

Destination

24 hours in

Niagara-on-the-Lake



Forum Galleries Antiques



Soak up some British charm and get tons of shopping in too, on a visit to this Southern Ontario weekend spot

Text: Michele Sponagle

9:00 A.M.

Start your day off in the heart of quaint Niagara-on-the-Lake, often called the loveliest town in Canada. Wander down the tree-lined streets and admire the Georgian- and Victorian-style buildings of this historic town. After being nearly destroyed during the War of 1812, the town was rebuilt in the British classical style, sending a not-so-subtle message that Niagara-on-the-Lake was proud to be part of the British Empire. Today, visitors enjoy the area's history while sipping tea from porcelain cups, watching plays during the famous Shaw Festival or touring the town's nearby wineries.

PILLAR AND POST Before hitting the shops, stop for a hearty breakfast at the dining room of the Pillar and Post Inn. No fancy ingredients you can't pronounce, just exquisitely created classics like eggs Benedict and buttermilk pancakes. Then take a stroll down Regent Street until you hit historic Queen Street. There you will find cool shops and sweet eateries and some of the town's best shopping. 48 John St. W., 905 468-2123, vintage-hotels.com.



From Japan

THE COPPER LEAF The winds of autumn may be blowing, but gardeners looking to start planning for the next growing season will find plenty of inspiration at this store. Highlights include frost-proof terracotta pots, trellises made from grapevines, and Benesto garden clogs. Those who crave colour indoors will adore the topiaries and window herb gardens. Too dazzled to make a choice? Just ask the staff, who will jump at the chance to share their know-how. 10 Queen St., 905 468-5323, thecopperleaf.com.

SERENDIPITY This boutique features decorating basics with a European flavour. Take a look and you will find great items like polka-dotted cutlery by the French brand Sabre, hand-hooked rugs by Kaffe Fassett, cheeky cartoon-cat plates from Chats... par Dubout, or an Eiffel Tower tea-light holder. There's nothing stuffy here. In fact, it feels like there's a wink and a smile behind every item. 46 Queen St., 1 866 381-9222, serendipityniagara.com.

DANSK FACTORY OUTLET Following the grand tradition of factory outlets, this store's main feature is savings. Discounts on the merchandise can reach 75 per cent, especially if you venture up to the second floor. Among the great deals, you will find whimsical teacup-and-saucer night lights at half price. Fall is a great time to look for acrylic glasses for the next barbecue season or Christmas-themed serving platters. Bonus: The store offers cross-Canada shipping. 91 Queen St., 905 468-2614.

NIAGARA CASTINGS CUSTOM FOUNDRY If you're the type who wants a little something extra to distinguish your house from your neighbour's, you will find plenty of ideas here. This custom foundry offers aluminum house signs and numbers in a variety of styles, ranging from country quaint to Victorian; brass door knockers; and more than 20 types of mailboxes. These durable items will likely outlast your mortgage. 106 Queen St., 1 800 265-0633, niagaracastings.com.



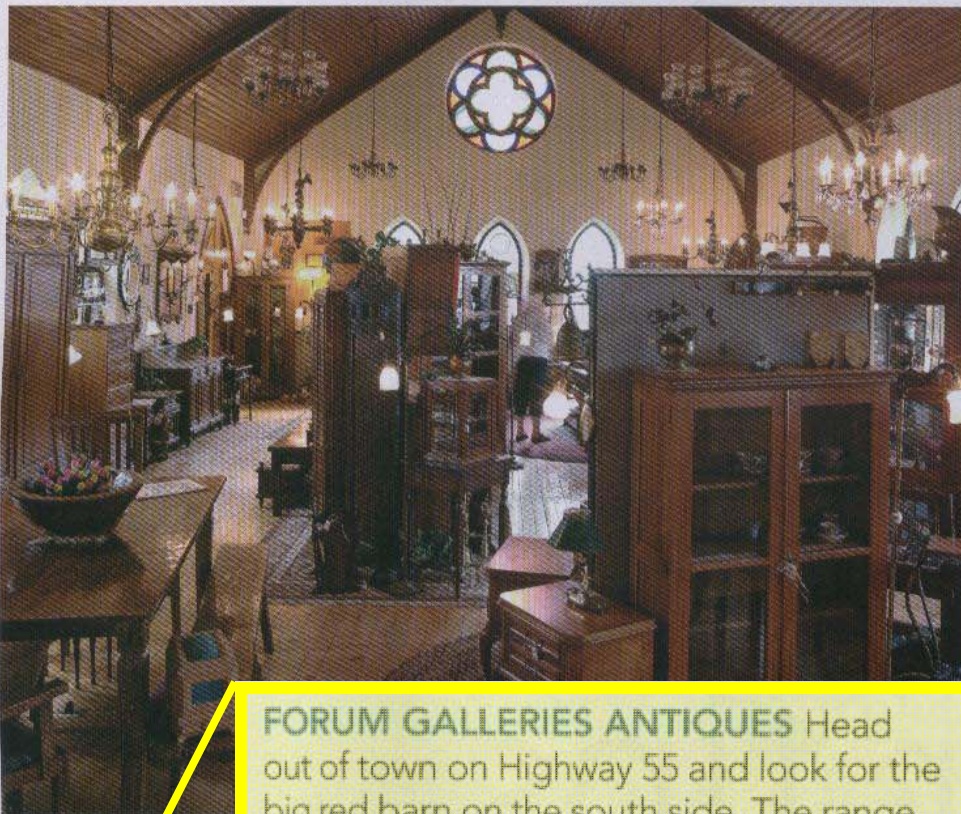
The Copper Leaf

TABLECLOTHS ETC. This tiny retailer is jam-packed with linens and kitchen goods with a French flair. If you want a cotton tablecloth inspired by the flora and fauna of Provence, this is the place to find it. On hand are hundreds of varieties in a wide range of sizes and shapes. There's a healthy selection of acrylic-coated tablecloths for those who fear stains, and you will also find elegant-looking placemats, napkins, runners, chair cushions, aprons, and fabric by the metre. 106-C Queen St., 1 888 468-1817, tableclothsetc.com.

