

Tours of Toronto

One thing most of us do when we are visiting a foreign city is to take a city tour, yet we rarely take the time to explore our own city in the same way.

Luckily, in Toronto we have a variety of city tour options to choose from!

There are great traditional ways of touring the city, such as bus and harbour tours, or even combining the two by taking the amphibious Hippo Tour. And for the more adventurous there are bicycle, Segway and helicopters tours. Yet one of the most authentic and intimate ways of getting to know a city is undoubtedly by taking a walking tour.

Many great walking tours are available and offered free of charge by well known institutions such as the Royal Ontario Museum. ROM Walks offer walking tours with a focus on local neighbourhoods, highlighting their architecture and history. Heritage Toronto Walks have a similar aim with an added focus on the city's archaeological and natural heritage. The Toronto Botanical Garden offers tours of the Music Garden. At Yonge Dundas Square there are daily, free 90-minute walking tours where you'll discover the past, present and future of this vibrant downtown district. High Park offers walking tours led by naturalists. And for a small fee, you can also take two-hour guided tours of Union Station, as provided by The Toronto Railway Historical Association and the Toronto Terminals Railway.

If you're looking to do something at your own pace, there are also self-guided walks available free of charge from the City of Toronto. These walks are known as Discovery Walks and they link city ravines, parks, gardens, beaches and neighbourhoods. An Old Cabbagetown walking tour map is available through that area's BIA and it highlights the charming Victorian homes you'll find there. Even National Geographic has listed three Toronto walking tours.

Many Toronto landmarks and national historic sites also offer guided tours. Most of them are either free or have a minimal fee, such as the 90-minute Elgin & Winter Garden Theatre tour, which recounts the history and restoration of this unique complex. The Legislative Building at Queen's Park is another popular attraction that offers tours throughout the year. Osgoode Hall opens its doors every summer, giving us the chance to appreciate the splendour of a restored Victorian courtroom along with other significant features. The University of Toronto also offers historical tours of its downtown campus.

Furthermore, thanks to the websites of *The Toronto Star* and Heritage Toronto, there are now also audio tours, iTours and podcasts available for downloading audio commentary on to your music player, giving you the flexibility to explore the city at your rhythm and pace, while still enjoying the benefits of a "tour guide."

If your touring interests are more specific, you'll find that many tours in Toronto offer a focus on a specific theme or area, such as Toronto tree tours, houses in Old Cabbagetown, VIP shopping, food, ghosts, art walks and gardens.

Whether you've lived here all your life or are visiting for the first time, there are endless ways of exploring Toronto and discovering our city's hidden gems!

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