



#25190 — Hiking in Colorful Quebec

**A Special Journey
in Montreal, Sherbrooke and Gatineau-Ottawa**

From September 21 to October 4, 2025

JOURNAL



Hello, hello,

Whenever I travel, I like to take notes in a journal so that I will remember who I have met, what I have done, and what I have seen on a daily basis. Long after I return from the trip, I really appreciate these notes and they help me to remember and relive (live again!) the journey.

This is the main reason behind this journey's journal written by the ambassadors who also shared their pictures. It offers the reader a glimpse into the diverse activities that the ambassadors AND the various participating club members lived together.

Enjoy reading,

Sylvie Limoges

Note 1: You can print this document.

Note 2: Some hyperlinks are included in this document. They lead to pages published in English where available.





Ambassadors		
Joseph Rexford Apotey	FF Trinity Club of Legion	Ghana
Peggy Best	FF Spokane	USA
Tom Best	FF Spokane	USA
Nancy Draayer	FF Western Michigan	USA
Lisa Fisher	FF Michigan	USA
Amina Giles	FF Spokane	USA
Barry Giles	FF Spokane	USA
John Kaiser	FF Cheyenne	USA
Maureen Kind	FF Wisconsin-Madison	USA
Leanne Richbourg	FF Raleigh	USA
Michael Stone	FF Richmond	USA
Coordinators		
Sylvie Limoges	FF Montreal	Canada
Ginette Bousquet	FF Sherbrooke Region	Canada
Françoise Lecrouart	FF National Capital Region	Canada
Supporters		
There is a long list of FF members from clubs who supported this special journey. Many thanks to all of them.		



Sunday, September 21st - by Leanne

The Ambassadors arrived today from the US and Africa. The first event of the journey was a delicious dinner at the Italian restaurant known as Il Fornetto. This restaurant is located in the Lachine area of Montreal, alongside the Canal Lachine. Some ambassadors walked through the park across the street prior to entering the restaurant.

Monday, September 22nd - by Tom

The day started with us gathering at the metro station Mont-Royal from the various locations of our hosts. It was all successful and everyone made it on time. From our meeting place at the Metro we began to walk up the street towards [Mont-Royal](#). Along the way we passed many interesting shops, restaurants and some amazing murals. We then walked to the monument for Sir George-Etienne Cartier. Sylvie provided information about him before we headed up the hill. At that point we entered the forest following our guide, Danny. There were many trails up the mountain but he led us with unerring skill to the top. There was a large viewing area where we looked out over the large city of Montreal. It really took this view for most of us to realize just how big the city is. At that point it was back to trails and this time we walked to the base of the large cross that looked out over the city. It was a very imposing structure that has lights that light up at night. On we climbed to the top where the views of the city were even better. There is a large building and parking lot at the top so there were quite a few people who drove, rather than walked. One of the most amazing sights was a mural of Leonard Cohen which took up the entire side of a large skyscraper. Easily visible even from that great distance.



Then it was time to start going back down the hill, but on a different trail. We came out onto a very big park with sculptures and large pond. It was there that we had lunch. Nicely organized because, when we walked in, the sandwiches were all made and ready for us. A cookie for dessert and we were on our way.

We continued our walk but this time on city streets through a very, and I mean very, well-to-do neighborhood. The homes in this area could easily be called mansions and were quite imposing. As we continued to walk up the hill, we came to another viewing area looking out onto another part of the city.

From there it was back into the woods and a climb to the backside of a most incredible church. It is called the Saint-Joseph Oratory and is immense in size and beauty. We walked through the sanctuary which was, again, very large with some incredible architecture and art. However, unlike many large older church buildings this one was quite modern, full of light with a huge organ in the back. Would love to be there when it was being played. When we walked out to the front of the [Saint-Joseph Oratory](#) we had yet another tremendous view of Montreal. We climbed down the many steps to the bottom and followed Sylvie to a location that left us all sobered and sad.



