



on the (winter) air

BY CHRIS ROBINSON



PHOTOS: TOURISM TORONTO



TORONTO The Cool

Cavalcade of Lights (left) Skating at City Hall (right)

I love TO, I do! And I love winter in the city. Now don't get me wrong – I will strap skis or snowshoes to my feet and head to the hills with the best of them. But I spent all summer yo-yoing up and down between my cottage and Toronto – pulled back and forth between the invisible poles of sparkling lake and sparkling lights. So why should winter be any different? I confess to multiple personalities and so there's no better place for me than the multi-faceted Toronto.

Peter Ustinov once described Toronto, a little unkindly, as "New York run by the Swiss." I know what he means, but that is just one side of this complex city. When it comes to the Holiday Season, for example, Toronto is more like "New York run by Santa's Little Helpers." No one embraces the Holidays like Torontonians do. The decorative lights go up as soon as the Halloween lanterns come down, and November isn't over when the Santa Claus Parade hits town. Now when Santa is drawing up his list of cities, there isn't much doubt whether

Toronto is on the naughty or nice list. So if you want to get in holiday mood with good, honest, simple fun then come out and join Toronto's families for the fantastic series of animated floats, marching bands, over-excited costumed kids and clowns that accompany the "Big Guy" through the streets – with no more commercial intent than to raise money for charity.

There are still lots of other simple winter pleasures to enjoy, such as skating outdoors at Nathan Phillips Square, or on Canada's largest artificial outdoor rink at Harbourfront. There is something special about skating under the lights in the evening, as snowflakes gently tumble and families glide around in peaceful circles. Toronto is cultured, cool, calm, comfortable – and kind. And in today's world that isn't a bad thing for a city to be.

It's during the holidays, though, that the city "cleans up (especially) well," as my old mom used to say, as the city literally dresses up. The lights are aglow everywhere, including during The Cavalcade of Lights,

a month-long (November 24 to December 30) celebration of lighting displays and fireworks throughout city neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, stores vie to outdo each other with fantastic winter window displays. And, of course, what would the holidays be without shopping?

Toronto has something for each one of my multiple retail personalities – and it no doubt has something for you. Want a store like Lululemon, devoted entirely to Yoga fashionwear and accessories? Or to be more like the Grinch, shopping for one last stocking-stuffer at Honest Ed's? Want the fashionable boutiques of Yorkville or the antiques of Kensington Market? Vintage wines at Canada's largest liquor store at Summerhill LCBO? Designer "everything" at Holt Renfrew, or an honest to goodness mall at the Eaton Centre? It's all here, but if you are tempted to shop till you drop – don't forget to save some energy to enjoy the cultural side of Toronto during the winter season.



Window dressing



Ballet

Start your evening with a glorious meal. If a type of cuisine exists I am sure multicultural, cosmopolitan Toronto has a restaurant somewhere serving it... owned by someone whose background is from that place, and whose granny provided the menu ideas. "Winterlicious" from January 25, 2008, to February 7, is a great opportunity to sample the fabulous culinary offerings of Toronto. Scrooge would approve of the super value of the "prix fixe" menus that are offered by 130 of Toronto's top dining establishments during this promotion. And you'll have enough dollars left in your pocket to enjoy the vibrant arts scene, with lots of offerings to put you in the holiday mood.

The Nutcracker premiered in St. Petersburg in 1892 and James Kudelka's vibrant, touching and truly spectacular re-imagining of this timeless work entered the National Ballet's repertoire in 1995 to rapturous acclaim. Ever since, it has been an indispensable part of the rituals and pleasures of the holiday season and synonymous with the joy and wonder of childhood. It embodies

the mixture of sophistication and simplicity that is this good-hearted city. It runs from December 8 - 30 at the new Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts.

And if you really want to revel in some good old-fashioned nostalgia, what better than the new stage adaptation of the beloved Irving Berlin classic film *White Christmas*? The delightful musical about two showbiz buddies putting on a show in a picturesque Vermont inn and finding their perfect mates in the bargain runs from November 20 to January 5, 2008, at the Sony Centre for the Performing Arts. Full of dancing, laughter and some of the greatest songs ever written, *White Christmas* is a merry and bright theatrical experience for the entire family.

So I confess, I'm dreaming of a Toronto Christmas, just like the ones I used to know... ❄️

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Ottawa - Winterlude

JANUARY 5, 2008 • CFRB
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