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What to Do and Where to Go While Visiting Beautiful Stratford, Ontario

Your essential guide to the Stratford Area

By Victoria and Murray Sanderson



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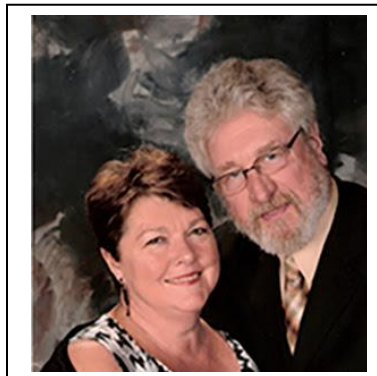
Welcome!!

Here in our Guide, you'll find essential tips on what you absolutely need to know (and what locals already know) to plan your next trip to our area.

Hello! I'm Victoria, and together with my husband, Murray, have lived in Stratford for over 14 years. After retiring from teaching elementary school, and from the corporate world, we became owners and innkeepers of Mornington Rose Bed and Breakfast located right in the heart of Stratford.

We love to help our guests make plans for when they visit. Whatever you would like to do or discover in our area, we're here to help you have the perfect adventure. We welcome guests from all over the world, and hope to be able to welcome you too, very soon.

Victoria and Murray Sanderson



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This guide is designed to help you get the most out of your trip to Stratford, so here's what you'll find inside:

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1. Stratford is truly Ontario's Premiere Arts Town

Stratford's love and commitment to the arts is reflected in the annual theatre festival, galleries and museums, artisan markets, and calendar of live musical performances.

We've got a great combination of activities and attractions that are perfect for a couple's trip, a boy or girlfriends' getaway, or even a solo trip if you choose. Because Stratford itself isn't very large you don't need a car in order to get around to most of the sights and attractions, in fact, Stratford is very walkable. Some of the best things to do involve just taking it slow, walking around, and seeing the sights. There are outdoor activities, pretty places, arts and cultural events, public art viewings, and even some retail therapy!

Let us help you plan your perfect trip, so that you make the most of your time here. You'll quickly see why our small city is a dream for those who want a slower pace and relaxing weekend away.





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2. Stratford Festival Theatres and Productions

In Stratford, “the Play” really is “the thing”, so on your trip to Stratford you really must see one of the amazing theatre performances! Founded in 1952, the Stratford Festival has become world-renowned for its repertory theatre, the largest in North America.

The four theatres, The Festival (below), The Tom Patterson, The Avon, and The Studio comfortably house patrons who enjoy Shakespearean plays, rousing musicals, entertaining comedies and original works by Canadian and international playwrights. Between ten and fourteen wonderful productions are presented each year with the actors usually having roles in two, or even three of them concurrently. Imagine having to remember all those lines and not getting mixed up !

The Season begins in April, for previews, and continues until the end of October, or even longer if performances are extended. Go [here](#) for details of the Stratford Festival!





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3. Culture and Heritage

Stratford Perth Museum

Do you like to find out the history behind the places you visit? Here, you'll get to travel back in time and learn about almost 200 years of history that has made Stratford the town it is today. Walk in the grounds as well, as the trails are lined with interpretive signage to give a bit more history of the area.

Originally built as a single family home, the Museum itself was most recently a large Bed and Breakfast that we stayed in before we moved to Stratford. You can find out other information about the house when you visit. The museum has permanent exhibits as well as several that change throughout the year. and not to forget our home-town boy, Justin Bieber. See [here](#) for more information.





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Heritage buildings

Stratford dates back to the mid-1800s and many early buildings are still standing to this day, such as many downtown buildings and the Stratford Hotel. Some are large and easy to spot, like Stratford City Hall (below) or the Perth County Court House. A visit to the Stratford Archives at the Stratford Perth Museum will give you lots of additional information about the architecture and buildings in the City.

We recommend wandering down some of the residential streets and keeping an eye out for plaques on the houses. These mark the historical homes and will tell you how old the building is and who originally lived there along with their occupation. Check out the plaque by the front door to find out who built the Mornington Rose, and ask Murray or Victoria to see the book about the history of our home.





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4. The Arts

Stratford Art in the Park

Art in the Park is an association of artists and artisans who display and sell their art on the grass along the banks of Lake Victoria on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons from May to October.

