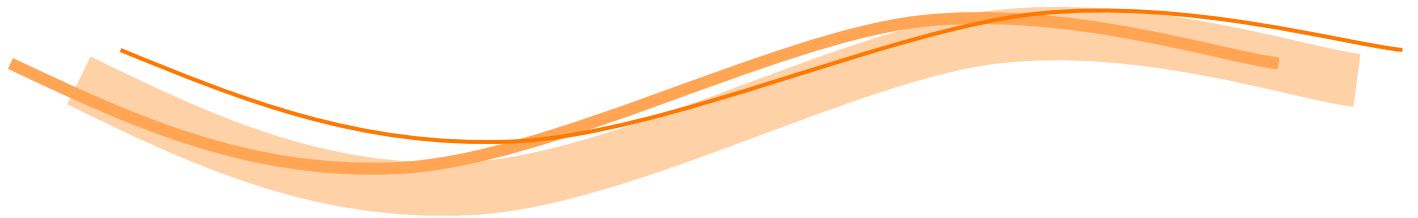




STRATFORD ONTARIO





STRATFORD

Ahh – the civilized city of Stratford! Few places in Ontario are lovelier or more alive with culture and character. Stratford is internationally famous for the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, the leading classical theatre in North America. But Stratford also has parks, glorious gardens and stunning Victorian architecture. In 2008 Stratford was named Canada's Best Blooming Community and won the International Challenge of Communities in Bloom.

Spring is the perfect time to visit Stratford. Take advantage of spring specials to stay at selected inns and bed and breakfasts, enjoy stunning Stratford Shakespeare Festival previews and sample Stratford's innovative cuisine. Spring room specials start at \$99 a night and you can savour exclusive spring menus in selected Stratford restaurants from as low as \$15 for lunch and \$30 for dinner. Plus the Stratford Shakespeare Festival is offering special preview prices of 3 plays for only \$199. Check out www.SensuousStratford.com

The Stratford Festival is hailed around the world for the quality of its theatrical productions. Each year it features 10 -15 shows, including Shakespeare and the classics, the best in musical theatre, contemporary drama and new Canadian plays. More than 500,000 attend the Festival each year, during a season that runs from April to November on four stages.

This year's Festival season includes 14 incredible productions. Renowned stage and screen actor Colm Feore will star as Macbeth and Cyrano de Bergerac. Acclaimed classical actor and director Brian Bedford, a master of comedy, will be directing The Importance of Being Earnest and donning a dress to play Lady Bracknell. Broadway luminaries have a major hand in this year's musicals. Gary Griffin (director of Oprah Winfrey's The Colour Purple) will direct West Side Story, with choreographer Sergio Trujillo (of Jersey Boys fame). Des McAnuff – multiple Tony and Olivier Award-winner (and the Festival's artistic director) - will direct A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, with choreographer Wayne Cilento (choreographer of Broadway hits Wicked and Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat). And Steven Page of Barenaked Ladies fame will be composing the music for Bartholomew Fair.

The Festival also offers lots of Beyond the Stage activities, including tours of the costume warehouse – one of the three largest in the world – and of the backstage areas, and gardens. There are also free concerts,

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	<p>lectures and stage-side chats to enhance your experience at the theatre.</p> <p>Stratford also attracts international singers, musicians, composers, including the famous Celtic songstress, Loreena McKennitt, Stratford Civic Orchestra and Stratford Concert Band. The city's passion for music is best displayed at Stratford Summer Music (July 20-August 16) when musical artists from around the world come to perform at musical events and concerts in Stratford's churches, heritage concert halls and in parks and gardens.</p> <p>Stratford has been cultivating a local culinary heritage and pleasing palates since 1832, with one of Ontario's oldest farmers' markets (operating since 1855) and the influential Stratford Chefs School, training chefs for over 25 years. Enjoy the adventures of savouring the local cuisine – from simply dining to wandering Epicurean Treks through rich pastoral countryside in the spring, summer and fall.</p>
Location	Stratford is a city on the Avon River in Perth County in Southern (Southwestern) Ontario, Canada with a
Geography	The countryside around Stratford is pretty and gently rolling with many farms and woods scattered over the fertile hinterland.
Name	When the area was first settled in 1832, the townsite and the river were named after Stratford-upon-Avon, England, of Shakespearean fame.
Population	Stratford has a population of 30,461
Language	English
Currency	Canadian Dollars
Time zone	EST
Health	Beware over-eating on the fine local produce!
Safety tips	A very safe destination.

