



PDF

Canada

Ontario (PDF Chapter)

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- Niagara Falls
- Niagara Peninsula Wine Country
- Niagara-on-the-Lake
- Southwestern Ontario
- Hamilton & Brantford
- Guelph
- Kitchener-Waterloo
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- Stratford
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Ontario

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Why Go?

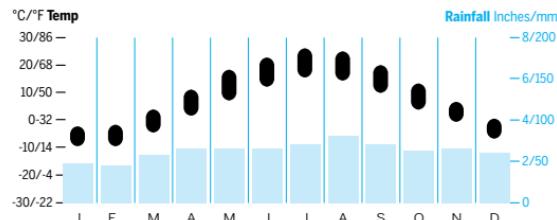
The breathtaking four-seasonal palette of Ontario's vast wilderness, endless forests and abundant wildlife awaits. Almost 40% of Canada's population lives here for good reason: Ontario is larger than France and Spain combined. Over 250,000 lakes contain a third of the planet's fresh water.

Most Ontarians call behemoth Toronto or Ottawa, the nation's cosmopolitan capital, home. Foodies, fashionistas and funsters converge on Toronto's vibrant multicultural neighborhoods. Both cities have hopping arts and entertainment scenes, kept current by the neighborly influences of New York and Montréal.

Whether you want to reconvene with nature or lose yourself in the excitement of the most multiculturally diverse and socially cohesive region on earth, you've come to the right place. Let Ontario surprise you with the striking beauty of her scenery and welcome you with the warmth of her people.

When to Go

Toronto



May–Jul Celebrate spring, marveling at moose, trilliums and loons in Ontario's parks.

Jul–Sep Join the frenzy of Toronto's festival mania or savor summer in cottage country.

Sep–Nov Unleash your inner artist as the maple leaves turn provincewide.

Don't Miss

The **Niagara Peninsula** (p122) is the day trip out of Toronto's hustle and bustle, but stay a few days if you can. Once you've experienced the awe-inspiring power of the world-famous falls and maxed out on gaudy tourist attractions, head up the road to the photogenic township of **Niagara-on-the-Lake** (p132) and its many wineries, galleries, boutiques and bistros. There's no shortage of delicious rooms in which to lay your weary head.

Consider scooting east to **Prince Edward County** (p196), Ontario's emerging culinary destination, where vineyards and organic farms dot the landscape. Here you'll also find **Sandbanks Provincial Park** (p197), with some of Lake Ontario's best swimming beaches.

Hungry for more? For a quaint riverside romp within an hour and a half of Toronto, try the neighboring historical villages of **Elora** and **Fergus** (p141). Get your Puck on at the **Stratford** (p143) Shakespeare Festival. If you really want to get away, head north to **Thunder Bay** (p182) and the wild shores of **Lake Superior** (p178), or the magnificent scenery of the **Bruce Peninsula** (p167) flanked to the west by the sandy beaches and warmer waters of **Lake Huron** (p146), and to the east by the stunning **Georgian Bay** (p162).

WHAT TO EXPECT

Ontario is Canada's breadbasket, cheese plate and salad bowl, and its plethora of breweries and wineries will exercise your drinking arm and whet your appetite for some seriously good food. When you're ready to burn off all those calories, why not hit a stretch of the many thousands of kilometers of scenic cycling trails? Of course, you may need to be adaptable and have a sense of humor in the face of temperamental weather, whatever the season. And remember, wildlife abounds – bring your binoculars to spot birds and beavers, moose, otter and deer.

For indoor days, almost every significant town sports a museum – Ottawa's and Toronto's are some of the world's best. Make sure you pack your patience – Toronto transit and traffic frequently grinds to a halt. You've got lots of ground to cover, so allow yourself time to explore and prepare to be surprised!

PLANNING

Ontario is alive with activity during the long days of the short summer, when there's always a festival or something fun going on. Be sure to book your accommodations in advance.

Ontario weather can change rapidly. If you're camping, or planning outdoor pursuits, pack for variations in temperature and remember the bug spray.

Fast Facts

- Population: 13,505,900
- Area: 1,076,395 sq km
- Capital: Toronto
- Quirky fact: the longest street in the world, Yonge St, begins in Toronto and runs 1896km to the border of Ontario and Minnesota.

Divine Wine...

Ontario's wines improve with every vintage. Delve into the lovely vineyards of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Prince Edward County.

Resources

- Ontario Travel Information Centre (www.ontariotravel.net) Has offices throughout the province.
- Toronto Tourism (www.seetorontonow.com) Run by the Toronto Convention and Visitors Association.
- Ottawa Tourism (www.ottawatourism.ca) Ottawa's official tourist site.

Ontario's Top Parks

- Algonquin Provincial Park (p190)
- Lake Superior Provincial Park (p179)
- Killarney Provincial Park (p174)
- Bruce Peninsula National Park (p169)
- Pukaskwa National Park (p181)
- Quetico Provincial Park (p185)



Ontario Highlights

- ➊ Find out what fashionistas and foodies adore about the vibrant neighborhoods of **Toronto** (p67).
 - ➋ Get cultured in the capital, **Ottawa** (p208), with its French flavors, world-class museums and bustling market.
 - ➌ Explore the Bruce Peninsula then catch the ferry from Tobermory to **Manitoulin Island** (p170), ancient home of the Great Spirit.
 - ➍ Marvel at the awesome **Niagara Falls** (p170) from aboard the *Maid of the Mist*.
 - ➎ Drool over cottage-cum-mansions as you cruise the **Thousand Islands** (p204) and **Muskoka Lakes** (p158).
 - ➏ Wine, dine and head back in time in **Stratford** (p143) with its festival celebrating Shakespeare and the arts.
 - ➐ Get off the grid in Ontario's northern parks: **Algonquin Provincial Park** (p190), **Pukaskwa National Park** (p181) and **Lake Superior Provincial Park** (p179).

History

When Europeans first stumbled through the snow into Ontario, several Aboriginal nations already called the region home. The Algonquin and Huron tribes had long occupied the southern portion of the province, but by the time European colonization took hold in the early 18th century, the Iroquois Confederacy (aka the Five Nations) held sway in the lands south of Georgian Bay and east to Québec. The Ojibwe occupied the lands north of the Great Lakes and west to Cree territory on the prairies (today's Alberta and Saskatchewan).

The first Europeans on the scene were 17th-century French fur traders, who established basic forts to facilitate trade links with the Mississippi River. With the arrival of the British Loyalists around 1775, large-scale settlement began. After the War of 1812, British immigrants arrived in larger numbers, and by the end of the 19th century Ontario's farms, industries and cities were rapidly developing. In the aftermath of both world wars, immigration from Europe boomed – Toronto has since evolved into one of the world's most multicultural cities.

An industrial and manufacturing powerhouse, Ontario is home to around 40% of Canada's population. Despite boom times in Alberta, Ontario remains the first choice of immigrants from across the globe, with solid employment prospects and Toronto's well-established immigrant support services proving a powerful draw.

Local Culture

There's something for everyone in Toronto. Torontonians love their city and seem somewhat blinded to its flaws: bitter winters, expensive housing, congested roads and inadequate public transit. They smile through gritted teeth as if it were their duty to defend the city against criticism. Toronto's ethnocultural makeup is so diverse that it defies attempts to define or resist it: people just get along. You'll find all walks of life and all colors, flavors and traditions of the world represented here.

Outside cosmopolitan Toronto and Ottawa, rural Ontario is generally homogenous and unassuming, although communities have French, Belgian, German, Chinese and First Nations roots and influences and there's a strong immigrant labor force. Farmers are practical, no-fuss folks who work hard, value things for their functionality and don't get

too involved with life beyond the farm. Most Ontarians are mild-mannered folk who enjoy a good to high standard of living, but don't feel the need to boast about it.

More than any other province, Ontario is hockey-mad: this is the home of Wayne 'The Great One' Gretzky, though less violent winter sports like curling still have a following. One thing is universal – when the weather is fine, city and country folk all head for the sunshine and the water, where they commune with nature and their families: food, wine, good friends, healthy conversation and debate are all valued here.

Land & Climate

Ontario is big. Its longest north-south span is 1730km and 1568km separate east from west. The two main highways are the Trans-Canada from Ottawa to just past Kenora, and the 401 which runs from the Ontario-Québec border, southwest to Windsor and the US border with Detroit. Unlike Canada's rugged west, the landscape is largely flat, with some mountainous regions and more lakes than you could skim stones across in a year: four of the five Great Lakes have shoreline in Ontario. Fifty percent of Ontario's (around 500,000 sq km) is part of the boreal forest (aka 'Amazon of the North') which transverses Canada. It's one of the world's largest storehouses of carbon, begins around the 50th parallel, between Lake Superior and Hudson Bay, and extends across the province in an east-west band up to 1000km wide.

In southern Ontario, cold air from the north collides with warm air from the Great Lakes, causing plenty of rain, humid summers and milder winters. The entire province gets blanketed with heavy snowfalls, but towns in the snowbelt, such as Parry Sound, Barrie and London (from Georgian Bay to Lake Huron) are generally hardest hit. Lake Ontario often spares downtown Toronto from the brunt of the snowfall, but winter storms have been known to shut down the city. January averages around -4°C on the Niagara Peninsula and -18°C in the north.

As summer draws closer, southwestern Ontario and the Niagara Peninsula get increasingly hot and sticky. It can feel oppressively humid in Toronto, where pollution can be stifling. Summer storms are common along the Niagara Escarpment and conditions sometimes produce tornadoes. July

averages around 23°C here and 15°C in the north. Late spring and early fall are the best times to visit, when temperatures are mild, days long and sunny and nature puts on its finest displays.

Parks & Wildlife

Ontario contains six of Canada's national parks: in the south, Georgian Bay Islands National Park, Bruce Peninsula National Park, Fathom Five National Marine Park and Point Pelee National Park, the southernmost point of the Canadian mainland. In the north are Pukaskwa National Park and St Lawrence Islands National Park. There are more than 330 provincial parks here, many offering hiking and camping facilities. Campsites for up to six

people cost between \$14 and \$42 per night (plus \$11.50 booking fee). They range from basic sites without showers or electricity to well-located powered plots with showers. Make reservations with **Ontario Parks** (888-668-7275; www.ontarioparks.com).

Fauna is abundant in the province. Deer, black bears, chipmunks, raccoons, beavers, skunks, turtles and all manner of birdlife can be seen. The moose, Ontario's charismatic megafauna, has largely disappeared from the south, but you're likely to spot one of these hairy roadside individuals as you head north: they come out in spring to eat the leftover winter salt from the road, and are often seen on the roadside.

ONTARIO ITINERARIES

Four Days

Get yourself oriented to **Toronto** (p67) with a visit to **Yonge & Dundas Square** (p75), then scoot down to scan the scene from atop the **CN Tower** (p70). When you've got your bearings, head out to explore the sights, sounds and smells of Toronto's neighborhoods, starting with **Queen Street West** (p82) and **Kensington Market** (p83). On another day, focus on King St: the **Entertainment District** (p75) and over to **St Lawrence Market** (p73) and the **Distillery District** (p73). You'll barely scratch the surface of what's on offer.

Take a tour with Chariots of Fire (p90) for the most comfortable and affordable way to cram the best of **Niagara Falls** (p122) and **Niagara-on-the-Lake** (p132) into just one day. Or rent a car, take yourself and stay a night. Head west to the pretty riverside villages of **Elora and Fergus** (p141), step back in time to the Mennonite community of **St Jacobs** (p140) and onward to arty-foodie **Stratford** (p143) for the night, catching a play at the festival before hotfooting it back to Toronto.

Two Weeks

In the warmer months, Ontario does road trips well. You could simplify and combine both loops below, but you'll be covering a lot of ground.

Nature Loop: Head north to explore the beauty of the **Muskoka Lakes** (p158), dip in to the West Gate of **Algonquin Provincial Park** (p190) for a few days kayaking and moose-spotting, then back out and scoot up to regroup in **North Bay** (p188) or **Sudbury** (p174). Avid campers could head down to **Killarney Provincial Park** (p174), while those who prefer creature comforts with their isolation will delight in **Manitoulin Island** (p170). If you're feeling adventurous, scoot through **Sault Ste-Marie** (p176) and onward to **Lake Superior Provincial Park** (p179), but you'll have to backtrack to catch the Chi-Cheemaun ferry down to magical **Tobermory** (p168), the magnificent **Bruce Peninsula** (p167) and back to Toronto, via **Collingwood** (p165).

Culture Loop: Start with an extended version of the four-day trip above, then set your sights east, stopping first to sample the rustic charm of a **Prince Edward County** (p196) B&B and the region's fine food and wine. Stop by **Sandbanks Provincial Park** (p197) for a swim, then spend a night or two in historic **Kingston** (p199). Journey on to **Gananoque** (p204) for a cruise around the delightful **Thousand Islands** (p204), then continue through **Brockville** (p205) and **Morrisburg** (p207), before arriving in **Ottawa** (p208), the nation's proud capital. When you're done, head back the way you came, stopping at all the spots you missed.

REGIONAL DRIVING DISTANCES

- Toronto to Niagara Falls:** 125km
- Toronto to Windsor:** 380km
- Toronto to Ottawa:** 440km
- Toronto to Thunder Bay:** 1470km

➊ Getting There & Around

AIR

Most Canadian airlines and major international carriers arrive at Toronto's **Lester B Pearson International Airport** (YYZ; ☎866-207-1690, Terminal 3 416-776-5100, Terminals 1 & 2 416-247-7678; www.gtaaa.com). From here, **Air Canada** (www.aircanada.com) and **WestJet** (www.westjet.com) operate extensive services within the province and beyond. From the downtown **Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport** (YTZ; ☎416-203-6942; www.torontoport.com/airport.aspx), **Porter** (☎888-619-8622; www.flyporter.com) services Northern Ontario as well as Ottawa, Montréal, Chicago, New York, Boston, Washington and more. **First Air** (☎800-267-1247; www.firstair.ca) and **Canadian North** (☎800-661-1505; www.canadiannorth.com) connect Toronto and Ottawa with Iqaluit in Nunavut.

BUS

As a general rule **Greyhound Canada** (www.greyhound.ca) covers southwestern Ontario and Ottawa, from Toronto. **Ontario Northland** (www.ontarianorthland.ca) takes care of Northern Ontario and **Megabus** (☎866-488-4452; www.megabus.com) offers dirt-cheap services between Toronto along the eastern corridor to Montréal as well as Niagara Falls and across the border to Buffalo, NY. Booking tickets at least seven days in advance can sometimes halve the fare. If one carrier doesn't service the route you need, check the others. Parkbus (p884) offers limited seasonal departures to Ontario's best national and provincial parks.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Outside Toronto, Ontario's roads are in good shape and offer pleasant driving (once you're off Hwy 401). Car rental is practically essential if you want to enjoy the province, but not for exploring Toronto – driving and parking downtown is painful enough for residents who know their way around. Pick up your rental on the day you're leaving Toronto and use the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) while you're in the city: there are no shortage of car-rental companies. When driving in Ontario, you can turn right on a red light after first having made a full stop. It's illegal to text or talk on a mobile device while driving.

TRAIN

VIA Rail (☎888-842-7245; www.viarail.ca) trains service the busy Ontario–Québec corridor, from Windsor in the southwest, all the way to Montréal (\$162, 11½ hours, three daily). VIA Rail also operates Trans-Canada services which stop in Northern Ontario en route to Manitoba and beyond. Trains have free wi-fi on board.

GO Train (www.gotransit.com) is Toronto's irregularly scheduled commuter train, sometimes servicing Hamilton, Niagara Falls and Barrie.

TORONTO

POP 5.2 MILLION

Welcome to Toronto, the most multiculturally diverse city *on the planet*: over 140 languages are spoken. The flavors, aromas, sights and sounds of almost every nation converge peacefully in the streets of Toronto's many neighborhoods: microcosms of culture thriving in a somewhat hazy 'bigger picture' that proud locals defend regardless. You're likely to feel accepted here: it's estimated that over half of Toronto's residents were born outside Canada, and despite its complex makeup, Torontonians generally get along. Reports of intolerance and race-related violence are uncommon; no doubt a factor in Toronto winning the bid to host the Pan-Am Games in 2015 (July 10–26). The third-largest international multisport games comes with a \$1.5 billion price tag and is expected to draw 250,000 visitors to town.

When the weather is fine, Toronto is a blast: a vibrant, big-time city abuzz with activity: some of the world's finest restaurants, happening bars, clubs and eclectic festivals are found here. At the height of summer, humid downtown neighborhoods become an endless convergence of patios bursting at the seams: alfresco is the way to drink and dine. Locals lap up every last drop of sunshine, beer or martini while they can.

Winter in Toronto, however, can be a real drag. Things get messy on the web of unacceptably congested highways. An archaic public transit system groans under the weight of a growing population and struggles to adequately serve the ever-widening boundaries of the urban explosion. At the time of writing, when the large-scale construction of infrastructure to support Toronto's insatiable expansion should have long since begun, only a vague vision for the future of public transportation was apparent and but a handful of long-overdue essential projects had begun (see p71).

Come with patience, an open mind and during the delightfully temperate and colorful spring or fall, and you're bound to have a great time. Whatever you're looking for, you're almost certain to be able to find it – eventually – in Toronto.

History

In the 17th century present-day Toronto was Seneca aboriginal land. Frenchman Étienne Brûlé was the first European here in 1615, but unwelcoming locals impeded French invasion until 1720 when the French established a fur-trading post in what's now the west end. In 1793 the British took over and John Simcoe, lieutenant governor of the new Upper Canada, moved the capital from Niagara-on-the-Lake and founded the town of York. On April 27, 1813, during the War of 1812, American forces looted and razed York, but were only able to hold sway for six days before Canadian troops hounded them back to Washington.

Toronto was born in 1834, when Mayor William Lyon Mackenzie renamed the town from an aboriginal name meaning 'gathering place.' The Victorian city, controlled by conservative politicians, became known as 'Toronto the Good.' Religious restraints and strong anti-vice laws were such that on Sundays it was illegal to hire a horse, the curtains of department-store windows were drawn (window-shopping was sinful!) and film screenings prohibited.

In 1904, Toronto had a great fire, burning about 5 hectares of the inner city and leveling 122 buildings. Amazingly, no one was killed, and by the 1920s Bay St was booming, in part due to gold, silver and uranium discoveries in northern Ontario.

Prior to WWII, 80% of the population was Anglo-Celtic. After the war, then Prime Minister Lester B Pearson introduced the world's first points-based immigration system. Since then, Toronto has welcomed millions of skilled immigrants and refugees from all corners of the globe. The figure is now closer to 50%. In 1998 five sprawling Toronto suburbs – York, East York, North York, Etobicoke and Scarborough – fused to become the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). As the fifth-largest city in North America, contemporary Toronto is booming – a million miles from its beginnings as 'Muddy York,' Ontario's second-choice town.

❶ Sights

Downtown Toronto is an easy-to-navigate grid, bounded by a hodgepodge of bohemian, ethnic and historic neighborhoods. Yonge St, the world's longest, dissects the city: any downtown street with an East or West designation refers to its position relative to Yonge. Unlike New York, there is no distinction between the directions of avenues and streets: Spadina Ave runs north-south, but Danforth Ave runs east-west. There's also a street called Avenue Rd. Go figure!

Most tourist sights hug the Harbourfront, Entertainment and Financial Districts at the southern end of downtown. The CN Tower, Rogers Centre stadium, Harbourfront Centre, Union Station and Theatre District are all here. South of the lakeshore, locals retreat to the Toronto Islands for solace and the hands-down best views of Toronto's gargantuan skyline – well worth the half-day round trip. Back on the mainland, east of Yonge and west of the Don Valley Parkway, the former Old York area is home to some of Toronto's oldest and most well-preserved neighborhoods. That said, you're not likely to be seduced by Toronto's beauty, so we recommend you get a taste of its charm and character: you'll find both a little further afield. There are too many neighborhoods to list here, so we've selected those of most appeal. Be sure to read the opening paragraph for each section first, to get the lowdown on that 'hood. Many argue that West is best: The Annex, Kensington Market and Queen West are all here.

The East has a completely different feel: as full of flavor, but a little more grounded. Leslieville, everybody-loves-to-eat Greektown (aka the Danforth) and The Beaches, slightly San Franciscan in their sensibilities, are the main draws.

We suggest using the TTC (Toronto Transit Commission) to get around – driving in Toronto is an art that many locals have not yet mastered, the cost of parking is extortionate and roads congested. Avoid the morning and evening rush hours when subways and streetcars are packed and services frequently late.

❷ Harbourfront

At the foot of Yonge and York Sts on Lake Ontario is the redeveloped Harbourfront area. Once a run-down district of warehouses,

Greater Toronto Area (GTA)



factories and docklands, the area now teems with folk milling about the restaurants, theaters, galleries, artists' workshops, stores, condominiums and parklands along Queens Quay. Ferries for the Toronto Islands dock here.

★ CN Tower

(La Tour CN; Map p78; ☎ 416-868-6937; www.cntower.ca; 301 Front St W; Tower Experience adult/child \$32/24, Skypod +\$12, EdgeWalk \$175; ☎ 9am-10pm Sun-Thu, to 11pm Fri & Sat; Union) Toronto's iconic CN Tower, a marvel of 1970s engineering, looks like a giant concrete hypodermic needle. Its function as a communications tower takes a backseat to relieving tourists of as much cash possible: riding those glass elevators up the highest freestanding structure in the world (553m) is one of those things in life you just *have* to do. If not, you're bound to catch a glimpse of the tower at night, when the entire structure puts on a brilliant free light show year-round. Try the intersection of McCaul St and Queen St W, due north of the tower, for best vantage.

NOTABLE BUILDING

On a clear day, the views from the top are astounding; if it's hazy (often) you won't see a thing. Queues for the elevator can be up to two hours long in each direction. Buying tickets online saves 15%. There's an obligatory revolving restaurant (called 360°): it's expensive, but the elevator price is waived for diners. Cashed-up daredevils (13 years plus) can now opt for the EdgeWalk, a 20-minute outdoor walk around the unbounded perimeter of the main pod (356m). Not for the fainthearted.

Harbourfront Centre

LANDMARK

(Map p78; ☎ 416-973-4000; www.harbourfront-centre.com; York Quay, 235 Queens Quay W; ☎ box office 1-6pm Tue-Sat, to 8pm show nights; ☎ 509, 510) The 4-hectare not-for-profit Harbourfront Centre exists to educate and entertain Toronto's diverse community, through a kaleidoscope of performances and events held in its numerous stages and halls. Many are kid-focused, some are free. There's also a lake-side ice-skating rink where you can slice up the winter ice. Don't miss the free galleries,

TORONTO IN...

Two Days

Quick weekend? Take an elevator ride up the CN Tower – as high as Torontonians get without wings or drugs. Lunch at **St Lawrence Market** (p102), then head up to **Bloor-Yorkville** (p80) to window shop. Once inspired, max out your style-to-value ratio in **Kensington Market** (p83) followed by a thrifty dinner of dumplings in **Chinatown** (p103). Start early on day two and check out the amazing **Royal Ontario Museum** (p80), intriguing **Casa Loma** (p81) or the **Art Gallery of Ontario** (p79) – then take a long lunch in **Baldwin Village** (p103). Afterwards, ride the ferry to the **Toronto Islands** (p86) and bike until the sun sets. Back on the mainland, relax with a pint at the **Mill Street Brewery** (p110) in the atmospheric **Distillery District** (p73).

Four Days

Begin with a loop on a double-decker sightseeing tour (p90) to get your bearings, then explore **The Annex** (p81) and have dinner in **Little Italy** (p99). On day two, take our neighborhood **Walking Tour** (p91), or head east for brunch in **Leslieville** (p109) to up your energy for **The Beaches** (p85). Pick a **patio** (p111) for dinner and drinks before catching a show or hitting the dance floor in the **Entertainment District** (p75) or **Church-Wellesley Village** (p80).

Devote a whole day or two to explore the boutiques, bars and eateries along **Queen West**, **Trinity Bellwoods** and **West Queen West** (p82). Head to **High Park** (p87) for a picnic, or if you're more about hot-dogs-and-beer, catch some baseball at the **Rogers Centre** (p116), hockey at the **Air Canada Centre** (p117), or all three for half the price at **Wayne Gretzky's** (p110).

One Week

Go beyond the downtown core: explore **Scarborough Bluffs** (p88), the **Sharon Temple** (p89) or the **McMichael Canadian Art Collection** (p88). Take a day trip to **Niagara Falls** (p122) and **Niagara-on-the-Lake** (p132).

WHAT'S IN A MAYOR?

In 2013 a scandal made headlines around the world when Toronto's democratically elected mayor, Rob Ford admitted smoking crack. A video, allegedly showing him in the act, brought on the confession. The ensuing global media circus did nothing for the beleaguered mayor, nor the city's reputation within and outside Canada. The latest revelations gave Mr Ford's opponents further reason to call for his resignation adding to their dissatisfaction over 'suburban politics' and a lack of, shall we say, charisma. At the time of writing, despite being stripped of most of his powers, Mr Ford has resisted all calls to step down.

What does all this mean for the people of Toronto? Opinions are mixed, but there's a general sense of mayoral malaise and embarrassment surrounding these events. Since coming to power in 2010, in an effort to cut the city's expenditure by \$3 billion, Mr Ford removed a revenue-generating car tax, reversed a number of recently installed bike lanes, slashed the formerly well-established Transit City plan for the future of public transportation, privatized city garbage services and made substantial cuts to city beautification projects and park maintenance. The result has been happier suburban drivers, but dirtier downtown neighborhoods passively seething with frustrated commuters.

Mr Ford remains a polarizing figure, whose support from the sizable 'Ford Nation' camp of constituents from outer-lying suburbs has not waned. The next time Torontonians go to the polls, they'll likely be paying much more attention to the democratic process. A resilient Mr Ford promises he'll be there in the race.

including the **Photo Passage** and the functioning **Craft Studio**.

Delicately strung along the western harborfront, the **Toronto Music Garden** was designed in collaboration with cellist Yo-Yo Ma. It expresses 'Bach's Suite No 1 for Unaccompanied Cello' through landscape, with an arc-shaped grove of conifers, a swirling path through a wildflower meadow and a grass-stepped amphitheater where free concerts are held.

Canada Square (Map p78) and **Ontario Square** (Map p78), two vast new public spaces, opened in June 2013. At the time of writing, construction works continued to improve access to the site and provide additional parking. Check the homepage for the latest details.

Power Plant Gallery

(Map p78; ☎ 416-973-4949; www.thepowerplant.org; ☺ 10am-6pm Tue, Wed & Sun, to 8pm Thu-Sat) **FREE** Easily recognized by its painted smokestack, the Power Plant gallery is at the Harbourfront Centre and is just that – a former power plant transformed into Toronto's premier gallery of contemporary Canadian art. Best of all, it's free and exhibitions change regularly.

Steam Whistle Brewing

(Map p78; www.steamwhistle.ca; 255 Bremner Blvd; 45min tour \$10; ☺ noon-6pm Mon-Thu, 11am-6pm Fri & Sat, to 5pm Sun; ☈ Union, ☎ 509, 510) **'Do**

one thing really really well' is the motto of Steam Whistle Brewing, a microbrewery that makes only a crisp European-style pilsner. Bubbling away in a 1929 train depot, Steam Whistle continually works on being environmentally friendly, in part by using renewable energy, steam heating, all-natural (and often local) ingredients, and using supercool ginger ale bottles that can be reused up to 40 times. Tours depart half-hourly from 1pm to 5pm and include tastings.

Rogers Centre

STADIUM

(Map p78; ☎ 416-341-2770; www.rogerscentre.com; 1 Blue Jays Way; 1hr tour adult/child \$16/10; ☈ Union) Technically awe-inspiring, the Rogers Centre sports stadium opened in 1989 with the world's first fully retractable dome roof and seating for up to 55,000 people. Tours include a brain-scrambling video-wall screening footage of past sporting glories, concerts and events, a sprint through a box suite, a locker-room detour (sans athletes) and a memorabilia museum. A budget seat at a Blue Jays baseball or Argonauts football game is the cheapest way to see the center.

Fort York National Historic Site HISTORIC SITE

(☎ 416-392-6907; www.fortyork.ca; 250 Fort York Blvd; adult/child \$9/4.25; ☺ 10am-5pm; ☈ 509, 511) Established by the British in 1793 to defend the then town of York, Fort York was almost entirely destroyed during the War of 1812 when a small band of Ojibwe warriors

and British troops were unable to defeat their US attackers. A handful of the original log, stone and brick buildings have been restored. The fort is open year-round; check the homepage for special events and tour details. From May to September, men decked out in 19th-century British military uniforms carry out marches and drills, firing musket volleys into the sky.

Spadina Quay Wetlands

PARK

(Map p78; ☎416-392-1111; www.toronto.ca/harbourfront/spadina_quay_wet.htm; 479 Queens Quay W; ☺dawn-dusk; ☎509, 510) A former lakeside parking lot has been transformed into the 2800-sq-meter Spadina Quay Wetlands, a thriving, sustainable ecosystem full of frogs, birds, fish and butterflies. When lakeside fishers noticed that northern pike were spawning here each spring, the city took it upon itself to create this new habitat. Complete with flowering heath plants, poplar trees and a birdhouse, it's a little gem leading the way in Harbourfront redevelopment.

Ripley's Aquarium of Canada

AQUARIUM

(Map p78; ☎416-360-7831; www.ripleysaquariumofcanada.com; 288 Bremner Blvd; adult/child \$30/20; ☺9am-9pm daily, to 6pm Sun-Thu Jan-Jun) Ripley's Aquarium of Canada is earmarked to be Toronto's hottest new attraction for young and old. Expect over 15,000 aquatic animals, 5.7 million litres of water in the combined tanks, as well as sleepovers, touch tanks and educational dive presentations.

Exhibition Place

LANDMARK

(☎416-263-3600; www.explace.on.ca; off Lake Shore Blvd W, btwn Strachan Ave & Dufferin St; ☎509, 511) Every August, historic Exhibition Place is revived for its original purpose, the Canadian National Exhibition, when millions of visitors flood the midway for carnival rides, lumberjack competitions and more good, honest, homegrown fun than a Sunday-school picnic. The beaux-arts *Victory* statue over Princes' Gate has stood proud since Canada's 60th birthday in 1927. Other events held at Exhibition Place include the Honda Indy Toronto in July and a slew of spectator sports and indie design shows. At other times the grounds are often spookily bereft of visitors.

Financial District

Union Station is Canada's busiest transport hub, serving 250,000 passengers daily. Currently under extensive revitalization until its estimated completion in 2016, the station,

subway area and surrounding streetscape are a mess. We hope to have better things to say by next edition. The area just north of the station on King and Adelaide and west to Bay St equates to Toronto's 'Wall St' – the nicest of the skyscrapers are here, where the 'Bay St Boys' do their darndest to convince themselves this is actually New York.

Hockey Hall of Fame

MUSEUM

(Map p78; ☎416-360-7765; www.hhof.com; Brookfield Pl, 30 Yonge St; adult/child \$17.50/11; ☺9:30am-6pm; ☎Union) Inside an ornate rococo gray stone Bank of Montréal building (c 1885), the Hockey Hall of Fame is a Canadian institution. Even those unfamiliar with the superfast ultraviolent sport are likely to be impressed by this, the largest collection of hockey memorabilia in the world. Check out the collection of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*-esque goalkeeping masks or go head to head with the great Wayne Gretzky, virtual-reality style.

Cloud Gardens Conservatory

GARDENS

(Map p74; ☎416-392-7288; 14 Temperance St; ☺10am-2:30pm Mon-Fri; ☎Queen) **FREE** An unexpected sanctuary with its own waterfall, the steamy Cloud Gardens Conservatory is crowded with enormous jungle leaves, vines and palms. Information plaques answer the question 'What Are Rainforests?' It's a great place to warm up during winter, but avoid the area after dark – the adjacent park attracts some shady characters.

TD Gallery of Inuit Art

MUSEUM

(Map p78; ☎416-982-8473; www.td.com/inuitart/gallery/inuit-gallery; ground fl & mezzanine, TD Centre, 79 Wellington St W; ☺8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun; ☎St Andrew) **FREE** A quiet pause in the bustle of the Financial District, the Toronto Dominion Gallery of Inuit Art provides an exceptional insight into Inuit culture. Inside the Toronto-Dominion Centre, a succession of glass cases displays otter, bear, eagles and carved Inuit figures in day-to-day scenes.

Design Exchange

MUSEUM

(DX; Map p78; ☎416-363-6121; www.dx.org; 234 Bay St; adult/child \$10/8, special exhibition prices vary; ☺10am-6pm Sun-Wed, to 9pm Thu-Sat) The original Toronto Stock Exchange now houses eye-catching industrial-design exhibits. The permanent collection includes more than 1000 Canadian pieces that span six decades. The 30-minute tours (\$15) should be booked in advance.

TORONTO FOR CHILDREN

Toronto is a kid-friendly city: there's plenty of things to see and do when traveling with little ones in tow.

The Harbourfront Centre (p70) produces ongoing events through HarbourKIDS. The Canadian National Exhibition (p93) also has events in August.

Inquisitive minds will love the CN Tower (p70), Ontario Science Centre (p88), Royal Ontario Museum (p80) and LEGOLAND Discovery Centre (p88).

Arty and creative kids might enjoy the clay classes at the Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art (p81), or they might like to drop in for storytime at the **Toronto Public Library – Lillian H Smith Branch** (Map p74; ☎ 416-393-7746; www.torontopubliclibrary.ca; 239 College St; ☑ 9am-8:30pm Mon-Thu, to 6pm Fri, to 5pm Sat, 1:30-5pm Sun; ☎ 506, 510) or catch a show at the **Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People** (Map p78; ☎ 416-862-2222; www.lktyp.ca; 165 Front St E; ☑ box office 9am-5pm; ☎ 503, 504).

The environmental custodians and animal doctors of the next generation will want you to take them to Ripley's Aquarium, Riverdale Farm (p83), High Park (p87), Spadina Quay Wetlands and Tommy Thompson Park (p83).

If they've got ants in their pants, they won't have after a trip to Canada's Wonderland (p88) or, for a way tamer version, the Centreville Amusement Park (p86). Teenagers will also enjoy the Eaton Centre (p117) and Kensington Market (p83).

Roomier digs for families that shouldn't break the bank are at the Eaton Chelsea (p97), with its massive waterslide; Courtyard Toronto Downtown (p98); the Grand Hotel and Suites (p97); and Cambridge Suites (p97).

A handy online resource for parents is www.helpwevegotkids.com, which lists everything child-related in Toronto, including babysitters and day-care options.

Old York

Historically speaking, the old town of York comprises just 10 square blocks. But today the neighborhood extends east of Yonge St all the way to the Don River, and from Queen St south to the waterfront esplanade. The ghosts of Toronto's past are around every corner.

Distillery District

LANDMARK

(Map p69; ☎ 416-364-1177; www.thedistillerydistrict.com; 9 Trinity St; ☑ 10am-7pm Mon-Wed, to 8pm Thu-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun; ☎ 503, 504) Centered around the 1832 Gooderham and Worts distillery – once the British Empire's largest – the 5-hectare Distillery District is one of Toronto's best downtown attractions. Its Victorian industrial warehouses have been converted into soaring galleries, artists studios, design boutiques, cafes and eateries. The Young Centre for Performing Arts and the Mill Street Brewery are also here.

On weekends, newlyweds pose before a backdrop of redbrick and cobblestone, young families walk their dogs, and savvy hipsters shop for art beneath charmingly decrepit gables and gantries. In summer expect live jazz, activities, exhibitions and foodie events.

St Lawrence Market

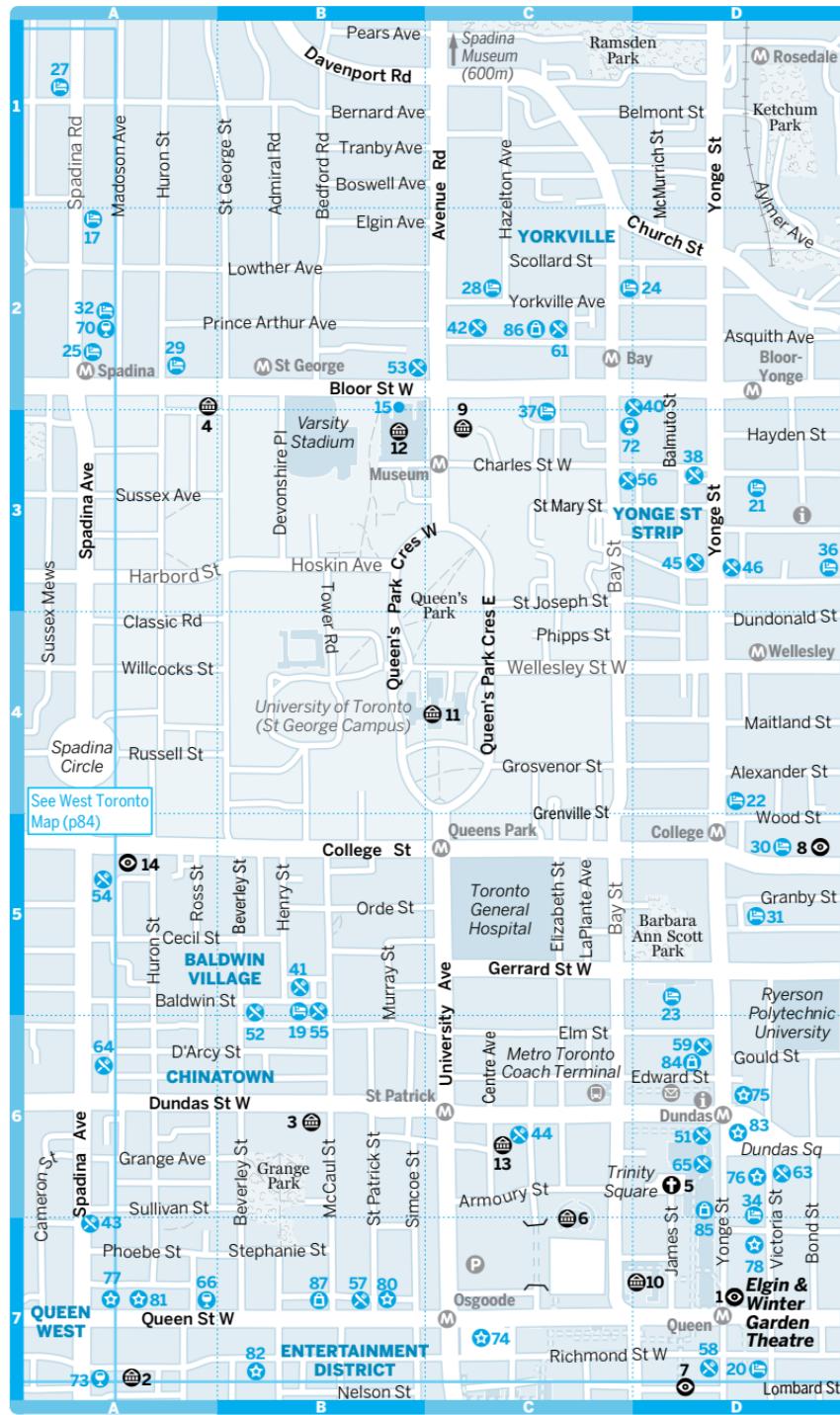
MARKET

(Map p78; ☎ 416-392-7129; www.stlawrencemarket.com; 92-95 Front St E; ☑ 8am-6pm Tue-Thu, to 7pm Fri, 5am-5pm Sat; ☎ 503, 504) Old York's sensational St Lawrence Market has been a neighborhood meeting place for over two centuries. The restored, high-trussed 1845 **South Market** houses more than 50 specialty food stalls: cheese vendors, fishmongers, butchers, bakers and pasta makers. Inside the old council chambers upstairs, the **Market Gallery** (Map p78; ☎ 416-392-0572; www.toronto.ca/culture/the_market_gallery; ☑ 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat) **FREE** has rotating displays of paintings, photographs, documents and historical relics.

On the opposite side of Front St, the **North Market** hosts a Saturday farmers market and a fantastic Sunday antique market – get in early for the best stuff. In 2010 the winners of a design competition to transform the North Market building were announced, but there's no sign of construction yet. A few steps further north, the glorious St Lawrence Hall (1849) is topped by a mansard roof and a copper-clad clock tower that can be seen for blocks.

Downtown Toronto North

ONTARIO TORONTO





Entertainment District & King Street West

West of the Financial District, on King St, between University and Spadina Aves, Toronto's Entertainment District is home to theaters and performance halls, pre-show bars and the acclaimed Toronto International Film Festival Bell Lightbox Theatre. The whole area as far west as Spadina is nightclub central. East on King, toward the Distillery District, you'll find high-end furniture and design stores, good for window-shopping, and some fine historic architecture.

★ 401 Richmond

GALLERY

(Map p74; www.401richmond.net; 401 Richmond St W; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat; Ⓜ 510) **FREE** Inside an early-20th-century lithographer's warehouse, restored in 1994, this 18,500-sq-m New York-style artist collective hums with the creative vibes of 130 diverse contemporary galleries showcasing works in almost any artistic medium you can think of. Grab a snack and a latte at the ground-floor cafe and enjoy it on the expansive roof garden: a little-known oasis in the summer.

Canadian Broadcasting Centre

MUSEUM

(CBC; Map p78; ☎ 416-205-5574; www.cbc.ca/museum; 250 Front St W; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri; Ⓜ Union, ☎ 504) **FREE** Toronto's enormous Canadian Broadcasting Centre is the headquarters for English-language radio and TV across Canada. You can peek at the radio newsrooms anytime or attend a concert in the world-class Glenn Gould Studio. Be sure to check out the **CBC Museum** with its fantastic collection of antique microphones and broadcasting memorabilia. Next door, the **Graham Spry Theatre** screens ever-changing CBC programming. Best of all, it's free!

Downtown Yonge

Heading north on Yonge St, Yonge & Dundas Sq, Toronto's homage to New York's Times Square, is regarded as the center of the downtown core. It's an oddly positioned public space that neither looks good nor really delivers. There's usually something going on here, but it's as frequently about commercial exploits as community-building. Across the street, the landmark Eaton Centre mall, which sprawls between Dundas and Queen Sts, is the primary draw along with some historic theaters and Ryerson University. The mixed-bag continues

Downtown Toronto North

Top Sights

1 Elgin & Winter Garden Theatre.....D7

Sights

- 2 401 Richmond.....A7
- 3 Art Gallery of Ontario.....B6
- 4 Bata Shoe Museum.....A2
- 5 Church of the Holy Trinity.....D6
- 6 City Hall.....C7
- 7 Cloud Gardens Conservatory.....D7
- 8 Former Maple Leaf Gardens.....D5
- 9 Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art.....C3
- 10 Old City Hall.....D7
- 11 Provincial Legislature.....C4
- 12 Royal Ontario Museum.....B3
- 13 Textile Museum of Canada.....C6
- 14 Toronto Public Library – Lillian H Smith Branch

.....A5

Activities, Courses & Tours

15 ROMBus

.....B2

Sleeping

- 16 1871 Historic House B&B.....E3
- 17 Annex Quest House.....A2
- 18 Au Petit Paris.....E3
- 19 Baldwin Village Inn.....B5
- 20 Cambridge Suites.....D7
- 21 Comfort Hotel.....D3
- 22 Courtyard Toronto Downtown.....D4
- 23 Eaton Chelsea
- 24 Four Seasons.....C2
- 25 Global Guesthouse
- 26 Grand Hotel & Suites.....E6
- 27 Havinn
- 28 Hazelton
- 29 Holiday Inn Toronto Bloor-Yorkville.....A2
- 30 Holiday Inn Toronto Downtown Centre.....D5
- 31 Les Amis Bed & Breakfast.....D5
- 32 Madison Manor
- 33 Neill-Wycik College Hotel.....E5
- 34 Pantages
- 35 Toronto Townhouse B&B.....F5
- 36 Victoria's Mansion Inn & Guesthouse
- 37 Windsor Arms

.....D3

.....C3

Eating

- 38 7 West Café.....D3
- 39 B Espresso Bar.....E7
- 40 Bloor Street Diner.....D2
- 41 Cafe la Gaffe
- 42 Caren's Wine and Cheese Bar.....C2

43 Dark Horse Espresso

A7

44 Eat Fresh Be Healthy

C6

45 Ethiopian House

D3

46 Fire on the East Side

D3

47 Golden Diner Family Restaurant

E5

48 Good View

E6

49 Guu

E5

50 Hair of the Dog

E4

51 JOEY Eaton Centre

D6

52 Kinton Ramen

B5

53 Morton's the Steakhouse

B2

54 Mother's Dumplings

A5

55 ND Sushi

B5

56 Okonomi House

C3

57 Queen Mother Café

B7

58 Richmond Station

D7

59 Salad King

D6

60 Sambucas on Church

E4

61 Sassafras

C2

62 Schnitzel Queen

F7

63 Senator Restaurant

D6

64 Swatow

A6

65 Urban Eatery

D6

Drinking & Nightlife

- 66 Black Bull
- 67 Black Eagle
- 68 Blake House
- 69 Crews & Tangos
- Fly

(see 46)

70 Madison Avenue Pub

A2

71 O'Grady's

E4

72 Panorama

C3

73 Wide Open

A7

Woody's/Sailor

(see 67)

Entertainment

- 74 Canadian Opera Company
- Cineplex Odeon Varsity

(see 40)

75 Cineplex Yonge & Dundas

D6

76 Ed Mirvish Theatre

D6

Elgin & Winter Garden Theatre

(see 1)

77 Horseshoe Tavern

A7

78 Massey Hall

D7

79 Phoenix

F5

80 Rex

B7

81 Rivoli

A7

82 Scotiabank Theatre

B7

83 TO Tix

D6

Shopping

- 84 BMV
- 85 Eaton Centre
- 86 Guild Shop
- 87 New Tribe

D6

D6

C2

B7

north on Yonge, skirting past the colorful Church and Wellesley gay village, into chic Yorkville at the intersection with Bloor St.

Elgin & Winter Garden Theatre THEATER
 (Map p74; ☎ 416-314-2901; www.heritagetrust.on.ca/ewg; 189 Yonge St; tours adult/concession \$12/10; Ⓜ Queen) A restored masterpiece,

the Elgin & Winter Garden Theatre is the world's last operating double-decker theater. Celebrating its centennial in 2013, the Winter Garden was built as the flagship for a vaudeville chain that never really took off, while the downstairs Elgin was converted into a movie house in the 1920s. Fascinating tours run Thursdays at 5pm and Saturdays at 11am.

Saved from demolition in 1981, the theaters received a \$29-million-facelift: bread dough was used to uncover original rose-garden frescoes, the Belgian company that made the original carpet was contacted for fresh rugs, and the floral Winter Garden ceiling was replaced, leaf by painstaking leaf.

City Hall

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Map p74; ☎416-392-2489, 311; www.toronto.ca; 100 Queen St W; ☺8:30am-4:30pm Mon-Fri; [S]Queen)

FREE Much-maligned City Hall was Toronto's bold leap of faith into architectural modernity. Its twin clamshell towers, central 'flying saucer' ramps and mosaics were completed in 1965 to Finnish architect Viljo Revell's award-winning design. An irritable Frank Lloyd Wright called it a 'headmarker for a grave'; in a macabre twist, Revell died before construction was finished. Collect a self-guided tour pamphlet at the info desk.

Out front is **Nathan Phillips Square**, a meeting place for skaters, demonstrators and office workers on their lunch breaks. Extensively redeveloped in 2013, the new green roof is at last impressive! In summer look for the Fresh Wednesdays farmers market, free concerts and special events. The fountain pool becomes a fun-filled ice-skating rink in winter.

Old City Hall

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Map p74; ☎416-327-5614; www.toronto.ca/old_city_hall; 60 Queen St W; ☺8:30am-4:30pm Mon-Fri)

FREE Across Bay St is the 1899 definitive work of Toronto architect EJ Lennox. Now housing legal courtrooms, the hall has an off-center bell tower, interesting murals and grimacing gargoyles.

Church of the Holy Trinity

CHURCH

(Map p74; ☎416-598-4521; www.holytrinitytoronto.org; 10 Trinity Sq; ☺11am-3pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat, 8am-4pm Sun, services 12:15pm Wed, 10:30am & 2pm Sun; [S]Dundas) Tucked away behind the west side of the gargantuan Eaton Centre is the oasislike Trinity Sq, named after the welcoming Anglican Church of the Holy Trinity. When it opened in 1847, it was the first church in Toronto not to charge parishioners for pews. Today it's a cross between a house

of worship, a small concert venue and a community drop-in center – everything a downtown church should be!

Of particular note, the labyrinth outside the church is of similar design to the one found in Chartres cathedral in France. Of ancient origins, a labyrinth is a constrained unicursal pattern with a single winding pathway to its central rosette, regarded as a place for prayer and reflection. Its length is deceptive – it takes about 20 minutes to walk in and back out, in silence – a kind of ambulatory meditation in the middle of the hustle and bustle of the city.

Textile Museum of Canada

MUSEUM

(Map p74; ☎416-599-5321; www.textilemuseum.ca; 55 Centre Ave; adult/concession \$15/6, admission free 5-8pm Wed; ☺11am-5pm Thu-Tue, to 8pm Wed, tours 2pm Sun; [S]St Patrick) Obscurely located at the bottom of a condo tower, this museum has exhibits drawing on a permanent collection of 10,000 items from Latin America, Africa, Europe, Southeast Asia and India, as well as contemporary Canada. Workshops teach batik making, weaving, knitting and all manner of needle-stuff.

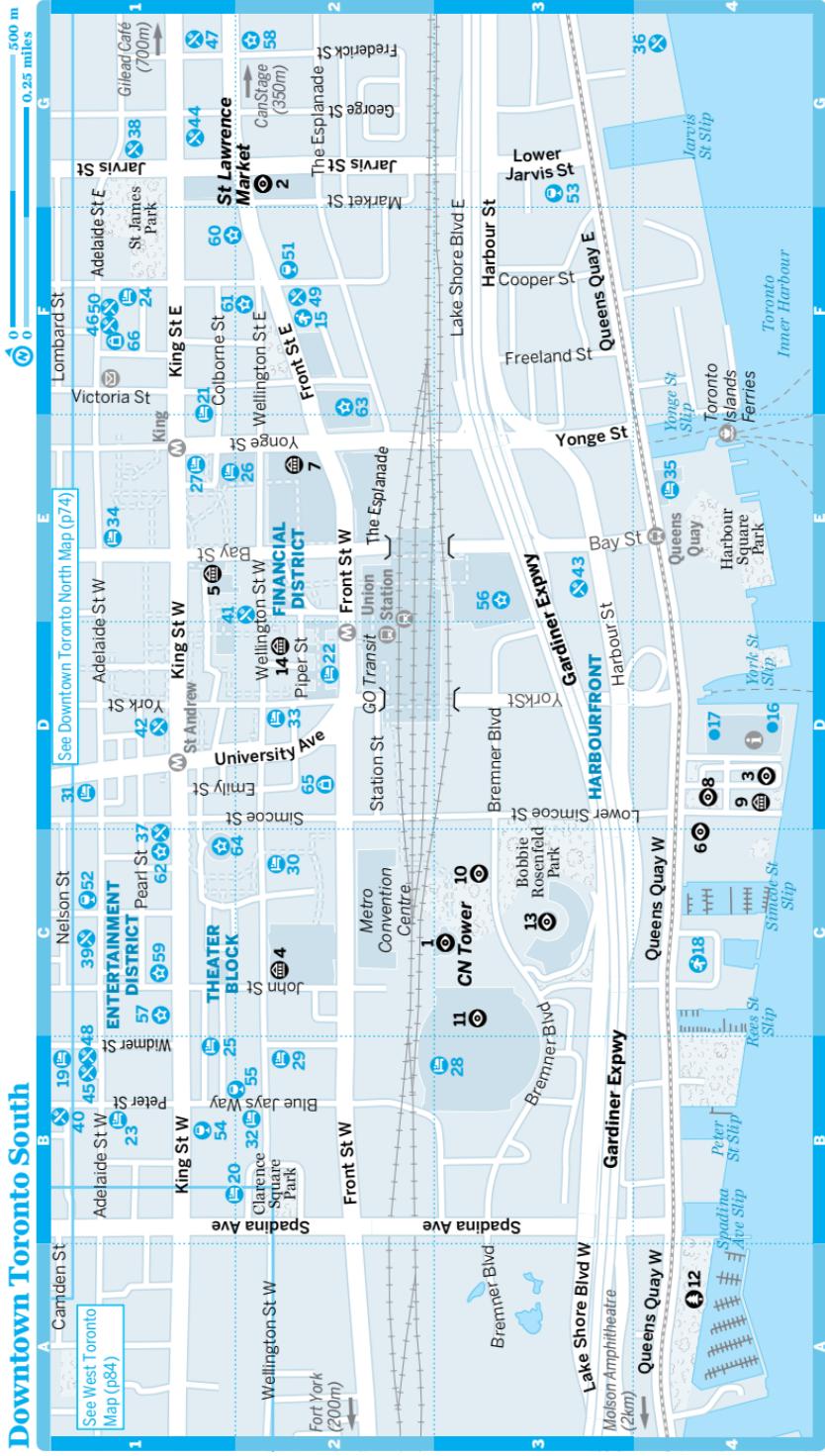
Chinatown & Baldwin Village

Toronto's grotty Chinatown occupies a chunk of downtown from University Ave to Spadina Ave between College and Queen Sts; a vermilion twin dragon gate marks the

TORONTO BY NUMBERS

- Canadian immigrants who settle in Toronto: 1 in 4
- Estimated number of visitors during Pride Week: 1 million
- Pint of local brew: \$5
- TTC subway ride: \$3
- Percentage of the US population within a day's drive of Toronto: 50%
- Height of the CN Tower: 553m
- Cheap seat at a Blue Jays game: \$11
- Parkland as a percentage of Toronto's area: 18%
- Months in year when parks are green and leafy: six
- Last time the Maple Leafs won the Stanley Cup: 1967
- Minutes per day the average Torontonian spends commuting: 82

Downtown Toronto South



Downtown Toronto South

Top Sights

- 1** CN Tower C3
2 St Lawrence Market G2

Sights

- 3** Canada Square D4
4 Canadian Broadcasting Centre C2
5 Design Exchange E1
6 Harbourfront Centre C4
7 Hockey Hall of Fame E2
 Market Gallery (see 2)
8 Ontario Square D4
9 Power Plant Gallery D4
10 Ripley's Aquarium of Canada C3
11 Rogers Centre C3
12 Spadina Quay Wetlands A4
13 Steam Whistle Brewing C3
14 TD Gallery of Inuit Art D2

Activities, Courses & Tours

- 15** Europe Bound Outfitters F2
16 Great Lakes Schooner Company D4
17 Mariposa Cruises D4
18 Wheel Excitement C4

Sleeping

- 19** Canadiana Guesthouse & Backpackers B1
20 Clarence Park B1
21 Cosmopolitan F1
22 Fairmont Royal York D2
23 Hilton Garden Inn Toronto Downtown B1
24 Hostelling International Toronto F1
25 Hôtel Le Germain B1
26 Hotel Victoria E1
27 One King West E1
28 Renaissance Toronto B3
29 Residence Inn Toronto Downtown B2
30 Ritz Carlton C2
31 Shangri-La Hotel D1
32 Soho Metropolitan Hotel B2
33 Strathcona Hotel D2
34 Trump Toronto E1
35 Westin Harbour Castle E4

Eating

- 36** Against the Grain Urban Tavern G4
37 Big Daddy's Bourbon St Bistro C1
38 Bombay Palace G1
39 Burger Brats C1
40 Burrito Banditos B1
41 Bymark E2
42 Earl's D1
43 Harbour Sixty Steakhouse E3
44 Hiro Sushi G1
45 Khao San Road B1
46 Nami F1
47 Patrician Grill G1
48 Ravi Soups B1
 St Lawrence Market (see 2)
49 Sultan's Tent & Café Maroc F2
50 Terroni F1

Drinking & Nightlife

- 51** C'est What F2
52 Crocodile Rock C1
53 Guvernment G3
54 Underground Garage B1
55 Wayne Gretzky's B2

Entertainment

- 56** Air Canada Centre E3
57 Bell Lightbox C1
 Glenn Gould Studio (see 4)
58 Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People G2
59 Princess of Wales Theatre C1
60 Rainbow Cinemas F1
61 Reservoir Lounge F2
 Rogers Centre (see 11)
62 Royal Alexandra Theatre C1
63 Sony Centre for the Performing Arts F2
64 Toronto Symphony Orchestra C1

Shopping

- 65** Bay of Spirits Gallery D2
66 Open Air Books & Maps F1

epicenter. Between Beverley and McCaul Sts, on Baldwin St, leafy Baldwin Village is a pretty strip of cheap eats and good vibes tucked away from the madding crowds. The village has Jewish roots, but today's bohemian air stems from counterculture US exiles who decamped here during the Vietnam War.

Art Gallery of Ontario

(AGO; Map p74; ☎ 877-225-4246, 416-979-6648; www.ago.net; 317 Dundas St W; adult/concession \$19.50/11, admission free 6-8:30pm Wed; ☰ 10am-

5:30pm Tue & Thu-Sun, to 8:30pm Wed; ☰ 505) The AGO houses art collections both excellent and extensive (bring your stamina). Renovations of the facade, designed by the great Frank Gehry and completed in 2008, fail to impress at street level: perhaps because of a drab downtown location. Fortunately, everything changes once you step inside. Highlights of the permanent collection include rare Québécois religious statuary, First Nations and Inuit carvings, stunningly presented works by Canadian greats the Group of Seven (p172), the Henry Moore

sculpture pavilion and a restored Georgian house, The Grange.

There's a surcharge for special exhibits but visits to the permanent collection on Wednesday evenings are free. Half-hour mini-tours leave from Walker Court daily at 11:30am and 2:30pm and on Wednesday evenings at 7 pm.

Church-Wellesley Village

North of Yonge & Dundas Sq along Yonge St, toward College St and Bloor St, you'll find Ryerson University and a smattering of cheap eats, sex shops and strip clubs, straight and gay. Toronto's gay village, known as 'Church & Wellesley' or 'the Village,' starts on the corner of Church and College and is centered a few blocks north on the intersection of Church and Wellesley Sts. Every summer, around the Canada Day long weekend, over a million shiny happy people descend on the streets for Toronto's massive Pride Parade and Festival, a celebration of sexuality, diversity and freedom.

Former Maple Leaf Gardens

LANDMARK

(Mattamy Athletic Centre and Loblaws; Map p74; ☎ 416-598-5966; www.mattamyathleticcentre.ca; 50-60 Carlton St;  College) This hallowed hockey arena was built in an astounding five months during the Great Depression, and was home to the Toronto Maple Leafs for over 50 years until they relocated to the Air Canada Centre in 1999. In its heyday, Elvis, Sinatra and the Beatles all belted out tunes here.

After a monumental redevelopment project, the facility is now home to Ryerson University's Athletic Centre and the must-see flagship megastore of the Loblaw's grocery chain, with its killer Patisserie and Wall of Cheese.

Bloor-Yorkville

Once Toronto's version of New York's Greenwich Village or San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury, this formerly counter-cultural leopard has changed its spots to become the downtown home of Toronto's rich, famous, glam and fabulous. Yorkville's main drag is the stretch of Bloor St W to Avenue Rd, otherwise known as the Mink Mile: where to go if high-end brand label shopping is your thing. The Holt Renfrew department store is here, along with Gucci, Prada, D&G and Louis Vuitton. There are some lovely bou-

tiques and cafes in the streets north of Bloor to Davenport Rd and east of Avenue Rd. Hollywood celebrities are frequently spotted in Yorkville bars when TIFF is in town.

Royal Ontario Museum

MUSEUM

(ROM; Map p74; ☎ 416-586-8000; www.rom.on.ca; 100 Queen's Park; adult/child \$15/12, special exhibit surcharges apply; ☺ 10am-5:30pm Sat-Thu, to 8:30pm Fri;  Museum) Celebrating its centennial in 2014, the multidisciplinary ROM is Canada's biggest natural-history museum and one of the largest museums in North America. You'll either love or loathe the synergy between the original heritage buildings at the main entrance on Bloor St and the 2007 addition of 'the Crystal,' which appears to pierce the original structure and juts out into the street like a massive shard.

Inside, the permanent collection features over six million specimens and artifacts, divided between two main galleries: the Natural History Galleries (all on the 2nd floor) and the World Culture Galleries (on floors 1, 3 and 4). The Chinese temple sculptures, Gallery of Korean Art and costumes and textile collections are some of the best in the world. Kids rush to the dinosaur rooms, Egyptian mummies and Jamaican bat-cave replica. The cedar crest poles carved by First Nations tribes in British Columbia are wonderful. Each year, the ROM hosts a variety of big temporary exhibits from around the world. The on-site Institute of Contemporary Culture explores current issues through art, architecture, lectures and moving image. There are free museum tours daily. Keep an eye out for the Friday Night Live programs in spring and fall when the museum opens its doors, stocks its bars and calls in the DJs for a makeshift disco. Check the website for updates about ROM's centennial celebrations.

Bata Shoe Museum

MUSEUM

(Map p74; ☎ 416-979-7799; www.batashoemuseum.ca; 327 Bloor St W; adult/child \$14/5, admission free 5-8pm Thu; ☺ 10am-5pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, to 8pm Thu, noon-5pm Sun;  St George) It's important in life to be well shod, a stance the Bata Shoe Museum takes seriously. Impressively designed by architect Raymond Moriyama to resemble a stylized shoebox, the museum displays 10,000 'pedi-artifacts' from around the globe. Peruse 19th-century French chestnut-crushing clogs, Canadian aboriginal polar boots or famous modern pairs worn by Elton John, Indira Gandhi

and Pablo Picasso. Come along for something truly different!

Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art MUSEUM
(Map p74; ☎ 416-586-8080; www.gardinermuseum.on.ca; 111 Queen's Park; adult/child \$12/free, 4-9pm Fri half-price, 4-9pm 3rd Fri of month Fri free; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Thu, to 9pm Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun; ☎ Museum) Opposite the Royal Ontario Museum, the Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art was founded by philanthropists. Spread over three floors, collections cover several millennia; various rooms focus on 17th- and 18th-century English tavern ware, Italian Renaissance majolica, ancient American earthenware and blue-and-white Chinese porcelain. There are free guided tours daily at 2pm.

University of Toronto & The Annex

Founded in 1827, the prestigious University of Toronto (U of T) is Canada's largest, with close to 80,000 students and 18,000 employees. Feel free to stroll through the

central St George campus to admire its collection of stately Victorian and Romanesque buildings. West and north of U of T lies The Annex, Toronto's largest downtown residential neighborhood, favored by students and academics. The number of pubs, organic grocery stores, world eats and spiritual venues comes as no surprise. Some of Toronto's most satisfying architecture is here.

★ Casa Loma

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Map p69; ☎ 416-923-1171; www.casaloma.org; 1 Austin Tce; adult/child \$18/10; ☎ 9:30am-5pm, last entry 4pm; ☎ 127, stop Davenport & Spadina, ☎ Dupont) Toronto's only castle may have never housed royalty, but it certainly has grandeur, lording over The Annex on a cliff that was once the shoreline of the glacial Lake Iroquois, from which Lake Ontario derived. Climb the 27m **Baldwin Steps** up the slope from Spadina Ave, north of Davenport Rd.

The 98-room mansion – an architectural orgasm of castellations, chimneys, flagpoles, turrets and Rapunzel balconies – was built between 1911 and 1914 for Sir Henry Pellat,

GAY & LESBIAN TORONTO

To say Toronto is GLBT-friendly is an understatement. That it embraces diversity more fully than most other centers of its size, is closer to the mark. In 2003 Toronto became the first city in North America to legalize same-sex marriage. Just over a year later, an Ontario Court also recognized the first legal same-sex divorce, as if to remind us that marriage can be hard work, whatever your orientation!

Toronto's LGBT (yup, the acronym swings both ways!) Pride Festival is one of the largest in the world. On Parade day, the streets around Church and Wellesley swell with over a million happy homosexuals and their friends and families. If Pride is your bag, be sure to book accommodations well in advance as beds fill fast...literally. At other times of the year, the Church St strip of the Village draws everyone from biker bears and lipstick lesbians to its modest smattering of sunny patios, pubs, cafes and restaurants for much promenading and people-watching. After dark it's all about the dancing: whether cabaret or drag, thumping top-40 and R&B or queer alterna-punk, late-night revelers spill on to the streets, especially on weekends.

Other gay-friendly neighborhoods include The Annex, Kensington, Queen West and Cabbagetown. Gay nightlife venues are abundant and although men's bars and clubs vastly outnumber lesbian venues, Toronto is also home to drag kings, women-only bathhouse nights and lesbian reading series.

Toronto is a great place to be gay or to explore your sexuality. Look for the *Xtra!* weekly free press – you'll find it everywhere in the Village. There are also plenty of fantastic free community resources and support groups available:

519 Community Centre (Church St Community Centre; Map p74; ☎ 416-392-6874; www.the519.org; 519 Church St; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun; ☎ Wellesley)

Canadian Lesbian & Gay Archives (Map p74; ☎ 416-777-2755; www.clga.ca; 34 Isabella St; ☎ 7:30-10pm Tue-Thu, 11am-2pm Fri; ☎ Wellesley)

Hassle-Free Clinic (p118)

Queer West (www.queerwest.org)

a wealthy financier who made bags of cash from his contract to provide Toronto with electricity. He later lost everything in land speculation, the resultant foreclosure forcing Hank and his wife to downsize. A variety of themed guided tours are available. If you're in Toronto around Christmas, a visit is a must. Check the website for details.

★ Spadina Museum

MUSEUM
(2) 416-392-6910; www.toronto.ca/culture/spadina; 285 Spadina Rd; tours adult/child \$8/5, grounds admission free; ☰ noon-4pm Tue-Sun; (S) Dupont) Atop the Baldwin Steps, this gracious home and its Victorian-Edwardian gardens were built in 1866 as a country estate for financier James Austin and his family. Donated to the city in 1978, it became a museum in 1984 and was recently painstakingly transformed to evoke the heady age of the roaring 1920s and '30s: highly recommended.

Provincial Legislature

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Map p74; www.ontla.on.ca; Queen's Park; ☰ tours every hour 9:30am-5:30pm Mon-Fri; (S) Queen's Park) FREE The seat of Ontario's Provincial Legislature resides in a fabulously ornate 1893 sandstone building, north of College St in Queen's Park. For some homegrown entertainment, head for the visitors gallery when the adversarial legislative assembly is in session (Monday, Tuesday and Thursday March to June and September to December). Viewing is free, but security regulations are in full force. Free 30-minute tours depart from the information desk.

Wychwood Park

PARK

(cnr Davenport Rd & Bathurst St; (S) Dupont) Formerly a gated artists colony, Wychwood Park, established in the late 19th century, showcases some of Toronto's most beautiful and fascinating heritage architecture. It's a great place for a stroll. Note that Wychwood is an actual residential community where people go about their daily lives: please be respectful.

Native Canadian

Centre of Toronto

CULTURAL BUILDING

(Map p84; (2) 416-964-9087; www.ncct.on.ca; 16 Spadina Rd; ☰ 9am-8pm Mon-Thu, to 6pm Fri, 10am-4pm Sat; (S) Spadina) This community center hosts Thursday-night drum socials, seasonal powwows and elders' cultural events that promote harmony and conversation between tribal members and non-First Nations peoples. You can also sign up for

workshops and craft classes, such as bead-ing and dancing.

🕒 Queen West & Trinity Bellwoods

Although Queen West isn't home to any significant attractions, a trip to Toronto's best-known 'hood is a must. Any self-respecting 20-to-40-something with an interest in popular culture will want to make this hip strip their first port of call.

To do Queen St justice, make a day of it: start at the corner of Yonge St and head west, although nothing really happens until the Osgoode subway station at the intersection of Queen St W and University Ave. The Queen West district begins here and continues for about 1.5km to Bathurst St. The first few blocks over to Spadina are a wonderful mix of mainstream retailers, bars and an eclectic bunch of boutiques, but it's really from Spadina to Bathurst where the wild things are. Infinitely more grungy, here you'll find all manner of cheap and delicious eats slotted between fabric, furniture, art and music stores. There's plenty of cafes and bars in which to glean inspiration and lose track of time.

West of Bathurst, past Trinity Bellwoods Park, for about 2km over to Dufferin St, is known as West Queen West. The first bit between Bathurst and happening Ossington Ave, south of Bloor, all the way down to Queen, is one of our favorite strips for food, drink and people-watching. This is the Trinity Bellwoods neighborhood – *the* place to live if you're a hipster, designhead, scenester or nonmainstream gay. (Yes, Toronto's neighborhoods can be this transparent...) The proliferation of excellent food and beverage joints on and around Ossington arose when high rents pushed many businesses further west. What emerged is a revitalised strip of Queen St, infinitely more trendy than the original.

Streetcars run the length of Queen St W, before it becomes the Queensway: nice to know if your feet get tired or you're loaded up with too many bags after a hard day hipsterising your wardrobe – it's a long walk back downtown.

Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art

MUSEUM

(MOCCA; Map p84; (2) 416-395-0067; www.mocca.ca; 952 Queen St W; admission by donation; ☰ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun; (F) 501) At Queen and Ossington,

in the heart of West Queen West's design and arts precinct, MOCCA's mandate is to exhibit innovative works by Canadian and international artists that address themes of contemporary relevance. The permanent collection is not presently on display, but temporary exhibits – promoting emerging artists from Nova Scotia to British Columbia and beyond – are changed every six to eight weeks.

• East End

The area east of Parliament St to the Don River was settled by Irish immigrants fleeing the potato famine of 1841. Because the area's sandy soil proved cabbage-conducive, it became known as Cabbagetown. Predominantly residential and officially designated a Heritage Conservation District, it has one of the largest concentrations of domestic Victorian architecture in North America, making for a pleasant stroll. It's nice to walk across Riverdale Park, north on Broadview Ave, then east on Danforth Ave where you'll find yourself in Greektown/The Danforth. Further east on Gerrard St E you'll come to Little India. Both are heavenly haunts for the food-focused. Dropping south to Queen St E, discover Leslieville. Favoured by armies of young cashed-up moms, it's Toronto's antithesis to Queen W: chichi, sanitised and a lovely spot for a fancy brunch. Since 2005, when the *New York Times* pronounced the then up-and-coming Leslieville as Toronto's

'it' neighborhood, real estate prices and interest in the area have soared.

Tommy Thompson Park

PARK

(Map p69; ☎ 416-661-6600; www.tommythompsonpark.ca; Leslie St, off Lake Shore Blvd E; ☺ 9am-6pm Sat & Sun; ☎ 83 Jones S, ☎ 501) A 5km-long artificial peninsula between the Harbourfront and The Beaches, Tommy Thompson Park reaches further into Lake Ontario than the Toronto Islands. This 'accidental wilderness' – constructed from Outer Harbour dredgings and fill from downtown building sites – has become a phenomenal wildlife success. It's one of the world's largest nesting places for ring-billed gulls, and is a haven for terns, black-crowned night herons, turtles, owls, foxes and even coyotes.

Open to the public on weekends and holidays; cars and pets are prohibited. Summer schedules offer interpretive programs and guided walks, usually with an ecological theme. At the end of the park there's a lighthouse and great city views. To get here, take any streetcar along Queen St E to Leslie St, then walk 800m south to the gates, or follow the Martin Goodman Trail.

★ Riverdale Farm

MUSEUM

(Map p69; ☎ 416-392-6794; www.toronto.ca/parks/featured-parks/riverdale-farm; 201 Winchester St; ☺ 9am-5pm; ☎ 506) **FREE** On the former site of the Riverdale Zoo, where from 1888 to 1974 prairie wolves howled at night and spooked the Cabbagetown kids, Riverdale

KENSINGTON MARKET & LITTLE ITALY

Tattered around the edges, elegantly wasted Kensington Market is multicultural Toronto at its most authentic. It's not a constrained market as much as a working residential neighborhood. Eating here is a cheap and cheery trip around the flavors and aromas of the world. Shopping too is a blast, with the biggest and best proliferation of vintage and secondhand clothing, books and bric-a-brac in the city. You'll find dreadlocked urban hippies, tattooed punks, potheads and dealers, bikers, goths, musos, artists and anarchists, generally behaving well and getting along fine. Hooch and Hendrix tinge the air. On weekends, it can feel like a small festival, especially on Pedestrian Sundays, when bi-peds rule. It's more chilled on weekdays, when that extra personal space makes it easier to browse.

To get here, take the College streetcar to Spadina Ave or Augusta Ave and follow the activity. Augusta Ave between College and Dundas is the main strip, but the little stretch of Nassau St between Augusta and Bellevue has some wonderful cafes and can be a welcome oasis from the crowds.

Further along College St, Little Italy is what you expect – a tasty slice of the homeland. There's a long-established strip of outdoor cafes, bars and stylish restaurants that frequently change hands – affluent clientele are notoriously fickle. The further west you go on College, the more traditional things become, with aromatic bakeries, sidewalk gelaterias and rootsy ristoranti.

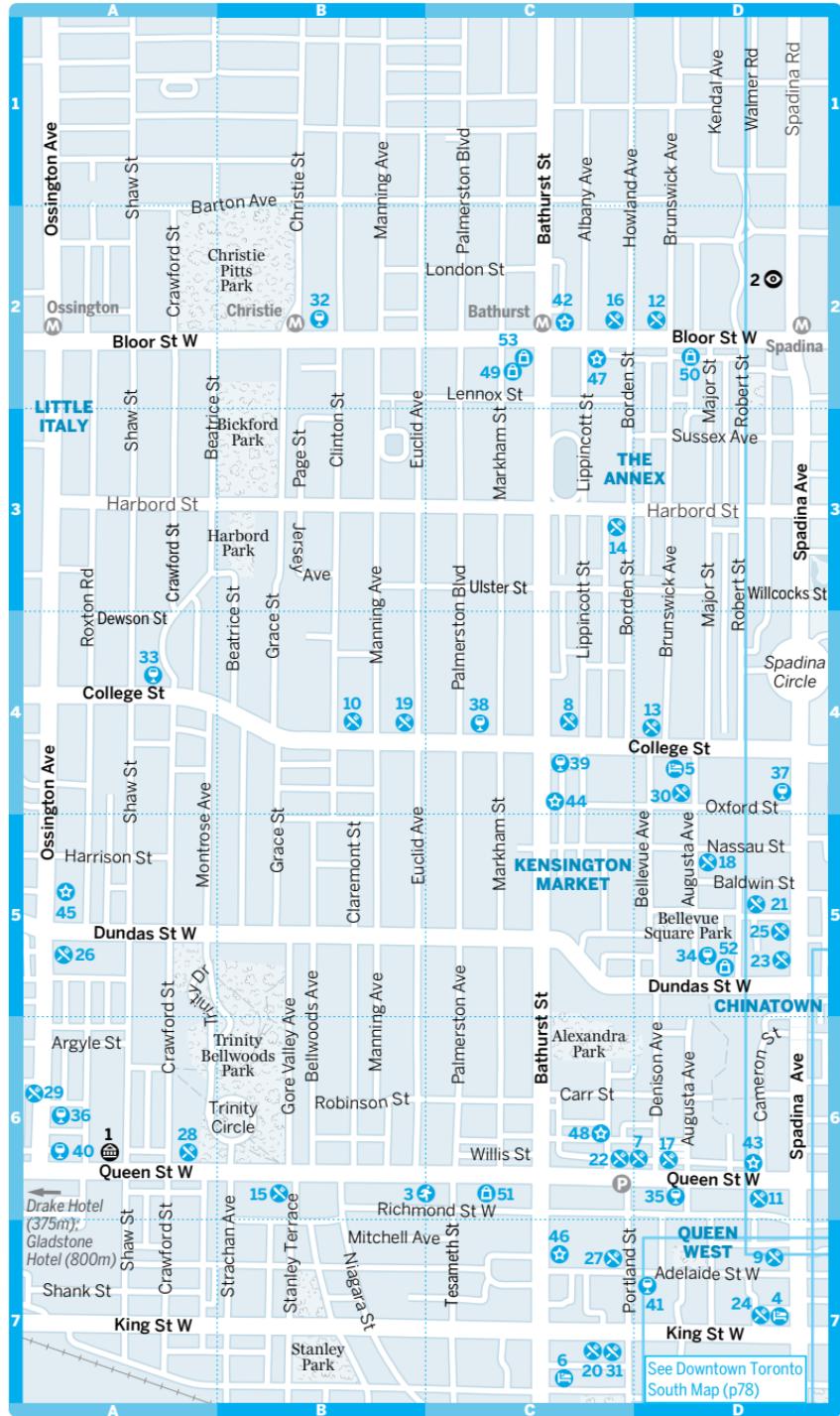
West Toronto

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West Toronto

② Sights

- 1 Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art.....A6
- 2 Native Canadian Centre of TorontoD2

④ Activities, Courses & Tours

- 3 Community Bicycle NetworkC6

⑤ Sleeping

- 4 Global Village Backpackers.....D7
- 5 Planet Travelers Hostel.....D4
- 6 Thompson TorontoC7

⑥ Eating

- 7 5th ElementD6
- 8 Aunties & Uncles.....C4
- 9 Avenue Open Kitchen.....D7
- 10 Bar Italia.....B4
- 11 Burger's PriestD6
- 12 By the WayD2
- 13 Caplansky's Deli.....D4
- 14 Chabichau.....C3
- 15 Chippy'sB6
- 16 Country StyleC2
- 17 Grasslands.....D6
- 18 Jumbo Empanadas.....D5
- 19 Kalendar.....B4
- 20 LeeC7
- 21 Moonbean Coffee CompanyD5
- 22 New York Subway.....C6
- 23 Nguyen HuongD5
- 24 PatriaD7
- 25 Phở Hu'ngD5
- 26 Pizzeria Libretto.....A5

- 27 Sadie's DinerC7
- 28 Swan.....A6
- Thompson Diner.....(see 6)
- 29 UnionA6
- 30 Urban HerbivoreD4
- 31 Wvrst.....C7

⑦ Drinking & Nightlife

- 32 Clinton's.....B2
- 33 El Convento RicoA4
- 34 Handlebar.....D5
- 35 Java House.....D6
- Mod Club(see 33)
- 36 OssingtonA6
- 37 Red Room.....D4
- 38 Smokeless Joe.....C4
- 39 Sneaky Dee's.....C4
- 40 Sweaty Betty's.....A6
- 41 Uniun.....D7

⑧ Entertainment

- 42 Bloor Hot Docs CinemaC2
- 43 Cameron House.....D6
- 44 Cineforum.....C4
- 45 Dakota TavernA5
- 46 Factory Theatre.....C7
- 47 Lee's PalaceC2
- 48 Theatre Passe Muraille.....C6

⑨ Shopping

- 49 BeguilingC2
- 50 BMVD2
- 51 Come as You AreC6
- 52 Courage My Love.....D5
- 53 Honest Ed'sC2

Farm is a rural oasis in the downtown. Now a working-farm museum, it has two barns, a summer wading pool and pens of feathered and furry friends. Kids follow the farmer around as he does his daily chores, including milking the cows at 10:30am. There's a farmers market on Tuesdays (3pm to 7pm May to October).

