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ABOVE Toronto skyline. BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT Subway, Casa Loma, A Toronto Islands park, Eaton Centre's flying Canada geese sculpture, Ferry from the city to Centre Island.

ONTARIO



City of EXCITEMENT

By Jennifer Schaefer



If the URBAN pulse of New York City is more your speed than the sunny beaches of Miami or the wilds of Montana, consider planning your next vacation to the Big Apple's neighbor to the north, Toronto. As CANADA'S LARGEST CITY, and the fifth largest city in North America, Toronto offers a one-of-a-kind blend of rich heritage, INTERNATIONAL flair and snapshot-worthy sites that will leave even the most seasoned city slicker wanting more. The following is a brief history of Toronto and our guide to some of the city's BEST ATTRACTIONS.

The Toronto Story

Originally occupied by Native Canadians, in 1788 the land that is now Toronto was purchased by the British from the Mississauga Indians. The name Toronto, an Indian word for “meeting place,” was chosen when the city was incorporated in 1834. During the War of 1812 and the ensuing decades, Toronto was not just a meeting place but a melting pot, attracting first British and Scottish immigrants and later Jews from the United States, the Soviet Union and Germany, as well as Irish fleeing famine in their homeland and African-Americans escaping slavery in the United States. By the 20th century, Toronto had flourished into the world’s most diverse city, a distinction it still holds today.

As Toronto’s population grew, so did its infrastructure. When Canada was established in 1867, Toronto became the capital of the newly created province of Ontario. The 1950s marked the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, a U.S.-Canadian waterway transportation system that turned Toronto into a viable port. In 1954, Canada’s first subway system, the second-largest public transit system in North America, was created by the Toronto Transit Commission (for information about getting around Toronto by subway, visit www.toronto.ca/ttc/). Present-day Toronto was created in 1998, when the then-smaller city and five surrounding municipalities joined together to form a new, larger city spanning 3,646 square miles. Within the city limits, there are about 4.2 million citizens who speak more than 100 languages.



Toronto Attractions

With dozens of exciting places to go and things to do, Toronto is a tourist’s delight. The following is a list of don’t-miss attractions to put on your itinerary.

Landmarks

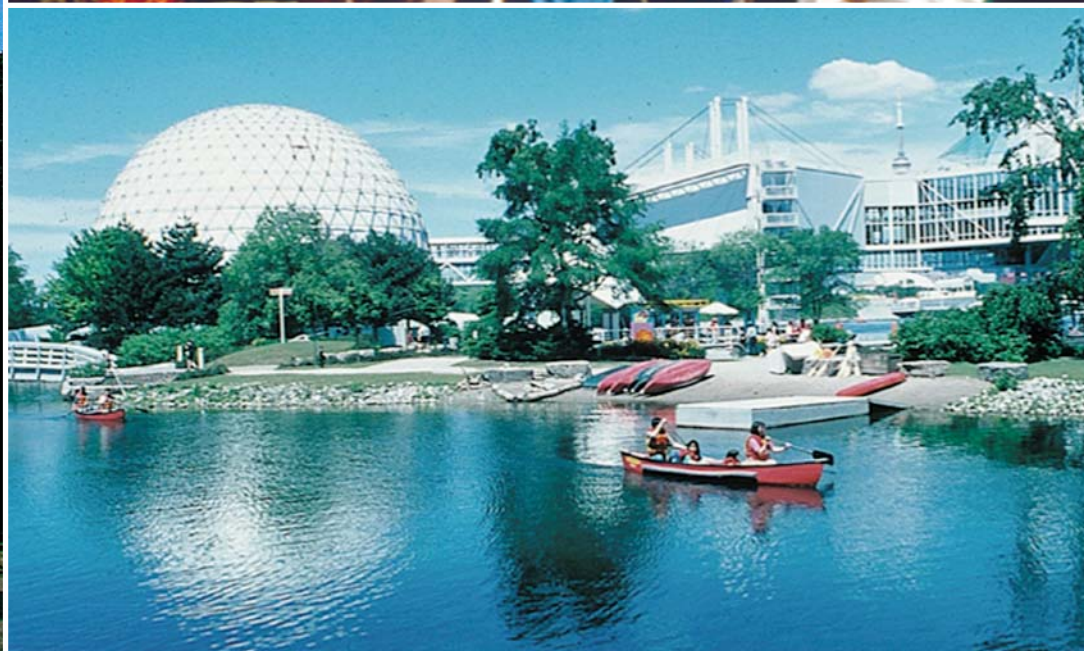
One of Toronto’s most famous landmarks is Casa Loma, a majestic castle that is the former home of Canadian financier Sir Henry Pellatt. Built between 1911 and 1914, the medieval-style castle, which took 300 men and about \$3.5 million to complete, is the only full-sized castle in North America. Visitors have an opportunity to tour elaborately decorated suites, stately towers, a five-acre garden, an 800-foot tunnel and even secret passageways.

