

Sound of Music Festival, a sandy beach and more in Ontario's Burlington



When summer arrives, Burlington has a wonderful sandy and swimmable beach for residents and tourists to enjoy.

By Mike Cohen
The Suburban

During the course of my life I have visited Burlington, Vermont many times, while never setting foot in Burlington, Ontario (<http://www.tourismburlington.com>). That all changed recently when en route to Buffalo, New York, we decided it would be nice to stop over somewhere on the way.

Burlington is conveniently located between Toronto and Niagara Falls, at the centre of southern Ontario's "Golden Horseshoe" and has a population of 175,000.

There are some people I know who base themselves in the Burlington area when visiting Toronto. The Royal Botanical Gardens are a draw, so is hiking on the nature trails, bird watching, museums, and the galleries at the Burlington Art Centre and presentations at the Burlington Performing Arts Centre. Spencer Smith Park is the large waterfront park where the pier, discovery landing (pond, rink, and restaurant) and

major festivals are held.

Looking ahead, the sweetness of Mother Nature launches spring in Burlington with the Maple Syrup Festival at Bronte Creek Provincial Park and Mountsberg Conservation Area. It's the season to engage your sense of smell and sight with the effervescent lilacs, daffodils and more than 100,000 tulip blooms, all bursting into colour at the Royal Botanical Gardens.

In the summer the waterfront and downtown come to life with the annual Sound of Music Festival. Canada's largest free music festival kicks off summer festivities the week leading up to Father's Day. Stroll the downtown streets, lakeside boardwalk or Waterfront Trail; enjoy an invigorating mix of acclaimed Canadian and international performers, and emerging performers on bistro patios and the waterfront stages. There is also rock, jazz, folk, roots, pop, blues, Celtic, country and children's entertainment – musically something for everyone. And there are many other festivals: watersports, boating, golf and outdoor activities to enjoy at local parks

and beaches. Burlington also has a swimmable and sandy beach, something which really intrigues me for a future summer visit. The Beachway Park Pavilion provides change rooms, outdoor showers, seasonal concession facilities featuring the snack shack and year round washrooms. Amenities at the beach include the pavilion, parking, a pay phone, a playground, and lots of sun, sand and water. Yes, I will have to make a return trip.

I am a huge fan of the Homewood Suites brand of hotels, having stayed there on trips to Washington, Chicago and Dover (New Hampshire). Well we were fortunate to find one in Burlington at 975 Syscon Road, right next to a Hilton Garden Inn owned managed by the same Westmont Hospitality Group. There is free outdoor parking. The staff were warm and welcoming and I immediately felt right at home.

The spacious suites come complete with fully equipped kitchens, including a two-burner stove and full-size refrigerator. Guests can choose between studios or one or two-bedroom suites featuring

separate living and sleeping areas. You can relax with a coffee in front of the fire in the hotel lodge area and grab any last-minute items at their 24-hour convenience store. Pets up to 25 pounds are welcome here. There is complimentary high-speed wireless internet access and a heated indoor pool.

Mornings start out with a hot full breakfast while complimentary evening dinner and drinks are offered as well Monday through Thursdays between 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. which proved to be very convenient when we checked in. They even offer a complimentary grocery shopping service. Easily accessible from the Q.E.W. (at Burloak Drive) and near Highways 403 and 407, the hotel is located in downtown Burlington right on Lake Ontario, minutes away from an extensive selection of restaurants, boutique shopping and popular attractions such as the Lion Safari Ontario. You can call 1-905-631-8300.

For more information about Burlington log on to www.tourism-burlington.com.