



Photo: Destination Toronto



Photo: James MacKenzie

# FROM NIAGARA TO NORTHERN LIGHTS

9 Days

Discover the endless possibilities of the Canadian metropolis Toronto – it's considered to be the country's cosmopolitan center! Toronto's worldly region is home to more than 250 nations and 170 languages. The multicultural roots are kept alive at colorful festivals and markets, adding to the incomparable charm of this extraordinary city. Not far from the urban buzz you can explore the probably best known waterfalls: Niagara Falls.

Enjoy the absolute contrast as you continue your journey into the wild Northwest Territories: it's only one flight away! You won't find the typical North American city here, but the tranquil yet dynamic capital Yellowknife is already the largest municipality in the region with a population of only 19,000. However, it has exciting things to tell!

Even today, a hint of gold rush atmosphere still wafts through its historic Old Town. And a colorful mix of residents from over 90 nations makes Yellowknife almost as an energetic and exciting as Toronto. A variety of festivals celebrate the different cultures, and there's an outstanding culinary offer, too! At the same time, Yellowknife's perfect location on the northern tip of Great Slave Lake makes it an ideal base for outdoor activities on land and water. Not to be missed are the Cameron Falls: not so well known, but wild, natural, lonely and breathtaking!

Your itinerary from the impressive metropolis to the spectacular north could look like this:

## Day 1

Welcome to Toronto! To get a first overview of the metropolis, a **hop-on hop-off tour** is particularly convenient. You can either lean back and do the entire route in just over two hours or

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hop on and off at any of the 20 most important attractions along the bus route.

One of the sights on the bus tour is the **Royal Ontario Museum**. In 2007, the futuristic-looking building was reopened after a spectacular renovation by star architect Daniel Libeskind. The Museum of Art, Culture and Natural History is one of the largest in North America and holds one of the world's most important ethnological collections. Both inside and out, it's anything but a dusty museum!



For travelers interested in history, **Casa Loma** is a stop worth experiencing. Sir Henry Pellatt had the dream castle built for his family at the beginning of the 20th century. Today, the stately home with its manicured gardens is a frequently booked movie set and a beautiful museum that can be visited individually on a self-guided audio tour.

Afterwards, a leisurely stroll through exciting **Chinatown** is a great way to experience the lively neighborhood. The Asian markets and stores along Spadina Avenue are known for their exotic fruits, medicinal herbs and unusual souvenirs.

End the day in a relaxed atmosphere with delicious and modernly interpreted dishes and refreshing cocktails at KÖST. From the restaurant's terrace on the 44<sup>th</sup> floor you have a unique view of Toronto's skyline and the world-famous CN Tower.

## Day 2

A visit to Toronto is not complete without a trip to the impressive 553-meter-high **CN Tower**. High up on the city's landmark, spectacular views of the skyline, the Toronto islands lying in Lake Ontario and the impressive abyss beneath the glass floor await. Adrenaline junkies can look forward to the EdgeWalk – 360° walk on the roof of the tower.

Afterwards take a walk along the **Water's Edge Promenade** and enjoy Toronto's pretty waterfront. Harbor tours are offered here, leading through the beautifully landscaped harbor with its offshore islands. From the water, a completely different perspective of the skyline opens up with grandiose photo opportunities. If you enjoy a good **bike ride**, the **Toronto islands** are a great place! It's best to rent your bike in downtown and take it with you on the ferry. The 5-kilometer-long island group in Lake Ontario consists of 15 interconnected islands. The park-like, car-free green oasis has served as a recreational area for over 200 years. Wards Island or Centre Island are good places to stop for lunch.

In the evening the historic **Distillery District** is recommendable: trendy indie restaurants, bars, boutiques and galleries line the streets.



## Day 3

Today it's time for an excursion! You can either rent a car, book a train or public bus or join an organized daytrip to see the world-famous **Niagara Falls**, located only about 130 kilometers from Toronto. The mighty masses of water cast a spell over visitors. From countless vantage points you have an impressive view of this unique spectacle.