CLIMATE	
General climate	The City of Stratford enjoys a year-round moderate climate. Stratford is located on the same latitude as Boston and Northern California. Southwestern Ontario offers four distinct seasons, which make a wide variety of leisure activities possible. The winter weather lasts from December thru March whilst summer temperatures stretch from May through October.
Today's weather	25 Centigrade and sunny (25 April 2009)
Best time to visit	Stratford is a wonderful short break destination any time of year, but spring and fall are particularly beautiful times to experience the gardens and the local produce.

GETTING THERE	
Cities	Stratford
Distances	Montreal to Stratford is approximately 8 hours drive time or 700km

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Trains	Historically, the city was a railway junction. Today, Canadian National Railways, and the Goderich-Exeter Railway provide freight links and VIA Rail Canada is the passenger carrier.
Car Rental	Car rental is an easy option as Stratford is at the junctions of Highways 7, 8, and former 19 (Now Perth Road 119) and is connected to Highway 401 by expressways from Kitchener.
Buses	Greyhound Canada provides daily service between London, Ontario and Kitchener. Within the city, Stratford Transit provides the local bus service.

ACCOMMODATION TYPES	<p>Stratford and area has lots of places to stay overnight to fit your style and budget. Lodgings range from full-service hotels to contemporary boutique inns; motels surrounded by gardens and parks; over 70 bed and breakfasts ranging from the cozy and intimate to the grand and luxurious - most in century homes, cottages and mansions.</p> <p>The Stratford website www.welcometostratford.com has even organized lodgings by atmosphere or style. They offer many ways for you to choose a place to stay - by a combination of date, value, amenities, atmosphere and location. Browse through the assortment of places to stay, create a short list of options, go to the reviews page to find out what other people said about them, select the one that fits your needs and send an e-mail to request a reservation.</p>
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TARGET GROUPS	
Kids	For those of us living in the big cities and suburbs, a weekend out in the country is a perfect way for parents and kids to take a breather and discover a quieter side of life. Tour a century old working farm with hayrides and in the fall, pumpkin tossing, or pick your own apples on a family farm. You can learn about the Canada's contribution to North American baseball, a swim in Canada's largest swimming-hole or get lost in North America's largest corn maze - at night.
Teens	<p>Ontario Maze: Adventure, challenges and fun for all ages in this unique, natural and educational setting where teens will have an unforgettable day ! Open July 26 to Oct 26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Themed 45 acre Corn maze • Labyrinth • Mini Golf • Picnic Area • Straw Museum • Flashlight Nights • Indoor and Outdoor educational exhibits and games <p>http://www.ontariomaze.com</p>

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	<p>Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame: How about a trip to the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame & Museum in St. Marys, Ontario? Located adjacent to the Quarry, Canada's largest outdoor swimming pool, the Hall is a short drive from Stratford. Housed in a century-old building, the shrine pays homage to 86 inductees who have left their mark on Canadian baseball. http://www.baseballhalloffame.ca</p>
Romance	<p>Some of the country inns are perfect for a romantic getaway and a night at the theatre is always a hit. And then there's so many choices for a sumptuous meal in a picturesque restaurant and the walk afterwards by the river with the swans gliding by...</p>
Seniors	<p>Stratford is a perfect short break destination for Seniors – it's quiet but has plenty to do, is perfect for walks and shopping and the cultural activities are amazing for a city of this size...starting of course with the Shakespeare Festival itself</p>