Back in 1989 a troubled young man entered a classroom for students of engineering, had all the boys leave and then shot and killed 14 young female students. A *horrible tragedy* that was immortalized in a small strip of land that had the names of each of the girls in a decorative form with the year of their birth and 1989, the year of their death. The sadness of such a meaningless, horrible crime resonated in all of us.

We were then back on the streets of the city heading to the metro station. We stopped at a bakery shop called Première Moisson and Sylvie, very generously, treated us to a pastry and drink. We were all pretty tired from being on our feet all day and enjoyed both the break and the treat. After that it was back to the metro Côte-des-

neiges with everyone parting to different locations.

It was a full day with tremendous views, incredible structures, great exercise and good company. Our thanks to our fearless leader, Sylvie, our intrepid guide, Danny, as well as the important history provided by Bernard.



Tuesday, September 23rd - by Amina

We woke up to a steady rain. The weatherman said it would stop at 10:15; we hoped he was correct, but dressed for rain just in case he might be wrong. The group gathered at the downtown metro station Champ-de-Mars at 10:00 for a tour of [Old Montreal](#).



We put on our rain coats, opened our umbrellas, and walked to the city hall for an informative half-hour tour. Next, we departed on a walk through the streets of Old Montreal. Fortunately, the forecast was correct and the rain stopped just as we began.

During our walk we stopped at Chateau Ramezay Historic site and Museum. Built in 1705 it is one of the oldest historical landmarks in Old Montreal. On the side of the building is a French style garden called the Governor's Garden. It was recreated in the year 2000 to emulate the gardens of nobility in 18th century in Montreal. We then proceeded towards the beautiful Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel and the breathtaking [Notre-Dame Basilica](#). The Basilica is renowned throughout the country for its Neo-Gothic architecture and stunning beauty. We spent a good amount of time inside the Basilica, taking in the beauty and absorbing the peaceful atmosphere.



After free time for shopping and lunch we visited the Old Montreal Royal Bank. Built in 1928 it was once the tallest structure in all of Canada and the first building in Montreal that was taller than the Basilica.

After the tour we returned to the metro station Square Victoria-OACI for the journey back to our host's homes and readied ourselves for the evening's small group dinners. Our group went to Aline's home and enjoyed a wonderful dinner and lovely conversations.

Wednesday, September 24th - by Michael

I really didn't want to get up when my alarm went off this morning. And I was not happy about such an early start to the day. I was already feeling a bit stiff & sore from the first few days of hiking. But my spirits picked up during the drive to [Mont-Tremblant](#) as I glimpsed some brilliantly colorful trees in between mini-naps in René's car.

When we arrived, I was surprised how warm it felt in the sun. So I was grateful that much of the hike was in the shade. It was a very challenging trail, probably the hardest that I can remember hiking. As we trekked, I wondered if Sylvie's ancestors included billy goats! I was hard pressed to keep up the pace on the trail.

I was very glad that I brought hiking poles with me. They were a gift from my older son last Xmas. It was my first time using them, and I doubt if I could have hiked the entire route without them.

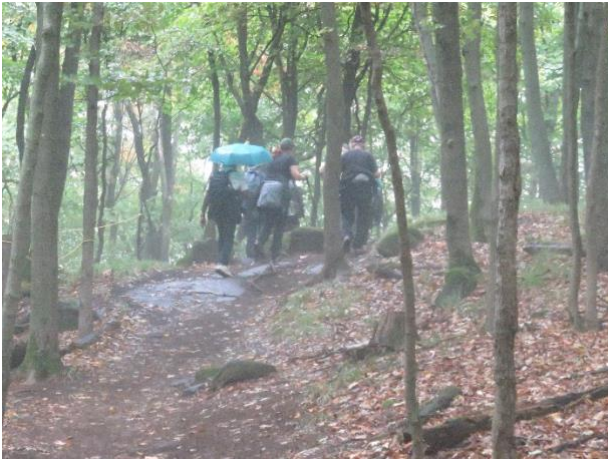


I was grateful for the gorgeous weather, good fellowship among the hikers, and the fabulous views of nature.



