

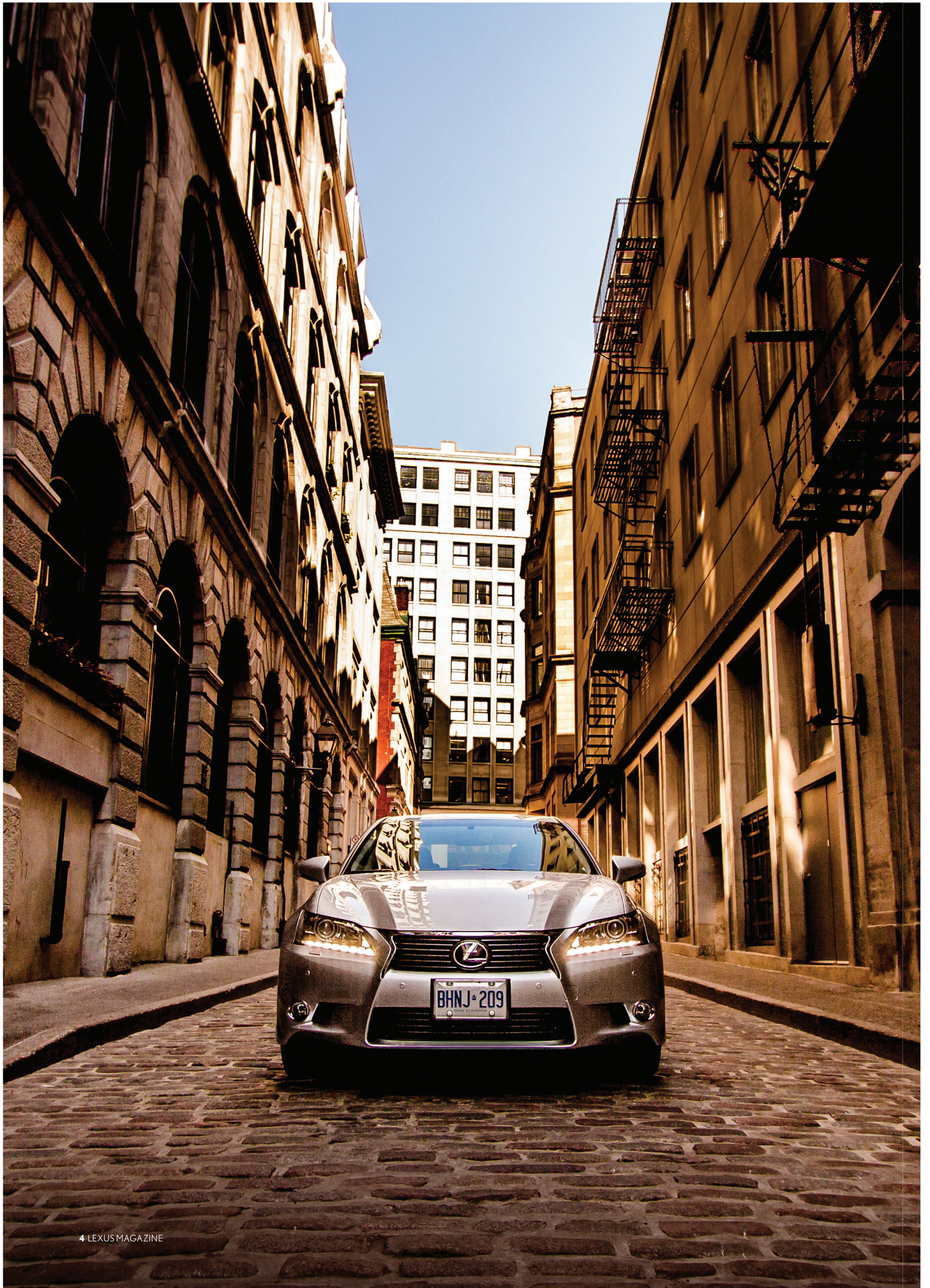
PROVINCE TO PROVINCE

The 2013 GS parks outside the Canada Aviation and Space Museum.

CRUISING CANADA—FROM OTTAWA TO MONTREAL—
IN THE 2013 LEXUS GS

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Exploring the cobbled streets of old Montreal. Inset: Crossing Quebec's Laurentian Mountains (left); inside Ottawa's Byward Market.

