

COSMOPOLITAN TORONTO

Hip fashion, bold architecture and multi-culti cuisine: Canada's 'melting pot' city is stirring stuff

New York and the likes have hogged the citybreak limelight long enough. **Toronto** is North America's true one-stop shop. Some call it Chicago North or Manhattan Lite; but what the city is 'lite' on is crime, grime, crowds – and your wallet. Gentrification has swept away the grit, yet hipsters can still afford cocktails, sushi and a damn good time. Take that, Big Apple.

By Ellen Himelfarb

WHAT TO SEE & DO

- Hop on a streetcar to Kensington Market (www.kensington-market.ca), which **lives the city's immigrant history – in a five-block precinct**. Moroccan spice merchants and Portuguese fishmongers holler greetings at Jewish milliners across the road, while nose-ringed students prop up taco stands, then rummage around in the vintage boutiques.
- Within smelling distance is 'Chinatown proper', the oldest of Toronto's five Chinatowns, where **fruit-sellers hawk spiky purple specimens and apothecaries stock potions** to cure all your sightseeing aches. The restaurants, hidden behind hanging pig carcasses and squid-infested tanks, shouldn't be feared – the *congees* (rice porridge) and stir-fries are delicious.
- Beneath the Victorian turrets of the Annex district are **boho cafes where rockers roll fags and academics play chess** instead of studying at the nearby University of **Toronto** campus – an inner-city idyll of grand old colleges and space-age towers.
- Take the subway to Union Station and head east to St Lawrence. Roam St Lawrence Market (www.stlawrencemarket.com; ①), a **United Nations of food peddlers**, for Polish salami, Montréal bagels and *babaganoush* dips. Across Front St is the 1892 Flatiron Building (②) with its *trompe l'oeil* mural, now out of place against the backdrop of skyscrapers. From here, follow the historic walk marked along the pavement – it'll lead you to the design district, where Old and

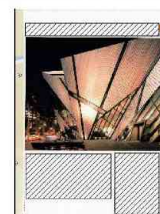
New **Toronto** live side by side in wood and steel.

- The Distillery District (www.thedistillerydistrict.com) is like a scene out of some urban bodice-ripper: **an eerily preserved Victorian village**. It's now an arty destination full of galleries and brasseries, but these warehouses once formed the second-largest film location outside Hollywood.
- The Noughties were kind to architectural **Toronto**. In 2007, The Royal Ontario Museum (00 1 416 586 8000, www.rom.on.ca; £14; ③) was given a spectacular new 'crystal' extension, designed by Daniel Libeskind. The following year, Frank Gehry unveiled his titanium-and-glass refurb of the Art Gallery of Ontario (00 1 416 979 6648, www.ago.net; £12; ④). A short stroll north takes you to the Bata Shoe Museum (00 1 416 979 7799, www.batashoemuseum.ca; £8; ⑤), which **resembles a shoebox with its lid ajar**.
- There's more cool glass at the Modernist Eaton Centre mall (220 Yonge St; ⑥). Blow your budget at the shops, then join the party at the piazza across the street – **there's always a concert, play or flea market in full swing**.
- The city's neo-punks, mods and rockers get sartorial inspiration on Queen Street West. Just about **every worthy local designer has a shop front here**, amid the cafes and clubs that have become hubs for stylemakers and scenesters. Watch them glide past over Martinis on the patio of Rivoli (00 1 416 597 0794, www.rivoli.ca; ⑦).
- The priapic CN Tower (301 Front St W; 00 1 416 868 6937, www.cntower.ca; from £15; ⑧) is the world's tallest freestanding structure and

unofficial symbol of the city. If you fancy a view, travel up to the 'look out' and glass floor. Or, if you prefer your **views with a sundowner**, head to Canoe (66 Wellington St; 00 1 416 364 0054, www.oliverbonacini.com; ⑨), the swish restaurant atop the TD Bank Tower. >