① The Beaches

To residents, The Beaches has become a wealthy, professional neighborhood by the lake. To everyone else, it means the neighborhood, the beaches themselves and the parklands along Lake Ontario. Of all the beaches, **Kew Beach** (Map p69; ☎ 416-392-8186; www.toronto.ca/parks/beaches/beaches; ☀ dawn-dusk; ☎ 501) is the most popular; its boardwalk runs east to **Balmy Beach** and west to **Woodbine Beach**.

Adjacent **Kew Gardens** (Map p69) has rest rooms, snack bars, a skating rink, lawn bowls and tennis courts; at the western end there's an Olympic-sized public swimming pool. For cyclists and in-line skaters, the **Martin Goodman Trail** leads past Ashbridge's Bay Park. Off Queen St E, the sunken **Ivan Forrest Gardens** leads to Glen Stewart Ravine, a wilder patch of green running north to Kingston Rd.

RC Harris Filtration Plant

LANDMARK

(☎ 416-392-2934; www.toronto.ca; 2701 Queen St E; ☎ 501) Commanding heavenly views of the lakefront on a priceless slab of real estate, the elegantly proportioned RC Harris Filtration Plant is an art-deco masterpiece that has appeared in countless movies and TV shows. Originally disparagingly dubbed the 'Palace of Purification,' due to hefty construction costs during the Great Depression, the fully operational plant is rarely open to

OFFBEAT TORONTO

► **Cineforum** (Map p84; ☎ 416-603-6643; www.cineforum.ca; 463 Bathurst St; over/under 24yr \$20/10; ☺ screenings 7pm & 9pm Sat-Thu; ☐ 506, 511) Eccentric Toronto character Reg Hartt wraps posters around telephone poles advertising his 20-seat home cinema playing avant-garde films. Come prepared for idiosyncratic lectures like 'What I Learned from LSD,' sometimes delivered during the film. Expect the unexpected.

► **Theatre Passe Muraille** (Theater Beyond Walls; Map p84; ☎ 416-504-7529; www.passemuraille.on.ca; 16 Ryerson Ave; tickets \$20-35, previews \$16; ☺ shows 7:30pm Tue-Sat, matinees 2pm Sat; ☐ 501) Since the 1960s, this alternative theater in the old Nasmyth's Bakery & Stables has focused on radical plays with contemporary Canadian themes. Saturday matinees are 'Pay What You Can.'

► **Beguiling** (Map p84; ☎ 416-533-9168; www.beguilingbooksandart.com; 601 Markham St; ☺ 11am-7pm Mon-Thu & Sat, to 9pm Wed & Fri, noon-6pm Sun; ☐ Bathurst) Need a comic-book fix? This is the kind of crowded, mixed-up joint that Robert Crumb would drop by; in fact, he once did. Be mesmerized by original 'zines, indie comics, pop-culture books, limited-edition artworks and posters.

► **New Tribe** (Map p74; ☎ 416-977-2786; www.newtribe.ca; 2nd fl, 232 Queen St W; minimum for tattooing \$80; ☺ 11am-8pm Mon-Thu, to 10pm Fri & Sat, noon-6pm Sun; ☐ 501) Body art in Toronto is almost mainstream: you'd run out of body parts before running out of tattoo and piercing shops. This one, in the heart of Queen St W, is one of our favorites.

► **Come as You Are** (Map p84; ☎ 416-504-7934; [www.comeeasyouare.com](http://www.comeasyouare.com); 493 Queen St W; ☺ 11am-7pm Mon-Wed, to 8pm Thu & Sat, to 9pm Fri, noon-5pm Sat; ☐ 501) Catering to all genders and orientations, Canada's pioneering co-op sex shop sells it all. Sign up for a workshop on erotic photography or Bondage 101!

the public, but makes a great photographic subject.

○ Toronto Islands

Once upon a time there were no Toronto Islands, just an immense sandbar stretching 9km into the lake. On April 13, 1858, a hurricane blasted through the sandbar and created the gap now known as the Eastern Channel. Toronto's jewel-like islands were born – nearly two-dozen isles covering 240 hectares and home to close-knit, 800-strong communities on **Algonquin Island** and **Ward's Island**. The islands are only accessible by ferry (15 minutes, adult/child \$7/3.50). To get to the ferry docks from Union Station, take the 509 Harbourfront or the 510 Spadina streetcar south to the Bay and Queens Quay stop.

Centreville Amusement Park AMUSEMENT PARK (☎ 416-203-0405; www.centreisland.ca; all-day ride pass adult/child/family \$37/25.95/111.80, grounds admission free; ☺ 10:30am-8pm May-Sep; ☐ Centre Island) From Centre Island ferry terminal, wander past the information booth to quaint Centreville's antique carousel, goofy golf course, miniature train and sky gondola. **Far Enough Farm** zoo presents kids with plenty

of opportunities to cuddle something furry and step in something sticky. There's no admission fee to the park, but you need to purchase a pass to use the rides.

South over Centreville bridge is a hedge maze and ticket booths for Toronto Islands tram tours. Further south are changing rooms, snack bars, bicycle rentals and a pier striking out into the lake. To the east is a boathouse where you can rent canoes, kayaks or paddleboats to explore the islands' lagoons.

Hanlan's Point

PARK

(☐ Hanlan's Point) At the west end of Centre Island by the Toronto City Centre Airport is Hanlan's Point, named after world-champion sculler 'Ned' Hanlan (1855-1904), a member of the first family to permanently settle here. Babe Ruth hit his first professional home run here in 1914 while playing minor-league baseball – the ball drowned in Lake Ontario, the ultimate souvenir lost forever!

Beyond the free tennis courts and a fragile ecosystem of low-lying dunes sustaining rare species, the not-so-rare nekkid humanus roams free on the gray sand of Hanlan's Point Beach. Popular with gay men, the beach's 'clothing optional' status was legalized in 1999.

Ward's Island

 Ward's Island) At the western end of Ward's Island is an 18-hole **Frisbee Golf Course** (www.discgolfontario.com; ☺dawn-dusk) **FREE**. An old-fashioned boardwalk runs the length of the south shore of the island, passing the back gate of the year-round Rectory Cafe with its delightful lakeside patio.

Greater Toronto Area (GTA)

Further afield, in outlying areas of the GTA, where Toronto's neighborhoods start to become suburbs and begin to look the same, are a number of worthy attractions. The downside is they can be frustrating to get to by public transport and even with a car. We've listed some of the best spots below in order of their proximity to downtown, the higher up the list being the closest and easiest to get to.

★ High Park

PARK

(Map p69; www.toronto.ca/parks/featured-parks/high-park; 1873 Bloor St W; ☺dawn-dusk;  High Park,  501, 506, 508) Toronto's favorite and best-known park is a wonderful place to unfurl a picnic blanket, swim, play tennis, bike around, skate on the **Grenadier Pond** in the winter, or in the spring meander through the groves of cherry blossoms donated to the park by the Japanese ambassador in 1959. There's also a theatrical stage, a small children's zoo and Colborne Lodge, built in 1836

by the Howard family, who donated much of High Park to the city in 1873.

To get here, bus 30B picks up at High Park subway station, then loops through the park on weekends and holidays from mid-June to early September. Otherwise it's a 200m walk to the north gates. The 506 High Park streetcar drops off on the east side of the park. If you exit the park by Colborne Lodge at the south gates, walk to Lake Shore Blvd W and catch any eastbound streetcar to downtown.

Evergreen Brick Works

PARK

( 416-596-7670; <http://ebw.evergreen.ca>; 550 Bayview Ave; ☺9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun;  28A,  Broadview)  **FREE**

Famed for the wonderful transformation of its originally deteriorating heritage buildings into a prime location for all things geotourism, this dynamic Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design-certified community environmental center and park hosts interactive workshops and community festivals around the themes of ecology, technology and the environment. There's a garden market and lots of nature trails. Check the website to see what's going on. Take the free shuttle bus from Broadview subway station.

Todmorden Mills

HISTORIC SITE

(Map p69;  416-396-2819; www.toronto.ca/todmorden; 67 Pottery Rd; adult/child \$5.30/2.40, gallery admission free; ☺10am-4:30pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun Apr-Dec) In an idyllic setting by the Don River, Todmorden Mills is

LAKE ONTARIO

Unlike nearby Chicago, a city of similar size, population and lake frontage, Toronto has neglected its waterfront. Where Chicago has 29km of contiguous loved-by-locals lakefront trails, parks and beaches, Toronto has the toxic Gardiner Expressway, Lake Shore Boulevard and a wall of waterfront condos obscuring the lake from general view. Lakeshore access has only opened up in recent decades and projects are ever so slowly trying to revitalize the shoreline. Updates can be found at www.toronto.ca/waterfront, and info on Toronto's section of a much bigger lakeshore trail project at www.waterfront-trail.org.

Chemicals, sewage and fertilizer runoff have traditionally fouled the waters of Lake Ontario, although the situation is improving. Many locals now seem content to swim in Toronto's eight Blue-Flag sanctioned beaches: www.toronto.ca/parks/beaches. For most citizens though, Lake Ontario is simply a big, gray, cold thing that stops the Americans from driving up Yonge St.

Lake Ontario is the 14th-largest lake in the world and the smallest and most easterly of the five Great Lakes: 311km long, 85km wide and 244m deep. The name 'Ontario' derives from Skanadario, an Iroquois word meaning 'sparkling water.' The name rings true and despite what lurks beneath, it still sparkles. Visit the Toronto Islands or Tommy Thompson Park to see the lake for what it really is – stoic, powerful and very beautiful. Be sure to tell the locals all about it.

a late-18th-century gristmill-turned-sawmill, then brewery and distillery, then paper mill. Historical relics are on display inside. Enthusiastic guides show visitors around old millers' houses and the petite Don train station. To get here, take the subway to Broadview station then board any bus. Alight at Mortimer/Pottery Road (Dairy Queen), turn left and walk down Pottery Rd.

The renovated **Papermill Theatre and Gallery** showcases local and emerging artists. Nature paths start near the bridge and wind back to the secluded **Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve** (www.hopscotch.ca/tmwp), 9 hectares of wildflowers growing on former industrial wasteland, complete with boardwalks and viewing platforms.

Ontario Science Centre MUSEUM
(416-696-1000; www.ontariosciencecentre.ca; 770 Don Mills Rd; Science Centre adult/child \$22/13, Omnimax \$13/9, combined ticket \$28/19; 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat & Sun; 34 from Eglinton TTC, 25 from Pape TTC) Climb a rock wall, journey to the center of a human heart, catch a criminal with DNA fingerprinting and race an Olympic bobsled at the excellent, interactive Ontario Science Centre. Over 800 high-tech exhibits and live demonstrations wow the kids (and the adults feigning interest at the back). There's also the giant domed Omnimax cinema. Check the website for family events, including theme-night sleepovers.

Scarborough Bluffs PARK
(416-392-1111; www.toronto.ca/waterfront/tour/scarborough_bluffs.htm; Scarborough; dawn-dusk; 12, Victoria Park) Atop this 14km stretch of glacial lakeshore cliffs, enjoy stunning views across Lake Ontario. Erosion has created cathedral spire formations, exposing evidence of five different glacial periods. Without wheels, getting to the bluffs can be a drag. Take the subway to Victoria Park, then bus 12 along Kingston Rd to Cathedral Bluffs Dr, east of the St Clair Ave E intersection.

If you're driving, from Kingston Rd (Hwy 2), turn south at Cathedral Bluffs Dr to reach the highest section of the bluffs (65m), **Cathedral Bluffs Park**. You can also access the shore at Galloway Rd further east. About 6km further east, you'll come to **Guildwood Park**, one of Toronto's most fascinating, filled with architectural relics and sculptures collected from the 1950s to '70s by the forward-thinking Rosa and Spencer Clark.

David Dunlap Observatory OBSERVATORY
(off Map p69; 905-883-0174; www.theddo.ca; 123 Hillsview Dr, Richmond Hill; adult/child \$10/2; 8:30pm Sat Jun-Oct, also 8:30pm Fri Jul & Aug; 91, Finch) North of the Toronto city limits, the David Dunlap Observatory houses Canada's largest optical telescope (the reflector measures 1.9m). On Saturday evenings, the observatory presents introductory talks on modern astronomy, followed by some interplanetary voyeurism. Check that weather conditions are favorable and book ahead for limited tickets.

Take the subway north to Finch station then transfer to the 91 Bayview bus (operated by York Region Transit) and request a stop at Hillsview Dr, from where it's a 1km walk to the observatory. Otherwise, drive north on Bayview Ave past 16th Ave to Hillsview Dr, turn left onto Hillsview Dr then head 1km further west until you see the white dome on your left.

LEGOLAND Discovery Centre AMUSEMENT PARK
(1-855-356-2150; www.legolanddiscoverycentre.ca/toronto; 1 Bass Pro Mills Dr, Vaughan; adult/child \$22/18; 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, 11am-7pm Sun; Yorkdale) Loved by kids and former kids alike, one of Toronto's newest attractions delights with its collection of hands-on, educational Lego-centric attractions including an earthquake table, 4D cinema and Lego factory. It's in the sprawling Vaughan Mills shopping center; take the subway to Yorkdale station and transfer onto the 360 YRT Maple Express bus to Vaughan Mills.

Canada's Wonderland AMUSEMENT PARK
(Map p69; 905-832-8131; www.canadaswonderland.com; 9580 Jane St, Vaughan; day pass adult/child \$59/35; 10am-10pm Jun-Aug, Sat & Sun only May & Sep; York Mills) Amusement park lovers will want to trek to this, Canada's largest, featuring over 60 rides, including the mammoth Leviathan, with a peak height of 93m! There's also an exploding volcano, 20-hectare Splash Works water park and white-water canyon. Queues can be lengthy; most rides operate rain or shine and tickets are cheaper online. From York Mills subway, catch the 60 GO Bus (additional fee).

McMichael Canadian Art Collection GALLERY
(888-213-1121, 905-893-1121; www.mcmichael.com; 10365 Islington Ave, Kleinburg; adult/child \$15/free; 10am-5pm) Handcrafted wooden buildings (which include painter Tom

Thomson's cabin, moved from its original location) are set amid 40 hectares of conservation trails contain works by Canada's best-known landscape painters, the Group of Seven, as well as First Nations, Inuit and other acclaimed Canadian artists. It's a 34km, 45-minute drive from Toronto: be sure to use a GPS. Parking is \$5.

Sharon Temple

HISTORIC BUILDING

(905-478-2389; www.sharontemple.ca; 18974 Leslie St, East Gwillimbury; adult/child \$5/free; 10am-4:30pm Thu-Sun) A national historic site and one of the oldest museums in Canada, this quaint and fascinating temple was built in 1832 by a Quaker sect called the Children of the Peace, to a unique architectural style. Lovingly restored in 2011, the simple museum tells the story of its founders and makes a wonderful day trip out of Toronto. It's about 55km north of downtown.

Activities

They're often mummified in winter layers, but Torontonians still like to keep fit. Outdoor activities abound: folks bike, blade and run along the lakeshore and hike up the city's ravines. Ice skating and hockey are winter faves.

Cycling & In-Line Skating

For cyclists and in-line skaters, the **Martin Goodman Trail**, a paved recreational trail from The Beaches through Harbourfront to the Humber River in the west, is the place to go. Head for the lake and you'll find it. On the way you can connect to the Don Valley mountain-bike trails at Cherry St. On the **Toronto Islands**, the south-shore boardwalk and the interconnecting paved paths are car-free. For a longer trek, the Martin Goodman Trail is part of the **Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail** (www.waterfronttrail.org), stretching 450km from way east of Toronto to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

If you choose to explore Toronto by bike, stick to marked cycling trails when possible. Although many locals bike to work, the downtown is fraught with perils: aggressive drivers, iPod-blinded pedestrians and streetcars. Cyclists do get hit by car doors, and rider accidents from connecting with streetcar tracks aren't uncommon. It's not a legal requirement to wear a helmet in Ontario.

Essential information for cyclists can be found at www.toronto.ca/cycling/map. Folks with smartphones should go to www.ride-the-city.com for real-time route planning.

BIXI

CYCLING

(1-877-412-2494; www.toronto.bixi.com; subscription per 24hr \$5, usage 1st 30min free then \$1.50 for next 30min, \$4 for next 30min, \$8 per additional 30min) Launched in 2011, BIXI is a subscription-based automated bike-sharing project. Look for the BIXI stations dotted around the city or check the homepage for specific locations – there are many. Collect from one station and return to the same or any other, but the longer you have your bike, the more it costs. A credit card is required.

The trick is to break your journeys down to half-hour blocks and to consider BIXI an alternative means of public transportation. It helps if you're good with directions. A \$250 security deposit is frozen on your credit card at time of collection.

Community Bicycle Network

CYCLING

(Map p84; 416-504-2918; www.communitybicyclenetwork.org; 761 Queen St W; rental 1st day/weekend/week \$25/35/65; noon-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat; 501) Celebrating 20 years of championing for sustainable transportation, CBN offers rentals, repairs, workshops and events from a convenient Queen St W location.

Europe Bound Outfitters

CYCLING

(Map p78; 416-601-1990; www.europebound.com/store; 47 Front St E; 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun; 503) Mountain bikes and tandems with helmets from \$30 per day.

Toronto Bicycling Network

CYCLING

(TBN; www.tbn.on.ca) This recreational cycling club welcomes nonmembers to organized rides for a \$5 fee.

Toronto Islands Bicycle Rental

CYCLING

(416-203-0009; www.torontoislandbicyclerental.com; Centre Island; per hour bicycles/tandems \$8/15, 2-/4-seat quadricycles \$17/30; 10:30am-6pm May-Sep; Centre Island) One of the best ways to explore Centre Island is by bicycle. Rent bikes here, beside Outlook Pier.

Wheel Excitement

CYCLING, IN-LINE SKATING

(Map p78; 416-260-9000; www.wheelexcitement.ca; 249 Queens Quay W; bicycles & in-line skates per hour/day \$15/35; 10am-6pm; 509, 510) Close to the ferries for Toronto Islands; day rentals here are cheaper than hiring on Centre Island and give you the freedom to explore further afield.

Hiking

Feel like stretching your legs? Delve into Toronto's city parks, nature reserves or ravines.

Alternatively, hook up with a group such as **Hike Ontario** (2 800-894-7249, 905-277-4453; www.hikeontario.com) or **Toronto Bruce Trail Club** (2 416-763-9061; www.torontobrucetrailclub.org) for hardy day hikes.

Ice Skating

Locals love to skate. When the weather is freezing and the snow falling lightly, downtown Toronto's outdoor ice rinks come alive. The best-known rinks are at Nathan Phillips Square outside City Hall and at the Harbourfront Centre. These artificial rinks are open daily (weather permitting) from 10am to 10pm mid-November to March. Admission is free; skate rental costs adult/child \$10/5. **Toronto Parks & Recreation** (2 416-397-2628; www.toronto.ca/parks) has info on other rinks around town, including those at Kew Gardens near Kew Beach and Trinity Bellwoods Park in West Toronto. If it's been *really* cold, you can skate on Grenadier Pond in High Park. Beginners might prefer the lesser-known Ryerson Rink, tucked away just north of Yonge & Dundas Sq at 25 Gould St – in summer the rink is a water feature.

Swimming

Torontonians generally avoid swimming in Lake Ontario, despite the presence of a dozen city beaches tended by lifeguards from July to August, eight of which are Blue Flag certified. Before taking the plunge, check with the **Beach Water Quality Hotline** (2 416-392-7161; www.city.toronto.on.ca/beach), as water quality deteriorates after heavy rain and the presence of E coli bacteria is a potential risk.

From June to September, the City of Toronto operates over 50 outdoor swimming pools, generally open from dawn to dusk. The complete list is found at: www.toronto.ca/parks/prd/facilities/outdoor-pools.

Tours

Boat

Between May and September cruise operators sail from the Harbourfront beside Queens Quay Terminal or York Quay Centre. Reservations are recommended for brunch and dinner cruises. Keep in mind that ferries to the Toronto Islands offer similar views for half the price.

Great Lakes Schooner Company BOAT TOUR (Map p78; 2 416-203-2322; www.tallshipcruisestoronto.com; Suite 111, 249 Queens Quay W; 90min

cruise adult/child \$21.95/11.95; ☺ Jun-Aug; ☎ 509, 510) The dashing black three-master *Kajama*, a 1930 German trading schooner, sails from the foot of Lower Simcoe St, but there's usually a ticket kiosk beside Queens Quay Terminal. Reservations can be made online.

Mariposa Cruises

BOAT TOUR

(Map p78; 2 416-203-0178, 866-627-7672; www.mariposacruses.com; Queens Quay Terminal, 207 Queens Quay W; 1hr tour adult/child \$20/13; ☺ May-Sep; ☎ 509, 510) Narrated harbor and two-hour buffet lunch tours (adult/child \$49/25). Sunday brunch and dinner-and-dance cruises, too.

Bus

Toronto isn't exactly London, Paris or Rome, where it's easy to ooh and ahh at endless historical marvels from the comfort of a coach. If traveling on a budget, you might find better value in a TTC day pass, exploring for yourself.

★ City Sightseeing Toronto

BUS TOUR

(2 416-410-0536; www.citysightseeingtoronto.com; adult/child \$35/20) Hop-on, hop-off sightseeing tours on an open-top double-decker London bus, around a 24-stop city loop. The route takes in most major sights with commentary and includes a free (seasonal) Lake Ontario cruise. Tickets are valid for 72 hours: good value if you plan to use the bus over three days and a great way to get oriented.

★ Chariots of Fire

BUS TOUR

(2 1-905-877-0855; www.chariots-of-fire.com; 33 Yonge St; day tours \$60) Low-cost day tours from Toronto to Niagara Falls including a *Maid of the Mist* boat ride and free time at Niagara-on-the-Lake. These guys are highly organized and comfortably present the best of the Falls, from Toronto, for those who only have a day to experience it all. Highly recommended.

ROMBus

BUS TOUR

(Map p74; 2 416-586-5797; www.rom.on.ca/en/activities-programs/walks-travel-bus-events/bus; 100 Queen's Park; full-day tours \$110-140; ☎ Museum) Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum organizes irregular special-events tours with educated, informative guides around historical, cultural and architectural themes. Full-day tours although pricey can be worth the expense if the subject matter falls in your sphere of interest.



City Walk Subterranean Toronto Blues

START UNION STATION
END TRINITY SQ
LENGTH ONE DAY

When it's just too cold to be outside, duck into Toronto's underground PATH system, a 28km (and growing) labyrinth of subterranean corridors connecting downtown sights, skyscrapers and shops. You'll be surprised at how much is interconnected. Allow yourself a full day if you want to try to do all of the following.

From **1 Union Station** (p120), you can head to the **2 Air Canada Centre** (p117) or follow the tubular SkyWalk over the railroad tracks to the **3 CN Tower** (p70), next to the **4 Rogers Centre** (p71).

Cross beneath Front St and up the staircase into **5 Fairmont Royal York** (p95). From here, follow the color-coded arrows to **6 Brookfield Place** and the **7 Hockey Hall of Fame** (p72). Wander through Commerce Court to the **8 TD Centre**. Beyond

the digital stock-market displays, go left and emerge at the **9 Design Exchange** (p72).

From back beneath TD Centre follow signs for the TD Waterhouse Tower to the **10 Toronto Dominion Gallery of Inuit Art** (p72).

Next, head toward the Standard Life Centre, the Exchange Tower and then the Richmond-Adelaide complex. You will pass the Sheraton Centre to reach **11 City Hall** (p77) and Nathan Phillips Sq.

From City Hall you can head back underground and follow the signs for **12 The Bay** (Canada's oldest department store) and shop till you drop; or pass The Bay, diverting right and up some stairs to Temperance St and the **13 Cloud Gardens Conservatory** (p72).

The PATH continues to the **14 Eaton Centre** (p117) whose large atrium plazas bring the feeling of outside in. From here, it's easy to reach Trinity Sq in the shadows of the **15 Church of the Holy Trinity** (p77), or pick up the subway at Dundas station for your onward journey.

Walking & Cycling

The easiest way to experience Toronto is on foot, though cycling tours allow you to cover a bit more territory.

★ Heritage Toronto

WALKING TOUR
(2) 416-338-3886; www.heritagetoronto.org; 3F, 157 King St E; donations encouraged; ☰ Apr-Oct)

A diverse offering of fascinating historical, cultural and nature walks and bike and bus (TTC) tours led by museum experts and neighborhood historical society members. Tours generally last one to three hours.

ROMWalks

WALKING TOUR
(2) 416-586-8097; www.rom.on.ca/en/activities-programs/walks-travel-bus-events/walks; per person \$10; ☰ Wed & Sun May-Sep) Well informed volunteers from the Royal Ontario Museum lead one- to two-hour historical and architectural walking tours, including some of the city's lesser-known but most interesting buildings and neighborhoods.

A Taste of the World

WALKING TOUR
(2) 416-923-6813; www.torontowalksbikes.com; 2-3½hr tours \$25-45) Quirky, well-qualified guides lead offbeat walking and cycling tours of Toronto's nooks and crannies, usually with a foodie focus. Reservations are recommended.

★ Festivals & Events

What Toronto lacks in visual appeal it makes up for in activity: there's always fun and excitement to be had in this vibrant city and the Toronto festival scene is no exception. In the long balmy days and nights of the short summer (June to August) there's so much on that it's hard to choose what to do. At times, when events overlap, it's best just to get out there and leave it to fate.

January

Winterlicious

FOOD
(www.toronto.ca/special_events/winterlicious) For two weeks in January, a staggering array of restaurants lure residents out of their living rooms for a prix-fixe extravaganza of lunches and dinners, showcasing Toronto's culinary diversity. If you're visiting in winter, we strongly recommend taking advantage of these fantastic cheap eats at every possible opportunity!

Next Stage Festival

THEATER
(www.fringetoronto.com/next-stage-festival) From the people behind the Toronto Fringe Festival, Next Stage showcases the work of 10

fringe artists at the Factory Theatre, as a platform for future success. There's a heated beer tent where audiences can mingle with the cast and crew before and after the performances.

February

Canadian International

Auto Show **MOTOR SHOW**

(www.autoshow.ca) Revheads from around the world converge on the Metro Toronto Convention Centre for all things cutting edge about cars, with a little bit of automotive history thrown in. The show is in its 40th year in 2014.

April

Hot Docs

FILM

(Canadian International Documentary Festival; www.hotdocs.ca) In late April, North America's largest documentary film festival screens more than 100 docs from around the globe from its home at the revamped-in-2012 Bloor Hot Docs Cinema.

420 Rally

CULTURE

(420rally.ca/420toronto/) On April 20, lovers of weed emerge from their basements and converge on Yonge & Dundas Sq in their thousands for this public pro-legalisation smokeout in the middle of Canada's largest city.

May

InsideOut

FILM

(Toronto LGBT Film Festival; www.insideout.ca) Approaching its 25th anniversary, the Toronto LGBT Film Festival showcases a huge range of gay-themed/interest films from around the world, with some screenings at the fantastic TIFF Bell Lightbox.

Doors Open Toronto

CULTURE

(www.toronto.ca/doorsopen) Over 500 public and private buildings of architectural and historical significance creak open their doors for you to sneak a peek at what's hot and what's not in other peoples' digs.

June

Luminato

CULTURE

(www.luminatofestival.com) Luminato seeks to bring a broad selection of the world's most accomplished musicians, dancers, artists, writers, actors and filmmakers to venues across Toronto in a celebration of creativity that reflects the city's diversity. Many performances are free. Past performers include Aretha Franklin, Joni Mitchell, KD Lang and Rufus Wainwright.

North by Northeast

PERFORMING ARTS

(NXNE; www.nxne.com) Musos can safely write off the entire week in order to sample the plethora of indie bands (around 1000), films, shows and booze to be had in all of Toronto's coolest venues. A variety of wristbands tailored to your tastes are exceptional value. The festival's 20th anniversary in 2014 promises to be a big one indeed.

Pride Toronto

GAY PRIDE

(www.pridetoronto.com) In late June, Toronto's most flamboyant event celebrates the diversity of human sexuality, with a week of community events, workshops and gatherings, mostly free. The exploration climaxes with an out-of-the-closet Dyke March and Pride Parade when the streets of Church and Wellesley village, Pride's G-spot, throb with the beat of over one million revelers. In 2014, Toronto Pride will merge with the world's biggest international LGBT event, WorldPride, for the first time in North America.

National Aboriginal Day

CULTURE

(wwwaboriginalaffairs.gov.on.ca/english/events/national_aboriginal_day) Canada's heritage of First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures is celebrated on the summer solstice (June 21), with events leading up to it the week before.

Toronto Jazz Festival

JAZZ

(www.tojazz.com) In late June/early July, jazz, blues and world beats blaze in the city's streets, nightclubs and concert halls, with musical workshops, film screenings and harbor cruises.

July**Summerlicious**

FOOD

(www.toronto.ca/special_events/summerlicious) Be sure to book your tables in advance for this culinary extravaganza held at almost 200 restaurants, bars and cafes across the city. Great-value prix-fixe menus in three price categories mean there's something to suit everyone's tastes and budget.

Toronto Fringe Festival

CULTURE

(www.fringetoronto.com) Celebrating 25 years in the spotlight, in 2014, Toronto's largest theater and performance festival hosts dozens of plays on as many stages over two weeks in early July. Ranging from utterly offbeat to seriously emotive and including a program of kids' plays, the festival's aim is to make theater accessible to the community.

Open Roof Festival

FILM

(www.openrooffestival.com) An enthusiastic bunch of film and music lovers put together a season of rooftop/outdoor film screenings and bands from hip urban locations. Check the website for venue info.

Honda Indy Toronto

CAR RACE

(www.hondaindyytoronto.com) Drivers from the international circuit compete in front of massive crowds, reaching speeds of up to 300km/h along Lake Shore Blvd and causing locals to flee the city for the sake of their continued ability to hear.

Beaches International Jazz Festival

MUSIC

(www.beachesjazz.com) **FREE** Held in late July, this free three-day jazz fest (which celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2013) plays to stages at Woodbine Gardens, Kew Gardens and along the Beaches Boardwalk. The highlight is the two-day Streetfest where a 2km stretch of Queen St E is closed to traffic and opened to the sounds of more than 50 Canadian bands and thousands of pedestrian admirers.

August**Caribana**

CARNIVAL

(www.caribana.com) North America's largest Caribbean festival, from late July into early August. The carnival parade, featuring florid and almost-not-there costumes, takes five hours to gyrate past.

Canadian National Exhibition

AGRICULTURAL

(CNE; www.theex.com) Dating from 1879, 'The Ex' features over 700 exhibitors, agricultural shows, lumberjack competitions and outdoor concerts at Exhibition Place. The air show and Labour Day fireworks take the cake.

Scotiabank Buskerfest

MUSIC

(www.torontobuskerfest.com) For three days in late August, a ragtag troupe of Canadian and international buskers descends upon downtown Yonge St in support of Epilepsy Toronto: expect sword-swallowers, jugglers and musicians of unpredictable merit.

SummerWorks Theatre Festival

THEATER

(www.summerworks.ca) Ten days of predominantly New Canadian plays in the largest juried theater festival in Canada.

September**Toronto International Film Festival**

FILM

(TIFF; torontointernationalfilmfestival.ca) The jewel in Toronto's international social and cultural crown has become one of the world's

largest and most prestigious celebrations of the cinematic art. Some come for the films, many screened in the stunning and state-of-the-art Bell Lightbox Cinema. Others come hoping to catch a glimpse of the celebrity circus as it pulls into town. Buy tickets and book your accommodation well in advance, and expect to pay a premium for rooms if you happen to be in Toronto over festival dates.

October

Nuit Blanche

CULTURE

(www.scotiabanknuitblanche.ca) One night. Over 130 overnight urban art experiences, all over town. Contrived 'chance encounters,' interactive dance pieces and an all-night street market are part of the fun.

International Festival of Authors

LITERATURE

(www.readings.org) For 11 days in mid-October, this festival corrals acclaimed authors from Canada and beyond to the Harbourfront Centre for readings, discussions, lectures, awards and book signings. There are kid-friendly events too.

November

Royal Agricultural Winter Fair

AGRICULTURAL

(www.royalfair.org) Since 1922, the largest indoor agricultural and equestrian fair in the world has been warming up audiences at Exhibition Place for 10 days in November.

Santa Claus Parade

CHRISTMAS

(www.thesantaclausparade.ca) A Toronto tradition since 1905, the annual Santa Claus Parade features exactly that: a bunch of old guys dressed as Santa stopping downtown traffic for hours and exciting children way too early before Christmas. The date varies each year.

December

Toronto Christmas Market

CHRISTMAS

(www.torontochristmasmarket.com) The Distillery District is at its festive best over the first two weeks in December for this European-style Christmas Market, showcasing hundreds of local handcrafted products.

Sleeping

Toronto has no shortage of accommodations, but it can get expensive, especially in summer when rooms sell quickly at up to double their regular rates. Plan ahead and you'll be able to find something to suit your style and budget. It's essential to book in advance for stays from mid-May to late September. Remember, 13% harmonized sales tax (HST) is almost always applied on top of the quoted rate. Avoid visiting in March if possible: the weather can be lousy and the enormous annual PDAC mining convention secures the majority of downtown beds.

Since 2011, a number of long-overdue luxury hotels have opened their doors, creating a surplus of fancy, expensive beds. There hasn't been similar investment in the midrange category: rooms of this ilk can feel drab and out of date for what you pay.

Unlike the rest of Ontario where budget beds are in short supply, Toronto has some great hostels. Trust us when we advise you to book in advance: the best digs fill quickly in summer. Plenty of B&Bs can be found through the following agencies.

Bed & Breakfast

Homes of Toronto

ACCOMMODATIONS SERVICE

(246-363-6362; www.bbcanada.com/associations/toronto2) Anything from modest family homes to deluxe suites.

ROLL OUT THE RED CARPET: TIFF

Since its inception in 1976, the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) has grown to be the crowning jewel of the Toronto festival scene and a key player in the world film circuit. Attracting over 400,000 eager cinephiles to the red-carpet celebrity frenzy of its 10-day run, the festival has become an important forum for showcasing new films.

In 1990 the festival expanded operations to include the year-round TIFF Cinematheque program, showcasing works from around the world. Two decades later, the Bell Lightbox (p116), with its five stunning cinemas, funky restaurants and bar, opened its doors as the permanent home for the festival and organisation.

If you're in town for TIFF, be sure to book ahead: tickets for screenings and events sell fast, while already elevated room rates go through the roof closer to showtime. Celebrities and paparazzi are in town and Torontonians come from far and wide to embrace the Hollywood spirit: catch a glimpse if you can!

Downtown Toronto Association of Bed and Breakfast

Guest Houses

ACCOMMODATIONS SERVICE
(2 647-654-2959; www.bnbinfo.com) Rooms in various neighborhoods, mostly in renovated Victorian houses.

Toronto Bed & Breakfast Reservation Service

ACCOMMODATIONS SERVICE
(2 877-922-6522, 705-738-9449; www.toronto-bandb.com) The oldest agency in town with a dozen central listings.

Harbourfront

Renaissance Toronto

HOTEL \$\$
(Map p78; 2 800-237-1512, 416-341-7100; www.renaissanceotoronto.com; 1 Blue Jays Way; d/st from \$199/289; 2 2 2 2; 2 2) Seventy suites here overlook the Rogers Centre playing field – be prepared for floodlights and hollering sports fans! If you'd rather use your room for sleeping, the restaurant and bar also overlook the field.

Westin Harbour Castle

HOTEL \$\$
(Map p78; 2 416-869-1600; www.westinharbourcastletono.com; 1 Harbour Sq; d from \$239; 2 2; 2 509, 510) If this were a hamburger, it'd be with 'the works' – restaurants, shops, gym, conference center, pool, disabled-access suites etc. Staff are surprisingly chipper for such a big hotel. Maybe the lobby keeps them amused, with enough marble to rival any Hollywood mansion. Tasty lake views.

Financial District

Hotel Victoria

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$
(Map p78; 2 800-363-8228, 416-363-1666; www.hotelvictoria-toronto.com; 56 Yonge St; d from \$159; 2 2 2; 2 2; 2 2) The early-20th-century Hotel Victoria retains a charming period lobby. Guest rooms are on the smaller side but have been simply and slyishly refurbished and have free wi-fi. Bathrooms have great tubs but ladies might be disappointed by the lack of vanity space.

Strathcona Hotel

HOTEL \$\$
(Map p78; 2 800-268-8304, 416-363-3321; www.thestrathconahotel.com; 60 York St; d from \$125; 2 2 2; 2 2; 2 2) This downtown hotel features compact, renovated rooms with decent bathrooms. The downstairs pub and cafe are convenient. Despite the lack of on-site parking, its proximity to Union Station is ideal, although some will find the long-term construction projects there an annoyance.

One King West

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p78; 2 416-548-8100; www.onekingwest.com; 1 King St W; d from \$209; 2 2 2; 2 2; 2 2) One of our favorite buildings in the Toronto skyline, the sleek One King West tower soars above the historic former head office for the Toronto Dominion bank with an effortless synergy. Studio and one-bedroom apartments are large, stylish and in a prime downtown location with subway and streetcars at your door.

Fairmont Royal York

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p78; 2 866-440-5489, 416-368-2511; www.fairmont.com/royalyork; 100 Front St W; d from \$179; 2 2 2 2; 2 2; 2 2) Since 1929 the eminent Royal York (a former grand dame of the Canadian Pacific Railway and Toronto icon) has accommodated everyone from Tina Turner to Henry Kissinger, and it shows. Fortunately, the 1300-plus guest rooms are undergoing significant renovation, which will take some time. Consider coming for high tea in the Library Bar and a chance to visit the lesser-known rooftop herb garden and bee apiary.

Until completion, snap up a deal on older rooms, or pay a premium for the new luxury product. Note also that long-term construction projects in and around Union Station (opposite the hotel) are less than convenient.

★Trump Toronto

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p78; 2 416-306-5800; www.trumphotelcollection.com/toronto/; 325 Bay St; d from \$425; 2 2 2 2; 2 2; 2 2) Words to describe Trump Toronto's oversized, modern guest rooms: sumptuous, decadent, bold, indulgent. High ceilings and full-length windows add to the feel of space and luxury. Opened in 2012, the Trump name is synonymous with status, big business and success, and this hotel is no exception. Expect only the most attentive service and finest Clefs d'Or concierges. If money is no obstacle, welcome home.

Old York

Hostelling International Toronto

HOSTEL \$

(Map p78; 2 877-848-8737, 416-971-4440; www.hostellingtoronto.com; 76 Church St; dm member/nonmember from \$22/26, d member/nonmember from \$89/109; 2 2 2; 2 2; 2 2) This award-winning hostel doesn't look much from the outside, but gets votes for its rooftop deck and friendly staff. Most dorms have their own bathrooms, and deluxe rooms offer good-value private accommodations,

including breakfast. The on-site Cavern Bar & Bistro has themed game nights to help you make friends.

Cosmopolitan

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p78; ☎ 416-350-2000; www.cosmotoronto.com; 8 Colborne St; ste from \$209; ☈ ☈ ☈; ⚡ King) This compact hotel is sleek and quiet, with only five rooms per floor. Entry-level Zen suites are on the small side. Lotus and Tranquility suites are significantly larger, have kitchens and some have lake views. All have balconies. Both the treatment spa and funky downstairs wine bar, Eight (with its \$1 per ounce Friday-night special) add to the appeal.

Entertainment District & King Street West

Clarence Park

HOSTEL \$

(Map p78; ☎ 647-498-7070; www.theclarencenpark.com; 7 Clarence Sq; dm \$27, d \$70-85; ☈) In a prime and picturesque downtown location, this budget gem has cozy clean dorms and private rooms, some overlooking the leafy square: all have en suite bathrooms. There's free wi-fi, a fabulous new communal kitchen and huge rooftop deck with BBQ for those lazy summer afternoons in the city.

Canadiana Guesthouse & Backpackers

HOSTEL \$

(Map p78; ☎ 877-215-1225, 416-598-9090; www.canadianalodging.com; 42 Widmer St; dm \$27-34, s/d from \$68/80; ☈ ☈ ☈; ☈ 504) On a quiet side street midway between two happening strips of Queen W and King W, location is not Canadiana's only plus. Pancake breakfasts, a movie room, barbecue nights, gas cooking and decent private rooms all add to the appeal. Occupying a Victorian terrace row, the place feels more intimate than its 200 beds would suggest.

Residence Inn Toronto Downtown

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p78; ☎ 416-581-1800; www.marriott.com; 255 Wellington St W; ste incl breakfast from \$209; ☈ ☈ ☈ ☈; ☈ 504, 508) Perfect for longer stays or traveling with kids, this modern business/tourist hotel is in a prime location and has a variety of comfortable, functional room types, up to two-bedroom suites. All have fully equipped kitchens, pleasant decor and lots of light. The full breakfast buffet makes for excellent value.

Thompson Toronto

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-640-7778; www.thompsonhotels.com/toronto; 550 Wellington St W; d from \$229; ☈ ☈ ☈; ☈ 504, 508) We love Thompson Toronto – it's just so LA. Funky, sharp rooms will be favored by those with a penchant for design; the rooftop bar, patio and pool are easily Toronto's finest; and the two on-site dining options, Thompson Diner and Scarpetta, independently deserve mention. Combine all this with a brilliant location and exceptional service and you've got something that's worth splurging on, but don't bring grandma (check the website to see what the fuss is about).

Hilton Garden Inn Toronto Downtown

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p78; ☎ 416-593-9200; www.hiltongardeninn.com; 92 Peter St; d from \$169; ☈ ☈ ☈; ☈ 501) Not to be confused with its sister property on Jarvis St, this Garden Inn is a great mid-range option, well located in the heart of the Entertainment District, near Queen St W – perfect for nocturnal explorations. It can get noisy on Friday and Saturday nights. Otherwise, the lobby and spacious rooms are of a high standard and staff are generally accustomed to the vagaries of a predominantly corporate weekday clientele.

Soho Metropolitan Hotel BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p78; ☎ 416-599-8800; www.sohometropolitan.com; 318 Wellington St W; d from \$260; ☈ ☈ ☈; ☈ 510) Luxury and style await in Soho Met's 92 guest rooms and suites, featuring beautiful maple woodwork, private dressing rooms, floor-to-ceiling opening windows and Italian linens. Exquisite marble bathrooms feature a deep soaker tub, separate shower and everybody-loves Molton Brown amenities. Repeat guests don't flinch at the rates.

Hôtel Le Germain

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p78; ☎ 866-345-9501, 416-345-9500; www.germantoronto.com; 30 Mercer St; d/ste from \$250/\$454; ☈ ☈ ☈; ☈ 504) Hip and harmonious, Le Germain resides in a quiet Entertainment District side street. Clean lines, soothing spaces and Zen-inspired materials deliver the promised 'ocean of well-being.' Aveda bath amenities, in-room Bose stereos and a rooftop terrace are bonuses. Parking costs \$35.

Ritz Carlton

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p78; ☎ 416-585-2100; www.ritzcarlton.com/toronto; 181 Wellington St W; d from \$445; ☈ ☈ ☈;

S St Andrew) Opened in 2011, as the first of Toronto's new batch of shiny five-star hotels, the Ritz Carlton name is loaded with connotations, but there's something about the modernity of the property that just doesn't fit with the old-world Ritz styling emulated in the guest rooms. Of course, expect exceptional service, a wealth of comforts and five-star 'tude. There are better options for the price.

Downtown Yonge

Baldwin Village Inn

B&B \$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-591-5359; www.baldwininn.com; 9 Baldwin St; d incl breakfast with shared bathroom \$90-110; ☈ ☈ ☈; ☈ 505, 506) Technically in the pretty enclave of Baldwin Village, just a few blocks from the Art Gallery of Ontario, this yellow-painted B&B faces a leafy street filled with cheap eateries and cafes. The front courtyard is perfect for lounging about and watching the people.

Cambridge Suites

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-368-1990; www.cambridgesuites-toronto.com; 15 Richmond St E; ste from \$175; ☈ ☈ ☈; ☈ Queen) A good choice, this all-suite hotel has spacious, good-looking rooms with separate living and kitchen facilities. Cityscape suites are on upper floors, are more luxuriously appointed and include continental breakfast in the restaurant. Three impressive penthouses are available.

Les Amis Bed & Breakfast

B&B \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-928-0635; www.bbtoronto.com; 31 Granby St; s/d with shared bathroom incl breakfast from \$85/115; ☈ ☈ ☈; ☈ College) Run by a multilingual Parisian couple, this cheery B&B offers full, gourmet vegetarian breakfasts. Colorful rooms are adorned with the owners' art and the leafy back deck is a great spot to chill out. It's a short walk from the Eaton Centre. Parking costs \$10.

Eaton Chelsea

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-595-1975; <http://chelsea.eaton-hotels.com>; 33 Gerrard St W; d/ste from \$139/239; ☈ ☈ ☈; ☈ College) Formerly the Delta Chelsea, now part of the Langham Hospitality Group, Toronto's largest (almost 1600 rooms!) and arguably best-value hotel caters to everyone, but is especially popular with families who appreciate the apartment-style suites and indoor waterslide. Many rooms have balconies.

Pantages

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 888-897-1401; www.pantageshotel.com; 200 Victoria St; ste from \$179; ☈ ☈; ☈ Dundas, Queen) A good choice for longer stays, each of the 89 rooms in this all-suite hotel, the closest to Yonge & Dundas Sq, Massey Hall and the Eaton Centre, have full bathrooms, kitchen and laundry facilities. It's in a residential building: once in the main doors, turn left for the hotel lobby.

Grand Hotel & Suites

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-863-9000; www.grandhoteltoronto.com; 225 Jarvis St; d/ste incl breakfast from \$199/249; ☈ ☈ ☈; ☈ Dundas, ☈ 505) A somewhat grotty and slightly seedy location is the bane of this otherwise solid performer's existence, although all that will change in the next few years as nearby condo projects reach completion. A variety of room types up to two-bedroom suites all have free wi-fi, kitchenettes and marble bathrooms. Breakfast is a hearty buffet. The indoor pool and two rooftop hot tubs are also worth a splash.

Shangri-La Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p78; ☎ 647-788-8888; www.shangri-la.com/toronto; 188 University Ave; d from \$355; ☈ ☈ ☈; ☈ St Andrew, Osgoode) Five-star Shangri-la's spanking-new, elegant guest rooms strive to synthesize Asian simplicity with Western indulgence and are among Toronto's largest. Each has separate bath, shower and toilet room, opening floor-to-ceiling-windows, Nespresso machines, iPod docks and L'Occitane and Bulgari bathroom amenities. The University Ave location is fantastic.

Church-Wellesley Village

Neill-Wycik College Hotel

HOSTEL \$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-977-2320; www.torontobackpackershotel.com/; 96 Gerrard St E; s/tw/d/tr with shared bathroom \$53/75/90/100; ☈ ☈; ☈ College) Pronounced 'Why-zik,' this budget travelers' favorite operates from early May to late August when the students are out. Private bedrooms with telephones are inside apartment-style suites that share a kitchen/lounge and bathroom. There are laundry facilities, lockers, TV lounges, a student-run cafeteria and incredible sundeck views.

Victoria's Mansion Inn

& Guesthouse

INN \$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-921-4625; www.victoriasmansion.com; 68 Gloucester St; s/d/studio from \$69/99/139; ☈ ☈; ☈ Wellesley) Festooned with

international flags, gay-friendly Victoria's Mansion accommodates travelers in a renovated 1880s redbrick heritage building with a lovely garden out front. All rooms have fridge, microwave and private bathrooms, making the smaller singles good downtown value.

Holiday Inn Toronto Downtown Centre

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-977-6655; www.holidayinn.com; 30 Carlton St; d from \$120; ; Funky renovated bedrooms and a great location, steps from College subway station and a variety of inexpensive shopping, dining and entertainment options, make this hulking Holiday Inn a good choice for most budgets. That said, there's really no view to speak of and standard rooms are quite compact.

Courtyard Toronto Downtown

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-924-0611, 800-874-5075; www.marriott.com; 475 Yonge St; d from \$116; ; The closest major hotel to the Village is also a good stock-standard choice for a midrange hotel, with a walk-to-everything location, gym, hot tub and pool. All rooms are of a decent size, have free ultra-high-speed wi-fi and some have balconies. Great rates can be found online, in advance.

Bloor-Yorkville

Holiday Inn Toronto Bloor-Yorkville

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 888-2654329, 416-968-0010; www.holiday-inn.com/torontomidtown; 280 Bloor St W; d from \$164; ;) The familiar green banners outside this high-rise, brick monolith do little to improve its aesthetics. Inside, generic guest rooms have comfy queen- or king-sized beds and plenty of room. Price and location are everything: the subway is at your feet, and the University of Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum and Bloor St shopping are minutes away.

Comfort Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 800-424-6423, 416-924-1222; www.choicehotels.ca/cn228; 15 Charles St E; d from \$169; ; It's generic and by no means fancy, but this basic tourist hotel is near some excellent cafes and is a hop, skip and jump from the Bloor St strip, where you'll pay three times the price for a room. The check-in of 1pm is another plus.

★ Four Seasons

LUXURY HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-964-0411; www.fourseasons.com/toronto; 60 Yorkville Ave; d from \$455; One

of Toronto's most senior and well-respected high-end hotels has moved to a brand-new building in an even better location. It's all about luxury, relaxation and enjoyment: crisp, clean, light-filled guest rooms with stunning views exude comfort, granite bathrooms are to-die-for and the exquisite lobby is one of the most beautiful we've seen.

If the rates don't shock, you won't flinch picking up the tab at Michelin-starred Café Boulud and should happily submit to body pampering and soul elevation at 'spa': it's up there with heaven.

★ Hazelton

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-963-6300; www.thehazeltonhotel.com; 118 Yorkville Ave; d from \$450; ; With a bunch of competitors in the luxury hotel class opening their doors in recent years, it's becoming harder for the Hazelton to uphold its self-proclaimed reputation as Toronto's most exclusive hotel: but try it will, and you'll only benefit from its efforts. Sophisticated, dramatic and sexy, this hotel is small enough (62 rooms, 15 suites) to make you feel like the someone special that we all know you are.

Design aficionados will be spoiled for things to appreciate here. When it comes to dining, Toronto culinary master Mark McEwan's 'ONE' restaurant might further decimate your wallet, but is destined to delight your tastebuds.

Windsor Arms

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-971-9666; www.windsorarmshotel.com; 18 St Thomas St; ste incl breakfast from \$356; ; ; The Windsor Arms is an exquisite piece of Toronto history – stay the night or drop in for afternoon tea. It's a 1927 neo-Gothic mansion boasting a grand entryway, stained-glass windows, polished service and its own coat of arms. Luxurious, oversized suites have separate tub and shower, Molton Brown amenities, Nespresso maker, butler service, buffet breakfast and wi-fi. Creatives will love that each comes with its own musical instrument!

University of Toronto & The Annex

Havinn

B&B \$

(Map p74; ☎ 888-922-5220, 416-922-5220; www.havinn.com; 118 Spadina Rd; s/d with shared bathroom incl breakfast \$59/74; ; ; Located on busy Spadina Rd, this small guesthouse has six basic rooms with shared

bathrooms and a communal kitchen. The price is right: cheaper than most B&Bs and more private than a hostel.

Global Guesthouse

INN \$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-923-4004; www.globalguesthouse.com; 9 Spadina Rd; s/d \$76/86, with shared bathroom \$66/76; ☈ ☈ ☈; ⚡ Spadina) Built in 1889, this old-fashioned redbrick Victorian has beautiful carved gables and sits just north of Bloor St, right on Spadina station. The hostel has 10 gaudy rooms, cable TV, hippie wall hangings, wooden floors and murals and fills up quickly.

Annex Quest House

INN \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-922-1934; www.annexquesthouse.com; 83 Spadina Rd; d from \$95; ☈ ☈; ⚡ Spadina) Engaging the principles of *vastu*, an Indian architectural science promoting tranquility through natural materials and asymmetrical layouts (similar to feng shui), this glorified backpackers has quaint, simple rooms. Wooden floors, patterned bedspreads and crafted copper bowls highlight the spaces.

Madison Manor

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-922-5579; www.madisonmanorboutiquehotel.com; 20 Madison Ave; d incl breakfast \$99-189; ☈ ☈; ⚡ Spadina) A refurbished Victorian home near the University of Toronto. Rooms have private bathrooms and are furnished in a traditional style; a few have a fireplace or balcony. Note that the Manor is sandwiched between a frat house and the Madison Avenue Pub: readers have complained of noise on weekends.

Kensington Market & Little Italy

★ Planet Travelers Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-599-6789; www.theplanettraveler.com; 357 College St; dm/d/tr \$30/75/90; ☈ ☈ ☈; ☡ 506) The Planet has moved up the street to a bigger and better location and continues to delight our readers and its guests with an awesome rooftop patio bar, great rates and commitment to being clean and green: it's arguably one of Canada's most environmentally friendly accommodations. With 94 dorm beds, 10 private rooms and shiny, slick communal areas, you'll have everything you need to make friends and enjoy hostel life.

Queen West & Trinity Bellwoods

Global Village Backpackers

HOSTEL \$

(Map p84; ☎ 888-844-7875, 416-703-8540; www.globalbackpackers.com; 460 King St W; dm \$26-29, d from \$72; ☈ ☈; ☡ 504, 511) This kaleidoscopically colored independent hostel was once the Spadina Hotel, where Jack Nicholson, the Rolling Stones and Leonard Cohen lay their heads. It likely hasn't been updated since those glory days, and despite its increasing grubbiness, remains popular. It does have a great location and outdoor party-patio, but look elsewhere if cleanliness is a priority.

★ Drake Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(☎ 416-531-5042; www.thedrakehotel.ca; 1150 Queen St W; d/st from \$169/319; ☈ ☈ ☈; ☡ 501) While other hotels have rooms, the Drake has 'crash pads, dens, salons' and a rockin' little suite, beckoning bohemians, artists and indie musicians with a little cash to burn. The crash pads are tiny yet ineffably stylish and functional. In fact, all the rooms are on the small side, but are impeccably furnished with a sense of fun and good design. The attached bar and band room is one of Toronto's finest venues for live music, and in summer the Sky Yard rooftop patio goes off to DJ beats and icy buckets of Coronas.

★ Gladstone Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(☎ 416-531-4635; www.gladstonehotel.com; 1214 Queen St W; d/st from \$199/375; ☈ ☈ ☈; ☡ 501) The 37 artist-designed rooms at this trend-setting hotel could have leapt straight from a Taschen design book. Pick a room theme from the awesome website, then when you arrive, take the hand-cranked birdcage elevator to your arty boudoir on the 3rd and 4th floors. Locally produced bathroom products and a green roof showcase the Gladstone's eco commitment. Downstairs, the Melody Bar band room and Café are integral to the Toronto indie scene, while the 2nd floor is dedicated to studio space and exhibitions for renting artists.

Bonnevue Manor

B&B \$\$\$

(☎ 416-536-1455; www.bonnevemanor.com; 33 Beaty Ave; d incl breakfast from \$99; ☈ ☈ ☈; ☡ 501, 504, 508) Tucked away on a side street between the furthest extents of Queen St W and King St W, this cozy place occupies a restored 1890s redbrick mansion with divine handcrafted architectural details. Six guest

rooms exhibit warm-colored interiors; all have bathrooms. Enjoy your cooked breakfast out on the grapevine-covered deck.

East End & The Beaches

Only Backpackers Inn

HOSTEL \$

(www.theonlycafe.com/inn/accomodations; 972 Danforth Ave; dm \$23-25;  ;  Donlands)

We love everything about the Only! Inspired by owner James' globetrotting adventures, it's everything you want a hostel to be: clean, intimate, convenient (subway to door) and in a perfect spot on The Danforth. There's free wi-fi, waffles for brekky and two private patios. Downstairs in the annexed licensed cafe where it all started, there's a large patio with 24 gourmet brews on tap.

Au Petit Paris

B&B \$

(Map p74; 416-928-1348; www.bbtoronto.com/aupetitparis; 3 Selby St; d \$85-129;  ;  Sherbourne) Hardwood floors blend with modern decor inside this exquisite bay-and-gable Cabbagetown Victorian. The pick of the four en suite rooms are the skylit Nomad's Suite and the Artist's Suite, with garden views and extra-large bathtubs. At time of writing breakfast was no longer provided.

Toronto Townhouse B&B

B&B \$\$

(Map p74; 877-500-0466, 416-323-8898; www.torontotownhouse.com; 213 Carlton St; d incl breakfast \$129-179;  ;  506) The six quaint rooms inside this 140-year-old heritage row house, just east of Church & Wellesley Village, are beautifully restored. A few come with private balconies and en suite bathrooms; breakfast includes homemade granola, baked goodies, pancakes and omelettes.

1871 Historic House B&B

B&B \$\$

(Map p74; 416-923-6950; www.1871bnb.com; 65 Huntley St; s/d with shared bathroom incl breakfast from \$95/105;  ;  Sherbourne) What other property can claim both Ernest Hemingway and John Lennon have walked the halls? In this historic Cabbagetown Victorian home, which displays its art and antiques in sunny common areas, all rooms are without a bathroom, but the coach-house suite has its own hot tub.

Jare's Place

B&B \$\$

(416-778-1940; www.jaresplace.ca; 87 Empire Ave; s/d incl tax & breakfast \$96/125;  ;  501) Colorful, clean, cozy (only three rooms) and convenient, young entrepreneur Jare's place is in a great spot, minutes from both the

downtown (heading west) and trendy Leslieville district. There's free wi-fi and breakfasts to remember. Those not traditionally accustomed to staying in B&Bs might well reconsider after first visiting Jare's place in cyberspace.

Accommodating the Soul

B&B \$\$\$

(866-686-0619, 416-686-0619; www.accommodatingthesoul.com; 114 Waverley Rd; d incl breakfast \$125-145;  ;  501) An early-20th-century home in The Beaches, boasting antiques and fabulous gardens, just a short walk from the lake. One room has an en suite, the other two share a bathroom.

Toronto Islands

Smiley's B&B

B&B \$\$\$

(416-203-8599; www.erelda.ca; 4 Dacotah Ave, Algonquin Island; r with shared bathroom \$100, apt per night/week \$250/1400;  ;  Ward's Island) Sleep the night away in 'Belvedere' – a sunny B&B room – and dine with the hosts, or hole-up in the studio apartment with its own kitchen and bathroom. Either way, on the car-free islands, relaxation is sure to come easy.

Eating

Nowhere is Toronto's multiculturalism more potent and thrilling than on the plates of its restaurants. Eating here is a delight – you'll find everything from Korean walnut cakes to sweat-inducing Thai curries, New York steaks and good ol' Canuck pancakes with peameal bacon and maple syrup. Fusion food is the future: traditional Western recipes invaded with handfuls of zingy Eastern ingredients and cooked with pan-Asian flare. British influences also linger – fizzy lunchtime pints and formal afternoon high teas are much-loved traditions.

Executive diners file into classy restaurants in the Financial District and Old York, while eclectic, affordable eateries fill Baldwin Village, Kensington Market, Queen West and the Yonge St strip. More ethnically consistent are Little Italy, Greektown (The Danforth), Little India and Chinatown. Ponder your profoundest cravings, identify your neighborhood of choice, then dive right in!

Harbourfront

Against the Grain Urban Tavern

PUB \$\$

(Map p78; 647-344-1562; <http://corusquay.urbangurbantavern.ca>; 25 Dockside Dr; mains \$14-26;

⌚ 11am-11pm Sun-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat; ⌚ 509) The best feature of this glorified pub is its enormous lakefront patio (seasonal) with some of the best views of the Toronto Harbourfront. Come with a friend to enjoy the sunshine and a martini, share a plate of pork belly or spicy lobster tacos, or get messy with the signature pulled pork sandwich. Mondays have \$5 pints and half-price share plates from 3pm to 7pm.

Harbour Sixty Steakhouse STEAKHOUSE \$\$\$
(Map p78; ☎ 416-777-2111; www.harboursixty.com; 60 Harbour St; mains \$32-130; ⌚ 11:30am-late Mon-Fri, 5pm-late Sat & Sun; ⌚ 509, 510) Inside the Gothically isolated 1917 Toronto Harbour Commission building, this opulent baroque dining room glows with brass lamps and plush booths. Indulge yourself in an eminent variety of enormous steaks, salmon or seasonal Florida stone-crab claws and broiled Caribbean lobster tail. Side dishes are big enough for two. Prepare to burn a significant hole in your wallet. Reservations essential.

Financial District

★ Richmond Station INTERNATIONAL \$\$
(Map p74; ☎ 647-748-1444; www.richmondstation.ca; 1 Richmond St W; mains \$20-29; ⌚ 11:30am-10:30pm Mon-Fri, 5:30-10:30pm Sat; ⌚ Queen) Reservations are strongly advised at this busy and uncomplicated restaurant, brain-child of celebrity *Top Chef Canada* season-two winner, Carl Heinrich. Dishes are ‘ingredient focused and technique driven.’ We loved the chunky lobster cocktail and buttery mushroom fettuccine. The eclectic menu is simple but gratifying, priced right and complemented by a well-paired wine list and daily chalkboard specials. Highly recommended.

Terroni ITALIAN \$\$
(Map p78; ☎ 416-203-3093; 57 Adelaide St E; mains \$8-18; ⌚ 9am-10pm Mon-Wed, to 11pm Thu-Sat; ⌚ King) The Adelaide St branch of this popular Italian eatery (there are two others, and one in LA) occupies a former courthouse with high vaulted ceilings and labyrinthine dining areas. It’s open, funky and, despite the size, generally packed. A DJ spins beats while the punters eat. Reasonably priced wood-fired pizzas, rich pastas and fresh panini would make the Godfather proud. Modifications to dishes are a no-no.

OLD-SCHOOL DINERS

In a city where franchised everything is inescapable, where neighborhoods are in a constant state of flux and restaurants come and go, it’s refreshing to know that some things never change. We’ve sniffed out some of Toronto’s most classic diners, greasy spoons and cheap eats to transport you back the golden age of vinyl and laminate booths, elbow grease and good ole’ fashioned home cookin’: cheap, oh-so tasty and not-so good for the waistline. Aren’t you on vacation, anyway?

- Patrician Grill (p102)
- Avenue Open Kitchen (p102)
- Golden Diner (p105)
- Gale’s Snack Bar (p109)
- Senator Restaurant (p104)

For a shiny new take on the classic theme, perfect for late-night people-watching and open 24/7, hit Thompson Diner (p103).

Nami

JAPANESE \$\$

(Map p78; ☎ 416-362-7373; www.namirestaurant.ca; 55 Adelaide St E; lunch sets from \$13.95, dinner mains from \$19.95, sukiyaki per person \$33; ⌚ 11:45am-2:30pm Mon-Fri, 5:30-10:30pm Sat; ⌚ King) The name means ‘wave’ (as in tsunami) – the neon wave on the outside of the building is unmissable and cool. Bustling about the black lacquered interior are kimono-clad hostesses and intense sushi chefs, who make only small concessions to North American palates. *Robata-yaki* grilling is a specialty, so is this the place to try homestyle sukiyaki hotpot.

Earl's

MODERN AMERICAN \$\$

(Map p78; ☎ 416-916-0227; www.earls.ca; Suite 100, 150 King St W; mains \$13-33; ⌚ 11:30am-late; ⌚ St Andrew) The Financial District branch of this upscale restaurant chain can be hit and miss: it’s all about the timing. From 5pm in the warmer months, the beautiful streetside patio fills with suits and singles looking for spouses. If you time it wrong, you won’t get a table. Reservations aren’t accepted. Come for cocktails and upscale versions of North American favorites.

VEGETARIAN HAVENS

Meat-free restaurants in food-obsessed Toronto run the gamut from gourmet to passe. We like the following:

- Govinda's (p106)
- Grasslands (p108)
- Sadie's Diner (p107)
- Urban Herbivore (p107)

Bymark

FUSION \$\$\$

(Map p78; ☎ 416-777-1144; www.bymark.mcewan-group.ca; TD Centre, 66 Wellington St W; mains \$27-90; ☺ 11:30am-3pm Mon-Fri & 5pm-midnight Mon-Sat; Ⓛ St Andrew) Toronto culinary powerhouse Mark McEwan brings his sophisticated menu of continentally hewn cuisine to this hip, bi-level downtowner. His creative kitchen crew whips seasonal regional ingredients (wild truffles, quail, soft-shell crab) into sensational combinations, each with suggested wine or beer pairings. It's on street level.

Old York

St Lawrence Market

MARKET \$

(Map p78; ☎ 416-392-7120; www.stlawrencemarket.com; South Market, 92 Front St E; items \$2-10; ☺ 8am-6pm Tue-Thu, to 7pm Fri, 5am-5pm Sat; Ⓛ 503, 504) Buskers and classical trios provide an acoustic backdrop at the city's beloved market, offering a mouthwatering range of quality produce, baked goods and imported foodstuffs. The **Carousel Bakery** is famed for its peameal bacon sandwiches (chunky back bacon cured in cornmeal served on a fresh bun) and **St Urbain** for its authentic Montréal-style bagels. The farmers market livens up the North Market from 5am every Saturday.

Patrician Grill

DINER \$

(Map p78; ☎ 416-366-4841; 219 King St E; meals \$3.75-10.95; ☺ 8am-4pm Mon-Sat) Built in the 1950s, the Patrician has been run by the same family since 1967 and looks the part. Photographers will have a field day with the neon outside and the original decor inside. Burgers, BLTs, bacon and eggs (cooked to perfection) and home fries are the order of the day. Friday lunchtime meatloaf is a local institution and sells out before you can say, 'Please sir, I want some more'!

Bombay Palace

INDIAN \$

(Map p78; ☎ 416-368-8048; www.bombaypalace-toronto.com; 71 Jarvis St; lunch buffet \$12.99; ☺ 11:30am-2pm & 5-9:30pm) This welcoming Indian restaurant occupies the front half of a quirky old house. It has a fine-dining atmosphere, polite, old-fashioned service and authentic, well-presented dishes. The à la carte dinner menu is a little pricey, but you can't go past the daily lunch and Sunday dinner buffets for excellent value.

Sultan's Tent & Café Maroc

MIDDLE EASTERN \$\$

(Map p78; ☎ 416-961-0601; www.thesultantent.com; 49 Front St E; mains \$17-39; ☺ noon-3pm Mon-Fri & 5-10:30pm Mon-Sat; Ⓛ 503, 504) Dark and atmospheric, replete with stained-glass lanterns, candles and fringed cushions, the Sultan's Tent serves traditional Moroccan cuisine. We liked the couscous royale (\$24) and for dessert the *keskesu* (sweet couscous, cinnamon, almonds, raisins and orange-blossom water). Belly dancers may or may not help you digest.

Hiro Sushi

SUSHI \$\$\$

(Map p78; ☎ 416-304-0550; www.hirosushi.ca; 171 King St E; lunch specials from \$12, dinner \$35-70; ☺ noon-2:30pm Tue-Sat & 5:30-10:30pm Sat; Ⓛ 503, 504) If sushi is your thing, good-humored Hiro is your man. This authentic Japanese *sushi-ya* prefers to operate on the traditional principle of *omakase*: leave it to the chef. If you do, a tantalizing journey awaits. However, Hiro understands the particular sensibilities of Western diners and offers a limited à la carte menu which varies according to the availability of produce and his mood.

Entertainment District & King Street West

Wvrst

EUROPEAN \$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-703-7775; www.wvrst.com; 609 King St W; sausage from \$6; ☺ 11:30am-late; Ⓛ 504, 508) Like sausage? If Wvrsts phenomenal success is any indication, then Toronto's hipsters do too. With more bangers and snags than you can poke a stick at, do yourself a favor and get some pork on your fork. Will you have the duck fat or dirty fries with that?

Avenue Open Kitchen

DINER \$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-504-7131; 7 Camden St; sandwiches from \$3, burgers from \$4.50; ☺ 7am-5pm Mon-Fri; Ⓛ 504) This cozy little joint off Spadina Ave feels like it's been here forever, but it's

spotlessly clean and great value. Go on, have a BLT with cheese and a side of fries and gravy for your lunch: we dare you. Breakfasts and burgers are truly old school and easy on the wallet. There's always a daily special.

Burger Brats

(Map p78; ☎ 647-352-4786; www.burgerbrats.ca; 254 Adelaide St W; burgers from \$5.50; ☺ 11am-9pm Mon-Thu, to 4am Fri & Sat) Home of 'the Great Canadian Hangover,' a burger with an obscene amount of meat, peameal bacon, an egg, mushrooms and the standard garnish thrown in for good measure (\$15). Not feeling it? Keep the calories down around 1500 with the Classic and those awesome hand-cut fries. Don't forget the gravy! Mmmmm.

Burrito Banditos

(Map p78; 120 Peter St; burritos from \$5.75; ☺ 11:30am-11pm Mon-Thu, to 4am Fri & Sat, noon-9pm Sun; ☎ 501, 502) Club-hounds who haven't got lucky pile into this basement booth to assuage their disappointment with a hefty injection of chili, sour cream and salsa. There's not enough room in here for both you and your burrito – grab one to go.

Ravi Soups

(Map p78; ☎ 647-435-8365; www.ravisoup.com; 322 Adelaide St W; soups \$8.99; ☺ 11am-10pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat; ☎ 504, 508) This one is pretty simple: a small menu of six soups (think corn chowder with blue crab and porcini mushroom wild rice bisque) and four wraps (curried beef with roasted yams) that are done to perfection – all are delicious. There's a small eating area with a sharing table which is usually jam-packed.

Thompson Diner

(Map p84; ☎ 416-601-3533; www.thompsondiner.com; 550 Wellington St W; breakfast from \$10, mains from \$11.75; ☺ 24hr; ☎ 504, 511) The casual dining option at the sexy Thompson hotel is open 24 hours (breakfast served 5am to 11am). Whatever time of day, there's likely good people-watching to be had: this is nightclub territory, remember. Comfort food is a sure thing, and the decor a classy modern twist on the classic diner theme. Will it be peameal eggs Benedict or buttermilk fried chicken with cheddar mash for breakfast?

Khao San Road

(Map p78; ☎ 647-352-5773; www.khaosanroad.ca; 326 Adelaide St W; mains \$13-16; ☺ 11:30am-2:30pm & 5-10pm Mon-Sat; ☎; ☎ 504, 508) Folks

BURGERS \$

SPANISH \$\$\$

line around the block for what's billed as Toronto's best Thai restaurant. Reservations aren't accepted. Granted, if you're a fan of the genre, it can be worth the wait. Once inside, everything functions like a machine: orders are turned around fast and the food is awesome. There's a vegan menu too.

Patria

(Map p84; ☎ 416-367-0505; [www.patriotoronto.com](http://www.patriatoronto.com); 480 King St W; small plates \$6-16; ☺ 11am-2:30pm Sun-Fri & 5:30pm-close daily, tapas 2:30-5:30pm Sun & Mon; ☎ 504, 508) Everything works beautifully in this expansive, stylish and modern restaurant specializing in Spanish tapas and cuisine. Reservations are highly recommended: it's usually packed. Knowledgeable servers help navigate the mouthwatering menu of cheeses, meats and seafood. Tapas are meant to be shared: order plenty and don't bother coming alone. Sunday brunch is a delightful deviation from the usual suspects.

Big Daddy's Bourbon St Bistro

SEAFOOD \$\$

(Map p78; ☎ 416-599-5200; www.bigdaddys.ca; 212 King St W; mains \$12-35; ☺ 11:30am-late; ☎ St Andrews) In the heart of the theater strip, Big Daddy's is the perfect spot for a pre-show dinner or drink. Straight from the heart of Louisiana y'all, the menu is seafood-centric with a Cajun bent. There are cheesy seafood fondues, scallops, calamari and crab cakes as well as a prix-fixe three-course option. Burp.

★Lee

ASIAN \$\$\$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-504-7867; www.susur.com/lee; 601 King St W; plates \$7-35; ☺ 5:30-10:30pm Mon-Wed, to 11:30pm Thu-Sat; ☎ 504, 508) Truly a feast for the senses, dinner at acclaimed *cuisinier* Susur Lee's self-titled flagship restaurant is an experience best shared. Slick servers assist in navigating the artisan selection of East-meets-West Asian delights: you really want to get the pairings right. It's impossible to adequately convey the wonderful dance of flavors, textures and aromas one experiences in the signature Singaporean slaw, with... how many?? ingredients!

Chinatown & Baldwin Village

Pho Hu'ng

Vietnamese \$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-593-4274; 350 Spadina Ave; mains \$6-13; ☺ 10am-10pm; ☎ 510) Clipped service and infernally busy tables are the price you pay for Pho Hu'ng's awesome Vietnamese soups. A few dishes may be a touch

too authentic for some (pork intestines and blood) but the coffee is spot-on.

Mother's Dumplings

CHINESE \$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-217-2008; www.mothersdumpplings.com; 421 Spadina Ave; dumplings 12 pieces from \$6.39; ☺ 11:30am-10pm; ☎ 506, 510) The cleanest and best located of Chinatown's dumpling houses (it's actually closer to Kensington Market) prepares plump and juicy dumplings to authentic recipes passed on down generations. However you like them, steamed or pan-fried, pork, chicken, beef, shrimp or vegetarian, these dumplings will fill your tum and delight your wallet.

Kinton Ramen

NOODLES \$

(Map p74; ☎ 647-748-8900; www.kintonramen.com; 51 Baldwin St; noodles from \$9.50; ☺ 11:30am-10:30pm; ☎ 505, 506) Ramen noodles are practically a religion in Japan and they're becoming increasingly popular in Toronto. The cool brains behind this clever outfit leapt upon the bandwagon with their own distinct flavor: caramelized pork. There's even a version with cheese, if you can imagine. This place oozes atmosphere – it's lively, noisy, steamy and beery. Join in the fun.

★ND Sushi

JAPANESE \$\$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-551-6362; www.ndsushiandgrill.com; 3 Baldwin St; mains \$15-22; ☺ 11:30am-3pm Mon-Fri & 5-10pm Mon-Sat; ☎ 505, 506) From its pole position at the beginning of Baldwin St, this unassuming *shokudō* prepares favorite Japanese treats like *gyoza*, tempura and mouthwatering sashimi with authenticity. Its specialty is sushi, including a variety of not-so-traditional Western *maki* rolls: the spicy rainbow roll is divine. You could pay a whole lot more for Japanese food of this caliber.

Cafe la Gaffé

CAFE \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-596-2397; www.cafelagaffe.com; 24 Baldwin St; mains \$7-25; ☺ noon-11pm Mon-Fri, 11am-11pm Sat & Sun; ☎ 505, 506) Stripy cotton tablecloths and fresh-cut flowers adorn the tables in this little cafe. There's a street patio and a leafy garden patio where you can dine on market salads, a filet mignon sandwich or the hand-tossed pizzas. A small-print wine list offers an extensive selection.

Swatow

CHINESE \$\$

(Map p74; 309 Spadina Ave; mains \$8-14; ☺ 11am-2am; ☎ 505, 510) Catering to a late-night crowd, the menu here covers cuisine from Swatow (a city now known as Shantou, on

the coast of China's Guangdong province). Nicknamed 'red cooking' for its potent splashes of fermented rice wine, the house noodles are fiery. Cash only; be prepared to queue.

Downtown Yonge

Urban Eatery

CAFETERIA \$

(Map p74; 1 Dundas St W; ☺ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, to 7pm Sun; ☎ Dundas) More than just a food court, the Urban Eatery opened in the basement level of the gargantuan Eaton Centre in 2011, with 24 outlets from fast food to seated dining. If you're at a pinch for something to eat and tired of walking, you're bound to find something here; in fact, you'll be spoiled for choice. In winter it's an underground haven connected to the PATH and subway system, too.

Good View

CHINESE \$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-861-0888; www.goodviewrestaurant.ca; 134 Dundas St E; items from \$8; ☺ 11:30am-late Mon-Sat; ☎ Dundas) Delicious Cantonese cuisine is prepared fresh at this glorified Chinese takeout not far from Yonge & Dundas Sq. Lunch and dinner specials are great value to take back to your hotel, but the real delight is in eating in with a few friends and choosing a variety of dishes from the à la carte menu.

Salad King

THAI \$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-593-0333; www.saladking.com; 340 Yonge St; mains \$5.50-9.75; ☺ 11am-10pm Mon-Fri, noon-11pm Sat, to 9pm Sun; ☎ Dundas) An institution among students of neighboring Ryerson University, colorful and somewhat misleadingly named Salad King dispenses large bowls of rich Thai curries, noodle soups, rice and, yes, salads, for under \$10. Long stainless-steel sharing tables and cozy booths are usually full of hungry patrons. You can specify your desired level of spice on a scale of 1-20!

Senator Restaurant

DINER \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-364-7517; www.thesenator.com; 249 Victoria St; mains \$8.45-17.95; ☺ 8am-2:30pm Mon-Sun & 5-9pm Tue-Sat; ☎ Dundas) Art deco buffs will delight in the Senator's curved glass windows, fluted aluminum counterface and original booths. Meals are refreshingly simple and home-style: we love the fish and chips, meatloaf and macaroni. Say no more?