UNIQUES	<p>The Epicurian Trek They're real foodies in Stratford! Not a surprise considering that Perth County has been cultivating food for the world for well over 100 years. The County's byways and country roads lead to a host of hidden culinary gems - from farm markets, cheese makers, bakeries, and fruit growers to farms cultivating heritage breeds of all kinds. Come take your taste buds on an experience meeting local food artisans along our Epicurean Trek available each spring, summer and fall. You will have a great time meeting the producers, listening to their stories and philosophies and sampling their unique products. Plan to drive or bike through the countryside, combining stops with some browsing through antique shops it. You will meet passionate characters dedicated to producing fresh and local foods, right on their farms and properties. Pick your own strawberries in June, sample heritage pork products; try baked goods fresh from the oven and sensationally sweet cheeses whose tastes vary by season. Try Aunt Hilda's mustards, local chutneys, pickles and preserves and don't forget to pick up some hand-rolled chili pepper truffles! Download the map on the Stratford website and choose your route based on the descriptions of the participants and days and times they are open for visitors. Graze away the afternoon and don't forget to pack an insulated shopping bag - you will definitely want to take some home to share with friends, or savour all by yourself!</p>
Surprising	<p>In keeping with its visitor-friendly nature, you can pick up a complimentary parking pass at the Stratford Tourism Office at 47 Downie Street across from City Hall. Passes are valid for one day during your visit in designated municipal parking lots, indicated on the back of the parking pass.</p>

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<p>History</p>	<p>The town was originally a railway junction. Furniture manufacturing became an important part of the local economy by the twentieth century. A 1933 strike by furniture workers in Stratford, led by the Communist Workers' Unity League, marks the last time the army was deployed to break a strike in Canada.</p> <p>The city's economy took a major turn when the Shakespearean Stratford Festival started in 1953. The annual festival now brings hundreds of thousands of theatre goers and tourists to the area. Celebrities such as Alec Guinness, Christopher Plummer, Peter Ustinov, Dame Maggie Smith, and William Shatner have performed at the festival. The world-renowned festival takes place in four theatres throughout the city; the Festival Theatre, the Avon Theatre, Tom Patterson Theatre and the Studio Theatre.</p> <p>Timeline:</p> <p>1828 - Settlement begins.</p> <p>1832 - Thomas Mercer Jones, an agent of the Canada Company, names the village "Stratford" and renames the portion of the Thames River running through it "The Avon River."</p> <p>1849 - The Perth County News is Stratford's first weekly newspaper. Ontario Street in the summertime.</p> <p>1853 - Perth County is created, with Stratford as its county seat.</p> <p>1854 - Stratford is incorporated as a village.</p> <p>1859 - Stratford is incorporated as a town.</p> <p>1885 - Stratford is incorporated as a city with a population of 9000.</p> <p>1918 - A gift from a Michigan CNR employee, swans come to live in Stratford.</p> <p>1933 - The army is called in to end a general strike, the last time the military is used to quell a strike in Canada.</p> <p>1936 - The Shakespearean Gardens are created.</p> <p>1953 - The Stratford Shakespearean Festival Theatre is opened by a Stratford journalist, Tom Patterson.</p> <p>1957 - The Festival moves into its first permanent structure.</p> <p>1964 - The CNR shops close.</p> <p>1997 - Nations in Bloom crowns Stratford the "Prettiest City in the World."</p> <p>2003 - The Stratford Festival of Canada celebrated its 50th season welcoming 672,924 patrons to 18 plays. This was a record number of playgoers during the 50 seasons. The Avon Theatre realized a complete renewal and The Studio Theatre, a fourth theatre space seating 250 people was added</p>
<p>1000 Places to see before you die</p>	<p>The Stratford Festival earns a coveted place in the USA and Canada edition</p>
<p>Must Sees</p>	<p>The Stratford Shakespeare Festival – naturally!</p>

