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Relocation Guide to Toronto, Canada

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TORONTO OVERVIEW



Photo courtesy of [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Toronto is the most populous city in Canada and the provincial capital of Ontario. It is located on the northwestern shore of Lake Ontario. Toronto, with a population of 2.8 million, is at the heart of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) which contains 6.4 million people. The city is the anchor of the Golden Horseshoe region, which wraps around Lake Ontario from Toronto to Niagara Falls and totals over 9.2 million residents, approximately a quarter of Canada's entire population. Toronto is the fourth largest city and fifth largest urban agglomeration in North America.

Toronto's climate overall is on the cool side and variable conditions can be expected. Downtown temperatures average -3.8°C (25°F) in January, but the extreme cold experienced further north typically lasts less than a week at a time. Despite this, come prepared. Winters are still cold and mostly cloudy, at sometimes snowy and uncomfortably windy and at other times damp. At times, severe storms can impact flights into and out of the city, as well as slow down transportation and activities in the city for a day or two.

The city experiences warm and humid summers with an average high of 27°C (80°F) and a low of 18°C (65°F) in July/August, with many muggy evenings, but rarely extreme heat. The historical annual average of the temperature exceeding 30°C (86°F) is 12 days, but this number has roughly doubled over the last decade. The sun shines more often than not in the summer, but brief thunderstorms occur from time to time, usually lasting less than an hour and bringing heavy rains.

City of Toronto Overview

- [Official Website of the City of Toronto](#)
- [Mayor of Toronto](#)
- Land Area: 630 km² (240 sq mi)
- Currency: Canadian Dollar
- [Toronto History](#)
- [Bank of Canada Exchange Rate Information](#)

Tourist Information

- [Toronto Tourist Center](#)
- [Information on attractions](#)
- [Toronto Tours and Day Trips](#)

Government organizations

- [Ontario Ministry of Labor](#)
- [Ontario Ministry of Education](#)
- [Toronto District School Board](#)
- [Ontario Ministry of Health](#)
- [Toronto Public Health](#)
- [Important Information on Immigration in Toronto](#)
- [Process of obtaining a Canadian driver's license](#)

Useful Local Links

- [Canadian International Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Immigration Contact info](#)
- [Yellow Pages Toronto](#)

International Community Organizations

- [US Embassy Toronto](#)
- [American Women's Club of Toronto](#)
- [American Chamber of Commerce in Canada](#)
- [British High Commission Ottawa](#)
- [Australian High Commission Ottawa](#)

Libraries

The public library is free for anyone who lives, works, goes to school or owns land in the city of Toronto. At the library you can borrow books, movies, CDs and much more for fun, study or self-interest. The library also has many free programs and services for everyone. There are 98 libraries in Toronto with over 12 million books in various languages. Find the closest one to you using the [library locator](#).

Newspapers

The main local newspapers are [The National Post](#) and [The Globe and Mail](#). The Globe and Mail holds a status similar to the New York Times in Canada and the National Post is the rival for The Globe and Mail. Other local newspapers include the [Toronto Star](#), [Metro/ Toronto 24 hours](#) and [Toronto Sun](#). Toronto Star is Canada's biggest daily paper. The Metro/ Toronto 24 hours and Toronto Sun are tabloids. You can also find weekly papers that come in different languages. News-stands carry lots of UK and US press.

Post Office

Toronto has post offices run by Canada Post throughout the city. Their office hours and services differ depending on the location. Find your office through the [post office finder](#). Through the website you can also find a rate, find a postal code and track your mail.

Time Zone

Toronto is in the Eastern Time Zone. Daylight savings time is in effect from the second Sunday in March until the first Sunday in November. You can see Toronto's time in relation to most cities on the globe by visiting www.TimeAndDate.com, which also can provide a Canadian calendar.

Metric System

The metric system is used in Canada.

Dates

Dates are written in the order of day/month/year.

Currency

Canadian one dollar coin ("loonie") (\$) = 100 cents. Canadian two dollar coin ("toonie") (\$) = 200 cents. Notes, or bills, come in denominations of \$5 (blue), \$10 (purple), \$20 (green), \$50 (pink) and \$100 (brown). Coins are in denominations of \$2, \$1, \$0.25, \$0.10, \$0.05 (frequently used) and \$0.50, \$0.01 (rarely used).

Money Matters

Sales Tax: The sales tax in Ontario is called the Harmonized Sales Tax. The 13% HST replaced the federal goods and services tax (GST) and the provincial sales tax (PST).

