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# Toronto for Database Researchers

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## Abstract

In the past several guides for VLDB conferences have appeared in the bibliography. Having such a city guide is a vital and important thing intended to make the life of the attendees easier during the conference days.

In this paper, we present interesting issues related to the city of Toronto. The guide is intended for database researchers and presents an overview of the attractions of the city of Toronto, eating places and getting around guidelines.

Preliminary experimental results obtained by visiting some of the places listed and by obtaining recommendations from the community, suggest that the material presented herein is a promising direction for a memorable stay in the city of Toronto.

## 1. A Toronto Primer

Welcome to Toronto, the city whose name means “**the meeting place**” in one of the native dialects. In 1996 *Fortune* chose Toronto as the number one city outside the US for work and raising a family. Since then, the city has developed with restaurants and cafes offering all kinds of ethnic food, reflective of the multicultural background of the citizens. Statistics show that the city of Toronto represents more than 80 different ethnic groups speaking more than 100 languages [1].

Toronto is a safe and vibrant city. You can walk

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safely to many locations of the downtown area and the places mentioned in this guide. Transportation is very well organized and if you come by car it is more practical to park it and enjoy a walk or a ride with the subway, buses or streetcars. Appendix A, presents a simplified map of downtown Toronto.

Finally, the climate of Toronto for the end of summer is rather mild. Toronto is on the same latitude as Cannes on the sunny Riviera and Milan. Lake Ontario serves to moderate Toronto's weather to the point that its climate is one of the mildest in Canada. Generally speaking, end of summer temperatures range from 15°C (60°F) to 25°C (80°F).

## 2. Useful Tips

- **TTC** [2]

(DW) The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) operates a network of subways, buses and streetcars that provide convenient transportation throughout Toronto. There are two major subway lines. The **Yonge/University/Spadina** is a U-shaped loop that runs under Yonge Street and University Avenue in the downtown area. There are subway stations where major cross streets intersect Yonge St. and University Ave. The subway stations closest to downtown hotels are in Union Station, at King and University, at King and Yonge, at Queen and University and at Queen and Yonge. The **Bloor/Danforth** runs east/west underneath Bloor Street. There are free interchanges between these two subway lines at the Yonge/Bloor station and at the St. George station and the Spadina station.

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<sup>1</sup> The contents presented in this document would not have been available to the attendees of the VLDB conference without the contributions of Mike Godfrey (MG) and Dave Wortman (DW), who compiled similar guides for ICSE 2001 and RE 2001, respectively. The present guide includes some updated and additional information.

Street car or bus lines run east and west on major streets.

There are two TTC streetcar lines that start in Union Station. The Harborfront 509 line runs through the Harbor Front area along Queens Quay to the CNE grounds. The Spadina 510 line runs along Queens Quay and then north along Spadina Ave to Bloor St. The Bay bus that runs north and south on Bay St is a convenient way to reach many of the places described in this guide.

The stops for surface (bus and streetcar) routes are marked with a vertical red and white TTC sign. Current TTC fares are \$2.25 cash (bus and streetcar drivers do NOT carry change) or tokens/tickets at 5 for \$9.00. Tickets and passes may be purchased at subway stations or from small shops that display the TTC Tickets sign. For TTC information call 416-393-4636.

**FROM THE AIRPORT TO ROYAL YORK HOTEL:** Take the 192 Airport Rocket bus at Terminal 2 (Canada/US) or 3 (International) to Kipling Station. At Kipling, take the Bloor-Danforth subway, change at Yonge/Bloor Station and take the Yonge-University-Spadina Line (southbound trains). Exit at Union Station. The 192 Airport Rocket bus operates every 25 minutes.

- **Federal and Provincial Taxes**

The **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** is a 7% tax that is charged on most goods and services sold or provided in Canada. And as Toronto is part of Ontario, purchases made in Toronto are also subject to the 8% **Provincial Sales Tax (PST)**. In brief, add a 15% tax on top of the price tags you see.

- **Tax refund program for visitors [3]**

Foreign visitors to Canada can apply for a rebate on the GST that is paid on accommodation (up to 30 nights per visit), and goods purchased in Canada and exported within 60 days of the purchase. Keep your receipts and read carefully the instructions given in the above website. You will need to download the corresponding form as well from <http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/E/pbg/gf/gst176/>.

- **Toronto City Guides [4]**

A list of the most comprehensive and useful online guides are:

- <http://www.toronto.com>
- <http://www.city.toronto.on.ca>
- <http://www.math.toronto.edu/toronto>

- **Emergency [5]**

(DW) The telephone number for fire department, police and ambulance service is 911. *TeleHealth Ontario* operates a 24-hour free medical advice service staffed by registered nurses at 1-866-797-0000. There are several major hospitals with Emergency Rooms on University Ave. between Dundas and College St.