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SPORTS ACTIVITIES	
Golf	<p>Stratford Country Club Nestled in the NorthEast end of the city, the Stratford Country Club offers residents and tourists alike leisure, dining and special event venue options year-round. The club's vibrant membership is evident in the participation levels, commitment to ongoing improvement and high level of social interaction. Curling members enjoy friendly competition through league play and club bonspiels, while their high level of both excellence and sportsmanship prevail during inter-club play. Last but not least, golfers enjoy season after season of great golf on a well-maintained course, and lots of good times in Bogey's Restaurant and Bar and on our patio overlooking the first tee. http://www.stratfordcountryclub.com/golf/rates.html</p> <p>St Mary's Golf and Country Club is also only 10 minutes away from Stratford and features a well-liked 18 hole course. http://www.stmarysgolf.com</p>
Fishing	<p>Wildwood Reservoir: Fish from shore or on the reservoir for perch, bass and pike. A fishing dock is located near the Marina.</p>
Hiking	<p>Long walks and relaxed hiking can be found in the Meadow Rue Gardens and the Birnam Wood Arboretum at the far end of the Avon past the Festival Theatre. Stratford's section of the 104 km Avon Trail is situated in the area of John Street. Follow the river to the T.J. Dolan Natural Area which is a contained rustic wilderness park within a residential area. You can follow the T.J. Dolan Natural Area as it joins up with the trail. Most of the Avon Trail runs through scenic farmland and meanders along small rivers and streams. It is a continuous non-motorized long distance trail, following a few country back roads between St. Marys and Stratford. At the end of the 18 km trail, just before the stonetown of St. Marys, you reach the 1400 hectare Wildwood Conservation Area with over 425 treed campsites, a beach and plenty of canoeing, boating and fishing opportunities. It is abundant with wildlife all year round including plenty of birdlife.</p>
Cycling	<p>For the biking enthusiast, you can rent a bike and download the directions for either an easy tour about town or take one of six self-directed cycling tours through the pastoral countryside of Perth County. Go to www.welcometostratford.com</p>
Swimming	<p>The famous Quarry in St Mary's is Canada's largest outdoor swimming pool. It's a former limestone quarry that has been rehabilitated for swimming. Between 1930 and 1935, the quarry filled with water and was used as a popular swimming spot by the locals. In 1945, St Mary's town bought it and the adjoining Thames Quarry along with 50 acres of</p>

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	<p>surrounding land for \$2,200.</p> <p>In 1997, the town, with the help of several partners, built a new multi-purpose facility on the Quarry property. The new facility, named the Lind Sportsplex, is used for curling in the winter months, and for basketball, volleyball, roller hockey, shuffle board, etc. The Lind Sportsplex offers wheelchair accessible change rooms equipped with showers, lockers, and canteen.</p>
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CULTURE	
Arts	<p>This town likes is art! Stratford's vibrant visual art scene is found in the artist collective of Factory 163, the curated shows at Gallery Stratford and Art in the Park.</p>
Music	<p>Stratford Civic Orchestra Concert The orchestra's travels arrive in the warm and sunny tropics, featuring hot, sultry music of Morricone and Bizet. Hear Canada's internationally-renowned pianist Robert Silverman perform with the orchestra in Manuel de Falla's richly sensual Nights In the Garden of Spain on May 16, 2009</p> <p>Stratford Concert Choir A Haydn Celebration is a tribute to the great composer, Joseph Haydn. Including "The Heavens are telling", "Te Deum Laudamus", "The Little Organ Mass" and "Achieved is the Glorious Work", concluding with the wellknown "Lord Nelson Mass". May 24, 2009</p>
Amish Tours	<p>The area of Perth County has the largest settlement of Amish in Canada and one of the largest settlements in North America. One sees the distinctive horse and buggies all year round. During the summer one can observe fathers and sons in the fields while mothers and daughters tend gardens.</p> <p>Every Autumn, the rarest of invitations are offered by Amish farmers, craftsmen and their families to come visit them every Saturday afternoon in October.</p> <p>This experience is very special - an intimate opportunity to meet the Amish community and its citizens going about their everyday business. You'll see their way of life, their culture, their skills, how they make their livelihoods - in a world without electric power. The Amish have been sustainable and carbon neutral farmers since well before it become an environmental issue.</p> <p>This is so rare an event and we wish to respect these special opportunities, so we ask you to follow a few simple rules. Use your Sunday manners (even though you're visiting on Saturdays), ask before you even unsnap your camera case if you have permission to take a photograph, and donations are accepted for touring the homes, workshops and farms of the Amish.</p> <p>Before you come, speak to your friends who ride, or sew, or have</p>

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	weddings or births coming up-you'll be visiting harness makers, dry good shops, furniture and quilt makers, and what better gift could you give than something that is handmade, one-of-a-kind and has a special story to go with your present.
Museums	Stratford Perth Museum is a good place to start your visit, providing an overview of the city, the county and surrounding region. http://www.stratfordperthmuseum.ca
Festivals	Stratford Shakespeare Festival – see separate section below Blyth Festival of Canadian theatre June 24 – Sept 19 Stratford Summer Music in July through August. Stratford's passion for music is best displayed at Stratford Summer Music when musical artists from around the world come to complement the elegant atmosphere that is our town in July 20- August16. You will be treated to musical events and concerts from churches, heritage concert halls and in our parks and gardens.