Tipping

Tipping is expected in Toronto. Bar and restaurant staff have a lower minimum wage than most Canadians. Generally, tip 15 percent on pre-tax meal bills, and a dollar or two at the bar. Hotel cleaning staff and bellhops also deserve a dollar or two. Hairdressers expect tips of between ten and twenty percent.

Electricity

Just like the United States, Canada uses 110-volt electric power with two- or three-pin plugs. Visitors from the UK and Europe will need adaptors, available at most hotels and department stores, to use their appliances from home.

Smoking

Smoking regulations are strict in Ontario. It is banned in public spaces and workplaces (including restaurants, bars, and casinos). Smoking is also banned in vehicles if anyone under the age of 16 is present.

AREA MAP



Source: [Lencer](#)

HOUSING

There are various housing options for those living in Toronto. The major three categories are freehold homes, condominiums and custom homes. A freehold home is a fully detached, semi-detached or townhouse dwelling that is entirely owned by the purchaser. All maintenance (indoors and out) is the sole responsibility of the owner and no monthly maintenance fees are required. If a home is a condominium unit, the owner is required to pay a monthly fee for the upkeep of the common elements. Common elements are the areas shared by residents, such as lobbies, parking garages, and recreational facilities such as pools and gyms. Finally, a “contract home” is a home that is built on land (a vacant lot, for example) that is already owned by the prospective homeowner. Thinking about the neighborhood and its demographic is also an important aspect when choosing a property.

The following sites list some of the popular options:

- [Apartment Rentals](#)
- [Toronto Real Estate Board](#)
- [Zoo Casa](#)
- [Toronto Apartment Standards](#)
- [Canada Housing Connections](#)
- [Padmapper](#)

Renting a Property

There is no shortage of real estate companies in the city. Some apartments can be rented by the month, but to rent a house you usually need to sign a rental agreement (or lease) for a year. This is a legally binding contract between you and the landlord. Make sure you understand exactly what you have to pay for and what is included in your rent before you sign a lease. If you are unsure about anything, ask questions and make sure you understand and are satisfied with the answers you get before you sign any lease.

The cost of renting a place depends on:

- **Location.**
- **Size and condition** of the place.
- **Amenities.** Condominiums with full facilities may command a higher price. Rent also depends on whether the place is furnished, partially furnished or unfurnished.

These are the steps in renting a home:

- Sign a lease with the owner, the terms of which are agreed between the two parties. Most landlords and housing agents ask to see a copy of your passport, a copy of your visa, passport sized photographs and an employment letter confirming your position. Sign an inventory listing of all the items provided by the owner, including their condition.

- Usually, a deposit or “security bond” equivalent to one month’s rent is required for leases that are over a year. This deposit is returned after move-out is deemed acceptable.
- Rental usually excludes utility bills but includes maintenance fees.

Lease Tips

- When you go to see Toronto apartments and meet landlords, make sure you are well-dressed and smart. Treat it like a job interview. If the apartment is good many people may be after it and the landlord will have their pick of several potential tenants.
- Take note of general appearance and upkeep. Are the carpets or flooring worn? Are the walls cracked or in need of painting? Is there staining on the roof or walls (an indication of a water leak)?
- Is an ensuite bathroom important? Is on-site laundry important or do you mind going to a Laundromat? Does the building feature security features such as security patrols or video cameras? Do you want the convenience of a dishwasher, an on-site gym or pool, a balcony etc.? Think about these when deciding on the home you want to rent.

[More information on renting a home in Canada.](#)

Utilities

For water and waste, the City of Toronto mails one Utility Bill that includes your water billing and your Solid Waste Management fees. The water and sewer service portion of your Utility Bill pay for a number of services, such as the supply and delivery of water to your home or business, water treatment facilities, lead testing, water meter reading, sewer use/maintenance, water meter replacement/installation, service line repairs (up to the property line). Solid Waste Management fees pay for garbage, recycling, green bin, litter prevention, landfill management and other diversion programs. Bills can be paid via web or phone. More info can be found [here](#).

Electricity is distributed by the Toronto Hydro Corporation to the city of Toronto through a clutch of affiliate companies. Payments can be made online through the eBills route, or through the Pre-Authorized Payment Plan. In order to get connected you simply choose one of the companies that is supplying your area and give their customer service department a call. You will be asked to provide a certain amount of documentation such as proof of ID and proof of address. As an expat, some companies may ask you to provide proof of your visa status and occasionally a deposit for connection may be required. Connection can usually be done fairly quickly so as soon as you have confirmation of your address you can arrange for the electricity to be switched on and the account set up in your name.

