

## **CONCIERGE DESK - Ward's Island**

Imagine a place where there is no traffic. No chain stores and no high rises. Picture an idyll complete with cosy, cottage-style homes, clean beaches, bike paths and so much green space that you'd swear you were in the countryside. Now imagine that such a place is only ten minutes from the heart of Toronto's bustling financial district!

It exists, this place, and it really is only ten minutes from the frenzied downtown core. By ferry, that is.

Many visitors to Toronto have heard about the Toronto Islands, but those that visit them often head directly for Centre Island and its amusement park. By doing this you'll miss the most charming part of the Islands. Instead of taking the larger Centre Island ferries, opt for the smaller one that takes you directly to Ward's Island and its community of "Islanders."

Although the Toronto Islands were settled as early as the 1830s, the current community on Ward's Island, and the adjacent Algonquin Island, began as a settlement of tents in the 1880s, whose main motto was to "keep it simple." In the early 1900s, some of these summer tent homes turned into year-round houses, with the addition of floors, porches and kitchens, progressing to the 262 remaining cottage-style homes you'll find there today. Stroll through this unique community by taking the first arched footbridge on your right after you exit the ferry over to Algonquin Island. One of your rewards will be an unparalleled view of the city skyline across the harbour. If an afternoon here isn't long enough, there are seven bed & breakfasts on Ward's Island offering overnight accommodations.

In addition to being a terrific place for a picnic, Ward's Island offers two dining options: The Rectory Café and Gravity Coffee House, with the former being a casual but full-service restaurant including a patio, and the coffee house offering take-out fare. (Both are only open from Victoria Day to Thanksgiving and have weather-dependent operating hours. See [www.torontoisland.org](http://www.torontoisland.org) for daily details.) Everything on Ward's Island is easily accessible on foot or bicycle and other highlights include the St. Andrew's-by-the-Lake Anglican Church, the Blue Flag-certified Ward's Island beach, and the nearly two-kilometre long beach boardwalk that spans the north-eastern part of the Islands.

Ward's Island is open year-round, however this hidden gem is at its most beautiful in the summer months. Frequency of the ferry service varies from every 30 minutes during the day in summer to once an hour in the off-season, from 6:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. and cost is \$6.50. For full schedule details please see: [www.toronto.ca/parks/island/](http://www.toronto.ca/parks/island/)

Article written by:

*Monika Grossenbacher*

*Concierge*

*Renaissance Toronto Hotel Downtown*

*Working towards her apprenticeship in*

*Les Clefs d'Or Ontario*