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Escape to paradise

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- Tulip Celebration, April 26, 27 and May 3, 4, 10, 11
- Lilac Celebration, May 17, 18, 19, 24, 25
- Iris and Peony Celebration, May 31 and June 1, 7, 8
- Rose Celebration, June 21, 22, 28, 29 and July 5, 6

Visit www.rbg.ca/1 for full event listing and details.

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July, 2008 — our new garden features native plants and native plant cultivars in an inspiring design that showcases sustainable gardening and the beauty of native plants.

Nils-Udo (Germany)

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earth
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CURATED BY: John Grande, Canadian world-renowned ephemeral art expert and author.
ARTISTS: Nils-Udo, Germany; Emilie Brzezinski, USA; Simon Frank, Canada; Neville Gabie, UK; Yolanda Gutierrez, Mexico; Ludwika Ogorzelec, Poland/France; Arthur de Mowbray, UK; Roy Staab, USA; Bob Verschueren, Belgium; Sharon Loper, USA.

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MY ONTARIO

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From Canada: French: 1-800-268-3736
Teletypewriter – TTY/Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD): (905) 612-0870

We provide information to assist travellers with disabilities. Accessibility information is collected to address a variety of special needs. Please call the toll-free line and counsellors will assist you with the details you need to plan and enjoy travel throughout Ontario.

INTERNATIONAL INQUIRIES

Contact the appropriate Canadian embassy or overseas consulate for information on Ontario.
For more information, visit www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/world/embassies/menu-en.asp on the Internet.
International visitors can also obtain information on Ontario through ontariotravel.net

RENSEIGNEMENTS EN FRANÇAIS

Nous sommes heureux de vous offrir un service d'information touristique en français.
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Ontario

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Perspectives

This is our Ontario!

What a treat to be the guest editors of the inaugural issue of *My Ontario*. How lucky that we actually live in our favourite tourist destination. I mean who else but Ontarians can say, "hey, just went to London for the day!" or "yeah, went to Paris this morning, did some shopping and was back for dinner." Good provincial flower too. Trilliums rock.

As a family we have done so many wonderful trips. And by our experiences you will see that your destination does not have to dictate your activity. When we go to gorgeous Algonquin park for example, are we pressured to canoe and portage and hike? No! We eat and drink and look at stuff. Lots of eating, drinking and looking. When we went to Winterlude in Ottawa to see the ice sculpting, it was fabulous but a tad cold. Were we daunted? No, we got a room overlooking the park and watched it all from there. We have an annual sojourn to the Stratford and Shaw festivals and being actors by trade, you would think that this would be the perfect place for us to participate. But it turns out that the other actors frown on that. Who knew? I guess the lesson is that you don't have to necessarily participate to really participate.

There is no bad way to see Ontario. The one trip where we finally got down to participating turned out to be our most unforgettable vacation: we skated on the Rideau Canal. The sky was blue, the sun was out and the canal was frozen, which, of course, is the best time to skate. What an experience it was with the Parliament Buildings looming large behind us, and our flag perched on top waving us on! If you're Canadian you've got to do it. If you're Ontarian...lucky you, you're there.

Colin Mochrie & Debra McGrath

contributors

Photo: Steve Elphick

TONY ASPLER C.M., page 44
Tony Aspler has been writing about wine for over 30 years. He was the wine columnist for *The Toronto Star* for 21 years and has authored 14 books on wine and food, including *The Wine Atlas of Canada*, *Vintage Canada*, *The Wine Lover's Companion*, *The Wine Lover Cooks* and *Travels With My Corkscrew*. Tony's latest book is *The Definitive Canadian Wine & Cheese Cookbook* (with chef Gurth Pretty). In December 2007, Tony was awarded the Order of Canada.

ANNA HOBBS, page 56
From the first issue of *Canadian Living* when she joined the editorial staff, Anna's focus has been on family, home and travel. For the past eight years as a freelance writer her work has appeared in *Fifty Plus, The Toronto Star, Food & Drink, Cuisine* and *The Globe and Mail*. When she isn't indulging in a spa, she and her husband and their big shaggy dog enjoy life in the lovely Purple Hills north of Toronto.

KATE POCOCK, page 78
Kate Pocock has been travelling with kids for 28 years. Her family travel adventures have been featured in numerous publications including *Today's Parent, Reader's Digest* and *CAA Magazine*. She is the author of *Fodor's Around Toronto with Kids* and wrote 14 chapters for *National Geographic Guide to Family Adventure Vacations*. Based in Toronto, she loves winter and is always ready to whoosh down hills, skate on a rink or snowshoe through freshly fallen snow.

TIM SHUFF, page 38
Tim Shuff is a Toronto-based writer and editor whose favourite mode of travel involves a paddle. In the summer of 2002 he went on an 80-day sea kayak trip along the length of Canada's West Coast. He has written articles about kayaking for many Canadian magazines and newspapers and is the editor of two kayaking magazines, *Adventure Kayak* and *Kayak Angler*. He studied Outdoor Recreation at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, on the shores of Lake Superior.

MARGARET SWAINE, page 66
Margaret Swaine has toured the globe many times over as a journalist, wine and restaurant critic, and feature writer. She spent more than two decades as the wine and drink columnist for both *Toronto Life* and *Chatelaine* magazines, and is now the weekly wine columnist for the *National Post*. She also writes *Gault Millau's* Toronto restaurant and city reviews for their website gayot.com, and a column on spas for *Reader's Digest Best Health*.

ALSO: Cathy Bennett, Ilona Kauremszky, Barbara Ramsay Orr, Michele Peterson, Annette Redican, Susan Scott, Andy Sheppard, James Smedley, Jacquelyn Waller-Vintar and Betty Zyvatkauskas

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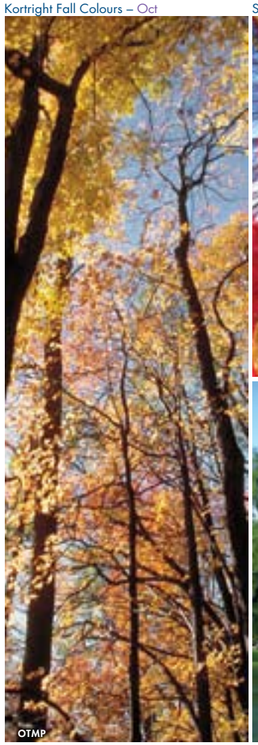
THE BEST TIME TO VISIT TORONTO? ANY TIME!

Toronto is such a vibrant, diverse city, it's always a great time to be here. Whether you want an event the whole family will enjoy or you feel like an outing just for the grown-ups, you could throw a dart at the calendar and you're bound to hit a world-class event. Take summer, for instance. The Luminato Festival of Arts & Creativity kicks off the season with world premieres, special celebrations and free events for all ages. As the days heat up, chill out to the cool beats of the TD Canada Trust Toronto Jazz Festival. And we're still only in June! Hope you aren't exhausted yet, because from the rhythms of Caribana to the aromas of Taste of the Danforth, summer in our city never lets up. Autumn in Toronto brings its own special hues, such as the colourful art of Nuit Blanche and the leaves of Kortright Fall Colours. And as the days get chillier, Toronto just uses that as an excuse for yet more award-winning festivals, from the Cavalcade of Lights to WinterCity. So what's the best time to be in Toronto? It's whenever you're in the mood for an unforgettable time.

Jazz Festival – June 20 - 29

Kortright Fall Colours – Oct



OTMP

Scotiabank Caribana – June 15 - Aug 3

OTMP

OTMP

Luminato Festival of Arts & Creativity – June 6 - 15
With more than ninety creative events, this international arts festival brings the creative spirit to every street corner of the city.

Mississauga Waterfront Festival – June 13 - 15
65,000 people come to be awed by everything from Pancake Breakfasts to Pirate Ships.

Pride – June 20 - 29
Canada's largest Pride Festival and the third-largest in the world.

TD Canada Trust Toronto Jazz Festival – June 20 - 29
This premier annual musical extravaganza showcases 1,500+ jazz artists and attracts 500,000 people.

Scotiabank Caribana – June 15 - Aug 3
North America's biggest Caribbean carnival event celebrates its 41st year with a spectacular parade of more than 20 bands performing and numerous exciting festivities citywide.

Taste of the Danforth – Aug 8 - 10
See why over a million people flock to the festival that celebrates the Hellenic food and culture that make the Danforth a destination year-round.

Southside Shuffle – Sept 5 - 7
Billed as "Mississauga's Musical Mardi Gras, Port Credit's Blues and Jazz Festival," it's guaranteed to get your feet tapping.

Kortright Fall Colours – Oct
Celebrate the spirit of the fall season near one of our boutique towns.

Scotiabank Nuit Blanche – Oct 4
A playful sunset-to-sunrise celebration that transforms public space all over the city into a wonderland of contemporary art.

Royal Agricultural Winter Fair – Nov 7 - 16
The largest indoor agricultural, horticultural, canine and equestrian event in the world.

One Of A Kind Show – Nov
Canada's finest craft show and one-of-a-kind shopping experience.

Cavalcade of Lights – Nov 29 - Dec 21
Presented by Scotiabank
Brighten your day with Toronto's citywide holiday lighting celebration.

For more information on these and other events and to plan your trip, visit torontotourism.com or call 1-800-499-2514 today.

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MY ONTARIO

Showcase

Ontario in a nutshell? You're in the right place. Welcome to the Showcase, an eclectic compendium of what's unique and special to our province. From classic favourites to the fresh and exciting, you'll discover the best of Ontario in the pages that follow. Enjoy the show.

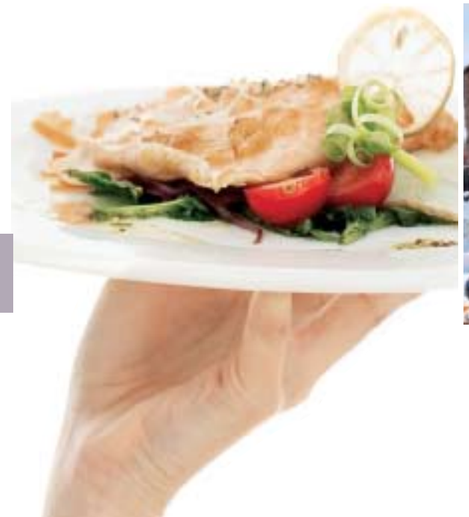


plate & palate

FOOD GROUPS

KID-FRIENDLY FARE

THREE GUYS AND A STOVE
Gourmet grub for the whole family? You betcha. Located in the Village at Blue, 3 Guys And A Stove's healthy tweens' menu offers yummy foods that both kids and parents will appreciate. Try kiddie starters like celery sticks with peanut butter, and main courses like chicken strips with corn, carrots, fries and dippy honey or a pita pizza. Craving something more? From lamb to risotto to sea bass, you'll find all the sophisticated tastes your adult palate craves as well.
3guysandastove.com
(705) 446-3595

SPENCER'S AT THE WATERFRONT
Spencer's for kids? This award-winning restaurant, known for its elegant ambience and stellar cuisine, also has a more casual café and takeout – offering tasty family fare like waffles, panini, hotdogs and hamburgers. Located on the fun-filled Burlington waterfront, this setting is the perfect destination for a family outing, with a waterjet plaza in the summer and a skating rink in the winter.
spencersatthewaterfront.com
(905) 633-7494

SEASONAL SENSATIONS

HILLEBRAND WINERY RESTAURANT
Hillebrand Winery Restaurant was the first vineyard restaurant in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and has recently been transformed into a stunning new space. Dishes are inspired by the undertones of their wines, and are artfully prepared using fresh local produce. Every creation is paired with wine and Icewine recommendations to bring out the very best in the dish. Enjoy the view of this beautiful winery while savouring the great Ontario flavours.
hillebrand.com
(905) 468-7123

EIGENSINN FARM
The experience of visiting Eigensinn Farm in Singhampton is a treat itself: taking in the idyllic scene of the farm's ducks and pheasants while admiring the almost derelict country farmhouse that has become an Ontario icon. And then there is the fare: a deliciously fresh slow food delight. Michael Stadtländer's unparalleled cooking uses produce from that very farm to create a set hyperseasonal 8-course menu for his intimate venue. With seating for only 10 per night, this legendary restaurant is worth the waiting list.
(519) 922-3128

STELLAR SETTINGS

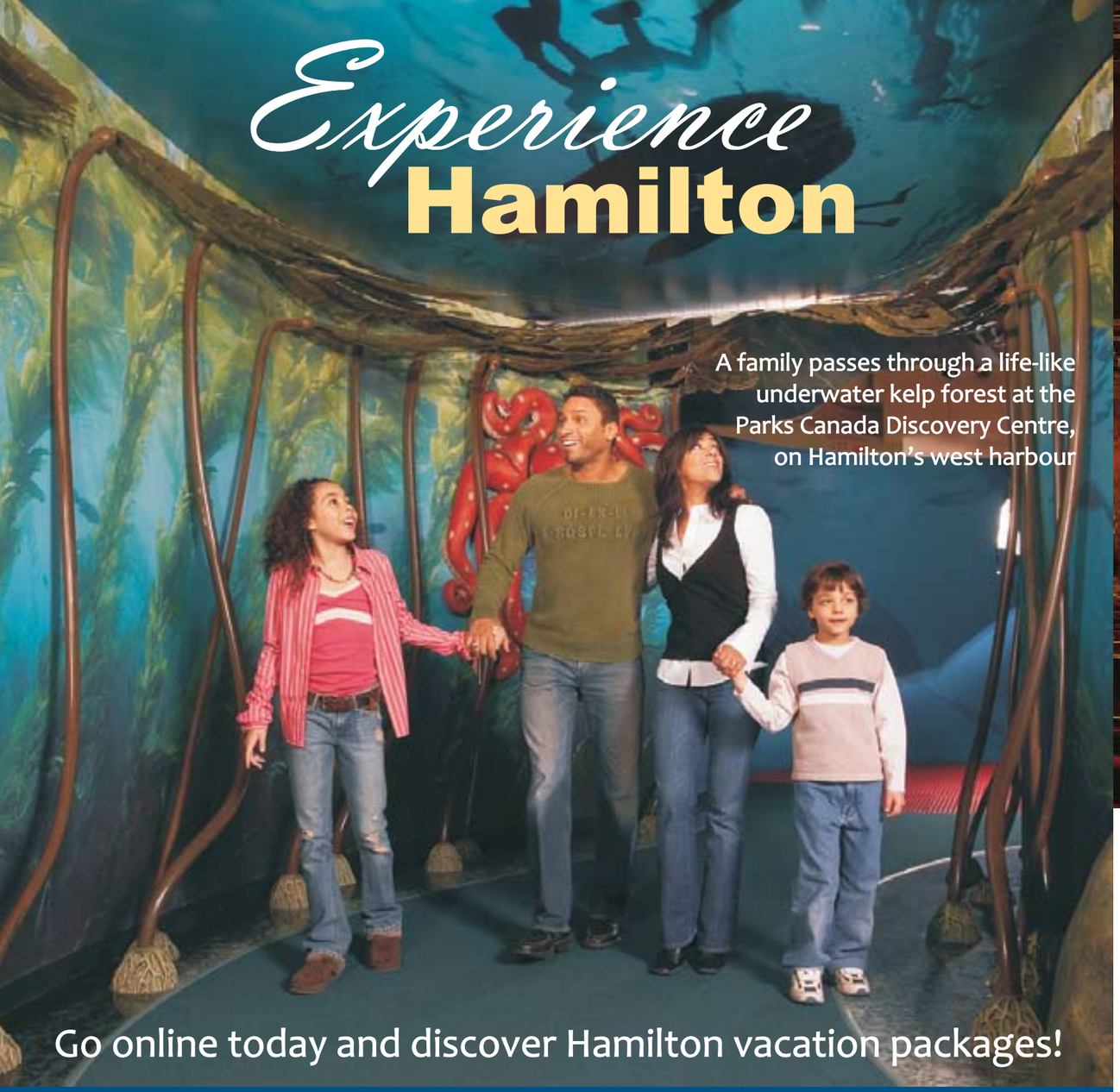
AGO RESTAURANTS
Anticipation is building for the completion of Frank Gehry's redesigned Art Gallery of Ontario. Anne Yarymowich, the executive chef of all the future AGO restaurants, is busy collaborating with Gehry's team to create four new exquisite dining spaces. There are plans for a highly anticipated upscale bistro, which will focus on slow food, plus seasonal and local fare. There will also be a smaller self-service café, banquet and function hall, and espresso bar. The AGO is scheduled to reopen in the fall of 2008; go online for updates.
ago.net
1-877-225-4246

ELEMENTS ON THE FALLS RESTAURANT
What better view to accompany a meal than a panorama of Niagara Falls? The new Elements on the Falls Restaurant, slated to open in June 2008, offers a comfortable family environment for good food, great fun, and one heck of a view! Kids and adults alike will love this new restaurant perched seemingly on the brink of the Horseshoe Falls. It also houses a collection of items inspired by the falls.
niagaraparks.com
1-877-NIAPARK (642-7275)

SIDE DISHES

CIRILLO'S CULINARY ACADEMY
Love to cook? Cirillo's Culinary Academy in Toronto, opening June 2008, is the place where foodies of all kinds can share in their joy of cooking. Award-winning chef John Cirillo leverages 25 years of international culinary experience to create a comfortable and unique learning environment. From the kitchen klutz to the veteran chef, there is something for everyone at the academy, with classes for individuals, couples, and even kids.
cirillosculinaryacademy.com
(416) 721-0965

COUNTYLICIOUS
Celebrate the county's bounty! This festival of fine dining features prix fixe menus at Prince Edward County's top restaurants, each offering amazing culinary creations for $30. Dinner menus, created by participating chefs exclusively for Countylicious, will include a starter, entrée and dessert. The festival runs annually late March – early April.
pec.on.ca/countylicious
1-800-640-4717



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ELGIN THEATRE

It's the smash Broadway musical that follows the downs and ups of a college grad who moves to New York, and is long on dreams but short of money. This engaging story is told in a creatively dramatic way, with key roles played by people and puppets alike.

dancaptickets.com
1-866-950-7469

JERSEY BOYS
AUGUST 21 – OCTOBER 5

TORONTO CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

The story of Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons is told in this musical tribute that has garnered ecstatic reviews throughout the U.S. The Canadian show premieres at the Toronto Centre for the Arts.

jerseyboysinfo.com
1-866-950-7469

A RAISIN IN THE SUN
OCTOBER 15 – NOVEMBER 15

SOULPEPPER THEATRE

Soulpepper Theatre, located in Toronto's historical Distillery District, presents the poignant theatre classic *A Raisin in The Sun*. The story follows the plight of a Black family in Chicago's Southside during the 1950s. After the show, stroll through the area's historic cobblestone streets and enjoy a gourmet coffee in a local café.

soulpepper.ca
(416) 866-8666

THE COLOR PURPLE
FEBRUARY 2009

CANON THEATRE

Mirvish Productions brings Oprah Winfrey's musical presentation of *The Color Purple* to the Canon Theatre in February 2009. This soul-stirring family saga tells the story of a woman who overcomes adversity through love. The show is set to a phenomenal soundtrack of blues, ragtime, gospel – and extraordinary voices.

mirvish.com
1-800-461-3333

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THROUGH THE Grapevine

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1 TWILIGHT IN THE VINEYARD

WINE REGION: Niagara – Jackson-Triggs Winery

VINTAGE EVENT: Award-winning wines and gourmet food are paired with outstanding performance arts in the intimacy of an open-air amphitheatre.

BE THERE: Saturday evenings throughout the summer at the twilight hour.

TASTY TRIVIA: Founders Don Triggs & Allan Jackson's passion for the wine industry began while in the employ of a beer company.

WORDS TO SAVOUR: "Do whatever it takes to make great wine." – Don Triggs & Allan Jackson

jacksontriggswinery.com 1-866-589-4637

Learn more about the Wine Regions of Ontario at **winesofontario.ca**

2 SIX BARRELS FOR SIX CHEFS

WINE REGION: Prince Edward County – Huff Estates

VINTAGE EVENT: It's about savouring the nuances as two wines, aged from six different oak barrels, are paired with gourmet meals prepared by a great chef.

BE THERE: August 1

TASTY TRIVIA: Huff Estates 2005 Vidal Icewine won the 2007 Art Vino Awards Gold medal.