WHERE TO STAY

- **Howard Johnson** (89 Avenue Rd; 00 1 416 964 1220, www.hojo.com; ⑩). Here's a rarity: a central family hotel that hasn't gone designer. It's cheap, too, despite its location virtually on top of the city's poshest boutiques and restaurants. Doubles from £60, B&B.
- **Madison Manor** (20 Madison Ave; 00 1 416 922 5579, www.madisonavenuepub.com; ⑪). Most Torontonians come of age at the Madison, a Victorian pub near the university. Next door, the owners run this cheap 'n' cheerful B&B with fireplaces and a fine continental breakfast. Doubles from £60, B&B.
- **Gladstone Hotel** (1214 Queen St W; 00 1 416 531 4635, www.gladstonehotel.com; ⑫). 'Gladstone' used to be local parlance for dosshouse, due to this hotel's former life. No longer – each room was taken on by a Canadian talent and designed to a unique theme. Exposed brick and a hand-operated elevator are vestiges of its past. Doubles from £80, B&B.
- **Cosmopolitan Toronto** (8 Colborne St; 00 1 416 350 2000, www.cosmotoronto.com; ⑬). This



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place follows the new rules of hospitality: make it modern, Eastern and smart. It bills itself as a 'Zen-like haven', with floor-to-ceiling windows and meditation mats in all the 'suites'. Doubles from £115, B&B.

Hotel Le Germain (30 Mercer St; 00 1 416 345 9500, www.germaintoronto.com; (14)). The beige-on-beige Germain has all the sleek chic of a big luxury hotel, but it's firmly within the boutique category. You're as close to 'fun Toronto' as your dollar will take you, so shop, eat and dance 'til they kick you out at dawn. Doubles from £151, B&B.



SoHo Metropolitan (318

Wellington St W; 00 1 416 599 8800, www.metropolitan.com/soho; (15)). The look is soaring glass, with heated marble floors and a Dale Chihuly chandelier in the lobby. It's perhaps the only hotel in Canada with a 'sleep concierge' (to keep you stocked up with aromatherapy pillows). Doubles from £161, room only.



WHERE TO EAT

Terroni (720 Queen St W; 00 1 416 504 0320, www.terrioni.ca; (16)). Owned by Italians, served by Italians, patronised by Italians... You can't argue with the authenticity of the pizzas, pastas and warm Mediterranean service. Mains around £6.



Asian Legend (418 Dundas

St W, 00 1 416 977 3909, www.asianlegend.ca; (17)). Thou shalt not leave Toronto without sampling a steamed pork dumpling from the Legend. Toronto's only Chinese restaurant with fashion sense. Evenings have a bistro vibe. Mains around £9.

Grace (503 College St; 00 1 416 944 8884, www.gracerestaurant.ca; (18)). It's got beauty, buzz and flawless food. Dishes are homespun, from venison pot pie to apple pie; inventive salads, too. Mains around £13.

George (111C Queen St E; 00 1 416 863 6006, www.georgeonqueen.com; (19)). Five-star dining near trendy Leslieville. Tuck in to Eastern-themed lamb, lobster and tandoori guinea fowl with local veg, while a DJ plays on the patio. Mains around £16.

Lucien (36 Wellington St E; 00 1 416 504 9990, www.lucienrestaurant.com; (20)). International tapas is served in a shabby chic leather setting. Try Kobe beef tartare, yellowtail sashimi or oysters Rockefeller. Mains around £17.

C5 (100 Queen's Park; 00 1 416 586 7928, www.c5restaurant.ca; (3)). Sit inside Daniel Libeskind's crystal masterpiece cantilevered above posh Toronto. This restaurant in the Royal Ontario Museum is a destination in its own right, with outrageous fish-fowl medleys. Mains around £21.



NIGHTLIFE

The Beaconsfield (1154 Queen St W; (21)). Everything you want from a boozier: vintage exterior, glam interior, scenester clientele – in the heart of 'Queen West West', west of fashionable Ossington.

Arthurs (501 College St; (22)). Little Italy is home of the lounge. Arthurs is the latest and best, king of the cocktail and £10 glass of Veuve. DJs favour funk and soul.

Carens Wine and Cheese Bar (158 Cumberland St; (23)). Here's a cosy niche for toasting your impulse buys at the pricey local boutiques. The focus is on wine and cheese... and prime people-watching.

The Green Room (296 Brunswick Ave; (24)). A caveat to over-30s: you might be mistaken for a professor. Best adopt the local camouflage of Converse trainers, beatnik demeanour and a pint.



WHERE TO SHOP

Holt Renfrew (50 Bloor St W; (25)). The Selfridges of Canada is HQ for runway fashion, including the labels locals find irresistible.