You will find painters who work in encaustics, acrylics, oils, and watercolours, glass artists, artisans who create fine silver, glass and semi-precious stone jewelry, and wood craftsmen who create lovely bowls and other unique items, plus much more..

It's such fun to wander along the river looking at the creations of the fine artists and artisans we have here. It's even more fun to find the perfect item to take home as a souvenir of Stratford !!





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Stratford Summer Music

Stratford Summer Music offers music and musicians from around the world from mid July to mid August. This is a wonderful concert series with amazing performers both in traditional venues as well as many al fresco free concerts around town.

Pop-up entertainment is common on the street corners, and painted pianos encourage the brave (confident) and talented (or not), to sit down and tickle the ivories. Everyone stops to listen and applaud, and share a smile.

Don't miss Barge Music on the Avon River. Musicians entertain from a boat that is sometimes moored, or sometimes travels slowly along the waterway, with pedestrians following along, listening to the music while feeding the ducks and swans. It's a lovely way to spend a summer day.





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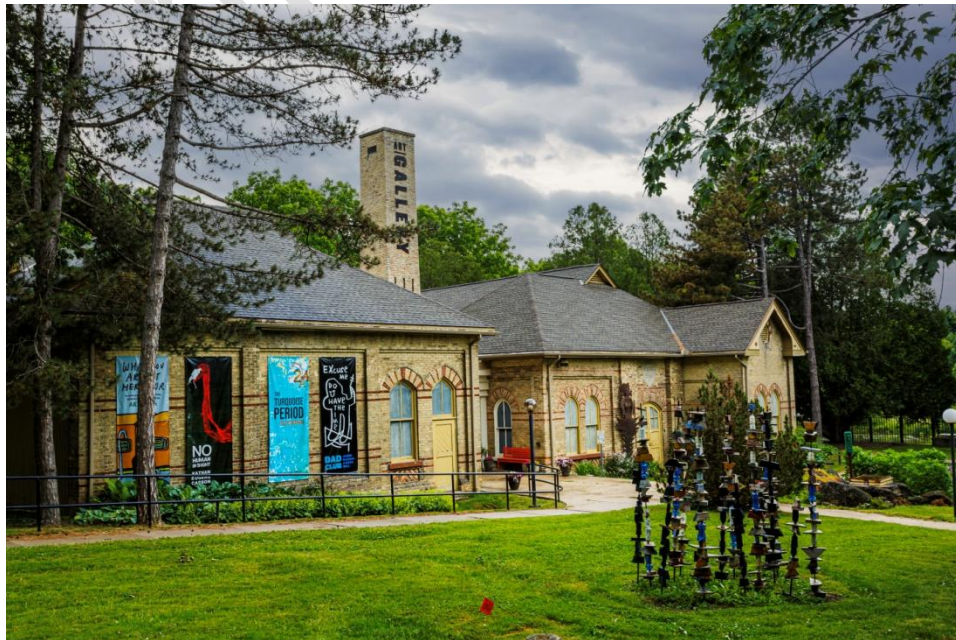
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Art Galleries

Stratford is an Art Lovers delight. Notwithstanding the architectural beauty of the Festival Theatre and the award winning architectural design of the Tom Patterson Theatre, there are numerous Art Galleries to visit.

Gallery Stratford (below) and Agora Gallery focus on contemporary visual art, especially regional and Canadian art works from local, national, and international visual artists in a range of media. Koolen Fine Arts specializes in historic Canadian and European art and original works by The Group of Seven, and Gallery Indigena displays and celebrates works of the original inhabitants of this land, First Nations, Inuit and Métis. A short drive away in St. Marys, a new gallery, the Art of Ideas, displays stunning art, stories of beginnings, and dreams for the future.

You will find something for everyone in the Art Galleries of Stratford! Check out the blog [here](#) for details.





