

Distillery Historic District



A QUICK JAUNT TO TORONTO

BY AMBER GIBSON

WITH ARTS FESTIVALS LIKE LUMINATO (*luminato-festival.com*) and the Toronto International Film Festival (*tiff.net*) and museums like the Art Gallery of Ontario, there's no denying that Toronto is one of the most culturally vibrant cities in North America. It's the fourth largest city on the continent—bigger than Chicago—and great to visit any time of year. Plus, it's close enough for a quick weekend getaway.

STAY

There's been a sudden boom in luxury hotels in Toronto the past couple of years, but the **Shangri-La** (188 University Ave., 647-788-8888, *Shangri-la.com*) is the crème de la crème. Guestrooms are sumptuous and spacious, with plush bamboo-weave carpeting and dark mahogany furniture. Ubiquitous Asian décor, from large-scale Chinese calligraphy in the lobby to delicate origami cranes on the nightstand, creates an elegant yet contemporary ambiance. The lobby

lounge is popular with tourists and locals alike—spend an afternoon enjoying tea service, or stop by in the evening for a nightcap and live music.

DINE

Next door to the Shangri-La is **David Chang's Momofuku** empire, with five restaurant concepts under one roof. Momofuku Daishō (190 University Ave., 647-253-8000, *momofuku.com/Toronto*) features eclectic Asian food with Canadian touches, like local Monforte Toscano cheese with charred cabbage. From roasted rice cakes with sausage and Chinese broccoli to whole roasted trout crusted in shiitake mushrooms, everything is bright and flavorful. There are excellent vegetarian options too, including a refreshing radish salad topped with crisp tofu skin. Frozen chocolate mousse for dessert is dressed with milk cream and toasted rice, like a sophisticated Asian malted milk ball.

SEE

The **Art Gallery of Ontario** (317 Dundas St. W., 416-979-6648, *ago.net*) has an unmatched collection of Canadian art, with an emphasis on local artists like **David Milne**, famous for his modernist landscapes. There's also an extensive photography collection, along with paintings ranging from the Renaissance to modern day. You might even catch an artist-in-residence painting on the walls for an upcoming exhibit.

LUXURIATE

The **Miraj Hammam** (*mirajcaudaliespa.com*) spa at the Shangri-La is the only **Caudalie Paris** spa in Canada. The signature treatment is a traditional *hammam* and *gommage*, which includes steaming and exfoliation with Moroccan black soap with eucalyptus. Caudalie's grape products are used in all the facials for their polyphenol properties. After your entire body and face are glowing, relax in the Moroccan-inspired lounge with baklava and chai tea while admiring your smooth-as-butter skin.

NIBBLE

The **St. Lawrence Market** (92-95 Front St. E., 416-392-7219, *stlawrencemarket.com*), one of the top food markets in the world, cannot be missed. Saturdays draw the biggest crowds and also the most vendors, with both the North and South halls overflowing with a cornucopia of fresh produce, seafood, meats, cheese and baked goods. Don't miss the peameal bacon sandwiches at **Carousel Bakery**, a lean-but-luscious porky delight. Try 38 different types of mus-

tard from cloyingly sweet to sinus-clearing spicy at **Kozlik's Canadian Mustard**, and try a Montreal bagel (smaller, denser and sweeter than the New York variety) dressed with za'atar from **St. Urbain Bagel**.

VISIT

Formerly derelict buildings in the **Distillery Historic District** (55 Mill St., 416-364-1177, thedistillerydistrict.com) are now home to artist studios, galleries, restaurants, breweries and great shopping. Take a walking or Segway tour with **Segway of Ontario** (segwayofontario.com) and taste unpasteurized small-batch sake from Eastern Canada's only sake brewery, **Ontario Spring Water Sake** (ontariosake.com). Don't miss the **Artscape Distillery Studios** (torontoartscape.org) either, where you can poke your head into more than 60 artist studios and shop for jewelry, paintings and home furnishings. **Hoi Bo** (hoibo.com) has locally made clothes and bags you won't find elsewhere, with a minimalist aesthetic and crisp lines. And when it's all said and done, turn your digital photos into gorgeous prints and photobook keepsakes at **Pikto** (pikto.com).



Momofuku Daishō's local Monforte Toscano cheese with charred cabbage

GET THERE

Porter Airlines (flyporter.com), Toronto's regional air carrier, is your best bet from Chicago. It's smooth sailing from **Midway** into **Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport**, located on the Toronto Islands. A two-minute ferry ride later and you're downtown. Plus, you're treated more graciously than on any domestic carrier. Everyone receives complimentary nuts, cookies and vegetable chips along with a choice of beverage (including alcohol) served in a real glass—an auspicious start to a great vacation. ■

TRAVEL



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