For gas, Ontario has two suppliers – Union Gas and Enbridge. When you need to open an account for gas supplies you simply call the customer service department of the company that supplies your region. The policy of each company is different when dealing with new customers. Some companies may ask for an administration fee in order to open the account. Some customers may also be asked to pay a security deposit. This depends on a number of factors but may take into account residency status, previous custom and credit history. The fees that are charged vary according to region and the company. New customers

should also be aware that there may be a connection fee payable. If there is a gas main in existence in your street then most homes are charged only a nominal fee to be connected to it. Companies will consider individual cases where there is no gas main in the street.

Recycling

[Solid Waste Management](#) provides innovative waste management services to residents, businesses and visitors within the City of Toronto, creating environmental sustainability, promoting diversion and maintaining a clean city.



Telecommunications

Toronto is well served by a competitive telecom industry which provides comprehensive television, telephone, wireless and broadband services. Some of the major service providers operating in the city can be contacted on their websites.

- [Bell Canada](#) is one of the leading telecommunications companies in the city, offering mobile, internet, satellite, television, high speed data and home phone services.
- [Rogers Cable](#) is one of the largest cable television service providers, along with Video-On-Demand, digital television, high-speed Internet access, interactive and enhanced television services.
- [Primus Telecommunications](#) is another popular telecom provider in Toronto and has acquired Win-Tel, to offer broadband, home phone and wireless
- [Telus](#): Largest telecommunications provider in Western Canada; home phone, internet, wireless, TV

EMERGENCY & IMPORTANT CONTACTS

**IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY
DIAL 911
DO NOT HANG UP UNTIL THE CALL TAKER TELLS YOU TO DO SO**

Language line: If the person calling 911 is unable to speak English, they can tell the operator what language they speak. The 911 Operator will have an interpreter on the line within one minute to assist with the translation.

Remain calm and speak clearly. Identify which emergency service you require (police, fire, or ambulance).

They will ask for the following information so keep this page close to your phone:

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE

Other Important Numbers:

CLOSEST CONSULATE OFFICE

PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN

WORK PHONE NUMBER

Area Health Care Centers:

- [Hospitals in Toronto](#)
- [Veterinary Clinics in Toronto](#)
- [Pharmacies in Toronto](#)

[Dial 311](#) for non-emergency municipal services (such as replacing a broken street lamp or removing an abandoned vehicle).

HEALTH FACILITIES

Canada has a good standard of general healthcare with a wide range of facilities. It is a system that has been in place for many years and is one that is publicly funded. The standards for healthcare are established by the national government, but it is overseen by each provincial government in the form of the Medicare system. In order to access the free Medicare system operated by the government you must be in possession of a healthcare card, which is issued by the health department in your province. The Medicare system is not completely free, though, and it should be noted that some treatments and medications will incur costs.

For many expats, this Medicare does not apply as expats do not have the permanent residency status. Those who don't have permanent residency status will need to obtain private healthcare insurance while you are in the country. There are many companies which provide this type of insurance at a reasonable price. Some operate on a nationwide basis and others solely in one or two provinces. It is possible with some companies to arrange healthcare insurance before you arrive in the country. In some provinces, private healthcare is essential for at least the first three months as they do not allow new arrivals to claim on Medicare for that time.

Healthcare for foreign visitors is provided regardless of status and there is a special scheme known as the [Interim Federal Health Program](#) which is designed for those who have come to the country as refugees or with another special status. It will give temporary cover until residency status can be established.

In recent years both federal and provincial governments have taken steps to tackle smoking and the health issues that it raises. Smoking is banned in many public places and it is becoming increasingly unacceptable to smoke in the presence of a non-smoker.

Counseling services are sometimes available through the Medicare system although this depends upon the province that you are in. In addition to this there are large numbers of organizations that offer counseling for specific problems such as alcoholism or bereavement and many of these work on a charitable basis, so treatment is free. You can also choose to see a private therapist and lists of registered therapists are available from the health department of your local provincial government.

