



Tour the Kingston Region: a passage through E. Ontario's history and natural beauty.

By Patricia Duncan

Whether you want a weekend getaway or a longer vacation, the Kingston area, centrally located between Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal, is a smart choice. The region is easily accessible from the Trans Canada Highway (401), but be prepared to leave the rush of traffic to meander along the lakeshore, through the rolling farmland or to head north along roads less traveled to the lakes and rocky uplands scoured by the passage of ice.

The Tradebank Kingston Franchise covers a geographical area of over 19,000 square kilometres. This region abounds in vacation and recreational opportunities. To the north, the district incorporates the spectacular, rugged beauty of the Canadian Shield, dotted with sparkling lakes, reaching almost to Algonquin National Park. The southern boundary is the north shore of Lake Ontario with its many charming, historic towns and villages. From Trenton in the west to Prescott in the east, these communities serve a part of Ontario where life exists at a less hectic pace. At all seasons, there is something to attract the visitor and Steve Haynes, the regional owner, is striving to provide Tradebank clients with opportunities to experience this fascinating region.

Steve is excited about Tradebank Kingston's future. "The Kingston region is a relatively new region and most of our members were acquired when Tradebank Canada Inc. purchased several smaller trade exchanges in this area. At present, visitors to our region will find there are limited trade opportunities, but we are concentrating our efforts on signing on new members especially in the tourist, recreation, and hospitality industries. As with most trade transactions, it is best to call and book ahead during peak season! In our area, that means long weekends and the peak summer season when the hospitality and recreation businesses are so busy in the cash world! If you are looking for a quiet time to visit, I would recommend late summer and early fall."

Kingston (144,000) is the largest urban community and a destination in itself offering a variety of accommodations and dining for all budgets. Recently renovated, First Canada Inns (www.first-canada-inns.com) is offering rooms and continental breakfast from T\$89.99. Kingston, located on the shore of Lake Ontario where the lake meets the St. Lawrence River, is a busy, modern city with a proud heritage the visitor cannot ignore. Founded in 1673, Kingston quickly became a significant military site. From 1841-1843, the city served as the first capital of the United Provinces of Canada and the first parliament held here established the frame for the future government of Canada. Nineteenth century architecture, constructed in local limestone, is dominant in the historic downtown, especially the magnificent City Hall. Parkland along the lakeshore invites cycling, walking, and picnicking.

The bustling centre retains the ambience of the small town so lacking in this age of malls. There are an enviable number of restaurants, shops and galleries. At the heart of the historic centre is Market Square: the Public market is the oldest farm market in Ontario. Currently, a restoration project is unearthing more of the market's history, yet at the same time new ideas are being incorporated. An open air ice pad has been poured providing winter family fun in the city's core. In the warmer months, it is pleasant to browse through the fresh produce, jams, baking, and crafts on sale.



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Kingston has a thriving cultural scene, attracting both touring artists and local performers. During the year, the city celebrates festivals with gusto: First Capital Days in June and Canada Day on July 1 provide fun for everyone. Kingston sparkles when the waterfront comes alive. Kingston is at the gateway of the St. Lawrence 1000 Islands National Park; a stunningly beautiful vacation spot. The Aboriginal people called it "the Garden of the Great Spirit". Cruises are extremely popular and Kingston 1000 Islands Cruise Line (www.1000islandscruises.on.ca) operates from the dock in front of City Hall and is available on trade. With a bilingual commentary, sightseeing tours of different lengths are available, as well as lunch, dinner, harbour and sunset cruises. The Wolfe Island Ferry (car and passenger) also operates from downtown and the short ride out on the lake displays Kingston's waterfront in all its grandeur.

A Visitor's Day Pass is available from Kingston Transit, partnered with some museums, to encourage visitors to explore the history and culture of the city. Try the Kingston Archaeological Centre, the Miller Museum of Geology, the International Ice Hockey Museum, the Canadian Penitentiary Museum or make a visit to Bellevue House, the Italianate dwelling of Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald. No trip to Kingston is complete without an excursion to Fort Henry, the nineteenth century British fortress that dominates the eastern end of the city. It is a living museum where visitors experience military life of the 1800s. Interactive daily programs run from May to September and are fun for the whole family. At this National Historic Site, re-enactments of battles with cannon booming and performances of intricate bayonet drills are exciting. The Sunset ceremonies are packed each Wednesday evening in July and August. In summer 2006, there is to be a spectacular military Tattoo.