Club Monaco (157 Bloor St W; (26)).

CM's sleek, neutral tailoring is best suited to Toronto's slender Asian population, but everyone goes for its timeless, high-fashion accessories – at mid-range prices.

Over the Rainbow (101 Yorkville Ave; (27)). It's a jeans genius, known for quarterly sales that will cure your denim blues.

Preloved (881 Queen St W; (28)). This neighbourhood legend is popular for vintage cast-offs, expertly reconfigured in the latest silhouettes.

Pho Pa (698 Queen St W; (29)). Bring home a one-off outfit. The Canadian designers it stocks are exclusive to the store. ■

Ask the local



Cristina Burgess has lived in **Toronto** most of her life and owns **Augustina Boutiques (138 Cumberland St)**

'I start my weekends at Patachou (1120

Yonge St; 00 1 416 927 1105; (30) with a *café au lait* and croissant, then **spend the morning browsing the design shops** nearby. For an afternoon's gallery-hopping,

The Gardiner Museum (00 1 416 586 8080, www.gardinermuseum.on.ca; £8; (31)) has an **amazing ceramics collection**. And the Corkin Gallery (00 1 416 979 1980; free; (32)) represents the best local artists. If I'm hosting friends from out of town, I **begin the evening with a drink and a view at The Roof Lounge** of the Park Hyatt (4 Avenue Rd; (33)). Next, we head to College Street for *pasta limone* at Trattoria Giancarlo (41 Clinton St; mains around £12; (34)) and a nightcap at Teatro (505 College St; (35)). You can't get a taxi for your life between midnight and 1am, so **make it a late one.**'



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Get me there

GO INDEPENDENT

Air Canada (0871 220 1111, www.aircanada.com) flies direct to Toronto from Heathrow from £462 return.
BA (0844 493 0787, www.ba.com) operates the same route from £463. **Canadian Affair** (020 7616 9999, www.canadianaffair.com) has direct charter flights with Air Transat and Thomas Cook from Gatwick, Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow from £298.

GO PACKAGED

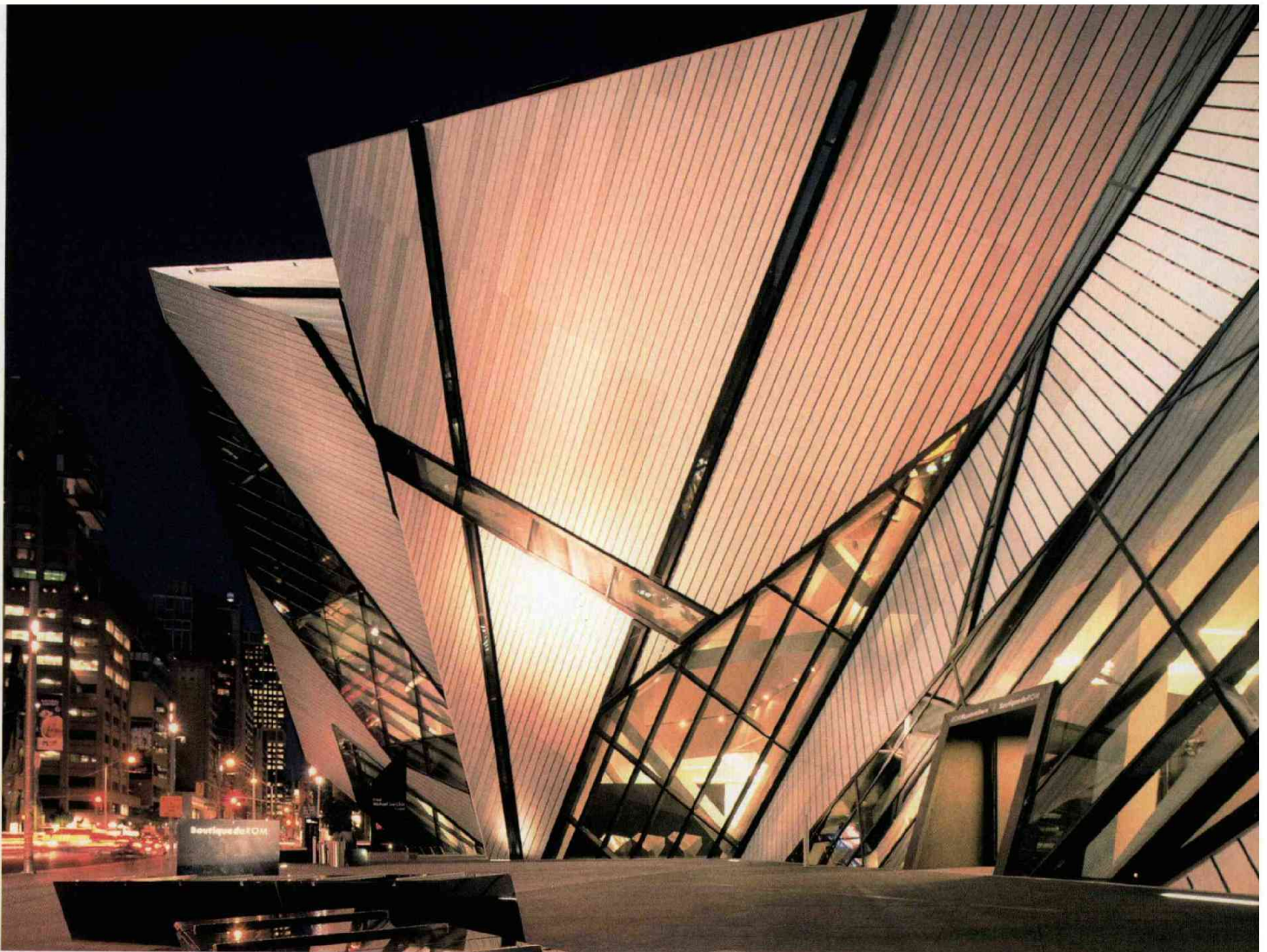
Canada Travel Specialists (0871 226 0475, www.canadatravelspecialists.com) has a three-night Toronto Short Break package from £499pp, room only, including flights from Manchester.
Canadian Sky (0870 904 0930, www.canadiansky.co.uk) has an 11-night Eastern Explorer package, with three nights in Toronto, two nights in Montréal and a night in

