

>5 things to do in: toronto

TAKE 5 IN TORONTO

By Jan Schroder



1

As I gazed down from a height of more than 1,400 feet upon the construction cranes, lush green islands, and sailboats lazily cruising around Lake Ontario, I realized one of the things I love about Toronto is the contrast of the old and the new. Although the city is in the midst of a construction boom with more than 145 high rises and skyscrapers in various stages of completion, it remains a charming city of neighborhoods. It is a place where you can hop on an old-fashioned bright red streetcar and ride to a modern architectural wonder, the world's tallest tower, where I now stood. You can enjoy dim sum dishes made the same way for thousands of years, or dine in gorgeous 21st-century décor on dishes such as yellowtail tuna with ginger oil and sea salt at Scarpetta, a Toronto eatery on several "Best New Restaurant" lists. The motto of Canada's most populous city is "Diversity Our Strength," and it's that diversity and variety of cultures that make this city one of the most interesting for visitors.

1. GO NEIGHBORHOOD HOPPING With more than 240 distinct neighborhoods, it's impossible to explore them all. Some of the more popular ones established by immigrants are **Chinatown**, where more than 400,000 Chinese live, work and play, **Corso Italia**, with one of the largest groups of Italian residents outside of Italy, and **Little India**, where visitors love the festival-like atmosphere.

We chose to explore **Greektown**, which has the largest Greek community in North America, and were lucky enough to go on the **Danforth Food & Cultural Walking Tour** with The Culinary Adventure Company, where chefs lead the tours. Scott Savoie and Peter Minaki enlightened us about the history of the area as we stopped to sip on Greek wine at **Pan on the Danforth**, nibble a gyro from **Alexandros**, meet the family that owns **Mykonos Grill** and the couple that owns the **Best Olives in the World**. They also pointed out several locations where the movie *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* was filmed.

2. EXPERIENCE THE ST. LAWRENCE MARKET Housed in a former city hall building built in 1850, the **St. Lawrence Market** has been voted No. 1 market in the world by *National Geographic*. The

South Market, one of three buildings in the complex, houses more than 120 vendors. I had a delightful morning browsing the selection of home goods, jewelry and fashion accessories before hitting the main attraction — the food. It was only due to lack of suitcase space that I didn't pile up a cart filled with yummy-looking baked goods, dairy products and meats.

I did indulge in the famous peameal bacon sandwich from **Carousel Bakery**. Toronto's most authentic food is very lean meat cured in brine. Carousel slices it thick and piles it on a bun for the people who line up daily. Anthony Bourdain had been there the day before to feature it in his show *The Layover*, and declared, "Accept no substitutes."

Visit on a Saturday and you'll also get to experience the **Farmer's Market**, which has taken place on the site since 1803. www.stlawrencemarket.com

3. GET ABOVE IT ALL AT CN TOWER Classified as one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World by the American Society of Civil Engineers, the CN Tower serves as a telecommunications hub and also houses several attractions. I had read about the **Edge Walk** that allows guests to walk the Tower's entire



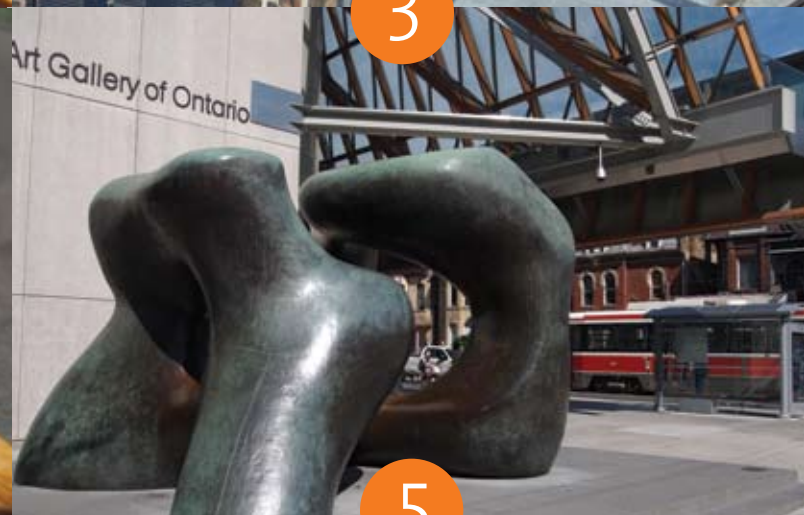
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perimeter at the height of 116 stories. "I could do that," I thought, proud of my lack of fear of heights. But once I took the elevator up to the top and looked down from the observation deck at the jumpsuit clad people below, I knew I would not be placing my toes over Toronto. I was brave enough to take the 58-second elevator ride to the LookOut Level, where it was thrilling to look 1,122 feet straight down through the Glass Floor. For an extra adrenaline rush, we got on the SkyPod elevator to go up an additional 33 stories, where at 1,465 feet we walked around for a 360-degree view of Toronto and Lake Ontario. www.cntower.ca

4. DINE AT LOCAL FAVORITES From options for fine dining to the popularity of the street food scene, Toronto has exploded as a foodie destination in the past few years. I explored as much of it as time (and my waistline) would allow. The **Foodies on Foot Insider's Tour** was an excellent way to see and taste a lot in a short period of time while also burning off a few of those delicious calories. Starting off with coffee at **Lit Espresso Bar**, we also enjoyed uniquely flavored doughnuts such as maple bacon from **Glory Hole Doughnuts**, before making our way to the popular **Aunties and Uncles** where giant portions of pancakes and omelettes rule.

I was fascinated by **Market 707**, where shipping containers have been converted to vendors' stalls. We tasted ice cream made from water buffalo milk at **Monforte Dairy**. Next up were organic fair trade chocolates at **Delight** and a beer tasting at **Bellwoods Brewery**, a new microbrewery housed in a former body shop. Health-conscious travelgirls will love the all-vegan,

organic, mostly raw food at **Feel Good Guru**.

Other restaurants we enjoyed were the cozy **Union**, which is like dining in a Paris bistro, but with local ingredients. One of my favorite meals was at **Keriwa Café**, dedicated to honoring native cuisine such as aboriginal fare, in tasting menus that change monthly. www.foodiesonfoot.ca

5. TAKE TIME FOR CANADIAN CULTURE The **Art Gallery of Ontario**, designed by Toronto native Frank Gehry, is one of the largest in North America. In addition to the largest public collection of the works of sculptor Henry Moore, the AGO has a comprehensive collection of contemporary art and a large Canadian collection. Sports fans will love the **Hockey Hall of Fame** where they can see the largest collection of hockey memorabilia in the world, take shots at a computer-simulated goalie and have their photo taken with the Stanley Cup. www.ago.net, www.hhof.com

What travelgirl could resist the **Bata Shoe Museum**? Celebrating footwear over a period of 4,500 years, the museum features more than 10,000 shoes, everything from Chinese bound shoes to modern-day celebrity footwear. www.batashoemuseum.ca

Ceramics lovers will want to check out **The Gardiner Museum**, Canada's national ceramics museum. And for Sherlock Holmes fans like me, Toronto has one of the best **Arthur Conan Doyle collections** on the fifth floor of the Toronto Reference Library. www.gardinermuseum.on.ca, www.torontopubliclibrary.ca

For more information: www.seetorontonow.com



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