WORDS TO SAVOUR: "Once you have Prince Edward County in your blood, you are bound to return." – Larry Huff

huffestates.ca (613) 393-5802

3 TASTE THE SEASON

WINE REGION: Niagara

VINTAGE EVENT: Taste the Season passport gives you access to 17 wineries that invite you to taste delicious wine and food pairings.

BE THERE: November weekends. (Nov. 1/2, 8/9, 15/16, 22/23)

TASTY TRIVIA: Your touring pass also supports the Second Harvest charity.

WINE NOTES: A great opportunity to pick up vintages for gift giving and holiday entertaining.

niagaraonthelake.com (905) 468-1950

1 BERGERON ESTATE WINERY

WINE REGION: Prince Edward County

CLAIM TO FAME: Located on the shores of Adolphus Reach, with a stunning waterfront view.

TASTY TRIVIA: Family-run winery, one of The County's new wineries.

WINE NOTES: 2006 varietals include Pinot Noir, Gamay, Vidal, Riesling/ Gewurztraminer, Chardonnay.

bergeronestatewinery.com (613) 373-0181

2 FROGPOND FARM

WINE REGION: Niagara

CLAIM TO FAME: Ontario's only organic winery.

TASTY TRIVIA: Frogpond Farm is powered by clean, green electricity supplied by Bullfrog Power.

WINE NOTES: All grapes are organically grown, processed and certified by Organic Crop Producers & Processors.

frogpondfarm.ca 1-877-989-0165

3 JOSEPH'S ESTATE WINES

WINE REGION: Niagara

CLAIM TO FAME: Founder and local icon, Dr. Joseph Pohorly, is an early Canadian Icewine pioneer and exclusive purveyor of Dr. Joseph's Grape Seed Oil.

TASTY TRIVIA: Made from pomace, the waste from a grape press, grape seed oil is rich in nutrients and antioxidants, and is purported to offer a host of health benefits.

WINE NOTES: Winery tours are offered three times daily, June through October.

josephsestatewines.com 1-866-468-1259

4 SPRUCEWOOD SHORES ESTATE WINERY

WINE REGION: Lake Erie North Shore

CLAIM TO FAME: Family-run business opened its doors in 2006...but the family planted the vines 15 years earlier.

TASTY TRIVIA: Soil conditions and the moderating effect of nearby Lake Erie create ideal conditions for growing exceptional vinifera grapes.

WINE NOTES: Sprucewood's 'Meritage' won a Gold at the 2006 All Canadian Wine Competition, the winery's first-ever entry into a competition.

sprucewoodshores.com 1-866-938-9253

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Sound of Music Festival - June 12-15
Canada Day - July 1
Children's Festival - August 17
Canada's Largest Ribfest - Aug. 29-31, Sept. 1
Craft Fair & Art Market - June 7, 8 & Sept. 13, 14
Festival of Lights - Dec. 7-Jan. 8

Morning Golf - A. Pradzynski -

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Best Western | Comfort Inn | Hilton Garden Inn Toronto/Burlington | Holiday Inn Burlington Hotel & Conference Centre | Homewood Suites Hilton | Travelodge QEW | Travelodge Hotel Burlington on the Lake

admire & acquire

Hidden Gems

From hand-picked precious stones to sterling silver stunners, you'll adore the unique jewellery created by Ontario designers. Distinctively crafted pieces are sure to enhance your collection and accentuate your style.

1. Sterling silver with red fossil coral pendant and red fossil and carnelian gemstones, VC Jewellery, **joygifts.ca** **2.** Glass beaded circle earrings, Glamjulz, **glamjulz.com** **3.** Frank Gehry Torque open ring, Tiffany & Co., Bloor St., **tiffany.ca** **4.** Expandable bracelet with Chinese baroque pearls, Czech crystal and Balinese silver, Chris Montgomery, **theglasshopperstudio.com**

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2008

APRIL

SHAW FESTIVAL

APRIL – NOVEMBER 2008
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

Enjoy the plays of George Bernard Shaw and his contemporaries, presented on three distinctive stages in the historic town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Take a guided backstage tour and dig deeply into the unique history of this repertory theatre company, plus learn about facets of theatre production. Tours available Tuesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, from June 1 through November 2.

shawfest.com 1-800-511-7429

JUNE

Photo: Stephanie Berger.

LUMINATO

JUNE 6–15, 2008
TORONTO

Toronto's Festival of Arts and Creativity illuminates the city for a second outstanding year. Share in this celebration of dance, music, theatre, film, literature and visual arts that shines a light on the city's cultural diversity.

luminato.com (416) 368-3100

LONDON INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S ARTS FESTIVAL

JUNE 4–7, 2008
LONDON

This magical festival celebrates the spirit and imagination of children. Kids and parents will love the diverse theatre, puppetry, storytelling, music and dance. Challenging workshops get your kids' creative juices flowing.

londonchildfest.com
(519) 645-6739

JULY

ROGERS CHINESE LANTERN FESTIVAL

JULY 31 – OCTOBER 12, 2008
TORONTO

More than 40 magnificently illuminated large-scale lanterns depicting Chinese landmarks and mythology light up Ontario Place. Don't miss one of the most exciting displays of Chinese culture seen in North America.

chineselanternfestival.ca
1-866-663-4386

COLLINGWOOD ELVIS FESTIVAL

JULY 24–27, 2008
COLLINGWOOD

Grab your blue suede shoes and head to Collingwood and celebrate the music of The King of Rock 'n Roll. Featuring the classic car parade, a midway, pancake breakfasts – and some of the best Elvis impersonators in the world.

collingwoodelvisfestival.com
1-866-444-1162

SEPTEMBER

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL (TIFF)

SEPTEMBER 4–13, 2008
TORONTO

The stars come out during TIFF, the world's second-largest film festival, featuring more than 250 films from around the globe. For 10 days, the city's abuzz with public screenings, galas and Hollywood celebs.

tiff08.ca 1-877-968-3456

OCTOBER

FORT FRIGHT NIGHT AT FORT WILLIAM HISTORICAL PARK

OCTOBER 17–19, 24–26, 2008
THUNDER BAY

Get into the Halloween spirit at a super-spooky Fort Fright Night. Take a frightening tour of Fort William and hear blood-curdling screams and disturbing bumps in the night. This one's not for the faint of heart!

fwhp.ca (807) 473-2344

2009

FEBRUARY

WINTERLUDE

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winterlude.ca 1-866-661-3530

MAY

SANTÉ: THE BLOOR-YORKVILLE WINE FESTIVAL

MAY 2009
TORONTO

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santewinefestival.net

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Come experience the newly transformed Art Gallery of Ontario when we reopen in fall 2008. Our expansion by world-renowned architect Frank Gehry will bring to life thousands of new works of art from the Group of Seven and Old Masters to photography and contemporary art.

Go to www.ago.net/myontario for more information and your special offer.

Art Gallery of Ontario Toronto, Ontario www.ago.net

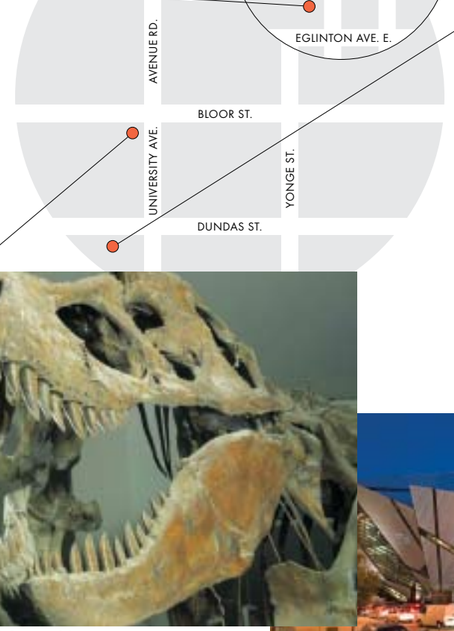
Pieter Brueghel, the Younger, *The Peasants' Wedding*,
end of 16th-beginning of 17th century, oil on panel.
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. W. Redelmeier, 1940. © 2008 Art Gallery of Ontario.

oohs & aahs!

Photo: Tom Arban.

The **Toronto Botanical Garden (TBG)** turns over a new leaf with the James Boyd Children's Centre, a newly created learning space for the 'budding' botanist. Hands-on learning using technology such as digital microscopes helps kids expand their understanding of the natural world.
torontobotanicalgarden.ca
(416) 397-1340

The grand expansion of the **Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO)** by renowned architect Frank Gehry is slated to reopen for fall 2008. The much-anticipated design will house nearly 2,000 works of art donated by the late Lord Kenneth Thomson, including paintings by Paul Kane, Tom Thomson and Lawren Harris.
ago.net 1-877-225-4246



The famous dinosaur collection at the **Royal Ontario Museum (ROM)** stirs the imagination of every family member. And young naturalists won't want to miss a chance to climb aboard the HMS Beagle and learn how to classify bugs during *Darwin: the Evolution Revolution* running until August 4.
rom.on.ca (416) 586-8000

Photo: Royal Ontario Museum, 2008.
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relax & renew

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ELEMENTAL EMBRACE
LOCATION: Brighton

DID YOU KNOW? Hidden in a forest off Highway 401, this wellness spa is nestled in a pocket of nature where the air is clean and Ayurvedic principles reign.

CLAIM TO FAME: The signature Sarasota Treatment begins with a herbal steam to release toxins, followed by a full body aromatherapy massage. The body is then cocooned in a warm herbal wrap while you enjoy a mini-facial with lymphatic drainage, a hot-stone foot massage and a scalp massage.

elementalembrace.com
1-866-212-WELL (9355)

STE. ANNE'S
LOCATION: Grafton

DID YOU KNOW? An old-world atmosphere envelops you as you enjoy an overnight stay at this destination spa, nestled in the countryside of Grafton. Stay in either the main inn, or one of several unique cottages.

CLAIM TO FAME: The Stress Express Day Spa Package is perfect for those who don't have time for an overnight getaway. Package includes round-trip rail transportation, lunch and afternoon tea, a group wellness class and use of the facilities – plus a $100 spa allowance to be used on any spa treatment.

steannes.com 1-888-346-6772

PANTAGES SPA
LOCATION: Toronto

DID YOU KNOW? Water from the aqua bar is offered with every treatment. In-house 'Aqua Sommeliers' pair one of over 50 waters from around the world with each therapeutic service.

CLAIM TO FAME: The Shirodhara Massage uses warmed herbal oil poured over the forehead to provide nourishment, and calm the body. The oil is massaged into the head and scalp, stimulating a sense of profound relaxation.

pantagesspa.com 1-877-772-6824

GRAIL SPRINGS HOLISTIC WELLNESS CENTRE
LOCATION: Bancroft

DID YOU KNOW? Grail Springs is focused on heightening one's 'inner beauty,' and emphasizes the integration of mind, body and spirit.

CLAIM TO FAME: The 12-night Signature Transformation Program includes a stay in a luxurious relaxation suite, complemented by a clean menu, rejuvenating spa treatments and fitness and recreation activities.

grailsprings.com 1-877-553-5772

THE BRIARS
LOCATION: Jackson's Point

DID YOU KNOW? This refuge of relaxation in Jackson's Point has been a resort destination for more than 165 years.

CLAIM TO FAME: The Briars Mother Daughter Getaway is the perfect way to reconnect with family. The hospitable heritage inn offers an ideal backdrop for a weekend escape. Indulge in relaxing spa treatments like manicures, facials, body wraps and hydrotherapies, plus enjoy relaxing activities like nature walks, yoga classes, and lake activities such as boating and swimming.

briars.ca 1-800-465-2376

SHAW SPA
LOCATION: Niagara-on-the-Lake

DID YOU KNOW? Shaw Spa uses vinotherapy, maple therapy, and chocotherapy for many of their signature treatments. (That's wine, maple syrup and chocolate!)

CLAIM TO FAME: The signature Red Wine Wrap is a grape and wine scrub, followed by a warmed, hydrating red wine body mask. Embrace the essence of the region – and soften and hydrate the skin.

shawspa.com 1-800-511-7070

HILLCREST VALENOVA
LOCATION: Port Hope

DID YOU KNOW? The spa is located in the tranquil Hillcrest Inn, an 1874 Victorian-style mansion.

CLAIM TO FAME: The Valenova Wave takes you into a tropical trance with its holly oil-infused Hawaiian Lomi-Lomi massage. This rhythmical massage awakens the lymphatic system and encourages deep relaxation.

thehillcrest.ca
1-888-253-0065

Shot on location at Le Scandinave Spa Blue Mountain, see page 78.

active & outdoors

Photo: Tennis Canada.

Photo: Sue Lebrecht.

Activity Levels

SPECTATORS

1. ROGERS CUP AT YORK UNIVERSITY
The Rogers Cup returns to Toronto this summer and along with it – la crème de la crème of men's tennis. Last year's champion Novak Djokovic swept top-ranked Roger Federer and No. 2 seed Rafael Nadal, on his way to claiming the Rogers Cup. All three are signed to return this summer in what promises to be some of the most thrilling tennis ever played in these parts. July 19–27.
rogerscupmen.com 1-877-283-6647

2. MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER ALL-STAR GAME AT TORONTO FC BMO FIELD
After an unbelievably successful kickoff year for Toronto FC, the new BMO Field at Toronto's Exhibition Place will play host to the 2008 All-Star MLS Game on July 24, 2008. The game will pit MLS All-Stars against West Ham United from the English Premier League. It's a great way to see European football without forking out airfare!
torontofc.ca (416) 360-GOAL (4625)

PARTICIPATORS

3. FAMILY FISHING WEEKEND
Want to go fishing with the kids but don't know where to start? Family Fishing Weekend is just your hook. There are fishing events all over the province where you and your junior anglers can learn tips on how to reel 'em in. It doesn't cost much...all you need is an inexpensive rod and reel, with live bait and bobber. And there's no fishing licence required. July 4–6.
familyfishingweekend.com

4. WINTER AT WYE MARSH
Explore woodland and wetland by snowshoe or cross-country ski at the 1,440-hectare (3,600-acre) Wye Marsh. Go deep into the silence of the wilderness and come face to face with forest creatures. The Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre offers a variety of programs for all ages including tours guided by a naturalist, with a stop at a warm fire with hot chocolate and snacks. Family holiday activities run all day including crafts and guided walks. Equipment rentals are available at a nominal cost.
wyemarsh.com (705) 526-7809

ACTIONATORS

5. BRUCE PENINSULA MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK
Got expert and rookie mountain bikers in the house? Here's the perfect outing then: the Bruce Peninsula Mountain Bike Park offers 20 km (13 mi.) of single and double-track trails, rated from easy to advanced. Challenge your riding chops with skinnys, teeter totters and suspension bridges. No worries for beginners though – all technical features are 'parked' to the side of the trail and have been rated for difficulty. You can ride on by or give it a try.
mtbthebruce.com 1-800-268-3838

6. ZIPLINING ELORA GORGE
For an adrenalin rush to remember, it's hard to beat propelling from the edge of a 24 m (80-ft.) cliff, flying for 60 m (200 ft.) above the Grand River, and then rappelling down a cliff face. Experienced zipliners say it's the most breathtaking way to witness the majesty of the Elora Gorge. It's extreme fun – with no experience necessary!
oneaxepursuits.com 1-877-7-ONEAXE (663293)

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DAZZLING GALLERIES – From Ancient Egypt and Canada's First Peoples to Medieval armour, hands-on family galleries and our famous dinosaurs, a trip to the Royal Ontario Museum is like going around the world and back in time, all in the same day!

UNBELIEVABLE ARCHITECTURE – The breathtaking Michael Lee-Chin Crystal, with its 'floating walls' and captivating angles, is sure to set your imagination racing.

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www.rom.on.ca

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Showcase

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What's a golf lover's dream? How about six exceptional golf destinations within swinging distance of each other. **The Hills of Headwaters Golf Trail** is a spectacular golf route in the Headwaters region of southern Ontario. Bring your best golf game and try them all.
thehillsofheadwaters.com/golftrail

Golfers of all skill levels will be challenged by the world-class golf courses along the Niagara Golf Trail, including the **Legends on the Niagara** and John Daly's **Thundering Waters**. After finishing a round, hit the casino or go on a wine tour.
niagaragolftrail.com

The Marshes at Brookstreet, One of the Ottawa area's finest corporate golf experiences welcomes you amid crystal blue lakes and gentle streams, right on the doorstep of Silicon Valley North. The four-diamond Brookstreet Hotel features fine dining and deluxe business amenities.
brookstreet.ca/golf

Looking for a unique golf getaway? Then fly to Muskoka for the ultimate golfing experience. Book a float plane from Toronto and in about an hour you'll be playing championship courses such as **Bigwin Island**, **Taboo** or **Deerhurst Highlands**.
ultimategolf.ca

The world's top players compete for bragging rights at Canada's premier golf tournament, The Canadian Open, hosted by the venerable **Glen Abbey** in Oakville. The Jack Nicklaus-designed course operates as a daily fee course and includes a spectacular clubhouse facility. The Canadian Open runs July 21–27.
thecanadianopen.ca

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eterra.ca
1-877-596-8303

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harrahs.com
1-800-991-7777

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ottawadowntownhotel.com
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retrosuites.com
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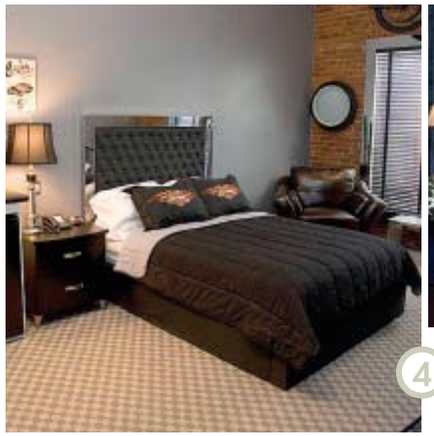
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1. Exterior of E'Terra Lodge. **2.** Playing the tables. **3.** Hotel Indigo's chic interior, Photo: Hotel Indigo.
4. The Easy Rider room, Retro Suites Hotel, Photo: John Lyons for Retro Suites.

LUXE

Inspired by a Group of Seven painting, **Ilona Kauremszky** explores the golden days of summer that await at Muskoka's newest grand hotel – Red Leaves.

Muskoka

When Ken Fowler of *Prudhomme's Landing* and *Alice Fazooli's* fame, was a kid at summer camp, he used to enjoy skipping rocks across Lake Rosseau while watching the mighty Segwun (now North America's oldest operating steamship) sail by. With his camp mates in tow, they lived to canoe, fish, hike, catch frogs and dream under the stars.

Little did Mr. Fowler know then that years later this prime piece of real estate would inspire a new dream. His latest venture, Red Leaves, is Muskoka's newest luxe resort complex, which promises to make you feel like a kid again.

His son Peter, co-founder, says his father's dream was to give people the opportunity to really experience Muskoka. "The wonderful thing about Muskoka is that all those things dad did 60 years ago are still there," he proudly states, describing the 566-hectare (1,400-acre) year-round playground facility.

Artist rendering of Red Leaves, Muskoka.

According to the Algonquins, Muskoka means ‘Land of the red earth’.

Aptly named after a Group of Seven painting, Red Leaves houses Canada’s first J.W. Marriott Resort, The Rosseau, which overlooks Mr. Fowler’s favourite lake, Lake Rosseau. Equipped with a marina, Audubon-sanctioned public golf course, spa, arts and culture facilities, the resort complex also includes the legendary Muskoka family retreat, Clevelands House, and has plenty of nature activities.

Don’t be surprised if you spot Hap Wilson leading a group through the rocky outcroppings. A bonafide naturalist-to-celebrities and one of Canada’s leading conservationists, Wilson animatedly describes the critter sightings that dart across this part of the Canadian Shield.

A golfer’s delight awaits at The Rock. This newly reopened 18-hole championship golf course was designed by golfing legend Nick Faldo. Golf director Greg Downer watches a stream of golfers tee it up. “We tweaked the course, refined it and now it’s more playable for the average golfer,” he says.

Robin Tapley, director of leisure development, enthusiastically describes the many trails he designed and numerous nature activities planned throughout the summer. “Muskoka’s beauty lies in a transitional zone between two types of wildlife habitats. We’re right in the middle, and at Red Leaves you can explore 2 km (1.25 mi.) of shoreline trail around the property while discovering the grandeur of Lake Rosseau.”