ATTRACTIONS	
Historic Buildings	Explore Stratford's historic public buildings and monuments: As you enter the City from the east on Ontario Street, the imposing Perth County Courthouse is visible for miles. It is a confection of Romanesque, Italianate and Queen Anne details rendered in sandstone, yellow-brick and red terracotta crowned with an imposing bell tower. The stained glass windows, oak woodwork and tiles of the Victorian interior is very well preserved. It sits in a core of civic buildings including the Stratford Public Library (which is a Carnegie Library), Stratford-Perth Archives and the Stratford Jail. The imposing heart of Stratford is its City Hall in all its Queen Anne red bricked glory surrounded by well preserved late-Victorian commercial districts of Wellington, Ontario and Downie Streets. Wander the streets and you will be captivated by architectural designs of dizzying variety, from chequerboards, latticework, corbels, Romanesque arches, pilasters, turrets, gargoyles and finials. Of national importance is the cenotaph on the banks of the Avon River created by Walter Seymour Allward. The dramatic sculptural style was to achieve its height in his next commission the Vimy Memorial and was a major influence for Jane Urquhart's novel The Stonecarvers.
Wildlife	The Swans of Stratford: If there's one visual that says Stratford to everyone who visits, it is the swans. Regal, graceful, majestic-all words that describe these noble birds. Stratford's honorary ambassadors set the pace for the city. But beware they can be cranky and one should stay their distance - they are royal birds, you know! The swans have been lovingly guarded and raised and guided since 1918. You can pick-up the book The Swans of Stratford, by the late

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	Robert Miller, the Honorary Keeper of the Swans, at a local book store.
Parks	Wildwood Conservation Area is located 11 km west of the City of Stratford. Wildwood's 1400 hectares of land and the large reservoir attract approximately 150,000 visitors each year. The park was created when Wildwood Dam and Reservoir were completed in 1965 and there are four marked trails totalling 20 km in length. The Lake Trail is the longest, at 7 km each way.
Gardens	<p>Tour Stratford's prize-winning gardens: Spring, summer and fall are ablaze with colour and the air is filled with music in all the five gardens of Stratford linked along the Avon River.</p> <p>The Shakespearean Gardens, framed by a pergola, the Perth County Courthouse and the oldest double arch stone bridge in Ontario, contains 60 varieties of herbs, flowers and shrubs from the time of Shakespeare and mentioned in his plays. Wander through knots of blooms bordered by thrift and boxwood, along the stone walls among fragrant rose gardens and rest on iron benches along the river bank.</p> <p>In the center of Stratford is the cenotaph where a dramatic monument to our fallen soldiers designed by the sculptor of the Vimy Memorial in France stands.</p> <p>The grounds surrounding the Festival Theatre is the Arthur Meighen Gardens and the dozens of fragrant rose arbours, water pools and tree filled parks.</p> <p>Beyond the Festival is Millennium Park filled with water plantings, lit fountains, native trees and ornamental plantings set amongst an outdoor sculpture garden.</p> <p>Gallery Stratford is set with the forested glade of Confederation Park with its soothing waterfall and Japanese garden</p>

OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	<p>Shopping Stratford is not about Chanel or Tiffany or Louis Vuitton - they are the "big box" stores. Instead, Stratford has shops that thrive on the creativity and ingenuity of their stylish owners, many of whom tend their own shops, who source the unusual, the environmental, the clever and eclectically fashionable . The downtown heritage shopping district attracts people far and wide.</p> <p>They are known for the unique buys as found in one of Canada's leading native arts galleries or wander along the river and view original visual pieces from Art in the Park.</p> <p>Where else can you walk within a few short blocks and discover three chocolatiers - Stratford probably has more gourmet chocolate shops per capita than anywhere else in Ontario. A nationally renowned children's store staffed with people who play with young shoppers. Or a shop devoted exclusively to all things Scottish - from kilts to jerseys from all the major British football teams.</p>

