



THE INSIDER

Sandwiched between Toronto and Ottawa, Kingston was once relegated to middle-child-city status, but **Meredith Hardie** discovers it's a surprisingly charming getaway.

THOUGHT KINGSTON WAS just a university town: a transient place that swells with eager students in the fall, only to shrink again as the spring trees begin to bud. True, the schools are important, but after spending three days exploring the Limestone City, I discovered its educational institutions are little more than footnotes in Kingston's whole story.

Tucked into the eastern corner of Lake Ontario and sandwiched between Toronto and Ottawa, for years Kingston had middle-child-city status. But its charm, independent makers and grand 19th-century architecture are finally getting the attention they deserve, without losing that down-to-earth feel.

I wouldn't call the pace slow; instead, it's thoughtful. People take their time strolling through the winding stone-walled alleyways, stopping at antique shops to browse or

lingering over an extended lunch in the historic Market Square (which hosts Ontario's oldest farmers' market, dating back to 1801).

This thoughtfulness shows up all over the city, from the plates of hyper-local food to the careful restoration of heritage buildings. Kingston's storied past isn't smoothed over with fresh concrete; it's on display. You're not just grabbing a bite at Chez Piggy (ahem, sorry, 'The Pig'), you're transported back to a limestone stable from 1808. A stay at the boutique Frontenac Club is a sleepover at one of Canada's first banks.

Within an hour's drive of downtown Kingston, you have the vineyards of Prince Edward County, the Thousands Islands sprinkled over the St. Lawrence River and acres of farmland supplying the restaurants with seasonal bounty so good it'll make you want to pack your bags, buy a Tragically Hip T-shirt and stay forever. **f**

GETTING THERE

Drive time from Toronto to Kingston is about three hours along Hwy. 401 eastbound. VIA Rail operates a frequent train service from Union Station. Economy fares start at \$104 return. Discounted Escape fares and business fares are also available. viarail.ca



THE EVERLY

At first glance, The Everly will catch your eyes with its millennial-pink walls and patio chairs, velvety indigo banquets and gorgeous interior design. Then, it will steal your heart with stunning plates of hyper-seasonal fare. Menus change monthly at the downtown Kingston restaurant, which works with more than 20 farmers and producers in the area. Expect small plates, including crispy deep-fried rabbit, heaping bowls of fresh pasta made in-house daily and expert wine pairings. The wine offerings are unique to the Kingston area and not available from the LCBO. Reservations are recommended for indoor dining. The patio is walk-ins only. theeverly.ca



FRONTENAC CLUB

Set in a 175-year-old heritage building (once Upper Canada's first bank), this newly renovated boutique hotel is a dream. Every morning, you can get complimentary in-room breakfast. And we're not talking cereal — the hotel's breakfast is outrageous (in the best way): eggs benedict with smoked salmon, Nutella-stuffed crepes, an oozing cheese omelette. Once you're ready to start the day, check out downtown Kingston, a five minute walk away, or stay and indulge in the hotel's many stunning amenities and rooftop terrace offering the best views in Kingston. frontenacclub.com



HARD WAY CIDER CO.

This west end cidery is worlds away from those sickly sweet cans you might be familiar with. Hard Way's cider is bone dry and aged in oak barrels. This ageing technique gives their crisp cider depth of flavour. If you're a margarita lover, check out their Loco Blanco cider, aged in anejo tequila barrels. If you like a bit of tartness, their cult-fave, ruby red Ramboozle, is aged in Caribbean rum barrels and has real raspberry juice added. hardwaycider.com



TANGO NUEVO

For a taste of that Spanish tapas experience — small portions of bold flavours — paired with sips of Prince Edward County and other Canadian wine, walk slowly to Tango Nuevo, located on King Street East. Nothing is rushed in Spain. Most things from siestas to meals are meant to be savoured. And you'll find plenty to relish here, from creamy avocado tartare to grilled-octopus pintxo (small snack) on brown butter fried bread with hot honey tomato oil. tangonuevo.ca

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