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24 Hours in Kingston

Canada's former capital offers hidden history and heritage

By [Marc Kassouf](#)

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One of four Martello towers built in Kingston to defend the harbor // © 2010 Pride Travel / S. Nathan DePetris

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A Kingston Penitentiary museum docent in period garb, demonstrates the use of the 'drowning' water torture device // © 2010 Pride Travel / S. Nathan DePetris



The Victorian sitting room of the Secret Garden Inn, Kingston, Canada // © 2010 Pride Travel / Marc Kassouf

Just two hours from either Toronto or Ottawa by VIA Rail train, the city of Kingston, Ontario, is a treasure trove of historic landmarks and picturesque Victorian heritage homes.

Clients should start their sightseeing with a tour of the Penitentiary Museum across the street from a still-functioning prison, dubbed the "Alcatraz of the North." Garish torture instruments are contrasted with a history of progressive reforms, and stories are accentuated with period artifacts. The experience is enhanced by interpreters who take you back in time through stories pulled directly from the institution's records.

On any FIT or group itinerary, the must-visit attraction in town is without a doubt Kingston's newly inducted UNESCO World Heritage Site, Fort Henry, which commands a panoramic defense over three bodies of water. Even clients not normally interested in military history will thank you for sending them to this one-of-a-kind attraction where daily fort life is preserved and re-enacted. Here, military parades and drills occur regularly – complete with rattle and cannon fire – and evening shows add a more unique twist to the experience. This living museum of soldiers is staffed with college students who will display acute precision and stamina such as only youth can muster. On-site options also include lunch and dinner with a soldier servant.

Next, hop aboard a trolley for a narrated circle tour around Kingston and see Royal Military College students drilling during maneuvers. Drive by architecturally fascinating Queens College campus buildings before hopping off downtown to stroll the picturesque square and waterfront with its shops, parks and open spaces.

Top off a great day by taking a leisurely Thousand Islands Cruise for dinner, featuring impressive scenery and exceptional food for such a small onboard galley. The onboard entertainment is provided by a combination comedian, ventriloquist, lip-synch master and DJ, whose act has such a high "cheese-factor" that it's truly a work of art.

Wrap up the evening and return to your home away from home at the Secret Garden Inn. Partners Gary and Warren are the hosts in this intimate haven, tucked on a quiet picturesque corner in the heart of Kingston. Your clients can stay in one of the inn's seven unique rooms, such as Theresa's Room, which echoes the inn's understated Victorian elegance and charm; it comes complete with its very own four-poster bed and a fireplace. In the morning, guests can enjoy a homemade breakfast in the dining room, served by their hosts, before bidding farewell and continuing the journey onward.

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Reenactments of military maneuvers at Fort Henry, Kingston, are done with expert precision by local college students // © 2010 Pride Travel / Marc Kassouf

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Marc Kassouf is the owner and CEO of Pride Travel which specializes in catering to the needs of gay and lesbian clientele. Kassouf holds numerous industry certifications, most notably by Cruise Lines International Association, the Travel Institute and various destination visitors bureaus including Korea, Japan and Thailand. He also sits on two board committees of the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association. Kassouf has traveled to nearly 48 countries and has sailed on more than 60 cruises.

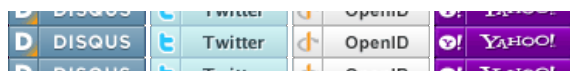
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