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Litre by litre ... we use almost twice as much water as parisians do - except for showers; Residential use of water per capita, per day Series: WATER (UN)LIMITED: [Final Edition]

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## Abstract (summary)

According to popular myth, the French don't bathe as frequently as North Americans do. In fact, the numbers show Parisians use about as much water, or in the same ballpark anyway, as we do for cleaning their bodies. An average bath uses about 115-190 litres of water, while a four-minute shower uses about 75 litres. (Installing a low-flow shower head could reduce that to 38 litres.) Since Europeans tend to opt for low-flow shower heads more readily than North Americans, it is conceivable they are showering more frequently, but using less water!

North Americans on average have a lot more garden and lawn to take care of than Europeans do, so it's not surprising we use more water in this category. According to Environment Canada, a single lawn sprinkler spraying 19 litres per minute uses more water in just one hour than a combination of 10 toilet flushes, two five-minute showers, two dishwasher loads, and a full load of clothes. You don't see a lot of lawn sprinklers in Paris. Then again, lawns are scarce in many neighbourhoods of Montreal, too. Perhaps our love of outdoor pools has an impact on this category, or maybe it's our Sunday afternoon fetish for washing our cars and driveways with garden hoses.

An automatic dishwasher uses about 40 litres of water per load. Filling the sink to wash a load of dishes by hand uses only 35 litres. But if you fill the sink three or four times a day to do small loads of dishes, you would save water by doing all the day's dishes in one dishwasher load.

## Full Text

Showers/Baths

Montreal: 57 litres (19 per cent)

Paris: 45 litres (30 per cent)

According to popular myth, the French don't bathe as frequently as North Americans do. In fact, the numbers show Parisians use about as much water, or in the same ballpark anyway, as we do for cleaning their bodies. An average bath uses about 115-190 litres of water, while a four-minute shower uses about 75 litres. (Installing a low-flow shower head could reduce that to 38 litres.) Since Europeans tend to opt for low-flow shower heads more readily than North Americans, it is conceivable they are showering more frequently, but using less water!

General cleaning and maintenance, inside and out:

Montreal: 90 litres (30 per cent)

Paris: 46.5 litres (31 per cent)

North Americans on average have a lot more garden and lawn to take care of than Europeans do, so it's not surprising we use more water in this category. According to Environment Canada, a single lawn sprinkler spraying 19 litres per minute uses more water in just one hour than a combination of 10 toilet flushes, two five-minute showers, two dishwasher loads, and a full load of clothes. You don't see a lot of lawn sprinklers in Paris. Then again, lawns are scarce in many neighbourhoods of Montreal, too. Perhaps our love of outdoor pools has an impact on this category, or maybe it's our Sunday afternoon fetish for washing our cars and driveways with garden hoses.

- When washing a car, fill a bucket with water and use a sponge instead of a running hose. This can save about 300 litres of water each time you wash the car.

Toilet Flushing

Montreal: 90 litres (30 per cent)

Paris: 15 litres (10 per cent)

Here, the difference in usage rates has nothing to do with culture or custom and everything to do with equipment.

Most European toilets use six litres of water per flush, or less, while in Montreal, many of us are using toilets that were

installed back in the 1980s or earlier. These use as much as 20 litres of potable water with every flush. Low-flush toilets are widely available here and replacing an old toilet is a relatively inexpensive way

to save a lot of water.

The most ecological choice is the new "dual-flush" toilet, which offers the

option of a three or six-litre flush,

depending on what you're flushing.

- If you've got an old toilet, either install a new, low-flush model or fill a plastic

jug or bag with water and place it in the back of the tank, away from the flushing mechanism. (Don't use a brick as it can disintegrate and jam the mechanism).

Food Preparation and Drinking

Montreal: 3 litres (1 per cent)

Paris: 10.5 litres (7 per cent)

The notion that to remain healthy, individuals should drink about eight eight-ounce glasses of water a day - almost two litres - has been roundly debunked. Doctors now say we should drink when we are thirsty, and the drink doesn't necessarily have to be water. It's hard to say why Parisians are using more water in this category than we are. They drink a lot more bottled water than we do. Perhaps they doing more from-scratch food preparation?

Dishwashing/Clothes Washing

Montreal: 60 litres (20 per cent)

Paris: 33 litres (22 per cent)

An automatic dishwasher uses about 40 litres of water per load. Filling the sink to wash a load of dishes by hand uses only 35 litres. But if you fill the sink three or four times a day to do small loads of dishes, you would save water by doing all the day's dishes in one dishwasher load.

A load of laundry done in a top-loading machine uses 105 to 230 litres of water, while doing the same load in a front-loading machine uses as little as 45 litres. Front-loaders also use less energy.

Drip. Drip. Drip. Fix That Faucet and Save Thousands of Litres

- A leak of only one drop per second wastes about 9,000 litres of water per year, or the equivalent of 16 baths every month. Most leaks in faucets, taps and toilets are easy to find and fix at very little cost.

- You can save water by turning off the faucet while you brush your teeth, shave or wash your face. For each minute the faucet runs unnecessarily, 11 to 19 litres of water are wasted.

- Reducing showering time by one minute each time can save more than 3,700 litres of water per year.

- Sprinklers should be suited to the size of the lawn - to avoid watering driveways and sidewalks. Sprinklers that lay water down in a flat pattern are better than oscillating ones, which lose as much as 50 per cent of what they disperse through evaporation.

- Rinsing dishes under the

tap wastes a lot of water. Rinse your dishes in a large bowl of water, or partially fill one side of a double sink. Here's another approach: Slowly pour a bowl of water over dishes after putting them in the drainer.

SOURCES: B.C. Environment department, The Energy Institute, Environment Canada, City of Montreal, City of Paris, California Energy Commission, Natural Resources Canada, University of Victoria Polis Project on Ecological Governance. Photos: Gazette File Photos, Istockphoto.Com

#### Illustration

Colour Photo: General cleaning and maintenance, inside and out: ; Colour Photo: Showers/Baths Photo: Food Preparation and Drinking Colour Photo: Dishwashing/Clothes Washing Colour Photo: (See hard copy for photo description) ;

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