

Toronto, ON, Canada



Airport: Toronto Pearson International Airport (YYZ)

Served by: American Airlines, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Malév Hungarian Airlines, Mexicana

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City Statistics



Location: Ontario, Canada.

Dialling code: 1.

Population: 2,503,281 (city); 5,555,912 (metropolitan area).

Time zone: GMT - 5 (GMT - 4 from the second Sunday in March to the first Sunday in November).

Electricity: 110 volts AC, 60Hz; flat two-pin plugs are standard.

Average January temperatures: - 4.5°C (23°F).

Average July temperatures: 22°C (72°F).

Annual rainfall: 689mm (27.1 inches).

Overview



Toronto stands on the northern shore of **Lake Ontario** and the view of the city across the water is stunning and unmistakable - the **CN Tower**, thrusting skyward near the water's edge, was until quite recently the **world's tallest tower**. Framing it is a glimmering collection of **skyscrapers**, which give way to a **dense city centre** with pleasant, **leafy residential areas** and **parks**, notably along the ravines that cut through the city.

The capital of the Province of Ontario, Toronto is **Canada's largest city** and the fifth largest in North America. A dominant force in the business and economy of the nation, it is also the **cultural centre of English-speaking Canada**.

Initially claimed by the **French** in the 18th century, it was not until the American Revolution caused hordes of **United Empire Loyalists** (loyal to the British) to escape to Toronto that the city became an **established settlement**. Then known as York, the town was exceedingly **British in character**, functioning as the administrative capital of English-speaking Upper Canada and becoming a **thriving manufacturing centre** by the 19th century. In 1834, the city was renamed Toronto, a Huron Indian word meaning 'meeting place'.

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The Toronto of the 19th and early 20th centuries was a **law-abiding city**, where rules were made and rarely broken and where the overriding concern was **making money**. As such, Toronto gained a reputation as a conservative, boring **enclave of Protestantism**, a reputation that still dogs it to some extent today. Older residents can remember the days when the city would come to a standstill on Sundays and only a handful of the very best restaurants served wine.

Towards the end of the 1950s, a surge in the arrival of **immigrants** infused Toronto with **new foods, new languages** and, most importantly, new attitudes. Italians, Portuguese and Eastern Europeans arrived first, followed by immigrants from the Caribbean, Asia and India. They settled into what would become the city's **great ethnic neighbourhoods** - Greektown, Little Italy and Chinatown.

Toronto gradually developed a multiethnic North American character - today, one in two of the city's residents was born outside Canada. It largely shrugged off its colonial identity, although vestiges still remain, such as the English-style pubs and the ingrained habit among conservative clubs and societies of **toasting the Queen** before eating.

There is a similar juxtaposition in the **architecture** of the city itself; at first glance, Toronto does not appear all that different from any other large American city, albeit a clean one, although closer inspection reveals preserved **Victorian** and **Edwardian buildings** and a profusion of neighbourhood **pubs**.

The Toronto of today is a **lively, cultured place** with hot, humid summers and cold, damp winters. It is the most **economically important** city in Canada, the centre of finance, media and services, and home to more corporate head offices than any other.

By night, its people indulge themselves at the city's numerous restaurants, bars and clubs, or at the symphony, **opera** and **theatre**. More than anything, however, Toronto is defined by its citizenry - friendly, efficient and one of the most **multicultural** in the world.

Getting There By Air



Toronto Pearson International Airport (YYZ)

Tel: (416) 247 7678 (T1) or 776 5100 (T3) or 1 866 207 1690.

Website: www.gtaa.com

Pearson International Airport is located 27km (17 miles) northwest of downtown Toronto. Canada's busiest and largest airport, it handles more than 30 million passengers per year and is served by more than 75 scheduled and charter airlines, providing service to 183 destinations in Canada, the US and the rest of the world.

Airport facilities: The airport's two terminals have facilities that include ATMs, bureaux de change, shops, duty-free boutiques, banks, childcare facilities, medical clinics, chapels, porters, left luggage, traveller's aid, bars and restaurants. The free LINK train regularly shuttles passengers between the terminal buildings. Car hire is available from *Avis, Budget, Dollar/Thrifty, Hertz and National/Alamo*.

Business facilities: Sheraton Gateway Hotel (tel: (905) 672 7000) offers a 24-hour business centre. Some business facilities are available through the various airline executive lounges. There are public Internet stations in T3 and Wi-Fi access available in T1 and T3.

Transport to the city: *Pacific Western* operates the *Airport Express* bus (tel: (905) 564 3232 or 1 800 387 6787; website: www.torontoairportexpress.com) from the airport to downtown Toronto every 20 to 30 minutes (journey time - 30-60 minutes).

Public bus services run by the *TTC* (see *Getting Around*) include bus 192 (the 'Airport Rocket') to Kipling subway station (journey time - 20 minutes), bus 58A to Lawrence West station (journey time - 60 minutes) and

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night buses 307 to Eglinton station (journey time - 45 minutes) and 300A, which travels along Bloor Street and Danforth Avenue.

There is also a *GO Bus* (tel: (416) 869 3200 or 1 800 438 6646; website: www.go-transit.com) to Yorkdale and York Mills subway stations (journey time - 35 minutes).

