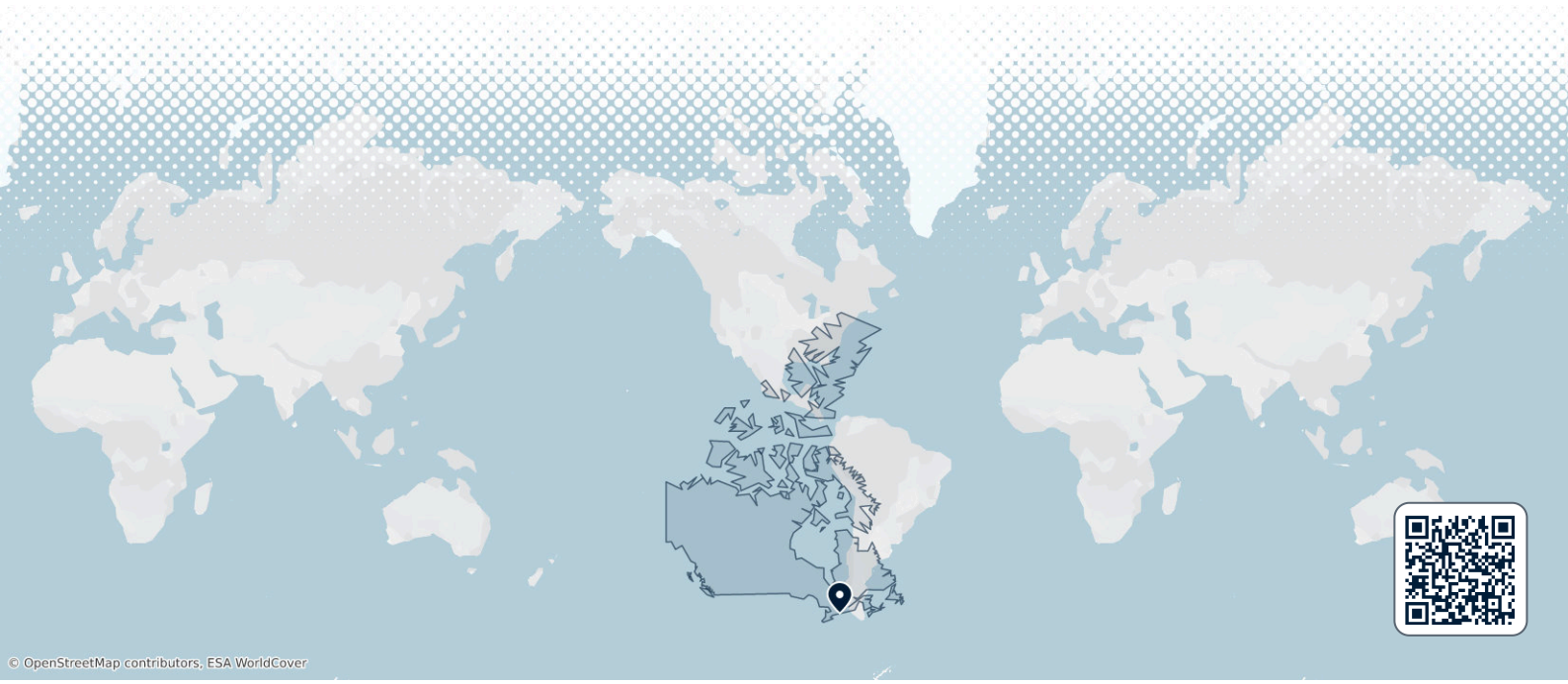


Kingston

Ontario · Canada

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

Kingston is a historic city on Lake Ontario, where the St. Lawrence River begins. Limestone buildings line the waterfront and downtown streets. It was Canada's first capital, from 1841 to 1844. It is also the southern end of the Rideau Canal.

The city suits a weekend or a short stop between Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. Visitors come for Fort Henry, old stone streets, lake views and boat trips to the Thousand Islands. Queen's University gives the centre a young, lively feel.

When to visit

Summer is the best time. Days are warm and humid, and boat trips, patios and Fort Henry are at their best. Late spring and early autumn are milder and quieter. Autumn brings colour along the lake. Winters are cold and snowy, and several historic sites close for the season.