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But you can't only marvel at the Niagara Falls in all their glory from land, but also from lofty heights. How about a **helicopter flight** for a bird's eye perspective?

Probably the most popular way to get closer to the roaring water and fine mist is by **boat**. The raincoat won't keep every drop of water out, but it's a perfect souvenir to take home. Make sure to stay until after sunset to experience the colorful **illumination** of the falls.

## Day 4

The spectacular Northwest Territories are only one flight away: Air North departs on Wednesdays and Fridays at 10:15 AM and takes you directly to Yellowknife. Air Canada will pick up the same route for Tuesday, Friday and Sunday nights starting in December 2023.

Once arrived in Yellowknife, treat yourself with a nice lunch at the historic **Wildcat Café**. The popular summer eatery is housed in an old log cabin reminiscent of Yellowknife's 1930s gold rush era. As the city's oldest restaurant – it dates back to 1937 – it looks back on eventful decades.



Under the leadership of the Wildcat Café Advisory Committee, the café is now one of Yellowknife's premier tourist attractions. With its delicious dishes made from local ingredients, the restaurant is not only historic, but also a culinary highlight!

Begin the afternoon with a unique panoramic view from the **Bush Pilot's Monument**. Yellowknife's most popular vantage point rises above Old Town and offers a breathtaking view over Great Slave Lake, Back Bay and the city's northern foothills. The monument is located high atop "The Rock" and can be reached by a spiral staircase. It is dedicated to the bush pilots and engineers who lost their lives flying in the wilderness of the Northwest Territories. The memorial also serves a practical purpose: when the light on top of the tower flashes, residents and visitors are warned that seaplanes or ski planes are flying in nearby Yellowknife Bay.

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Photo: Northwest Territories Tourism



Photo: Georg Fischer & NWT



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Photo: Northwest Territories Tourism

Afterwards, Yellowknife's funky and historic **Old Town** awaits your visit! With its quirky cottages, stately mansions, colorful houseboats, seaplanes and excellent access to Great Slave Lake, the Old Town is perhaps the most interesting neighborhood in all of Canada. Jutting boldly from the rocky outcrops above Yellowknife Bay, it was once the starting point of the gold rush in the Northwest Territories. The Old Town bustles with visitors and locals year-round, but to see it at its liveliest, visit it during the annual **Old Town Ramble & Ride**, which takes place on Civic Day weekend each year (early August).

The first day in Yellowknife is drawing to a close. Whether you're staying at the campground in Fred Henne Territorial Park, in one of the houseboats of Yellowknife Bay Floating B&B or in a suite at the Explorer Hotel with a fantastic view of the city, it's important to look up at the sky on the way home. With a little luck, you'll witness another magnificent spectacle: When night falls in the Northwest Territories and millions and millions of stars twinkle in the darkness, the celestial dance floor opens over 240 days a year. High overhead, a breathtaking natural display of fireworks ignites as the starry sky fills as if by magic with whirring lights

of bright colors. Bands of green, blue, white and red lights begin to glow in the sky, dancing and swirling around their own axis, slowly at first, then faster and faster. With mostly crystal-clear skies and a perfect geographic location under the Aurora Oval, Yellowknife is the world's best region for viewing the **Aurora Borealis**.

## Day 5

Begin your day with a little orientation at the **Northern Frontier Visitor Center**. Nearby are the **NWT Legislative Assembly Building** and the **Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Museum**. The latter is the mother of all northern museums and offers an excellent overview of the Northwest Territories' art, culture, industry and history. Exhibits range from Dene moose skin boats to gold rush era memorabilia and old bush planes. If you're there at the right time, you can also enjoy exciting live presentations.

Next up is a truly sparkling experience! Yellowknife lies in the middle of an area rich in gold and diamonds. The latter were first discovered in the early 1990s, giving the region a renewed boom after its brief gold rush of the 1930s. While the diamond mines are located slightly outside, the **NWT Diamond Centre** in town awaits with the secrets of Arctic diamonds.

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Here, chunky rough diamonds are transformed into polished jewelry by expert cutters in front of the eyes of curious spectators.

