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## Celebrate winter in Canada's Capital

FIONA TAPP *Lonely Planet Writer* 18 DECEMBER 2020




Ottawa is known as a longstanding capital of winter fun ? Thomas Brissiaud / Shutterstock

Ottawa, Canada's capital city, is famous for its picturesque winter landscapes. So, it's no surprise that in a place known as a longstanding capital of winter fun, Ottawans know how to enjoy the season.

Welcome to Ottawa in winter from an insider's perspective! We'll take you beyond the most popular cold-weather activities in the city, like skating on the canal, marveling at ice sculptures, and warming up with a Beavertail, to discover everyday [winter adventures \(https://ottawatourism.ca/en/winter?utm\\_source=lonelyplanet&utm\\_medium=content&utm\\_campaign=2020\\_content\\_mkt&utm\\_content=en\\_gta-gma\\_sponsored\)](https://ottawatourism.ca/en/winter?utm_source=lonelyplanet&utm_medium=content&utm_campaign=2020_content_mkt&utm_content=en_gta-gma_sponsored) that locals just adore.

Minutes from downtown you can be tearing up the snow on fat bikes, cross country skiing, or seeing how traditional maple syrup is made. So, join us for a glimpse of what it's like to spend the season in Canada's original winter wonderland.

 Fresh snow on the paths through the green belt around Ottawa. A person walking on a boardwalk. Red jacket stands out in the white.

The greenbelt around Ottawa is gorgeous when dusted in snow ? Jana Kriz / Getty Images

## Enjoy the Greenbelt

Ottawa is surrounded and crisscrossed by 203.5-square-kilometer (78.6 square miles) of pristine, protected greenbelt ([https://ottawatourism.ca/en/see-and-do/canada-s-capital-greenbelt?utm\\_source=londonplanet&utm\\_medium=content&utm\\_campaign=2020\\_content\\_mkt&utm\\_content=en\\_gta-gma\\_sponsored](https://ottawatourism.ca/en/see-and-do/canada-s-capital-greenbelt?utm_source=londonplanet&utm_medium=content&utm_campaign=2020_content_mkt&utm_content=en_gta-gma_sponsored)), comprised of wetlands, forests, farms, and green space. In the colder months, it's covered in a blanket of snow and transforms into a magical winter woodland.

Visit Mer Bleue Bog, a 7,700-year-old scientific wonder and the one of the most studied bogs in the world. Boardwalks allow you to walk right into the habitat of many wild animals including rare spotted turtles, muskrats, and beavers, while interpretive panels give you some background knowledge on the unique features of this northern boreal landscape. The trails are accessible year-round and if you want to pop on some snowshoes or cross-country skis you can connect from the Dewberry trails – a 1km beginner's path – to numerous other routes that link and extend across the area.

Pack some sunflower seeds in your pocket when you walk through Jack Pine Trail on Moodie Drive and, if you stand quite still with your hand extended, you might be visited by some friendly chickadees who are all too keen to relieve you of those seeds. Keep an eye out for children's handmade bird feeders hanging from the trees. You can cross country ski, snowshoe, or walk the 1.5km (0.9 miles) trail all winter long.

 Ottawa-Winter-Skating.jpg

Skating on the Rideau Canal in downtown Ottawa ? Bob Hilscher / Shutterstock

## Skate in Ottawa

It isn't winter in?Ottawa without skating on the Rideau Canal Skateway ([https://ottawatourism.ca/en/see-and-do/rideau-canal-skateway?utm\\_source=londonplanet&utm\\_medium=content&utm\\_campaign=2020\\_content\\_mkt&utm\\_content=en\\_gta-gma\\_sponsored](https://ottawatourism.ca/en/see-and-do/rideau-canal-skateway?utm_source=londonplanet&utm_medium=content&utm_campaign=2020_content_mkt&utm_content=en_gta-gma_sponsored)) – the largest ice skating rink in the world – which celebrated its 50th skating season in 2020. As temperatures drop, the historic canal, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and a favorite spot with locals to walk, cycle, and jog beside, freezes over. Skate the 7.8km (4.8 miles) length which winds into downtown and gives you stunning views of the city including the castle-like Fairmont Ch?teau Laurier.

The Skateway's season is of course dependent on the weather but usually runs from January to March. Treat yourself to a Beavertail pastry in the ByWard market, an Ottawa invention, after your skate.

Ottawa also boasts [many other skating spots](https://ottawatourism.ca/en/ottawa-insider/best-ice-skating-experiences-ottawa?utm_source=lonelyplanet&utm_medium=content&utm_campaign=2020_content_mkt&utm_content=en_gta-gma_sponsored) (https://ottawatourism.ca/en/ottawa-insider/best-ice-skating-experiences-ottawa?

utm\_source=lonelyplanet&utm\_medium=content&utm\_campaign=2020\_content\_mkt&utm\_content=en\_gta-gma\_sponsored)?including The Rink of Dreams in front of City Hall, which is free to use and looks magical lit up at night. And be sure to [check local updates on COVID-19](https://ottawatourism.ca/en/visiting-ottawa-safely-during-covid-19?utm_source=lonelyplanet&utm_medium=content&utm_campaign=2020_content_mkt&utm_content=en_gta-gma_sponsored_travelstory) (https://ottawatourism.ca/en/visiting-ottawa-safely-during-covid-19?