As with the UK and the US, it is the usual practice to register with a local doctor. However, in some urban areas of Canada some practices have no room for more patients. Those who have difficulty in finding a doctor that is accepting new patients can contact the local colleges of physicians and surgeons. You can also simply contact all the practices that are listed in the yellow pages, but this can be time consuming if you are living in a well populated area as you may find that more than half of all practices are not taking on new patients. The same applies for dentists. You may come across several practices which are not taking on new patients and will need to do a little searching. It is also worth contacting the health department of your provincial government as some provinces have a program that can match up patients to available practices.

Childcare

Child care in the City of Toronto is available in over 900 licensed child care centers and through 19 licensed home child care agencies working with over 2,000 approved home care providers. Children served by licensed child care range in age from infant to school age.

[Link to Lists of Childcare options](#)

Kindergarten

Kindergarten classes are widely available across the country. In some areas the only option for kindergarten is a private scheme and you will need to pay for this. State run kindergartens are often oversubscribed. There are both full-day and half-day kindergartens. The location and process of enrolling your child to a public kindergarten in Toronto can be found through the [Toronto District School Board](#).

Education in Public Schools

Canada is one of the few countries in the world that has a high public education standard making it possible to enroll your child into a public school. Primary education covers grades 1 – 6 and children will attend from the age of 4 to the age of 11. In secondary school, the education covers grades 7 – 12 in the majority of provinces. Children are obliged to attend school until the age of 16, although the mandatory leaving age in Ontario is 18. Those who graduate with a high school diploma in Canada will find that many countries worldwide will accept this as a qualification.

The school year begins in September and runs until June, with breaks for Christmas and Easter. The school usually starts between 8 am and 8.30 am and finishes between 2.30 pm and 3 pm. The schools have a wide variety of extra-curricular activities such as sports and crafts. Most schools offer programs to educate children in native studies, combat racism and involve aboriginal members of the community in educating the children about their history and culture. Some schools may offer courses in Aboriginal languages.

The vast majority of schools have programs which offer support to international students, teaching French or English as a foreign language as required. The country has a program of offering education in both English and French and some schools will have lessons taught in both languages. There are several public schools in Canada which offer day programs and home stay programs. The fees for these are usually a minimum of \$10,000 per year.

[The Catholic School Board](#) is also a free-educational system but the child and parents will need to have been baptized and provide a reference from their local priest.

Private schools are also common in Toronto and these can be single sex or co-educational. These are usually funded independently. The advantage to private school education is the smaller class sizes. Pupils can be boarders or day pupils and fees normally start at around \$25,000 per year.

In order to register with a school in Toronto you will need to provide documentation and the type will depend upon your status. Children who have permanent residency status will need confirmation of this status and their record of landing. If the child has visitor status the parent will need to produce a passport and the child will need to have a study permit. The child of a temporary resident will need to have their own passport or be listed on their parent's passport and the parent should have either a study or work permit. You will also be expected to provide translated report cards and immunization records.

There are places for all children at state-run schools although you may prefer a private school. Some of these institutions are over-subscribed and there are waiting lists. This will depend upon the area that you are in. You will need to produce the same documentation as for enrollment at a state school and some may require you to be interviewed or the child to take an entrance exam.

For more information on Public Schools in Toronto visit [Toronto District School Board's HP](#) or [Toronto's education portal](#).

International Schools of Toronto

Foreign System Schools, or International Schools, offer you the opportunity to pursue an education similar to the one in your country of origin. Registered with the Ministry of Education, they follow guidelines and curriculum identical to those in their home country.



Toronto has a number of International Schools offering French education or IB education. Some International Schools impose minimum requirements for admission, such as language proficiency or nationality. The criteria vary with each school.

School fees per year vary for lower and upper grades from schools to schools. Academic calendars for each school also differ.

Information on some of the international schools in Toronto can be found [here](#).

BANKING & MONEY MATTERS

Banks and other financial institutions, such as credit unions, offer a variety of services. These services include:

- checking and saving accounts
- credit and debit cards
- online bill pay
- loans
- insurance
- financial planning

Banking

Both Canadian and International Banks can be found throughout the city of Toronto. The most common banks are the following:

- [CIBC](#)
- [Bank of Montreal](#)
- [Royal Bank](#)
- [Scotia Bank](#)
- [TD Canada Trust](#)
- [Banks in Toronto](#)

Credit cards are accepted in most of the larger shops, hotels, and restaurants. ATMs (also called ABMs in Canada) can be found all over the city.

