



NIAGARA

Three Vintage Hotels are located in the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, the most picturesque corner of the Niagara Region. Spectacular natural wonders, world class arts and culture venues, historical attractions, and the finest sporting facilities plus seasonal festivals make the region one of Canada's top tourist destinations.

First known as Butlersburg, Niagara-on-the-Lake was incorporated in 1781 as the Town of Newark by Loyalists who fled the U.S. during the American Revolution. In 1792 the newly renamed Niagara was the capital of Upper Canada, but lost that distinction to York (now Toronto) due to Niagara-on-the-Lake's proximity to the U.S., which was deemed a vulnerable position at that time. During the War of 1812, Niagara-on-the-Lake was burnt to the ground. Rebuilt, it became a commercial centre, thanks to a vibrant shipping industry. In 1880, the present name was adopted.

Today, Niagara-on-the-Lake attracts more than two million visitors annually. The picturesque main street is a testament to the beauty of 19th century architecture. A landmark on this street is the clock tower monument, erected as a memorial to 10 of the town's men who lost their lives in World War I. In 1996, the city with the only Lord Mayor in Canada was named the Prettiest Town in Canada by Communities in Bloom.

Niagara-on-the-Lake is in close proximity to many of the Niagara region's most popular attractions. A sampling follows.

ARTS AND CULTURE

The Shaw Festival has been showcasing the works of Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw and his contemporaries since 1962. The second largest repertory theatre in North America, Shaw Festival is open from April until October annually. Performances take place in three theatres: the 856-seat Festival Theatre, where the grand opening and flagship play take place each May; the 327-seat thrust stage Court House Theatre, where more challenging or intimate works are presented; and the 328-seat Royal George Theatre, a former vaudeville house that showcases the Festival's musicals, comedies, thrillers, lunchtime readings, and the occasional romance.

HISTORICAL SITES

History buffs enjoy Niagara's 20 historical museums, two reconstructed forts, Underground Railroad sites, and the historic charm of Niagara-on-the-Lake, the only town in the province designated as a National Historic Site.

Built by the British between 1783 and 1802, Fort George served as the headquarters of the British Army and the local militia. The scene of several battles during the War of 1812, it was captured by the Americans in May 1813 but retaken by the British in December that year. After the war, the fort was

abandoned. It was rebuilt in the 1930s by the Niagara Parks Commission and is now a National Historic Site. Visitors can view the fort's eight meticulously restored buildings on tours led by staff in period costumes. Exhibits detailing history and life of the garrison 200 years ago are also on display, as well as regular military, musket and artillery, and music demonstrations. Ghost tours are also available; indeed, the Niagara region is considered the most haunted region in Canada, primarily because it was a key location in the War of 1812.

NATURAL ATTRACTIONS

Niagara Falls is a natural wonder of the world that can be observed from Queen Victoria Park's gardens and platforms as well as underground observation rooms. Skylon Tower offers the highest overhead view of the Falls.

The Niagara Wine Route runs along the most well-known and developed wine region in Canada. Protected by the Niagara Escarpment, this part of southern Ontario has a unique microclimate that supports the production of Vinifera grapes. The route boasts an abundance of wineries, most of which offer tours and tastings.

The Niagara Trail runs parallel to the Niagara River from Historic Fort Erie in the south to Fort George in the north. Visitors can walk or bike this scenic paved trail, which is 56 kilometers (35 miles) long and 2.5 meters (8 foot) wide. Nine bridges close gaps over creeks and historic markers bring Niagara history to life amidst the beauty of the landscape.

Niagara Parks Butterfly Conservatory allows visitors to explore a network of pathways surrounded by exquisite butterflies in a tropical rainforest setting.

Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens features an herb garden, vegetable garden, rock garden and splendid arboretum, embracing one of Canada's finest collections of ornamental trees and shrubs.

FESTIVALS

Winter Festival of Lights is Canada's largest lights festival. Winter nights are illuminated with nearly two million sparkling lights and 100 animated lighting displays.

Niagara Wine Festival features 30 participating wineries ready to welcome visitors with tours, tastings, and special events all celebrating the first taste of Ontario's newest wines.

Niagara Icewine Festival allows visitors to enjoy the winter's sweetest bounty with gala evenings, outdoor Icewine cafes, ice bars, Icewine dinners, chestnut roasting, frozen grape picking, and carriage rides along Niagara's wine route.

The agricultural roots of the communities in Niagara are celebrated with seasonal tributes to strawberries, peaches, grapes, and apples—each fruit earning its own festival and celebration.

OUTDOOR SPORTS

Niagara is home to 40 public golf courses as well as 25 private campgrounds. Charter boat fishing and whirlpool jet boating are available on Lake Ontario and Lake Erie while hiking is enjoyed on the Bruce Trail and rock-climbing in the Niagara Glen. The Wine Route and Greater Niagara Circle Route attract bicycling enthusiasts.

TRANSPORTATION

Airport access to Niagara-on-the-Lake is available through Toronto International Airport (120km/75mi North) and Buffalo Airport (80km/50mi SE). Other transportation is available through St. Catharines Railway Station (20km/13m), St. Catharines Bus Terminal (18km/11mi) and Port Dalhousie Harbour (15km/10mi).