A number of private bus companies operate services to various destinations, including Niagara Falls. Information desks for each company are located in the arrivals area of each terminal. Licensed limousines and taxis are also available at fixed rates based on a zone system, with journeys to downtown Toronto taking about 40 minutes.

Toronto City Centre Airport (YTZ)

Tel: (416) 203 6942.

Website: www.torontoport.com

Toronto City Centre Airport is situated on an island in Toronto harbour. Handling scheduled commercial, charter, private and corporate flights, the airport primarily services the nearby business community, offering flights from nearby destinations in Canada, such as Montreal and Ottawa.

Airport facilities: There is a restaurant at the airport. Car hire should be arranged in advance from downtown companies (see *Car Hire*), which will arrange for pick up at the ferry landing.

Transport to the city: A two-minute ferry ride (free of charge to airline passengers) provides transportation every 15 minutes to the mainland, where taxis are available at metered rates. Ferry services operate daily 0530-2400.

Approximate flight times to Toronto: From London is 8 hours; from New York is 1 hour 35 minutes; from Los Angeles is 5 hours 15 minutes.

Getting Around



Public Transport: Toronto has a well-developed public transport system, operated by two companies.

Principal services in the city centre are run by the *Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)* (tel: (416) 393 4636; website: www.ttc.ca) and include subway and rapid transit lines, as well as tram and bus routes.

Toronto's three **subway** lines operate Monday to Saturday 0600-0130 and Sunday 0900-0130. The arms of the U-shaped Yonge-University-Spadina subway extend from Union in the south to Finch and Downsview to the north. The Bloor-Danforth subway connects Etobicoke in the west with Scarborough in the east, where the Scarborough Rapid Transit basically provides an eastward extension to the line. The east-west Sheppard subway serves northeast Toronto.

Streetcars (trams) and **buses** operate throughout the city centre approximately 0500-0030/0100 all week (although service on many routes begins later and is less frequent on weekends and holidays). These are supplemented by the 'Blue Night Network' **night services** from 0130-0500.

Prepaid fares are cheaper and can be purchased at subway stations or from newsagents. These are often handier, as exact change is required on buses and trams. Transfers are available for switching between the subway, bus and tram. Two types of day **passes** are available: a pass for one person, good any day of the week; or a group/family pass for two adults or combinations of adults and children, good on weekends and holidays.

GO Transit (tel: (416) 869 3200 or 1 800 438 6646; website: www.go-transit.com) operates **rail** services from Union Station to suburban destinations, as well as **GO buses** throughout the Greater Toronto Area. Tickets

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are available from GO train stations, bus terminals, transit ticket agencies and bus drivers. Ticket prices vary depending on distance travelled. Day **passes** are also available.

Taxis: Within the city centre, taxis can be hailed at almost any time and also can be found at taxi ranks or ordered by telephone. Most taxis operate as part of one of Toronto's major dispatching companies - *Diamond Taxi* (tel: (416) 366 6868), *Crown Taxi* (tel: (416) 750 7878) or *Co-op Cabs* (tel: (416) 504 2667). Taxi drivers are commonly tipped around 15% of the fare.

Driving in the City: Traffic is heaviest during the rush hours (0700-0930 and 1600-1930), particularly on the major motorways leading in and out of the city, which can make driving to the airport a longer than expected ordeal. Toronto is laid out on an easy-to-follow grid system, with a few notable exceptions, such as the Don Valley Parkway, snaking along the ravine east of the city centre. Yonge Street, allegedly the longest street in the world, is the city's main thoroughfare, bisecting the city centre into east and west. Its junction with Bloor Street forms the city's most major and central intersection.

Although there is a lot of street parking available, it is notoriously difficult for drivers to find a spot and many opt for the simpler although slightly more expensive option of parking in a private car park. *Canpark* (tel: (416) 482 2203) operates a number of 24-hour locations in the city centre

Car Hire: All major North American car hire companies are represented in Toronto, along with a few local ones, at numerous locations throughout the city. Those with the most central locations and accepting international reservations include *Budget*, 141 Bay Street (tel: (416) 364 7104; website: www.budget.com), *Discount*, 730 Yonge Street (tel: (416) 921 1212; website: www.discountcar.com), *Hertz*, 65 Front Street West (tel: (416) 364 2080; website: www.hertz.com), *National*, 65 Front Street West (tel: (416) 364 4191; website: www.nationalcar.com), and *Thrifty*, 191 Parliament Street (tel: (416) 868 0350; website: www.thrifty.com).

Drivers must be at least 21 years old and pay by credit card. Those aged under 25 may have to pay an extra fee and choose from a limited range of vehicles. North American and European visitors may use national licences. Visitors from other countries are often required to have an International Driving Permit as well.

Bicycle Hire: Bicycle hire in Toronto can be arranged through *Cyclepath*, 1510 Danforth Avenue (tel: (416) 463 5346; website: www.thecyclepath.com), and *Wheel Excitement*, 249 Queen's Quay West, Unit 110 (tel: (416) 260 9000; website: www.wheelexcitement.ca). *Wheel Excitement* also hires out rollerblades.