Opening an Account

To open an account, you must present various pieces of identification, for example a Canadian driver's license, passport, certificate of citizenship, permanent resident card, birth certificate, social insurance number, old age security card, health insurance card, document issued by provincial governments, employee identity card, a credit card, a foreign passport, etc. For more information go to [the Canadians Bankers Association](#). Your IOR Destination Services Consultant will also be able to provide you with more detailed information.

Money Matters

Sales Tax: The sales tax in Ontario is called the Harmonized Sales Tax. The 13% HST replaced the federal goods and services tax (GST) and the provincial sales tax (PST).

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION & DRIVING

Public Transportation

Toronto has a large and extensive public transport network which extends well into the suburbs. The system is made up of buses, street cars and a subway system called the Scarborough Rapid Transit Line. All modes of public transportation are operated by the [Toronto Transit Commission](#) (TTC).

[TTC \(Toronto Transit Commission\)](#), provides public bus services that run to and from Pearson. [GO Transit](#), provides express buses to locations outside of Toronto's downtown. It operates from the airport to Yorkdale and York Mills subway stations in North York. [Mississauga Transit](#) is another option. You can also get into Toronto through bus, train and car depending on where you begin your trip. For further information, look at the [visitor's website](#).

Trains

There are three subway lines and one "RT" line that connects neighborhoods within Toronto. For detailed schedules and fares go to the [TTC website](#). The GO Transit is a great way to get around the city of Toronto. The majority of these services, especially trains, are oriented to weekday commuters travelling to and from downtown Toronto. GO Transit charges fares by distance. Trains are large and comfortable, and the vast majority runs only during rush hours. For routes and more information, check out their website [here](#).

Subway and RT Stations Map



Courtesy of [Reddit](#)

Street Cars

Street Cars is another option to get around the city. It is not recommended to take them during rush hours due to the notorious traffic jams. In addition, when getting on and off streetcars, make sure that the traffic is stopped in the lane next to the streetcar. While drivers are required by law to stop behind open streetcar doors, some drivers don't.

Taxis

Taxis are plentiful, but not cheap. As with most big cities, driving a car downtown can be annoying; parking is often hard to find and expensive, and traffic along certain streets can make vehicle travel slower than mass transit. However, travelling longer distances when not close to subway lines is often significantly faster by car or taxi.

Bicycles

Door to door, in downtown Toronto, a bike beats a car or transit nearly every time. There is a lack of clear understanding about regulations regarding bicycles and as a result, there can be hostility between automobiles and cyclists. Generally speaking, if you are on the road, you are expected to obey the same laws as cars, and you are not allowed to ride on the sidewalk. The city is predominantly flat and post-and-ring locking posts are present throughout the city. There are many bike-only lanes on major roads and threading through various neighborhoods and parks. The city publishes a cycling map, available on the city [website](#).

Driving

As Toronto is a very large city and many areas of the city are inadequately served by the public transit system, the car is the most commonly used method of transportation in the Greater Toronto Area. The road system (except for Highway 407 ETR) suffers from traffic congestion at almost all times of day, 7 days a week, and severe traffic congestion occurs during rush hour (approximately 6:30am-10am and 3pm-8pm Monday-Friday). Avoid driving during rush hour, and avoid driving in severe weather. Highway 407 ETR is almost never congested, but is a very expensive toll road. Following are suggestions on where to find traffic information.

- [Google Maps](#) (click on the traffic button)
- [680 News](#) (radio station)
- [CP24](#) (television station)

Airport

[Toronto Pearson International Airport](#) is about 30-50 driving minutes by car from the downtown core (depending on traffic) and is serviced by most major international carriers.

DRIVER'S LICENSE

As a foreign national you are able to use the license that was issued in your own country but for a limited period of time. Ontario allows you to drive on your own license for up to **60** days, but then you will need to make arrangements to exchange it for a Canadian license. If there is an agreement between Canada and your home country the exchange can be fairly straightforward, although there are some issuing countries which are not accepted by Canada so you will need to take a driving test there.

When you exchange your driving license you will need to do so at the provincial offices. You will need to show that you are a current resident of the area and should show visa documentation to support this. Ontario regulations will expect you to have an eye test, show that your current license is valid (and if this is not already in French or English then it will need to be translated), show proof of ID, proof of address, pay the relevant fee and if you have been driving for less than a couple of years then you may need to take a knowledge test. Each province deals with their own documentation so enquiries should be made to the ministry of transportation.

