Quintessential Calgary

Calgary Tower

The Calgary Tower is a landmark of the city skyline and a must-see for all visitors. On the Observation Deck, 191 meters above the ground, stand on glass floors for a birds-eye view of the streets below or take in the 360-degree view of the city and the majestic Rocky Mountains. Remember to make reservations for an unforgettable dinner and award-winning wine list at SKY 360, the restaurant that rotates 155 meters off the ground. Finally, see the tower lit up in the dark and walk through the night lights at the nearby Olympic Plaza, built for the 1988 Olympic Winter Games.

(New) Central Library

Completed in 2018, the (new) Central Library garnered architectural accolades and locals' love. From the outside, watch as CTrains travel through a tunnel encapsulated by the building. Inside, request a tour or, on your own, explore four levels of a modern library space where Calgarians learn and play. Pro tip: on the upper floors, look closely at the window frames for messages from library lovers. Afterward, visit the rest of the newly redeveloped East Village for some of Calgary’s most stunning public art.
River Walk

Walking the newly re-developed paths along the south front of the Bow River is a great way to see the stunning rivers that keep the city alive. For the full experience, start at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow rivers - a site known to the Indigenous peoples of these lands long before colonization and that gives this land its other name, Moh’kín’stsi - or at the George C. King Bridge in East Village. Follow the river side to the lush grounds of Prince’s Island Park, sitting down for lunch or dinner at the River Café for a uniquely indulgent taste of Canadiana crafted with locally sourced ingredients. End your trip on the Peace Bridge, overlooking the water (or continue to the lively streets of Kensington Village).

Where Calgary Savors Life

Walk the streets, indulge in culinary delights, shop local and world-renowned boutiques, and experience a vibrant nightlife in Calgary’s most lively and walkable districts.

Stephen Avenue (a.k.a. 8 Avenue SW)

This historic downtown avenue is open to pedestrians only during the daytime. So, relax and walk alongside old sandstone facades and new shopfronts, listen to live music pop-ups, and sit under The Galleria Trees sculpture (best viewed at night, when it lights up). Before 6 pm, shop at the boutiques and inside Bankers Hall and the CORE Shopping Centre. Finally, grab lunch, dinner, or a night-cap at one of the avenue’s restaurants and bars, including the local culinary and cocktail marvells of Teatro Ristorante, SALTILK Calgary, The Wednesday Room, Murrieta’s West Coast Bar & Grill, The Guild, and Hy’s Steakhouse & Cocktail Bar.

Kensington Village

Just off Sunnyside station, this quaint, colorful neighborhood features some of the city’s best-loved cafes and boutiques. Before you enter Kensington, you can also check out containR, the public art installation and performance stage, visible from the CTrain platform. When in Kensington, do as Calgarians do: sit down for a cider and a quick board game at The Hexagon Board Game Cafe, grab a coffee and a cuddly cat at the Regal Cat Cafe, see the latest indie film at The Plaza Theatre (a.k.a. the pink theatre), and take a stroll through Riley Park. And, on September 7 only, come for the local farmers and craftspeople at the Kensington Night Market.

The Beltline

Spanning several avenues south of 9 Avenue in city center, the Beltline is one of Calgary’s most hip and walkable neighborhoods. Along with housing some of the city’s finest bars, craft breweries, and newly redeveloped parks and gardens, this district is home to the award-winning Bridgette Bar and Ten Foot Henry. Finish your trip with a truly Canadian experience, shopping at one of the nation’s most trusted brands: Mountain Equipment Company.
Inglewood

As Calgary’s oldest neighborhood, Inglewood holds on to a small-town vibe. But make no mistake: the district is always ahead of the curve on the new and cool. Check out the Brewery Flats, the Music Mile, local fashion boutiques, and some of the city’s best cafes (including Canela Vegan Bakery & Café, the first all-vegan café in Western Canada). Then, sink into the atmosphere at some of the Calgary’s unique restaurants, including the Deane House with its gorgeous gardens and The Hose and Hound, built in a decommissioned 1906 firehall.

17th Ave (a.k.a. Uptown, RED Mile, or Retail & Entertainment District)

This historic district came to be known as the RED Mile after thousands of Calgary Flames fans (wearing red jerseys) flooded the streets during the 2004 Stanley Cup Playoffs. Recently redeveloped, 17th Ave is 14 blocks of boutiques, restaurants, and bars. Check out local favorites Betty Lou’s Library (to enter this speakeasy, make reservations to get the password in advance), the Ship & Anchor, and Made by Marcus. And see street performances at Tomkins Park, always bustling with buskers and public events like outdoor movie screenings.

University District

Staying at the Best Western or have time to spare before you have to get to Mathison Hall? Consider traversing through the nearby, newly built University District. Though less established as a city-wide hub, the neighborhood has made a big splash for its sustainable, mixed-use community planning. Check out this up-and-coming area’s beautiful parks, great restaurants and bars, and entertainment venues (including the Cineplex VIP Cinemas).