I catch up with Robin later. His head tilted to the night sky ablaze in a blanket of stars, it’s business as usual. His outdoor office is the perfect backdrop for urban night owls hanging on his every word. As one of Ontario’s foremost wildlife naturalists and an avid astronomer, he’s at home explaining wolf habits and the constellations.

After the night show I returned to the lodge for a sneak preview of the luxury suites. Yep, I can see myself sinking nicely into one of the plush couches by the fireside or better yet, sitting in my private deck chair to watch the starry night unfold. I’m so there. MO

Red Leaves Muskoka is tentatively scheduled to open in July 2008.

– Ilona Kauremszky is a weekly travel columnist, a contributor to major publications across North America and is the producer of the travel ezine, www.mycompass.ca

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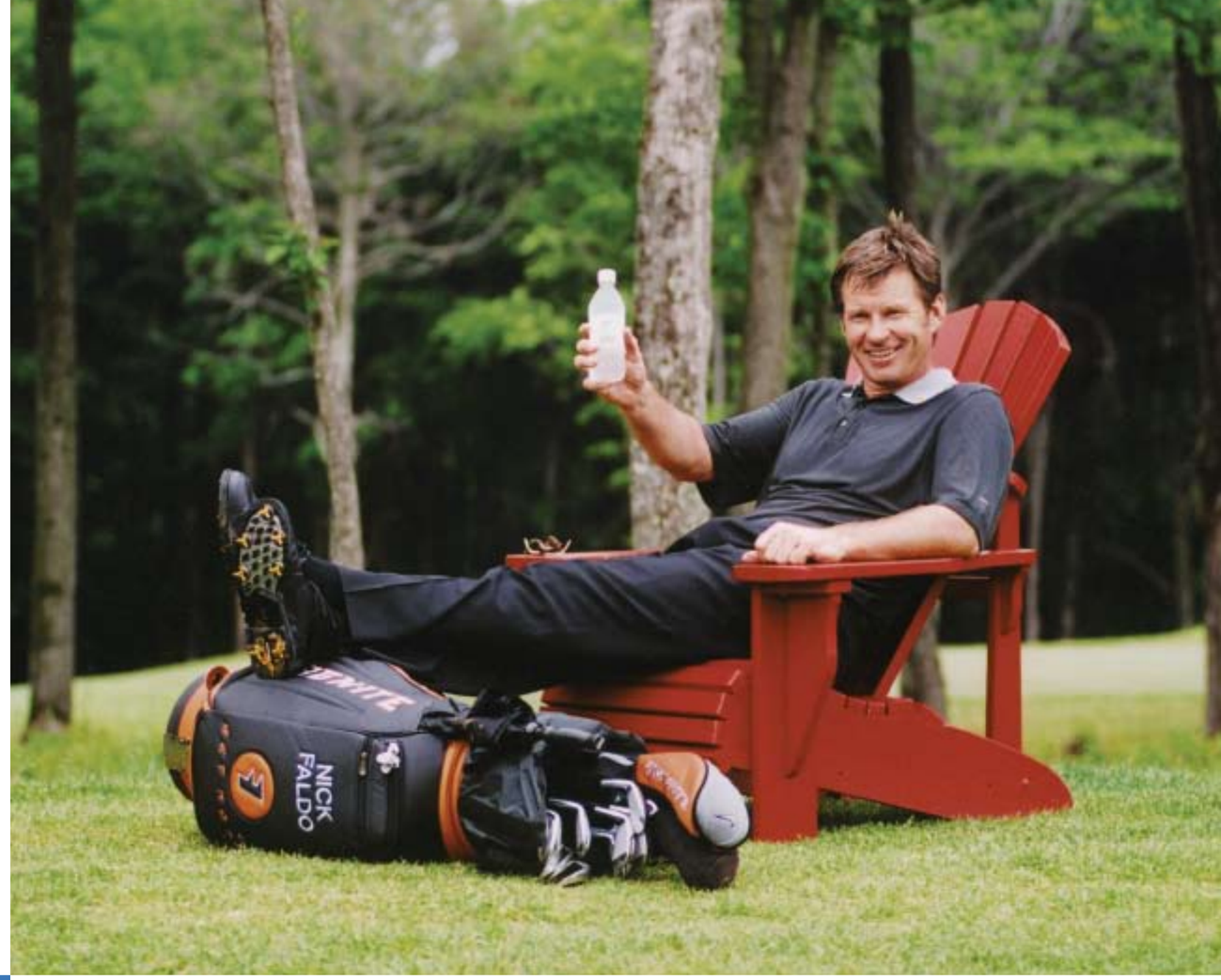

LEFT PAGE, LEFT – RIGHT: Clevelands House dock; Red Leaves’ co-founders Ken and Peter Fowler. **THIS PAGE, TOP – BOTTOM:** Nick Faldo chills in a Muskoka chair; Hole 13 at The Rock. All images: Red Leaves Muskoka.

The Pursuit of Kayaking

Tim Shuff reveals what he would do if he had a million dollars. It's not what you think – sea kayaking on Lake Superior's North Shore. Photos by **James Smedley**.

Kayaking the Lake Superior shoreline.

THIS PAGE: Riding the surf along the Lake Superior shore. **RIGHT PAGE, TOP – BOTTOM:** Cooling off in Denison Falls; Nightfall on Lake Superior.

When people talk of pursuing happiness, I think it's moments like this they are referring to.

Three days into a week-long solo trip, today was the most beautiful so far. When I arrived here at Cascade Falls, the sun was just breaking through the fog, illuminating the ragged shoreline like a misty mountain scene in a Chinese watercolour.

I recognized the place immediately, even though it's my first time here: those cedars hanging over the cliff between the falls, the jagged grey-black rock, the pattern of the whitewater veil. The base of the falls have dredged a deep pool out of the gravel beach and I dove in with my wetsuit on, then stripped naked and dove again. I set up camp as the only person I know with my own private waterfall and then built a makeshift Finnish sauna with a rain tarp and driftwood.

People underestimate Ontario's sea kayaking because we have no 'sea'. When I moved to the West Coast and started kayaking, I was surprised when my friend Dave, a passionate kayaker and wilderness lover, told me that some of the best paddling anywhere was back where I'd come from. The land was beautiful and wild, he said, and there were fewer people and less boat traffic than on the ocean. So when I moved back home, I vowed to explore Dave's favourite place, Lake Superior's northeast corner starting at Pukaskwa National Park and finishing at Rock Island Lodge at Michipicoten Harbour.

In Aboriginal lore this lake is the 'Ojibway Ocean.' In textbooks it's an inland sea with so much fresh water – 10 per cent of the world's supply – that it takes 191 years to recharge. In reality no myths or mathematics can evoke the picture you get from the seat of a kayak. You can look at a cobble beach and see the rock scrubbed clean by winter waves the size of buildings, see driftwood logs deposited improbably high on the shore, and truly understand the shipwreck songs and Ojibway legends of Misshepezhieu, the horned serpent who whips up storms with a flick of his tail.

But the real secret is that in mid-summer the lake is typically calm. The warm weather lulls long enough for novice kayakers to discover the sweeping beaches, the century-old lighthouse at Otter Island, abandoned logging camps like Pukaskwa Depot, the towering cliffs of Point Isacor, and the mystifying Pukaskwa Pits that reveal prehistoric human habitation.

And kayakers can camp at river-mouth cascades worthy of a movie set, like Denison Falls on the Dog River, or here at Cascade Falls.

In fact it's from a movie that I know this place. The famous canoeist, artist and filmmaker Bill Mason immortalized this whole coast and shoots a long scene here in his feature film *Waterwalker*. Years ago I got that movie for Christmas and watched it again and again, dreaming it was me sitting on the beach. And now here I am.

At sunset I light a fire to celebrate, raising a toast of tea to simple pleasures and dreams come true. I wonder for a moment if I had dreamed of being a millionaire, if I would have accomplished that too. But I don't think about it. I'm glad I chose this. MO

northofsuperior.org 1-800-265-3951
paddlingontario.com
ontariotravel.net/outdoor

Choose Your Own

Adventure

Now there's no part of this inland sea you can't kayak. This year Naturally Superior Adventures is running a new trip called 'The Big One.' It's a two-month-long, fully guided expedition along the lake's entire Canadian shore, including the new 10,000 km^2 (3,850-sq.-mi.) Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area. The trip is divided into seven week-long sections so you can sign on for any part. Shorter multi-day trips head to popular spots like Denison Falls on the Dog River, another site you may recognize from movies, books and paintings. For beginner kayak lessons and day trips that end with a sunset view and a comfortable bed, base yourself at Rock Island Lodge, an inn and paddling centre that hosts a sea kayak surfing festival in September.

naturallysuperior.com
paddlingontario.com

Mike Weir: left-handed swing, left-handed swirl,
Photo: Mike Weir Estate Winery.

Celebrity

If Wayne Gretzky, Mike Weir and Dan Aykroyd walked into a wine bar, what would they order? **Tony Aspler** explores how each of these Canadian icons got into the wine business.

VINES

Golfer Mike Weir was first in the field. Maybe he got the wine bug from his PGA buddies, Greg Norman and Ernie Els who both have their own wine labels, the former in Australia, the latter in South Africa. A little off-course competition perhaps. "Actually, I've never considered it a competition at all," Mike told me. "I've always enjoyed good wines. I spent a lot of time growing up in the Niagara region, and I've paid close attention to the growth and success of Canadian wines over the years."

Mike's grandparents emigrated from Italy and settled in Niagara Falls, and like many Italian immigrants, they made their own wines. The first wine Mike ever drank was a homemade wine at his grandfather's table. "I think he cut it with ginger ale," says Mike. "The grapes came from Niagara, even if they were a little rough back then."

Does Mike Weir get to share the wine that now bears his name with his fellow international golfers? Indeed he does. He has hosted events at the last two Presidents Cups where his wines were

LEFT – RIGHT: Dan Aykroyd: Ghostbuster, Conehead, Vintner, Photo: Adam Rankin; Wayne Gretzky: no ice in that wine, Photo: Gretzky Estate Wines.

the only ones served. Currently under the Mike Weir label are Cabernet Shiraz, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Cabernet Merlot and Vidal Icewine.

And what has the pursuit of the grape taught Mike Weir? "There are incredible similarities between wine and golf. Golf, like wine knowledge, is a journey. They are both lifelong pursuits that keep you constantly trying, practising and learning more. I don't think you ever get to the point where you can say that you've reached 'perfection' in either case."

The wine epiphany for comedic actor Dan Aykroyd occurred in a Los Angeles nightclub in the early 1980s. The erstwhile Blues Brother, Ghostbuster and Conehead was the opening act for his 'Saturday Night Live' chum, Steve Martin. That night, his Blues Brothers Band guitarist Steve Cropper opened a bottle of wine for him. "It was a big Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon," Dan recalls, although he doesn't remember the winery or the vintage. "I changed my whole perception of what I wanted to taste for the rest of my life."

Until that Proustian moment, he confesses that a big night out in his hometown Ottawa was a bottle of Mateus Rosé. "On our dinner table at home, my parents had Kressmann and big jugs of white Italian wine. My dad bought in volume. But actually my first taste of wine was Mogen David at a Seder."

In 2005, Dan Aykroyd acquired the Canadian rights for the ultra-premium tequila, Patrón. The Canadian importing agent for this brand is Toronto-based Diamond Estates, a company that controls three wineries in the Niagara region – EastDell Estates, Lakeview Cellars and Birchwood Estate Wines. Dan sunk $1 million into Diamond Estates, saying at the time, "This is a sound investment in a growing and exciting company with smart people. It's also an investment in my home province and an opportunity to put more Canadian wines on shelves alongside Australian and Chilean vintages."

Given his international celebrity status, it was perhaps a no-brainer that Dan Aykroyd should have his name on the label. "They asked me if I'd like to have my own wines...how good is that?"

In the fall of 2007, the company broke ground for the Dan Aykroyd Winery. This 4,200 m^2 (45,000-sq.-ft.) facility will be built off the Queen Elizabeth Way, on the site currently occupied by Diamond Estates' Birchwood Estate property. The range of Dan Aykroyd wines includes Chardonnay and Cabernet Merlot at popular prices, and a new Vidal Icewine produced under the exclusive Reserve label.

Click onto gretzkyestatewines.com and you'll be greeted by the photo above, a portrait of Wayne Gretzky that suggests his interests go far beyond the hockey arena. Posed against a backdrop of vine rows with a glass of wine in his hand, he wears an enigmatic smile. Perhaps the wine reminded him of the first glass he ever tasted – a red wine made by his grandfather in the 1960s, when Wayne was growing up on a farm in Brantford, Ontario.

Wine is not a beverage you would necessarily associate with hockey, but now that Wayne Gretzky is coaching behind the bench rather than scoring on the ice, he can allow himself that indulgence. "For many years Janet and I have wanted to fulfill a dream of launching a winery that makes world-class wines," he says. "And we are fortunate to have found talented winemakers who have already won numerous international and domestic wine awards."

Like Mike Weir's wines, Wayne's are made by the winemakers at Creekside Estate Winery in Jordan Station – Rob Power and Craig McDonald – and the labels of the unoaked Chardonnay and Meritage (a red Bordeaux blend) and a new Vidal Icewine bear his legendary number 99. In 2009, these wines will be made at the Wayne Gretzky Estate Winery in the Niagara Region, currently under construction.

While none of the three celebrity winery guys actually get their feet in the vat, they do involve themselves in selecting the final blends that end up in the bottle. According to Mike Weir, "I have been fortunate to have been involved in every aspect of the wines – from packaging and labels, to commenting on the wines themselves. I actually do the blending on the Cabernet

Shiraz with the winemakers, although I wish that I had much more time to dedicate to that part of the process. I really enjoy being part of the winemaking and I have a lot of respect for the talents of the winemakers."

Both Mike Weir and Wayne Gretzky donate proceeds from the sales of their wines to their own foundations. For Mike, the mission is "to advance the physical and educational welfare of children;" and for Wayne the recipients are at-risk or disadvantaged youths.

Now to go back to that question that opened this piece: they would probably do the gentlemanly thing and order a glass of Bob Izumi's Coyote's Run Chardonnay – because that TV fishing personality also has his own vintages, produced at his small craft winery in Niagara-on-the-Lake. MO

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Online Grapevine

In an effort to 'make a difference', Mike Weir formed the Mike Weir Foundation to support children in need. Net proceeds from the sale of his wines are donated to this worthy cause. **weirwines.com**

An investment in his home province, the new Dan Aykroyd Winery will celebrate the region's terroir as well as pay tribute to Dan's 30-year career by showcasing some of his favourite memorabilia. **danaykroydwines.com**

Take a light-hearted video tour of Wayne Gretzky's winery with colourful host Jim Jerome, and learn more about Wayne's winery and its support of the Wayne Gretzky Foundation. **gretzkyestatewines.com**

and all that Jazz

It's a hot sunny day. A light breeze is wafting in over the beach and through the lush gardens. A crowd has gathered on the grass in front of a stage. Everyone's hips are swaying to salsa rhythms and blues guitar. **Andy Sheppard** details the Beaches International Jazz Festival, a large celebration that has been happening every summer in the city – going on 20 years.

Sure, you might think this was a scene that took place in Havana or New Orleans, but this particular musical moment unfolded in Toronto. In fact, it was part of a larger celebration that has been happening every summer in the city for almost 20 years.

It's the Beaches International Jazz Festival, and every year it plays host to a great variety of Canadian and international jazz talent. And it takes place in one of the loveliest parts of the city.

The Beaches. That's the name of a wonderful neighbourhood that hugs the shores of Lake Ontario in the eastern part of Toronto. And the name is fitting. There are kilometres of sandy beaches, all connected by a meandering boardwalk. And when it comes time to shake the sand out of your sandals, you can make your way into Kew Gardens, the heart of the neighbourhood (at least on this particular afternoon). It's a gently rolling park, full of beautiful mature trees and flower gardens, and it's the home of the weekend finale of the Beaches International Jazz Festival. This free event celebrates world-class music, great summer food, and lots of community spirit.

Sundresses and fedoras aren't the only fashions on display. Add to the mix young parents in Hawaiian shirts and flip-flops, with their ice cream-laden kids in tow. Teenagers wearing funky sunglasses line up for roasted corn on the cob. And older couples, decked out in their best weekend threads, dance barefoot in the shade. It's a diverse and friendly crowd, brought together by the music.

The common theme at the Beaches International Jazz Festival is, of course, jazz. But don't expect to hear only the straight-ahead variety (though there's plenty of that to enjoy). At the 19th annual festival, I grooved to the Afro-Cuban sounds of Son Aché, heard some wonderful world-fusion banjo playing from Jayme Stone, and watched some joyful, percolating steel pan music from Barbados, courtesy of David 'Ziggy' Walcott. And then, without leaving my post (which was conveniently located in the beer garden), I was treated to one of the best blues guitar shows ever.

It was Carl Weathersby. This is a man who learned his blues directly from the great Albert King. His Chicago and Mississippi roots sang through his shiny black Gibson guitar. He was resplendent in his bright orange suit, and he burned through his set with a smoldering intensity that got hotter with every song. Then, like a fearless mountaineer ascending some great peak without a rope, Carl made his way off the stage and out into the crowd. A little wireless transmitter on his belt allowed him to venture, untethered, and he took the blues right to the people.

Everyone in the crowd was transfixed, not just by the sight of a wandering electric guitarist, but also by the solo that seemed to sing and howl at the same time. Every phrase was punctuated by waves of applause and delighted cheers. It was like the crowd had become part of the music. And even though the song lasted a good 15 minutes, it felt like it was over too soon. What a show!

One of the nicest things about the festival is that you can pace yourself. I took a break to wander along Queen Street East and take in the atmosphere of this charming village, which just so happens to be one of the best places in the city to peruse antique shops. And, at the end of the day, all you have to do to get back downtown is hop on one of the city's famous 'Red Rocket' streetcars. A good bet, especially after an afternoon in the beer garden.

Now these were just a few highlights from one day out of more than a week of highlights. The festival is a 10-day moveable feast of music. The 2008 edition of the Beaches International Jazz Festival gets underway on July 18th, and I have it on good authority that there will be some very special international guests and many great shows to help celebrate the 20th anniversary of this venerable event. MO

– Andy Sheppard is a winner of the prestigious Colleen Peterson Songwriting Award and enjoys exploring Toronto's historic neighbourhoods.

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CLOCKWISE: Cuban pianist Hilario Duran tickles the ivories, Photo: Beaches International Jazz Festival; Detail of a saxophone; Blues great Carl Weathersby puts his Gibson guitar through its paces, Photo: Beaches International Jazz Festival.

A professional ice carver demonstrates her artistry.
Photo: Iceculture.

Artistry on Ice

Michele Peterson takes us on a glittering behind-the-scenes look at the secret world of ice sculpture.

It was 9 a.m. on a chilly February morning and the weak winter sun was just making its way above the treetops of Ottawa's Confederation Park. In front of me was a block of ice the size of a small refrigerator. Nearby, a set of steel ice carving tools. I was about to embark on a journey into the world of ice carving.

"You better put on a pair of these protective pants," cautioned Julie Billows, Winterlude's Program Coordinator, as she tied some leather chaps across my legs.

I reached for the V-shaped chisel and braced myself for the first cut. The ice's surface yielded easily and revealed a soft, translucent-blue inner core. "Ice is much like skin and has a thin outer layer," explained Billows.

The special qualities of ice were just one of several surprises I would discover about ice sculpting. Even the carving tools are unusual. Moments earlier I'd wandered through the park and watched professional carvers in action. Armed with chainsaws, they looked more ready to brawl than sculpt a masterpiece. Each had their own tricks of the trade and used curling irons, drill bits with rubber tips and even clothes irons to add their own personal touches.

"It can take over a year to create one design. Sometimes we use computer software to fully develop our sketches," explained Suguru Kanbayashi, a 30-year-old ice sculptor who has competed professionally in China, Poland and Japan.

Such intricate designs need flawless ice.

“It’s not as easy as simply freezing water,” says Heidi Bayley, General Manager of Ontario-based Iceculture Inc., a world leader in the hospitality ice business. One secret is to begin with pure well water. Then the water is purified through reverse osmosis and circulated continuously until frozen. This eliminates air bubbles and ensures a creation free of blemishes.