Maps and information on cycling in the city are available from the *Toronto Cycling Committee* (tel: (416) 392 7592; website: www.toronto.ca/cycling), which has a downloadable cycling map, and the *Toronto Bicycling Network* (tel: (416) 760 4191; website: www.tbn.on.ca). Riding a bicycle in the winter is not a good idea, due to possible icy road conditions (not to mention the cold).

Hotels



Hotels

Hotel prices are subject to a provincial sales tax, levied at 5% on accommodation, as well as a federal goods and services tax of 5%. This is usually added to the bill at the end. Tipping is expected in Toronto and porters are usually given a C\$5 note for their efforts.

The hotels below have been grouped alphabetically within four categories and divided into price bands:

\$\$\$\$ (over C\$250)

\$\$\$ (C\$200 to C\$250)

\$\$ (C\$150 to C\$200)

\$ (up to C\$150)

These are based on the lowest standard rates for a double room, excluding taxes and breakfast, unless otherwise specified.

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Business

Cambridge Suites

Located in the heart of the Financial District, this all-suites hotel is designed with the business traveller in mind. The experienced staff can handle all kinds of business occasions, from state-of-the-art presentations to informal breakfast meetings. The exterior of the hotel is typically North American - 20 floors of green glass, while the 231 guest rooms range from one bedroom apartment-style units to deluxe duplexes, usually decorated in muted browns and creams. All rooms have work areas that are comfortable, well designed and feature two double-line telephones and high-speed and Wi-Fi access. The penthouse suites have Jacuzzis.

15 Richmond Street East, Financial District

Tel: (416) 368 1990 or 1 800 463 1990.

Website: www.cambridgesuiteshotel.com

Price: \$\$\$ (including breakfast)

Fairmont Royal York Hotel

The tallest building in the British Empire when it opened in 1929, the massive Royal York even now is a prominent feature of Toronto's Lake Ontario skyline. It retains quite a bit of its between-the-wars classic ambiance, but frequent upgrades have allowed it to keep pace with its many nearby competitors. Its convenient location (steps from the banks of Bay Street and connected by tunnel with Union Station) makes it a favourite with both business and leisure travellers. Amenities include a business centre, indoor lap pool, 24-hour fitness centre, spa and children's wading pool. The **Library** Bar and **EPIC** Restaurant are traditional without being stuffy.

100 Front Street West, Financial District

Tel: (416) 368 2511 or 1 800 257 7544.

Website: www.fairmont.com/royalyork

Price: \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

InterContinental Toronto Centre

This modern high-rise is ideal for business travellers. Located next door to the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and a short walk from the heart of the Financial District, the hotel has 12 top standard meeting rooms, as well as a ballroom, boardroom and several smaller hospitality suites. The staff's experience in all varieties of meetings and conferences mean that any business occasion should run smoothly. The 586 guest rooms are appointed with luxurious materials, including comfortable beds and down duvets, as well as a coffee/tea maker, two telephone lines, high-speed and Wi-Fi Internet access, and complimentary newspaper delivery. The indoor pool and fitness centre are available to all guests.

225 Front Street West, Financial District

Tel: (416) 597 1400 or 1 800 422 7969.

Website: www.torontocentre.crowneplaza.com

Price: \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$



The Sutton Place Hotel Toronto

Located midtown, next to the sprawling green campus of the University of Toronto and Queen's Park, the concrete and glass exterior of The Sutton Place Hotel may not take one's breath away but once inside the European styling is luxurious, with antiques and paintings throughout. Although it is the hotel of choice for film celebrities during the Toronto International Film Festival, it also serves the business traveller very well. There are 10 individually designed meeting rooms and three breathtaking ballrooms (the rooftop ballroom, **Stop 33**, offers a superb view of the city), and a professional staff is on hand to facilitate any type of event. The suites are spacious and all have a large work desk, two-line telephone with voicemail, fax/modem point, bathrobes and complimentary daily newspaper delivery. Furnished apartments are available within the hotel for extended stays.

955 Bay Street, Midtown

Tel: (416) 924 9221 or 1 866 378 8866.

Website: www.suttonplace.com

Price: \$\$-\$\$\$

Luxury

Cosmopolitan Hotel

This boutique hotel, located in the heart of the city's financial district, puts the emphasis on well-being and fashion. Not only created for the chic and trendy, the Cosmopolitan entices multiple generations of travellers who appreciate the simplicity and serenity intricately woven into the hotel's design. There are just five suites per floor, and rooms are light with big windows; interestingly, each suite has a 2m (7ft) fountain. There are 95 suites and two penthouses. The Shizen Spa combines the latest techniques in acupuncture and holistic philosophy with classic spa treatments. (The Cosmopolitan's similarly sleek sister property near the Eaton Centre, the **Pantages Hotel and Suites**, is also worth checking out.

8 Colborne Street, Downtown

Tel: (416) 350 2000 or 1 800 958 3488.

