



Toronto's Neighbourhoods

Toronto is an exciting urban centre made up of diverse and colourful neighbourhoods and regions, creating a rich mosaic of cultures and lifestyles. With more than 100 cultures celebrated in Greater Toronto, visitors can enjoy art, ideas and cuisine from around the world, all within easy reach of each other. From tantalizing world cuisine and oodles of shopping to areas teeming with history, Toronto's neighbourhoods offer the kinds of experiences that unfold when diverse ideas, cultures and lifestyles mix, mingle and thrive.

Financial District and Underground City

Location: *The area from University Avenue to Yonge Street between Dundas in the north and Front Street in the south*

Soaring architectural marvels fill the horizon in Toronto's Financial District. This bustling business core, centred on Bay and King Streets, is home to banks, corporate head offices, law firms, Toronto Stock Exchange and stockbrokerages and other big businesses. But under the glass, concrete and steel monoliths reaching skywards, a whole other city thrives below the surface and is known as Toronto's Underground City. The PATH, or Toronto's Underground City, is a subterranean shopping concourse that weaves its way for more than 27 kilometres (16 miles) beneath the financial core. With close to 1,200 retail shops, cafés and restaurants, the Underground City connects to 48 office towers, six hotels and five subway stations.

Upon making it back to the surface, the architectural wonders of the Finance District deserve an up close and personal glimpse. The dozens of towering glass, concrete and steel monoliths are a must-see for architecture enthusiasts, as well as the many public statues and pieces of art dotting the districts sphere. Joe Fafard's *The Pasture*, a herd of seven bronze cows in the TD Centre courtyard, is the perfect place to relax while touring Toronto's core.

Nathan Phillips Square is the home of City Hall, and where sightseers can view Toronto's historical Old City Hall, which lies adjacent to the new building and remains as one of Toronto's more prominent structures with its distinctive clock tower. Along with its outdoor skating rink, many public festivals and events and ethnic street food offerings, Nathan Phillips Square is home to one of Toronto's many farmer markets every Wednesday from June to October.

Famous sites: Hockey Hall of Fame, Union Station and Old City Hall

Hidden gems: The Design Exchange and the galleria in Brookfield Place

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Queen's Quay Terminal at Harbourfront

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Entertainment District

Location: The area roughly from University to Spadina Avenue between Richmond and Front Streets

The Toronto Entertainment District is not only home to Canada's most recognizable icon the CN Tower, but it also houses internationally-renowned theatres and performing arts centres, boasts four major-league sports teams at their home venues, and an array of cultural and family attractions. In continuing to represent Toronto's true artistic and cultural identity, the Entertainment District will bring a new addition to its streets with Bell Lightbox, the soon to be home base for world renowned Toronto International Film Festival. In Bell Lightbox, everything that is remarkable about the moving image art form will be gathered in this permanent location and presented through innovative cross-media exhibitions, lectures and film-related learning opportunities for all ages.

Aside from the arrival of the film culture, the area is home to Canada's public broadcasting centre the CBC, lavish Broadway musicals, travelling shows, home-grown productions, classical concerts and comedy shows. Theatres include the Pantages, the Royal Alexandra, the Princess of Wales, the Elgin & Winter Garden Theatre Centre, Roy Thomson Hall and Massey Hall. Not to be missed is The Second City, the renowned comedy centre where Canadian comedy legends gained their name including Dan Aykroyd and Martin Short.

Sports fans can also visit Rogers Centre (formerly SkyDome), which is a stellar entertainment centre and home to the Toronto Blue Jays baseball team, the Toronto Argonauts football club and an exciting roster of big-name concerts, sporting events and trade shows.

With world leading hotel brands, boutique accommodations, and "condotels", the Entertainment District is the ideal area for the discerning patron. An urban neighbourhood packed with a wide array of restaurants, bars and nightclubs, it features something for every taste. The jam-packed neighbourhood is the undisputed entertainment capital of Canada and is the site of Canada's Walk of Fame, located along King Street. Theatres, music, film and fun for all is the only way to describe Toronto's Entertainment District, which is always pulsing with creativity.

Famous sites: Princess of Wales Theatre, Royal Alexandra Theatre, Rogers Centre, Roy Thomson Hall, Second City, CN Tower

Hidden gems: CBC Museum and Steam Whistle Brewing

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Church Wellesley Village

Location: *Mostly along Church Street, centred at Wellesley Avenue*

Toronto is home to Canada's largest gay community and this vibrant neighbourhood welcomes visitors from all walks of life. The Gay Village, or "The Village" as the locals call it, is a predominantly gay neighbourhood nestled within Toronto's downtown core and located at the intersection of Church and Wellesley Streets. Surrounded by an eye-catching combination of skyscrapers and well-aged European style churches, the area is packed with cafes, restaurants, gay-oriented shops and a vast array of hot bars and nightspots.

If not only for its renowned summer patios, intoxicating nightlife and sense of playfulness, The Village is also known for its annual festival frenzies. Each year this neighbourhood plays host to the infamous Pride Week and Halloween, which are both known world-wide for their enthralling parties.

The end of June is the perfect time for a trip to The Village, when visitors can partake in Pride Week, one of the largest pride festivals in the world, and third largest in North America. This ten-day queer celebration turns streets into parades and parking lots into parties, and draws a crowd of over a million supporters from around the globe. With concerts, galas, and cultural events throughout, the festival climaxes on its last day with the famous Pride Parade that takes over Toronto's Yonge Street and fills it with all the colours of the rainbow. Pride participants welcome all to join, always drop their inhibitions, and sometimes their clothes.