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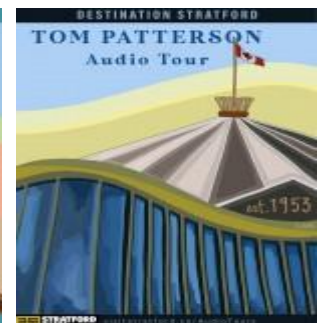
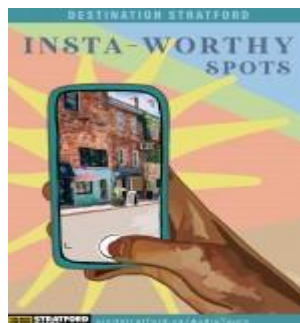
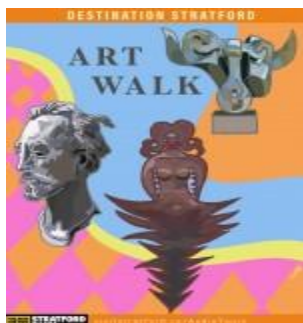
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5. Walks and Activities

Stratford and the surrounding Perth County is full of spectacular walking, hiking, and cycling routes - from relaxing strolls along the Avon River, hikes through the T.J Dolan conservation Area, to challenging cycling on the G2G Trail. As well, there are beautiful streets and parks in town for you to explore on foot. There's sure to be a walk to suit you whether you have an hour or a whole day at your disposal.

Stratford Audio Walking Tours

Our local Tourism Office, Destination Stratford, offers themed Audio Walking tours so you can see the city your way and at your own pace. Do you have a green thumb and love exploring parks? Enjoy the beautiful public spaces with the Stratford Garden Tour. Are you star struck with the talent that has come out of Stratford? Check out the Bronze Stars of Stratford tour (or the Bieber tour if that's who you're into). If you're a fan of things that go bump in the night, follow along with the Epitaphs and Headstones tour and if you're a Chocoholic taste your way through Stratford on The Chocolate Trail. Just pull up the interactive map on your phone, walk from one destination to the next, and enjoy the minute-long audio clip on each tour stop. You can see a lot of Stratford in one day with any one of these free audio tours, and it's fun to step into shops, breweries, and restaurants along the route to fill your day.





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The Avon River and Lake Victoria

No trip to Stratford is complete without exploring along the Avon River! Sip an iced coffee or other beverage and enjoy a leisurely stroll along the waterfront where you'll find the city's famous swans, along with Canada geese, ducks and other waterfowl. Relax under hundred year old original growth maple and oak trees, or sit and rest a while to soak in the spirit of nature to restore your soul.

Why not take a boat tour on the Juliet III to enjoy Stratford from a different perspective? Drift down the river, past the bandshell and the brand new Tom Patterson Theatre to the Stratford Festival Theatre grounds and back. Our magnificent swans, the progeny of a gift from Queen Victoria, may follow you along on your relaxing ride which is peaceful and enjoyable after an afternoon of exploring. Remember to stop for a \$2 ice cream cone at the Boathouse when you disembark !



If you're feeling a little more adventurous, you can rent a pedal boat, kayak or canoe to paddle past swans and ducks, alongside flower gardens bordering the river, and under walking bridges connecting the city's islands and parks. My daughter and I had a lovely canoe ride to the Festival Theatre and in about an hour, with no ill effects except for sunburned noses. One word of caution – don't feed the swans and ducks from your craft. They get Very Annoyed when you run out of corn !



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If you're into cycling, bicycles can be rented at the *Boathouse*, or *Totally Spoke'd*, our bike shop on Ontario Street. The Mornington Rose Bed and Breakfast is a part of *OntarioByBike* and have accommodations, information, and maps of the favourite cycling routes both in town, in the T.J.Dolan Conservation Area, and through the countryside on various loops around Perth County.





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6. The Gardens of Stratford

One of our absolute favourite things to do is to take a stroll in one of the beautiful Gardens of Stratford. All around the city there are garden plots attended to by the members of the Stratford Horticultural Society, on a volunteer basis. They do a wonderful job of keeping them looking their best, and provide an unexpected beautiful surprise around a corner here and there, such as in the Iris Garden, the Dutch Garden and the Cenotaph Memorial.

The most splendid of these are the Arthur Meighen Gardens at the Festival Theatre, the Ophelia Lazaridis Garden at the Patterson Theatre, and the Shakespearean Gardens.

There are gorgeous views to enjoy as you explore the pathways that meander through the displays of flowers. Be sure to pack your camera for some shots to impress your friends and family back home

You can see details of the Gardens of Stratford [here](#) on the Mornington Rose website.