Such attention to artistic purity draws clients from unlikely places. In addition to filling orders from Dubai, Saudi Arabia and India, Iceculture recently shipped an ice lounge featuring a full-size ice elephant to Thailand.

Closer to home, exceptional ice artistry can be found at many of Ontario’s winter carnivals. Winterlude, created in 1979 by the National Capital Commission, draws some of the world’s most talented ice carvers to its International Ice Carving Competition. Held during the festival’s first weekend, teams have 30 hours to carve 18 blocks of ice, while solo carvers have 28 hours to carve eight blocks of ice.

The winning secret?

“Judges look for two elements in an award-winning carving,” explained Kanbayashi. “They are looking for ‘movement’, as though the ice is ready to leap out of itself. Plus, they look for the carving to tell a story.”

Kanbayashi’s work featured a water nymph that seemed to be emerging from the ice as though being born. Other eye-catching sculptures under construction included a scorpion, King Kong and even a Siamese lion in battle.

My own foray into the world of ice artistry resulted in only a few deep grooves across an otherwise perfect block of ice. Although my creation did glint rather magnificently in the sunlight, it didn’t resemble anything inspiring. But it did plant the seeds of inspiration. I began wondering what I could create if I could get my hands on one of those chainsaws. MO

– Michele Peterson is a Toronto-based freelance writer.

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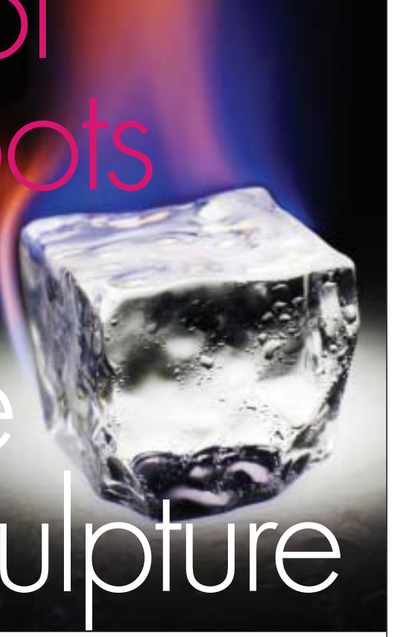
capcan.ca 1-800-465-1867

CLOCKWISE: Skating on the Rideau Canal; Detail of intricate ice sculpture; Admiring the ice sculptures at Winterlude in Ottawa.

Hot Spots for Ice Sculpture



Niagara Icewine Festival: Enjoy ornate ice bars and Icewine tastings along the Niagara Wine Route.
niagaraicewinefestival.com

Cobourg’s Winter Festival: Featuring ice mazes, ice-painting and even an ice cube hunt during Ontario’s Family Day weekend.
cobourgtourism.ca

Barrie Winterfest and Festival of Ice: Get active in the ice block play area or watch carvers transform Memorial Square into an ice theme park.
barrie.ca

Bloor-Yorkville Ice Festival: View exquisite ice sculptures, relax at the ice lounge and sample the best in Ontario Icewine – right in the heart of Toronto.
bloor-yorkville.com

Union Station, Toronto

SPA TRAIN

The Route to Well-Being

Who would have thought that trains and spas could go together? As **Anna Hobbs** found out, the two couldn't have fit together better and for her, the timing was perfect. All aboard!

TOP – BOTTOM: Regal and refined, the Fairmont Royal York Hotel in Toronto; Relaxing on the Spa Train, where the journey is part of the destination.

The timing was perfect! Just as my friend and I were trying to decide on a memorable outing to celebrate milestone birthdays, VIA Rail and Premier Spas of Ontario announced the launch of their unique joint venture – Spa Train, the Route to Well-Being.
What a great idea!

As Spa Train travellers, we could ride the rails and hop off at any of the 16 Premier Spas along the VIA corridor between Windsor/Niagara and Ottawa.

This healthy track-to-well-being met all our criteria for the ultimate escape. Forget traffic gridlock. We could experience the relaxed comfort of train travel. The spas would not only make our VIA reservations, they would also transport us to and from the nearest station. We could begin to unwind the minute we sank into the train's comfy seats with nothing more to think about than blissful treatments ahead. And we could, in four days, travel from Toronto to Ottawa, visiting five day- and stay-spas along the route.

Since all spas are accredited members in good standing of Premier Spas of Ontario, that guaranteed top-notch standards.

We kicked off our girlfriend getaway at the Elizabeth Milan Spa at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel. What looks like a small storefront on the hotel's concourse level, fans out into a full-service spa that includes a couples' treatment room, in what was originally a bank vault.

Elizabeth Milan had recently returned from a working trip to Thailand. She was so impressed with the natural ingredients used in treatments there that she developed her own signature Royal Thai Foot and Leg Treatment. Pampering tired or painful limbs starts with a black pepper buff to exfoliate the skin. Plunging feet and legs into cold, then warm water stimulates the circulation. A pressure point massage uses steamy herbal poultices – little muslin parcels filled with kaffir lime, turmeric, lemongrass and ginger. An hour later, having had a final massage with a refreshing gel, we felt as if we could – and should – dance all night.

THIS PAGE: Interior of the exquisitely restored Hillcrest Valenova Inn & Spa, Port Hope. **RIGHT PAGE:** Au Naturel Spa at Brookstreet in Kanata, Photo: Courtesy of Brookstreet Hotel.

Instead, we skipped – giddy as schoolgirls – across Front Street to Union Station to catch a train. An hour later, Debbie McCoy of Hillcrest Valenova Inn & Spa met us at the Cobourg station for the short drive to Port Hope.

Situated at the top of a shady street, Hillcrest raises the aaahh factor. An exquisitely restored 1847 mansion, it nestles in 6 hectares (15 acres) of beautiful gardens overlooking Lake Ontario. This is a stay-spa only, with space for 22 guests. A feeling of nurture and caring blankets guests as they walk through the front door.

It's a place to stop being a 'stress bunny'. "I had no idea how much I needed this place," one of our dinner companions remarked. "I thought I was fully in control of my train, but it was really running with no tracks."

"We hear comments like that all the time," retorts owner and certified stress consultant, Robin Dines. "Without a day spa component, the pace slows and we get to know our guests' needs."

Imagine a warm, sunny day. A summer breeze wafts off Lake Ontario. In a flower-strewn garden, with only the birdsongs to distract you, spa manager Simone Beitler waits in the gazebo, ready to soothe any cares or aches away with her signature, Lomi Lomi-inspired, Wave Massage.

While I was being lulled into another time and place, my friend was enjoying the 90-minute Dr. Hauschka Classical Skin Treatment, incorporating what they call, 'exclusive biodynamically crafted products'. It was, she declared later, "the best-ever facial."

The next morning, tempting as it was to laze longer by the pool, Au Naturel at Brookstreet was waiting.

Four hours and a world away, the trendy, upscale Brookstreet Hotel, smack in the middle of Kanata's high-tech corporate park near Ottawa, is a haven for stressed or distressed business executives.

Here we discovered a sophisticated sanctuary where chic corporate ambience meets soothing, soft creamy decor. Located on the hotel's second floor, Au Naturel captures a sense of luxury and understated sophistication, with Italian beauty products and treatments designed for both men and women.

We were seduced by the description of the Monticello Fango Wrap with its velvety Italian mud, enriched with Monticello thermal waters. The 75-minute treatment included exfoliation, immersion in a hydro fusion capsule at 40°C (104°F) for the mud to work its magic, a hose down and massage with a non-greasy body butter. It was touted as a reducing and detoxifying treatment. Lamentably, while it left the skin feeling wonderful, any weight reduction was undone by the offerings for dinner at Perspectives.

Holtz, our downtown Ottawa stop, is a day-spa serving locals and guests at The Fairmont Chateau Laurier and Westin hotels. It is the city's oldest and best-loved spa facility. And no wonder! Step through the doors of an unassuming office building on busy Rideau Street and you step into a Zen-like sanctuary that offers a full menu of traditional spa services alongside holistic Eastern treatments, sound therapy and Tibetan healing bowls. Some 50 well-trained staff members make you feel as if you are at an exotic destination spa, a true out-of-country experience.

LEFT PAGE, TOP – BOTTOM: A manicure; a relaxing pedicure at Holtz Spa. **THIS PAGE:** Arizona La Stone therapy complete a day at the spa.

The Holtz brochure promised to exceed expectations. And it did! We opted for their signature manicure and pedicure, upped a notch with a hot stone massage. We loved the Asian influence in these rooms. Devoid of shelves or tables with a clutter of bottles and jars, each aesthetician brought the items she would need in tiny dishes on a wooden tray, each adorned with an orchid.

By the time we were enjoying a glass of wine and making the turn for home, the three Rs (Relax, Refresh, Rejuvenate) had overtaken us. We agreed our last stop, the Claramount Inn & Spa in Picton, would have a hard time topping what we had already experienced. But we were not disappointed.

Claramount is a gracious colonial revival mansion, brought to life by Norah Rogers, a multi-talented family physician and antique collector. From inn accommodations to gourmet dining to the intimate spa overlooking beautiful gardens, there is attention to every detail. Their special hydrotherapy treatment, Wet Socks, is based on the teachings of Sebastian Kneipp, the father of naturopathy.

Four days and five spas later, two birthday girls were ready for their next decade.

"By giving yourself a spa present," Dr. Rogers told us, "you are acknowledging that you are worth the time to relax and do something for yourself. If, at the end, you feel and look good, you will feel more self-confident. And that's what being successful is all about." MO

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THIS PAGE: Claramount Inn & Spa.
RIGHT PAGE: Checking out of the Holtz Spa, relaxed and refreshed.

HOW TO GET • more bliss FROM YOUR SPA VISIT

- Do your homework. Every spa has its own personality. Select one whose ambience and treatments suit your tastes and expectations.
- Arrive early. Show up at least 20 minutes before your treatment to have time to relax, unwind or enjoy the steam room.
- Speak up. If the music is too loud, if you're uncomfortable or don't like something.
- Leave late. Take advantage of the facilities to lengthen your stay with a sauna, a workout in the gym or simply relaxing in the lounge with a good book.
- Drink plenty of fluids afterwards – preferably water or tea.

Three of Ontario's finest chefs, Mark McEwan, David Lee and Jamie Kennedy, are famous for their food and for their support of local farmers and producers. **Margaret Swaine**, food and wine writer, spoke with the three on behalf of *My Ontario* magazine.

Serving up Local Cuisine

Yukon Gold Fries with lemon and mayonnaise, served up at Jamie Kennedy at the Gardiner.

What's it like to be an Ontario chef on a world stage?

Lee: "I don't see myself as a chef on a world stage, but am proud to be able to serve local Ontario products at Splendido."

Kennedy: "It is about maintaining consistency and meeting expectations from customers that there is something unique to take away with them in their memories."

McEwan: "It is amazing to be part of the movement and help contribute to the food scene in Toronto/Ontario. Years ago, making trips to New York, there was a major divide but now we have equal footing and it's a great thing to see."

When you compete in international or national chef competitions, do you bring Ontario ingredients with you and what would some of those be?

Lee: "When we compete internationally, I am always keen to bring the seasonal flavours of Canada to the plate, whether by using naturally raised Cumbrae Farms ribsteak or Ontario strawberries."

McEwan: "Quails, ramps, morels..."

What ingredients do you think typify our province?

Lee: "Stone fruit from Niagara, Bruce Peninsula apples and pears, freshwater fish from the Great Lakes."

Kennedy: "For me it is more a quest to find what best represents the regions of Ontario. Let's identify regional differentiation in gastronomy."

McEwan: "Spring ramps, morels, pickerel, perch..."

Who are some of your favourite Ontario farms and what are their products?

Lee: "Simple. Jannsen Farm white asparagus and Cumbrae Farms with their Haldimand County Dorset lamb, Larry's Farm suckling pig and Angus or Wagyu Beef."

McEwan: "[David] Cohlmeyer's – carrots, tomatoes..."

– See chefs' bios page 71.

What are some of the favourite Ontario dishes you have created and what makes them so? Do you have a 'signature' Ontario dish?

Lee: "My cuisine is largely based on seasonality, and as such there are a few: in May, Poached Jannsen Farm White Asparagus with a simple Hollandaise Sauce; August finds us with Freskiw Farms Wild Blueberries which I use to make protein shakes (my signature dish at home!) – they are full of antioxidants and more; and throughout the summer, a 1¾" thick-cut charcoal-grilled Cumbrae Farms Ribsteak. Late June gives us Ontario Strawberry Crunch with Champagne Foam. All of these dishes are simple in their concept and highlight the great local products available to us. At Splendido our philosophy is eat and buy local."

Kennedy: "Pristine Poached Whitefish with Hillier Soubise and Beet Glaze. So, the pristine is a cold-pressed soya oil from Jason Persall, who makes this oil in Ontario. The whitefish is indigenous to Lake Huron where it is fished. The Hillier Soubise is made from onions grown on my farm. The soil gives extremely good tasting onions and I make them into a sauce for the fish. So it is the feeling that all these ingredients came from Ontario that makes the conception and the preparation of the dish exciting and unique."

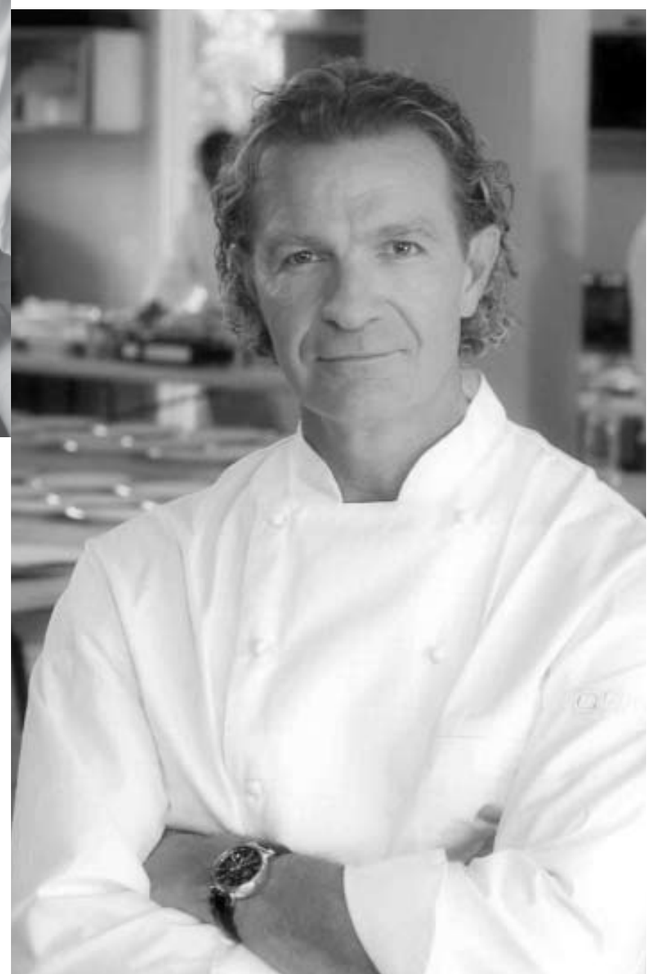
McEwan: "Pan-seared pickerel with sweet corn risotto."

What do you deem to be the most exciting Ontario food trend at this moment in time?

Lee: "The Ontario food trend I'm most excited about is the continued evolution and support of local, small-market farmers."

Kennedy: "To recapture the spirit of our forebears in how they approached cooking. They were tied to the seasons and were forced to cope with the harsh winters. Much creativity emerged from that challenge. In support of local food economies, many chefs are turning their attention to their rural partners in gastronomy, the growers."

McEwan: "I really believe that the 'food trend' is non-existent. Chefs are really just adding their own twist as we are all very confident in creating great dishes."



THIS PAGE: David Lee. **RIGHT PAGE, CLOCKWISE:** Detail, Jamie Kennedy prepping a plate; Jamie Kennedy, Photos: Mary Armstrong; Mark McEwan, Photo: Nikki Leigh McKean.

What's your feeling about organic farming in Ontario?

Lee: "As people become more aware of the healthful aspects of eating, organic farming will continue to grow. However, I'd like to see that growth accelerated and the support for organic farmers increased."

Kennedy: "I support organic farming in Ontario because it promotes the mixed farm model that does not rely on inputs outside the farm for fertility and health on the farm. I think as consumers we should be focusing on sourcing local first, organic second."

McEwan: "Organic farming in Ontario is superb. We are very fortunate to have local produce."

Is there anything else you would like to add about the Ontario food and restaurant scene?

Lee: "When faced with a choice between buying Ontario products or those from the United States, I'd like to see the consumer choose to support our local farmers. For restaurants, it can sometimes be a challenge to support small-market farmers due to the volume of product they may need. I'd love to see an increase in the volume of specialty products available to Ontario chefs."

McEwan: "I think we are at the world level. Toronto is a hidden culinary treasure."

Do you have any new projects on the horizon?

Lee: "Yes. Our new restaurant, Nota Bene, at 180 Queen St. West is slated for summer 2008 opening."

Kennedy: "To present a model in terroir-based gastronomy on my farm. There will be a tavern, a dining room, a barn with some animals, a vineyard, and a vegetable and herb garden. One reason that I am excited about this project is that it will give young cooks within the organization the opportunity to experience first-hand just what it takes to raise animals, to grow crops, to look after a vineyard. I think it will give them a valuable new perspective on the provenance of our food."

McEwan: "I will be opening an upscale gourmet grocery store in the fall." MO

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Lunching at Jamie Kennedy at the Gardiner.

COOKING Class

David Lee
British-born Lee is the third generation of a family line of chefs. In London, at the tender age of 17, he worked at the Hotel Intercontinental and went on to get a taste of cooking Michelin-starred food at Le Soufflé. From there he went to Switzerland and the Hotel Fleur du Lac before being recruited by Anton Mosimann to work at his eponymous restaurant in 1992, rising quickly to the sous-chef position. At 24 he moved to Canada and was hired as chef de cuisine at Centro. By age 29 he'd teamed up with Yannick Bigourdan to acquire Splendido, which reopened in the fall of 2001 to much acclaim.

Jamie Kennedy
Kennedy is a George Brown College grad who went on to train as Journeyman Cook in Europe in the late 70s. He returned to Toronto to open the renowned Scaramouche, heralded as a new phase in Canadian culinary history and then in 1985, Palmerston Restaurant. From 1994 to 2003 his unique cooking style became the distinguishing feature of J.K. ROM at The Royal Ontario Museum. In 2000 he published a cookbook, *Jamie Kennedy Seasons*. In 2003 he launched JK Kitchens on Church Street and in 2006, Jamie Kennedy at the Gardiner. A devout supporter of our ecological systems, Jamie has spoken for such causes as the Endangered Fish Alliance, World Wildlife Foundation, Living Ocean Society and Seafood Watch.

Mark McEwan
After a position as the youngest executive chef in Canada (at the Sutton Place Hotel) in the early 80s, McEwan acquired Pronto Ristorante in 1985. His classic fine dining establishment, North 44 on Yonge Street, opened in 1989 and he expanded that operation to include North 44 Catering, a full catering service. He went on to relaunch Terra in 1996, open Bymark in the Toronto Dominion Centre in 2002 and two years later, branched out into television when he began filming *The Heat*. It launched on Food Network Canada in October 2006. Never one to rest on his laurels, he opened One Restaurant in The Hazelton Hotel in 2007.

Two days, three plays and one bag of swan food later, **Betty Zyvatkauskas** follows the Avon River, overhung with willows, back to her B&B. As the moon rises over the town, she can't help but think that any visit to Stratford is always a magical experience.

Beyond the Bard

That magic has come to punctuate my life. Ever since I was a teenager arriving by school bus for my first student matinee, I've been in love with the place. Back then, my friends and I walked along the same river, stopping to feed the crusts of our brought-from-home cheese sandwiches to the swans. Getting out of school seemed like reward enough, but seeing *The Taming of the Shrew* performed live brought a surprising realization: we didn't need footnotes or teachers to understand this Shakespeare. Watching that play come to life on stage started not only a love affair with the Bard, but a love affair with Stratford.