- **Yellow Pages**

The Canadian Yellow pages contain a comprehensive list of services. They can be accessed online at <http://www.yellowpages.ca/>. The hard copies (that can hopefully found in the Toronto hotels) also contain useful maps.

### 3. Major Attractions

#### 3.1 Near the Conference Hotel

- **The CN Tower [6]:** (DW) The ride from the airport downtown offers a view of the world's tallest building and freestanding structure (553+ m, 1815+ ft). On a clear day the public observation tower offers views over Toronto and as far away as Niagara Falls. The revolving restaurant at the top of the tower offers a panoramic view of the city. [entry through the CN Tower walkway at the west end of Union Station.]
- **The Sky Dome [7]:** (DW) Toronto's largest stadium with a retractable roof. Home to the Toronto Blue Jays. [entry from Front St. West.]
- **The Air Canada Center [8]:** Named after Canada's main airline, ACC is the main athletic facility for indoors sports, home of the NBA Toronto Raptors team and the NHL Toronto Maple Leafs team. During the summer it is used as a concert hall and there are stores that sell a variety of sports memorabilia. [entry from York Str and Lakeshore Blvd.]
- **Toronto Islands [9]:** (DW) A very large park on an island offshore. Includes restaurants, a children's amusement area and some long pleasant walking areas. Bicycles, roller blades, canoes and paddle boats can be rented in season. [Access via the Toronto Island Ferry at Bay Str and Queens Quay.]
- **Nathan Philips Square [10]:** A large public square featuring seasonal entertainment and nice ambience. The large building in the middle of the square is Toronto's City Hall. From 10am to 2pm every Wednesday the square hosts a *Farmer's Market*, where products from all over Ontario are be-

ing sold. [located on Queen Str West between Bay and University Ave.]

- **Harbour Front** [11]: (DW) Toronto's waterfront park. Very pleasant waterfront atmosphere. [Queens Quay, between Bay St. and Spadina Ave.]
- **Entertainment District** [12]: (DW) The main theater district in Toronto. Also home to **many** clubs and restaurants. [between King St and Queen Street, west of University Avenue.]
- **St. Lawrence Market** [13]: (DW) Toronto's traditional old style market. Butchers, bakers and fruit and vegetable vendors. Several interesting food-stuffs shops. On Saturdays the market doubles in size when local farmers come in to sell their produce [Front Street at Jarvis St.]
- **The Distillery** [14]: The Distillery Historic District is a Canadian heritage site and Toronto's newest arts and entertainment cultural community. Throughout the year, it hosts celebrations and special events such as the Distillery Jazz Festival [located near the corner of Parliament and Front Str East.]

### 3.2 Downtown

- **Royal Ontario Museum** [15]: (DW) The ROM is Ontario's largest traditional museum. [On University Avenue just south of Bloor Street. TTC Museum Station on the University subway line.]
- **Art Gallery of Ontario** [16]: (DW) Home to a large collection of Canadian and World Art. [Dundas Street between University Avenue and Spadina.]
- **The Eaton's Center** [17]: One of Toronto's largest indoor shopping mall of all varieties and tastes [on Yonge Street between Dundas and Queen.]
- **University of Toronto** [18]: (DW) Canada's largest University. The St. George campus is north of College St, (mostly) west of University Avenue. [TTC Queens Park Station on the University subway.]
- **Gay Town** [19]: (DW) Toronto has one of the largest gay/lesbian communities in North America. Gay Town on Church Street between Carleton St. and Bloor St. is one focal point for this community. [TTC College St or Wellesley St stations on the Yonge subway.]

### 3.3 Elsewhere

- **Ontario Science Center** [20]: (DW) A science museum featuring exhibits of interest to all ages. [770

Don Mills Road ; TTC east on Bloor Subway to Pape station then north on the Don Mills 25 bus or north on the Yonge subway to Eglinton station then east on the Eglinton East bus to Don Mills Road; (416) 696-3127.]

- **The Toronto Zoo** [21]: (DW) On of the top ten zoos in North America and the 3rd largest in terms of area (comfortable walking shoes are recommended). On Meadowvale Road north of Highway 401 in the north east corner of Toronto. [TTC Take the Bloor/Danforth/Scarborough LRT east to Kennedy Station. Take the 86A bus from Kennedy station to the Zoo. GO TRAIN: take a GO train from Union Station to Rouge Hill station in Scarborough, TTC buses connect this station directly to the Zoo.; (416) 392-5900.]
- **The Casa Loma** [22]: Casa Loma is the former home of Canadian financier Sir Henry Pellatt. It is a castle with decorated suites, secret passages, an 800-foot tunnel, towers, stables, and beautiful 5-acre estate gardens. [TTC: go to Spadina station and take the Davenport 127 bus to Davenport & Spadina. Get off the bus and climb the Baldwin steps (110 steps ), or take the bus one stop further to Davenport and Walmer and walk up the hill on the west side of the castle.]
- **Paramount Canada Wonderland** [23]: (DW) A major amusement park featuring rides and shows. On Highway 400 about 15 Km north of Toronto. [Express GO busses run from Yorkdale and York Mills subway stations. An alternative is to take the GO train from Union Station north to Maple Station and then take the Vaughn Transit #4 bus to Canada Wonderland.; (905) 832-8131]