For a bird’s eye view of the city, visit another famed symbol of Toronto, the CN Tower, which, at 1,814 feet, is the world’s tallest freestanding structure. Stand on the Glass Floor and peer down at the ground almost 1,000 feet below, and then climb even higher to the SkyPod, the world’s highest public observation deck at nearly

1,500 feet. If you have a hankering for fine cuisine during your visit, 360 Restaurant offers a panoramic view, award-winning cuisine and more than 550 international and Canadian wines from its “cellar in the sky.”

Toronto’s waterfront, one of North America’s largest, is the site of a host of entertainment options for the whole family. For live entertainment, visit the Harbourfront Centre, which houses a dozen different performance venues that house concerts, dance performances, readings, films and kids’ shows all year-round. If you’re not in the mood for a show, spend the day perusing the Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, ice-skating around The Nattel outdoor rink, shopping for souvenirs at the Bounty Contemporary Canadian Craft Shop or watching the glass-

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LEFT Toronto's most famous landmark, Casa Loma. **TOP RIGHT** St. Lawrence Market featuring produce and flowers along with arts and crafts. **BOTTOM RIGHT** Ontario Place, a waterfront entertainment complex.

blowers work their magic at The Craft Studio.

Another family-friendly waterfront attraction is Ontario Place, an entertainment complex with a water playground, face painting, a children's village, a virtual reality-games arcade and the Cinesphere, Toronto's largest IMAX theater housed inside a giant sphere.

Shopping

Some of Toronto's best shopping is found on Yonge Street. Listed in the "Guinness Book of World Records" as the longest street in the world, Yonge Street spans 1,178 miles, from the shores of Toronto's Lake Ontario to Rainy River, Ontario, near the Minnesota border (roughly the

distance from Seattle to San Diego!). To get a feel for the famed boulevard, start at Eaton Centre, a complex with 320 shops and restaurants located in the heart of downtown. Walk north to experience the flashy Yonge Street Strip section, which is known for its eclectic mix of retail. For a more sophisticated "side" of the street, continue north past Bloor Street, where fine food shops, designer stores and art galleries cater to Toronto's well-heeled crowd.

For a more organic shopping experience, head to the St. Lawrence Market in the historic Old Toronto neighborhood. Named by *Food and Wine* magazine as one of the world's 25 best food markets, St. Lawrence Market will appeal to those who enjoy spending an afternoon

wandering around Seattle's Pike Place Market. The market is housed in two buildings, one on either side of the street. The north building features mainly farm-fresh produce, flowers and other agricultural products and is only open on Saturday. The south building, a giant red-brick structure built in 1905, houses dozens of permanent vendors, including local artists and craftspeople, and is open Tuesday through Saturday.

