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TORONTO TODAY

Toronto is an ebullient town – the economy has recovered from setbacks in the early '90s, the shopping scene is vibrant as ever and regular festivals bring smiles to people's faces. Food-lovers continue to count their blessings, and politically (locally at least) things are on a relatively even keel.

The soul of contemporary Toronto, however, seems to be split in two: on one side the bohemian descendants of Yorkville's '60s folk scene drift hazily around Kensington Market and West Queen West, admiring each other's tattoos, puffing on joints and indulging their artistic passions. In the opposite corner, the pinstriped 'Bay St Boys' exchange business cards, work long stock-market hours then buy city girls dinner at **Bymark** (p94). And never the twain shall meet. Caught in between, middle Toronto attempts to lasso the best of both worlds.

Meanwhile, astute Toronto real estate agents continue to play 'Follow the Artists.' It's a familiar phenomenon: young artists move into a cheap neighborhood and get busy with spoken word, painting, music, sex and drugs, hanging out in lofts and generally being cool.

Then the yuppies decide they want to live somewhere cool too – the money moves in, and the real estate magnates make a killing. Pretty soon there's a Starbucks where the pawn shop used to be and the artists can't afford the rent, so they pack their paintbrushes and move somewhere else. In Toronto, 'somewhere else' has been Yorkville in the '60s, The Annex and Kensington Market in the '70s and '80s, Queen West in the '90s, and West Queen West in the 2000s. Where next? Leslieville? Corktown? Our money's on West Bloor Village, where the crack dealers enjoy excellent public transportation, affordable rent and a distinct absence of yuppies.

CITY CALENDAR

Peak summer season runs from Victoria Day (the Monday preceding May 24) to Labour Day (the first Monday in September), during which time accommodations fill to overflowing (and charge accordingly) and queues at major attractions extend toward the horizon. Everywhere stays open later during summer; neighborhood street festivals happen most weekends. Other busy times are Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's, as well as during major events like **Caribana** (p14) and the **Toronto International Film Festival** (p15).

During July, the hottest, most humid month, many Torontonians escape to the Harbourfront, Toronto Islands or The Beaches where, even if the air temperature is only a few degrees cooler, lakefront breezes make life more tolerable. Subarctic winds howl through the city in January and February, when sensible folks descend into Toronto's underground PATH system (p215). But regardless of the weather, there's always something going on in T.O.!

See p201 for a list of Toronto's public holidays.

LOWDOWN

Lazy pronunciation of Toronto Tuh-rah-noh

Population of the GTA 4.5 million

Time zone Eastern (EST/EDT)

Street-cart hotdog \$2.50

Cup of decent coffee \$3

TTC subway ride \$2.75

Pint of local brew \$5

Three-star hotel room around \$120

Height of the CN Tower 553m

Last time the Maple Leafs won the Stanley Cup 1967

JANUARY & FEBRUARY

WINTERCITY FESTIVAL

☎ 416-395-0490; www.toronto.ca/special_events
From late January through mid-February, the city pulls out all stops to urge folks to defy the cold, offering free outdoor concerts, fireworks, arts and cultural events, special tourist packages and even a barbecue outside **City Hall** (p60). WinterCity Passport coupons offer discounts to city attractions.

WINTERLICIOUS

☎ 416-395-0490; www.toronto.ca/special_events
The early February version of **Summerlicious** (p14).

MARCH & APRIL

CANADA BLOOMS

☎ 416-447-8655, 800-730-1020; www.canadablooms.com
Heralding the arrival of spring, this is one of the most florid horticultural expos in North America.

TORONTO TASTE

☎ 416-408-2594; www.torontotaste.ca
Tasty T.O. at its charitable best (p112).

MAY

DOORS OPEN TORONTO

☎ 416-205-2670; www.doorsopen.org
Architectural treasures creak open their doors to let the public sneak a peek (p34).

MILK INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

☎ 416-973-4000; www.harbourfront.on.ca/milk
Around Victoria Day weekend, hundreds of kids take over the **Harbourfront Centre** (p52) for international puppetry, theatre, dance and musical performances, as well as deliciously messy art workshops, outdoor games and storytelling events. Day passes cost \$12.50.

JUNE & JULY

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

☎ 416-595-0313; www.torontodragonboat.com
Adhering to 2000-year-old Chinese traditions, these hefty, luridly decorated

'dragon' canoes froth up the lake around the **Toronto Islands** (p75) in mid-June. Crowds yell enthusiastically as over 120 teams compete to represent Canada internationally.

NORTH BY NORTHEAST (NXNE)

☎ 416-863-6963; www.nxne.com
An independent music and film festival to rival South by Southwest (SXSW) in Austin, Texas. A \$25 wristband (likely to cost more from 2007) gets you in to any of 400 new music shows at over 30 clubs, all squeezed into one long, boozy weekend in mid-June.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

☎ 416-392-5583; www.toronto.ca/diversity/events.htm
Although not a statutory holiday, Canada's heritage of First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures is celebrated on June 21 (the summer solstice), including a cultural arts fair outside **City Hall** in **Nathan Phillips Square** (p60). Politicians fall over themselves to attend.