Niagara Falls, from £1,599pp, including all breakfasts, one lunch, one dinner and flights.
Flight Centre (0800 587 0058, www.flightcentre.co.uk) offers a seven-night East Coast Canada Fly-Drive package from £489pp, including flights from Heathrow and car hire.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Toronto Tourism: 00 1 416 203 2600, www.seetorontonow.com.

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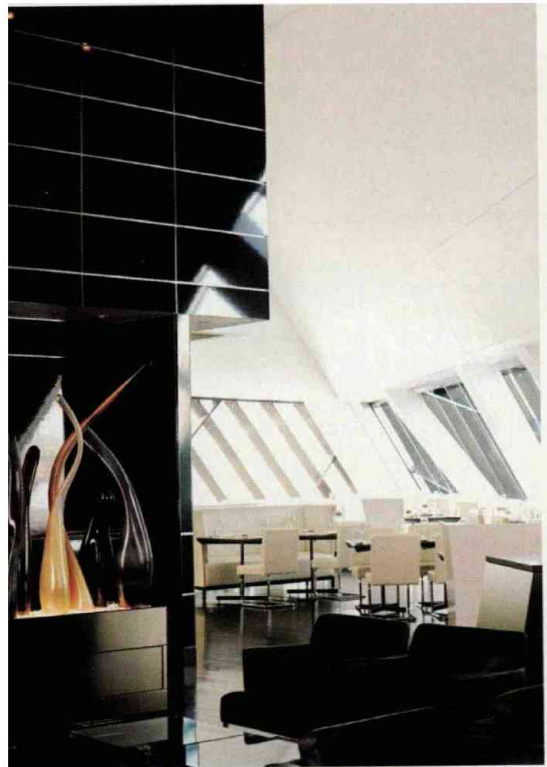
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Rise and shine: from left, the 'crystal' extension at the Royal Ontario Museum; Kensington Market; unofficial city symbol, the CN Tower; one of the city's five Chinatowns

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Bathing beauty: from left, whirlpool tub at the Cosmopolitan Toronto's spa; the SoHo Metropolitan bar; C5 restaurant in the Royal Ontario Museum – inspired by the resident gem collection