

Ottawa family-themed itinerary ideas for packaged travel

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Day 1—Boats, bikes and museums

The downtown core is easily accessible by foot with many attractions grouped close together. Explore them while hearing a little local history with [Ottawa Walking Tours](#). Their most popular tour takes two hours and covers Parliament Hill, the National War Memorial, and Major's Hill Park. Then head to the ByWard Market neighbourhood and choose one of the numerous patios (seasonal) on which to enjoy lunch together.

As a capital city, Ottawa is home to an amazing array of museums, many of which house interactive kid-friendly exhibits. Start your afternoon adventure at the [Canada Science and Technology Museum](#), a short drive or public transportation ride from downtown. Young scientists can explore ZOOM, an innovative zone where learning happens through play; climb aboard a real steam locomotive cab; find their balance in the Crazy Kitchen, an original museum exhibit from 1967 which challenges perception and illusion; and much more.

Dinosaur fans will want to take a trip back in time 50 million years ago at the [Canadian Museum of Nature's](#) Fossil Gallery. Here they can see 30 complete dinosaur skeletons and 15 life-sized models, as well as learn about Canadian mammals, birds and Indigenous Peoples' way of life in the Arctic. The castle-like building located downtown is also surrounded by gardens with Canadian plants and animal replicas.

Initiate some thought-provoking conversations with older kids at the [Canadian War Museum](#). This modern and symbolic building just west of downtown is the best place to learn about the Canadian experience of war and conflict throughout history. Kids especially like exploring the real tanks, aircraft and other war vehicles in the Lebreton Gallery.

If your family prefers to stay active, rent some bicycles or join a cycling tour with [RentABike](#) or [Escape Bicycle Tours](#). For independent travellers, self-guided cycling tours around Ottawa's parks and the [Garden Promenade](#) (a collection of more than 75 garden experiences) are a relaxing way to spend the afternoon.

After dinner, jump on board an early evening cruise along the Ottawa River with [Paul's Boat Line](#) where you'll pass many important sites like Parliament Hill, the Supreme Court of Canada and the official residence of the Prime Minister of Canada. Alternatively, join [Rideau Canal Cruises](#) for a trip along the historic waterway.

You can also captain your own houseboat from [Le Boat](#) and cruise in style along the Rideau Canal, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, to downtown Ottawa from their base in picturesque Smiths Falls. It's a great option for families since boats sleep up to 12 guests. (Note there is a minimum of three days for Le Boat rentals.)

Day 2—History and fun on the water

The [Diefenbunker](#): Canada's Cold War Museum, is located in the village of Carp, about 39 kilometres (24 miles) from downtown Ottawa. At this unique bunker, families can learn all about the threat of nuclear war during the 1950s and onward, over the four subterranean floors.

After a stop for lunch, it's time for a family-friendly afternoon adventure on the Ottawa River with [Ottawa City Rafting](#). This fun 3-hour urban whitewater experience, which departs just west of downtown, includes an interpretive guide who will share the history of the river as you are treated to views of the Parliament Buildings (minimum age is 5 years).

See our outdoor activity itinerary for even more adventurous options!

[Pirate Life Ottawa](#) provides interactive theatre cruises at Mooney's Bay on the Rideau River, a short drive south of downtown. Kids of all ages love getting involved with the action, including dressing up, firing the water cannons and finding treasure. They might even make a pirate walk the plank!

Back downtown, take a stroll down Sparks Street, North America's first pedestrianized promenade located a block from Parliament Hill. Stop for dinner at one of the many restaurants and end your evening on a spooky walking tour with [Haunted Walk of Ottawa](#). You'll be led along by lantern light as the guide delights you with scary ghost stories and fascinating history.

Day 3—Water taxis, car safaris and a show

Start the day with wonderful views of the city from the Ottawa River as you ride on the [Aqua-Taxi](#) across the water. The shuttle is a convenient way to travel between the Ottawa Locks jetty (below the Bytown Museum), the [Canadian Museum of History](#) in Gatineau, the Richmond Landing near the Canadian War Museum, and more.

Next, head to Montebello, in Quebec, about an hour's drive east of Ottawa, to visit [Omega Park](#). The 12-kilometre (7.4 mile) wilderness car safari allows you to observe Canadian animals including bison, moose and elk in their natural habitat, and even hand-feed deer with carrots, available to buy for purchase. There are also nature paths, including a First Nations Trail, to explore on foot, complete with interpretive educational panels and picnic areas. The wolf observatory where you can get a close-up look at a Canadian apex predator cannot be missed.

After a fun-filled day, travel back to Ottawa to enjoy a theatre production of the family-friendly musical “Oh Canada Eh?” Canada’s longest-running dinner musical includes Canadian music from folk songs to pop hits in a two-hour high-energy show, suitable for all ages.

Day 4—Escape and splash together

For a family bonding activity, visit Escape Manor. Here groups of 2-12 guests are locked in themed rooms and have to work together as a team to solve the clues and puzzles before the time runs out. The Wonderland option is particularly suitable for families and recreates all the magic of Alice in Wonderland.

During the warm summer, pack up your swimwear and towels and drive 20 minutes east of Ottawa to Limoges, where you’ll find Calypso Waterpark, Canada’s largest theme water park. You can easily spend the whole day here playing and relaxing in the biggest wave pool in Canada. There are also two different play areas for kids, over two dozen water slides and over 100 games, ranging from the tame Jungle Challenge water obstacle course to extreme water slides like the Aqua Loops which feature a trap door where you’ll plummet down and hit a speed of 60 kilometres an hour!