



There's so much more to Ontario

With its sophisticated cities and stunning countryside, Ontario is a destination like no other. Enjoy gourmet dining in Toronto and Ottawa, then head for awe-inspiring Niagara Falls and discover the region's award-winning wines. Great food, fine wine and unspoilt natural beauty: Ontario has it all



PHOTOGRAPHS: CANADIAN TOURISM COMMISSION, CREATIVE MEDIA, ONTARIO TOURISM (OTMPC).

Ontario, in the heart of Canada, offers the Great Outdoors par excellence: myriad lakes, huge forests, serene uplands – and of course, Niagara Falls. This vast countryside also enables Ontario's farms to produce an incredible variety of top-quality produce. The Niagara Fruit Belt is famous for its peaches, strawberries, cherries and grapes, and the spring maple syrup harvest is an event you won't want to miss. The grapes are so good that Ontario has even developed four world-class wine regions (winesofontario.org).

Peppered with wonderful rural restaurants, bucolic wineries and the exciting metropolitan cuisine of two great cities, Toronto (opposite) and Ottawa, Ontario is a fabulous gourmet destination.

That's why, when you visit Ontario, whether you're enjoying the chef's special, taking part in a cookery class, or attending a wine tasting, you'll always find great local flavours on the menu.

NIAGARA: MUCH MORE THAN A WATERFALL

Everybody has heard of Niagara's premier attraction but nothing prepares you for the awe-inspiring experience of being close to it. Whether you're soaring above Niagara Falls in a helicopter or splashing beneath on a boat tour, you'll be thrilled by the sound and sight of this natural phenomenon. And, if you'd rather experience it all in the dry, from the comfort of your seat, you can immerse yourself instead in the Niagara Falls movie, *Legends and Daredevils*, on the IMAX cinema's 18-metre screen.

But Niagara's other great outdoor feature is its splendid wine region, which lies on the same latitude as Bordeaux and provides Ontario with most of its wine. This is thanks to the area's unique micro-climate – it is protected from the extreme cold by the Niagara Escarpment and the warming effect of Lake Ontario.

There are more than 60 wineries in Niagara and the best have produced internationally award-winning wines. Why not take a tour of a few wineries? Each one has a different character: there's the intimate Henry of Pelham Family Estate Winery; Peller Estates' large manor; the sleek and modern Jackson Triggs Niagara Estate; or the eco-friendly Stratus Vineyards.

Wine goes hand-in-hand with food, it's only right that you enjoy some of the fine restaurants in the Niagara area, too. Try Treadwell's (treadwellcuisine.com) and the winery restaurants at Peller (peller.com),

Hillebrand (hillebrand.com) and Strewn Estate Wineries (strewnwinery.com). The Niagara Culinary Trail (niagaraculinarytrail.com) will lead you to some of the best restaurants and farms serving the Niagara Region's local, fresh produce.

TORONTO: CITY OF LIGHTS AND DELIGHTS

If you're looking for a vibrant modern centre with great architecture, world-class museums and galleries, and a super-slick transport-system, Toronto is the place to come. It has that famous skyline of the cloud-popping CN Tower and the curved dome of the Rogers Centre, an enviable location next to Lake Ontario, and a selection of diverse neighbourhoods offering the best cuisines from around the world.

Making use of all of Ontario's great produce, there are more than 7,000 restaurants in Toronto. They reflect the many tastes, cultures and ingredients of its ethnically diverse population, from Indian to Ethiopian, upmarket to down-home, and feature some of Canada's most talented chefs.

Visit Greektown on Danforth Avenue to enjoy a hearty souvlaki or sweet baklava, or venture to India Bazaar for authentic and affordable Indian cuisine. In Little Italy, amid the martini bars and cocktail lounges, you'll find Italian chefs who have been sharing family recipes with the neighbourhood for years. Chinatown never sleeps – much to the delight of those who take their enjoyment seriously enough to stay up into the



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small hours. If you can't decide, just head to Baldwin Village where you'll find an international cooking pot of restaurants: Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Korean, Mexican, Italian, French, Indian, Middle Eastern and Thai, all of them side by side!

You'll also find a handful of good wineries just north of Toronto, in the Vaughan region, and there are more dotting the countryside along the north shore of Lake Erie, an easy drive southwest from the city.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: feel the spray from Niagara Falls on the *Maid of the Mist*; one of Niagara's 60 wineries; find superb seasonal specialities at Ontario's many farmers' markets

HOW TO GET THERE

- Ontario's most popular point of arrival is Toronto Airport, 26km northwest of the city. The Airport Express runs every half an hour from outside the terminals to the city centre. Air Canada (0871 220 1111; aircanada.com) and British Airways (0844 493 0787; britishairways.com) fly direct from Heathrow. Ottawa is a four-hour drive or train ride from Toronto.
- For a tailor-made holiday to Ontario, including fly-drives, rail tours and escorted tours, try Frontier Travel (020 8776 8709; frontier-canada.co.uk).