One of my first road trips with my newly acquired driver's licence was to see Maggie Smith in a brilliant Stratford production of *As You Like It*. A few years later, it was Peter Ustinov performing the title role of *King Lear*. And so on, for more decades than I care to remember, right up to last summer, when a mighty

Stratford Shakespeare Festival, Avon Theatre.

fine *Oklahoma!* had my sister and I singing all the way home in the car, but not before stopping off to buy some of the tastiest Mennonite summer sausage I've ever eaten. After all, Stratford is not just another pretty theatre town, it's also a thriving farming community.

Much of Stratford's appeal lies in its ability to engage audiences both onstage and off. Take a backstage tour of the Festival Theatre or attend an academic lecture; there's something for both dilettantes and dedicated fans. Want to be on stage? For only $25, a two-hour workshop will see you hoofing and singing your way through a number from *The Music Man*.

For those of us who'd rather stay behind the scenes, Costume Warehouse tours offer a rare glimpse of theatre magic. I joined Michael McKenna on an informative 45-minute guided tour through the massive new facility where some 50,000-plus costumes, 10,000 pairs of shoes and numerous stage props reveal the remarkable craftsmanship and ingenuity that go into each production. From 20 paces away, a Desmond Healy-designed set looks like a drawing room with a stone fireplace and mirror. Up close, the carved stone turns out to be cleverly painted paper over a lightweight combination of plastic pool noodles and plywood. "It's all about making lies come alive," Michael says with a grin.

As we walk past rack upon rack of costumes organized in 13 historical periods, Michael points out the historically accurate farthingale skirts and ruffed collars that each demands many hours of craftsmanship. Period bodice laces may look real, but hidden underneath are domed snaps for quick costume changes. Even the mud is fake, an acrylic paint that will survive hundreds of performances.

We're fascinated with props like a plate of rubber sardines sparkling as though they were fresh out of the water, and 'stone' statues carved from styrofoam. Best of all, we're invited to try on the costumes. Even reluctant teenage boys respond in princely fashion when trying on a regal cloak, proving that we can all succumb to stage magic.

Stay an extra day and there's time to explore Ontario Street and the historic area around Market Square. This is a great shopping town, with fine china, antiques, artisans and gourmet foods – all within an easy walk along streets

LEFT – RIGHT: Taking a behind-the-scenes Costume Warehouse tour; Period chapeaux from the Costume Warehouse; Chocolates from Rhéo Thompson Candies; Black bean chili fries from Boomers Gourmet Fries.

rich in late 19th and early 20th century architecture. I go window-shopping at Gregory Connor Antiques, a spot known for its fine furniture and its knowledgeable proprietor, who often appears on the Canadian Antiques Roadshow. At Watson's Bazaar I check out the tiny Limoges porcelain vegetables. Then there's shopping for children's birthday gifts at Family and Company, one of Canada's top independent toy stores. I would never think of coming home from Stratford without a box of melt-in-your-mouth mint smoothies from Rhéo Thompson. They've been making these exactly the same way since I first discovered them in the 1970s: minty truffle centres hand-dipped in quality chocolate.

Being outdoors is such a big part of the Stratford experience that I always take time to walk through the parklands along the River Avon, past the ornamental flowerbeds and fountains of Millennium Park to the maple woods of the T.J. Dolan Natural Area. Along the way I might check out the current art show in the converted Victorian pumphouse that is now home to Gallery Stratford, or buy a bag of corn at the York Street Visitor's Centre to feed the swans. The river plays a starring role in the annual Summer Music Festival, with fireworks over the water and concerts on a floating barge.

When I'm too tired to walk, there's the wonderfully gossipy double-decker bus tours that point out the actors' favourite haunts and the town's unique architectural signatures:

its abundant yellow brick, and its 12-sided 1898 City Hall. In her potted history of the festival, our guide explains that Sir Alec Guinness, who performed Richard III in the festival's 1953 debut season "is better known to younger audiences as the actor who played Obi-Wan Kenobi in *Star Wars*." The youngsters nod in recognition while their parents laugh.

Like the Festival, the town itself has evolved over the years, offering a more sophisticated welcome, but its sylvan charms still hold their appeal. I pick up a great sandwich 'to go' from the riverfront York St., then find a bench where willows are reflected in the slow-moving water, and watch the swans glide by – until they spot the sandwich.

Picnics were a necessity in the early days. Now, thanks in large part to the local chef school, the town is a foodie's paradise. From rabbit rillettes at the stylish Rundles, to the après theatre duck confit at the Church, these plates win rave reviews. But you don't need to spend big to eat well. Later on, I grab the fish and chips with homemade roasted garlic mayo at Boomers Gourmet Fries.

Like the restaurants, local accommodations have adapted to an increasingly upscale crowd, from the chic boutique-style hotel rooms at XIS to the Canadiana-filled Mercer Hall Inn. But I still enjoy the folksy comforts of an old-fashioned bed and breakfast. At Eighteen Waterloo, Christie Mee brings a welcoming pot of tea out to the verandah while I read the reviews. Over breakfast the following morning, I chat with fellow theatre-goers about must-see plays and plan my next visit. MO

– Betty Zyvatkauskas is a Toronto-based writer who enjoys travel, nature, culinary history and the theatre.

welcometostratford.com 1-800-561-7926
stratfordfestival.ca 1-800-567-1600
summertheatre.org (416) 408-4556 ext. 12
ontariotravel.net/getaway

Dinner at The Belfry.

Certified tea sommelier Karen Hartwick at her Stratford shop, Tea Leaves.

Tea time

Proprietor Karen Hartwick, a certified tea sommelier, doesn't just sell tea, she guides customers through personalized tea tastings at her Stratford shop, Tea Leaves. She helps tea-lovers find their favourite brew, be it a rare silver tip white tea or a popular herbal blend of South African rooibos and Provençal petals.

"I'm trained to analyze their palate, and guide them using their likes and dislikes. We start by smelling the dry leaves and seeing which one they are drawn to." Perhaps it's the smoky undertone of Wuyi or the sweet chestnut smoothness of Green Spring Snail. The sample tea is then brewed in professional tasting cups equipped with fine white teeth to hold back the loose leaves.

stratfordtealeaves.com 1-800-733-0376
welcometostratford.com 1-800-561-7926

beyond the stage
AT THE SHAW FESTIVAL

Like Stratford, Niagara-on-the-Lake's Shaw Festival has earned a loyal following for the depth of its theatrical experiences. Sure, the plays are wonderfully produced, but behind the scenes a wealth of enrichment programs opens up the world of George Bernard Shaw and the magic of the stage. Whether it's a four-day seminar looking at issues in Shaw's text or a hands-on millinery workshop, there's a wide range of ancillary activities to engage audiences. Free Sunday morning coffee concerts featuring the Festival Theatre's resident string quartet are a particular favourite.

shawfest.com 1-800-511-7429
tourismniagara.com 1-800-263-2988

Village at Blue Mountain.

Blue Mountain

winter's playground

When it comes to enjoying the white stuff, **Kate Pocock** has travelled extensively with her family. But it was closer to home, at Blue Mountain, where she found surprising family delights.

...how European it all seemed. The kids, and my husband, were immediately drawn to some on-site art pieces that would have been at home in Davos or Innsbruck: a giant Muskoka chair that made my husband look like tiny Gulliver; and an old red truck spilling springs and evergreen boughs.

When it comes to schussing down slopes and enjoying the white stuff, we've often taken our three kids to play in the snow. Along the way, we've skied into snow forts at Whistler, eaten sugar pie at Mont Tremblant and swam under snowflakes in the Green Mountains of Vermont. My parental philosophy? If you can't beat winter, join it. And that means booking into a family-friendly resort offering ample opportunity for outdoor fun.

Ironically though, we'd never, ever travelled to our closest four-season resort – Blue Mountain in Collingwood – just two hours up the road. That changed last season, after Santa brought new skis and snowboard gear, and Mother Nature delivered her own gift wrap of snow. No plane flights or travel hassles. All we had to do was put our two available kids and equipment into the car, drive to The Westin Trillium House, Blue Mountain, on the edge of the Village at Blue, and hand over our car keys to their valet. For two days, we would whiz down hills, explore the food scene, play outdoors and enjoy all that 'Ontario's Winter Playground' had to offer. Whether it would pass the thumbs-up test from savvy snowboarding Natalie and her skiing brother, Dustin, as well as from two parents who needed a well-deserved holiday time-out, time would tell.

I had heard that Intrawest's Village at Blue was modelled on turn-of-the-century Ontario cottage country. So it was not surprising when we arrived to find boathouses, fireplaces around which families could gather, swimming holes – make that outdoor ponds, pools and an indoor aquatic centre – and nature. Lots of nature. At Blue, some 34 tree-lined ski trails shoot down the rugged Niagara Escarpment – a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve (one of only 12 in Canada). Though the vertical height reached just 220 m (720 ft.), these hills stretched for miles. "We like to say that Blue is as wide as Whistler is high," joked a Westin staffer as we checked into our one-bedroom family suite.

What was surprising, however, as we strolled into the pedestrian-only Village, was how European it all seemed. The kids, and my husband, were immediately drawn to some on-site art pieces that would have been at home in Davos or Innsbruck: a giant Muskoka chair that made my husband look like tiny Gulliver; and an old red truck spilling springs and evergreen boughs. The streets were bustling with shoppers in ski boots, kids enjoying tasty treats,

...rounding the corner came an old-style red wagon pulled by two black horses, their silver ornaments and bells jingling as their hoofs clacked along the pavement. We clambered aboard to take a tour before dinner followed by a swim in the outdoor hotel pool. Under snowflakes and a full moon, the water was a balmy 29°C (84°F). The kids loved it.

and dogs wearing knitted coats. Thousands of tiny twinkly lights decorated the 40 shops and restaurants, turning the streetscape into a virtual snow-laden holiday card.

Sure enough, rounding the corner came an old-style red wagon pulled by two black horses, their silver ornaments and bells jingling as their hoofs clacked along the pavement. We clambered aboard to take a tour before dinner followed by a swim in the outdoor hotel pool. Under snowflakes and a full moon, the water was a balmy 29°C (84°F). The kids loved it.

There were many family-friendly advantages to staying at the Westin Trillium House, beyond its well-appointed suites with living area and sleeper couch, kitchen, two TVs and bedroom with Heavenly Bed for parents. At the front desk, we could buy discounted ski tickets or water time on the slides at the indoor/outdoor Plunge! Aquatic Centre next door; reserve a ski locker so we didn't have to lug gear; and even book a babysitter or request any number of kiddie items free of charge – from diapers in every size to rubber bath mats and jogging strollers. My daughter and I immediately requested a pair of slippers, which helped keep us cosy by the fireplace in our room.

But the hills outside were also alive with family friendliness. My kids enjoyed the many intermediate runs accessible from the Silver Bullet high-speed chair. "Having a good time?" asked one of the attendants. "Yes!" exclaimed my daughter. We saw family-together lessons, kids' camps and adult sessions to master the moguls. For tots as young as two, there were 45-minute sessions of ski snowplay. Teens seeking high-adrenalin action (helmets required) could head to the Badlands Terrain Park, voted 'Beast of the East' by *Skier* magazine. After enjoying some face time with fresh air, families reunited by the fire in the square or wandered into the toyshop, beading store or chocolate factory.

We parents didn't spend every minute with the kids though. Because they were old enough to watch a movie in our room alone, we snuck away a few times to listen to live music in Windy O'Neills authentic Irish pub or test the steamy outdoor baths at Le Scandinave Spa, about 15 minutes away. One morning, we drove to the Nordic Centre at the Scenic Caves Nature Adventures up the road, rented snowshoes and set out in powdery snow for the 126 m (410-ft.) Suspension Bridge strung across the valley. It was still and quiet, except for the peep of birds. Then another surprise: a couple from Uruguay, enjoying snow for the very first time, on their honeymoon! "We tried skiing yesterday, but this is easier," they laughed. "How did you find this place?" I inquired. "Internet," they shouted. Indeed, we heard many languages over two days: Japanese, Spanish, Russian. All these international tourists had somehow found their way to Blue.

For our last night splash-out dinner in the Westin's hopping Oliver & Bonacini café-grill, we toasted our delicious food

LEFT PAGE: Suspension bridge at Scenic Caves Nature Adventures. **THIS PAGE, TOP – BOTTOM:** Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory; La Scandinave Spa at Blue Mountain.

Digging in to a tasty BeaverTail.

with Oh Behave Blue Mountain Wave drinks (for the kids) and Snojitos (for the parents). I thought this was our very last treat, but no. As we packed up the next morning, my daughter insisted, "We can't leave without trying BeaverTails." We obliged, and lined up for a hot chocolate hazelnut pastry for Dustin, and cinnamon, sugar and lemon for Nats. "Can I have a bite?," I asked. "Sure," she said, offering me the Canadian treat shaped like a beaver tail. It was delicious...hot, sweet and savoury all at the same time. Then she finished it and left me wanting more. Just like Blue, I thought. We'll be back. MO

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good eats

Blue Mountain may be the 'Ski Capital of Ontario' but it's also become a 'foodie' heaven, even for picky eaters. Families can warm up with Irish stew at Windy O'Neills (the owner is as Irish as the recipe), cool down with Cherry Garcia frozen yogurt at Ben & Jerry's Scoop Shop, or devour pizzas at the Firehall Pizza Co. This fun eatery boasts a door-handle axe, and firefighters' boots and coats line the entryway. For snacks, including delicious sweet potato fries with chili mayonnaise, stop at Copper Blues Bar & Grill. The toughest reservation? Westin's Oliver & Bonacini café-grill, where decor and dress are casual but the cooking fervour is not. Sit in a booth near the kitchen to watch the action. A family-friendly touch: everything, from Creamy Alex's Farm Goat Cheese Salad to O&B's Macaroni & Cheese, can be split into two – at half price. Bon appetit!

SWEET SUMMER

You don't have to wait until the snow flies to enjoy outdoor attractions at Blue Mountain. As soon as warm weather hits, grab the kids and head for the hills. In the Village, test the outdoor climbing wall, paddle a kayak or spin a pedal boat around the Mill Pond. Ride the Silver Bullet Gondola up the mountain for a scenic view of the Niagara Escarpment. Not to be missed is the three-hour guided EcoAdventure at Scenic Caves Nature Adventures Tours. Combine a treetop walk with a an exhilarating 91 m (300-ft.) zip line ride. To take a breather, dip your toes in Georgian Bay (hotel guests have their own beach) or enjoy one of the nighttime outdoor films on the big screen. As they say in the movies, it's showtime!

Niagara Rapids Run at Great Wolf Lodge water park.

Family Fun to the 10th Power

In **Annette Redican's** Ontario, family counts! With literally thousands of exciting activities and countless fantastic events on offer, family fun is sure to multiply like magic this summer. For kid-pleasin' excitement times 10, grab the family and head to these terrific Ontario attractions.

1 For a howlin' good time, I like to round up my pack and head to Great Wolf Lodge in Niagara Falls. This fabulous water park resort has it all (and then some) for families. The spectacular lobby, a.k.a. the Grand Living Room, features a massive fieldstone fireplace with platforms that support amazing animated wolves. Watch the little ones' faces when they press their tiny hands in palm prints on surfaces and cause these realistic creatures to spring to life. It's such a great moment when wide-eyed small-fry make the connection between themselves and the wolves baying at the moon!

The gigantic, exclusive water park, with its mind-drenching 9,500 m^2 (103,000 sq. ft.) of very wet and wild rides, slides and water activities, along with the nifty minigolf and the massive games arcade, kept my older guys busy for hours. Eyeing the fabulous spa and great in-house shopping, I trotted off to make a splash of my own. It's all good at Great Wolf Lodge.

2 Your junior gardeners will be all aflutter at the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens & School of Horticulture, which houses the simply magical Niagara Park's Butterfly Conservatory. Winner of the 2007 AccessibleNiagara.com 'Breaking the Barrier' Award, the fully accessible facility allows everyone to delightfully interact with over 2,000 exotic butterflies gliding freely among the verdant greenery and abundant blooms in this steamy rainforest environment. Observe as your little guys, faces intent with concentration and arms extended, will these ethereal creatures to float in for a landing. Much to the delight of your living statues, one of the colourful specimens is usually happy to use the rest-stop.

3 The inquisitive set will be blown away at this stimulating spot where they have fun down to a science! The Ontario Science Centre, in Toronto, offers visitors of all ages a compelling immersion in science and nature. KidSpark, an energetic area geared to younger children – from toddlers to 8-year-olds – encourages youngsters to discover their budding scientist through open-ended, learn-thru-play experiences. Older kids can rehearse being tomorrow's leaders and innovators in the edgy, new Weston Family Innovation Centre. This funky space, geared for ages 14 and up, features over 50 dynamic and relevant experiences that meld music and art with science and technology to totally stoke young minds. With a ringing declaration of "Way cool!", my offspring took a shot at designing footwear, mixing music on the wall of sound and producing stop-motion films.

4 To stay right on track for the best in Ontario summertime fun, we head to Canada's Wonderland, the home of an impressive lineup of over 200 rides, shows, attractions plus Splash Works, an 8-hectare (20-acre) water park. The really big news for my daredevils this summer is the premiere of Behemoth – Canada's biggest, fastest and tallest roller coaster! At over 1,616 m (5,300 ft.) in length and climbing to a height of 70 m (230 ft.), followed by a heart-pounding 85-degree drop at speeds reaching 125 km (78 mi.) per hour in 3.9 seconds, Behemoth is certain to put their scream in this theme park. Personally, I'm happy just to wave from the ground!

5 Have you noticed that the once-lowly reptile has scaled its way to a big comeback? Once considered the ultimate in creepy, these cold-blooded, air-breathing, egg-laying vertebrates are now more popular than ever with the younger set. So make like my family and scurry to Reptilia, a totally cool reptile zoo located in Vaughan, for an interactive and entertaining encounter with these intriguing creatures. The kids loved the live demonstrations 'cause they got to really meet the creatures.

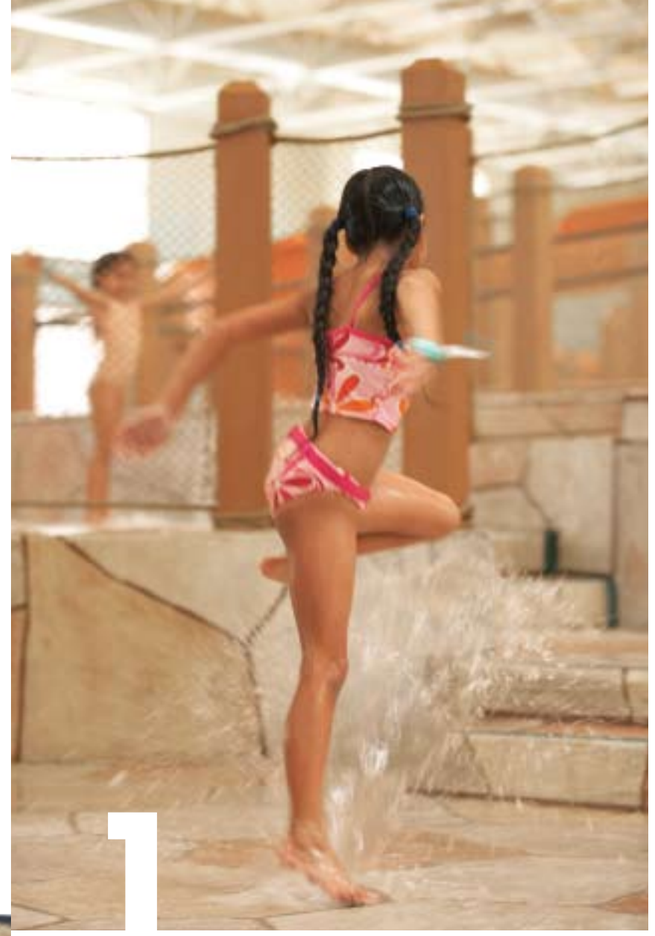
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Photo: Craig Abel Photography

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Photo: Ontario Science Centre.

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Photo: Ontario Place.

