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# (another) city



Shelburne Farms

## Burlington is a great getaway

by LORRAINE CARPENTER

Most American travel destinations fall into one of three categories: tropical hotspots, urban metropolises and sleazy vice-satisfying getaways. Few vacationers think of small U.S. towns as vacation-worthy, and probably with good reason, but small cities like Burlington, VT are pretty idyllic.

For one thing, it's only about 90 minutes from Montreal by car, and at most 2.5 hours by bus. Vermont's progressive ethos, excess of green space and the near-Maritime levels of laid-back charm and kindness among the populace give it the feel of the West Coast without the flight cost. And while Montreal's recession-esque chill can be depressing, Burlington is vibrant and hopping, even when the students have gone home for the summer. (It also has a thriving weekly paper, *Seven Days*, a must-read for visitors.)



Grilled squid at Bleu

What tends to drive most tourists to Burlington are two things that we love here at home: food and beer. With a focus on local sourcing and the proximity of the New England Culinary Institute, Burlington has a surprising number of very fine fine-dining options. Among them is Hen of the Wood, a spot so renowned that some foodies time their Vermont getaways around Hen reservations (which are not easy to come by,

though last-minute bar seats for dinner or late-night oyster snacking are sometimes attainable).

On the same block, the Courtyard Burlington Harbor Marriott hotel restaurant, Bleu, specializes in North Atlantic cuisine, with an emphasis on seafood — both the lobster roll and pan-roasted redfish with baby beet risotto were excellent. In the neighbouring [Hotel Vermont](#), we had equal success at the Juniper restaurant: chevre gnocchi with mushroom ragout, peas and black truffle, and a hemp seed whole grain burger. (Quick, easy and cheap food also exists in Burlington, with pizza options on the main commercial drag, Church Street, and hot and cold meals at scrappy, colourful spots like Radio Deli, who claim to make the best meatball subs around — I can't vouch for that, but their breakfast sandwiches are pretty killer.)

Speaking of Juniper, we were accompanied at dinner by Hotel Vermont's friendly beer concierge, who explained just how seriously Vermonters take their local beer. We tried a few fine brews in-house, and talked about the multiple prize-winning Heady Topper, a double IPA brewed by Alchemist. This stuff reportedly flies off shelves to people who've been lining up for hours, but after buying a can at a bar later that night, I believe it's best reserved for real IPA connoisseurs.

On day one of our 2.5-day trip, we went on a bike and brew tour organized by Hotel Vermont. We rode south on vintage bikes to a strip that feels a little like the Lachine Canal, visiting the Switchback brewery, who make the state's signature ale — you'll find it on tap everywhere. The ale was a highlight of our sampler "flight," but the citra pilsner was a refreshing reminder of local blanche beers, a summer favourite of mine.

We hit the road again for a shorter trek to Zero Gravity, a new brew pub with a beautiful terrace. My personal highlight there was the Bretthead, an IPA with *Brettanomyces* yeast. It's also a 6.1 per cent alcohol beer, which I didn't know at the time, but I managed to remain upright on my bike en route to our next stop, Citizen Cider. Though it wouldn't be the choice of purists, heavy as it is with gingery goodness, but the Dirty Mayor cider was fabulous, a crisp cap to a cool activity that many Montrealers would love.



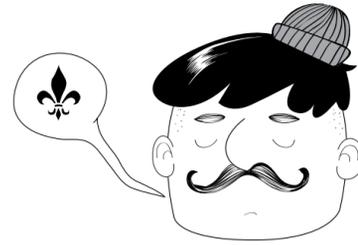
A flight at Zero Gravity

The next day, we drove a mere 20 minutes to Shelburne Farms, on the shores of Lake Champlain. It's primarily an educational institution where children learn about animals, farming and sustainable development — kids were all around as we met and pet free-range cows, baby goats, chickens and pigs. The dairy farm produces food to feed staff, stock the on-site food cart and nearby shop (where we sampled and bought a whole bunch of superior cheese) as well as occupants and staff of the inn on the same property, just a few minutes' drive away. The inn was once a 19th century mansion, and much of the original aesthetic has been maintained on the ground floor lobby, library, restaurant and garden.

As beautiful as the inn was, Hotel Vermont is the best hotel I've ever experienced, and I've stayed at a five-star, which this is not. It's a 3.5-star, with no pool or room service, but that's more than compensated for by its other features: a warm, rustic yet modern aesthetic, cosy banquet seating in the lobby (where a pre-Burlington Jazz Fest show was unrolling one night) and communal coffee/tea-making areas on every floor, stocked with fresh fruit and water at all times, and with different sweet and savoury snacks twice a day. Built in 2013, its name borrowed from a hotel that used to exist in the middle of town, Hotel Vermont is also eco-friendly — of course it is.

All this, only two hours away.

## :quebonics



by MALCOLM FRASER

Reader MK, a prodigal Montrealer trying to re-immers herself in the local lingo, writes: "There is one Quebec word I hear all the time that I would love to know the background to: **la patente**."

It's a good question, though one to which the answer is hard to pin down precisely. A *patente* in French-from-France is, well, a patent. Over here, it's used to refer to something for which the user doesn't know the actual name—a whatchamacallit, thingy or whatsit. (Or alternately, a *machin*, *truc* or *j'sais-pas-trop-quoi*.)

But why or how the expression came to be is less clear. Last year's edition of the prestigious *Robert* dictionary added the term *patenteux*, meaning a person who creatively solves problems using whatever means available. According to the website Du Français au Français, a resource used to explain the vernacular of the Québécois to their French colonial counterparts, *patenteux* begat the Quebec sense of *patente*, though the site doesn't list a source for this assertion. Though there's clearly still some deeper investigation to do, I did learn through the site about the verb *patenter* (to improvise a quick solution) and the variation *patente à gosse* (a useless item).