Eat Fresh Be Healthy

(Map p74; ☎ 647-258-8808; www.eatfreshbehealthy.com; 185 Dundas St W; lunch from \$10.49, dinner from \$13.49; ☺ 11:30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 3-9pm Sat; ⓕ 505) Truly a case of 'don't judge a book by its cover,' the exterior of this wonderful restaurant on a rather drab strip of Dundas St is easy to pass by. Don't. Inside, a variety of hearty, healthy, home-style meals await, from fresh filled sandwiches and lean pastas for lunch to braised lamb and mustard-glazed pork chops for dinner. The prix-fixe lunch and dinner specials are excellent value.

JOEY Eaton Centre

(Map p74; ☎ 647-352-5639; www.joeyrestaurants.com/eaton-centre; 1 Dundas St W; mains \$13-30; ☺ 11am-1am Sun-Wed, to 2am Thu-Sat; ⓕ Dundas) The downtown Toronto branch of this upscale casual (if the cap fits...) grill and lounge bar has decor to impress and a menu to match with a center-of-town location atop Dundas Station at the Eaton Centre. Favorite items include the Baja fish tacos, crispy chicken sandwich and lobster grilled cheese. Variations can be made for gluten-free and vegetarian diners.

 **Church-Wellesley Village****Golden Diner Family Restaurant** DINER \$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-977-9898; 105 Carlton St; breakfast from \$2.50; ☺ 6.30am-10pm; ⓕ College) This good old-fashioned basement-level Greek diner has some natty booths and one of the best-value all-day breakfasts in the city. The \$6.95 breakfast special includes three eggs, a handful of crispy bacon or peameal bacon, a mound of home fries and a bottomless cup of coffee. Pancakes are \$2.50! It's not the best breakfast in town, but it will fill you up and save you some coin, so there's more to spend on dinner.

Ethiopian House

AFRICAN \$ (Map p74; ☎ 416-923-5438; www.ethiopianhouse.com; 4 Irwin Ave; mains \$11-17; ☺ noon-11pm; ⓕ Wellesley) You won't find cutlery at this culturally authentic dining experience: slather chunks of *sherro wot* (seasoned chickpeas) and *gored-gored* (spiced beef) onto wonderful moist *injera* (bread) and eat with your hands, then try the after-dinner coffee ceremony: it's widely regarded that coffee originated in the then Ethiopian kingdom of Kaffa. Numerous vegetarian dishes are available.

INTERNATIONAL \$\$

★ Hair of the Dog

PUB \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-964-2708; www.hairofthedogpub.com; 425 Church St; share plates from \$8, mains from \$13; ☺ 11:30am-late Mon-Fri, 10:30am-late Sat & Sun; ⓕ College) At its best in the warmer months when two levels of shaded patios spring to life with a mixed gay/straight crowd, this chilled puppy is delightfully less mainstream than its Village neighbors a few blocks north. Equally listable as a 'Drinking' venue, the pub's food stands on its own: sharing plates and salads are great. Show me a nonvegetarian who can resist the butter chicken grilled cheese, and I'll buy you a pint of Sapporo.

Fire on the East Side

FUSION \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-960-3473; www.fireontheeastside.ca; 6 Gloucester St; mains \$10-25; ☺ 11:30am-10:30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10:30pm Sat & Sun; ⓕ Wellesley) Best for brunch, with a feisty selection of 'East Side Bennies' and morning after cocktails, this neighborhood fave also serves dinner from 4pm with a modest selection of well-prepared modern American and European dishes. It was once known for its haywire variations on Caribbean and Cajun themes, but after some kitchen changes only the buttermilk biscuits and fried chicken have echoes of the deep South.

Guu

JAPANESE \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-977-0999; www.guu-izakaya.com/toronto; 398 Church St; ☺ 11:30am-2pm & 5-11:30pm Mon-Fri, 4:30-11:30pm Sat & Sun; ⓕ College) Hip young Japanese use the street-word 'guu' for 'good' or 'cool!' This so-named reproduction of a Japanese *izakaya* is always packed, loud and lively. Come with friends for beer, sake and a selection of mouth-watering small plates like spicy *negitoro* (fatty tuna), deep-fried brie with mango and berry sauce, and banana tempura with coconut ice cream! You'll likely have to queue to get in unless you make a reservation online. Hint, hint.

Sambucas on Church

ITALIAN \$\$

(Map p74; ☎ 416-966-3241; www.sambucas.ca/home; 489 Church St; mains \$9.95-21.95; ☺ 10:30am-10:30pm; ⓕ Wellesley) Great for weekday lunches, weekend brunches and dinner anytime, Sambucas' Italian menu has some North American twists. Pastas are hearty, risottos creamy and the chicken dishes noteworthy. We really dig the calamari. If you're lucky, try for the window table to watch the Villagers walk by.

Bloor-Yorkville

Okonomi House

JAPANESE \$
(Map p74; 23 Charles St W; mains \$6-12; ☎11:30am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun; 

Okonomi House is one of the only places in Toronto (and perhaps North America) dishing up authentic *okonomiyaki* – savory Japanese cabbage pancakes filled with meat, seafood or vegetables. A must for Japanophiles.

7 West Café

CAFE \$\$

(Map p74; 416-928-9041; www.7westcafe.com; 7 Charles St W; mains \$10.95-17.95; ☎24hr; 

Three floors of moody lighting, textured jade paint, framed nudes, wooden church pews and jaunty ceiling angels set the scene for a dazzling selection of pizzas, pastas and sandwiches, and 24-hour breakfasts. Make like a vampire sipping blood-red wine (by the glass or bottle) as the moon dapples shadows across the street. Cool.

Bloor Street Diner

INTERNATIONAL \$\$

(Map p74; 416-928-3105; www.bloostreetdiner.com; Manulife Centre, 55 Bloor St W; mains \$10.50-26, brunch \$25.95; ☎noon-1am; 

Deceptively named, the swanky Bloor Street Diner has been a Toronto favorite for over 30 years, loved for its Parisian-style patio, distinguished wine list and impressive Sunday brunch buffet with chocolate fountain. Hit the cafe section in the mall out front for speedy takeout sandwiches.

Carens Wine and Cheese Bar

FUSION \$\$

(Map p74; 416-962-5158; www.carenswineandcheese.com; 158 Cumberland St; lunch \$14-24, dinner \$16-35; ☎11:30am-10pm; 

The staff of this delightful, rustic bi-level restaurant will happily recommend wine pairings for their amazing selection of world cheeses. Bright shawls drape over chairs in case you get a chill on the intimate and stylish back patio, and Thai lanterns hang from the trees. Weekend brunches are delightful, and the spicy baked mac 'n cheese (\$16) is ah-mah-zing – add lobster for an extra \$12.

Morton's the Steakhouse

STEAK \$\$\$

(Map p74; 416-925-0648; www.mortons.com/toronto; 4 Avenue Rd; mains from \$28; ☎5:30-11pm; 

If you like steak and don't find what you get here absolutely to your liking, we'd be extremely surprised if they didn't rectify the situation quick smart. These people are serious about steak: your server will bring a trolley of shrinkwrapped cuts to your ta-

ble, so you can see just what you're getting. Expect to drop a couple of hundred here on a dinner for two with wine, then slip into a food coma.

Sassafraz

FUSION \$\$\$

(Map p74; 416-964-2222; www.sassafraz.ca; 100 Cumberland St; mains \$21-39; ☎11:30am-2am Tue-Sat, to midnight Sun & Mon; 

Popular with visiting celebrities and the nouveau riche, Sassafraz's style epitomizes Yorkville. Jazz combos serenade weekend brunchers; sassy receptionists distribute clientele between the sun-drenched patio and leafy indoor courtyard. The food? Predictably good. Dress: to impress.

University of Toronto & The Annex

Govinda's

VEGETARIAN \$

(888-218-1040; www.govindas.ca; 243 Avenue Rd; by donation; ☎noon-3pm & 6-8pm Mon-Sat; 

The Hare Krishna movement has been feeding poor travelers around the globe for decades. Toronto is no exception. Politely decline any offers of religious conversion, make a small donation and enjoy tasty, karma-free vegetarian fare that is on the whole good for body and soul. It's a little out of the way, on the very northern fringe of the Annex.

Chabichau

FRENCH \$

(Map p84; 647-430-4942; www.chabichou.ca; 196 Borden St; ☎10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun; 

This French *traiteur* has a mouthwatering selection of fine cheeses and pâté (try the duck and pistachio), filled sandwiches on freshly baked bread and daily specials such as pork-apple stew: simple, hearty, awesome. The small cafe is a delight, but the booty on offer cries 'put me in your picnic basket'!

★Country Style

HUNGARIAN \$\$

(Map p84; 416-536-5966; 450 Bloor St W; schnitzels from \$18; ☎11am-10pm; 

This delightful Hungarian diner with its red-and-white checkered tablecloths and friendly family staff hasn't changed a bit in at least a generation. The variety of enormous breaded schnitzels, cooked to crunchy perfection, are the best in town, and the cucumber salad is a treat. We hope they don't change a single thing for as long as they possibly can. Note that menu prices include tax.

By the Way

(Map p84; ☎ 416-967-4295; www.bythewaycafe.com; 400 Bloor St W; mains \$9-17; ☺ 9am-9pm Sun-Wed, to 10pm Thu-Sat; ☎; ☈ Bathurst, Spadina) An Annex fixture, this cheerful corner bistro has a fusion menu that leans toward Middle Eastern. Although there's plenty of meat on the menu, vegetarians won't go hungry. There's an extensive and well-selected wine list.

Kensington Market & Little Italy

Aunties & Uncles

CAFE \$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-324-1375; www.auntiesanduncles.ca; 74 Lippincott St; mains \$2-8.75; ☺ 9am-3pm; ☈ 510) There's usually a line on the sidewalk outside the picket fence of this always-bustling brunch/lunch joint with a simple menu of cheap and cheery homemade favorites. Plop yourself down in one of the mismatched chairs and dig into dishes like grilled brie with pear chutney and walnuts on challah, banana oatmeal pancakes, or grilled Canadian cheddar.

Jumbo Empanadas

CHILEAN \$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-977-0056; www.jumboempanadas.com; 245 Augusta Ave; items from \$4.50; ☺ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun; ☈ 510) They're not kidding – chunky Chilean empanadas (toasted delights stuffed with beef, chicken, cheese or vegetables) and savory corn pie with beef, olives and eggs always sell out early. A mini empanada will only set you back \$1.50. Bread and salsas are also homemade.

Nguyen Huong

SANDWICHES \$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-599-4625; www.nguyenuong.ca; 322 Spadina Ave; sandwiches from \$5; ☺ 8:30am-8:30pm; ☈ 510) Cheap and delicious filled Vietnamese sandwiches are the name of the day at the original precursor to Toronto's *banh-mi* phenomenon.

Urban Herbivore

VEGETARIAN \$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-927-1231; www.herbivore.to; 64 Oxford St; mains \$4-10; ☺ 8am-8pm; ☈; ☈ 510) This humble wholefoods joint specializes in vegetarian meals *sans* additives and preservatives, including salads, rice bowls, chunky soups and specialty vegan gluten-free baked goodies. There's also a branch at the Eaton Centre's Urban Eatery (p104).

Kalendar

CAFE \$\$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-923-4138; www.kalendar.com; 546 College St; mains \$11-25; ☺ 11:30am-late Mon-Fri, from 10:30am Sat & Sun; ☈ 510) Kalendar feels like France in Little Italy, with dark wood, tiled floors and a dainty sidewalk patio. The menu funks things up with different types of scrolls (crepe-style roti topped with all sorts of veggies and sauces) and nannettes – naan topped with yummies such as pesto, artichoke hearts and Asiago cheese. There's a long list of cocktails to help you wash it all down.

Bar Italia

ITALIAN \$\$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-535-3621; www.bar-italia.ca; 582 College St; mains \$14-27; ☺ 11am-late Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun; ☈ 506) Locals love Bar Italia, a place to see and be seen (especially from a vantage point on the coveted front patio). Grab a sandwich or al dente pasta, with a lemon gelato and a rich coffee afterward – and while away the entire afternoon or evening.

Caplansky's Deli

DINER \$\$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-500-3852; www.caplanskys.com; 356 College St; mains \$7-18; ☺ 11am-10pm Mon-Fri, from 9am Sat & Sun; ☈ 510) All-day breakfasts and Montréal-style hot smoked-meat deli sandwiches are the claim to fame of this authentic Jewish deli, also serving rich meaty dinners and daily specials. The friendly folks won't make you feel like chopped liver, though you're more than welcome to order some if you wish (\$7).

Queen West & Trinity Bellwoods

New York Subway

FAST FOOD \$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-703-4496; www.newyorksubburritos.com; 520 Queen St W; 'burritos' from \$3.49; ☺ 11:30am-midnight Mon-Fri, to 10pm Sat) It's hard to describe the weird burrito creations that late-night punters have been flocking here to consume for years, but they're awesome. The joint ain't fancy, but these things are cheap, delicious and filling. Mushroom lovers should stick to their instincts and will be rewarded.

Sadie's Diner

DINER \$

(Map p84; www.sadiesdiner.com; 504 Adelaide St W; mains \$9-13; ☺ 7:30am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-10pm Sat & Sun; ☈; ☈ 504, 511) This quaint diner and juice bar specializes in all-day breakfasts and healthy-ish comfort foods and is vegan-friendly and celiac-conscious.

★ Queen Mother Café

(Map p74; ☎ 416-598-4719; www.queenmothercafe.com; 208 Queen St W; mains \$9-23; ☺ 11:30am-1am Mon-Sat, to midnight Sun; Ⓜ 500) A Queen St institution, the Queen Mother is beloved for its cozy, dark wooden booths and excellent pan-Asian menu. Canadian comfort food is also on offer – try the Queen Mum burger. Check out the display of old stuff they found in the walls the last time they renovated. The patio is hidden and one of the best in town.

Burger's Priest

BURGERS \$\$

(Map p84; ☎ 647-748-8108; www.theburgerspriest.com; 463 Queen St W; burgers from \$5.49; ☺ noon-9:30pm Mon-Sat) There's a lot of hype surrounding the Priest – some say the burgers are the best in town. They're good and simple: fresh ground beef, soft bun, griddled to perfection. We recommend 'the Priest' (of course), topped with a breaded deep-fried portobello mushroom, but check out the secret menu online, if you're brave. For dessert, don't shy from the Vatican on ice: an ice-cream sandwiched between two grilled cheese sandwiches (that's right). It's an experience.

5th Element

INDIAN \$\$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-504-3213; www.5thelement.com; 506 Queen St W; lunch sets from \$6.95; ☺ 11:30am-10pm Mon-Fri, 5-10pm Sat & Sun) This pleasant Indian restaurant has all the usual suspects and presents them consistently well. We're including it for the excellent-value lunch specials: choose one dish off the menu (prices vary for vegetarian, meat, seafood) with naan and rice.

Chippy's

FISH & CHIPS \$\$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-866-7474; www.chippys.ca; 893 Queen St W; fish from \$8.50, chips from \$3.99; ☺ 11:30am-9pm; Ⓜ 501) For a city as food-diverse as Toronto, there's a definite lack of good fish and chipperys. Chippy's is an exception: the fish is as fresh as you get in the big smoke, the chips are cut daily from Ontario and Prince Edward Island potatoes and the batter has two bottles of Guinness added to every batch. Sit in Trinity Bellwoods park, opposite, to enjoy your catch.

Grasslands

VEGETARIAN \$\$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-504-5127; www.grasslands.to; 478 Queen St W; dishes \$9-19; ☺ 5:30-10pm Wed-Sun; Ⓜ; Ⓜ 501) Grasslands was born in 2013 as a fresh revamp of former zenith of vegetarian and vegan dining in Toronto, Fressen. Keeping the same team and premises, Grasslands' superior service and sumptuous brick-and-

wood dining room tempts even hardy carnivores. A stylish seasonally adjusted organic menu traverses world cuisines. Dishes are marked as wheat free, nut free, gluten free and Buddhist friendly.

Swan

CAFE \$\$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-532-0452; 892 Queen St W; mains \$18-23; ☺ noon-10pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun; Ⓜ 501) This art-deco diner features a small and deceptively simple menu, with items like smoked oyster with pancetta and egg scrambles, club sandwiches, and mussels that rest iced in a vintage Coca-Cola cooler. The coffee is divine, and it's a great place to sit at the counter and read the paper on a rainy Sunday – if you can get a table.

Pizzeria Libretto

ITALIAN \$\$

(Map p84; ☎ 416-532-8000; <http://ossington.pizzerialibretto.com>; 221 Ossington Ave; mains \$10-17; ☺ noon-11pm; Ⓜ 505) A bit north of Queen West in Portugal Village, Pizza Libretto crafts what is arguably the best pizza in town. The secret?

BEST COFFEE SHOPS?

Too early for beer? Sidestep the coffee chains for some *real* barista action:

► **Rooster Coffee House** (☎ 416-995-1530; www.roostercoffeehouse.com; 479 Broadview Ave; ☺ 7am-7pm; Ⓜ 504, 505) Opposite Riverdale Park.

► **Te Aro** (☎ 416-465-2006; www.pilotcoffeeroasters.com; 983 Queen St E; ☺ 7am-6pm Mon-Fri, from 8am Sat & Sun; Ⓜ 501, 502, 503) Leslieville.

► **Dark Horse Espresso** (Map p74; ☎ 416-979-1200; www.darkhorseespresso.com; 215 Spadina Ave; ☺ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, from 8am Sat & Sun; Ⓜ 510) Fashion District/Chinatown.

► **B Espresso Bar** (Map p74; ☎ 416-866-2111; bespressobar.com; 111 Queen St E; ☺ 7:30am-5pm Mon-Fri; Ⓜ 501) Financial District/Corktown.

► **Moonbeam Coffee Company**

(Map p84; ☎ 416-595-0327; www.moonbeamcoffee.com; 30 St Andrews St; ☺ 7am-9pm; Ⓜ 510) Kensington Market.

► **Jet Fuel** (☎ 416-968-9982; jetfuelcoffee.com; 519 Parliament St; ☺ 7am-8pm; Ⓜ 506) Cabbagetown.

► **Remarkable Bean** (☎ 416-690-2420; 2242 Queen St E; ☺ 7am-10pm; Ⓜ 501) The Beaches.

A wood-fired oven built by a third-generation pizza-oven builder with stones shipped from Italy. Besides certified Neapolitan pizza and other Naples staples, the menu also includes a prix-fixe lunch (salad, pizza and gelato for \$15) and an all-Italian wine list. Make sure you reserve your table for weekends.

Julie's Cuban

LATIN AMERICAN \$\$

(2416-532-7397; www.juliescuban.com; 202 Dovercourt Rd; tapas from \$4.25, mains \$9-20; ☎ 5:30-10pm Tue-Sun; Ⓜ 501) This West Queen West neighborhood joint serves traditional Cuban dishes like *ropa vieja* (shredded beef in spicy tomato sauce with ripe plantains, white rice and black beans). The restaurant was once a corner store, and every effort has been made to retain the vibe.

★ Union

FUSION \$\$\$

(Map p84; 2416-850-0093; www.union72.ca; 72 Ossington Ave; mains \$18-34; ☎ 6-10pm Mon & Tue, noon-3pm & 6-11pm Wed-Sun; Ⓜ 501) This dandy little hipster kitchen serves a delicious fusion of French- and Italian-inspired dishes which it touts as 'simple done right,' although the menu feels more convoluted than simple. Fortunately, the food, decor and service are masterfully executed: steak, chicken, ribs and fish are staples. There's a delightful little patio out back.

East End & The Beaches

★ Gilead Café

CAFE \$

(2647-288-0680; www.jamiekennedy.ca/intro-gc.php; 4 Gilead Pl; mains \$9-18; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Sat, from 10am Sun; Ⓜ 503, 504) Counter service meets haute Canadian cuisine in this Jamie Kennedy kitchen. The menu, featuring items like gourmet poutine, Canadian artisan cheese plates and cider mayo, is written on the chalkboard daily. Ingredients are sourced from Ontario farms; if you're watching your mileage, the Gilead is a great choice for the 100-mile diet.

Schnitzel Queen

EUROPEAN \$

(Map p74; 2416-363-9176; 237 Queen St E; schnitzels \$7-10; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Fri) This poky German takeout specializes in golden delicious breaded schnitzel sandwiches that make great picnic fodder. These mammoth creations are excellent value and usually good for two meals – the schnitzel is literally double the size of the bun. Purists should try for one of the few bar stools and stay in for the authentic dinner plates with mushroom sauce,

potato salad and sauerkraut (\$9.99). Not open weekends.

Gale's Snack Bar

DINER \$

(539 Eastern Ave; meals from \$3.25; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sat; Ⓜ 501, 502, 503) Off the gentrified Leslieville strip, on a working-class corner with high-vehicular traffic, you'll find this gritty hole-in-the-wall. If you can get past the fact that it hasn't been updated in decades, you'll discover some of Toronto's cheapest, greasy-spoon eats. Great value and tasty too.

Siddhartha

INDIAN \$\$

(2416-465-4095; www.thesiddhartha.com; 1450 Gerrard St E; mains \$9-18; ☎ 11:30am-10pm; Ⓜ 506) In a neighborhood stuffed with excellent South Asian food, Siddhartha is a consistent favorite. Although it's popular for its all-you-can-eat lunch and dinner buffets, don't be afraid to order off the menu. The naan is perfect, the curries are classic and the samosas are massive. Cool your burning tongue with a Kingfisher.

Pan on the Danforth

GREEK \$\$

(2416-466-8158; www.panonthedanforth.com; 516 Danforth Ave; mezes \$8-24, mains \$17-59; ☎ noon-11pm Sun-Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat; Ⓜ 506) As Greek as Greektown, colorful, casual Pan serves unpretentious fare with traditional Greek flavors, like calamari, moussaka, Santorini chicken stuffed with spinach and feta, with new potatoes and seared veggies. Finish with a sticky chocolate baklava.

★ Allen's

PUB \$\$\$

(2416-463-3086; www.allens.to/allens; 143 Danforth Ave; mains \$12-36; ☎ 11:30am-2am; Ⓜ 504, 505) Featuring one of the city's nicest patio dining areas (in warmer months), Allen's is more than just a pub, although it is a great place to come for lovers of Irish music and dance. The menu changes with the seasons. Expect hearty but sophisticated Irish fare: cuts of hormone- and additive-free beef (including one of Toronto's best burgers), lamb and veal, ale-battered halibut and Yukon gold fries, and spicy, creamy curries.

Gio Rana's Really Really Nice

Restaurant

ITALIAN \$\$\$

(2416-469-5225; www.gioranas.com; 1220 Queen St E; mains \$25-35; ☎ 6pm-late Tue-Sat; Ⓜ 501, 502, 503) There's no signage at this quirky, fun joint – just a massive Italianate nose on the exterior of an otherwise nondescript 1950s bank building. Locals come here for the

atmosphere, good humor (the website will give you a sense of what's in store) and old-fashioned Italian comfort food: enormous meatballs, hot sausage risotto, veal and 'sexy duck.'

Toronto Islands

Rectory Café

CAFE \$\$

( 416-203-2152; <http://therectorycafe.com>; 102 Lakeshore Ave, Ward's Island; mains \$13-21;  11am-9pm Sun-Thu, to 10pm Fri & Sat;  Ward's Island) Propped up next to the boardwalk, this cozy gallery-café serves light meals, cups of tea and weekend brunch with views of Tommy Thompson Park. Reservations recommended for brunch and dinner; quick snacks and drinks are more casual. Try to nab a seat on the lakeside patio if the sun is shining.

Drinking & Nightlife

Bars & Pubs

The Toronto pub and bar scene embraces everything from sticky-carpet beer holes, cookie-cutter franchised 'Brit' pubs and Yankee-style sports bars to slick martini bars, rooftop patios, sky-high wine rooms and an effervescent smattering of gay and lesbian hangouts. Thirsty work! Strict by-laws prohibit smoking indoors in public spaces, although some outdoor patios are permissive. Taps start flowing around mid-day and last call hovers between 1am and 2am.

Mill Street Brewery

BREWERY

( 416-681-0338; www.millstreetbrewery.com; 55 Mill St, Bldg 63, Distillery District;  11:30am-midnight;  503, 504) With 13 specialty beers brewed on-site in the atmospheric Distillery District, these guys are a leading light in local microbrewing. Order a sample platter so you can taste all the award-winning brews, including the Tankhouse Pale Ale, Stock Ale and Organic Lager. On a sunny afternoon, the courtyard is the place to be. Typical brewery fare is served, with beer-friendly pairings like burgers, sandwiches and wraps.

Panorama

BAR

(Map p74;  416-967-0000; www.panoramalounge.com; 51st fl, Manulife Centre, 55 Bloor St W;  5pm-late;  Bay) Swanky and priced to match, the city's highest licensed patio has arguably Toronto's best views outside the CN Tower. It's in the Manulife Centre building and unlike the tower, there's no admission fee, though

you'll be scoffed at if you don't drop some cash on a martini or a meal.

C'est What

PUB

(Map p78;  416-867-9499; www.cestwhat.com; 67 Front St E;  11:30am-1am;  503, 504) Over 30 whiskeys and six dozen Canadian microbrews (mostly from Ontario) are on hand at this underground pub. An in-house brewmaster tightly edits the all-natural, preservative-free beers on tap, and there's good bar food that makes the most of fresh produce from St Lawrence Market next door.

Gladstone Hotel

BAR

( 416-531-4635; www.gladstonehotel.com; 1214 Queen St W;  8am-10pm;  501) This historic hotel revels in Toronto's avant-garde arts scene. The Art Bar and Gladstone Ballroom sustain offbeat DJs, poetry slams, jazz, book readings, alt-country and blues, while the Melody bar hosts karaoke and other musical ventures. Cover varies, usually \$10 or less.

Black Bull

PUB

(Map p74;  416-593-2766; www.blackbulltavern.ca; 298 Queen St W;  noon-1am;  501;  The Black Bull may have Toronto's most desired patio in that it seems to catch more sunlight than anywhere else, and has a prime drinking spot for when you need a rest from Queen St shopping. Line up behind the others to wait for a table, and don't give it up until the sun goes down. Free wi-fi is a nice touch.

Wayne Gretzky's

PUB

(Map p78;  416-348-0099; www.gretzkys.com; 99 Blue Jays Way;  11:30am-late Mon-Fri, 10am-late Sat & Sun;  503, 504) Once part owned by Canada's favorite hockey legend but now just sharing his name, Gretzky's is a sports bar, restaurant and awesome rooftop patio serving fairly innocuous modern American food. Sports fans come to view the hockey memorabilia, but it's otherwise a good downtown spot for a beer.

Sweaty Betty's

BAR

(Map p84;  416-535-6861; 13 Ossington Ave;  5pm-2:30am Mon-Thu, 3:30pm-2:30am Fri-Sun;  501) In a city of infused vodkas and creative cocktails, Betty's refuses to mix anything with more than three ingredients. This nonsense approach pares a night out at the bar to the essentials: having a good time and chatting people up. The tiny place is packed with hipsters on the weekends, and the liv-

PICK OF THE PATIOS

With such short summers, vitamin-D starved locals beeline for Toronto's patio bars and restaurants at the first available opportunity. Be prepared for stiff competition for the best tables...or just any table really! Here are some of our favorites:

- ◆ Hair of the Dog (p105)
- ◆ Earl's (p101)
- ◆ Rectory Café (p110)
- ◆ Panorama (p110)
- ◆ Java House (p111)
- ◆ Allen's (p109)
- ◆ Drake Hotel (p111)
- ◆ Against the Grain (p100)

ing room-ish setup kinda makes it feel like a college house party.

Blake House

(Map p74; ☎ 416-975-1867; www.theblakehouse.ca; 449 Jarvis St; ☺ 11am-2am) Just east of the Village, this historic 1891 mansion is a good all-round performer. Nicely renovated in dark tones, it's wonderfully cozy and inviting in winter, and has a great patio out front in the summer months. There's cold beer, great food and friendly servers. It's popular, but not crowded.

Red Room

(Map p84; ☎ 416-929-9964; 444 Spadina Ave; ☺ 11am-late; ☎ 506, 510) The Red Room rules. Part pub, part diner, part funky lounge – this arty Kensington Market room is the place to drag your hungover bones for a recuperative pint of microbrew, an all-day breakfast and an earful of Brit pop. Sink into a booth and forget your misdemeanors.

Handlebar

(Map p84; ☎ 647-748-7433; 159 Augusta Ave; ☺ 6pm-late Mon-Fri, from 3pm Sat & Sun) A jolly little spot paying homage to the bicycle and its lovers, this newcomer to the Toronto bar scene comes from owners with a fine pedigree. In a great spot south of Kensington Market, there's some wonderful retro styling and a nice mix of shiny happy punters.

Madison Avenue Pub

(Map p74; 14-18 Madison Ave; ☺ 11am-2am; ☎ Spadina) Comprising three Victorian hous-

es in The Annex, the Madison draws a late-20s U of T crowd. Think billiards, darts, a sports bar, polished brass, antique-y lamps lighting the curtained upper floors, *five* patios and lots of hormones colliding between the boys and the girls.

Java House

BAR
(Map p84; ☎ 416-504-3025; 537 Queen St W; ☺ 9am-1am; ☎ 510) In the grungy heart of Queen W you'll find this haven for seriously well-priced drinks and eats with a huge side patio that is mostly packed in the summer months.

Wide Open

BAR
(Map p74; ☎ 416-727-5411; www.wideopenbar.ca; 139a Spadina Ave; ☺ 5pm-2am; ☎ 510) If you blink you'll miss this grotty little non-descript hole-in-the-wall, but if you do find it, you'll also have tracked down some of Toronto's cheapest booze: half-price and \$10 pitchers on Mondays, and happy hour Thursday when *all drinks* are \$2.50 (5pm to 8pm). There's a drink special every day.

Crocodile Rock

PUB
(Map p78; ☎ 416-599-9751; www.crocrock.ca; 240 Adelaide St W; ☺ 4pm-2am Wed-Fri, 7pm-2am Sat, 9pm-2am Sun) Like a thorny island in the middle of clubland and entertainment central, Crocodile Rock caters to a slightly older crowd, particularly since the recent renovation to its excellent rooftop patio. Expect out-of-towners, after-work suits for \$3 specials and anyone who remembers the '80s and still likes to party.

Smokeless Joe

BAR
(Map p84; ☎ 416-966-5050; 488 College St; ☺ 5pm-1am Tue-Thu, noon-1am Fri-Mon; ☎ 506) Formerly a basement bar in clubland, Smokeless Joe has moved to a new home in Little Italy but retains its cozy 'everybody knows your name' feel. With more than 200 beers available, you're spoiled for choice.

Underground Garage

BAR
(Map p78; ☎ 416-688-8787; www.undergroundgarage.ca; 365 King St W; ☺ 10pm-2:30am; ☎ 504, 510) Trying valiantly to keep it real in the otherwise skin-deep Entertainment District, this urban rock bar is down a steep staircase lined with Led Zeppelin, Willie Nelson and John Lennon posters. Wailing guitars, cold beer and good times – just as it should be.

Drake Hotel

BAR
(☎ 416-531-5042; www.thedrakehotel.ca; 1150 Queen St W; ☺ 8am-11pm; ☎ 501) The Drake is

part hotel, part pub, part live-music venue, part nightclub: with a bunch of different areas to enjoy, including lounge, patio, the wonderful rooftop Sky Yard and a basement underground.

Sneaky Dee's

BAR

(Map p84; ☎ 416-603-3090; www.sneaky-dees.com; 431 College St; ☺ 11am-3am Mon-Fri, 9am-3am Sat & Sun; ☣ 506, 511) Spangled with graffiti on the prominent Bathurst/College St corner, Sneaky Dee's downstairs bar is true grunge with battered booths and years of history: fill up on Tex-Mex (half-price fajitas on Tuesdays!) while downing cheapish beer. The upstairs band room is a darkened breeding ground for new local rock n roll although Saturdays go off to '60s to '80s 'Shake-a-tail' club nights.

Clinton's

BAR

(Map p84; www.clintons.ca; 693 Bloor St; ☺ 4pm-2am Mon-Fri, 11am-2am Sat & Sun; ☣ Christie) Weekly themed DJ nights, live music and comedy are all part of the line-up at iconic Clinton's, attracting a fun, arty crowd. There's a pub at the front serving decent food and a wicked dance hall at back: the 'Girl & Boy '90s Dance Party' on Fridays is kickass.

Ossington

BAR

(Map p84; ☎ 416-850-0161; www.theossington.com; 61 Ossington Ave; ☺ 6pm-2am) With a moody candlelit front bar and cavernous backroom hosting Friday and Saturday DJ nights, local fave the Ossington is a great mix of 20-to-30-somethings who still have a little life left in them and choose to stray from the mainstream mania.

Clubs

'Clubland' convenes around Richmond St W and Adelaide St W at John St. After dark, nondescript doorways creak open, thick-necked bouncers cordon off sidewalks and queues of scantily clad girls and awkward guys in their Sunday best begin to form. The air hangs heavy with hormones and excitement but a few hours later, things get messy: drunk girls stagger, guys swing apocalyptic fists and hot-dog cart owners struggle to maintain order among the condiments. Many clubs now offer/require 'bottle service,' where you pay through-the-nose prices to reserve a bottle of liquor and a table for your group. This also helps you skip queues. Most clubs open around 9pm or 10pm (but

don't get swinging until later) and close around 4am.

Not your idea of a good time? Head to neighborhoods like Little Italy, Church and Wellesley, Queen West and The Annex for more intimate haunts and wider scope. Cover charges range from \$5 to \$15. Bars with band rooms or mini-clubs out back open early and don't close until 2am or 3am.

Guvernment

CLUB

(Map p78; www.theguvernment.com; 132 Queens Quay E; ☺ 10pm-late Tue-Sat; ☣ 6, 75) For diversity, nothing beats the gargantuan Guv. DJs play hip-hop, R&B, progressive house and tribal music to satisfy all appetites. Rooftop skyline views are as impressive as the Arabian fantasy lounge and art-deco bar. Koolhaus is the midsize live venue.

Mod Club

CLUB

(Map p84; www.themodclub.com; 722 College St; ☺ 8pm-midnight Mon-Thu, 6pm-3am Fri & Sat; ☣ 506) Celebrating all things UK, this excellent Little Italy club plays electronic, indie and Brit pop, with occasional live acts like Paul Weller, The Killers and Muse taking the stage. Up-to-the-nanosecond lighting gives way to candlelit chill-out rooms.

Uniun

CLUB

(Map p84; ☎ 416-603-9300; www.uniun.com; 473 Adelaide St W; ☺ 10pm-3am Fri-Sun; ☣ 504, 508) The entrance to this ultra-schmick, ultra-cool, bottle-service nightclub – Toronto's newest – is off Portland St. Don't even try to get in unless you look and feel a million bucks and have the cash to back it up. There's an insane LED-lighting system encased in the walls and ceilings, room enough for 1500 and style to burn.

Gay & Lesbian Venues

O'Grady's

PUB

(Map p74; ☎ 416-323-2822; www.ogradschurch.ca; 517 Church St; ☺ 11am-2am; ☣ Wellesley) The Village's largest patio fills up quick as soon as the sun comes out, but in the colder months there's nothing particularly noteworthy about this fairly standard gay-friendly Irish pub.

Woody's/Sailor

BAR

(Map p74; ☎ 416-972-0887; www.woodystoronto.com; 465-7 Church St; ☺ noon-2am; ☣ Wellesley) Toronto's most well-known gay bar is a sprawling complex with a grab-bag of tricks, from drag shows, 'best ass' contests, billiards

tables and nightly DJs. Sailor is a slick bar off to one side.

Black Eagle

(Map p74; ☎ 416-413-1219; www.blackeagletoronto.com; 457 Church St; ☺ 2pm-late; [S] Wellesley) The men-only Eagle lures leather-men, uniform fetishists and their admirers. The year-round rooftop patio is the perfect place to meet a Daddy: Sunday afternoon barbecues draw a strong crowd. There's a cruising area upstairs and a newly renovated dance area downstairs. While not for the fainthearted, the folks and staff are generally as friendly as they come.

Crews & Tangos

BAR

(Map p74; ☎ 416-972-1662; www.crewsandtangos.com; 508 Church St; ☺ 5pm-2am; [S] Wellesley) A sprawling bar by day (with an excellent rear patio) and a crowded nightclub by night, featuring live drag and cabaret shows and DJs out back. Boys who like boys, girls who like girls, girlish boys and boyish girls and all their friends tend to make up the lively crowd in this welcoming space.

Fly

CLUB

(Map p74; ☎ 416-410-5426; www.flynightclub.com; 8 Gloucester St; ☺ 10pm-4am Fri & Sat; [S] Wellesley) This fun multi-level club, just outside the Village, off Yonge St, spins hard-house, tribal and trance and is frequently home to the butch and beary Pitbull parties (www.pitbullevents.com). Music from the club is piped next door into Fire on the East Side (p105), so you can enjoy a lounge scene before hitting the dance floor.

El Convento Rico

CLUB

(Map p84; ☎ 416-588-7800; www.elconventotorico.com; 750 College St; cover \$8-10; ☺ 10pm-3am Thu, 8pm-3am Fri & Sat; [F] 506) With a friendly mixed crowd, this LGBT dance bar has free salsa lessons on Friday at 10pm as well as nightly drag shows.



Entertainment

As you might have guessed, there's always something going on here, from jazz to art-house cinema, offbeat theater, opera, punk-rock, hip-hop and hockey. In summer free outdoor festivals and concerts are the norm but Toronto's dance and live-music scene keeps grooving year-round. Gay life is also rich and fulfilling, with plenty of clubs, groups, bar nights and activities for the community.

For the latest club, alt-culture and live-music listings, look for Toronto's free street press in venues, by subway entrances or online: *Now* (www.nowmagazine.com), *The Grid* (www.thegridto.com), and *Xtra!* (www.xtra.ca) for LGBT readers.

In an effort to promote arts and culture, many venues and events operate a 'Pay What You Can' (PWYC) policy: admission is free or by donation; give what you think is reasonable. Otherwise, **Ticketmaster** (☎ 1-855-985-5000; www.ticketmaster.ca) sells tickets for major concerts, sporting matches and events.

TO Tix (Map p74; www.totix.ca; Yonge & Dundas Sq, 5 Dundas St E; ☺ noon-6:30pm Tue-Sat) sells half-price and discount same-day 'rush' tickets and **TicketKing** (☎ 800-461-3333, 416-872-1212; www.mirvish.com/ticketking) covers shows at Royal Alexandra, Princess of Wales, Ed Mirvish and Panasonic Theatres.

Live Music

Dust off your Iggy Pop T-shirt, don your Docs and hit the pit. Alt-rock, metal, ska, punk and funk – Toronto has a thriving live-music scene. Bebop, smoky swamp blues and acoustic balladry provide some alternatives. Expect to pay anywhere from nothing to a few dollars on weeknights; up to \$20 for weekend acts. Megatours play the Rogers Centre, the Air Canada Centre and the Molson Canadian Amphitheatre (Map p78).

Horseshoe Tavern

LIVE MUSIC

(Map p74; ☎ 416-598-4753; www.horseshoetavern.com; 370 Queen St W; ☺ noon-2am; [F] 501, 510) Well past its 65th birthday, the legendary Horseshoe still plays a crucial role in the development of local indie rock. Not so local, The Police played here on their first North American tour – Sting did an encore in his underwear and Bran Van 3000 made their long awaited comeback. This place just oozes a history of good times and classic performances. Come for a beer and check it out.

Massey Hall

CONCERT VENUE

(Map p74; ☎ 416-872-4255; www.masseyhall.com; 178 Victoria St; ☺ box office from noon on show days; [S] Queen) Few venues have hosted as diverse a range of performances as Massey Hall, with its over 120 years in the business. Extensive back-of-house renovations are slated to bring the 2500-seat space into the next generation, while retaining its period charm.

Opera House

(Map p84; ☎ 416-466-0313; www.theoperahousetoronto.com; 735 Queen St E; ☎ 501, 502, 503) The old Opera House is an early 1900s vaudeville hall. Over the years, rockers like The Black Crowes, Rage Against The Machine, Eminem, A Perfect Circle and Beck have all strutted out beneath the proscenium arch, as well as a number of dance parties and performances.

Sound Academy

CONCERT VENUE
(Map p16; ☎ 416-649-7437; www.sound-academy.com; 11 Polson St; ☎ 72, 72A) This Harbourside venue can hold around 3000 for rock concerts and live shows. Past acts include Guns & Roses, The Killers and Fallout Boy.

Phoenix

CONCERT VENUE
(Map p74; ☎ 416-323-1251; www.libertygroup.com; 410 Sherbourne St; ☎ 506) The 1000-capacity Phoenix has occupied the former Harmonie Club, a grand ol' room that now sees the harmonious rock of bands like the Tragically Hip.

Sony Centre for the Performing Arts

CONCERT VENUE
(Map p78; ☎ 416-872-7669; www.sonycentre.ca; 1 Front St E; ☎ box office 10am-5:30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat; ☎ Union) With an entry awning protruding over Front St like a hummingbird beak, this place is hard to miss. Phone or book online for shows as diverse as the Soweto Gospel Choir, Pet Shop Boys and Russell Brand.

Rivoli

LIVE MUSIC
(Map p74; ☎ 416-596-1908; www.rivoli.ca; 334 Queen St W; ☎ 11:30am-1am; ☎ 501) Songbird Feist got her start here. Nightly live music (rock, indie and solo singer-songwriters), weekly stand-up comedy and monthly hip-hop nights are all part of the line-up. There's an awesome pool hall upstairs and great food.

Lee's Palace

LIVE MUSIC
(Map p84; ☎ 416-532-1598; www.leespalace.com; 529 Bloor St W; ☎ 9am-2:30am; ☎ Bathurst) Legendary Lee's Palace has set the stage over the years for Dinosaur Jr, Smashing Pumpkins and Queens of the Stone Age. Kurt Cobain started an infamous bottle-throwing incident when Nirvana played here in 1990. You can't miss it - look for the primary-colored mural that seems to scream out the front.

CONCERT VENUE

Dakota Tavern

LIVE MUSIC
(Map p84; ☎ 416-850-4579; www.thedakotatavern.com; 249 Ossington Ave; ☎ 6pm-2am Mon-Fri, 11am-2am Sat & Sun; ☎ 63, ☎ 501) This basement tavern rocks with wooden-barrel stools and a small stage where you can catch some twang. You'll hear mostly country, blues and some rock. Saturday and Sunday bluegrass brunches (\$15; 11am to 3pm) are a *big* hit - they're tasty, filling and fun, but you'll have to queue to get in.

Reservoir Lounge

BLUES, JAZZ

(Map p78; ☎ 416-955-0887; www.reservoirlounge.com; 52 Wellington St E; ☎ 7:30pm-2am Tue-Sat; ☎ 503, 504) Swing dancers, jazz singers and blues crooners call this cool candlelit basement lounge home, and it has hosted its fair share of musical greats over the years. Where else can you enjoy a Grey Goose martini while dipping strawberries into chocolate fondue during the show?

Cameron House

JAZZ

(Map p84; ☎ 416-703-0811; www.thecameron.com; 408 Queen St W; ☎ 4pm-late; ☎ 501, 510) Singer-songwriters, soul, jazz and country performers grace the stage; artists, musos, dreamers and slackers crowd both front and back rooms.

Rex

BLUES, JAZZ

(Map p74; ☎ 416-598-2475; www.therex.ca; 194 Queen St W; ☎ 9am-2am; ☎ 501) The Rex has risen from its pugilistic, blue-collared past to become an outstanding jazz and blues venue. Over a dozen different Dixieland, experimental and other local and international acts knock over the joint each week. Cheap drinks; affordable cover.

Dominion on Queen

JAZZ

(Map p84; ☎ 416-368-6893; www.dominiononqueen.com; 500 Queen St E; ☎ 11am-1am Mon-Sat, to 11pm Sun; ☎ 501, 502, 503) This jazzy pub has earned a rep for sassy vocalists, trios and sextets through to full-blown swing bands. Music starts nightly around 9pm. Beers have a crafty edge, and there's plenty of *vin rouge* to soothe your big-city heartbreak.

Canadian Opera Company

OPERA

(Map p74; ☎ 416-363-8231, 800-250-4653; www.coc.ca; Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St W; ☎ box office 11am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 3pm Sun; ☎ Osgoode) Canada's national opera company has been warbling its pipes for over 50 years. Tickets sell out fast; the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre (in the fabu-

lous Four Seasons Centre) holds free concerts from September through June, usually at noon. Check the website for specific days.

Toronto Symphony Orchestra

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(TSO; Map p78; ☎ 416-593-4828; www.tso.ca; Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St; ☎ box office 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sat; ☎ St Andrew) A range of classics, Cole Porter-era pops and new music from around the world are presented by the TSO at Roy Thomson Hall, Massey Hall and the Toronto Centre for the Arts. Consult the website for the answers to such questions as 'What if I need to cough?' and 'Should I clap yet?'

Harbourfront Centre

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(☎ 416-973-4000; www.harbourfrontcentre.com; York Quay Centre, 235 Queens Quay W; tickets \$10-40; ☎ box office 1-6pm Tue-Sat; ☎ 509, 510) The vibrant Harbourfront Centre puts on a variety of world-class musical performances throughout the year, including Sunday family shows and free outdoor summer concerts in the Toronto Music Garden and on the Concert Stage.

Glenn Gould Studio

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(Map p78; ☎ 416-205-5555; www.cbc.ca/glenngould; Canadian Broadcasting Centre, 250 Front St W; tickets \$15-40; ☎ box office 2-6:30pm Mon-Fri, to 8pm Sat; ☎ Union, ☎ 504) Glenn Gould Studio's acoustics do the namesake famous pianist honor. Purchase advance tickets for evening concerts of classical and contemporary music by soloists, chamber groups, choirs and orchestras between September and June. Young international artists are often featured.

Toronto Centre for the Arts

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(off Map p69; ☎ 416-733-9388; www.tocentre.com; 5040 Yonge St; ☎ box office 11am-6pm Mon, to 8pm Tue-Sat, noon-4pm Sun; ☎ North York Centre) Way north on Yonge St, the 1000-seat George Weston Recital Hall is home to the **Toronto Philharmonia** (www.torontophil.on.ca). The 1700-seat Main Stage Theatre and intimate Studio Theatre also host ballet and theater.

Theater

Long winter months indoors are conducive to the creation and performance of theatrical works. This, and Toronto's relative proximity to Broadway and cosmopolitan Montréal, help sustain the city's reputation as a theater maker's playground. Broadway and off-Broadway musicals and plays pack

theaters around the Theatre Block in the Entertainment District, and Yonge & Dundas Sq, but there are numerous smaller venues and vibrant young production companies around Harbourfront, in the Distillery District and Queen West. Check the free street press for listings. Tickets for major productions are sold through TicketKing. For last-minute discounted tickets, go to TO Tix or ask about 'rush' tickets at box offices.

CanStage

THEATER

(Canadian Stage Company; ☎ 416-368-3110; www.canstage.com; 26 Berkeley St; ☎ box office 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 8pm show days; ☎ 503, 504) Contemporary CanStage produces top-rated Canadian and international plays by the likes of David Mamet and Tony Kushner from its own Berkeley Street Theatre, and the wonderfully accessible (pay-what-you-can) mid-summer productions of 'Shakespeare in the Park,' under the stars in High Park: bring a blanket and show up early.

Elgin & Winter Garden Theatre

THEATER

(Map p74; ☎ 416-314-2901; www.heritagetrust.on.ca/ewg; 189 Yonge St; ☎ Queen) The restored double-decker Elgin & Winter Garden Theatre stages high-profile productions in an amazing setting.

Ed Mirvish Theatre

THEATER

(Map p74; ☎ 800-461-3333, 416-872-1212; www.mirvish.com; 244 Victoria St; ☎ Dundas) Formerly the Canon, the Ed Mirvish Theatre was renamed in 2011 in honor of the late Ed Mirvish, Toronto's well-loved businessman, philanthropist and patron of the arts. One of four Mirvish theaters, the 1920s-era vaudeville hall is a hot ticket for musical extravaganzas.

Royal Alexandra Theatre

THEATER

(Map p78; ☎ 800-461-3333, 416-872-1212; www.mirvish.com; 260 King St W; ☎ 504) The 'Royal Alex,' as she is sometimes affectionately known, is one of the more impressive theaters in the city and home to splashy Broadway musicals.

Princess of Wales Theatre

THEATER

(Map p78; ☎ 800-461-3333, 416-872-1212; www.mirvish.com; 300 King St W; ☎ 504) The POW is a 2000-seat playhouse showing big-ticket items such as *Miss Saigon* and *Rock of Ages*.

Young Centre for Performing Arts

THEATER

(☎ 416-866-8666; www.youngcentre.ca; 55 Mill St, Bldg 49; ☎ 503, 504) The \$14 million Young Centre houses four separate performance

spaces, utilized by theatrical tenants including **Soul Pepper** (www.soulpepper.ca) and **George Brown Theatre Co** (www.georgebrown.ca/theatre). There's an on-site bookshop and bar too.

Factory Theatre

THEATER

(Map p84; ☎ 416-504-9971; www.factorytheatre.ca; 125 Bathurst St; ☎ 511) This innovative theater company – ‘Home of the Canadian Playwright’ – has been busy for 35 years. Sunday matinees are ‘Pay What You Can.’

Cinemas

Torontonians love going to the movies: we think it might have something to do with the weather. Tickets cost around \$14 for adults. Tuesday is discount day: expect to pay around half that.

★ Bell Lightbox

CINEMA

(Map p78; www.tiff.net; cnr 350 King St W; ☎ 504) Home of Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF; p94), this resplendent cinema complex was completed in 2010 and is the hub of all the action when the festival is in town. Throughout the year, it's used primarily for TIFF Cinematheque, screening world cinema, independent films and directorial retrospectives and other special events. Try to see a film here if you can.

Bloor Hot Docs Cinema

CINEMA

(Map p84; ☎ 416-637-3123; www.bloorcinema.com; 506 Bloor St W; ☎ Bathurst) This art-deco theater with a two-tiered balcony screens a wonderfully varied schedule of new releases, art-house flicks, shorts, documentaries and vintage films and is home to the mind-expanding Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival.

Cineplex Yonge & Dundas

CINEMA

(Map p74; ☎ 416-977-9262; www.cineplex.com; 10 Dundas St E; ☎ Dundas, ☎ 505) At the heart of Yonge & Dundas Sq, this enormous cinema complex has 24 huge screens with fabulous stadium seating, IMAX, a food court and direct subway access to the building, perfect for those super-cheap Tuesdays or freezing winter Sundays.

Scotiabank Theatre

CINEMA

(Map p74; ☎ 416-368-5600; www.cineplex.com; 259 Richmond St W; ☎ Osgoode) Managed by Cineplex, this fun gargantuan multiplex in the heart of Queen West features the latest technology, including IMAX 3D. Buy tickets downstairs then take the gigantic escalator

upstairs where you can buy pizza, poutine and popcorn for the show.

Cineplex Odeon Varsity

CINEMA

(Map p74; ☎ 416-961-6304; www.cineplex.com; Manulife Centre, 55 Bloor St W; ☎ noon-midnight; ☎ Bloor-Yonge) This state-of-the-art multiplex has VIP theaters and smaller screens.

Rainbow Cinemas

CINEMA

(Map p78; ☎ 416-491-9731; www.rainbowcinemas.ca; 80 Front St E; ☎ 503, 504) Plays first-run movies at second-run prices, right in Market Sq. Tuesdays are \$5.

Polson Pier Drive-In Theatre

CINEMA

(☎ 416-465-4653; www.polsonpier.com; 11 Polson St; ☎ from 8:30pm Fri-Sun Apr-Oct) Drive-in isn't dead – even downtown! First-run blockbusters and special features start around dusk, down by the lake. Summer only.

Sports

Many Torontonians weep with joy at the very mention of their beloved sporting teams: professional baseball (the Blue Jays) and football (the Argonauts) through the summer; ice hockey (the Maple Leafs), basketball (the Raptors) and lacrosse (Toronto Rock) through the winter. **Ticketmaster** (www.ticketmaster.ca) sells advance tickets, as do the box offices at the Air Canada Centre and Rogers Centre. Ticket scalping is illegal, but that doesn't seem to stop anybody.

Toronto Blue Jays

SPECTATOR SPORT

(☎ 416-341-1234; bluejays.com; ☎ Apr-Sep) Toronto's Major League Baseball team plays at the **Rogers Centre** (Map p78; ☎ 416-341-2770; www.rogerscentre.com; 1 Blue Jays Way; ☎ Union). Buy tickets through Ticketmaster or at the Rogers Centre box office near Gate 9. The cheapest seats are way up above the field. Instead, try for seats along the lower level baselines where you have a better chance of catching a flyball (or wearing one in the side of the head). The Jays haven't won the World Series since 1993, but who knows, this could be their year.

Toronto Argonauts

SPECTATOR SPORT

(☎ 416-341-2746; www.argonauts.ca; ☎ Jun-Oct) The Toronto Argonauts crack their Canadian Football League (CFL) helmets at the Rogers Centre. The Argonauts have won the Grey Cup a record 16 times, most recently in 2012. Bring a jacket – the open-roof Rogers Centre cools off at night. Tickets through Ticketmaster or the Rogers Centre.

Toronto Maple Leafs

SPECTATOR SPORT
(2 416-815-5982; www.mapleleafs.com; ☺ Oct-Apr) The 13-time Stanley Cup-winning Toronto Maple Leafs slap the puck around the **Air Canada Centre** (ACC; Map p78; 2 416-815-5500; www.theaircanadacentre.com; 40 Bay St; ☎ Union) in the National Hockey League (NHL). Every game sells out, but a limited number of same-day tickets go on sale through Ticketmaster at 10am and at the Air Canada Centre ticket window from 5pm. You can also buy tickets via the website from season ticket-holders who aren't attending – expect to pay around \$80 and up.

Toronto Raptors

SPECTATOR SPORT
(2 416-815-5500; www.nba.com/raptors; ☺ regular season Oct-Apr) During hockey season, the Toronto Raptors also play at the Air Canada Centre. The 'Raps' have been around since 1995, but haven't yet caused much of a flap.

Toronto Rock

SPECTATOR SPORT
(2 416-596-3075; www.torontorock.com; ☺ regular season Jan-Apr) Lacrosse may not immediately spring to mind when someone mentions Canadian sports, but Toronto's team is red hot, having won the championship six times. Games at the Air Canada Centre; tickets through Ticketmaster.

**Shopping**

Shopping in Toronto is a big deal. When it's -20°C outside, you have to fill the gap between brunch and the movies with *something*, right? People like to update their wardrobes and redecorate their homes, or just walk zombie-like around warm sprawling malls like the **Eaton Centre** (Map p74; 2 416-598-8560; www.torontoeatoncentre.com; 220 Yonge St; ☺ 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat, 11am-6pm Sun; ☎ Queen, Dundas). This habit continues through to summer, overflowing into the streets of neighborhoods like boho-central **Kensington Market** and the full length of **Queen Street West**, with its smatterings of almost anything fashion, art and design you could imagine.

The **Annex** features a dwindling hodge-podge of art shops, bookstores and second-hand music, especially along Harbord St and on Markham St (aka Mirvish Village). **Bloor-Yorkville**, formerly 'Free Love' central in the 1960s, is now Toronto's most exclusive shopping district where nothing is free and snobby sales clerks aren't uncommon.

Downtown, underground **PATH** (www.toronto.ca/path) shops are bargain basements

for discount clothing, goods and services. Canadian and international design stores line **King Street East** between Jarvis and Parliament Sts, in a trendy area known as the **Design Strip**, priced accordingly. Close-by, the boutiques, galleries and craft studios of the burgeoning **Distillery District** are a major draw. Cheap retailers in **Downtown Yonge**, near Ryerson University, target students and the **Church-Wellesley Village** is festooned with all manner of gay-themed boutiques.

Typical retail shopping hours are 10am to 6pm Monday to Saturday and noon to 5pm Sunday, but this varies according to season, neighborhood and the amount of foot traffic. Phone ahead before setting out, or just pick a neighborhood, wing it and see what you find: that's half the fun.

There are far too many great stores to list here, so we've chosen a handful to get you started. Tourism Toronto also has some good ideas on its searchable database at www.sectorontonow.com/shopping/.

Bay of Spirits Gallery

SOUVENIRS

(Map p78; 2 416-971-5190; www.bayofspirits.com; 156 Front St W; ☺ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat; ☎ Union) The works of Norval Morrisseau – the first indigenous artist to have a solo exhibit at the National Gallery of Canada – are proudly on display in this atmospheric space, which carries aboriginal art from across Canada. Look for the Pacific West Coast totem poles (from miniature to over 4m tall), Inuit carvings and Inukshuk figurines.

Guild Shop

SOUVENIRS

(Map p74; 2 416-921-1721; www.theguildshop.ca; 118 Cumberland St; ☺ 10am-6pm Mon-Wed & Sat, to 7pm Thu & Fri, noon-5pm Sun; ☎ Bay) The **Ontario Crafts Council** (www.craft.on.ca) has been promoting artisans for over 70 years. Ceramics, jewelry, glassworks, prints and carvings make up most of the displays, but you could also catch a special exhibition of Pangnirtung weaving or Cape Dorset graphics. Staff are knowledgeable about First Nations art.

Courage My Love

CLOTHING

(Map p84; 2 416-979-1992; 14 Kensington Ave; ☺ 11:30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 1-6pm Sun; ☎ 505, 510) Vintage clothing stores have been around Kensington Market for decades, but Courage My Love amazes fashion mavens with its secondhand slip dresses, retro pants and white dress-shirts in a cornucopia of styles.

The beads, buttons, leather goods and silver jewelry are hand-picked.

Open Air Books & Maps

(Map p78; ☎ 416-363-0719; www.openairbooks-andmaps.com; 25 Toronto St; ☺ 10am-5:30pm Mon-Sat; ☈ King) A rather ramshackle basement full of travel guides and maps plus books on nature, camping, history and outdoor activities.

BMV

(Map p74; Dundas Sq, 10 Edward St; ☺ 10am-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun; ☈ Dundas) The biggest (and most loved) secondhand bookstore in Toronto, with a second outlet on **Bloor St** (Map p84; 471 Bloor St W; ☺ 11am-10pm Mon-Wed, to midnight Thu-Sat, noon-10pm Sun; ☈ Spadina).

Honest Ed's

DEPARTMENT STORE
(Map p84; ☎ 416-537-1574; www.honesteds.sites.toronto.com; 581 Bloor St W; ☺ 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun; ☈ Bathurst) The legendary late Ed Mirvish's Toronto institution is a delightful old-fashioned bargain bazaar. Come to photograph the flashy iconic sign.

i Information

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

By North American standards, Toronto is a safe city in which to live and visit, but don't be complacent. It's not a brilliant idea for women to walk alone after dark around Parliament and Jarvis Sts at the intersections with Carlton, Dundas St E and Queen St E, particularly around Allan Gardens and George St – and probably not a good idea during the day, either. The Entertainment District can get messy with drunken fools after midnight.

Many social service agencies have shut their doors in recent years, creating a tide of homeless, often mentally ill people on the streets – a real problem for Toronto. Most are more likely to be assaulted themselves, than to do so to you. Spare a thought for what their lives must be like in winter as you contemplate the 700-plus names of those who have perished on Toronto's streets since 1985, at the Toronto Homeless Memorial. It's outside the Church of the Holy Trinity.

EMERGENCY

Police (☎ nonemergency 416-808-2222, emergency only 911; www.torontopolice.on.ca)

SOS Femmes (☎ 416-487-4794; www.sos-femmes.com) French-language crisis line for women.

Toronto Rape Crisis Centre (☎ 416-597-8808; www.sexualassaultsupport.ca/toronto)

INTERNET ACCESS

Toronto's cheapest internet cafes congregate along the Yonge St strip; Bloor St W in The Annex and Koreatown; and Chinatown's Spadina Ave. Rates start around \$2 per hour. Wi-fi is becoming increasingly available at restaurants and coffee shops: check out www.wirelesstoronto.ca for a list of free hot spots in the city.

FedEx Office Queen St & Dundas Sq (☎ 416-979-8447; 505 University Ave, Queen St & Dundas Sq; ☺ 24hr; ☈ St Patrick); The Annex (☎ 416-928-0110; 459 Bloor St W; ☺ 24hr; ☈ Spadina)

Net Plaza (267 College St; ☺ 8am-2am Sun-Fri, 24hr Fri & Sat; ☈ 510)

MEDIA

Globe & Mail (www.theglobeandmail.com) Elder statesman of the national daily newspapers.

Grid (www.thegridto.com)

Metro (www.metronews.ca) Free daily rag with bite-sized news, sports and entertainment (often left on subway seats).

NOW (www.nowtoronto.com) Alternative weekly (good for events and concerts) free every Thursday.

Toronto Life (www.torontolife.com) Upscale monthly mag: lifestyle, dining, arts and entertainment.

Toronto Star (www.thestar.com) Canada's largest newspaper; a comprehensive left-leaning daily.

Toronto Sun (www.torontosun.com) Sensational tabloid with predictably good sports coverage.

Where Toronto (www.where.ca/toronto) The most informative of the free glossy tourist magazines.

Xtra! (www.xtra.ca) Free weekly gay and lesbian street press.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Dental Emergency Clinic (☎ 416-485-7172; 1650 Yonge St; ☺ 8am-midnight; ☈ St Clair)

Hassle-Free Clinic (☎ 416-922-0566; www.hasslefreeclinic.org; 2nd fl, 66 Gerrard St E; ☺ women 10am-3pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 4-8pm Tue & Thu, men 4-8pm Mon & Wed, 10am-3pm Tue & Thu, 4-7pm Fri, 10am-2pm Sat; ☈ College) Provides anonymous, free walk-in STD/HIV testing and reproductive health services.

Hospital for Sick Children (☎ 416-813-1500; www.sickkids.ca; 555 University, emergency 170 Gerrard St W; ☺ 24hr; ☈ Queens Park)

Mount Sinai Hospital (☎ 416-596-4200, emergency 416-586-5054; www.mountsinai.on.ca; 600 University Ave; ☺ 24hr; ☈ Queens Park)

St Michael's Hospital (☎ 416-360-4000; www.stmichaelshospital.com; 30 Bond St; ☺ 24hr;

Queen, Dundas) The emergency unit of this major teaching and research hospital is in the heart of downtown on the corner of Victoria and Shuter Sts.

Toronto General Hospital (2416-340-3111; emergency 416-340-3111; www.uhn.ca; 190 Elizabeth St; 24hr; **S**Queens Park)

Women's College Hospital (2416-323-6400; www.womenscollegehospital.ca; 76 Grenville St; 24hr; **S**College) Nonemergency women's and family health.

MONEY

It's easy to get money from overseas credit cards or debit cards with the Cirrus or Plus symbols from ATMs which are on practically every street corner and in many convenience stores.

American Express (905-474-0870, 800-869-3016; www.americanexpress.com/canada) branches function as travel agencies and don't handle financial transactions. Instead, tackle the banks or try **Money Mart** (2416-920-4146; www.moneymart.ca; 617 Yonge St; 24hr; **S**Wellesley).

POST

Toronto no longer has a main post office. There are a number of outlets in Shopper's Drug Mart stores around town. The most central full service post offices are below.

Adelaide Street Post Office (Map p78; 2400-267-1177; www.canadapost.ca; 31 Adelaide St E; 8am-5:30pm Mon-Fri; **S**Queen)

Atrium on Bay Post Office (Map p74; 2400-267-1177; www.canadapost.ca; 595 Bay St; 9am-6pm Mon-Fri; **S**Dundas)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Ontario Travel Information Centre (Map p74; 2416-314-5899; www.ontariotravel.net; 20 Dundas St W; 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun; **S**Dundas) This large branch opposite the Eaton Centre on Dundas St has knowledgeable, multilingual staff and overflowing racks of brochures that cover every nook and cranny of Ontario...almost. This is an easy and sensible first port of call when you get to town.

Tourism Toronto (Map p78; 800-499-2514, 416-203-2500; www.seetorontonow.com; 207 Queens Quay W; 8:30am-6pm Mon-Fri; **S**Union) Contact one of the telephone agents; after hours use the automated touch-tone information menu.

i Getting There & Away

AIR

Most Canadian airlines and international carriers arrive at Canada's busiest airport, Lester B Pearson International Airport (Map p69), 27km northwest of downtown Toronto: it's a giant and attracts one of the highest airport taxes in the world. Don't worry, you'll have unknowingly paid that in the price of your ticket. Terminal assignments vary; be sure to check with your airline which one you'll be coming in to or leaving from.

Air Canada and WestJet compete heavily in the domestic market, and match one-way fares between Toronto and Ottawa (from \$99), Montréal (from \$99), Calgary (from \$219), Edmonton (from \$239), Vancouver (from \$249) and Victoria (from \$304). Don't expect to see these kind

PORTER: FLYING RE(DE)FINED

Porter's meteoric rise to becoming the beloved darling of gridlocked downtowners began when it opened the doors of its Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport terminal in 2010. Since then, accessibility, low fares, great service and a rapidly expanding network of destinations within Canada and the US have ensured its continued success. Far-flung cities like Sault Ste-Marie and Thunder Bay benefit from an influx of domestic tourists, and residents of Toronto's inner neighborhoods now pop over to New York, Boston, Chicago and Washington for the weekend.

It is incomparably smaller than Toronto's gargantuan Lester B Pearson airport; and access by a free ferry shuttle makes air travel in and out of Toronto easy. Operating a quiet fleet of Bombardier turbo-prop aircraft, manufactured here in Canada, Porter is in the process of negotiations between the local council and residents to commence service of a new CS100 whisper-quiet jet aircraft, which would enable the airline to expand its operations. Porter flies right past a bunch of waterfront condos, so not everyone is on board. Yet.

Construction of a pedestrian tunnel to the airport is under way and a free shuttle bus links Union Station to the ferry terminal for the Island airport (as it is also known). When planning your itinerary, be sure to keep your eyes on www.flyporter.com: seat sales are frequent and offer excellent value. With construction of a rail link to Pearson International airport also under way (at last!), there's sure to be competition in the skies for years to come.

of prices all the time: domestic air travel within Canada is comparatively expensive.

Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport (Map p69), on a small island just off the lakeshore, is the proud home of Porter airlines (p119), with competitive fares to a wide range of destinations within eastern Canada and the USA. Air Canada also has services to Montréal from here (p67).

BUS

Long-distance buses operate from the art deco **Metro Toronto Coach Terminal** (Map p74; ☎ 416-393-4636; 610 Bay St; \$ Dundas).

Greyhound Canada has numerous routes from Toronto. Megabus has a smaller, and cheaper, selection of destinations. Advance tickets offer significant savings.

Union Station downtown serves as the bus and train depot for **GO Transit** (Map p78; www.gotransit.com), the commuter service of the GTA.

Parkbus (www.parkbus.ca) offers limited seasonal departures to the Bruce Peninsula, Algonquin and Killarney Provincial Parks and plans to expand its range and frequency of service: check the website for latest details.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Toronto is wrapped in a mesh of multi-lane highways, frequently crippled by congestion. The Gardiner Expwy runs west along the lakeshore into Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) to Niagara Falls. At the city's western border Hwy 427 runs north to the airport. Hwy 401 is the main east-west arterial and is regularly jammed. On the eastern side of the city, the Don Valley Pkwy connects Hwy 401 to the Gardiner Expwy. Hwys 400 and 404 run north from Toronto. A GPS is strongly recommended.

All major car-rental agencies have desks at Pearson airport and offices downtown and throughout the city. Book in advance for best rates. Cars sell out on busy summer weekends.

Smaller independent agencies offer lower rates, but may have fewer (and older) cars.

Wheels 4 Rent (☎ 416-585-7782; www.wheel-4-rent.com)

GREYHOUND BUS INFORMATION

DESTINATION	COST	DURATION	FREQUENCY
Hamilton	\$9	2hr	4 daily
London	\$36	2½-3½hr	12 daily
Montréal	\$56	8-10hr	frequent
Niagara Falls	\$18	1½-2hr	5 daily
Ottawa	\$64	5½hr	8 daily
Sault Ste-Marie	\$110	10-11hr	2 daily
Sudbury	\$75	5hr	5 daily
Thunder Bay	\$190	20hr	2 daily

s4rent.ca; 77 Nassau St; ☎ 510) rents compact cars from around \$35 per day excluding taxes.

For long-distance trips, try **Auto Drive-Away Co** (☎ 800-561-2658, 416-225-7754; www.torontodriveaway.com; 5803 Yonge St; ☎ 97), a private vehicle relocation service for Canadian and US destinations.

TRAIN

Grand Union Station (☎ 416-869-3000; www.viarail.com; 140 Bay St) downtown is Toronto's main rail hub, with currency-exchange booths and Traveller's Aid Society help desks. VIA Rail plies the heavily trafficked Windsor-Montréal corridor and beyond. The station is under renovation until 2016.

Amtrak trains link Toronto's Union Station with Buffalo (\$50, four hours, one daily) and New York City (\$120, 13 hours, one daily).

GO Transit trains and buses also use the station.

i Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Airport Express (☎ 800-387-6787; www.torontoairportexpress.com) operates an express bus (adult/child one-way \$28/free) connecting Pearson International with the Metro Toronto Coach Terminal and a few downtown hotels. Buses depart every 20 to 30 minutes from 6am to midnight. Services are frequently late: allow 1½ hours for the journey.

The cheapest (and at times, quickest) way to get to the airport is on the TTC (\$3) but it's a pain with heavy luggage: many stairs. Catch the subway to Kipling station (you may need to change lines at Bloor/Yonge) then connect with the 192 Airport Rocket Express bus. From the airport, the bus departs Terminals 1, 2 and 3 every 20 minutes from 5:30am to 2am. Allow at least an hour for the journey.

Taxis from Pearson to the city take anywhere from 40 to 70 minutes, depending on traffic. The Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA) regulates fares by drop-off zone: it's \$60 to

WHAT'S UP WITH THE TTC ?

Seriously. It's the question on everyone's lips, usually a few times a week. Love it or hate it, you have to use it and tens of thousands of people do, every day. Operated by the Toronto Transit Commission and known by locals as the TTC, Toronto's antiquated subway, streetcar and bus system is adequate, at best. At worst, it seriously underdelivers services to a city continuing to expand more rapidly than infrastructure can be built to keep up. On a good day, you'll get to where you need to in the expected time frame. On a bad day – usually in midsummer or the throes of winter – you might wish you had just stayed put.

Service delays and overcrowding are the most common complaints. Streetcars are clunky, packed to the hilt and move at a snail's pace during the long rush hours, twice a day. Be sure to have the exact change as you board or ye shall not pass. Subway trains are better, with some fancy new rolling stock on the rails, but equally subject to delays. Of course, it's very Canadian to make like a sardine or wait patiently in line and *never complain*: especially at staffed ticket booths where you'll often see your train whizz past as you wait in line to get through. Attempts to automate ticketing haven't taken off.

Improvements are happening in dribs and drabs, but alas, we don't see much respite for ragged Torontonians any time soon. A bunch of new streetcars, trains and tracks are on the way, and civic action groups are lobbying like crazy. Check out www.your32.com.

For the official word on what's being done, see: www.bigmove.ca.

downtown. Don't pay more and remember to tip. Airport limos often match the rate and have nicer cars and drivers.

At the time of writing a long overdue rail link from Pearson Airport to Union station called the Union Pearson Express had commenced, slated for completion in 2015. It's estimated that travel times will be slashed to just 25 minutes. For details, stay tuned to www.bigmove.ca.

BOAT

From April to September, **Toronto Islands**

Ferries (Map p78; ☎ 416-392-8193; www.city.toronto.on.ca/parks/island/ferry.htm; adult/child/concession \$6/2.50/3.50) runs ferries every 15 to 30 minutes from 8am to 11pm. The journey (to either Ward's Island or Hanlan's Point) only takes 15 minutes, but queues can be long on weekends and holidays. From October to March, ferries run on a reduced schedule. The Toronto Islands Ferry Terminal is at the foot of Bay St, off Queens Quay.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Parking in Toronto is expensive, usually \$3 to \$4 per half-hour. Private lots offer reduced rate parking before 7am and after 6pm. Traffic is horrendous amid ongoing construction. We don't recommend driving downtown. If you do, you must stop for streetcars – behind the rear doors, when the streetcar is collecting or ejecting passengers – and for pedestrians at crosswalks when signals are flashing. Look out for cyclists in your blindspots.

Hwy 407 (www.407etr.com) running east–west from Markham to Mississauga is an electronic toll road. It can be a wonderful alternative to the congested 401. Cameras record your license plate and the time and distance traveled. Expect a bill in the mail (Canada, US or Zanzibar, they'll find you).

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Rides anywhere on the Toronto Transit Corporation (TTC) network of trains, streetcars

VIA RAIL TRAIN INFORMATION

DESTINATION	COST	DURATION	FREQUENCY
Kingston	\$73	2½hr	frequent
London	\$56	2hr	7 daily
Montréal	\$110	5¼hr	9 daily
Niagara Falls	\$24	2hr	seasonal, infrequent
Ottawa	\$99	4½hr	7 daily
Sudbury Junction	\$79	7hr	1 daily
Vancouver	from \$590	83hr	3 weekly

and buses cost adult/child \$3/0.75. Seven tokens cost \$18.55: a little cheaper. Day passes (\$10.75) are good value if you plan on making three rides and are excellent value on weekends, when up to two adults and two children can use one pass. Purchase them at TTC stations and some convenience stores.

You can transfer from one form of TTC transit to another using your paper streetcar/bus ticket or by collecting a transfer ticket from automated dispensers near subway exits. You must be joining a connecting service. Exact change is required for streetcars and buses.

Subway lines operate regular service from around 6am (9am Sunday) until 1:30am daily. The two main lines are crosstown Bloor–Danforth line, and the U-shaped Yonge–University–Spadina line. Stations are generally very safe and have Designated Waiting Areas (DWAs) monitored by security cameras.

Streetcars are notoriously slow during rush hours, stopping frequently. The main routes run east–west along St Clair Ave and College, Dundas, Queen and King Sts. North–south streetcars grind along Bathurst St and Spadina Ave. TTC buses generally serve suburban areas. For more far-flung travel, the TTC system connects with GO Transit's network to surrounding areas like Richmond Hill, Brampton and Hamilton.

TAXI

Metered fares start at \$4, plus \$1.60 per kilometer, depending on traffic.

Crown Taxi (416-240-0000; www.crowntaxi.com)

Diamond Taxicab (416-366-6868; www.diamondtaxi.ca)

Royal Taxi (416-777-9222; www.royaltaxi.ca)

NIAGARA PENINSULA

Jutting east from Hamilton and forming a natural divide between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, the Niagara Peninsula is a legitimate tourist hot spot. Though many only see the falls and Clifton Hill on a day tour from Toronto, there is lots to explore here. Consider a several-day visit to fully experience the delights of the peninsula.

Water flows from Lake Erie, 100m higher than Lake Ontario, via two avenues: stepping down steadily through the locks along the Welland Canal, or surging over Niagara Falls in a reckless, swollen torrent. A steep limestone escarpment jags along the spine of the peninsula, generating a unique microclimate. Humid and often frost-free, this is prime terrain for viticulture: a fact not lost

on the award-winning wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Niagara Falls

POP 83,000

An unstoppable flow of rushing water surges over the arcing fault in the riverbed with thunderous force. Great plumes of icy mist rise for hundreds of meters as the waters collide, like an ethereal veil concealing the vast rift behind the torrent. Thousands of onlookers delight in the spectacle every day, drawn by the force of the current and the hypnotic mist.

Niagara is not the tallest of waterfalls (it ranks a lowly 50th) but in terms of sheer volume, there's nothing like it – more than a million bathtubs of water plummet downward every second. By day or night, regardless of season, the falls never fail to awe: 12 million visitors annually can't be wrong. Even in winter, when the flow is partially hidden and the edges freeze solid, the watery extravaganza is undiminished. Very occasionally the falls stop altogether. This first happened on Easter Sunday morning in 1848, when ice completely jammed the flow.

Otherwise, Niagara might not be what you expect: the town feels like a tacky outdated amusement park. It has been a saucy honeymoon destination ever since Napoléon's brother brought his bride here – tags like 'For newlyweds and nearly deads' and 'Viagra Falls' are apt. A crass morass of casinos, sleazy motels, tourist traps and strip joints line Clifton Hill and Lundy's Lane – a Little Las Vegas! Love it or loathe it, there's nowhere quite like it.

The old downtown area, where you'll find the bus and train stations, focuses along Queen St, and despite many attempts to bring life back into tired and shuttered buildings, there's not a lot going on. Check the enthusiastic www.niagarafallsdowntown.com to see what's happening.

⦿ Sights & Activities

Parking access for sights and activities around the falls and Clifton Hill is expensive and limited.

⦿ The Falls & Around

Niagara Falls forms a natural rift between Ontario and New York State. On the US side, **Bridal Veil Falls** (aka the American Falls)

crash onto mammoth fallen rocks. On the Canadian side, the grander, more powerful **Horseshoe Falls** plunge into the cloudy **Maid of the Mist Pool**. The prime falls-watching spot is **Table Rock**, poised just meters from the drop – arrive early to beat the crowds.

Tickets for the four falls attractions listed below can be purchased separately, but the online 30% discounted **Niagara Falls Adventure Pass** (www.niagaraparks.com) is better value. It includes admission to Maid of the Mist, the Journey Behind the Falls, White Water Walk, Niagara's Fury and two days transportation on the WEGO bus system. Passes are also available from the Niagara Parks Commission at Table Rock Information Centre and most attractions.

★ Maid of the Mist

BOATING
(2905-358-5781; www.maidofthemist.com; 5920 River Rd; adult/child \$19.75/12.65; ☺9am-7:45pm Jun-Aug, to 4:45pm Apr, May, Sep & Oct) This brave little boat has been plowing headlong into the falls' misty veil since 1846. It's loud and wet and heaps of fun. Everyone heads for the boat's upper deck, but views from either end of the lower deck are just as good. Departures are every 15 minutes, weather permitting.