If you need to take a Canadian driving test then you should make yourself aware of the regulations in your particular province, as these vary across the country. You will need to apply for a novice license and this can be done from the age of 16. Drivers will find that most states have a graduated licensing program which encourages drivers to slowly build on their driving skills. You will be asked to take an eye test and a theory test on road signs, driving regulations and safe driving. Some provinces will expect a driver to take more than one practical test before a full license is issued.

Detailed information for Ontario can be found [here](#).

Your IOR DS Consultant will assist you with this process.

SHOPPING

As the largest city in Canada, Toronto has ample opportunities for shopping, and nearly any section of the city has unique places to shop. Emerging as a major style destination, [Queen West](#) is home to some of the city's most cutting edge boutiques. The most high-end designers operate out of the [Bloor-Yorkville](#) shopping district, and other popular malls include the [Toronto Eaton Centre](#) and [Vaughan Mills](#). Additionally, those looking for [flea markets](#) or [vintage stores](#) will not be disappointed.

See [this website](#) for a shopping directory for Toronto.

Groceries

- [Metro](#) is a 24 hour super market chain found throughout Toronto. It provides the essentials of everyday life from vegetables to daily household items.
- [Sobeys](#) is a large chain with many locations
- [Loblaws](#) is a supermarket chain that, in addition to food, offers home décor items, a pharmacy, bulk foods, and often a wine store.
- [No Frills](#) is a basic grocery store for those looking to get the best value for their dollar.
- [Whole Foods](#) is known for its vast selection of organic and health foods.
- [Famers Markets in Toronto](#)

Housewares and Furniture

- [Ikea](#), located in North York, is a great option for those on a budget. It sells everything necessary in a home: from beds to ice cube makers.
- [Sears](#) offers similar goods to Ikea. Beds, tables, sofas... You name it.
- [United Furniture Warehouse](#) offers similar goods to Ikea and Sears.
- [Pier 1 Imports](#) is a furniture and soft furnishings store providing a wide range of exotic, colorful and eye-catching designs that are sourced offshore.
- [Sleep Country Canada](#) is a Canadian company specializing in mattresses, pillows and bed linen. Is best known for its radio jingle, "Why buy a mattress anywhere else?"
- [The Brick](#) is a retailer of furniture, mattresses, appliances, electronics, soft furnishings and home accents.
- [Crate and Barrel](#) offers housewares, furniture, and home accessories.
- More [furniture stores](#) in Toronto

RECREATION

Sights

There are some places in Toronto you should not miss seeing, according to the locals. One sight that everyone should visit is the CN tower. [The CN Tower](#) is the tallest free-standing structure in the western hemisphere and it now includes EdgeWalk, a thrilling hands-free walk on an outside ledge of the tower. The view and the thrill are exquisite and make it a must see. Those who want to be closer to the ground can take the scenic ferry ride the Toronto Island which provides a great photo opportunity of the skyline. Bike, picnic and explore the Centre Island amusement park, [Centreville](#). Toronto is also chock-full of family friendly activities that are educational and fun. [The Ontario Science Centre](#) offers hundreds of interactive exhibits; the [Toronto Zoo](#) showcases over 5,000 animals including gorillas and polar bears; the [Royal Ontario Museum \(ROM\)](#) is Canada's largest museum of world cultures and natural history; kids can unleash their own Harry Potter in North America's only castle, [Casa Loma](#); and for thrills, chills and spills [Canada's Wonderland](#) is a park featuring over 69 rides and a 20-acre water park.



Courtesy of edgewalkcntower.ca

For more information check [here](#).

Festivals

Toronto as a multicultural city has numerous [festivals on the calendar](#) throughout the year. The following are some festivals that are large in scale and interesting to see:

- [Scotiabank Caribbean Carnival Toronto](#): An exciting cultural explosion of Caribbean music, cuisine, revelry and visual and performing arts. It has become a major international event and the largest cultural festival of its kind in North America.
- [Canadian National Exhibition](#): This annual fair is fun for the entire family. Midway rides bring chills and thrills. The National Trade Centre boasts an International Marketplace with goods spanning the globe along with innovative products. Horse shows and dog shows entertain both young and old.
- [The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair](#): Once a year, the country comes to the city bringing along over 300 vendors, regal horse shows, entertaining dog shows and everything else in between. The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair is the largest of its kind and truly is part of Canadian tradition.
- [Santa Claus Parade](#): The Santa Claus Parade has been a Toronto tradition since 1905. Fantastic animated floats leave the corner of Christie and Bloor Street in the company of two dozen marching bands and a couple of thousand costumed participants, cheered along by excited kids.
- [Toronto Christmas Market](#): Inspired by the Old World and influenced by the New, this free annual event captures all the tradition, heritage and charm of a European Christmas Market, while showcasing hundreds of unique and local handcrafted products.