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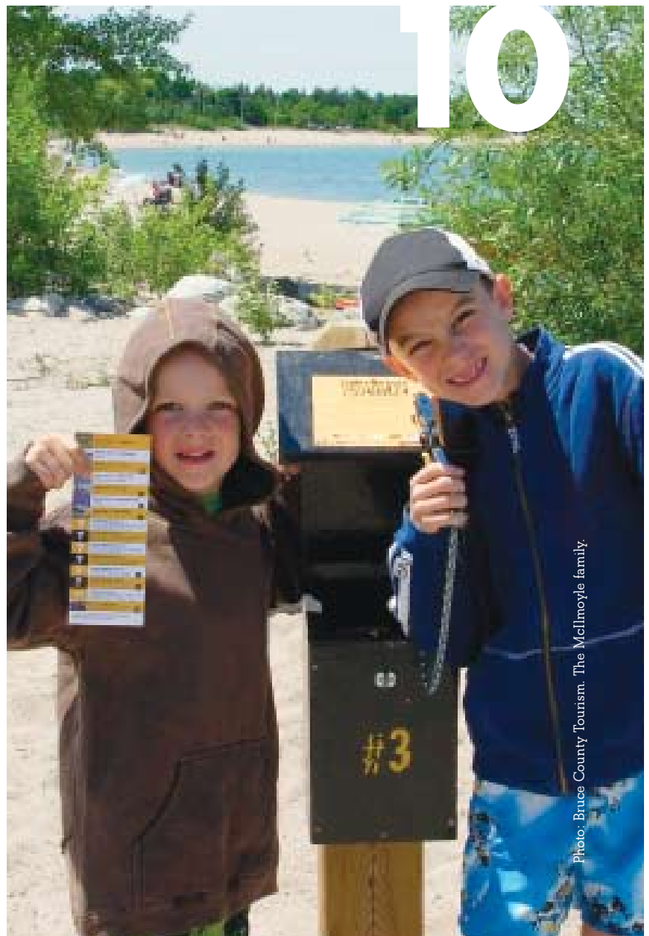

10

Photo: Gord Carter, Currency Museum.

9

Photo: Bruce County Tourism. The McIlmoyle family.

8

6 Ontario Place, an internationally acclaimed cultural, leisure and entertainment parkland complex located alongside Lake Ontario, is a special seasonal favourite for us. Soak City, Toronto's only downtown water park, is gallons of fun for every member of the family. When little, my kids loved the H_2O Generation Station, Canada's largest outdoor soft-play climbing structure and the Atom Blaster, the only foam-factory playground in the country. Nowadays, they'll drop everything for the plummet on Free Fall or a ride on the New F/X Adventure Theatre, a 30-seat motion simulator that looks at Planet Earth from the perspective of its non-human inhabitants.

7 Scenic Caves Nature Adventures, near Collingwood, is an unbelievable back-to-nature immersion that we found absolutely inspiring. Seizing the day, not to mention the handrail, we took the dare and strolled across Ontario's longest suspension bridge, which arches 25 m (82 ft.) above the treed valley below. Everyone was blown away by the gorgeous 10,000 km^2 (3,860-sq.-mi.) view. It was a welcome distraction from the fact that there was a mere 8 cm (3 in.) of timber between us and the distant forest floor. Back on terra firma...sorta...we delved deep to explore the labyrinth of caves and crevices inside Blue Mountain.

8 Northern Ontario's Dynamic Duo – Science North and Dynamic Earth – are our official destinations for family fun this summer. These internationally renowned attractions, located in Sudbury, Ontario's mining epicentre, offer an interactive and fascinating look at both the world around us and the earth beneath our feet. We experienced a close encounter of a different kind with flying squirrels, built a robot in the LEGO Mindstorms Robotic Lab, soared in a float plane flight simulator, and descended seven storeys deep into a rock chasm – while viewing a state-of-the-art multimedia show about mining the planet's precious resources. Dynamic Earth is also home to the largest coin in the world! Hardly small change, the Big Nickel is 9 m (30 ft.) high, 61 cm (24 in.) thick and weighs 13,000 kilograms (over 14 tons)!

9 For fun the family can bank on, head to Canada's capital city, Ottawa, and discover The Currency Museum. Part of the Bank of Canada, this intriguing attraction is the repository of Canada's National Currency Collection, which consists of over 100,000 items. Count on the children to really take to the clever programs that illustrate the value of money in a practical way. Little ones can fill a treasure chest, while older kids can conduct mock archeology digs or learn how to spot counterfeits. Since our visit, my two make a point of scrutinizing their allowance to make sure it's the genuine article.

10 From its world-renowned sunsets to its world-class attractions, families will be dazzled by the incredible Bruce Peninsula. Just a few hours northwest of Toronto, 'The Bruce' is a stunningly beautiful area bordered by Lake Huron, Georgian Bay and the Niagara Escarpment that features over 850 km (530 mi.) of gorgeous coastline plus tons of engaging activities for kids of all ages. Always looking for a little adventure-to-go, we snagged the *Explore the Bruce Adventure Passport* at explorethebruce.com. Our family loved this cool 'Bruce' activity, which plays like Ontario's version of the *Amazing Race*. Dashing to explore participating sites, we collected passport punches to qualify to win incredible 'Made in Bruce' prizes!

It's really quite simple. Ontario *plus* summertime *plus* something special to engage every child – adds up to the greatest family getaway ever! MO

– Annette Redican has been passionate about tourism in Ontario for 25 years, and loves writing about our province. Her two well-rounded children had the good fortune to have practically been raised at Ontario events and attractions.

1 greatwolf.com 1-800-605-9653
2 niagaraparks.com (905) 358-0025
3 ontariosciencecentre.ca 1-888-696-1110
4 canadaswonderland.com (905) 832-8131
5 reptilia.org 1-888-737-8454
6 ontarioplace.com 1-866-663-4386
7 sceniccaves.com (705) 446-0256
8 sciencenorth.on.ca 1-800-461-4898
9 currencymuseum.ca (613) 782-8914
10 explorethebruce.com/passport 1-800-268-3838

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Playing in the pool at Deerhurst Resort.

Classic Muskoka

Take Two

When **Jacquelyn Waller-Vintar's** kids were younger, she took them to stay at Deerhurst Resort. She returned with them several years later to discover that the historic resort still has something for everyone.

THIS PAGE: Deerhurst Resort in the soft light of dusk. **RIGHT PAGE:** Kids testing out their Deerhurst digs.

Our home away from home impressed. We had two bedrooms – and doesn't every parent know what every kid does in a hotel room to test the beds? – a kitchen too large to be called a kitchenette, a dining room with a table for six, a living room with a fireplace, TV and sliding doors with a view to the Lakeside Golf Course. Everyone was happy.

"We're gooo-ing to Deeeeeer-hurst! We're gooooo-ing to Deeeeeer-hurst!" my youngest child chanted over and over again for a week (or was it a month?) when we decided to book a few days at historic Deerhurst Resort, just north of Huntsville. We'd been there years before when the kids were younger and the experience was a wonderful balance between parental bliss and family fun. We were confident Deerhurst could swing it again.

The way to the resort was well marked, and as we turned onto the grounds, we were greeted by a valley-like expanse of trees, rock outcroppings and rolling hills. We checked in and were standing in our suite in The Greens within 15 minutes. Our home away from home impressed. We had two bedrooms – and doesn't every parent know what every kid does in a hotel room to test the beds? – a kitchen too large to be called a kitchenette, a dining room with a table for six, a living room with a fireplace, TV and sliding doors with a view to the Lakeside Golf Course. Everyone was happy.

We totally played tourists the first day. In walking shoes, with bottles of water and swimsuits in the pack, we spent the whole day just exploring – there was so much to see. We can't claim to have covered all 324 hectares (800 acres), but we did take our resort map and hiked around the Pavilion, checked out the outdoor tennis and basketball courts and tromped around the sports villas (where we'd stayed on a previous visit).

Then we headed down the road to the Sugar Shack, where sap is collected in the spring and made into maple syrup right there, making the Shack a popular March Break

LEFT PAGE: Hanging out poolside.
THIS PAGE, TOP – BOTTOM: Riding stables; Eclipse dining room.

destination. We visited the horse stables and booked some beginners' rides for later in the week. They're such beautiful animals...we all hung out for a while just talking to them.

We continued our tour, hiking along the waterfront of Sunset Bay, right up to The Point. Here's where the kids pulled out their bathing suits and flip-flops. We meandered along the waterside, a nice mix of sandy areas where the kids could dig and go in the water, and grassy expanses where there were plenty of loungers laid out for sunning, reading or just relaxing. We took full advantage of the weather and just blissed out while the kids played. Famished, we moseyed over to the Pool Deck Patio and Grill, with its view of Peninsula Lake, and enjoyed a delicious barbecue lunch.

After polishing off iced teas under the patio umbrellas, we ventured back to the water, and took out pedal boats for a race (no true winner, but lots of spirited sprints). From out on the lake we spied gardens and the boardwalk, which looked like a good spot for fishing. Not far away, teenagers were taking windsurfing lessons. Upon docking, we discovered there were also lessons for waterskiing and sailboating. There were canoes and kayaks for guest use too, and as a family with kayak experience, that looked like a good early morning activity for another day.

Over the course of our stay, we spread our dining around, with some meals in the kid-friendly British-style pub, and fabulous breakfasts and dinners at the Eclipse dining room with its wraparound window views of Peninsula Lake. If your stay includes Sunday, then make reservations for the brunch. Your children will appreciate the chocolate fountain and its velvety blankets of delicious chocolatiness. We made a

LEFT – RIGHT: Getting acquainted with new Plush Pals; Crème Fraîche treatment at the Spa at Deerhurst.

number of meals in our suite too – it's amazing how much fun preparing food can be when you're using someone else's kitchen. The town of Huntsville is a short drive away, and we picked up groceries there for late, lazy breakfasts and late-night snacking. Deerhurst has a Pizza Hut on-site, with delivery, so some traditions from home can be carried on – except this was the hottest delivery pizza we'd ever tasted!

One night we scored tickets to *Canada Rocks! Live at Deerhurst*. We all love music and a good show, and if Shania Twain performed here for three years, there's no telling what kind of talent we could see. So after dinner one night, we made our way to the 100-year-old lodge, found the theatre, and had a ball. The show has a different theme and choreography every year. This year it's all songs by Canadian writers and singers, so it's a rockin', patriotic show, with excellent singing and dancing. The director, Dave Campbell, brings his experience from all five seasons of *Canadian Idol* to the show. The show is appropriate for all kids who like music. The later show is more cabaret-like... ahem...so get the kids off to bed. There's some humour with a definite adult edge, and it's a fabulous way to end the night.

The YMCA hosts accredited workshops and day programs on-site, geared to kids from 18 months to 12 years. Each day has a theme. Ours was Hawaii's Kamehameha Day, which celebrates Hawaiian culture, music, dance, food, traditions and art. There are also workshops – we tried our hands at 'building' a stuffed toy. We had time to pick and choose clothing and accessories, and we couldn't have asked for a finer memento of our trip.

If there was one place that I felt was calling my name, it was the newly renovated Spa at Deerhurst. Once an Aveda spa, the direction is now more cosmeceutical with the switch to Pevonia Botanica skincare products. After slipping into a fluffy white robe and spa slippers, I was off to a dimly lit room with a shower that has no equal. I had a Crème Fraîche with Papaya and Pineapple treatment, which was a light exfoliation, then a slathering on of the Crème Fraîche, wrapping my entire body in plastic and towels, and then huge comforters. It was heaven. After a wonderful rest, I eased myself into the shower, relishing all 700 soothing streams of water. The final application of cool cream was the height of luxury.

Deerhurst truly has something for everyone: five pools, two golf courses, paintball, hiking trails, tennis, and most important, many opportunities to enjoy family time together. MO

– Jacquelyn Waller-Vintar was a writer and editor with *Toronto Life* and *WHERE Toronto* magazine for many years.

deerhurstresort.com 1-800-461-4393
resortsofontario.com 1-800-363-7227
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A STAR IS BORN

Years ago, when Shania Twain showed up at Deerhurst Resort for an audition, they weren't even looking for anyone. But once they heard that voice and saw that talent, they signed her on. She had a three-year contract to sing and dance in the stage show. Some record label people from Nashville came up to see what she could do, and invited her down to do a demo. Her career took off after that, but Shania didn't. Shania was married at Deerhurst, and even brought Katie Couric and an NBC crew with her to talk about "the good old days at Deerhurst."

Holding court in the drawing room at Dundurn Castle.

Princess FOR A DAY

Hamilton is home to its very own fairy tale castle. **Betty Zyvatkauskas** shows us the upstairs/downstairs world of stately Dundurn Castle.

THIS PAGE: Dundurn Castle. **RIGHT PAGE:** Climbing the grand staircase.

When my girls were young they loved playing princess. The Cinderella story was endlessly fascinating so it seemed only natural that they should want to visit a Canadian castle. Set high on a bluff for a commanding view of Burlington Bay, Dundurn Castle was as grand as any Hamilton home could be in the 1850s, with columns that tower like a Greek temple over the front door and some 40 rooms. Although it's technically a regency mansion, not a castle, you'd never have convinced my little girls that royalty didn't live here.

Stately Dundurn has all the ingredients of a good fairy tale: the brave young soldier who eventually finds wealth, suffers the tragic loss of his first wife and son, flirts with luxury and suffers bankruptcy. OK, maybe the ending is not so happy, but the saga of Sir Allan MacNab's real estate wheelings and dealings make Donald Trump seem like a bit player. Despite his financial ups and downs, MacNab enjoyed entertaining on a grand scale. Twenty people could comfortably sit down to dinner in the emerald dining room where sparkling crystal and silver graced the table.

But it's not the towering silver epergnes or even the early indoor plumbing that delights kids as much as seeing how other kids lived 'in the olden days'. My girls delighted in visiting the second floor nursery suite where the MacNab daughters, Minnie and Sophia, spent much of their childhood, taking meals and lessons in their own private world. There was much interest in the toys: no plastic little ponies, but a nice toy tea set that young ladies might enjoy sharing with a well-behaved porcelain-head doll. Childhood games ranged from the familiar, like marbles and Snakes and Ladders, to historic oddities like Snap Dragon, a contest in which youngsters plucked currants from a bowl of flaming brandy, then popped them in their mouths. "No, we won't be trying that at home."

But it was the downstairs world of the servants that really captured their imaginations. Just scary enough to be memorable, the dim cellar where young servant girls toiled as scullery maids and cook's helpers is endlessly fascinating. Here is the dungeon-like pit where ice cut from the lake in winter was kept frozen throughout the summer, the windowless sleeping quarters where girls probably huddled together on cold nights. Some spent their days washing dishes, others working alongside the laundress, boiling linens in huge vats stirred with long wooden poles, then pressing them with assorted flat irons and crimpers.

With its sputtering gaslight, the basement kitchen seems a more welcoming place than the laundry, especially if some freshly baked biscuits have just come out of the wood-burning range. My girls, who have never been fond of dishwashing, looked horrified at the scullery maid's sink, where a girl not much older than them would have washed a seemingly endless stack of pots and pans.

Unlike those servants, we had time to picnic among the lilacs and roses of the famed Royal Botanical Gardens. Now *that* makes you feel like a princess. MO

– Betty Zyvatkauskas is a Toronto-based writer who enjoys travel, nature, culinary history and the theatre.

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The Knight Who Built a Castle

A man of many occupations, Sir Allan Napier MacNab stands out as one of Upper Canada's most colourful characters. From brave soldier to scheming speculator, businessman to bankruptee, his career was certainly controversial. At the tender age of 14 he was fighting in the War of 1812. Fourteen years later he was setting up his own law practice in Hamilton. By 1830, he was serving as a Tory in the House of Assembly and conducting a vitriolic battle with reform-minded newspaperman William Lyon Mackenzie. Using his legislative connections to fund land speculation, he became a major Hamilton landowner. Despite profiting from his railway connections, he couldn't assuage his creditors and died penniless in 1862, but not before seeing his daughters wed into the British aristocracy.

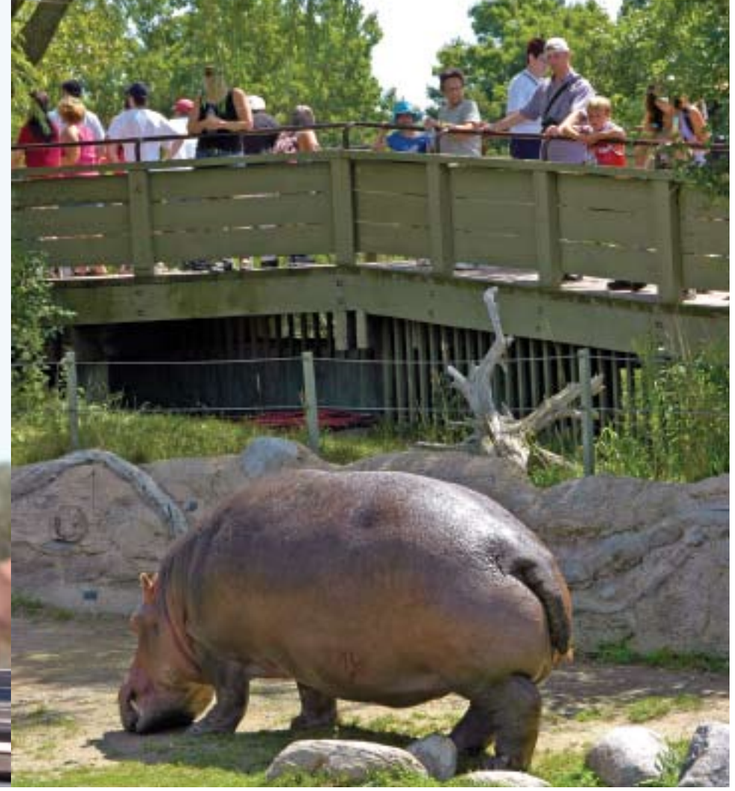
SERENGETI BUSH CAMP

at Toronto Zoo

Ever dream of going on safari and taking the kids? **Jacquelyn Waller-Vintar** did just that. And it was right in her own backyard – well, almost.

Vacation time with children has risen to an art form. It used to be enough to pile in the station wagon and drive for two weeks, stopping at scenic lookouts on the way to visit far-flung relatives. Now my children's friends are going to Machu Picchu, Tuscany, Washington DC, Ecuador. Ecotourism, edutourism and adventure tourism are the buzzwords that beckon us, and in my case have led to some amazing discoveries right in my own (almost) backyard.

I've discovered a way to give my kids a safari experience without the planning, danger, airfare and inoculations. It's the Serengeti Bush Camp at the Toronto Zoo, an incredible overnight stay right in the zoo, in tents. And it's not just for Boy Scouts and Girl Guides and large groups – your group of mom, dad and kids, or any combination of adults and children over the age of 6, is welcome on Family Nights.



LEFT PAGE: Fixed binoculars are available on the safari. **THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE:** Hippopotamus, elephant and zebra grazing, Photos: Courtesy of Toronto Zoo.

The excitement begins around 4 p.m. when adventurers meet at the zoo's entrance and board the Zoomobile for the trip past the Malayan Woods, Indo-Malaya and African Rainforest pavilions to Kesho Park, and the entrance to the bush camp.

The first thing is the assigning of tents. Some of them are actually from Kenya, which will get you in safari-mode pretty quickly! A small tent holds four or five people, while the larger ones hold eight, so each family gets their own tent. I find that very comforting, because it really makes it a family experience, and you can make it your own space – kids and teens can bring their stuffed animals, mom her face mask, dad his favourite pillow.

After a little settling-in time, it's off on a daylight hike of the African Savannah, and a special behind-the-scenes time with one of the zookeepers. We got about as up-close-and-personal as you'd ever want to get with a white rhino, and later with a lion. While we got to run our hands over the rhino's hide, we kept a respectful distance from the lion! Meeting with the animals' keepers is really special for everyone, because the keeper can tell you about the personalities and quirky habits of their charges, things you'd never know by just watching them from a distance.

The hike winds down back at camp, where dinner is served at Simba's Safari Lodge, overlooking the rhino's paddock. It's buffet-style dining, complete with beer and wine for the adults. As darkness falls, the camp counsellors rally everyone for a night hike. Armed with flashlights and bug juice, holding the hands of the younger ones, we set out amidst the croaking of frogs, swooping bats and the occasional roar and rustle of the lions settling in for the night. It really feels like you're on another continent. Imaginations get further encouragement at the campfire that follows, as counsellors show off their storytelling skills.

It's lights out at 11 p.m., but that's when the jungle sounds seem to wake up. If you have a breeze, you can hear roars, howls, trumpeting and, of course, crickets and the creaking of the raised wood floors of your tent. It is, as the kids said, "Excellently, atmospherically African."