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1st cross country ski of the season

A woman enjoys her first cross-country ski of the season in Ottawa ? Murray McComb / Getty Images

## Get active in the snow

Ottawans don't let frigid temperatures keep them indoors and neither should you. Dress warm and get out and [active in the snow](https://ottawatourism.ca/en/ottawa-insider/wonderful-outdoor-winter-activities-ottawa?utm_source=lonelyplanet&utm_medium=content&utm_campaign=2020_content_mkt&utm_content=en_gta-gma_sponsored) (https://ottawatourism.ca/en/ottawa-insider/wonderful-outdoor-winter-activities-ottawa?

utm\_source=lonelyplanet&utm\_medium=content&utm\_campaign=2020\_content\_mkt&utm\_content=en\_gta-gma\_sponsored). If you have your own snowshoes, simply head out to any of the many trails across the city which feature snowshoe routes throughout winter. Bilberry Creek Ravine is an easy and picturesque 1.9km (1.1 miles) trail that crosses a river and pretty bridges. Check mountain equipment stores to rent snowshoes for the day or the week.

For [cross-country skiing](https://ottawatourism.ca/en/ottawa-insider/cross-country-skiing-and-around-ottawa?utm_source=lonelyplanet&utm_medium=content&utm_campaign=2020_content_mkt&utm_content=en_gta-gma_sponsored) (https://ottawatourism.ca/en/ottawa-insider/cross-country-skiing-and-around-ottawa?utm\_source=lonelyplanet&utm\_medium=content&utm\_campaign=2020\_content\_mkt&utm\_content=en\_gta-gma\_sponsored), right in the heart of the city, head to the Mooney's Bay Ski Centre where you'll find 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) of groomed trails and can head out alone or take part in an organized lesson. You can also rent equipment here.

If you are already feeling confident on your skis, enjoy a day on the SJAM Trail. The Sir John A. Macdonald Winter Trail is a popular 16km (9.9 miles) trail used by a range of different winter sports enthusiasts and walkers. The trail takes you through busy, trendy neighborhoods and offers lots of spots to take a detour and stop for a drink or a bite to eat.

Fat bikes are often allowed on multi-use trails like the SJAM, but you should yield to cross-country skiers and snowshoers and respect trail etiquette. Try the South March Highlands in Kanata which has lots of trails to test out those hardwearing tires.



Ottawa-Winter-Maple.jpg

Maple syrup is a sweet treat around Ottawa at the tail end of winter ? kipgodi / Shutterstock

## Taste the Season

At the tail end of winter in late February and early March, when daytime temperatures start to warm up a little, but the nights are still very cold, it's the perfect time for the maple sap to flow and that's when you should visit a sugar bush.?

If it's safe to do so, check out Fulton's Pancake House and Sugar Bush ([https://ottawatourism.ca/en/see-and-do/fulton-s-pancake-house-and-sugar-bush?](https://ottawatourism.ca/en/see-and-do/fulton-s-pancake-house-and-sugar-bush?utm_source=ottawa%20tourism%20canada&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=2020%20Spring%20Promotions)

[https://ottawatourism.ca/en/winter?  
utm\\_source=lonelyplanet&utm\\_medium=content&utm\\_campaign=2020\\_content\\_mkt&utm\\_content=en\\_gta-gma\\_sponsored](https://ottawatourism.ca/en/winter?utm_source=lonelyplanet&utm_medium=content&utm_campaign=2020_content_mkt&utm_content=en_gta-gma_sponsored)), and other locations just a short drive from the city. Under normal conditions, you can try maple taffy poured directly on the snow, learn about maple syrup production, and walk trails on the property. Now, that's the perfect way to enjoy a [winter day in Ottawa](https://fultons.ca/) (<https://fultons.ca/>). For a taste of Canada's liquid gold any time, you can buy Fulton's Pancake House [products online](https://fultons.ca/) (<https://fultons.ca/>).

For more information, visit [Ottawa Tourism \(https://ottawatourism.ca/en\)](https://ottawatourism.ca/en), online to find attractions, events and activities based on your preferences. Please make your travel plans for when it is safe to do so, and?check [local updates on COVID-19 safety precautions \(https://ottawatourism.ca/en/visiting-ottawa-safely-during-covid-19?utm\\_source=lonelyplanet&utm\\_medium=content&utm\\_campaign=2020\\_content\\_mkt&utm\\_content=en\\_gta-gma\\_sponsored\\_travelstory\)](https://ottawatourism.ca/en/visiting-ottawa-safely-during-covid-19?utm_source=lonelyplanet&utm_medium=content&utm_campaign=2020_content_mkt&utm_content=en_gta-gma_sponsored_travelstory) often.



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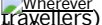
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