White Water Walk

WALKING
(2905-374-1221; 4330 Niagara Pkwy; adult/child \$10.95/7; ☺9am-7:30pm) At the northern

end of town, next to Whirlpool Bridge, the White Water Walk is another way to get up close and personal, this time via an elevator down to a 325m boardwalk suspended above the rampaging torrents, just downstream from the falls.

Whirlpool Aero Car

GONDOLA

(2905-354-5711; 3850 Niagara Pkwy; adult/child \$13.50/8.50; ☺9am-8pm Mar-Nov) Dangling above the Niagara River, 4.5km north of Horseshoe Falls, the Whirlpool Aero Car was designed by Spanish engineer Leonardo Torres Quevedo and has been operating since 1916 (but don't worry – it's still in good shape). The gondola travels 550m between two outcrops above a deadly whirlpool created by the falls – count the logs and tires spinning in the eddies below. No wheelchair access.

Niagara's Fury

SIMULATOR

(2905-358-3268; 6650 Niagara Pkwy; adult/child \$13.50/8.80; ☺every 30min 10:30am-4pm) On the upper level of Table Rock, the falls' latest Universal Studios-style attraction takes visitors into an interactive 360-degree cinema-simulation of how the falls were created. Expect lots of high-tech tricks to suspend disbelief, including plenty of water, snow and a rapid drop in temperature.

Floral Showhouse

GARDENS

(2905-354-1721; www.niagaraparks.com; 7145 Niagara Pkwy; adult/child \$5/3.75; ☺9:30am-

WELLAND CANAL AREA

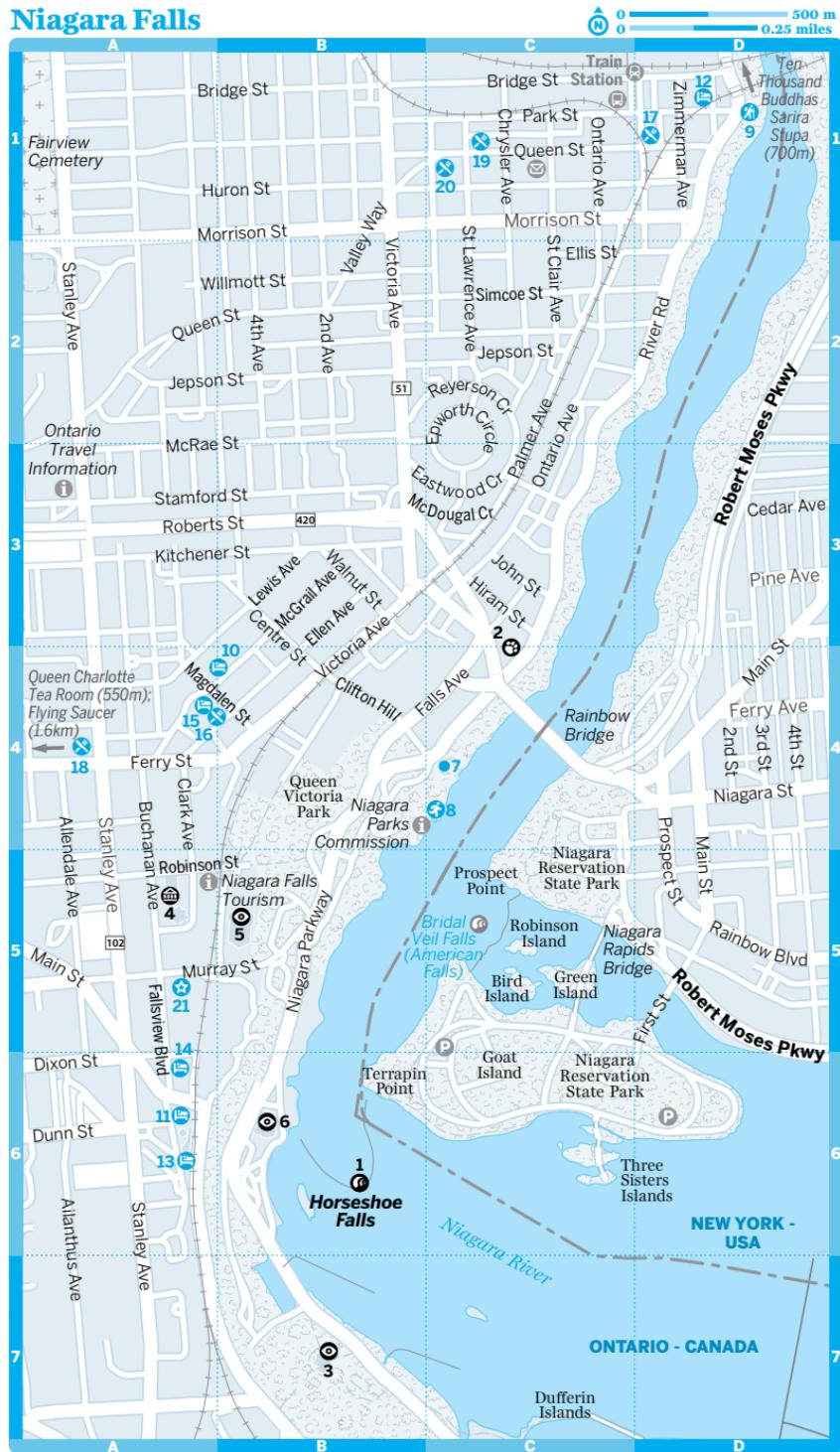
Built between 1914 and 1932, the historic Welland Canal, running from Lake Erie into Lake Ontario, functions as a shipping bypass around Niagara Falls. It's part of the St Lawrence Seaway, allowing shipping between the industrial heart of North America and the Atlantic Ocean, with eight locks along the 42km-long canal overcoming the difference of about 100m in the lakes' water levels.

Before it shifted east to Port Weller, the original Welland Canal opened into Lake Ontario at Lakeside Park in **Port Dalhousie**. This rustic harbor area is a blend of old and new, with a reconstructed wooden lock and an 1835 lighthouse alongside bars, restaurants and ice-cream parlors. Hikers and cyclists can stretch out along the 45km **Merritt Trail** (www.canadatrails.ca/tct/on/merritt.html), an established track along the Welland Canal from Port Dalhousie to Port Colborne.

For a more up-to-date look at the canal, the **Welland Canals Centre** (2905-984-8880; www.stcatharineslock3museum.ca; 1932 Welland Canals Pkwy; ☺9am-5pm) **FREE** at Lock 3 has a viewing platform close enough to almost touch the building-sized ships as they wait for water levels to rise or fall. You can check the ships' schedules on the website and plan your visit accordingly.

Port Colborne, where Lake Erie empties into the canal, contains the 420m Lock 8 – one of the longest in the world. Check it out at **Lock 8 Park** (Mellanby St; ☺24hr), south of Main St. The quiet, good-looking town has a canal-side boardwalk and shops and restaurants along West St, good for an afternoon stroll or evening meal.

Niagara Falls



Niagara Falls

Top Sights

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Sights

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18 Napoli Ristorante PizzeriaA4

19 Paris Crepes CafeC1

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& GrillC1

Entertainment

21 Niagara Fallsview CasinoA5

8pm) Around 1km south of Horseshoe Falls, the showhouse offers year-round floral displays and some warm respite on a chilly day. Opposite, lodged on rocks in the rapids, the **Old Scow** is a rusty steel barge that's been waiting to be washed over the falls since 1918 – a teetering symbol of Western imperialism, perhaps?

Clifton Hill

Clifton Hill is a street name, but refers to a broader area near the Falls occupied by a sensory bombardment of artificial enticements. You name it – House of Frankenstein, Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, Castle Dracula – they're all here. In most cases, paying the admission will leave you feeling like a sucker.

IMAX Theatre & Daredevil Gallery

MUSEUM

(905-358-3611; <http://imaxniagara.com>; 6170 Fallsview Blvd; Daredevil Gallery adult/child \$8/6.50, movie prices vary; 9am-9pm) The most engaging thing around here is the Daredevil Gallery attached to IMAX Niagara (which screens blockbusters and films about the falls; combo tickets are available). Scratch your head in amazement at the battered collection of barrels and padded bubbles in which people have ridden over the falls (not all of them successfully). There's also a history of falls 'funambulism' (tight-rope walking) here.

Bird Kingdom

ZOO

(905-356-8888, 866-994-0090; www.birdkingdom.ca; 5651 River Rd; adult/child \$17/12; 9am-6:30pm) The jungly Bird Kingdom claims to be the world's largest indoor aviary, with 400 species of free-flying tropical birds from around the globe. You can also buddy-up with a boa constrictor in the Reptile Encounter Zone.

Ten Thousand Buddhas

Sarira Stupa

TEMPLE

(905-371-2678; 4303 River Rd; 9am-5pm, main temple Sat & Sun only) If the tourist bustle is messing with your yang, find some tranquility at this out-of-context Buddhist temple. The modern building of Western construction is ultra-tacky. Visitors are welcome to wander the complex and view the various sculptures, bells and artworks.

Skylon Tower

VIEWPOINT

(905-356-2651; www.skylon.com; 5200 Robinson St; adult/child \$13/8; 8am-10pm) The Skylon Tower is an ugly 158m spire with yellow elevators crawling like bugs up the exterior. The views from the indoor and outdoor observation decks are eye-poppers. There's also a revolving restaurant.

Around Niagara Falls

The slow-roaming, leafy Niagara Pkwy meanders for 56km along the Niagara River, from Niagara-on-the-Lake past the falls all the way to Fort Erie. Along the way you'll find parks, picnic areas and viewpoints. The idyllic 3m-wide **Niagara River Recreation**

Trail (www.niagaraparks.com/nature/recreational-area.php) for cycling, jogging or walking runs parallel to the parkway. The trail can easily be divided into four chunks, each of which takes around two hours to pedal. In season, fresh-fruit stands selling cold cherry cider adorn the side of the trail. Download a map online, or pick one up at a visitors center.

Niagara Glen Nature Reserve PARK
(2905-371-0254; www.niagaraparks.com/; Niagara Pkwy; \odot dawn-dusk) About 8km north of the falls is this exceptional reserve, where you can get a sense of what the area was like pre-Europeans. There are 4km of walking trails winding down into a gorge, past huge boulders, cold caves, wildflowers and woods. The Niagara Parks Commission offers **guided nature walks** daily during the summer season for a nominal fee. Bring something to drink – the water in the Niagara River is far from clean.

Botanical Gardens and Butterfly Conservatory GARDENS
(2905-356-8119; www.niagaraparks.com/; 2565 Niagara Pkwy; Butterfly Conservatory adult/child \$12.95/\$8.25, gardens free; \odot 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun) Entry to the 40 hectares of Botanical Gardens is free, but you'll need to pay to enter the Butterfly Conservatory, with its more than 50 species of butterflies (some as big as birds) flitting around 130 species of flowers and plants. This is also a breeding facility where you can see young butterflies being released.

Queenston Heights Park HISTORIC SITE
(2905-262-6759; www.niagaraparks.com/; 14184 Niagara Pkwy, Queenston; \odot dawn-dusk)
FREE In Queenston village, a snoozy historic throwback north of the falls near the Lewiston Bridge to the US, is Queenston Heights Park, a national historic site. Here,

the commanding **Brock Monument** honors Major General Sir Isaac Brock, 'Savior of Upper Canada.' Self-guided walking tours of the hillside recount the 1812 Battle of Queenston Heights and include a walk to the top for a magnificent view.

Mackenzie Printery & Newspaper Museum

MUSEUM

(2905-262-5676; www.mackenzieprintery.org/; 1 Queenston St, Queenston; adult/child \$5/3.75; \odot 10am-5pm May-Sep) This ivy-covered museum was where the esteemed William Lyon Mackenzie once edited the hell-raising *Colonial Advocate*. Enthusiastic young staff conduct tours every half-hour.

Bruce Trail

WALKING

(www.brucetrail.org/) The southern extent of the Bruce Trail, which extends 800km to Tobermory on Georgian Bay, is at Queenston Heights Park. There are numerous access points in the Niagara area.

Tours

Journey Behind the Falls

WALKING TOUR

(2905-354-1551; 6650 Niagara Pkwy; adult/child Apr-Dec \$15.95/10.95, Dec-Apr \$11.25/6.95; \odot 9am-10pm) From Table Rock Information Centre you can don a very unsexy plastic poncho and traverse rock-cut tunnels halfway down the cliff – as close as you can get to the falls without getting in a barrel. It's open year-round, but be prepared to queue.

Double Deck Tours

BUS TOUR

(2905-374-7423; www.doubledecktours.com/; cnr River Rd & Clifton Hill; tours adult/child from \$79/49; \odot 11am Apr-Oct) Offers a deluxe four-hour tour on a red double-decker bus. The price includes admission to the Whirlpool Aero Car, Journey Behind the Falls and the Maid of the Mist.

THE BRUCE TRAIL

For 800km the Bruce Trail winds along the top of the Niagara Escarpment, from the Niagara Peninsula to the Bruce Peninsula. This wide, well-maintained path is excellent for hiking during summer months, while those armed with cross-country skis take it through its winter paces. Opened in 1967, it's the oldest hiking trail in Canada and the longest in Ontario. The trail winds through public and private land, as well as roadways. Wander past wineries, farmlands and forests and marvel at Georgian Bay's shimmering azure from the escarpment's white cliffs. Day hikes along the trail are an appealing way to spend a sunny afternoon. A multitude of campgrounds en route have budget accommodations for those on longer trips, and trail towns offer B&Bs galore. Get prepared at www.brucetrail.org/.

DAREDEVILS

Surprisingly, more than a few people who have gone over Niagara Falls have actually lived to tell the tale. The first successful leap was in 1901, by a 63-year-old schoolteacher named Annie Taylor, who did it in a skirt, no less. This promoted a rash of barrel stunters that continued into the 1920s, including Bobby Leach, who survived the drop but met his untimely death after slipping on an orange peel and developing gangrene!

In 1984 Karl Soucek revived the tradition in a bright red barrel. He made it, only to die six months later in another barrel stunt in Houston. Also during the 1980s, two locals successfully took the plunge lying head to head in the same barrel.

A US citizen who tried to jet ski over the falls in 1995 might have made it – if his rocket-propelled parachute had opened. Another American, Kirk Jones, survived the trip over the falls unaided in 2003. After being charged by Canadian police with illegally performing a stunt, he joined the circus.

Only one accidental falls-faller has survived – a seven-year-old Tennessee boy who fell out of a boat upstream in 1960 and survived the drop without even breaking a bone.

Take the virtual plunge at IMAX Niagara, and check out the over-the-falls barrels folks have used at the Daredevil Gallery.

Niagara Helicopters

HELICOPTER TOUR

(905-357-5672; www.niagarahelicopters.com; 3731 Victoria Ave; 10min flights adult/child \$137/85; ☺ 9am-sunset, weather permitting) A fantastic falls encounter, but pricey and not the most environmentally sensitive option.

Festivals & Events

Winter Festival of Lights

LIGHT SHOW

(905-374-1616, 800-563-2557; www.wfol.com) A season of events from late November to mid-January, including more than 125 animated displays and three million tree and ground lights, the undisputed highlight of which is an over-the-top nocturnal light display along a 36km route. There are also concerts, fun runs and a cheerleading championship.

Sleeping

There are more beds than heads in Niagara Falls, but the town is sometimes completely booked up. Prices spike sharply in summer, on weekends and during holidays. Check B&B availability online at www.bbniagarafalls.com. Cheap motels line Lundy's Lane.

ACBB Hostel Niagara

HOSTEL \$

(905-359-4815; www.hostelniagara.ca; 5741 Mc-Grail Ave; dm/d incl breakfast from \$29/38; ☺ ☺) With comfortable, spacious dorms, kitchens on every floor and balconies galore, freshly renovated ACBB continues to be a notch above the rest. Owner Patrick is passionate about Niagara and hosting, and always has time to make suggestions or draw you a map. His breakfasts are legendary.

Hostelling International Niagara Falls

HOSTEL \$

(888-749-0058, 905-357-0770; www.hostellingniagara.com; 4549 Cataract Ave; dm/d incl linen from \$28/79; ☺ ☺ ☺) Quietly adrift in the old town, this homey, multicolored hostel sleeps around 90 people. The facilities, including a sizable kitchen, pool table, lockers and cool basement lounge, are in good shape; staff are friendly and ecofocused. It's close to the train and bus stations, and you can rent bicycles for \$15 per day.

Niagara Parkway Court

MOTEL \$

(905-295-3331; www.niagaraparkwaycourt.com; 3708 Main St; d from \$59; ☺ ☺) Recently renovated rooms in a variety of styles, free wi-fi and transport to the falls from its pleasant spot, just outside town, combined with excellent customer service make this motel a great choice for low-cost accommodations.

Oakes Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(877-843-6253, 905-356-4514; www.oakeshotel.com; 6546 Fallsview Blvd; d \$99-159; ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺) A jaunty silver spire next to the Fallsview Casino, the Oakes has front-row-center views of the great cascades. Not all rooms have falls views; try for a terrace room if you can – you'll likely pay extra. Some rooms have Jacuzzis and fireplaces. If you're on a budget, ask about the cheaper drive-up motel rooms, from \$69.

Sterling Inn & Spa

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(289-292-0000; www.sterlingniagara.com; 5195 Magdalen St; r from \$125) The stylish rooms of this affordable boutique hotel (with either

a Jacuzzi or steam shower) beckon you to relax and unwind with someone special, even if that is yourself. Quality furnishings, amenities and breakfast-in-bed baskets are the kind of touches to expect. The on-site AG Restaurant is fancy and delicious and there's a full-service treatment spa. Perfect for couples. Note that it is a low-rise property a little distance from the falls: no views.

Embassy Suites

HOTEL \$\$

(2800-420-6980; www.embassysuitesniagara.com/; 6700 Fallsview Blvd; ste incl breakfast from \$145) This mammoth all-suite hotel has a great position that makes you feel like you're almost on top of the Canadian falls. For that reason, its generic rooms get a lot of use. That said, they're spacious and a variety of suite types are available: most have great views. A welcome drink is also included.

Marriott Niagara Falls

HOTEL \$\$

(888-501-8916; www.niagarafallsmarriott.com; 6740 Fallsview Blvd; r from \$149) This sprawling giant is so close that you could almost touch the falls. A variety of room types are available, but we love the two-level loft suites with Jacuzzi, fireplace and awesome views from the floor-to-ceiling windows.

Eating

The old downtown section is seeing a lot of new restaurants crop up and is worth exploring. Fast food is abundant in the touristy strip, but the best eats can be found a little further afield. For cuisine a cut above, you're better off heading up the road to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Edwin's

FUSION \$

(289-990-7305; www.edwinsrestaurant.com; 4616 Erie Ave; mains \$2.50-6.50; 11:30am-11pm) Born in Jamaica and trained in England, the illustrious Edwin blends Caribbean and Mediterranean cuisine at this little spot near the train station. Jerk chicken, fried plantains, curried goat and salmon salad are all on offer, as is a weekend breakfast buffet (\$6.99).

Flying Saucer

FAST FOOD \$

(905-356-4453; www.flyingsaucerrestaurant.com; 6768 Lundy's Lane; mains \$8-27; 6am-10pm) For extraterrestrial fast food, you can't go past this iconic diner on the Lundy's Lane motel strip. Famous \$1.99 early-bird breakfasts are served from 6am to 10am (eggs, fries and toast) with the purchase of a beverage. Heftier meals in the way of steaks, sea-

food, fajitas, burgers and hot dogs are also onboard. Takeout is in the saucer to the left.

Queen Charlotte Tea Room

BRITISH \$

(905-371-1350; www.queencharlottetearoom.com; 5689 Main St; light meals \$7-14; 9am-7pm Tue-Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun) Expats craving a decent or even fancy cuppa, cucumber sandwiches, steak and kidney, or fish and chips with mushy peas should head straight to this quaint establishment on Main St near the intersection with Lundy's Lane for a spot of tiffin!

Taps on Queen

Brewhouse & Grill

INTERNATIONAL \$\$

(www.tapsbeer.com; 4680 Queen St; mains \$9-14; noon-10pm Mon, Tue & Sun, to midnight Wed-Sat) Does a mix of stuff, from shepherd's pie to ancient grains curry (quinoa, couscous, adzuki beans, mung beans and veggies). All dishes are, naturally, best when paired with one of the brewery's tasty beers.

Paris Crepes Cafe

FRENCH \$\$

(289-296-4218; www.pariscrepescafe.com; 4613 Queen St; mains \$12-30; 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, from 9am Sat & Sun) In the revitalized area of Queen St you'll find this quaint creperie, a very long way from the streets of Paris: you can't miss the dark red building. Sweet and savory crepe sensations are served among other continental delights from the wonderfully authentic Parisian menu.

Napoli Ristorante Pizzeria

ITALIAN \$\$

(905-356-3345; www.napoliristorante.com; 5545 Ferry St; mains \$14-30; 4-11pm) Head to Napoli for the best Italian in town, hands down. Delicious pizza, rich pasta, creamy risotto and veal parmigiana all feature on the familiar menu.

AG

CANADIAN \$\$\$

(289-292-0005; www.agcuisine.com; 5195 Magdalen St; mains \$18-36; 5:30-9:30pm Tue-Sun) Fine dining isn't something you find easily at the Falls, which makes this fine restaurant at the Sterling Inn & Spa so refreshing. Service, decor, presentation and especially the quality of the food all rate highly. Has a seasonal menu featuring dishes like fennel pollen pickerel, roasted venison loin and crispy skinned trout, sourced locally.

Entertainment

Niagara Fallsview Casino

CASINO

(905-371-7569; www.fallsviewcasinoresort.com; 6380 Fallsview Blvd; 24hr) This casino never

closes. The building itself is worth a look – an amazing complex of commerce and crapshoots, with a fantastical fountain in the lobby. Corny old-timers like Kenny Rogers and Donny Osmond are regularly wheeled out to perform.

Information

Accessible Niagara (www.accessibleniagara.com) Advice for the mobility-impaired.

Greater Niagara General Hospital (905-378-4647; www.niagarahealth.on.ca; 5546 Portage Rd; 24hr) Emergency room.

Info Niagara (www.infoniagara.com) Privately run website with helpful links.

Niagara Falls Public Library (905-356-8080; www.nflibrary.ca; 4848 Victoria Ave; 9am-9pm Mon-Thu, to 5:30pm Fri & Sat; Free internet and wi-fi internet access.

Niagara Falls Tourism (905-356-6061, 800-563-2557; www.niagarafallstourism.com; 5400 Robinson St; 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) Everything you need to know about Niagara, served with a smile.

Niagara Parks Commission (877-642-7275, 905-371-0254; www.niagaraparks.com; 9am-11pm Jun-Aug) The falls' governing body, with information desks at Maid of the Mist Plaza and Table Rock Information Centre.

Ontario Travel Information (905-358-3221; www.ontariotravel.net; 5355 Stanley Ave; 8am-8pm) On the western outskirts of town; free tourist booklets containing maps and discount coupons.

Post office (www.canadapost.ca; 4500 Queen St; 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Getting There & Away

BUS

The **Niagara Transportation Centre** (800-461-7661, 905-357-2133; 4555 Erie Ave) is in the old part of town. Greyhound Canada buses depart for Toronto (\$18, 1½ to two hours, seven daily) and Buffalo, New York (\$10.30, one to 1½ hours, six daily). GO Transit also operates services from Toronto (via Burlington) by combination of rail/bus and, in recent years, direct rail services on weekends (June to September). Check with www.gotransit.com.

Niagara Airbus (800-268-8111, 905-374-8111; www.niagaraairbus.com) operates a door-to-door shared shuttle service between Niagara Falls and Toronto Pearson airport (one way/return \$87/137, 1½ hours) or Buffalo International airport, NY (\$89/146, 1½ hours).

TRAIN

Rail services from **Niagara Falls Train Station** (888-842-7245; www.viarail.ca; 4267 Bridge

FORT ERIE

East of Port Colborne and south of Niagara Falls is the town of Fort Erie, where the Niagara River leaks out of Lake Erie. Across from Buffalo, New York, it's connected to the US by the Peace Bridge. The main drawcard here is the historic, star-shaped **Fort Erie** (905-871-0540; www.oldforterie.com; 350 Lakeshore Rd; adult/child \$12.25/7.95; 10am-5pm May-Nov), a key player in the War of 1812, and 'Canada's bloodiest battlefield.' Also known as the Old Stone Fort, it was first built in 1764. The US seized it in 1814 before retreating. Inside there's a museum and immaculate, uniformed soldiers performing authentic military drills. Take the worthwhile guided tour (every 30 minutes), included in the admission.

St) to Toronto were suspended in recent years, with the exception of a weekend summer service operated by GO Transit. You can, however, get to New York City (\$87, 1½ hours, once daily).

Getting Around

BICYCLE

The Niagara region is perfect for biking. The excellent **Zoom Leisure Bicycle Rentals** (866-811-6993; www.zoomleisure.com; 431 Mississauga St, Niagara-on-the-Lake) also has offices in Niagara Falls and on the Niagara Parkway, and will deliver to anywhere in the Niagara region. Excellent bike tours are also available.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Driving and parking around the center is an expensive headache. Park way out and walk, or follow the parking district signs and stash the car for the day (around \$6 per 30 minutes, or \$15 per day). The huge Rapidsview parking lot (also the WEGO depot) is 3km south of the falls off River Rd.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Cranking up and down the steep 50m slope between the falls and Fallsview Blvd is a quaint **Incline Railway** (www.niagaraparks.com; 6635 Niagara Pkwy; one way/day pass \$2.50/\$6).

Formerly the seasonal Niagara Parks People Mover, **WEGO** (www.niagaraparks.com/wego; day pass adult/child \$7/4) is an economical and efficient year-round transit system, geared for tourists. There are three lines: red, green and blue; between them, they've got all the major sights and accommodations covered. For

areas further afield, locals use **Niagara Transit** (2 905-356-7521; www.niagarafalls.ca/living/transit/bus-routes.aspx; one-way adult/child \$2.50/2.25, day pass \$6), but most have their own cars.

WALKING

Put on your sneakers and get t'steppin' – walking is the way to go! You'll only need wheels to visit outlying sights along the Niagara Pkwy or if you're staying on Lundy's Lane.

Niagara Peninsula Wine Country

The Niagara Peninsula adheres to the 43rd parallel: a similar latitude to northern California and further south than Bordeaux, France. A primo vino location, the mineral-rich soils and moderate microclimate are the perfect recipe for viticulture success. A visit to the area makes an indulgent day trip or lazy weekend, with haughty old vineyards

and brash newcomers competing for your attention.

Touring the vineyards by car is the best way to go. There are two main areas to focus on: west of St Catharines around Vineland, and north of the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) around Niagara-on-the-Lake. Regional tourist offices stock wine-route maps and brochures, which are also available at winery tasting rooms. For more info, check out www.winesofontario.ca.

Tours

Crush on Niagara

WINERY TOUR

(2 866-408-9463, 905-562-3373; www.crushtours.com; tours \$85-120) Small-group morning and afternoon van tours departing from various pickup points in the Niagara region.

Grape Escape Wine Tours

WINERY TOUR

(2 866-935-4445; www.tourniagarawineries.com; tours \$44-135) A range of wine-flavored regional tours, by bike, van or SUV. Tours in-

WINERY DRIVING TOUR

The following drive weaves through the best Niagara wineries. Apart from tastings, most offer tours and dining; check the respective websites for more info. Parking is free at all vineyards.

Coming from Toronto, take Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) exit 78 at Fifty Rd into Winona and **Puddicombe Estate Farms & Winery** (2 905-643-1015; www.puddicombefarms.com; 1468 Hwy 8, Winona; tastings \$0.50; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun), a rustic farm specializing in fruit wines (try the peach and the iced apple). Light lunches available.

Off QEW exit 74 is **Kittling Ridge Winery** (2 905-945-9225; www.kittlingridge.com; 297 South Service Rd, Grimsby; tastings free; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun, free tours 2pm Tue-Sat year-round & 11am Sun Jun-Aug). It looks like a factory, but friendly staff and award-winning ice-wines and late-harvest wines will win you over.

Continue southeast on Main St W to King St; photogenic **Peninsula Ridge Estates Winery** (2 905-563-0900; <http://peninsularidge.com>; 5600 King St W, Beamsville; tours \$5; ☎ 10am-5pm, tours 11:30am Jun-Nov) is unmissable on a hilltop. The lofty timber tasting room, restaurant and hilltop setting are magic.

Turn right at Cherry Ave, about 10km further down the road, go up the hill, then turn left onto Moyer Rd for the stone buildings of **Vineland Estates Winery** (2 905-562-7088, 888-846-3526; www.vineland.com; 3620 Moyer Rd, Vineland; tastings \$3, tours \$6; ☎ 10am-6pm), the elder statesman of Niagara viticulture. Almost all the wines here are excellent. The restaurant and accommodations are fabulous too.

Backtrack up to King St, to the intersection of King and Cherry where you'll find beloved hockey star's winery, **Wayne Gretzky Estate** (www.gretzkyestateswines.com; 3751 King St, Vineland; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun).

Follow King Rd east, turn right onto Victoria Ave, then left onto 7th Ave for friendly **Flat Rock Cellars** (2 905-562-8994; www.flatrockcellars.com; 2727 7th Ave, Jordan; tastings \$1-2, tours \$10-25; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, from 11am Sun). The hexagonal architecture and lake views here are almost as good as the wine.

Wander back toward the lake to 4th Ave and cheery **Creekside Estate Winery** (2 905-562-0035, 877-262-9463; www.creeksidewine.com; 2170 4th Ave, Jordan Station; tastings free if purchasing, tours free; ☎ 10am-6pm), where you can tour the crush pad and underground cellars (book online).

clude some kind of meal (cheese platters on cheaper tours through to full gourmet dinners). There's free hotel pickup/drop-off.

Niagara Airbus

(800-268-8111, 905-374-8111; www.niagaraairbus.com; tours from Niagara Falls \$49-129, from Toronto \$129-190) Stops at well-known wineries; some itineraries include vineyard tours, lunch and shopping in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Festivals & Events

Niagara Wine Festivals

(905-688-0212; www.niagarawinefestival.com) There are three wine-related festivals throughout the year: Niagara New Vintage Festival, celebrating Niagara's new-season vino and regional cuisine in late June; the main event, Niagara Wine Festival, a week-long event in mid-September celebrating the region's finest picks off the vine; and Niagara Icewine Festival, a 10-day winter festival held throughout the Niagara region dur-

WINERY TOUR

ing mid-January and showcasing Ontario's stickiest, sweetest ice wines.

Sleeping & Eating

Bonnybank

B&B \$\$

(888-889-8296, 905-562-3746; www.bonnybank.ca; RR 1, Vineland Station; r incl breakfast \$105-135; A stately Tudor-meets-Grimsby-sandstone house in an owl-filled wilderness setting. It's a little off the beaten track.

Squirrel House Gardens

B&B \$\$\$

(905-685-1608; www.squirrelhouseniagara.ca; 1819 5th St, St Catharines; ste incl breakfast \$180; Stay in a massive suite in the old barn, built in 1850 as part of this country estate. Lovingly decorated, the room opens onto a massive garden and features brick and colored cement floors, original wood beams, and French doors that open onto a deck. The grounds have a swimming pool, patio and fire pit. The delightful, arty owners are welcoming and friendly, and take as

From 7th Ave, scoot back onto the QEW and truck east into the Niagara-on-the-Lake region. Take exit 38 and head north onto Four Mile Creek Rd, which will take you to **Trius Winery at Hillebrand** (800-582-8412; www.hillebrand.com; 1249 Niagara Stone Rd, Niagara-on-the-Lake; tastings \$5-10; 10am-9pm). Mass-market wines are the name of the game here, but hourly introductory tours and tasting-bar presentations are great for newcomers to the wine scene.

Further north, superiority emanates from elite **Konzelmann Estate Winery** (905-935-2866; www.konzelmann.ca; 1096 Lakeshore Rd, Niagara-on-the-Lake; tours May-Sep \$5; 10am-6pm), one of the oldest wineries in the region and the only one to take full advantage of the lakeside microclimate. Late-harvest vidal and ice wines are superb.

Next on the right is **Strewn** (905-468-1229; www.strewnwinery.com; 1339 Lakeshore Rd, Niagara-on-the-Lake; tours free; 10am-6pm, tours 1:30pm), producing medal-winning vintages and home to a classy restaurant and **Wine Country Cooking School** (905-468-8304; www.winecountrycooking.com; 1339 Lakeshore Rd, Niagara-on-the-Lake), where one-day, weekend and week-long classes are a gastronomic delight.

Closer to Niagara-on-the-Lake, **Sunnybrook Farm Estate Winery** (905-468-1122; www.sunnybrookfarmwinery.com; 1425 Lakeshore Rd, Niagara-on-the-Lake; tastings \$1-3; 10am-6pm) specializes in unique Niagara fruit and berry wines, and brews a mean 'hard' cider. It's only a little place, so tour buses usually don't stop here.

Stratus (905-468-1806; www.stratuswines.com; 2059 Niagara Stone Rd, Niagara-on-the-Lake; 11am-5pm), south of Niagara-on-the-Lake, was the first building in Canada to earn Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) certification. The design addresses complex recycling, organic, energy-efficiency and indigenous concerns.

Heading south down the Niagara Pkwy, **Reif Estate Winery** (905-468-7738; www.reifwinery.com; 15608 Niagara Pkwy, Niagara-on-the-Lake; tours \$5-20; 9am-6pm), pronounced 'Rife,' is a well-established winery. Ice wines are what you're here for.

Complete your tour (if you're still standing) at **Inniskillin** (888-466-4754; www.inniskillin.com; 1499 Line 3, cnr Niagara Pkwy, Niagara-on-the-Lake; tastings \$1-20, tours \$5-15; 9am-6pm, tours hourly May-Oct), master of the ice-wine craft.

good care of you as they do their impressive country garden.

Peach Country Farm Market

(905-562-5602; 4490 Victoria Ave, Vineland Station; items from \$2; ☎ 9am-8pm Jun-Aug, to 6pm Sep & Oct) An open-fronted barn selling fresh fruit, jams, ice cream and fruit pies, all grown, picked and baked on-site by fourth-generation farmers – a roadside gem!

Pie Plate

BAKERY \$

(905-468-9743; www.thepieplate.com; 41516 Niagara Stone Rd, Virgil; sandwiches \$7-11; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) Simple but delicious lunches (we devoured the pear and brie sandwich) at reasonable prices. It wouldn't be an Ontario bakery without butter tarts, but there are also thin-crust pizzas, meat pies, salads and a few beers on tap. A great place to fill up your belly while touring the wine country.

Peninsula Ridge

FUSION \$\$\$

(905-563-0900; 5600 King St W, Beamsville; mains \$24-34; ☎ noon-2:30pm & 5-9pm Wed-Sat, 11:30-2:30pm Sun) Sit outside, upstairs or down in this high-Victorian 1885 manor, serving haute cuisine paired with local wines...of course.

➊ Getting There & Away

The 100km drive from Toronto to the central peninsula takes around 1½ hours – take Hwy 403 then the QEW east from Hamilton toward Niagara Falls. The official Wine Route is sign-posted off the QEW, on rural highways and along backcountry roads.

ICE, ICE BABY

Niagara's regional wineries burst onto the scene at Vinexpo 1991 in Bordeaux, France. In a blind taste test, judges awarded a coveted gold medal to an Ontario ice wine – international attendees' jaws hit the floor! These specialty vintages, with their arduous harvesting and sweet, multidimensional palate, continue to lure aficionados to the Niagara Peninsula.

To make ice wine, a certain percentage of grapes are left on the vines after the regular harvest is over. If birds, storms and mildew don't get to them, the grapes grow ever-more sugary and concentrated. Winemakers wait patiently until December or January when three days of consistent, low temperature (-8°C) freeze the grapes entirely.

In the predawn darkness (so the sun doesn't melt the ice and dilute the grape juice), the grapes are carefully harvested by hand, then pressed and aged in barrels for up to a year. After decanting, the smooth ice vintages taste intensely of apples, or even more exotic fruit, and pack a serious alcoholic punch.

Why are ice wines so expensive? It takes 10 times the usual number of grapes to make just one bottle. This, combined with labor-intensive production and the high risk of crop failure, often drives the price above \$50 per 375mL bottle. Late-harvest wines picked earlier in the year may be less costly (and less sweet), but just as full-flavored and aromatic.

Niagara-on-the-Lake

One of the best-preserved 19th-century towns in North America, affluent N-o-t-L is an undeniably gorgeous place, with tree-lined streets, lush parks and impeccably restored houses. Originally a neutral First Nations village, the town was founded by Loyalists from New York State after the American Revolution and later became the first capital of the colony of Upper Canada. Today, tour-bus stampedes overrun the streets, puffing Cuban cigars and dampening the charm; the town fountain is full of coins but there are no homeless people here to plunder it. Is this a *real* town, or just gingerbread? Is there a soul beneath the surface? Yes, after 5pm.

❷ Sights

Lovely Queen St teems with shops of the ye olde variety selling antiques, Brit-style souvenirs and homemade fudge.

Fort George

HISTORIC SITE

(905-468-6614; www.pc.gc.ca/fortgeorge; 51 Queens Pde; adult/child \$11.70/5.80; ☎ 10am-5pm May-Oct, Sat & Sun only Apr & Nov) On the town's southeastern fringe, restored Fort George dates from 1797. The fort saw some bloody battles during the War of 1812, changing hands between the British and US forces a couple of times. Within the spiked battlements are officers' quarters, a working kitchen, a powder magazine and storage

houses. Ghost tours, skills demonstrations, retro tank displays and battle re-enactments occur throughout the summer. Parking costs \$6, but this is reimbursed with your ticket.

Niagara Historical Society

Museum

(2 905-468-3912; www.niagarahistorical.museum; 43 Castlereagh St; adult/child \$5/1; ☎ 10am-5pm)

The Niagara Historical Society Museum, south of Simcoe Park, has a vast collection relating to the town's past, ranging from First Nations artifacts to Loyalist and War of 1812 collectibles (including the prized hat of Major General Sir Isaac Brock).

Lincoln & Welland

Regimental Museum

MUSEUM

(2 905-468-0888; www.lwmuseum.ca; cnr King & John Sts; adult/child \$3/2; ☎ 10am-4pm Wed-Sun)

The Lincoln & Welland Regimental Museum has wonderfully aged displays of Canadian military regalia.

Tours

Jetboat Niagara

BOAT TOUR

(2 905-468-4800, 888-438-4444; www.whirlpooljet.com; 61 Melville St; 45min tours adult/child \$6/151; ☎ Apr-Oct) A wet and wild ride, full of fishtails and splashy stops – bring a change of clothes (and maybe underwear). Reservations required.

Niagara Wine Tours International

FOOD TOUR

(2 800-680-7006, 905-468-1300; www.niagara-worldwinetours.com; 92 Picton St; tours \$65-165) Bicycle and gourmet lunch and dinner tours around local wineries, including tastings.

Sleeping

Although there are over 300 B&Bs in town, accommodations are expensive and often booked out. When the Shaw Festival is running, lodging is even tighter. Plan ahead.

★ Historic Davy House B&B Inn

B&B \$\$

(2 888-314-9046; www.davyhouse.com; 230 Davy St; d incl breakfast \$155-204; ☎) This reasonably priced Historically Designated home built in 1842 has been beautifully restored to maintain its colonial charm and is meticulously maintained by expert hosts who've been in the hospitality biz for over 30 years. Guests are invited to enjoy the lush, landscaped grounds and rustic guest parlor. It's an excellent choice for comfortable, restful and authentic accommodations in this B&B-saturated area.

Britaly B&B

B&B \$\$

(2 905-468-8778; www.britaly.com; 57 The Promenade; r incl breakfast \$120-140; ☎ ☎) This simple three-room B&B (choose from the English, Italian or Canadiana rooms) is extremely popular for its reasonable rates and wonderful hosts who maintain their lovely home and gardens to the highest standard.

White Oaks Resort & Spa

HOTEL \$\$\$

(2 800-263-5766; www.whiteoaksresort.com; 234 Taylor Rd SS4; d from \$159) This sprawling 220-room resort just off the QEW, 15km from Niagara-on-the-Lake, offers well-appointed rooms and resort-style service and facilities: there's a full-service spa and on-site restaurant. A variety of stay packages are available online. Rates can be cheaper than downtown accommodations.

Charles Inn

HOTEL \$\$\$

(2 905-468-4588; www.niagarasfinest.com/properties/charlesinn; 209 Queen St; d incl breakfast from \$185) We love this romantic little inn (c1832) by the golf course. Rooms of varying sizes are sumptuously decorated to a diverse range of styles. Check the website to see which you like best: each is wonderfully comfortable – there's even a pillow menu.

Moffat

INN \$\$\$

(2 905-468-4116; www.moffattinn.com; 60 Picton St; d from \$189; ☎ ☎ ☎) Green trim and flower boxes lend an Irish pub feel to the outside of the Moffat, which bills itself as 'cottage chic.' Twenty-four rooms are tastefully decorated, and you'll probably find the word *charming* pop out of your mouth more than once while visiting.

Prince of Wales Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(2 888-669-5566, 905-468-3246; www.vintage-hotels.com; 6 Picton St; d/ste from \$289/\$429; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Prince of N-o-t-L, an elegant Victorian hotel, was knocked into shape around 1864 and retains much of its period primp: vaulted ceilings, timber-inlay floors, red-waistcoated bellhops. Frills and floral prints seem angled toward the elderly and honeymooners, but it's the perfect spot for anyone looking to splash out. Also on-site are a spa, afternoon tea and the excellent Escabeche restaurant. Parking costs \$10. It's on the corner of King St.

Eating

A few blocks from Queen St, Queen's Royal Park is a sweet spot for a picnic beside the water. Check out www.niagaraonthelake.com

A SHAW THING

In 1962, lawyer and passionate dramatist Brian Doherty led a group of residents in eight performances of George Bernard Shaw's *Candida* and 'Don Juan in Hell' from *Man and Superman*. Doherty's passionate first season blossomed into today's much-esteemed **Shaw Festival** (2800-511-7429, 905-468-2172; www.shawfest.com; 10 Queens Pde, Niagara-on-the-Lake; ☎ box office 10am-8pm). Plays run from April through October, infusing a variety of works from Victorian drama to contemporary plays, musicals and classics from Wilde, Woolf and Coward. Specialized seminars are held throughout the season, plus informal 'Lunchtime Conversations' on selected Saturdays.

Actors tread the boards in three theaters around town – the Festival, Royal George and Court House theaters. Rush seats go on sale at 9am on performance days (except for Saturdays). Students, under-30s and seniors receive discounts at some matinees; weekday matinees are the cheapest. Check the website for what's on when.

for updates on the Fabulicious food festival held in March.

1875 Restaurant

CANADIAN \$\$\$

(28905-468-3424; www.notgolf.com/restaurant-home; 143 Front St; mains \$10-27; ☎ 8am-10pm) The restaurant in North America's oldest golf course was one of N-o-t-L's best-kept secrets, until now: its prime waterfront patio is incomparable, the vibe casual (for N-o-t-L) and service, friendly. The menu is refreshingly familiar: we love the crab cakes and fish and chips. Come for brunch, lunch, dinner or a drink and be pleasantly surprised.

Irish Harp Pub

PUB \$\$

(28905-468-4443; www.theirishharppub.com; 245 King St; mains \$12-20; ☎ noon-11pm Mon-Thu, 11am-11pm Fri-Sun) Loved by locals throughout the Niagara region for its hearty pub meals (think Irish hot pot and steak & guinness pie), although some just come for the Irish 'craic' (fun and conversation) and of course, beer! There's Guinness on tap and Irish Harp lager, brewed locally from a traditional recipe. All told, plenty to wet your whistle and fill your tum.

Epicurean

CAFE \$\$

(28905-468-3408; www.epicurean.ca; 84 Queen St; mains \$11-29; ☎ 9am-9pm Wed-Sat, to 5:30pm Sun-Tue) By day this fare-thee-well cafeteria dishes up fresh, tasty sandwiches, salads, pies and quiches. The ambience ramps up at night with a bistro menu offering the likes of crispy-skin chicken with steamed rice, scallops and shiitake mushrooms in Thai coconut curry. The streetside patio is always full.

Fans Court

CHINESE \$\$

(28905-468-4511; 135 Queen St; lunch mains \$7-10, dinner \$15-20; ☎ noon-9pm Tue-Sun) A menu

graced with Cantonese, Szechuan and pan-Asian dishes distinguishes this place from its neighbors in this most Anglo of towns. The best part about Fans, however, is not the mango pork (though that's delish), but the wonderful flowered courtyard.

★ REST/Stone Road

Grille

MODERN CANADIAN \$\$\$

(28905-468-3474; www.stoneroadgrille.com; 238 Mary St; \$16-34; ☎ 5-9pm Tue-Sun) Don't be fooled by the rather drab strip-mall location: you've found one of the best restaurants in town. Menus vary with what's in season, but expect only the freshest of ingredients. Modern takes on classic themes include scallop risotto and slow-roasted pork loin. Locals love the gourmet 'Rest: to go-go' takeout: isn't it a great day for a picnic?

Escabeche

FUSION \$\$\$

(28905-468-3246, 888-669-5566; www.vintage-hotels.com; 6 Picton St; mains \$25-48; ☎ 7am-9pm) The fine-dining room at the opulent Prince of Wales Hotel takes its food seriously. The contemporary menu offers taste inventions like a tart of locally cured prosciutto, caciocche sausage, tomato and mascarpone, followed by roast lamb with fine mustard, fingerling potatoes and baby amber turnips in ice-wine-braised shank jus. Leave room for dessert (you've been warned).

Information

Chamber of Commerce Visitors Information

Centre (28905-468-1950; www.niagaraonthelake.com; 26 Queen St; ☎ 10am-7:30pm) A brochure-filled info center; staff can book accommodations for a \$5 fee. Pick up the *Niagara-on-the-Lake Official Visitors' Guide* for maps and a self-guided walking tour.

Getting There & Around

There are no direct buses between Toronto and Niagara-on-the-Lake, so head for St Catharines or Niagara Falls then transfer.

5-0 Taxi (2800-667-0256, 905-358-3232; www.5-0taxi.com) shunts folks between Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake. Call for pickup locations and times. A regular one-way taxi between the two towns costs around \$45.

Cycling is an ace way to explore the area. Rent a bike from (or have one delivered to you by) the reader-recommended **Zoom Leisure Bicycle Rentals** (2866-811-6993, 905-468-2366; www.zoomleisure.com; 2017 Niagara Stone Rd; rental per half-day/day/2 days \$20/30/50; ☎ 9am-5pm). Free delivery.

SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO

Arcing around Lake Ontario is a heavily populated industrialized zone encompassing a number of the GTA's 'satellite' cities. Highway 403 will get you to Hamilton and Brantford, but most will take the 401 for Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo and beyond: it's an impenetrable concrete artery linking Toronto to the US border at Windsor, and the Québec border to the east. The stretch through Toronto is regarded as one of the busiest and widest freeways in the world. Those who venture off it can uncover a heritage of aboriginal and colonial settlement, well-preserved architecture, tree-lined boulevards, healthy rivers and verdant pastures. Don't be discouraged by the feeling that Toronto never ends – press on to the delightful villages of Elora, Fergus and the unique Mennonite settlement of St Jacobs and you will be rewarded.

Guelph, Waterloo and London are thriving university centers, each with their own appeal – first appearances can be deceptive; dig deeper than what lies immediately beyond the highway. Get off the 401 at Kitchener for Stratford (-upon-Avon), birthplace of the 'Beebs' and yet a remarkably cultured country town, and home to the penultimate festival of Shakespearean theater outside the *other* Stratford-upon-Avon.

From here, you can head northwest until the farmlands dissolve into the sandy shores of Lake Huron, or drop down to London and get back on the 401, following the dead-flat fields of gold – wheat, corn and everything-growing regions where you'll cheer for even

the most modest of hills – until you reach the north shore of Lake Erie and quirky Pelee Island, Canada's southernmost point. The end of the road is in Windsor at the Detroit/USA border: both were once automotive giants, now they wrestle with the winds of change.

Hamilton & Brantford

COMBINED POP 774,250

En route to the Niagara Peninsula, blue-collar Hamilton – center of Canada's iron and steel industries – isn't famed for tourism, although cleanup efforts and downtown revitalization have improved things for visitors. If you can see past the smokestacks on approach and ignore the vague whiff of sulfur in the air, there are some interesting sights, a handful of decent eateries and some sweeping views.

Brantford, 40km southwest of Hamilton on Hwy 403, has plenty of niche tourism sites. Southeast of town, the Six Nations territory has been a First Nations' center for centuries. Captain Joseph Thayendanegea Brant led the Six Nations people here from upper New York State in 1784 and established a village that long served the district's First Nations tribes.

Sights

Dundurn Castle

MUSEUM

(2905-546-2872; 610 York Blvd, Hamilton; adult/child \$11.25/5.75; ☎ 11am-4pm) Delightful and unexpected, this column-fronted, 36-room mansion once belonged to Sir Allan Napier McNab, Canadian prime minister from 1854 to 1856. It sits on a cliff overlooking the harbor amid lovely chestnut-studded grounds and is furnished in mid-19th-century style. Castle admission includes entry into the Hamilton Military Museum.

Royal Botanical Gardens

GARDENS

(21-800-694-4769; www.rbg.ca; 680 Plains Rd W, Burlington; adult/child incl shuttle-bus rides \$12.50/7.50; ☎ 10am-5pm) Canada's largest and most spectacular botanic gardens comprise over a thousand hectares of trees, flowers and plants, including numerous rare species. There's also a rock garden, an arboretum and a wildlife sanctuary with trails traversing wetlands and wooded ravines. From June to October, thousands of delicate jewels bloom in the Centennial Rose Garden,

Southwestern Ontario



six nations being Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora – and the village of **Ohsweken**, a well-known Aboriginal community. Established in the late 18th century, the territory gives visitors a glimpse of traditional and contemporary First Nations culture.

Sleeping & Eating

Rutherford House

B&B \$\$

( 905-525-2422; 293 Park St S, Hamilton; s/d incl breakfast \$120/130;  A short walk from downtown, the Rutherford is a lovingly restored redbrick Victorian. Its two period furnished guest rooms feature downy beds and extravagant wallpaper.

C Hotel by Carmen's

HOTEL \$\$

( 905-381-9898; www.bestwestern.com; 1530 Stone Church Rd E, Hamilton; s & d from \$140;  You may be surprised that a hotel of this caliber is both a Best Western and in Hamilton. New in July 2011, the handsome building pays an impressive tribute to art deco; its rooms and suites are both spacious and elegant. With an indoor pool and all the comforts of home, you'll be more impressed by the price.

Black Forest Inn

GERMAN \$\$

( 905-528-3538; www.blackforestinn.ca; 255 King St E, Hamilton; mains \$9.90-29.90;  11:30am-9pm Tue-Sun) This downtown institution has been satisfying meat lovers and beer drinkers since 1967. If you're a fan of schnitzel, goulash, wurst or German beer, you've found yourself a reason to visit Hamilton. The prices are great, so it's usually packed. In summer, the patio becomes a *biergarten* – perfect!

Information

Brantford Visitors & Tourism Centre ( 800-265-6299, 519-751-1771; www.discoverbrantford.com; 399 Wayne Gretzky Pkwy, Brantford;  9am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 9pm Sat, to 5pm Sun) Just north of Hwy 403, the sparkling tourism center is optimistic about Brantford's future, with plenty of brochures and helpful staff.

Six Nations Tourism ( 866-393-3001; www.sntourism.com; 2498 Chieftwood Rd;  9am-4:30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) At the corner of Hwy 54 find this visitors center, with information on local sites, attractions and events in Six Nations.

Tourism Hamilton ( 1-800-263-8590; www.tourismhamilton.com; 28 James St N, Hamilton;  10am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat & Sun) This downtown tourist office is keen to assist

with all things Hamilton and surrounds, or just visit its impressive and up-to-date website.

Getting There & Away

If you're in a squeeze finding a cheap flight out of Toronto, see if Westjet also flies to your destination from **John C Munro Hamilton International Airport** (YHM;  905-679-1999; www.flyhi.ca; 9300 Airport Rd, Mt Hope), 10km south of town – airport taxes are cheaper here.

GO Transit operates a combination of regular scheduled bus and train services between Hamilton and Toronto (\$10.45, one to two hours) from the Hamilton **GO Centre** (www.gotransit.com; 36 Hunter St E;  5am-11pm Mon-Fri, from 6:15am Sat & Sun). Trains operate only during rush hour and on certain weekends in summer.

Greyhound Canada and Megabus also make stops in Hamilton. Greyhound Canada connects Toronto (\$28, one to two hours, five daily), London (\$26.40, 1½ hours, four daily) and (via Hamilton) Niagara Falls (\$35, four hours, two to three daily) to the **Brantford Transit Terminal** ( 519-756-5011; 64 Darling St).

VIA rail operates trains to Toronto (\$40, one hour, five daily) and London (\$36, one hour, five daily) from the **train station** ( 519-752-0867; www.viarail.ca; 5 Wadsworth St).

Guelph

POP 121,700

Founded in 1827 by a Scottish novelist who planned the town's footprint in a European style, Guelph is best known for its popular university and... beer! Sleeman Breweries and two microbreweries call Guelph home. Strong manufacturing and education sectors contribute to Guelph's low unemployment rate, which fuels a vibrant youth scene: funky cafes, great food, rocking pubs and hip boutiques await. With a wealth of local history, a fantastic museum and lovely Victorian architecture, Guelph is worth a visit.

Sights & Activities

Guelph Civic Museum

MUSEUM

( 519-836-1221; www.guelph.ca/museum; 6 Dublin St S; adult/child \$4/free;  1-5pm) Extensively transformed in 2012, in what was originally an 1854 sandstone convent, this attractive LEED-certified museum offers exhibitions, programs and events digging up the history of the city (named after the British royal family's ancestors, the Guelphs). The 'Growing Up in Guelph' kids' exhibition makes a happy distraction.

Church of Our Lady Immaculate CHURCH (519-824-3951; www.churchofourlady.com; 28 Norfolk St; admission by donation; ☺ 7am-dusk) Lording over downtown Guelph is the dominant stone-faced bulk of the Church of Our Lady Immaculate. It's hard to move around town without catching a glimpse of Our Lady's twin towers and elegantly proportioned rose window, which have been awing parishioners since 1888.

University of Guelph Arboretum GARDENS (519-824-4120; www.uoguelph.ca/arboretum; College Ave E; ☺ 8:30am-4:30pm Mon-Fri; ☈)

 **FREE** Modeled after the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, this stunning microcosm of flora and fauna has 8.2km of paths traversing 165 hectares of thoughtfully cultivated land. The variety of species represented here boggles the mind, and best of all, it's free!

Macdonald Stewart Art Centre GALLERY (519-837-0010; www.msac.ca; 358 Gordon St; suggested donation \$3; ☺ noon-5pm Tue-Sun)

Over 7000 works belong to the collection exhibited here in the Raymond Moriyama-designed galleries, specializing in Inuit and Canadian art. The **Donald Forster Sculpture Park** is the largest at a public gallery in Canada and offers 1 hectare to explore: gravity-defying cubes, beached boats and cell phones spiked onto agricultural sickles.

Speed River Canoe & Kayak Rentals KAYAKING (116 Gordon St; kayak/canoe rental per hr Tue-Fri

\$10/12, Sat & Sun \$12/15; ☺ 10am-dusk Tue-Sun Jun-Aug) Get on the water then tackle the ice-cream store next door. This is also the starting point of a self-guided eco-heritage walk along the banks of the Speed and Eramosa Rivers, a 6km circuit with interpretive signs.

Festivals & Events

Hillside Festival PERFORMING ARTS

(519-763-6396; www.hillsidefestival.ca) Having celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2013, Hillside continues to delight with an eclectic mix of furry and fuzzy, hippy and huggy performers from seasoned pros to the up-and-coming artists of tomorrow. Feel the love and jump on board for one short weekend in July. Consult the website for this year's lineup and details.

Sleeping

The **Guelph Area Bed & Breakfast Association** (www.gabba.ca) has a crop of quality B&Bs on its books. If motels are more your style, there are a couple on Woodlawn Rd W, just north of town. The University of Guelph lets rooms during the summer months.

Comfort Inn

MOTEL \$

(519-763-1900; www.choicehotels.ca; 480 Silvercreek Pkwy; d from \$90) Tastefully renovated in 2012, this spotlessly maintained motel about 5km north of the town center offers great-value rooms including a light breakfast.

Norfolk Guest House

B&B \$\$

(519-767-1095; www.norfolkguesthouse.ca; 102 Eramosa Rd; r incl breakfast \$139-269; ☈) A central location and sumptuously furnished themed bedrooms, most with en suite Jacuzzi, make the Norfolk – a delightfully restored Victorian home – the logical choice for luxury B&B accommodations in downtown Guelph.

Delta Guelph Hotel & Conference Centre

HOTEL \$\$

(519-780-3700; www.deltahotels.com; 50 Stone Rd W; d/st/e from \$125/\$175) Conveniently located near the University of Guelph, 3km from downtown, this modern, tastefully furnished property has spacious standard rooms with dark woods and comfy beds. A variety of well-priced suites, some with fireplaces, kitchenettes and downy sofas, complete the package.

Eating & Drinking

★ Joint Cafe

CAFE \$

(519-265-8508; www.thejointcafe.com; 43 Cork St E; mains \$6-18; ☺ 9am-3pm Mon-Wed & Sun, 9am-4pm & 5-10pm Thu-Sat; ☈) The Joint is a great all-rounder. Come for brunch or coffee, dinner or drinks and you're bound to find something on the diverse and original menu that tickles your fancy – there's a definite emphasis on healthy comfort food and plenty of options for vegetarians.

Cornerstone

CAFE \$

(519-827-0145; 1 Wyndham St N; mains \$6-10; ☺ 8am-midnight Mon-Fri, from 9am Sat & Sun; ☈) Thick stone walls plus scuffed wood floors equal serious comfy-ness at this well-loved vegetarian cafe. Go for coffee in the morning and return for a pint and some live music in the evening. If you're looking for a sandwich,

consider the Taste of Downtown: avocado, brie, red peppers and garlic aioli (\$8).

Bookshelf

(519-821-3311; www.bookshelf.ca; 41 Québec St; mains \$12-15; ☎ e-Bar 5pm-late, bookstore 9am-9pm) Forty years young, Bookshelf is the pacemaker of Guelph's cultural heartbeat: part bookstore, cinema, cafe and music venue. Swing by to read the paper, catch an art-house flick or have a bite in the e-bar/Greenroom. Featuring regular salsa nights, poetry slams and flashback Fridays, there's something for everyone.

Bollywood Bistro

(519-821-3999; www.thebollywoodbistro.com; 51 Cork St E; mains \$12-17; ☎ 11:30am-2pm Mon-Fri & 5:30-8:30pm daily; ☎) Guelph's favorite Indian restaurant isn't the cheapest, but uses a traditional tandoor oven to create well-known dishes with a contemporary twist, with influences from Nepal, Delhi and Bombay. The creamy butter chicken (\$17) is one of the best we've had.

Artisanale

FRENCH \$\$\$
(519-821-3359; www.artisanale.ca; 214 Woolwich St; mains \$23-28; ☎ 11:30am-2:30pm & 5-9pm Tue-Sat) With an emphasis on fresh, seasonal local produce, this French country kitchen has a wonderfully simple lunch menu and is popular for its prix-fixe \$25 dinners, although they're not so fixed with irresistible hors d'oeuvres and sides (\$3 to \$5) and a number of the more tempting mains attracting a \$5 surcharge.

Woolwich Arrow

PUB
(519.836.2875; www.woolwicharrow.ca; 176 Woolwich St; ☎ 11:30am-late) The 'Wooly,' as it's affectionately known, stands on its own two feet as a microbrewery but also ranks highly for delicious gourmet eat-with-beer munchies like longhorn beef chili poutine (small \$7) and Lake Erie pickerel tacos (\$14).

Manhattan's

BAR
(519-767-2440; www.manhattans.ca; 951 Gordon St; ☎ 11am-late Mon-Fri, from 4pm Sat & Sun; ☎) The pizza here is hot and fresh like the smooth, smooth jazz: there's live music most nights. Check the website for details. Free wi-fi. No cover charge.

Information

Guelph Tourism Services (800-334-4519; www.visitguelphwellington.ca; 1 Carden St; ☎ 9am-4:30pm Mon-Sat) In the new city hall,

friendly staff are local experts. Ask them about self-guided walking tours.

i Getting There & Away

The **Guelph Bus Station** (519-824-0771; www.greyhound.ca; cnr MacDonnell & Carden Sts) has buses to Toronto (\$22, 1½ hours, 12 daily) and London (\$26, 2¼ hours, three daily).

VIA rail operates trains to Toronto (\$24, 1½ hours, twice daily) and London (\$36, two hours, two daily). GO Transit operates commuter trains to Toronto (\$13, 1½ hours, twice daily). Both depart from the **Guelph Train Station** (888-842-7245; www.viarail.ca; cnr Wyndham & Carden Sts; ☎ 6am-1pm & 4pm-midnight Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm & 4pm-midnight Sat & Sun).

Kitchener-Waterloo

POP 280,000

The adjacent cities of Kitchener (formerly called Berlin, due to its Germanic origins) and Waterloo, like Siamese twins, are as different as they are connected. 'Downtown' Kitchener lacks appeal and although prettier 'uptown' Waterloo has some nice sandstone architecture, two universities and the largest community museum in Ontario, neither city is particularly exciting. The best time to visit is festival time, when the twins come to life - Oktoberfest here is the second largest outside Munich, Germany! Otherwise, just pass through on your way to Elora and Fergus, St Jacobs or Stratford.

o Sights & Activities

Waterloo Region Museum

MUSEUM

(www.waterlooregionmuseum.com; 10 Huron Rd, Kitchener; adult/child \$10/5; ☎ 9:30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) Waterloo's newest attraction is this primary-colored local-history museum set on 24 hectares. Its the gateway to the **Doon Heritage Crossroads**, a re-created pioneer settlement where costumed volunteers do their best to help you time-travel.

Joseph Schneider Haus

HISTORIC SITE

(519-742-7752; www.region.waterloo.on.ca; 466 Queen St S, Kitchener; adult/child \$2.25/1.25; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, from 1pm Sun Jul-Aug, 10am-5pm Wed-Sat, from 1pm Sun Sep-Jun) A national historic site, Joseph Schneider Haus was one of the first homes built in the area, and has been restored to full 19th-century splendor. Originally built for a prosperous Pennsylvanian Mennonite, the architecture is amazing, as are demonstrations of day-to-

day 1800s chores and skills (everything from beadwork to making corn-husk dolls). When we visited, a two-story washhouse was under construction.

Waterloo Central Railway STEAM RAILWAY
(519-885-2297; www.waterloocentralrailway.com; 10 Father David Bauer Dr; from \$10; Apr-Dec) This lovingly restored steam train shuttles between Waterloo and St Jacobs on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays in the warmer months: check the homepage for schedule details.

Festivals & Events

Uptown Waterloo Jazz Festival JAZZ
(www.uptownwaterloojax.ca) Big-time jazz, small-town environment: mid-July.

Oktoberfest BEER
(519-570-4267, 888-294-4267; www.oktoberfest.ca) *Willkommen* to this nine-day berry Bavarian bash – the biggest of its kind in North America and possibly the largest outside of Germany. It's K-W's favorite event, bringing in about 500,000 people each year from early to mid-October – sauerkraut, oompah bands, *lederhosen* and *biergartens* galore. Book accommodations well in advance.

Sleeping & Eating

Bingemans Camping Resort CAMPGROUND \$
(519-744-1002, 800-565-4631; www.bingemans.com; 425 Bingemans Centre Dr, Kitchener; campsites/RV sites \$35/45, cabins from \$65, reservations \$8; South of Hwy 401, Bingemans is a combined water park and campground with enough pools, ponds and waterslides to warrant 'Great Lake' status. The cabins are nothing spectacular, but sleep four. A wide range of camping and waterpark packages are available; check online.

Walper Terrace Hotel HOTEL \$\$
(519-745-4321, 800-265-8749; www.walper.com; 1 King St W, Kitchener; r/st from \$89/\$159; There's a rich sense of history at the Walper, a classy downtown dame looking good for her age – the hotel was built in 1893 and renovated in 2011. All rooms have high ceilings and period features, flatscreen TVs and free wi-fi, but standard rooms are a tad cozy. Suites are more spacious.

Crowne Plaza Kitchener-Waterloo HOTEL \$\$
(519-744-4144; www.crowneplaza.com; 105 King St E, Kitchener; d from \$144; Formerly the Delta, Crowne Plaza extensively renovated this property, which re-opened in late

THE MENNONITES OF ST JACOBS & ELMIRA

The Mennonite story harks back to a 16th-century Swiss Protestant sect who moved around Europe due to religious disagreements. They ended up in the rural setting of what is now Pennsylvania, USA where they were promised religious freedom and prosperity. Cheaper land and their unwillingness to fight under the American flag lured many Mennonites to southern Ontario in the late 19th century, where they remain today, upholding the same basic values of family, humility, simplicity, modesty and pacifism.

For a detailed history and information see www.mhsc.ca, or take a day trip to the quaint villages of St Jacobs, about 20 minutes' drive from Kitchener, and Elmira, 8km further north. Here, black buggies rattle past, the scent of cattle fills the air, and bonnets, braces and buttons are de rigueur.

The quintessential **country market** (519-747-1830; www.stjacobs.com; cnr King & Weber Sts, St Jacobs; 7am-3:30pm Thu & Sat, also 8am-3pm Tue Jun-Aug), 3km south of St Jacobs, has an earthy soul. Folks come from miles for the farm-fresh produce, smoked meats, cheese, baked treats, arts and crafts. Pop in to the **visitors center** (519-664-3518; www.stjacobs.com; 1406 King St, St Jacobs; 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) to see the Mennonite Story, an insightful exhibition on the Mennonites' history, culture and agricultural achievements. One of these is the production of maple syrup: learn about it at the **Maple Syrup Museum & Quilt Gallery** (519-664-1232; www.stjacobs.com; 1441 King St N, St Jacobs; 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, noon-5:30pm Sun) **FREE** or sample the liquid gold at the **Maple Syrup Festival** (www.elmiramaplesyrup.com) in early April. Round out the day with a traditional lunch at **Benjamin's Restaurant** (519-664-3731; www.stjacobs.com/country-inns; 1430 King St N, St Jacobs; meals \$10-30; 11:30am-9pm;), grab a fresh fruit pie and some scones for the road from the **Stone Crock Bakery** (519-664-2286; 1402 King St N, St Jacobs; items \$2-8; 7am-3pm Mon & Tue, to 8pm Wed-Sat, 11am-8pm Sun) and be on your way.

2013. With a futuristic new lobby and 201 sparkling, modern guest rooms, these are the best digs for miles.

Princess Cafe

CAFE \$
(519-886-0227; www.princesscafe.ca; 46 King St N, Waterloo; panini \$6.50; 11:30am-10pm Sun-Thu, to 3:30am Fri & Sat) This quaint cafe next door to the cinema serves up coffee, toasted panini and other snacky delights. If you're a night owl, stop in for 'Cheeses Murphy': the ultimate post-drinking grilled cheese (midnight to 3:30am Friday and Saturday).

Concordia Club

GERMAN \$\$

(429 Ottawa St S, Kitchener; lunch mains \$7-12, dinner \$12-20; 11:30am-11pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun) Polish up your German verbs and fill up on schnitzel at Concordia, a Teutonic fave that's been around for decades. Dark wood, low ceilings, white linen and loud conversation complement the menu. There's red-hot polka action on Friday and Saturday nights, and a summer *biergarten*.

Information

KW Tourism (519-745-3536; www.explorewaterlooregion.com; 200 King St W, Kitchener; 8:30am-5pm Mon-Fri) Inside city hall.

Waterloo Visitors Centre (519-885-2297; www.explorewaterlooregion.com; 10 David Bower Dr, Waterloo; 9am-4pm Mon-Sat Apr-Dec) Friendly staff! At the terminus of the Waterloo Central Railway.

Getting There & Away

From **Waterloo International Airport** (YFK; 519-648-2256; www.waterlooairport.ca; 4881 Fountain St N, Breslau), 7km east of town, there are flights to Calgary, Detroit and Chicago.

Greyhound Canada operates from the **Charles Street Transit Terminal** (800-661-8747; www.greyhound.ca; 15 Charles St W, Kitchener), a five-minute walk from downtown. Buses run to Toronto (\$28, 1½ to two hours, hourly) and London (\$25, 1½ to two hours, three daily).

Kitchener Train Station (888-842-7245; www.viarail.ca; cnr Victoria & Weber Sts, Kitchener) is an easy walk north of downtown. VIA rail operates trains to Toronto (\$28, two hours, twice daily) and London (\$35, 1½ hours, twice daily). GO Transit operates commuter trains to Toronto (\$15.55, two hours, twice daily).

Elora & Fergus

No longer one of Ontario's best-kept secrets, the delightful Wellington County river-

side towns of Elora and Fergus, straddling the banks of the twisty Grand River, await your visit. Both have done a magnificent job preserving their heritage facades and streetscapes. Enticing Elora with its gorge and swimming hole is a wonderful place to escape the summer heat, while neighboring Fergus evokes nostalgia for a lost age and a distant northern kingdom... along with the desire to sample all of its cozy pubs.

Sights

Wellington County Museum

MUSEUM

(519-846-0916; www.wcm.on.ca; Rte 18, Elora; by donation; 9:30am-4:30pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun) Midway between Fergus and Elora, an austere, red-roofed former 'Poor House' provided refuge for the aged and homeless for almost a century before becoming the Wellington County Museum in 1957. Historical and local modern-art exhibits extend through 12 galleries, displaying an obvious pride in local history and current culture. The centerpiece is the new 'If These Walls Could Speak' exhibit, which examines the lives of those who lived or worked there.

Elora Gorge Conservation Area

PARK

(www.grandriver.ca; Rte 21, Elora; adult/child \$5.75/2.75, tubing rentals \$15; late Apr-mid-Oct) About 2km south of Elora is the photoworthy Elora Gorge Conservation Area, a plunging limestone canyon through which the Grand River seethes. Easy walks extend to cliff views, caves and the Cascade waterfalls – a sheet of white water spilling over a stepped cliff. For a free gorge view, head to the end of James St, off Metcalfe St in Elora. Tubing is a lazy way to spend a warm afternoon at the gorge. You can also camp here.

Elora Quarry Conservation Area

PARK

(www.grandriver.ca; Rte 18, Elora; adult/child \$5.75/2.75; dawn-dusk Jun-Aug) A short walk east of Elora are the possibly bottomless waters and 12m limestone cliffs of the Elora Quarry Conservation Area – a superb swimming hole. Hormone-fueled teens plummet from great heights, despite signs suggesting they don't.

Tours

Elora Culinary Walking Tours

WALKING TOUR

(226-384-7000; www.eloraculinarywalkingtour.com; per person \$15; 2pm Sat May-Sep) Sample some of Elora's culinary treats on this two-hour guided tour. Rain or shine, meet in front of the Village Olive Grove (8 Mill St W).

Festivals & Events

Elora Festival

(www.elorafestival.com) A classical, jazz, folk and arts festival held from mid-July to mid-August, with concerts at the quarry and around town. Singers and musos from around the country crowd the schedule of Elora's premier event.

Fergus Scottish Festival &

Highland Games

MUSIC

(www.fergusscottishfestival.com) If it's not Scottish, it doesn't count: tugs-of-war, caber tossing, bagpipes, Celtic dancing, kilts, haggis and Scotch nosing (aka tasting). Hoots! Held over two days in mid-August.

Sleeping

There are many B&Bs in the area. If you don't have any luck with the below, try **Fergus Elora Bed & Breakfast Association** (www.ferguselorahosts.com).

Elora Gorge Conservation Area

Campground

CAMPGROUND \$

(519-846-9742, 866-668-2267; www.grandriver.ca; Rte 18, Elora; campsites \$32.50-40, reservations \$13) More than 550 campsites in six distinct, riverside zones. They're overflowing during summer, especially on holiday weekends.

Stonehurst B&B

B&B \$\$

(519-843-8800; www.stonehurstbb.com; 265 St David St S, Fergus; s/d incl breakfast \$113/130)

This gorgeous country home, belonging to one of the wealthiest families in the area from 1853 to 1933, had a brief stint as a nursing home and newspaper office before adopting its best-suited fate as a B&B in 2001. Four comfortable rooms each have en suite bathrooms. Your welcoming hosts maintain the house, its common areas and gardens magnificently. Great value.

Bredalbane

INN \$\$\$

(519-843-4770; www.bredalbaneinn.com; 487 St Andrew St W, Fergus; r \$90-225) Rooms at this compact inn are classically furnished without being tacky. Some have canopy beds and most have Jacuzzis. It has an annexed pub and bistro and a prime main street location, so you won't need to venture far for entertainment, though it can sometimes get noisy.

Drew House

INN \$\$\$

(519-846-2226; www.drewhouse.com; 120 Mill St E, Elora; r incl breakfast from \$125;  Drew House unites the old world with the new. On spacious grounds, the inn has both reno-

vated stable suites (with private bathrooms) or guest rooms (with shared bathrooms) in the main house. Meter-thick stone walls whisper history as you drift into dreams, before waking to a breakfast of fresh fruit, hot coffee, and bacon and eggs cooked how you love them.

Eating & Drinking

Gorge Country Kitchen

DINER \$

([519-846-2636](tel:519-846-2636); 23 Wellington Rd 7, Elora; meals \$8-22;  7am-8:30pm) The Gorge is usually hopping for its family-friendly country-style cheap eats, especially the hearty breakfasts. There are daily specials.

Mill St Bakery & Bistro

CAFE \$\$

([519-384-2277](tel:519-384-2277); www.millstreetbakerybistro.com; 15 Mill St E, Elora; mains \$11-24;  9am-7pm Mon-Sat, from 10am Sun) This busy breakfast-and-lunch joint has a fantastic river-view patio and serves sandwiches, your favorite comfort foods and a limited dinner menu.

Brewhouse

PUB \$\$

([519-843-8871](tel:519-843-8871); www.fergusbrewhouse.com; 170 St David St S, Fergus; mains \$10-22;  11:30am-1am Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun) Wave to the fly-fishers on the Grand River from the shady Brewhouse patio as you weigh up the benefits of cheddar and ale soup, bangers and mash, or curried chicken enchilada. It sports a cozy bar, European beers on tap and live music to boot.

Cork

EUROPEAN \$\$\$

([519-846-8880](tel:519-846-8880); www.eloracork.com; 146 Metcalfe St, Elora; mains \$24-34;  11:30am-9pm) Run by a mother and daughter team, Cork is a casual fine-dining restaurant turning heads in Wellington County for its excellent service, delicious food and sunny patio. From the grilled beet and goat cheese salad to the saffron lobster risotto, we think you'll be pleased with your investment.

Goofie Newfie

PUB

([519-843-4483](tel:519-843-4483); www.goofienewfie.ca; 105 Queen St W, Fergus;  11:30am-late) Good food, cold booze, live entertainment and happy patrons make the Goofie Newfie the jolly place it is.

Shepherd's Pub

PUB

(8 Mill St W, Elora; mains \$9-13;  noon-10pm) Pubby mains and cold pints of Guinness by the river. All-day breakfast fry-ups, beer-battered fish and chips, and hearty beef pies will revive you if you spent too long here the night before.

Information

Elora Welcome Centre (519-846-2563, 877-242-6353; www.elora.info; 9 Mill St E, Elora; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, to 5pm Sun) The friendly staff at the Elora Welcome Centre by the bridge are a font of knowledge for all things Wellington County.

Getting There & Away

Greyhound Canada stops on Bridge St in Fergus and at the **Little Katy Variety Store** (185 Geddes St, Elora; ☎ 9am-7pm) in Elora, heading to/from Toronto (\$25, two hours, one to two daily).

Stratford

Stratford is a success story, a wonderful country town that refuses to surrender to the depopulation syndrome plaguing rural centers worldwide. As the story goes, in 1952, upon hearing the announcement that the Canadian National Railways (the region's largest employer) was closing the doors of its Stratford facility, a young journalist by the name of Tom Patterson approached his council for a loan. His plan was to find and bring back a troupe of actors to capitalise on the town's namesake: the birthplace of Shakespeare. It worked. In 1953 the first performance of what has grown to become the Stratford Festival (the largest of its kind) was born, creating a whole new industry which continues to support the town today.

Charming, cultured and classy, with a bunch of *other* festivals to boot, Stratford packs more punch than cities twice its size: there are plenty of great places to eat and stay. Whatever the season, you'll enjoy the nature, arts and architecture and the proud locals will make you feel welcome.

SWANS ON PARADE

Stratford's beloved swans don't paddle around the Avon all winter; instead, they are kept warm in winter pens. Come early April, the release of the birds to their summer home on the river is a Stratford celebration. The swans waddle down the street in parade formation, backed by bagpipe players marching in kilts. Check www.welcometostratford.com for exact dates and more information.

Sights

Avon River

RIVER

Stratford's swan-filled Avon River (what else were they going to call it?) flows slowly past the town, with plenty of riverbank lawns on which to chill out. Just west of Stratford Tourism on the riverbank, the **Shakespearean Gardens** occupy the site of an old wool mill. Parterre gardens, manicured box hedges, herbs, roses and a bronze bust of Bill – pick up a brochure at Stratford Tourism. Further along the river is **Queen's Park**, with paths leading from the Festival Theatre along the river past Orr Dam and an 1885 stone bridge to a formal **English flower garden**.

Stratford-Perth Museum

MUSEUM

(519-393-5311; www.stratfordperthmuseum.ca; 4275 Huron Rd; suggested donation \$5; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sat, from noon Sun & Mon) The diverse and significant Stratford-Perth Museum collection includes artifacts and memorabilia from the early 1800s to the present day. Its mission is to celebrate and remember the community stories of Stratford and Perth County.

Gallery Stratford

GALLERY

(519-271-5271; www.gallerystratford.on.ca; 54 Romeo St; adult/child \$5/free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) In a wonderful renovated yellow-brick pump house (c 1880), Gallery Stratford exhibits innovative contemporary art with a Canadian emphasis. Regular art studios, movie nights and family days are held. It's very kid friendly.