The safari isn't over when you get up the next morning, which happens at 6:30 a.m. – with juice and coffee that's much better than that served on a real safari, I've been told. We awoke to strains of The Lion King playing over the loudspeaker, a good clue to that waking question "Where am I?" There's a serious hike over to the Canadian Domain to see and hear the wolves greeting the day, and to catch a glimpse of bison, moose, lynx and cougars as well. After returning to the camp, it's eggs and bagels for brekkie, buffet-style, and then camp breaks up. You're even welcome to stay for the day and see the rest of the zoo. MO

The Serengeti Bush Camp takes place this summer between June 27 and August 27.

– Jacquelyn Waller-Vintar was a writer and editor with *Toronto Life* and *WHERE Toronto* magazine for many years.

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Getting into the pioneer spirit at Fort William Historical Park, Photo: Marty Nascarin, Fort William Historical Park.

It is the summer of 1815 and **James Smedley** takes his family on a journey to relive the Fur Trade at Fort William Historical Park.

Voyage ur Life

At first my 8-year-old Lillian is alarmed at the flamboyant nature and colourful dress of our guide, but quickly warms up to his tales of the fur trade with the mighty North West Company. In a thick French Canadian accent he tells us he's a Voyageur, paddling and portaging furs and trade goods. We're walking along a wooded path through an Ojibway settlement outside an immense log palisade. My wife Francine and 10-year-old Islay glance toward wigwams where women stretch hides and sift wild rice, as our guide explains that we've arrived at Fort William and it's the summer of 1815. As we step through the palisade gates, it's easy to believe; more than 40 stone and timber buildings encircle a main square where Voyageurs with bright shirts and wide sashes stroll the grounds, and blacksmiths, coopers and farmers go about their business.

With the characteristic zeal of a Voyageur, our guide tells us it's the height of the fur trade when the North West Company (or 'Nor'Westers') had a transportation network spanning the entire country. "Birchbark canoes loaded with trade goods are paddled from Montreal to Fort William," he says, "and furs from the farthest corners of the western interior are paddled here too." He tells us how the furs are sorted, cleaned and repacked for shipment to Montreal and then Europe, and how trade goods are sorted for distribution to western trading posts. "It all happens here," he says with a flourish.

It's midsummer at the fort, the time known as the Great Rendezvous, when hundreds of Natives, Voyageurs, clerks, partners and agents of the fur trade descend on Fort William. Our guide invites us to tour the grounds before excusing himself to partake in the 'regale', a reward for paddle-weary Voyageurs, consisting of bread, butter, cheese and rum.

As the Voyageur disappears into the melange of characters, we duck into Dr. McLaughlin's House and Apothecary where our daughters listen wide-eyed as he wields the knives and saws used for amputating limbs. At the Fur Store House we heft the 41 kg (90-lb.) packs carried by the Voyageurs, and then poke our noses into the Council House where Scottish Company gentlemen with top hats and long coats discuss the season's business. Islay mimics their thick Scottish accent as we look at the grand portraits, old maps and fine china of the Great Hall where the Company gentlemen take their meals. The girls bravely enter the darkened confines of the jailhouse, but exit shrieking as the moans of a prisoner issue from one of the cells. The smell of baking emanating from the kitchen drives us to the canteen for hearty beef stew and stone bread. We talk hurriedly of our afternoon plans. I want to visit the Canoe Shed where an 11 m (36-ft.) birchbark Montreal canoe is being built. The girls point towards the farm and Francine hints at going for a paddle along the Kaministiquia River in a Voyageur Canoe. We eat quickly. We only have the rest of the afternoon to re-live the days of the fur trade, as they were almost 200 years ago. MO

– James Smedley is a freelance writer/photographer who loves the outdoors. He is Travel Editor for *Ontario Out of Doors* magazine. He lives in Wawa.

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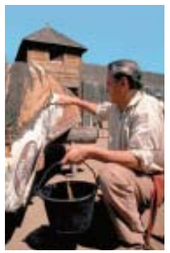
THIS PAGE, TOP – BOTTOM: Trying a 41 kg (90-lb.) pack on for size, Photo: James Smedley; Birchbark canoe paddled by modern-day Voyageurs.
RIGHT PAGE, TOP – BOTTOM: Local wildflowers collected; Young Voyageurs vie for world dominance, Photo: Marty Nascarin, Fort William Historical Park.

Voyageurs, the Human Engines of the Fur Trade



Strong as oxen and tough as rawhide, Voyageurs paddled from sun-up to sundown at 40 paddle strokes per minute, pausing for only five minutes every hour for a smoke of their pipes. Breakfast and lunch were the only longer breaks, when they subsisted on an unvarying diet of either salt pork or a fatty buffalo meat and berry mixture, called pemmican. Over portages around rapids or between water systems, they regularly carried two 41 kg (90-lb.) packs, and sometimes more, over rough terrain for several kilometres. At night they slept on the ground under the overturned canoe, waking to do it all over again next day. As the engines that moved the furs and trade goods throughout the waterways of the Canadian wilderness, the Voyageurs were truly the backbone of the fur trade.

Chatsworth Antiques in Bloomfield.

then & now

ALONG THE LOYALIST PARKWAY

By Susan Scott

Prince Edward County's Loyalist Parkway offers wineries where canneries used to be, luxury inns beside beach cottages, historic buildings, antique shops, jazz and music festivals, and newcomers blending happily with United Empire Loyalist descendants.

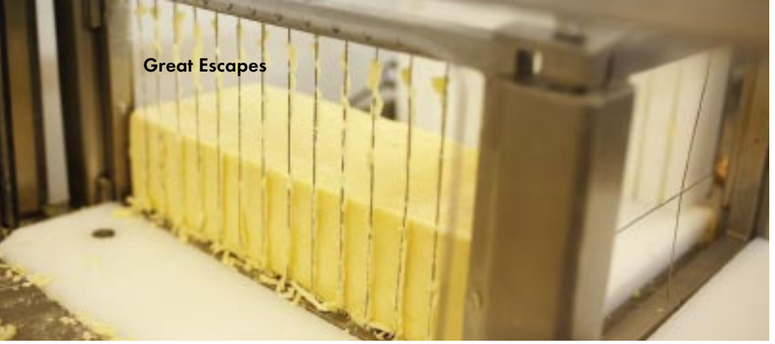
We began our Parkway pilgrimage at Hillier House Antiques, a converted 1870s general store where Toronto transplant Noreen Kalman, an interior designer, says she "mixes new and antique pieces just as you would in someone's home."

In Bloomfield at Dead People's Stuff, I recognized Sue and Terry Hierlihy from Ottawa's Stittsville Flea Market. Terry laughed at the 'Concreatures' (concrete gargoyles) they've added to their barn full of antiques and collectibles. Sue sent us to Slicker's Ice Cream (my husband recommends the Jazzberry). Across the way at Saylor's Café and Collectibles, I found a 1940s Lucite purse for $10.

Another newcomer, Kevin Bazkur, has opened Chatsworth Antiques across from Bloomfield's historic Town Hall. I loved the store's motto: 'Shop like you mean it.' Nearby, Krista and Keith Eden's County Treasures Galore offers collectibles, local baking and preserves (try the butter tarts).

Picton's Arts on Main co-operative displays the eclectic works of 26 local artists, while just up the way, Buddha Dog offers local hotdogs and sauces that have been rated Canada's best by *Reader's Digest* magazine (*Toronto Life* called them "genius"). Book lovers will enjoy Books & Company, a unique bookstore where gently read classics sit on shelves cheek-by-jowl with the latest bestsellers. We spent the night at the ultra-modern Huff Estates Winery Inn (try their crisp, citrus-rich rosé). The Huff family has been here for 10 generations (we saw a Huff headstone in the historic Adolphustown Loyalist Park burial ground, on the Glenora Ferry leg of the Parkway).

THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE: Books & Company in Picton; Chatsworth Antiques in Bloomfield; Buddha Dog in Picton. **RIGHT PAGE:** Huff Estates Winery in Bloomfield.



LEFT – RIGHT: Black River Cheese Factory, Milford; Barley Days Brewery, Picton.

For me, that mix of tradition and change is Prince Edward County. I bought a vintage canning label after admiring the collection at the Wellington Museum; we spent the evening listening to live jazz and sampling locally brewed Harvest Gold Pale Ale at the Barley Room Pub. Sunday, we tasted our way through new wineries before relishing cheese curds from the century-old, farmer-owned Black River Cheese Factory. Later on, we poked through Picton County Market in the beautifully restored Hemlock barn on the edge of town.

Then and now...side-by-side...that's Prince Edward County and I think the Loyalists would approve. MO

– Susan Scott is a freelance writer specializing in travel and antiques. She has written about the experience of antiquing throughout North America and England.

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Royally Loyal

Prince Edward County was settled in the 1780s by families fleeing the United States after supporting Britain and the Crown during the American Revolutionary War. Often arriving with only the clothes on their backs, these 'United Empire Loyalists' braved incredible hardship and turned an empty wilderness into the prosperous towns, farms and villages that today dot Ontario's 'Loyalist Parkway'.

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norfolk county

BEAUTIFUL & BOUNTIFUL

By Barbara Ramsay Orr

As I drive down Highway 6, leaving the congestion of the QEW and Highway 403 behind, I begin to remember what smalltown Ontario used to be like. There's a sense, in these farmlands and quiet agricultural-based towns, that time here has been suspended. And there's something about that I find attractive.

This is Norfolk County, one of Ontario's most abundant producers of fruits and vegetables, located about a two-hour drive from the Toronto area. It's close enough for a great day trip, but far enough away that the city is a distant memory.

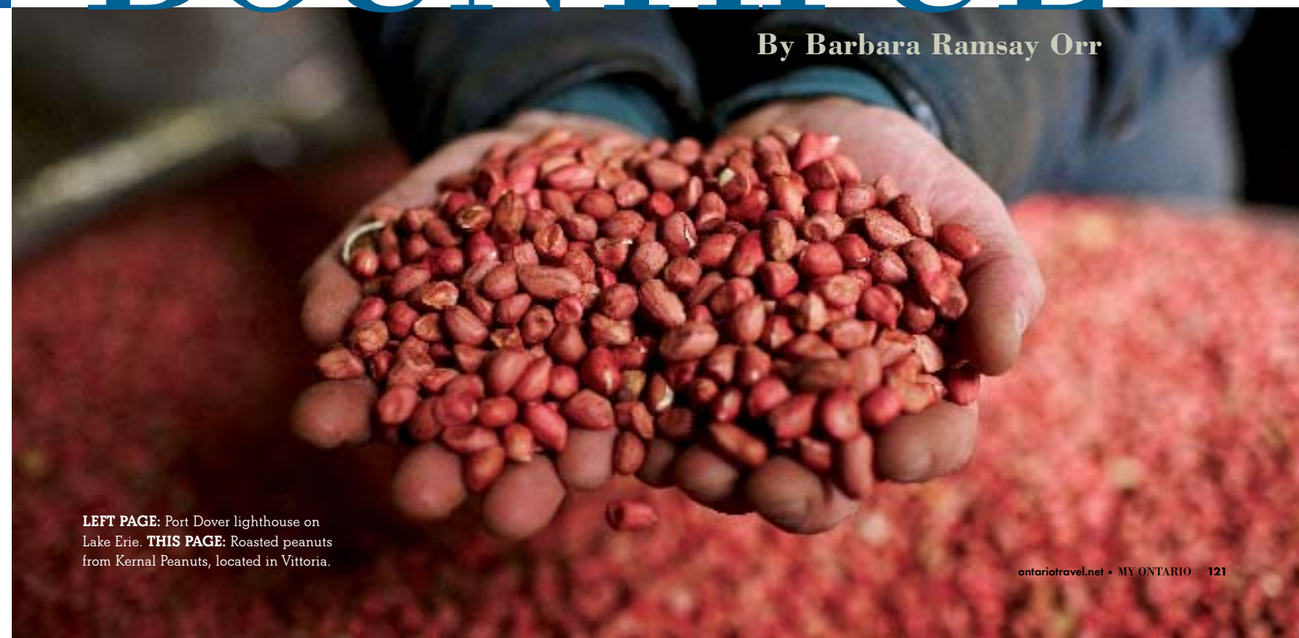
I find it reassuring to discover that the small towns, like Delhi, Courtland and Waterford, are still comprised of tree-lined streets and traditionally designed red brick Ontario homes. Out around Lake Erie, at Turkey Point, Long Point and Port Dover, there are miles of white sandy beaches, probably some of the best I have experienced in the province. My children spent golden days – wading in the warm shallow waters, building sandcastles, and enjoying picnics enriched by fresh fruit we bought at roadside stands on the drive to the beach.

Between the towns, some of the most prolific growing spaces in the country can be found. And the local producers are proud of the excellence of their produce. According to Miriam Worley, of Chary Produce in Oakland, "Almost everything that grows under the sun is grown here in one form or another. We have exceptionally beautiful soil in Norfolk, and a long history of farming."

That abundance makes a tour of the county an adventure in healthy eating. In Port Dover, lunch at the famous Erie Beach Hotel is not just a celebration of all of the best local products, it's a tribute to a dining era that has all but disappeared. Along with the fresh perch and pickerel caught within sight of the hotel, the friendly waitress serves me jellied horseradish salad, pickled pumpkin, marshmallow and mandarin orange salad, a pickle tray, three-bean salad, celery bread and fresh coleslaw. I haven't had a jellied salad since I was a child and I had forgotten how good it was. Dessert on the summer day that I visited was fresh saskatoon-berry pie, made from locally grown berries and served warm with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

The Cider Keg in Vittoria is a fifth-generation family-run farm and country store that sells fresh apple juice (no water or sugar added!) – deliciously refreshing on a warm summer day. They also sell sparkling ciders, preserves, apples and fresh produce. Jensen's, famous for its award-winning cheeses, provides what I think is the perfect match for a crisp Cider Keg apple – a chunk of their nippy aged artisanal cheddar. Nearby Kernal Peanuts markets their own roasted peanuts, as well as peanut butter. I'm addicted to their white chocolate popcorn made from locally grown corn.

Environmentalists might be interested in a visit to the Y U Ranch, near Tillsonburg, where the Gilvesy family raises Texas longhorn cattle on tall prairie grass, as part of an Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) pilot project. To preserve the memory of a great day in Norfolk, I stop in at Purple Daze Lavender Farm for bunches of aromatic lavender to take home.



LEFT PAGE: Port Dover lighthouse on Lake Erie. **THIS PAGE:** Roasted peanuts from Kernal Peanuts, located in Vittoria.

THIS PAGE: A local farmer with something to crow about. **RIGHT PAGE, LEFT – RIGHT:** Cider Keg farm and country store in Vittoria; Pickle tray from the Erie Beach Hotel in Port Dover.

The Simcoe farmers' market every Thursday, and the Port Dover market on Saturdays give visitors a chance to browse the many local growers' products. For a real smorgasbord of fresh food, arrange a visit to Simcoe's Norfolk County Fair (Oct. 7–13 in 2008). It's a traditional agricultural fair, and one of the largest horse shows in Canada. Foodies like myself take a special interest in the Flavour Fest, where the arena is filled with the best local growers, who provide samples and sell their produce.

There are great beaches, there's history and there's some of the best fresh produce in the province. I strongly recommend you make your next day trip a ride through the 'breadbasket' of Ontario to discover the source of the green bounty on our plates. MO

– Barbara Ramsay Orr is an award-winning freelance writer who specializes in food, travel and gardens. She's always on the lookout for those special places that still retain their unique 'terroir'.

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FRESH DRIVE

THE NORFOLK GROWERS' ROUTE

The farms in Norfolk County are lush and productive. The county is the province's number one producer of apples, sour cherries, asparagus, pumpkins, green onions, saskatoon berries, squash and sweet corn. Surprisingly, it is also one of the largest producers of ginseng in North America.

A drive along the county's back roads in the growing season is a chance to buy the freshest produce right at the farmer's gate. Get a copy of the Norfolk Grower's Route map by contacting **1-800-699-9038**.

manitoulin island

MAGICAL, MYSTICAL MANITOULIN

By Cathy Bennett

The morning mist rises off the north shore of Manitoulin's Aundeck Omni Kaning reserve.

"Kagawong has a fudge shop," says our friend John Petcoff, who hails from Espanola, "and that makes it as close as it gets to a tourist town on Manitoulin."

All kidding aside, it's actually a chocolate factory and this pretty little (and I do mean little), historic village is home to one of the island's biggest attractions – Bridal Veil Falls.

A sturdy steel stairway with a lookout platform leads to the falls where water cascades 10.5 m (35 ft.) over a limestone formation into a plunge pool, where you can swim. There's also a hiking trail going the other way, which you can follow to the mouth of Kagawong River.

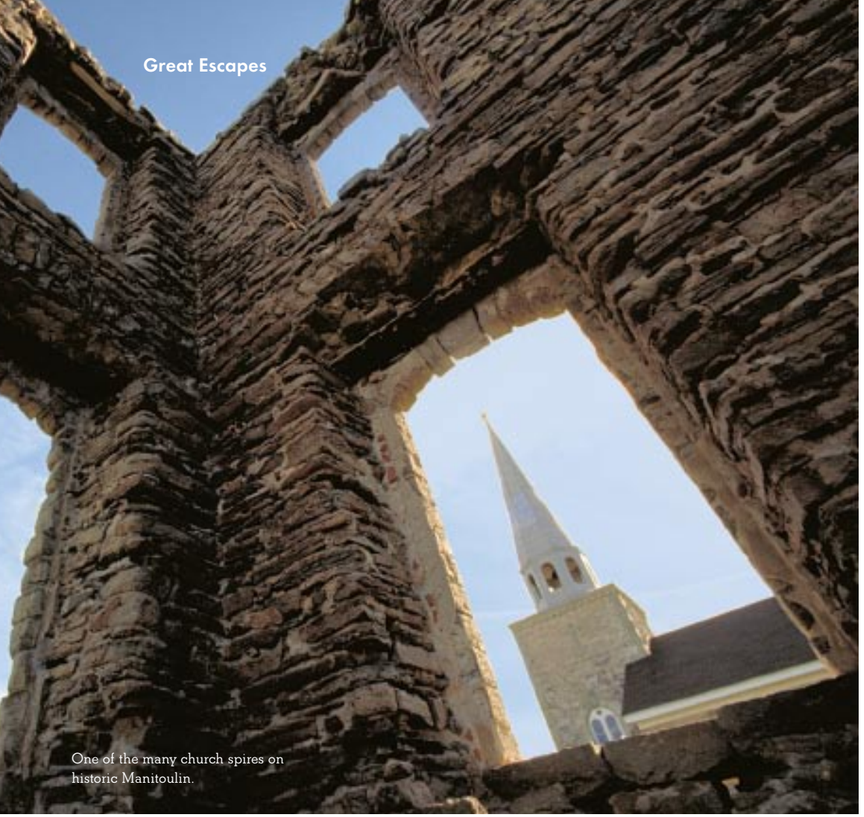
Farther south in M'Chigeeng, Fr. Jim Kelly, pastor of the Immaculate Conception Church, claims the town has the highest concentration of art galleries per capita in Ontario – 10 in a town of about 770 people.

Whether it's true or not, the church is a wonderful melding of native spirituality and Roman Catholicism, and a great starting point for an art tour.

A skylight with a thunderbird, said to be a messenger of the Great Spirit, illuminates hand-carved animals, beadwork and a stunning series of paintings by renowned Manitoulin artist Leland Bell, which my artist husband patiently explains are called the Stations of the Cross.

Another 'must-see' here is the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation representing 60 First Nations. On exhibit this summer are Pow Wow paintings by well-known Aboriginal artists like Daphne Odjig. The new amphitheatre showcases native dance, music and theatrical performances.

For hiking aficionados, the 8 km (5-mi.) M'Chigeeng Trail leads to a bluff, with points of interest like Bear Caves and Fossil Rock Point, and provides outstanding views including the North Channel.



One of the many church spires on historic Manitoulin.

When we want to treat ourselves to a night of fine dining, the well-established School House Restaurant in Providence Bay never disappoints us. Everything on the delectable continental menu is made in-house, including bread and desserts (like the sinfully delicious bourbon-soaked bread pudding). After you're totally sated, do what we do – stroll along the boardwalk that spans the sprawling white beach on the waters of Lake Huron.