PRIDE TORONTO

☎ 416-927-7433; www.pridetoronto.com
Larger and more flamboyant than ever, Pride Week climaxes in late June with an out-of-the-closet Dyke March and Pride Parade, with the festival's G-spot in the **Church-Wellesley Village** (p64). See *Xtra!* (p203) for a schedule of free LGBTTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersex and queer) events.

DOWNTOWN JAZZ FESTIVAL

☎ 416-928-2033; www.tojazz.com
For 10 days in late June and early July, jazz blazes through Toronto's city streets, clubs and concert halls, with musical workshops, film screenings and harbor cruises. Expect anyone from Wynton Marsalis to gospel choirs, with blues and world beat influences thrown into the mix.

SCREAM IN HIGH PARK

☎ 416-466-8862; www.thescream.ca
Sit on a blanket under the stars and listen to local poets, novelists, storytellers and random wordsmiths from across Canada perform on the **Dream in High Park** (p129) stage, as well as at events around town. The culmination of the broader **Scream Literary Festival**, the High Park event happens one night in mid-July.

TORONTO: A DAY IN THE LIFE

A random sampling of a few days' worth of Toronto events as listed in the free weekly street-press *Now* (p203):

- Big Rude Jake plays ragtime guitar in the Melody Bar at the **Gladstone Hotel** (p119).
- *Counting Sheep*, a 15-minute film featuring sheep wandering around a field, screens at the **Nuit Blanche** festival (opposite).
- The **Canadian Opera Company** (p133) warbles through a free lunchtime Mussorgsky concert.
- Dharma discussions and walking meditation transpire at **Tengye Ling Tibetan Buddhist Temple** (p143)
- Public forums on improvements to Toronto's garbage disposal occur across the city.
- Toronto's largest adult store ramps up advertising for its line of saucy Halloween costumes.
- **Yuk Yuk's** (p133) comedy lounge presents Amateur Night – Tuesday night stand-up for the fearless, thick-skinned or talented.
- Fly Fridays at **Government** (p131) features hip-hop, old school, house and reggae with DJs Boza, Wristpect and Brian Bliss.
- **CanStage** (p128) conducts auditions for mid- to large-sized dogs for their upcoming production of *Of Mice and Men*.
- Las Vegas charisma-rockers The Killers blitz into town and lift the roof off the **Koolhaus** (p131).

TORONTO FRINGE FESTIVAL

☎ 416-966-1062; www.fringetoronto.com

The promoters' slogan for Toronto's stand-out theatre festival is 'Uninjured. Unexpected. Unforgettable.' Happening over two weeks in early July, dozens of stages host dozens of plays ranging from utterly offbeat to deadly serious, plus a program of kids' plays too.

GRAND PRIX OF TORONTO

☎ 416-922-7477; www.grandprixtoronto.com

Formerly the Molson Indy, T.O.'s Grand Prix in mid-July sees drivers from the international circuit competing in front of massive crowds, two practice days building to the big race on the third day. Whining engine noise fills the air as cars top 300km/h along Lake Shore Blvd.

SUMMERLICIOUS

☎ 416-395-0490; www.toronto.ca/special_events

For two weeks in mid-July, 130 of Toronto's top eateries throw financial prudence to the wind, plating up three-course prix-fixe lunches (\$15 to \$20) and dinners (\$25 to \$35) for all-comers. You can experience the likes of **North 44°** (p113), **Auberge du Pommier** (p113) and **Canoe** (p94) without breaking the bank. **Winterlicious** (p13) is the same but different.

BEACHES INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL

☎ 416-698-2152; www.beachesjazz.com

Going strong for almost 20 years, this high-caliber, free, three-day jazz festival in

late July fills stages along Queen St E, at **Kew Gardens** (p75) and in the **Distillery District** (p56) with classy zah-bah-dee-dah. Jazz, big band, trad R&B and soul are the names of the games.

AUGUST

CARIBANA

☎ 905-799-1630; www.caribana.com

This energetic carnival is North America's largest Caribbean festival, running from late July into early August. The finale is a weekend of reggae, steel drum and calypso mayhem, a huge carnival parade featuring ornate and skimpy costumes à la Rio. It takes five hours to gyrate past – damn, that's some party!

TASTE OF THE DANFORTH

☎ 416-469-5634; www.tasteofthedanforth.com

Modeled on the Taste of Chicago, this multicultural food-and-music festival takes over the streets of Greektown in early August. Look for beer gardens, food stalls, cooking demos, fashion shows and the Danforth Dash bed race.

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL DANCE FESTIVAL

☎ 416-214-5854; www.ffd.org

'Where the world comes to dance!' is the catch-cry here, and they ain't kidding. For two weeks in mid-August, the Distillery District erupts with groovers and shakers from all over the globe, performing, conducting

workshops and exchanging ideas. Some shows are free; most cost around \$20.

CANADIAN NATIONAL EXHIBITION

☎ 416-393-6300; www.theex.com

Dating from 1879, 'The Ex' claims to be the world's oldest and largest annual exhibition. Over 700 exhibitors conduct agricultural shows, lumberjack competitions, outdoor concerts, carnival games and rides at **Exhibition Place** (p51). The air show and Labour Day fireworks take the cake.

TORONTO BUSKERFEST

☎ 416-964-9095; www.torontobuskerfest.com

For three days in late August, a rag-tag troupe of Canadian and international buskers descends on St Lawrence Market to perform and raise money for Epilepsy Toronto. Expect sword-swallowers, jugglers, musicians of unpredictable merit and more unicycles than you've ever seen in one place.