- [Canadian Music Week](#): Canadian Music Week is one of the premier entertainment events in North America, and features Canadian Music Fest spanning 6 nights of performances, with 1,000 bands at more than 60 live music venues in downtown Toronto.
- [Hot Docs Canadian International Festival](#): Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival is North America’s largest documentary festival, conference and market. Each year, the Festival presents a selection of more than 150 cutting-edge documentaries from Canada and around the globe.
- [Red Path Water Front Festival](#): A unique festival that provides on-water and on-land programming, while positioning and promoting Toronto locally, nationally and internationally as a waterfront destination.

Music

Toronto has one of the best music scenes in the country. The mainstream music scene is found at major venues in central downtown. But it’s those little hole-in-the-wall bars with those independent musicians that make for the most memorable experiences.

Major Concert Venues Concert venues in the city have evolved over the years. [The Rogers Centre](#) used to be the only main stage for some of the most famous musical acts in the world. The Rogers Centre still attracts the likes of U2 and Bon Jovi for their massive stages and crowds but now the [Air Canada Centre](#) (ACC) is another popular alternative for those wanting to see a popular concert or performance.

Toronto is home to a number of buildings that are as famous as the acts that have performed there. [Massey Hall](#), the “grand dame” of local music halls has been part of Toronto’s music history since 1894. It has hosted some of the greatest musical legends and in fact, Gordon Lightfoot is the most frequently returning artist in the building’s history! [The Phoenix](#), located on the edge of downtown, is one of Toronto’s most infamous entertainment spaces. Over the past 20 years, it has played host to legendary artists including The Rolling Stones, The Tragically Hip and Bob Dylan and contemporary artists like Death Cab for Cutie and Two Door Cinema Club.



Massey Hall

More information can be found [here](#).

Movies

Toronto also has a wide range of movies in showing in their movie theaters: from popular blockbusters to independent films. They also have world renowned film festivals in town such as Hot Docs Canadian International Festival.

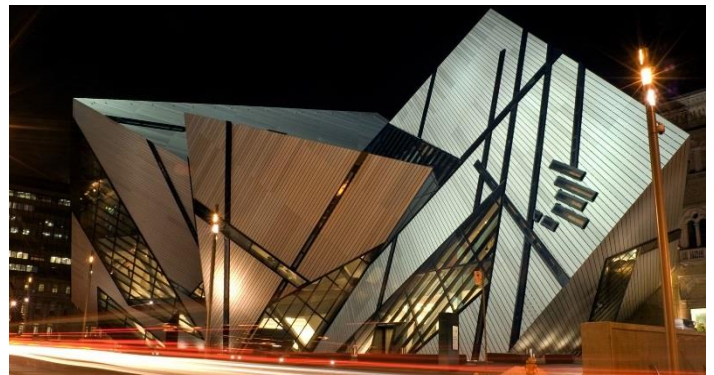
For more information on movies, check the following links:

- [Movies and Theatre Locations](#)
- [Hot Docs CA](#)

Museums

Some of the best museums in Canada are located in Toronto. The following are few of the museums to explore:

- [Royal Ontario Museum](#): One of the better and larger museums in North America. The original building was built in 1910, and is a handsome Romanesque revival, with many carvings of people and events. The newer addition is a large deconstructed crystal, made of steel and glass. Thousands of artifacts and specimens are featured in over 20 exhibits; including dinosaurs, Ancient China, native Canadians, Canadian furniture, medieval Europe, art deco, ancient Egypt, textiles, middle east, India and Pacific islanders. The world's largest totem pole, which is over 100 years old, is also housed in a place of honor.
- [Bata Shoe Museum](#): This offbeat museum is devoted to shoes and footwear, and contains Napoleon Bonaparte's socks, and footwear from cultures all over the world.
- [Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art](#): Dedicated to ceramics in an exquisite m contemporary building right across from the Royal Ontario Museum - from Ancient to Contemporary with an extraordinary European collection.
- [Hockey Hall of Fame](#) : Dedicated to the history of ice hockey, it is both a museum and a hall of fame. It is housed in the historic Bank of Montreal building and dates from the 1880s.
- [McMichael Canadian Art Collection](#): Renowned for its devotion to collecting and exhibiting only Canadian art, the McMichael permanent collection consists of almost 6,000 artworks by Tom Thomson, the Group of Seven, their contemporaries, and First Nations, Inuit and other artists who have made a contribution to Canada's artistic heritage. The McMichael Canadian Art Collection is the only major public art gallery devoted solely to the collecting and exhibiting of Canadian art. The gallery offers visitors the unique opportunity to enjoy Canadian landscape paintings in the woodland setting that inspired them.



