
Unexpected Toronto With Children

When touring Toronto with kids, especially if you have already “done” the typical attractions, think outside the city. Visit a farm in the York Municipal Region north of downtown and take in the thundering power of Niagara Falls two-hours away.

The Forsythe Family Farm is like a day in the country but without the long drive. About an hour from Toronto, the farm’s fields, animals and enchanted forest provide an oasis for little kids who need a break from urban crowds. A colorful, climb aboard wooden train is near the big red barn, home to the market. In June and July find juicy strawberries and tasty sweet peas and in August and September savor the corn. More take-home treats include pecan tarts, jams, jellies, and apple cider.

“We’re trying to be Grandpa’s farm,” says owner Jim Forsythe. On a visit, kids can feed lambs and goats, find out why bees are important by looking at working hives, learn how to milk a cow by practicing on a cardboard cutout, pet rabbits, move through a corn maze in late summer in fall, jump on bales of hay and walk through an Enchanted Forest adorned with storybook scenes.

Another daytrip: visit Niagara Falls, CN. Getting wet on the Maid of the Mist has been a tradition since 1846 when the first steamboat ferry carried stagecoaches and horses across the Niagara River near the falls. Now the 30-minute boat rides puts you within spraying distance of the thundering falls, both the American Falls and the wider, more impressive Canadian Falls.

Getting close to the roaring power of the ever-tumbling water is a thrill, albeit a wet one. Even when wearing the blue plastic poncho handed to you, you will get doused. To minimize your soaking, remove your socks and roll up your pants. For those who prefer to stay on land, there’s the less exciting Journey Behind the Falls. You descend an elevator to a tunnel at the base of the falls. From two alcoves you view thick curtains of water teaming down. The best part is walking out onto two decks. The lower one puts you within reach of the fall’s spray.

Just outside of the park is Clifton Hill. Nirvana to kids, the street looms like a money pit to parents. Negotiate with your children ahead of time about how many hours and how many dollars you want to spend here. Among the “gotta-do” places for gradeschoolers are several fun houses, a SkyWheel (Ferris Wheel), Ripley’s Believe It or No, mini-golf and Louis Tussaud’s Wax works.

The Homewood Suites by Hilton, Markham, Ontario, about 40-minutes from downtown Toronto and 20-minutes from the Forsythe Family Farm, is a family-friendly property that offers added value for families. One and two-bed-room suites come with a full kitchen, a living area with a pull-out couch and a television plus a separate bedroom with another

television. The bathroom is reached through the bedroom.

The hotel has an indoor pool, outdoor putting green and barbecue grills available on a first-come basis. Rates include a hot breakfast plus a Welcome Home Reception, Monday through Thursday from 5-7 p.m, that features a hot item plus a salad or vegetable. For some non-fussy kids, that meal could be dinner.

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www.forsythefamilyfarms.com

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