



CANADA

Your Guide to Exploring Canada's Coolest Neighborhoods (Video)



Plan your next journey north around one of these destination-worthy neighborhoods.

TRAVEL + LEISURE STAFF NOVEMBER 15, 2017

The crags of [Banff](#) and the bucolic towns of [Prince Edward Island](#) have their charms, but Canada's coolest major cities are not to be overlooked: You'll find skyscrapers and a diverse international community in Toronto, Francophone appeal and killer bagels in [Montreal](#), and dramatic scenery and fantastic cultural institutions in Vancouver. But any city vacation depends on finding the right corners of town in which to linger — spend your time in a sleepy residential district or a financial center that empties out after work and you'll get a skewed picture of city living. Here, we've compiled expert guides to the best neighborhoods in three of Canada's biggest cities. Whether you're wondering where to stay in Mile End or where to shop in Toronto, these curated must-do lists have got you covered.

Montreal's Mile End

This district of the Plateau Mont-Royal borough is one of the coolest in all of Canada. Come for the music, creative boutiques, and dozens of trendy bars and restaurants. (One thing we left off this list: Bagels. We're not getting in the middle of that local rivalry, so try one from Fairmount and St-Viateur and decide for yourself.)



Marc Bruxelles/Alamy

Stay

Lodging in the area is limited, so your best bet is an Airbnb or the guesthouse [Pensione Popolo](#) (*doubles from \$75*), upstairs from the music venue Casa del Popolo. For more-luxurious digs, head to nearby Old Montreal for the new [Hotel William Gray](#) (*doubles from \$211*).

Eat and Drink

For refined English brunch fare, try [Lawrence](#) (*brunch entrées \$10–\$14*), which serves bubble and squeak, a blood-sausage sandwich, and beef liver with onions. At the cozy basement boîte [Petite Maison](#) (*prix fixe from \$29*), Québécois celebrity chef Danny St. Pierre is acclaimed for his “inverted poutine,” a potato croquette with cheese and gravy inside. The menu at [Lili.Co](#) (*small plates \$2–\$25*) changes daily, with options sure to delight both vegetarians (cantaloupe and tomatoes in goat-feta cream) and omnivores (jerk sweetbreads).

Do

Bands from Arcade Fire to the Moldy Peaches have played at [Casa del Popolo](#), also a vegetarian restaurant, bar, art gallery, and fair-trade café. Shoppers should check out [Boutique General 54](#), an independent store with women's clothing and accessories from more than 60 Canadian and American designers.

Vancouver's Chinatown

Canada's largest Chinatown has begun luring young chefs, artists, and entrepreneurs, who have launched exciting new businesses alongside the neighborhood's best-loved attractions. There are retro jazz bars, classical gardens, and a boutique hotel filled with Aboriginal designs — all reasons this neighborhood is a must-visit stop on a tour of Canada.



Michael Wheatley/All Canada Photos/Getty Images

Stay

The standout hotel is [Skwachays Lodge Hotel & Gallery](#) (*doubles from \$103*), which offers 18 suites, each filled with First Nations art, that can serve as a perfect home base when exploring town — the property sits conveniently between Chinatown, downtown Vancouver, and Gastown.

Eat and Drink

Chinatown has seen a surge in vegan and vegetarian restaurants in the past couple of years, including [Virtuous Pie](#) (*pizzas from \$8*), which serves 10-inch plant-based pizzas and a variety of seasonal, house-made ice creams. [Kissa Tanto](#) (*entrées \$22–\$37*), a 76-seat Japanese-Italian hybrid, became an immediate favorite after opening last spring. Its retro Tokyo-jazz-bar vibe is an appealing atmosphere for dishes like rib eye topped with saffron-chili sauce. For drinks, stop in at the [Boxcar](#), where the 24 rotating taps feature local craft brews and regional favorites.

Do

The architecture alone makes wandering through Chinatown worth it, but be sure to take in some culture. Housed in the neighborhood's oldest building, [Rennie Museum](#) displays one of the largest contemporary art collections in Canada. It's free and open to the public during the week. If the weather is nice, a walk through the [Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden](#) is also a must. Book a guided tour for an insider's take on the surrounding Taihu rocks, hawthorn berries, and more.

Toronto's King and Queen Streets West

On just a few blocks between Chinatown and the entertainment district, Toronto's King and Queen Streets are where you'll find some of the city's best stuff. The stylish design district is home to award-winning restaurants, great culture, and tons of innovative shops.



Roberto Machado Noa/Lightrocket/Getty Images

Stay

With its central location and incredible city views, the sleek [Thompson](#) (*doubles from \$526*) is an ideal base from which to explore the neighborhood. Farther afield, [the Hotel X](#) (*doubles from \$339*), on the Lake Ontario waterfront, is scheduled to open this month.

Eat and Drink

At the Canadian bistro [Canis](#) (*tasting menus from \$51*), chef Jeff Kang uses simple seasonal ingredients, from cabbage and pearl onions to fish and poultry, in his sophisticated tasting menus. Locals come to [Pablo's Snack House](#) (*small plates from \$4*), a "secret" small-plates joint on the second floor of the popular Latin eatery Baro, for executive chef Steve Gonzalez's beef empanadas and tacos made from fresh local fish. [Rhum Corner](#) (*entrées \$6–\$30*) specializes in Haitian-inspired cocktails and cuisine, such as *griot*, made with pork shoulder, and *pen patat*, a sweet-potato dessert.

Shop

[I Have a Crush on You](#), a gift store, gallery, and design studio, is stocked with creative trinkets, stationery, and clothing made by Canadian designers. In the rear of the store is Amy Kwong's Smitten Kitten, which sells paper goods.