Last month's column, in which I expressed confusion at the name of classic Québécois comedy-rock group Rock et Belles Oreilles, provoked a veritable deluge of response. Several readers wrote in to point out that the band was named after "Roquet Belles Oreilles," the French name for 1950s Hanna-Barbera cartoon character Huckleberry Hound.

While I appreciate this historical knowledge, it still doesn't answer the question of why someone would look at that name and think "Hey, there's the comedy band name inspiration I've been looking for!" But it's challenging enough trying to explain Quebec expressions to anglos. Quebec humour is perhaps beyond my ability to grasp.

Anglos, any expressions vexing you? Francos, is there a detail I've missed or something that us anglos need to understand? Let me know: malcolmfraser74@gmail.com

Illustration by: Evan Mehyk www.coursaofthemultiples.com

## :stay ostentatious

Spare me your Two Solitudes talk. It's a lazy catch-all for any perceived irreconcilable difference between anglos and francos in this province that should have been retired generations ago.

The people who keep using it tend to be either wistful pre-101 types or ROC uni students who just got here a week ago and are desperately trying to fit in. But it still gets used, a lot. It's an easy way to close a conversation without having to say anything meaningful.

Some anglo was told to "en français SVP" by a store clerk? TWO SOLITUDES. A poll comes out saying anglos don't celebrate St-Jean? TWO SOLITUDES. South Shore mayor wants unilingual council meeting banter? TWO SOLITUDES. You don't know who Marie-Mai is? TWO SOLITUDES.

We can't get together. Might as well give up and return to our respective bunkers. We gave this shared society thing the old college try. Better put a chalk line down St-Laurent Brady Bunch-style and punish those who dare cross.

Holy crap. Enough SVP. The Two Solitudes term came from a book in 1945, and it has somehow stuck

around through the Quiet Revolution, Bill 101, two referendums, biker gang wars, the Charbonneau Commission, three Habs dynasties, an influx of immigrants from many fucking solitudes and a proposed values charter to rein them all in.

Sure, there are still parts of town that lean one way or the other, but we've been mingling and crossing the streams successfully on a daily basis for a very long time. Modern Quebec society isn't split down the middle: post-101 babies are completely bilingual and there are more than enough allophones who speak three or four languages. (By our logic, Congo has over 200 solitudes.)

Solitudes would imply we exclusively stick with our own kind. We don't. There are cultural differences, to be sure, like I didn't shed tears of joy when the Beau Dommage ruelle recently opened. But I can belt out Offenbach at karaoke night.

The tired Two Solitudes expression needs to ride off into the sunset. It's reductive, and it disrespects so many Montrealers who don't trace their lineage back to either France or Britain. Sure, there are anglos and francos who haven't shaken their prejudices, but they shouldn't speak for the rest of us, who are so fucking over it.

Can we move on? Please? And if you're still stuck in solitude-mode, can you please go out and make some new friends? They won't bite.

## :persona mtl

If you're ever out after dark in Montreal, you've definitely seen Wax.

The punk rocker has been a fixture of the DIY and underground music scene since 1979, when he was a spiky-haired youth playing guitar for punk and hardcore bands like S.C.U.M. Even if you haven't seen him on stage performing with the Bombs, Hexapheen or the odd reunion show with Unruted, you've likely seen his signature 1985 Cadillac hearse parked outside one of the venues where he works to help bands and DIY organizers to put on gigs and events without breaking the bank. Over the years Wax has put on shows at Playhouse (RIP), Katacombes, Café Chaos, Foufounes Électriques and Piranha Bar, plus venues of Montreal past like Ballouse, Saphir, Jupiter Room and Pub Jacques Cartier. We caught up with Wax recently to ask him more about his life in the underground.

Cult MTL: How did you get started with booking and promoting shows?

Wax: When I started playing music back in '79, there were not too many clubs to play in Montreal, especially for punk rockers. We decided to rent a place downtown to practise and we started doing our own shows. In the late '70s and early '80s, everything was cheap. The rent was cheap, even cigarettes were cheap! A pack of cigarettes back then was a buck.

You would go to any place on St-Laurent or St-Denis or Parc Avenue and you would spot something over a store or something, so you know that after 6 p.m. it's empty so you can make as much noise as you can. In Old Montreal, there was no neighbourhood around, so we could make noise. We started doing shows there and we had bands from Europe coming down to play because it was cheap. We didn't charge anybody to rent. It started like that.



I worked for most of the clubs downtown. I kept all the posters and fliers of each show I went to see or produced.

Cult MTL: Ever think of doing an exhibition with all of those posters?

Wax: I want to do a book about it. I started collecting these posters and fliers in '79, mainly of the punk scene and goth scene. I'm going to do a book as soon as I have time—right now I'm still trying to re-book Playhouse stuff left and right. When I started at Playhouse, I started concentrating on punk and rockabilly. At the same time, queers were coming in, and nobody wanted to touch them with a 10-foot pole back then, in 2006–2007. I couldn't believe that a big night like Faggity-Ass-Friday could have trouble finding a space because they were queer. So I said, "Yeah, come on in, we'll have fun and fuck the rest." That's how we started working with the queer community.

Cult MTL: What's your main goal when booking shows?

Wax: I want to keep helping bands to have places to play for free. It's a big problem right now, even small places are starting to charge. It's killing the scene right now. It's very hard. I just want people to have a good time for the short time we're on this planet.