**Proposition 1:** The City of Toronto provides a **CityPass** [24], which provides entrance to 6 famous Toronto attractions for one-low-price. Includes tickets to the Art Gallery of Ontario, Casa Loma, CN Tower, Ontario Science Centre, Royal Ontario Museum, and Toronto Zoo. The cost is \$46.00 CAD (almost half the price) and tickets can be purchased online as well as in any of the 6 attractions.

**Proposition 2:** The Toronto theatre community has introduced T.O.TIX [25], which offers performing arts lovers the opportunity to purchase half-price tickets to a wide variety of theatre, dance,

comedy, opera and music events **on the day of performance**.

**Proposition 3:** This year, the 29th International Toronto Film Festival, runs from September 9 to 18. Check under <http://www.e.bell.ca/filmfest/2003/> for more information on location, hours and tickets.

#### 4. Eating in Toronto

(DW) Toronto has over 2,000 restaurants. The Toronto Health Department has instituted a mandatory restaurant inspection program. Restaurants that have passed this inspection display a large green PASS sign.

##### 4.1 Near the Conference Hotel

- **Mövenpick Marché** [26]: A unique open cafeteria restaurant in BCE place. An experience! Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Warning: unlike all other Toronto restaurants, Marché automatically adds a service charge to your bill so tipping is not appropriate. [East end of the street level in BCE place; (416) 366-8986.]
- **Marché Lino:** A smaller take out version of Marché in the PATH underground in BCE place.
- **C'est What** [27]: A bistro offering "ethno-clectic" menu serving multi-cultural food. It also offers 45 craft brewed beers on tap, fine whiskies from the world over, and a select all Ontario wine list [67 Front Street East; (416)-867-9499.]
- **Young Thailand** [28]: A small chain of very good Thai restaurants. Two locations nearby: 81 Church St (between King and Queen; (416) 368-1368) and 165 John St (north of Queen St.; (416) 593-9291).
- **Avalon** [29]: An excellent (expensive) high end restaurant. One of the best restaurants in the city. Open for lunch only on Thursdays. [270 Adelaide St. West (at John St.); (416) 979-9918.]
- **Barberian's Steak House** [30]: Carnivore's delight. One of Toronto's top steak restaurants. Expensive. [Elm Street between Yonge St and Bay St. a couple of block north of Dundas; (416) 597-0335.]
- **Bombay Palace** [31]: A good Indian restaurant with a buffet lunch. [71 Jarvis St. north of Front St.; (416) 368-8048.]
- **Sangam Restaurant:** An Indian restaurant with a good selection of vegetarian dishes. [788 Bay St at

College St.; TTC Bay bus north to College St. ; (416) 591-7090.]

- **St. Lawrence Market:** There are several bakeries/cafes in the St. Lawrence market that sell sandwiches and other light snacks. Try a peameal bacon (real Candian bacon) sandwich or from Canada's north try an Arctic Char sandwich. [Front Street at Jarvis St.]
- **Lai Wah Heen** [32]: Very good Chinese restaurant with inventive (and expensive) dim sum. In the Chestnut Hotel [108 Chestnut St. one block east of University Ave, one block south of Dundas. (416) 977-9899.]
- **Gallery Grill** [33]: An excellent lunch-only restaurant in the Hart House student union on the University of Toronto Campus; (416) 978-2445 ; TTC north on University line to Queens Park or Museum stations. NOTE: It will be open starting September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Dundas Street China Town:** The area on Dundas Street between Bay and University has many other interesting Chinese restaurants.
- **Front Street:** There is a good selection of inexpensive to moderate priced restaurants on Front Street, west of University Avenue. These are mostly mass market restaurants catering to the crowds attending events at the Sky Dome.
- **Entertainment District:** There are many good restaurants and pubs in the Entertainment district.
- **PATH food courts:** For something fast and simple, there are a number of fast food lunch places (as well as some serious restaurants) in the PATH complex underneath the downtown area.
- **Harbour Front:** There are a number of restaurants with a pleasant waterfront ambience in the Harborfront area. The restaurants tend to have better ambience than food. Still a pleasant place to have a sandwich and a beer and watch the waterfront activity. The Kitchen Table convenience store [10 Queens Quay West; (416) 777-9875] sells a nice selection of sandwiches and other portable food for taking with you while you walk along the waterfront.