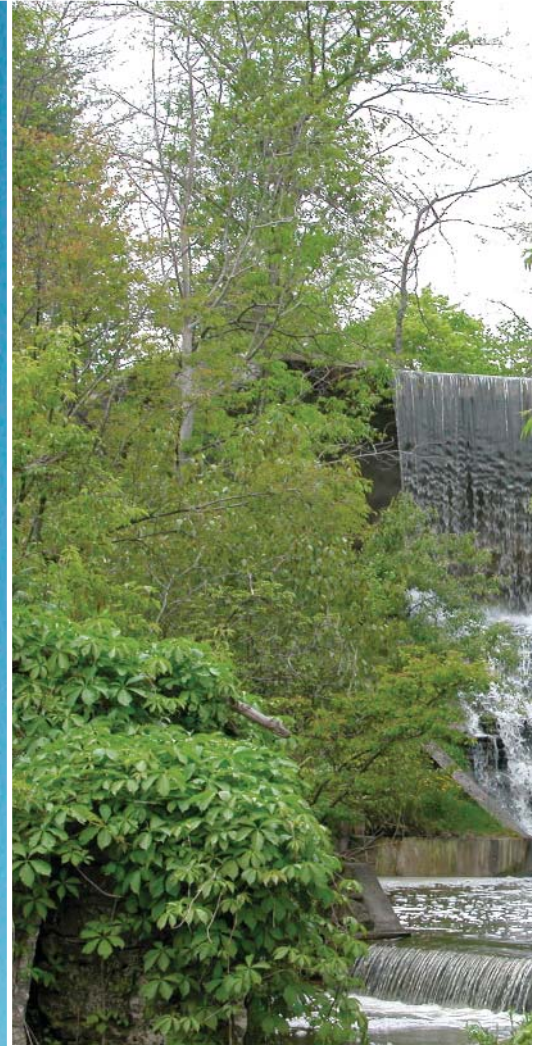
Just for Fun

For animal-lovers, a trip to the Toronto Zoo is definitely in order. The 710-acre zoo, the largest in Canada, is divided into six "regions": Indo-Malaya, Africa, the Americas, Australasia, Eurasia and the Canadian Domain. There are more than 5,000 animals spread along six miles of walking trails, so be sure to wear comfortable shoes. You'll be rewarded for your efforts with sightings of exotic animals both large (think elephants and giraffes) and small (think naked mole-rats and yellow-banded poison dart frogs). Kids will go ape over Zellers Discover Zone, which includes a special kids' zoo, an interactive wildlife exhibit, a two-acre water play area and a 750-seat entertainment venue.

The 2010 Winter Olympics will be hosted on Canada's opposite coast, but visitors can experience the games all year round at Olympic Spirit Toronto, the only Olympic-themed attraction in the world. Housed in a five-story building, with entire floors dedicated to the summer and winter games, the center both educates and entertains with state-of-the-art simulators and high-energy multimedia presentations. Visitors can watch a film montage of triumphant victories and heartbreaking defeats, test their skills against a gold medal-winning goalie, take a ride on a virtual bobsled and more. You never know who you might meet: Olympic Spirit Toronto employs more than 50 athletes and former Olympic medalists to give visitors first-hand knowledge about the games.

For an insider's insight into Toronto, plus a little exercise, consider joining a Muddy York Walking Tour. There are six different tours-with-a-twist to choose from, each with a unique theme. One of the most popular is the Haunted Streets of Downtown Toronto Tour, during which participants learn about the history of some of Toronto's finest institutions, as well as many of the city's spookier landmarks. Another, equally eerie, option is the Bloody York Tour, which looks back at Toronto's past, including a few high-profile criminal cases. Tuck a pen and paper into your purse or pocket—no matter which Muddy York tour you choose, you're sure to spot points of interest along the way to add to your itinerary.

If this article has inspired you to visit Toronto, you can find more information about planning your trip at www.TorontoTourism.com.

