguingly different flavor.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 3 – Sat, April 4 - Snow & -3C

Short and sweet - it is snowing here after the nice weather we had yesterday.

Well, we're ready and we've got the gear and we're going out for coffee. After all, what would Saint Marcia of Montreal have done in this situation?

Tomorrow's Sunday and Colette has found us a Sunday Catholic Easter Mass that's close by to go to. Churches, graveyards and Saints are always favorites.

Our apartment is toasty warm and you have to look outside to see if the wind is blowing by looking at the bare tree tops because you can't hear a thing in here.

I just took some pictures now that we've got the place setup a bit. We've each got areas of our own to work in so it's quite nice. Computers and art – yum.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 3 – Sat, April 4 - Part 2 for the day

We went out again today for a walk to one of the big shopping centers so I could see about getting a Canadian mobile plan and so we could lay in some food supplies because it will be Easter here tomorrow and not much will be open.

And, once again, there were protests in the streets. I grabbed a video and some stills of the fun.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal – Day 3 – Sat, April 4th – Stills

Montreal - Day 3 - April 4 - Part 2 for the day - the stills I promised.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 4 – Sun, April 5th - Easter

A beautiful but cold day here. It was -3C when we left the house and it never warmed past 0 all day. And, with the wind, it was equivalent to -7C according to the weather folks.

We walked across downtown and attended a nice Easter Mass at the Cathedral of Our Queen of the World which is the main Catholic Cathedral of Montreal. Nice organ music and a priest/singer with a fine tenor.

After that, we began to wander in that area of downtown and discovered more huge sections of the underground city. It's just amazing; the size of it.

Then, a nice walk home and several hours of art projects and computer fiddling and it was time to go out again for another walk, Still cold so we are both snuggled up in our puffer jackets, gloves and hats.

We walked north into an area we've not explored yet and we were well rewarded. We found an entire very cool neighborhood along Rue Mont Royal which seems to be the central part of Plateau Mont Royal. We walked west along Rue Mont Royal until we came St. Denis where we turned south and were again rewarded with some very cool neighborhoods.

Colette taught me a new descriptive phrase today that she said reminded here of these areas. "**Boho Chic**". Meaning neighborhoods where many of the folks are affluent enough to live elsewhere but they like the Bohemian atmosphere of the area and so they stay on.

I'm sure we are going to have many adventures in these two neighborhoods.

We're eating in a lot because we have a nice kitchen and it is silly to eat out all the time. But, we've agreed to go out both Friday and Saturday night this coming weekend to try out some of the neat restaurants we've seen.

This city is really fun to explore.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 5 – Mon, April 6 - Colette's got a cold

Probably the same one I was coming down with as we were preparing to leave Christchurch. Razor blades in the throat she describes it as.

So, when I got up this morning, I went and got her a bagel from the shop down the road.

She felt a bit batter after awhile and we went out to an Athletic club I'm joining and on to the market for a bit of shopping.

And then again, later in the day, we went out again and bought our Metro cards so we can ride the subways and buses here. Old guys like me - over 65 - get a discount – yay!

Then, of course we had to try it out. And since my backup USB external hard drive had just gone to the big roundup in the sky this morning, we went downtown (via the Metro - don't cha noe?) to a big Best Buy store and got another one.

It's cloudy here and it has been snowing very lightly most of the day though as I look outside now, it's beginning to come down heavier.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 6 – Tue, April 7 - Post Cards and Art Shops

Colette's feeling better and this morning we went out to run some errands that I needed to get done.

We walked from the apartment downtown to HSBC Bank and the Complex Guy Favreau on Rue Lavesque all of which which is just under 2 km from here. In the end, my several planned missions for the outing went bust and the main and only thing I accomplished for the morning was I bought a stamp for a post card and got it mailed. Oh well, some days it just goes like that.

From there, we used our new Metro cards and the subway whisked us back to our castle in the sky here.

The weather's come right today and even though it probably didn't get over 3C, it was sunny and bright and very pretty.

In the afternoon, we took off to run errands that Colette wanted to get done and her missions worked out a lot better than mine. She had two goals and scored on both of them. She had two art shops to locate and peruse and we found both of them after a nice walk about 2 and a quarter km north and a bit west from our place. Lots of neat neighborhoods along the way. We went up Rue Saint Laurent all the way up to Avenue Fairmont. A real mix of things. Some clothing, some junk, some restaurants, some book stores, more restaurants and more restaurants.... And lots of good people watching along the way.

The first art store we located was, to say the least, obscure. We saw the sign along the little side street and, as we got closer, it wasn't obvious where it was. There was a sign out on the sidewalk and then there was a grimy little entryway that looked really decrepit. We looked in the entry way and we both doubted anything could be in there. But we pressed on and went down a rickety flight of stairs into what looked alike a lot of abandoned junk and then there was a door around the corner. I mean, really, it looked like a place where people would shoot-up

in or where cats would go to die. But, when you opened the door, you found yourself in an intensely packed art supply store in an ancient basement where the narrow rooms went off in several directions. And while the stuff was new and presentable, everything looked like it had been assembling itself there organically for many years.

That was fun, but, and I want to emphasize this, the people we met there and everywhere so far in this city were friendly and courteous. I was telling Colette over coffee today that I have yet to see anyone here that I've felt I needed to be physically wary of.

We pressed on to the second art store up on Fairmont and when we found it and it could not have been more different than the first. It was a Japanese Paper speciality store. Colette is into Japanese Washi paper for some of her art projects and this place was a find. She said they had patterns that she hasn't seen before in other such shops she's visited in Australia and the U.S. She bought some stuff and then we walked all the way home again. I'm starting to get used to all these long walks and I'm enjoying them. They are a great way to see a city close-up.

In between walks and eating and sleeping, she's working on art projects and I'm coding on an iPhone/iPad application. It is a good life, this vacation. As usual, I've included some photos that show bits of our day.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 7 - April 8th - a lotta nada

We didn't do anything today more exciting than go out for a croissant in the morning and go shopping in the evening.

I've lined up a membership at an exercise place for \$60 CDN for the three months I'm here and I'm happy with that. I tried it out today and, yes, my body still remembers how to push the various weights here and there as part of my scheme to stave off the slow muscle weakening that accompanies aging. It's never great fun but I've got a routine and I just get into it for an hour and then it's done.

For about an hour afterwards, I feel like I might have a muscle or two somewhere - but then after an hour, it all goes south again. Oh well.

Other than that, I'm working on a snaky iOS auto-layout problem and Colette is creating a work of art.

Listened to the BBC America World News this evening. Seems like the Middle-East is having such a complicated breakdown that no one's even sure who are the good guys and who are that bad guys - much less being able to pick out someone to support.

Just leaves less and less of the world I want to go visit. But, thankfully, there's still a lot of good stuff out there. Pictures? Naw, ain't got no pictures tonight.

...

Awwwww, don't cry! Ok, here's one that shows a bit about how Kiwi's understand religion and politics in the USA.

This was seen in Lyttelton a few months ago.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 8 – Thu, April 9 - Montmorency, Old Town and more police

Another nice day with a mixed set of activities and events. First, the obligatory bagel and cup of coffee at the bagel place up the road. I like the feeling of having a place I go to often. It feels like a bit of a home. They've got good bagels and coffee, free WiFi and a nice attitude and location.

Today was a 'go out and see things' day. So, we got on the subway, just across the street, and rode out to the end of the line at Montmorency which is the last station on Montreal's Orange Line Subway.

I was hoping that Montreal's subway, like Paris' would rise above the ground and run on elevated tracks once it was out of the central city. But, no such luck. Maybe the snow's just too high here too much of the year. It stayed below ground all the way out and all we got to see were the stations along the way which are very much alike. Montmorency Station was also a bus station and you could see, from the bus map, that it served a lot of the hinterlands north of the city. We walked around for maybe 45 minutes and found a large supermarket but not much else other than a lot of University of Montreal facilities. It impressed me as a town/area where everyone is car-centric and there's not much walking done because things are pretty spread out.

We considered taking a bus back into Montreal central but that didn't seem to be on when I asked. So, we opted for the subway again.

Surprise! We may have gotten out there on a single \$2.60 ticket but if we wanted to get back, it was going to cost \$3.25. Luckily, we had sufficient funds stashed away in our considerable bank accounts (or, in Colette's case, her wee purse that has more pockets than anyone could ever keep track of (smile)).

Back in town, we headed down to Montreal's Old Town to see where it all began back when people used to wear funny clothes and sailed off to surprise people in other lands who thought they were all alone.

Old town was actually quite nice and we had a good time walking up and down and being very tourist-like gawking at things and saying "Gee willikers, Colette, will ya look at that [fill-in-the-blank], at's the biggest one I ever did see!" ...and so on.

But, we soon located a place that was happy to serve us some food in exchange for our money (which is better than how it all worked when the people in the funny clothes first arrived) And so we sat and had a nice meal and photographed our food and the patrons and the waitresses and the entire place like we'd never seen anything thing like that before, Vern, dang!

Sweet as. And then we stumbled back out in the bright 5C weather and walked home after a great morning of wandering about.

The afternoon, after I had a short old-man nap, was spend on art and computer programs. At least up until when the sirens started in and we noticed a commotion down in the street. More student protests - don't cha know.

So, I left my sweetie-pie all warm and safe up in the nest and went down for look. Yup, police cars and lines of police were across the street right in front of our favorite coffee and bagel place. Every once in a while, when a policeman or woman (let's be fair) felt a call of nature, they'd hop in their car and fire off the siren like Bonnie and Clyde were just over thar a ways and they were gonna catch 'em and they'd race off siren's blazing. Other than that, the choreographer sent through a fire truck once where I think all ten guys in it must had to go bad cause they were blazing' too.

Then I came back up and we had dinner and just looked at each other sad-like cause all the excitement was over. I strongly considered another nap about then but Colette saved me from that by finding and presenting an excellent pudding.

That's my story from Montreal - an I'm sticking' to it.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 8 - April 9 – Part 2

Colette quote: "An apartment with a balcony in Montreal is the very definition of optimism."

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 9 - April 10 - Nothing

Yep, nothing. It rained and we stayed in virtually all day. Late in the day, we went for a walk north to Du Mont-Royal and then west to St. Denis and then back around east to our place. A lot of nice shops and things along both of those streets.

Net from all of that? We decided where we are going to go out and eat Saturday evening (tomorrow). We haven't had a proper meal out in the evening since we've arrived since we have a nice kitchen and a good market not far way. Not to mention that Colette's an excellent and a healthy cook.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 10 – Sat, April 11th - To the ends of the metro and bus lines

It as an 'out' day today. We decided to ride to the end of the green subway line towards the east from downtown. That took us to the Honoré-Beaugrand subway station. Once there, we got on the 189 city bus and rode it to the end of its line which takes you to the easternmost end of the island that the city of Montreal sits on. And that terminus is called Sherbrooke/Gouin.

Just to make things conceptually confusing, the name of the island that the city of Montreal sits on is, itself called, "Montreal Island".

The bus ride was interesting. The subways all seem to run underground so they haven't much to show you. But from the bus, we could see all the various neighborhoods we passed through. Lots of residential and small stores and some industrial areas. We could also, on occasion, glimpse the Saint Laurent River to the south as we travelled east along the southern edge of the island. The neighborhoods were all OK. Not too much poverty in evidence nor a lot of wealth displayed. Good to see once.

At the terminus at Sherbrooke/Gouin, our bus driver took a break before he turned around and headed back the way he'd come. We were switching over to the 186 bus so we could take a different route back but our bus hadn't come yet so we struck up a conversation with our driver and had a great talk.

He's been in Canada for 25 years having come over from Algeria via France. He lives up in Laval near where we went the other day when we took the subway to its northern terminus in Montmorency.

I gave him my card and he saw that I am a writer and that started a conversation about politics and environmental issues. He doesn't like the current Canadian Harper government much more than I do. We talked

for maybe 10 minutes and touched on politics, the environment, New Zealand and the USA. All good stuff to chat about.

Having those kinds of impromptu encounters is some of the best spice you can encounter when traveling. The 186 came and we shook hands warmly and departed. The route back had more 'stuff' along it in terms of commercial. This was along Sherbrooke which is the same street our apartment building is on - but we're in the 800 block and out there, it is in the 9900's.

Nothing specific happened on the bus and subway rides back into the city. Colette and I are avid people-watchers so that, and the passing scenery, outside kept us captivated.

I always get a lot of 'impressions' when I watch people and while I feel them strongly, I often can't say just what they were most of the time. It's a bit like having a vivid dream and then forgetting it seconds after you've awoken.

On our return to the city, we were hungry so we rode on into the McGill station and got off in part of the Underground City. There we found a fast-food place called Sushi Man and had a small lunch which was excellent. Excellent food and excellent prices. I felt so strong about it that I went up and told them how impressed I was as we left and namaste'd them.

Then a walk north towards McGill University, a few photographs along the way and then a 2 km walk home to the east to get back to the apartment. It is now 4 PM and we're resting up until we go out for a nice evening meal over on St. Denis at a place we noted last night.

The day's gotten warmer and sunnier as it has gone on. It is 7C now and promises to be 15C tomorrow and 20C on Monday. How cool is that?

If tomorrow is as nice as it sounds like it will be, we're going to go over and climb up the Parc Du Mont-Royal Hill which overlooks the city.

One other note, before I go, Colette talked to the Canada Rail people today in the Underground City and found out that we can both go up to Quebec City and back on the train for \$124 CDN total for both of us if we lock in a reservation a week ahead. That sounds great!

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 11 & 12 - April 12 & 13 - Yep, it's a twofer.

Montreal - Day 11 - April 12 - Parc Du Mont Royal

There's too much happening and your correspondent can't keep up!

Yesterday, we went to Parc Du Mont Royal on bus number 11. But, before we set off, we did the obligatory visit-a-coffee-shop routine and we found a good one with great Bagels up on Rue Mont-Royal north of our apartment.

From near there, we caught the 11 bus and it took us up and over Parc Du Mont Royal which is on a large hill located in the middle of Montreal. The views from up there over the city are spectacular and it was nice day; which got up to about 15C.

They've got a large building up at the top where everyone goes for the view. This building, which is called the Chalet, is like a community center. When we went in, there were martial arts classes for small kids and Tai-Chi class for adults all be held in a very large open room.

Colette and I had a lot of fun goofing around with duel-selfies, with the city in the background, and we played with the binoculars too; which I'd carried along.

Finally, we walked all the way around the top of the hill where the observation area is and stopped and admired a huge cross that overlooks the city and Colette Meehan wandered into the snow a bit, just for fun.

That afternoon, we were home again and Colette worked some more on her art project.

In the evening, we watched a great show on BBC America about all the things that are underground in London. Amazing stuff.

Montreal - Day 12 - April 13 - Little Italy - sort of....

I got up this Monday morning and walked to my club and did a workout. It was a good one though I'm still getting used to the new and different machines. There's fellow there who is really into lifting and he advised me the other day to do my reps slower and he's right! They are way harder that way. So, I came home pretty toasted and had to go off with Colette to the local Bagel shop for a nice sweet yummy and a coffee to recover.

But, beyond that, we had a plan. It was to go off and see Little Italy which is about 2 km north of here. We had an idea where it was though none of the maps we're using mentioned it by name. We walked up there but we didn't see anything that seemed particularly Italian. However, we came across an area called Saint Hubert Plaza which was very interesting.

For a big stretch along Saint Hubert (maybe 10 blocks long), they've accessorized the shop fronts on both sides of the street with a nice glass awning that fully covers the sidewalk to shelter the walking public. If you subtract the glass awnings out of the picture in your mind, you can see that the shops along there are nothing very special. Most of them are older two and three story buildings. But, with the awnings in place and running down the road so far, it gives the place a definite and positive identity that really works well. It's brilliant idea.

We had a good time wandering along there and window shopping, people watching and playing with my camera. At the far end, I got a coffee and we sat outside on a nice corner where you could watch the entire world go by and just enjoyed it all. Today's weather was wonderful. A week ago, we woke up to a snow storm and today it was 22C and beautiful outside.

After that, we grabbed the metro subway home.

Once here, we started talking about future plans and checked on airline prices for the jump we'll take from here to Vancouver and back in a few months. We decided the tickets were not going to get cheaper and we zeroed in on which ones we wanted.

So, we'll be off to Vancouver on July 1st for two months and then back here on August 30th for an overnight and then we'll catch a flight to Los Angeles on the 31st. That might seem like a very odd flight plan but it results from the fact that we originally though we would be going on from here in Montreal to Paris and back for July and August and then onto LA.

But, that all changed (we'll going to Europe next year) and we only added Vancouver into the mix after the Montreal tickets were bought. Ah, the tangled webs we weave. So, the net of this ticketing discussion was that we decided to buy the tickets and to get them for the cheapest possible price, we needed to go out to Pierre Trudeau Airport and buy them directly from the West Jet desk.

Then we linked a trip to the main train station onto the airport adventure because we have also bought train tickets to Quebec City for April 27th and we wanted to get physical tickets in our hands rather than the electronic ones on our iPhones (least an electronic snafu mess our plans up).

We walked down to the main bus station where we could catch the bus 747 for the airport and along the way, the sirens were going off again and the police were out in force. More student unrest at the University which sits just across the street from the bus station.

The unrest made the airport bus 20 minutes late but we didn't care as we weren't catching a flight - just buying tickets. Indeed, it seemed strange to be at an airport without lugging a ton of stuff about and worrying about catching a flight.

The ticket purchase came off without a hitch and then on the way back on the 747, we jumped off half way through downtown at the main train station and sorted out getting physical tickets to board the train with as well. Then the metro home and we finally walked in here about 10 minutes before 6 just in time to see the BBC America News.

I think tomorrow, I might want to just stay home all day (except for the obligatory coffee-shop-visit and just hunker down and stare out the window. Not sure about my Sweetie, though. I call her the "Energizer Bunny" because her go-go-go switch is seemingly always on. Maybe I can talk her into going shopping (smile).

Cheers, all.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 13 - April 14 - A quite day in

The only outing we made was to walk to an art store so Colette could buy some supplies. On the way back, we sat in a Starbucks on St. Denis and enjoyed the lovely afternoon unfolding outside.

I'm making good progress on my programming project but things are quiet just now.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 13 - April 14th - Part 2...

Yep, I thought I was done writing about yesterday but that's not how it happened in the end.

Our apartment faces west so we get the full blast of Montreal afternoon sunshine and last night about 9 PM, it was still warm in here and Colette suggested we go out and walk around the block. That sounded great to me and I added that we might stroll up to St. Denis and pop into a bar and I could get a beer. Game on!

So, we walked up and quickly found a place and went in. It was basically empty and so the bartender came over to chat with us as I sipped my beer and Colette her wine.

It turned out to be one of those fortuitous conversations that just happen sometimes - like the one the other day where we talked to the bus driver out at the end of the line at Sherbrooke/Gouin.

He was a native Montrealer and we talked about a lot of interesting stuff including bi-lingualism. Does it feel different subjectively to speak French as opposed to English? He said, 'Yes'. French has more rules to deal with whereas English just flows out more. He also speaks some Spanish and, to him, Spanish always feels happy.

He's studying wine so we talked about how California's wine industry rose up in the 70's and how New Zealand's has come on in the last 20 years or so.

When we walked out, I looked back at the place to identify where we'd been so we could return. And it turned out to be one of the places our landlord here had recommended highly to us when he was briefing us on the local neighborhood the day we arrived.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 14 - Wed, April 15th - Greeks!

A quiet morning. A bit of art, a bit of programming, a bit of working out and then add a dash of coffee and a pastry.

Stir the mix slowly with the hour hand of the clock - until noon.

Then, we walked down into Old Montreal to a museum to see a show about the Greek civilization. It was great. It bills itself as the most complete collection to ever come to North America.

I really enjoyed it and Colette did as well. I just kept looking at the objects on display and trying to imagine what the world was like when the object I was looking at was new? And who would have been holding it and what would their world have looked like to them?

I looked at a plate from around 2300 BCE. 2,300 years before Christ and Rome. I kept thinking this plate lay somewhere while virtually all the history I know of came and went. And here it is sitting in front of me.

An exhibit like this fills you with really hard to grasp ideas.

Swords, helmets, Bronze and Iron weapons, coins minted by Alexander The Great. Necklaces worn by women when Democracy was a brand new idea (not that it extended to women or slaves then - but still, what a revolutionary idea). Jars that poured wine under skies gone now thousands of years ... but there the jar is, just in front of me, now.

Walking home, I found myself thinking of the religious fanatics in ISIS who are destroying priceless relicts of mankind's one and only past. Unbelievable.

I couldn't take any pictures in the exhibit though you may find some if you dig in the link to the show, below.

But, as we arrived here at our building, the preschool down at ground level in our building had a group of tykes coming out just as we walked up. I took a picture of that!

Cute alert! The teacher keeps them all gathered together by having them all hold onto little handle/straps on the edges of a little blanket. Every time I've seen this here it just makes me smile and laugh.

And tonight, an evening in, some evening news, a nice meal cooked by my Sweetie, a bit more programming and then writing this piece. All in all, a good day to be alive.

<http://www.pacmusee.qc.ca/.../the-greeks-agamemnon-to...>

Click to see original FB post with photos

Montreal - Day 15 – Thu, April 16 - French Onion Soup

Nice weather today. About 16C at mid-day. We are into walking and today we went out three times. This neighborhood is great for walking.

I commented that walking in Colette's neighborhood in Christchurch is good but it is residential so the activity level around you is fairly low on a walk. Here, we walk on St. Denis and on Mont Royal and the stores, sidewalk cafes, parks and people strolling make it a juicy adventure.

On our morning walk, we saw a restaurant with French Onion soup on the menu. So, come mid-day when we began to think about lunch, I suggested we go there. And it was nice. It's a good looking place but it was virtually empty though places were thronging just a block over on St. Denis. Maybe this guy is new and hasn't been discovered yet. Or, maybe location, location, location.

In any case, we had the outside patio to ourself and a long slow meal with lots of good talking developed. It's nice when you've been with someone for over four years and you can still sit down and have a deeply interesting and enjoyable conversation.

