

Reimagined tours during Parliament Hill rehabilitation

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Parliament Hill is a major attraction for visitors to Ottawa, a symbol of the country's democracy and freedom, and a beautiful part of the skyline in the downtown core of Canada's capital. Important events, celebrations, and ceremonies are held on site and over 1.5 million people visit the Parliament Hill grounds every year.

An ambitious renovation project is underway to modernise the site to better meet the needs of visitors and members of government while preserving the heritage for generations to come. This is the largest heritage rehabilitation and modernisation project in Canada and will be a multi-year endeavour.

A historic renovation project

Ottawa's Parliament Precinct comprises three main buildings that form a horseshoe shape: the West Block, the Centre Block (including the iconic Peace Tower) and the East Block. Designed in a Gothic revival style, the architecture includes many mythical and playful carvings known as grotesques, and the Peace Tower features a 53-bell carillon.

Traditionally, the Centre Block was the home of the House of Commons, the Senate, and the ornate Library of Parliament (the latter dates from 1876). The East and West Block contained heritage rooms used during the first 100 years of Canada's government, and offices for parliamentarians.

This decade-long project - Centre Block and the Parliament Welcome Centre are targeted for completion in 2030/2031 - aims to artfully blend the preservation of historic assets while modernising the infrastructure to ensure Canada's Parliament buildings are carbon neutral and universally accessible to all visitors. The delicate work of preserving murals, stained glass windows and historic features has been achieved by painstaking digital screening and mapping of all historic artefacts.

The total restoration works also include essential maintenance and improvements to the grounds surrounding the Parliament Hill escarpment, including the planting of 70,000 new trees.

During the massive rehabilitation project, some buildings—including the Centre Block where most tours took place—are closed and their entire contents have been moved to long-term temporary locations. However, touring the Parliamentary Precinct during this unique and historic period is a fascinating chance to see the story of Canada preserved for generations to come.

Reimagined guided tours

While the Centre Block is closed, its functions have moved elsewhere and tours have followed suit. Individual visitors, groups and Parliamentarians can visit the beautifully refurbished interior of the West Block, which temporarily houses the House of Commons. Exposed stone walls and a newly constructed glass domed roof have been combined to great effect.

The Senate of Canada has moved just a short walk down Wellington Street. Its home is now a Beaux-Arts-style former train station constructed back in 1912 next to the Rideau Canal. Guided tours of the interior show how much of the original structure has been preserved while adapting to its temporary functions.

Reservations can be made through the [online system](#) or by telephone. Parliament tours are subject to Parliamentary activity and special events, and visitors need to pass through a security check before admittance.

Outdoor features and events

When visiting Parliament Hill during construction, you can still access the Centennial Flame which is located at the southern end of the grounds (towards the street). First lit in 1967, this monument commemorates Canada's hundredth anniversary as a confederation. Several of the other monuments and statues on site have also been moved and can be seen elsewhere, such as the Famous Five statue, now on the plaza in front of the Senate of Canada building, near the Rideau Canal.

Before construction, many events and activities were held on Parliament Hill, including [Canada Day](#) celebrations, the [Changing of the Guard ceremony](#), Yoga on Parliament Hill, and the [Northern Lights Sound and Light Show](#) in the summer. Some of these events are being held elsewhere or virtually.

Online resources

Whether you want to enrich your in-person experience or you want a preview before a future visit, there are many ways to experience Canada's Parliament online, including:

- [Parliament: The Virtual Experience](#) takes you on virtual reality journey inside Centre Block pre-construction, including the beautiful Library of Parliament and Peace Tower.
- View a collection of [videos and photos](#) of Parliament Hill.
- Shop the online [Parliamentary Boutique](#) for unique mementos.
- Watch [this Centre Block project construction video update](#) to delve deeper into the rehabilitation project.