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7. Stratford and Area Farmers' Markets

One of the oldest markets in Ontario, the Stratford Farmers' Market has been in operation continuously since 1855. It's open from 7 to noon on Saturday mornings, so get up early to get the freshest items you need. If you can't make the Saturday market, we have one on Sunday as well. Right behind City Hall in Market Square the Slow Food Market is held every Sunday from 11am to 2pm.

We love the fresh produce, beautiful flowers, delicious baked goods, farm fresh eggs, cheeses, and locally produced pork, beef, lamb and chicken to serve to our guests for breakfast or to include with our Charcuterie Dinners. Don't miss the variety of preserves, maple syrup and honey products that are also available to take home to enjoy. The unique and unusual craft and hand made goods make great gifts for special occasions.

See my blog post [here](#) for information about Stratford Farmers' Markets, the St. Jacob's Market, the Wild Hog Market just outside of town, and the Farmgate markets on the country roads in and around Perth County.





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8. Food and Drink

Restaurants

Stratford is known for having an incredible restaurant scene and every time I need to make a choice to dine out I'm blown away by all of the delicious options. From fine dining, a casual meal, dinner at the Stratford Chef School, or good old pub food, Stratford has it covered : Italian, Indian, French, Mediterranean, Chinese, Mexican, Thai, or a good basic Alberta T-bone steak - which is your favourite?

Go to [this page](#) on the Mornington Rose website to get a list of our favourites and their websites. Make sure to make your reservation before you arrive in Stratford – we don't want you to be disappointed if you can't get a table !





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Craft Beer Breweries and Distillery

All your exploring can certainly make you a little parched, so why not enjoy a hot or chilled beverage or two? Stratford is home to three craft breweries: Black Swan Brewing Co, Heritage Hops Brewing Co and Jobsite Brewing Company, all of which offer a wide range of beers. Of course, there is also a number of taverns and pubs in Stratford if you'd like to enjoy a beverage with a tasty bite to eat. Let's just say there's no shortage of spots to enjoy a refreshing adult drink!



Stratford also has one distillery: Junction 56. Using only Ontario-grown grains, they produce moonshine, vodka, gin, whiskey and a variety of other products. Pop by for a guided tour (when available) or indulge in a sample or two on Saturdays.

Coffee more your thing?

How about a freshly brewed coffee, or latte, americano, misto, flat white, or basically any sort of fancy coffee drink you can think of? We have so many great coffee shops in Stratford: Revel Café, The Livery Yard, Coffee Culture, and Edison's, to name a few. Each one offers its own fantastic beverages, eats and treats and in all honesty – you really can't go wrong with any of them. My favourite is the Alley Cat Café. There, the added plus is, along with a great beverage and snacks, you can cuddle with the cats who are looking for their forever homes.



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9. Shopping!

If your idea of souvenir shopping is more local boutiques than novelty shops, then Stratford is your kind of place! Take a stroll along one of Stratford's main streets and discover the array of beautiful eclectic little shops. We have EVERYTHING here!

Our main shopping district is a short ten minute walk from the Mornington Rose. Browse through thriving independent local businesses stocking everything from locally made products, Canadian designer goods, sustainable fashion brands, to the leading names in kitchen wares and home decor.

Check out *Grace the Boutique*, *The Wardrobe* (my favourite), *The Green Room*, and *Rhumba* for trendy fashions and accessories, or step into the sixties at *La Osa Jewelry and Vintage*, for retro fashions.

Other must-visit boutiques include *Watson's Chelsea Bazaar* and *Bradshaws* for kitchen and gifts for the foodies out there, *MacLeods Scottish Shop* for everything Scotland, *FINDS* and *Treasures* for unique items made by local artists and artisans, (including Victoria), and *Wills and Prior*, *Stilettos and Sawdust*, and *Dale and Company* for home décor.

You're sure to find some great gifts to stash away for a special occasion, and probably lots more things for you ! Make sure to bring your credit card with you!





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10.Experiences

Alpaca Farm Experience – Come Dance with the Alpacas!

Ready for a mental health break? Connect with nature and cuddly animals with this unique opportunity to take an alpaca for a walk – and we won't judge if you do a little jig at the end!