After that, we walked down to the IGA store in our neighborhood and bought supplies for three or four days. During this second walk of the day, I saw a park I liked the look of not too far from here on St. Denis. It was the sort of place where you can sit and watch the world go by if the weather's good.

So, in the evening, after tea, off we went on our third walk of the day to go sit in that park. And that was good. When we got bored sitting there, what to do?

Get up and walk home the long way around by going up St. Denis to Mont Royal and then along Mont Royal until we turned south to Parc Lafontaine and then home again.

St. Denis and Mont Royal, at 8 PM are full of people and the bars and restaurants are full. Part of this is simply the local culture, I'm sure. But part of it is, that in the two weeks we've been here, it has gone from piled winter snow and storms to relatively warm Spring days and I suspect people are overjoyed to come out and play.

Virtually all the snow is melted now and on the major boulevards, the restaurants and bars are moving out onto the sidewalks and roadside in from of them - literally.

Wooden platforms upon which sit tables and chairs are being built. They extend across half the side walk in front of an establishment (still leaving room for pedestrians to walk by) and then on out into the street so that they fill the several parking places there. These have begun appearing in many places in the time we've been here.

Truly, this city has two modes; inside, in the long winters, and outside, in the glorious spring and summertimes. I'll grab a photo or two of some of these platforms when we're out today.

We didn't spend all of our time walking around today. Colette's deep into her art projects and I'm exploring the wonders of how does one shift the data entry elements on an iPhone's screen upwards when the keyboard appears and would overlay the data entry field. As usual, this is an investigation followed by a lot of experimentation and learning. The final goal is to write an algorithm to handle this situation generically so I will be unlikely to have to revisit the problem again.

Some people like Sudoku but this is what lights my fire. I enjoy seeing a program take shape over months as functionality is built into it day after day.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 16 – Fri, April 17 - Looked at an apartment

Friday was a quiet day. The only thing of significance we did was to walk across town in a new direction we haven't gone and look at some apartments that were being advertised.

It's not that we're really interested in renting but we're just curious about what's available and what it costs here in Montreal. It was also a great walk off into a part of the city we've not seen previously.

We talked to a lady in the office and after a few questions, she got a fellow to show us an apartment in the 2nd level. These apartments are in a large building which is maybe 10 stories high. It's down south east of where we are now and near one of the major bridges (The Point Jacques-Carter Bridge) that crosses the St. Laurent.

We came away from the apartment building with two impressions.

The first was that the apartments were not as nice in person as they seemed to be on the website. They were reasonably sized but the entire building seemed a bit tired.

The fellow who came to show us around was really nice and, in the end, he ended up showing us three units.

He was great to talk to and that was now our third time to encounter someone here in Montreal who was very informative to talk to.

While he showed us around, we found out that he's from the UK and that he's now applying for Canadian residence and has been here for several years and loves it. He talked a lot about his impressions of Montreal and Montrealers. We had a lot of fun chatting with him as he showed us around.

He told us that Rue Sainte Catherine is closed off each year for a long stretch (like from Papineau to Berri) and cars are not allowed. He said it becomes a bit of a street party scene.

When we left, we walked along Sainte Catherine to see it. And at one point, we stopped into a Starbucks for a coffee and a rest.

Sainte Catherine is nice but I think the excitement level will go up substantially once it is closed off.

As we walked along Sainte Catherine, I began to realize that we were in a gay district and for several blocks the gay scene was quite intense.

Eventually, we got back to Berri and turned north and we were home.

All in all, a quiet day. But then, that's why we came here to live the way we are living. We're here to live in the city rather than to have it be a tourist extravaganza everyday. I'm finding that I'm really liking walking down the same streets and getting a sense of what is like to be here on perfectly ordinary days.

Here are some photos of things we saw along the way.

Here are the apartments we looked at: <http://www.appartementsfaro.ca/en/home.html>

Click to see original FB post with photos

Montreal - Day 17 – Sat, April 18 - We declare this Bagel and Wine Day

Well, if we were going to vote on the slowest day, I might vote for this one. Not that I didn't like it - because I did. But it was slow.

We began with humankind's eternal quest for the perfect bagel and cup of coffee. PJ (blessed be he of bagel advice) had advised us of a possible bagel reconnoitering opportunity up on Fairmont. So, this morning, suitably attired for a bagel safari, we pressed on out into the jungle of Montreal's streets on a mission.

Whooo. it was not a short walk and for awhile we were not sure that we might not be lost. And if there are too many negatives negating negatives in that last sentence, please fill free to add another if you need to to get the sense right for yourself. (insert dial-tone here)

We found the bagel shop on Fairmont and there was good news and bad news. It was a counter only get yer bagels and take them away sort of a place. No coffee to be had, no people watching. Though there was bum out front and I made his life better by about .70 cents. Good news - we got a bagel. Bad news - no coffee. We each got a cinnamon and raisin bagel with some creme cheese applied to it and walked off chewing as we embarked on our new quest for coffee.

Down to Mont Royal, turn left, chew, chew, chew and there was a Starbuck glowing like a promise of American consumerism. Gawd, Bubba, I felt so at home.

Had some coffee there and walked home.

Day gets slow at this point as I, having some programming I felt I really needed to get done, coped with the pressure of it all by laying down for a 30 minute nap.

After that it was programming, art, programming, art, ... Oh, is that you over there on the other side of the apartment? Yes, yes, hello ... followed by more programming, art, you-tube videos, art, programming ... and etc.

Finally, we cracked under the pressure of it all at about 4 PM and had a clandestine conversation that included the subjects, "side-walk-cafe", "people-watching", "get out of the apartment" and "wine" And not necessarily in that order.

About ten seconds later, the door was heard to shut behind us.

We went up to St. Denis to a place Colette had admired and got what the Meehan sisters are known to twitter about; which is called the much esteemed '**Beaky Seat**' just by the window.

500 ml of Pinot Gris and some bread and the game was on. We stretched all of that out for maybe an hour and we gave people all up and down that street a lesson in people watching.

We also began to discuss the idea of maybe taking a foray out of Montreal down to New York City. And the more we talked about it, the better it sounded. I was also thinking about, maybe, leaving Colette to explore the Big Apple by herself for a few days while I popped over to Allentown, Pennsylvania, to do some research.

You see, my father, Joseph Francis Gallagher was born in Allentown on August 31st, 1915. It is a perhaps strange but true fact of my childhood that I've never had any contact with anyone on my father's side. For all I know, I may have dozens of cousins around the Allentown area and it seems like, if I'm going to go looking, at 67 I should think about doing it soon.

Wine empty and bread gone, we came back to the apartment to hear the weather report which was unfortunately asserting rain here for five or six days.

Colette made a nice meal, we Skype'd with her son and daughter in law in Christchurch and poof - that brings us to here where I put this last little period thingy on the end of this sentence.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 18 – Sun, April 19th - Sunday, a thing of beauty

The weather man told us yesterday to expect five or more days of rain. But today dawned 2C and baby-blue clear as far as you could see. We'd planned to do some hunkering down for the predicted rain but it just kept looking better and better outside.

After a trip to the local bagel emporium at St Denis and Sherbrooke and a visit to the Marché Saint Jacques a few blocks the other way for some bread and apples, we packed a lunch and took off adventuring.

The plan was to take the subway to the Guy-Concordia Station and then walk out and take the 66 bus which would take us to the Hampstead Neighborhood; which is to the west of downtown Montreal.

The bus driver we talked to a week or so ago, when we went out to the extreme eastern end of the island, had told us that the island is loosely divided along an east-west axis with the poorer French speakers towards the eastern end and the wealthier English speakers to the west and the central city in the middle.

This was to be our first real foray into the western end.

It did not disappoint. The bus took us through neighborhoods that could have been lifted directly from places in the UK that Colette has seen. The style of construction changed and things seemed cleaner and more prosperous. But, I have to say, they seemed a bit less interesting to me. I think I like the slightly grittier central and eastern portions. Life is more real and less insulated, perhaps. Or maybe I'm just having one of those little attacks of making tourist judgements while looking out the bus window .

We live in, or very near, Montreal's Latin Quarter with all its little shops, cafes, student apartments and general hustle and bustle - and I like it.

But, still, it was interesting to see the more English end of Montreal's world.

We stayed with the bus until the end of its route and then we got off. We had no idea where we'd end up when we began.

Amazingly, the bus dropped us half a block from a community center of some kind that was closed on Sunday. And it had two unused picnic tables in front of it! How cool was that? We were both getting hungry and the sandwiches in my bag were calling to us.

We sat and ate and watched the neighborhood around us. The bus, by the end of its journey, had carried us a bit beyond the affluent areas and the neighborhood we now found ourselves in was a little more down-scale. There were a number of people about who probably came from former French colonial holdings in Africa - places like Côte d'Ivoire. It was, again, a working class neighborhood.

We walked then about four long blocks to the northeast to get access to the 161 bus line on Fleet Street which would turn into Van Horne and which would finally carry us all the way back to the east until it intersected St. Denis; some ways north of our place. There we would jump off and begin walking south along St. Denis towards home - with a promised coffee at a side-walk coffee shop along the way.

And, so it happened. The bus carried us east some ways north of the route we followed going west so we got to see two different slices through the city; east and west. And it carried us well north of the major hill that dominates central Montreal - both the city and the island - and whereon sits Parc du Mont-Royal where we took bus 11 to the top a few days back.

I cannot say how very much I love this exploring. Whether it is working out how to get from one place to another in an unfamiliar city, sitting on the bus looking at the people around me, looking out the window at all the new and unfamiliar scenery passing by, walking down the sidewalks and glancing at the passing faces or sitting in an outside coffee shop just absorbing the life of the city passing - I love it all intensely. And the brilliant sunlit Sunday that we were not suppose to have didn't hurt either.

Apparently, the Montrealers felt the same. When we got back onto St. Denis and began to walk south, the sidewalks were busy with people of all ages and types. All out enjoying a beautiful and free Sunday at the end of, what we've heard, was a hard winter here.

The sidewalk cafes were full but, with a bit of luck, we found a table and two chairs in the primo (Beaky) spot just outside a cafe right on the sidewalk.

Colette snagged the table (and apparently defended my chair as well) while I went in to get us our just rewards for being intrepid travelers. And those were, for those of you wondering (and thus proving Pavlov correct), a nice Vanilla Latte, a Piccolo Americano and a Brioche lovely. And they gave us two squares of sweet chocolate as a freebie.

Twenty minutes of slow savoring and reflecting on how lovely this day was then ensued.

Truly, we all live at such a pace acquiring things and making ourselves secure that it must seem to many of us that we will never get to the place where we can simply stop and watch the world unfold - as a reward for all of our hard work.

But that day can come for most of us, if we want it, here in the advanced western nations.

At some point, I am going to write about how it is that Colette and I can afford to do what we're doing on trips like this.

And I can tell you now that it is not rocket science, it is not that we are at all wealthy by western standards. But it does require some flexibility and a recognition that none of us are going to get out of this life alive and that this day, week, month and year, these very ones, are probably the best ones we'll ever have for the rest of our lives. In the end, for many of us who are nearing retirement, there's little real justification to wait for better days - other than that's what we've been doing for a long time until it's become a habit.

But, enough philosophizing for now.

We relinquished our table and walked home and it is now 5:10 PM and the skies are still clear, the streets are humming and life is good.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 19 - April 20 - Quiet days for the dynamic Montreal duo

We got up and had a bagel. We went out and we shopped for three or four days worth of groceries. We went out for a walk in the evening and had a glass of wine. It rained.

That's it. Some stories are very boring.

Ah, but there was news from last night. Last night, I felt like a beer and Colette decided to stay in, so about 8 PM I walked north up St. Hubert to a small bar I'd seen at St. Hubert and Duluth. The Taverne L'Inspecteur Epingle.

Well, hoo-ee, when I walked in. Absolutely no one cared. Because they were all riveted to the big screen watching the Stanley Cup Playoffs. I did managed to get a really nice Belle Gueule beer for \$6 that was good so I sat down and began to watch as well.

I remember watching ice hockey as a kid during the many hours I'd roam the channels in Los Angeles looking for something interesting to watch.

It is fast. When they slap the puck around, and especially when they slap it towards the goal, I don't see how anyone can see it.

But, apparently Canadians can. Because every time it would get slapped, they'd all jump up in the bar and scream.

I wanted to jump up and scream too but I was afraid I might jump up and scream all by myself when one of the players had just waved his hockey stick at nothing in particular. And then I knew everyone would notice me in the bar and wonder who the hell let him in here.

When I left in the 2nd half (if they call it a second half - who knows?), the game was 1 and 1.

Next morning, I heard the Montreal team had won 2 to 1. But I didn't scream then either as I thought Colette might think I'd lost my mind.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 20 – Tue, April 21 - The Underground City

Tuesday today and still raining. I got up and went off and did a workout at my club and Colette stayed here and did her workout in the apartment.

We'd discussed what to do with another rainy day and I thought it might be good to go and spend a lot of it in Montreal's Underground City. After all, no need to stay cooped up inside waiting for cabin fever to come knocking.

So, we did. We began by catching the subway just across the road here at the Sherbrooke and then riding it to the Bonaventure station; which is near the city's central train station.

Colette wanted visit there to find out about train fares down to New York City as part of our tentative plan to spend some time there (and for me to go over to Allentown and research my father's family).

When we first arrived, however, a Starbucks dragged us off course for about 20 minutes. As we sat sipping and chatting, Colette laughed at herself. Before, when we'd been in the U.S., we'd gone to Starbucks a fair amount (because it was a favorite of mine). She'd always found it a trying experience because she could never get them to make her a cup of coffee as she wanted it.

Now, she quite likes Starbucks because she's worked out the mystery of what to say to elicit the perfect brew. Here in French Canada, 'Piccolo' is apparently the magic word. Piccolo, meaning 'small'. She now says, "A Piccolo Americano with space." and then they all high-five each other over the counter to celebrate perfect cross-border communication. Now that she's worked that out, she says she likes Starbucks because they give her a reproducible coffee experience.

We got to the Gare, or train station, about 11:10 am and they told her that the Amtrak Representative wouldn't be back until 11:30 am.

Well, we'd come for a day of sitting and people watching so we just sat there and passed the time until 11:30. Then she got the information we needed and all was good.

We began to roam the Underground. We had a goal in mind but there was no big hurry. Our intent was to find a place we'd eaten at before called "Sushman".

You have to have some idea of just how big the Underground City is to realize that this could be a tall order. This is a weekday now, a regular business day, and all the office workers, executives, sales people and etc, are out in the Underground City at 12:30 seeking lunch.

The place is thronging with people and there are maybe half a dozen major food court spaces (vast spaces, some of them), literally hundreds of food vendors to choose from and thousands of places to sit.

And woven through all of that, in vast vertical spaces (five levels in some areas), are shops of every other kind as well. You want clothes? You want a Metro Station? You want drapery? You want your shoes repairs? You want to travel? It goes on and on.

Its quite fun, actually. An adult mid-day lunch people-watching extravaganza.

So, off we went seeking little Sushman in all of that. And, Colette did get us there! Brilliant.

So, lunch was sweet as. Then we decided that we'd had enough glitter and distraction, so we hopped the Metro back at Bonaventure and were off at Sherbrooke an in the apartment 1, 2, 3.

Colette spent some time looking at hotels in New York (can you say, "expensive"?).

And I went off to investigate the mysteries of how one goes about seeing a doctor here. I've gotten a rash on the calf of my right leg that is really itchy which I want someone to look at.

I called Southern Cross, who we bought our travel/medical insurance for this trip from, and they could not have been better. Their rep. said to go to a GP and see what he said. If the GP gave me a reference to a dermatologist specialist, then fine as well. Just collect and keep the bills, diagnosis and referrals and submit them and 'poof', you will be reimbursed.

How easy is that.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 21 – Wed, April 22 - A small encounter with the Canadian Medical System

And it was good.

But, before I go there, we'll begin at the beginning. Regular readers will know that the beginning always involves a bagel and today was no exception. We went to our local favorite. the Hinnawi Bros. Bagel and Café. Afterwards, rather than walking straight home, we walked a bit south on St. Denis just for something different and we found some interesting scenes.

After we returned home, I waded into my self appointed task for the day which was to make an appointment to see a doctor here regarding the rash on my calf. To make an appointment here at an urgent medical clinic, unless you have an acute problem, you call in and make an appointment on an automated system (at least you do that for the urgent medical clinic I selected). So, I signed up and made a request for an appointment and I was informed that soon I would have e-mail giving me the hour of my appointment.

Well, I waited and waited and nothing came and finally, about 1:30 in the afternoon, I realized that the expected E-Mails had probably gone into my junk mail because they were from a new source. So I looked and sure enough, there was my appointment all setup for 1 pm and I'd missed it because I'd forgotten to check my junk folder.

I decided to ride out to the clinic anyway and just see if I couldn't wiggle into a slot if someone cancelled. Well, I needn't have worried. 20 minutes after I arrived, I was in seeing a doctor. The good news is she felt that the rash is from excessively dry skin and that once it occurred, it was aggravating itself in a self-perpetuating cycle. The answer was some cortisone creme and some skin lotion. Easy-peasy.

Not much else to say about today. It's rained on and off a lot of the day. I rode the subway to the far side of the city to the clinic (which I selected in particular because they have dermatologists on staff) and that was fun as I love riding the subway and people watching.

Colette stayed home and went off to the local market by herself for a bit of shopping and we met back here about 4:30.

I had a nice Skype session with my son, Chris, his partner, Laura, and got a lot of good screen time with my new grandson, Sammy, who is coming a long very nicely. All seems well back home and that's always nice to know.

It's Wednesday today and we're taking the train up to Quebec City on Monday and we're already getting excited about that.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 22 – Thu, April 23 - a trip west to Angrignon Subway Station and then a bus to Les Galleries Lachine

Today is overcast and cold with a hint of snow mixed with rain so we discussed either staying indoors or staying in vehicles. In the end, we opted for the latter.

I worked out in the morning and then we went for a late morning coffee, came home and had lunch and then walked to the Sherbrooke Subway station near our place.

The plan was to take the green line to its extreme west end and then shift onto the 110 bus which went a good deal farther west. We had no idea what we'd find as this area is all new to us. It could be Disneyland or a wasteland.

At the subway terminus station, Angrignon, we walked out to wait for the 110 bus. The wind was blowing bitterly cold and it was hovering around 1 C after the wind chill was factored in. We both, gladly, had our puffer jackets on. The area around us seemed to be mostly two to four level apartment/flats and not much else except for a cluster of high-rise apartments in the distance. The subway station, itself, was under construction.

These terminus subway stations are, generally, hubs of the busses that will carry commuters further out away from the central city. Angrignon was no exception. Fully 10 bus lines departed from it.

The bus ride further west was, generally, unremarkable. The two to four level rows of flats continued in all directions and we scarcely saw anyplace where people might shop.

The bus route, at times, took us near the Saint Laurent and at one point, we passed close by the Pont Honoré-Mercier Bridges.

The bridges looked tired to me and, indeed, I've read that Canada is having the same issue as U.S. which is that many significant pieces of essential infrastructure like these bridges are not having the necessary cyclical maintenance kept up on them.

That's an issue that will, eventually, catch up with both the U.S. and Canada. Who can forget the bridge that collapsed in Minneapolis a few years ago.

As the bus seemed to be nearing the furthest point in its west-ward track, we began to think about getting off to stretch our legs but there were so few commercial zones that we despaired that we'd find a place. And we didn't just want to get off in an empty field, a residential neighborhood or an industrial zone and wait 30 minutes in the cold wind for the next 110 bus to come by.

Finally, near the end, we came to the **Les Galleries Lachine Shopping Center** and we jumped off.

In spite of the advice we've received that the western end of Montreal Island is the wealthier end, this particular area was definitely on the poor side.

Just across the street from the shopping center was a huge complex of what I took for government housing. And the shopping center itself was not exactly flash. It was a bit of a low-budget shopping center to my eyes. We were glad to see it though and wandered in out of the wind. We walked up and down looking for a place to sit and get a cup of coffee and a snack.

There was a shop that sold discount clothing and the item being pushed today was tops for women with the Montreal Canadiens Logo on the front the the last names of the various team members on the back.

Well, don't ya know that one of the team members has the last name of **Gallagher!**? That was like an instant purchase decision for me, once I got Colette to at least agree that she would model it for me (smile).

We found a restaurant after that and had some coffee and a snack.

Back out to the bus stop and in 10 minutes the 110 on its reverse trip came by and we hopped on.

The trip back was uneventful and in an hour and a half, we were back here perhaps tucked in for the night - though I am thinking of walking up to St. Denis for one of my new favorite Belle Guele beers. 60% chance of rain around 9 pm tonight - no problem! For a beer, I can deal with that! Just hope I can talk Colette into coming along.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 23 - April 24 - A very quiet day

It's cold here today and cloudy. Maybe it got up to 3C today and with the wind, the chill factor was below zero most of the day. We wandered out on short trips a few times but always ran for home. Brrrr.

I spent most of the day reading Apple documentation on how to integrate iCloud storage into my app. As usual, it starts out as a lot of gibberish and slowly resolves into something I think I understand. The next hill to get over is when I actually try it and then I'll understand that I really haven't understood it at all so far and then I'll wade into the documents again.

We Skyped with Colette's Son, Jono, and his sweet family. Great fun.

Every post needs at least one picture so I've included one. Kudos to whom ever has an idea of what it is.

Also, a shout out to my ex, Rose, mother of my two sons. She and I have remained friends over the many years. It's her birthday today. Happy Birthday, Rose!

Cheers, all.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 24 – Sat, April 25 - Romans and beer

Another quiet day because of the cold. Plus, I think we've been here now long enough that we don't need to run out to 'accomplish' something every day. We're spending enough time here to be able to afford to wait for the good weather days.

In the morning, we walked over to St, Denis and went to a Boulangerie (a bakery) to see about getting some bread. We discovered that this particular place ("La Boulangerie") looks like it is just a place to order your bread and leave as there are no tables downstairs. But, upon inspection we found that up a steel staircase and way in the back of the building is a large room outfitted with an eclectic collection of tables, chairs, and couches and it is, apparently, a student coffee and study hangout.