Attend Halloween in October to see costumed revelers dressed to shock, and experience the fun and frivolity of this wicked week-long Halloween celebration. Think costumed mayhem, free-flowing cocktails, fashion, entertainment and countless cute trick-or-treaters. With a drag swap, fright-fall film festival and the best costume party of the year, Halloween is not to be missed.

Despite the many shops and rousing parties, people-watching remains one of the most popular Village pastimes. On any given day, hot boys and hot girls fill Church Street, The Village's main thoroughway, with energy, passion and opportunity.

The Gay Village is an international destination known around the world for its electrifying street events, shops, bars and services but also for the many different types of people that walk its streets. Since 2003 when Ontario announced that same-sex marriages would be allowed, thousands of couples from across the continent have flocked to Toronto to get hitched in this Canadian playground. The Gay Village has become an epicentre for the open minded destination traveller.

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Famous sites: Zelda's Restaurant Bar Patio, Woody's (featured in American version of *Queer as Folk* as the hot gay hangout)

Hidden gems: Enjoy an Alexander Wood beer, brewed and bottled exclusively for The Village

Bloor-Yorkville

Location: *On and around Bloor Street between Avenue Road and Yonge Street, including Cumberland and Yorkville Avenues to the north*

Yorkville, Toronto's original bohemian enclave in the 1960's, has long given way to designer boutiques, high end hotels, restaurants where locals go to see and be seen and a seemingly never-ending parade of Mazzeratis and Ferraris dotting Cumberland and Yorkville Avenues. The area features small courtyards and alleyways, including the contemporary Yorkville Park. In the very heart of the neighbourhood, therein lies this Yorkville Park where a smooth as marble giant boulder (that was carved out of the Canadian Shield) lies beside a fountain wall, providing visitors with the utmost tranquil setting fit only for the upper crust.

Hailed as the "Mink Mile", Bloor-Yorkville is one of Toronto's more elegant shopping areas. Chic residents and visitors alike frequent this small stretch of Bloor Street for the finest fashions, china and décor. Continue a few steps north of Bloor and be rewarded with Yorkville's stunning designer boutiques, antique shops, clubs and galleries. International fashion fiends will find all the major labels here including Prada, Gucci, Boss, Escada, Chanel, Hermes, Louis Vuitton and more. Shoppers can also freshen up their wardrobe with unique fashions from the hottest Canadian designers, including Jeremy Lang, Hoax Couture, Izzy Camilleri and Nadya Toto.

During the Toronto International Film Festival, considered by Variety magazine to be second only to Cannes in terms of high-profile pics, stars and market activity, it is the gleam of high-priced art, haute couture and fine dining that draws stars, fans and paparazzi to Bloor-Yorkville.

When walking through this elegant neighbourhood, a visit to Canada's largest museum of world culture and natural history, the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), is a must. The sleek yet jutting style of the museum's renaissance renovation by famed architect Daniel Libeskind has added to the grace and style of this famed neighbourhood. The ROM's Michael Lee Chin Crystal protrudes with confidence from the 19th century original museum structure. Named as one of the seven architectural wonders of the world by Conde Nast Traveler, the Crystal houses permanent and temporary exhibits along with one of the city's most sought after dining spots of C5.

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Famous sites: Visit the famed and rebuilt Sassafras for celebrity sightings, Holt Renfrew, Royal Ontario Museum

Hidden gems: Thomas Hinds Tobacconist and the Zen garden inside Jeanne Lottie Fashion Inc.

The Annex

Location: *The area between Bloor to Dupont Streets and Avenue Road to Bathurst Street*

Bohemia and academe meet head on in this lively downtown community surrounding the University of Toronto and neighbour of chic Bloor -Yorkville. Stretching for a kilometre along Bloor Street West between Bathurst and Spadina, the Annex offers visitors an intoxicating blend of beautiful old homes, art galleries, theatres, beatnik coffee shops, bookstores, discount shopping, restaurants and bars.

The Annex has no problem drawing a crowd of all likes of people, making it the perfect Toronto neighbourhood to partake in the tourist's beloved past time of people watching. From hipsters to art folk and eco freaks, musicians to intellectuals, the Annex will satisfy a visitors' thirst for an inside glimpse of how Torontonians new and old are updating the vibe of this neighbourhood with their unique trends and trinkets.

With its arraying blend of residents from all walks of life, the Annex is a great place to idle away a few hours browsing through independent book and music stores, antique and eco-friendly shops and organic retailers. To fit in with the locals be sure to include a visit to Honest Ed's, the landmark discount store founded by the late philanthropist Ed Mirvish, and a stop at some of the oldest taverns or most modern martini bars lining the street.

The Annex is a vibrant and colourful community in the heart of Toronto and when evening falls, citizens of this community come out to play in the neighbourhood's many restaurants, bars and patios. These social hot spots offer food and drink from around the world and present the pulsating soundtracks of both international and local artists.

A tour through the Annex wouldn't be complete without a peek at the one-of-a-kind Bata Shoe Museum. Complete with four floors of gallery space devoted to the history and advent of the beloved wardrobe accomplice the shoe, the museum also boasts a showroom of celebrity soles including those of Marilyn Monroe and Buddy Holly.

Completing a tour through the Annex must include a stroll by the homes of the residents who inhabit this diverse region. Built mainly from the 1880's to early 1900's, the assortment of homes

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are fine examples of a wide array of architectural styles including Victorian, Queen Anne, Edwardian, Georgian, English cottage and Romanesque. This neighbourhood is a true testament of Toronto's eclectic mix of history and diversity at its very best.

Famous sites: Casa Loma, Honest Ed's (Toronto's original discount emporium), Bata Shoe Museum

Hidden gems: Mirvish Village (next to Honest Ed's), a street filled with chic boutiques and bistros

Koreatown

Location: *Lies between Markham and Christie Streets along Bloor Street*

Koreatown, which can be found when continuing west through The Annex, is one of Toronto's younger neighbourhoods, yet this is certainly not reflected in the sights of this boulevard that is lined with authentic Korean diners, specialty shops and clothing boutiques.