Royal Ontario Museum Courtesy of [Walters Inc.](#)

Theatre and Visual Art

Toronto offers a wide variety of theater and the visual arts. They have comedy, they have musicals, they have plays and they have operas. You name it! The following are some venues and groups based in Toronto.

- World renowned [Second City](#) comedy/improv theatre has a location in Toronto. See great improv and situation comedy performed live with audience participation over dinner and drinks in the heart of the club district of downtown Toronto.
- Small theatres in the Annex and elsewhere offer smaller productions that range from original Canadian works, avant-garde, experimental theatre, small budget musicals to British murder mysteries.
- A variety of theatre festivals such as the New Ideas, Rhubarb and Fringe Festivals are the seed for many commercial successes such as *The Drowsy Chaperone*.
- Check out the [Four Seasons Centre](#) for the Performing Arts, the new home of the Canadian Opera Company and the National Ballet of Canada.
- The [Toronto Symphony](#) plays in the recently acoustically renovated Roy Thomson Hall.

Sports

Toronto is an active playground for sports enthusiasts. [The Air Canada Centre \(ACC\)](#) is home to a few of its teams including the [Toronto Maple Leafs](#), the hockey team and the [Toronto Raptors](#), the city's basketball team since 1995 and Canada's only NBA team. All home games for [Toronto Rock](#), our national Lacrosse team, are also played at the ACC. [The Rogers Centre](#) is home to the baseball team, [Toronto Blue Jays](#) and the Canadian football team, [The Toronto Argos](#). [The Toronto Football Club \(TFC\)](#) is Toronto's newest sports team, founded in 2007. Their devoted fan base come to games in their signature colors, white and red, at Toronto's newest stadium, BMO Field.



Courtesy of [Ticketmaster](#)

Be Part of the Action

There are plenty of interactive entertainment complexes and venues downtown. [The Ballroom](#) is more than just ten-pin bowling in the heart of the Entertainment District. This two-floor entertainment center features Molson Canadian Hockey House, a live stage, an X-box center and more than 60 LED TVs. [Spin Toronto](#) is a 12,000 square foot ping pong social club located in central downtown. The space features 12 ping pong tables, a lounge, a restaurant, a private party room and nightly events. [Polson Pier](#) is the ultimate indoor and outdoor entertainment complex and offers one of the best views of the city skyline. This is a great outdoor destination in the summer and features a drive-in movie theatre, driving range, swimming pool and go-karts. [Playdium](#), in downtown Mississauga, is the ultimate interactive adventure featuring 40 000 square feet of action-packed games to enjoy.

Restaurants

Thanks to the multicultural composition of this vast city, Toronto has over 10,000 eateries offering a multitude of different cuisines. Good quality and great value restaurants abound in Toronto, with different cuisines featured in separate areas. College Street offers some of the city's best Italian restaurants and trattoria, and Greek food is best enjoyed in the Danforth area. Authentic Chinese restaurants are located (not surprisingly) in Chinatown around Dundas and Spadina and also north of the downtown core in Markham, while Gerrard Street East is a great area to get good Indian food. It is customary to tip 15% for good service in restaurants in Toronto. Be sure to watch for the many food festivals popping up around the city. [Food blogs](#) narrate various restaurant experiences.



Courtesy of [Love This City](#)

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Public holidays include the following in the Ontario Region:

- New Year's Day
- Family Day (Third Monday in February)
- Good Friday (Friday before Easter Sunday)
- Victoria Day (Monday before May 25)
- Canada Day (July 1)
- Civic Holiday (First Monday in August)
- Labour Day (First Monday in September)
- Thanksgiving (Second Monday in October)
- Christmas Day (December 25)
- Boxing Day (December 26)

More information can be found [here](#).



Courtesy of [City-Data.com](#)