Well, that spoke to us! So we installed Colette in a nice Beaky Seat and I went back down to get some coffee for us. This place makes me wonder how many other little nook and cranny places there are scattered all over the Latin Quarter. We loved it.

In the afternoon, after a bit of a struggle to get it going, we fired up the DVD player here in the apartment and watched episode 1 of 12 of season one of "Rome"; an HBO Series that's here in the apartment. Looks like it is going to be good.

Late in the afternoon, we walked up to Rue Mont Royal and went to a place which Colette had noted on earlier walk as a good prospect; the Bar Le Mont Royal. We went in and by luck got the best seat in the house just by the front window so we could watch everyone walking by on a late Saturday afternoon.

This place is new. It's been open only two months, And the waiter who served us was a really nice fellow who told us he'd spent two months in New Zealand and so we had an instant bond. I don't know if it was because the place is new or because the waiter was friendly or what but the feeling in the place was really very nice.

Colette and I had a great far ranging conversation and watched people and played with the camera a bit.

Colette had a nice glass of red and I had a glass of Belle Guele dark beer which I'm becoming quite fond of.

Our walk home took us back through Parc La Fontaine. The ice in the big ponds there has all melted and the level of the ponds is very low now and you can see debris left from the winter in the bottom. I expect that the park folks will sort all that out soon and refill the ponds and it is going to be a beautiful thing indeed.

I'm glad we came when we did to see the city transition from winter to spring and summer. The transition in a northern city like this is quite dramatic. We had a warm week a week or so back and then the winter cold came back but it will lift soon in a more permanent fashion. The sidewalk cafes are ready and waiting to be filled.

We've postponed some of our journeys out and about to wait for warmer days.

Monday, regardless of what the weather does, we're away on an early train bound for Quebec City for the day.

That should be a lot of fun. And we've settled on going down to New York for the last week of May. Arrive on a Monday and return on a Saturday.

And, if my research to locate any of my father's family over in Allentown, Pennsylvania, succeeds, when Colette heads back up to Montreal from New York, I'll take off over to Allentown to hopefully see some long lost relations.

Montreal is a sweet experience and we've already discussed that we're going to miss this city when we go and we're only a month into our three month visit. Truly, a first-world problem.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 25 – Sun, April 26 - Codger-me-mate and universities - part 1 of 2

Today's Sunday and mostly our minds are thinking about our trip to Quebec City which is scheduled for tomorrow, Monday. The weather reports for Monday are mixed - so it could be rain or maybe just clouds.

But, today's looking pretty good so we decided not to remain cooped up but rather to get out there and enjoy it.

One outing we've wanted to make is to go and see some of the university campus scattered around the city. We've been around the UQAM campuses which have been the source of the demonstrations we've seen but we haven't had a good look yet at McGill University nor The University of Montreal.

So, being people of clear thought and purpose, we set out on our mission and were immediately distracted before going a block.

You see, there's a large building that sits one block west of the 801 Signature building where we are staying. It used to be a major hotel but apparently that didn't work out and these days it's become part of something called Groupe Savoie. We see this building all the time because looking out the windows of our apartment we'd have to be blind to miss it. It is the biggest thing in our view.

Neither one of us would, of course, ever admit to being voyeurs, in spite of our being 12 stories up and having a pair of binoculars at hand, but we have, on occasion, noticed this 26 stories building and been curious about it. Just the other day, a man was lowered down the side of the building on a window-cleaner's platform and helped change out some windows on the building and that caught our attention.

On another recent occasion, Colette noticed a long white cloth tube, maybe 10 to 12 inches in diameter wide and 10 to 15 feet long, poking out one of the small windows 13 or 14 stories up and waving about in the breeze. That really puzzled us at first. I thought it was some kid left home alone playing about but we later figured out that someone was using a power tool in the apartment and that this was their way of exhausting the dust to the outside.

This building currently has a large banner hanging on the front advertising it as having apartments to lease. As we walked by on the way to see McGill University, we noticed groups of balloons tied all around the front of the building and that proved too much for us. Balloons!

Ye Gods, let's abandon all of our previous high-minded university-visiting plans and go in and see whatever could be such a big occasion as to require balloons!

Yep. They wanted to have an open house and to show folks around.

You see this place, which was a hotel (but apparently didn't do all that well at being a hotel), has now been reinvented as:

"A living Environment Made to Measure for Independent Golden Aged People".

We like poking our noses into all sorts of possibilities so we decided to give this a 'boo', as the Canadians say (when they mean to say, 'let's go give it a look').

We each hunched over a bit and I put on a lightly more deranged look than usual so that they would see us as worthy of their attentions and we stepped in and asked for a tour.

"Where are you from?"

"New Zealand."

"What are you doing here?"

"Oh, just touring around the planet and deciding where to buy up spare apartments and pied à terre's for our golden years."

"Nice life-style."

"Yes, as fabulously wealthy folks, when ever we're not in New Zealand or Monaco, we do try to do our part."

"Well, let me show you some of our units then."

Actually, that's all a complete exaggeration of what was actually discussed but I could sense that most of you were about to fall asleep as I was beginning to talk about retirement homes.

The fellow who is managing the place, Michael, the Directeur Manoir Plaza, was very nice and agreed to show us two units even though I think he was doubtful that were were good candidates. I think it is hard for anyone to look at my partner, the erstwhile Energizer Bunny, and to imagine that she has any possible need for a golden age retirement facility, though I did think he might have eyed me up a bit.

He explained that the units from the 6th floor and down were one and two bedrooms units and that they came equipped with kitchens and were essentially just apartments to be leased. Above the 6th floor, they were all studios without kitchens and if one leased them, they all came with two meals a day. All the units, high and low, came with full access to all the facilities.

It really is a nice idea if one wants to retire and be looked after. They have medical services on-site, meals, recreation, clubs and just about everything a person could want. The two units he showed us were nice. One of them faced the apartment building we are in so I walked over and snapped a picture of our building from theirs.

He also took us up to the 26th (top) floor, which is a huge open space with a fabulous view over the entire city. It's where people eat and hang out. It was pretty impressive looking out over Montreal and the surrounds from there.

Michael was nice and we had a good chat. He told us that we might be more interested in a new and hot area to the west of downtown where many new condominiums are going up.

So, we left and I was tempted to ask for a balloon, but my courage failed me at the end. And then we continued on our mission to see two new universities. — with Colette Meehan at Les Residences Groupe Savoie on Sherbrooke.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 25 – Sun, April 26 - Codger-me-mate and universities - part 2 of 2

Non-spoiler alert! All the codger stuff is in part 1 of 2. If you're looking for codgers, go there!

So, after our adventure with codger-hood and the Groupe Savoie, we walked on west on Sherbrooke down to where McGill University is and explored that area.

McGill is Canada's second oldest university, teaching is done in English and the place has a world-class reputation. It's also has a great looking campus.

We walked around and shot a lot of photos of the interesting looking buildings and then went looking for the inevitable associated student zone that would/should be near it.

But we never actually found the student zone, though we walked up the west side of the university and also explored the area just north of it.

But, as we continued yet further west, we did come to an area that was new to us that looked very interesting. An area with lots of restaurants and street buzz - much like what we've already found on St. Denis and up on Rue Mont-Royal. We noted it and we'll be back for another look, of sure. This area seems to center at Blvd. Maisonneuve and Rue Crescent.

From that point, we wanted to go and have a look at the University of Montreal and so we hopped on the subway and after two transfers we arrive there.

The University of Montreal sits on the northern side of Mount Montreal almost directly opposite of where McGill is on the southern side.

The University of Montreal is Montreal's oldest university though the campus shows no evidence of 19th century buildings. So, perhaps, it has been relocated since its original founding? Teaching here is done in French.

Again, walking around on campus was a very pleasant experience though quiet as it was on a Sunday. Lots of photos were taken. At one point, tired of walking, we entered a building and sat in a nice open reception area. The building, itself, proved to have to do with Pharmacology and cancer research. Very nice facilities.

Not much to say about all of this. The photos will say more than I can. Both Colette and I are drawn to universities and love to visit them.

Following all this walking, it was time to go home and another subway journey and one transfer brought us back to the Sherbrooke Station one block from home.

Time to rest up for our adventure to Quebec City tomorrow.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 26 – Mon, April 27 - Quebec City

Yep, we went to Quebec City all day long. Colette's written a nice entry about what we did up there and how the day progressed and I think I'll just lean on that for a good description of the day.

All I have to add to what she said are some general observations.

Observations about how well Canada seems to work compared to the U.S. There don't seem to be Detroit's and Baltimore's here; at least not that I've seen in my travels in and out over 45 years.

It's a vast country (the 2nd largest in the world, physically) so I haven't seen it all but I've seen several of the big cities and wandered through them extensively and I just haven't seen the levels of crime, danger and anger that I've seen in any number of U.S. cities.

Canada just doesn't have the same kind of sink or swim Capitalistic ethic that seems to prevail in the U.S. In the U.S., the bright and the competitive and the wary move to the front of the line in self-defense. And anyone that isn't those things risks getting swept backwards by the backwash.

And it isn't just the individual competitions that marginalize people. In the U.S., there are larger forces at play and for many, who are just in the wrong place at the wrong time, that's all it takes to find yourself marginalized and on the big swing down into poverty.

If you live in affluent American communities and you've got good jobs, then it is hard to see the truth of such statements and it is easy to think that those who are on the losing end of the game are there because they are lazy asses. But, it ain't necessarily so.

You know, it is no coincidence that Detroit and the other American cities in the rust belt are dying as they are in spite of the fact that 40 years ago, they were thriving.

American big business, in their wisdom and greed, decided they could make the things we buy from them cheaper if they had them made overseas. And, indeed, they did become vastly wealthier by those decisions. But they also trashed the heartlands of American manufacturing in the process and turned entire regions of the country into wastelands.

For whatever reason, I haven't seen that yet in Canada and I hope I never do.

I'm going to tell the rest of the story of my day in Quebec City in the commentary that attends the photos, below.

Oops. I just found out that Colette's story was in an E-Mail to family and not in a FB post - so I've grabbed the relevant parts and copied it , below:

We set off at 5am in the dark for a 40 minute walk to Central Station for a 5.55am check in. There are no busses or Metro running at that time; so it was a walk in light rain. Despite my mapping the route out we missed our cross street turn off and wandered off into the dark with no one around. We did come across one person luckily who said the station was 'that way' so we turned round and backtracked to get there in time before the boarding opened.

The journey is three hours; out over to the south side of the St Lawrence River and then the rest of the time through very flat farming land and some small towns, often call Saint this or Saint that – part of the French Catholic colonial heritage. The landscape still has no signs of spring; deciduous trees still bare, and rain and snow soaked land, and an overcast day made it look bleak. But the train was comfortable and the view was all new to us.

The train station in Quebec City is very ornate. A lot of old Quebec has a French colonial look to the buildings which is of course part of its current day charm. We set off from the station in light rain. I'd booked our tickets a couple of weeks ago to get a saver fare so it was always going to be a gamble that the day could be bad weather. It did lighten up and stop raining in the afternoon though.

We arbitrarily decided to walk up along the city wall route – Rue des Remparts – in pursuit of strolling round Old Town, the walled city. This was a good choice as we passed by all the old wall and cannons we could see the turrets and spires of the Old Town ahead and the little side streets of old terraced housing along the way.

The edge of Old Town is dominated by the Hotel Chateau Frontenac which is picture postcard impressive and the 'poster girl' for Quebec. There appeared to be very few visitors to Quebec during our visit and we figured it is probably the 'shoulder season' between winter sports and carnivals and the promise of a couple of warm months ahead. Anyway we didn't have to step round the hordes as you often have to in popular places. However, it made me think about how the place survives financially. Both Old Town and Lower Town and what we saw of the Grande Allee appears to be almost totally tourist centered in their offerings and there weren't many people around.

We strolled round both Old Town (the walled City) and Lower Town by the Port and in between those destinations had a look in the Parliament area. That area too was very quiet. Considering it's the equivalent of Molesworth St and Lambton Quay in Wellington it was deserted by comparison. There were few people out and none of the buzzing round or the busyness you find in Wellington. Maybe they're running round underground tunnels to stay inside.

We chanced on an opportunity to go up to the observation floor at the top of one of the main Government offices buildings. You'll see the views of Quebec City that we got from that level in the photos.

We did more strolling round; over to the Citadel and up on the wall by the fortifications and then made our way back down to the Lower Town which appeared to be totally for the tourists. I don't think anyone lives in the area. Its charm was its quaintness and re-creation of an old area that probably once housed laboring people who serviced the port and the river.

So in one day we got to see the areas that Quebec City is known for and that it markets itself on, but of course like any city that depends on its promotions and marketing our experience was not the real Quebec City. The closest we got to that was what we could see of the city out the train window. All the housing, places of commerce and roading that make a 21st century city. We are by contrast getting a very good experience of the 'real' Montreal by staying here for a long time.

All up, a visit to Quebec City was well worth it and we did a fairly comprehensive coverage for a day (albeit partly in the rain as well).

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Days 27, 28 & 29 – Tue, Wed, Thur, April 28-30 - Settling in

Day 27, which was Tuesday, was pretty much of a non-event. We laid around here like dead-dogs recovering from our long day traveling up to Quebec City and back. Oh, and I did a lot of writing catching up on Quebec City as well.

Day 28, Wednesday, was a bit more adventurous. We decided to go for a walk and it turned out be be for three hours or more.

The walk took us over to McGill University where I stopped into HSBC to get some money for the rent.

Then south into downtown as we looked for a postal shop that had a mailer tube so I could send a tango-mad friend of mine a Tango poster I'd snagged for him here. No such luck. Mailing tubes seem to be rare critters here.

At one point we found ourselves in the underground again and revisited Sushiman for a light lunch. Then we wandered east again and went back to a huge art supplies store Colette loves.

And, finally, we walked back north to the apartment. I carried the tango poster all over this town and never found a mailer. Even now, it is sitting across the room smirking at me.

That evening, I wanted to go out for a beer as the weather is improving and the sidewalk places are getting some life. Colette decided to stay in so I went out solo and washed up at my current favorite in the neighborhood, Lucca et Francos. And I had a nice glass of Belle Guele and sat outside and read my current book and glanced at the world passing by.

Today is Thursday, **Day 29**, and given that the weather is on the improve, we decided to go out after lunch and we walked down to the south end of Rue Papineau to see if we could catch a shuttle bus over to Isle Saint Hélène.

On the way there, we passed Rue Saint Catherine and noted that it has now been closed off for the summer and workmen were all up and down the street building sidewalk café extensions in preparation for the weekend. We walked up it and had a coffee at the same Starbucks we went to a week or so back when we were last in the area.

Then we continued down to where we thought the shuttle buses might be to the island. But, after a brief search and another look at the map, we worked out that they only run in the summer and we're still, apparently, considered to be in Spring.

So, plan #2. Catch the Metro out to the island. and so we did.

The Isle Saint Hélène sits in the middle of the Saint Laurent to the south of downtown. Out on the Isle is a park, a huge bio-dome and a number of other attractions. We wanted to go out and have a first look.

We walked around for an hour or so. The trees are just beginning to bud and there weren't many people. The gardening crews are busy preparing it for the coming summer season and it has the feel of a place about to come alive.

We admired the rent-a-bikes that are available and plotted about coming back and renting a bike for the day and riding all over the island.

After that, we took the subway home and here we are.

I was talking with Colette the other day and I was telling her that I think time changes after you've been somewhere for awhile.

The first days we were here are engraved in my mind so clearly. It took like ages for the first three or four days to pass. Everything was so new and every moment was pregnant with new discoveries.

Now, after a month, time has resumed its normal pace. Days and weeks are beginning to move faster.

We've been here now for a month and we're only going to be here two more months. How quickly it has gone after such a slow and intense start.

When we walk out now, most of what we see in the local area, we've seen many times. It is still Montreal and it is still very far from home and it is still full of people who speak French and have lived here most of their lives. But we're starting to get used to it and I think that changes how you perceive the passing time.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 30 – Fri, May 1 - just in da hood

Nothing special today and yet it all seemed special.

A workout in the morning, some programming after that, Then a walk up St. Denis to find a tubular mailer (which I did at the local UPS place). Then a stroll on up St. Denis to find a book shop Colette likes followed by a cup of tea on a balcony overlooking St Denis. Then on to Rue Mont Royal and then a turn west until we got to Rue Brebeuf where we turned south.

A visit to the small bakery there for a sweet, which we stood on the corner and ate, and then across the street to Chez Mona where I got a nice hair cut and Colette and I had a great talk with the owner, Mona, about politics, Canada, Montreal, and Vancouver (where she lived for 12 years).

Back here then and I packed the Tango poster I got for Joel in Vancouver, Washington, into the tubular mailer and I walked back to St. Denis to mail it at the same place that had given me the mailer in the morning. Colette stayed home on this outing.

Well, that turned out to be fun. The owner, Marc (or Mark), at UPS was great to talk to and we were off and running before long. Great fun. He's someone I think we'll hear from again.

Then back here again for the 5 pm news and then out again for a light meal outside on St. Denis at Luca et Francos where we got a Margherita Pizza and a wine for Colette and a beer for me (a Belle Gueule, what else?).

The people there always recognize us and they treat us really nice. There's a definite east-coast Italian/Sicilian feel to the place and I quite love it. While we ate, a demonstration marched by with several following police cars. Not sure what it was about though I snapped some shots.

Then we walked over the small park across the street and found a bench and watched the people, the squirrels and played with my camera in the late afternoon light. While we were there, another demonstration (much bigger than the first) went by but this time we were at the far end of the park from St. Denis so we couldn't see much of it.

Then back here. The weather is really turning up nice now. It was 19C and I was out in a tee-shirt earlier. Nothing special - and yet it was all special and one-of-a-kind.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 31 – Sat, May 2 - Books? Books? No books!

Well, today was the day we've been waiting for (among many others we are waiting for). I mean, that's why we have calendars, right? So, we know which days we're waiting for?

So, today was the Big Book Sale. It's been on posters around town for some time right there between the Rumi poetry reading in French and the upcoming Tango event.

Books? We like books though we don't really need any. Too much weight to carry home and we're already buried in the stuff we're reading.

But hey, it was a great excuse to go out into the city and locate a place we've never been to before.

So, off we went from the Sherbrooke Metro Station to the Berri-UQAM Metro station where we changed lines and then onto the Pius IX Metro Station. Along the way, Colette and I discussed who Pius IX was and when did the church move to saying Mass in the local languages and so on.

At one point, I told her a long and involved tale about a small town in Kansas that was unusual in the first place because it was Catholic in the midst of the mid-west's born-again insanity.

(brief aside for readers of sensitive nature who may have felt that I overplayed my last description of the U.S.'s mid-western affection for all things born-again. You point is, of course, well taken and if you still feel the same when you've come to the end of reading this article (which will be, other than for that one slip, completely religion-neutral, PC and correct in all respects) then you may request a refund. The refund form can be found clearly shown at level 5, section 3 at subsection iix of the amended Facebook Privacy and Security notes. A simple perusal of the 75 pages of boiler plate and harumps and wherefores and whereas's not withstanding, your diligence shall bring you to the appropriate place.)

Well, that small town had a Catholic Seminary for many years but at some point the need for more priests in that small corner of Kansas must have diminished and it was closed down and fell on hard times. Following a period of lying fallow, the local Pot-o-wat-o-mee Tribe made some sort of a deal with the town to use the facilities.

But, it was a deal much regretted soon after because of the drunken parties and brawls that ensued in the formerly holy and hallowed halls. The town's folks were understandably outraged by it all and soon, whether by design or simple luck, their outrage found itself vented.

An enormous thunderstorm blew up (as they are wont to do in Kansas, Dorothy) and a mighty lightning bolt smote the cathedral with a party within it ongoing and pretty much destroyed it after it had stood there for a 100 years untouched by any previous storm.

Well, the tribe took it as a damn clear sign and left and soon the town's people had possession of, and quiet from, their slight diminished Seminary back.

Time passed and another group came calling. These folks were from a group whose name included a reference to a Pope named Pius XII, I think. That's Pius the 12th for those of you who might be non-Roman-Numeric (remember, I mentioned that we were going to be PC from here on out).

They wanted to lease or buy the facilities and their money looked good, so the burnt-once-but-never-get-wise townsfolk agreed and now new folks began to install themselves.

The Pius the XII folks harken back to the days when the Mass was read in Latin and the women wore long dresses so men would be dissuaded from admiring their legs unless they were married to you.

Long story short, the new folks began to come to the small town like locusts and the former residents, who had all assured themselves and each other that they were indeed upstanding Catholics, now found themselves wading up and down the few sidewalks in their town to the disapproving glares of the new folks who thought that the town's local Catholics had seriously fallen off the platform of the pious. (yes, Pun intended)

It got worse as the Pius XII folks had money and began buying farms and things like that and getting seats on the local city council and .. and .. well, you can just imagine.

But, there I was telling this long, long shaggy dog story to Colette to pass the time as we walked all the way up Rue Pius IX heading for the fabled book store and sale. And all this because the street's name and the Metro station happened to be named Pius IX.

So, you see what Colette has to deal with, eh?

But, we finally go to the book store sale and DARN. We were shocked.

You would have thought that there was a Seminary up for sale for \$20 or something. There were folks lined up around the corner and waaaaay down the street. And, the doors to the sale had already been open since 1 PM and we were arriving at 1:30.

I looked for lighting to see if there might be a way to clear a path into the sale but, unfortunately, the sky was clear.

Ah well, we told ourselves. We didn't need any stinking' books anyway. We've got lots of books of our own and we don't need any of their old, used books. We stood near the door saying stuff like than and stamping our feet too.

But that didn't accomplish anything much for us so we decided to make a strategic (I meant to do that) retreat to a coffee shop, if we could but find one.

A walk to a bus stop, a bus ride then followed by a Metro ride and whoop, we are back in God's country on Rue Mont Royal where a Starbucks welcoming weary travelers (and their money) took us in. Then another Metro jump back to Berri-UQAM where we'd started, a trip to the IGA store to shop for groceries and here we are after another fine adventure in the wild lands of Montreal.