The joy of Koreatown lies in the process of discovery. When night falls, it's not only time to chow down, but also seek out one of the many local karaoke bars. The Karaoke bars of this neighbourhood are perhaps the most beloved and frequented in the city. The two big ones - XO Karaoke and BMB Karaoke are both open late, and unlike other karaoke spots in the area, feature large private party rooms for the serious singers.

Some of the most fun to be had in Koreatown is in searching for the best specialty store to buy a huge tub of kimchee, sampling pork bone soups in one of the many no frills eateries, comparing bibimbaps and freshly made walnut cakes or grabbing a seat at the 24 hours Boounee restaurant. For the "less adventurous", many of the Korean-owned restaurants also offer a decent line-up of sushi and tempura.

Days spent in Koreatown are filled with leisurely browsing and exploring, and should include a stop at the grassy knolled Christie Pits Park where hipster drum circles can be heard from the far end of this closely knit neighbourhood. In the winter, the park is also a popular place for tobogganing. Other active pursuits should include cruising local grocery stores, relaxing with a green-tea infused drink or browsing through high-end boutiques featuring vibrant Korean fashions. For the exploratory type, visiting one of the area's acupuncture clinics or herbalists is a must.

Each year Koreatown presents its signature event, the Dano Festival, where visitors can witness spectacular martial arts demonstrations, exotic dancing and music within the neighbourhood Christie Pits Park.

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Famous sites: 24 hours Booungee restaurant, Karaoke at one of many venues

Hidden gems: Dano Festival for Korean culture and food

Chinatown

Location: Dundas Street West and Spadina Avenue

The corner of Spadina and Dundas Street West wouldn't look at all out of place in the middle of Hong Kong. The crowds of people and the buzzing activity add to the captivating atmosphere of Toronto's downtown Chinatown. Elegantly stroked Chinese characters grace store and street signs. Oriental shops and markets with exotic fruits and vegetables spill onto the sidewalk, where grocers literally sing as they invite street goers to browse their selection.

Chinatown prides itself on the wide variety of authentic Asian cuisine it offers. A bountiful selection of Chinese, Thai, Japanese and Vietnamese restaurants spread throughout this genuine neighbourhood. Visitors can experience Peking duck served in two courses at the Bright Pearl, fabulous dim sum that's available all day long at Golden Leaf, or for real Vietnamese beef pho visit Pho Hung with the red cow on its sign.

Delicious food and constant excitement give more than enough reason to visit Chinatown, but it gets better. Toronto's Chinese New Year celebrations rival those of the ancestral homeland. Attend this vivacious celebration to see spectacular decorations, dancing dragons and endless amounts of food that accompany the festivities each year.

Toronto contains Canada's largest Chinese population, and therefore extends the Asian communities far beyond the main downtown Chinatown. In total, the greater area of Toronto includes six Chinatowns. "Chinatown East" lays between Broadview and Gerrard, originated in 1970s and now consists of ethnic street-level businesses. Next are Agincourt, or "Scarborough Chinatown", and Mississauga Chinatown. Comprised of Chinese retail shops, these neighbourhoods are the city's suburban Chinatowns located along the arterial roads in the former municipality of Scarborough, and to the west in the City of Mississauga. Richmond Hill-Markham is Toronto's "Chinatown North" and originated in the 1980s due to an influx of wealthy Asian business families searching for newer high-end housing on larger lots.

Famous sites: The Art Gallery of Ontario and the Bright Pearl or Golden Leaf restaurants for dim sum

Hidden gems: Look up to see gorgeous street sculptures along Spadina, including a dragon and a black cat on a chair.

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Kensington

Location: Northwest of Dundas Street West and Spadina Avenue, on Baldwin, Augusta, St. Andrew and Kensington Streets

Toronto's Kensington Market, the neighbouring precinct of Chinatown, is the city's absolute hipster centre and hub for counter-culture and is a maze of narrow streets and alleys, many of which are lined with brightly-coloured Victorian houses presenting their wares and trinkets. During the 1920's, it was known as the Jewish Market and its offerings today are indicative of a time when Jewish families would set up stands in front of their homes and sell their goods to one another. This was the start of Toronto's famous Kensington Market.

In today's Kensington Market, you can sense the city's rich multicultural mix, obvious in the shops packed with goods from Europe, the Caribbean, the Middle East, South America and Asia. Kensington Market is where the city's cultural mosaic comes together creatively and collaboratively, giving visitors a Toronto experience unlike any other.

Kensington will provide visitors with a sensory trip around the world and access to a treasure trove of vintage and second-hand clothing shops tucked in among eclectic restaurants and cafés. The energetic neighbourhood truly comes to life when it hosts its summer long Pedestrian Sundays. On the last Sunday of the month during June, July and August roads are closed to vehicular traffic and the entire city and its visitors come out to play within an eclectic mirage of foodie vendors, marketers selling everything from antiques to restored vintage clothing and a constant flow of entertainment including spoken word poets, Brazilian capoeira dancers and buskers. This neighbourhood is filled with a passion that will pique all senses and have its guests coming back for more.

Every December 21, Kensington celebrates the winter solstice in a colourful pageant called the Kensington Karnival. The neighbourhood stages a traditional candlelit mummers' parade, with gigantic costumes and wonderfully atmospheric music. It takes place in late afternoon, after the sun goes down and the market is bustling with holiday shoppers.