Just a hop, step and jump away from the Mornington Rose you will find TLC Alpacas, a lovely farm that is the home of cows, horses (two miniatures as well), donkeys, goats, and a small herd of beautiful Alpacas. These gentle animals love interacting with humans, and actually hum when you approach them. They enjoy going for walks through the countryside, even in winter, and love to be petted - they have such lovely soft fleece!

Spend some time getting to know them in the fresh, country air, then round out your visit with a delicious picnic lunch under the trees overlooking the pasture.

See my blog post [HERE](#) for details, and to book a visit with them, contact Victoria.





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Crabapple Orchard Visit

Did you know that just a few miles away we have the only Crabapple Orchard in Canada? While this tiny apple was slowly dying out, taken over by regular size apples for consumer consumption, it's now making a great comeback close to home.

We can arrange a tour of the orchard for you where you will learn about the apple, cultivation, harvest, and products made from them. Crabapple Jelly and Mixers are produced from the crabapples for the healthy foodies who want delicious mixed drinks and natural jams made with simple ingredients.

For a tour of the facility and to taste some delicious crabapple jelly and beverages, contact Victoria at Mornington Rose.





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A Taste of Chocolate

Who doesn't love indulging in delicious chocolate treats? Stratford just happens to be home to some of the best chocolatiers around - truly a Chocoholic's dream !

Destination Stratford offers the Chocolate Trail, a self-guided tour of shops and restaurants that will offer you deliciously decadent and unusual chocolate offerings. For \$35.00 you will receive 6 vouchers that you can use to explore all the unique chocolate themed deliciousness around town, or, you can explore and taste test on your own.

Rheo Thompson Candies, Barr's Chocolates, the Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory, and Jenn and Larry's are only a few of the places where you can sample chocolate confections that will make you swoon. Unexpected chocolate items can be found as well, such as the light creamy chocolate Lager at Black Swan Brewing and a chocolate-infused olive oil or balsamic vinegar at Olive your Favourites!



Chocolate can go with anything – trust me!!!



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11. Getting here is Easy!

From Toronto, hop on Highway 401 heading west until you reach Highway 8 towards Kitchener/Waterloo. Use the right lane, follow Hwy 7/8 through K/W and right into the heart of Stratford. Your journey should take about 90 minutes.

From Michigan, cross the border at Sarnia and follow Hwy 402 to Strathroy, then Hwy 7 all the way to Stratford. Your journey will take about 2 hours from when you cross the border into Canada.

Additionally, special Stratford Festival Buses depart from downtown Toronto on performance days. Bus service is only for those with a Stratford Festival or Forum ticket. You can check the Stratford Festival website for details.

For more details, driving directions are on the Mornington Rose website [here](#).

Parking

There's ample paid street parking at the main Stratford downtown district, but time limits are short. You can park for free along Lakeside Drive beside the river, at the free Municipal Parking Lot on Downie Street, or the Cooper Parking Lot on St. Patrick Street.

If you stay at the Mornington Rose Bed and Breakfast, you can park in our lot and just walk everywhere. We are a seven minute walk to the Patterson Theatre, a fifteen minute walk to the Avon and Studio theatres, a ten minute walk to downtown, and a twenty to twenty-five minute walk to the Festival theatre (depending on how long you linger to feed the ducks and swans...)



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Are you ready to visit?

We hope that you've enjoyed reading our free guide, and found it a great starting point to your trip. We know by now you've found a whole list of things you'd like to do and see in Stratford.

You'll love the hospitality we offer in our casually elegant home, as well as our central location - close to the very best of everything the area has to offer. And it's not just the complimentary 3-course breakfast in the morning, the comfy beds, the beautiful, spotless rooms, or even Murray's Chocolate chip cookies that you'll love, either. You'll also appreciate our attention to detail, the help with making plans, and the little extras going on at Mornington Rose throughout the year. When you stay with us, you'll understand why, year after year, TripAdvisor has awarded us their Certificate of Excellence with over 250 five-star reviews.

We're looking forward to welcoming you soon, and of course, if you have any questions, we'd love to hear from you! Be sure to check out our website and blog for the latest news, information, and offers.



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