

## **CONCIERGE DESK - High Park**

Named by the original purchaser, John George Howard, for its position as the highest land point along the Humber Bay shoreline, [High Park](#) has developed from a 160-acre sheep farm to the largest park in Toronto at 399 acres. Bordered by Bloor Street West, The Queensway, Ellis Park Road and Parkside Drive, High Park is enjoyed by over a million people annually for its natural beauty found just minutes from the downtown core.

Maintenance of the area's history and local terrain are strongly supported by not only the city but local volunteers and organizations. The historical **Colborne Lodge** is strong evidence of this with its original Howard family furnishings from 1837 and a fine collection of early Toronto watercolours.

An adventure awaits as you wander through the park. Encounter an unexpected outdoor sculpture created by a local artisan nestled amidst the cherry trees. Sidestep a chipmunk along the ravine trails which are favoured by joggers in the summer and cross country skiers in the winter. Find yourself sitting peacefully amidst one of the towering Black Oak savannahs, a remnant of the sand prairie system that once dominated the Ontario landscape. Round a bend in the road and you are suddenly presented with a mini zoo, home to everything from peacocks to bison and, of course, sheep. The zoo is open year-round from 7:00 a.m. to dusk daily and there is no admission fee.

If it happens to be the second or fourth Sunday of the month, head down to the benches across the road from the restaurant to join up with the **High Park walking tour group**. Volunteer historian- or local naturalist-led tours run from 10:30 a.m. until noon, with tour topics ranging from "Myths and Legends of High Park" to "Returning Migratory Birds" or a "Photo Buff Walk." Tours are also available every third Thursday evening of the summer months.

Perhaps a less physically demanding overview of the park sounds tempting. From 10:30 a.m. to dusk purchase a \$4.00 25-minute tour from the driver of the seasonal (April through September) open air **trackless train**. Sit back as bicyclists whiz by on the hilly paved terrain heading south towards access points of the Martin Goodman Trail. Take in the **Jamie Bell Adventure Playground** designed by children for children, the laughter and splashes from the public swimming pool or see locals gardening in their very own rented allotment garden.

For the ultimate Toronto photo op visit the beautiful **Hillside Gardens** made up of three distinct styles of landscaping, alongside waterfalls and wooden bridges. Nearby see the 200-foot-wide **Grenadier Pond** which myth has it is bottomless. Only the fish avoiding local licensed anglers truly know!

Finally, as the day winds down, be one of the first at the outdoor amphitheatre as the gates open any Tuesday to Sunday from June 26 to September 6 to enjoy the pay-what-you-can performance of one of Shakespeare's masterpieces presented by the Canadian Stage TD Dream in High Park. World class theatre underneath the stars!

Article written by:  
*Georgina McCormick*  
*Concierge*  
*Four Seasons Hotel*