Famous sites: In Kensington it's all about the cafés: Moonbeam Café, Hot Box Café (Toronto's first and only pot positive café), Number 10 Fire Station

Hidden gems: If you spot a [murmur] sign, call the phone number listed on it to hear a unique Toronto story.

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Fashion District

Location: Centered around the intersection of Spadina Avenue and King Street

Neighbouring Toronto's Chinatown along the Spadina Avenue stretch is the neighbourhood known as the Fashion District (or the Garment District) and holds the city's largest collection of fabric and fashion outlets. To find hot deals on even hotter styles in fabrics, leather and fur, this core region of Toronto is a must. For the outdoors types, check out the cluster of outdoor outfitters. The popular trend of this neighbourhood is buying direct from the manufacturer and saving loads of cash, or browsing through the large selection of affordable wedding gowns for those planning a trip down the aisle.

The district is easily accessible by the renowned Toronto streetcar, which is just as stylish and trendy as the fashions found within. Equally trendy is the infamous Spadina Hotel turned Global Village Backpackers, which has been dubbed the "Rock and Roll Hostel" and hosted the likes of Leonard Cohen, Jack Nicholson and the Rolling Stones.

Famous sites: The many fabric stores housing copious amounts of material, antique buttons and more

Hidden gems: Buying merchandise direct from local manufacturers to save on cash

Old Town Toronto (includes Corktown, St. Lawrence and King East)

Location: Stretching from Lakeshore Boulevard north to Queen Street, bound on either side by Yonge Street and the Don River

Old town Toronto is the site of the city's first settlement of Old York, and is now one of the most photogenic and charmingly unpretentious neighbourhoods. Past and present merge effortlessly in this historic hub, which contains the original 10 blocks that make up 19th-century Toronto. The region has developed into being the vibrant soul of a new city by offering fine dining, a lively nightlife along Front Street and blocks of historical architecture that tell the story of Toronto's young and vibrant past. Today, three historic buildings remain as the old city's social centre. The North Farmers' Market, South Market and Gallery and the beautifully restored St. Lawrence Hall, one of the most prominent landmarks of the neighbourhood, can all be explored in Old Town.

St. Lawrence is definitely the historic heart of Old Town and offers visitors a chance to see farmer's markets, antique bazaars and of course the area's main attraction, St. Lawrence Market. The Market is currently ranked as one of the top 25 markets in the world, according to *Food & Wine Magazine*. Culinary specialties here span the globe and vendors can also be found selling unusual

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crafts and gifts and ongoing entertainment in the form of art displays and live music.

St. Lawrence will surely keep anyone busy with its hustling and bustling atmosphere and quiet nature of historic churches and parks. On Saturdays the North Building of St. Lawrence Market springs to life at five in the morning. Local farmers start setting out their seasonal produce at first light, introducing 1,001 aromas and tempting tastes to the hall. The site also hosts a regular antique and old paper market. For snacking, follow the locals for a favourite Toronto tradition - the Canadian pea meal bacon sandwich. This signature snack of Toronto features salt- and sugar-cured extra-lean back bacon rolled in cornmeal, making the trip worth while.

Each year in August, St. Lawrence converts into a street side circus when it welcomes the wacky and wonderful world of Scotiabank BuskerFest. This festival, known as the last of the major festivals in the Toronto summer season features an eclectic array of street performers from across the world and presents this collection of world class street theatre to well over 500,000 spectators.

After enjoying a favourite signature dish at the market, King Street East should be the next stop on a tour through Old Town. King East is famous for its high end designer furniture stores, community college (the city's top culinary institute) and burgeoning restaurant scene. The antique and décor shops of this neighbourhood have the inhabitants of others swarming in on Saturdays, searching for the perfect ottoman and more.

After enjoying signature dishes at the Market and a stroll through King East shops, the Corktown region deserves a closer look and will provide an even further peek into Toronto's past. Corktown is rich with history but brand-new urban retrofitting developments and the presence of production and movie studios within vacated industrial buildings make the region one of Toronto's newest neighbourhoods to discover. Located just east of the original Town of York, Corktown was named after its early settlers in the 1800s that came from County Cork, Ireland, to make this neighbourhood their own little Irish ethnic enclave. Some say the presence of distilleries, breweries and cork-stopper manufacturers in the vicinity may also have secured the neighbourhood's nickname.

A visit to Corktown tells a story of the aspiration, strength and faith of a community, and the buildings that held their kinship together still stand strong. Pay a visit to the Trinity Schoolhouse, Toronto's first "free school", which has a museum housing a replica of a 19th-Century classroom.

Famous sites: St. Lawrence Market, The Flatiron Building, St. James Cathedral, St. Michael's Cathedral, Trinity Schoolhouse (Toronto's first "free school")

Hidden gems: Market Gallery, antique and decor shops along King Street East

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Cabbagetown & Leslieville

Location: Cabbagetown is set east of Parliament Street between Wellesley Avenue and Dundas Street East and Leslieville is bounded by Gerrard Street to the north, Empire Avenue to the west, Eastern Avenue to south, and Coxwell Avenue to the east

This historical Toronto neighbourhood is not only well known for its unusual name (originated in the mid-19th century when Irish settlers planted cabbage patches in their front yards), but is also notorious for having one of the largest concentration of Victorian houses on the continent, most of which have been beautifully restored. As one of the most attractive neighbourhoods in the city, residents take great pride in their historic community and a stroll down the main street is a must when in Toronto. The area charms visitors with its hodgepodge of restaurants, cafes and one-of-a-kind shops. Cabbagetown is quite literally a calm village within a bustling metropolis.

The neighbourhood was gentrified by affluent professionals beginning in the 1970s, and has been inhabited ever since by liberal artists, musicians and journalists as well as professors, doctors and social workers. Today, some traces of a 1960s counter-culture feeling are evident in the vintage clothing stores, gestalt therapy clinic and an adventure travel agency.

