



*L'Auberge
Saint-Gabriel
salmon as art.*

Exquisite Food, Intriguing Backstory

6 The history of the building that houses **L'Auberge Saint-Gabriel** alone would make this Old Montreal landmark worth a visit. Built as a two-story house by a French soldier in 1688, it became the first inn in North America and, later, the first establishment to be granted a liquor license under British rule. In recent decades the site languished as a tourist trap—until it was bought by Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Laliberté and pop star Garou,

who transformed it into an Ali Baba's cave of contemporary art, complete with a spinal column of a whale lit to dramatic effect. Under the stewardship of the Michelin-starred Provençal chef Éric Gonzalez, Auberge Saint-Gabriel has evolved into Montreal's most satisfying combination of atmosphere and culinary cred—a place to sit back and enjoy such solid classics as homemade charcuterie and aged-on-premises beef in historic surroundings.



The Big in Japan brasserie always hops.

Culture-Convergence Hangout

11 Like its location, Boulevard St. Laurent, where Montreal's traditionally French-speaking east side meets the historically Anglo west, the brasserie **Big in Japan** occupies a happy interzone among cultures. Co-owners André Nguyen and Julie Bisson have created what could pass for a hipster *izakaya* (drinking establishment with nibbles) on a Tokyo side street. Display cases are filled with lovingly labeled Godzilla and Astro

Boy paraphernalia. Patrons sit at cozy tables or on chrome stools fronting orange and yellow linoleum countertops salvaged from nearby dive bars and french fry stands. In this Japanese brasserie, named for a "synthpop" song performed by Alphaville, there is no sushi, just comforting food and bracing drink. Deep-fried chicken wings in caramelized soy sauce, for example, are excellent paired with beer, sake, *shochu* (similar to vodka), or *umeshu* (a sweet-sour liqueur made from unripened fruit).



Wine serves as the leitmotif at handsomely lit Pullman.

Going the Wine Bar Route

20 Along with its working-class taverns, Montreal's *bars à vin* get high marks for their sips, nibbles, and ambiance. But these wine bars aren't just for oenophiles; patrons who prefer beer or spirits won't be disappointed.

Pullman—occupying a three-story townhouse perfectly located on Avenue du Parc for a bite before an evening of entertainment in the Quartier des Spectacles—offers 300 wines, with a selection

of 50 available by the glass. Sommeliers are on tap to help you navigate the list. For those who like a little of this and a little of that, the menu includes “trios”: samplings of three wines, two ounces each. Should you need sustenance (maybe that's a stretch), the kitchen turns out grilled cheddar sandwiches with port, sea bass carpaccio, foie gras and smoked meat terrine, bison burgers, and more. Menu options also include a variety of cheeses and desserts.