Tours

Downloadable Guides

WALKING TOUR

(www.visitstratford.ca/toursandguides.php) These genius folk out here are one step ahead of the rest! Download a wide range of audio podcasts and PDF guides of themed walking, driving and cycling tours through the streets of Stratford and surrounding region. Themes include food, wine, gardens, antiques and even... Justin Bieber!

Boat Tours

CRUISE

(519-271-7739; www.avonboatrentals.ca; 30 York St; tours from adult/child \$7/3, rentals from \$15; ☎ 9am-dusk May-Oct) Take in the parks, swans, riverbanks and grand gardens on Avon River. Tours depart below Stratford Tourism by the river. Canoes, kayaks and paddleboats are available.

THE STRATFORD FESTIVAL

Sir Alec Guinness played Richard III on opening night of the much-lauded **Stratford Festival** (2800-567-1600; 519-273-1600; www.stratfordfestival.ca), which began humbly in a tent at Queen's Park. The festival, with over 60 seasons under its belt, has achieved international acclaim. Aside from the plays, there's a peripheral schedule of interesting programs: post-performance discussions, backstage tours, lectures, concerts and readings. Some are free.

Far from its tented origins, four theaters stage contemporary and period dramas, opera and, of course, works by the Bard, over a monster season lasting April to November. Main-stage productions occur at the 1800-seat Festival Theatre and 1000-seat Avon Theatre. The Tom Patterson and Studio Theatres are more intimate. Actors from around the world prize festival residencies.

Tickets go on sale to the general public in early January. By showtime nearly every performance is sold out: book ahead! Spring previews and fall end-of-season shows are often discounted by 30%, with 50%-off 'rush' tickets, two hours before showtime.

Festivals & Events

Savour Stratford Festival

FOOD (519-271-7500; www.visitstratford.ca/culinaryfestival) Beer, wine and food tastings, workshops, farm tours and special dinners all highlight Perth County's abundance in mid-September. Prices vary with the event.

Stratford Garlic Festival

FOOD (www.stratfordgarlicfestival.com) Held in mid-September. Bring your breath mints.

Stratford Garden Festival

GARDEN (www.stratfordgardenfestival.com; admission \$9) A four-day horticultural extravaganza held in early March, featuring flora from around the world, guest speakers and presentations.

Stratford Summer Music

MUSIC (www.stratfordsummermusic.ca; tickets \$10-40) Four weeks of classical, cabaret and theatrical music from mid-July to mid-August, with acclaimed musicians from around Canada tuning up and letting loose.

Sleeping

There's a plethora of accommodations in Stratford but savvy locals know how to make a buck: room rates can go through the roof. Check out www.stratfordaccommodations.com.

Stratford General Hospital Residence

HOSTEL \$ (SGH Residence; 519-271-5084; www.sgh.stratford.on.ca/residence; 130 Youngs St; s/d \$59/69;  These renovated nurses' quarters are

the closest thing you'll find to a youth hostel in town: 360 rooms with shared bathrooms, kitchens and a heated pool. Cheap, clean and comfy, but not party central.

Forest Motel and Woodland Retreat

MOTEL \$\$

(519-271-4573; www.forestmotel.on.ca; 2941 Forest Rd RR 4; d \$99-205) Friendly hosts welcome you to this wonderful woody lakeside gem that's secluded, but only 10 minutes from town and close to highway amenities. Comfy renovated rooms emphasize Conrad's carpentry skills. You'll feel more like you've stepped into a country cottage than a motel. All rooms have microwave, fridge and homey touches.

Parlour Historic Inn & Suites

HOTEL \$\$

(519-271-2772; www.bestwestern.com; 101 Wellington St; d from \$139) This handsome hotel occupies a heritage building in the center of town, but has been fully refitted to a high standard – most rooms are spacious and light filled. There's a pub downstairs with a lovely patio but it doesn't get too rowdy or noisy.

Festival Inn

MOTEL \$\$

(519-273-1150; www.festivalinnstratford.com; 1144 Ontario St; d \$99-189) This sprawling four-wing motel complex has more than 160 pleasantly renovated rooms and suites in a variety of styles, offering good value during the festival period. On the highway near a bunch of amenities, it's a few minutes' drive to the festival and downtown attractions.

Swan Motel

MOTEL \$\$

(519-271-6376; www.swanmotel.on.ca; 960 Downie St S; r \$105-130; A fabulously maintained 1960s roadside motel 3km south of town, the Swan has spotless rooms with costume sketches and original artwork on the walls. The parklike grounds feature hammered-steel sculptures, fountains and a pool. The motel is closed from late October to early May.

Acrylic Dreams

B&B \$\$

(519-271-7874; www.acrylicdreams.com; 66 Bay St; r incl breakfast \$135-160; Owned by a husband-and-wife team, this renovated 1879 B&B has polished wooden floorboards and spa amenities. Besides being artists (there are more than a few acrylic masterpieces on the walls) the owners also practice chair massage, reflexology and can accommodate all diets.

Lofts at 99

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(800-361-5322, 519-271-1121; www.bentleysannex.com; 99 Ontario St; r \$99-299; This modern, dark-wood furnished inn houses commodious bi-level suites and lofts. Skylights, kitchenettes and period furnishings are standard, the receptionists are friendly and the cafe downstairs is always pumping.

Mercer Hall Inn

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(888-816-4011, 519-271-1888; www.mercerhallinn.com; 108 Ontario St; d \$90-200; Downtown Mercer Hall Inn has more class than most: uniquely artistic rooms feature handcrafted furniture, kitchenettes and electric fireplaces. Some have Jacuzzis.

Three Houses Bed & Breakfast

B&B \$\$\$

(519-272-0722; www.thethreehouses.com; 100 Brunswick St; ste incl breakfast \$195-495; Two Edwardian townhouses, a garden carriage house and an 1870s Italianate house make up this meticulous, *almost* over-the-top 18-room inn. No detail has been spared in decorating these light-filled spaces - even the luggage racks match the quirky individual room designs. A saltwater pool and secret oasis garden add relaxing touches.

Eating

A local chef's school and surrounding farmland make Stratford a gourmand's delight. Reservations are recommended during festival time.

Boomer's Gourmet Fries

FAST FOOD \$

(519-275-3147; www.boomersgourmetfries.com; 24 Erie St; items \$3-15; 11:30am-7pm Tue-Sun) Crazy, weird, killer, delicious, amazing, irresistible, to die for, what the? All of these words have been used to describe the fries, poutines, burgers and fried creations that come out of this kooky and friendly little joint. Jump on the bandwagon, it's rockin'. You know you want to.

York Street Kitchen

SANDWICHES \$

(519-273-7041; www.yorkstreetkitchen.com; 24 Erie St; mains \$6-16; 8am-8pm) This cozy kitchen serves up show-stopper sandwiches on homemade bread, brie fritters, salads, quiches and desserts. Try the 'Mennonite' sandwich: sausage, cheddar, corn relish, tomato, honey mustard, mayo and lettuce.

Let Them Eat Cake

CAFE \$

(519-508-2253; www.letthemeatcake.ca; 23 Albert St; mains \$6-20; 7am-8pm) This Stratford institution serves all-day breakfasts, fresh-baked scones and muffins, tasty sandwiches, salads, burgers and has a limited dinner menu.

Raja

INDIAN \$\$

(519-271-3271; www.rajaindiancuisine.ca; 10 George St W; mains \$12-22; 11:30am-2:30pm & 5-9pm; Challenging Stratford's demure Anglo tastes with funky lashings of chili and spice, Raja plates up super curries, soups, salads, breads, vegetarian and tandoori dishes and serves them on white linen. Staff are dapper and unfailingly polite.

Down the Street Bar & Restaurant

INTERNATIONAL \$\$

(519-273-5886; www.downthestreet.ca; 30 Ontario St; dinner \$19-29; 5:30pm-2am Tue-Sun) Darkly atmospheric, with gorgeous gilt mirrors and old neons stirring memories of Parisian cafes, this delicious bar/restaurant offers pre-theater dining, microbrews and wines by the glass. The menu is multicultural (thin-crust pizzas, goat cheese enchiladas) and after 10pm the bar steps up as one of Stratford's more kickin' nocturnal haunts.

Mercer Hall

EUROPEAN \$\$

(519-271-9202; www.mercerhall.com; 104 Ontario St; lunch \$6-16, dinner \$10-28; 11:30am-9pm Sun-Wed, to midnight Thu-Sat) This stylish artisanal eatery features a fantastic brunch menu and seasonal dinner delights such as beef brisket, aged bison and a delicious lentil and vegetable curry.

Bijou

(519-273-5000; www.bijourestaurant.com; 105 Erie St; lunch \$8-18, dinner \$46-52; ☎11:30am-1pm Fri & Sat & 5-9pm Tue-Sat) Classy and delightful, this French joint has a different set menu written on the chalkboard each evening. The locally sourced meals might include quail, heirloom tomato salad or Lake Huron whitefish ceviche. Creaky wooden floorboards and children's artwork on the walls add a personal touch.

i Information

Stratford Public Library (519-271-0220; www.stratford.library.on.ca; 19 St Andrew St; ☎1-9pm Mon, 10am-9pm Tue-Thu, 10am-5pm Fri & Sat; @) Free internet access.

Stratford Tourism (519-271-5140, 800-561-7926; www.visitstratford.ca; www.welcometostratford.com;) **Downtown** (47 Downie St; ☎8:30am-6pm Mon-Fri); **Riverside** (30 York St; ☎10am-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep) Staff can help with accommodations and all things 'Festival.' The websites are an excellent information source, with loads of tour options. The downtown location has one of Justin Bieber's signed guitars (an endless source of fascination for giggling teen fans from around the world). There's even a self-guided Justin Bieber tour, where you can see where the tween star went on his first date, if you really have absolutely nothing better to do.

i Getting There & Away

The **Stratford Direct** (www.stratfordfestival.ca) is a shuttle service between Toronto and Stratford's four theaters during Festival season (performance days only, May-Oct) for only \$20 round-trip. Buses pick up and drop off passengers at Simcoe St, south of Front St, beside the Intercontinental Toronto. You must purchase your ticket by 11pm the day before you travel. There are no stops between Toronto and Stratford, but there's wi-fi and a washroom onboard. Departure times vary; check the homepage for details and booking.

The **Stratford Airporter** (1-888-549-8602, 519-273-0057; www.stratfordairporter.com; from \$69pp) runs daily shuttles to Pearson International Airport. It's cheaper if you're traveling with someone.

VIA Rail runs from **Stratford Train Station** (888-842-7245; www.viarail.ca; 101 Shakespeare St) to Toronto (\$37, two hours, twice daily) and London (\$20, one hour, twice daily).

FRENCH \$\$\$

Lake Huron Shoreline

Lake Huron has some of the cleanest waters of the Great Lakes and is wide enough that the sun sets on the waterline of its western shore: expect wonderful sunsets. If you've been lingering around Toronto and Lake Ontario, Lake Huron's 'blueness' will be both surprising and refreshing, as will its whitish sandy beaches. Hwy 21 hugs the underpopulated shoreline, in parts. When it doesn't, you're separated from the water only by pine forests and lakefront mansions.

Grand Bend

For most of the year, Grand Bend is a sleepy, shuttered town on the southeastern shore of Lake Huron, but from late May to late October the town heaves to life with sun-hungry university students from nearby London, Kitchener and Windsor. It's hard to imagine the transformation: the handful of year-round residents' peaceful lives interrupted by a mini Florida-style Spring Break on their doorsteps.

From a vantage point on the broad, sandy shoreline of the main beach, you can see how the town got its name: the coastline arcs dramatically from this point until it becomes almost a straight line, headed north. In early spring it's quite a surreal experience to stand on the sandy shore in the sunshine and gaze out at the frozen, snow-covered lake, its edges whipped by the wind into frozen waves.

l Sleeping & Eating

Bars and cheap eats line Main St W as it approaches the beach: there are some great patios for a cold beer... or two.

Pinery Provincial Park

CAMPGROUND \$

(info 519-243-2220, reservations 888-668-7275; www.pinerypark.on.ca; RR2, Grand Bend; rates vary) South of Grand Bend is popular, picturesque Pinery Provincial Park with 10km of wide sandy beaches and lots of trails winding through wooded sections and sand dunes (bike/kayak rental per day \$45/40). There are hundreds of campsites and a number of yurts to choose from. Be sure to book in advance through Parks Ontario's snazzy website: www.reservations.ontarioparks.com, as spots fill fast.

Bonnie Doone Manor on the Beach

INN \$\$

(519-238-2236; www.bonniedoone.ca; 16 Government Rd; d \$90-325; We love this ramshackle holiday motel – the only one on the beach – lovingly updated and maintained by the same family for over 50 years. Rooms are a retro time warp with bright, colorful accents. Many face the water for unimaginably beautiful sunsets. There's also a quaint private cottage. It's right on the beach and a hop, skip and jump from Main St.

Schoolhouse Restaurant INTERNATIONAL \$\$

(519-238-5515; www.grandbendschoolhouse.ca; 1981 Crescent St; mains \$14-26; 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, from 8am Sat & Sun) There's something for everyone at this foodie-friendly restaurant occupying, you guessed it, the former Grand Bend Public School. From tender roast chicken to succulent steak, ribs, lake-fresh seafood and a variety of delicious local salads, you'll be delighted to find this alternative to Main St's touristy offerings.

Sunset House INTERNATIONAL \$\$

(519-238-2622; www.sunsethouse.ca; 85 Main St W; mains \$11-24; 11am-11:30pm) This place scored Grand Bend's prime beachfront spot. It's a lovely place to linger over dinner and drinks as the sun dips over the horizon. Choose from sizzling fajitas, seafood, burgers and salads or just go a few rounds of appetizers with your liquid refreshments.

Drinking & Nightlife

Riverbend Bar & Grill

BAR

(519-238-6919; 26 Ontario St S; 1-10pm) Open year-round, Riverbend's regulars return for huge portions of succulent hot chicken wings, karaoke nights and cold beer on the patio. Sounds tough, eh!

Getting There & Away

There's no public transportation to Grand Bend. Renting a car from London is a great way to explore the Huron Coast and to avoid the daunting experience of driving in/out of Toronto. Both **Avis** (800-230-4898; www.avis.ca) and **Enterprise** (800-261-7331; www.enterprise-rentacar.ca) have locations on Horton St, near London Train Station (p153).

Goderich

Previously awarded the title of Canada's prettiest town, charming Goderich's most recent and tragic claim to fame was for

the EF-3 tornado which tore through it at 4:03pm on August 21, 2011. It was a Sunday and the crowded market square had just emptied. The twister formed over Lake Huron and followed a direct path across the town's distinctive octagonal town square, City Hall and beyond. Of the 97 century-old trees in the square, only three remained; hundreds of buildings were damaged or destroyed, scores injured and one life lost.

A few years on, the town continues to work to regain its former title. Most of the restoration and reconstruction work is now complete. The friendly staff at **Tourism Goderich** (519-524-6600; www.goderich.ca; 91 Hamilton St; 9am-5pm) will be delighted to provide you with a self-guided Heritage Walking Tours brochure and field any questions you have about the town, tornado or otherwise.

Sights & Activities

Huron County Museum

MUSEUM

(519-524-2686; www.huroncounty.ca/museum; 110 North St; adult/child \$5/3.50; 10am-4:30pm Mon-Fri, 1-4:30pm Sat Jan-Apr, 10am-4:30pm Mon-Sat, from 1pm Sun May-Dec) Walk the wooden floorboards at Huron County Museum for an informed look at local history, industry and transportation. Displays include everything from antique furniture and china to an old steam engine and a tank.

Huron Historic Gaol

MUSEUM

(519-524-6971; www.huroncounty.ca/museum; 181 Victoria St N; adult/child \$5/3.50; 10am-4:30pm Mon-Sat, from 1pm Sun May-Sep, 10am-4:30pm Sat, 1-4pm Sun-Fri Sep-Nov) Follow a creepy, prison-gray corridor into the Huron Historic Gaol, an octagonal fortress that served as the courthouse and jail for almost 130 years (and was the site of Canada's last public hanging in 1869).

Boardwalks

WALKING

Goderich has three sandy Lake Huron beaches, linked by kilometers of boardwalks. Don't miss a dusk stroll for swoon-worthy sunsets.

Festivals & Events

Blyth Festival

THEATER

(www.blythfestival.com) The nearby village of Blyth has the kind of main street that Bruce Springsteen likes to sing about, and is home to the esteemed summer Blyth Festival. From June to August, primarily Canadian plays get an airing, from outdoor

pioneer performances to indoor gut-busting comedies.

Celtic Roots Festival

(www.celticfestival.ca) The town fills up early August for this, one of the largest celebrations of Celtic history and culture in North America.

Sleeping & Eating

Maple Leaf Motel

MOTEL \$
(519-524-2302; www.themapleleafmotel.com; 54 Victoria St N; d from \$79; This central 11-room motel with quaint country decor is lovingly maintained to a high standard.

Colborne B&B

B&B \$\$\$
(519-524-7400; www.colbornebandb.com; 72 Colborne St; d incl breakfast \$90-120; Formerly the manse for the Presbyterian Church, this handsome three-story property has four bright, smartly furnished guest bedrooms, each with en suite: two have whirlpools. Delicious gourmet breakfasts, served in the dining room, are a great way to start your day. Excellent value.

Benmiller Inn & Spa

INN \$\$\$
(800-265-1711; www.benmiller.ca; 81175 Benmiller Line; from d \$149-289; Just outside Goderich, riverside Benmiller is somewhere to treat yourself with a little old-fashioned luxury and country hospitality. There's a fantastic indoor swimming pool with river views, full-service Aveda treatment spa, the 'Ivey' fine dining restaurant and 57 charming rooms.

Culbert's Bakery

BAKERY \$
(519-524-7941; 49 West St; items from \$2; 8am-5:30pm Mon-Sat) Folks come from far and wide for this old-school bakery serving delicious and decadent cream puffs, muffins, tarts and fresh-from-the-oven loaves. The early bird catches the early calories.

West Street Willy's

DINER \$
(519-524-7777; 42 West St; items \$8-18; 7am-9pm Tue-Sat, to 8pm Sun) Hearty breakfasts and homestyle faves await you at Willy's: perogies, pizza, meatloaf, burgers are all on the menu.

Thyme on 21

INTERNATIONAL \$\$\$
(519-524-4171; www.thymeon21.com; 80 Hamilton St; mains \$19-34; 11:30am-2pm Tue-Fri & 5-9pm Tue-Sun) Goderich's only casual fine-dining establishment does a good job upholding its fine reputation. Global influenc-

es are present in the mouthwatering menu, with mains including lobster, veal, pad thai and soufflé.

i Getting There & Away

Aboutown Northlink ([888-666-5466](tel:888-666-5466); www.aboutown.com/northlink) operates a limited service to/from London (adult/child \$27/13.50) on Fridays and Sundays year-round. It connects with a Greyhound service to/from Toronto.

Southampton & Port Elgin

Southampton has happily sequestered itself from the beaten path of rowdy summer holidays. The quaint colony's sandy beach feels almost undiscovered at times, and a stroll down the main streets reveals mom-and-pop shops and the piecemeal architecture of Queen Anne-styled homes.

To the south, neighboring Port Elgin is the year-round home to the bulk of shopping, dining and nightlife options for the region. It also has some of the better, more accessible (free parking) and lesser known beaches on this strip of Lake Huron.

About 20km north of Southampton, **Sauble Beach** has a delicious wide strip of white sand and warm, clear waters, but its huge popularity with holidaymakers and revelers and the high cost of car parking take some of the magic away. In winter it's a ghost town.

o Sights & Activities

Chantry Island

ISLAND

Chantry Island, just 2km off the shoreline, is home to a lonely lighthouse and a sanctuary for migratory birds. The only way to reach the island is with **Chantry Island Tours** ([866-797-5862](tel:866-797-5862), 519-797-5862; www.chantryisland.com; per person \$30; Jun-Sep). Informative outings are led by the Marine Heritage Society and provide fascinating insights into the region's nautical history as well as a chance to climb the blinking lighthouse. Book in advance as only nine people can be accommodated per tour.

Bruce County Museum

MUSEUM

(519-797-2080, 866-318-8889; www.brucemuseum.ca; 33 Victoria St N, Southampton; adult/child \$8/4; 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, from 1pm Sun) This museum has an extensive collection of artifacts relating to shipwrecks in the region. There are also rotating summer exhibits for kids.

Rail Trail

Cyclists will enjoy this 25km stretch of abandoned railway, which starts at the corner of Albert and Adelaide Sts and ends in the small town of Paisley.

Thorncrest Outfitters

KAYAKING

(2 519-797-1608; www.thorncrestoutfitters.com; 193 High St, Southampton; canoe rental from \$35) The Saugeen River, which flows into Lake Huron at Southampton, is one of the best-established routes for canoeing and kayaking in southern Ontario. Thorncrest Outfitters runs an extensive program of short self-guided and organized trips aimed at inexperienced paddlers.

 **Sleeping & Eating****Aunt Mabel's Inn**

MOTEL \$

(2 866-868-2880; www.auntmabels.com; 5084 Hwy 21 S, Port Elgin; d from \$65) These spotless, compact rooms have flatscreen TVs, fridge and microwave and comfy beds. Some have soaker tubs. It's a few minutes' drive from some of the coast's best swimming beaches. Better still, Aunt Mabel's kitchen whips up the best home cookin' for miles, from 6am.

Chantry Breezes

B&B \$\$

(2 866-242-6879, 519-797-1818; www.chantrystays.com; 107 High St, Southampton; r incl breakfast \$120-160; 2 2) This old Queen Anne manor, tucked gently behind gnarled evergreens, features seven rooms spread out among endearingly cluttered antiques and a private garden cottage. Made-to-order breakfasts are delightful to enjoy on the porch.

Southampton Inn

INN \$\$

(2 888-214-3816, 519-797-5915; www.thesouthamptoninn.com; 118 High St, Southampton; r/ste \$135/\$155; 2 2) If the beachy blend of sand and wind isn't a good enough exfoliant, head downstairs for a full spa treatment. The upper level is dedicated to sprawling accommodations; each suite has a private sunny sitting room.

Armen's

FUSION \$

(224 High St, Southampton; mains \$5-12; 2 9am-4pm daily & 5-8pm Wed-Sat) Forget the local greasy spoons and say hi to chatty Armen as he prepares a tasty sandwich from the ever-changing menu. A rotating dinner menu in June, July and August highlights global cuisine; one night it's Canadian, another it's Moroccan. It keeps your taste buds on their

toes. Sneak upstairs and enjoy your fresh eats on the sunny rooftop deck.

Elk and Finch

CAFE \$

(www.elkandfinch.com; 54 Albert St, Southampton; mains \$8-24; 2 8am-8pm Sun-Thu, to 9pm Fri & Sat) This 'coffee pub' serves more than caffeinated and alcoholic beverages: sandwiches, salads and thin-crust pizzas will fill you up. Sip your trendy brew in the wobbly house or park yourself at a table on the grassy lawn.

 **Information**

The small **Southampton Chamber of Commerce** (2 888-757-2215, 519-797-2215; 201 High St, Southampton; 2 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, from noon Sun) can be found in the town hall – the large brick building with a clock tower. The **Saugeen Shores Chamber Office** (2 800-387-3456, 519-832-2332; 559 Goderich St, Port Elgin; 2 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, noon-4pm Sun), 8km down the shoreline in Port Elgin, offers a wider array of information about the region. Check in with **Saugeen Beach Tourism** (2 Jul-Aug 519-422-1262, Sep-Jun 519-422-2457; www.saugeenbeach.com; 672 Main St, Sauble Beach; 2 9am-5pm) for the lowdown on party town.

 **Getting There & Away**

Passengers arriving at Lester B Pearson International Airport in Toronto can take the **Grey Bruce Airbus** (2 800-361-0393; www.grey-bruceairbus.com), which connects to Southampton and Port Elgin (\$74, three hours, four daily). From Toronto Union bus terminal, **Can-ar** (2 800-387-7097; www.can-arcoach.com) operates a bus service to Port Elgin (\$35 to \$44, 4½ hours, one daily), arriving at Ralph's Hi-way Shoppette in the center of town.

London

POP 366,000

Ontario's third-most populous city (after the GTA and Ottawa), midway between Toronto and Detroit, is London, aka the 'forest city.' It bears little resemblance to its namesake, short of its substantial collection of fine Victorian homes, River Thames and a plethora of leafy parks and gardens. Aside from a smattering of beautiful art-deco buildings, London's downtown core is predictably turn-of-the-millennium, if not a little bit 1970s. You might notice some sketchy characters walking along Dundas St toward Adelaide St, but you'll also notice plenty of police cars keeping the peace.

London is home to the University of Western Ontario in the city's north, favored by wealthy Toronto families as *the* spot to send their kids. The student population ensures a young, upbeat vibe: during the end of summer before term begins, London's 'Richmond Row' becomes 'party central.'

The close-to-downtown neighborhoods of Wortley Village and Woodfield have echoes of the great architect Frank Lloyd Wright's hometown of Oak Park in Illinois (USA), although there is no connection between the two or his architectural style: it's more about the quiet leafy streets, the era of construction and those rustic front porches. There's plenty of accommodations in town, some good student-priced eateries and a handful of interesting tourist attractions: it's a great place to visit in the warmer months (it gets heavy snows in the winter) and a wonderful place to live. As Toronto continues to expand, we predict eyes will be more focused on London in years to come.

Sights

Museum London

MUSEUM
([519-661-0333](tel:519-661-0333); www.museumlondon.ca; 421 Ridout St N; admission by donation; \ominus 11am-5pm Fri-Wed, to 9pm Thu) Focusing on the visual arts and how they fit together with history, London's vibrant museum has 5000-plus works of art and 25,000-plus artifacts. Free tours run on Sundays at 2pm.

Eldon House

HISTORIC BUILDING
([519-661-5169](tel:519-661-5169); www.eldonhouse.ca; 481 Ridout St N; adult/child \$7/5; \ominus 2-4pm Tue-Sun) Built in 1834, London's oldest surviving house remains virtually unchanged since the last century. Inside you'll find heirlooms and treasures belonging to the Harris family, a fascinating bunch, while outside you can enjoy the beautiful 19th-century garden.

Museum of Ontario Archaeology MUSEUM
([519-473-1360](tel:519-473-1360); www.uwo.ca/museum; 1600 Attawandaron Rd; adult/child \$4/2; \ominus 10am-4:30pm) An educational and research facility affiliated with the University of Western Ontario, the Museum of Ontario Archaeology displays materials and artifacts spanning 11,000 years of aboriginal history in Ontario. Next door is the Lawson site, an active excavation of a 500-year-old pre-contact Neutral Iroquoian village.

ST THOMAS: ALL ABOARD!

St Thomas is a low-key farming community 20km south of London, en route to Lake Erie. It has a well-maintained Victorian downtown and was once the center of rail travel in southern Canada. At its peak, over a hundred trains a day passed through: hard to imagine today. A must for train-spotters and the kid in everyone, the **Elgin County Railway Museum** ([519-637-6284](tel:519-637-6284); www.ecrm5700.org; 225 Wellington St; adult/child \$5/2; \ominus 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep) is a brick rail shed full of red-hot locomotive action. Special events are held. Down the road, from its home in the hulking, painstakingly restored Canada Southern Station, built in 1873, the **North American Railway Hall of Fame** ([519-633-2535](tel:519-633-2535); 750 Talbot St, St Thomas; \ominus 8:30am-4:30pm Mon-Fri) **FREE** operates a small museum and oversees the ongoing restoration of this incredible building. Historical displays are presented in the waiting rooms, station board room and the ticket office. Rail buffs, drop in and say hello!

Ska-Nah-Doht

Village & Museum

HISTORIC SITE

([519-264-2420](tel:519-264-2420); www.lowerthames-conservation.on.ca/Ska-Nah-Doht; Longwoods Rd Conservation Area; adult/child \$3/free; \ominus 9am-4:30pm) This museum, 32km west of London, re-creates a 1000-year-old Iroquois longhouse community. Village structures are encircled by a maze; the museum contains artifacts thousands of years old and recounts the area's history.

Fanshawe Pioneer Village

HISTORIC SITE

([519-457-1296](tel:519-457-1296); www.fanshawepioneerillage.ca; 1424 Clarke Rd; adult/child \$7/free; \ominus 10am-4:30pm Tue-Sun May-Oct) Explore London's history at the 30-building Fanshawe Pioneer Village on the eastern edge of town. Costumed blacksmiths, farmers and craftspeople carry out their duties in 19th-century pioneer-village style. At the adjoining **Fanshawe Conservation Area** you can swim, walk and camp.

Royal Canadian

Regiment Museum

MUSEUM

([519-660-5275](tel:519-660-5275); [www.theroyalcanadianregiment.ca/thercmuseum](http://theroyalcanadianregiment.ca/thercmuseum); 750 Elizabeth St; adult/child

\$5/3; ☺ 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, from noon Sat & Sun) Inside the austere Wolseley Hall, the Royal Canadian Regiment Museum focuses on the oldest infantry regiment in Canada, with displays covering the North-West Rebellion of 1885 through both world wars to the Korean War.

Festivals & Events

London Fringe Festival

CULTURE

(www.londonfringe.ca) Eleven days of theater, spoken word, film and visual arts around downtown, mid-June.

Sunfest

MUSIC

(www.sunfest.on.ca) Canada's premier world-music festival, held in July.

London Pride

LGBT

(www.pridelondon.ca) London is big enough and gay enough to celebrate its very own pride festival, in July.

Londonlicious

FOOD

(www.londonlicious.ca) A London homage to Toronto's hit Summerlicious festival brings cheap fancy eats to the peeps. It's held from July to August.

Rock the Park

MUSIC

(www.rockthepark.ca) Rock the Park turned 10 in 2013. For a weekend in July, riverside Harris Park swells with longhaireds and rockers for the likes of Whitesnake, Platinum Blonde and the Tragically Hip.

Sleeping

There's a bombardment of cheap chain motels on the Wellington Rd approach from Hwy 401, but stay downtown if you can.

Fanshawe Conservation Area

Campground

CAMPGROUND \$

(866-668-2267; 519-451-2800; www.thamesriver.on.ca; 1424 Clarke Rd; campsites \$25-29, reservations \$9; ☺ May-Oct; ☻) Convenient camping within the city limits, across from Fanshawe Pioneer Village.

Woodfield Bed & Breakfast

B&B \$

(519-675-9632; www.woodfieldbb.com; 499 Dufferin Ave; s \$80, d \$90-120) In the heart of historic Woodfield, one of London's most attractive neighborhoods, you'll find this gorgeous new B&B in a sprawling Victorian mansion. An alternative to London's generic tourist hotels, it's a great way to experience what this picturesque city has to offer.

Holiday Inn Express & Suites

HOTEL \$\$

(519-661-0233; www.holidayinn.com; 374 Dundas St; d incl breakfast from \$109; ☺ ☻ ☻) Centrally located, with some great restaurants nearby, this recently refurbished property has bright rooms with comfy beds and good showers. Rooms have a fridge, microwave, large TV, and there's free internet.

Delta Armouries

HOTEL \$\$

(519-679-6111; www.deltahotels.com; 325 Dundas St; d from \$119; ☺ ☻ ☻) The Armouries wing of London's premier hotel was originally a historic military training facility. Its period features remain to be enjoyed, though most rooms are in the tower wing. Expect comfortable, neutrally furnished accommodations, a central location and reasonable rates.

Metro

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(519-518-9000; www.hotelmetro.ca; 32 Covent Market Pl; d from \$129) Rooms in this funky boutique hotel in the heart of downtown have exposed-brick walls, rainfall showers, deep soaker tubs and plenty of interesting design elements to keep you entertained.

StationPark All Suite Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(800-561-4574; www.stationparkinn.ca; 242 Pall Mall St; ste from \$139; ☻) This all-suite hotel has oversized bedrooms with separate living rooms. Granted, they could do with a makeover, but the service is excellent and the location near Richmond Row and Victoria Park can't be beat.

Eating

★ Covent Garden

MARKET \$

(519-439-3921; www.coventmarket.com; 130 King St; items from \$2; ☺ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun) This humongous, barn-shaped market will whet and satisfy any appetite. There's a permanent collection of delis, bakeries, chocolate shops, fresh produce stalls and world-cuisine eateries, plus seasonal vendors and a sunny, busker-fueled buzz on the patio.

Early Bird

DINER \$

(519-439-6483; 355 Talbot St; items \$5-20; ☺ 11am-3pm Mon, to late Tue-Sun) Delicious Early Bird delivers its own take on from-scratch, home-style cooking. When we say unique, how about the Fat Elvis: smoked bacon, *panko*-crumbed fried bananas, peanut butter and local honey sandwiched between French toast. Don't knock it till you've tried it.

Morrissey House

PUB \$
(519-204-9220; www.themorrisseyhouse.com; 359-361 Dundas St; mains \$9-16; ☎ 11am-late; ☎) This centrally located 'grub-pub' offers classy, well-prepared menus and a relaxed vibe inside its Victorian manor rooms, or on the large sunny patio out front. Free wifi and great tunes are a bonus. Come for a meal, a few pints or both: everyone else is.

★ Budapest

EUROPEAN \$\$
(519-439-3431; 348 Dundas St; mains \$11-25; ☎ 11am-9pm Mon-Sat, 4-9pm Sun) If you've been in business for over 50 years, you've got to be doing something right. We love the authenticity of owner Marika's humble establishment. Over the years, she's perfected her schnitzels, chicken paprikash and pierogies. Yum! Lunch specials are excellent value.

Zen Gardens

VEGETARIAN \$\$
(519-433-6688; www.zen-garden.ca; 344 Dundas St; combination boxes \$10.50; ☎ 11:30am-9pm Mon-Sat, 5-9pm Sun) This Asian vegetarian restaurant downtown will impress vegetarians and their most hardened carnivorous mates alike. Combinations, served in Japanese *bento* boxes, offer the best value.

Bertoldi's Trattoria

ITALIAN \$\$
(519-438-4343; www.bertoldis.ca; 650 Richmond St; mains \$12-29; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Fri, 4-11pm Sat & Sun) On Richmond Row, casual yet classy Bertoldi's does authentic Italian and has special regional menus and a substantial vino list. There's a nice patio in the warmer months.

Thaifoon

THAI \$\$
(519-850-1222; www.thaifoonrestaurant.com; 120 Dundas St; mains \$10-21; ☎ 11:30am-2:30pm Mon-Fri & 5-9pm daily) Classing Dundas St up a bit is Thaifoon. A calm, composed atmosphere and babbling water features provide relief from the mean streets, while chili-laden curries, stir-fries, soups and salads provide a kick in the pants.

Drinking & Entertainment

The vibrant student population ensures plenty of youthful, boozy entertainment; check out the local rag *Scene* (www.scene-magazine.com) for listings.

Honest Lawyer

PUB
(519-433-4913; www.honestlawyer.ca; 228 Dundas St; ☎ 11am-late) Is there such a thing as an honest lawyer? Maybe not, but it's a sure-fire conversation starter at this long, narrow

beer room where an upbeat crowd is usually knocking back a few. Student specials, wing nights, big-screen sports and live music on the weekends.

Barneys/CEEPS**PUB**

(671 Richmond St; ☎ 11am-2am) Don't ask about the name - we don't get it either. Hands down London's largest and most hopping patio as well as bands and DJs, pool tables, shuffleboard, and local beers on tap. The original Richmond Row institution.

Up on Carling**CLUB**

(www.uponcarling.ca; 153 Carling St; ☎ 9pm-late Thu-Sat) A stylish, martini-soaked affair, spinning Latin, R&B, funk house and soul. Dress code enforced.

Call the Office**LIVE MUSIC**

(519-432-4433; www.calltheoffice.com; 216 York St; ☎ 5pm-late) A grungy dive bar with cheap drinks and alt-rock live bands, sometimes pulling names like the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion.

London Music Club**LIVE MUSIC**

(519-640-6996; www.londonmusicclub.com; 470 Colborne St; ☎ 7pm-late Wed-Sat) Touring blues and folk acts fall over themselves to play here, a rockin' room out the back of a cream-brick suburban house. Electric blues jam on Thursday nights; acoustic open mic on Fridays.

i Information

London Public Library (www.londonpubliclibrary.ca; 251 Dundas St; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Thu, to 6pm Fri, to 5pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun; ☎) A fabulous modern setting with a cafe, reading garden, and free internet and wi-fi.

Post Office (800-267-1177; www.canadapost.ca; 515 Richmond St at Dufferin St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Tourism London (800-265-2602, 519-661-5000; www.londontourism.ca) Downtown (267 Dundas St; ☎ 8:30am-4:30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat; Wellington Road (696 Wellington Rd St; ☎ 8:30am-8pm) The downtown office shares a building with the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame and its interesting/gory displays of brains, hearts and bones.

i Getting There & Around

London International Airport (YXU; www.londoninternational.ca; 1750 Crumlin Rd) is a regional base for Air Canada, WestJet and Delta with flights to Toronto, Detroit, and limited Canadian and US destinations.

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Neither subterranean nor an actual railroad, the Underground Railroad refers to the secretive web of abolitionists and humanitarians – both black and white – who shepherded, sheltered, hid and transported escaped slaves north from the US to freedom in Canada. Before the American Civil War, it's estimated that 40,000 brave souls made the dangerous journey. This part of southwestern Ontario, so close to the US border, is rich with historic Underground Railroad sites. Many local towns have substantial African-American populations, descended from those who found sanctuary here.

Historical sights include the North American Black Historical Museum (p155) and Walls Underground Railroad Museum (below). For more information visit: www.blackhistorysociety.ca.

Greyhound Canada rolls out of **London Bus Station** (800-661-8747; www.greyhound.ca; 101 York St; ☎ 6:30am-9pm) to Toronto (\$36, 2½ hours, 12 daily) and Windsor (\$36, 2½ hours, five daily).

London Train Station (519-672-5722; www.viarail.ca; cnr York & Clarence Sts; ☎ 5am-9:30pm Mon-Fri, from 6:30am Sat & Sun) has trains to Toronto (\$56, two hours, seven daily) and Windsor (\$46, two hours, four daily).

London Transit (www.ltconline.ca; 150 Dundas St; ☎ 7:30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8:30am-6pm Sat) has extensive bus services around town (\$2.75 a ride).

Windsor

POP 209,000

At the end of the highway on the southwestern tip of Ontario (across the river from Detroit, USA) this once-booming center for trade and manufacturing has seen better days. Recent approval to commence work on the New International Trade Crossing, a bridge that will increase the volume of trade and speed of passage over the border, may change all that.

For the moment, Windsor's empty facades bear the scars of decline. The upside? Cheap real estate, adjacency to the US and proximity to Lake Erie slowly lure cityslickers looking for a change of pace.

Sights

Visitors will enjoy walking along the Riverwalk, a multi-use path that extends from under the Ambassador Bridge for 5km along the riverfront. The historic Walkerville neighborhood is worth a look.

Dieppe Gardens

(cnr Ouellette St & Riverside Dr) These beautiful gardens, on land once used by Detroit-Windsor ferries before the 1929 bridge and 1930 tunnel put them out of business, offer the best views of the smoke-and-mirrors Detroit skyline.

Art Gallery of Windsor

(AGW; 519-977-0013; www.agw.ca; 401 Riverside Dr W; ☎ 11am-5pm Wed-Sun) **FREE** The jaunty glass-and-concrete prow of the AGW has an awesome permanent collection focused on contemporary Canadian sculpture and painting. Best of all, it's now free!

Canadian Club

Bands Centre

DISTILLERY

(519-973-9503; www.canadianclubwhisky.com; 2072 Riverside Dr E; adult/child \$8/2; ☎ Thu-Sat Jan-Apr, Wed-Sun May-Dec) Canadian Club has been sluicing here (formerly known as the Walkerville Distillery) since 1858. One-hour tours (noon, 2pm and 4pm) explore the history of the ornate Italianate building, the distilling process and offer a taste.

Walls Underground

Railroad Museum

MUSEUM

(519-727-6555; www.undergroundrailroadmuseum.org; 855 Puce Rd, Maidstone; admission \$5; ☎ 10am-4pm May-Oct) Some 20km east of Windsor, the 1846 log cabin built by John Freeman Walls, a fugitive slave from North Carolina, is the focal point of this site, which functioned as a safe terminal for others searching for freedom. Walls' descendants still run the museum.

Festivals & Events

Bluesfest International

MUSIC

(www.thebluesfest.com) Featuring the likes of Los Lobos and Steve Earle. Held mid-July.

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

About 100km northeast of Windsor, before Chatham, is the **Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site** (519-683-2978; www.uncletomscabin.org; 29251 Uncle Tom's Rd, Dresden; adult/child/concession/family \$6.25/4.50/5.25/20; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, from noon Sun May-Oct). Uncle Tom was the fictional protagonist and namesake of the book written by Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1852, based on real-life hero Reverend Josiah Henson. The 5-hectare site displays articles relating to the story and the Underground Railroad, as well as a theater, gallery and interpretive center. To get here, take exit 101 off Hwy 401 and follow the signs.

Sleeping & Eating

There are plenty of beds in Windsor. Chain hotels and local motels dominate Huron Church Rd, leading off the Ambassador Bridge.

Ouellette Ave (Thai, Indian and coffee shops) and Chatham St (bars and grills) lend foodie focus to the downtown area. The Italian district on Erie St E has a happening vibe.

University Place Accommodations HOTEL \$ (519-866-618-1112, 519-254-1112; www.windsorexecutivestay.com; 3140 Peter St; r with shared bathroom from \$39;   ) Though not affiliated with the university, this long- and short-term residence offers clean rooms with shared facilities including laundry. Rooms with en suites and bike rentals are available.

Kirk's B&B

B&B \$\$ (519-888-271-2624, 519-255-9346; www.kirksbandb.com; 406 Moy Ave; s/d from \$75/89;   ) One block from the river, Kirk's is a three-story, old-fashioned brick affair, with a lush garden. Warm, tidy rooms have comfortable beds.

Holiday Inn Windsor Downtown HOTEL \$\$ (519-256-4656; www.holidayinn.com; 430 Ouellette Ave; d from \$119;   ) This generic Holiday Inn is looking a little dated, but has a great downtown position, comfy beds and spacious rooms. There's a full service restaurant on-site, inground swimming pool and plenty of parking.

Squirrel's Cage

CAFE \$ (519-252-2243; www.facebook.com/TheSquirrel-Cage; 1 Maiden Lane W; items \$2-14; ☎ 8:30am-8pm Mon-Wed, to late Thu-Sat, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) Former city slickers love their new life in Windsor and bring a taste of cosmopolitan Toronto to town in this stylish, upbeat licensed cafe. Expect coffees, soups, delicious filled panini, healthy salads daily and weekend brunches.

Spago Trattoria e Pizzeria

ITALIAN \$\$

(519-252-2233; www.spagos.ca; 690 Erie St E; mains \$10-22; ☎ 11:30am-10pm Mon-Sat, 1-9pm Sun) Windsor has a reputation for its Italian, and Spago's fits the bill. If you're not in the mood for delicious pasta, staff also deliver outstanding wood-fired pizzas, seafood, salad and scaloppine. Mmm...amma mia!

Cook's Shop

ITALIAN \$\$

(519-254-3377; <http://cooksshoprestaurant.wordpress.com>; 683 Ouellette Ave; mains \$15-24; ☎ from 5pm Tue-Sun) This reasonably priced fine-dining establishment has been operating for over 30 years from its century-old premises. Specializing in seafood, pasta, lamb and beef; reservations are strongly advised.

Drinking & Entertainment

Manchester

PUB

(519-977-8020; www.themanchester.ca; 546 Ouellette Ave; ☎ 11:30am-late) Friendly staff, hearty British pub fare and a convenient downtown location make the Manchester a sensible choice for a casual relaxed meal and a couple of pints. There's plenty of North American munchies on the menu too.

Caesar's Windsor

CASINO

(800-991-7777; www.caesarswindsor.com; 377 Riverside Dr E; ☎ 24hr) This provincially owned casino (affiliated with the Caesar's Las Vegas family) gives Windsor an economic boost, although crowds have declined with tighter border security and a strong Canadian dollar. Minimum age 19 years. The annexed hotel has the best rooms in town.

Information

Ontario Travel Information Centre (519-973-1338; www.ontariotravel.net; 110 Park St E; ☎ 8:30am-8pm) Well stocked with brochures and helpful staff.

Tourism Windsor Essex (800-265-3633, 519-255-6530; www.visitwindsoressex.com; Suite 103, 333 Riverside Dr; ☎ 8:30am-4:30pm)

Mon-Fri) Information on Windsor and the area; best accessed from Pitt St.

i Getting There & Away

Detroit-Windsor is a major international border crossing, via either the famously expansive Ambassador Bridge (toll \$4.75/US\$4), or the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel (toll \$4.50-4.75/US\$4-4.50) connecting the two downtowns.

The **Windsor Bus Station** (519-254-7577; www.greyhound.ca; 300 Chatham St W; ☎ 7am-9pm) runs buses to Toronto (\$54, five hours, five daily) via London (\$36, two hours, five daily). US-bound trips to Chicago (\$105, nine hours, three daily) transfer from Greyhound Canada to Greyhound in Detroit. Cheaper fares are available online, in advance. Also here is **Transit Windsor** (519-944-4111; www.citywindsor.ca), running buses to Detroit (\$4, 30 minutes, every 30 minutes) – bring your passport.

Windsor Train Station (888-842-7245; www.viarail.ca; cnr Walker & Wyandotte Sts; ☎ 5:15am-11:30pm), 3km east of downtown, has trains to Toronto (\$76, four hours, four daily) via London (\$46, two hours).

Lake Erie Shoreline

From the Welland Canal near Niagara to the Detroit River at Windsor, the Lake Erie shoreline is a scenic, thinly populated strip of sandy beaches, small towns and peaceful parks. Many Ontarians have cottages here. Recent environmental efforts are such that you can swim in Lake Erie (the shallowest and warmest of the Great Lakes), but do check with the locals before you go in. If you really want to get *away*, try quirky Pelee Island, Canada's southernmost point. There's next to no public transport along the shoreline: the following listings assume you're driving between towns.

Amherstburg

War of 1812 and Underground Railroad buffs will find some enthralling diversions in historic Amherstburg, a small town south of Windsor, where the Detroit River flows into Lake Erie – although much more happened here in the past than has of late.

○ Sights

Fort Malden National Historic Site

(519-736-5416; www.pc.gc.ca; 100 Laird Ave; adult/child \$4/2; ☎ 10am-5pm May-Oct) This British fort was built on earthwork embank-

ments along the river in 1840. Beginning with the arrival of the fur traders, the area saw a lot of friction between the French, First Nations and English and, later, the Americans. Here, during the War of 1812, General Brock (together with his ally, Shawnee Chief Tecumseh) conspired to take Detroit.

Park House Museum

MUSEUM

(519-736-2511; www.parkhousemuseum.com; 214 Dalhousie St; adult/child \$3/1; ☎ 10am-5pm) The oldest house in town, and the only one not *from* town. It was built on the other side of the river, ferried across in 1799, and is now furnished in 1850s style.

North American Black Historical Museum

MUSEUM

(519-736-5433, 800-713-6336; www.blackhistoricalmuseum.com; 277 King St; adult/child \$5.50/4.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, from 1pm Sat & Sun) The Nazrey African Methodist Episcopal Church here, a national historic site, was built by former slaves and played a role in the Underground Railroad.

★ Festivals & Events

Shores of Erie

WINE

(www.soewinefestival.com) Wine and entertainment are the name of the game during this late-summer/early-fall festival. Book accommodations well in advance.

🛏️ Sleeping & Eating

Pier 41

B&B \$\$

(519-737-9187; www.pier41bb.com; 41 Mickle Dr; r \$100) Sleep and wake to the gentle lapping of the waves at the shoreline from these two private suites in the friendly owner's former family home.

Artisan Grill

MODERN CANADIAN \$

(519-713-9009; www.artisangrill.ca; 269 Dalhousie St; meals \$8-25; ☎ 11am-10pm Tue-Sun) It's nice to know that a small town like Amherstburg has decent casual fine dining as found here in the Artisan Grill: wraps, sandwiches, salads and steaks – even lobster – make the cut.

Lord Amherst Public House

PUB \$

(519-713-9165; www.lordamherst.ca; 273 Dalhousie St; mains \$10-16; ☎ 11:30am-late Mon-Sun) Fancy, delicious pub meals and top-shelf beers make this quaint historic watering hole a lovely diversion from your heritage adventures.

Information

Amherstburg Visitors Information Centre (519-736-8320; www.amherstburg.ca; cnr Sandwich & William Sts; ☺ late May-Oct) This new facility can point you in the right direction for your historical research.

Leamington & Pelee Island

Lakeside Leamington is the 'Tomato Capital of Ontario,' though most people come here just to get the ferry to Pelee Island. Southeast of town, Point Pelee National Park (the southernmost point of mainland Canada) is a pit stop for thousands of migratory birds during spring and fall.

Canada's southernmost outpost, Pelee Island is a surprising, sleepy oasis in the middle of Lake Erie. In 1788 the Ojibwe and Ottawa Nations leased it to Thomas McKee, though it remained undeveloped until William McCormick bought it in 1823. By 1900 Pelee had 800 residents, four churches and four schools. These days there are just 275 residents and not much else. Life revolves around a very relaxed and humble form of tourism. The island is as green as green can be and surrounded by sandy beaches and shallow water; come to get away from it all without leaving the province. Access is by a bumpy grassroots car ferry from April to December. At other times, you'll need a plane. Remember folks, it's an island: many of the roads are unpaved and services and amenities are limited, including internet.

Sights

Point Pelee National Park

(866-787-3533; 519-322-2365; www.pc.gc.ca; Point Pelee Dr, Leamington; adult/child \$8/4; ☺ dawn-dusk) About 13km southeast of Leamington, this well-loved national park features nature trails, a marsh boardwalk, forests and lovely sandy beaches within the park. The fall migration of monarch butterflies is a spectacle of swirling black and orange.

Pelee Island Heritage Centre

MUSEUM (519-724-2291; www.peleelandmuseum.ca; 1073 West Shore Rd, Pelee Island; adult/child \$3/2; ☺ 10am-5pm May-Oct) Near West Dock, the small Pelee Island Heritage Centre has one of the best natural history collections in Ontario. Engrossing displays cover indigenous to 20th-century history, geology, wildlife, industry, sailing and shipwrecks.

Fish Point Nature Reserve

PARK

(www.ontarioparks.com; 1750 McCormick Rd, Pelee Island; ☺ dawn-dusk) Fish Point Nature Reserve is a long sandy spit – absolutely the southernmost point of Canada. A 3.2km return forest walkway leads to the point, one of the island's best swimming spots. It's a birdwatcher's Eden with black-crowned night herons and a multitude of shorebirds.

Pele Island Winery Wine Pavilion

WINERY

(800-597-3533; www.peleisland.com; 20 East-West Rd, Pelee Island; special tours adult/child \$5/free; ☺ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun May-Oct) Enjoy the fruits of island life at the Pelee Island Winery Wine Pavilion. Regular tours are free at noon, 2pm and 4pm most days; special wine-and-cheese and wine-and-chocolate tours can be scheduled by calling. Check the website for details of its outlet on the mainland.

Tours

Explore Pelee

BIKE TOUR

(519-724-2285; www.explorepelee.com; tours from \$40) Explore Pelee tours will take you from the oldest home through to the canals, pump houses, lighthouse and island graveyard. Wine-tasting combos are available.

Sleeping & Eating

All accommodations on Pelee Island are seasonal, matching the ferry's operational dates.

Stonehill Bed & Breakfast

B&B \$

(519-724-2193; www.stonehillbandb.com; 911 West Shore Rd, Pelee Island; s/d with shared bathroom \$70/85; ☺) Built in 1875 with limestone from the quarry in back, this old farmhouse has waterfront views, a parklike setting and friendly hosts. Cozy bedrooms have patchwork quilts.

Anchor & Wheel Inn

MOTEL, CAMPGROUND \$\$

(519-724-2195; www.anchorwheelinn.com; 11 West Shore Rd; unpowered/powerd campsites \$20/35, d \$85-115, cottage from \$150; ☺) The effervescent Anchor & Wheel in the northwest corner of Pelee has a range of beds from grassy campsites through to air-conditioned guest rooms with Jacuzzis and a dockside cottage.

Wandering Pheasant Inn

INN \$\$

(519-724-2270; www.thewanderingpheasantinn.com; 1060 E West Rd, Pelee Island; d incl breakfast \$115-175) The most southern inn in Canada occupies 1 hectare on the island's eastern

shore. With no streetlights in sight, it's easy to watch the magical fireflies. There are 15 simple rooms and a hot tub. No kids.

Conorlee's Bakery & Delicatessen BAKERY \$ (519-724-2321; rickolte.wix.com/bakery; 5 Northshore Dr; sandwiches \$5-7; ☺ 7:30am-3pm) Conorlee's bakes fresh breads, cakes, pizzas and pies, brews espresso and sells local honey. Grab a sandwich and eat it on the beach.

Drinking & Nightlife

Scudder Beach Bar & Grill BAR (519-724-2902; www.scudderbeach.com; 325 North Shore Rd; mains \$8-16; ☺ noon-10pm May-Sep) This woody bar room serves wraps and sandwiches plus gallons of cold beer; there might be a live band on a Saturday night.

Information

For information on Leamington, go to www.tourismleamington.com or look for the Big Tomato on Talbot St.

All there is to know about Pelee Island can be found at www.pelee.org. Book ferries and accommodations in advance. There's an ATM at Scudder Beach Bar & Grill but it can run out of money on busy weekends! Bring cash.

Getting There & Around

From Leamington (and sometimes Kingsville), **Ontario Ferries** (519-326-2154; www.ontarioferries.com; adult/child/concession \$7.50/3.75/6.25, car/bicycle/motorcycle \$16.50/3.75/8.25; ☺ Apr-mid-Dec) services the island. Schedules depend on the day and season; reservations essential. The trip takes 1½ hours each way. Ferries also connect Pelee with Sandusky, Ohio. In winter, forget it.

Bicycles can be rented at **Comfortech Bicycle Rentals** (519-724-2828; www.comfortechbikental.com; West Shore Rd, Pelee Island; per hr/day \$8/20; ☺ May-Oct) near the West Dock.

Port Stanley

A working fishing village in a nook of Kettle Creek, **Port Stanley** (www.portstanley.net) has a pretty downtown and an agreeable, unpretentious atmosphere: the kind of place where people talk to you in the streets.

Rail buffs and the young at heart will enjoy **Port Stanley Terminal Rail** (877-244-4478; www.pstr.on.ca; 309 Bridge St; adult/child \$15/9), a 14km section of the historic London-Port Stanley railroad. The schedule varies: check the website for details.

SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES

The flat, sandy soils of northern Norfolk County between Port Stanley and Port Dover provide ideal growing conditions. What used to be a strictly tobacco-growing area now also supports hemp and ginseng fields. For a sniff of old 'baccy, take Hwy 3 inland to the **Tobacco Museum & Heritage Centre** (519-582-0278; www.delhimuseum.ca; 200 Talbot Rd, Delhi; admission by donation; ☺ 10am-4:30pm Mon-Fri, 1-4pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug), a wooden-crate, leaf-filled multicultural museum with displays on the local history of tobacco production.

The **Port Stanley Festival Theatre** (519-782-4353; www.portstanleytheatre.ca; 302 Bridge St) keeps locals and visitors amused over its summer season.

If the pace endears you, consider staying at the **Inn on the Harbour** (519-782-7623; www.innontheharbour.ca; 202 Main St; d \$129-239; ☺ ☈ ☈) where you can watch fishing boats come and go from this upmarket, maritimewoven inn.

Port Dover & Around

Port Dover is a summer-centric beach town with a sandy, laid-back vibe. Sunburned midlifers, bikini-clad teens and ice-cream-dripping kids patrol the main drag on summer vacation. **Port Dover Visitors Centre** (519-583-1314; www.portdover.ca; 19 Market St W, Port Dover; ☺ 10am-5pm) can help with accommodations and loan bicycles for free. The **Port Dover Harbour Museum** (519-583-2660; www.portdovermuseum.ca; 44 Harbour St, Port Dover; admission by donation; ☺ 11am-6pm) is a reconstructed fishing shack focusing on the Lake Erie fishing industry and the exploits of local sea-dog Captain Alexander McNeilleedge ('Wear no specks, use no tobacco, take a wee dram as necessary'). The most central beds in town are at the white-walled **Erie Beach Hotel** (519-583-1391; www.eriebeachhotel.com; 19 Walker St, Port Dover; d \$90-110; ☺ ☈ ☈). Kitschy rooms overlook impossibly perfect lawns, while the pubby dining rooms obsess over perch and shrimp (mains \$10 to \$20).

If you head southwest along the coast you'll first come to the excellent **Turkey**

Point Provincial Park (519-426-3239; www.ontarioparks.com; 194 Turkey Point Rd, Turkey Point; unpowered/powerd campsites \$28/33, admission per car \$11; ☎ May-Oct). Here, forests teem with bird nerds and nature lovers. Around 30km further southwest, **Long Point Provincial Park** (519-586-2133; www.ontarioparks.com; 350 Erie Blvd, Port Rowan; unpowered/powerd campsites \$28/33, admission per car \$11; ☎ May-Oct) occupies a sandy spit jutting into the lake, great for swimming.

MUSKOKA LAKES

The city of Barrie marks the end of Toronto's suburban sprawl and the gateway to the Muskoka Lakes region. Although pleasant, lakeside Barrie can feel like just another Toronto suburb at times. It's worth stopping at the large **Ontario Travel Information Centre** (800-668-2746, 705-725-7280; 21 Maple View Dr; ☎ 8am-8pm) along Hwy 400 as you approach the lakes to arm yourself with maps and brochures.

The Muskoka Lakes (or just Muskoka) is a broader name for the region comprising Lakes Muskoka, Rosseau and Joseph, among many smaller others. Originally rich in lumber production and shipbuilding, the area is now at the heart of 'cottage country': a popular place for families to enjoy the water and, for many, to retire. Schedule a few days to explore the beauty and serenity of this forested, watery region, particularly delightful in the fall. Ontario's most extravagant cottages are here, many in the fabulous 'Millionaires' Row' on Lake Muskoka.

There's limited public transportation in the region, which is best explored by car: www.discovermuskoka.ca/suggested-driving-tours. Note that Friday northbound traffic (from Toronto) and southbound Sunday traffic on Hwy 400 can be a nightmare from May to October.

Orillia

Orillia proudly sits at the northern end of Lake Simcoe, which pours into Lake Couchiching. Neither are technically part of the Muskoka Lakes, but are major stops along the Trent-Severn Waterway. Triangular sails and grumbling motorboats clutter the harbor, while drivers turn off Hwy 11 for a stroll down time-warped Mississauga St, Orillia's main drag.

Sights & Activities

Leacock Museum

MUSEUM

(705-329-1908; www.leacockmuseum.com; 50 Museum Dr; adult/child \$5/2; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) In 1928, Canadian humorist Stephen Leacock built a lavish waterfront house that has since become the Leacock Museum. In July the museum hosts the **Leacock Summer Festival**, a well-regarded literary festival.

Coldwater Canadiana Heritage Museum

MUSEUM

(705-955-1930; www.coldwatermuseum.com; 1474 Woodrow Rd, Coldwater; admission by donation; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, from 1pm Sun late May-Oct) West of Orillia on Hwy 12 before it connects with Hwy 400, you'll find this charming riverside folk museum with its sweet collection of colonial buildings tracing the history of village life from 1830 to 1950.

Island Princess

CRUISE

(705-325-2628; www.orilliacruises.com; ☎ Jun-Oct) Orillia offers a variety of sightseeing cruises on the *Island Princess*, though Penetanguishene and Parry Sound have more picturesque cruising options. There are up to four cruises daily here in July and August. Lunch and dinner cruises require advance booking: check the website for cruise types, schedules and fares.

Sleeping & Eating

Cranberry House

B&B \$

(866-876-5885, 705-326-6871; www.orillia.org/cranberryhouse; 25 Dalton Cres S; r from \$95) This B&B sits on a quiet street that feels a lot like the set for the TV show *The Wonder Years*. Every house seems tidy and welcoming, and Cranberry House is no exception. Rooms have en suite bathrooms.

Stone Gate Inn

HOTEL \$\$

(705-329-2535, 877-674-5542; www.stonegateinn.com; 437 Laclie St; r incl breakfast from \$132; ☎) It's the extra perks that set this modern inn apart from the rest: a swimming pool, full business center, hors d'oeuvres over the weekend and bathrobes in the rooms.

Webers Hamburgers

BURGERS \$

(705-325-3696; www.webers.com; Hwy 11; hamburgers \$4.79; ☎ 10:30am-late) Just 12km north of Orillia on Hwy 11, this legendary charcoal barbecued burger joint lures passers-by with cheap eats and a shmancy sky bridge to nab commuters on the other side. Endless lines of lip-lickers form salivating over greasy treats.

Mariposa Market

 705-325-8885; www.mariposamarket.ca; 109 Mississauga St E; items from \$2; ☺ 8am-5pm) This half-bakery, half-knickknack shack is a feast for the eyes and the tastebuds. Try the assortment of savory pastries for a light lunch, grab a dessert then shop for souvenirs.

MARKETS

★ Entertainment**Casino Rama**

 705-329-3325; www.casinorama.com; 5899 Rama Rd; ☺ 24hr) Glitz Casino Rama is also a main stage on the touring entertainment circuit. A courtesy shuttle links many accommodations to the frenzy.

CASINO

Orillia Opera House

 PERFORMING ARTS (705-326-8011; www.orilliaoperahouse.ca; 20 Mississauga St W) The turreted Orillia Opera House hosts a variety of productions including the likes of *Cats* and *Oklahoma!*

PERFORMING ARTS

i Getting There & Away

Greyhound Canada provides services between Orillia and Toronto (\$31.25, 2½ hours, four daily). **Ontario Northland** (www.ontarionorthernland.ca) also offers passenger services (\$27.75, two hours, four daily).

Gravenhurst

While nearby Bracebridge is favored among visitors, Gravenhurst is coming into its own. Check out Muskoka Wharf, a post-millennial waterfront development including shops, restaurants, condos, a farmers bazaar and a museum.

○ Sights

Muskoka Boat & Heritage Centre MUSEUM (705-687-2115; www.realmuskoka.com; 275 Steamboat Bay Rd; adult/child \$7/2; ☺ 10am-4pm Tue-Sat) This museum tells the region's rich history of steamships and hoteliers with displays of over 20 wooden vessels. Also here, you'll find two ships: the *Segwun*, the oldest operating steamship in North America, and the *Wenonah II*, a new cruiser with an old-school design. In a past life, the *Segwun* was a mail ship serving secluded Muskoka enclaves. A variety of cruises are available: check the website for details.

Bethune Memorial House HISTORIC BUILDING (705-687-4261; www.pc.gc.ca/bethune; 297 John St N; adult/child \$3.90/1.90; ☺ 10am-4pm Tue-Sat Jun-Oct) This small museum honors Cana-

dian doctor Norman Bethune who spent much of his life in China as a surgeon and educator. Bethune set up the world's first mobile blood-transfusion clinic while in Spain during the Spanish Revolution.

♂ Tours**Muskoka Autumn Studio Tour**

ART TOUR

(www.muskokaautumnstudiotour.com) For over 35 years, each September, local artists open their studio doors to the public.

★ Festivals & Events**Music on the Barge**

MUSIC

(www.musiconthebarge.webs.com; Gull Lake Park; admission by donation) In summer, thousands flock to hear big-band numbers, jazz or country. Concerts start at 7:30pm each Sunday from late June to late August.

● Sleeping & Eating**Residence Inn Muskoka Wharf**

HOTEL \$\$\$

(705-687-6600; www.marriott.com; 285 Steamship Bay Rd; d/st incl breakfast from \$125/\$155; ☺ ☻ ☻) If you want to be by the water, it's hard to get closer than this hulking new property in the Muskoka Wharf complex, offering large, freshly decorated studios and suites with full kitchens, separate living and sleeping areas and generous bathrooms. Some have balconies and lake views. Rates spike in peak periods.

★ Taboo Resort

RESORT \$\$\$

(705-687-2233; www.tabooresort.com; 1209 Muskoka Beach Rd; d from \$199; ☺ ☻ ☻) Finally, a boutique Ontario property with international appeal. Occupying a stunning lake frontage on a compact peninsula, Taboo's hotel rooms and suites have clean, minimalist lines, gray and maple woods and slick bathrooms with Molton Brown amenities. Tri-level chalets are perfect if you're bringing the kids: they'll disappear into kids' clubs so you can enjoy a cocktail by the pool, a round of golf or the fabulous cuisine.

Blue Willow Tea Shop

TEAHOUSE\$

(705-687-2597; www.bluewillowteashop.ca; 900 Bay St; high tea \$23, meals \$8-24; ☺ 10am-4pm Mon-Wed, to 8pm Thu-Sat, noon-4pm Sun) This lovely waterfront tearoom serves high tea daily from 2pm. There's a limited dinner menu with British staples like bangers and mash and fish and chips.

Pizza Station

(705-687-3111; 415 Bethune Dr N; small pizzas from \$6; ☺ noon-3pm & 6-11pm) Locals swear by this nondescript pizza joint for its steaming-hot cheesy goodness with just the right amount of toppings and a crispy crunchy crust. Take out and eat by the water.

Entertainment**Gravenhurst Opera House**

THEATER

(705-687-5550; www.gravenhurstoperahouse.com; 295 Muskoka Rd S) This charming heritage building presents a summer season of professional theater.

Information

Gravenhurst Chamber of Commerce (705-687-4432; www.gravenhurstchamber.com; 685 Muskoka Rd N; ☺ 8:30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Located on the edge of town. Additional information can be found at www.gravenhurst.ca.

Getting There & Away

Ontario Northland (www.ontarianorthland.ca) runs buses between Toronto and Gravenhurst (\$36.45, three hours, four to five daily) on the North Bay route, which pull in to the Gravenhurst Train Station. Since late 2012, trains no longer serve the region.

Bracebridge

Woodsy Bracebridge sits on the 45th parallel, halfway between the North Pole and the equator! This enchanting town reveals its natural charms throughout the year, with towering evergreens, gushing waterfalls and brilliant maples.

Sights**Waterfalls**

WATERFALL

Near the visitors center you'll find the best known of Bracebridge's 22 waterfalls, Bracebridge Falls. Other favorites include Muskoka South Falls (33m), about 6km south of town, Wilson's Falls and High Falls, both to the north.

Muskoka Brewery

BREWERY

(705-646-1266; www.muskokabrewery.com; 13 Taylor Rd; ☺ 11am-5pm Mon-Sat, to 4pm Sun) Muskoka Brewery bottles some delicious flavors including a cream ale and a couple of lagers. In summer, free taste-testing tours depart 12:30pm to 3:30pm on the half-hour Thursday to Saturday.

PIZZERIA \$

Tours**Lady Muskoka**

BOAT TOUR

(705-646-2628, 800-263-5239; www.lady-muskoka.com; cruises adult/child from \$29/14; ☺ May-Oct) Muskoka's largest cruise ship takes in the beauty of Lake Muskoka, including jaw-dropping 'Millionaires Row' where the other half relax. A variety of sailings including brunch cruises are available. Check the website for schedules and fares.

Sleeping & Eating**Wellington Motel**

MOTEL \$\$

(705-645-2238; www.wellingtonmotel.com; 265 Wellington St; r \$80-120, ste \$140; ☺) This tidy, centrally located redbrick motel is retro but clean. Rooms have fridge, microwave and huge bathrooms. Suites come with full kitchens.

Inn at the Falls

HOTEL \$\$

(877-645-9212, 705-645-2245; www.innatthefalls.net; 1 Dominion St; d \$109-205; ☺ ☎) Iron lanterns, antique candelabras, portraits and picket fences uphold the 1870s vibe of this local landmark, with its grand main building and six cottages. It's a popular wedding spot. Suites have charming decor and gargantuan beds that feel like boats. The on-site gourmet pub has a stunning patio surrounded by tiered gardens overlooking the bay.

Old Station

PUB \$\$

(705-645-9776; www.oldstation.ca; 88 Manitoba St; mains \$12-35; ☺ 11am-10pm) On summer evenings this is the most happening place in town. The patio overlooks the main drag – perfect for post-kayak recovery sessions. Dig into a pulled-pork sandwich and wash it back with a pint of Muskoka ale from the brewery just over the road.

Riverwalk

MEDITERRANEAN \$\$\$

(705-646-0711; www.riverwalkrestaurant.ca; 1 Manitoba St; lunch mains \$12-18, dinner \$28-37; ☺ 11:30am-2:30pm & 5:30-7:30pm Tue-Sat) Tear your eyes away from the view to focus on the menu, if you can. You'll need to choose between pork, chicken, duck, veal, beef, lamb or seafood. Reservations recommended.

Information

Bracebridge Visitors Centre (705-645-8121, 866-645-8121; 1 Manitoba St; ☺ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat, noon-4pm Sun Jun-Aug) Open year round.

➊ Getting There & Away

Ontario Northland (www.ontarionorthland.ca) buses connect Bracebridge with Toronto (\$39.30, three hours, four to five daily) on the North Bay route.

Rosseau & Port Carling

You'll pass through sleepy Rousseau on a Discover Muskoka self-driving tour: www.discovermuskoka.ca/suggested-driving-tours. It's a quaint little village with a small beach, a historic library, a few antique shops and one or two cafes. It's your closest village if you choose to stay in Muskoka's newest 'buzz' resort, the **Rousseau** (JW Marriott Resort & Spa; ☎ 705-765-1900; www.therousseau.com; 1050 Paignton House Rd, Minett; d/st from \$199/249): ideal for couples with kids and/or money, it's the kind of place where Mom and Dad can swim by the pool while the youngsters ramble on guided nature walks. Dining is limited to the resort's expensive offerings. Suites have kitchens, but cost a small fortune. In short, it's huge, handsome and has it all, but isn't for everyone.

North of Bracebridge along Rte 118, in wealthy Port Carling, is a fantastic **mural** of an old ship. A closer glance reveals that the mural is actually a mosaic of vintage photographs: truly remarkable. Muskoka's majestic beauty serves as an inspiring backdrop for many other artists in the region. Contact the **Arts Council of Muskoka** (www.artscouncilofmuskoka.com) for more information.

Huntsville

Pretty Huntsville, Muskoka's largest town, set among twisting lakes and furry pines, is the gateway to Algonquin Provincial Park in eastern Ontario. Base yourself here for day trips to the park, around Muskoka, or before setting off on an Algonquin adventure, although you'll have to have your own wheels. At time of writing, there was no longer scheduled public transport between Huntsville and the park.

❷ Sights

Muskoka Heritage Place

(☎ 705-789-7576; www.muskokaheritageplace.org; 88 Brunel Rd; adult/child \$16/11; ☺ May-Oct) Come here for a historic perspective of the region, which includes an authentic pioneer village, several informative museums and

a working steam train from 1902 (departs several times per day; rides included in admission).

★ Festivals & Events

Festival of the Arts

ARTS

(www.huntsvillefestival.on.ca) Music, films and general celebrations of the arts held year-round.

🛏 Sleeping

Huntsville Inn

MOTEL \$

(☎ 866-222-8525; www.huntsvilleinn.com; 19 King William St; d from \$50; ☺ ☻) In a prime location by the bridge, fully refurbished rooms with flatscreen TVs and free wi-fi offer excellent value.

Au Petit Dormeur

INN \$\$

(☎ 705-789-2552; www.aupetitdormeur.com; 22 Main St W; d \$80-100; ☺ ☻) Set in a beautiful colonial home, rooms are stylish – there's even a fitness facility. Breakfast can be taken on the balcony overlooking the nearby lake.

Hidden Valley Resort

RESORT \$\$

(☎ 705-789-2301; www.hvmuskoka.com; 1755 Valley Rd; d from \$115; ☺) Most of the well-proportioned, recently refurbished rooms in this '90s style resort have a balcony with a wonderful vista of the lake and expansive well-tended grounds. There's a restaurant with a fabulous patio, outdoor and indoor pools and even a small ski-hill nearby. It's 8km north of Huntsville.

Sunset Inn Motel

MOTEL \$\$

(☎ 866-874-5360, 705-789-4414; www.sunsetinnmotel.com; 69 Main St W; d incl breakfast from \$115; ☺ ☻) In a nice hillside spot near the train station, this quality lakeside motel provides breakfast in a sunny common room.

❖ Eating & Drinking

★ That Little Place by the Lights

ITALIAN \$

(☎ 705-789-2536; www.thatlittleplacebythelights.ca; 76 Main St E; meals \$6-14; ☺ 11am-8pm Mon-Sat) A local favorite, this little place by the lights is loved for its old-school pizzas, pastas and gelati. Excellent value.

Louis' II

DINER \$

(☎ 705-789-5704; 24 Main St E; items \$6-18; ☺ 8am-8pm) This pleasant family diner is great for cheap breakfasts and cheery lunches like old-school BLTs, burgers and souvlaki. Daily specials.

Bo's Authentic Thai

(705-789-8038; www.bothai.ca; 79 Main St E; mains \$10-19; ☺ 11am-9pm; ☐) As the name suggests, authentic Thai dishes (although only with English names on the menu) are presented with flair in this new joint by the water. Vegetarian options are available.

Mill on Main

MODERN CANADIAN \$\$

(705-788-5150; www.themillonmain.ca; 50 Main St E; mains \$12-26; ☺ 11am-10pm) Try the famous cheese balls – you won't regret it. With a lovely covered patio glimpsing the water and some classy original twists on old favorites, the Mill is a good spot for a casual meal or a few drinks. There's sometimes live music on weekends.

On the Docks

PUB

(705-789-7910; www.onthedockspub.com; 90 Main St E; items \$6-14; ☺ 11:30am-1am) Swing by for tasty wraps, appys and sandwiches on the fantastic multi-level water-view patio.

Cottage Bar and Grill

BAR

(705-789-6842; www.huntsvillecottage.com; 7 John St; ☺ 11am-10pm) The sprawling waterfront patio gets packed in the summer, but you can't beat the location for a beer and a burger in the sunshine. There's live local music, most nights.

i Information

Chamber of Commerce (705-789-1751; www.huntsville.ca; 8 West St N; ☺ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) Loaded with local info.

i Getting There & Away

Ontario Northland (www.ontarionorthland.ca) buses from Toronto (\$39.30, three hours, four to five daily) continue to North Bay.

GEORGIAN BAY

A vast realm of blues and greens, Georgian Bay is a land of infinite dreaming. Summer breezes blow gently along sandy shores. Maples ignite in the fall and thick pines quiver at winter's frosty kiss. These ethereal landscapes inspired Canada's best-known painters and today the bay remains home to scores of thriving artistic communities.

We begin our journey on its eastern shore in Parry Sound, at the northern fringe of Muskoka, then trace the shoreline south to Midland, with its spectacular murals, and to pretty Penetanguishine. In the bay's

southern arc sits Wasaga Beach, the longest freshwater beach in the world: a summer sizzler. Neighboring Collingwood and Blue Mountain are home to the province's most popular downhill and cross-country skiing in the winter.

Heading north on its western shore from Owen Sound, the magnificent Bruce Peninsula is famed for its jagged limestone outcrops, shimmering cliffs and craggy beaches. At the Bruce's tip, tiny Tobermory offers some of Ontario's most spectacular scenery and a relaxed alternative vibe, but be prepared to share it. A pleasant sail on the Chi-Cheemaun ferry brings you to the beauty of sparsely populated Manitoulin Island, believed by many First Nations to be the home of the Great Spirit. Linger here for a few days if you can.

Parry Sound

Formerly a busy shipping port, little Parry Sound is gently tucked behind hundreds of tiny islands in Georgian Bay. The atmosphere is laid-back and serene, despite the giant set of railroad tracks soaring through the sky near the docks.

⦿ Sights & Activities**Bobby Orr Hall of Fame**

MUSEUM

(877-746-4466; www.bobbyorrhalloffame.com; 2 Bay St; adult/child \$9/6; ☺ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, from 11am Sun) For the uninitiated, local legend and hockey hero Bobby Orr forever changed the role of defensemen with his awesome offensive prowess. At his huge modern shrine, fans can pretend to be a sports announcer or strap on goalie gear and confront an automated puck-firing machine.

White Squall

KAYAKING

(705-342-5324; www.whitesquall.com; 53 Carling Bay Rd, Nobel; rentals from \$30, day tours from \$120; ☺ 9am-5:30pm Apr-Oct) Explore the area's waterways with rental kayaks and guided tours: friendly staff offer a range of programs. Check the website for details. HQ is about 15km northwest of Parry Sound near Nobel, en route to Killbear Provincial Park.

Island Queen

CRUISE

(800-506-2628; www.island-queen.com; 9 Bay St; 2hr cruise adult/child \$28/14, 3hr cruise \$38/19; ☺ Jun-Oct) Cruise through the nearby 30,000 islands (yes, that's right!) on the

Georgian Bay



ONTARIO PARRY SOUND

good ship *Island Queen*. A variety of sailings are available.

MV Chippewa III

(888-283-5870, 705-746-6064; www.spiritofthesound.ca; Seguin River Parkette, Bay St; Jun-Oct) Lunch and dinner cruises are among the variety of options aboard this tiny green tugboat. Check the website for fares and schedules.

Festivals & Events

Festival of the Sound

(www.festivalofthesound.ca) Parry Sound hosts a nationally renowned festival of classical music from mid-July to mid-August. Ticket prices vary.

Sleeping & Eating

Area B&Bs can be found on www.parrysoundbb.com.

Bayside Inn

B&B \$\$ (866-833-8864, 705-746-7720; www.psbaysideinn.com; 10 Gibson St; \$93-143;) Built in the 1880s as a luxurious private residence, this refurbished estate is full of pleasant surprises: a twisting staircase behind the fireplace and 12 beautiful bedrooms with memory-foam mattresses. All have en suite

bathrooms and are decorated in soothing colors.

Mad Hatter Café

CAFE \$

(35 Seguin St; items \$6-12; 7am-4pm Mon-Fri, from 8:30am Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) Bustling and cheerful, this place has excellent coffee and baked goods to have you grinning like the Cheshire cat.

