

Toronto: City of superlatives



Photo: Ontario Tourism

Ontario Place has an array of summer attractions including the floating museum, HMCS Haida, a marina, an open air concert hall and a Cinesphere – a geodesic-domed cinema – with one of the world's largest curved screens. In the background can be seen the CN Tower and the SkyDome.

'Colonel Simcoe returned from Toronto and speaks in praise of the harbour and a fine spot covered with Oak which he intends to fix upon as a site for a Town,' wrote Mrs Simcoe in her diary in 1793.

If Colonel Simcoe were to return to the spot nearly two centuries later he would doubtless rub his eyes with astonishment.

Toronto today is an unashamedly modern city with many fine buildings soaring upwards to the sky. One of them, the 1815-foot CN Tower is the world's tallest freestanding structure – almost twice the height of the Eiffel Tower. From its observation deck 1465 feet above the ground, you can see for 100 miles.

Three hundred yards away is another landmark of which Torontonians are particularly proud. SkyDome is the largest, all-purpose entertainment complex in the world, and the first major sports stadium to be equipped with a fully retractable roof. The \$427-million complex was completed last June and can accommodate 53 000 people for major sports events and up to 70 000 for concerts and entertainment spectacles.

SkyDome covers eight acres and is big enough to contain a 31-storey building. Among its other facilities are a 350-room hotel, a swimming pool, gymnasium and squash courts. It has already hosted a number of major sports events and makes Toronto a strong contender for the 1996 Olympic Games.

Museums of the past, present and future

The city is also a major cultural centre – one of its attractions being the world's largest public collection of works by British sculptor Henry Moore. The Henry Moore Centre forms part of the Art Gallery of Ontario, regarded as one of the finest art museums in the New World. It has more than 15 000 works ranging from Old Masters to the avant-garde.

As for the best collection of Sherlock Holmes material in the world, it, too, is in Toronto – at the Metropolitan Library.

Toronto is also home to Canada's largest public museum – the Royal Ontario Museum – which has important collections that trace the history of civilisation back to its roots. The museum's Chinese collection is internationally famous and includes three, 13th-century temple wall paintings and a monumental Ming tomb.

Next door to the Royal Ontario Museum is the McLaughlin Planetarium – a 'must' for anyone interested in space. Part of its building is occupied by the Astrocentre which opened in 1986 and attempts to put into perspective our galaxy and some of its cosmic inhabitants. It includes spectacular, blown-up images of the planets, sun, stars and galaxies.

If you think museums are boring, pay a visit to the Ontario Science Centre and you may well change your tune. The centre has been described