

# Homes & Leisure

**Travel** Ballooning over Egypt **F3**

**Homes** Top-notch view in Grand Barachois **F6**



The stunning Library of Parliament in Centre Block has thousands of flowers, masks, and mythical beasts carved into its white pine panelling. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED/CATHY DONALDSON

## FIVE IDEAS WHEN VISITING OTTAWA

From museums to spas, to the parliamentary experience, there's plenty to see and do in our nation's capital

**CATHY DONALDSON**  
TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

When I was in high school in 1983, I made the long train trip from my hometown of Sydney, N.S. to our nation's capital. I was excited beyond words.

As the train stopped in various communities along the line, we picked up more passengers, including other teens like myself who were destined for Ottawa's Terry Fox Canadian Youth Centre. The facility, which had just opened the previous year, was the base for a bilingual program aimed at promoting a better understanding of Canada among young Canadians.

That initiative, which has since changed its name to Encounters with Canada, is still going strong, giving those aged 14 to 17 a chance to travel to the capital and learn about Canadian institutions and national history, explore

career options, and develop leadership skills.

I still remember my group's enthusiasm during visits to Parliament and the Supreme Court, as well as participating in cultural events, and – perhaps most importantly in those teen years – when we took the bus to shop at the CF Rideau Centre shopping mall.

Fast forward to last month.

I'd been back to Ottawa for a few stays in the interim but this was the first time since the '80s that I'd had the chance to tour some of the same venues. This latest journey was such a blast I knew I had to write about the experience and

encourage others – of all ages – to consider making the trek.

Arguably the best feature of this beautiful city of more than a million is that there is literally something for everyone. Home to many national museums and sites as well as many festivals, Ottawa is truly a hub for culture and history at any time of year.

And if you can't make it in the coming months, start planning for 2017. That's when Canada marks 150 years as a nation and when the capital will be in serious party mode.

"Ottawa has been planning for 2017 for years already — a 12-month

non-stop celebration!" says Jantine Van Kregten, director of communications for Ottawa Tourism. "The Ottawa 2017 team is pulling together once-in-a-lifetime experiences to complement our existing festivals and events. It will be a special year of national pride for all."

I definitely plan to return then, though the city already has oodles to offer. On a recent stay with my daughter, Sarah, we barely made a dent in our sightseeing list.

Of course, having a central place to stay certainly helped. We chose

PLEASE SEE → **OTTAWA, F4**

## Bright, bold colours highlight renovation

**REBECCA TEAGARDEN**  
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

To get to know her new client, interior designer Kim Gorsline gave Amanda a colour-profile test.

Amanda passed. With, ah-hem, flying colours.

"I would look at those traditional mushroom-coloured rooms and think, 'Uck! Not for me.'"

"Red is my favourite," she says, referring, specifically, to the glass-painted backsplash in the kitchen and dining-room portions of her family's Washington state home, a well-curated rainbow of contemporary design. This shade, in particular, recalls a fat tomato at its most ripe.

"I know it's not for everyone," she says. "But I didn't want to make choices that were safe."

With Gorsline by her side, Amanda did no such thing. (Today she's wearing a simple black dress and a large watch with the color wheel across its face.) They hunted and gathered from a variety of local stores.

"When Kim found the bed in that emerald green velvet, she brought it to us, and I thought, 'Oh yeah!'"

The family arrived in the Seattle area eight years ago from Chicago for a change of lifestyle. But two is now five – they have three boys under six years old – and the family needed a family home.

The couple loved the location on a secluded street descending to the water – and liked the home, built in 1993, 5,400 square feet. It had good flow, fine bones, bright spaces, places for kids, places for grown-ups. But it was also full of brass and stainless steel; needed a cosmetic do-over. The couple hired

contractor R.W. Anderson Homes for that, changing out counters, lighting, fixtures, stair railings and more. Cabinets, still serviceable, got new pulls.

After that, for wall coverings, paint and furnishings, it was up to Gorsline. "We were very lucky," says Amanda. "Once we moved into this house, we were able to hit reset" (out with Ikea and college hand-me-downs).

Gorsline went for the boldest shades of every colour, but she held those choices in each room down to one or a few pieces for a pop that becomes pow! Such curation, in her words, keeps the whole thing from "feeling too much like a circus."

The living room, for example, is all about that lush royal blue sofa from Design Within Reach. A deepest

PLEASE SEE → **RENOVATION, F9**



Interior designer Kim Gorsline found this painting online. It shares a colourful relationship with Arne Jacobson's chartreuse Egg Chair nearby, from Canadian artist Elena Baker. PHOTO: TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

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## Homes&amp;Leisure



The Centre Block's Peace Tower is shown through the gates of Parliament Hill. PHOTO: THE CANADIAN PRESS



Many national museums can be found in Ottawa, including the Canadian Museum of Nature, which houses a wide variety of exhibits such as a cool dinosaur display. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED/CATHY DONALDSON

## Five capital ideas when visiting Ottawa

### OTTAWA → F1

ARC the hotel, a wonderful boutique property on Slater Street in Ottawa's downtown, only two blocks from Confederation Park, a six-minute walk to the National Arts Centre, and a seven-minute stroll to Parliament Hill.

Along with the impressive location, the hotel features sleek, European-styled rooms and suites, a chic yet relaxing lounge and bar area, as well as private dining and event spaces.

The friendly atmosphere of the hotel was a great way to start a day of exploring, and we often turned to ARC staff to suggest sightseeing options or ensure we were headed in the right direction.