Kingston's life is enriched by the over 20,000 students who attend its institutions. Prestigious Queen's University is one of Canada's leading research universities with a strong international reputation. Its beautiful lakeside campus is well worth a visit. At the other end of town to the east, on Point Frederick, is the Royal Military College of Canada, also a degree granting institution. Visitors are encouraged to stroll its grounds and visit the free museum. St. Lawrence College is also located in Kingston. Perhaps this influx of youth explains Kingston's lively pub scene!

From Kingston, exploring the lakeshore is easy in either direction. Following the 1000 Islands parkway east, stop at Gananoque. A couple of days here at Tea and Crumpets B & B (www.teadandcrumpetsbb.com) would be refreshing. Rates at this charming Victorian house, dated 1901, are T\$80-T\$145 depending on season. Also, an Arts and Entertainment package is offered at T\$213-T\$291 per person for 2 nights.

Check the website for details. Sport fishing is renowned in this area and fishermen can expect to land pike, pickerel, bass, and perch. Charters are available at Muskie Rush Charters (www.muskierush.com) Gananoque is also a departure point for 1000 Island cruises. The Gananoque Boat Line (www.ganboatline.com) offers different cruises through the islands on trade. The 5 hour cruise to Boldt Castle is very interesting.



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The building was begun in 1900, on Heart Island, by George C. Boldt, the millionaire owner of New York's Waldorf Astoria Hotel, as a 120 room gift for his wife. In 1904, when Louise died suddenly, he stopped construction at once and never returned to his Germanic turreted castle. For 73 years, it stood abandoned to the elements. The cruise lands at the now restored castle and passengers have plenty of time to explore and fantasize about furnishing 120 rooms!

Continuing east, Brockville, "the city of the 1000 Islands", is another picturesque, historic town with water front trails and stately mansions. The hungry traveler could sample the fare at Tango before moving on. The countryside between Kingston and Trenton is full of interest. The 40km, Loyalist Parkway, hugging the lakeshore between Amherstview and Adolphustown, is one of the premier cycling routes in Ontario. Nostalgia Station in Amherstview not only provides good food, refreshments, and entertainment, but is also owned by the parents of Canadian Idol, Ryan Malcolm. Each of the towns along this route has its own charm and interest. Belleville, on the Bay of Quinte, is another centre for sport fishing and sailing with a good yacht harbour. Prince Edward County is a rich, rural area: apple country. Here, hard cider (fermented) is produced. The wine industry is developing here and, depending on the time of year, wine and culinary tours are offered. In addition, studio tours, often in the Fall, are a lovely diversion displaying the incredible talents of local artists. In nearby Trenton, the Comfort Inn provides a restful stop-over or a base for some exploring.

On leaving the lakeshore behind, the scenery north of Kingston changes, altering to a landscape of lakes and rock. About 45 minutes out of Kingston is Westport in the heart of the Rideau lakes. This community has a reputation for its antiques, crafts, and original art. Hebden House B& B ([hebdenhouse .com](http://hebdenhouse.com)) is by Upper Rideau lake and offers reduced winter rates. Room rates, with a cooked breakfast, range from T\$79-T\$150. Do visit these sites for views and more details of both charming properties.

The Rideau Heritage Route links many small towns and villages, all of which contribute to an understanding of Ontario's past. Perth is the largest centre on the way north and was voted "the best place in Canada to retire" by Chatelaine magazine. It is the gateway to tourism for this part of E. Ontario and the Ottawa Valley. With 75 specialty boutiques, shops and restaurants, it has taken the concept of Main Street revival seriously. The famous Balderson's Cheddar cheese is produced just outside the city. Linked by the Tay Canal to the Rideau system, there is also plenty of opportunity for water-based activity here. The Aquarius Motel offers accommodations from T\$79-99. Restaurants "Mr. and Mrs. Jones and Jameson's Chinese Buffet" welcome Tradebank clients. Now, move on to the Lanark Highlands, a little north-west of Perth, to find the "Maple Capital of Ontario". From March to April the Maple Sugar Festival is in full swing. If you need something less sweet to sustain you, stop in at Lanark Landing. Try to imagine this region in the fall when the maples turn colour! In winter, all over this large area downhill and cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and ice fishing are part of the scene. Resorts and spas offer serenity and relaxation. Kingston and its hinterland is a miracle of contrast where a visitor of any age can find recreation and entertainment. It is a serendipitous place where the beauty of nature, in all seasons, is there to restore the spirit. Contact your broker for more information and watch for more offers from Tradebank Kingston.