

Hidden Gem – Leslieville

As a visitor to a new city, isn't it just wonderful to have the opportunity to immerse yourself in a local neighbourhood? Blending in and being warmly welcomed, being able to go home and brag about the inside scoop you personally experienced and to have first-hand knowledge about the best spots to visit, for a true reflection of the people?

This can easily be accomplished by visiting one Toronto neighbourhood, Leslieville. Visitors to Toronto and residents alike can enjoy a ride on the streetcar, local architecture, unique independent retail, environmentally-minded shops and a great brunch spot all in one afternoon!

Leslieville is one of the latest in a long line of downtown Toronto neighbourhoods to undergo gentrification. Fifteen minutes east of the downtown core via the 501 streetcar that runs along Queen Street (tick another one off the bucket list for a mere \$3, exact change payable to the driver) is the place to start your journey of this neighbourhood in transition.

Be enticed immediately by the sense of community. This area has drawn independent-minded business entrepreneurs, all fiercely loyal to the refurbishment of one of the city's oldest communities and supportive of each other. Businesses rally together to organize art walks and pub crawls and local artisans are featured front-and-centre in many of the historical storefronts.

Sample a seasonally- and regionally-inspired menu created by one of the fabulous chefs at one of the over fifteen brunch spots frequented by the locals as you wander Queen Street. Stop in organically-favoured home shops, explore consignment and vintage stores, local art galleries and Toronto-based designer boutiques. See the city's famous multiculturalism represented from window to window and mingling on the sidewalks as people plot their next event together, smiling warmly as they encourage you to join in the conversation.

After a day of assimilation, perhaps turn north on Broadview Avenue as you decide whether you've experienced enough and a taxi will do, or if you've got enough energy left to walk up to the Broadview subway stop. As you travel north, look left and pull out your camera to get the best view of the Toronto skyline available! Now you can officially say you've been to Toronto!

This month's hidden gem from Les Clef's d'Or is by:

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