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	<p>You'll find vintage clothing, organic makeup, musical instruments, hand-selected bookstores - for adults and kids, environmentally sensitive gifts of all kinds, fun T-shirts and big-name labels, funky china and décor shops, kitchen gadgets, teas from around the world, theatre gifts, mementos, posters and fashions.</p> <p>Or hop in the car and cruise the wide variety of artisan shops, handmade furniture emporiums, antique shops and good old-fashioned general stores in and about the countryside.</p> <p>And there's lots of bistros, restaurants and bohemian coffee bars to rest in with the weight of your shopping bags — dotted with actors, artists, writers and musicians.</p>
<p>Markets</p>	<p>Stratford Farmers Market</p> <p>This market has been selling fresh local produce since 1855 and is one of the oldest markets in Ontario.</p> <p>Open Every Saturday 7:00am to 12:00 noon</p> <p>Location: the new Stratford Agriplex in the Stratford Rotary Complex at 353 McCarthy Road - Lots of FREE Parking</p> <p>Tel: (519) 271- 5130</p> <p>Website: http://www.stratfordfairgrounds.com/market.html</p>

<p>CUISINE</p>	
<p>Food</p>	<p>Savour the freshness of the season on a guided Epicurean Trek through Perth County. Take your taste buds on an adventure, visiting sweet and savoury culinary artisans in and around Stratford.</p> <p>www.welcometostratford.com</p> <p>Stratford has been cultivating a local culinary heritage and pleasing palates since 1832. From one of Ontario's oldest farmers' markets operating since 1855 to the influential Stratford Chef School – training chefs for over 25 years.</p> <p>Stratford has a national reputation for culinary creativity represented by some of the finest restaurants in Canada. The Stratford chefs are renowned for their artistry and have become culinary personalities, stars of 3 Food Network Canada television series, The Manic Organic, Fink and Chef School. From haute cuisine to country comfort food, fresh and inventive seasonal flavours await. It begins with the quality and freshness of organic produce, artisanal breads and cheeses, pasture fed organic beef, Amish raised goat milk and heritage pork – all originating from surrounding Perth County. Come to Stratford and enjoy the adventures of savouring the local cuisine – from dining to wandering Epicurean Treks through rich pastoral countryside.</p>
<p>Tea</p>	<p>Canada's tea sommelier, Karen Hartwick, will lead you on a tea tasting journey at Tea Leaves Tea Tasting Bar. Karen is a certified tea sommelier whose passion is introducing people to the sophisticated, rich and varied world of fine tea.</p>

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	www.stratfordtealeaves.com
Restaurants	The Old Prune: With three art-filled rooms and a sunlit Garden Room overlooking a courtyard, The Old Prune offers exemplary dining in a summery setting. Cuisine sparkles, thanks to Chef Bryan Steele's flawless technique and execution. www.oldprune.on.ca

MORE INFO	
Brochures	Stratford Tourism Alliance , 47 Downie Street, Stratford, ON N5A 1W7 Tel: 1-800-561-7926
Website	For Stratford: www.welcometostratford.com For Stratford in the Spring: http://www.sensuousstratford.com For the Festival: www.stratfordshakespearefestival.com For Festival tickets call: 1-800-567-1600 tickets@stratfordshakespearefestival.com

HOTEL PRIZE PARTNER	The Lofts at 99 – Tastefully decorated two level suites in Stratford's heritage downtown. Just steps from the picturesque Avon River and Shakespearean Gardens, yet in the heart of the shopping district and close to theatres. Address: 99 Ontario Street, Stratford, Ontario Tel: 519.271.1121 or toll free at 1-800-361-5322 Website: www.bentleys-annex.com
Location	Contemporary, spacious bi-level loft accommodations in the heart of downtown Stratford, Ontario.
Facilities	All rooms come complete with flat screen, wireless internet, and fireplaces.
Accommodation	Pamper yourself in the ensuite, modern, bath facilities. Relax in a famous tempurpedic mattress with high-end linens or resting beside your in-room fireplace. Decorated throughout with fine art decor, plasma flat screen T.V, state of the art radio sound systems, and free wireless internet