SEPTEMBER

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL (TIFF)

☎ 416-968-3456; www.bell.ca/filmfest

Toronto's prestigious 10-day film fest is one of the world's best (p27).

CABBAGETOWN FESTIVAL

☎ 416-921-0857; www.oldcabbagetown.com

A family-focused celebration held the first weekend after Labour Day, featuring corn roasts, pancake breakfasts, a minifestival of film and performing arts and historic home tours. Elvis impersonators and jazz and blues acts grace various stages.

VIRGIN MUSIC FESTIVAL

☎ 888-999-2321; www.virginfestival.ca

In 2006 Dick Branson brought his musical extravaganza to the Toronto Islands, with predictable success. Thirty-six bands (The Flaming Lips, Sam Roberts, Muse etc) rubbed up against 15 DJs over two mid-September days, just late enough in the season to avoid the Centre Island crowds.

NUIT BLANCHE

☎ 416-338-0338; www.livewithculture.ca

Loosely translated it means 'sleepless night.' Over 140 free, zany, urban art experiences – from 24-hour Three Stooges film

marathons to nocturnal pool parties and ballroom dancing sessions run by 10-year-old DJs – keep Toronto awake for one night (7pm to 7am) in late September.

OCTOBER

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF AUTHORS

☎ 416-954-0366; www.readings.org

Part of the Harbourfront Reading Series (p132), the Authors' festival delivers over 100 acclaimed writers from Canada and abroad (including big names like Margaret Atwood) to the Harbourfront Centre for readings, panel discussions, lectures, awards and book signings.

AFTER DARK FILM FESTIVAL

☎ 416-967-1528; www.torontoafterdark.com

New to the Toronto festival circuit, After Dark is a cinematic celebration of international sci-fi, horror and fantasy cinema, timed appropriately to coincide with Halloween. Also on the cards are animated, action and short-film offerings from local film-makers.

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

CANADIAN ABORIGINAL FESTIVAL

☎ 519-751-0040; www.canab.com

Open to everyone, this multiday celebration held at the **Rogers Centre** (p53) in late November involves dancing, drumming, artisan crafts, new films and traditional teachings, as well as a lacrosse competition. This is Canada's biggest Aboriginal festival.

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR'S EVE

☎ 416-392-8674; www.city.toronto.ca/culture

In the weeks leading up to Christmas, traditional celebrations light up **Casa Loma** (p68), **Mackenzie House** (p61), **Black Creek Pioneer Village** (p77) and other cultural venues. The **Church of the Holy Trinity** (p60) runs a not-to-be-missed musical nativity pageant. Over three days leading up to the New Year, **First Night Toronto** (☎ 416-603-4778; www.firstnighttoronto.ca) organizes wonderful family-friendly entertainment at the **Distillery District** (p56). Pray for snow – Torontonians are not happy if they don't get a white Christmas.

CULTURE

IDENTITY

Like most Canadians, Toronto residents usually define themselves by what they are *not* (not Americans, not Québécois etc), rather than positively defining who they actually are. This habit changed during the 2006 soccer World Cup, when every Torontonian suddenly became patriotically Italian, French, Portuguese, Brazilian or English, delving into family trees to unearth distant genetic ties to whichever team was winning at the time!

The English modernist Wyndham Lewis said of Toronto, 'O for a half-hour of Europe after this sanctimonious icebox!' The long-standing tag of 'Toronto the Good' has been hard to shake. Initially a safe haven for Loyalists fleeing the American Revolution, Toronto was ruled by a conservative British colonial society, led by politically savvy Anglican clergy. In 1906 the Lord's Day Act (p41) was passed, which forbade working and socializing on Sundays.

Free from the binds of history, modern Toronto has swapped dour sanctimoniousness for indulgent good-times – this is a party town, infatuated with theatre, live music, sports, festivals, fine food and wine. It's Canada's most culturally diverse city, with more than 70 resident ethnic groups and over 100 languages spoken. Half the city's residents were born outside Canada. The urban sprawl of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), accounts for one in seven Canadians, and continues to swell as new immigrants arrive from around the globe. Torontonians insist on identifying their city as 'world class' – and rightly so!

Canadians are more lax about religion than their US counterparts, and generally don't mix religion with politics. Tolerance is a way of life, with a high number of 'affirming' congregations that ordain, marry and welcome the lesbian community. At pious places like downtown's *Church of the Holy Trinity* (p60), the congregation comes more for the social activism than the Sunday service. Historically, Toronto has maintained a strong Jewish presence. Buddhism predominates among Asian communities, including a small Tibetan Buddhist community.

Toronto's Aboriginal population, comprising mostly of First Nations people, nudges over 10,000 people. A 1997 Canadian Supreme Court ruling stated that, based on oral history, Aboriginal people have legitimate title to their lands and that provincial governments have a 'moral duty' to negotiate with them. Frustratingly, this ruling hasn't helped Aboriginal groups without a land base, like those in urban Toronto. The nearest established Aboriginal community is Brantford's Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, near the Niagara Peninsula. *Back on the Rez: Finding the Way Home* (1996) by Brian Maracle is an account of one Torontonian's return to life on the reserve after 40 years away.