Wellington's

PUB \$\$

(105 James St; mains \$9-20; 11am-11pm) Wellington's is the 'light beer' of pubs – it looks like a bar, but it's healthier for you. The menu has some calorie-conscious options like pecan chicken.

Information

Georgian Bay Country Visitors Centre

(705-746-1287; www.gbcountry.com; 70 Church St; 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) At the former train station.

Getting There & Away

Ontario Northland

(www.ontarionorthernland.ca) buses connect Parry Sound with Toronto (\$52.40, 3½ hours, three daily) on the Sudbury route.

THE BUZZ ON BLACK FLIES

From the spring thaw until there's been at least three weeks of hot summer weather, anywhere north of Toronto is subject to minor plagues of black flies, mosquitoes, deer flies and horseflies. Unlike the pesky mosquito with their pointy stingers, black flies are small and voracious: they actually have teeth that gnaw away at your skin, leaving raised bumps (often scores of them) and frequently causing streaks of blood to suddenly appear on your precious skin. Sounds like a horror film, right? They're generally not as bad as it sounds, but can be. Hardened locals swear by eating leeks for breakfast, lunch and tea, or taking lots of vitamin B to dissuade the bloodthirsty critters, but we find an electrified tennis racquet called 'the Executioner' works just as well. Whatever you do, remember the insect repellent when you're heading north.

Midland & Penetanguishine

The native Huron-Ouendat people first settled the region and developed a confederacy to encourage cooperation among neighboring Aboriginal tribes. This alliance attracted French explorers and Jesuit missionaries eager to save their souls. Much of Midland's fascinating history focuses on the bloody altercations between the Huron and the Christian stalwarts. Midland is also known for the over 30 vibrant murals which have transformed downtown into an outdoor art/history lesson.

Less than 6km up the road, Penetanguishine (pen-uh-tang-wa-sheen) is a small town with a big name that makes a great base for exploring the 30,000 islands that are sprinkled around Georgian Bay. Together, they make a fine day trip or easy weekend away from Toronto.

Sights & Activities

Martyrs' Shrine

(www.martyrs-shrine.com; Hwy 12, Midland; adult/child \$4/free; ☺ 8:30am-9pm May-Oct) This monument to six Jesuit missionaries who met their gruesome demise at the hands

MONUMENT

of the Huron features a large lawn strewn with crosses and the imposing cathedral-esque Shrine church. Each year, thousands make a pilgrimage here to pay homage to martyred St Jean de Brébeuf.

Ste-Marie among the Hurons HISTORIC SITE

(✉ 705-526-7838; www.saintemarieamongthe-hurons.on.ca; Hwy 12, Midland; adult/child \$10/9; ☺ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct) Costumed staff members dose on visitors to this reconstruction of the 17th-century Jesuit mission, offering stories about hardship and torture with a cheerful smile.

Huronia Museum & Huron-Ouendat

Village MUSEUM

(✉ 705-526-2844; www.huroniamuseum.com; 549 Little Lake Park Rd, Midland; adult/child \$10/6; ☺ 9am-5pm) The Huronia Museum & Huron-Ouendat Village is a replica of a 500-year-old Huron-Ouendat settlement. The museum houses a collection of almost a million pieces – not all are on display!

Discovery Harbour

MUSEUM

(✉ 705-549-8064; www.discoveryharbour.on.ca; 93 Jury Dr, Penetanguishine; adult/concession \$7.25/6.25; ☺ May-Sep) Recommended guided tours of this reconstructed British garrison lead visitors through two replica vessels and recount the fort's history.

Awenda Provincial Park

PARK

(✉ 705-549-2231; Awenda Park Rd; day use per vehicle \$12-20, campsites \$16-46; ☺ May-Oct) About 15km from Penetanguishine, this picturesque park boasts four sandy swimming beaches, 30km of easy walking trails and over 200 species of bird.

MS Georgian Queen

CRUISE

(✉ 800-363-7447, 705-549-7795; www.georgianbaycruises.com; ☺ May-Oct) A variety of cruises depart the Penetanguishine town dock: check the website for latest schedules and fares.

Tours

30,000 Island Tours

BOAT TOUR

(✉ 705-549-3388, 888-833-2628; www.midlandtours.com; 177 King St, Midland; adult/child \$27/14; ☺ May-Oct) *Miss Midland* isn't a regional beauty pageant, but the name of a vessel: cruise on her daily at 2pm from Midland dock. Lunch and dinner cruises operate July to August.

Sleeping & Eating

Silver Star

MOTEL \$
 (705-526-6571; www.silverstarmotel.ca; 748 Yonge St, Midland; d from \$60; Cheap, cheery, clean and central! Recently renovated rooms have flatscreen TVs and free wi-fi. Best value in town.

Comfort Inn

MOTEL \$
 (705-526-2090; www.comfortinnmidland.com; 980 King St, Midland; d from \$79; Drive-up units, good rates and friendly staff win points for this dated but well-maintained motel in a leafy spot about 3km from downtown.

★ Little Lake Inn

B&B \$\$
 (888-297-6130; www.littlelakeinn.com; 669 Yonge St, Midland; r \$124-175; Each room at this modern B&B offers a flat-screen TV, DVD player and whirlpool. Its friendly, welcoming hosts are attentive but not intrusive. The green room has a separate entrance and private outdoor sitting area. True to its name, Midland's 'Little Lake' is out back.

Georgian Terrace

B&B \$\$
 (705-549-2440, 888-549-2440; www.georgianterrace.ca; 14 Water St, Penetanguishene; r incl breakfast \$150-175; Dramatic pillars front this beautifully restored and updated heritage home. Rooms are elegant without being frilly, have en suite bathroom, wi-fi and flatscreen TVs.

Ciboulette et cie

DELI \$
 (705-245-0410; www.cibouletteetcie.ca; 248 King St, Midland; items from \$6; 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) This gourmet deli/cafe is stocked to the hilt with fine foods, cold meats, cheeses, freshly made soups and sauces. The cafe serves great coffees and light meals, and there's a range of products to go: perfect for a lakeside picnic.

★ Captain Ken's Diner

FISH & CHIPS \$\$

(705-549-8691; www.captainkensdiner.com; 70 Main St, Penetanguishene; mains \$10-25; 7am-9pm) Come say hello to Ken as he fries your lightly battered fresh lake pickerel to perfection. He got a part-time job here at 14 when it was a pool hall, bought the joint at 17 and over decades turned it into the smoothly operating fish, chips and sports-bar success story it is today. The food is as good as the story.

Explorer's Cafe

INTERNATIONAL \$\$
 (705-527-9199; www.theexplorerscafe.com; 345 King St, Midland; mains \$14-30; 11:30am-10pm) This quirky restaurant remains a favorite: its walls are lined with booty from around the world. While meals are just as international (Singapore noodles, Argentine steak and maple chipotle salmon), only local produce is used in their creation.

Cellarman's Ale House

PUB \$\$
 (705-526-8223; 337 King St, Midland; mains \$8-25; 11:30am-late) This cozy pub has an intimate location, tucked away off King St. Hearty British fare keeps the locals strong during drafty winters: try a scotch egg with your steak and mushroom pie. Mmm.

★ Entertainment

King's Wharf Theatre

THEATER

(888-449-4463; www.kingswharftheatre.com; 93 Jury Dr, Penetanguishene; May-Sep) Hosts small-town productions of big-name musicals from its wonderful wooden lakeside theater.

Information

Southern Georgian Bay Chamber of Commerce (705-526-7884; www.southerngeorgianbay.on.ca; 208 King St, Midland; 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Produces the *Southern Georgian Bay Visitor Guidebook*: download it from the website.

Tourist office (705-549-2232; 2 Main St, Penetanguishene; 9am-5pm May-Oct) You can't miss this seasonal office on the docks.

Getting There & Around

There are no direct buses from Toronto to the area. Greyhound Canada buses connect Barrie with Midland and Penetanguishene (\$17.50, one hour, two daily). **Central Taxi** (705-526-2626; www.centraltaximidland.ca) can take you between Midland and Penetanguishene if you don't have wheels.

Collingwood & Blue Mountain

Pretty lakeside Collingwood and neighboring Blue Mountain, a handsome ski resort and summer playground, have become a year-round mecca for those who enjoy activity with their scenery. The area is called Blue Mountains, the resort is called Blue Mountain. If healthy outdoorsy

WASAGA: WORLD'S LONGEST FRESHWATER BEACH

It's true, the 14km stretch of sand at **Wasaga Beach Provincial Park** (2 705-429-2516; day use per vehicle \$15; ☺ May-Oct) is the longest freshwater beach in the world. It's also the closest beach town to Toronto, drawing mega-crowds in summer: things can get rowdy and camping is prohibited. In winter pristine sand dunes transform into snowy hills, perfect for cross-country skiing. There are plenty of beds in town, but most are basic and expensive. Hit www.wasaga.com for the full listing. Greyhound operates services from Toronto to Wasaga Beach (\$39, 2½ hours, twice daily).

pursuits aren't your thang, why not sink your teeth into the Apple Pie Trail (www.applepietrail.ca), then slip into a blissful food coma.

Activities

★ Blue Mountain

(2 705-445-0231; www.bluemountain.ca; 108 Jozo Weider Blvd, Blue Mountains; day & night lift ticket adult/concession \$72/55; ☺ 9am-10pm) Hands down the best skiing and snowboarding in Ontario, from the folks who brought you Whistler and Mont-Tremblant: freestyle terrain, half-pipes, jump-on jump-off rails, 16 lifts and over 35 runs from beginner to double black diamond. The Blue Mountain Snow School offers a variety of lessons for all experience levels. Courses including day lift pass, rentals and instruction start at \$79. In summer activities abound, including mountain biking, sailing, climbing, hiking and windsurfing.

Free Spirit Tours

ADVENTURE SPORTS (2 519-599-2268, 705-444-3622; www.freespirittours.com; 236720 Grey Rd 13, Heathcote; activities from \$45) Escape the crowds and enjoy a sensational day rock climbing, caving or kayaking (summer) or take a stab at snowshoeing in the winter. Check the website for details.

Scandinave Spa

SPA (2 705-443-8484; www.scandinave.com/en/blue-mountain; 152 Grey Rd 21, Blue Mountains; baths \$48; ☺ 10am-9pm) Indulge yourself silly whatever the season in this fine Scandinavian-

style treatment spa featuring hot baths, cold baths, waterfalls, snow-rolling (winter only) and saunas. It's \$10 cheaper on Wednesdays. Book in advance.

★ Festivals & Events

Elvis Festival

PERFORMING ARTS

(www.collingwoodelvisfestival.com) Since 1995, every July, Collingwood becomes a sea of Elvises in this, one of the largest competitions for Elvis impersonators in the world.

Wakestock

SPORTS

(www.wakestock.com) In August, young wakeboarders descend on Collingwood with their expensive toys for this loud festival of action sports and music.

─ Sleeping & Eating ─

Rates can spike dramatically in this year-round destination. Retiree-friendly Collingwood has plenty of decent dining options around Hurontario St, and Hwy 26 is lined with fast-food chains.

Theme-park-esque Blue Mountain Village has some satisfying though unspectacular selections.

Mariner Motor Hotel

MOTEL \$

(2 705-445-3330; 305 Hume St, Collingwood; d from \$89; ☺) Who would have thought a piece of the great architect Frank Lloyd Wright's legacy would end up as a roadside motel in Collingwood. Basic, retro and even a little awkward, we just love the authenticity of this place.

Blue Mountain Inn

HOTEL \$\$

(2 877-445-0231, 705-445-0231; www.bluemountain.ca; 110 Jozo Weider Blvd; r \$89-499; ☺ ☺ ☺) Accommodations range from standard guest rooms to upscale mosaic three-bedroom suites, all of which have seen a facelift in recent years. Check the website for the wide variety of options: rates can vary dramatically.

Days Inn & Suites

MOTEL \$\$

(2 705-444-1880; www.daysinncollingwood.com; 15 Cambridge St, Collingwood; d from \$109) Midway between Collingwood and Blue Mountain, this 76-room chain motel is well maintained by professional staff. Neutrally furnished rooms have microwaves. There's a guest laundry on-site. Fireplace and jacuzzi suites are available.

★ Westin Trillium House

RESORT \$\$\$
 (705-443-8080; www.westinbluemountain.com; 220 Gord Canning Dr, Blue Mountains; d/sts from \$189/239) Couple-friendly, pet-friendly and family friendly, this Westin upholds its brand's reputation for excellence in service. A wide range of guest rooms and suites are all luxuriously furnished and most overlook the Blue Mountain Village, pond or outdoor pools. Experiment with your dates for the best rates and packages.

Grandma Lambe's

MARKET \$

(Hwy 26; ☎ 8am-6pm Sat-Thu, to 7pm Fri) You won't regret the 35km trek to Grandma Lambe's (west on Hwy 26 between Thornbury and Meaford). The store is a delicious jumble of maple-syrup vintages, butter tarts, bushels of vegetables and tables piled high with pies, buns and jellies.

Tremont Cafe

EUROPEAN \$\$\$

(705-293-6000; www.thetremontcafe.com; 80 Simcoe St, Collingwood; mains \$16-36; ☎ 11am-3pm & 5:30-9:30pm Wed-Mon) Come for a mouthwatering weekend brunch or classic dinner at this delightful fine-dining cafe in the historic Tremont building. Will you have the duck confit or Atlantic salmon after your lamb lollipops? Dinner menus change regularly.

Information

Georgian Triangle Tourism Association

(705-445-7722; www.visitsouthgeorgianbay.ca; 45 St Paul St, Collingwood; ☎ 9am-5pm) Pop in to get inspired about this wonderful region.

Getting There & Around

Greyhound Canada has limited services from Toronto to Collingwood (\$42, three hours, two daily) continuing to Owen Sound (\$24, 1½ hours, two daily). From December to April, **AUC Tours** (416-741-5200; www.auctours.com) operates a shuttle from Toronto to Blue Mountain. Refer to the website for rates and online bookings.

Ace Cabs (705-445-0300, 705-445-3300) can drive you between Collingwood and Blue Mountain (\$20, 15 minutes).

Bruce Peninsula

The Bruce is a 100km limestone outcrop of craggy shorelines and green woodlands

at the northern end of the Niagara Escarpment. The fingerlike protrusion separates the cooler crystal waters of Georgian Bay from warmer Lake Huron. Owen Sound is the largest regional center, while delightful Tobermory is the reward at the tip of the peninsula. Visit www.explorethebruce.com for the latest.

Owen Sound

Owen Sound has a sordid past as a port rife with booze and prostitution. Things got so out of hand that alcohol was banned here for over 60 years – hard to believe, today. By the time the embargo was lifted in 1972, the town had transformed into a thriving artists' colony and remains so today: check out the **Owen Sound Artist's Co-op** (www.osartists-co-op.com; 279 10th St E; ☎ 9:30am-5:30pm Mon-Sat, noon-4pm Sun) when you're in town.

Sights

Tom Thomson Art Gallery

MUSEUM

(519-376-1932; www.tomthomson.org; 840 1st Ave W; adult/child \$5/3; ☎ 11am-5pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun) This gallery displays the work of Tom Thomson, granddaddy of modern Canadian landscape painting. His intimate and smoldering portrayal of nature is said to have inspired the formation of the Group of Seven painters. Thomson grew up near Owen Sound and many of his works were composed in nearby thickets of fall leaves.

Grey Roots Museum & Archives

MUSEUM

(519-376-3690; www.greyroots.com; 102599 Grey Rd 18, RR 4; adult/child \$8/4; ☎ 10am-5pm) This interesting museum highlights the region's rich pioneering history through displays about early settlers and local heroes. Interactive presentations focus on natural resources, climate and topography. Past exhibits have explored themes as diverse as Albertan dinosaurs and the history of the toilet.

Billy Bishop Heritage Museum

MUSEUM

(519-371-3333; www.billybishop.org; 948 3rd Ave W; adult/child \$5/2; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun) Hometown hero William Avery ('Billy') Bishop, Canada's notorious flying ace in WWI, is honored here at his

childhood home, now the Billy Bishop Heritage Museum, celebrating Canada's aviation history.

Waterfalls

WATERFALL

There are eight scenic waterfalls in the area, four of which are close to downtown. Go to www.visitgrey.ca for a downloadable waterfall tour.

Owen Sound Farmers Market

MARKET

(114 8th St E; ☎ 7am-12:30pm Sat) This co-op of vendors is one of the oldest in Ontario. Expect the freshest produce, as well as maple syrup, soaps and baked goods.



Festivals & Events

Summerfolk Music Festival

MUSIC

(www.summerfolk.org) This epic three-day folk fest in mid-August draws world-class performers and artisans from far and wide.



Sleeping & Eating

For a list of area B&Bs, go to www.bbgrey-bruce.com.

Diamond Motor Inn

MOTEL \$\$

(519-371-2011; www.diamondmotorinn.com; 713 9th Ave E; r \$60-89; ☈) A pleasant, no-frills choice, this small motel contains bright rooms with wooden paneling and kitchenettes.

Highland Manor

B&B \$\$

(519-372-2699; www.highlandmanor.ca; 867 4th Ave A W; d \$120-170; ☈) This magnificent Victorian mansion (c 1872) has been elegantly furnished by attentive hosts. Decadent, spacious suites all have their own bathrooms. Many have original fireplaces. Enjoy a glass of wine on the wraparound deck, or curl up by the fireplace with a Lonely Planet guidebook. Highly recommended.

Rocky Racoon Café

FUSION \$\$

(519-376-2232; 941 2nd Ave E; mains \$15-23; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Sat; ☈) These organic advocates serve up wild boar and Tibetan dumplings, with vegan and vegetarian options. You'll find plenty of south Asian flavors, especially delicious curries.

Shorty's Bar & Grill

CANADIAN \$\$

(519-376-0044; www.shortysonline.com; 967 3rd Ave E; mains \$12-32; ☎ 11:30am-late Mon-Sat) Locals love Shorty's and so do we. Appetizers like escargot, crab cakes and calamari fail to disappoint seafood lovers, while mains range from burgers and steaks to chicken

and seafood. And of course, there's plenty of cold beer and good conversation to boot.

i Information

Owen Sound Visitors Information Centre

(519-371-9833, 888-675-5555; www.owensound.ca; 1155 1st Ave W; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Ask the friendly locals about the Bruce Peninsula's hidden gems.

i Getting There & Away

Greyhound Canada runs bus services to Toronto (\$42, 4½ hours, twice daily) and Barrie (\$34, 2½ hours, twice daily).

First Student (519-376-5712) operate a limited bus schedule to Tobermory on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from July to early September (\$32, 1½ hours, one daily).

Owen Sound to Tobermory

The 100km stretch of highway from Owen Sound to Tobermory is monotonous at best. Consider taking a side road or two to get a taste of the scenery that makes the Bruce so special.

From Owen Sound, follow Grey County Rd 1 which winds along the scenic shoreline of staggering pines between Owen Sound and the quaint village of **Wiarton**. Stop here to say hello to **Wiarton Willy**, Canada's version of Punxsutawney Phil, then continue on Hwy 6 to the sleepy and picturesque bay at **Lion's Head**, a great place to stop for lunch.

Heading further north on Hwy 6 for about 25km, you'll reach Dyer's Bay Rd. Turn right and maintain your heading for another 10km to the little village of **Dyer's Bay**, reminiscent of Cape Cod with its pretty clapboard houses and shoreline scenery. From here you must decide if you'll plow on the further 11km to remote **Cabot Head Lighthouse** (admission by donation; ☎ May-Oct), promising stunning views from the keeper's perch. It's wild and wonderful, but the windy unpaved road is slow going and there's only one way in and out...back to Hwy 6 and north to Tobermory.

Tobermory

You've made it to the tip of the Bruce Peninsula: quite the trek from Toronto! Tiny Tobermory is a hippy, nature-lover's paradise boasting some of Ontario's most stunning scenery and sunsets. The village centers on the harbor area known as Little Tub, which

is bustling during ferry season (May to late October) and all but deserted in winter.

Some of the best wreck-diving in North America exists in these brilliant blue waters. Meander through 22 separate wrecks, some dating back to the 1800s, but note that the water is usually about 1 degree short of an ice bath. All divers must register in person at the Parks Canada Visitors Centre (p170).

Sights & Activities

Fathom Five National Marine Park PARK ( 519-596-2233; www.pc.gc.ca/fathomfive; adult/child \$6/3) Established to protect the numerous shipwrecks and islands around Tobermory, this was the first park of its kind in Canada. Aside from the wrecks, the park is known for much loved Flowerpot Island with its top-heavy 'flowerpot' formations, eroded by waves.

Bruce Peninsula National Park OUTDOORS ( 519-596-2233; www.pc.gc.ca/brucepeninsula; day use per vehicle \$11.70;  May-Oct) Much of the area just south of Tobermory is protected by this national park, flaunting some of Ontario's finest assets: the Niagara Escarpment, 1000-year-old cedars, rare orchids and crystal-clear, limestone-refracted waters. Be sure to check in with the visitors center. Must-see locations include **Little Cove**, the **Grotto** and **Singing Sands**, on the other side of Hwy 6. The park remains stoic despite the recent spike in interest: be prepared to share the magic with tourist busloads during the short summer season.

Bruce Anchor Cruises CRUISE ( 800-591-4254, 519-596-2555; www.bruceanchorcruises.com; 7468 Hwy 6; adult/child from \$37/28;  May-Oct) Glass-bottom boat tours

over the tops of rusty, barnacled shipwrecks and onward to Flowerpot Island depart from this private dock at the very end of Hwy 6, also a brilliant spot to catch the sunset. Some sailings include shipwrecks, others go to Flowerpot direct: check online. Pay the surcharge to explore the island like Robinson Crusoe.

Thorncrest Outfitters

KAYAKING

( 888-345-2925, 519-596-8908; www.thorncrestoutfitters.com; Hwy 6; rentals from \$35, day courses from \$109) Choose from a variety of kayaking trips geared more toward intermediate paddlers. Independent paddlers can rent just about anything from this friendly outfitter.

Diver's Den

DIVING

( 519-596-2363; www.diversden.ca; 3 Bay St S) These guys can hook you up with gear rentals, certification courses (open-water certification from \$545) and walk-on dives from \$40.

Sleeping & Eating

In summer it's absolutely essential to book accommodations in advance. There are so few restaurants in Tobermory that if you stay here for any length of time, you'll try them all!

Cypress Lake Campground

CAMPING \$

( 519-596-2263; www.pc.gc.ca; Cypress Lake Rd; sites from \$23.50, yurts from \$120) Sites at the most central and substantial campground within the Bruce Peninsula National Park must be reserved through Parks Canada in advance (recommended) or at the visitors center. You can even glam it up in a yurt! Backcountry sites are available.

JAGGED EDGES

The Niagara Escarpment, a 725km-long land formation that creates Niagara Falls, is a designated Unesco World Biosphere Reserve. Sweeping from eastern Wisconsin and along the shore of northern Lake Michigan, down through Lake Huron and across Manitoulin Island, slicing through Ontario and then curving under Lake Ontario and ending in New York State, the escarpment is a long spine of brush-covered stone. A combination of what was originally lime bed and ancient sea floor, the dolomitic limestone that makes up the land formation is more resistant than the land around it, which has eroded and left the bulge of limestone slithering around the Great Lakes: look for the cliffs near Hamilton, Milton, Lion's Head and Tobermory.

Great waterfalls are just one result of the escarpment. Together with Lake Ontario, the geological formation has created a microclimate perfect for viticulture. The soil (a combination of limestone and clay) and the warmth created by Lake Ontario generate growing conditions very similar to those of France's Burgundy region.

Peacock Villa

MOTEL \$
(519-596-2242; www.peacockvilla.com; 31 Legion St; d from \$45; ☎) Six simple but pleasantly furnished motel rooms and four cozy cabins in a peaceful, woodsy setting a hop, skip and jump from downtown, offer excellent value. Friendly owner Karen is a wealth of information about the town and surrounds.

Big Tub Harbour Resort

MOTEL \$
(519-596-2219; www.bigtubresort.ca; 236 Big Tub Rd; d from \$60; ☎) On the other side of Big Tub Harbour, a short drive or decent walk from the town and Little Tub, this quiet motel has spacious, woody rooms and manicured gardens with a wonderful outlook. Both the isolation and on-site Bootlegger's Cove Pub are wonderful. Water-sport rentals keep you occupied.

Innisfree

B&B \$\$
(519-596-8190; www.tobermoryaccommodations.com; 46 Bay St; r \$89-154; ☎ May-Oct; ☎ ☎) Whether it's the scent of fresh blueberry muffins, or the stunning harbor views from the sunroom and large deck, guests will adore this charming country home.

Blue Bay Motel

MOTEL \$\$
(519-596-2392; www.bluebay-motel.com; 32 Bay St; d from \$95; ☎ ☎ ☎) Many of this centrally located motel's 16 bright and spacious guest rooms overlook Little Tub Harbour. Fresh and funky, each room is different: choose from double-double, queen and king beds. Some have fireplaces, soaker tubs and LCD TVs. Peek and choose on the website.

Bootlegger's Cove

PUB \$\$
(519-596-2219; 236 Big Tub Rd; items \$7-25; ☎ noon-8pm) Good service, tasty food and a stunning patio overlooking Big Tub Harbour make this joint the local secret we couldn't keep to ourselves. The fun menu includes wraps, quesadillas, pizzas and s'mores.

Craigie's

FAST FOOD \$\$
(519-596-2867; 4 Bay St; fish & chips \$10.50; ☎ 7am-7pm May-Oct) This white sea shanty has been serving fish and chips in Tobermory since 1932. Greasy breakfast specials are the way to start the day before an early-morning ferry or hike into the wilderness.

**Drinking & Nightlife****Crows Nest Pub**

PUB
(519-596-2575; www.crowsnestpub.ca; 5 Bay St; ☎ 11am-late Apr-Oct) The only pub in Little Tub, recently renovated Crows Nest has

an elevated outdoor patio overlooking the town. Wraps, burgers and pizzas feature on the pub-style menu which includes plenty of beers on tap.

i Information

Parks Canada Visitors Centre (519-596-2233; www.pc.gc.ca/fathomfive; Alexander St; ☎ 8am-8pm May-Oct) Has a fantastic interpretive center, exhibits, a movie theater, several hiking trails and a 20m viewing platform (112 steps). To get here by foot, follow the beaver signs from the Bruce Trail Monument opposite the LCBO. It's a 10-minute walk.

Tobermory Chamber of Commerce (519-596-2452; www.tobermory.org; Hwy 6; ☎ 9am-9pm) As you pull into town (from the south) it's to your right: drop in for latest updates.

i Getting There & Around

First Student (519-376-5712) operates a limited bus schedule from Owen Sound to Tobermory on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from July to early September (\$32, 1½ hours, one daily). From Toronto, **Parkbus** (www.parkbus.ca) offers a limited schedule of express services (\$58, five hours) with a number of downtown collection points. Check schedules and make bookings online.

Tobermory is not the end of the line: take the Chi-Cheemaun ferry from the Bruce Peninsula across the mouth of Georgian Bay to Manitoulin Island. Operated by **Ontario Ferries** (800-265-3163; www.ontarioferries.com; adult/child/car \$17.9/9.37; ☎ May-late Oct), the boat connects Tobermory with South Baymouth (two hours). There are four daily crossings from late June to early September, and two daily crossings during the rest of the season, with an additional voyage on Friday evenings. Reservations are highly recommended.

When in Tobermory, the **National Park Shuttle Bus** (519-596-2999; www.tobermoryparkbus.com; adult/senior/child \$4.50/2.50/3.50) can take you between Little Tub, the Bruce Peninsula National Park Visitors Centre and Head of Trails.

Manitoulin Island

Manitoulin (meaning 'Spirit Island' in the Ojibwe language) is a magical and remote place. There's a real sense of being 'away' up here. Jagged expanses of white quartzite and granite outcrops lead to breathtaking vistas and hidden runes, but you'll need patience to find them: Manitoulin is the largest freshwater island in the world and its small communities, with names like Mindemoya, Sheguandah and Wikwemikong, are many

kilometers apart. Haweaters (people born on Manitoulin) will spot you a mile away as you fumble over six-syllable words. But don't let these syllabic setbacks deter you from visiting – a few days on Manitoulin is food for the soul.

There are two ways on and off the island: South Baymouth is the port of call of the Chi-Cheemaun vehicular ferry, from Tobermory. From here, Hwy 6 continues north for 65km to Little Current and the swinging bridge that reconnects it to the mainland. It meets the Trans Canada Hwy at Espanola, 50km further up the road.

Sights & Activities

Manitoulin isn't laden with historical sights as much as natural beauty. Take some time to drive around the island and explore its enclaves.

Church of the Immaculate Conception

CHURCH

(M'Chigeeng) This church in the round represents a tepee, a fire pit and the circle of life and welcomes aboriginal traditions and Catholic beliefs. Colorful paintings by local artists depict the Stations of the Cross, while magnificent carvings represent both Christ and the Great Spirit Kitche Manitou.

Ojibwe Cultural Foundation

MUSEUM

(705-377-4902; www.ojibweculture.ca; cnr Hwys 540 & 551, M'Chigeeng; adult/child \$7.50/free; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, noon-4pm Sun) You're free to explore on your own, but guided tours of this insightful museum are highly recommended. Rotating exhibits reflect a rich history of legends and skilled craftwork.

Bridal Veil Falls

WATERFALL

(Kagawong) Just off Hwy 540 before Kagawong, there's a lovely picnic area at the top of this pretty waterfall. Walking trails lead down to the base where you can take a dip before continuing into the old town.

Great Spirit Circle Trail

CULTURAL TOUR

(877-710-3211; www.circletrail.com; 5905 Hwy 540; activities & tours from \$30) The eight local First Nation communities have collaborated to form this consortium, offering a wide variety of fun activities and cross-cultural day and overnight tours throughout the year: a wonderful way to get a sense of Manitoulin and its people.

Cup & Saucer Trail

HIKING

From its origin near the junction of Hwy 540 and Bidwell Rd (18km southwest of Little Current) this 12km trail, with its 2km of dramatic 70m cliffs, leads to the highest point on the island (351m) with breathtaking views of the crinkled shoreline along the North Channel.



Festivals & Events

Wikwemikong Powwow

CULTURE

(705-859-2385; www.wikwemikongheritage.org; adult/child \$10/2) The unceded First Nation of Wikwemikong (locals say 'Wiki') hosts a huge powwow on the first weekend in August. Expect vibrant and colorful displays of dancing, drumming and traditional games.

De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Group

THEATER

(www.debab.ca) Canada's foremost Aboriginal troupe, whose name appropriately means 'storytellers,' performs moving pieces of original work transcending various mediums. Check the website for the full story.



Sleeping & Eating

Accommodations on the island are limited; many people have cottages here. Check out www.manitoulin tourism.com for additional listings.

Auberge Inn

HOSTEL \$

(877-977-4392, 705-377-4392; www.aubergeinn.ca; 71 McNevin St, Providence Bay; dm/d incl breakfast \$39/90; ☎) Enthusiastic Auberge Inn is a hostel-plus. With one bunk room and one private room, the place isn't large but it's comfortable and sociable with warm colors and custom cedar bunks. It's a short stroll to the beach.

My Friends Inn

MOTEL \$

(705-859-3115; www.myfriendsinn.com; 151 Queen St, Manitowaning; d from \$85; ☎ ☎) First-time hotelier and former nurse Maureen Friend retired to Manitoulin with her husband to be closer to their daughter: they're doing a wonderful job. Rooms in this friendly little motel outside the pretty village of Manitowaning in central Manitoulin are smart and homely. Highly recommended.

Southbay Gallery & Guesthouse

B&B \$\$

(877-656-8324; www.southbayguesthouse.com; 15 Given Rd, South Baymouth; d incl breakfast \$89-150; ☎ May-Sep; ☎ ☎ ☎) A one-minute walk from the ferry docks you'll find this delightful melange of colorful guest rooms and summery cottages: friendly owner Brenda's

breakfasts are overflowing. Check out the gallery of handcrafted works by talented local artisans.

Queen's Inn

CAFE \$
(2) 416-450-4866, 705-282-0665; www.thequeensinn.ca; 19 Water St, Gore Bay; s/d from \$95/105; ☺ May-Dec) Like a pillared temple to remote elegance, this stately B&B peers over the silent cove of Gore Bay. Grab a book from the antique hutch library and idly thumb through while relaxing on the white verandah among potted lilacs.

★ Buoys

SEAFOOD \$
(2) 705-282-2869; www.buoyseatory.com; 1 Purvis Dr, Gore Bay; items \$8-18; ☺ noon-8pm) We love everything about this little joint by the Gore Bay beach and marina: the vibe, the location, the food: sourced from local providers and prepared fresh. The seasoned whitefish melts in your mouth, but if you're not feeling fishy, pizza, pasta and burgers are likely to please. When you're done, linger with a beer on the sunny patio and feel a million miles from home.

Garden Shed

CAFE \$
(10th Side Rd, Tehkumah; mains \$3-10; ☺ 9am-2pm) The Garden Shed takes rustic charm to a new level by placing you right inside a working greenhouse. Nibble among flats of greens, or sip your coffee in the light and airy shed. Breakfast from \$2.99!

Lake Huron Fish and Chips

FISH & CHIPS \$
(2) 705-377-4500; 20 McNevin St, Providence Bay; ☺ noon-8pm) You're going to crave it at some point surrounded by all this water, and this is the place to go: golden fried fresh lake fish and crispy crunchy fries.

Garden's Gate

CAFE \$\$
(2) 705-859-2088; www.manitoulin-island.com/gardensgate; Hwy 542, Tehkumah; items \$5-19; ☺ noon-8pm) Seriously good homestyle food can be found here, near the junction of Hwys 6 and 542. Rose, the owner, makes everything from scratch; she's always inventing desserts, which are regularly featured in the local newspaper.

i Information

Manitoulin Tourism Association (2) 705-368-3021; www.manitoulintourism.com; Hwy 6, Little Current; ☺ 8am-8pm May-Oct) Pamphlets and maps of the island can be found in the South Baymouth ferry terminal, as well as onboard the Chi-Cheemaun. If you're coming from the other side, drop in here to get your bearings.

i Getting There & Around

The Chi-Cheemaun ferry operated by **Ontario Ferries** (p170) runs from Tobermory to South Baymouth (two hours, two to four daily). Reservations are recommended.

A thin swinging bridge links the island to the mainland in the north along Hwy 6. In summer, the bridge closes for the first 15 minutes every hour to allow shipping traffic through the channel.

There is no land-based public transportation to or around Manitoulin.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

'Big' is a theme in Northern Ontario. The area is so big that it could fit six Englands and still have room for a Scotland or two. Big industry has made its home here: most of the world's silver and nickel ore comes from massive local mines, and vast forests

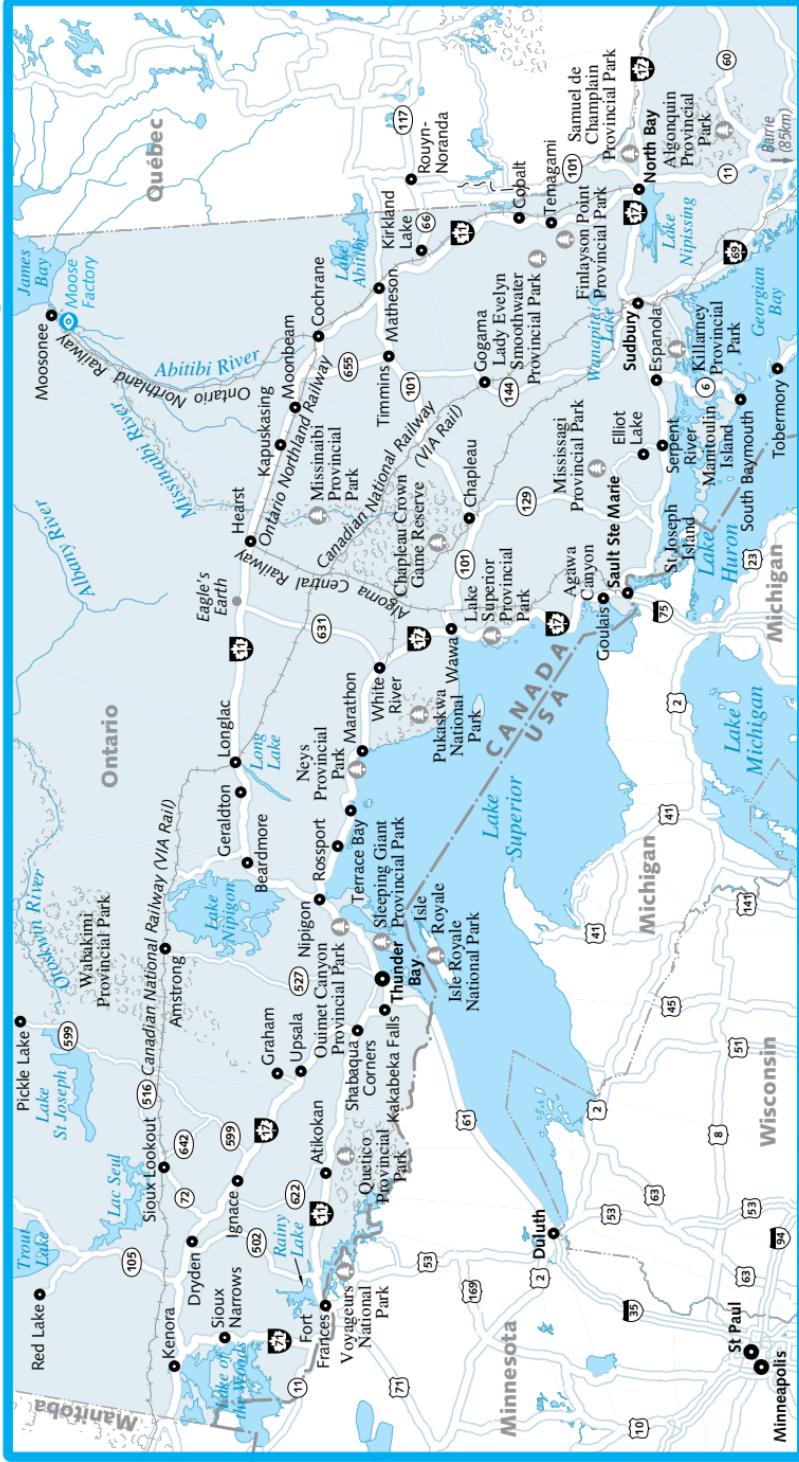
THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

Fired by an almost adolescent enthusiasm, the Group of Seven (aka the Algonquin School) were an all-male troupe of Canadian painters. They rampaged through the wilds of northern Ontario from 1920 to 1933, capturing the rugged Canadian wilderness through all its seasons, their joyful energy expressed in vibrant, light-filled canvases: mountains, lakes, forests and towns.

In 1917, before the group officially formed, their fellow painter and friend Tom Thomson drowned, just as he was producing his most prolific works. Other members – Jackson, Lismer, MacDonald, Johnston, Varley and Carmichael – considered him their leading light. Thomson's deep connection to the land is evident from his works hanging in Toronto's AGO (p79) and Ottawa's National Gallery (p209). His rustic cabin has been moved onto the grounds of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection (p88). Each has magnificent examples of the Group of Seven's profound talents.

Northern Ontario

200 km
100 miles



have made the region a key producer of timber. Even the mosquitoes are big. Really big. Bring your bug spray! What's not so big is the region's population – only Sudbury and Thunder Bay have over 100,000 citizens, with little growth to speak of.

Two main highways (Hwy 17 and 11) weave an intersecting course across the province. The Trans-Canada Hwy (Hwy 17) unveils the provincial pièce de résistance, the northern crest over Lake Superior. Driving between Sault Ste-Marie and Thunder Bay offers some of the country's most dramatic scenery: misty fjordlike passages hide isolated beaches among dense thickets of pine, cedar and birch. Remote Hwy 11 stretches deep into the north before linking back up to Hwy 17. This far-flung area offers access to isolated James Bay. From Cochrane, a whistle-stop train shuttles passengers to Moose Factory, an aboriginal reservation and former trading hub of the legendary Hudson's Bay Company.

If wilderness isn't your thing, move on. Otherwise, bear witness to a stunning, silent expanse where ancient aboriginal canoe routes ignite under the ethereal evening lightshow of the aurora borealis.

Killarney Provincial Park

Killarney Provincial Park (2705-287-2900; Hwy 637; day use per vehicle \$13, campsites \$29.75–42.25, backcountry camping \$11) is considered one of the finest kayaking destinations in the world. The Group of Seven artists had a cabin near the park's Hwy 6 entrance and were instrumental in its establishment; Killarney's 100km **La Cloche Silhouette Trail** is named after Franklin Carmichael's legendary painting. This rugged trek for experienced hikers twists through a mountainous realm of sapphire lakes, thirsty birches, luscious pine forests and shimmering quartzite cliffs. A network of shorter, less challenging hikes also offers glimpses of the majestic terrain, including the **Cranberry Bog Trail** (a 4km loop) and the **Granite Ridge Trail** (a 2km loop).

Most people access the park from the Hwy 637 turnoff along Hwy 69, which terminates in the tiny village of **Killarney**. The popular **George Lake** access point features an information center and limited campsites: none are powered. Contact **Ontario Parks** (www.ontarioparks.com) for advance reservations.

Stock up with supplies at **Grundy Lake Supply Post** (2705-383-2251; www.grundylakesupplypost.com; cnr Hwys 69 & 522; 8am–9pm May-Oct), 40km south of the Killarney turnoff on Hwy 69. Once at the park, **Killarney Canoes** (2888-461-4446, 705-287-2197; www.killarneykanoes.com; canoe rental per day \$24–39; 7am–7pm May-Oct) provides canoe and kayak rentals from **Bell Lake** and **George Lake**, but can deliver to **Carlyle Lake** and **Johnny Lake** on request. Advance reservations are strongly recommended. **Killarney Outfitters** (2705-287-2828; www.killarneyoutfitters.com; 1076 Hwy 637, Killarney; canoe & kayak rental per day \$26–37, activities from \$35) offers a similar service and a variety of guided adventures, including hiking, paddling and photography workshops, organized through its property, **Killarney Mountain Lodge** (2800-461-1117; www.killarney.com; 3 Commissioner St, Killarney; d per person incl meals \$135–210; May-Oct). It's a sprawling holiday lodge with a bunch of facilities, woody lodge rooms and cabins – a great alternative for noncampers.

Parkbus has limited seasonal services to the park (\$61, 5½ hours) from Toronto; otherwise, you'll need wheels.

Sudbury

POP 160,000

Sudbury gets props for making something out of nothing. In the 1880s it was but a desolate lumber camp called Ste-Anne-des-Pins. Then, when the Canadian Pacific Railway plowed through in 1883, the discovery of a motherlode of nickel-copper ore transformed the dreary region into the biggest nickel producer worldwide. By 1920, industrial toxicity and acid rain had killed the trees and fouled the soil, leaving Sudbury a barren place of blackened boulders. It's easy to understand why NASA used Sudbury's terrain to test moon-landing equipment.

Today, the story is a lot greener: locals have planted more than 12 million trees since 1980, although heavy industry and mining still rule. Sudbury has a university, two fantastic science museums, some cool haunts and chilled locals, but there's little reason to visit unless you're passing through.

Sudbury no longer has a visitors information center. Try www.sudburytourism.ca.

● Sights

If you're planning to tackle Science North and Dynamic Earth, save money with the 'Dynamic Duo' discount coupon (adult/child \$48/40).

★ Science North

MUSEUM
(2 705-523-4629; www.sciencenorth.ca; 100 Ramsey Lake Rd; adult/child \$20/18; ☺ 9am-6pm) After passing through a tunnel dug deep within the 2.5-billion-year-old Canadian Shield, work your way down through the spiral of exciting hands-on activities in this fantastic museum. Wander through a living butterfly garden, stargaze in the digital planetarium or fly away on a bush plane simulator. Visiting exhibits and IMAX films change regularly.

Dynamic Earth

MUSEUM
(2 705-522-3701; www.dynamicearth.ca; 122 Big Nickel Rd; adult/child \$32/28; ☺ 9am-6pm) Dynamic Earth's main attraction is the underground tour with simulated dynamite blast. Visitors stand to learn lots about geology and our planet from thought-provoking interactive exhibits. Be sure to take a happy snap in front of the 9m-high Big Nickel, made entirely of stainless steel.

Copper Cliff Museum

HISTORIC BUILDING
(2 ext 2460, 705-674-3141; 26 Balsam St, Copper Cliff; ☺ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Jun-Aug) **FREE** This pioneer log cabin 6km west of downtown is filled with relics from an era when settlers first arrived to survey the land, oddly juxtaposed with the unmissable nearby smoke-spewing shaft, affectionately known as the 'Superstack.'

Sleeping & Eating

Holiday Inn

HOTEL \$\$
(2 705-522-3000; www.holidayinn.com; 1696 Regent St; d from \$119; ☈ ☎ ☻) Outside, this Holiday Inn looks frozen in 1972. Inside is what you'd expect: refurbished, generic rooms of a good size. There's an indoor pool.

Radisson Sudbury

HOTEL \$\$
(2 705-675-1123; www.radisson.com; 85 St Anne Rd; d from \$139; ☈ ☎ ☻) Centrally located and recently refurbished, Radisson's rooms aren't anything to write home about, but there's something about this hotel that's just that little bit a cut above the rest.

Auberge du Village

B&B \$\$
(2 705-675-7732; www.aubergesudbury.com; 104 Durham St; ste \$165; ☈ ☎) Lofted above

SNOWMOBILING IN ONTARIO

Ontario has 46,000km of recreational snowmobile trails, more than anywhere else in the world. Sudbury is the unofficial capital of snowmobile-nation.

Many of the province's motels and lodges cater to this subculture: it's not uncommon to see motels advertising snowmobile parking with video security. Visit the website of the **Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs** (www.ofsc.on.ca) to learn what all the fuss is about.

a quaint *boulangerie*, these two spacious suites transport guests away from the steel jungle of factories to a quiet hamlet in Provence with soft pastels and overflowing wine.

Deluxe Hamburgers

FAST FOOD \$

(1737 Regent St; mains \$4-9; ☺ 8am-10pm) McDonald's has the golden arches; Deluxe has the golden arch. So maybe the concept isn't original, but this blast from the past is a local institution.

Pasta e Vino

ITALIAN \$\$

(2 705-674-3050; 118 Paris St; pasta from \$12; ☺ 5-9pm Mon-Sat) So it's not the best Italian restaurant in the world, but there's a lovely vibe about this quaint pasta joint in a little house on the edge of downtown. Something in the air: it's the kind of place you'd go on a date if you lived here.

★ Respect is Burning

ITALIAN \$\$\$

(www.ribssupperclub.com; Durham St; lunch mains \$8-12, dinner \$14-29; ☺ 5-9pm; ☎) This self-proclaimed supper club's focus is on rustic Tuscan cuisine but chefs aren't shy about getting experimental. The ever-shifting menu promises bursting flavors with every bite. Weekend evenings feature delectable sample platters and late-night drinks.

● Drinking & Entertainment

Laughing Buddha

BAR

(2 705-673-2112; www.laughingbuddhasudbury.com; 194 Elgin St; ☺ 11am-2am) Sudbury's prime hangout for hipsters and slackers pulls off snobby sandwiches (like the 'Brie LT') while maintaining an überchill vibe. In summer, slip out to the crimson-brick courtyard and enjoy your casual lunch or one of the 100-plus types of beer.

SRO

(705-670-1361; www.sronightclub.com; 94 Durham St; ☑ 8pm-2am Mon-Sat, from 5pm Fri) Grab a martini from the swirling stainless-steel bar: the drinks are so large you can swim in them. Weekends are standing room only, so strap on the dance shoes and prepare to get down.

Zig's

BAR

(705-586-9447; www.zigsbar.com; 54 Elgin St; ☑ 8pm-2am Tue-Sat) You're guaranteed to turn a head in this fun subterranean gay bar where everyone knows everyone.

Towne House Tavern

LIVE MUSIC

(705-674-6883; www.thetownehouse.com; 206 Elgin St; ☑ 11am-2am) You won't find any cover band here – this beloved institution is all about Canadian indie from punk to gospel. It's grungy and right along the train tracks. Naturally.

i Getting There & Around

Sudbury airport is about 25km northeast of downtown. Air Canada, Bearskin Airlines and Porter operate services to Toronto, Ottawa, Sault Ste-Marie and Thunder Bay. Several car-rental options are available at the airport, including **Enterprise** (800-736-8222; www.enterpriseacar.ca) and **National** (705-387-4747; www.nationalcar.ca).

Ontario Northland (www.ontarianorthland.ca) connects Sudbury to Toronto (\$74, 5½ hours, three daily). Greyhound connects Sudbury to Toronto (\$75, five hours, three daily), Thunder Bay (\$201, 14 hours, twice daily) and Ottawa (\$75, 7½ hours, three daily).

Sudbury Train Station (800-361-1235; cnr Minto & Elgin Sts) services a small network of remote towns including White River and Chapleau.

CLUB

City buses roam the downtown region from the **transit center** (705-675-3333; cnr Notre Dame Ave & Elm St). One-way fares are \$2.80.

Sault Ste-Marie

POP 75,000

'The Soo,' as it's commonly known, quietly governs the narrow rapids between Lakes Huron and Superior. Perched along the last 'steps' of the St Lawrence Seaway, this sleepy city is the unofficial gateway to the far-flung regions of northwestern Ontario. Originally known as Baawitigong ('Place of the rapids'), it was a traditional gathering place for the Ojibwe and remains a strong First Nations' area today. French fur traders changed the name to Sault Ste-Marie (soo-saynt muh-ree) or 'St Mary's Falls,' but don't expect to see any today: they've been tamed into a series of gargantuan locks.

Let's face it, Sault Ste-Marie is not the prettiest town. In many parts, it's dreary. Downtown feels like a ghost town and can be sketchy after dark. Despite appearances, the Soo may be the friendliest place in Ontari-oo (sic) and it's a logical overnight on Trans-Canada itineraries. There's a US border crossing here too.

⦿ Sights & Activities**Canadian Bushplane Heritage Centre**

MUSEUM

(705-945-6242; www.bushplane.com; 50 Pim St; adult/child/student \$12/3/7; ☑ 9am-6pm) A visit to the Soo's most dynamic and kid-friendly museum is a great way to get a sense of how Northern Ontario works: bush planes are crucial to remote communities that are not

MISSISSAGI PROVINCIAL PARK

The tree-lined jaunt between Sudbury and Sault Ste-Marie offers little more than forest views out the car window. **Elliot Lake**, the largest community in the area, is popular with retirees on a tight budget. This little town made headlines in 2012 after a concrete section of a mall's roof catastrophically collapsed without warning. The slab fell three floors, taking the lives of two women: it took rescue teams four days to find the deceased. At time of writing, the inquiry continues into how this could happen in a mall inspected by city and provincial officials.

Mississagi Provincial Park (705-865-2021, 705-848-2806; Hwy 639; day use per vehicle \$13, backcountry sites \$9.50, campsites \$27-34; ☑ May-Sep), 25km north of the lake, is a secluded expanse of hemlock forests, sandy beaches, trembling aspens and chirping birds. A hike around **Flack Lake** reveals ripple rock – a geological feature formed by a billion years of wave action. It's quiet and undeveloped: none of the campsites have electricity and the limited facilities on **Semiwite Lake** (the gatehouse and toilets) are solar-powered. Reserve your spot with **Ontario Parks** (www.ontarioparks.com).

ALGOMA CENTRAL RAILWAY

Constructed in 1899 to facilitate the transport of raw materials to Sault Ste-Marie's industrial plants, the **Algoma Central Railway** (ACR; ☎ 705-946-7300; www.agawacanyontourtrain.com; round-trip from adult/child \$88/41) is a 475km stretch of railroad from Sault Ste-Marie, due north to Hearst. Nowadays, from mid-June to mid-October, it ferries passengers through unspoiled wilderness along the pristine lakes and jagged granite of the Canadian Shield. The best time to ride is from late September to early October as the train twists its way through jaw-dropping blazing autumn foliage for as far as the eye can see.

Two options are available. The **Agawa Canyon Tour Train** (\$88/41 adult/child) departs at 8am and returns at 6pm, with a two-hour layover in the lush Agawa Canyon, 185km north of Sault Ste-Marie. The **Tour of the Line** (\$233/145 adult/child) is a whistle-stop train that goes all the way to sleepy Hearst, where you must overnight if you're returning to Sault Ste-Marie. Surcharges apply during peak fall departures.

Extended wilderness adventures are available in conjunction with the many retreats dotted along the railway, known as the **Lodges along the Line**. How about snowmobiling through 4000km of groomed winter trails, or spending a weekend fishing for plump trout? Check the website for schedules, packages and to make reservations.

accessible by road. Stroll among retired aircraft to see how tiny these flyers really are. A flight simulator takes passengers on a spirited ride along sapphire lakes and towering pines.

Sault Ste-Marie Museum

MUSEUM

(☎ 705-759-7278; www.saultmuseum.com; 690 Queen St E; adult/concession \$6/4; ☺ 9am-5pm Tue-Sat) Constructed in the old post office, an important historical tribute to the early 1900s, this three-story museum details the town's history through several perspectives. The Skylight Gallery is a must-see for industrial-history buffs; an interactive timeline from prehistory to the 1960s incorporates the local historical society's unique collection of preserved fossils and relics.

Sault Ste-Marie Canal National Historic Site

HISTORIC SITE

(☎ 705-941-6262; 1 Canal Dr) **FREE** Stroll through the quiet islands on the Canadian side of the waterway; the majority of freighter traffic occurs further afield in the American locks - the older Canadian locks, built in 1895, are used for recreational vessels only. The **Attikamek walking trail** is a short, self-guided hike around South St Mary's Island. The meandering path winds through wooded knolls, encircles the trenchlike locks and dips under the International Bridge, allowing visitors to grasp the interesting juxtaposition of nature and industry.

Fort St Joseph National Historic Site

HISTORIC SITE

(☎ 705-246-2664; www.pc.gc.ca/fortstjoseph; Hwy 548; adult/child \$3.90/1.90; ☺ 9:30am-5pm Jun-Oct) St Joseph Island, a quiet expanse of woodland about 50km east of Sault Ste-Marie, is between Canada and the USA in the northwest corner of Lake Huron. It's linked by bridge off Hwy 17. Here, the Fort St Joseph National Historic Site was once the most remote outpost of the British landhold in North America. The preserved ruins of the 200-year-old fort are an archaeologist's dream.

Treetop Adventures

ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES

(☎ 705-649-5455; www.treetopadventures.ca; 6 Post Office Rd, Goulais River; admission from \$30) This woodsy adventure park offers a variety of heart-pounding activities such as rope-walking high above the tree line and ziplining, Tarzan-style. It's open daily year-round by reservation; phone ahead.

Sleeping & Eating

While the bulk of motels are found along Great Northern Rd, with all the conveniences of one giant strip mall, there are several options scattered downtown, where there's some scenic interest in the waterfront and the majority of attractions, but few amenities after 8pm.

Sleep Inn

MOTEL \$

(☎ 705-253-7533; www.sleepinnssmarie.ca; 727 Bay St; d incl breakfast from \$79; ☺) This

tourist motel in a nice spot by the water has pleasantly refurbished rooms with comfy beds and good showers.

Holiday Inn Express

MOTEL \$\$

(705-759-8200; www.holidayinn.com; 320 Bay St; d incl breakfast from \$109; Conveniently located opposite the Station Mall, this completely rebranded and refurbished motel has large, new rooms with dark woods and plenty of light.

Water Tower Inn

HOTEL \$\$\$

(800-461-0800; www.watertowerinn.com; 360 Great Northern Rd; d from \$119; The Water Tower continues to stand out from the rest with its plethora of pools, bar/restaurant and treatment spa. A variety of room types including family rooms and suites are available.

Muiio's

DINER \$

(705-254-7105; www.muios.com; 685 Queen St E; mains \$8-24; Like a shrine to the era of roller discos and drive-in movie theaters, Muiio's continues to bask in its own anachronistic glory. The joint is famed for its breakfasts and broasted (half broiled, half roasted) chicken-on-a-bun smothered in rich gravy. OMG.

★ Arturo Ristorante

ITALIAN \$\$

(705-253-0002; www.arturo.ca; 515 Queen St E; mains \$12-28; A shimmering jewel in a dismal downtown strip, Arturo is the kind of place you remember once your vacation has ended. It's atmospheric but unpretentious with soft lighting, starched white tablecloths and antiques aplenty. The meals are equally as presentable: Italian mains like veal marsala and chicken piccata are tender and succulent as they should be, sauces rich and wines appropriately paired.

Panna Bar & Grill

MEDITERRANEAN \$\$

(705-949-8484; 472 Queen St E; lunch mains \$8-16, dinner \$14-28; Stylish Panna puts its own spin on traditional Mediterranean fare: appetizers like calamari and garlic shrimp feature alongside tempura vegetables. Choose from a variety of seafood and pasta dishes as well as burgers and steaks juicy enough to turn any starving carnivore's frown upside down.

Drinking & Entertainment

If cheap beer is what you're after, follow the bar-hoppers across the International Bridge

to Michigan for half-priced hooch. Most visitors won't.

Docks

BAR

(705-256-6868; www.docksriverfrontgrill.ca; 89 Foster Dr; Great views, cold booze, pool, live bands and tasty bar-eats all help make Docks your safest bet for a good time in the Soo.

LopLops

LIVE MUSIC

(705-945-0754; www.lolops.com; 651 Queen St E; Grab a glass of vino from the glittering steel bar and enjoy an evening amid strumming guitars and the restless murmurs of tortured artists. Unleash your inner diva on an open-mic night or just come to contemplate the art. Where the cool kids hang.

i Information

Ontario Travel Information Centre (705-945-6941; www.ontariotravel.net; 261 Queen St W; Sells fishing permits and snowmobiling licenses.

i Getting There & Around

Sault Ste-Marie Airport (YAM; 705-779-3031; www.saultairport.com; 475 Airport Rd) is about 20km from downtown. Air Canada and Porter have scheduled services to Toronto. Bearskin Airlines services locations in Ontario and Manitoba including Ottawa, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay and Sudbury. Airport car-rental providers include **Avis** (800-230-4898; www.avis.ca) and **National** (877-222-9058; www.nationalcar.ca).

Greyhound (800-661-8747; www.greyhound.ca) runs buses to Sudbury (\$56, 4½ hours, twice daily) and Thunder Bay (\$125, 10 hours, twice daily) from the downtown **bus station** (705-949-4711; 73 Brock St). For \$2.50 a ride, try the network of city buses.

From here, you can also get the **International Bridge Bus** (906-632-6882; one-way \$2; over to sister Sault Ste-Marie in Michigan. Buses depart the Canada side every hour on the half-hour, and every hour on the hour from the US side. You must have your passport.

Lake Superior Shoreline

Superior in size and beauty, Lake Superior covers a surface area of 82,100 sq km: it's the largest freshwater lake on the planet, with its own ecosystem and microclimate. Much of its dazzling Canadian shoreline is hugged by the Trans-Canada Hwy (at this point Hwy

17) with the section of road between Sault Ste-Marie and Wawa regarded by many as the most picturesque of the highway's 8030km span. A 90km stretch of the highway passes directly through Lake Superior Provincial Park.

This section covers the journey west from Sault Ste-Marie, before reaching the park. The Great Lake freezes over for many months at a time and most of the following locations are seasonal (May to October). Keep an eye out for scraggly moose as you drive the highway, especially at dusk or dawn.

Sights & Activities

Harmony Beach

BEACH

(Hwy 17) Heading west from Sault Ste-Marie on Hwy 17 for about 40km, look for a left-hand turn to a poorly signposted 'Harmony Beach Road,' to reach this popular summer swimming spot.

Chippewa Falls

WATERFALL

These powerful waterfalls, 52km west of Sault Ste-Marie on the side of Hwy 17, are at their best in spring when the volume of melting snow turns their otherwise steady flow into a thunderous roar.

Pancake Bay Provincial Park

PARK

( 705-882-2209,  888-668-7275; www.ontarioparks.com/park/pancakebay; Hwy 17; day use \$9.50) It's been a long drive, but you've made it to one of Canada's finest stretches of white sandy beach, and if you time it right, you might have it all to yourself. In summer that won't be the case. Be sure to reserve one of the 325 campsites (from \$27.50) in advance through Parks Canada, or just stop by for a swim.

Caribou Expeditions

KAYAKING

( 800-970-6662; www.caribou-expeditions.com; 1021 Goulais Mission Rd, Goulais Bay; courses from \$75, tours from \$135) Join the team of experienced nature lovers (based about 34km north of the Soo, on the quiet waters of Goulais Bay) for a variety of kayaking expeditions along the northern crest of Lake Superior. Canoe and kayak rentals are also available.

Sleeping

Voyageur's Lodge and Cookhouse

MOTEL\$

( 705-882-2504; www.voyageurslodge.com; Hwy 17, Batchawana Bay; d \$79-109, ste from \$139;  On the highway opposite Batchawana

Bay's 4km of sandy beach, you'll find this roadside motel and diner. Clean and cozy woodsy rooms are perfect for a beach break. Two housekeeping suites have a full kitchen. Open year-round, the cookhouse does regular fish fries, mammoth burgers and the best tastin' gravy for miles. You can rent canoes and buy booze on-site too!

Salzburgerhof Resort

RESORT\$

( 705-882-2323; www.salzburgerhofresort.com; Corbeil Point Rd, Batchawana Bay; d from \$85;  Family owned for over 40 years, this little piece of Austria looks right at home on the shores of Lake Superior. In fall the surrounding trees are truly breathtaking. Rooms are predictably woodsy, European and a little bit retro, but that all just adds to the charm. There's a private beach and Austrian restaurant on-site. Take Hwy 563 west off Hwy 17 at Batchawana Bay.

Twilight Resort

CAMPGROUND\$

( 705-882-2183; www.facebook.com/TwilightResort; Hwy 17, Montreal River Harbour; cabins from \$70;  May-Oct) This wonderfully isolated spot, just before the entrance to Lake Superior Provincial Park, was once a camp for Mennonite war objectors sent to work on the Trans-Canada Hwy. Today, it's a no-frills, back-in-time holiday spot with a few fisher's cabins and plenty of campsites, all facing due west for jaw-dropping sunsets over Superior.

Lake Superior Provincial Park

Lake Superior Provincial Park ( 705-856-2284,  705-882-2026; www.lakesuperiorpark.ca; Hwy 17; day use per vehicle \$13, backcountry sites \$9.50, campsites \$27.25-32.75) protects 1600 sq km of misty fjordlike passages, thick evergreen forest and tranquil sandy coves that feel like they've never known the touch of humankind. The best bits of the park require some level of hiking or canoeing to access, but if you're not so inclined or have limited time, there are numerous picture-perfect vistas just off the highway which goes straight through the park. Sights and facilities generally open from May to October.

Your first stop should be the **Agawa Bay Visitors Centre**, 9km in from the park's southern boundary. The interactive museum and park experts will advise you well. There's a smaller information area at **Red**

CHAPLEAU

About 140km inland from Wawa, Little Chapleau (*chap-loh*) is the gateway to the world's largest Crown game preserve, with nearly 1 million hectares of land: hunting is strictly prohibited. For information, check out www.chapleau.ca, or stop by the **Centennial Museum & Information Centre** (705-864-1122; 94 Monk St; ☎ 9am-4pm May-Aug). Critters you might encounter include bald eagles, beavers, lynx, black bears, moose and more.

The Missinaibi River tumbles down from James Bay flowing deep within Chapleau's preserve to **Missinaibi Provincial Park** (705-864-3114, 705-234-2222; day use per vehicle \$10, campsites \$32-39; ☎ May-Sep). Several outfitters operate at various points along the river, including **Missinaibi Headwaters Outfitters** (800-590-7836; www.missinaibi.com; Racine Lake), based in the preserve.

Rock Lake, 53km further north, if you're coming from the other direction.

Katherine Cove picnic area is a must for panoramas of misty sand-strewn shores. Budding anthropologists will appreciate the **Agawa Rock Pictographs**: red-ocher images up to 400 years old. A rugged 500m trail leads you to a rock ledge where, if the lake is calm, the mysterious pictographs can be seen.

Avid hikers will delight in the park's 11 exceptional trails. The signature hike is the 65km **Coastal Trail**, a steep, challenging route along craggy cliffs and pebble beaches (allow five to seven days). There are five road access points for those who wish to do a smaller section. The **Nokomis Trail** (5km) loops around iconic **Old Woman Bay**, so named because it is said you can see the face of an old woman in the cliffs. Depending on the weather, wispy beardlike fog and shivering Arctic trees exude a distinctly primeval flavor. The diverse **Orphan Lake Trail** (8km) just north of Katherine Cove is a tasting plate of the park's ethereal features: isolated cobble beaches, majestic waterfalls, elevated lookouts and dense maple forests.

There's a burgeoning paddling culture here. Eight charted inland routes range from

the mild 16km **Fenton-Treeby Loop** (with 11 short portages) to challenging routes accessible only via the Algoma Central Railway (p177), which departs from Sault Ste-Marie. Naturally Superior Adventures (see below) and Caribou Expeditions (p179) run extensive paddling programs in and around the park.

There are three campgrounds close to the highway: Crescent Lake (no flushing toilets), Agawa Bay and Rabbit Blanket Lake. Bookings through Ontario Parks (www.ontarioparks.com) are essential.

Wawa

In the middle of nowhere, enduring winters straight out of a Siberian nightmare, little Wawa is a tough bird. Literally. *Wawa* is the Ojibwe word meaning 'wild goose.' This resilient 1720s fur-trading post was so named because of the millions of geese that would rest by Lake Wawa during their seasonal migration. It's also the idea behind the shabby, 8.5m-tall gander that's been unapologetically luring travelers off the highway into town since the 1960s. And rightly so: Wawa is an obligatory Trans-Canada stop for many drivers and that's likely why you'll visit. There's a glut of motels here from spick and span to cheap and nasty.

⦿ Sights & Activities

Wawa Goose

MONUMENT

(26 Mission Rd) A trip through Wawa would be incomplete without getting up close and personal with the Wawa Goose in front of the visitors information center, before it flies the coop: engineers say the goose is cooked and needs costly repairs. There are two other big geese in town: see if you can find them.

Naturally Superior Adventures

KAYAKING

(800-203-9092, 705-856-2939; www.naturally-superior.com; RR1 Lake Superior; courses/ day trips from \$50/\$95) Based 8km southwest of Wawa, the robust gang at Naturally Superior delight in guiding folks eager to get acquainted with Lake Superior by water. Trips and courses range from day affairs to weekend and week-long expeditions, including beach camping. Equipment rental is also available. Other workshops, from photography to yoga and guide-certification courses, are also offered.

Sleeping & Eating

Parkway Motel

(2 705-856-7020; www.parkwaymotel.com; Hwy 17; r \$69-99; ☎ @) Refurbished rooms feature LCD TVs with DVD players and complimentary movies as well as microwaves and decent bathrooms. There's a hot tub out back. It's 5km south of Wawa along the highway.

Rock Island Lodge

LODGE \$\$
(2 800-203-9092; www.rockislandlodge.ca; RR1 Lake Superior; d incl breakfast \$98-109; ☎ May-Oct; ☎) Naturally Superior Adventures' lodge sits along Lake Superior between a craggy expanse of stone and smooth, sandy beach. The four basic rooms are spotless, comfortable, have en suites and offer views of the evening sun as it gently melts into the lake. There's wi-fi but no TV.

Columbia Restaurant

DINER \$
(2 705-856-1300; 71 Broadway Ave; items from \$6; ☎ 7am-8pm) There's nothing fancy about this greasy-spoon diner, but it does do the best breakfasts and pizzas in town – not that there's a lot of competition.

Kinniwabi Pines

INTERNATIONAL \$\$
(2 705-856-7226; 56 Hwy 17; mains \$12-26; ☎ noon-3pm & 6-10pm) What would you expect to find lurking behind the facade of a highway motel in remote Northern Ontario? Food from Trinidad, mom! Add some spice to your trip and try the baked pork or the stewed catfish. European and Chinese dishes are also available for those who don't care to dare their palate.

Information

Visitors Information Centre (2 705-856-2244, 800-367-9292; 26 Mission Rd; ☎ 8am-8pm Jun-Aug) Drop in for info on the town and nearby Lake Superior Provincial Park and Pukaskwa National Park.

Getting There & Away

Greyhound Canada buses connect Wawa with Sault Ste-Marie (three hours, three daily) and Thunder Bay (6½ hours, three daily).

Pukaskwa National Park

At **Pukaskwa** (2 807-229-0801, ext 242; [www.parkscanada.gc.ca/pukaskwa](http://parkscanada.gc.ca/pukaskwa); Hwy 627; day use adult/child \$5.80/2.90, backcountry sites \$9.80, campsites \$15-29), bear hugs are taken literally. Open May through October, the park offers many of the same topographical features

as Lake Superior Provincial Park and has an intact predator-prey ecosystem, including a small herd of elusive caribou. There are only 4km of roads in the entire park.

Pukaskwa's front country is based around the only general-use campground at **Hattie Cove**, near the park's entrance. Check in with the **visitors center** (2 807-229-0801; ☎ 9am-4pm Jul-Aug) when you arrive: guided hikes and activities depart here most evenings around 7pm.

Three short trails begin at **Hattie Cove**, offering glimpses of the pristine setting. The popular **Southern Headland Trail** (2.2km) is a rocky, spear-shaped route that offers elevated photo-ops of the shoreline and craggy Canadian Shield. Look for the curious stunted trees, so formed by harsh winds blowing off the lake. The **Halfway Lake Trail** (2.6km) loops around a small lake: informative signs offer a scientific perspective on the inner workings of the ecosystem. The **Beach Trail** (1.5km) winds along Horseshoe Bay and Lake Superior revealing sweeping vistas of crashing waves and undulating sand dunes.

Pukaskwa's stunning backcountry is not for the fainthearted: 1878 sq km of remote, untouched wilderness defines isolation. The **Coastal Hiking Trail** (60km) is the main artery for hikers, dipping along the vast shoreline. For a taste of the backcountry, many fit hikers opt to traverse the first 7.6km of this trail, culminating at the 30m-long, 25m-high **White Water Suspension Bridge**. The trek is damp, arduous, and there's only one way in and out (15km total).

Paddlers choose from three incredible routes, including the acclaimed **White River Canoe Route** (72km), which links Hattie Cove to **White Lake Provincial Park**. Do not attempt any of these hiking or water voyages without proper preparation. If you need a water taxi, **McCuaig Marine Services** (2 807-229-0193; mccuaig@onlink.net) pick up and drop off anywhere along the coast, though fickle weather can delay pickup service. If you're not a skilled independent hiker, Naturally Superior Adventures and Caribou Expeditions (p179) both offer a variety of guided excursions through Pukaskwa's backcountry.

Marathon to Nipigon

The winding path over the northern crest of Lake Superior is a pleasant jaunt with several places that make a good excuse to

stretch your legs. Rocky **Neys Provincial Park** (2807-229-1624; www.ontarioparks.com/park/neys; day use per vehicle \$9.50), just west of Marathon, has craggy beaches, furry caribou, and long, lingering sunsets.

Drop by the town of **Terrace Bay** and catch a boat to the **Slate Islands**, home to the largest herd of woodland caribou in the world.

Consider spending the night in little **Rossport**, tucked between the grumbling railroad and one of Lake Superior's only natural harbors. The **Rossport Inn** (2807-824-3213; 6 Bowman St; cabins \$65-95; mid-May-mid-Oct) has pleased passers-through since 1884, but its last generation of kind owners recently retired. It still rents its idyllic cabins from May to October: call in advance.

Sleeping Giant Provincial Park

The jagged Sleeping Giant Peninsula takes the shape of a large reclining man: it's been considered a sacred realm for millennia. The **Sleeping Giant Provincial Park** (2807-977-2526; Hwy 587; day use per vehicle \$9.50, campsites \$32-42) lies at the southern tip of the craggy mass, offering unforgettable views of Lake Superior.

The park is rugged enough to offer back-country camping, yet compact enough for a fulfilling day trip from Thunder Bay, 45km away. Contact **Ontario Parks** (www.ontarioparks.com) for reservations. The three-day **Kabeyun Trail** follows the dramatic west coast of the peninsula. Hope to meet white-tailed deer, moose and porcupines.

At the tip of the peninsula, where the sealed road deteriorates into a path of dirt and pebbles, you'll find the remote community of **Silver Islet**. In the mid-1880s the town exploded with the world's richest silver mine; now it lies abandoned.

Thunder Bay

POP 102,300

Thunder Bay is about as comfortably isolated as you can get – it's 692km west of Sault Ste-Marie and 703km east of Winnipeg (Manitoba). If you're arriving by road, it's a welcome and obligatory return to civilization: no matter how beautiful *those* forests and *that* shoreline, it starts to blur together after a while. With a smattering of decent historical attractions, pervading natural beauty and a handful of creative restaurants and bars, you might be pleasantly surprised that Thunder Bay hums along strong, in defiance and celebration of its long, dark winters. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that 10% of the population are of Finnish descent.

The Ojibwe have inhabited the region continuously for thousands of years. Europeans arrived in the 1600s, but it wasn't until 1803 that the British erected Fort William as the trading hub for the lucrative North West Company (beaver-pelt central). Shortly after, the rival settlement of Port Arthur was born 5km up the road and became a center for mining and shipping prairie grain: these granaries are the gargantuan industrial structures you see along the lakeshore. It

WINNIE THE WHO?

The little logging town of **White River** (www.whiteriver.ca) lays claim to being the home of the original Winnie the Pooh.

As the story goes, back in 1914 a trapper returned to White River with an orphaned black-bear cub. A veterinarian soldier named Harry Colebourn was on a rail layover in White River when he came across the trapper and fell in love with the cub, purchasing her for \$20. He named her 'Winnipeg.' She boarded the Québec-bound troop train with Harry, en route to his native Britain.

When Harry was called to serve in France, he left Winnie in the care of the London Zoo, where she became an instant hit. One of the many hearts she won over belonged to a young Christopher Robin Milne, son of AA Milne. A frequent visitor to the zoo, young Christopher's pet name for the little bear was 'Winnie-the-Pooh.' In his 1926 first edition, Mr Milne noted that his stories were about Winnie, the bear from the London Zoo, his son, Christopher, and Christopher's stuffed animals.

Eventually, Disney purchased Milne's tales of Winnie-the-Pooh and Christopher Robin, and... the rest is history. A monument to both bears, actual and fictional, stands in the park in White River, by the visitors center.

was only in the late 1960s that Fort William and Port Arthur became one, choosing the evocative moniker ‘Thunder Bay’ from the aboriginal name for the region, Animikie, meaning ‘thunder’.

If you’re passing through, consider staying two nights to get a sense of the place. Otherwise, if you’re looking for something different, why not watch for a seat sale and fly in from Toronto for the weekend.

Sights

The city itself is sprawling and doesn’t have a tonne of things for visitors to do, but there’s a definite sense of urban revival downtown and some lovely residential streets to explore: photographers will have fun here. You’ll need a car to make the most out of the historical and natural wonders dotted around a 40km radius.

Fort William Historical Park MUSEUM
 (2807-473-2344; www.fwhp.ca; 1350 King Rd; adult/child \$12/9; 10am-5pm May-Oct) French voyageurs, Scottish gentlemen and Ojibwe scuttle about while re-enacting life in the early 1800s at this historical park. From 1803 to 1821, Fort William was the headquarters of the North West Company. Eventually the business was absorbed by the Hudson’s Bay Company and the region’s importance as a trading center declined. Today, the large heritage center offers 42 historic buildings stuffed with entertaining and antiquated props like muskets, pelts and birch-bark canoes.

David Thompson Astronomical Observatory OBSERVATORY
 (2807-473-2344; www.fwhp.ca; 1350 King Rd; adult/child \$10/8; Thu-Sat, times vary) You too can take a peek at the stars through the largest telescope in Canada on a star walk at this fantastic, accessible observatory. Check the website for latest conditions.

Terry Fox Lookout and Memorial MONUMENT
 This memorial honors Terry Fox, a young cancer sufferer and amputee who began a trans-Canada walk on April 12, 1980 to raise money for cancer research. After traveling 5373km from St John’s, Newfoundland, he arrived in Thunder Bay as his condition deteriorated. He never left. Today’s memorial is erected close to where Terry ended his great ‘Marathon of Hope’.

Kakabeka Falls Provincial Park

PARK

(2807-473-9231; www.ontarioparks.com/park/kakabekafalls; Hwy 11-17; day use per vehicle \$9.50) About 25km west of Thunder Bay, just off Hwy 11-17, you’ll find the spectacular 40m-high Kakabeka Falls, the source of many local legends. The moody chute is most powerful in early spring during the thaw, or after heavy rains. There are a number of campsites (\$32 to \$42) and a small village before the park.

Amethyst Mine Panorama

HISTORIC SITE

(2807-622-6908; www.amethystmine.com; East Loon Rd; admission \$8; 10am-5pm May-Oct) Visit the mine, 40km east of Thunder Bay, and dig for your very own purple chunk of amethyst, Ontario’s official gemstone. While pulling into the parking lot, you may notice that the gravel has a faint indigo hue, a testament to the fact that the area is truly overflowing with these semiprecious pieces.

Thunder Bay Museum

MUSEUM

(2807-623-0801; www.thunderbaymuseum.com; 425 Donald St E; adult/child \$3/1.50; 11am-5pm) This century-old museum is engaging for adults and children alike. Displays about Ojibwe culture, fur trading, military history and recent developments incorporate well-presented artifacts to offer visitors a glimpse of the region’s 10,000 years of human history.

Thunder Bay Art Gallery

GALLERY

(2807-577-6427; www.theag.ca; 1080 Kewatin St, Confederation College; adult/student \$3/1.50; noon-8pm Tue-Thu, to 5pm Fri-Sun) Thunder Bay’s premier gallery offers an eclectic assortment of contemporary art, including Aboriginal artists. The use of natural imagery, haunting masks and scorching primary colors will leave lasting impressions on visitors. It’s free on Wednesdays.