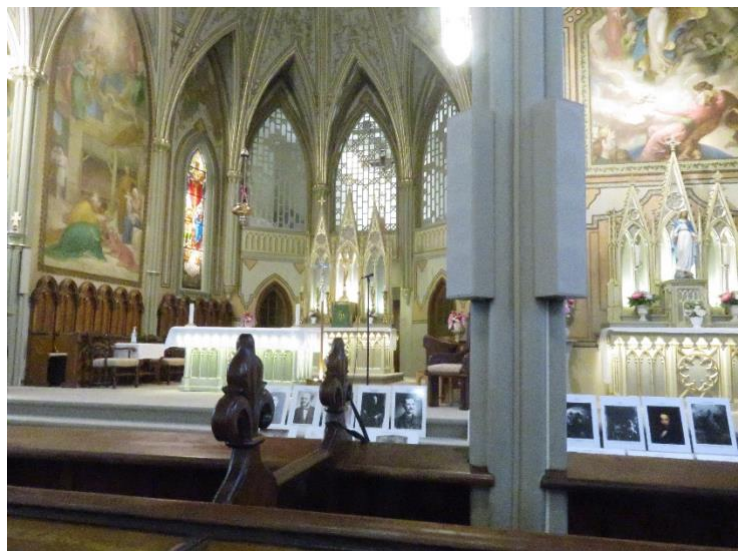
Thursday, September 25th - by John

The South Shore clan was determined not to let a steady drizzle keep us off Mont Saint-Hilaire at 414 meters. This area is the [Gault Nature Reserve](#) and has been owned by McGill University since 1958. By consensus we chose Burned Hill Trail for the ascent. It was a relatively easy 3.7-mile trail with a steady climb up then a quick drop down to picturesque lac Hertel. In total we were on 5 trails, Burned Hill, Dieppe, Rocky Loop 1, Purple Buckle and Rocky Loop 2. As we neared the lake, we were joined by 30+ 3rd and 4th graders on an outing. Their enthusiasm to be outdoors was enjoyed by all. Upon returning to the Alice Johannsen Welcome Pavillion for McGill University we shared a lunch of sandwiches or croissants.



We continued our afternoon with cider tasting at [Verger Petit et Fils apple orchard](#) then on to Chocolaterie La Cabosse d'Or where we contributed to the local economy in a generous way. Our final stop in Mont-Saint-Hilaire was Église Saint-Hilaire where two ladies from the parish explained the architecture, windows and history of the church. It was a beautiful church enjoyed by all.

Returning to Longueuil Michael Stone and I took our wonderful hosts René Bourassa & Céline Tremblay to Silva Grillades for a wonderful Portuguese dinner. We ended our stay with a lively game of Five Crowns.



Friday, September 26th - by Lisa

We said goodbye to our Montreal hosts and made our way to Sherbrooke. Most of the group traveled to Sherbrooke by bus, but Leanne and Michael as well as Nancy and I drove. We had a bit of adventure finding our host's house when Google maps took us to a nonexistent address due to a mistake in the city name provided. After arriving we spent a little time getting to know our hosts before the welcome dinner. The potluck dinner took place at a member's clubhouse. We enjoyed a delicious variety of food and wine as well as socializing with the Sherbrooke members. The Sherbrooke Club president, Ginette Bousquet, gave a welcome speech and gave each ambassador a nice winter hat with a light, club logo, and pin. It was a fun get-together.



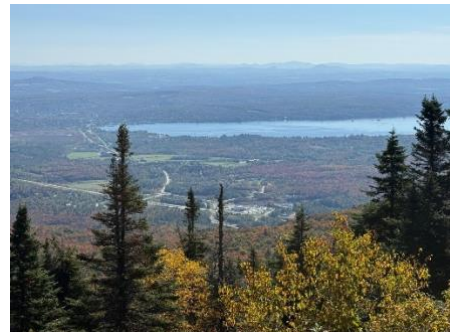
Saturday, September 27th - by Peggy



Tom and I had a nice breakfast with our host, Micheline. Pierre, Joseph's host, picked us up at 8:30 a.m. We all met at a mall (8:45 a.m.) to gather and organize our drive. It was a beautiful, scenic drive to Mt. Orford (about 45 minutes travel time).

