

Burlington – A Great Trip from Niagara

By **GEORGE BAILEY, QMI Agency**

BURLINGTON, Ont. -- Quick now, what's the first thing you think about when someone from Niagara mentions they're going to Burlington? Chances are they'll say to shop -- at IKEA.

But Burlington is much more than this giant retailer. However, IKEA is one of the main reasons for visiting this city less than an hour drive from Niagara. The acronym IKEA is made up of the initials of the Swedish founder Ingvar Kamprad plus those of Elmtaryd, the family farm where he was born and the nearby village of Agunnaryd. Today at 95 years of age, Kamprad is listed by Forbes Magazine as the 11th richest person in the world with a net worth of \$23 billion. IKEA is found in 40 countries around the globe, with one of the largest located in Burlington.

On a trip to pick up new furniture, I decided to explore more of this city of 165,000 nestled on the shore of Lake Ontario smack dab in the centre of the Golden Horseshoe of Southern Ontario.

Start your journey by visiting the downtown area of this lovely city.

But first a word of advice: Parking is limited here and you'll also need lots of change to feed the meters found on streets and in lots; however, it will be worth it.

Your first stop should be the Burlington Tourism Information Centre at 414 Locust St. (www.tourismburlington.com or 1-877-499-9989). You can park in the indoor parking garage next door where the first 20 minutes is free. Once I got my bearings, I headed out on a free self-guided heritage walking tour provided by the information centre.

Remember to dress in layers, it's cold outside and you are near a lake.

The tour starts at the nearby Burlington Art Centre (www.thebac.ca or 905-632-7796). Admittance is free of charge and the centre is open seven days a week. Check out examples of original Canadian art and experience a bit of the tropics inside its mini greenhouse.

If you like old homes, walk Nelson, Burlington and Ontario streets to see lovely circa-1885 homes built by the city's earlier leading citizens.

Across from the art centre is one of the gems of Burlington -- The Waterfront Trail along the shoreline of Lake Ontario, where it is a hive of activity at any time of the year. Here I saw families taking advantage of the free outdoor Rotary Centennial Rink and playground found at the Discovery Landing.

I walked the waterfront Trail and was rewarded with a sighting of North America's largest birds, long-necked Trumpeter Swans swimming and feeding along the shoreline. At one time Trumpeter Swans were on the endangered list, but thanks to conservationists they once again flourish.

The Joseph Brant Museum (www.museumsofburlington.com) is another place to visit, except Saturdays and Mondays when the museum is closed. This museum at 1240 North Shore Boulevard beside the waterfront is housed in a replica home of Mohawk leader Joseph Brant, who built his home at this location in the 1830s. The museum highlights Burlington's rich cultural past. Adult admission is \$4.50 and children 5 to 12 years of age \$2.25. Until the end of February you can see a special exhibition of the fashions of the Roaring '20s.

Before you leave the downtown there are lots of great eateries to enjoy a meal. Two of my favourites are Benny's Deli and Siam Dish, where you can get authentic Thai cuisine. Both are located on Lakeshore Rd. across from the waterfront.

When you leave

If you took the QEW to Burlington, hug Lakeshore Rd. East beside Lake Ontario to get back to Niagara. It's a slower route, but if you're not in a hurry, who cares? Once you cross the old Lift Bridge, continue along Beach Boulevard to the end and



A view of the lake shore in Burlington, Ont. (Shutterstock)

turn left on Van Wagner's Beach Rd. You'll see old homes mingled with modern condos in the shadow of the Burlington Skyway.

If you're interested in nostalgia, plan to break at Hutch's Restaurant at 280 Van Wagner's Beach Rd. This classic diner has been around since 1946 and serves up some of the best fish and chips, hamburgers and hotdogs -- much like they did in the diner found in the 1950s television series Happy Days. You almost expect to find Fonzie sitting at one of the booths playing the Juke Box. Yes, the original Juke Boxes are still at the booths. An added bonus is that the restaurant has a majestic view of Lake Ontario from your booth.

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