Mt Mackay

MOUNTAIN

Mt Mackay rises 350m over Thunder Bay, offering sweeping views of the region’s patchwork of rugged pines and swollen rock formations. The lookout is part of the **Fort William First Nation** (2807-622-3093; www.fwfn.com; Mission Rd; per vehicle \$5; 9am-10pm May-Sep), and reveals its most majestic moments in the evening when the valley is but a sea of blinking lights. A walking trail leads from the viewing area to the top of the mountain. Watch your step while climbing – the shale rock can cause tumbles.

OUIMET CANYON PROVINCIAL PARK

Ouimet Canyon (807-977-2526; admission by \$2 donation; ☎ May-Oct), just 80km east of Thunder Bay, is a treacherous crevasse scoured out by ice and wind during the last Ice Age. A microclimate supporting a small collection of rare arctic-alpine plants has formed at the bottom, 150m below. A 1km loop hugs the jagged bluffs offering views that will make your knees tremble. Camping is prohibited. The canyon is 12km from the highway turnoff.

Nearby, **Eagle Canyon Adventures*** (807-857-1475; www.eaglecanyonadventures.ca; 275 Valley Rd, Dorion; entry \$18, zip line \$55, campsites \$30; ☎ 9am-9pm Apr-Nov) 183m-long bridge over the deep canyon floor is the longest suspension footbridge in Canada. It also claims the country's longest zip line, to satisfy almost-insatiable adventurers.

Activities

Kangas

(807-344-6761; www.kangass sauna.com; 379 Oliver Rd; sauna hire from \$14; ☎ 7:30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8am-11pm Sat & Sun) Friday night at Kangas is a well-established social event. The saunas are private and can be hired for up to five hours, so go it alone, or grab a 'conference room' for you and your 'associates.' There's also a hot tub, fantastic dining area, tanning booths and a hair salon!

Chippewa Park

(www.chippewapark.ca; City Rd) This waterfront park is a great place to swim, frolic or picnic on a sunny day.

Loch Lomond Ski Area

(807-475-7787; www.lochlomond.ca; 1800 Loch Lomond Rd; full-day lift tickets from \$38; ☎ Dec-Apr) With 14 runs, equally distributed between beginner, intermediate and advanced, this is a great hill to learn on and a wonderful place to ski with kids.

Sleeping

Thunder Bay has plenty of beds: most of the big motel chains are represented around the intersection of Hwys 11-17 and 61.

Thunder Bay International Hostel HOSTEL \$ (807-983-2042; www.thunderbayhostel.com; 1594 Lakeshore Dr; campsites \$13, dm \$20; ☎) Colorful bric-a-brac, including antlers and a baby grand piano, lies splayed across the shrubby lawn as though Alice in Wonderland were having a garage sale. Charismatic owner Lloyd champions the backpacking lifestyle; he's a kindhearted, well-traveled soul who cares about his guests. The hostel is 25km east of town.

Strathcona Motel

MOTEL \$

(807-683-8136; www.strathconamotel.ca; 545 Hodder Ave; d from \$50; ☎) We love this tiny motel that's been in the family since Ken was a kid. Units with separate bedrooms are a veritable time warp, but spotlessly clean and atmospheric. It's a few kilometers east of downtown in a lovely neighborhood.

McVicar Manor

INN \$\$

(807-344-9300; www.bbcanada.com/3918.html; 146 Court St N, Port Arthur; s/d from \$105/120; ☎) This sumptuous Victorian home has been proudly perched on its large lot for over one hundred years. Ask the owners what the local unionists did to the manor in the 1960s (it involves a bomb), but don't let that scare you off – McVicar takes comfort and quality a step beyond most other B&Bs.

Days Inn & Suites

MOTEL \$\$

(807-622-3297; www.daysinn.com; 645 Sibley Dr; d incl breakfast from \$119; ☎ ☎ ☎) This family-friendly motel is as central to everything as you can get in spread-out Thunder Bay. Kids love the indoor pool. Rooms are clean, spacious and neutrally decorated.

Nor'Wester

MOTEL \$\$

(807-473-9123; www.bestwestern.com; 2080 Hwy 61; d from \$119) It doesn't seem to matter that this fantastic motel is about 15km from downtown – if you can say Thunder Bay has such a thing. The setting is lovely, the staff are excellent, rooms are clean and comfortable and there's a fantastic selection of suites. There's a huge indoor pool and hot tub for those wintry nights. Highly recommended.

Eating

Growing Season Juice Collective JUICE BAR \$ (807-344-6869; 210 Algoma St S; items \$4-12; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Sat) Healthy blended juice is the name of the game here, but there are also scrumptious dishes to accompany your smoothie. Wash down your carrot sticks with a shot of organic wheatgrass.

WORTH A TRIP

THUNDER BAY TO MANITOBA

Decisions, decisions: if you're driving further west, you have two choices. Neither are particularly inspiring: the northern route is faster, but the southern route has some impressive diversions.

Traffic and highway vistas thin out after **Kakabeka Falls**. Then, at **Shabaqua Corners**, the highway forks: the northern route along Hwy 17 plows straight toward Winnipeg, while the southern route (Hwy 11 and Hwy 71) takes two extra hours as it ambles through more scenic landscapes. Both routes shuttle you through prime fishing country.

Signs mark the beginning of a new time zone (you save an hour going west).

Northern Route

Ignace and **Dryden** have plenty of motels and basic restaurants. If you're passing through at the beginning of July, check out the annual **Dryden Moose Fest** (www.moosefest.ca).

The biggest and best place to pause is **Kenora** (www.visitkenora.ca), the unofficial capital of the striking **Lake of the Woods** region and tourism hub for local summer cottages and fishing trips. Accommodations are plentiful: the usual army of franchise motels lines the highway.

Canadian Native Cultural Tours (807-468-9124; www.mskenora.com; adult/child \$27/14) offers scenic cultural cruises aboard the MS Kenora. The **Lake of the Woods Museum** (807-467-2105; www.lakeofthewoodsmuseum.ca; 300 Main St S, Kenora; adult/child \$3/2; 10am-5pm) features the aboriginal and industrial history of the area, with a particular focus on the last century of rapid change.

Greyhound Canada connects Kenora with Thunder Bay (\$95, six hours, twice daily) and Winnipeg (\$40, 2½ hours, twice daily).

Southern Route

The longer route has some spectacular distractions. **Atikokan** is the first major stop after the highways diverge. This crusty mining town has several motel and lodge options, making it a good base for a day trip to the stunning and secluded **Quetico Provincial Park** (807-597-4602; www.ontarioparks.com/parks/quetico; Hwy 11; day use per vehicle \$9.50, campsites per person campground \$14-43, backcountry \$11-19). The endless waterlogged preserve has one small campground, and over 1500km of canoe routes stretching into unexplored backcountry. **Canoe Canada Outfitters** (807-597-6418; www.canoeandcanada.com; 300 O'Brien St, Atikokan; tours from \$240) provides both self-guided and guided adventures through this dramatic wilderness.

Further west, **Fort Frances** sits right on the American border. The **Fort Frances Museum** (807-274-7891; www.fort-frances.com/museum; 259 Scott St, Fort Frances; adult/child \$3.75/2.75; 10am-5pm) is worth a look, offering a historical introduction to the area. **Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung** (807-483-1163; Shaw Rd, Emo; admission \$10; 10am-6pm Wed-Sat Jun-Sep), 50km west of Fort Frances, is a sacred Ojibwe site containing the largest ancient ceremonial burial grounds in Canada.

Travelers who wish to continue along the Trans-Canada Hwy must follow Hwy 71 north after passing tiny **Emo**, since Hwy 11 veers south across the border: do not pass without your passport.

Before linking back up with Hwy 17, consider making two more scenic pit stops, at **Nestor Falls** and **Sioux Narrows**, serene resort towns offering a glut of rentable cottages and houseboats.

Sweet Pea

(807-344-8543; www.sweetpeashomecatering.com; 252 Algoma St S; items from \$6; 11:30am-3pm & 4:30-7:30pm Tue-Fri) Fresh, earthy, organic, healthy and sustainable: all are words

VEGETARIAN \$

one can use to describe the fantastic made-with-love cooking of this delightful little catering joint/cafe.

Hoito Restaurant

(345 6323; www.hoito.ca; 314 Bay St; mains from \$8; 8am-8pm) You'll think you've stumbled into a staff cafeteria in Finland – in fact, that's how the Hoito started, over one hundred years ago, providing affordable meals to Finnish bush workers. This Thunder Bay institution serves breakfast until 7:30pm with lunch from 10:45am. It's famed for its flattened pancakes served around the clock.

Giorg

ITALIAN **\$\$**
(807-623-8052; www.giorgistorante.com; 114 Syndicate Ave N; mains \$14-28; noon-3pm & 6-10pm) The exterior is a throwback to a time when good taste and architecture weren't especially synonymous (the 1970s), but the charming Italian restaurant inside ranks as one of Thunder Bay's best, with scrumptious pastas served by poised waiters.

Tokyo House

ASIAN **\$\$**
(807-622-1169; www.tokyohouse.ca; 231 Arthur St; buffet from \$15; noon-10pm) There's nothing authentically Japanese about this shiny all-you-can-eat restaurant, but this is Thunder Bay and we're grateful Asian food is represented this far north at all! Most of your favorite Japanese dishes are here with a ton of sushi options, all prepared to order.

Bistro One

INTERNATIONAL **\$\$\$**
(622 2478; www.bistroone.ca; 555 Dunlop St; 5-10pm Tue-Sat) A diamond in the rough hidden among chunky uninspired neighbors, Bistro One sizzles with an innovative, ever-changing menu, sleek decor and a legendary wine list.

Caribou Restaurant & Wine Bar FUSION **\$\$\$**

(807-628-8588; www.caribourestaurant.com; 727 Hewitton St; mains \$16-39; 11:30am-2pm Thu & Fri & 5-9pm daily) Between the confusing haze of wide-set freeways and boxy megamarts lies one of Thunder Bay's best dining options. The facade positively reeks of franchise banality; however, the inside is filled with lovely touches like white-clothed tables and designer stemware.

Prospector Steakhouse

STEAKHOUSE **\$\$\$**
(807-345-5833; www.prospectorsteakhouse.com; 27 Cumberland St S; mains \$20-40; 5-9pm) Appetites beware: you're about to be obliterated. Hefty carnivorous portions are dished out amid ranchlike curios. The infamous prime rib will give your arteries a workout.

**Drinking & Nightlife****Sovereign Room**

BAR

(807-343-9277; www.sovereignroom.com; 220 Red River Rd; 4pm-late Tue, Wed, Sat & Sun, from 11am Thu & Fri) From the chandelier behind the bar to the ornate olive wallpaper, dark woody booths and upward curling staircase by the storefront window, the Sovereign Room stands on its own as a great spot for a beer. There's live music here too. Better still, the regularly updated menu is both surprising and delightful. Some come just for the food, others the beer, many for both. The vibe goes from mellow as a cello to seriously happening.

Foundry

PUB

(807-285-3188; www.thefoundrypub.com; 242 Red River Rd; 4pm-late Tue, Wed, Sat & Sun, from 11am Thu & Fri) New kid on the block, The Foundry is making waves in the Bay: with 24 beers on tap, live music most weekends and dinner nightly within a smart two-level venue.

Madhouse Tavern Grill

BAR

(807-344-6600; 295 Bay St; 11:30am-11pm) A great place to relax and take a load off among warm, friendly chatter and cold beer. The dangling portraits of famous writers and artists have a swirling style similar to Dalí.

i Information

Both information centers have wireless internet connections, as do the city's four central libraries.

Pagoda Information Center (807-684-3670; cnr Red River Rd & Water St; 9am-5pm Tue-Sat Jun-Aug;) This is the most central source of visitor information and the oldest tourist-information bureau in Canada!

Tourism Thunder Bay (800-667-8386; www.tourismthunderbay.com; 1000 Hwy 11-17; 9am-5pm;) Located 6km east of town at the Terry Fox Lookout and Memorial.

i Getting There & Away

Thunder Bay Airport (YQT; www.tbairport.on.ca) is served by Air Canada, WestJet, Porter, Delta, Wasaya and Bearskin airlines. The airport is about 3km southwest of the city, at the junction of West Arthur St and Hwy 61. Flight connections include Sudbury, Sault Ste-Marie, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg and Minneapolis.

Greyhound buses run to and from Sault Ste-Marie (\$126, nine hours, twice daily) and Winnipeg (\$127, nine hours, twice daily). The

Greyhound bus depot (807-345-2194; 815 Fort William Rd) lies between the two downtown areas near the Intercity Mall.

➊ Getting Around

Car-rental chains are well represented at the airport.

Thunder Bay Transit (807-684-3744; www.thunderbay.ca) has the city covered. Buses have two main hubs: the **Thunder Bay South Terminal** (cnr May & Donald Sts) and the **Thunder Bay North Terminal** (cnr Water & Camelot Sts), though at the time of writing a central bus station was in the works as part of a transit Master Plan. One-way trips cost \$2.65.

Cochrane to Moosonee & Moose Factory

Time has not been kind to little Cochrane, whose *raison d'être* is the *Polar Bear Express* – the whistle-stop train shuttling passengers north to the remote recesses of James Bay. Cochrane doesn't pretend to be a dainty tourist destination and, in a way, that honesty is refreshing. Evidence of harsh, long winters is conspicuous in this wind-swept town, but despite the inhospitable winters, the largely Francophone population is warm and accommodating.

Moosonee and Moose Factory sit near the tundra line, and are as far north as most people ever get in eastern Canada. Expeditions further north will undoubtedly involve floatplanes, canoes, snowmobiles, dogsleds or snowshoes. The railway reached Moosonee in 1932, about 30 years after it was established by Révillon Frères (known today as Revlon) as a trading post. A quick boat trip links Moosonee to the island of Moose Factory, which is not an industrial site that churns out large hairy beasts, but a small Cree settlement and the historic site of the Hudson's Bay Company trading hub founded in 1672.

While you ponder a lengthy journey to this ultraremote locale, consider the following: when fur trading peaked 300 years ago, the main access to Ontario's interior was from the north via the Hudson and James Bays. It's hard to fathom.

❻ Sights & Activities

Most visitors come just for the day and miss out on what the secluded area has to offer. Moosonee and Moose Factory could not be more different. Moosonee has a banal indus-

trial vibe, while Moose Factory is a spirited reservation of friendly people and scores of smoke huts. The best way to experience the region is through a tour with the local Moose Cree.

Polar Bear Habitat & Heritage Village ZOO (800-354-9948; 705-272-2327; www.polarbearhabitat.ca; 1 Drury Park Rd, Cochrane; adult/child \$16/10; ☺ 9am-5pm) Despite all the polar bear talk, there are no wild polar bears in the region. This center is dedicated to the conservation, care and well-being of polar bears: Ganuk is presently its only beary resident. Visitors can interact with him at daily 'meet the bear' sessions, or swim with him in a pool divided by a thick sheet of glass (swim session \$5).

Cree Cultural Interpretive Centre MUSEUM (www.moosecree.com/tourism/ccic; ☺ Jul & Aug) Located in Moose Factory, this center features indoor and outdoor exhibits of artifacts, including bone tools, traditional toys, reusable diapers and dwellings from the precontact era. You'll learn about *pashtamowin*, or 'what goes around, comes around' – the Cree's version of karma, if you will. It is best to explore the center with the aid of a guide, as they can relay fascinating details and personal anecdotes about the interesting displays.

Polar Bear Express TRAIN TRIP (800-268-9281; www.ontarianorthland.ca; round-trip adult/child \$104.90/52.40; ☺ Sun-Fri) This whistle-stop train is the only way to reach the remote communities of Moosonee and Moose Factory. It departs Cochrane in the morning, arriving in the afternoon, before turning around. The assortment of passengers is a sight in itself: locals, trappers, biologists, geologists, tourists, anglers and paddlers. It's a five-hour trip each way, so if you return the same day you'll only have time for a short visit. From September to June, the train is commonly known as the Little Bear.

Moose Cree Outdoor Discoveries & Adventures OUTDOORS (705-658-4619; www.creeadventures.com) Run by the Moose Cree First Nation, this outfit offers customized trips incorporating cultural activities (storytelling and traditional foods) with canoeing in summer and snowshoeing in winter. In tailoring your adventure, friendly staff will ask you: 'what do you want to experience?' and 'what are you not

looking for?" Prices vary depending on the number in your party, season and how long you want to visit. These trips offer a unique opportunity to experience Cree life as it is today.

Sleeping

Reserve accommodations before you arrive. There are a couple of lodging options in Moosonee, though we strongly suggest staying on the island of Moose Factory.

Station Inn

MOTEL \$
(2) 705-272-3500; www.ontarionortheast.ca; 200 Railway St, Cochrane; d from \$95; Go one better than staying near the train station by staying on top of it! You'll meet lots of fellow travelers here and you won't be late for your train.

Cree Village Ecolodge

INN \$\$
(2) 888-273-3929, 705-658-6400; www.creevillage.com; 61 Hospital Dr, Moose Factory; r from \$160 The Cree Village Ecolodge is the first lodge owned and operated by Aboriginals in the northern hemisphere. This fascinating place was designed and furnished to reflect traditional Cree values. The environmentally conscious design extends to the organic wool and cotton used in the carpets, blankets and bed linen, organic soaps in every room, and some composting toilets. All meals are available.

Washow Lodge

LODGE \$\$
(2) 705-658-4619; www.washow.ca; Hannah Bay; contact for quote A stay at the Washow Lodge, 65km east of Moosonee, is to be welcomed into the family of Moose Cree and experience a way of life that has remained largely unchanged by technology, with the exception of the snowmobile. Hope for a glimpse of the northern lights, black bears and beluga whales, and expect a unique cultural experience communing with nature from the comfort of this isolated new facility.

Getting There & Around

Ontario Northland runs buses from **Cochrane Train Station** (2) 705-272-4228 to North Bay (\$75, 6½ hours, twice daily) and Sudbury (\$74, six hours, one daily).

Moosonee and Moose Factory are not accessible by car and can only be reached by the Polar Bear Express (p187). From Moosonee, water taxis shuttle passengers the 3km over to Moose Factory (\$12, 15 minutes). In winter the river becomes an ice bridge stable enough for cars

and trucks. Van taxis from Moosonee station to the docks cost \$6 per person.

Temagami

While god-fearing Egyptians were commissioning wondrous pyramids, this region of majestic old-growth pines and hushed lakes was a thriving network of trading routes. Evidence of these ancient trails exists today as hidden archaeological sites strewn throughout the region's provincial parks. For information about the group of preserves around Temagami, visit **Finlayson Point Provincial Park** (2) 705-569-3205; www.ontarioparks.com/park/finlaysonpoint; Hwy 11; day use per vehicle \$9.50; (May-Sep), 2km south of town on Hwy 11. Temagami's **Welcome Centre** (2) 800-661-7609; www.temagamiformation.com; 7 Lakeshore Rd; (9am-4:30pm Mon-Fri) also offers information about the area and has displays about the region's history.

Check out **Obabika River Park**, or the vast **Lady Evelyn Smoothwater Provincial Park**, which has Ontario's highest point, **Ishpatina Ridge** (693m). There are no facilities, and campsites can only be reached by canoe. The easily accessible **White Bear Forest** has a soaring fire tower at Caribou Mountain offering a bird's-eye view of the stocky trunks below.

For something different, why not embark on an exhilarating and educational adventure, dogsledding through snow-drenched forests and frozen lakes. You're in good hands with **Wolf Within Adventures** (2) 705-840-9002; www.wolfwithin.ca). In summer canoe trips through Temagami's rugged wilderness are also available.

Affable owners Doug and Marg have been running **Northland Paradise Lodge** (2) 705-569-3791; www.northland-paradise.com; 51 Stevens Rd; s/d/st/e \$55/85/150), their friendly lakeside lodge, since 1986. The comfortable motel-style rooms, with full kitchen facilities, make the perfect base for any type of adventure in Temagami. Ontario Northland connects Temagami with North Bay by bus (\$20, 1½ hours, two daily).

North Bay

POP 54,000

North Bay bills itself as 'just north enough to be perfect,' which begs the question: perfect for what? It's just north enough to make visiting Torontonians feel like adventurers,

and the lakeshore is lovely, but other parts of town have seen better days. That said, there's plenty of decent accommodations and some great food to be enjoyed by the water.

Ontario's two major highways (11 and 17) converge just outside of town, making North Bay a logical layover for Trans-Canada tourists. The highways don't link up again until after Thunder Bay, 1100km away.

Sights & Activities

Dionne Quints Museum

MUSEUM
( 705-472-8480; www.northbaychamber.com/tourism/museum; 1375 Seymour St N; adult/child \$3.75/2.25;  10am-4pm May-Oct) This museum, dedicated to five little girls, the Dionne Quints, identical quintuplets who briefly turned the city into the most visited Ontario destination after Niagara Falls. Born during the Great Depression, they were exploited as a tourist attraction by the provincial government: they even starred in four Hollywood films. The museum contains a fascinating collection of artifacts from their early years.

Lake Nipissing Waterfront

PARK

(adult/child \$21/12) A walk along the scenic Lake Nipissing shoreline reveals several enjoyable activities including antique carousel rides.

Chief Commanda II

CRUISE

( 866-660-6686, 705-494-8167; www.chieffcommanda.com; King's Landing, Memorial Dr;  May-Sep) This jolly passenger liner cruises through the Manitou Islands (adult/child \$22/12), along the French River (\$38/20) and down to Callander Bay at sunset (\$28/14). Three-hour 'Blues Cruises' are a big hit and meals are available on many departures: book in advance.

Sleeping

North Bay's downtown lacks appeal, but the strip of motels along Lakeshore Dr, from when the highway used to come through town, is pleasant enough.

Sunset Inn

MOTEL \$

( 705-472-8370; www.sunsetinn.ca; 641 Lakeshore Dr; d/sts from \$89/169;    We love this spotless waterfront option with its own private beach in a secluded cove off Lake Nipissing. Friendly hosts continue to update the variety of room types which include a number of luxurious suites with twin Jacuzzis and large flatscreen TVs, and two-bedroom family suites with full kitchens.

There's an adorable romantic cabin for two in front of the beach.

Comfort Inn

MOTEL \$

( 705-494-9444; www.lakeshore.comfortnorthbay.com; 676 Lakeshore Dr; d incl breakfast from \$79;  Opposite the waterfront, this early-1990s motel has been well looked after. Drive-up ground-floor rooms are convenient and the leafy outlook is pleasant.

Gray's Log House

INN \$

( 705-495-2389; www.graysloghouse.com; 5270 Hwy 63, Trout Lake; r \$90, cabin \$50) Escape the downtown bustle and retreat to this lovely log cabin near Trout Lake (5.7km after Average Joe's). Evenings can be spent chatting with the affable owner over homemade desserts, or you can snuggle up with a handmade quilt and watch the snow fall in winter. There's a rustic camping cabin out back, full of charm.

Eating & Drinking

Burger World

BURGERS \$

( 705-497-9755; www.burgerworld.ca; 1308 Algoma Ave; burgers from \$4;  7am-8pm) Punters line up for the juicy burgers and crispy fries at this local institution and you'd be well advised to join the club. Dine in or head down to the waterfront for an impromptu picnic.

Dave's Green Papaya

ASIAN \$\$\$

( 705-476-8883; www.davesgreenpapaya.com; 652 Fraser St; mains \$10-18;  11am-2pm Tue-Fri & 4-9pm Tue-Sun) An eclectic pan-Asian selection of mouthwatering meals, including dishes from China, Korea, Thailand and Japan, are presented with flavor and flair at this hopping downtown eatery. The price is right.

Kabuki House

JAPANESE \$\$\$

( 705-495-0999; www.kabukihouse.com; 349 Main St W; lunch mains \$9-19, dinner \$20-34;  11:30am-2pm Mon-Fri & 5-10:30pm daily) It's so nice to find authentic Japanese cuisine this far north. Dinner here might put a dent in your wallet, but Kabuki House is guaranteed to please lovers of sushi, sashimi and teppanyaki. *Omakase* (chef special) and set menus are highly recommended.

White Owl Bistro

CANADIAN \$\$\$

( 705-472-2662; www.thewhiteowlbistro.ca; 639 Lakeshore Dr; mains \$21-39;  11am-9pm Mon-Sat) Dinners at this lovely little bistro, built in 1934, are a little pricey, so we recommend you enjoy a better-value lunch or weekend

brunch on the beautiful lakefront patio instead.

Average Joe's

(705-474-1982; www.averagejoes.net; 3501 Trout Lake Rd; ☎ 11am-11pm) Average Joe's is anything but average. Arriving by land, water, or frozen lake in the winter, enjoy tasty fare from the broad menu (mains \$8-29) while staring out over the serene Trout Lake. The bar keeps the gregarious locals around until 1am or 2am.

BAR

i Information

North Bay Chamber of Commerce (705-472-8480; www.northbaychamber.com; 1357 Seymour St; ☎ 9am-7pm) Near the junction of Hwys 11 & 17, 5km south of downtown, beside the Quints museum.

➊ Getting There & Away

Ontario Northland buses connect Toronto and North Bay (\$73, 5½ hours, four to five daily). Greyhound connects North Bay with Sudbury (\$29, 1¼ hours, three daily) and Ottawa (\$75, 5½ hours, three daily). The terminus for all services is the **North Bay Train Station** (705-495-4200; 100 Station Rd), which no longer serves passenger rail services.

EASTERN ONTARIO

Eastern Ontario encompasses the countryside east of Toronto as far as the Québec border. Not too far past the suburban sprawl of Oshawa, the GTA's easternmost extent, the fertile pastures of Prince Edward County support a rich farming tradition. Travelers journeying between Montréal and Toronto along Hwy 401, the nation's busiest corridor, should allow a few days to enjoy this scenic, historic and culinary realm.

For a dose of colonial history, eastern Ontario is tops. Stately Kingston was the first capital of modern-day Canada: the picturesque city offers a wealth of museums and attractions. Continuing east, the smaller towns of Gananoque, Brockville and Prescott have a genteel Victorian vibe with their abundance of stately inns and estates. Tiny Merrickville, a former Loyalist stronghold, has changed little since the American Revolution. These horse-and-buggy townships straddle the stunning Thousand Islands region, a foggy archipelago of lonely isles along the deep St Lawrence Seaway.

Eastern Ontario's natural beauty extends far into the province's sparsely populated interior, which overflows with scenic parks, preserves and private cottage retreats. Internationally acclaimed Algonquin Provincial Park is the area's flagship domain, offering unparalleled hiking, canoeing and wildlife-spotting through twisting sapphire lakes and towering jack pines. Similar topography extends to the Kawarthas and Land O' Lakes, once inhabited by ancient Aboriginal tribes.

Surprisingly, there is still no major highway running directly between Toronto and Ottawa. The speediest option is to take Hwy 401 from Toronto to Prescott, then scoot up north on Hwy 416 to the capital. The rural, two-lane Hwy 7 is a pleasant but slower alternative.

Algonquin Provincial Park

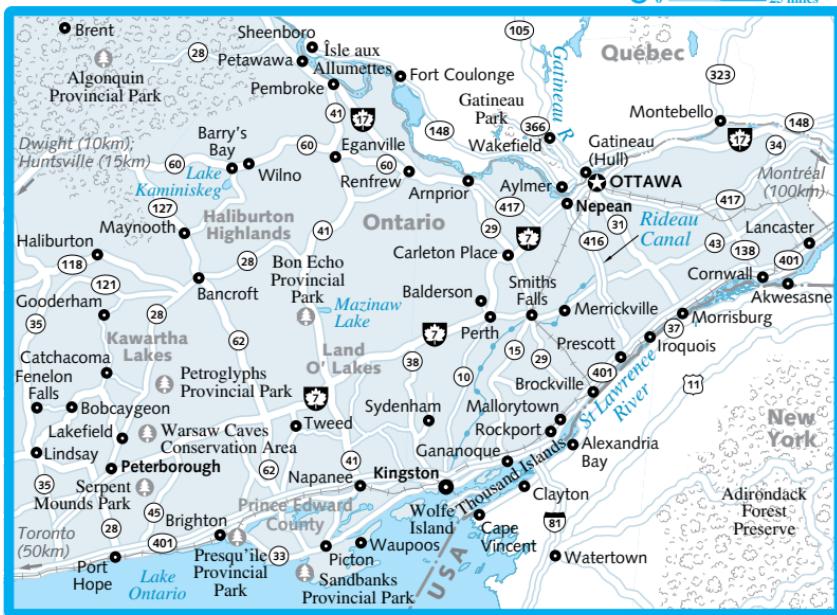
Established in 1893, Ontario's oldest and largest park is a sight for sore eyes, with 7800 sq km of thick pine forests, jagged cliffs, trickling crystal streams, mossy bogs and thousands (thousands!) of lakes. An easily accessible outdoor gem, this rugged expanse is a must-see for canoeists and hikers.

Hwy 60 intersects a small portion of the park near its southern edge. Each kilometer of highway within the park is tagged, starting at the West Gate (known as 'km 0') and terminating at the East Gate (known as 'km 56'). Outfitters and accommodations use

CRYING WOLF

Algonquin Provincial Park is very active in wolf research, and public 'howls' are an incredible way to experience the presence of these furry beasts. Wolves will readily respond to human imitations of their howling, so the park's staff conducts communal howling sessions on the occasional August evening. These events are highly organized: you could be one of 2000 people standing in the darkness waiting for the chilling wails. Wolf howls are announced only on the days they are actually held. They often take place on Thursdays, but check the bulletin boards, park website or phone the visitors center (613-637-2828) to be sure.

Eastern Ontario



these markers when giving directions: 'turn north off Hwy 60 at km 15.4 to reach Arowhon Pines lodge.' Numerous campgrounds and hiking trails are accessible from this well-trodden corridor. The vast, wooded interior of Algonquin is only accessible via 2000km of charted canoe routes and intense hiking trails.

Aside from the main gates, Algonquin Park has 29 access points located around the periphery of the park and along Hwy 60, for access to the park's backcountry.

The two large Muskoka towns of Bracebridge and Huntsville are within an hour's drive of the West Gate. Other small townships include Whitney, Maynooth and Bancroft, south of the East Gate, and Mattawa, north of the park on Hwy 17.

The official website for the Friends of Algonquin Park is www.algonquinpark.on.ca.

Sights

Algonquin is famous for its wildlife-watching and scenic lookouts. During spring, you're almost certain to see moose along Hwy 60, as they escape the pesky black flies to lick the leftover salt from winter de-icing. Other creatures you may encounter include deer, beaver, otter, mink and many bird species.

There's no limit to the breathtaking natural scenic beauty on offer.

Algonquin Art Centre

GALLERY

(2705-633-5555; www.algonquinartcentre.com; km 20 on Hwy 60; 10am-5pm Jun-Oct) FREE

Exhibits display an array of wilderness-themed art through several media including paintings, carvings and sculpture.

Algonquin Logging Museum

MUSEUM

(2613-637-2828; km 54.5 on Hwy 60; 9am-5pm Jul-Oct) FREE This excellent museum has extensive exhibits and interpretation of the park's logging heritage. The displays are spread along a 1.5km trail that remains open even when the reception area, bookstore and theater are closed.

Activities

Algonquin is a great place to give canoeing or kayaking a whirl. Outfitters offer many opportunities for novice paddlers as well as advanced wilderness adventures for the experienced outdoors person. Self-guided paddling trips are a popular option. A quota system governs the number of tourists on each canoe route, so plan ahead. Canoe Lake and Opeongo Lake are popular starting points for beginners, although the launching docks are frequently crowded.

Opeongo Outfitters

(800-790-1864; www.opeongooutfitters.com; 29902 Hwy 60, Whitney; kayak rentals from \$16, ultimate camping per person \$85-120) Algonquin's oldest outfitter is just outside the park's East Gate. It offers the ultimate camping adventure where you're taken to your ready-made campsite with everything you need to get back to nature, without the hassle. Staff will even bring you food and check up on you every few days if you're sticking around for a while.

Algonquin Outfitters

(800-469-4948; www.algonquinoutfitters.com; rentals from \$20, day tours from \$25) With two stores in Huntsville, a location just outside the West Gate in Oxtongue Lake and two further outlets within the park at Opeongo Lake and Brent, these guys have got Algonquin covered. Guided tours are available and water taxis can be reserved to whisk you through rougher waters up to wilder regions beyond Opeongo Lake.

Algonquin North Wilderness**Outfitters**

(877-544-3544; www.algonquinnorth.com; Hwy 17 & Hwy 630, Mattawa; kayaks from \$25) This outfitter is north of the park at the junction of Hwy 17 and Hwy 630 in Mattawa, from where a gravel road takes you to the Brain Lake access point for secluded backcountry explorations.

Algonquin Portage

(613-735-1795; www.algonquinportage.com; 1352 Barron Canyon Rd, Pembroke; canoes from \$22, dm

KAYAKING

\$30, campsites per person \$5) Rustic accommodations, shuttle service, portage, food and gas are all available here, east of the park's furthest eastern extent, on Rte 28.

Canoe Algonquin

KAYAKING

(800-818-1210, 705-636-5956; www.canoealgonquin.com; 1914 Hwy 518 E, Kearney; kayak rentals from \$20) North of Huntsville; this outfitter is the closest to access points 2, 3 and 4.

Portage Store

KAYAKING

(summer 705-633-5622, winter 705-789-3645; www.portagestore.com; km 14 on Hwy 60; canoe rentals from \$30, bike rentals from \$25) Located 14km inside the park's West Gate on Canoe Lake at access point 5, you'll find a gift shop, grocery store and outfitters. Bike rentals can be organized at the Lake of Two Rivers Store. Guided tours also available.

South Algonquin Trails

HORSE RIDING

(800-758-4801, 705-448-1751; www.southalgonquintrails.com; 4378 Elephant Lake Rd, Harcourt; 1hr ride \$60) Scenic horseback trail riding is very popular in and around the park.

Tours

A seemingly endless range of tours are available to all types of adventurers. Guided trips range from day hikes to customized remote adventures that last as long as your stamina allows.

Northern Edge Algonquin

KAYAKING

(888-383-8320; www.algonquincanada.com; 100 Ottawa Ave, South River) Features paddling

TOP FIVE HIKES IN ALGONQUIN PROVINCIAL PARK

Whether you're visiting for a day or a month, sampling some of the over 140km of hiking trails, including many shorter jaunts accessible from Hwy 60, is a must! Hikes depart from various mileposts (actually kilometer-posts) along Hwy 60 between the West Gate (km 0) and the East Gate (km 56).

Mizzy Lake (moderate 11km loop) – An excellent chance to see some diverse wildlife: all known species within the park have been witnessed here at some point in time (at km 15).

Track & Tower (moderate 7.7km loop) – A serene lakeside trail and an unusual elevated lookout point along an abandoned railway (at km 25).

Booth's Rock (difficult 5km loop) – Follow an abandoned railway for breathtaking views of the sweeping lakes and forests (follow the road from km 40).

Centennial Ridges (difficult 10km loop) – The best panoramas in the park, bar none (follow the road from km 37).

Lookout Trail (difficult 1km loop) – The busiest hike in Algonquin, but for good reason: a spectacular view of untouched nature awaits (at km 40).

trips, women's weekends, and tailored programs in winter.

Voyageur Quest

(800-794-9660; 416-486-3605; www.voyageurquest.com; Round Lake, South River) Has lodge rentals in addition to popular paddling trips.

Sleeping & Eating

Algonquin is a nature preserve, which means that most noncamping accommodations are outside the park boundaries. Consider basing yourself in Huntsville or Bracebridge (43km and 73km from the West Gate, respectively) or Whitney, just outside the East Gate, if you plan on day-tripping to the park.

There are nine car-accessible developed campgrounds within the park (some with yurts) that can be reached from Hwy 60, as well as backcountry camping, accessible only by hiking or canoeing. Three additional sites (Achray, Brent and Kiosk) are accessible via minor roads further north. You must contact the centralized reservation service for **Ontario Parks** (www.ontarioparks.com) for all reservations. Fees vary by site.

There are three upscale lodges in the park's interior; each has restaurants. Otherwise, you'll need to bring your own munchies and supplies.

West Gate

Wolf Den

HOSTELS \$

(866-271-9336, 705-635-9336; www.wolfdenebunkhouse.com; 4568 Hwy 60, Oxtongue Lake; dm/s from \$25/45) If you're in the backpacking spirit, this hostel has an awesome buzz. Guests stay in shiny log cabins and bunkhouses scattered around the grounds or the large central lodge with huge kitchen and stunning 2nd-floor lounge.

Dwight Village Motel

MOTELS \$

(705-635-2400; www.dwightvillagemotel.com; 2801 Hwy 60; r \$79-149) You'll notice this excellent motel from the highway: spotless rooms offer all the creature comforts and the friendly owners assure a comfortable stay. It's 25km west of the park, just east of the village of Dwight. There's a lovely outdoor picnic area with fire pits and plenty of room for kids to play.

Riverside Motel

MOTELS \$

(705-635-9021; www.riversidemoteldwight.com; Hwy 60, Dwight; r from \$95; Few roadside motels can claim a 4-hectare plot with

its own waterfall and swimming hole. You can hear the river from the rooms, some of which come with kitchenettes and Jacuzzi tubs. Flower gardens and walking trails round out the offerings.

Park Interior

The only permanent resorts within the park are the following upscale lodges, which operate between mid-May and mid-October. Each option includes breakfast, lunch and dinner in the pricing scheme. Dining rooms are open to nonguests as well.

Arowhon Pines

LODGE \$\$\$

(866-633-5661; www.arowhonnipes.ca; turnoff at km 15.4 on Hwy 60; r per person from \$198, private cabins per person from \$328) If you've ever wondered what it might be like to go to adult summer camp, Arowhon Pines is the answer. The largest and most luxurious of Algonquin's all-inclusive lodges has canoes, kayaks, tennis courts, hiking and gourmet fine dining (BYOW – Bring Your Own Wine). It's wonderfully, blissfully secluded, well north of Hwy 60.

Killarney Lodge

LODGE \$\$\$

(866-473-5551; www.killarneylodge.com; turnoff at km 33.2 on Hwy 60; cabins per person from \$219) Take a trip back in time to an age where rustic lakeside cabins were synonymous with family vacations. Killarney is an idyllic place for a paddle on the lake or to relax on your private deck with a few glasses of red (BYO). The delightful dining room functions like a well-oiled machine, serving three hearty and delicious meals per day. Only the occasional distant rumble of trucks along Hwy 60 interrupts the blissful silence.

Bartlett Lodge

LODGE \$\$\$

(866-614-5355; www.bartlettłodge.com; turnoff at km 23.3 on Hwy 60; d per person from \$195) One especially interesting cabin sets this place apart: 'Sunrise' runs completely on solar power, but a variety of studio rooms, cabins and two flashpacking tents are available. Bartlett Lodge is accessed by boat (provided for you) from a point 23km inside the West Gate.

East Gate

★ Arlington Hostel & Pub

HOSTEL \$

(613-338-2080; www.thealrington.ca; Hwy 62, Maynooth; HI members dm/d \$20/52, non-members dm/d \$25/58 taxes incl; pub 3-10pm

Thu-Sun) There's something about this towering century-old monster that makes you just want to disappear into it. If Jack Kerouac were alive and came to Canada, well, you could just see him hanging out on the porch. In tiny Maynooth, the Arlington is a great place for artists, writers and lonely wanderers who want to disappear into their craft for a while: there's nothing here but a rocking pub downstairs.

Algonquin East Gate Motel MOTEL \$ (613-637-2652; www.algonquineastgatemotel.com; Hwy 60, Whitney; d from \$60) This cozy little motel just outside the park's East Gate has spotless retro rooms, a funky dining room and friendly, helpful staff. There's even a private housekeeping cottage out back.

Magnificent Hill HOSTEL \$ (705-448-9453; www.magnificenthill.ca; 1258 Magnificent Rd, Highland Grove; dm from \$25)

Set on a 40-hectare organic farm, this rustic lodge is a winner. One dorm room above a woodshop sleeps a handful, while a separate 'Zen room' offers a chill-out space. Work-stay/WWOOFing (Willing Workers on Organic Farms) programs are available, or you can just enjoy the chickens, baby goats, and miles and miles of quiet. It's near the park's southern boundary.

Couples Resort RESORT \$\$\$ (866-202-1179; www.couplesresort.ca; 139 Galeairy Lake Rd, Whitney; r from \$236) Don't let the name fool you into thinking this is some kind of a swinger's den, although you are correct in that it caters specifically for couples. All accommodations benefit from a lovely position on Galeairy Lake, just outside the park border. Entry level rooms are comfortable and modern, but the real appeal lies in the decadent, private (and a little gaudy) lakeview 'chateaus' with outdoor hot tubs, indoor Jacuzzis, fireplaces and every conceivable amenity for eliciting romance. Rates are competitive during low season.

Information

Algonquin Provincial Park is accessible year-round. Drivers can pass through the park along Hwy 60; you must pay the day-use fee to stop and look around (\$16 per vehicle). The Hwy 60 corridor has limited cell-phone coverage for several kilometers on each side of the park, as well as a couple of payphones.

Algonquin Visitors Centre (613-637-2828; www.algonquinpark.on.ca; km 43 on Hwy 60; 9am-9pm; This world-class visitors

center is worth a stop in its own right. Displays and dioramas illustrate the park's wildlife, history and geology. The center also has a bookstore, cafeteria, wi-fi and a lookout with spectacular views.

Information Centres (613-637-2828; www.algonquinpark.on.ca) West Gate (8am-8pm May-Sep); East Gate (8am-7pm) Small info centers at either end of the park along Hwy 60 at km 0 and km 56.

Getting There & Away

The closest form of public transportation to Algonquin Park is the Greyhound bus connecting Toronto to Maynooth (\$55, five hours), 44km from the East Gate.

Parkbus (www.parkbus.ca) offers limited (but increasing) express departures from Toronto and at the time of writing was trialing a service from Ottawa. Check the website for the latest schedules.

Haliburton Highlands

This rugged expanse of needleleaf trees feels like a southern extension of Algonquin Provincial Park. Over 240 sq km of the densely forested region is part of the **Haliburton Forest** (705-754-2198; www.haliburtonforest.com; 1095 Redkenn Rd, Haliburton). This privately owned woodland, 30km north of Haliburton town, can be accessed through its main office on Kenneis Lake. A variety of activities are available: the recommended 'Walk in the Clouds' four-hour guided hike (\$95) takes you on a pulse-quickenning adventure along suspended planks (20m above the ground) through the treetops while providing a bird's-eye view of the woods below. A visit to the Wolf Centre is included; visitors can glimpse a pack of wolves from a safe distance as they meander through their 6-hectare enclosure. Thick pillows of snow in the winter encourage a thriving snowmobiling culture, and dogsledding (\$175 for a half-day tour) is a popular attraction as well.

The small town of **Bancroft** (www.bancroftontario.com) is particularly well known for its mineral-rich soils and the **Rockhound Gemboree** (www.rockhoundgemboree.com), Canada's largest gem festival, held in early August. During the yearly event, geologists lead tours around nearby abandoned mines to scout out stones. These 'rockhounding' adventures are usually quite successful: examples of over 80% of the minerals found in Canada are regularly dug up in the area.

COTTAGE COUNTRY

Much of Ontario, from the shores of Lake Erie to Muskoka, the Kawarthas, Haliburton and the Thousand Islands, is cottage country. Thousands of lakes are dotted with rocky islands and forested shorelines offering dazzling sunsets. It won't be long after you arrive in Toronto before you're introduced to the slow pace and hospitality of someone's cottage, for that's what Ontario summers are all about – communing with friends, family and nature over cold beer, fine wine and good food.

Torontonians flock to the lakes as soon as the weather gets warm. Ramshackle fisher's huts are prised open at the first available moment after the spring thaw, while sprawling winterised waterfront mansions awake from their slumber: flowerpots are replanted, freezers restocked and families begin their weekly pilgrimage from the city.

The common denominator of the cottage phenomenon is the sense of pride in one's place and the desire to be in the great outdoors. Canoes, kayaks, ski-boats and Sea-Dos all come out and the lazy days and wild nights begin, until winter, when the lakes freeze over, the snowmobiles appear and they do it all again.

Peterborough & the Kawarthas

Peterborough, in the heart of the wooded Kawarthas, is the best place to start your visit through this sacred aboriginal land. The handsome **Peterborough & the Kawarthas Visitors Centre** (705-742-2201, 800-461-6424; www.thekawarthas.ca; 1400 Crawford Dr, ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun May-Oct) should be your first stop: helpful staff will point you in the right direction toward cultural attractions or scenic nature preserves. It's a green university town with a bustling community surrounded by thousands of private cottages dotted around the area's many lakes. Stoney Lake, one of the largest, has some of the most lavish and beautiful private homes in the area.

If you feel like hanging around, consider staying a night in pretty **Lakefield**, 14km north of town at the bottom of Stoney Lake. Nearby **Lake Edge Cottages** (705-652-9080; www.lakeedge.com; 45 Lake Edge Rd, Lakefield; cottages from \$240; ☎ ☎ ☎) has rustic, well-appointed lakefront cottages with decks on a secluded woody property. There's a wonderful swimming pool and private hot tubs appear as if by magic in the winter. A further 22km northwest, on Country Road 23, the **Whetung Ojibwa Gallery** (705-657-3661; www.whetung.com; Curve Lake Indian Reserve; ☎ 9am-6pm) **FREE** has an extensive collection of aboriginal crafts from around the country, including the valued works of noted artist Norval Morrisseau.

Back in Peterborough, you'll find plenty of dining and shopping options and a quaint

city center. Abandoned railroads and the impressive hydraulic lift lock are relics of a bygone era. The **Canadian Canoe Museum** (866-342-2663; www.canoe museum.ca; 910 Monaghan Rd, Peterborough; adult/child \$10.50/8.25; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, from noon Sun) is a must-see. Although the outside looks like a warehouse, the refurbished dimly lit interior contains a phenomenal collection of over 200 canoes and kayaks. Walk around amid the calming sound of a trickling waterfall as you learn about the surprising and lengthy history of aquatic navigation in the region. If you're not inspired to pick up a paddle when you're done, how about ice cream from the Peterborough branch of much-loved **Kawartha Dairy** (705-745-6437; www.kawarthadairy.com; 815 High St, Peterborough)?

Northeast from Peterborough on Warsaw Road, the **Warsaw Caves Conservation Area** (877-816-7604; www.warsawcaves.com; admission per vehicle \$10; ☎ May-Oct) offers hiking, swimming, camping and spelunking in eroded limestone tunnels. Continuing north for another 30km will bring you to **Petroglyphs Provincial Park** (705-877-2552; www.ontarioparks.com/park/petroglyphs; 2249 Northey's Bay Rd, Woodview; admission \$9.50; ☎ 10am-5pm May-Oct), with one of the best collections of prehistoric rock carvings in the country. Rediscovered in 1954, this important spiritual site is home to over 900 icons carved into the park's limestone ridges (although only a small percentage are discernible). Visitors will be pleased to find that the site is generally quite empty and has an earthy spiritual vibe. Camping is not permitted.

Land O' Lakes

South of the Haliburton Highlands and east of the Kawarthas, the majestic Land O' Lakes region (www.travellandolakes.com) links the vast inland expanse of yawning lakes and bulky evergreens to the temperate pastures of the St Lawrence Seaway. Half of the region belongs to the Thousand Islands-Frontenac Arch reserve – Canada's 12th biosphere, appointed by Unesco in 2002.

The region's crown jewel is the serene **Bon Echo Provincial Park** (613-336-2228; www.ontarioparks.com/park/bonecho; Hwy 41; day use per car \$9.50, campsites from \$14; May-Oct), one of eastern Ontario's largest preserves, 80km due north of **Napanee**. Its untainted beauty lures artists and adventurers alike. The park's highlight is a 1.5km sheer rock face known as **Mazinaw Rock**, jutting sharply out from the depths of Mazinaw Lake for 100m. The rock features the largest visible collection of aboriginal pictographs in Canada, best observed by canoe. For camping reservations and information, contact **Ontario Parks** (www.ontarioparks.com).

BRIGHTON & PRESQU'ILE PROVINCIAL PARK

Pop off Hwy 401 at exit 509 to find quiet Brighton and the curious L-shaped **Presqui'le Provincial Park** (613-475-4324; www.ontarioparks.com/park/presquile; 328 Presqui'le Pkwy, Brighton; day use per car \$9.50, campsites from \$14), which juts out onto Lake Ontario. Relax on the beach among migrating birds, or try the **Jobes Wood Trail**, a 1km circular path that's just rural enough to glimpse the diverse woodlands and wildlife. The **Friends of Presqui'le** (www.friendsofpresquile.on.ca) provides all there is to know about local flora and fauna. Camping reservations (May to October) must be made through **Ontario Parks** (www.ontarioparks.com). Drop by the Brighton District Chamber of Commerce **visitors center** (877-475-2775, 613-475-2775; www.brighton.ca; 74 Main St; 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) for more information about the town and region of Northumberland.

Frontenac Provincial Park (613-376-3489; www.ontarioparks.com/park/frontenac; 1090 Salmon Lake Rd, Sydenham; day use per car \$9.50, campsites from \$14) straddles both the lowlands of southern Ontario and the rugged Canadian Shield as a unique menagerie of wild plants and animals. The entrance and the information center are at **Otter Lake**, off Rte 19 north of Sydenham. From here, hikers and paddlers venture deep within the park, using the 160km of trails to spot beaver, black bear, coyote and osprey. **Frontenac Outfitters** (800-250-3174, 613-376-6220; www.frontenac-outfitters.com; 6674 Bedford Rd, Sydenham; rentals from \$25; 9am-5pm Wed-Mon Apr-Oct) offers canoe rentals near the entrance to the park. The **Friends of Frontenac** (www.frontenacpark.ca) website is particularly handy.

Prince Edward County

Photographers will delight in the sweeping expanses of dappled branches, undulating pastoral hills, rugged bluffs and windswept shorelines of Prince Edward County. Golden fields yield bountiful harvests in this region rich in farm-to-table cuisine, peppered with providers of the finest foods, inviting B&Bs and up-and-coming wineries. Along the shores of Lake Ontario, Sandbanks Provincial Park's sandy beaches summon old-school holidaymakers to revel in the long hot days, summer storms and balmy nights around the campfire. In winter it's a different story entirely.

Wineries sprawl throughout the terrain, but the food scene is equally intoxicating: cheesemakers, bakers and restaurateurs who source only local produce all make for a sumptuous visit. Prince Edward County has the same soil composition as France's Burgundy, a mix of clay and soft calcitic limestone. Recent techniques to manage cooler winter climates have seen an influx of winemakers and growing recognition for the region's wines. Check out the **Ontario Culinary Tourism** (www.ontarioculinary.com) website for ideas around the food and wine theme.

The **Loyalist Parkway** (Hwy 33) unfurls for 94km from Trenton, along Lake Ontario, to Kingston, retracing the steps of the British Loyalists who settled here after fleeing the American Revolution. There's a brief interruption to the road at Glenora, beneath the mystical Lake on the Mountain, where a free car ferry whisks you across to Adolphustown.

Small-but-active **Picton** is the unofficial capital of the isthmus.

Sights & Activities

If you're looking for culture and museums, you'll get your fill in Kingston and Ottawa. Savor Prince Edward County for its beauty, architecture and cuisine. Points of interest are scattered around a broad area. We suggest you hit the Loyalist Parkway, stopping (frequently) when something tickles your fancy.

Sandbanks Provincial Park

PARK

( 613-393-3319; www.ontarioparks.com/park/sandbanks; Country Rd 12; day use per car \$9.50) Offering some of the best sandy swimming beaches in Ontario, popular Sandbanks Provincial Park is divided into two sections: **the Outlet**, an irresistible strip of white sandy beach, and **Sandbanks**, with its undulating dunes, some over three stories high. The less frequented, undeveloped section at the end of the beach is unlike anywhere else in Ontario.

Lake on the Mountain Provincial Park PARK ( 613-393-3319; www.ontarioparks.com/park/lakeonthemountain; RR1, Picton) Lake on the Mountain, near Glenora, is somewhat of a mystery: 60m *above* adjacent Lake Ontario, it has a constant flow of clean, fresh water. Scientists are yet to confirm its source. The Mohawks offered gifts to its spirits, and settlers thought it was bottomless. There's a delightful picnic ground with wonderful views of the Bay of Quinte on Lake Ontario.

Bloomfield Bicycle

CYCLING

( 613-393-1060; www.bloomfieldbicycle.ca; 225 Bloomfield Main St, Bloomfield; half-day rentals from \$25;  10am-6pm Apr-Oct) In little Bloomfield, just past the turnoff for Sandbanks, you can rent bicycles and gear to explore the surrounding countryside. In June visitors can ride around picking luscious strawberries from the vine at numerous farms. Check out the website for a printable PDF cycling map of the area. Tours are available.

Tours

Taste Trail

FOOD TOUR

(www.tastetrail.ca) The Taste Trail is a great way to explore the wines and food producers of the county. Download a printable PDF of the self-guided tour, through restaurants, farms and wineries, from the website. It's a gourmet adventure for the taste buds.

Arts Trail

ARTS TOUR

(www.artstrail.ca) The Arts Trail is a self-guided tour leading to 28 studios and galleries across the county. Ceramics, glassworks, photography, jewelry and painting are some of the mediums you'll encounter. You can download a PDF map from the website.

Waupoos Winery

WINERY TOUR

( 613-476-8338; www.waupooswinery.com; County Rd 8; tour \$5, tasting \$1;  10:30am-6pm May-Oct) White-gabled Waupoos Winery, with its patio among the vines and scenic lake vistas, offers tours and tastings. If the wine tickles your taste buds, why not stop for lunch?

Sleeping

Prince Edward County has a wide range of upscale B&Bs, boutique hotels and inns scattered among its three largest towns: Picton, Bloomfield and Wellington. The Picton Chamber of Commerce and Tourism office maintains a detailed list.

Sandbanks Provincial Park

CAMPGROUND \$

( 888-668-7275, 519-826-5290; www.ontarioparks.com/park/sandbanks; campsites from \$14;  Apr-Oct) Summer camping at Sandbanks is scenic and stress-free, but sites along the sandy dunes get booked months in advance. There are some first-come, first-served options as well, and two rentable cottages, each requiring a two-night minimum stay. Both chalets feature several bedrooms, a working fireplace, satellite TV and a full kitchen. Bookings must be made through Ontario Parks. Rates for sites vary.

Red Barns

HOSTEL \$

( 613-476-6808; www.theredbarns.com; 167 White Chapel Rd, Picton; dm/d from \$60/90;  It's difficult to classify Red Barns: part hostel,

TRENT-SEVERN WATERWAY

This scenic **waterway** (www.trentsevern.com;  May-Oct) cuts diagonally across eastern Ontario, following the lakes and rivers of Lake Simcoe County and the forested Kawarthas. The scenic hydro-highway starts on Lake Huron and passes 45 locks before emptying out near Prince Edward County on Lake Ontario. A hundred years ago, this 386km-long aboriginal canoe route bustled with commercial vessels. Today, it's purely recreational.

part B&B, part art school, this 10-hectare retreat has it all. Artists rent studio space (there's a glass-blowing studio and a woodshop) or participate in workshops; you'll likely be sharing with some of them. B&B rooms are in the farmhouse, while dorms share a common room in an outbuilding.

Lake on the Mountain Resort INN \$\$
 (613-476-1321; www.lakeonthemountain.com; 268 County Rd 7; cottages/r/ste from \$90/\$140/\$250; May-Nov) Comprising eight homey cottages and the 'House across the Road,' a beautiful Victorian with tastefully restored rooms and stunning views, this quaint country resort is the kind of secret you'll want to keep but just can't help sharing. Check the website for a taste of what's on offer, including what's cooking at the equally noteworthy restaurant.

Drake Devonshire Inn BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$
 (www.drakedevonshire.ca; 24 Wharf St, Wellington; d from \$149) From the folks behind Toronto's legendary Drake Hotel comes the Drake Devonshire, a lakeside foundry being converted into a delicious 11-room boutique hotel, hovering on Lake Ontario. Scheduled to open in 2014, the Devonshire Inn and dining room are set to take the county by storm. Be a trendsetter and get in before everyone else does.

Newsroom Suites HOTEL \$\$
 (613-399-5182; www.newsroomsuites.ca; 269 Main St, Wellington; d from \$155) Upstairs from the working offices of the *Wellington Times* you'll find these two delightful and spacious private suites, furnished to a high standard of comfort and privacy.

Claramount Inn & Spa INN \$\$
 (613-476-2709; www.claramountinn.com; 97 Bridge St, Picton; d from \$175) It's easy to be impressed by this opulent yellow mansion, now a luxurious spa retreat and fine-dining restaurant. Individually themed rooms are of generally grand proportions and include such features as Georgian period furniture, canopy beds, exotic fabrics, fireplaces and decadent bathrooms with separate soaker tubs and showers.

 **Eating & Drinking**
Fifth Town Artisan Cheese DAIRY \$
 (613-476-5755; www.fifthtown.ca; 4309 County Rd 8, Picton; ice creams \$4, cheeses \$7-18; 10am-5pm) Pop into this funky, solar-powered dairy for a scoop of lavender honey goat

cheese ice cream, taste the spread of goat and sheep cheeses, and then leave with a sack full of them. You can enjoy your snack on the grounds, which has an eating pavilion and a cheese lover's herb garden, or take it back to your accommodation and pair it with a PEC chardonnay.

County Cider Company CAFE \$
 (613-476-1022; www.countycider.com; 657 Bondgards Crossroad, Waupoos; mains \$10-18; 11am-4pm May-Oct) Served on a hilltop patio surrounded by a vineyard and overlooking the lake, lunch consists of pizzas, burgers, salads and wraps made from local ingredients, accompanied, of course, by a range of sparkling ciders.

The Inn INTERNATIONAL \$\$\$
 (613-476-1321; www.lakeonthemountain.com; 268 County Rd 7; mains \$8-29; 11am-9pm) At the Lake on the Mountain Resort, this charming restaurant and its beautiful leafy patio overlooks the Bay of Quinte, 60m below. Meals are prepared using only the finest local ingredients. Highly recommended.

Blumen Garden Bistro FUSION \$\$\$
 (613-476-6841; www.blumengardenbistro.com; 647 Hwy 49, Picton; lunch \$12-18, dinner \$21-32; 11:30am-2pm & 5-10pm Wed-Mon) Haute cuisine without the pretense equals 'honest food,' say the owners. With a relaxed, comfortable ambience, the bistro, true to its name, features a lovely garden where stepping stones lead to private, candlelit tables surrounded by fragrant flowers. Reservations are recommended.

East and Main MODERN CANADIAN \$\$\$
 (613-399-5420; www.eastandmain.ca; 270 Main St, Wellington; mains \$19-29; noon-2:30pm & 5:30-9pm Wed-Sun) The meals at this fine bistro taste as good as they look: farm-fresh meats, vegetables and lake-fresh seafood form the basis of this 'secret treasure of epicurean delight,' which pairs local wines beautifully to the chef's creations.

Acoustic Grill BAR
 (613-476-2887; www.theacousticgrill.com; 172 Main St, Picton; mains \$8-14; 11:30am-late Mon-Sat, from 3pm Sun) Acoustic folk, roots and blues acts can all be heard at this thigh-slappin' good time bar and grill. The beer is cold, the delicious bar menu is refreshingly down to earth for this foodie county, but still made fresh from local ingredients and the music is live. We highly rate the burgers.

★ Entertainment

Regent Theatre

(2 613-476-8416; www.theregenttheatre.org; 224 Main St, Picton) Continually restored and updated, the funky Regent Theatre hosts a diverse series of plays, concerts and readings. A new projector has expanded its repertoire to include some fantastic art-house and cult cinema.

Information

Chamber of Tourism & Commerce (2 800-640-4717, 613-476-2421; www.peccchamber.com; 116 Main St, Picton; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) Offers touring brochures and cycling maps, and will help with booking B&Bs and bike rentals.

Kingston

POP 115,000

Modern-day Canada's first capital, albeit for a short time (three years), Kingston was stripped of the title when Queen Victoria worried that it was too close to the American border and could not be properly defended. Today, the pretty city finds itself strategically placed as the perfect pit stop between Montréal or Ottawa and Toronto.

Often called the 'Limestone City,' Kingston is stocked with chunky halls of hand-cut stone and prim Victorian mansions. A noticeable lack of modern architectural eyesores helps to maintain the historical charm. A slew of interesting museums, historical sites and the Royal Military College keeps culture alive, while a pretty waterfront location, plenty of established trees and vibrant, colorful gardens add to the visual appeal.

Founded in 1841, at the same time the town was proclaimed capital, Queen's University adds a dash of hot-blooded youthfulness to the mix. An assortment of great dining options, some with student-friendly prices, and a crankin' nightlife round out the package. If you have the time, and history is your thing, stay a night or two on your way to the capital.

○ Sights & Activities

Conveniently, most sites are found around the central, historic downtown.

Fort Henry National

Historic Site

(2 613-542-7388; www.forthenry.com; Fort Henry Dr; adult/child \$15/12; ☎ 9:30am-5pm) This re-

THEATER

stored British fortification, dating from 1832, dominates the town from its hilltop perch. The postcard-perfect structure is brought to life by colorfully uniformed guards trained in military drills, artillery exercises and the fife-and-drum music of the 1860s. The soldiers put on displays throughout the day; don't miss the 3pm Garrison Parade. Admission includes a guided tour of the fort's campus. Special events are held throughout the year.

City Hall

NOTABLE BUILDING

(261 Ontario St; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) The grandiose City Hall is one of the country's finest classical buildings and a relic from the time when Kingston was capital. Friendly red-vested volunteers conduct free tours on request, revealing colorful stained glass, dozens of portraits, dusty jail cells and an ornate council chamber.

Open-Air Market

MARKET

(www.kingstonpublicmarket.ca; King St; ☎ Apr-Nov) On Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, the oldest continuous market in Canada takes place in the square behind City Hall.

Marine Museum of the

Great Lakes

MUSEUM

(2 613-542-2261; www.marmuseum.ca; 55 Ontario St; adult/child \$8.50/5.50; ☎ 10am-4pm Mar-Nov) Kingston was an important shipbuilding center. This museum sits on the site of the old shipyard, offering a detailed history of the fascinating vessels built at the yard.

Pump House Steam Museum

MUSEUM

(2 613-542-2261; www.steammuseum.ca; 23 Ontario St; adult/child \$5/2; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun May-Sep) The one-of-a-kind, completely

OFFBEAT KINGSTON

Canadian bureaucrats call the nation's jail system the 'correctional service.'

The **Penitentiary Museum** (2 613-530-3122; www.penitentiarymuseum.ca; 555 King St W; admission by donation; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun May-Oct) is the best way to get a taste of that kind of service, without stealing a car. The museum, across from the actual penitentiary (which closed late in 2013, after over 175 years), has a fascinating collection of weapons and tools confiscated from inmates during attempted escapes.

Kingston

ONTARIO KINGSTON



restored, steam-run pump house was first used in 1849. Today the warehouse features all things steam-related, including two full-model train sets as well as the recently restored steamboat *Phoebe*.

Bellevue House

MUSEUM
(613-545-8666; 35 Centre St; adult/child \$4/2;
10am-5pm Thu-Mon Apr-Oct) This national historic site was once home to Sir John A Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister and a notorious alcoholic. Perhaps the architect also enjoyed a drop, as the Italianate mansion is wholly asymmetrical, a pompous

use of bright color abounds and balconies twist off in various directions. There are also plenty of antiques and a sun-drenched garden, adding further kooky charm and intrigue.

Military Communications & Electronics Museum

MUSEUM
(613-541-5395; www.c-and-e-museum.org; Hwy 2 E; admission by donation; 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun May-Sep) Despite the driest of names, this is a comprehensive and well-designed museum on the military base, offering chronological displays on commu-

Kingston

❶ Sights

- 1 City Hall D3
- 2 Marine Museum of the Great Lakes C5
- Open-Air Market (see 1)
- 3 Pump House Steam Museum C5

❷ Activities, Courses & Tours

- 4 Kingston 1000 Island Cruises D3

❸ Sleeping

- 5 Holiday Inn Kingston Waterfront D2
- 6 Queen's Inn C2
- 7 Residence Inn by Marriott Kingston Water's Edge C4
- 8 Rosemount Inn B3
- 9 Secret Garden B3

❹ Eating

- 10 Chez Piggy D2
- 11 Coffee & Company D2
- 12 Curry Original D3
- 13 Le Chien Noir C2
- 14 Mlt Dwn B2
- 15 Pan Chancho D2
- 16 Sleepless Goat C2
- 17 Wok Inn B2

❺ Drinking & Nightlife

- 18 Kingston Brewing Company D3
- 19 Red House D2
- 20 Stages A2
- 21 Tir nan Og D3

❻ Entertainment

- 22 Grad Club A4
- 23 Grand Theatre B2

nications technology and sundry military gadgets.

Kingston Archaeological Centre MUSEUM (613-542-3483; www.carf.info/archaeological-centre; 611 Princess St; ☎ 9:30am-4pm Mon-Fri) **FREE** If you've been traveling along the boring stretch of Hwy 401, you probably spotted the sedimentary rock outcrops – the only interesting thing on the road. Swing by the archaeological center to learn more about the craggy formations, and while you're there check out the archaeological record detailing the 8000-year-old human history of the area.

Wolfe Island Car Ferry FERRY (613-548-7227; www.wolfeisland.com) **FREE** The largest island in the Thousand Islands chain, Wolfe Island is actually bigger than Kingston. Getting there on the free Wolfe Island car ferry is half the fun: the 25-minute trip affords views of the city, fort and islands. The island is cycle-friendly, with four routes marked with colored signs. Download a map at www.wolfeisland.com. The Kingston Tourism visitors center can advise you on the best way to explore the terrain.

👉 Tours

Kingston Trolley Tours TOUR (613-549-5544; www.1000islands脆ures.ca; adult/child \$18.50/9.25; ☎ Apr-Oct) A trackless mini-train departs regularly from the tourist office for hour-long tours with cheery historical commentary. From May to September

there's a six-stop hop-on, hop-off loop bus (adult/child \$22.50/11.25).

Haunted Walk

WALKING TOUR

(613-549-6366; www.hauntedwalk.com; adult/child \$14/8) Tours featuring stories of hangings and grave robbers leave from 200 Ontario St, in front of the Prince George Hotel. Tour content and times vary: check the website for details.

Kingston 1000 Island Cruises

BOAT TOUR

(613-549-5544; www.1000islandcruises.on.ca; 1 Brock St; cruises from \$25; ☎ May-Oct) A variety of scenic cruises depart from the *Island Queen* dock, on Ontario St at the foot of Brock St. Lunch and dinner cruises are available. Check the website for the latest rates and sailing times.

★ Festivals & Events

Visit www.kingstoncanada.com for a complete list of events throughout the year.

Kingston Buskers Rendezvous

MUSIC

(www.kingstonbuskers.com) Four days of tomfoolery in July.

Limestone City Blues Festival

MUSIC

(www.kingstonblues.com) All-star musicians gather for a four-day jam session in August.

杆菌 Sleeping

Accommodations in Kingston are top heavy, with a larger confluence of pricier stays than budget options. Motels are strung along Princess St and along Hwy 2 on each side of

town. The knowledgeable staff at the tourism office in Confederation Park can help track down additional options, including on Wolfe Island. B&B buffs should check out www.historicinnskingston.com for extra ritzy digs.

Queen's Inn

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$
(2) 613-546-0429, 866-689-9177; www.queensinn.ca; 125 Brock St; r \$99-159; (, ,) Constructed in 1839, the Queen's Inn is one of the oldest hotels in the country. The outside has a stately limestone facade and some rooms have stone walls, dormer windows and leafy views. A downstairs pub and the downtown location make this place a worthy option.

Fireside Inn

MOTEL \$\$
(2) 613-549-2211; www.bestwesternkingston.ca; 1217 Princess St; d from \$139; (, ,) The best thing about this uptown motel are the gaudy but fun fantasy suites, reminiscent of an American-sized Japanese love hotel. Standard rooms have been recently refurbished and have pillowtop mattresses. There's an outdoor heated pool.

Rosemount Inn

B&B \$\$
(2) 888-871-8844, 613-531-8844; www.rosemount-inn.com; 46 Sydenham St; r \$139-299; (, ,) Enjoy a decadent stay at this former dry-goods merchant's home. Built in 1850, the massive stone building features arched doorways and intricate flooring. A small spa offers wine baths and chocolate face masks, and the full breakfast (prepared by two chefs) includes gourmet chocolate.

Holiday Inn Kingston Waterfront **HOTEL \$\$**
(2) 613-549-8400; www.hikingstonwaterfront.com; 2 Princess St; d from \$169; (, , ,) You can't beat the location of this waterfront hotel. Its spacious rooms have balconies and some have microwaves. There's an indoor and an outdoor pool.

Residence Inn by Marriott Kingston Water's Edge

HOTEL \$\$
(2) 613-544-4888; www.marriottresidenceinkingston.com; 7 Earl St; d from \$179; (, ,) Kingston's largest rooms can be found in this hulking new hotel in a prime spot on the water, near the university. It's a few minutes' walk from downtown.

Secret Garden

B&B \$\$
(2) 877-723-1888, 613-531-9884; www.the-secret-garden.com; 73 Sydenham St; r incl breakfast \$145-189; (, ,) Whether you recline in the stately salons with dripping chandeliers

overhead, or retreat upstairs to your canopy bed, don't forget to say hello to tiny Mork and Mindy, the resident dogs.

Eating

Praise be to Queen's University for sparking the proliferation of tasty options at student-friendly prices.

★ Pan Chanco

BAKERY \$

(2) 613-544-7790; www.panchanco.com; 44 Princess St; items \$6-16; (, 7am-6pm) This phenomenal bakery and cafe fuses unlikely ingredients into palate-pleasing light and savory lunches. For breakfast, delight in amazing maple sausages, spicy chutney and perfect eggs. Try the fennel and cream-cheese spread on anything from your table's freshly baked bread basket.

Mit Dwn

FAST FOOD \$

(2) 613-766-1881; www.mltdwn.com; 292 Princess St; sandwiches from \$4.50; (, 10am-10pm Mon-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat, 11am-9pm Sun) We predict that this original Kingstonian fast-food joint is going to go global. You won't be able to resist the calorific goodness oozing from just about every conceivable twist on the humble grilled cheese sandwich...especially if it's late and you're stumbling back from the pub. Cheesetastic.

Wok Inn

ASIAN \$

(2) 613-549-5369; 30 Montréal St; dishes from \$6.95; (, 11:30am-2:30pm & 4:30-9pm Tue-Sat) Cambodian, Vietnamese and Thai delights feature in this plain Jane downtown eatery favored for takeout by starving university students.

Sleepless Goat

VEGETARIAN \$

(2) 613-545-9646; www.thegoat.ca; 91 Princess St; meals \$7-11; (, 7am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8am-10pm Sat & Sun;) With a name that sounds like an Alanis Morissette lyric, it's no surprise that this low-key joint attracts gaggles of artists and angst-filled intellectual types. A self-proclaimed co-op, the restaurant is run by a clan of savvy cooks who churn out the tastiest vegetarian options in town.

Coffee & Company

CAFE \$

(2) 613-547-9211; 53 Princess St; (, 7am-6pm Sun-Wed, to 9pm Thu-Sat;) Get your daily dose of barista-brewed organic free-trade coffee here with your daily dose of free wi-fi. Why not have a Godiva chocolate with that?

Curry Original

INDIAN \$\$

(2 613-531-9376; www.curryoriginal.ca; 253A Ontario St; mains \$11-19; ☺ 11:30am-2pm Tue-Sat & 5-9pm Tue-Sun) Kingston's finest Indian cuisine can be found at this smart outfit with an excellent waterfront patio. All your favorites are well represented here.

Chez Piggy

FUSION \$\$\$

(2 613-549-7673; www.chezpiggy.com; 68-R Princess St; mains \$16-35; ☺ 11am-midnight) Hidden in a flowery stone courtyard, the city's best-known restaurant has earned its reputation with an innovative menu, charming ambience and memorable weekend brunches. Mains include marinated ostrich loin and seared sea scallops. Reservations are strongly recommended on weekends.

Le Chien Noir

FRENCH \$\$\$

(2 613-549-5635; www.lechiennoir.com; 69 Brock St; mains \$17-36; ☺ 11:30am-9pm) It's a tad pricey but locals love this little taste of Paris with a hint of Québec in downtown Kingston: consider the gourmet poutine. Mains include lobster, duck and the obligatory steak frites.

**Drinking & Entertainment****Kingston Brewing Company**

PUB

(2 613-542-4978; www.kingstonbrewing.ca; 34 Clarence St; mains \$8-18; ☺ 11am-2am) Chow down on tasty tavern munchies amid flickering Christmas lights and kitschy beer-themed paraphernalia, or make a meal of it and grab a patio table outside. Try the Dragon's Breath and White Tail Cream Ales, both so popular they're brewed and bottled off-site.

Red House

PUB

(2 613-767-2558; www.redhousekingston.com; 369 King St E; ☺ 11:30am-2am) The new ranch-raunchy pub has a killer selection of beers on tap and a fantastic bar menu ranging from comfort food to seriously smart dining (in a casual pub setting). We love that there are roasted herbed potatoes cooked in duck fat as a side dish.

Tir nan Og

PUB

(2 416-544-7474; 200 Ontario St; ☺ 11am-late) Set inside one of the oldest and most charming buildings along the waterfront, this Irish oasis serves up live music and overflowing pints, as well as a full menu.

Stages

CLUB

(2 613-547-5553; www.stages.ca; 390 Princess St; ☺ 10pm-3am Fri & Sat) This is where young Kingston folk get their groove on and dance till they drop.

Grad Club

LIVE MUSIC

(2 613-546-3427; <http://queensgradclub.wordpress.com>; 162 Barrie St; ☺ 10:30am-close Mon-Fri) Housed in an imposing Victorian mansion, this Queen's campus mainstay is one of the hottest venues for live music. It's open on weekends for special events.

Grand Theatre

THEATER

(2 613-530-2050; www.kingstongrand.ca; 218 Princess St) Once an opera house, then a movie theater, and now the city's premier venue for theater, the symphony, concerts and comedy. The Grand has undergone extensive renovations since 1967, including a massive overhaul in 2008.

i Information

Hotel Dieu Hospital (2 613-544-3310; www.hoteldieu.com; 166 Brock St; ☺ emergency room 8am-10pm) Yes, it's a hospital: centrally located.

Kingston Tourism (2 888-855-4555, 613-548-4415; www. kingstoncanada.com; 209 Ontario St; ☺ 9am-5pm) This useful information center has intelligent, friendly staff, well versed in the city's history. It's across from City Hall.

Post office (2 800-267-1177; www.canadapost.ca; 120 Clarence St; ☺ 8am-5:30pm Mon-Fri)

i Getting There & Away

The **Kingston Coach Terminal** (2 613-547-4916; 1175 John Counter Blvd) is 1km south of Hwy 401, just west of Division St. Megabus offers regular services to Toronto (\$20, three hours, 14 daily) and Montréal (\$31, three hours, 14 daily).

If you're arriving by car on Hwy 401, exits 611, 613, 615, 617, 619 and 623 will lead you downtown. For car rental, try **Enterprise** (2 613-389-8969; 2244 Princess St), which offers complimentary pickup and drop-off.

Kingston station (2 888-842-7245; www.viarail.ca; 1800 John Counter Blvd) is about 400m east of where Princess St and John Counter Blvd meet. Trains run to Montréal (\$70, 2½ hours, nine daily), Ottawa (\$57, two hours, six daily) and Toronto (\$73, 2½ hours, 11 daily).

i Getting Around

For information on getting around by bus, call **Kingston Transit** (2 613-546-0000). To get to town from the bus terminal, there is a city bus

stop across the street; buses depart 15 minutes before and after the hour. From the train station, bus 1 stops on the corner of Princess St and John Counter Blvd, just a short walk from the bus station. Frequency is decreased on Sundays.

Cyclists will be happy to note that the Kingston area is generally flat, and both Hwys 2 and 5 have paved shoulders. Rentals are available at **Ahoy Rentals** (613-539-3202; www.ahoyrentals.com; 23 Ontario St; bike rental per day \$25).

Gananoque

Little Gananoque (gan-an-awk-way) is the perfect place to rest your eyes after a long day of squinting at the furry green islands on the misty St Lawrence. The dainty Victorian town, deep in the heart of the Thousand Islands region, teems with cruise-hungry tourists during summer and early fall. In spring and late fall, it's quiet as a mouse.

Sights & Activities

Boldt Castle

CASTLE
(315-482-9724; www.boldtcastle.com; 1 Tennis Island Rd, Alexandria Bay, NY, USA; adult/child \$10/6; ☎ 10am-5pm) Technically in the USA, though only 36km from Gananoque, so you'll need your passport to visit this lavish turn-of-the-century island castle in the middle of the St Lawrence. It was built by George C Boldt, original proprietor of New York's famous Waldorf Astoria Hotel. As they say, if you haven't seen Boldt Castle, you haven't seen Boldt Castle. The castle is accessible by road, off the Thousand Islands Pkwy: it's linked by

bridge. Many Thousand Island cruise tours also stop here.

Skydeck

VIEWPOINT

(613-659-2335; www.1000islandsskydeck.com; Hill Island; adult/child \$10/6; ☎ 9am-dusk Apr-Oct) In Ivylea, 22km from Gananoque, a series of soaring bridges link Ontario to New York State over several islands. Halfway across, you'll find the Skydeck, a 125m-high observation tower offering some fantastic views of the archipelago from three different balconies.

Gananoque Boat Line

CRUISE

(888-717-4837; www.ganboatline.com; 6 Water St; tour prices vary; ☎ May-Oct) Several trip options including a stopover at Boldt Castle make this a popular choice for cruising the Thousand Islands. The castle is technically in the USA, so be sure you have your passport if you are planning to visit. A variety of sailings are available; check the website for details.

1000 Islands Kayaking

KAYAKING

(613-329-6265; www.1000islandsKayaking.com; 110 Kate St; rentals from \$35, tours from \$85) If you're feeling energetic, paddling is a great way to tour the islands. Choose from a multitude of packages including courses, excellent half-day and overnight trips.