Website: www.cosmotoronto.com

Price: \$\$\$

Four Seasons Hotel Toronto

The Four Seasons chain was founded and started by Canadian Issy Sharp and, although this hotel is not the original, it is more often than not the one celebrities and well-heeled visitors choose when visiting the city. Located in Yorkville, a chi-chi district littered with boutiques and cafes, the hotel is well known for its service and comfort. Features include corner rooms with balconies, marble bathrooms and family perks, such as child-size bathrobes and bedtime milk and cookies, as well as time-savers such as complimentary overnight shoeshine and one-hour pressing. In addition to the standard business amenities, including 24-hour business services, the hotel provides a limousine service to the downtown core on weekdays. Of course, the hotel has not neglected the basics for relaxing either - there is a heated pool, a health club (with whirlpool and sauna) and spa services. The chic **Avenue** bar and lounge and the award-winning restaurant, **Truffles** (see *Restaurants*), are city landmarks.

21 Avenue Road, Yorkville

Tel: (416) 964 0411 or 1 800 819 5053.

Website: www.fourseasons.com

Price: \$\$\$\$

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Hazelton Hotel

Since opening in August 2007, the Hazelton in the ritzy Yorkville district has drawn a steady stream of actors and hipsters, many attracted by its proximity to luxury boutiques and Toronto International Film Festival events. Granite, leather and velvet predominate the décor in the hotel's public areas, 62 rooms and 15 suites, which also feature original Canadian artworks. Huge bathrooms have heated floors, soaker tubs and rainfall showers. Business centres on each floor and hotel-wide Wi-Fi cater to the corporate crowd. Amenities include a lap pool, fitness centre, spa, private screening room and 24-hour room service. Mark McEwan, chef at the hotel's restaurant **One**, is a local culinary celebrity who also owns North 44 (see *Restaurants*).

118 Yorkville Avenue, Yorkville

Tel: (416) 963 6300.

Website: www.thehazeltonhotel.com

Price: \$\$\$\$

Le Royal Meridien King Edward

Known affectionately by locals as the 'King Eddy', this elegant century-old hotel was the choice for visiting royalty in the mid 1920s and has continued to draw distinguished guests ever since. Its opulent décor and impressive service have ensured the hotel's reputation. The hotel's original 1903 facade alone is stunning. Its downtown locale makes it ideal for theatre-goers, shoppers and businesspeople. Although not all rooms are spacious, they are well appointed, tastefully designed and have thoughtful perks, such as complimentary daily newspapers, bathrobes and 24-hour room service. A state-of-the-art business centre joins the list of guest facilities, which includes a 24-hour fitness centre and in-house spa.

37 King Street East, Financial District

Tel: (416) 863 9700 or 1 800 543 4300.

Website: www.lemeridien-kingedward.com

Price: \$\$\$

Moderate

Delta Chelsea

Canada's largest hotel, the glass-clad, sky-high Delta Chelsea tries to cater for everybody in its 1,590 guest rooms. For families, there are Nintendo games, a bottomless cookie jar (in the Family Fun suites only) and kids' discounts in the restaurants. For business travellers, there is a dedicated floor of rooms equipped with cordless speaker telephones, faxes, well-stocked desks and back-friendly chairs. All rooms are en suite. Facilities include two pools (one with a water slide) and a fitness centre. Many rooms have been designed for travellers with disabilities and the staff are always on hand to assist with meeting planning or presentation. Weekend packages are often very economically priced.

33 Gerrard Street West, Downtown

Tel: (416) 595 1975 or 1 800 243 5732.

Website: www.deltachelsea.com

Price: \$\$

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The Strathcona

A popular budget hotel, The Strathcona is located directly across from the city's main railway hub - Union Station. The Strathcona now aims itself at the budget business traveller. It provides corporate rooms with Wi-Fi access and has a full service meeting room and 24-hour business centre. The guest rooms are small but comfortable and the hotel is just steps away from the Queen's Quay waterfront, theatres and great shopping. All rooms are en suite.

60 York Street, Theatre/Financial District

Tel: (416) 363 3321 or 1 800 268 8304.

Website: www.thestrahconahotel.com

Price: \$

Other Recommendations

The Gladstone Hotel

This is the oldest continuously operating hotel in Toronto (built in 1889), and it is now one of the city's most exciting, with artist-designed hotel rooms and suites, studios and exhibition spaces. In this hotel, guests have instant access to the Toronto art scene - either through events, by going outside to enjoy the city's art and design neighbourhood, or simply by enjoying the paintings in their rooms. The hotel offers 51 comfortable hotel rooms and suites.

1214 Queen Street West

Tel: (416) 531 4635.

Website: www.gladstonehotel.com

Price: \$\$-\$\$\$

Park Hyatt Toronto

Formerly known as the Park Plaza, this hotel has a rooftop bar-lounge that has made appearances in some Canadian novels, such as Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* (1988). Millions of dollars were invested in refurbishment of the 1930s art deco building - including the addition of the Stillwater Spa. Along with its location in ritzy Yorkville, the hotel boasts typical business amenities of two-line telephones, plush bathrobes, in-room safe, complimentary shoeshine and Internet access.

4 Avenue Road, Yorkville

Tel: (416) 925 1234.