Adding to its small-town appeal is the Cabbagetown Festival held every September. This community-based week-long celebration features concerts, a film festival, a captivating dog show and tours of some of North America's most imaginative home renovations.

Cabbagetown sites include the tranquil gardens and greenhouses of Allan Gardens and Toronto's oldest cemetery - the Necropolis, where many famed Torontonians are buried. For families with children, Riverdale Farm is the perfect enclave where 7.5 acres of wooded pathways and ponds await to be explored.

Once the roots of Cabbagetown have been explored, the up and coming neighbourhood of Leslieville to the east is another ideal spot to discover. After many years of playing the role of little brother to the more developed Riverside, Leslieville has emerged as one of Toronto's hippest places to dine, drink, shop and live. Historically home to light industry and the Film District, it's now more known as one of Toronto's best brunch destinations and features some great cafes, vintage furniture, fashion and design stores. However, the film industry still boasts a strong presence in Leslieville with the especially noteworthy Filmport, a major film studio projected for completion in 2010. Once complete it will be the first studio in Toronto capable of accommodating large blockbuster movies that previously could not film in the city, and will hold the largest purpose-built soundstage in the world.

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Famous sites: Riverdale Farm (the original site of the Toronto Zoo) and Allan Gardens

Hidden gems: Necropolis (Toronto's oldest cemetery)

Distillery Historic District

Location: *The area bordered by Cherry and Parliament Streets from east to west, and Mill Street to Lakeshore Boulevard from north to south*

North America's largest and best preserved collection of Victorian industrial architecture, once home to the largest distillery in the British Empire, is located in this historic area in downtown Toronto. The Distillery Historic District, officially considered to be part of Old Town yet in a world all of its own, is a 13-acre historic enclave on Toronto's shoreline, complete with 45 19th-century buildings that have undergone careful restoration. Formerly the Gooderham & Worts Distillery, founded in 1832, the Distillery Historic District has been developed as a centre for arts, culture and entertainment.

The picturesque, pedestrian-only area is filled with over a hundred tenants, including galleries, museum, rehearsal halls, a theatre, boutiques, retail shops, artist studios, restaurants, bistros and cafés. The Distillery provides the utmost stunning architectural backdrop for its occupants, most of which feature post and beam finishes, amazing natural light and expansive ceilings. The Distillery bustles with activity day and night with live music, outdoor exhibitions, fairs and special events year-round.

In this district one can enjoy a motorized Segway tour, a seat in Toronto's largest patio neighbourhood, dozens of festivals each summer and free samples at the Brewpub of one of Canada's most popular beers. The precinct has also been featured in countless music videos, commercials, television shows and Hollywood blockbusters such as *Cinderella Man* and *Chicago*.

Famous sites: Over 800 feature films, including *Chicago* and *Cinderella Man*, have been filmed at the Distillery

Hidden gems: Soulpepper Theatre Company and a micro chocolate factory at SOMA

King West Village and Liberty Village

Location: *King West Village can be found on King Street from Yonge to Bathurst and Liberty Village is bounded by King at the north, west by Dufferin, east by Strachan Avenue and by the Gardiner Expressway in the south*

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Once a gritty industrial zone, King West Village has been reborn as the chic, dynamic cousin of trendy Queen Street West. Historic factory buildings still dot the area, but many have been converted to unique residential and commercial spaces making King West Village one of Toronto's latest in vogue neighbourhoods. However, despite its hipster status, the neighbourhood has quite a reputation for friendliness. For a taste of local history, belly up to the bar for a pint at the famous Wheat Sheaf Tavern which is Toronto's oldest bar serving patrons since 1848. There's even rumoured to be a tunnel from the bar to the barracks at Old Fort York so the British Redcoats could sneak back after one too many.

Foodies will delight in the gastronomic variety of this neighbourhood, which includes restaurants created by Canadian chefs and international culinary stars such as Susur Lee, David Lee, Mark Thuet and others. King West has given itself a branding makeover in the last decade and is now a destination for stylish, high-end restaurants, lounges and dance clubs and Toronto's best men's clothing store. The area has also become a creative hotbed for galleries, artists' studios and interior design and furniture shops with the most modern and contemporary offerings.

A visit to this neighbourhood should entail filling up on the gastronomic delights of its many restaurants, a sunset walk along Lake Ontario under the sheltering trees of nearby Coronation Park, followed with a fun-filled evening at some of the stylish bars and lounges.

Following west on King Street will lead sightseers into the once dotcom central of Liberty Village, which has parlayed its industrial roots into a hot spot for burgeoning Web 2.0 start-ups, film and television production companies and a growing residential community settling into former factories turned lofts. This budding neighbourhood will continue its gentrification as many Canadian and US design firms relocate to Liberty Village, creating a vibrant and successful atmosphere amidst the growing mix of restaurants and shops.

Famous sites: Academy of Spherical Arts, Coronation Park on beautiful Lake Ontario

Hidden gems: Restaurants of Canadian and International chefs cascade through King West

West Queen West

Location: Queen Street West, between Bathurst Street and Gladstone Avenue

Young, vibrant and bohemian-chic are great ways to describe the trendy neighbourhood of West Queen West. Unique restaurants, boutiques and a diverse collection of galleries make this neighbourhood a must-see. Visitors will find budding young artists displaying their works proudly in hip galleries and funky coffee shops, and the strong artistic presence doesn't stop there. It's no

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wonder this neighbourhood is home to the iconic media building that houses, among other studios, MuchMusic, Canada's answer to MTV, in a neo-Gothic terra cotta façade building that is no doubt the most recognizable on Queen Street West. The neighbourhood is also home to the largest concentration of art galleries in Toronto, including the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art.