[Mt. Orford](#) is a popular place for skiing in the winter, hiking at other times. A ski lift can take you to the top, but we hiked to the Summit. (20 of us started our hike at 10 a.m.) There were many beautiful viewpoints, photo opportunities, and times to catch our breath and have a snack. We could see the White Mountains and the US in the distance. At the Summit there were picnic tables where we gathered for a sack lunch (sandwich and pasta salad.) We took a few group photos. Instead of hiking, we rode the gondola down the mountain — a long, scenic ride with beautiful [fall colors](#)! (About 12:45).

Along with Joseph, Pierre offered to show us some other sights on the way home. We drove through the resort town of Magog which sits on Lake Magog. There was an inviting waterfront park, tour boat, train, bike riding, picnic areas, marina, also a pretty Main Street with shops and restaurants. Next, we drove through Lennoxville and Bishop University. Students were everywhere in their purple home color supporting a soccer game in progress.



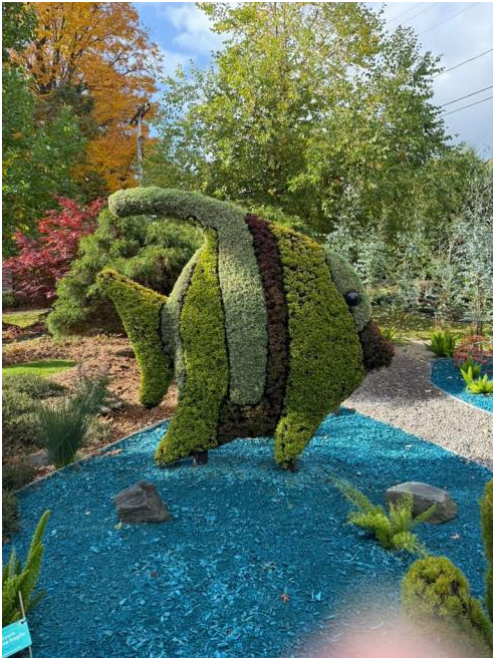
The buildings of the campus were in the British architectural style-stately with red brick.



Pierre gave us a quick tour of Sherbrooke, pointing out interesting sights. Once returned to our host home, we enjoyed a relaxing time in her garden, had a leisurely walk along the river and finally a nice dinner at home with our host, Micheline.

Wonderful full day, perfect weather, beautiful scenery.

Sunday, September 28th - arrival in Sherbrooke



It looks like today is the first day of this journey where we can take our time! Why? A full morning free with our home host. Each of us did something different and, most importantly, we had time to relax and chat.

In the afternoon, we all enjoyed a guided [tour of Sherbrooke by greeters](#). It was entertaining to discover some of its history and culture through murals and fun to play “find and seek” for characters and objects. This contributed to make the walk enjoyable.

We all finished the day having dinner with our home host.



Monday, September 29th - by Barry

Another sunny but cooler morning awaited us as we arrived at the [Park du Mont-Bellevue](#) on a mountainside in Sherbrooke. Upon arrival we received a short talk from Gilles and learned that the land the park is located on is jointly owned and maintained by the city and the nearby University of Sherbrooke. This eco-friendly park is open to all members of the community and is used for year-round outdoor activities such as hiking, mountain biking, and snowshoeing. There is also a small downhill ski area complete with a chairlift. After the talk we took a beautiful hike through the colorful deciduous forest and witnessed outstanding views of Sherbrooke and the mountains beyond.



On the way to our afternoon destination, located in the mountains on the opposite side of town, we stopped for lunch at the Normandin restaurant. Here we fueled up and re-hydrated for our afternoon activities. Here we had an opportunity to try poutine, a Quebec specialty consisting of gravy and cheese curds over a bed of French fries.