That's our story for today and we're sticking' to it!

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 32 – Sun, May 3 – Church

We went to the Basilica St. Patrick today for the 11 AM mass. This church was begun in 1847 to serve the Irish population and today they still do their services in English. The church is massive but even so, you can see how the central city has grown around it until all the business buildings surround it. I imagined it standing originally towering over the much smaller buildings gathered all around it. How things have changed over its lifetime. Inside, it was one of the prettier churches I've seen. The service was nice as well, Singing and talking mixed together with ceremony in a good way. All in all, I quite enjoyed it and it made me reflect on Jesus' words. And that, in turn, made me consider how very many ways there are to interpret what one is hearing. But that's a long story for another day.

We walked home and had a nice lunch and stayed in most of the afternoon though I popped out once to see what all the noise was about as a demonstration moved by on Rue Berri.

Later, we redid what we did last night and went out for a beer and a wine and a good sit in a sidewalk cafe watching the world go by on a Sunday afternoon with 25C weather blessing all of us.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal – Day 33 – Sat, May 4

Demonstrators sitting in the intersection at Rue Berri and Rue Ontario after marching south on Berri. Not sure what it is about but maybe something to do with May Day or austerity.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 34 – Tue, May 5 - Tickets to New York

We walked downtown today to the train station and bought tickets for our trip to New York City. We'll be there from May 28th to May 2nd having a look around. We've decided to stay at an AirBnB home in Brooklyn and to subway it into the city. We're quite excited about our little upcoming trip.

On the way into town, we walked by UQAM University and admired the big church there and we noted its doors were open so we walked over to have a look.

Imagine our surprise when we discovered that the church's front is just a shell - the preserved front of the church that originally stood there. Another side of the church is preserved on the south side as well. Both sides have been woven into a huge UQAM building that from the inside looked like a student union building to us.

On the way back we stopped and had lunch. It was a beautiful Spring day here in Montreal, Canada. Colette and I spent an hour or more eating our sandwiches, sitting in the sun beside a huge square near the center of the city and watching the thousands of people nearby. People walking, talking, sitting and eating their lunches, sharing petitions to be signed, visiting, taking in the sun, clowning around, flirting and all of the many things free people do to enjoy such a gorgeous day.

A leisurely walk home after that followed by some writing. Then, about 4 PM, I went over to St. Denis (Colette wanted to take a nap) and sat at a sidewalk cafe and read and sipped on a nice beer and watched the world go by, which is a favorite pastime.

I've started on Arundhati Roy's book, "Capitalism - A Ghost Story". It looks like it is going to tear Capitalism a new one. It also makes it look like whatever I might be complaining about with regard to Capitalism in the U.S., it's a lot worse in India.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 35 – Wed, May 6 - away to Vaudreuil and Spaghetti Carbonara

Another beautiful day here with clear skies, light winds and a high of 24C/75 F.

We decided to take a shot at riding one of the AMT commuter trains out of Montreal to one of the bedroom communities around the city. And today, we chose to go west to Vaudreuil which is at the end of the line (except once a day when the train goes further out to a town called Hudson).

It was a shot-in-the-dark adventure for us so we packed a lunch, and a few tentative hopes, and took off to see what we would see.

An hour took us there and we got off at the train station terminus in Vaudreuil. It was going to be three hours before a return trip would take us back to Montreal.

We immediately noted that large spaces surrounded us. This is have-a-car-or-die country out here. Off in the distances we could see what looked like strip malls and in another direction we could see two and three story apartment buildings. What we couldn't see was any clear indication of where we might find a good coffee.

We found a sign at the station that had a sort of a map of the town and I took a photo of it on my iPhone. In one direction, it offered up a Town Hall and a park and that sounded promising. Though to get to it, we had to depart away from the strip mall visuals and head into the residential neighborhoods. Ah well. Coffee turns up in odd places.

It took us 30 minutes of walking to come to the "Hotel de Ville" (which means 'Town Hall').

Well ... we were looking at a bland government looking building.

And, if anything, it was blander inside. And, it appeared to be sparsely settled with a few government tax offices, long empty halls ways and not much else - though we did find restrooms there (not that either of us actually needed to rest in there - but that's a discussion for another day). I thought a person might be in danger of passing out from boredom just by looking upon this building.

Food nor drink? Nada, none, nowhere, nothing.

Outside again, we continued walking towards some newly sighted buildings in the distance that looked a bit like a strip mall.

We finally came to a huge Home Depot store and not far from it was a restaurant apparently devoted to sports fanatics.

They had a lot of nice outside tables (none were currently being used) and we had our packed lunches with us. I went in and asked if we might sit and one of their outside tables and drink some of their coffee and eat our packed lunches. A meeting of the staff and management was held and it was decided that this would be a bad precedent and it should not be allowed.

Well, OK then. Far be it from us to upset the delicate mechanisms of a multinational corporation teetering on the brink of insolvency through too much generosity.

We took our sandwiches back over to Home Depot where there were several picnic tables that were obviously used by Home Depot employees (none of whom were in evidence) and we used them and ate (sans coffee). The Home Depot corporation survived this blatant attack on their solvency and more power to them!

More walking ensued after eating. The endless search for coffee, don't cha know? We were well endowed with time as our train would not come again until we'd been here for three hours and we had a good deal of that left at this point.

A restaurant that served chicken-ee things appeared in a strip mall. It wasn't at all certain that coffee without chicken was an option there so, being shy to ask, we voted that down. Finally, we came to a place called Boston Pizza.

By now the coffee cravings were strong and only people as strong, or strong than Marcia Heller (all praise to the coffee maven that she is), could have continued past this point without a capitulation. We buckled and went in to see if we could have a coffee without a pizza.

Understand now, there was no question that we might be able to obtain a sophisticated Latte or Macchiato here. No, it was going to be drip coffee. The only question was whether or not we could perform a pizzaectomy on our coffee order.

A close negotiation was held by yours truly with the staff while Colette stood off at a distance wringing her hands over the outcome. And, Glory-Be! It was decided that coffee could be obtained - all by itself! Though there was a sincere and puzzled question by the staff at that point: "Are you sure you don't want a dessert?"

So, all was well and we sat on out on the patio with two fellows that I think might have been conversing in Italian and a group of five young women who looked to me like they had never had any reticence about consuming large amounts of pizza with or without coffee. In addition, the local decor consisted of small table with a large jar of mustard and a can of bug spray. But, it was 24C and we had coffee coming - so we made allowances.

Following a money extraction ceremony, we departed and began to work our way back to the train station.

Arriving there, I noted that we had yet another hour before the train that would carry us back to Montreal was due. I responded by rolling up my light jacket for a pillow and snoozing on a bench while Colette kept watch for Canadian Killer Squirrels which I think she believes, or at least suspects, are loose here in the Montreal area.

After a long time, the train came and we settled in for the ride back, this time sitting on the other side of the train so we could see everything we'd missed on the way out.

The only fly in the ointment with that was we were in a 'Quiet' car which some train systems use. On such cars, even talking (other than very quietly) is discouraged.

Well, a young couple, who were having a heated discussion/argument, apparently didn't get the memo and they got progressively louder as we rolled on. I finally had enough and stood up with my gear and announced to Colette and everyone in the car that I was changing cars because, "Those f***ing people are too loud!", and left (Colette had found them odious as well and came along) for the next car where things were much better.

Soon, we were back home after a return to the train station and a quick link to our subway line.

We went out as soon as we arrived in the neighborhood and got some 'real' coffees and sat in the local park and enjoyed them. At one point, Colette went off and filmed some squirrels doing whatever squirrels do for her grandson, Henry.

This evening, she and I went over to the Luca e Franco Restaurant on St. Denis, which has become a favorite of ours, and ordered up a nice plate of Spaghetti Carbonara. Yum!!! That, and a Grolsch Beer, and I was a happy camper.

Another day well spent.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 37 – Fri, May 8 - Mont Royal Parc

It was going to be a hot day so I took off to do my workout early so I could be back and we could get on our way up to the top of Mont Royal for a picnic before the worst of the heat. It was scheduled to 30C/86F (which it actually got to).

The workout was good. My weight's down to 88 kg which is the lowest I've been in years.

Picnic lunch packed, we were off and walked north through Parc Lafontaine towards where we'll catch bus 11 for the Mont.

As we walked through Parc Lafontaine, we marveled at the difference a month makes. A month ago, the water was frozen and we had to dodge patches of snow to walk. Now, the trees are erupting with green and Spring is everywhere as are bicyclists and walkers.

At the north end of the park, we came upon a scene that always makes me smile. A group of pre-schoolers were being guided on their way by several teachers. Too cute! See the pictures.

We went into a shop next to the north end of the park and ordered some coffee and sat outside and drank it and enjoyed the neighborhood. It's a Friday morning so you'd expect many people would be away to work. But still, hundreds of folks were about riding bikes and walking places.

Onto bus 11 where nothing remarkable happened except that I noted, once again, how so many disparate types of people all seem to come together without tension in this city. And how polite and considerate of each other they are. A young mother with a large baby carriage got on and immediately several teenagers got up and made space for her. No fuss, no muss, just nice.

At the Parc Mont Royal, we walked to the Chateau and viewing area as we did before, a month ago, and this time the ground was clear of snow. A beautiful view over the downtown area as before.

We went in and had another look at the Chateau and I noticed some details I'd missed before. Like the Squirrel Motif woven into the roof's support beams. There are pictures too along the walls that refer back to the earliest days in this area when hunters and trappers from the Hudson Bay Company would have been among the first to have come through here. It is hard not to think of the book, "The Last of the Mohicans", when I see these things.

We had another coffee and sat out on the eastern side of the Chateau in the shade and struck up a conversation with a gentleman on a bicycle who we found there. He was a native Montrealer and maybe close to my age. He said this past winter was the hardest he's ever seen in Montreal and he thinks it has to do with Global Climate Change.

We walked about a bit more and then opted to walk down off the Mont rather than take a bus back. We decided to come down the south slope, below the view area, which would take us right down into the downtown area.

It was a great wooded walk. It reminded me on walking in the hills over Wellington in New Zealand. Eventually, we came into a neighborhood and it was pretty ritzy. Wealthy huge stone houses built to last. We had fun gawking and shooting pictures as we walked along like two hill-billies come to the big-smoke.

Down, finally, into the downtown area, we returned to a Starbucks we know on Avenue McGill College and sat and took a rest. After that, a Metro ride home and our picnic adventure was done.

About 4:30 PM, I went down onto St. Denis and had a big 500ml Grolsch Beer at Cafe Cherrier and read and watched people walk by.

I'm continuing to read "Capitalism - A Ghost Story" by Arundhati Roy. It is a powerful indictment of Capitalism and its insidious ways but I'm holding my judgement on much of the book's assertions to see how it all plays out.

Already, there's one part I have doubts about as Roy's lumped The Gates Foundation in with The Ford Foundation and I've got serious doubts about that.

In my opinion, The Gates Foundation is too young and too tightly controlled by its original, and still very much living, founders for it to have been deeply co-oped into a global Capitalistic conspiracy such as Roy is painting the Ford Foundation, and others of their ilk, into. We'll see. I wrote an E-Mail to a friend's daughter, who worked for the Gates Foundation for a year or two, to see what she thinks.

Colette stayed home to do some Skyping while I did my sidewalk cafe adventure and when I came home, she was just finishing with her sister, who's currently on business in Korea, and about to begin a session with her son, daughter-in-law and grand-daughter, Jared, Julia and Sophie back in Christchurch.

All in all a good day. Sophie helped make Colette and Happy Mother's Day greeting and that was pretty cute.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 39 – Sun, May 10 - Old town and a dose of Zen & Motorcycles

Off in the morning for a long walk down to old town Montreal. We went over to St. Denis and then headed south until we came to St. Catherine where we turned west.

Rue St. Catherine was closed off a week or so ago and is now a walking street only. Many of the cafes have extended their serving areas right out into the street and the entire length of the closed off section is overhung with pink balls.

We found a giant Lego Man and took a picture for Henry, Colette's oldest Grandchild; who loves Lego Men.

Once we got to the end of the closed off area of St. Catherine, we turned south on Papineau and took it all the way down to the water - or as near as well could get. We hadn't been that way before so we were just meandering and exploring. Our attempt to get to the waters of the St. Laurent was doomed as we found that a giant Molson Brewery stood between us and the river at that point for a long ways.

We turned east again and walked through an industrial zone that finally gave way to an area where new condos are being built to gentrify former industrial wastelands. From there, we could get down to the water and it

was pretty. But the day was getting hot and we were looking for a bench to sit on that was out of the sun. We had to walk nearly to old-town before we found one. But, once we got there it was a pretty place and well worth a look (or a 'boo' as some Canadians say).

The next bit of our walk took us into old-town Montreal itself where we've been before.

In fact, when Colette asked me what I wanted to do today, I'd suggested that we revisit old-town where I would indulge again in mussels and a beer at "Les Trois Brasseurs".

But, it was still a bit early for lunch yet so we wandered into the main old-town market building which is, itself, quite an edifice.

We walked and looked in the various shops (mostly catering to tourists) and I finally saw what I've been looking for for many weeks now - Colette's next pair of earrings.

I like to buy Colette a jewelry something at each of our major destinations as a memento - like when we were in Paris.

Though she once received a pair of earrings in the tiny town of Cust in the wop wops of Canterbury, New Zealand, and I'm not sure just how that event fits into my theory of global earrings genesis.

But in any case, there I was standing there looking at a pair I really liked and it looked like the time had come.

I showed them to Colette Meehan and she liked them too. We chatted with the shop keeper to see what else she had that was similar but, after a bit of looking, it still turned out to be the original ones I'd seen and liked. Nice!

After that, it was a few minutes before noon and so we wandered down for Mussels and beer.

After lunch, we Metro'd it home and laid about for a few hours.

In the evening, I attended a MeetUp Group called, "Intellectual Cafe: Philosophy and Beyond". The subject tonight was Robert Pirsig's famous book, "Zen and the art of Motorcycle Maintenance". It was held just down the road at a vegetarian restaurant on St. Denis. Colette elected to skip it and have a quiet evening at home.

It was my first MeetUp event here in Montreal and I wasn't sure that to expect but it turned out to be great fun. There's nothing much better than meeting several really smart people who actively want to talk and explore new ideas. And that was this meeting in spades. I loved it.

It wrapped up about 10 PM after we had attempted to solve most of the world's problems. Good fun!

Colette and I have decided to create a MeetUp group of our own here in Montreal called, "Montreal New Zealand Exchange". The idea is to attract people who are curious to hear about New Zealand from folks that live there and while they are picking our brains, we'll be picking their's about Montreal and Quebec.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 41 – Tue, May 12 - The Cat Cafe

A quiet day. But, to spice up the joy I was experiencing doing my U.S. Taxes, Colette and I went over to St. Denis to try out a new Cafe. It is the Cafe of Cats or "Le Cafe des Chats".

It is, literally, a cafe that is shared by cats and people. When you come in the double doors (designed to not let the cats escape, you are greeted and presented with a squirt bottle of hand cleaner so you can do your hands so you won't bring in anything that might negatively affect the cats.

It all sounds quite strange but it is, in fact, a brilliant idea and place. We loved it. It's not very big and it is very quiet and gentle in its feel.

Photos attached.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 42 - May 13 - Redpath Museum

We decided to walk west to McGill University and to go to the Redpath Museum on campus; which is free. Nice walk, nice day and the museum was good as well.

It was in an older building and it all had the feel of having been a museum for a long time. But the exhibits were well displayed, lighted and explained.

We did the ground floor and the floor above, which Americans would have called the 2nd floor whereas New Zealanders would have called it the 1st floor. Still don't know what Canadians might have called it.

When I suggested to Colette that we go up, I just referred to it as "Up there" (smile).

Lot of Minerals and fossil displays and some stuffed animals that were described as being endangered. (Not sure if anyone else saw the potential ironic humor in that).

Afterwards, a walk down McGill to a Starbucks we know about followed by a walk back home.

We've been doing a lot of walking here in Montreal. Probably 5 or 6 km a day.

It's doing well for me, along with my workouts. My weight's down to 89 kg and I'm feeling good.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 43 - Thu, May 14 - A bicycle ride along the Lachine Canal

Gorgeous day. Too nice to waste much of it wrestling with U.S. Tax forms.

Colette did some research and found out where we could rent bicycles for a reasonable amount down in Old Town. So, after my workout, we went out to Mamie Clafoutis Bakery (www.mamieclafoutis.com), which we particularly like, and had some coffee and pastries and then took off on the Metro to Place d'Armes. Here we got off and walked down into old town and found the bike shop Colette had zeroed in on.

A bit of paperwork and we were off on bikes for the first time since we left Christchurch back in late March. Woo! That felt so good to both of us. We are bicycle people and we've missed them.

It was a perfect day for a ride and we went west along the Lachine Canal which is a place with a lot of history here in Montreal. Now, it seems to be a well maintained but quiet waterway cutting its way east to west through Montreal Island.

Bike trails here are excellent. Usually separated from traffic (but not always). Always two lanes and well marked. Along much of the canal, at least as far as we went, you could ride on either side.

Some of it was industrial but much of that is in various stages of being gentrified.

We saw everything from active industrial enterprises in all types and ages of buildings to old warehouses with lofts being rented out to artists to brand new condos; some of which were built in styles designed to remind you of their industrial heritages.

A lot of people were out walking, riding, and roller-blading. We even saw some people with their Vespa scooters on the bike paths. Not sure if that's kosher but it seemed to be working.

We had two hours before we needed to be back and, a bit before the mid-point, we stopped at a picnic table beside the canal and broke out the nice lunch Colette had prepared for us. Sandwiches, pears and assorted nuts.

We were both remarking on how very much we liked being out on bikes.

We went a bit further and then turned back for old town. That all went well except for two events.

The first event was that I had a minor bicycle collision with a woman coming around a blind curve on the wrong side.

Yowie! I jammed the brakes on and we didn't hit hard enough to be thrown off but it was close. She was pretty shook up so I didn't give her much grief. I just leaned forward (we were about 12" apart with our bike front ends mashed together) and I said nicely, "Lady, you are on the wrong side."

Then, as we got back into the harbor area near old town, the second event was that I made a wrong turn and had us headed out to Île Sainte-Hélène rather than into old town.

Colette was suspicious and got me to ask a passing cyclist and she was right!

The fellow I asked was great and he guided back to where I'd missed a turn. We got back with under ten minutes to spare before our two-hour deadline.

I rewarded the two of us for having survived all of this with a big ice cream cone after we'd turned the bikes in.

Then, a nice walk home and a bit of quiet time communing some more with my lovely taxes.

But, Colette saved me again and suggested that we go over to Luca e Francos for a Margarita Pizza and some wine for her and a beer for me. Brilliant. No need to suggest that twice!

It was a sweet day.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal – Day 45 – Sat, May 16 – Taxes!

U.S. Taxes are DONE!

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 46 – Sun, May 17 - Church, Victoria Day and The Atwater Market

We have made it a mission of ours to explore a lot of the major churches here in Montreal and Sunday was our day to attend Notre-Dame Basilica. It was Catholic, like St. Patrick's which we attended recently. But, unlike St. Patrick's, the service here was all in French. An extremely beautiful church. I thought St. Patrick's was one of the most beautiful I'd ever seen but Notre-Dame is even better.

I enjoy sitting in a church like this. It puts me in a meditative frame of mind and I begin to think about bigger issues than I might otherwise have engaged with. Poetry, history and the purpose of things all begin to weave. I'm always amazed that everyone (but me) always seems to know when to get up and when to sit down.

I looked to see if, perhaps, one of the hands on the many carved Saints might be moving telling everyone when to rise and when to sit. But, I could not spot it. It is even a mystery to me when the service is in English.

I am only nominally a Catholic (born and baptized into the faith but abandoned to wanton secularism thereafter) so maybe knowing when to stand and when to sit is a special skill that true dyed-in-the-wool Catholics learned in secret Catechism classes?

This service had a Choir element in it (which was partly why Colette zeroed in on it as our next church adventure) and organ music as well. One piece I especially liked was a piece by Mozart called "Ave Verum". I came home and listened to it again on my computer.

One unusual and notable part of the service was the presence of several soldiers dressed in costumes dating from the 1600's when Montreal (or New France as they called it then) was being founded. I wasn't sure what that was about (not speaking French) until got back outside.

We're in the midst of a three-day weekend here and Monday (today, as I am writing), it is Canadian Victoria Day.

Now, Victoria Day sounds like a very British sort of a thing to me. And we are here, after all, in the part of Canada that clearly derives from French influences. So I'm not too sure just how excited the local French-Canadians are about wooting it up over a British Queen.

But, as we came outside, I got a better (though still inadequate) sense of how all of this weaves together here in Montreal.

The large square in front of the church was prepared for a ceremony and the many folks outside, and those pouring forth from the church after the Mass, were being guided to move to the left and the right but not out into the middle of the square by Canadian soldiers dressed in fatigue uniforms.

We were going to head away for our next adventure but we decided to stay on for a bit to see what was up. There was a stage setup on the eastern side of the square and as we watched, a lot of 'notables' marched out of the church (both men and women well-dressed and looking important) and over to the stage area for special seating.

Then, a short time after that, several columns of troops began to march in from the street to the east between the church's front steps and the stage on the eastern side of the square. At least three types of military uniforms were present there as well as maybe a half-dozen men dressed in the 1600's uniforms, complete with swords, that I mentioned earlier as having been in church.

Thing got pretty scenic at that point and I began to walk around taking photos and enjoying the spectacle.

Speeches were made and the soldiers marched and presented arms and clunked them down and did it all on close-order drill - looking very serious.

At one point, taps was blown and salutes were made so I'm sure part of it had to do with acknowledging Canadian war-dead.

In the midst of all of this were the soldiers dressed in 1600's garb and I'm pretty sure (did I mention I'm clueless about the French language) that part of what was being acknowledged there had to do with the French settlement of Quebec and their struggles to maintain their identity against British attempts to co-op them into the British sphere of influence.