Website: <http://parktoronto.hyatt.com>

Price: \$\$\$\$

Business Etiquette



Toronto has often been ridiculed as a conservative, uptight city - Toronto the Good, as its detractors say. But while this perception is about 20 years out of date, its legacy survives in the city's approach to business. Torontonians are hardworking, efficient employees. A little chit chat here and there is welcome but generally people like getting to the point. Men and women wear business suits and rarely drink alcohol at lunch. Entertaining is usually confined to restaurants and bars, rarely in private homes.

Business cards are normally exchanged after meals or meetings, not during introductions. The giving of gifts in business situations is unusual and might be treated suspiciously. In the workplace, it is common to answer

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the telephone by stating one's first and last name. Around the office, however, people (both superiors and co-workers) are usually addressed by first name. Working hours are typically Monday to Friday 0900-1700, although slight variations are not uncommon. The best time to visit Toronto for business purposes is between September and May, as the summer is the most popular time of year for holidays.

Sightseeing



Sightseeing Overview: Like a needle jabbing into the sky, the **CN Tower** dominates Toronto's cityscape and is its **most famous attraction**. Since its completion in 1976, the tower has attracted company - at its foot stands the **Rogers Centre** (formerly the SkyDome), a retractable dome stadium, while further east is the **Air Canada Centre** (a state-of-the-art hockey and basketball arena).

Immediately to the north is the dense cluster of office towers that comprise the **Financial District**, including some architectural wonders by Mies van der Rohe (Toronto-Dominion Centre) and Santiago Calatrava (the galleria at BCE Place).

Interspersed between these (and even underlying many of the buildings) are some of the city's main shopping areas, with the theatres and nightclubs of the **Entertainment District** to the west, and some of Toronto's chief tourist attractions just to the north.

The latter include **Toronto City Hall**, a gem of modern architecture, the nearby **Art Gallery of Ontario**, the vast collections of the **Royal Ontario Museum**, and the medieval-inspired 20th-century castle, **Casa Loma**, which stands a bit further to the north.

In the city's west end, the enormous, sweeping patch of green known as **High Park** unfurls, while along the waterfront **Ontario Place** and the **Canadian National Exhibition Grounds** provide fun days out for families with children. Beyond the trail-laced ravine of the **Don Valley**, to the east of the centre, is **The Beaches**, with chic boutiques and a waterfront promenade.

Toronto is known as a **city of neighbourhoods** and many of these are a short distance from the Financial District's towers. Unlike many major North American cities, Toronto has a thriving, vital, **leafy downtown** that keeps home owners and families from fleeing to the suburbs.

Two of the city's most affluent areas are **Rosedale** and **Forest Hill** - pleasant for walks and people-watching. **Yorkville**, a hippy enclave in the 1960s, predictably went chi-chi in the 1970s, today offering elegant cafes and restaurants and even a Prada store.

Toronto's **Chinatown** - arguably North America's best due to Toronto's enormous Chinese community - centres on Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West. Danforth Avenue is home to **Greektown**. Toronto has one of the highest concentrations of Italians outside Italy and many of them originally made their homes in **Little Italy**, west of the city centre.

Near the University of Toronto, the **Annex** is a trendy, popular neighbourhood known for its lively nightlife and cultural scene. The area around Church and Wellesley Streets is home to the city's out and proud **gay and lesbian village**.

Tourist Information: Tourism Toronto

Suite 590, 207 Queen's Quay West

Tel: (416) 203 2600 or 1 800 499 2514.

Website: www.torontotourism.com

Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0830-1800.

Ontario Travel Information Centre

20 Dundas Street West

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Tel: (416) 314 5899 or 1 800 668 2746.

Website: www.ontariotravel.net

Opening hours: daily 0830-1700 (until 2000 from late May through August).

Passes: The **Toronto CityPass** includes entry to the Royal Ontario Museum, CN Tower, Hockey Hall of Fame, Ontario Science Centre, Toronto Zoo and Casa Loma. The pass is available from the participating attractions or from *CityPass* (tel: 1 888 330 5008; website: www.citypass.com).

Key Attractions



CN Tower

At a height of 553m (1,815ft), the CN Tower was, until recently, the world's tallest tower; it is still the defining symbol of this lakefront city. On a clear day, it offers stunning views of up to 120km (75 miles) across the surrounding cityscape and Lake Ontario. Glass-fronted elevators (one with a newly installed glass floor) bring visitors to the main section (at an equivalent to 114 storeys high) where a terrifying glass floor enables visitors to stare 342m (1,122ft) straight down. A more leisurely view can be had from the revolving **360 Restaurant** on the floor above. Another set of elevators leads to the **SkyPod**, 33 storeys further up. There is also a group of entertainment venues at the base of the tower, including a motion-simulator ride.

301 Front Street West

Tel: (416) 868 6937.

Website: www.cntower.ca

Opening hours: Usually from early morning until 2200 or 2300 in the evening. Opening hours are adjusted seasonally, so visitors should call the tower to check.

Admission charge.