The site of the "[Sanctuaire De Beauvoir](#)," a field-stone-constructed rustic chapel, is located on a mountainside on the opposite side of Sherbrooke from where we spent the morning. This peaceful retreat offered marvelous views and hiking trails through a serene landscape graced with benches for contemplation and statues depicting Christian scenes. There is also an outdoor chapel and areas set aside for family picnicking. After a short talk on the history of the site members of our group were free to visit the chapel, wander the grounds, and take in the scenery. In the evening we finished our time in Sherbrooke with a farewell dinner at the Baton Rouge Restaurant where we said our final goodbyes to our new friends from Sherbrooke.



Tuesday, September 30th - by Sylvie

After four nights in Sherbrooke, it is now time to go to the region of Ottawa, ON, and Gatineau, QC, for the last portion of this journey. As I did to come from Montreal to Sherbrooke, I accompany seven of the ambassadors on the bus: Amina, Barry, John, Joseph, Maureen, Peggy, and Tom. Lisa and Nancy travel by car, and Leanne and Michael in a Recreational Vehicle (RV). The first section of the itinerary to our final destination is the bus going from Sherbrooke to Montreal. I am very happy to realize that there is no delay in the arrival time in Montreal, meaning that we have at least two hours of free time.

First, each ambassador gets a token to secure their luggage in a locker. We all laugh when one of us put the token in the wrong locker!

During the stop in Montreal, I had planned to walk around the Grande bibliothèque ("Great Library") of Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (Quebec Library and National Archives) across the street from the bus terminal. This is the largest French library in North America and is located in a very nice building. After the visit, I manage to show to the group the bell tower of the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) on the St-Denis street. We then walk on that street, where many festivals take place in the summer. We see a lot of restaurants and shops.

Back to the bus terminal, I make sure that we all board the bus going from Montreal to the train station in Ottawa. Upon arrival in Ottawa, we all meet with our home hosts for dinner.

Wednesday, October 1st - by Maureen

Getting to know Ottawa on a normal day: postal workers are striking because the government has decided to phase out home delivery; the nurses have arrived en masse at Parliament to protest wages and working conditions and we encounter some Canadians with anti-Trump signs and another who counts herself a member of the Beaver Brigade protesting Russia's war on Ukraine.

Françoise, Joseph and I are lucky enough to take a bus downtown so we don't have the problem of parking. Our group boards a double-decker bus and the ride gives us an [overview of Ottawa](#): museums, embassies, the Mint, the Canadian Mounties' Training Grounds, tin-roofed Cathedral Notre Dame, the University of Ottawa (founded in 1848 as a bilingual Catholic college) and the Aviation and Space Museum. As we get off the bus, the Nurses' Union is assembling for a rally in front of Parliament. Across the street the War Memorial is guarded by 2 soldiers. It is dedicated to those who fought in the First World War, the Boer War, the Second World War, the Korean War and in Afghanistan.

On our way to lunch we wander through the elegant [Chateau Laurier](#), peeking into the ballroom. It was one of the Canadian Pacific hotels, built along train routes to encourage tourism across the country. We hear the story of the theft and recovery of a portrait of Winston Churchill.



Lunch is at the [By Market](#), a covered market with shops outside in the streets around it. After a group picture of us perched on the OTTAWA sign, which celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada, we enter the market via the Maison de Provence. Everyone spreads around to choose their lunch. For dessert Françoise and I declare Canadian-American friendship by sharing an Obama cookie (the one he chose when visiting)

We get up close to the Rideau Canal, dug with picks and shovels by soldiers under the command of Lieutenant By in 1826. It is 200 km long, the longest in the world, with 49 locks running from Ottawa to Kingston. We ramble down one of the locks.

We walk across the Alexander Bridge over the Ottawa River. It has nice bike lanes! The boundary between Quebec and Ontario runs down the middle of the Ottawa River. I marvel at the swirling beige wave of the History museum where we can see a few of the Totems in their very large collection and notice the canoe and canoe paddle references in the architecture. The War Museum points with its roof across the river to the Parliament buildings, suggesting their good relationship. Françoise told me that. It was an intentional part of city planning. I notice a hydroelectric installation on the Ottawa River. We walk through what used to be an industrial area with a memorial remnant of a sulfide factory left standing.