LIFESTYLE

In general, Torontonians are a mannerly bunch, if sometimes a little too earnest. They think long and hard about how to live their lives, ruminating over everything from recycling to the Blue Jays' prospects. Sincerity aside, there's no shortage of irony or wryness in the local sense of humor, which at its most potent can strip paint.

HOT CONVERSATION TOPICS

- With plumes of **air pollution** drifting in from the south and Canada's conservative government making anti-Kyoto Protocol mutterings and procrastinating over new environmental measures, it seems Toronto's asthmatic fog is unlikely to dissipate anytime soon. Wheeze...
- Toronto's eyesore **Gardiner Expressway** conveys 180,000 motorists every day, but it's perpetually congested and needs constant expensive maintenance. A recent report from the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corp suggested demolishing it and building a 10-lane, \$758 million 'Great Street' – who'll be paying for *that*?
- Toronto is proud of its long-standing 'safe city' reputation, but gun crime is on the rise. Everyday there's at least one gun-related incident somewhere in the GTA, and locals are getting edgy. What the hell is this, Detroit?
- Still no action down at **Maple Leaf Gardens** (p65), eh? After malingering on the auction block for a while, this classic Toronto landmark, where the Leafs played from 1931 to 1999 and Elvis crooned, was bought by grocery chain Loblaws in 2004. History-sensitive redevelopment is scheduled for late 2007.

IT'S A DOGS LIFE

Dogs enjoy an elevated social status in Toronto. Unlike many western cities where hounds are tied up on the sidewalk, Toronto's mutts can freely access shopping malls, supermarkets, cafés, the PATH network and the subway. Affluent Yorkville ladies parade pedigree pooches along Bloor St, shop attendants not batting an eye as wet noses sniff through racks of YSL and Prada. A crop of downtown doggy boutiques (p162) ensure that Toronto's canines are groomed to the nines. Thankfully, city dogs have trained their owners to stoop and scoop the poop – unfortunate footwear encounters are rare. Woof!

FOOD & DRINK

When you're on the road, you want to try the local cuisine, right? Except in Canada, because what's there to try? A bit of charred moose? Maple syrup pie? Once there was only Québécois cuisine, but all that has changed. New Canadian cuisine combines unusual, fresh (often organic) local ingredients with classic French stylings and daring fusion techniques from Asia. It's similar to Californian cuisine, but fleshed out with northern game and continental-inspired sauces. That said, Yukon Gold potatoes are still just potatoes, and Prince Edward Island seafood isn't necessarily anything special. Our advice: order internationally and adventurously and see what arrives!

Most Torontonians are real 'foodies,' the names of local chefs rolling off their tongues as easily as those of movie stars. People here are as comfortable plunging chopsticks into a bowl of *pho* (Vietnamese soup) at **Phở Hu'ng** (p100) as they are polishing the silver during tea at the **Windsor Arms** (p172). The city's high-flying restaurants have some of the top tables in North America, including **Canoe** (p94) and **Auberge du Pommier** (p113). The **Summerlicious** (p14) and **Winterlicious** (p13) festivals increase your chances of being able to afford to eat at these kinds of places.

Weighing in on the local cuisine scene are the fecund Niagara Peninsula vineyards (p186), which take enormous steps forward with every vintage. The Niagara Peninsula enjoys a quirky microclimate (it almost never snows), allowing the world-famous Niagara ice wines to flourish. Also on offer are excellent bottles of pinot noir, cabernet sauvignon, merlot, cabernet franc and pinot grigio – wine tasting is a mandatory experience if you're touring the Peninsula. If you're city-bound, most decent Toronto restaurants proffer healthy wine lists, usually peppered with Niagara classics.

Wine not your thing? You'll be relieved to hear that microbrew culture is alive and kicking in Toronto, many pubs and bars like **C'est What?** (p119) and **Smokeless Joe** (p123) serving small-batch Ontarian, Québécois and British Columbian beers. Don't miss a tour of **Steamwhistle Brewing Company** (p54)

The work ethic in the Financial District on Bay St (Toronto's version of Wall St), is intense. *Waaay*-too-young stockbrokers do their best to convince themselves that Toronto is actually New York, but most people here know how to clock-off and relax too. Eating and drinking are major pursuits, with life lived outdoors as much as possible, especially during summer.

Torontonians are more likely to speak their mind than other Canadians (especially when anyone mentions George Bush), but tolerance remains a virtue. Most embrace multiculturalism, especially with its festivals, thriving arts scene and fusion cuisine.

Quiet residential blocks scattered throughout the city centre boast shady trees, one-way streets (called 'Traffic Calming Zones') and Victorian row houses, interlinked by the efficient TTC public transport system. Despite the grim winter and the critical issue of homelessness, general living standards are high – Torontonians know that they've got it good.

TORONTO THE (STILL) GOOD

Describing Toronto in 1984, Jan Morris wrote that Torontonians were 'incoherently polite.' Indeed, during your visit you might wonder, 'What the hell did I do to deserve all this courteousness?' Those unlikely to earn a knighthood will enjoy the standard 'Sir' and 'M'am' salutations, while riding the punctual TTC with its charter of 'Respect & Dignity' is an oddly calming experience. Subway notices say, 'Be courteous – do not rush doors'; street-crossings are adorned with signs saying, 'Pedestrians obey your signals.' Walking from A to B, Torontonians stick religiously to the right of the sidewalk, conditioned by years of driving. This absence of chaos might drive you nuts, but don't complain – you'll always get where you're going on time.