The arrival of custom retailers, designers and artists has altered the face of the neighbourhood over the last decade. This neighbourhood is packed with an inspiring mix of original fashions, antiques and Art Deco creations. One can't help but notice that this funky but welcoming area hums with culture and creativity.

Galleries and retailers aside, this neighbourhood is also a great place to relax in local cafés and bistros where patrons can spot attention-grabbing outfits, piercings and one-of-a-kind leather getups. Voyeuristic cravings will be satisfied by open door tattoo shops inking their customers in large front windows for all to see. A stroll down West Queen West is unlike any other.

Aside from the liberal activities of Queen West inhabitants, the area is also home to beautiful Trinity-Bellwoods Park where interesting people, friendly dogs and organized drum circles keep the park constantly buzzing with activity.

Famous sites: Trinity Bellwoods Park, main studio complex of CTVglobemedia (that houses MuchMusic) where many events spill out onto the street during broadcasts

Hidden gems: Choose from a variety of over 40 art galleries, tucked into every available space

Parkdale

Location: Bounded by Queen Street in the north, Roncesvalles Avenue in the west and Dufferin Street in the east, and leading south to Lake Ontario

No longer the down and out neighbourhood it once was in the late 1900's Parkdale is slowly, but inevitably extending Queen Street West's rejuvenation past the Dufferin jog. This diverse community is home to Tibetan, North African and West Indian enclaves mixed in with some of Toronto's best vintage fashion, furniture and fabric stores. Popular new bars and live music venues such as Wrongbar happily co-exist with pub stalwarts like the Cadillac Lounge and Mitzi's Sister.

Parkdale experiences continuous signs of gentrification as West Queen West's sphere of influence extends further and further west. "Hipster" cafés, lounges, restaurants, condominiums, shops and a slew of art galleries are copping up in former "dive" structures, including internationally acclaimed

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boutique hotels The Drake and Gladstone. Local taverns receive new patronage from artists and urbanites seeking refuge and a peak into this recently discovered historical destination, which is known for its architecturally significant buildings from the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Notably, the area is also becoming a new gay village and as a result, has been deemed the alternate nickname of "Queer West Village".

Famous sites: Toronto's ultimate hipster boutique hotels The Drake and Gladstone Hotel

Hidden gems: Weekly gallery exhibit events along the Queen West strip offer the newest trend in nightlife

Little Italy

Location: College Street from Bathurst to Shaw Streets

In the years following World War II, Little Italy became the heart and soul of Toronto's Italian Community and is one of the original distinct neighbourhoods the city is now known for world-wide. Although Little Italy is now demographically more Portuguese, the atmosphere is still very much Italian.

This neighbourhood is all about fine conversation, laughter and good company at many of the area's "social clubs", such as the traditional Italian coffee shops or billiard halls. Little Italy's sidewalks are humming with activity on weekends - especially in the summer, with locals and visitors alike sipping espressos on outdoor patios. The traditional Italian trattorias are another perk of this authentic neighbourhood, which are known for their family-style, casual dining and social atmosphere. After an authentic Italian meal when darkness has fallen, Little Italy's College Street strip heats up with some of the city's hottest nightlife.

A visit to this part of town would not be complete without a bite or a sip at Café Diplomatico. This popular destination has become a Toronto institution for coffee lovers and is affectionately known as "The Dip" by locals. The café is often used as a set by filmmakers and while there might be a line-up just to get a seat, the savoury Italian dishes, reasonable prices and people-watching opportunities make it well worth the wait.

Famous sites: Vespas parked in front of sunny patios and great people-watching

Hidden gems: Real Italian ice cream; see where Clinton and Gore (both residential streets) meet up

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Corso Italia

Location: Situated on St. Clair Avenue West, between Westmount Avenue (just east of Dufferin Street) and Lansdowne Avenue

Little Italy was the original home to Italian immigrants and Corso Italia is like the sophisticated sibling who moved uptown. Here the streets are lined with fashionable, high-end Italian shops, Italian-style lampposts, trendy gelaterias and cappuccino houses. For more than 5 decades, Corso Italia has featured the best in owner-operated retail stores who import the latest in European fashion. This neighbourhood is known for its fashionable shops that reflect what's hot in Europe. Torontonians know to come to Corso Italia for bridal wear, house wares and fine food products that you can't buy anywhere else.

Despite its sophisticated façade, this neighbourhood isn't afraid to let its hair down. During the 2003 Corso Italia Fiesta the community came together to set a new Guinness World Record for the longest spaghetti noodle ever made. It stretched 160 metres. The annual Fiesta features live bands and authentic tastes, plus many other ways to experience Toronto's vibrant Italian culture. When Italy won the World Cup in 1982, it was estimated that more than 500,000 people gathered to celebrate the victory on the main street of this neighbourhood. Since then, Corso Italia is home for the largest gathering of soccer fans during World and European Cup football matches.

The community of Corso Italia has a strong focus on food, like any other true Italian community. Some of the best pizza in the city can be found in this neighbourhood, many feel that it doesn't get any better than La Paloma's gelato, and anyone would be hard-pressed not to wander into the many bakeries after smelling a whiff of fresh bread and pastries.

Famous sites: Any boutique selling imported designer fabric from Europe

Hidden gems: Corso Italia is the place to be during any soccer match

Dundas West and Little Portugal

Location: Dundas West is located from Dundas in the south, Lansdowne in the west, College in the north and Bathurst in the east and Little Portugal is centered around Bathurst, Dundas and Queen West Streets, and by Trinity Bellwoods Park in the south

No longer limited to just Little Portugal, Dundas West is one of Toronto's most overlooked micro-neighbourhoods. The thoroughfare Dundas Street West has always been considered an arterial avenue, but only in recent years has it finally begun to grow into the vibrant borough it has the potential to be. Historically the region housed primarily a Portuguese community of immigrants

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flowing into Canada from Brazil, Portugal and previous Portuguese African colonies. With a new influx of inhabitants from the downtown core including artists, professionals and young families, Dundas West has developed into a neighbourhood of art galleries, unique and vibrant nightlife, friendly vintage shops and organic grocers.