FROM JAPAN Tucked away in a Victorian house on a side street, this little store is an unexpected but welcome addition to the local shopping scene. The vintage silk kimonos are so gorgeous that you will want to hang them on your walls. And the pretty sheets of hand-printed wrapping paper make gifts gorgeous or look cool in bamboo frames. While you're there, pick up some antique woodblock prints or an oriental chest with brass embellishments to complete your Asian decor theme. 187 Victoria St., 905 468-3151, fromjapaninc.com.

NOON

After your morning stroll, you will want to head farther out of town for the unique boutiques and stores located in the charming nearby villages. This region is about taking it all in at a leisurely pace. You never know where a country road may take you — to a family-run winery, a roadside bakery or even an artisan's workshop. But first, take a break for lunch.



STONE ROAD GRILLE eatery's strip mall locat some eyebrows, but ins Delicious dishes are acc refined wine list featurin can be hard to choose battered salmon medall sour dough-crust pizza, b kid back and, as the sig 218 Mary St., 905 468-3 stoneroadgrille.com.

FORUM GALLERIES A out of town on Highway big red barn on the sou of merchandise at this a pays homage to almost XV to art nouveau and b owner, Leon Perel, has fine and fun fare: Somehow an art deco dressing table looks right at home next to a battered antique trunk or shelves full of pink Depression glass. Don't go with a shopping list, though — this place is all about hunting and fishing for hidden gems. 2017 Niagara Stone Rd. (Hwy. 55), 905 468-2777, forumgalleries.com.

EUROPA ANTIQUES A little farther down the highway is this shop housed in a red-brick church built in 1894. The wide assortment of large furniture pieces is heavy on armoires and beds and showcases pieces that you can build a room around. But it's no slouch in the accessories department either. You will

FORUM GALLERIES ANTIQUES Head out of town on Highway 55 and look for the big red barn on the south side. The range of merchandise at this antiques emporium pays homage to almost every era, from Louis XV to art nouveau and beyond. The Belgian owner, Leon Perel, has a keen eye for both fine and fun fare: Somehow an art deco dressing table looks right at home next to a battered antique trunk or shelves full of pink Depression glass. Don't go with a shopping list, though — this place is all about hunting and fishing for hidden gems. 2017 Niagara Stone Rd. (Hwy. 55), 905 468-2777, forumgalleries.com.

stained glass, and sculptures. 755 Lakeshore Rd., 905 934-2904.

CREEKSIDE MONOGRAM SHOP If you're a little more adventurous, you can travel out to St. David's to visit this adorable little location. This small shop can put monograms on pretty much anything, even slipcovers and upholstered ottomans. And if you're ever in a jam for a quick wedding or baby gift, opt for their monogrammed silk pillows or baby blankets. Bonus: The same-day service means that no one will ever know you did your shopping on the fly. 239 Creek Rd., St. David's, 905 262-0680, creeksidemonogram.ca.

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Shaw Café & Wine Bar

Photo: Andrej Kopac (Shaw Café & Wine Bar)

5 P.M.

ZEES PATIO & GRILL All that shopping can leave you famished. Head back into Niagara-on-the-Lake to enjoy some great gastronomy. Zees has been wowing locals and visitors alike since its June 2005 opening. Executive chef Ross Midgley is a hometown talent who walked away from a bank job to pursue his passion for cooking. And it shows in dishes like the coconut-encrusted popcorn shrimp or the perfectly seared strip loin served atop a wood cutting board with a red wine and beef jus in a cow-shaped-pitcher loin the side. This just goes to show that gourmet eating can be delicious and fun.

92 Picton St., 905 468-5715, zees.ca.

SHAW CAFÉ & WINE BAR The night is still young, so why not partake of Niagara's famous wines? Head a few blocks down on Queen Street and stop at the Shaw Café's distinctive round facade, then head on through to the patio surrounding the statue of George Bernard Shaw. Sitting inside a bit more your speed? The oversized windows are perfect for people-watching, and the impressive wine list includes many pages devoted to local wines as well as a few dedicated to imports from outside the region.

92 Queen St., 905 468-4772, shawcafe.ca.

Two wine-worthy excursions



Inn on the Twenty

Indulge in wine-based spa treatments like the Wine Country Wrap at The Spa on the Twenty. 3845 Main St., Jordan, 905 562-8728, innonthetwenty.com.

Wine Country Cooking

Take a culinary vacation with hands-on cooking classes from the Strewn Wine Country Cooking School, designed to increase your knowledge of the relationship between food and wine. 1339 Lakeshore Rd., Niagara-on-the-Lake, 905 468-8304, winecountrycooking.com.



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