TOP FIVE TORONTO CHEFS

Torontonians worship their celebrity chefs, some of whom flit from restaurant to restaurant, their reputations and clientele tagging along for the ride. Scan the fine (or sometimes not-so-fine) print on the menu to see if you're feasting on the inventive creations of the following:

- David Chrystian – a serial success story, Chrystian skipped through the kitchens of Cafe Societa, Patriot, Accolade and the Drake Hotel to his current domain, **Joy Bistro** (p110). He's passionate about Canadian wines, and founded **The Centre for Wine and Food Experimentation** (www.thecentreforwineandfood.com).
- Susur Lee – welcomed home like a prodigal son after a stint in East Asia, this pony-tailed Hong Kong chef reigns supreme, serving up classy, imaginative cuisine at **Susur** (p109). He's even had a book written about him.
- Mark McEwan – world-wise McEwan blew people's minds in 1990 with **North 44°** (p113), which remains one of Toronto's top tables. He followed up with super-slick **Bymark** (p94), and now has a TV show called *The Heat*, and a new restaurant opening in 2007.
- Pascal Ribreau – after languishing in middling French kitchens, Ribreau struck out on his own with sparkling **Celestin** (p113), a success made all the more triumphant after a paralyzing car accident in the late '90s. He rates Toronto above Paris in the food stakes.
- Dufflet Rosenberg – Toronto's 'Queen of Cake' started her pastry biz at home in 1975. Today, **Dufflet Pastries** (p107) – a 31-year-old pioneer Queen West business – sells her divine (and reasonably priced) delights.

if you're at a loss for something to do around Harbourfront. If you're more of a cocktail fiend, Toronto's love affair with the martini remains undiminished – you'll have no trouble pickling yourself with countless interpretations of the classic recipe.

Outside of European restaurants, decent coffee can be hard to find in Toronto. Humongous North American chains proliferate, serving watery, overheated, oversized caffeine monstrosities to the ill-educated masses. But weed around the back blocks and you'll be able to find a decent latte (p123).

FASHION

With two internationally renowned Fashion Weeks, a glittering selection of big name designer boutiques, and an inspired selection of vintage and antique clothiers, Toronto is at the centre of the Canadian fashion stage. Some of fashion's most recognized labels were born here: twin brothers Dean and Dan Caten, brainchildren behind the catwalk favorite DSquared, are from Toronto. So is Alfred Sung, father of Club Monaco, and Arthur Mendonca, whose bold designs have grazed the backs of countless celebrities. Eco-forward Preloved, groundbreaker in the use of recycled fabric, was born on Queen West, and cosmetic giants MAC makeup, known for their support of AIDS research and their use of big-name spokespeople (which have included Lisa Marie Presley, Elton John and Mary J Blige) originated in T.O.

Meanwhile, Toronto continues to produce a steady hum of young, up-and-coming independent designers ready to provide the next big thing. Local creations are featured at eclectic boutiques such as **Propaganda** (p154), **Courage My Love** (p158), **Fresh Collective** (p158) and sister store **Fresh Baked Goods** (p158), while **Secrets From Your Sister** (p157) provides a comfortable setting for proper bra-fitting and a wide range of sizes. Trendsetters will head straight to one of the Fiorio salons, or to **Coupe Bizarre** (p145) for of-the-moment hairstyling.

SPORTS

Toronto is utterly sports mad. Media burgeons with the latest headlines, while before big hockey games, TTC buses display 'Go Leafs!' messages instead of route numbers. Despite the fact that the **Toronto Maple Leafs** (p142) haven't won the Stanley Cup since 1967, the city is rabid with hockey fever all winter long. Tickets to Leafs games are expensive and hard to come by, but the atmosphere is unforgettable.

When the **Toronto Blue Jays** (p140) won back-to-back World Series in 1992 and '93, they became the only non-US team ever to claim Major League Baseball's holy grail. Less fortunate have been the **Toronto Raptors** (p141), who belong to the Atlantic Division of the National Basket-

ball League's Eastern Conference. Since Vince Carter packed his bags for New Jersey in 2004, it's been slim pickings for the Raps. Emerging star Chris Bosh might pick up the pieces.

First observed by a Jesuit missionary during the 1600s, when teams of hundreds of First Nations warriors placed goals miles apart and competed from sunrise to sundown, lacrosse is often called 'the fastest game on two feet.' Modern matches are played on indoor hockey rinks. The blazing **Toronto Rock** (p142) dominate in the National Lacrosse League.

The Canadian Football League is an odd duck, considered to be 'longer, wider and faster' than its American counterpart. The **Toronto Argonauts** (p142) are the winningest team in CFL history.

On the back of the 2006 World Cup, soccer is staking a claim as Toronto's (and indeed North America's) fastest growing sport. **Toronto FC** is poised to join America's Major League Soccer (www.nsl.net) competition in 2007.

For golf information see p139; horseracing p142.

MEDIA

Toronto is Canada's English-language publishing centre. Publishing houses abound – major internationals like Random House, Harper Collins and Penguin have offices here. Although newsstands aren't generally found on the street (they're usually inside subway stations where it's warmer), the city has an abundance of magazine shops to satisfy residents' voracious appetites for news. Free street-press dailies, weeklies and quarterlies – available pretty much everywhere – fill the cultural gaps and keep locals informed about upcoming concerts, exhibitions, shows and lectures. See p203 for an essential list of newspapers and magazines.