AS THE EDITOR of The Lexus Enthusiast weblog, I've had the great fortune to have test driven an array of Lexus models over the years. Recently, however, Lexus offered me the chance to not only try out the latest Lexus GS 350 but drive it for an extended period. Obviously, I jumped at the opportunity—this would be a chance to really get a feel for the car in a variety of conditions.

But where to go? What to do? And then the answer was clear: Why not take it for the

buildings center around the Peace Tower, which dominates the city skyline.

Among the many museums and galleries in the Ottawa area is the Canada Aviation and Space Museum, which tells the history of flight, aerodynamics, and speed. Parking the car outside the sleek-looking building, I couldn't help but notice how well the GS fit into the scene, looking equally sleek and modern with its Liquid Platinum exterior.

THE COBBLED STREETS OF MONTREAL TRANSPORT US LIKE A TIME MACHINE.

kind of drive many of us wish we had more time for? A getaway. An escape. Part urban, part road trip, and all pleasure. A 200-mile cruise between two of Canada's most enjoyable cities: Ottawa and Montreal.

Every great journey begins with a good cup of coffee, or at least it should, so I naturally made Ottawa's Byward Market the starting point. As one of the country's oldest street markets, the Byward serves up a unique slice of Canadiana, and for a couple of hours, my wife and I sampled crêpes, beavertail-shaped fried dough, and most memorably, a Maple Bacon cupcake.

Fortified, we drove over to Parliament Hill, home of the Canadian government and a must-see destination for more than three million tourists a year. Notable for their pure Gothic architecture, the Parliament

Crossing over the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge, which connects Ottawa and Quebec, we found ourselves on the gentle winding road through Gatineau Park, a sprawling wedge of picturesque wilderness about 15 minutes away from Ottawa. I know the GS is capable of more power, but for now it's a joy to experience the more mellow side of its personality.

After swinging by the summer home of Willam Lyon Mackenzie King, the 10th and longest-serving prime minister of Canada, we exit the park and begin our journey to Mont-Tremblant, a small alpine town perched almost exactly between Ottawa and Montreal. Preferring a more scenic drive, we decide on Route 323, a two-lane highway that twists through the Laurentian Mountains.



Now that we're free of traffic, it's time to see how the GS handles the mountain roads. Dialing the Drive Mode Select into SPORT S+ mode, I paddle-shift my way through the ups and downs, eager to take on each curve as the GS 350's vocal exhaust lets the countryside know we're coming.

Rolling in to Mont-Tremblant, we find the mountain-resort town—popular with skiers in winter—to be bustling. The brightly colored buildings hold a host of tiny shops and eateries that keep us busy until it's time for a late-night gondola ride up Mont-Tremblant, the mountain that gives the town its name.

The next day starts bright and early, with my wife ready to get behind the wheel—as I lounge in the back seat. Clearly enjoying



NOW THAT WE'RE FREE OF TRAFFIC, IT'S TIME TO SEE HOW THE GS HANDLES.

Clockwise from bottom left: On the road to Mont-Tremblant; the journey's starting point in Ottawa; the former prime minister's summer home; wildflowers in the Laurentian Mountains; the view from Mont-Tremblant Mountain.

herself, she cruises down Route 117 as it weaves through the Laurentian Mountains to Montreal.

After checking into our hotel, we ascend a nearby clock tower to take in the surroundings. The island city is an intriguing mix of old and new—and we're able to pick out neighborhoods to explore.

Back in the car, we first drive to the cobbled streets of Old Montreal then alternate between walking and driving, trying to absorb the history of the area building by building. The GS navigates the old city well, handling the bumpy streets with ease. We then veer off toward the Expo 67 world's fair site, where intriguing monuments like the Biosphere, the geodesic dome designed by Buckminster

Fuller, and Habitat 67, an experimental modular housing complex made of identical concrete blocks, provide some architectural intrigue.

It's a crime, however, to visit Montreal and not eat a bagel—it's a staple here—so we head to one of the most famous bagel bakeries in the city, the St-Viateur Bagel Shop. The bakery is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and walking out of the shop with a dozen still-warm bagels is a definitive Montreal experience.

As night blankets the city, Montreal becomes aglow with neon signs, and clubs and restaurants attract their evening visitors. Grabbing our own table, we sit down to rest and plan the trip's next delightful experience—the drive home. □