

# CANADA

# UNDERGROUND MONTREAL

In winter, the temperature in Montreal is minus eight centigrade! So it's really good that there is another city where it's warm and cosy<sup>1</sup> – underground<sup>2</sup>. Montreal has the world's longest system of underground pedestrian<sup>3</sup> passages. They link<sup>4</sup> shops and offices, banks, hotels and restaurants, universities and museums, metro and railway stations. They are all connected by tunnels and interior walkways<sup>5</sup>. Montrealers could enter a metro station in the morning to go to work, have lunch, look at some public art, attend a concert, and go home for dinner without going outside into the cold.

## THE VISION

Vincent de Pasuito Ponte (1919-2005) had the vision of this underground city. He was born in Boston, the only child of a rich Italian merchant<sup>6</sup> family, and studied architecture in Rome but changed to urban planning. After his degree, Ponte started working for the firm of one of his professors, I.M. Pei, the architect who created the Louvre pyramid. But his 'multi-level, interconnected city' was difficult to sell to planners<sup>7</sup> and developers<sup>8</sup>. Did the people of Montreal want to move their city underground? Over time, more and more buildings were connected to

it. A shopping mall<sup>9</sup> was built below Christ Church cathedral as part of the network, to generate money for restoration work for the cathedral.

## TODAY

Today, the largest and most famous segment is between the Peel and Place des Arts metro stations on the Green Line and the Lucien-L'Allier and Place d'Armes stations on the Orange Line.

Montreal is in Quebec, Canada's bilingual – and very French – province. When the network<sup>10</sup> was renamed in 2004, it was decided to use the French word for network: 'réseau' (but abbreviated to the homophone 'RÉSO').

The network is air-conditioned, well-lit<sup>11</sup> and protected by CCTV<sup>12</sup>. And every year, a public art festival celebrates this underground space through art (see interview). As a visitor, you might not even notice<sup>13</sup> you're in the network, because it's an integral part of the city's urban infrastructure. If you come in winter, you'll be one of half a million people who use the underground city every day!

## GLOSSARY

- 9 SHOPPING MALL:** centro comercial
- 10 NETWORK:** red
- 11 WELL-LIT:** bien iluminado
- 12 CCTV (CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION):** circuito cerrado de cámaras de seguridad
- 13 TO NOTICE:** darse cuenta
- 14 MAIN AIM:** objetivo principal
- 15 NON-PROFIT:** sin ánimo de lucro
- 16 TREND:** tendencia
- 17 DOWNTOWN:** centro
- 18 LOBBY:** vestíbulo
- 19 TO SET UP:** montar
- 20 PERFORMANCE:** actuación, espectáculo
- 21 AMAZING:** increíble, asombroso
- 22 TO PICK:** escoger
- 23 TO WALK ALONG:** caminar, pasear
- 24 PROUD:** orgulloso

## GLOSSARY

- 1 COSY:** agradable
- 2 UNDERGROUND:** subterráneo
- 3 PEDESTRIAN:** peatón
- 4 TO LINK:** unir
- 5 WALKWAY:** pasarela
- 6 MERCHANT:** comerciante
- 7 PLANNER:** urbanista
- 8 DEVELOPER:** promotor inmobiliario