In recent years, as any flourishing neighbourhood would, Dundas West has established a street festival that pays tribute to the cultural vibrancy of its residents. The Samba on Dundas Festival happens every August and includes a capoeira performance by the internationally renowned, Toronto-based Capoeira Camara. Local merchants work together to offer refreshments, a traditional Brazilian feijuada meal, as well as family drumming, art workshops and dance lessons. Dundas West is lively, on the cusp of change, but still friendly and unpretentious making it the perfect new Toronto neighbourhood to explore.

While Dundas West has emerged into a new centre for emerging artists and designers, the remnants of Little Portugal certainly still remain. Toronto's large Portuguese community are still located in this neighbourhood, and offer those wandering into their domain dozens of bake shops, restaurants, cheese stores and fish markets. This colourful inner city neighbourhood welcomes anyone and everyone, and draws crowds from all over Toronto with its local sports bars broadcasting matches from all across the globe.

Famous sites: Trinity-Bellwoods Park and funky hot spots such as Communist's Daughter, Sweaty Betty's and The Dakota Tavern

Hidden gems: Samba on Dundas Festival in August

Little Poland Rocesvalles

Location: Roncesvalles Avenue between King Street and Dundas Street West

Toronto's Little Poland spans mainly along the major street of Roncesvalles, and is referred to by locals at Roncesvalles Village. For those who enjoy a sense of European atmosphere, Little Poland finds a way for authentic Polish butchers, bakeries and restaurants to thrive among a growing spate of cafes serving fair trade brew, latte art and vegan treats. A visit to this neighbourhood should include a mix of popular brunch spots, a second-run flick at the revitalized Revue Cinema and gourmet, locally sourced hot dogs at Buddha Dog. This neighbourhood is no longer one of Toronto's best kept secrets.

The small-town European charm of this neighbourhood is what captures the hearts of its visitors, and of course, the food. Small, family-owned retail and food shops serving up East European
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delicacies such as savoury hand-made perogies, juicy sausages, sauerkraut, cabbage rolls and traditional soups can be found on every corner, along with local bakeries dispersing irresistible aromas.

In the true European fashion of festival festivities, every September Roncesvalles will be found hosting the annual Little Poland festival. The main street is closed off to make room for amusement rides, dancers moving to the sounds of polka music, games, food stands and thousands of people. No visitor need to worry, Roncesvalles' locals ensure there are always plenty of activities for children and adults and delicious treats to go around.

Famous sits: Revue Cinema, the oldest continuously running movie theatre in Ontario, run by a not-for-profit organization

Hidden gems: Locally sourced hot dogs at Buddha Dog

India Bazaar

Location: Stretches along Gerrard Street between Greenwood and Coxwell

Little India, also known as Gerrard India Bazaar, might only stretch for a half dozen blocks on Gerrard Street East but this small neighbourhood manages to pack in Toronto's highest concentration of Indian restaurants, clothing, electronic stores and grocers. Saris of all colours can be seen flowing from silk houses along the thoroughfare, exotic fruits and spices are for sale at the third largest South Asian marketplace in North America, and Indian restaurants serve up cuisine representing all cultures from across the South Asian region.

With shop gems offering bargains on exotic home furnishings, jewellery and art, there is plenty to keep visitors busy before even getting to the Bazaar's main attraction - the food. The food alone makes this Toronto experience a must for anyone. A mishmash of eateries featuring delicacies from North and South India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh tantalize the senses.

Not only does this neighbourhood know how to eat, but they also know how to celebrate. In November Little India celebrates Diwali, the Festival of Lights, and decorates the Bazaar with hundreds of twinkling tea lights that project a warm, majestic glow. Little India does not stop there, and can be found celebrating many other festivities surrounding henna artistry, Bollywood films and their tasty treats.

Famous sites: The mishmash of eateries featuring delicacies from across South Asia

Hidden gems: In November, Little India celebrates Diwali, the Festival of Lights

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Greektown & The Danforth

Location: Along Danforth Avenue, between Broadview and Jones Avenues

The Greektown neighbourhood in Toronto is the largest in North America and is unanimously referred to as the Danforth. The Greek community started with only 20 Greek names in 1907, and has grown to become the second-largest outside of Greece itself - a testament to the area's strong character and welcoming atmosphere.

As one of Toronto's most vibrant and cosmopolitan neighbourhoods, the Danforth is a premier destination for shopping, dining, strolling, patio-lounging and people-watching. This section of town is always buzzing with excitement and in the warmer months, many restaurants and cafés stay open until the wee hours of the morning. Shouts of "opa!" waft through the air, mingling with the scent of garlic and rosemary. Visitors can always tell when they've arrived in Greektown, and when they regretfully leave the celebrated thoroughfare, upon viewing the streets lined with the unmistakable blue and white of the Greek flag and welcoming signs displayed in both English and Greek.

Most notably, Greektown hosts the annual Taste of the Danforth festival which draws culture seekers from all across the globe. This event brings the delectable cuisines out of local 'mom and pop' restaurants and into the streets. Performances by crowd raising Greek bands, an explosion of senses with taste tasting of authentic souvlaki, stuffed grape leaves, grilled lamb and moussaka and the general invigorating and friendly atmosphere of the Danforth always have visitors hooked for life.