Casa Loma

Toronto seems an unlikely location for a castle, but since 1911 the soaring battlements of Casa Loma have lent an element of magic to the city. The 98-room castle was completed in 1914 by Sir Henry Pellatt, a charismatic financier, industrialist and philanthropist, to be his home. Financial ruin forced its sale years later and the castle eventually became the popular tourist attraction it is today. The castle is a bizarre hybrid of a medieval-style stonework exterior (replete with turrets and battlements) and an early 20th-century interior. Highlights include the splendidly carved **Oak Room**, secret passageways and pseudo-gothic **Great Hall**, which has 18m- (60ft-) high ceilings. The gardens are open between May and October.

1 Austin Terrace

Tel: (416) 923 1171.

Website: www.casaloma.org

Opening hours: Daily 0930-1700 (last admission 1600).

Admission charge.

Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO)

Reopened after a C\$254m expansion led by Toronto-born architect Frank Gehry, Canada's premier art gallery, the AGO, contains 110 galleries displaying temporary exhibitions and a large permanent collection of international art. Its European collection covers the Italian Renaissance, Flemish Masters, 17th-century French painting and the Impressionists, right through to 20th-century works by Chagall and Picasso and beyond. The gallery's greatest attraction, however, is the Canadian collection, featuring a cross-section of work from the Group of Seven - a group of early 20th-century painters whose work embodies the sublime beauty of Canada's boreal wilderness. The gallery is also home to one of the world's largest collections of Inuit art, as well as

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works by Henry Moore. It is worth allowing extra time to visit **The Grange**, a restored 19th-century house, adjacent to the gallery. The gallery is due to reopen in November 2008.

317 Dundas Street West

Tel: (416) 979 6648.

Website: www.ago.net

Opening hours: New hours not yet confirmed.

Admission charge.

Bata Shoe Museum

The Bata Shoe Museum is the only museum of its kind in the world. Housed in an equally unique building shaped, appropriately enough, like a shoebox, the museum owns some 12,500 items of footwear, dating as far back as 4,500 years. Pieces range from Elvis Presley's loafers and Queen Victoria's ballroom slippers to 19th-century beaded Native American shoes and leather broad-toed Tudor shoes.

327 Bloor Street West

Tel: (416) 979 7799.

Website: www.batashoemuseum.ca

Opening hours: Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri and Sat 1000-1700, Thurs 1000-2000, Sun 1200-1700.

Admission charge (pay-what-you-can Thurs 1700-2000).

Royal Ontario Museum (ROM)

The ROM is one of the most exciting museums in Canada, and it recently got even better due to a massive redevelopment project. The museum's striking facade alone will take your breath away, but deeper within, the museum houses excellent collections featuring almost 6 million artefacts. The exhibits representing East Asia include a renowned collection of Chinese art, with wall paintings, snuff bottles and ceramic head cushions, as well as the only complete example of a Ming tomb in the west. Other levels handle the life sciences, the ancient Mediterranean and a Canadian heritage collection. Ten new ROM galleries opened in late 2005, and the spectacular new Michael Lee-Chin Crystal galleries and public spaces opened in 2007, featuring a grand new entrance and six new galleries overlooking the street. Designed by Daniel Libeskind, the new crystal is covered in a luminous skin of aluminium and glass. Like I.M. Pei's pyramid at the Louvre, it has not been without controversy but is likely to become a major urban landmark.

100 Queen's Park (Bloor Street West at Avenue Road)

Tel: (416) 586 8000.

Website: www.rom.on.ca

Opening hours: Sat-Thu 1000-1730, Fri 1000-2130.

Admission charge.

Ontario Science Centre

The Ontario Science Centre was opened in 1969, with a mission to 'open minds to science by creating environments that excite curiosity, inspire insights and motivate learning in science and technology'. This difficult task is successfully accomplished with over 800 fascinating exhibits. Themes explored in depth include the human body and space travel. Interactive exhibits include piloting a spacecraft or touching the hair-raising Van de Graaff generator. An **Omnimax Cinema** offers a 24m (79ft) domed screen. A new 2,325 sq m (25,000 sq ft) innovation centre featuring over 50 unique interactive experiences geared to teenagers and young adults opened in 2006, part of a C\$47m renovation. It includes garbage art, fish music, a sound panel room, vibrating chair and other challenges designed to encourage skills, attitude and behaviours that enable innovation.

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Tel: (416) 696 1000.

Website: www.ontariosciencecentre.ca

Opening hours: Generally 1000-1700 but it varies by season; call to check.

Admission charge.

Toronto Zoo

Situated on a sprawling 287-hectare (710-acre) forested piece of land next to the Rouge Valley, in the suburb of Scarborough, the Toronto Zoo is one of the largest zoos in the world. The collection of over 5,000 animals is truly international, since the zoo features areas named African Savanna, the Americas, Indo-Malaya, Australasia, Eurasia and the Canadian Domain. Underwater exhibits showcase polar bears, South African fur seals, beavers in their dens and otters swimming at eye level.

Meadowvale Road, 2km (1 mile) north of Highway 401

Tel: (416) 392 5900.

Website: www.torontozoo.com

Opening hours: The zoo is open every day but Christmas, but hours vary throughout the year; call to check.

Last admission one hour before closing.

Admission charge.