Toronto is also a major centre for TV, film and radio production. Downtown you'll find the English-language headquarters of the **Canadian Broadcasting Corporation** (p58), as well

LOCAL VOICES: JOHN MOORE

Born and raised in Montréal, **John Moore**, 40, is best known for his freewheeling, acerbic entertainment reports on radio stations around the country. On TV, John has hosted, voiced, written, directed and been featured on a dozen shows. He currently hosts the cleverly named *John Moore Show* on Toronto radio station CFRB 1010, and lives in both Toronto and Montréal.

What do you love most, or think is unique about Toronto?

Toronto is a city of neighborhoods. You can easily live, shop and eat without a car which means that even if you live in the core of the city (which I do) it's a bit like being in a small town. I like Toronto because it's still trying to figure out what it wants to be when it grows up, which means everyone who lives here has a stake in the future of this city.

What's your favorite eatery around town?

I have so many. There's a sushi joint (Sushi Inn) I love in Yorkville that cares so little about what you think that it's like being in New York. But I have a thing for outrageously over the top dining so I like **Canoe** (p94), **Bistro 990** (p102) and **Scaramouch** (p113). **The Drake Hotel** (p121) is a great hang out but what a lot of people don't know is that it's a terrific place to eat. For cheap and cheerful eats you can't beat **The Rivoli** (p126).

What's Toronto's best-kept secret?

I love the residential streets on the Toronto Islands. There is no other place like this in North America. You can spend a couple of hours on a summer's afternoon walking along the pathways and taking in homes of iconoclasts who have opted out of urban life.

What key controversial issue does the city face today, and what are your thoughts on it?

Toronto needs to quit obsessing over what the rest of the world thinks and to merely build one of the world's greatest cities in which to live. Toronto is like a microcosm of Canada: it worries too much about how it's perceived. The irony is that when cities are built for their citizens, they immediately become interesting to visitors.

YOU KNOW YOU'VE BEEN IN TORONTO TOO LONG IF:

- You wouldn't be seen dead in a toque (winter hat) anywhere above 0°C.
- You think purple cabbages are an acceptable form of floral decoration.
- You're used to public washroom soap that smells like marzipan (or is it Dr Pepper?).
- You named your goldfish after a former Maple Leafs goalie.
- You can tell the difference between a subway token and a dime in the dark.
- You call six inches of snow a 'dusting.'
- You don't wear a watch anymore because the clock towers around town actually work.
- You obey the 'Move just a little farther back please' signs on buses when there's no one else standing up.
- You're considering stitching a Canadian flag on your backpack so people don't think you're American.
- You won't eat anywhere that doesn't have an omelette on the menu.

as Citytv (p60), Toronto's first independent TV station founded by media innovator Moses Znaimer. Most Toronto homes have cable TV which offers around 70 stations – enough to keep dedicated channel-surfers occupied for days. Sports, movies, current affairs and chat-shows proliferate, but you'll struggle to find much arts coverage. Keep an eye out for charismatic Toronto culture jammer George Stroumboulopoulos and his CBC show *The Hour*, which delivers a left-field, alternative take on the day's news.

Walking around Toronto's streets you'll regularly see film crews in action, powdering starlets' noses and yelling 'Cut!'. Favorable exchange rates, excellent infrastructure and 'this could be any town' architecture make Toronto (aka Hollywood of the North) an appealing place to shoot a movie.

Perhaps because of civic pride, graffiti culture isn't really something downtown Toronto has embraced, but ride the subway to the end of the line and you'll start to see some expressive pieces.

See p204 for a snapshot of local radio stations.

LANGUAGE

We challenge you to name a language that isn't spoken in the GTA! City Hall notices are printed in Chinese, English, French, Greek, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, Tagalog and Tamil. Unlike the rest of Canada, most of Toronto's bilingual signs are written in English and Chinese, not French. Most of the French signs are near the US border, as if Ontario wants to hit arriving Americans with the message, 'We are Canadian! We are bilingual!'

In practice, Toronto is predominantly Anglophone. Residents don't exactly speak the Queen's English, but many British terms and spellings (eg 'centre' instead of 'center') endure. The proper pronunciation of the city's name troubles visitors. You can pick out the newbies by how they enunciate each syllable of 'Toh-ron-toh,' while natives dissolve the second 't' and slur the word into 'Tuh-rah-noh.'

A quick glossary of Canuck (Canadian) slang: 'ski-doo' means snowmobile; a 'toque' (rhymes with duke) is a winter hat; 'peameal bacon' is cured (not smoked) pork; a 'Newfie' is someone from Newfoundland (a source of much amusement to many Canadians); a 'hosier' is a beer-guzzling fool; if you're tired, you're 'bagged'; a 'patio' is a terrace, courtyard or deck; the word 'all' adopts an 's', becoming 'alls.' To summarize: 'Alls I did was ride my ski-doo to Newfie to buy a toque, but I'm totally bagged. You hosers wanna eat some peameal bacon on the patio?'

For a full explanation of the famous Canadian 'eh?,' check out Will and Ian Ferguson's book *How to Be a Canadian: Even if You Already Are One* (2001).