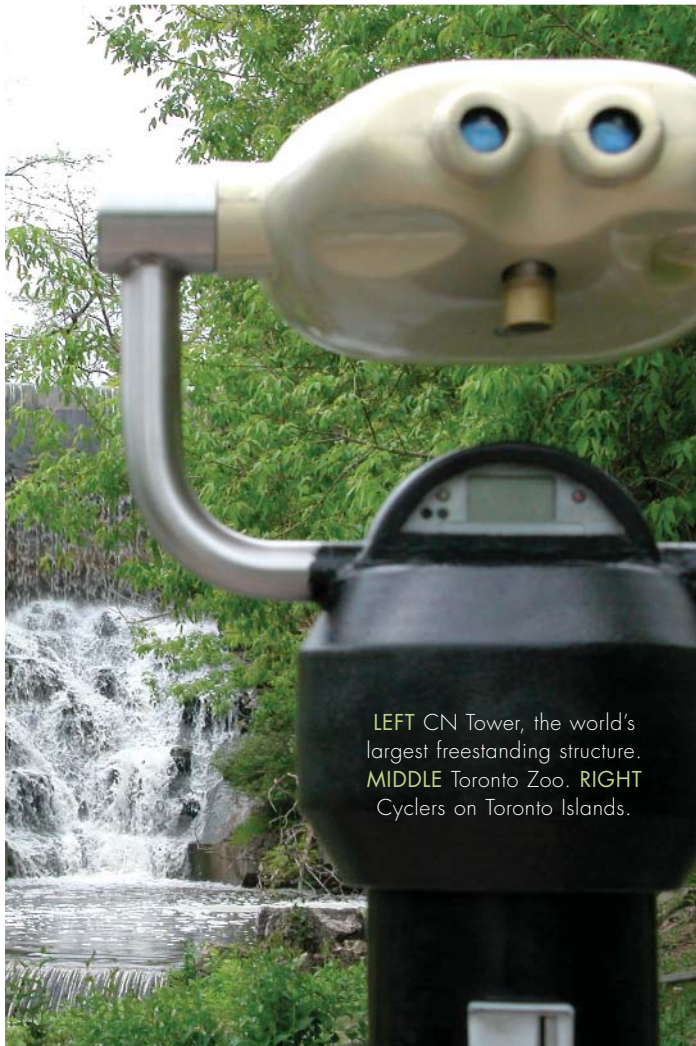


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FOR MORE INFORMATION

CASA LOMA
1 Austin Terrace
(416) 923-1171
CasaLoma.org

CN TOWER
301 Front Street West
(416) 868-6937
CNTower.ca



LEFT CN Tower, the world's largest freestanding structure.
MIDDLE Toronto Zoo. RIGHT Cyclers on Toronto Islands.



The Toronto Islands

Like New York City's Central Park, Toronto boasts a natural refuge where residents and visitors can go to escape the big-city grind: the Toronto Islands in Lake Ontario, just off of downtown. These 14 tree-lined islands were a peninsula until 1858, when a raging storm separated them from the mainland. In the 1920s, Toronto's wealthier citizens began summering on the islands, and they soon became a popular recreation destination. The major islands are Centre Island, the most popular among tourists, and Ward's Island, which is more residential. Those who make the short ferry trip to Centre Island will find an old-fashioned amusement park, a charming village and plenty of space to spread out and enjoy a picnic lunch. For more information and the ferry schedule, visit Toronto.ca/parks/island/index.htm.

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Following is contact information for the Toronto attractions described in this article.

EATON CENTRE
220 Yonge Street
(416) 598-8700
TorontoEatonCentre.com

HARBOURFRONT CENTRE
235 Queens Quay West
(416) 973-4000
HarbourfrontCentre.com

MUDDY YORK WALKING TOURS
Meeting places vary;
call for details
(416) 487-9017
MuddyYorkTours.com

ONTARIO PLACE
955 Lakeshore
Boulevard West
(866) ONE-4-FUN
OntarioPlace.com

OLYMPIC SPIRIT TORONTO
35 Dundas Street East
(888) 466-9991
OlympicSpirit.ca

ST. LAWRENCE MARKET
92 Front Street East
(416) 392-7219
StLawrenceMarket.com

TORONTO ZOO
316A Old Finch Avenue
(416) 392-5900
TorontoZoo.com