

Ottawa: A Capital Lifestyle



To the eye, Ottawa is a city of spires. High on a cliff above the Ottawa River, the Parliament buildings exhibit a medieval splendour. Their Gothic towers, together with the silver spires of the church of Notre-Dame, the glass dome of the National Gallery, the fairytale turrets of the Chateau Laurier Hotel, and the soaring roofline of the Supreme Court, form a skyline that is instantly recognizable and instantly enchanting.

Ottawa feels "small" — the city proper has little more than 300 000 residents. It is surrounded, however, by a network of 26 neighbouring communities that bring the metropolitan population to well over 800 000. Ottawa therefore ranks as Canada's fourth-largest population area.

Ottawa's origins date back to 1827 when the Rideau canal was built to provide uninterrupted navigation between Montreal and Lake Ontario. The economic potential of the area's huge stands of red and white pine was soon discovered, lumbering flourished, and so did a small settlement at the confluence of the Ottawa and Rideau rivers.

In 1840, politicians began looking for a new national capital. In the end, it was the

lumber town's spectacular site on a cliff overlooking the majestic Ottawa River, along with its secure location at the junction of French- and English-speaking settlements, that impressed Queen Victoria. In 1857, the British monarch chose Ottawa as Canada's capital. Today, the bilingual character prevails and many Ottawans are comfortable speaking English and French.

Beginning with the construction of the Parliament buildings, the city expanded over the years both in size and sophistication, and came to assume its contemporary character as the seat of Canadian political life.

Today, Ottawa's character and activities are dominated by the federal government. Over 90 government organizations are headquartered in Ottawa and employ more than one-third of the working population. Some 400 national and international organizations have unrivaled opportunities to interact with the Canadian government and influence decision-makers.

Pleasure and business alike have made the tourism and convention industry second only to government. Sophisticated new meeting facilities, hotels and restaurants have combined to establish Ottawa as a convention destination of world calibre. Three million visitors a year come for Ottawa's unique blend of history, culture and natural attractions or to learn how the nation is governed.



Photo: T. Atkinson, National Capital Commission

High on a cliff overlooking the Ottawa River, the Parliament buildings give an aura of medieval splendour.

Ottawa's basic economy has been vigorously supported with the emergence in the late sixties of a vital high-technology sector. Firms in the telecommunications, computer and electronics fields have provided Ottawa and its satellite cities with the reputation of a world-class centre for high technology. From the powerful Bell Northern Research/Bell Canada/Northern Telecom telecommunications triumvirate to a variety of smaller companies such as CAL (Canadian Astronautics Limited), Spar Aerospace and Cognos, all are producing state-of-the-art technology in the city in their respective fields.

Among Ottawa's many shopping areas is Sparks Street — Canada's oldest outdoor pedestrian mall and the first of its kind in North America. For nearly 30 years now, summertime crowds have been coming to the mall to wander from shop to shop, eat ice cream and relax in the sunshine watching buskers, from guitarists and mime artists to dancers and magicians.

From earliest days, the commercial life of the city has revolved around the Byward Market, established in 1828 and still going strong as Ottawa's oldest outdoor farmers' market. From the first warm, melting days of spring right up to Christmas, the streets of the market are lined with stalls offering seasonal produce that ranges from maple syrup and flowers in spring to pumpkins and firewood in fall.