ECONOMY & COSTS

From its colonial fur trade roots, Toronto has grown to be pivotal in Canada's economy. The Toronto Stock Exchange, which opened in 1937, conducts over \$100 billion worth of business annually from its high-rise tower off Bay St. Canada's five largest banks are head-

quartered in the Financial District. The city has the nation's busiest airport, is an important Great Lakes port, and straddles two industrial powerhouses: the 'Golden Horseshoe' (along Lake Ontario from Niagara Falls to Hamilton), and the Québec-Windsor corridor.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Britain was Canada's strongest trading partner, but in the 21st century the USA has snapped up more than three-quarters of Canada's exports, especially raw materials. Since the passage of the Free Trade Agreement (what Americans call NAFTA), the border has become even more porous. Alarmists decry the 'brain drain' of educated Canadians leaving for higher-paying jobs in the south.

After the 1995 referendum rejected Québec's independence, Toronto absorbed much of Montréal's nervous business exodus, but the 2003 SARS outbreak cost the city a billion dollars in lost revenue. Things have recovered since then, but boomtown Calgary is starting to erode Toronto's mantle as Canada's business *numero uno*.

Thanks to the soaring Canadian dollar, Toronto is the most expensive city in Canada (and is on the world's '50 Priciest Cities' list), but for US and European visitors it'll still seem affordable. The most expensive item will be a plane ticket, followed by accommodations. Couples traveling together should count on spending around \$200 per day on a B&B room, neighborhood restaurant meals and splashing some entertainment cash.

HOW MUCH?

Airport shuttle \$16.50

Bottle of water \$2.50

B&B room with private bathroom \$100

Cheap ticket to a Blue Jays game \$9

Crappy 'I Love T.O.' T-shirt \$12

Glass of Niagara wine \$6

Litre of gasoline 80¢

Return ferry to Toronto Islands \$6

Short taxi ride \$10

Slice of pizza \$3

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

Once the Canadian capital, Toronto is now the just capital of the province of Ontario (national capital Ottawa is a short flight away). Relations between the three levels of government – municipal, provincial and federal – are positively Byzantine with overlapping responsibilities, as well as gaps where no one seems to be minding the store.

When Charles Dickens visited the city in the 1840s, he decried its 'rabid Toryism.' The Union Jack still appears on the provincial flag, but the Tories were long out of power until Mike Harris' promises of tax cuts and reduced social spending returned them to provincial power in 1995. Post-election, the Tories slashed government jobs, shut down hospitals and mental health services and weakened labour laws. Toronto's politics have been traditionally progressive, but these right-wing tactics shifted the political climate and the resultant wave of mad homeless people yelling at themselves in the streets has changed the face of Toronto.

Locally, Toronto's mayor presides over the city council, the primary municipal legislature, with 44 members hailing from the city's different wards. The council in session can resemble a Shakespearean drama, with agitated ravings and fools letting the insults fly. In 1997 the amalgamation of the Megacity (p38) created a strong new suburban voting bloc that swept North York mayor Mel Lastman into the city mayoral seat. Although mayors traditionally aren't required to announce a party affiliation, Lastman was clearly comfortable with the Tories.

But Torontonians weren't comfortable with him. Shortly after Premier Dalton McGuinty (aka Mr Ontario) and his Liberals were returned to provincial power in 2003, voters elected Harvard-educated David Miller, a former High Park councilman, as their new mayor. Proving popular, Miller was re-elected in 2006, pledging to pursue a 1% share of existing goods and sales taxes from the federal and provincial governments to improve Toronto's public transit, housing, child care and family services.

Cynical Torontonians suspect that if they gain 1% here, they'll lose it somewhere else just as fast.

ENVIRONMENT

THE LAND

Ontario is separated from western Canada's prairies by the massive Canadian Shield, a stretch of Precambrian rock over 1600km long formed by a prehistoric glacier. Toronto was once under the waters of Lake Iroquois, an ancient sea lapping up against the escarpment roughly traced by today's St Claire Ave, upon which **Casa Loma** (p68) resides. The old shore cliffs have eroded over millennia but are still visible. The rest of Toronto is pretty flat, making for easy walking.

Modern Toronto sits beside Lake Ontario, part of the chain of Great Lakes shared between Canada and the USA.

The **Toronto Islands** (p75), originally a 9km-long sandbar peninsula, were created when a violent 19th-century storm blasted away an isthmus connecting them to the mainland. The sandbar itself was formed by drifting material eroded from the **Scarborough Bluffs** (p79) further east along the lakeshore – gnarly cliffs formed over five different glacial eras.

BY THE NUMBERS

Immigrants to Canada settled in Toronto 1 in 4
Estimated number of visitors during Pride Week 1 million
Median family income \$64,000
Percentage of parkland 18%
Number of bridges 535
Percentage of the US population within a day's drive of T.O. 50%
Population density per sq km 3940
Number of uniformed police officers (including the chief) 5,028
Total length of city sidewalks 7060km
Unemployment rate 6.5%

GREEN TORONTO

On the streets of Toronto, recycling bins are as common as garbage cans – residents have taken a shine to sustainable living practices, going to great lengths to separate organic waste from bottles and cans.