COOKERY SCHOOLS

- Transform the gifts of the earth into palate-pleasing dishes at one of Ontario's many cooking schools. Niagara-on-the-Lake's Wine Country Cooking School (winecountrycooking.com) is the only non-professional cooking school in the gorgeous Niagara wine region.
- In Beamsville, visitors to the Good Earth Cooking School (goodearthcooking.com) will find themselves at a pretty fruit farm in the heart of the Niagara Fruit Belt. Host Nicolette Novak focuses on fruits and vegetables and regularly welcomes Niagara's finest chefs as guest instructors.
- Prince Edward County's farms are the source of inspiration at the Waring House Cookery School and Inn (waringhouse.com) in Picton, where regional cuisine is the order of the day.
- The award-winning author of 12 bestselling cookery books, Bonnie Stern has studied cooking from around the world and runs the Bonnie Stern School of Cooking (bonniestern.com) in Toronto.

food festivals...

If you want to fully appreciate the scope of Ontario as a culinary centre, visit one of the food festivals that take place all year round throughout the region.

The Niagara wine-growing area comes to life in January during its Icewine Festival (niagarawinefestival.com). Ontario's famous icewine is showcased at local wineries, outdoor ice bars and lively gala dinners.

Winter is also the time for harvesting the sweet natural elixir, maple syrup. When daytime temperatures rise above freezing in late February, the maple sap begins to flow and everyone gathers to celebrate the production of the syrup and feast on stacks of delicious pancakes (ontariomaple.com). The Elmira Maple Syrup Festival

(elmiramaplesyrup.com) is one of the largest such events.

Ottawa's Winterlude Stew Cook-Off (byward-market.com) will warm your bones. During the annual Winterlude Festival, more than 20 ByWard Market restaurants compete in an all-you-can-eat charity lunch with original rib-sticking stew recipes.

Planning a summer visit? The fruit farms are bursting with produce at this time of year. Don't miss the Winona Peach Festival and the Sudbury Blueberry Festival.

In autumn, kids will love the Port Elgin Pumpkinfest and adults will enjoy the thigh-slapping, ale-drinking Oktoberfest in Kitchener-Waterloo – the largest Bavarian festival outside Munich (oktoberfest.ca).

OTTAWA: CANADA'S CAPITAL OF CULTURE

While Toronto, the economic capital, bewitches with its big-city, bright-lights spirit, Ottawa, Canada's national capital, beguiles visitors with its mix of Victorian Gothic architecture, picturesque riverside promenades and state-of-the-art museums, with a stunning backdrop of the rolling Gatineau Hills.

Ottawa is a year-round culinary destination. Its relaxed dining districts include historic ByWard Market with its courtyards and outdoor cafés, Somerset Street's great Asian dining, Preston Street's Italian food, and Elgin and Bank Streets, where you'll find a mix of culinary treats.

The city's prestigious Le Cordon Bleu Culinary Institute, the first to be set up outside Paris, welcomes amateur chefs. You can also enjoy this classic French cuisine at the Institute's Signatures restaurant, recognised as one of Canada's best dining experiences.

Food lovers will relish the city's Savour Ottawa initiative, which brings together Ontario's producers and restaurants to celebrate the region's amazing fruit, vegetables, meat and dairy produce. Whether you're eating at an elegant brasserie in the city's entertainment district or sampling the Maple Bush Lager at a canalside pub, you'll find Ottawa offers something to suit your taste.

CELEBRATE ICEWINE

A rare and delectable nectar, icewine is one of Canada's most coveted exports. It has been judged one of the world's best wines at the Vin Expo in Bordeaux, and is celebrated at the midwinter Icelwine Festival (niagarawinefestival.com) in Ontario's Niagara region, for three weeks every January.

Beyond the cities

● BLUE MOUNTAIN RESORT

A visit to Ontario must include a trip to see some of the spectacular scenery just 90 minutes north of Toronto, on the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. Stay at the beautiful Blue Mountain resort, overlooking the shores of Georgian Bay.

● **EIGENSINN FARM** In the village of Singhampton in Grey County, just over two hours northwest of Toronto, foodies in the know search high and low for Eigensinn Farm, where chef-patron Michael Stadlander welcomes guests to his country table for dinner based on his farm's freshest produce.

● **MUSKOKA** Renowned for its sparkling lakes and clean air, Muskoka offers unparalleled outdoor adventure. Activities include hiking, riding, kayaking, canoeing, cycling, fishing and, when it's time to wind down, relaxing spa treatments. Don't miss nearby Algonquin Provincial Park, which inspires with its breathtaking landscape of maple hills, rocky ridges and leafy hiking trails.

● **PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY** Follow the Taste Trail (tastethecounty.ca) for a tour of wineries, cideries, breweries, fisheries, artisanal cheese makers and pick-your-own farms. A short drive east will take you to the province's emerging wine region, where there are almost a dozen wineries. Many of these, such as Norman Hardie, Huff and Waupoos, are already capturing the attention of discerning chefs and sommeliers.



TOP ROW, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: the Wine Country Cooking School at the Strewn Estate Winery is located near the beautiful town of Niagara-on-the-Lake; the Prince Edward County Taste Trail takes in an array of wineries, cideries, breweries and artisanal cheese makers; outdoor dining at one of Toronto's 7,000 restaurants. MIDDLE ROW: In the colder months, Ontario becomes a winter wonderland; icewine is an award-winning speciality of the Niagara vineyards; early spring sees the maple syrup harvest. LEFT: fresh local produce for sale along the Taste Trail in Prince Edward County

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