Given that Canada itself was part of the British Commonwealth and the English and French parts of Canada live uneasily together (witness the several attempts by Quebec to succeed from Canada), this must be delicate and nuanced stuff to weave together in a way to make everyone proud rather than annoyed.

Many photos were shot (some of which you'll find here). But, finally, over-pumped and ceremonied, we departed for the Place-des-Arms Metro station on our way out to explore the market at Atwater, which we'd seen while bicycling last weekend.

The Atwater Market sits just beside the Lachine Canal (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lachine_Canal) which we bicycled along last week.

Lots of vegetables, fruits, plants, flowers and food shops are to be found there. It was a beautiful day and many people were out enjoying it all.

A woman was playing guitar and singing Brazilian (think 'Girl from Ipanema') Style and all in all, it was quite cool. We wandered and looked until I found a place that would make in an on-demand Jambon et Fromage sandwich (ham and cheese in a baguette) and I also got a soft drink based on Maple Syrup which was quite good.

A bit more walking and then into the big central building looking about until we finally found a place with a fancy coffee making machine (and it was a place that wasn't run-over with people) and we got two coffees and sat and enjoyed them as the world whirled by.

Home again on the Metro and the day was mostly done. In the late afternoon, I walked over to Cafe Cherrier on St. Denis and had a Guinness beer and continued reading "Singularity Sky" by Charles Stross.

Interesting stuff and pretty far out on an edge hanging over an Abyss of quantum physics and Faster-Than-Light (FTL) consequences. But, to redeem it, it has a nice love story in the middle of all that gee-whiz stuff and the characters rub their skin together and things are warm and cosy.

The evening meal and some more reading and sitting about and then Colette was in the mood for a walk and so we went out into the late twilight and took a long one.

North up St, Hubert to Rue Duluth, then east to St, Laurant and then south along it until we came to the end of Prince Arthur where we headed east again.

Prince Arthur is a walking street with many funky restaurants along it and very cool. Montreal is really such a nice, human oriented city. With the massive winter over, people just come out and play.

Once again, Colette and I talked and noted that it is a safe feeling city. We can pass groups of six or eight young men and I don't bristle. I just feel relaxed.

I used to think that when I felt like that, I was just experiencing a bit of paranoia. I don't think so anymore. I think I was reacting to the real potential for problems whereas here, I just virtually never have that feeling.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 49 - May 20, Wednesday - Cousteau and a Meetup

Last night we attended a meetup gathering down at the Montreal Science Center. The same fellow, Masood, that hosted the Philosophy meetup group I attended back a week or so hosted this one as well.

Attending were six of us.

The movie was 3D and that was fun. I don't think I've ever watched a full movie in 3D with quality glasses. As with all nature photograph in recent years, the colors, details and closeup were just stunning. The movie was Secrets of the Ocean in 3D by Jean-Michel Cousteau.

Afterwards, we all walked over a block or two to Les Trois Brasseurs in old town (Colette and I have been there twice before on our own. Close readers of these digressions will recall that Mussels were in the air on previous visits).

It was noisy and hard to hear but we still had a good time. I already liked Masood from my previous meeting with him. And the three ladies all turned out to be friendly and interesting people as well. Eva is an artist from Hungary, Donna is an importer who was originally from Kamloops in British Columbia and Ada came to Montreal from Romania 15 years ago.

So, what an international gathering. A Hungarian (Eva), a Romanian (Ada), a Canadian, an Iranian (Masood), a New Zealander (Colette) and an American (Dat's me :-)).

Conversation flowed in many directions. Just skimming it all we touched on Maori and other indigenous peoples, art vs. intellectuals, and religion vs. atheism. Beers were had and nachos were shared (thanks, Masood!).

I was so dazzled by events that I never shot a photo all evening and didn't realize it until Colette and I had returned home and were discussing the evening.

So, having nothing better to offer and knowing that each post should be accompanied by a photo, I can only offer you this pig on a wall as a consolation prize. Sorry.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 50 – Thu, May 21 - Montreal New Zealand Exchange MeetUp Group

Colette and I started a MeetUp group of our own (cost was \$15) and we called it "The Montreal New Zealand Exchange".

I described it as, "No set agenda. Just a simple gathering to share information, ask questions and to satisfy our mutual curiosity about each other's cultures and countries."

Our first meeting was last night down at Resto Végo St-Denis which is just a few blocks from here. We let the group 'percolate' for about week and 17 people joined. Then, before the day, eight RSVP'd saying they'd come. And on the day, two actually came.

That's not so unusual, I think, as I observed much the same with another philosophy group I've attended. I think people like to have a lot of interesting options lined up and then, on the day, they go for the one that appeals the most to them at that moment.

So, we had two people attend and that was a good number for good conversation. We began in the meeting room downstairs but soon migrated up to the terrace out front on St. Denis.

One of the folks was a fellow from Barcelona who is living currently in Montreal with his girlfriend. They are thinking of coming to New Zealand next year. The other was a Canadian lady who has lived in Montreal for many years and who was also curious about New Zealand.

Guillem, (the fellow from Barcelona) bought a Lonely Planet Guide to New Zealand which had a nice map and we spent a lot of time poring over it and answering questions. We also used the time to quiz both of them about their lives and experiences. It's a great way to meet people and learn about their lives and how different all of our experiences are.

It was a great evening. Many thanks to Guillem and Karen for joining us.

We've decided we'll schedule another meeting of the 'Montreal New Zealand Exchange' before we go so that folks who missed this time might be able to attend the next.

After we parted from our guests, Colette and I walked up St. Denis and went into Café Cherrier and had a glass of wine and chatted about these last two evening - which have been full of socializing here in Montreal. It was quiet here in Montreal for us for awhile but we seem to have hit upon a rich streak just now. All great fun.

A picture? No, once again I didn't think to take any pictures. I think the problem is that when my mouth gets running, the other things like memory shut down (smile).

But, don't despair, I can always come up with an emergency photo if needed. How about one of me in September of 1971? I was solo hiking in Yosemite. Yow - what a blast from the past.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 51 – Fri, May 22 - Westmont and Carbonara

After months of anticipation and careful planning, our 51st day in Montreal finally arrived and it was spectacular!

We woke up and looked out the window, all excited, and the sun had come up, as we'd hoped, and busses were driving by, people were going to work on both bicycles and on foot. It was exactly as we'd always imagined the 51st day would be.

And then ... we decided to tone our excitement down a bit and not get too overwrought (I've been hoping for a long time to find a place to use that word) and to see if we could just make it a fairly normal day and go some place on a bus and look at some normal things. It's just no good to go out on the street with your manic party hat on when no one else knows it's party day.

"Bus 24", someone said. "Bus 24!"

So, we got out the maps and looked to see where Bus 24 might go.

And there it was, literally and figuratively (I'm not even sure what that means), passing right by our place and running up and down Rue Sherbrooke like a manic dog with two masters.

Whoop. Game's on now. Clothes on? Check! Bus ticket in hand? Check! Maps in pocket? Check! We are away!

Bus 24 promised to take us to the west into the more English part of the island. And, Colette had noted that if we took it as far as Metro Station Villa-Maria and got off, that we could walk, comfortably, over to a big church called, "Oratoire Saint-Joseph".

My sweetie likes to visit churches (I do as well). And this was another one to add to our "Been-There-Done-That" list.

I'm always reminded of the old WWII movies where the heroic pilot's climbing into the cockpit and the camera pans for a moment over all the bomb or plane symbols engraved just by his name. Each symbol indicating a target bombed or an enemy plane shot down. Lt. Meehan +++++++.

I think Colette and I should have coats like the motorcycle guys do except with church symbols arrayed on them so we'd get 'respect' where ever we go. We'll call ourselves 'The Church Angels' and make secret genuflection signs at each other.

So, with such dreams in our heads, and attempting to show nothing on our faces, we boarded the 24 striving to look as normal as we could.

It was a good ride, as usual. It took us west on Sherbrooke past where we been before.

But, as often befalls people who think they are in control of their lives and destinies, everything was about to change for us.

Colette looked out the window....

And she noted that the neighborhoods we were passing through had changed and we were in a long stretch of interesting shops that looked, she said, as if we were in London somewhere.

Somewhere, a cord was pulled, a connection closed and a small light came on - signaling a change in our mission.

Mere mortals, no longer on a mission for God, we descended into the neighborhood of Westmont-on-Sherbrooke. And, as the bus departed, we looked at what we had done and we declared it was good. There were shops, there were shoes in the shops and there was a Starbucks. We had come to the promised land. It was a nice neighborhood and felt quite different to the areas in the Latin Quarter where we normally find ourselves.

We walked up and down and had a Starbucks and I sat on a few park benches (quite happily, I might say) while Colette investigated a few shops. It was a pretty day and I love to just sit and watch the world go by. We found a shoe shop called, "Machino", that has a nice pair of shoes Colette has been admiring since she first saw them about a week ago. But, I've gotten to know the drill now.

She sees the shop and looks surprised. She goes to the window, she sees the pair of shoes (all the Machino shops seem to have this particular pair in the window), she considers them (and experiences a bit of shoe lust, I think) and then she says, "no". and we move on.

But then, as today, we encounter another Machino shoe shop and the same "side-walk-shoe-mating-dance" ensues.

"Oh look, it is a Machino shop (with wonder in her voice). Oh look, they have that pair of shoes I like." (time passes here as she studies them and does some serious calculations far too difficult for a mere mortal man to follow), and then she says, "OK" (stoically) and is ready to move on.

I say, "Are you thinking of buying them?" And she says, "Oh no, not really."

And then time passes until the next Machino shop comes into view and the shoe-mating-dance begins again (smile).

Today, in Westmont-on-Sherbrooke, it was no different.

It is a very good thing when you love someone and find them wonderfully entertaining as well (smile)(and I do both).

Finally, our adventure in Westmont-on-Sherbrooke over, we took the 24 back to the east to our neighborhood and arrived home.

In the evening, we treated ourselves to a nice dinner out and went over to "Luca e Franco" on St. Denis and each had a nice Fettuccine Carbonara. The end to a very nice day.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 52 – Sat, May 23 - Marché Jean-Talon

We took a long walk north on Saturday out to the Marché Jean-Talon, which is an outside weekend market much like the one we went to a week ago at Atwater.

It was about a 4 km walk and we stayed mostly to streets we were unfamiliar with.

The market was great. As at Atwater, I found a nice sandwich place and we sat outside and watched people go by. Then we went for a long slow walk through the market and when we had seen it all, we sat in the local Starbucks and sipped some coffees.

Sweet day.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 53 – Sun, May 24 - Free Museum Day

May 24th is the Sunday when Montreal opens many of their museums and lets the public in for free. We went to this exhibit

<http://montrealgazette.com/.../visual-arts-marvels-and...>

at the fine arts museum.

It was an interesting program. Lots of great paintings that were the actual hot items at the time the Orientalist phase was sweeping Europe.

I have to confess, I was only marginally aware of this event in art history.

But Europeans were quite enamored of oriental things at that time (Oriental, in this context, is mostly referring to the Arabic world with all of its Moorish architecture, plush courts and harems).

The pictures were fascinating and it wasn't hard to see how Europeans might have idealized the Orient when seen through this lens.

But, those languorous harem scenes were sexual slavery painted up to be pretty and all of the people standing around in plush courts with their fine cloths and swords were all served by a population, unseen, who were brutalized. It was all a very sanitized view of a hot, dusty and very brutal world.

It was interesting, in any case. Afterwards, we walked out on Crescent Street and found a sidewalk cafe and had a plate of nachos, admired the neighborhood (it is called Montreal's golden mile) and talked about the show.

Then home again until early twilight when we cut up a bit of bread and went over the the park on St. Denis to enjoy the light breeze, the 24C weather and to feed the squirrels.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 54 - May 25, Monday - with the Actors

A friend, Donna, whom we met at the Jean-Michel Cousteau film we saw last week, invited us to a theater going class that she leads.

The members of this group are all interested in the Theater and this weeks meeting was to have two stage actors come and talk to the group and it sounded like good fun so we went.

We arrived and there were perhaps 15 people sitting in a half circle with Donna at one end. A few introductions were made and then the first guest / actor came and we began. Donna told about the various things he's been involved with over the years and the group asked him questions. We talked about writing and his opinions of various people and plays.

I found it all quite intriguing and I know Colette did as well. it was a deep look into a world that I am utterly unfamiliar with.

The first speaker, Tony, who was an actor and a playwright, was quite dynamic, outgoing and gregarious. I asked him if he wrote without letting his internal censor look at what he was writing and he agreed that this was, indeed, the way or you'd never get done with the page you were on. He also said that after writing something, you then need to drop it and not look at it for a while so you can really see it with fresh eyes.

The second actor was Howard and he was quite different and equally interesting. His delivery was quite laconic and a bit self-effacing but it was easy to see that there was a confident consciousness behind that veneer. He talked in more detail about what was right and wrong about the play he's just finished doing.

At one point, he said that he'd had a hard time getting into 'emotional' contact with one of the long monologues he'd done.

I asked him if that meant that the emotion the writer was trying to portray in the monologue was somehow not true to life and therefore hard to establish emotional rapport with.

But, I'd misunderstood what he meant by getting into 'emotional' contact with the monologue.

He described a wall of drywall (gib-board to Kiwis) that was poorly done. The sections were badly joined and it took a lot of post-hanging work to make it all look smooth and flat.

To him, the monologue was rough like this drywall wall and it took a long time before he was able to deliver it smoothly moving from part to part without feeling and stumbling over the gaps in it that the writer had not smoothed away.

He also described how a play like this (one he granted was popular but rough from some of the actor's viewpoints) evolves over the time it is being delivered. The actors add their own small modifications or devices to help the flow and to make it more and more seamless as the weeks of presentation pass.

Well, to say it was interesting for Colette and I would be an understatement. This is precisely the sort of thing we like.

We chatted with a few of the folks there afterwards (all friendly folks) and thanked Donna for having invited us to sit in.

Then we took off eastwards back towards McGill University for visit to the HSBC bank and then onto St. Denis for a visit to the Vego Restaurant to setup a reservation of our own for our next meeting of the Montreal New Zealand Exchange which we've now scheduled for June 9th.

A bit of Starbucks coffee and then home for a quiet afternoon as the rain is picking up steadily.

A happens sometimes, I took no pictures today. Yes, I know, I know. Lame, lame, lame.

But, I found one for you. 1999 in the Juan Fernandez Islands off the coast of Chile. Our guide is showing us where the third island in the group of three lies from the ridge top we're on.

These islands are where a seaman named Alexander Selkirk was marooned in 1704 for four years, four months and four days. His story, when he finally got back to England, was the basis for Daniel Defoe's book, "Robinson Crusoe".

This is the very ridge where Selkirk climbed, daily, to look for ships.

What was I doing there? Ah, there's a story for another day.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 57 - May 28, Thursday - away to NYC

Be back on June 2nd. May or may not make posts along the way because we're traveling light.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

New York – Day 58 – Fri, May 29

After a nap and some laid-back time, we took the subway into Times Square to see NYC's tourist heart, in its glory - it did not disappoint. The crowds and the hawkers and the almost bare-naked ladies were full-on. The buildings were ablaze with ads many stories high and China and Turkey were paying big bucks to impress the Times Square crowds with how wonderful they were.

Two story high tourist buses were constantly rolling by and if you stopped for a moment, someone would try selling you a ride on one. I'm not sure if the almost bare naked ladies were selling rides on the bus, though.

We were going to wait until 8:19 pm, which is sunset in NYC at this time of year, and see the sunset which, on this specific day, sets so it shines exactly down Manhattan's east/west streets.

But we got a bit chilled and decided to hop it back to Brooklyn and find an inside beer and call it a night. And, that's what we did.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

New York – Day 59 – Sat, May 30

We've been exploring Brooklyn. My birth certificate says my parents lived at 52? Poplar when I was born in August of 1947. Public School Number 8 sits about where I think they lived but their place was probably just on either side. Quite strange walking these streets and thinking my mom carried or took me around through all of this area in a stroller back then. I've known I was born in Brooklyn all my life but being here is a trip!

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

New York – Day 60 – Sun, May 31

A great tour of several parks in Manhattan including Central Park. Lots of walking and gawking and sitting on park benches in the shade (it's hot in NYC) and then a nice sushi meal back in Brooklyn and a good chat with our AirBnB hostess, Donna.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

New York – Day 61 – Mon, June 1st

Colette and I went to the Washington Square and Greenwich Village area today. The Square was hosting a science festival by NYU for kids which was very cool. We began walking after that and eventually walked all the way down to Wall Street and then The Staten Island Ferry - which we took over and back so we could see the island and the Statue of Liberty. Home to Brooklyn after that for a nap and now it's pouring. Been hot and humid all day long.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

New York - Day 62 – Tue, June 2 – Last Day

Last day in NYC. We're on a train for 10 hours back to Montreal tomorrow.

Today, we took the subway down to Coney Island for a look around. Interesting. All the rides quiet at 10 am on a windy, rainy gray Monday morning. Amazingly, the lifeguard stations were all manned by lifeguards looking at an empty cold sea. Maybe, its a union job and their contract specifies they be there rain or shine? We walked and looked and were glad we went.

Out and back, we rode on the elevated subway lines over some of the grittier parts of Brooklyn. It looks hard, poor and industrial in much of it.

Back in the city, we got off the D line at 32nd to see The Mall of Manhattan. Not very impressed and none of the four levels had so much as a bench to sit at unless you were in a restaurant. The message was clear - shop or get out.

We grabbed a sandwich across the street and then walked north on 5th avenue headed for 42 street and Grand Central Station.

Yum, was that an impressive place! Huge food courts in the lower levels and the enormous hall just as I've seen it filmed so many times.

Apple has appropriated the upper floors of the entire east end of the Station. Hard to even imagine what that must cost but then look at the demographics of the buying public that walks through.

We decided to wrap things up in Manhattan and go back to Brooklyn about 3pm. Bim, boom, bam - we know the subway pretty well now.

Colette and I were talking, now that we're on the brink of departure tomorrow, about what had impressed us most about our NYC visit.

For me it was no contest. I've been amazed and impressed at how cleaned up Brooklyn Heights and Manhattan are.

Perhaps too many books and movies have tainted me but I expected NYC to be a harder, grittier and heavily graffiti covered place.

Well, it ain't so. It was 20 years ago but there have been big changes. Speaking specifically about Brooklyn Heights, when the property values began to rise because of its easy proximity with the city, the citizens jointly realized that they had a lot to protect and they banded together with the police to make common cause against graffiti and crime.

The Heights is a more affluent place now, an affluence that seems widely shared among both blacks and whites.

I was so amazed by all of this that I've talked to both police and common citizens about it several times.

The police say they've got cameras and presence and good support from the public. And when someone does get out of line with tagging or other crime, they come down on them like a load of bricks.

All in all, I find all of that quite amazing. I've been to a number of financially vibrant cities and they are still covered with graffiti. I don't know what they are and are not doing about it but I'm certain they could learn from what's gone on here in NYC and Brooklyn Heights.

What ever it is, it extends to inter-racial tension as well. Brooklyn Heights must be at least half black or more. And. As we've walked these streets for days, I've not gotten that prickle on my scalp that says 'tension' when I've found myself in close proximity with black folks. Instead, I feel relaxed and harmonious. People here, by and large, are happy with their lives and their neighborhood.

A big thumbs up to all of that!

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 63 – Wed, June 3 – New York Write Up

Just dead dogs here ... nothing to see move along, move along.

We are back -----

Well, we got home last night about 8 PM after an 11 hour train ride from NYC back to Montreal. A good train ride as I sat and read a book most of the way (5th book in the Expanse Space Opera series by James S. A. Corey).

It was nice to be 'home'. Now, that's a rather weird statement, when I think about it. I'm an American citizen returning to Canada from NYC and I'm saying it is 'nice to be home'. But, that's how it feels to me (Smile). We've been comfortably settled in here in Montreal for two months and we've just taken a whirlwind tour of NYC for four days and five nights. So, weird as it may seem, this does feel like home in Montreal now that we're back.

NYC? Well ... that's all we've been discussing now that we're home. We are doing a back-and-forth debriefing of each others impressions about all we've seen and experienced there.

We're having a quiet 'dead-dogs' day, as I describe it. Chatting, coffee, laundry and enjoying being back in Montreal's slower pace.

NYC is intense. It began the moment we arrived into the pandemonium of Penn Station after the train was nearly two hours late because of fussing at the U.S. border.

Arrival -----

Low ceilings, tunnels running off in all directions, thousands of people sweeping by in all directions looking intense and knowing where they were going, a musician playing electric guitar at high volume in the midst of all of this, Amtrak, the Long Island Rail Road and the New York Subway system all sharing space in the complex environment and all of it new to us. We needed to buy subway tickets, we needed to locate the #2 subway and get on it going towards Brooklyn (and not the other way), we needed something to eat, ... it was a lot to absorb after 12 hours on a train.

But, I was proud of us. We noodled it all out on the spot and got some food, bought our unlimited subway tickets (good for a week) and found the right subway train and got on it. Then we had to know what station we were getting off at and how to see where we were along the way. And all that happened as well.

Once off the subway at Borough Hall in Brooklyn Heights, we popped up the stairs to see NYC above ground for the first time since we arrived. Everything up until now had been underground including the subway's crossing of the East River in a tunnel under it.

When you pop up from the subway, there are usually several exits and the locals know which ones go where. We knew bupkis and just went up to see what we could see. Not too bad though as we immediately found Court Street and began tracking the numbers to see if they were ascending upwards towards 111 which was the address we were looking for.

We found it and pressed the buzzer for the apartment and were buzzed in and then climbed up to the fourth floor to meet our hosts (it's an older building without elevators from 1890 or so).

Very nice folks! Donna (our hostess), Joaquim, Allison and a cat named Miguel.

It was a rustic older apartment that's probably been re-purposed many times in the years it has been standing there in Brooklyn. I'm sure it was 50 years old, if a day, when I was born in Brooklyn in 1947. Makes you wonder what stories the walls could tell.