For Lovers of:

Art, Theater, and Music

Immerse yourself in Calgary’s thriving contemporary art scene by taking a self-guided tour through the Esker Foundation’s Contemporary Art Map. During your time here, the city is excited to be hosting the works of American photographer Diane Arbus at Contemporary Calgary. Plus, with just a short walk from Mathison Hall, you can swing by the exhibitions at Nickle Galleries or study the magnificent numismatics collection (by appointment with the numismatics collections specialist).

If the performing arts are more to your liking, have a night out at one of the Arts Commons’ unique and worldly shows, hear local thespians tell Canadian stories on the mainstage at Theatre Calgary, or feel your spirits lifted by the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra (2023-2024 season announcements coming soon).
Finally, the city’s musical highlight of the week will be the sweet and bold country legends The Chicks (previously known as Dixie Chicks) with special guest Maren Morris on September 7 at the iconic saddle-shaped Scotiabank Saddledome. Calgary is also proud to permanently host the National Music Centre at Studio Bell, open for day tours (walking distance from the Hyatt or City Hall station). From there, you could end the night at an intimate concert hosted by the King Eddy restaurant and bar est. 1905 (lineup includes The Mike Plume Band on September 8). Or take your pick of Calgary’s other restaurants and bars with live music, including the Ranchman’s Cookhouse & Dancehall with its honky-tonk tunes you can two-step to like a true Calgarian and the three anchors of the Music Mile in Inglewood:

- bluesy, Cajun charm at The Blues Can
- folk singers and a café atmosphere at Gravity Espresso & Wine Bar
- jazzy, relaxed dinner scene at Ironwood Stage & Grill

Sports

Equestrian sports enthusiasts are in luck: from September 6 to 10, see the top show jumping riders and horses from around the globe at the prestigious Spruce Meadows ‘Masters’ Championship. And, if you’re in town early, feel the city roar with excitement as the Calgary Stampeders face off with rival Edmonton Elks in the football Battle of Alberta on September 4 at McMahon Stadium (just a short walk from the Best Western). Please note that while tickets are available the day of, seat availability is not guaranteed unless you buy ahead of September.

Nature

If you’re up for long walks, take the CTrain to Fish Creek-Lacombe station and enter the northwest arm of Fish Creek Provincial Park. Or, if you’re already in Inglewood, check out the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary or the Pearce Estate Park. Finally, visit Nose Hill Park (by car or bus) for an adventure and a deep sense of this land and its history. Please note that the park is very big and has low cell service in some spots, so visitors should pay close attention to map signposts and plan a route ahead of time. Most easily, you could visit the Siksikaitsitapi Medicine Wheel, a spiritual landmark for the Blackfoot Confederacy and other Indigenous peoples of these lands; if you squat in the high grasses nearby and look in the direction of the city center, you can see the landscape as it was before Calgary came to be. Whenever you visit these or other natural areas, please respect the wildlife and be especially advised that coyotes are generally not a threat to people but should not be approached or fed.
**Architecture and History**

From City Hall station, take a quick walking tour of contemporary downtown architecture, in order from east to west: Studio Bell, the new Central Library, Calgary Tower, TELUS Sky, and The Bow (affectionately known to locals as the bean) with its adjacent Wonderland sculpture. Or take a day trip through 40 buildings in Calgary’s architectural history with the help of Calgary’s Architecture Map.

For devoted history buffs, make a day of exploring Heritage Park (perhaps ahead of the gala dinner on September 9). The 1900s living historical village showcases the lives of Western Canadian settlers: their cars, trains, houses, shops, restaurants, schools, and churches. Throughout the park, see and talk to costumed interpreters re-enacting settlers’ days; you can further immerse yourself in settler life with the historically inspired cuisines and craft goods. The park grounds are expansive, so for your convenience, consider taking a horse-drawn carriage, boarding the steam train, or sailing the breathtaking Glenbow Reservoir on the S.S. Moyie paddlewheeler.

For something quicker, visit Fort Calgary, the city’s inaugural site east of the city center (walking distance from City Hall station). Learn how this city came to be, starting as a North West Mounted Police post. And, nearby, see the confluence of the Bow and Elbow rivers, a site that has been significant to the Indigenous peoples of this land long before colonization and that gives this land its other name, Moh’kins’tsis.

Finally, check out:

- Canada’s military history at the Military Museums (by car or bus)
- the history of Canada’s residential schools on the ‘Remembering Our Children’ trail at Prince’s Island Park in city center
- Calgary’s 2SLGBTQIA+ history with the help of A Queer Map

**Hidden Gems**

If you want to be weirded out (in a good way), try Cirque du Soleil's daily clown and acrobatics show near Louise Bridge. Or, if you’re looking for a calm reprieve, try the historic Reader Rock Garden by Erlton Stampede station. And, for the daring: dance-off with Calgarians to Latin music at Rio Bar & Grill on 6 Ave SW (Friday and Saturday night only) or karaoke your heart out on the big stage at Nanta Karaoke & Bar on 6 St SW.

For more things to do around the city, please see the Visit Calgary website.