Fort York

Fort York harks back to the days when Toronto, then as British as afternoon tea, was named York. As a colony, the city occasionally had to deal with revolutionaries to the south, so Fort York was founded in 1793 to ensure British control of Lake Ontario. Most of the buildings, however, date from 1814 because, during the War of 1812, the evacuating British blew up the gunpowder magazine - an explosion so unexpectedly large that it killed 10 of their own men and 250 advancing Americans, and destroyed a good deal of the fort. Highlights of Fort York include blockhouses, barracks, officers' quarters, costumed staff and period demonstrations.

100 Garrison Road, off Fleet Street

Tel: (416) 392 6907.

Website: www.toronto.ca/culture/fort_york.htm

Opening hours: Daily 1000-1700 (late May-early Sep); Mon-Fri 1000-1600, Sat-Sun 1000-1700 (early Sep-late May). Several short closed periods throughout the year.

Admission charge.

Gardiner Museum

One of the world's premier ceramic art museums, it now boasts 2,694 sq m (29,000 sq ft) of exhibition space and features Asian ceramics, 19th-century ceramics made at Minton, and contemporary studio ceramics, in addition to collections including Ancient American, Italian Renaissance majolica, and 17th- and 18th-century English delftware. The museum also features a restaurant and an expanded shop specialising in artist-designed and handmade objects.

111 Queen's Park

Tel: (416) 586 8080.

Website: www.gardinermuseum.on.ca

Opening hours: Mon-Thurs 1000-1800, Fri 1000-2100, Sat-Sun 1000-1700.

Culture



Although Toronto has a reputation as a place of business, it has much to offer the visitor interested in soaking up some local culture - notably its vibrant theatre scene. Toronto has the third most theatres of any city in the world, after London and New York, showing everything from high-budget musicals to experimental fringe theatre.

Toronto's role as the cultural capital of English-speaking Canada is also evident in its major performing arts companies, with ballet, opera and the symphony all well represented during a season that generally runs from September to April.

Evidence of how seriously the city takes its role as a cultural capital is the C\$181 million **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts** (tel: (416) 363 8231; website: www.coc.ca/house/house.html), the magnificent new home of the **Canadian Opera Company** inaugurated in June 2006. Designed by Toronto architect Jack Diamond and located at 145 Queen Street West, the centre integrates the best features of the grand European opera houses with innovative technology in acoustics and sightlines. The centre is also the performance venue for **The National Ballet of Canada**.

Foremost among the many classical music companies who play at **Roy Thomson Hall**, 60 Simcoe Street (tel: (416) 872 4255; website: www.roythomsonhall.com), is the **Toronto Symphony Orchestra**. Further east, the **Sony Centre for the Performing Arts**, 1 Front Street East (tel: (416) 393 7469; website: www.sonycentre.ca), stages big dance, music and performance productions. It was here that during a 1974 Bolshoi ballet visit a young Mikhail Baryshnikov, on loan from the Kirov, bolted from the centre's stage door, down The Esplanade and into a waiting getaway car and a new life in the West. It is currently under renovation and is due to reopen for the 2009-2010 season.

In addition to the daily newspapers, the free weeklies *NOW* (website: www.nowtoronto.com) and *eye* (website: www.eyeweekly.com), have listings for major events and obscure fringe offerings. Tickets for most cultural attractions can usually be bought through *Ticketmaster Canada* (tel: (416) 870 8000; website: www.ticketmaster.ca). Tickets for many of the big musicals are available from *TicketKing* (tel: (416) 872 1212 or 1 800 461 3333; website: www.ticketking.com) or in person (Tuesday-Saturday 1200-1830) from the *TOTix* half-price ticket booth, at the southeast corner of Yonge Street and Dundas Street (tel: (416) 536 6468; website: www.totix.ca).

Music: The **Toronto Symphony Orchestra** (tel: (416) 598 3375 or 593 7769; website: www.tso.on.ca) performs over 125 concerts every year at **Roy Thomson Hall** (see above), attracting guest performers of international acclaim. The **Canadian Opera Company** (tel: (416) 363 6671; website: www.coc.ca) has received growing audiences in recent seasons and will no doubt have continued success in its impressive new home, the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts**.

Theatre: The city's Theatre District is focused on King Street West, slightly north of the CN Tower. Built in 1907, the **Royal Alexandra Theatre**, 260 King Street West, is an old, spacious Victorian theatre that shows musicals along with the occasional piece of serious theatre. The nearby **Princess of Wales Theatre**, 300 King Street West, shows similarly popular fare, generally bringing touring versions of major West End and Broadway shows. Both venues are run by *Mirvish Productions* (website: www.mirvish.com) and should be booked through *TicketKing* (see above). The **Canon Theatre**, 263 Yonge Street, restored to its exquisite 1920s design and for many years the Toronto home of *Phantom of the Opera*, is now also a part of the Mirvish stable.

