

A visit to the Hockey Hall of Fame a highlight for any sports fan visiting Toronto



The Habs room.

By Mike Cohen
The Suburban

For more than two decades I have been visiting Toronto (www.seetorontonow.com) at least once a year. There were times that for work purposes I'd be there as often as once a month, yet for some reason I never made it a priority to visit the Hockey Hall of Fame (www.hhof.com). During my most recent stop, I made it a priority to place this on my agenda. It is located downtown in Brookfield Place at the corner of Yonge and Front Streets.

Visitors are told to pretty much allocate several hours to explore Toronto's premier hockey attraction and I did just that. Montreal fans will enjoy experiencing a replica of the Canadiens dressing room at the old Forum, complete with sweaters of such greats as Ken Dryden and Guy Lafleur. There are small and large TV monitors in various sections and the Habs room you can hear the golden voice of our very own Dick Irvin narrating a film about Stanley Cup dynasties.

Guests can take shots at real-time goalies (I scored on one of five shots), stop the shots of legends Gretzky and Messier, call the play-by-play of some of hockey's greatest goals (I chose a Guy Lafleur goal to describe), view hockey flicks like Stanley's Game Seven, (hockey's first 3D film and 30 minutes of great entertainment) in one of two theatres, get up close and personal with the Stanley Cup and explore the largest collection of hockey memorabilia in the world. There are separate sections for international hockey, the old World Hockey

Association and vintage jerseys from teams which no longer exist. If you are a student of the game, you will spend a lot more time here. There is so much history to read and analyze, such as the space allocated for Hall of Fame inductees. This is a museum and entertainment destination like no other, one suited for the whole family and kids of all ages! And of course there is plenty of Olympic hockey history on site.

General admission is \$17.50. It is \$11 for youth (four to 13), \$13 for seniors (65 and over) and free for children under three. The entrance is conveniently located right next to a large food court.

Where to Stay

I like to stay downtown when visiting Toronto and for my family nothing beats a junior two bedroom suite at The Grand Hotel and Suites (www.grandhoteltoronto.com), located at the corner of Jarvis and Dundas. This is a great area to select as a base for it is in such a dynamic location. It was a mere 10 minute drive to the Hall of Fame and a short walk from the amazing Eaton Centre (www.torontoeatoncentre.com). Besides its endless array of stores and kiosks, there is an Indigo bookstore, 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. We took advantage of the hotel's daytime shuttle service, which got us to wherever we wanted to go.

The Grand Hotel and Suites is only 14 years old and still looks spanking new. It

features 177 extraordinary guest suites. For families, the junior two bedroom suites feature spacious living room/work areas separated from the two bedroom areas by sets of double French glass doors with vertical blinds. The bedrooms areas contain king and queen size beds, LCD TVs and dual-line telephones with data port. A separate living area contains a double sofa, TV, DVD Player, CD Player and a work desk with a dual-line telephone. There is a fully equipped kitchenette with a microwave, fridge, coffeemaker and cutlery. We got one of the recently refurbished second floor rooms.

You can slip into a plush bathrobe, use the iron and ironing board and enjoy the convenience of the laptop size in-room safe.

There is complimentary wireless internet access in each room. Indeed this place has all of the comforts of home and more, which is why many guests capitalize on the options of extended stay packages for 21 consecutive days or more. The kitchenette is a definite bonus and something kosher guests in particular will find useful as they can prepare some of their own meals. A very large Metro supermarket is just a block and a half away. The suite has ample cupboard space to pack away the groceries.

All guests get to enjoy a splendid breakfast buffet, free of charge, with an extensive array of items to choose from. There is also a fitness centre, the two-storey neo-classical pool indoor pool (surrounded by exquisite hand painted murals) and two whirlpools on the rooftop garden, which provides a panoramic view of Toronto. The latter is a real plus and an area guests take advantage of year-round, even with below zero temperatures. When darkness falls, movies and television shows are piped on to a large white screen.

There is 24 hour room service, twice-daily maid service, valet and underground parking, a friendly concierge, a restaurant, 10,000 square feet of meeting space and a fully equipped business centre. Shuttle services are available to anywhere in the financial core. Make sure to bring your Aeroplan card in order to earn 500 miles per night.

Having the two distinct bedrooms and the middle area was a bonus I would recommend for a family spending multiple days together in a hotel room, providing just the necessary privacy.

The Shore Club

The Shore Club (www.theshoreclub.ca) on Wellington Street turned out to be a real treat. A vibrant restaurant and cocktail bar offering up lively ambiance, The Shore Club (which also has an Ottawa locale) is memorable for its atmosphere, professional serv-

ice and outstanding cuisine. Located in the new RBC Dexia Centre, the restaurant is situated in Toronto's bustling Entertainment District and is just steps away from prominent cultural venues such as Roy Thomson Hall, David Peacut Square and TIFF Bell Lightbox, making it an ideal pre-performance dinner destination. It's also within walking distance of the financial district, Rogers Centre and the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Valet parking is available next door at the Ritz Carlton.

We started off by sharing an amazing Single Tier Seafood Tower featuring a king crab dip, won ton, oysters, clams, mussels and jumbo shrimp while also opting for the grilled marinated wild mushrooms. The menu includes numerous other sumptuous choices such as fried calamari, steamed clams, dungeness crab cake, apple cider smoked salmon and vanilla-battered prawns. There are a number of soups and salads. As for the main courses, you have a choice between seafood specialties such as salmon wellington, maple-glazed king salmon, smoked Alaskan black cod, herb-dusted sea bass and stuffed rainbow trout and steakhouse favorites like the New York strip, filet mignon, braised short ribs and double-cut lamb chops. As for sides and add-ons, there are no less than 21 selections from mashed potatoes and steakhouse fries to tempura-battered onion rings, fresh asparagus and braised fennel. We all went the steak and lobster route, enjoying every morsel of each. Yes, we saved just enough room for some of the home made desserts: a spectacular Black Forest cake and some keylime pie.

With its luxurious, contemporary décor, The Shore Club elevates dining to a true feast for the senses. The interior, curated by renowned designer Elaine Thorsell, pays homage to art deco ocean liners, boasting soaring ceilings, a palette of cool blue and green hues and stunning original artwork.

An interesting collection of artwork adorns the wood panel and suede walls. Whether guests are in the cocktail bar, main restaurant or dining room, beautiful works of art complement the ambiance, impeccable service and classic surf and turf fare.

The lounge features a spectacular work by celebrated Canadian artist David Bierk, whose paintings incorporate both eclectic and well-known works by masters such as Vermeer, Ingres and Manet. In this case, he draws inspiration from 'Girl with a Pearl Earring' by Vermeer, altering the scale of the original and juxtaposing it with his own moody, turbulent landscape that evokes similar scenes by connoisseurs of the genre such as Turner.



The Shore Club.