TRAVEL PRIZE PARTNER	Travel between Montreal and Stratford on VIA Rail. Relax and let VIA do the driving for you. Arrive rested and ready to enjoy all of Stratford's pleasures. www.viarail.com
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CURRENT DEALS	Spring is the time to reawaken and refresh the taste buds. Stratford offers specially designed spring culinary packages to compliment your visit to Stratford from April until the end of June. Try an afternoon of chocolate making and then spending a few hours with Canada's preeminent tea sommelier matching your masterpieces with a variety of teas? Spend a few hours with a master baker creating gluten-free
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	<p>bread, cookies and energy bars, you can take home the recipes. Visit Anthony John, The Manic Organic, on his organic vegetable farm and be entertained by his philosophy of responsible, environmental farming. For specific packages go to http://www.sensuousstratford.com/packages.php</p> <p>Take advantage of spring specials in hotels, inns and B&Bs starting from \$99 a night.</p> <p>Savour delicious Stratford. Stratford's celebrated chefs offer exclusive spring menus starting at \$15 for lunch and \$30 for dinner.</p> <p>See Sensational 2009 Stratford Shakespeare Festival musicals and plays. Special preview prices – 3 plays for only \$199.</p>
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES	<p>See http://www.christalkstravel.blogspot.com for photos and commentary on my recent visit to Stratford (April 2009):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Epicurean Trek - Tea Tasting with Canada's Tea Sommelier, Karen HartwickLunch at TangoCostume Warehouse Tour at the FestivalStratford Shakespeare Festival performance: West Side Story

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<p>STRATFORD SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL</p>	<p>A national institution of international renown, the Festival is committed to maintaining and promoting the highest level of artistic excellence, to cultivating the widest possible audience and to providing theatre-related education and training for Canadian artists. In their creative exploration of the great works of the dramatic imagination, they aim to rediscover and reinvent those works for each new age, in order that they may continue to entertain, enlighten and inspire audiences of all ages and origins.</p>
<p>2009 Season</p>	<p>Under the general direction of Antoni Cimolino and the artistic direction of Des McAnuff, the 2009 season aims to present Shakespeare for the 21st century along with a glorious variety of other repertoire.</p> <p>The 2009 playbill consists of 14 productions. Four plays from the Elizabethan-Jacobean era will be staged: Shakespeare's Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream and Julius Caesar and Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair. Stratford's musicals will be West Side Story, presented on the Festival Theatre stage, and A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum at the Avon Theatre</p> <p>Other productions on the playbill include Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest, Ever Yours, Oscar, Chekhov's Three Sisters and Racine's Phèdre. The Studio Theatre will showcase three Canadian works, The Trespassers, Rice Boy and Zastrozzi.</p> <p>The Stratford Shakespeare Festival's 57th season will open in previews on April 11, 2009 and run until November 1, 2009. The box office is open - for tickets and information visit www.stratfordshakespearefestival.com or call 1.800.567.1600</p>
<p>Highlights of the Season</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This year's Festival season features renowned stage and screen actor Colm Feore as Macbeth and Cyrano de Bergerac. • Acclaimed classical actor and director Brian Bedford, a master of comedy, will be directing The Importance of Being Earnest and donning a dress to play Lady Bracknell. He'll also present a one-man show about Oscar Wilde, Ever Yours, Oscar. • Two blockbuster musicals: West Side Story and A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum – great directors and choreographers. Lots of Broadway sizzle. <p>Antoni Cimolino will be directing a show this year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Batholomew Fair • Features the music of Steven Page (late of Barenaked Ladies) • Great cast – Lucy Peacock, Jonathan Goad, Juan Chioran, Randy