##### 4.2 Dining in Toronto

Other alternatives for those who want to explore Toronto's cuisine a bit more



- **Lee Garden** [34]: Chinese (Cantonese) restaurant, very popular. [331 Spadina Ave, between College and Dundas; (416) 593-9524.]
- **Nataraj** [35]: A good Indian restaurant in the Bloor Street West area. [394 Bloor St West, west of Spadina ; (416) 928-2925.]
- **La Bodega** [36]: A good French restaurant. Moderate to expensive. [30 Baldwin St; east of Spadina Ave, south of College St; (416) 977-1287.]
- **Avli** [37]: An upscale Greek restaurant in Toronto's Greektown. Inexpensive to moderate. 401 Danforth Ave. TTC east on the Bloor line to Chester station; (416) 461-9577.]
- **Mezes** : Very authentic Greek restaurant. Moderate. [456 Danforth Ave; TTC east on the Bloor line to Chester station; (416) 778-5150.]
- **Le Trou Normand** [38]: A French provincial restaurant specializing in the cuisine of Normandy. [90 Yorkville Ave; TTC north on the Bay bus to Yorkville ; (416) 967-5956.]
- **Pangaea Restaurant** [39]: High end nouvelle (fusion) cuisine. Expensive. [1221 Bay Street, north of Bloor; TTC north on the Bay Street bus to Bloor St. ; (416) 920-2323.]
- **Boba** [40]: One of the finest restaurants in Toronto. Mediterranean/Asian fusion cuisine. Expensive. [90 Avenue Road, 3 blocks north of Bloor; TTC north to Museum station on the University line; (416) 961-2622.]
- **Sushi Inn** [41]: Very nice Japanese restaurant in the heart of the Yorkville area. Moderate [120 Cumberland Street, north of Bloor; TTC Bay Sta-

tion and exit on Cumberland or Yorkville; (416) 923-9992.]

## 5. Conclusions

This document is for personal use only. Although there is not enough experimentation, it provides the basis for a pleasant and smooth stay in the city of Toronto, the place where the 30<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Very Large Databases is being held for the year 2004.

Even if you use this document as the basis for your getting around in Toronto, we encourage you to check the links provided. The author has done his best to assure the consistency and correctness of its contents; however, we would appreciate your input should there be missing or inaccurate information in it.

Finally, we are proposing to pursue several directions for further research. Firstly, we plan to explore variability of our evaluations with respect to factors such as ethno-cultural background (Canadian/Greek/Japanese/ etc.), age (student/junior professor/senior professor etc.), and position (academia/industry). We are also working on a framework for conducting more accurate evaluations, both with respect to outcomes and process. Therefore, we invite you to explore our city and propose your own recommendations therein.

## References

- [1] [http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/toronto\\_facts/index.htm](http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/toronto_facts/index.htm)
- [2] <http://www.ttc.ca/>
- [3] <http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/E/pub/tg/rc4031/rc4031-e.html>
- [4] <http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/links.htm#guides>
- [5] <http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/emerg/>
- [6] <http://www.cntower.ca/>
- [7] <http://www.skydome.com/>
- [8] <http://www.theaircanadacentre.com/>
- [9] <http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/parks/island/index.htm>
- [10] <http://www.toronto.com/profile/150067/>
- [11] <http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com/>
- [12] <http://www.toronto.com/infosite/310101/>
- [13] <http://www.stlawrencemarket.com/>

- [14] <http://www.thedistillerydistrict.com/>
- [15] <http://www.rom.on.ca/>
- [16] <http://www.ago.net/>
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- [18] <http://www.utoronto.ca>
- [19] <http://toronto.rezrez.com/entertainment/gaytoronto/index.htm>
- [20] <http://www.ontariosciencecentre.ca/>
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- [32] <http://www.metropolitan.com/lwh/>
- [33] [http://www.harthouse.utoronto.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts\\_3\\_1320\\_1.html](http://www.harthouse.utoronto.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_3_1320_1.html)
- [34] <http://www.toronto.com/profile/147185/>
- [35] <http://www.toronto.com/profile/221627>
- [36] <http://www.labodegarestaurant.com/>
- [37] <http://www.toronto.com/infosite/179730/>
- [38] <http://www.toronto.com/profile/146801/>
- [39] <http://www.pangaearestaurant.com/>
- [40] <http://www.toronto.com/profile/146875/>
- [41] <http://www.toronto.com/profile/115741/>

# Appendix A

This map is brought to you by WHERE Toronto/Tourism

