

A Day of Arts & Culture Itinerary Option 1

YOUR DAY'S ITINERARY

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Enjoy your morning coffee at a Bloor Street café (The Coffee Lab and L'Espresso Bar Mercurio are just two sweet spots). Then begin at that most logical starting point for a walking tour: the **Bata Shoe Museum**. It houses an extraordinary collection of over 13,000 shoes and related artifacts. But you don't have to be a shoe person to appreciate the celebration of footwear history, or to get a glimpse into how society is reflected by what we put on our feet. (From French chestnut-crushing boots to embroidered Chinese silk shoes, to footwear made from human hair!) It's All About Shoes, literally, with a semi-permanent exhibition of that name, plus special displays in three rotating galleries. From Ferragamo and Westwood to Native American footwear, the Bata has something for all ages and interests. Queen Victoria's ballroom slippers? Robert Redford's cowboy boots? Karen Kain's ballet shoes? Elton John's silver platforms? Check, check, check, and check.

Next, it's a short walk up stately Huron St. to the 19th century brick mansion that's home to the **Istituto Italiano di Cultura**. It's where Italy and Canada meet through cultural collaborations in theatre, music, and cinema. (Not to mention the Istituto's role as a presenter of Italian artists of global renown: Renato Scott and La Scala Philharmonic among them.) Browse the wide-ranging collection of Italian books and movies in the library or delve into the richness of Italian culture through one of the Istituto's many talks. (Taking you from Italy's famous cinema to its equally famous cuisine.) Torontonians and long-term visitors alike can learn "the language of culture" through Italian classes offered in this intimate setting.

You may want to stop for lunch in fabled Yorkville en route to your next destination. A far cry from the neighbourhood's '60s coffee house days, when the likes of Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, and Gordon Lightfoot sang and strummed, today's Yorkville is chic boutiques, petite galleries, and gastronomic delights. Blog TO is one good source for dining choices.

From Yorkville it's a matter of minutes to Yonge and Bloor, Toronto's most famous intersection. Yes, it's the entry point to "Mink Mile" the city's upscale shopping district, but it's also where you'll find the striking **Toronto Reference Library**, just one short block north. An architectural gem, with its soaring, light-filled atrium, the library is often said to be reminiscent of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Not only is it an inspiring place to study, it's also a go-to for literary events with leading authors — and for its notable collections, including one of the world's foremost devoted to Sherlock Holmes creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Aficionados of the ever-growing world of comics should stop by the Page and Panel shop on the way out (possibly followed by an afternoon coffee at Balzac's café).

The Bloor St. Culture Corridor holds some hidden treasures you'll want to uncover. Case in point, The **Japan Foundation**, found on the third floor of the Hudson's Bay Centre. The Japan Foundation hosts exhibitions of stunning Japanese and Japan-related graphic design, fine arts, and handicrafts, as well as being home to artist talks, demonstrations, and group tours. Its public lending library is Canada's only specializing in Japanese culture and boasts over 20,000 Japanese-related materials in English, French, and Japanese (including an extensive Manga and Anime collection). Want to study Japanese, or explore Japanese arts and cultural exchange programs? Come to Toronto's gateway to Japanese culture.

From Japan to France: Stroll back down Bloor St. to Spadina Rd. and the **Alliance Française de Toronto**. Founded in 1902 as a centre for learning la belle langue, it's gone on to become the largest French-language school in Canada. But learning French at today's Alliance could mean doing yoga, writing slam poetry, or playing games — all in French. (More traditional French courses for a full range of learners, from children to corporate employees, are also available.) Visitors can hear from French-speaking communities spanning the five continents through exhibitions and talks in the Pierre Léon Gallery, as well as plays, shows for the kids, and French language films. (Make sure to check out Movie Thursdays.) Then there's the music. Whether classical or Klezmer or any shade in between, the Alliance's concerts present some of the extraordinary breadth of music sung in the French language.

When it comes to live music the Bloor St. Culture Corridor is an embarrassment of riches, none richer than the music you can hear at NOW magazine's Best Concert Hall of 2017: the **Royal Conservatory of Music's Koerner Hall**. You'll find international stars of jazz, classical, pop, and world music centre stage at this acoustically fabulous hall. Connected to the Royal Conservatory's Victorian-era headquarters, Koerner is also an architectural triumph, literally a bridge between old and new, seamlessly integrating the 19th century with the 21st. You may associate the Royal Conservatory with musical study, and you're not wrong — its famed alumni include the likes of Glenn Gould, Oscar Peterson, Angela Hewitt, and Sarah McLachlan, to name a few. But any music enthusiast can dive into its music appreciation programs, unlocking everything from Mozart's comedic tendencies, to what makes an opera diva a diva, to just how it is that music actually works.

Finish your day with a nightcap at a neighbourhood pub, or head home to get ready for another day in the corridor.



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