Famous sites: Music fills the air on summer evenings, and the Taste of the Danforth festival is held in August

Hidden gems: Lolita's Lust, a wonderfully bohemian haunt

High Park and Bloor West Village

Location: High Park stretches south from Bloor Street West to The Queensway, bounded on the west by Ellis Park Road and Grenadier Pond and on the east by Parkside Drive and Bloor West Village spans along Bloor Street (visit Runnymede or Keele subway station for easy access)

Stately Victorian and Edwardian homes line the winding residential streets surrounding Toronto's largest greenspace, High Park. About a 20-minute subway ride from downtown, this tree-filled area of the city enjoys easy access to the tranquil paths and diverse recreational activities of the nearly

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400-acre oasis that is quite literally, a city within a park. High Park is a mixed recreational and natural park, with sporting facilities, cultural facilities, educational facilities, gardens, playgrounds and a zoo. One third of the park remains in a natural state, with rare oak savannah ecology.

The playgrounds, animal paddocks and other attractions of the park are ideal for a leisurely afternoon of exploring with young children, that special someone or completely solo to gain some peace of mind. Spending a day in this leafy, family-friendly neighbourhood is easy and its visitors always come back for more. Daytrippers will return time after time to enjoy the lush gardens, Grenadier Pond, Colborne Lodge Historical Museum, an “off-leash” dog area, cafes and restaurants and the all the rage Dream in High Park, a Shakespearean play put on by Canadian Stage Company during warm summer months.

Neighbouring High Park west along Bloor Street is the quant shopping and residential district of Bloor West Village, a neighbourhood filled with European charm and café culture. While walking west, delectable scents will entice and chic designs will stylize but don't forget to spend some relaxing moments within one of the Village's cozy patio corners or welcoming pubs.

Famous sites: High Park's free Swimming Bath Complex open in summer months, Dream in High Park showing Shakespearean plays, High Park Zoo

Hidden gems: The lush landscaped ornamental garden area on the hill to the east of Grenadier Pond, the adventure playground for children in the south-east corner of the park

The Waterfront and Toronto Islands

Location: *Queens Quay West between Yonge and Bathurst Streets and off the mainland; accessible by ferry at the foot of Bay Street*

Toronto's Harbourfront neighbourhood is an upscale community with a picturesque view of Lake Ontario and the Toronto Islands. Aside from its charming beauty, residents and visitors also enjoy many fine cultural, recreational, shopping and dining opportunities. Toronto's waterfront beautifully combines modern architecture with terrific lakeside walking trails and boardwalks.

At the Queen's Quay Terminal Building visitors will find specialty shops, an Inuit Art Museum, the Fleck Dance Theatre and award-winning architecture with natural light pouring in from towering ceilings.

Just a stone's throw from the Terminal is Toronto's Harbourfront Centre. This arts and culture hub

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assists over 450 groups in bringing their artistic visions to the public. The 10-acre site houses studios, theatres, galleries, markets and more. Adjacent to the Centre is the forward thinking Power Plant, Toronto's foremost showcase for contemporary arts.

Recent waterfront revitalization has created another reason for tourists to visit this neighbourhood. Among the recent renovations is the stylish H2O Park. Housing chic yellow umbrellas dotting a sandy urban beach, H2O is the perfect reason to get out for some sun along a Great Lakes beach.

Better still, getting away from it all only takes a seven-minute ferry ride on Lake Ontario to get to the Toronto Islands. Toronto's own island community is where summer cottages from the 1920's have become family homes and local artists' retreats. The islands feature nature reserves, picturesque paths and an ideal setting for exploration and inspiration, whether on foot, bike or inline skates. It is a bird watcher's paradise, a nudists' dream with Toronto's only nude beach, family fun destination with Centreville Amusement Park and a nature lover's fantasy with salmon fishing among the island lagoons.

Famous sites: Centreville Amusement Park, HTO Park, Hanlan's Point Nude Beach

Hidden gems: Gibraltar Point Lighthouse (on Toronto Island) and the tall ship Kajama,

The Beach

Location: Queen Street East from Woodbine to Victoria Park Avenue and the Lake Ontario shoreline just south

When visiting the downtown metropolis of Toronto one feels instantly calm after learning that The Beach neighbourhood, with its sweeping natural appeal and small-town charm, is just a street car ride away. The Beach, or "Beaches", is a delightful, laid-back neighbourhood with a relaxed yet sociable vibe. Just 15 minutes east of downtown Toronto visitors can experience the original cottage country. To keep travellers engaged year round the area has two main attractions: the beach and Queen Street East.

The inviting Lake Ontario beachfront features acres of soft sand, shady parks ideal for a picnic, bike and rollerblade paths and a 3-km boardwalk. Working up a sweat along the paths or at one of the many beach volleyball courts, then cooling off in the lake or at the Olympic-size swimming pool (entry is free) is ideal before taking a stroll up to the main street along Queen Street East.

If ever a street was made for idly sauntering, it's Queen Street East in The Beach. Reflecting the diversity and easy-going attitudes of the neighbourhood, the bustling thoroughfare is lined with

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quaint and quirky stores, and a cool collection of bars, restaurants and sidewalk cafes.

Nestled between Queen Street East and the beach is Kew Gardens, a large public park that is home to the neighbourhood's many festivals, craft shows, concerts and exhibitions, including the annual Beaches International Jazz Festival attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors every July.

Strolling the boardwalk one can count how many dog breeds there are. The Beach has more dogs per capita than anywhere else in Toronto. There's even a bakery where dog-lovers can find gourmet biscuits for their pampered pets.

Famous sites: The sandy beach and boardwalk, and the Beaches Jazz Festival

Hidden gems: Kew Beach Memorial Gardens and pet-friendly pubs and shops

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