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	<p>Hughson, Tom McCamus and his wife, Brigit Wilson.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And the members of the Birmingham Conservatory
Musicals	<p>Broadway luminaries have a major hand in this year's musicals. Gary Griffin (director of Oprah Winfrey's <i>The Colour Purple</i>) will direct <i>West Side Story</i>, with choreographer Sergio Trujillo (of <i>Jersery Boys</i> fame). Des McAnuff – multiple Tony and Olivier Award-winner (and the Festival's artistic director) will direct <i>A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum</i>, with choreographer Wayne Cilento – choreographer of Broadway hits <i>Wicked</i> and <i>Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat</i>.</p>
Festival Mission	<p>The Stratford Shakespeare Festival is a repertory, not-for-profit, theatre festival, permanently located in Stratford, Ontario, Canada. Our mission is to produce, to the highest standards possible, the best works of theatre in the classical and contemporary repertoire, with special emphasis on the works of William Shakespeare.</p>
History	<p>In 1952 Tom Patterson successfully proposed a Shakespeare Festival to Stratford City Council (in Ontario, Canada) leading to the incorporation of the Stratford Shakespearean Festival of Canada. Tyrone Guthrie was hired as artistic director.</p> <p>The first season at the Stratford Festival began on July 13th, 1953 with a performance of Shakespeare's <i>Richard III</i> starring Alec Guinness. <i>All's Well That Ends Well</i> was also presented during the first season. All performances took place in a tent, and the attendance for the year was over 68,000 during a six-week season.</p> <p>The Stratford Shakespeare Festival is now Canada's largest non-profit arts organization, with an annual budget of over \$52 million and over 1,000 employees, averaging more than 500,000 audience members per season.</p>
The Theatres	<p>The Festival Tent was first erected in 1953, and came down for the last time in 1956. The permanent Festival Theatre building was constructed over the winter-spring of 1956-57 and officially opened in 1957 with a performance of <i>Hamlet</i>. The Festival Theatre has been renovated several times including its most recent face-lift completed in 1997. It now seats 1,826.</p> <p>The Avon Theatre was originally built in 1901 as the Theatre Albert, a vaudeville house. It also served as a movie theatre. The Stratford Festival first rented it in 1956, purchasing the building in 1963. Extensive interior renovations took place and were completed with an entirely new façade in 1967. The Avon was renovated again in two phases over the winters of 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 and currently seats 1,083.</p> <p>The Tom Patterson Theatre, which seats 480, was originally used by</p>

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	<p>the Festival and known as The Third Stage in 1971 and renamed the Tom Patterson Theatre in 1991 to honour the founder of the Festival.</p> <p>The Festival's most intimate theatre space, the Studio Theatre, seats 260 patrons and opened in the Festival's 50th season in 2002. Located in the former scene shop of the Avon Theatre the theatre is home to new and experimental work, and for productions of rarely performed classics.</p>
Other Activities	<p>Things to do beyond the stage at the Festival:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tours of the backstage area and the gardens • Free concerts in the lobby, stage-side chats, lectures, workshops.
Costume Warehouse	<p>Join theatre enthusiasts on a tour of Stratford Shakespeare Festival's Costume Warehouse, one of the largest in North America. View thousands of costumes and props designed by the talented artisans of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival.</p> <p>www.stratfordshakespearefestival.com</p>
2009 Playbill	<p>Here's the complete line-up for 2009 at the Festival:</p> <p>Macbeth West Side Story Cyrano de Bergerac A Midsummer Night's Dream The Importance of Being Earnest Julius Caesar A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum Three Sisters Bartholomew Fair Ever Yours, Oscar Phèdre The Trespassers Rice Boy Zastrozzi</p>
Savings	<p>You can save from 20% to 50% off the ticket price when you purchase through the website at www.stratfordshakespearefestival.com</p> <p>There are also special Student prices and rush ticket prices available</p>
Children	<p>Bring the kids and save up to 68%!</p> <p>With each regularly priced adult ticket to any show, you can buy up to four youth tickets for as little as \$36 each for those 18 or younger.</p> <p>Programming of interest to families -</p> <p>Meet the Festival - Meet actors, designers, craftspeople and staff members</p> <p>Post-show discussions - With Stratford Shakespeare Festival actors</p> <p>Talking Theatre - Informal discussion groups</p> <p>Theatre Explorer - Fun workshops and Informal discussion groups</p> <p>Tours - Backstage, costume warehouse, garden</p>

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