NYC -----

I've previously posted on each of the days we were in NYC detailing some of what we did and where we went. So, this part won't be about that. Here's where I'm going to mostly talk about our overall impressions of the city.

We spent our first day in the Brooklyn Heights area. It was the first of three hot days. We walked down Atlantic towards the East River and then looked across to Manhattan and the Statue of Liberty in the far distance.

It's an dense area but then everything we saw in the city, proper, was dense. Some of the buildings, like the Livingston, are skyscrapers in their own right (<http://tinyurl.com/pu9h9kg>). Dense, old and re-purposed many times over is what most of it feels like. But also vibrant and affluent describes it also - even if that sounds contradictory.

From the water, we walked north. There are several piers here along this side of Brooklyn which formerly were industrial. One of two of them are fully converted now as parks and sports venues while others look like their conversions are works in process.

After walking a while, we came to the Brooklyn Bridge and the area where my parents listed their address when I was born. We'd looked at it earlier from New Zealand using Google Earth. Poplar Street is short; three, maybe three and a half, blocks long. I couldn't recall the exact house number (and I'd lamely not recorded it from my birth certificate before we'd come) but we remembered the building that Google Earth had indicated as the place.

Turns out it is Public School Number 8. And it was built in about 1910. So, it is unlikely that my parents lived exactly there. We suspect they were in one of the old houses on either side of the school. But still, I went inside to see how old the school was - to see if it might have been built after I'd been born.

That was the occasion for some laughter. "Hi, my birth certificate says my parents were living here when I was born in 1947." They didn't think so and I think it qualified as one of the odder questions and requests for information that they'd received in some time. But, they humored me and asked a few questions of me and of each other before it was deemed deeply improbable.

Brooklyn Heights is old with a lot of gritty history and now it's deep into a property boom and gentrification cycle because of the proximity of Manhattan. But, it hasn't, apparently, been the case that the property developers moved in and bought everyone out, cleared the land and build shine new condos.

Nope, people have been here for a long time hanging onto what they've got. Their roots go back a long ways and this is their place. One fellow, Jeff, we met at "Hot Bagels" on Montague told me he bought a little one bedroom here 25 years ago (his parents live in the area too) and it's price doubled. Then he sold up for a two bedroom and it's value has tripled since he bought it. He says he told his wife to do whatever she wants to fix it up because they are not leaving.

Our AirBnB hostess, Donna, told us she came 20 years ago now from central Connecticut and rented the place we were in. She's stayed all this time because she could never ever get a place of equivalent size now for the price. I asked why her landlord doesn't sell up and let some property developer turn it all into high-priced condos. She said he's local and he doesn't want to and he's stubborn and a former Brooklyn City Councillor.

So, she'll probably have a good deal until he passes on and then things will change.

The neighborhood seems like it is at least 50% black and I see a lot of black folks who are looking affluent to me. Their clothes, their confidence and their general attitudes tell me that they are doing well and that this is their neighborhood and world. But there's nothing hard-edged in any of that. People get along, smile, are polite and courteous to each other and it feels good.

There are beggars but there don't seem to be gangs. There are lots of young men around, sometimes walking in groups, but there's no tension or 'edge' to them. There are asians, whites, latin@s, east Indians and blacks all sharing space and it works. The buildings are old, the sidewalks gritty, the infrastructure's tired and yet there's a good feeling to it all.

Graffiti -----

It took me awhile to wake up to the fact that I was not seeing graffiti everywhere. Once I did, I began to notice it was virtually absent throughout Brooklyn Heights (and all of the parts of Manhattan that we saw as well). That was such a difference to other cities around the world that I've been in that it really caught my attention.

I quizzed several people (citizens and cops; both) about this. The long and the short was that 20 years ago, it was a bad problem. Then the property values began to rise and people began to realize they had something good and they wanted to protect it.

The police told me they've got a lot of cameras, they have a lot of presence, they have a lot of public support and they know the neighborhood well. If someone comes into the area from outside, and tags, the police know how they are likely to get in and out and they nail them. They come down on them like a load of bricks.

That sounds good but many of us will never have seen it in actual practice. We think we live in affluent and safe cities and yet most of the places we live are just covered in graffiti. Brooklyn knows something we don't.

Subways -----

NYC subways are intense and complicated relative to other systems I've seen. But, having said that, they are not so difficult to get the hang of. They were built at different times though so the conventions on one line may be different than on another line. Things like: how do you know what the next station is and is there a map of the stations along your route.

The lines are named by their end points. Thus one of the lines that goes from Manhattan to Brooklyn will be referred to as "Flatbush" as that is its terminal station. Lines are also called out as going "Uptown" or "Downtown" so you need to have some awareness of where you are within the greater scheme of the city itself.

The facilities are old and overworked. Functional for sure - but tired. The spaces between the tracks on one side and the tracks on the other are narrow and generally huge steel beams supporting the roof are in the middle of them. There's a yellow stripe maybe 16 inches wide warning you of the edge and maybe another 16 inches between the yellow stripes and the central steel supports. So, you can't just wander around fat, dumb and happy because it could be terminal.

The trains (all that I saw) run on steel wheels rather than on the rubber tires many systems use. So, sounds are harsh and the squealing of steel on steel is frequent.

We read that taking the subway at 3 or 4 AM can be a risky business so you'll want to get in a car with other people already in it and preferably a car near the front where the driver is. But, we never rode late at night and I never felt unsafe nor threatened or offended by anyone's behavior.

Small side-story. We bought unlimited tickets for \$31 each when we first arrived and the day we left, they still had another day or two on them. As we took the subway from Brooklyn Heights to Penn Station where we'd catch the Amtrak to Montreal, I saw a fellow who very considerately pointed out to Colette, who was about to sit beside him, that there was some spilled liquid on the seat. I watched as several other people got on at later stops and he did the same thing. So, as I got up, not needing my ticket any longer, I gave it to him. He was pretty surprised but he took it in good stride.

Manhattan -----

Is just big and nearly overwhelming. As Colette said, you come to see all the things you've just seen pictures of. But, now you are there and you are down on the street and all these things are towering impossibly high above you.

And, if you are anywhere near a tourist magnet like The Empire State building, you will be descended on by pushy hawkers trying to sell you tours and options of one kind and another. And every five feet or so, there's another one ahead of you, sizing you up and moving in with their spiel. Rude, pushy and damned annoying. Some parts were better like Times Square and Duffy Square and the parks (of which the city has many). There you can see horizontally and get some sense of things.

We walked a lot in Manhattan. Three of our four days, we spent substantial time there. And did I mention it was hot; all but the last day?

Rich neighborhoods (5th Avenue, 42nd Street), poorer areas (Greenwich Village) and powerful areas (Wall Street and the NY Stock Exchange).

Central Park was great. There were hawkers trying to sell you things as you entered and left but, once inside, it was sweet and gigantic. We walked and walked and never made it more than a 1/3 of the way up from the south end where entered.

Cabs, horns, buses (including two-story tourist rigs), delivery trucks and normal cars passing every moment in a great cacophony. I couldn't imagine why anyone would drive there unless they had to.

And the pedestrians were always pushing the envelope. 'Is the light about to change?', 'is anyone coming?', 'if I go now, can I make it?' It's a zoo.

Expense -----

New York is expensive to live in. When we were shopping for AirBnB places to stay in, we were amazed by the prices. Being out in Brooklyn Heights was a lot cheaper than being in Manhattan - and it wasn't cheap in Brooklyn Heights (<http://tinyurl.com/qhr9oym>).

But people want to be there and that fascinated us. We wanted to know what was the draw?

Part of it, I think, is the same thing that draws kids from small and mid-sized towns all across America to migrate to Los Angeles/Hollywood or New York City as soon as they are able. They want to dump the mundane and go where the action is.

And the popular media sure supports all of this. "New York - The Big Apple", "If you can make it here, you can make it anywhere", Broadway, Fifth Avenue, Sex in the City, Seinfeld and on and on.

And then, once they are there, they have to scramble to get a place and hang onto it. The buzz, the hustle, the grit, the attitude and the promise. It's the big time. Get a studio flat and share it if you have to to make ends meet. Just outside the door, it is all happening.

We walked in Washington Square and I recalled the words from Joan Baez's album, "Diamonds and Rust" which imprinted themselves deep into my brain during an acid trip in 1979:

Now I see you standing
With brown leaves falling around

And snow in your hair
Now you're smiling out the window
Of that crummy hotel
Over Washington Square
Our breath comes out white clouds
Mingles and hangs in the air
Speaking strictly for me
We both could have died then and there

I looked for that hotel.

We also looked at the Dakota where John Lennon was killed coming out the door. And we saw a memorial to him just inside Central Park near the Dakota where people are still placing flowers and singing his songs.

New York has a huge draw as one of the places to be on the planet. A 'power spot', if you will.
We talked about it and wondered if we felt like that and if not, why not.

I said that having something very valuable ties you to that thing. An object, a person, an apartment. The longer you hold it, the more you think you could lose - if you lose it. So, you stay ... and stay.

But, the world is huge and at every turn, there are wonderful places and people. I've seen Wellington, Melbourne, Vancouver, Eugene, Seattle, Santa Barbara and a dozen others that I know are sweet.

Colette talked about Sex in the City and the fantasy it builds of how life was for those four ladies. But, she said, once you are in the city and see the prices, you know that it is a fantasy.

When we returned to Montreal last night, we went to the Bonaventure Station to catch the subway back to our apartment. The station was huge and open and airy and had very few people in it. Compared to the density and bustle of New York's subways, the stations here always looks empty and excessively clean and orderly.

Walking this morning by a bus stop, the people waiting for the bus looked at us. Nothing special - no particular attitude or anything - just simple open curiosity.

That doesn't seem so amazing but I think people in New York are just glutted on other people and they don't look much. They control eye contact and they stay focused on what they are doing. Too many distractions and too much going on to be staring idly about like a country yokel, is my guess.

That's not to say that when you engage them and ask a question, they are not right there and ready to help - because New York folks are. But I think they've just got too much of everything to do with people and they spend a lot of the time going from A to B and ignoring the people around them.

That's now how I feel it here in Montreal. Here, people walk and their personal space is not drawn tightly around them but rather is expanded and open and curious to a significantly higher degree.

Summary -----

Well, we are both deeply happy that we went. And we love the people we met and shared space with. Donna, Joaquin and Allison shared their thoughts and experiences with us and made our visit that much richer. And we met others as well in the community who told us their stories and were interested in ours.

I got to walk the street where my parents lived when I was born and to reflect that my mother probably took me here and took me there. I got to look at the buildings and Brooklyn Heights gathered around me and to imagine my baby self looking up from a stroller at all these things so long ago. I got to feel that this is and was 'my place' in a very real sense. I got to go back and see it, in this life, under ideal circumstances so that I could stop and dwell on it and touch the bricks and feel the energy.

Thank you, New York.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 63, 64 & 65 – Wed, Thu, Fri, June 3, 4, 5

After we returned from NYC and I wrote up a massive summary report on that wonderful adventure, we fell into 'dead-dog' mode here and just rested up from all the vacationing we've been doing.

Now, a week or so later, looking back, we cannot even reconstruct what we did there for a few days. I have to believe we managed to imbibe food and coffee during that time as, without those two essentials, there's nothing passive about us at all.

A look at our photo records has revealed a few clues.

On **June 3rd** - Wednesday

there's a photo of Colette sitting outside at Luca et Franco on St. Denis and I'm getting a nice memory of a plate of Linguini Carbonara there and I'm sure there was a glass of wine and a Belle Gueule beer involved as well as a chat with our wonderful waiter, Michael.

On **June 4th** – Thursday

I think there was a long walk up to Mont-Royal followed by a return down St Denis. I have a few pictures of shops along the way and, if I recall correctly, Colette had seen some clothing shops she wanted to return to and we were making a small photographic record of where they were.

Then, later in the day, we have some pictures of squirrels in the local park. We'd gone over with a bit of bread to feed them. There's quite a few of the squirrels and one photo of me smiling. Perhaps, I saw a squirrel do something particularly amazing? Or maybe I was going to get a bit of bread of my own? We'll never know. All lost in the sands of time.

On **June 5th** – Friday

I'm struggling here to pull it all together. I think I recall going to do a workout and Colette wandered off up St. Denis to pursue some shopping. Then I think I remember that it poured and she came in with her purchases (which were nice ones!) and looking quite wet. I recall using the phrase "wet rat" and I think I recall that I felt less popular for a while after that (smile).

No photos exist to document this day save two I shot that evening after dark looking out the windows here over the city scape.

But, take heart intrepid readers. But the time we get to the 6th of June, I actually know some of the stuff we did and I won't have to make it up anymore!

I've heard of people being beamed up by the aliens and then being returned to Earth with no idea of what happened for a few days.

Colette and I would like to say that we completely reject this possibility.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 66 – Sat, June 6th - Airports and Grand Prix's

So, Colette had noted, on the tickets we bought to take us to Vancouver and back, that her name was incorrectly entered. They had her as Colette Anne rather than as Colette Anne Meehan.

The airport's website said they check ID when you board the plane so we could imagine that she might get bounced if her ticket said one thing and her ID said another. Ah, more big fun with corporations.

Thus, a trip to the airport was in order to get this sorted out. Our normal Metro passes do not include the 747 bus which is specific for the airport so we had to each buy a one-day unlimited ticket for \$10. Not a problem! We rubbed our hands together with glee. "We're going to run the wheels off this metro system today zooming everywhere on one one-day 'unlimited' ticket". Yup, that's the kind of people we are <smile>.

So, out to the airport and we had a chat with a nice lady who sorted it all out for us.

After that, which went well, we wanted to go out to the Outremont area for a look around. We'd heard that it is an interesting neighborhood with a lot of shops and Hasidic Jews about and it sounded interesting.

Well, we could have taken the 747 back into the Montreal downtown area and jumped off near an Metro station and then transferred up to the Outremont area. But no we got fancy (not).

We got the 204 bus from the airport and took it a short distance to the Dorval Bus Station where we could transfer onto the 202 bus which would take us east to its terminus just by the Du College metro station (which would be a new one for us). And from there we could do on the Metro to the Outremont Metro Station.

But, we had not counted on the Dorval Bus Station being quite so confused and badly timed when we got there.

We discovered that it was over an hour until the next 202 passed through Dorval.

So, we opted to change plans again and now we grabbed the 425 bus which would take us downtown to the Lionel-Groix Metro Station. Recall, our main goal here was to simply get from the airport to any Metro station so we could transfer our way to Outremont. Basically, this is the same thing that would have happened if we'd taken the 747 back in the first place.

But also recall that we are out to "thrash" these little bus tickets down to pulp because they are unlimited "all-day" tickets.

So, still smiling as if we had some idea of what we were doing, we took the erstwhile 425 down to the Lionel-Groix Metro Station. And from there we went back back the way we'd come from to the Snowdon Station. And then a transfer to the Blue line (we were on the orange line - come on, try to keep up now!) which would take us to Outremont.

Whew.... And, after awhile we did, indeed, actually find ourselves in Outremont.

Colette had a plan (she usually does) for where to walk from there and so we took off looking, walking and gawking (that's our usual MO).

There are some Hasidic Jewish folk about in this neighborhood and we pretended not to stare at them too much as we stared.

Some of these folks wear round fur hats (not sure if they wear them all the time or if it is just a Saturday thing). The men wear long black coats like the old preacher gunfighters used to do in the Spaghetti Westerns (you can tell where I get most of my historical and cultural information now, eh?).

More seriously, though. As I'm writing, I just stopped and read an extended piece in the Wikipedia on Hasidic Jews and it was quite interesting.

It is here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasidic_Judaism

At some point, we stopped and had lunch and sat outside and watched people walk by. Outremont is an affluent area of Montreal. We speculated on what our three months in Montreal might have been like if we'd settled here rather than in the Latin Quarter. But, as you cannot put your foot into the same river twice, that was a fun but pointless speculation.

Another area near, or in, Outremont is called "Mile End" and we walked and had a look at that as well. And we found a very nice park just in the midst of this area that was quite nice as well.

We went home for a rest after that and spent a few hours here laying about.

As it got to be 4 PM or so, Colette suggested that we go out for a beer and a wine since the weather was so nice. And we decided to go back over to the Crescent Street area where we'd been once before. The idea was to find a nice sidewalk cafe there and sit back and watch the world go by some more.

Well, we caught the 24 bus just around the corner and headed towards the Crescent Street area.

But soon, the bus was moving quite slowly - much to our consternation. And it was really packed with people too - which was also a puzzle.

Finally, not too much past McGill University, we decided to get off and walk as it would be faster. And soon we realized the problem!

It was Grand Prix weekend in Montreal and we were getting near the thick of it. Yow!

Curious, we walked on. Crescent Street was walled off into a walking street and it was JAMMED. Zillions of people. Booths on either side, police, firemen, racing products, rock and roll bands, slinky ladies, race cars, ... it was a dense, heaving crowd and happening place. Noisy too!

We walked much of the length of it and I shot a lot of photos but, in the end, it was simply too much to bear so we turned off on a side street and headed back up to Sherbrooke and the 24 bus route.

We'd started off the afternoon looking for a beer and a glass of wine and, finally, back on Sherbrooke, we found a nice upscale hotel lobby that looked promising. Their prices were a tad high but it was calm, organized and peaceful inside so we took refuge and sat and enjoyed our wine and beer for 40 minutes or so and just chatted before we went home.

Before the day was over, we'd each put more than 10 rides on our all-day bus tickets and we still had one more to look forward to the next morning (it's a full 24 hour time cycle).

Whoop! We trashed them lil' puppies.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 63 - June 7th, Sunday - A gathering at Eva's

In the morning, we jumped on our all-day bus tickets once more just to squash them totally flat. Hoo-yah!

We took a ride on our tickets for the last time up to Mont-Royal and St. Viateur's Bagels where we had a nice breakfast bagel. Yum. On the way back, we walked through Parc La Fontaine and I took a nice panorama shot of Colette near the lake.

It was a quiet day. And then, in the afternoon, we went over to Eva's place.

Eva is a very nice lady we met a few weeks ago, along with Donna and Ada, at the 3D Movie about Jean-Michel Cousteau's underseas adventures. Very nice people, and we hit it off with all of them.

Eva had a gathering for all of us at her condo in an area just a bit west of the Outremont area which we explored yesterday. Attending were Eva, Donna, Ada, Valery, Colette and myself. Valery was the only one we had not met before.

It was a spectacular day and we were able to sit out on the patio which had a wonderful outlook to the north of the city. Eva's condominium complex sits on the side of what is part of northern flank of Mont Montreal - which itself dominates the center of the island and the city itself.

We'd agreed to bring finger food and a bottle of wine and I made my Pico de Gallo (which is one of the few food items I can actually claim that I know how to do) and we brought a nice bottle of New Zealand wine.

Everyone there was an academic!

We've been very lucky in meeting open and educated people here. Eva's taught Art and Art History at the university, Donna's taught Theater Arts, Valery teaches in the Social Sciences at the University and Ada, who was the youngest among us, is pursuing a PhD. What a great group.

Conversation wandered far and wide and it all lasted for several hours. Sweet. I especially enjoyed our forays into meditation, spiritualism and beliefs. Quite a wide range of opinions were expressed.

I'm not sure why, but I never felt drawn to take photos so I have none from this gathering.

Eva invited Colette and I to drive out with her to her place in the country near Saint-Sauveur this coming Wednesday and to spend the day there. That sounds like a lot of fun!

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 68 – Mon, June 8th - A Theater Group and some rain

We returned, this morning at 10 AM, to Donna's Theater Group which we attended two weeks ago and quite enjoyed. And so we got to see Donna again just a few hours after leaving her last night at Eva's gathering (smile).

Today's theater group had two experiences for us.

In the first, five actors and playwrights (some wear both hats) came in and put on five short skits for us. Minimal props and mostly just great dialogue.

They were all quite good but I especially like the first one about an older couple, both of whose memories are apparently going, who are having a conversation on a park bench in which they both keep mixing up their current partners for their former ones and both of them are in deep denial that there's any problem on their side of the conversation. Hilarious.

Following the skits, we had a couple in who are long-time members of the local Montreal theater community. The two of them, together, had written a play. And they also are musicians who perform together (she sings). He's also been a newspaper reporter; among other things.

It was obvious from the topics they tend to deal with in their work that they both have social justice high on their set of personal values.

I asked him if the things he saw as a news reporter had influenced the sorts of things that ended up in his songs and plays and that was a big affirmative.

Later, I asked him which of the two outlets; writing plays or writing articles for publications, was a more effective outlet for raising consciousness on social issues.

He said it had to be writing plays now because the opportunities for reaching the public on contentious issues through the publishing media are diminishing rapidly.

It was all very interesting stuff.

Later, when the official part of the gathering was done, we talked to several people before we left. One of those folks, Cathy, invited us to come and hear her and Donna sing in a Balkan Choir this Saturday.

And then later, via E-Mail, Cathy, wrote and also invited us to a Buddhist mediation gathering at her place on the 15th.

So, the circles and the contacts continue to expand so very nicely for us in this city. We feel very welcomed. It was raining today so not much else happened.

No pictures taken today so I'll just offer up an interesting building mural I saw the other day on St. Laurent.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 69 – Tue, June 9th - Rockland, Washi Paper, St. Laurant & Meet Up

On Sunday, someone at Eva's gathering mentioned the "Rockland" shopping center. We've been here 9 weeks now and we'd never heard of it. And we'd thought we'd discovered the best of mall shopping here in Montreal's underground city. But no, ... there was to be more!

So, up and at them!

We arose this morning and tromped to the Metro Station, maps in hand and a shopping glint in our eyes. Off to do battle with the commercial elements of North American Capitalism and materialism in the guise of a mall cleverly design to titillate our senses and separate us from our money. Were we up for the challenge? Yes! And even more excitement - we were going to be going to a new Metro Station - the Crémazie Station. The Montreal Metro System isn't all that big and, thus far, we've stopped in perhaps half of the stations. Once at Crémazie, we took the 100 bus west to the Mall.

The Rockland Centre Mall was big, plush and very modern.

Paris, in general, and New York's Manhattan Mall, in particular, could learn something from the folks that designed Rockland.