With their help, as well as tips from Ottawa Tourism, Sarah and I had an outstanding visit. At the end of the journey, we compiled a list of our top five stops. Here's what we recommend:

#### Tour Canada's Parliament

Few symbols are as well-known as our neo-Gothic-styled Parliament Buildings, also known as East Block, West Block, and Centre Block. Tours of Centre Block – home to the Senate, House of Commons, and Library of Parliament – are offered free of charge daily, with exceptions. Get tour tickets (available on a first-come, first-served basis) at 90 Wellington St., across from Parliament Hill.

During our tour, we learned that in 1916, a massive fire destroyed the original Centre Block, except for the Library, fortunate since the breathtaking space is a masterpiece of texture, colour, and architectural detail. Today, the Library serves as a research centre for parliamentarians and their staff, and contains over 600,000 items.

After your Centre Block tour – which lasts 20 to 50 minutes depending on parliamentary activity – take the elevator up to the Peace Tower. At a height of more than 90 metres, the Tower is the dominant feature on Parliament Hill.

If time allows, drop by the Memorial Chamber, a solemn room near the base of the Peace Tower dedicated to Canadians who have died in conflicts around the world.

If you're a political junkie, consider also attending Question Period in the House of Commons. Individuals and groups can reserve seats for 'QP' through their Member of Parliament,

preferably at least two days before their arrival. Sarah and I thoroughly enjoyed watching the live banter between government and opposition MPs on a range of topics.

(Unfortunately, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was out of town during our visit so we weren't able to witness the leader – who has apparently caused a spike in public visits to parliament – in action.)

For more info on Parliament, see [lopparl.gc.ca/Visitors/](http://lopparl.gc.ca/Visitors/).

#### Have a spot of tea

Without a doubt, reserve a seat at 'Afternoon Tea' in Zoë's Lounge at the Fairmont Château Laurier, adjacent to Parliament Hill. Sarah and I felt the term 'tea' was a bit of a misnomer. Our stop was more of a complete sensory experience, in part made so memorable because of the lounge's location in the landmark hotel, a magnificent limestone creation with turrets and masonry reminiscent of a French chateau.

After we took a window seat in the regal setting, a knowledgeable, friendly server appeared and enthusiastically described the many dried teas he could prepare tableside. While our tea picks steeped, we began on the chilled fruit cups served (napkins in lap, of course!). Later, we sipped our teas and devoured the sweet and savoury items stacked on our tiered tea trays. We knew we'd have no room for dinner that night after filling ourselves with freshly-baked scones, delicate sandwiches, and divine sweets.

To make a reservation for 'Afternoon Tea', visit [fairmont.com/laurier-ottawa/dining/zoes-lounge](http://fairmont.com/laurier-ottawa/dining/zoes-lounge)

(Incidentally, some gliding along Ottawa's famed Rideau Canal Skateway would have been a great way to work off our tea extravaganza. Unfortunately, the Skateway – usually open from January to early March – had already closed by our stay.)

#### Enjoy a world-class museum

One of the best ways to explore Ottawa is by visiting one or more of its many exceptional museums. From the Museum of History (formerly the Museum of Civilization) to the National Gallery of Canada, there are a multitude of fantastic options to suit a range of interests.

On this trip, I opted for a stop at the Canadian Museum of Nature, located at the corner of McLeod and Metcalfe streets, about a 20-minute walk south of Parliament Hill.

I wound my way through the castle-like building to check out a barrage of fascinating exhibits, including super displays of dinosaurs, wildlife, and birds, among others. Several groups of young students were also enjoying their tours, leading me to note that this museum is a must for families. For more information on the Canadian Museum of Nature or any of Ottawa's other museums, visit [https://www.ottawatourism.ca/see-and-do/museums](http://www.ottawatourism.ca/see-and-do/museums).

#### Browse the ByWard Market neighbourhood

The ByWard Market is one of the oldest and largest farmers' markets in Canada, as well as the name of its surrounding eclectic neighbourhood. The area is filled with great restaurants, clubs, bistros, coffee shops, boutiques, and food retailers.

We found some great little market haunts during our brief stay, though could see how the place would be even more fun in summer, when up to 175 outdoor merchants sell their wares in stalls filled with plants, flowers, fruits, and vegetables as well as art and crafts.

#### Enjoy a spa day

Before leaving Moncton, I surveyed my Facebook friends for suggestions on their favourite attractions in and around Ottawa. Several suggested Nordik Spa-Nature, so – though 10 minutes from downtown Ottawa in Chelsea, Que. – Sarah and I decided to check it out.

Tucked away at the entrance to Gatineau Park, the spa is the largest of its kind in North America, with seven outdoor baths, eight unique saunas, an infinity pool, restaurant and lounge.

As guest services' manager Kim Dufour showed us around the property, I felt my shoulders already begin to relax. Even without trying one of Nordik's massages, body treatments, or experiencing its salt-water floating pool, I made a mental note that this might make the perfect getaway for my upcoming birthday (if I can wait that long).

#### Cathy Donaldson

is a professional writer based in Moncton. While in Ottawa, the Donaldsons were guests of ARC the hotel, the Fairmont Château Laurier, and the Canadian Museum of Nature. For more information about Ottawa, visit [ottawatourism.ca](http://ottawatourism.ca). For details about Ottawa 2017, visit [ottawa2017.ca](http://ottawa2017.ca).

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Sarah Donaldson enjoys tea and a delicious array of sweet and savoury delicacies during 'Afternoon Tea' at the Fairmont Château Laurier. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED/CATHY DONALDSON