We come back across the bridge and some tall skinny reflecting buildings going up catch my eye. Then we walk through the seat of the [Canadian government](#), the Supreme Court building, the West Parliament for the House of Commons, the center under refurbishing and the East building for the Senate. The library, the only part that survived the 1916 fire because someone closed a door, is best seen from the Ottawa River side.

There are beautiful plantings of lovely coordinated flowers throughout the down town. There are also pennants on the street lights for each Province which picture a bird in a landscape: a Loon for Ontario, A Snowy Owl for Quebec. A fountain on the Parliament grounds is ringed by the flags of the provinces and their date of entry into the Canadian Confederation. All the government buildings and parks we have seen today are managed by the National Capital Commission. I notice that the stop signs which had only “arrêt” on them in Québec have now added “stop”, but as I look in the neighborhoods on the way home, this is not true of all of them. Our last stop is at the Women are Persons monument commemorating the 5 women from Alberta who in 1929 won a court case that changed the legal definition of “person” to include women. The monument includes an empty chair, inviting anyone to join the celebratory tea party.

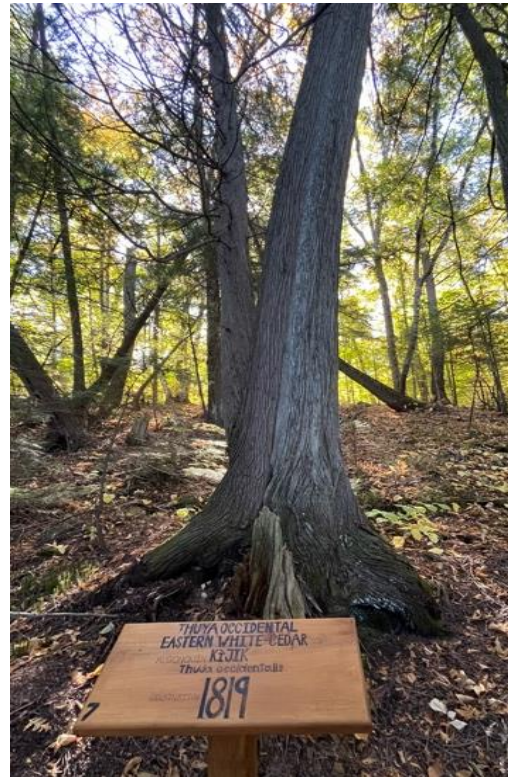
Before leaving for home Françoise, Joseph and I walk through a nearby pedestrian street stopping at some souvenir shops. I get a box of maple cookies for my French group and Joseph seeks presents for his grand-kids. Then we take the bus back home and get ready to go out to eat.

We go to the Glebe, a nearby neighborhood of local shops and restaurants. We enter the middle-eastern restaurant, the Jericho. It is a work of art! Over the 42 years the owner has been here, he has covered every inch of walls, ceilings and tables with intricately painted “Persian/Moorish” designs and mosaics. A delicious meal is followed by a stop at an ice cream shop for dessert.

A wonderful day in a beautiful capital city!

Thursday, October 2nd - by Nancy

In the morning, we met at the visitor center of the [Réserve écologique de la Forêt-la-Blanche](#) or the [Forêt-la-Blanche Ecological Reserve](#). This was a beautiful old growth forest and some of the special trees were marked. The trails were hilly and there were lake views.



Lunch was at Le Bistro in Montebello. Montebello is a quaint town with historic places like [Chateau Montebello](#) and Manoir Papineau. We were met by Diane Roy who gave us a guided tour of the area. This was one of my favorite days.

Friday, October 3rd - by Francine



The first activity of the day was in the [Gatineau Park](#) where we hiked the Lauriault trail. We ate the provided lunch at the top where we had a good view on the area. After the hike, many of us enjoyed ice cream.

We then drove to the Governor General's Residence and walked on its grounds. Some also went to see [Rideau Falls](#).



To close the day AND the journey, there was a farewell dinner in a room reserved just for us. The club's president presented a short speech highlighting that we come as strangers but we leave as friends.