Providing seats for people to sit down outside the shops is not going to lead to the death of Capitalism as they seem to think. Rockland provides a lot of nice seating throughout the mall and it makes it a friendly place. When Colette went into a shop, I could sit, comfortably, and wait for her to return.

Rockland even had a huge ante-room as part of their toilet area. You walk in and there's a large room with couches and telephones where you can sit and rest and do whatever. A few more steps, and then you are in either the men's or women's toilets which were also very nicely appointed.

This constant angst over maximizing the dollar return per square meter that seems to get mall designer's underwear so tangled up in their anal spaces doesn't seem to be in evidence here and, in my opinion, this mall is far better for it. Profit is good but it is not everything - unless you are a greedy twit.

After Rockland, we took the bus back to Crémazie Metro and then Metro'd down to the Rosemont Station and from there we walked to a shop that sells Japanese Washi Paper and other interesting things. We were there back in April as well. A very cool place.

On the walk to the Washi Paper shop, we thought to take a short cut to avoid some road work. Well, the short cut didn't work out and we ended up basically back near where we started and still had to negotiate the construction area. But, the detour took us through a nice neighborhood we'd never have discovered any other way. Life is funny that way.

Colette had a good time in the shop and I sat out on a public bench outside (Paris? Are you listening?) and watched the neighborhood life flow by. People on bicycles, people walking, a lady on her balcony with a small child she was talking to, cars, delivery vans and just motion in all directions while I sat quietly in the midst. Its interesting, when you watch quietly, you can see that many of these folks have lived there for years. This is their 'place'. It is the centre of their world. Everyplace is actually like that when you stop to watch but you have to slow down and open yourself to it. It was sweet.

We decided to walk back from the Washi Paper shop to our place and we ended up walking a long way down St. Laurent.

Normally, St. Laurent is quite an interesting street but, serendipitously, it was blocked to car traffic on this day for the entire distance we walked it (from north of Bernard to almost Sherbrooke on the south). Some sort of a festival was underway so it was especially interesting.

This city has a lot of festivals in the summertime. I suppose it is the release they need after the brutal winters here. More than one person has told us about staying inside for weeks on end during the winter because it is just too much work and discomfort to venture out. But, they make up for it in the summer!

The entire street was setup for a street festival. At the time of the day we came through it was just a bit quiet but I could well imagine that as the evening came on and as the weekend arrived, that it was going to get intense. But, it was still fun and walking down the middle of the street was a nice relief from staying on the sidewalks.

It was a long, slow and savored walk home.

That evening, we held our second Meet Up Group at the Vego Restaurant on St. Denis at 7 PM. Our group is called "The Montreal - New Zealand Exchange".

It was a rainy evening so we wondered if anyone would show. The group has accumulated 23 members but only one had RSVP'd for this evening and, given the rain, we would not have been surprised if no one showed up.

But, at 7 PM, David arrived and we all spent a happy two hours discussing a zillion different things including some about New Zealand.

He was, and is, a very interesting fellow who was a university professor here in Montreal and then decided he'd had enough of that and quit. He told us a funny story about how that sort of thing happens so infrequently that the administration people at the university had a terrible time working out what paperwork and procedures were necessary for him to be allowed to quit.

Now, he works globally for NGO's that deal with setting up public radio stations in the third-world. He travels a lot but, apparently, he still owns an apartment here which continues to bring him back.

We got along quite well and he and his wife, Marilyn, have now invited us to their place for dinner this coming Sunday.

A walk home in the rain and a another fine day was done.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 70 – Wed, June 10th - Eva's country place

Our friend, Eva, invited us out to her country place for the day. How nice!

We took the Metro and were at her place here in the city at 9:30 AM, as agreed. From there, she drove us north out of the city for about an hour to her country home.

Her place is just a bit north of Saint Sauveur very near Mont Gabriel.

It was a lovely place. It was the end unit of four. And, from the outside, it looked two stories high but that was deceptive because, seen from the other side, it was three levels. It was furnished with many objects from Hungary, where Eva came from.

What an interesting lady she is. She took us all around the area she lives in and showed us all the things in her neighborhood. The area is a recreational area for Montrealers and, in the winter, it is a ski area as well. She's had her place there for many years and I think the area has grown up all around her.

She took us to a beautiful lake with pontoons you could go swimming from. Then she took us to see a piece of undeveloped land that she owns by a small lake. After that, we went by her daughter's home which was quite beautiful. Her daughter is a successful pediatric surgeon. And then we went through some of the small towns nearby like Saint Sauveur and Saint Adèle. Lovely places, all.

But perhaps the best outing was a spectacular visit to a resort called "The Polar Bear's Club" on the side of a river. What a wonderful spot that was. A very cool place. See the photos.

After the drive around the local area, we came back to her house and sat down to a cup of coffee and a long chat.

We found out about Eva's birth and her family in Hungary, about her marriage there, and their escape to the west through Yugoslavia. We learned that her husband was an engineer who became involved in the American Space Program as a satellite engineer.

Eva discovered her interests in art sometime in her twenties, after they'd arrived in Canada, and pursued her art and her academics until she ended up teaching art in university. Both of her homes are full of her art which is quite striking.

In the late afternoon, Eva drove us to where we could catch a bus back to the central bus station in Montreal (which is quite near our apartment). It was the end of a most excellent day and one that we are very grateful for.

When you visit a new country or city, it is the traveler's hope to meet local people, to hear their stories, learn about their lives and to be invited into their homes so that you can experience how life is in the new place in a very direct way.

Recently, we have been meeting some wonderful people here in Montreal and our hopes have been exceeded. Eva's generosity, to take us into both of her homes, socially, was a tremendous thing for us.

Thank you, Eva!

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 71- Thu, June 11th - Francolies & V

Today was a quiet day. Late in the afternoon, we walked downtown to meet V.

We met V. back on May 27th, just before we went off to New York.

This evening, we were to meet her at the Hyatt Regency Hotel Bar.

She's a newspaper reporter, the third we've met here in Montreal, and I was curious to talk with her about her work.

I asked her about how much freedom reporters have these days to report the news as they see it verses being controlled by their management to only report stories that the news organization is comfortable reporting. Her answer was similar to the other reporters I've talked to. The freedom to report the news without interference from management is rapidly eroding.

In fact, it is distressing her enough that she is seriously thinking of getting out of her career and getting into other types of work.

I've suspected, from various things I've read, that unbiased news reporting is becoming a thing of the past in many countries around the world. So, getting direct, personal confirmation from three different reporters here in the Montreal area wasn't a surprise for me. It is however, a sobering thing. Many people depend on their news sources to keep them informed of the world around them and they are not getting what they think they are getting.

We moved on to more general discussions about the state of the world and we found out that she is deeply idealistic and wants to actively work to make the world a better place. It would take far to long to trace all the twists and turns that that conversation took - but suffice to say, it spanned several hours.

Canada is currently suffering under a NeoLiberal government led by Stephen Harper and the interests of the rich and powerful here are ascendant over the population in general.

It's true that one cannot see much on the street to indicate the forces moving in the background but they are there. But, that's a long discussion for another place and probably has no place in a travelogue.

After we parted from V., we walked out and the area around the Hyatt was seething with people and noise. I've mentioned that Montrealers seem to have a festival every weekend during the good-weather months and this was no exception. Currently the Francofolies are in full swing downtown and people are out inform to enjoy themselves.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 72 – Fri, June 12th - not much?

When we were first here in Montreal, we would go out frequently with our loins girded for some serious touristizing. And, yes, I did make that word up.

But, the longer we are here, the more we are tending to have 'average' or laid-back days.

And, to be sure, that was always part of the plan for us. Coming to a city like Montreal for three months, was for us, to experience 'living' in it. And living in it means all of it; the laundry, the shopping, the socializing, the transport systems, the people and the just laying about as well.

So, when I look at my notes of for the 12th, I see this:

- Workout

- Coffee
- Grocery Shopping
- Visit Marc
- Drop into Luca's
- Quiet evening

Not an 1812 Overture in the entire list. A lot of it was a rainy day.

Marc is a guy, a kindred spirit, you might say, that I met at the local UPS store back in April when Colette and I went in searching for a cardboard tube with which to mail a poster to a friend.

Since that initial meeting, I've dropped in on Marc at work a number of times (it's only two blocks away from our apartment) to talk. And we always have great chats. Whatever it is that animates a lot of my deep personal interests in things, I can see that they are alive in him as well. I think we recognize a lot in each other.

After talking with Marc, I wanted a cup of coffee so I walked over to Luca et Franco. (<https://www.zomato.com/mon.../luca-e-franco-osteria-montreal>) which has become a favorite of mine in the neighborhood.

It's one of those small but classy restaurants where, after a visit or two, they recognize you and they make you really feel welcome and at home. One fellow there, Michael, has become a special favorite of mine and we've had several good chats when business was slow.

When I went into today, the front door was open but they were not really open yet. The waitress and the chef were just sitting down for lunch at the bar. I recognized her and we greeted each other and she explained that they weren't open yet but that she could make me a Latte, if I wanted.

In the course of organizing that, I chatted for a moment with the chef and we introduced ourselves and soon we were all sitting together talking as they ate.

Quite a typical encounter for us here in this lovely city. People are quite open and friendly.

In the next 20 minutes, I learned that she was from Lyon in France and speaks English, French and Italian (Lyon is quite close to the Italian border). I also learned that the chef travelled a lot around the world in his 20's and 30's and has now returned to Montreal. I told them some about our travels and why we are in Montreal for these three months.

I had to laugh at one point because I have a tiny sliver of fame to my name in this restaurant.

Some time ago, when we went in one evening for a meal, I'd asked if they could do a Spaghetti Carbonara, even though it was not on the menu. After some consultations, it was agreed that they could. And soon I had a wonderful plate of that fine pasta in front of me. It was explained to me that night that Carbonara was a favorite of the owner and that he sometimes requested it of the chef.

A week or so later, when I was passing, I encountered Michael out front by the terrace and we talked for a moment, as we often do, and he told me that Carbonara was now 'on the menu' - thanks, in part, to my request and interest. I thought that was pretty cool. And, indeed, since then, we've been in and I've ordered it several times.

Today, sitting with the chef, this subject came up and he exclaimed, quite happily, "Oh, you're the guy responsible for getting Carbonara on the menu!", and we all had a good laugh.

He told me that he's often told the wait-staff that, if they are not too busy, he is always happy to entertain orders for things not on the menu, if he has the ingredients.

So, a tiny bit of fame for me (smile) here in this restaurant. Ha!

I got up to go and asked how much the coffee would be and they looked at each other and smiled and said that the house could afford it! Well, how nice it that, I thought.

I walked home to join Colette who had stayed in and I regaled her with my adventures with Marc and at Luca's and that was another fine day done here.

Today's photo, you say?

Mmmmm. As sometimes happened, I didn't take one.

But a friend in the U.K. just posted one that gave me a laugh. The dog's name is Bella and the owner is not happy with Bella.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 73 – Sat, June 13th - Balkan Choir

On Saturday morning, we decided to take a walk the north end of Parc la Fontaine for coffee.

There is a coffee shop up there that shares space with a bicycle shop and so, as you might expect, there are a lot of bicycle types who frequent the coffee shop. We like that sort of thing.

And, interesting, the intersection the coffee/bike shop is on is directly across the street from the park and is also the intersection of two major city bicycle paths. So, if you sit outside, there is a lot of coming and going of bicyclists.

We had a secondary goal for going up there and that was to buy a bicycle jersey for me at the bicycle shop. But, alas, that was not to be as they opened an hour and a half after the coffee shop on a Saturday morning. We walked home through the park, which is always a pleasure. We never fail to comment on how the park looked when we arrived in April (snow) and how it looks now (green everywhere).

After that, I did some programming and Colette worked on art projects. Then, mid-day, we decided to walk into town and take another look at all the Francofolies doings. That's always fun. The streets are full of people and there's just a lot going on. Musicians and band stands and stuff for sale and a general buzz in the air.

In the afternoon, we did some more art and programming and just general laying about and then we walked over to St. Denis to see a Balkan Choir sing.

Our friend Donna invited us to this. She seems to be involved with a lot of art around town and we're very thankful that she's taken to inviting us to various things like this. It has expanded our opportunities to meet people tremendously.

The concert was held at a place called, "Montreal Espace Comfort", on St. Denis. It was a small place and there were a lot of us who attended. Colette and I were lucky and got to meet the performers and sat at their table as well - how lucky is that?

In addition to the Balkan Choir, they also had a Georgian Choir. The songs were typically about marriages, love or disasters and musically, they were quite complex.

The Balkan choir has been together for 10 or 15 years. They love the complexity of the singing and it shows. For me, I found myself remembering a lot of the reading I've done about Soviet agricultural collectivism and such. Not all those times were good times. And I suspect that much of the world that gave rise to such songs has been wiped out. I thought, in particular, of a book, "The 25th Hour", by Virgil Gheorghiu, (<http://tinyurl.com/qhnw3be>) which had a huge impact in me while I was in the military.

Following the concert, several of us walked across the street and sat and had a beer at an outside cafe.

We were comprised of Donna, Susan (one of the Balkan Choir singers), Doug (the Balkan choir's drummer and Susan's partner), Colette, myself and a psychologist named Kierin. All very nice people. But, as is often the case, the noise levels were so high there that I had trouble following the subtleties of conversations.

But, all in all, it was a very nice evening and I enjoyed it a lot. Montreal is truly a city with a lot of cultural things going on.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Day 74 – Sun, June 14th - A bike ride and Prince Arthur

Today we rented bicycles for the second time here in Montreal. We knew the weather was going to be good so we walked down to Old Town and secured two fine steeds and away we went.

This time, we'd decided to revisit Île Sainte Hélène which is an island in the middle of the Saint Laurent. It contains Parc Jean Drapeau, The Biosphère and La Ronde, which is a member of the Six Flags entertainment parks system. We'd taken the Metro out once before and had a walk around but now, with the bicycles, we would be able to explore it much more thoroughly.

It's a great ride out. You go west along the waterfront, over a small bridge, then through an industrial area behind some major docks and then along Jetée Mackay where there's a really cool looking apartment/condominium building called Habitat 67 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habitat_67). This is an area where gentrification is in full swing.

Past that, you turn south onto Pont de la Concorde and cross over a good portion of the Saint Laurent on your way to the island. The bridge is nicely done in that the cars and the bicycles are clearly separated so you can enjoy the ride and not stress over all the moving steel zooming by you.

On the island we simply went exploring, and, before we were done, we'd circumnavigated most of the island save for the north western end which is fully given over to the Six Flags Amusement Park. You can ride along

the water and look over at the city or you can ride into the interior of the island and go through woods and parklands. There's a lot out there to see and some of it wants to charge you for admission but we weren't interested in any of that. Just riding around and enjoying the land and the water and the views of the city were good for us.

After we rode back and turned the bicycles in, we sat on a bench by the water in Old Town and ate half our lunches. We made the entire trip out and back in under two hours and it cost us each \$18 for the adventure.

After that, we walked up to the area where the Francofolies are in progress. We've looked in on all that fun several times as it is fun to feel the buzz and mix with the crowds of Montrealers enjoying their summer city. The second half of our lunches disappeared about this time.

Then we walked over to St. Denis and walked north up it until we came to a Starbucks near our house where we sat and enjoyed an early afternoon coffee.

We had a quiet afternoon at home and then at about 6 PM we took off to meet some new friends for a meal. We met David at our second Montreal - New Zealand Exchange Meet Up group meeting on June 9th and we hit it off really well with him. So, tonight we were to meet with him and his wife, Marilyn, whom we hadn't met before. We all chose to meet at the corner of St. Laurent and Prince Arthur at 6:30 PM.

That was a happening intersection. I've mentioned before that St. Laurent is closed off now to vehicle traffic for a long distance and the entire street is set up for food vendors, musicians, and entertainments of various sorts.

David and Marilyn arrived and we did introductions and then all walked up Prince Arthur towards a Greek place with outside seating that Colette and I had noted on our way over.

Our companions are an interesting couple. Bright, warm, friendly people. I think I mentioned David before. He's a former professor at one of the universities here who decided he'd had enough of that life and simply left it.

Now, he works for NGOs establishing public radio stations in the third-world with funds partially provided by the UN and UNESCO.

He met his wife, Marilyn, in the Philippines. She's quite pretty and a bit younger than he is (though he's one of those people who looks much younger than his chronological age) but that doesn't seem to any sort of a problem for them. They are charming people and obviously quite in love with each other.

They married five years ago and David first brought her home with him to Montreal two years ago. They travel a lot because of his work. Listening to them describe what it was like for Marilyn, who has always lived in the Philippines in 30 C weather, to arrive in Montreal in -20 C weather had us in stitches. He said (and she did not disagree) that she stayed in most of that first winter here (smile). We don't blame her. We've heard that the winters here, and especially this last one, can be utterly brutal. In any case, the conversation flowed, as did the two bottles of wine we brought along on the BYOB plan. We discussed her home in the Philippines and how poor the vast majority of people are.

Apparently, a few rich folks, maybe 20 families, have the place entirely sewed up and the rest of the population struggles to get by. Many people she knows work at call-centers which are one of the best employment opportunities available there. But, there's no social safety nets there and if the bosses want to put you on one shift this week and another next week, there's no one to tell them 'no'. And plenty of people who would love to have your job if you don't want it.

We talked about a British Traveller, Simon Reeve, who does a lot of interesting stuff on TV. He visited the Philippines and got the opportunity to visit Imelda Marcos. David recalled the show, as did we. and what Simon shared with us about Imelda made an interesting contrast against the world as Marilyn and David described to us. There were far too many topics that crossed the table to hope to capture them all but suffice to say, it was a great evening.

After the meal, we walked north up St. Laurent with David & Marilyn until we got to Duluth and then we turned for home. We've all agreed to try to meet once more before Colette and I depart for Vancouver and I'm already looking forward to it.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Days 75, 76, 77, 78 & 79 – Mon-Fri, June 15-19 - Lot of it sick time

I've been sick with a cold for a lot of these past five days. I think I got the first sign of a symptom when we headed out to meet David and Marilyn last Sunday evening. You know, that sort of a feeling at the back of your throat that says, "Oh-oh, something's not right."

So, as the week's gone on, I've cancelled a couple of get-togethers I very much wanted to do and held on to a few others. Colds are, for me, up and down affairs. One moment, I'm feeling pretty strong and then a few hours later, I'm dragging and achy.

So, on Monday, **June 15th** I cancelled on a meditation meeting I wanted to go to out on the west end of Montreal Island and stayed home.

On Tuesday, **June 16th**, I laid low most of the day and then in the late afternoon, Colette and I walked over to the main Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (or BAnQ) on boulevard de Maisonneuve and met Guillem and his girlfriend, Leonore, for a chat and a cup of tea.

Very interesting people. Two Spaniards living here in Montreal. He's a mechanical engineer from Barcelona and she's a political science researcher working, I think, on her masters.

The subject of 'Podemos', a recently arisen political movement in Spain, came up. The conversation we had on this subject was very interesting.

I won't try to describe Podemos, as this Wikipedia article pulls it all together far better than I could:
[https://en.wikipedia.org/.../Podemos_\(Spanish_political...\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/.../Podemos_(Spanish_political...))

Given my own misgivings about where many of our western democracies are heading, these events were a breath of fresh air for me.

But as Colette said, the things that can transpire in smaller countries, like Spain and Iceland, may not be possible in larger ones. Also, such movements arise and then fragment; much as many intentional communities do; full of good intentions and flawed by basic human nature.

But still, we need something better than we have.

I'm not sure how familiar you are with Podemos. But, if you are not, you may find the Wiki article an interesting read.

Guillem and Leonora are planning to come to New Zealand next year so she can continue her research and we hope to see them again then.

On Wednesday, **June 17th**, I was feeling somewhat better (as I said, colds for me are like that - they come and go and just about the time I think I'm going to be OK, wham, they come and slam me again). But, I was feeling good as Wednesday began.

So I decided to spend the day doing something I like to do at least once in a city, if we're visiting it for a longer period; like for two or three months.

And that is to go out by myself and just sit somewhere, for an extended period of hours, and just watch life go by. I've done this several places now and I quite enjoy it. A cup or two of coffee and a sandwich for lunch while typically sitting in a sidewalk cafe with a good view. Just listening to the people around me coming and going and seeing them walk by. I don't know, really, what the attraction is but I really love doing this, periodically.

So, I took off in the morning and by 11 am, I was downtown emerging from the Place-D'Armes Metro Station.

Near Place-D'Armes is the area where we'd seen all the tumult of the Francofolies celebrations and my first thought was to find a table on the shady side of the square where much of this had gone on. But, as I approached, I could see that things were quiet and then I realized that I really wanted to see people more in their natural, or day to day, guises rather than immersed in a once-a-year celebration.

So, I walked west towards the Place Ville Marie complex where I remembered a particular underground shopping area that I thought might do. But, in the end, that would not do either.

So, finally, I remembered the Outremont area where Colette and I went and found a lovely sidewalk cafe in an affluent neighborhood that was quite interesting. I got on the Metro again and after two transfers and an eight block walk, I was there.

It's a nice area. Well kept buildings and shops, a number of sidewalk cafes that are well patronized along a two-block stretch of Bernard Street and not too far from the Outremont Metro Station.

I went in and got myself a large latte and a ham and cheese sandwich on some wonderful bread and then came out and found a table just in the shade from which I could watch the world go by.

It's a good thing this was a low energy adventure because I was beginning to feel the effects of my cold again. Not a runny nose, thank goodness, but a general aches and malaise. But, thankfully, all I had to do was to be able to lift my coffee and sandwich to my lips and not fall out of my chair. So, I thought I was going to make it.

Outremont did not disappoint. The tables slowly filled in around me and people were friendly though I didn't engage in any real conversations. They pretty much come here all the time and I'd just showed up one day. I think if I came for two or three days, some of them might notice I had some regularity and was therefore maybe interesting to talk to. But, I didn't care as I hadn't come to talk but rather to look and to 'be'.

On my left, a group of older retired folks, all of whom knew each other, began to fill in. By the end, there were, perhaps 10 of them.

