

REVIEW: The Ritz-Carlton Montreal

So Canada is the US's northern brother/sister – and most recently, after a poll was released signifying Donald Trump's lead in the presidency, one of the top Google search terms that came up was "Move to Canada" (Check it out [here](#)). I, for one, have always enjoyed skiing and snowboarding on the Western side of our northern brethren around Vancouver and in the powder-blessed mountains of Whistler, but this was my first foray into Quebec, the semi-French part of Canada. Now I say semi-french because as I soon found out, people actually speak a little bit of both, or either, or sometimes neither (that's another story).

Of course upon finding out that there was a Ritz in Montreal I decided to make a reservation. Now let me say, i've been to about ten Ritz Carlton's thus far and this one was by and far my favorite. But you'll have to excuse my french when I tell you why – it was the only one that had built in electronic bidet's and heated floors in the bathrooms.



Now you're probably looking at this thing like "Why is there Hal 9000 in my personal commode space?" Let me tell you, if you've never traveled to Japan or had the personal luxury of having your private spaces washed and dried by an electronic tool of personal hygiene then you're missing out on life!

All jokes aside, this Ritz Carlton wholly embodies the spirit of the Ritz. I arrived at the hotel pretty late after deciding my AirBnB I had booked was a bit too creepy for my taste (lost the money on that one – but totally happy to stay at the Ritz instead), and the staff at the Montreal Ritz was happy to make space for me (they have rooms blocked off for Marriott members if you ask nicely enough, and if you tell them you don't plan on keeping the room past when they need it – because then you're causing issues for other guests that are checking in later).



The lobby is a work of art, with a beautifully painted ceiling mural with backlighting and a Dom Perignon Bar that elicits the question "Why shouldn't I have some coffee, a glass of champagne, and caviar at 10AM?"



Furthermore, the rooms are decorated with that classic Ritz old-world style along with modern amenities (see above bidet reference). The rooms weren't particularly large, but they were cozy, and in the 30 degree (cold by my Southern California standards) Montreal winter I thought it was just the perfect spot to spend a few nights. Extra kudos to the electronically controlled shades and the infinitely adjustable dimmers in the room – I mean, who wants to wake up to blinding incandescent lighting when all you want is to go have a midnight tinkle.



PROS:

- Absolutely love the decor in the room. The wood flooring, the high quality finishes, the elegantly classic touches but with modernity imbued throughout.
- The champagne room and foyer area was lovely
- The brunch on Sunday's is incredible, they have quite a spread and you can eat in the indoor/outdoor atrium area which is nice on a dark winter day
- The concierge service with umbrellas at the ready and personal greetings every time you walked to the elevator – this isn't the case in every single Ritz, but at the smaller ones it's much appreciated
- I have to say, this might be my favorite Ritz to date!

CONS:

- The price is pretty high for the Ritz, and the area is a bit further than I would've liked from the shopping district, but it is centrally located for the most part

- The rooms are small but they are appointed lavishly
- Dining options other than the brunch area are limited.
The Champagne bar is fun but the dining there is subpar

SECRETS:

- Spend some time upstairs in the upper lobby, there's some sitting areas that are sort of hidden from view but overlook the downstairs foyer. Bring a drink upstairs and enjoy the view from there
- There's also a rooftop pool and they sometimes open up the floor to ceiling glass walls which allows for lounging on the rooftop – you can view all the rooftop gardens around Montreal from here



OTHER STUFF IN MONTREAL:

- Definitely visit the local St Viateur Bagel Shop, it's a 24/7 bagel shop where you can saunter in at 4AM slightly inebriated (like I was), and request bagels be tossed to you in a bag. Yes, I didn't make that up. Grab a tub of their special cream cheese and slather away!



- Just to get the vista, and to work off all those carbs, walk up Mount Royal – it's an easy 20 minute hike up a few steps with a rewarding view



The rewarding view from the top of Mount Royal



The random forest you have to hike through to get to the top of Mount Royal

- Lastly, I highly recommend the Montreal Craft Beer Tour. Do the walking tour, enjoy the exquisite microbreweries popping up all across Canada (Yup, they love their American microbrews up there), and enjoy all that poutine + beer amalgamation – a match certainly made in heaven.

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Kapalau – Maui



A panorama of the grounds



The stock photo

The island of Maui is not necessarily my favorite because of a variety of reasons. Most of those revolve around my theory that it's the neglected "child" of an island. It doesn't share as much greenery as Kauai, certain portions of the Big Island, or even the windward side of Oahu. It also doesn't have the culinary faire or the cultural sights of Oahu or the Big Island, but mostly, it's just large and barren.

My personal disjoint on the subject aside, there IS a Ritz, and a glorious one at that. The Ritz Kapalua is a massive resort, and has cascading pools, a beautiful golf course, and its very own private beach access (pic below)



The resort is fairly priced and is the perfect place to relax and hang out with family or a loved one, the rooms are beautifully appointed (albeit in the standard modern Hawaiian style of wicker, koa wood, lots of tan and whites, and Tommy Bahama inspired theme colors.

There is also a nature reserve on the resort property where you can hang out with two very affable hogs



The staff went out of their way to accommodate me when I had a late flight and offered a late 6PM checkout so that I could enjoy the pool and shower prior to my 6 hours back to LAX.

PROS:

- The resort has a lot to offer, with ancient Hawaiian burial grounds for those who like cultural artifact
- There's lots of activities such as a very well maintained volleyball, tennis, and basketball court, and whale and dolphin watching from the private beach
- The pool has multiple areas and terraces, so you aren't stuck like sardines staring at each other trying to hog some sunlight
- Looks pretty newly renovated. Some Ritz properties could use some more TLC but this one looks like it's had some recent lovin'

CONS:

- In Maui you need a rental car, and there's a ton of traffic around the Kapalua area. That aside, once you drive northwards you get to see a ton of outdoor activities to partake in, including brewery tours, wine tours, snorkeling trips, etc.
- The hotel doesn't have many dining options, but there are a few secret ones you should definitely check out

SECRETS:

- Check out the Terrace restaurant, it is downstairs below the lobby and offers an incredible brunch complete with fresh local fruit and to-die-for salmon lox
- If you go to the Alaloa lounge bar in the lobby, they'll hook you up with a bottle of your favorite champagne or wine and a cooler with which you can bring to anywhere in the hotel grounds to enjoy. Cheers to that!
- You MUST TRY THE MAHI MAHI. They grill it to perfection here. I must've turned into one at the end of the trip because I couldn't stop eating it (Yea they're kinda ugly but they grill well)



- They'll also put any drink you want into a pineapple (to be fair, many tropical resorts do this), but heck, nothing beats the original Hawaiian pineapple – mostly

because it's grown in that nutrient rich volcanic soil



OTHER STUFF IN MAUI:

- I highly recommend renting a car and just going off the beaten path to explore. Maui is known for little hiking spots and waterfalls (Take a look at Nemo Falls below) and Blowhole.
- Check out this website Maui Guidebook for more detailed info on the island.