For a more local flavour, the **Poor Alex Theatre**, 296 Brunswick Avenue (website: www.pooralextheatre.com), is one of the best venues offering innovative new theatre. The **Tarragon Theatre**, 30 Bridgman Avenue (tel: (416) 531 1827; website: www.tarragontheatre.com), specialises in new Canadian writing. The **St Lawrence Centre for the Performing Arts**, 27 Front Street East (tel: (416) 366 7723; website: www.stlc.com), is home to the **Canadian Stage Company** (tel: (416) 368 3110; website: www.canstage.com), producers of modern Canadian plays and productions. Near the waterfront, the **Harbourfront Centre Theatre**, at the Harbourfront

Centre, 231 Queen's Quay West (tel: (416) 973 4000; website: www.harbourfront.on.ca), was built as an ice house in the 1920s but was renovated into a modern theatre, showing musicals alongside more serious pieces, in the 1990s.

Further information on drama in the city is available from the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (tel: (416) 536 6468; website: www.tapa.ca), which represents over a hundred local companies.

It is worth getting out of the city for two of the country's most important theatre festivals - the Shaw Festival (website: www.shawfest.com), held in Niagara-on-the-Lake (see *Excursions*), and the Stratford Festival (tel: 1 800 567 1600; website: www.stratfordfestival.ca), in Stratford, two hours' drive southwest of Toronto. As the name suggests, the focus at the Stratford Festival is on the works of Shakespeare, although the repertoire also includes more recent works by Canadian and international playwrights like Albee and Chekhov.

Dance: The National Ballet of Canada (tel: (416) 345 9595 or 1 (866) 345 9595; website: www.national.ballet.ca), arguably the country's best known dance company, uses the **Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts**, opened in 2006, as its performance venue. The company's most popular show is the annual Christmas production of *The Nutcracker*. One of the best spots for Canadian and international contemporary dance is at the **Harbourfront Centre**, 231 Queen's Quay West (tel: (416) 973 4000; website: www.harbourfront.on.ca).

Film: In recent years, Toronto has gained the nickname 'Hollywood North', due to the large number of American films that are shot on its streets and in its buildings. Even though Vancouver and Montreal have stolen some of that thunder, dozens of American feature films are still shot in Toronto every year. Recent successes include *Hairspray* (2007), *16 Blocks* (2005), *Assault on Precinct 13* (2004), the film musical *Chicago* (2002), and *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002). A number of television series, including the US version of *Queer as Folk*, have also been filmed in the city. Among the films where Toronto actually plays itself are *The City* (1999), *Forever Knight* (1992) and *Exotica* (1994), directed by University of Toronto alumnus Atom Egoyan.

Every September, Toronto is flooded with celebrities and film types; patios are overrun with bruschetta and canapés, as film buffs line up to see major releases and art house works from around the world during the Toronto International Film Festival (tel: (416) 968 3456; website: www.torontointernationalfilmfestival.ca), the second largest festival in the world, after Cannes. A new festival centre, **Bell Lightbox**, (website: www.festivalcentre.ca) is currently being built. The C\$196 million project, a five-storey podium building of 13,935 sq m (150,000sq ft), with five cinemas, over 1,300 seats, a gallery, multiple learning studios, reference library and archive, retail store and year-round ticket centre, is scheduled to be completed in late 2009 or early 2010.

As far as seeing a film in Toronto goes, it is customary to buy tickets at the cinema, which means arriving early if the film is likely to sell out. Seating is always acquired on a first-come, first-serve basis. **Cineplex** (website: www.cineplex.com) operates the majority of Toronto's mainstream cinemas, with locations throughout the city. The **Bloor Cinema**, 506 Bloor Street West (tel: (416) 516 2331; website: www.bloorcinema.com), is popular for second-run, art house and more obscure international films. **Cinéma-thèque Ontario**, at the **Art Gallery of Ontario's Jackman Hall**, 317 Dundas Street West (tel: (416) 968 3456; website: www.bell.ca/cinematheque), shows a mixture of English-language and subtitled films.

Literary Notes: Toronto is home to two of the English-speaking world's most talented and well known writers, Michael Ondaatje and Margaret Atwood. Not surprisingly, their home city features directly in much of their literature. Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987) follows the early history of Toronto, including the building of the Bloor Street Viaduct and the R C Harris Waterworks. Atwood's *Cat's Eye* (1988) also finds the city as its setting, telling the story of a woman painter returning to Toronto for a retrospective of her work, which brings on a re-examination of her own and her city's past. Other famous Torontonians include Ann-Marie MacDonald, whose *Fall on Your Knees* (1996), a story of love, abuse and incest on Canada's east coast,

won the Commonwealth Prize, and Anne Michaels, whose *Fugitive Pieces* (1997) tells the story of an ageing Holocaust survivor's life and friendships in Toronto.

The famous American author John Irving has a particular fondness for Toronto, spending much of his time in the city. His novel, *A Prayer for Owen Meany* (1989), features a private school for girls in Toronto, where the book's narrator is a teacher. And it was also in Toronto that a young American writer, Ernest Hemingway, got his big break - as a journalist on the *Toronto Star*. Toronto journalist and novelist David Gilmour won Canada's top literary prize, the Governor General's (GG) fiction award, for 2005 with his *A Perfect Night to Go to China*. One of Canada's foremost poets, Dionne Brand, also lives in Toronto. She won the GG award for poetry in 1997 for *Land to Light On*.

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