One lady wanted to borrow my extra chair for a new arrival, so she asked in French. I knew what she wanted so I smiled and assented without speaking.

But, a moment later, the gentleman she's gotten it for demurred to accept it and so then she pushed it back over to my table again and engaged me with another burst of French and said, I'm sure, something like, "Oh, sorry, he's changed his mind". Again, I smiled and nodded just as if I completely understood.

But then, in a moment, it all changed yet again and they needed the chair. This time she turned to me with her hand to cover her mouth so they could not hear what she was saying and disclosed something to me apologetically saying something like, "Oh that old fool, he cannot make up his mind <big smile here>. Please pardon all this fuss.". So, catching the drift, I nodded and smiled encouragement and away went the chair again.

Having very little idea of anything that had been said, I still had the idea that I'd had a pleasant encounter. Now, that's sweet and that's Montreal for you.

I sat and sipped and a lady came and sat at the table to my right then (our tables were the ones nearest the sidewalk). Instead of sitting with her back to the building and facing the street which, I think most people would do, she sat with her back partially to the street and sort of in the space between her table and mine. She wasn't crowding me so much that I minded but I was curious why she'd sat this way.

Soon a companion, another woman, arrived and they rearranged so that they were both on the back side of the table but still sitting a bit oddly. At one point the other woman went in to order something and the lady just by me was looking the other way lost in thought. During this, a bird jumped up on her table (they are quite aggressive around outside cafes) and walked over and began to have his way with her pastry. So, I touched her on the shoulder to draw her attention to this event. She laughed and smiled at acknowledge my intervention.

Her friend came back and there were some descriptions given over a cell phone about just where they were and soon an entire family arrived and I saw then that they'd been trying to secure, in advance, a sufficient amount of space and tables to seat the entire group.

By now things were quite full around me in terms of chairs and chatter. But I still sat in my small and peaceful bubble watching and slowly sipping my latte and nibbling my sandwich and enjoying the show.

Hasidic Jews walked by. Women with babies in carriages walked by. A man in a yamaka pulled up in a car and parked out front and went in and got his elderly mother and escorted her to the car and placed her in the back seat, carefully, and they drove off. A boy from the family group to the right of me had a toy anemometer and he was walking around watching it whirl and then trying to make it stand upright by driving the post in to the dirt next to a tree just out front. And, after a bit, his mother went to get him to quit before he got too dirty.

I tried to 'feel' the place. What was it like for these folks who lived here all the time? And, basically, it felt good.

An upscale, but not wealthy, neighborhood. A good mix of religious groups and ages. A sense of it all having been like this for some time and that most of the people around me were happy with their lot. The buildings all kept and the shops reasonably prosperous.

It is always strange to me, when I let myself think of it, how utterly different life is in so many other places in the world.

When you just stay in one nation, in one city and in one neighborhood, it is easy to think that this is how it is everywhere. Of course, that's too simple. People do know. But I think a lot of that knowing lacks a visceral sense

of reality when the knowledge of other places you have consists of news snippets sandwiched between cars advertisements and the local weather report. It is easy to think the world is mostly as you see it around you.

When thinking like this, I always recall reading several of Isaac Bashevis Singer's books. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1978.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Bashevis_Singer

His books were largely about the Jewish communities in Poland in the years immediately before WWII. He took you through neighborhoods like this full of very human people, all of who thought that their neighborhoods and their way of life would simply go on forever because it had gone on for as long as they could remember. Bar Mitzvahs, weddings, parties, family squabbles, business problems and poor cousins. All the day to day stuff.

And then all of it utterly swept away when WWII erupted across Poland and Europe.

Not to wax too doom and gloom but I think of these things when I see ideal places like Outremont on a warm pleasant day and then I go home and see on TV the tens of thousands risking everything to claw their way into Europe and watching places like Canada passing draconian security bills like C-51.

“The world has changed. I feel it in the water. I feel it in the earth. I smell it in the air. Much that once was is lost...” ~ Galadriel – Lord of the Rings

But, regardless of what the future brings, it was a very pleasant afternoon in Outremont.

My cold was returning with some power now and on the Metro home I could barely stay awake. I got home, told Colette about my day and heard about hers and I was gone to sleep.

Thursday, **June 18th**, was a lost day. I spent most of the day laying down and napping. Unfortunately, we made a plan to get together with Eva at her place and I had to cancel. I regretted that because Eva has been so kind to us since we met her. She, and her friend, Donna, have embraced us and invited us into their worlds and they have made our experience here immeasurably better.

So, I wasn't happy to withdraw from our arrangement but I thought it was best. I was a mess and there was no need to risk making her sick as well.

Friday, **June 19th**, was only slightly better. In the morning, we walked over to the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec where we'd met Guillem and Leonora on Tuesday. We were curious about the place and, since it was close, we walked over for a better look. Interestingly, this is very near us and we've walked by it and around it many times - clueless as to what it was and what it might offer us.

It's a magnificent modern library. As nice as any I've seen. If we'd have known and if we could have wangled access cards, we might have spent a lot of time here checking out books and video and enjoying the facilities. But, alas, we discovered it late. We have however, resolved to look for something similar in Vancouver early on.

Back home for another gather-my-strength nap and then, in the afternoon, we walked over to Square St. Louis, which is quite close, and fed the squirrels and had a bit of ice cream from the little cupola shop on the west end of the park by Rue Laval. Square St. Louis is a lovely little neighborhood park. Not nearly as upscale as Outremont but then this is the edge of the student Latin Quarter. There are always a mix of people there. Some bums, bare chested and drinking, telling each other stories, squirrel feeders like us, college students in groups

on blankets on the grass, the occasional whiff of weed in the air. There's a group which come quite often who have a cat on a leash.

Woman with baby in strollers, the occasional lost soul and young girls reading on park benches. It's a neighborhood park and it feels like it. I like it a lot and we go over quite often with some bread for the squirrels and to just be there. We started for home, for a quiet evening in, when I suggested that we stop into Luca's for a cup of coffee sitting out on their terrace facing St. Denis street. Colette agreed.

Much to my pleasant surprise, the two folks with whom I had such a pleasant exchange a week or so ago when I dropped in for coffee on a rainy day, were there. Paul, the Chef, and Elle, the waitress. They were both out on the terrace (business was still slow at this time of day). So, I introduced Colette to them and we all had a great chat.

Paul told us about a number of things to see and do and foremost among them was the same suggestion several others have made, including our friends, PJ and Marcia, which was to go and listen to the big drumming circle that assembles near the mont on Sunday mornings. We've now put this on our calendar.

Elle is from Lyon in France and we got her to tell us about Lyon. It sounded wonderful. It is, apparently, France's second city and has all the wonderful things Paris does but without so many tourists and such high prices. Colette was there for two days some years ago. It sounds like a place to put on our bucket-list of cities (which is getting quite full!).

Ellie was also quite excited, having just been accepted for a intern position with the theater industry in New York City. She's been here for four years in Montreal and has just finished a degree in business and this may be her entree into the business side of theater. We wished her luck on all of that.

I have to love and admire people like her (and Paul who has also done a lot of traveling) who strike out young and take the world by storm. It would be nice to have a time machine and see where she ends up in 20 years.

When I was young, my boundaries were set, in my teens, by the boundaries of Los Angeles. And then later by the continental United States. It wasn't until I was about 40 that I started exploring the wider world. Now I consider myself a citizen of the entire thing and the idea of being limited to one country seems a bit quaint to me. But then, to be fair, I've had an awful lot of luck in my life. Blessed, you might say. Well, after that nice chat with Paul and Ellie, we turn home and had a quiet evening. We're getting close to the end of our time here in Montreal and we're both excited about the jump over to Vancouver on July 1st and equally sad to be leaving this wonderful city.

We talked about it. We didn't know what really to expect here. We'd heard good things but in a lot of ways, a visit like this can be a shot in the dark. Well, we've had no bad experiences whatsoever. Our apartment here, our landlord, the city and the people we've met have all been exemplary. Oh, and my cold's getting better and we've rescheduled with Eva for next week - so that's sweet!

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)

Montreal - Days 80-90 – Jun 20 to 30 - end times in Montreal

So, this post will cover a number of days. Though it won't be too long as I'll keep each day's story relatively short.

We're down to our final days here in Montreal. It is amazing how fast three months can go by. I still remember, so clearly, the memories we laid down when we were in our first days here; marveling at the snow and absorbing a new city.

This may well be my final post from Montreal. It is Friday, June 26th, now. We fly out at 3 AM this coming Wednesday headed for Vancouver. I expect these last days will get busier as we go.

But, let's turn back the Wayback Machine (<http://tinyurl.com/qfqvmv7>) now and see what Dennis and Colette were doing way back on June 20th and there after.

*** **Day 80** - June 20th - a Saturday

I went to my club and had a workout. First one after being sick this past week. That was good. My body was full of energy coming off the cold.

In the evening, Colette and I had tickets to a candle light Vivaldi Concert at the St. Denis Church. We've had these tickets for awhile after we noted the concert and bought them several weeks ago when we were walking through the neighborhood where the St. Denis Church is.

The concert was great. All the talk was in French so that was all lost on me - but the music was beautiful. And it was all done in candle light. The church was nearly packed. It reminded me that I used to have an album of Vivaldi music (the Four Seasons) a long time ago when I was still playing vinyl. I'm going to get some Vivaldi again now in digital form.

It was almost 11 PM when we got out and then we walked home along St. Denis. I expected St. Denis to be more raucous at 11 PM on a Saturday night but it was relatively calm.

*** **Day 81** - June 21st - a Sunday

We walked up through Parc la Fontaine today and discovered a Jazz concert in the middle of the park.

*** **Day 82** - June 22nd - a Monday

I had another workout today. I've been pretty consistent since I've been here. I joined a place called Econofitness and it is pretty economical. All up, it cost me \$60 to belong to it for the three months I was here. And they are just three blocks away so it's convenient.

Currently my weight is about 88 or 89 kg whereas it was more like 91 or 92 when I began. I look in the mirror and I'm always surprised to see that I am still 67 years old in spite of working out - but I feel better, even if no one else can see any difference (smile).

In the afternoon, we fulfilled another one of our aims. When we first came, we developed quite a list of places we wanted to see around the city. And one of them was the Île des Soeurs, which is an island out in the St. Laurent just off the southern shore of the main Island of Montreal. We'd seen it on the map and assumed it might be interesting but it was still a surprise.

We took the Metro down to the La Salle Station on the Green Line. From there, we went looking for the 12 bus. But, as seems to happen a lot in the Montreal bus system, they'd temporarily moved the bus stop. So we had a walk about trying to discover where it was. We eventually found it, after getting some advice from a driver on a different line.

The island itself is an upscale area that seems to have been pretty recently developed. There's a large shopping center on the eastern end and a lot of high-rise condo buildings scattered all across it with a smattering of very plush single family homes. Lots of parks and open areas and all of it quite pretty.

We took the 12 bus down to its terminus on the western end of the island and there the driver told us about a short walk down by the river that we could do while he sat and waiting for his appointed return departure time.

People are very friendly and helpful here!

So, we took the suggested walk and it was nice.

I'm not sure if I'd like to live out on the island, though. Parts of it reminded me of Irvine, California. That 'everything's new and pretty' feeling - but sometimes you feel like there's no 'there' there? Sort of a made-to-order cookie-cutter perfect world? It's a place where you would assuredly need a car, unless you were quite close to the shopping center or really liked walking a lot - and don't forget they've got some pretty stout winters here and we were seeing all of this in perfect June weather.

But, the island was pretty and it is obviously a 'destination' for moving-up-in-the-world Montrealers.

*** **Day 83** - June 23rd - a Tuesday

In the evening, on Tuesday, we walked over to David and Marilyn's place to meet them for an evening meal.

There was some thought of having it up on their roof but it was blowing too hard for that to be realistic. But I went up and shot a few photos.

They showed us around their place and that was fun. One of the best things about visiting other places around the world is if you make acquaintances and get invited in to see people's homes. Then you are really getting to see what life there is like.

They live in an older building and their apartment is on the upper floor. It is a long and narrow apartment with quite a number of rooms. David's owned it for a number of years going back, I think, to when he was still a tenured professor at McGill University.

Afterwards, we walked a block or two to a Vietnamese restaurant that David's been going to for a lot of years. It was very unassuming on the outside and Colette and I both thought that we might have missed it if David hadn't guided us in. But, once inside, it was quite nice and the woman who owns it, whom David said has been there for all those years, was very happy and accommodating and made our visit quite pleasant.

Conversation flowed and we all had a good time. As before, we learned a lot about the part of the Philippines that Marilyn comes from (in the far northern islands) and we both found that intriguing. She and David have traveled a lot in that area of the world to Burma, Vietnam and etc. They've also been to Columbia as well.

Part of the reason we met David was our New Zealand - Montreal Exchange group on Meetup. At that point in time, he thought he might have a New Zealand contract lined up but it didn't pan out. I'll be curious to see where they go next. It's an interesting life-style they have.

*** **Day 84** - June 24th - a Wednesday

Today, we decided to go exploring again and we picked out an area of the city we haven't seen a lot of before. We took the Metro to the Côte-des-Neiges Station and from there we took the 119 bus.

Well, as I said not long ago, the bus stops move around a lot and the 119 stop was no exception. Construction near the station had shifted it and it took us a bit to find it. And then, when we were waiting, it seemed to take forever to come. But, it eventually did.

It was an interesting ride. It took us northwest from the Côte-des-Neiges Metro Station, past the Outremont Metro Station and then turned northwest and headed up Rockland boulevard towards the Rockland Shopping Centre, which we had not approached from the south before.

Once by the Rockland Centre, we turned south west and ran parallel to the 40 highway until we reversed and then went south on Rue Laird until it terminated in the middle of Mont-Royal, the neighborhood. We got off and found it was a good place to be dropped.

Our thought was to walk from where ever we were dropped back to the Outremont area which we particularly like. But, before that, we were hungry and, as luck would have it, we'd been dropped by a nice place. We got some sandwiches there and some coffee and sat out on their terrasse and watched another nice neighborhood's life pass by. This area is quite nice with well kept buildings and it looks affluent.

After lunch, we began our walk towards Outremont by going southeast on Graham. Most of it was nice though some was a bit industrial as we had to cross a large bridge over railway lines. But it was all interesting and the weather was perfect for a walk. And it didn't take that long to arrive at the Outremont area. We've really become quite the walkers here.

We stopped into the same coffee shop we've patronized before, both solo and together, on Rue Bernard in Outremont and had an orange juice and just enjoyed it all again. This might have been our last stop there as we are beginning to get down to the end of our adventures in Montreal.

After that, we came home but the day was not over yet.

It was Quebec Day and there were some big 'doings' up on St. Denis so we walked over and had a look. Colette went home after a bit and I stayed on but it wasn't all fully cranked up yet and so I ended up bailing on it as well in favor of a quiet evening. We did see an awful lot of Quebec Flags out though.

*** **Day 85** - June 25th - a Thursday

After a quiet morning, with our usual trip over to the Mamé Clafoutis Bakery, I decided to go and get a haircut from the same lady, Mona, at Chez Mona, that cut my hair when I first arrive here back in April.

Colette didn't want to come and sit and wait as she did last time so she stayed home and I leisurely walked north up through Parc la Fontaine and then on up Rue de Brébeuf to Mona's shop.

It was a beautiful day for a walk and I realized that I'd never walked up through the park by myself. That's not a problem because Colette and I like going most places together but the realization surprised me. I probably walked a bit slower than we do together because, generally, Colette's a faster walker than I am. I call her the Energizer Bunny.

Mona was sitting in her shop eating a salad and she asked if I would mind waiting while she finished it and I said, 'No problem.'

I asked if she remembered me and she did and then we were off on a conversation about traveling and especially about Vancouver because she lived and worked there for a number of years.

As she cut my hair, two more customers came in and she said, "You see now why I eat when I can?" I did. I had a very pleasant experience there and all the better because this is a small shop in a local neighborhood and it is very unlikely that anyone, other than the locals, will have found it. That's a good deal of the fun about coming to a city and staying for several months - you get to see its 'real life' at that level.

I walked slowly home after my haircut, and this time I went west from her shop to Rue St. Denis and then came south all the way down St. Denis, which is, of course, one of our favorite streets here.

We had an invitation to go to Eva's place in the afternoon and it promised to be an interesting time as it was to have several parts.

The first part was a meal. Eva cooked us a nice spaghetti and we sat outside on her terrace and ate it and chatted.

Then she and I went in and had a look at her new printer. It's a printer, fax, scanner and copier - all in one and it is wireless, besides. She'd installed the software and gotten the wireless connection to work but she was stalled after that.

After a bit of fussing, we got the printer's printing and copying functions to work. And the fax seemed to do all the right things but it failed to connect to the machine on the other end. And then the scanner told us that it could not find the PC to save the scanned images. So, we had some successes and some misses.

But then we had to go before we could troubleshoot it further because we had to go and pick up Donna and go to an art opening.

A quick zip across town in Eva's car and we found Donna sitting out on her steps waiting for us. And then another short drive and we were at the art opening.

That was fun. We were introduced to a fellow who is a very famous photographer in Montreal and has documented the city for many years. We also met the artist whose work was being shown.

They had a table with free wine and both Colette and I took a glass and wandered and looked at the art and chatted.

After awhile, we (Myself, Colette and Eva) went off to another event, a Mundo Lingo gathering. Donna elected to stay on with the art opening folks.

Mundo Lingo is something that Eva told us about. It was a new idea for us. See: <http://mundolingo.org> Basically, a lot of people who speak one language but would like to test their skills in another language. They gather at, typically, a bar. When you arrive, there's a receptionist and you are asked for your native language and the one you would like to practice. In response to your answers, you are given two flags to place on your shirt much as you might do with a name tag.

I took a New Zealand flag and a Spanish flag, Colette took a New Zealand flag and a Quebec flag (for French). Most of the people who were there, and there must have been 60 or more, were young and in their 20's and 30's. Many of them university types from the several universities around Montreal.

Eva, who is a former university instructor in art, says she just loves the events. She really likes young people and their optimism about life.

When we first walked in, I wasn't sure it was going to work for me. At the art show, I had no doubts at all as I could see before me a crowd of 40's to 60's types; many of them artists and aficionados and I knew I would be able to connect in conversations. But, with a younger crowd, I sometimes have mixed results.

But, I needn't have worried. I talked with three different people and they each were curious, engaging and not in the least put off by our age differences.

The first fellow was a computer engineer from Mexico City. He's working here for Ericsson using Java in networking. He told me that he recently lived in Australia for a year. I asked if it was difficult for Mexicans to travel internationally and he said no. If you were in the middle or upper classes, getting a passport and moving about internationally is just like it is for anyone else.

I think, in retrospect, my question probably seemed naive but most of my experience these last 20 years, with Mexicans, has been with those of the illegal type in the U.S. And those folks simply didn't have the opportunity or means to obtain legal passports.

I also talked to Elena and Amir; a Ukrainian woman and an Iranian man. Both, perhaps, about 30.

By the way, all of this talking was in English. I never made any attempt to practice my Spanish all evening.

Elena is from Kiev in the Ukraine. She is opposed to the Russian interventionists in the eastern parts of the Ukraine and she also opposes Russia's annexation of Crimea. She has a degree in Materials Design, I think, but she was keen to talk about opportunities as a programmer so I told her a bit about what I am doing and how she might get started if she wanted to.

Amir told me that he left Iran after the Green Revolution in 2009 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iranian_Green_Movement).

I asked him how it was that the Ayatollahs there continue to hold power in Iran. He said they they actually only represent about 10% of the people but that they hold 90% of the money and power - so everyone else in marginalized.

Colette talked to an Iranian woman there at the Mundo Lingo. And this woman said she was so very happy to be out and free of all the cover-everything-up clothes that the Ayatollahs force the women to wear there.

Mundo Lingo is an interesting idea. I looked it up online and it is spreading around the world. Currently, it seems to be operating in Buenos Aires, Cologne, Geneva, La Plata, London, Melbourne and Montreal.

I wrote my son, Chris, in Christchurch about it. He manages a bar/restaurant there which a lot of international people coming in and it seems like an idea that might work there.

Eva dropped us at the Outremont Metro Station and we said goodbye to her rather sadly. She and Donna have done a lot to make our stay here in Montreal quite special. They will be missed.

*** And that brings us back to here on **Day 86**, June 26th - a Friday, when I'm writing this.

We're wrapping things up now. Just days remain and psychologically, we're ready to depart and to get over the hump of traveling and to settle into our next residence in Vancouver. In these last few days, we'll still go out and revisit a few of our favorite places.

In fact, on Saturday, **Day 87**, we'll visit the Oratoire Saint-Joseph, which is a large church we've wanted to have a look at and then, that evening, we'll return to Luca e Franco, a favorite restaurant of ours on St. Denis, and I will indulge in my final pasta Carbonara there.

Sunday morning, **Day 88**, we'll attend church again at Saint Patricks, an old Catholic church here in Montreal in which the services are given in English. A beautiful building, which I'd like to have one more look at.

By Sunday afternoon, we'll begin cleaning and packing up. Monday, **Day 89**, will see all of that completed.

When we get up on Tuesday, **Day 90**, we'll leave everything packed and ready to go atop the bed and the rest of the place will be devoid of our stuff. We'll clear out and stay out for the day and not return until the evening which will give a cleaner time to come in and do a major cleaning. That evening, we'll come back, sleep and then arise at 3 AM to head for the airport. That day, after we departed, the cleaner will return and sort out our bedding and then, that afternoon, the next tenant will arrive.

Our landlord here, Amir, has been a gem. Everything from day one has been just as he said and we could not be more pleased with the apartment or with him. Thanks, Amir!

Next stop - Vancouver, B.C. We'll be 19 stories up in a condominium tower in the the heart of downtown.

And all our swanky Vancouver apartment costs paid for by an IRA that I forgot and left behind me in California in the 1980's.

Last year, I was notified that this \$5400 USD existed and I applied for it and got it. Ain't that sweet! Spending free money is fun.

[Click to see original FB post with photos](#)