Sleeping & Eating

Gananoque sports an abundance of memorable accommodations including several up-market and architecturally eye-catching inns. Otherwise, virtually every motel chain is represented along King St E near Hwy 401.

THOUSAND ISLANDS

The 'Thousand Islands' are a constellation of over 1800 rugged islands dotting the St Lawrence River from Kingston to Brockville. The lush archipelago offers loose tufts of fog, showers of trillium petals, quaking tide pools and opulent 19th-century summer mansions, the turrets of which pierce the prevailing mist.

The narrow, slow-paced **Thousand Islands Parkway** dips south of Hwy 401 between Gananoque and Elizabethtown, running along the river for 35km before rejoining the highway. The scenic journey winds along the pastoral strip of shoreline offering picture-perfect vistas and dreamy picnic areas. The **Bikeway** bicycle path extends the full length of the parkway.

In Mallorytown, the **Thousand Islands National Park** (613-923-5261; www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/on/lawren/index.aspx; 2 County Rd 5, Mallorytown) preserves a gentle green archipelago, consisting of over 20 islands scattered between Kingston and Brockville. A walking trail and interpretive center allow visitors to learn more about the lush terrain and resident wildlife. Over a dozen of the freckle-sized islands support backcountry camping (between mid-May and early September) and they are accessible only by boat (BYO boat).

Misty Isles Lodge

(613-382-4232; www.mistyisles.ca; 25 River Rd, Lansdowne; r from \$85) Located about 4km east of Gananoque on the Thousand Islands Pkwy, you'll find this laid-back beachfront property boasting comfortable units with wicker furnishings. A variety of adventure outfitting is offered as well, including kayak rentals (from \$25 per hour), guided tours (from \$39) and camping packages on some of the river's shrubby islands.

Gananoque Inn

INN \$\$\$
(888-565-3101; www.gananoqueinn.com; 550 Stone St S; r \$179-395) Signature green shutters denote this stately inn at the junction of the Gananoque River and the St Lawrence Seaway: the former carriage-works first opened its doors in 1896 and has retained much of its charm. Discounted rooms and day-spa pamper packages are frequently offered online.

Houseboat Holidays

HOUSEBOAT \$\$\$
(613-382-2842; www.houseboatholidays.ca; RR3, Gananoque; weekend/midweek/weekly rates from \$525/725/950) The only thing better than staying near the seaway is staying *on* the seaway! This experienced outfit just 3km east of Gananoque will set you up with your very own floating hotel and provides a brief instructional course for nautical newbies.

Maple Leaf Restaurant

EUROPEAN \$\$
(Czech Schnitzel House; 613-382-7666; www.mapleleafrestaurant.ca; 65 King St E; mains \$9-20; 11am-9:30pm Tue-Sat, from 10am Sun) As Canadian an old-school family diner as the Maple Leaf can be, the name belies the real European gems found inside: golden breaded schnitzel, goulash, borscht and beer. There's a little patio out back, in summer.

Stonewater Pub & Irish Eatery

PUB \$\$
(613-382-2116; www.stonewaterbb.com; 490 Stone St; mains \$12-16; 8am-late May-Oct) This homely little pub by the waterfront serves up delicious hearty fare: the Irish meatloaf and drunken shepherd are both must-trys for self-respecting carnivores. There's a bunch of creative salads and veggie options too. The vibe inside is straight out of Moby Dick: delightful in the colder months.

Ivy Restaurant

MODERN CANADIAN \$\$\$
(613-659-2486; www.ivylea.ca; 61 Shipman's Lane, Lansdowne; mains \$14-34; noon-3pm & 5-9pm Wed-Sat, 10:30am-2pm Sun) The beautifully refurbished restaurant belonging to the opulent Ivy Lea Marina and Club is open to the public. It's in a charming waterfront spot about 15 minutes' drive from Gananoque. Casual patio lunches and Sunday brunches are the more affordable way to enjoy the stunning environment but evening fine dining is available. Otherwise, just stop by for a look and a lick: there's an incredible ice-cream booth out front.

**Entertainment****Thousand Islands Playhouse**

THEATER

(866-382-7020, 613-382-7020; www.1000islandsplayhouse.com; 185 South St) This delightful waterfront theater has presented a quality lineup of mainly light summer plays and musicals since 1983.

OLG Casino

CASINO

(613-382-6800; www.olg.ca; 380 Hwy 2; 9am-4am Mon-Wed, 24hr Thu-Sun) This small but almost always open casino – often filled with senior citizens – can be a sad indictment of modern society, but the staff are friendly and for many punters, it's just good, clean fun.

**Information**

Visitor Services Centre (800-561-1595, 613-382-3250; www.1000islandsgananoque.com; 10 King St E; 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 8pm Sat, to 5pm Sun) The delightful staff at this immaculate visitors center are a font of information for all things Thousand Islands and beyond.

**Getting There & Away**

There's no public transport into Gananoque. It's a short detour off Hwy 401 about 35km east of Kingston.

Brockville & Prescott

Attractive Brockville marks the eastern edge of the Thousand Islands region. The 'City of the Thousand Islands,' as it's known, has a

cache of extravagant estates. Rows of Gothic spires twisting skyward make it easy to imagine that the clip-clop of carriage horses once rang through the streets. It's also the end of the Unesco World Heritage Rideau Canal.

Neighboring Prescott, 20km up the road, could be Brockville's younger brother: it's smaller, scrappier and hasn't quite developed into a full-fledged city of its own. The 19th-century town is home to the International Bridge to Ogdensburg, New York State.

Sights

Brockville Museum

MUSEUM

( 613-342-4397; www.brockvillermuseum.com; 5 Henry St, Brockville; adult/child \$4.50/2.50;  10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 1-5pm Sat & Sun) Take a look at the area's history here, where you'll find displays on Brockville's railroad past, its hat-making industry and other community tidbits. The museum encompasses the Isaac Beecher house, a historic landmark and example of a typical New England home built before American independence.

Fulford Place

MUSEUM

( 613-498-3003; www.heritagetrust.on.ca/Fulford-Place; 287 King St E, Brockville; adult/child \$5/  11am-4pm Tue-Sun) **FREE** This stunning 35-room Edwardian mansion from the 1900s

FRONTENAC ARCH BIOSPHERE RESERVE

One of only 15 Unesco-designated reserves in Canada, Frontenac Arch encompasses a small portion of the Canadian Shield that extends down through Ontario. What was once a range of towering mountains has been weathered down to rolling hills and rugged cliffs: still dramatic after driving through flatlands. Archaeological finds in the area indicate that it was once part of a human migration route; knives from the Yellowknife region as well as shells from the Caribbean have been found in the area.

The 2700-sq-km reserve has ample recreation opportunities from biking and hiking to canoeing and diving. It's easily accessed from Hwy 401, between Gananoque and Brockville. The excellent www.frontenacarchbiosphere.ca will guide you to various entry points.

was once the home of George Taylor Fulford, the producer of the 'Pink Pill for Pale People.' Why not stop by for a cup of tea on the veranda? Admission includes a guided tour.

Brockville Arts Centre

CULTURAL BUILDING

( 877-342-7122, 613-342-7122; www.brockvilleartscentre.com; 235 King St W, Brockville;  box office 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat) Built in 1858 as Brockville's Town Hall, what is now the arts centre has survived one fire and several incarnations. Today, it doubles as a theater and art gallery, where local artists get billing alongside biggish names.

Fort Wellington National Historic Site

HISTORIC BUILDING

( 613-925-2896; 370 Vankoughnet St, Prescott; adult/child \$4/2;  10am-5pm May-Sep) The original fort was built during the War of 1812 and was used again as a strategic locale in 1838 when an American invasion seemed imminent. Some original fortifications remain, as does a blockhouse and officers' quarters. Renovations and improvements are ongoing.

Tours

1000 Islands Cruises

BOAT TOUR

( 800-353-3157, 613-345-7333; www.1000islandslei.com; 30 Block House Island Pkwy, Brockville;  May-Oct) Offers sightseeing tours of the Thousand Islands on two vessels: a traditional sightseeing cruiser and the high speed *Wildcat*. Check the website for details, schedules and rates.

Sleeping

Nearby Prescott has some of the most original accommodations options along the St Lawrence, though Brockville has plenty to satisfy.

Dewar's Inn

INN \$

( 877-433-9277, 613-925-3228; www.dewarsinn.com; 1649 County Rd 2, Prescott; r \$68-91, cottages \$87-107;  ) Constructed from the bricks of an old distillery, this jumble of quaint seaside cottages and units are tastefully furnished and spotlessly clean. Scuba dives in the backyard revealed sunken bottles of old brew. No pets or children.

Green Door

B&B \$\$

( 613-341-9325; www.greendoorbb.com; 61 Buell St, Brockville; d from \$115;  ) This old brick tabernacle has found a new calling as a B&B. Crisp sunlight dances through the ample common space during the day. Spend your

evenings by the piano or snuggled up in an antique bed.

Ship's Anchor Inn

B&B \$\$
 (2 613-925-3573; www.shipsanchorinn.com; 495 King St W, Prescott; d from \$109; ☎) Once the beachside abode of a crusty sea captain, this 175-year-old hand-hewn stone manor is packed to the rafters with sea-shanty relics of bygone days: schools of taxidermic fish, anchors aplenty and models of wooden frigates. Hearty breakfasts, fit for a sailor, will keep you chugging along until dinnertime.

Eating

Buell Street Bistro

INTERNATIONAL \$\$
 (2 613-345-2623; www.buellstreetbistro.com; 27 Buell St, Brockville; mains \$12-31; ☎ 11am-10pm Mon-Fri, 5-10pm Sat & Sun) Three levels and a delectable patio break the space up at this locals' favorite. Seafood and pasta dishes mingle with Thai and Indian flavors: there's enough variety to please the fussiest of palates, including a full gluten-free menu.

Mill

ITALIAN \$\$
 (2 613-345-7098; www.themillrestaurant.ca; 123 Water St W, Brockville; mains \$9-26; ☎ 11:30am-2pm & 5-9pm Mon-Fri, 4-9pm Sat) There's a wonderful, romantic ambience to this quaint Italian restaurant located in a restored 1852 mill. Pasta, seafood and veal feature on the menu: we recommend the *scallopine al marsala*. Dishes are, refreshingly, reasonably priced.

Georgian Dragon Ale House

PUB
 (2 613-865-8224; 72 King St W, Brockville; meals \$9-24; ☎ 11:30am-late) This British alehouse on the main drag has a good selection of beers on tap and tasty British pub faves like butter chicken and fish and chips.

Information

Brockville District Tourism (2 613-342-4357; www.brockvilletourism.com; 10 Market St, Brockville; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Open year-round and provides ample information about attractions all along the seaway.

Getting There & Away

VIA Rail trains leave Brockville's **train station** (www.viarail.ca; 141 Perth St) for Toronto (\$80, three hours, six daily) and Ottawa (\$31, 1½ hours, five daily). **Megabus** (2 866-488-4452; www.megabus.com) runs daily buses from Toronto (from \$21, four hours, three daily) and Montréal (\$46, 2½ hours, three daily).

Merrickville

Tiny Merrickville can thank the Canadian Railroad for never laying tracks through town. Had the wee burg become a stop on the line, it would have swapped its stone structures for industrial eyesores. Fortunately, today, visits can still be a step back in time to when the area was a Loyalist stronghold ready to defend the Crown against the rebellious Americans. Merrickville was such a desirable locale that Colonel By, the master planner of the Rideau Canal, built his summer home here, and Benedict Arnold was given a tract in town as a reward for betraying the Americans.

History buffs will enjoy exploring the **Blockhouse** (2 613-269-2229; cnr Main & St Lawrence Sts; ☎ May-Oct) **FREE** and boutique-browsers will love the numerous artisan workshops. Pause for a meal at **Gad's Hill** (2 613-269-2976; www.dickens-restaurant.com; 118 St Lawrence St; mains \$9-26; ☎ 11am-9pm), where menus are tucked inside leather-bound tomes, encouraging the pronounced Dickensian motif. Catch a dinner show while you're there; *A Christmas Carol* is an annual event.

Morrisburg

Little Morrisburg is known far and wide for its quality historic site, **Upper Canada Village** (2 613-543-4328; www.uppercanadavillage.com; 13740 County Rd 2; adult/child \$15/12; ☎ 10am-5pm May-Oct). Costume-clad interpreters animate this re-created town by emulating life in the 1860s. Plan to spend three or four hours at the village in order to explore the over 40 buildings. Wander through Cook's Tavern, the Blacksmith's Shop, Asselstine's Woollen Factory, the Schoolhouse, the Gazette Printing Office and the many other dwellings to learn about the intricacies of colonial life.

Hwy 2 along the river is slower but more scenic than Hwy 401. The **Upper Canada Migratory Bird Sanctuary** (2 613-537-2024; www.uppercanadabirdsanctuary.com; 5591 County Rd 2, Ingleside; ☎ May-Oct) **FREE** offers 8km of self-guided trails that meander through wooded thickets and lush wetlands. Over 200 bird species can be glimpsed. Inquire at the park office about the dozen camping options.

Ottawa

POP 933,500

Descriptions of Ottawa read like an appealing dating profile: dynamic, gregarious, bilingual, likes kids and long walks on the river. In person, the attractive capital fits the bill.

Canada's gargantuan Gothic Parliament buildings regally anchor the downtown core, an inspiring jumble of pulsing districts at the confluence of three rivers. In the distance, the rolling Gatineau hills tenderly hug the cloudless valley. Ottawa has a wonderful conglomeration of world-class museums, from the smooth, undulating walls of the Museum of Civilization to the haunting arches of the Museum of Nature; all are architecturally inspiring homes to a variety of intriguing collections.

Ottawa's cultural diversity is reflected in its culinary prowess. A compact footprint makes finding great food simple: there's a plethora of excellent dining options catering to most tastes and budgets. Look forward to a dynamic mix of flavors and aromas from around the globe, prepared using fresh, local ingredients.

The capital is truly a year-round destination. Parks, gardens and wide, open public spaces pay an accessible homage to all four seasons – don't dismiss a winter visit because of the bracing cold. Locals celebrate

the city's seemingly longest season with a bunch of outdoor pursuits. Many skate to work or school on the frozen Rideau Canal, the largest skating rink in the world. Visitors from far and wide come to delight in the Winterlude festival with its sprawling village made entirely of ice. Once everything melts, auspicious tulips cheer the downtown as spring clicks to summer. Vibrant autumn leaves round out the year, lining the streets with a blaze of eye-popping reds and yellows.

Whether it's for the stunning museums or mouthwatering eats, the rainbow of seasons or outdoor retreats, we think you'll be smitten with Ottawa.

History

Like many colonial capitals, Ottawa's birth was not an organic one. The site was chosen by Queen Victoria as a geographic compromise between Montréal and Toronto, and poof – the city was born. Canadians were initially baffled by her decision; Ottawa was far away from the main colonial strongholds. Many thought the region to be a desolate snowfield, when in fact the Ottawa area was long inhabited by Algonquin, who named the rolling river Kichissippi (Great River).

For almost a century, Ottawa functioned as a quiet capital. Then, after WWII, Paris city planner Jacques Greber was tasked with giving Ottawa an urban facelift. The master

OTTAWA IN...

One Day

If you're only here for a day, there's no time to waste! Get yourself to **Parliament Hill** (p209) for happy snaps with the Peace Tower and a quick tour of the lavish, Harry Potter-esque interior. Next, be seduced by the shimmering glass spires of the **National Art Gallery of Canada** (p209), with its carefully curated collection of Canadian and world art and the restored remains of a lovely wooden chapel. Pause for lunch at the **ByWard Market** (p222) where you'll uncover scores of vendors hawking fresh farm produce and over 1000 kinds of cheese! Sample a beavertail at the **Rideau Canal** (p213): in winter it becomes the largest ice-skating rink in the world (7.8km).

Three Days

After completing the one-day itinerary, gravitate toward the awe-inducing architecture, skyline views and fascinating exhibits of the **Canadian Museum of Civilization** (p209). Ogle at taxidermic megafauna at the **Canadian Museum of Nature** (p211) before heading for an inspired hike or swim in picturesque **Gatineau Park** (p224). Make sure you're back in town in time for tea: honor your cravings – the city will satisfy. After a lazy brunch and morning stroll around **Confederation Park**, head to the quirky, Cold War marvel of the **Diefenbunker** (p213) and the pretty landscapes outside town. After another delicious dinner, round out your final day with a show at the **National Arts Centre** (p222) or rock out with some live music in the ByWard Market area's many venues.

planner created a distinctive European feel, transforming the city into the stunning cityscape of ample common and recreational spaces we see today.

⦿ Sights

Most of Ottawa's numerous world-class museums are within walking distance of each other. Many are closed on Mondays in the winter and several will let you in for free if you arrive less than an hour before closing time, smiling politely: although you won't have much time to appreciate the extensive collections. A number of museums offer free general admissions on Thursday evenings. If you plan to visit both the Museum of Civilization and the War Museum, discounted tickets are available: inquire at either museum.

★ Canadian Museum of Civilization

MUSEUM
(Map p210; ☎ 819-776-7000; www.civilization.ca; 100 Laurier St, Gatineau; adult/child \$13/8; ☺ 9am-6pm Fri-Wed, to 8pm Thu) Allow plenty of time to experience this high-tech, must-see museum across the river, in Hull, Québec. Documenting the history of Canada through a range of spectacular exhibits, it's an objective recounting of the nation's timeline from the perspectives of its Aboriginal peoples, its colonial beginnings and the rich multicultural diversity of Canada today. Entry includes admission to the **Children's Museum**, based around a theme of 'the Great Adventure': over 30 permanent and visiting exhibits allow kids an opportunity to travel the world.

Outside, there are stunning views of Parliament Hill, across the river. The building's striking stone exterior has been sculpted into smooth ripples, like an undulating wave, to honor the aboriginal belief that evil dwells in angled nooks. A variety of visiting hands-on exhibitions, events and IMAX films maintain year-round appeal.

★ Canadian War Museum

MUSEUM
(Map p210; ☎ 800-555-5621; www.warmuseum.ca; 1 Vimy Pl; adult/child \$13/8; ☺ 9:30am-6pm Fri-Wed, to 8pm Thu) Fascinating displays twist through the labyrinthine interior of this sculpturelike, modern museum, tracing Canada's military history with the nation's most comprehensive collection of war-related artifacts. Many of the touching and thought-provoking exhibits are larger than life, including a replica of a WWI trench. Take a look at the facade in the evening, if you can: flickering lights pulse on

❶ MUSEUMS PASSPORT: EIGHT MUSEUMS, SEVEN DAYS

Capital-ize on Ottawa's cache of fantastic museums with the **Museums Passport** (www.museumpassport.ca;

adult/family \$45/99), a discount card that grants carriers admission to eight of the city's best museums. Additional perks include 20% discounts on performances at the National Arts Centre. The card can be purchased at any of the participating museums and is valid for use within seven days.

and off spelling 'Lest We Forget' and 'CWM' in both English and French Morse code.

Parliament Hill

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Map p216; ☎ 613-996-0896; www.parl.gc.ca/Visitors; 111 Wellington St; ☺ 9am-5pm) Vast, yawning archways, copper-topped turrets and Gothic-revival gargoyles dominate the facade of the stunning lime and sandstone Parliament buildings. The main building, known as the Centre Block, supports the iconic Peace Tower, the highest structure in the city. Completed in 1865, Canada's nexus of political activity welcomes visitors year-round. You can download informative PDFs of self-guided walking tours from www.canadascapital.gc.ca, but we recommend the free 45-minute guided tours. From May to September a limited number of tickets are distributed from the Hill Centre, across the street. In other months, head to the main visitor entrance beneath the Peace Tower.

Question Time in the House of Commons occurs every afternoon and at 11am on Fridays, when parliament is in session. Visitors are welcomed to watch the antics on a first-come, first-served basis. Expect security checks. At 10am daily in summer, see the colorful changing of the guard on the front lawns, and at night enjoy the free bilingual sound-and-light show on Parliament Hill.

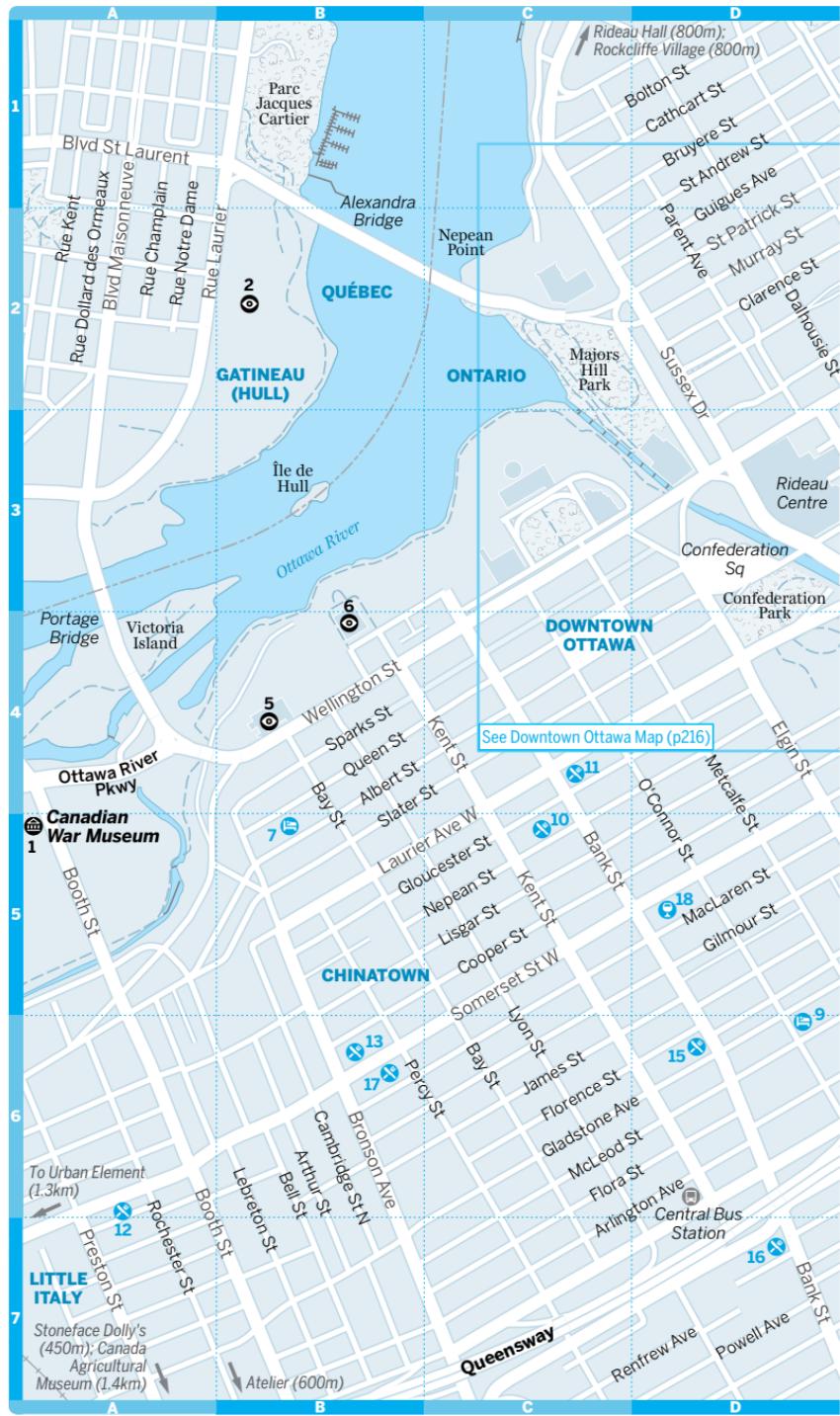
National Gallery of Canada

MUSEUM

(Map p216; ☎ 800-319-2787, 613-990-1985; www.gallery.ca; 380 Sussex Dr; adult/child \$12/6; 5-8pm Thu free; ☺ 10am-5pm Fri-Wed, to 8pm Thu) The National Gallery is a work of art in itself: its striking ensemble of pink granite and glass spires echo the ornate copper-topped towers of nearby Parliament. Inside, vaulted

Ottawa

ONTARIO OTTAWA





Ottawa

Top Sights

1 Canadian War Museum.....A5

Sights

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- 18 Centretown PubD5
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Entertainment

- 20 Bytowne CinemaE2

galleries exhibit predominantly Canadian art, classic and contemporary, including an impressive collection of Inuit works. It's the largest such collection in the world, although additional galleries of European and American treasures include several recognizable names and masterpieces. Chronological displays guide visitors through an annotated retelling of the nation's history.

Deep within the gallery's interior you'll find two smooth courtyards and the remarkable **Rideau Street Convent Chapel**. Built in 1888, this stunning wooden chapel was saved from demolition and restored piece by piece within the main building – quite extraordinary.

Canadian Museum of Nature

MUSEUM
(Map p210; ☎ 613-566-4700; www.nature.ca; 240 McLeod St; adult/child \$12/10, 5-8pm Thu free; ☰ 9am-6pm Sat-Wed, to 8pm Thu & Fri; ☐ route 5, 6, 14, stop McLeod St) Sparkling after a massive renovation, this vast museum pokes its

Gothic head just above the skyline, south of downtown. It houses an impressive collection of fossils, the full skeleton of a blue whale and an excellent stock of dinosaurs from Alberta. Everyone loves the realistic mammal and bird dioramas depicting Canadian wildlife. The taxidermic creatures are so lifelike, you'll be glad they're behind a sheet of glass.

Ottawa Locks

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Map p216) The series of steep, steplike locks, between the Château Laurier and Parliament Hill, marks the north end of the 200km Rideau Canal which flows all the way down to Kingston. Colonel By, the canal's visionary engineer, set up headquarters here in 1826.

Bytown Museum

MUSEUM

(Map p216; ☎ 613-234-4570; www.bytownmuseum.com; 1 Canal Lane; adult/child \$6.50/3; ☺ 10am-5pm) Take the stairs alongside the Ottawa locks on Wellington St to find the Bytown Museum, sitting at the last lock before the artificial canal plunges into the waters of the Ottawa River. This well-curated collection of artifacts and documents about Ottawa's colonial past is displayed in the city's oldest stone building.

Canada Science & Technology Museum

MUSEUM

(☎ 613-991-3044; www.scientech.technomuseum.ca; 1867 St Laurent Blvd; adult/child \$12/8; ☺ 9:30am-5pm) Ambient squeaks and boinks fill the air of this hands-on museum as contented visitors gingerly turn knobs and push buttons, exploring the physical laws governing things like optical illusions and time. A walk through the 'Crazy Kitchen' is a blast: the lopsided galley makes you stumble from start to finish. There are trains out back to enlighten you on the science of coal and steam propulsion and a large display of space technology. Popular with adults and kids alike, it's informative and fun!

Canada Aviation and Space Museum

MUSEUM

(☎ 613-993-2010; www.aviation.technomuses.ca; 11 Aviation Pkwy; adult/child \$13/8; ☺ 9am-5pm; ☎ 129) With nearly 120 aircraft housed in this mammoth steel hangar about 5km northeast of downtown, you could be forgiven for thinking you were at the airport. Wander through the warehouse, try the flight simulator and get up close and personal with colorful planes ranging from the Silver

Dart of 1909 to the first turbo-powered Viscount passenger jet.

Royal Canadian Mint

NOTABLE BUILDING

(Map p216; ☎ 613-993-8990; www.mint.ca; 320 Sussex Dr; guided tours adult/child \$6/3; ☺ 10am-5pm) Although Canada's circulation-coin mint is in Winnipeg, the royal mint holds its own by striking special pieces. The imposing stone building, which looks a bit like the Tower of London, has been Canada's major gold refiner since 1908. Weekday tours of the coin-making process are highly recommended: visitors can glimpse the transformation as sheets of metal are spun into loads of coins. This doesn't happen on weekends, so the tour price is discounted.

Notre Dame Cathedral-Basilica

CHURCH

(Map p216; 385 Sussex Dr; ☺ 7am-6pm) Built in 1841, this shimmering tin-topped house of worship is the oldest church in all of Ottawa and the seat of the city's Catholic archbishop. At the entrance, pick up the small pamphlet outlining the church's many idiosyncratic features, including elaborate wooden carvings and the dazzling indigo ceiling peppered with gleaming stars.

Supreme Court of Canada

NOTABLE BUILDING

(Map p210; ☎ 613-995-5361; www.scc-csc.gc.ca; 301 Wellington St; ☺ 9am-5pm) **FREE** This intimidating structure strikes an intriguing architectural balance with a modern concrete shell and a traditional copper roof. Visitors can stroll around the scenic grounds, vaulted lobby and dark oak-paneled courtroom. In summer law students from the University of Ottawa conduct friendly and insightful tours, which depart every 30 minutes. During the rest of the year, tours must be booked in advance.

Library & National Archives of Canada

NOTABLE BUILDING

(Map p210; ☎ 613-996-5115; www.collectionscanada.gc.ca; 395 Wellington St; ☺ 8:30am-11pm) **FREE** The mandate of this monstrous concrete institution is to collect and preserve the documentation of Canada. Behind the tiny checkered windows lies a vast anthology of records, including paintings, maps, photographs, diaries, letters, posters and 60,000 cartoons and caricatures collected over the past two centuries. Rotating exhibits are displayed on the ground floor.

Laurier House National Historic Site

(Map p210; ☎ 613-992-8142; 335 Laurier Ave; adult/child \$4/2; ☺ 9am-5pm) This copper-roofed Victorian home built in 1878 was the residence of two notable prime ministers: Wilfrid Laurier and the eccentric Mackenzie King. The home is elegantly furnished, displaying treasured mementos and possessions from both politicos. Don't miss the study on the top floor.

Rideau Hall

NOTABLE BUILDING

(Off map p210; ☎ 613-993-8200; www.gg.ca; 1 Sussex Dr; ☺ 9am-5pm) **FREE** Home of the governor-general, Rideau Hall was built in the early 20th century. There are free 45-minute walking tours of the fancy residence, with poignant anecdotes about the various goings-on over the years. Otherwise, the grounds are free to be enjoyed at your leisure. At the main gate, the small changing of the guard ceremony happens on the hour throughout the day from the end of June until the end of August.

Walk east along Sussex/Princess Dr to take a glance at **Rockcliffe Village** (off map p210), Ottawa's swankiest neighborhood and home to prominent Canadians and most foreign diplomats.

RCMP Musical Ride Centre

HISTORIC SITE

(☎ 613-998-8199; 1 Sandridge Rd; ☺ 9am-4pm) **FREE** While the name sounds like Disney's newest attraction starring chipper red vested policemen, the musical ride center is actually the stage where the Mounties perfect their pageant. The public are welcome to watch the dress rehearsals and equestrian displays, though it mostly appeals to equestrian enthusiasts. It's about 7km northeast of Centretown. Call for schedules.

Diefenbunker

HISTORIC BUILDING

(☎ 613-839-0007; www.diefenbunker.ca; 3911 Carp Rd, Carp; adult/child \$14/8; ☺ 10am-6pm) During the Cold War, paranoid government officials commissioned this gargantuan four-floored secret underground shelter, designed to house over 300 'important persons' for 30 days during a nuclear attack. Admission includes an optional one-hour tour, the highlights of which include the prime minister's suite, the CBC radio studio and the Bank of Canada vault. It's about 40km west of town, in the village of Carp.

RIDEAU CANAL

On June 28, 2007, the Rideau Canal became Canada's 14th location to be named a Unesco national historic site. This 175-year-old, 200km-long system connects Kingston with Ottawa through 47 locks, climbing 84m from Ottawa over the Canadian Shield before dropping 49m into Lake Ontario.

After the War of 1812, there was a fear of future skirmishes with the Americans. The Duke of Wellington decided to link Ottawa and Kingston in order to have a reliable communications and supply route between the two military centers. Construction was a brutal affair, involving as many as 4000 men battling malaria and the Canadian Shield, some of the world's hardest rock. Despite their blood, sweat and tears, the canal never saw military service, although it later proved useful for shipping goods.

Today, it's a nautical paradise, lined with charming parks, lakes and towns to enjoy.

Saunders Farm

PARK

(☎ 613-838-5440; www.saundersfarm.com; 7893 Bleeks Rd, Munster; admission \$16.50; ☺ Jun-Sep) About 40 minutes' drive southwest of Ottawa, this fun family farm is chock-full of hedge mazes and has a water park, pedal carts, hay rides and picnic areas for you to enjoy.

Activities

Residents of this city of long, harsh winters love to be outside, whatever the season.

The **Rideau Canal**, Ottawa's most famous outdoor attraction, doubles as the largest **ice-skating rink** in the world. The 7.8km of groomed ice is roughly the size of 90 Olympic-sized hockey rinks. Rest stops and changing stations are sprinkled throughout, but, more importantly, take note of the wooden kiosks dispensing scrumptious slabs of fried dough called beavertails. The three **skate and sled rental stations** are located at the steps of the National Arts Centre, Dow's Lake and 5th Ave.

Several nearby **skiing** resorts offer a variety of alpine and cross-country trails. In the **Gatineau Hills**, about 20km from downtown, over 50 groomed slopes are available.

OTTAWA FOR CHILDREN

Nope, the **Canada Agricultural Museum** (Map p210; ☎ 613-991-3044; www.agriculture.technomuses.ca/; 930 Carling Ave at Prince of Wales Dr; adult/child \$10/7; ☺ 9am-5pm Mar-Oct) isn't about the history of the pitchfork – it's a fascinating experimental farm. This government-owned property includes over 500 hectares of gardens and ranches. Kids will love the livestock as they hoot and snort around the barn. Affable farmhands will let the tots help out during feeding time. Guided tours lead visitors to an observatory, a tropical greenhouse and an arboretum. The rolling farmland is the perfect place for a scenic summer picnic, and in winter the grounds become a prime tobogganing locale. Just as farmlike, but without the animals, the mazes at Saunders Farm (p213) will keep the kids going in circles for ages, so you can put your feet up! Otherwise, most of Ottawa's museums have been designed with families in mind; several have entire wings devoted to child's play, like the Canadian Museum of Nature (p211), the Canada Science & Technology Museum (p212) and the Canadian Museum of Civilization (p209). Family-friendly accommodations include the Albert at Bay Suite Hotel (p215), Les Suites (p218) and Courtyard Ottawa East (p215).

Camp Fortune (☎ 819-827-1717; www.campfortune.com; 300 Chemin Dunlop, Chelsea) is a year-round adventure spot with ski runs that turn into a paradise for mountain bikers in the summer. If that's not enough, there's also plenty of ziplining to be had. Popular ski resort **Mont Cascades** (☎ 819-827-0301; www.montcascades.ca; 448 Mont Cascades Rd, Cantley) also flips its tricks in the summer, operating an expansive water park. **Mount Pakenham** (☎ 613-624-5290; www.mountpakenham.com; 577 Ski Hill Rd, Pakenham), 60km west of Ottawa, is a strictly winter affair. Cross-country skiers will love the trails in Gatineau Park (p224).

Hot-air ballooning has long been a popular leisure activity in the capital region. **Sundance Balloons** (☎ 613-247-8277; www.sundanceballoons.com; per person from \$250) offers sunrise and sunset trips departing from several locations in the Ottawa valley.

👉 Tours

The Capital Information Kiosk (p223) offers several handy brochures for self-guided walking tours.

Ottawa Walking Tours WALKING TOUR (☎ 613-799-1774; www.ottawawalkingtours.com; tours \$15) These informative and fun tours with professional guides depart in front of the Capital Infocentre. Cash only.

Haunted Walk WALKING TOUR (Map p216; ☎ 613-232-0344; www.hauntedwalk.com; 73 Clarence St; walks \$14-17) Has several ghoulish walking tours including visits to the old county jail. A new 'Naughty Ottawa'

pub crawl is also available for those who want to get their beer on.

Lady Dive Amphibious

BUS TOUR

(Map p216; ☎ 613-223-6211; www.ladydive.com; cnr Sparks & Elgin Sts; tours from \$31; ☺ May-Oct) This half-bus half-boat drives around Ottawa's favorite sights and then plunges into the Ottawa River. Free hotel pickup is available.

Paul's Boat Lines

BOAT TOUR

(Map p216; ☎ 613-255-6781; www.paulsboatcruises.com; Ottawa Locks or Rideau Canal Dock; cruises from adult/child \$20/12; ☺ May-Oct) Scenic cruises offer picture-perfect moments.

Gray Line

BUS TOUR

(Map p216; ☎ 613-562-9090; www.grayline.ca; cnr Sparks & Elgin Sts) Tours depart from the cornerside ticket kiosk. A variety of tours including a hop-on, hop-off service is available. Check the website for schedules and pricing.

★ Festivals & Events

The nation's capital is abuzz year-round with over 60 annual festivals and events. Here are our picks.

Winterlude

WINTER

(☎ 613-239-5000; www.canadascapital.gc.ca/winterlude) Three consecutive weekends in February celebrate Ottawa's winter, centering on the frozen Dow's Lake and the canal. Awe-inspiring ice sculptures abound.

Canadian Tulip Festival

FLOWER

(☎ 613-567-5757; www.tulipfestival.ca) In May, after the winter thaw, Ottawa explodes with

color as beds of over 200 species of tulip come to life. Over 100,000 bulbs were gifted to the city in 1945 by the Dutch royal family in gratitude for Canada sheltering their princess and her daughters during the war. Festivities include parades, regattas, car rallies, dances, concerts and fireworks.

Ottawa Bluesfest

MUSIC

(2 613-241-2633; www.ottawabluesfest.ca) The world's second-biggest blues festival after Chicago's brings in the big names for memorable concerts in late June.

Canada Day

CULTURE

(2 613-239-5000; www.canadascapital.gc.ca/canadaday) The best place in Canada to celebrate the nation's birthday on July 1. Noteworthy fireworks crackle and boom above the Parliament buildings.

HOPE Volleyball Summerfest

SPORTS

(2 613-237-1433; www.hopehelps.com) A giant volleyball tournament in mid-July to raise money for local charities.

SuperEX

AGRICULTURAL

(2 613-237-2222; www.ottawasuperex.com) This enormous carnival has been running for over 120 years, but had been temporarily canceled at time of writing. We hope it gets back on its feet again.

Capital Pride

CULTURE

(2 613-421-5387; www.capitalpride.com) A week's worth of rainbows culminating in a rowdy parade in mid-August.

Sleeping

Ottawa has an impressive array of accommodations available in all price ranges, with plenty of great choices in the downtown core. Reservations are recommended during summer and over festival dates, especially Winterlude.

Locals call downtown 'Centretown.' To its east, the Sandy Hill district with its cache of stately heritage homes and international embassies has a number of pleasant B&Bs, boutique hotels and, closer to ByWard Market, hostels. All are within a healthy walking distance from downtown.

Centretown

Hostelling International (HI)

Ottawa Jail

HOSTELS

(Map p216; 2 613-235-2595; www.hihostels.ca/ottawa; 75 Nicholas St; members dm/s \$29/54,

nonmembers dm/s \$34/59; @) This quirky hostel in the former Ottawa Jail, considered to be one of the most haunted buildings in town, isn't for everyone, especially those who've served time or are scared of their own shadow. Others will love its originality. Guests can sleep in the stone penitentiary's old wrought-iron cell block. Check out the on-site gallows where numerous criminals were hanged for their wretched crimes.

Lord Elgin Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p216; 2 613-235-3333; www.lordelginhotel.ca; 100 Elgin St; d from \$169; #) In one of Ottawa's finest locations, the stately Lord Elgin was built in 1941 in a similar, but less grandiose style to the Fairmont Royal York in Toronto. Its large, bright rooms are comfortably furnished and were recently refurbished with large flatscreen TVs. Many feature wonderful views over Confederation Park. Check online for frequent special rates at this landmark property.

Albert at Bay Suite Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p210; 2 1-800-267-6644; www.albertatbay.com; 435 Albert St; ste from \$159; #) This all-suite hotel offers excellent value for traveling families and those who prefer the comforts of home. Oversized multiroom one- and two- bedroom suites, Ottawa's largest, all have full kitchens and plush, comfortable furnishings, though we're not sure how all that white will stay looking sharp. Many rooms have balconies. It's a little far west of the downtown action, but still offers excellent value.

Courtyard Ottawa East

HOTEL \$\$

(2 613-741-9862; www.marriott.com; 200 Coventry Rd; d from \$119; #) The closest hotel to Ottawa's not-so-central VIA rail station is also a great choice if you're driving: free parking. One of Ottawa's newest hotels, it has spacious, functional rooms with trendy furnishings. There's a rooftop pool and on-site bar/restaurant. Consider elsewhere if you need to be very downtown, or if you're traveling in winter without a vehicle.

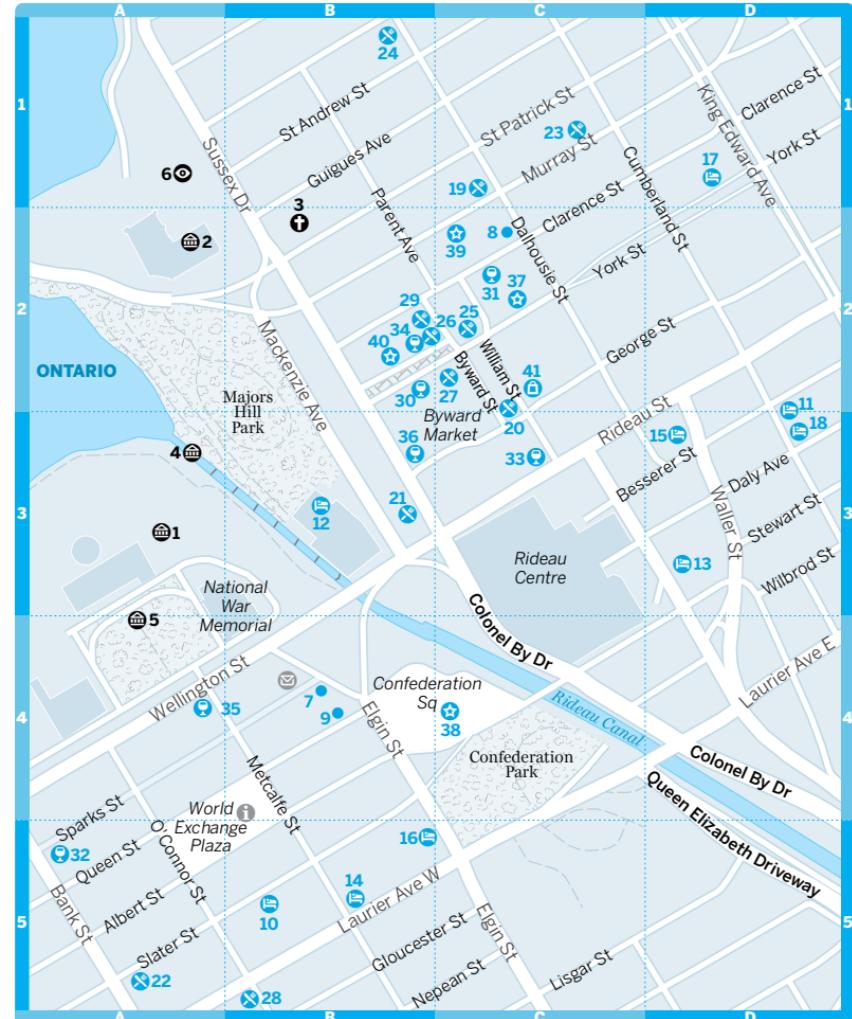
Victoria Park Suites

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p210; 2 800-465-7275; www.victoriapark.com; 377 O'Connor St; d incl breakfast from \$139) A delightful position in a leafy downtown backstreet, bright, airy rooms with kitch-ettes and plush, comfortable beds make this property an excellent choice for travelers with a limited budget. Deluxe continental breakfast, on-site gym and a fantastic

Downtown Ottawa

0 400 m
0 0.2 miles



rooftop courtyard with great views are all bonuses.

Hotel Indigo

(Map p216; ☎ 613-216-2903; www.ottawadowntownhotel.com; 123 Metcalfe St; d from \$139; A prime downtown location helps score points for this trying-to-be boutique hotel that doesn't quite pull it off. Quirks include an atrium lobby, floor-to-ceiling murals in each room, plasma TVs, and customer information written in haiku form, but rooms are a little small and dark. It's a good bet if the price is right.

HOTEL \$\$

Arc

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$
(Map p216; ☎ 613-238-2888; www.arcthehotel.com; 140 Slater St; d from \$129; Arc is a savvy boutique hotel with 112 minimal-yet-elegant rooms in a great location; call it low-key, muted and restfully hip. This mellow adult atmosphere continues through the quiet bar and trendy restaurant.

Fairmont Château Laurier

HOTEL \$\$\$
(Map p216; ☎ 866-540-4410, 613-241-1414; www.fairmont.com/laurier; 1 Rideau St; d from \$269; The city's best-known hotel by the Ottawa Locks is a landmark in its own right. Rooms are predictably large and fea-

Downtown Ottawa

❶ Sights

- ❶ Bytown Museum.....A3
- ❷ National Gallery of Canada.....A2
- ❸ Notre Dame Cathedral-Basilica.....B2
- ❹ Ottawa Locks.....A3
- ❺ Parliament Hill.....A4
- ❻ Royal Canadian Mint.....A1

❷ Activities, Courses & Tours

- ❷ Gray Line.....B4
- ❸ Haunted Walk.....C2
- ❹ Lady Dive Amphibious.....B4
- Paul's Boat Lines.....(see 4)

❸ Sleeping

- ❽ Arc.....B5
- ❾ Barefoot Hostel.....D2
- ❿ Fairmont Château Laurier.....B3
- ❾ Hostelling International (HI)
Ottawa Jail.....D3
- ❿ Hotel Indigo.....B5
- ❾ Les Suites.....D3
- ❿ Lord Elgin Hotel.....B5
- ❿ Ottawa Backpackers Inn.....D1
- ❿ Swiss Hotel.....D3

❹ Eating

- ❿ Boulanger Français.....C1
- ❿ Boulangerie Moulin de Provence.....C2

- ❻ Brasserie Métropolitain.....B3
- ❻ C'est Japon à Suisha.....A5
- ❻ Chez Lucien.....C1
- ❻ I Deal Coffee.....B1
- ❻ Lapointe.....C2
- ❻ LUXE Bistro & Steakhouse.....B2
- Market Square.....(see 41)
- ❻ Planet Coffee.....C2
- ❻ Tosca.....B5
- ❻ Zak's Diner.....B2

❻ Drinking & Nightlife

- ❻ Château Lafayette.....B2
- ❻ Clock Tower Brew Pub.....C2
- ❻ Edge.....A5
- ❻ Highlander Pub.....C3
- ❻ Lookout Bar.....B2
- ❻ Parliament Pub.....A4
- ❻ Social.....B3

❻ Entertainment

- ❻ Fat Tuesday's.....C2
- ❻ National Arts Centre.....C4
- ❻ Rainbow Bistro.....C2
- ❻ Zaphod Beeblebrox.....B2

❻ Shopping

- ❻ ByWard Market.....C2

ture original antique furnishings. Feel free to walk the opulent marble hallways, admire the art and recline on the overstuffed chaises as though you were the toast of the town.

Byward Market & Sandy Hill

Ottawa Backpackers Inn

HOSTEL \$

(Map p216; ☎ 613-241-3402; www.ottawahostel.com; 203 York St; dm/s \$27/65, apt from \$150; This laid-back hostel lives in a converted 19th-century house boasting fresh-faced bathrooms, sun-drenched dorms, and handy power outlets at every bed.

Barefoot Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(Map p216; ☎ 613-237-0335; www.barefoothostel.com; 455 Cumberland St; dm \$38; Thick duvets, generous bursts of air-conditioning, excellent bathrooms and common areas and a quaint patio make this 'boutique hostel' a clear winner.

Australis Guest House

B&B \$

(☎ 613-235-8461; www.australisguesthouse.com; 89 Goulburn Ave; s/d from \$75/115; This eco-friendly guesthouse in hilly Sandy Hill

offers 100% cotton sheets, reusable cloth napkins, all-natural cleaning products and loos with a low-flush option.

Avalon

B&B \$

(Map p210; ☎ 613-789-3443; www.avalonbedandbreakfast.com; 539 Besserer St; d \$85-125; A refreshing departure from the usual antique-laden B&Bs, Avalon, on a lovely street near the canal, has a tasteful blend of modern furnishings. Enormous healthy breakfasts are the norm. Each of the four stylish rooms has en suite bathroom.

Swiss Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(Map p216; ☎ 613-237-0335; www.swisshotel.ca; 89 Daly Ave; r incl breakfast from \$128; Reduced rates are available for extended stays, making this beautiful boutique hotel a wonderful place to call your Ottawa home. The old stone guesthouse has 22 stylish rooms, all a little different but each with iPads, free wi-fi and plush bedding. The optional Swiss buffet breakfast features delicious imported coffees, muesli, cheese and much, much more.

Benner's B&B

(Map p210; ☎ 613-789-8320; www.benners-bnb.com; 541 Besserer St; d \$95-130; ☺) Well-appointed and spacious, this 100-year-old house stands out as a comfortable option in Sandy Hill District, a 15-minute walk to downtown. The King loft room is a great deal.

McGee's Inn

(Map p210; ☎ 613-262-4337; www.mcgeesinn.com; 185 Daly Ave; d incl breakfast \$119-198; ☺ ☻) This vast Victorian mansion has all the period trappings, from floral prints and embroidered chair caning to plush button-eyed teddy bears and varnished sewing machines: there's so much atmosphere in here. A variety of private suites are available – we love the John McGee room. Enjoy the full breakfast in the dining room amid chirps from antique cuckoo clocks. This is an excellent choice for those who love history and charm.

Les Suites

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p216; ☎ 866-682-0879; www.les-suites.com; 130 Besserer St; ste from \$151; ☺ ☻ ☻ ☻) Spacious suites in this downtown hotel at the edge of the Byward Market district feature one or two bedrooms, full kitchens and in-suite laundries. Staff have a reputation for their excellent customer service. Some suites have been refurbished more recently than others; clarify before you book.

 **Eating**

Ottawa's smorgasbord of gastronomic goodness rivals that of Toronto and Montréal, but is more accessible: you'll never have to travel too far for great dining options catering to all tastes and budgets. Bounteous **ByWard Market** (www.byward-market.com) boasts 150 options squished into one condensed epicurean district. When it's warm, diners spill out onto the streets as patio seats fill fast.

Follow Bank St south to the colorful Glebe neighborhood for a surplus of less touristy pubs, restaurants and cafes between First St and Fifth St or take an evening stroll down Preston St, aka 'Corso Italia,' for a little slice

SAVOR OTTAWA

Check out www.savourottawa.ca for details about the burgeoning local initiative that strives to match regional restaurants with the area's farmers.

of the homeland. Ottawa's lively Chinatown, spread along Somerset St W near Bronson Ave, is also a great spot to visit and there's a tasty smattering of Vietnamese flavors west of Booth St.

 **Centretown & Chinatown****Eggspectation**

BRUNCH \$

(Map p210; ☎ 613-569-6505; www.eggspectation.ca; 171 Bank St; meals \$8-23; ☺ 7am-5pm Sat-Tue, to 9pm Wed-Fri) The downtown location of this breakfast (and more) franchise is so handy and the menu so *egg-citing* that we couldn't resist sharing. It's cheap, cheery and full of sunshine. Literally. Bright open windows give you plenty of personal space to navigate through your hangover, but you might want to keep the shades on.

Hung Sum

CHINESE \$

(Map p210; ☎ 613-238-8828; 870 Somerset St; dishes \$2-9; ☺ 11am-8pm Mon-Sun) Traditional Cantonese dim sum is served all day in this wonderfully plain and nontraditional little restaurant. All dishes are prepared and served fresh, unlike the pick-from-the-trolley joints you might be familiar with. Best eaten with friends, this is one of the tastiest, best-value and fun-to-eat meals you'll find in Ottawa.

 **Town**

MODERN CANADIAN \$\$

(Map p210; ☎ 613-695-8696; www.townlovesyou.ca; 296 Elgin St; mains \$13-34; ☺ 11:30am-2pm Wed-Fri & 5-10pm Tue-Sun) Town loves you and we love Town. Slick, smart and ineffably cool, this joint is always packed: arty-farty hipsters bump elbows with wealthy coiffured housewives. Anyone around who knows about food knows the food here is good: real good. Town's clever young owners have pulled together the right mix of style, location, marketing and an exceptionally executed menu that everyone is talking about.

Brasserie Métropolitain

FRENCH \$\$

(Map p216; ☎ 613-562-1160; www.metropolitainbrasserie.com; 700 Sussex Dr; mains \$11-38; ☺ 8am-midnight) This trendy hot spot puts a modern spin on the typical brasserie with a swirling zinc countertop, flamboyant fixtures and the subtle oompah-pah from a distant accordion: you'll feel like you're dining on the set of *Moulin Rouge*. 'Hill Hour' (4pm to 7pm on weekdays) buzzes with the spirited chatter of hot-blooded pollys as they down cheap drinks and plats du jour.

The Works

(Map p210; ☎ 613-235-0406; www.worksburger.com; 580 Bank St; burgers from \$9.50; ☺ 11am-10pm Sun-Wed, to midnight Thu-Sat) It's hard to believe that in one short decade this clever burger joint has flourished into a successful franchise. Brand your patty how you like it with over 60 quirky toppings, from fried eggs to brie cheese and peanut butter.

Tosca

ITALIAN \$\$

(Map p216; ☎ 613-565-3933; www.tosca-ristorante.ca; 144 O'Connor St; mains \$16-36; ☺ 11:30am-late Mon-Fri, 4-10pm Sat & Sun) In the heart of the downtown core, this upscale but accessible Italian *ristorante* offers delicious, authentic food, an extensive wine list and excellent service. The evening atmosphere is candlelit and serene, perfect for romancing or long conversations with old friends.

C'est Japon à Suisha

JAPANESE \$\$

(Map p216; ☎ 613-236-9602; www.japaninottawa.com; 208 Slater St; sushi & sashimi from \$6, mains \$18-35; ☺ 11:30am-2pm Tue-Fri & 5pm-9:30pm Tue-Sat) While strong in other culinary branches, Ottawa lacks a ton of good Japanese restaurants. This is the exception: mouthwatering authentic dishes are delivered in a traditionally styled setting with sushi boats and private *washitsu* Japanese rooms. A wide variety of combinations and sets are available from an extensive menu.

Shanghai

CHINESE \$\$

(Map p210; ☎ 613-233-4001; www.shanghaiottawa.com; 651 Somerset St W; items \$8-17; ☺ 11:30am-2pm Tue-Fri & 4:30-10pm Tue-Sun; ☺) This restaurant is widely known as the first establishment in Ottawa's Chinatown, and is now run by the artistic children of the original owners. The food is great – modern Chinese cuisine with lots of vegetarian options – but the real draw is the trendy decor, rotating art exhibits and fabulous weekend events (think 'Disco Bingo' and karaoke) hosted by the local diva tranny goddess China-Doll.

ZenKitchen

VEGAN \$\$

(Map p210; ☎ 613-233-6404; www.zenkitchen.ca; 634 Somerset St W; mains \$18-21; ☺ 11:30am-2pm Thu & Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun & 5-10pm daily; ☺) The dining concept here works on the premise that vegan food can be visually appealing, delicious and healthy. Only the freshest local ingredients are used in the preparation of a menu that seeks to bring out the rich flavors of individual ingredients like tomatoes, mangoes, peaches and limes.

BURGERS \$\$

An award-winning Ontario wine list softens the palate. Highly recommended for the veg-curious out there.

Beckta Dining & Wine

FUSION \$\$\$

(Map p210; ☎ 613-238-7063; www.beckta.com; 226 Nepean St; mains \$28-39; ☺ 5:30-10pm) ☺ Book in advance for the hottest table in town, if not one of the hottest in the country. Beckta offers an upmarket dining experience with an original spin on regional cuisine. The inspired five-course tasting menu (\$85) is the collective brainchild of chef and sommelier and a great way to experience the bigger picture at work here. Serious foodies won't fail to get a table.

Whalesbone Oyster House

SEAFOOD \$\$\$

(Map p210; ☎ 613-231-8569; www.thewhalesbone.com; 430 Bank St; mains \$24-35; ☺ 11:30am-2pm Mon-Fri & 5-10pm daily) ☺ If the local chefs are purchasing their fish from Whalesbone's wholesale wing (or should we say 'fin'), then there's really no doubt that it's the best place in town for seafood. The on-site restaurant offers up a short list of fresh faves like lobster, halibut and scallops ceviche on small plates.

Byward Market & Sandy Hill**Boulangerie Moulin de Provence**

BAKERY \$

(Map p216; ☎ 613-241-9152; www.moulindeprovence.com; 55 ByWard Market Sq; items from \$2; ☺ 7am-10pm) Still riding on the buzz left by a visit from President Obama, this wonderful bakery is packed to the hilt with sugary and savoury goodness. The 'Obama Cookies' are a big hit, but we recommend the flaky croissants, which have often held the title of the city's best.

Boulanger Français

BAKERY \$

(Map p216; ☎ 613-789-7941; www.bennysbistro.ca/bakery; 119 Murray St; pastries from \$2; ☺ 7am-5:30pm) The smell of freshly baked *pain au chocolat* will destroy even the smallest of diets. Pastries are prepared using tried-and-true recipes from France.

Zak's Diner

DINER \$

(Map p216; ☎ 613-241-2401; www.zaksdiner.com; 14 ByWard Market Sq; mains \$8-15; ☺ 24hr) Shoo-bop along to the '50s music that supplements the *Grease*-like atmosphere. The kitschy diner is at its best in the middle of the night when the joint fills up for post-party munchies. The club sandwich is a big

hit, as are the breakfast items. Wraps are also on offer, so it's not a total time warp.

Market Square

(Map p216; ☎ 613-562-3325; www.bywardmarket.com; 55 ByWard Market Sq, cnr William & George Sts; ☺ 7am-8pm) Anchoring the market district, this sturdy brick building is the perfect place to stop when hunger strikes. Aside from the fresh produce and cheese, there's an array of international takeaway joints offering falafel, spicy curries, flaky pastries, sushi (the list goes on). Look for the stand selling beavertails, Ottawa's signature sizzling flat-dough dish.

I Deal Coffee

(Map p216; ☎ 613-562-1775; www.idealcoffees.com; 176 Dalhousie St; ☺ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun) Ideal indeed; handcrafted blends are produced and roasted on-site. The decor is thin – it's all about rich, flavorful cups of joe.

Planet Coffee

(Map p216; ☎ 613-789-6261; 24 York St; ☺ 7:30am-10pm Mon-Sat, 9am-7pm Sun) Skip Starbucks and grab a latte around the corner in the quiet courtyard. Sweetened ice coffees are a big hit.

★ Fraser Cafe

(☎ 613-749-1444; www.frasercafe.ca; 7 Springfield Rd; brunch items \$9-15, mains \$12-29; ☺ 11:30am-2pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun & 5:30-10pm Tue-Sun) It's worth taking a little trek over to this smart cafe/restaurant across the canal, just east of Sandy Hill, especially if you're in the mood for brunch (weekends only). Healthy, tasty, creative meals are prepared from the freshest ingredients. The atmosphere is lively and casual and the service, despite the bustle, is excellent. Reservations are recommended.

Chez Lucien

(Map p216; ☎ 613-241-3533; 137 Murray St; mains \$6-16; ☺ 11am-2am) Exposed burgundy brick, classics playing on the free jukebox, shucking down butter-soaked escargot, all makes wonderful sense at Chez Lucien, one of Ottawa's favorite places to kick back in style.

Lapointe

(Map p216; ☎ 613-241-6221; www.lapointefish.ca; 55 York St; mains \$10-29; ☺ 11:30am-9:30pm) This fish market has served the community since 1867. The basement restaurant lacks ambience but offers a versatile array of fishy

MARKET \$

dishes from sashimi to chowder and old-school fish and chips.

LUXE Bistro & Steakhouse

STEAKHOUSE \$\$\$
(Map p216; ☎ 613-241-8805; www.luxebistro.com; 47 York St; mains \$12-37; ☺ 11:30am-1am) If you like your steak a little French with a twist of New York, this smart ByWard Market bistro is bound to appeal. The decor is slick and the new outdoor patio is a hit in the warmer months. Dress smart.

Le Cordon Bleu Bistro

@ Signatures FRENCH \$\$\$
(Map p210; ☎ 613-236-2499; www.bistroatsignatures.com; 453 Laurier Ave E; mains \$26-35; ☺ 11:30am-1:30pm Wed-Fri & 5:30-9:30pm Wed-Sat) Housed in a Tudor-style castle, this restaurant belongs to the prestigious Le Cordon Bleu culinary school. Well-seasoned instructors prepare nightly à la carte dinners. Weekday *table d'hôte* lunches (\$26) crafted by graduating students offer the best value, though can be hit-and-miss. The lengthy wine list looks more like an encyclopedia.

Further Afield

White Horse Restaurant

DINER \$
(☎ 613-746-7767; 294 Tremblay Rd; ☺ 5am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-4pm Sat & Sun) This wonderful little greasy spoon is the closest place to get a meal near Ottawa station and boasts good old-fashioned home cooking and the cheapest breakfast in town.

Petit Bills

CANADIAN \$\$\$
(☎ 613-729-2500; www.petitbillsbistro.com; 1293 Wellington St W; mains \$22-33; ☺ 11:30am-9pm Mon-Sat, 4:30-9pm Sun) It's worth the cab fare to get to this charming family-run bistro in Ottawa's Fisher Park neighborhood. We think the secret-recipe east coast seafood chowder is one of the best we've had.

Urban Element

FUSION \$\$\$
(Map p210; ☎ 613-722-0885; www.theurbanelement.ca; 424 Parkdale Ave; courses from \$90; ☺ 9am-5pm, meals by appointment) Housed in a vacant brick firehouse, this gustatory option wins on concept alone. Think *Iron Chef* meets Martha Stewart. Make a reservation at this kitchen-cum-classroom and cook your own three-star gourmet meal, with the help of a skilled cook, of course. The team of instructors includes a regular crew of chefs and several visiting professionals who work at the finest restaurants around town.

Atelier

(Map p210; ☎ 613-321-3537; www.atelierrestaurant.ca; 540 Rochester St; menu \$110; ☺ 5-10pm) 

The brainchild of celebrated chef and molecular gastronomy enthusiast Marc Lépine, Atelier is a white-walled laboratory dedicated to tickling the taste buds. There's no oven or stove – just Bunsen burners, liquid nitrogen and hot plates to create the unique 12-course tasting menu. Each dish is a mini science experiment that toys with texture, taste and temperature, and pushes the limit of 'normal' cuisine (think taco ice cream). This isn't fusion, it's fission.

Wellington Gastropub

STEAKHOUSE \$\$\$

(☎ 613-729-1315; www.thewellingtongastropub.com; 1325 Wellington St W; mains \$19-27; ☺ 11:30am-2pm Mon-Fri & 5:30-9:30pm Mon-Sat)

Although 'gastropub' might sound like some sort of British indigestion, the Wellington is luring foodies to the west end with its savvy selection of hearty mains and funky waiters. The rotating menu is best paired with a pint of crafted microbrew.

Le Baccara

FRENCH \$\$\$

(☎ 819-772-6210; Blvd du Casino; dinner mains \$30-50; ☺ 5:30-11pm Wed-Sun) How do you say 'shmancy' in French? The answer is 'Baccara.' This world-class dining experience in the Casino du Lac Leamy, across the river in Hull, features an open-concept dining room where patrons can watch the master chefs prepare their meal. Tours are available of the cavernous wine cellar, which contains over 13,000 bottles of wine! All customers must be at least 18 years of age.

**Drinking & Nightlife**

From cheap-and-crusty beery dives to cheery local pubs and plush, see-and-be-seen lounges, Ottawa has it all. Most bars start up around 9pm, and when they shut down (usually 2am) people scurry over to Hull to continue the party.

Highlander Pub

PUB

(Map p216; ☎ 613-562-5678; www.thehighlanderpub.com; 115 Rideau St; ☺ 11am-1am) Kilted servers, 17 taps and 200 single malt scotches all add to the wonderful Scottish appeal of this ByWard Market area pub. The food is good too!

Parliament Pub

PUB

(Map p216; ☎ 613-563-0636; www.parliamentpub.com; 101 Sparks St; ☺ noon-2am Mon-Sat, to 9pm Sun) There's no better place to down a quiet

beer while contemplating the history of this fine city than from this summer patio directly opposite Parliament Hill.

Château Lafayette

PUB

(Map p216; ☎ 613-241-4747; www.thelaff.ca; 42 York St; ☺ 11am-2am) Many would argue that 'the Laff' puts the 'crap' in crapulence, but this run-down relic does a good job of capturing ByWard's laid-back attitude.

Manx

BAR

(Map p210; ☎ 613-231-2070; 370 Elgin St; ☺ 11:30am-2am Mon-Fri, 9:30am-2am Sat & Sun) A homey velvet sea awaits you at this basement pub-style hangout. Most people come for the great selection of Canadian micro-brews (including the beloved Creemore) served on copper-top tables.

Stoneface Dolly's

BAR

(Map p210; ☎ 613-564-2222; www.stonefacedollies.com; 416 Preston St; ☺ 8:30am-2:30pm & 5-9pm) Named for the owner's mother, who perfected the art of a stone-cold poker bluff, this popular joint is a great place to grab a pint of Beau's or Hobgoblin – there's food throughout the day, too.

Clock Tower Brew Pub

BAR

(Map p216; ☎ 613-241-8783; www.clocktower.ca; 89 Clarence St; ☺ 11am-2am) Enjoy homemade brews like Raspberry Wheat and Fenian Red amid exposed brick and ByWard bustle. There are three additional locations around town.

Social

BAR

(Map p216; ☎ 613-789-7355; www.social.ca; 537 Sussex Dr; ☺ noon-midnight) A chic, flowing lounge with slick DJ beats, overstuffed furniture and oversized drinks appeals to a trendy crowd. The cocktails are so large, there should be a lifeguard on duty.

Gay & Lesbian Venues

Ottawa has a happening small-town gay scene, but it's less happening than neighbor Montréal, two hours up the road. Check out *Xtra* (www.xtra.ca) for details.

Centretown Pub

PUB

(Map p210; ☎ 613-594-0233; <http://centretownpub.blogspot.ca>; 340 Somerset St W; ☺ 2pm-2am) This handsome little neighborhood pub has friendly staff, pool out the back and a small rear patio. On weekends, the upper and lower levels open up revealing multiple dance floors which can quickly become standing (or dancing) room only.

Lookout Bar

(Map p216; ☎ 613-789-1624; www.thelookoutbar.com; 41 York St; ☰ 2pm-2am Mon-Sat, to 9pm Sun) This popular joint in the ByWard Market caters to a wide range of patrons, especially lesbians.

Edge

(Map p216; ☎ 613-237-2284; www.clubedgeottawa.com; 212 Sparks St; ☰ 10pm-3am Fri & Sat) A younger gay crowd grinds to Top 40 and house in this bumping and grinding nightspot.

**Entertainment**

Ottawa has a variety of publications (print and web-based) that offer the latest scoop on the various goings-on around town. *Express* (www.ottawaxpress.ca) is the city's free entertainment weekly, also found around town in cafes, bars and bookshops. Try www.ottawaentertainment.ca for additional info and check out Thursday's *Ottawa Citizen* for complete club and entertainment listings.

Nightlife venues generally cluster in three zones: the ByWard Market, along Bank St in the Glebe neighborhood, and down Elgin St about halfway between the Queensway and Parliament Hill.

Casino du Lac Leamy

CASINO

(☎ 819-772-2100; 1 Blvd du Casino; ☰ 11am-3am) Across the river in Hull, Québec, Ottawa's little slice of Vegas is this posh gambling hall with docking facilities and a helipad – just in case you were thinking about bringing your helicopter. The sizable casino complex is complete with a towering hotel, dinner theater, glitzy shows, a high-class restaurant and a felt sea of gambling tables. Take the third exit after the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge from Ottawa, and don't forget to dress up.

Live Music**Zaphod Beeblebrox**

LIVE MUSIC

(Map p216; ☎ 613-562-1010; www.zaphods.ca; 27 York St; ☰ 5pm-1am) 'Zaphod Beeblebrox' means 'kick-ass live-music venue' in an otherwise undecipherable alien tongue. Grab a Gargleblaster cocktail, and let the trippy beats take you on a ride to the edge of the universe. Well, maybe.

Fat Tuesday's

LIVE MUSIC

(Map p216; ☎ 613-241-6810; www.fattuesdays.ca; 62 York St; ☰ 11:30am-1am) Ottawa's little slice of New Orleans is known around town for its dueling pianos on Friday and Saturday

nights. Palm readings and happy-hour discounts lure the locals on the other days of the week.

Rainbow Bistro

LIVE MUSIC

(Map p216; ☎ 613-241-5123; www.therainbow.ca; 76 Murray St; ☰ 4pm-midnight) An oldie but a goodie: the best place in town to catch live blues.

Irene's Pub

LIVE MUSIC

(Map p210; ☎ 613-230-4474; www.irenespub.ca; 885 Bank St; ☰ 11:30am-midnight) This friendly and funky lil' pub offers live Celtic, folk or blues, and a great selection of imported beers.

Theater**National Arts Centre**

THEATER

(NAC; Map p216; ☎ 613-755-1111; www.nac-cna.ca; 53 Elgin St) The capital's premier performing-arts complex delivers opera, drama, and performances from the symphony orchestra. The modish complex stretches along the canal in Confederation Sq.

Cinemas**Mayfair Theatre**

CINEMA

(Map p210; ☎ 613-730-3403; www.mayfairtheatre.ca; 1074 Bank St) Check out this art-house cinema which hasn't changed much since the early '30s.

Bytowne Cinema

CINEMA

(Map p210; ☎ 613-789-3456; www.bytowne.ca; 325 Rideau St) Ottawa's indie heart has been screening independent and international movies for over 60 years.

Sports

Ottawa is a hard-core hockey town. It's worth getting tickets to a game even if you're not into hockey: the ballistic fans put on a show of their own. The NHL's Senators play at the **Scotiabank Place** (☎ 613-599-0100; www.senators.com; Palladium Dr, Kanata) in the city's west end.

Those on a budget can catch the Ottawa 67s, a minor-league hockey team, at the **Civic Center** (Map p210; ☎ 613-232-6767; www.ottawa67s.com; 1015 Bank St).

Shopping

The **ByWard Market** (Map p216; ☎ 613-562-3325; www.byward-market.com), at the corner of George St and ByWard St, is the best place in town for one-stop shopping. Vendors cluster around the old maroon-brick market building, erected in the 1840s. Outdoor

merchants operate booths from 6am to 6pm year-round (although the winter weather drastically reduces the number of businesses). In summer more than 175 stalls fill the streets, selling fresh produce from local farms, flowers, seafood, cheese, baked goods and kitschy souvenirs. Dalhousie St, a block east of the market, has been rising in popularity with a smattering of hipster boutiques and fashion houses.

The Glebe, a colorful neighborhood just south of the Queensway, bustles with quirky antique shops and charismatic cafes. Most of the action crowds along Bank St.

Information

The Ottawa Tourism website (www.ottawatourism.ca) offers a comprehensive glance at the nation's capital and can assist with planning itineraries and booking accommodations. Several banks and currency-exchange outlets cluster along the Sparks St mall.

Accu-Rate Foreign Exchange (613-238-8454; 1st fl, World Exchange Plaza, 111 Albert St) Accommodates currency exchange, traveler's checks and EFTs.

Capital Information Kiosk (Map p216; 800-465-1867, 613-239-5000; www.canadascapital.gc.ca; World Exchange Plaza, 111 Albert St; ☎ 9am-6pm; ⓘ) The hub of information for all things Ottawa.

Market Cleaners (613-241-6222; 286 Dalhousie St; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Fri, from 8am Sat & Sun) A laundromat and internet cafe all rolled into one.

Ottawa Hospital (613-722-7000; www.ottawahospital.on.ca; 501 Smyth Rd; ☎ 24hr) Southeast of downtown in Alta Vista; has an emergency room.

Post office (Map p216; 800-267-1177; www.canadapost.ca; 59 Sparks St; ☎ 8am-5:30pm Mon-Fri)

Getting There & Away

AIR

The state-of-the-art **Ottawa MacDonald-Cartier International Airport** (YOW; 613-248-2000; www.ottawa-airport.ca; 1000 Airport Rd) is 15km south of the city and is, perhaps surprisingly, very small. Main airlines serving the city include Air Canada, WestJet, Porter American Airlines, British Airways, Northwest Airlines, KLM and US Airways. Almost all international flights require a transfer before arriving in the capital.

BUS

The **central bus station** (Map p210; 613-238-5900; 265 Catherine St) is 20 blocks south of

the Parliament, near Kent St. Several companies operate bus services from the station, the largest being Greyhound Canada with services to Toronto (\$64, five hours, eight daily).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Major car-rental chains are represented at the airport and offer several locations around town, especially along Laurier and Catherine Sts.

TRAIN

The **VIA Rail Station** (Map p210; 888-842-7245; 200 Tremblay Rd) is 7km southeast of downtown, near the Riverside Dr exit of Hwy 417. VIA Rail operates trains to Toronto (\$99, 4½ hours, seven daily) and Montréal (\$50, 1¼ hours, seven daily).

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The cheapest way to get to the airport is by city bus. Take bus 97 from the corner of Slater and Albert Sts, west of Bronson Ave (make sure you are heading in the 'South Keys & Airport' direction). The ride takes 30 minutes.

Ottawa Shuttle Service (613-680-3313; www.ottawashuttlesteservice.com; from \$25; ☎ 10am-10pm) offers private and shared shuttles from most major hotels.

Blue Line Taxis (613-238-1111; www.bluelinetaxi.com) and **Capital Taxi** (613-744-3333; www.capitaltaxi.com) offer cab service to and from the airport; the fare is \$20 to \$30. If you're having a hard time snagging a cab, there's always a cluster on Metcalfe St between Sparks and Queen Sts.

BICYCLE

The friendly staff at **Rent-A-Bike** (613-241-4140; www.rentabike.ca; East Arch Plaza Bridge, 2 Rideau St; rentals from \$9/hr; ☎ Apr-Oct) will set you up with a bike and can offer tips about scenic trails.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

There is free parking in World Exchange Plaza on weekends, and it's always the best place to park when visiting the downtown tourist office. Hourly metered parking can be found throughout downtown. During winter, overnight on-street parking is prohibited. Call the **City of Ottawa** (613-580-2400) for additional parking queries.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Ottawa and Hull/Gatineau operate separate bus systems. A transfer is valid from one system to the other, but may require an extra payment.

OC Transpo (613-741-6440, 613-741-4390; www.octranspo.com) operates buses and a light-rail system known as the O-train. An extension of the light rail system is being built and

BONNECHERE CAVES

The **Bonnechere Caves** (2613-628-2283; www.bonnechercavesc.com; Fourth Chute Rd; tours adult/child \$16/12; ☎ 10am-4:30pm May-Oct), about 130km west of Ottawa, are one of the finest examples of a solution cave (a cave dissolved out of solid rock by acidic waters) in the world. Formed 500 million years ago from the floor of a tropical sea, the dank passages feature a haunting collection of prehistoric fossils including a well-defined octopus. Learn about speleology from the humorous tour, which details the site's quirky history. Nimble guests will enjoy squeezing through a few extra-narrow, damp passages.

is scheduled to open in 2018. Until then public transportation can be tedious: services are at times infrequent and excessively crowded. Bus tickets cost \$1.50 and most rides require a minimum two tickets. A book of six passes can be purchased at most convenience stores. Be sure to grab a transfer pass from the driver when boarding the bus; they are valid for 90 minutes.

Around Ottawa

Across the river, after Hull, Québec, the Ottawa Valley becomes the Outaouais (pronounced as though you were saying 'Ottawa' with a French-Canadian accent). This large, mostly rural region extends from the Ottawa River north past Maniwaki, west past Fort Coulonge, and east to Montebello.

Gatineau Park

Gatineau Park is a deservedly popular 36,000-hectare area of woods and lakes in the Gatineau Hills of Québec. The **visitors center** (2819-827-2020; 33 Scott Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm) is 12km from Ottawa's Parliament Hill, off Hwy 5.

In summer this green expanse of cedar and maple offers 150km of hiking trails and

over 90km of cycling paths. Winters are just as crowded with dozens of alpine skiing hills. Lac Lapeche, Lac Meech and Lac Philippe have beaches for swimming (including Lac Meech's nude gay beach), which lure the land-locked locals for a refreshing dip (watch out for the occasional leech!).

Also in the park is the **Mackenzie King Estate** (2800-465-1867; admission per car \$10; ☎ 11am-5pm May-Oct), the summer estate of William Lyon Mackenzie King, Canada's prime minister in the 1920s, late 1930s and early 1940s. A capable speaker, quirky King was known for his gregarious nature; he even talked to his dead dog and deceased mother. His home, Moorside, is now a museum with a pleasant tearoom.

Fall Rhapsody (2800-465-1867; www.canadascapital.gc.ca/gatineau) gives leaf-peepers a chance to glimpse the blazing fall foliage before the powdery snow blankets the gnarled trunks. Regular activities include organized walks, art exhibits and brunches with live music.

Wakefield

Charming and scenic, historic Wakefield is an amiable mix of heritage buildings, cafes and tourist-oriented shops. Northwest of Gatineau Park, there are several outfitters that use a turbulent section of the Ottawa River for rafting adventures.

Esprit Rafting (2800-596-7238; www.whitewater.ca), which is further out in the Outaouais, just off Hwy 148 in Davidson, near Fort Coulonge, uses small, bouncy self-bailing rafts. The one-day rafting trip is a favorite, while many people opt for multi-day trips, which go as far as Algonquin. For those who want to stay a little longer, the rustic **Auberge Esprit hostel**, run by the folks at Esprit Rafting, includes breakfast and use of canoes and kayaks. Campsites are also available. Try **Wilderness Tours** (2888-723-8669; www.wildernesstours.com; 33 Scott Rd, Old Chelsea) or **OWL Rafting** (2800-461-7238; www.owl-mkc.ca; 40 Owl Lane, Foresters Falls, Old Chelsea) for a mix of wild and mild trips. Both companies offer meals, camping and pricey cabin accommodations.

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