Afterwards the glittering water of **Great Slave Lake** is waiting for you! Rent a canoe or paddleboard for the afternoon and paddle around the Latham and Joliffe Island to marvel at the cabins, mansions, sea planes and houseboats in Yellowknife Bay. Don't forget to pack a picnic for lunch!

Then, back on land, enjoy your well-deserved dinner on the beautiful outdoor patio at The Woodyard. The cool brew pub in Yellowknife's Old Town offers not only delicious food, but also home-brewed beer made from local ingredients.

Still not tired? In the most famous saloon of the North, the Gold Range, you can experience the spirit of the North until late at night. The illustrious mix of guests ranges from political elites to trappers who have just returned from the wilderness.

## Day 6

Today it's time to explore the beautiful **Ingraham Trail**. Rent a car, pack hiking boots, fishing rod and a picnic lunch!

At about 70 kilometers long, Highway No. 4 – also known as the Ingraham Trail – runs east from Yellowknife to Tibbitt Lake. The region is also known as Yellowknife's "Cottage Country" due to its abundance of weekend cottages between Cassidy Point and **Prelude Lake Territorial Park**. Numerous beautiful lakes line the route. Prelude and Reid Lake as well as Madeline, Prosperous and Pontoon Lake offer good water access with boat docks and nice areas for swimming. The highlight of the Ingraham Trail, however, is **Cameron Falls**. Here, in Hidden Lake Territorial Park, a short hiking trail winds through evergreen forests, over boardwalks and hilly outcroppings until you reach, about 20 minutes later, the viewing point on the other side of the falls where the Cameron River plunges 17 meters on its way to Great Slave Lake. From here, the trail continues upstream until you cross a bridge to the other side of the river, where excellent picnicking and fishing opportunities await, as well as swimming at the base of the waterfall (on hot days).





Photo: Yellow Dog Lodge

After an exciting day in the great outdoors, head back to Yellowknife in the late afternoon. Take a breath and treat yourself to dinner at Yellowknife's legendary seafood restaurant **Bullock's Bistro** in Old Town. Enjoy a cold beer and the "Catch of the Day": freshly caught fish from Great Slave Lake. The day in Yellowknife could not end more authentically...

## Day 7-9

If you thought you've already seen the wild north by now, here is to a perfect ending of your trip: the following two nights you'll spend in **wilderness paradise** only 20 minutes from Yellowknife. That's 20 minutes by float plane! **Yellow Dog Lodge** is surrounded by untouched nature between Duncan and Graham Lake and is only accessible by float plane. It picks you up in Yellowknife and brings you to the lodge - a spectacular start for your wilderness stay.

Opened in 1970 as a sport fishing lodge, Yellow Dog Lodge is now a multi activity **fly-in wilderness lodge** specializing in aurora viewing, summer sport fishing, canoeing, glamping and outdoor adventure. Gordon and Kathy Gin have owned this little jewel of the North since 2006 and have made tremendous improvements. The lodge is recognized as one of Canada's iconic signature destinations.

Staying in the lodge you'll have plenty of time for outdoor adventures such as hiking, paddling, fishing or even snow shoeing and skiing as well as relaxing in the outdoor hot tub with an amazing view of the surroundings or a sauna session. As soon as the sun sets, get ready for the absolute highlight of your trip – **for Northern Lights**.

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Photo: Yellow Dog Lodge

Seeing Northern Lights in the Northwest Territories is a different experience from seeing them anywhere else. Here, the Northern Lights are the strongest in the world - the colours are brighter, the displays last longer, the movements are more elaborate - all of this creates a world of spectacular dances performed right above us almost every night.

More than just brief glimpses of colour in the sky, Northern Lights in the NWT are humbling and otherworldly and fill our open skies with memorable and magical displays. There's **no better place** to see the best Aurora in the world than the Northwest Territories. The best time to witness the spectacle is from Mid-August until the end of September.



Photo: Ed Hardy & NWT

After these impressive days it's time for the journey home. With you are countless impressions of Canada's diversity, ranging from exciting metropolises over historic old towns, roaring waterfalls, sparkling lakes, untouched nature to the unique Aurora Borealis.

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