Toronto is no Los Angeles, but **CN Tower** (p51) visitors will get a smoggy eyeful of the city's air pollution problem. Helping the cause, City Hall enacted a bylaw to prevent motorists from idling their cars more than a few minutes. Meanwhile, American car-sharing company **Zipcar** (p212) set up shop in Toronto in 2006, and **Pedestrian Sundays** have become a fixture at Kensington Market.

Although many Torontonians own bicycles, there are still too many vehicles on the streets – competing with them on two wheels can be hazardous. As a result, most cyclists stick to the ravines and established parkland bike trails.

Torontonians love their lakefront beaches, boardwalks and recreational paths (see the Green Ravine Scene walking tour, p85). Gradually, old shipping quays are being converted along the Harbourfront, creating spaces like the **Toronto Music Garden** (p54). Almost every downtown block has at least some green space, whether it's a tree-lined residential street or a small conservatory tucked between skyscrapers. Toronto's ravines remain largely untouched.

IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN

...but here's a handful of leafy T.O. places that'll restore your faith in sustainability:

- **Community Vehicular Reclamation Project** (Map pp240–1) – Kensington Market's kooky car-becomes-greenhouse street installation on Augusta Ave.
- **High Park** (p77) – acres of unkempt scrub, stands of oaks and Grenadier Pond. This is what Toronto looked like before Europeans arrived.
- **Spadina Quay Wetlands** (p53) – a former parking lot transformed into a sustainable ecosystem for birds, frogs and fish.
- **Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve** (p80) – nine hectares of wildflowers, reclaimed from industrial wasteland.
- **Tommy Thompson Park** (p74) – a man-made green refuge for snakes, turtles, foxes and even coyotes!

URBAN PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Toronto was tinkering with its environment well before it decided to push the Don River around during the Don Valley Parkway construction in the '50s. In recent decades, the Toronto & Region Conservation Authority has based its acts on sounder ecology, evidenced by the astounding success of **Tommy Thompson Park** (p74) and the regeneration of natural wetlands at **Grenadier Pond** (p78) and **Spadina Quay** (p53).

Community groups play an active role in fighting ill-planned urban development, largely driven by explosive population growth. Most development battles focus on the Harbourfront: City Hall's optimistic 'Making Waves' plan proposed thousands of new high-rise lakeside condos (without much green space), while the future of the Gardiner Expressway fuels ongoing debate (p16).

One of the city's recurring environmental nightmares is toxic water conditions along the Lake Ontario shoreline. Sudden, heavy rains cause sewage treatment plants to overflow, sending garbage and bacteria (such as *E. coli*) straight into the lake. Summer beach closures and bacteria blooms in ravine creeks are regularly announced on TV.

The Authors

Charles Rawlings-Way



Charles first made Toronto's acquaintance when he was eight, flying in from Tasmania to assess the squirrels and his uncle's croissants. He's since cultivated a Toronto habit, shifting focus towards

baseball, bookshops and beer. He's been snowed-in by blizzards, bamboozled by microbrews, rocked earless in grungy bars and overwhelmed by global culinary delights. A meek decision to avoid the giant trampoline at Ontario Place in 1978 haunts him to this day...

A lapsed architect, underrated guitarist and fearless home renovator, Charles greased the production wheels at Lonely Planet's Melbourne HQ for many years before becoming a freelance travel writer in 2005.

Natalie Karneef



Natalie's love of style has taken her through Indian bazaars, up London high streets, around Parisian markets and into boutiques in her hometown of Montréal. She spent two years living, and shopping, in Toronto, and returned there to write the Shopping and Excursions chapters of this book. She also interviewed John Moore (p19) and wrote the Fashion section in the City Life chapter.

CONTRIBUTING AUTHOR

MONICA BODIRSKY

Monica wrote the 'First Nations Foundations' box (p40) in the History chapter. She is the coordinator of 'Getekindaswingamig' Native Community History Program at the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (p69).

PHOTOGRAPHER

Corey Wise

For photographer Corey Wise, a stint in Europe unleashed a hopeless case of travel addiction that led to multi-month forays around the Middle East, Asia and South America. Toronto was a change of venue, but surprisingly exotic, thanks to the city's diverse population.

Charles' Top Toronto Day

I can't get started without a kick-ass coffee, so it's straight to **Jet Fuel** (p124) or **Moonbean Coffee Company** (p124) for a fix. After the Andy Warhol exhibition at the **Art Gallery of Ontario** (p64) I boot it into **Baldwin Village** (p99) for a street café brunch. Plunging into the subway, I rumble into grandiose **Union Station** (p54) – the **Toronto Islands** (p75) ferry isn't far away. The bike I rented keeps slipping gears, but the Islands sure do look good. My jealousy is thinly veiled as I trundle past some **Ward's Island** (p77) hippies snoozing in the boardwalk sunshine. Back on the mainland I slurp down some \$3 noodles in **Chinatown** (p99) then rummage around **Kensington Market** (p158) for a new *toque* (winter hat). I wonder if the **Royal Ontario Museum** (p66) extensions are finished? Somehow I doubt it... There's time for a quick pint at the **Distillery District** (p120) before the Blue Jays (p53) baseball game tonight. The indie street-press *Now* coughs up a cool band at the **Cameron House** (p125) later on, but I'll keep my appreciation low-key – tomorrow I'll drive down to the **Niagara Peninsula** (p186) to stock up on wine and check climate change hasn't evaporated the falls.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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