Most accommodations on the island book by the week, so your best bet for a weekend is to make reservations at a B&B. MO

– Cathy Bennett is a freelance writer who loves to travel throughout Ontario. Her husband John, an artist, is her co-pilot and photographer.

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Coming and Going

To get to Manitoulin, board the Chi-Cheemaun ferry and enjoy a leisurely sail across Lake Huron. Or follow Hwy. 6 from Espanola on a scenic drive though the La Cloche Mountains. Enjoy your trip more by arriving one way and leaving the other!

A weekend here is great, but if you add a couple of days on either side, you can see a whole lot more of the largest freshwater island in the world.

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www.northumberlandtourism.com
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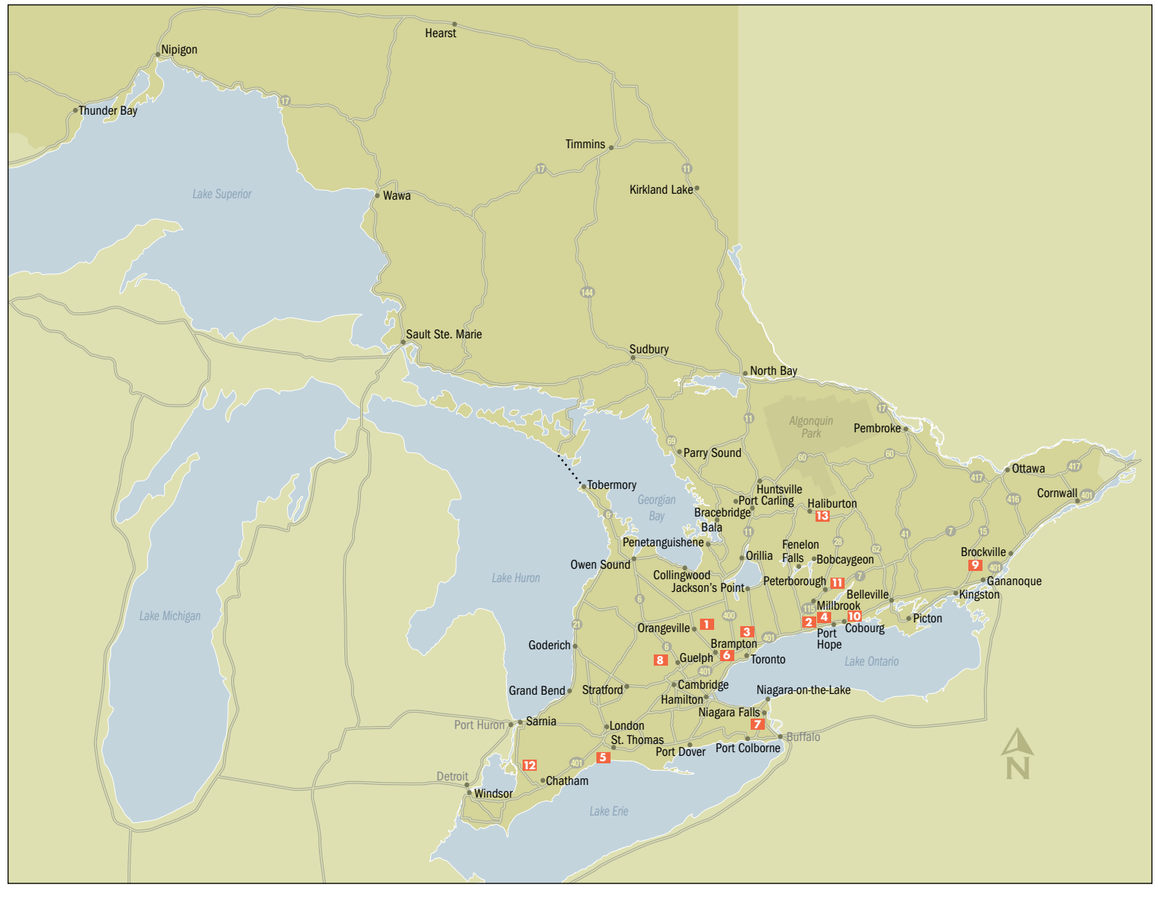

Ontario Travel Information Centres (OTICs)

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Core hours of operation: daily all year long from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Closed on Christmas and New Year's Day. During the peak season from May to August, most centres have extended hours from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Check the hours of operation before you leave by calling the centre directly, by visiting **ontariotravel.net** or by calling **1-800-ONTARIO**.

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Hwy. 400 and Mapleview
21 Mapleview Drive East L4N 9H5
Tel: (705) 725-7280
Toll-Free: 1-800-567-1140
Fax: (705) 725-7285

Cornwall ($)
Seaway International Bridge
903 Brookdale Ave. K6J 4P3
Tel: (613) 933-2420
Fax: (613) 933-3387

Fort Erie
Peace Bridge in the Ontario Welcome Centre
350 Bertie Street, Unit 1 L2A 6S6
Tel: (905) 871-3505
Fax: (905) 871-6461

Fort Frances ($)
Fort Frances International Bridge
400 Central Ave. P9A 1X8
Tel: (807) 274-7566
Fax: (807) 274-7870

Niagara Falls ($)
Rainbow Bridge
5355 Stanley Ave. L2E 7C2
Tel: (905) 358-3221
Fax: (905) 358-6441

St. Catharines ($)
Westbound QEW at east end of Garden City Skyway
RR 4, Niagara-on-the-Lake L0S 1J0
Tel: (905) 684-6354
Fax: (905) 684-3634

Sarnia ($)
Blue Water Bridge
1455 Venetian Blvd. N7T 7W7
Tel: (519) 344-7403
Fax: (519) 332-4576

Sault Ste. Marie ($)
Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge
261 Queen St. West P6A 1A3
Tel: (705) 945-6941
Fax: (705) 945-6943

Toronto Atrium On Bay ($)
Location:
20 Dundas Street West M5G 2C2
Mailing address:
Atrium on Bay, PO Box 162
595 Bay Street, Toronto M5G 2C2
Tel: (416) 314-5900
Fax: (416) 314-5901

Windsor Huron ($)
Ambassador Bridge
1235 Huron Church Rd. N9C 2K6
Tel: (519) 973-1310
Fax: (519) 973-1313

Windsor Park ($)
Detroit/Windsor Tunnel
110 Park St. East N9A 3A9
Tel: (519) 973-1338
Fax: (519) 973-1341

SEASONAL CENTRES
(MAY TO OCTOBER)

Hawkesbury
777 Hwy. 417, RR 1
Chute-à-Blondeau K0B 1B0
Tel: (613) 674-2000
Fax: (613) 674-2689

Hill Island
700 Hwy. 137
RR 1, Lansdowne K0E 1L0
Tel: (613) 659-2108
Fax: (613) 659-2102

Kenora
Ontario/Manitoba Border
Hwy. 17
c/o General Delivery
Keewatin P0X 1C0
Tel: (807) 468-2495
Fax: (204) 349-8339

Lancaster
20806 County Rd. 2 and Hwy. 401
RR 1 K0C 1N0
Tel: (613) 347-3498
Fax: (613) 347-3435

Pigeon River
7671 Hwy. 61
Neebing P7L 0A2
Tel: (807) 964-2094
Fax: (807) 964-2029

Prescott
1033 Hwy. 16
PO Box 1600 K0E 1T0
Tel: (613) 925-3346
Fax: (613) 925-1462

Rainy River
201 Atwood Ave.
PO Box 100 P0W 1L0
Tel: (807) 852-4449
Fax: (807) 852-3124

($) Currency exchange on site

Ontario

In Ontario all roads lead to discovery!

? Indicates location of **Ontario Travel Information Centre**. See page 130 for locations, addresses and hours of operations. Correct at time of printing.

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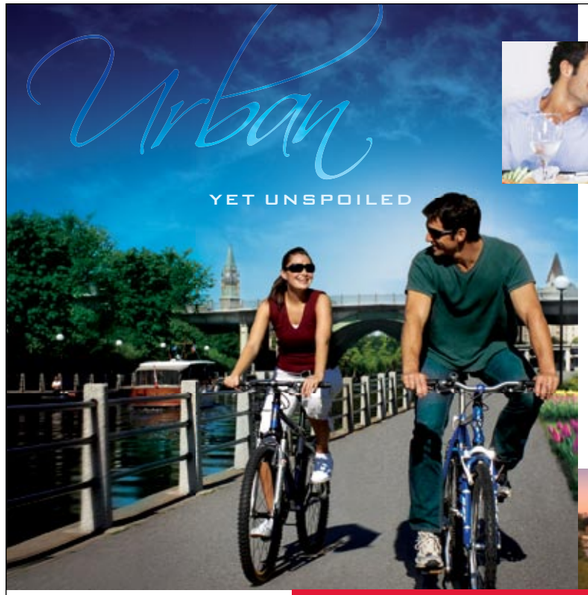

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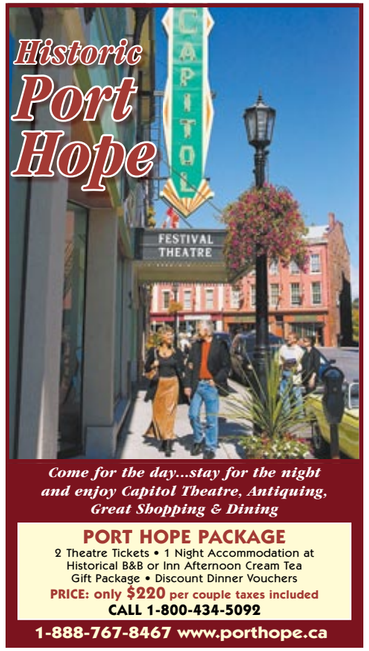
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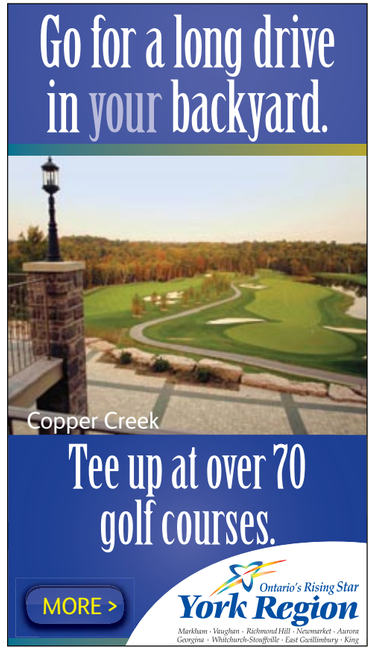
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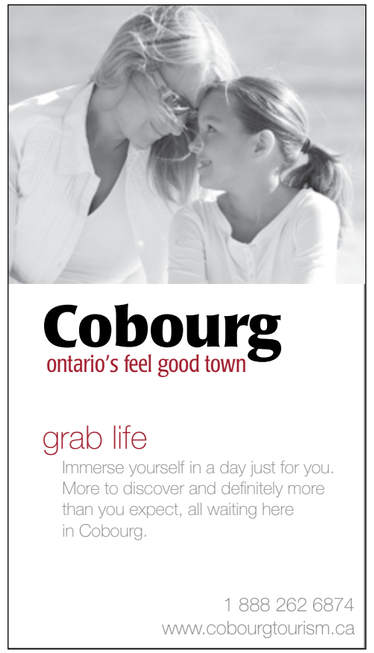
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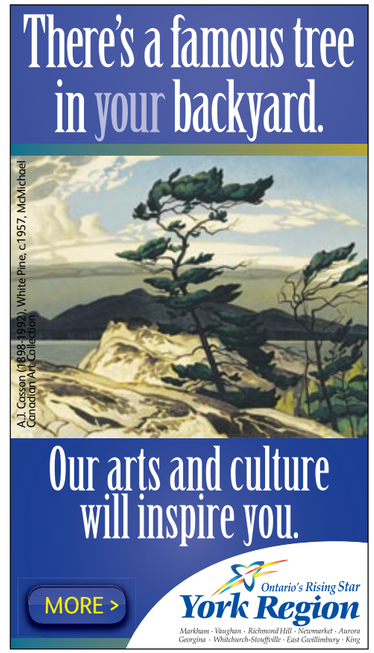
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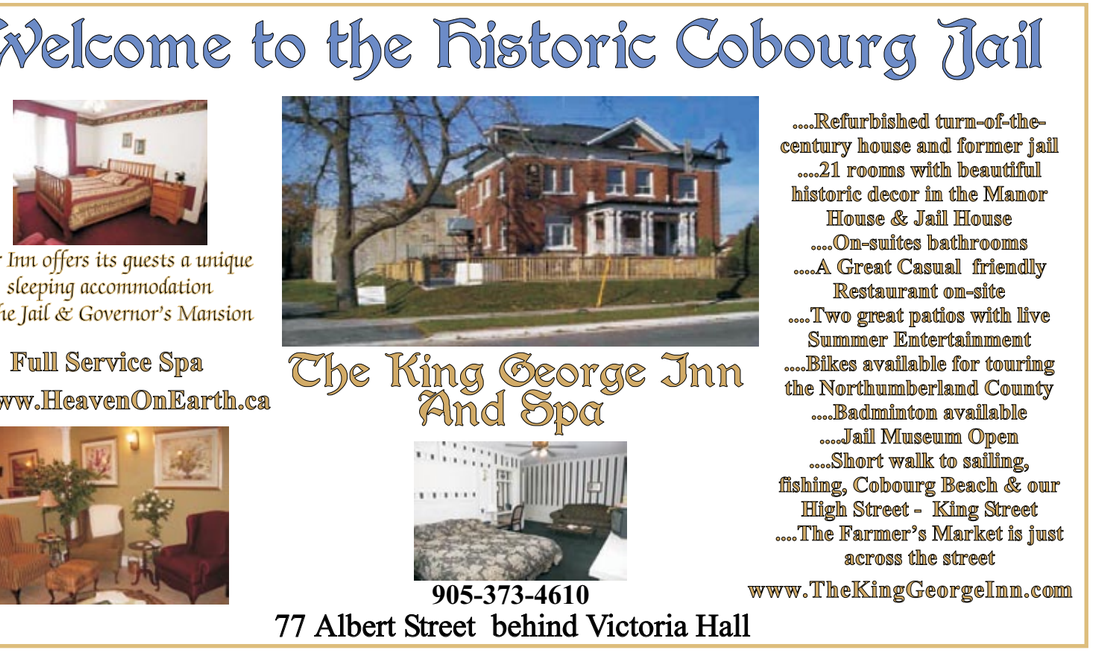
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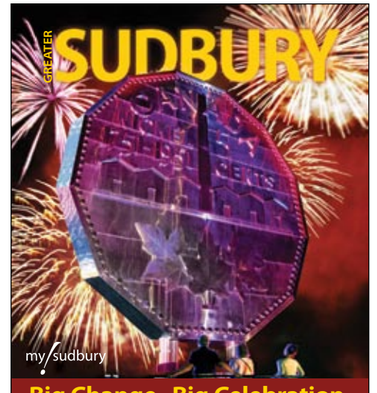

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2008 Special Events and Highlights

• **Huron Carol Exhibit**: All season • **Aboriginal Festival**: June 14 - 15 • **National Aboriginal Day**: June 21 • **Paddlefest**: July 19 - 20 • **Thanksgiving Harvest Festival & Arts and Crafts Show**: October 11-12 • **Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre POW WOW**, Sainte-Marie Park: September 6-7 • **First Light**: Evenings, December 4, 5, 6

Restaurant and Gift Shop on site. For historic site opening dates, please call 705-526-7838 or visit www.hhp.on.ca

Ontario

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• **Naval Re-enactors presenting "Bayfield's School of the Sailor"; visiting Tall Ships** : July 19-20
• **Métis Day**: August 9
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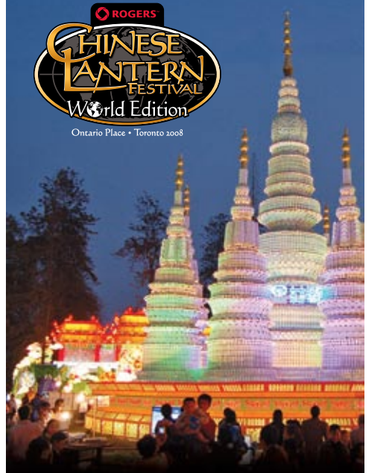

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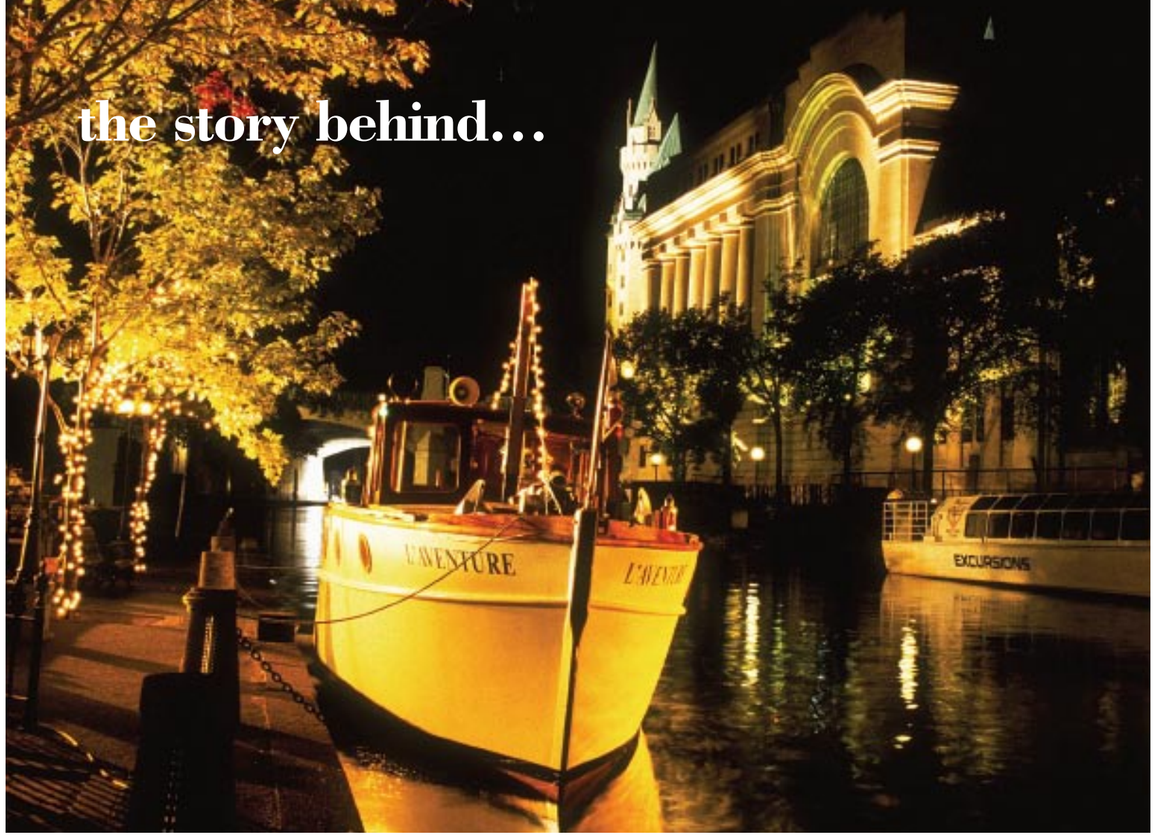

THE RIDEAU CANAL

One of Ontario's great waterways, the Rideau Canal, is a popular place for skating, boat cruises and recreational activities. This man-made canal winds for more than 200 km (125 mi.) from Kingston to Ottawa. But how did this extraordinary channel come to be?

Following the War of 1812, Upper Canada (modern-day Ontario) was still under threat from the United States. The St. Lawrence River was the province's vital shipping route but it flowed through American territory, leaving Upper Canada vulnerable. And so the idea of transforming the Ottawa River into an alternative shipping route took shape. A bold system of large locks was created to allow large steamboats to be raised and lowered between the small connected streams of the Cataraqui River. In recognition of this impressive, historic engineering feat, the Rideau Canal was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007, an Ontario first. Although its use as a shipping route has long passed, this great canal remains a proud part of Ontario's history. MO

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The Rideau Canal inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2007
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