

An extended stay in Canada's largest city – Toronto

Travel Spotlight

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TORONTO - The largest city in Canada, Toronto (www.seetorontonow.com), has become a frequent destination for my family and me. Let's face it folks; while Montreal may be a great city, it does not offer the excitement and options of Toronto.

Our most recent trip was a mixture of business and pleasure, which required eight nights of accommodations. The Grand Hotel and Suites (www.grandhoteltoronto.com), located at the corner of Jarvis and Dundas, was the logical choice. This is a great downtown area to select as a base. First and foremost, the amazing Eaton Centre (www.torontoeatoncentre.com) is just a few blocks away. Besides its endless array of stores and kiosks, there is an Indigo book store, a number of restaurants and the busy urban eatery food court, which can serve your dinner needs at good prices on a daily basis. Dundas Square, across the street, is Toronto's answer to Times Square and always full of action. The Theatre District is nearby.

Thanks to Mirvish Productions (www.mirvish.com), Toronto is Canada's answer to Broadway. The Andrew Lloyd Weber version of *The Wizard of Oz* (www.wizardofozthemusical.com) has been bringing in the crowds at the Ed Mirvish Theatre since December 2012, with lead performer Danielle Wade showing everyone who watched her win the role on a CBC TV reality show in the fall that she is the real thing. Native Montrealer Lisa Horner portrays The Wicked Witch. Its run will stretch until at least June 2.....and then tour the US. The Tony Award winning musical *The Book of Mormon* comes to the Prince of Wales Theatre April 30 to June 9 while *Anything Goes* hits the same venue July 16 to August 18.

I must say that the Grand Hotel and Suites gave us all of the comforts of home, with a warm in and out indoor parking lot. This beautiful locale is only 13 years old and still looks spanking new. It features 177 extraordinary guest suites. For families, the 550 square foot junior two bedroom suite features a spacious living room/work area separated from the two bedroom areas by sets of double French glass doors

with vertical blinds. The bedroom areas contain king and queen size beds, LCD TVs and dual-line telephones with dataport. A separate living area contains a double sofa bed, TV, DVD Player, CD player and a work desk with a dual-line telephone. There is a fully equipped kitchenette with a microwave, fridge, coffee maker and cutlery.

The kitchenette is a definite bonus. All guests get to enjoy an extensive free breakfast buffet. There is also a fitness centre, the two-storey neo-classical pool indoor pool and two whirlpools on the rooftop garden.

We dined at P.F. Chang's China Bistro Restaurant, located at the newly redeveloped and trendy Shops at Don Mills. This has the distinction of being the first P.F. Chang's in Canada, with the second set for Montreal's Blue Bonnets plaza in April. The menu offers cuisine inspired from five regions of China (Mongolian, Sichuan, Beijing, Shanghai and Hunan) along with unique desserts and signature drinks while also delivering impeccable service. The restaurant caters to different dietary and cultural needs, offering also a vast selection of gluten free and vegetarian dishes.

When we visited the Toronto location, it was packed to capacity. Each dish on the P.F. Chang's (www.pfchangs.com) menu is prepared to order using the freshest and highest quality ingredients. The menu is tantalizing and features a much appreciated calorie count next to each item. Start off with a won ton or egg drop soup and the signature chicken lettuce wraps. The Mongolian beef, crispy honey shrimp and double pan-fried noodles are extraordinary. There are currently a number of Montrealers on staff there, obtaining hands on experience before transferring here in the spring.

May I also recommend a visit to Dave & Busters in Vaughn, about 30 minutes from downtown. It has a fun menu and the most spectacular arcade you have ever seen. This place is blast for folks of all ages.

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Photo: Cylla-von-Tiedemann

Montrealer Lisa Horner portrays The Wicked Witch in the Mirvish production of *The Wizard of Oz*



The Grand Hotel and Suites rooftop Jacuzzi is accessible year-round

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