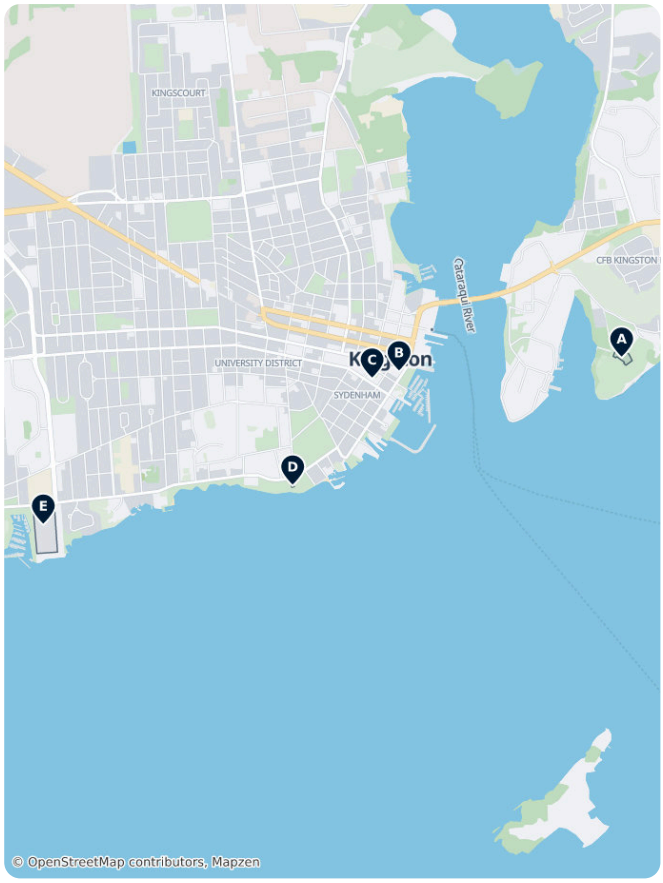
MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for watersports	-2° / 5° Feels like -8°	-9° / -21°	13 rainy days · Dry air
February	Poor Poor for watersports	-2° / 5° Feels like -7°	-9° / -18°	Dry air
March	Poor Poor for watersports	3° / 11° Feels like -2°	-4° / -14°	12 rainy days · Dry air
April	Fair Fair for cycling	9° / 17° Feels like 5°	2° / -4°	12 rainy days · Dry air
May	Good Good for cycling	17° / 24°	10° / 4°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 27°	16° / 11°	13 rainy days · Calm winds
July	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 29°	19° / 15°	12 rainy days · Humid air · Calm winds
August	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 28°	19° / 15°	12 rainy days · Humid air · Calm winds
September	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 26°	15° / 10°	Calm winds
October	Good Good for cycling	14° / 21° Feels like 10°	9° / 3°	13 rainy days · Dry air
November	Poor Poor for watersports	7° / 14° Feels like 2°	2° / -4°	12 rainy days · Dry air
December	Poor Poor for watersports	2° / 8° Feels like -4°	-4° / -14°	14 rainy days · Dry air

Best months: June, July, August, September

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights

- A Fort Henry is a large stone fort above the harbour. It was built in the 1830s to guard the Rideau Canal. Costumed guards give drills and tours in the warmer months.
- B Kingston City Hall is a domed limestone building on the waterfront. It stands next to the market square and is easy to find from anywhere downtown.
- C St. George's Cathedral is an Anglican cathedral with a large dome, close to City Hall.
- D Murney Tower is a round stone tower from the 1840s, built to defend the harbour. It now holds a small museum, open in summer.
- E Kingston Penitentiary is a former maximum-security prison. It opened in 1835 and closed in 2013. It sits on the lakeshore west of downtown.



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What to experience

- **Take a Thousand Islands cruise.** Sightseeing boats leave from the downtown waterfront in the warmer months. Some tours go past the islands and castles on the St. Lawrence.
- **Ride the Wolfe Island ferry.** The crossing is free and takes about 20 minutes. It gives a good view of the Kingston skyline.
- **Watch the Fort Henry Guard.** In summer, costumed guards perform drills at the fort.
- **Sail or paddle on Lake Ontario.** Kingston has long been a sailing town. Rentals and lessons are available in summer.

Day trips

All trips are one way from downtown, in order from closest to farthest.

- **Wolfe Island**: about 20 minutes by free car ferry. A quiet farming island with country roads that suit cycling.
- **Gananoque**: about 30 minutes by car. A small town on the St. Lawrence and a main base for Thousand Islands cruises.
- A Thousand Islands: about 30 to 45 minutes by car. Islands, channels and summer houses along the river. Boat tours also leave from downtown Kingston.
- **Prince Edward County**: about 1 hour by car. Wineries, beaches and small farm towns.
- B Ottawa: about 2 hours by train or car. Canada's capital, at the other end of the Rideau Canal.



Where to explore

- Rideau Canal runs from Kingston to Ottawa. Kingston is the southern end, and the canal is a World Heritage Site.
- Thousand Islands is a river region of islands, east of the city.
- Ottawa is Canada's capital, about 2 hours away.

Getting there

- **By air**: Kingston Airport (YGK) has limited service. Most visitors fly to Toronto Pearson (YYZ), Ottawa (YOW) or Montreal (YUL) and continue by train, bus or car.
- **By train**: VIA Rail runs along the Toronto to Montreal line. Kingston is about 2 to 3 hours from Toronto, about 2 hours from Ottawa, and about 3 hours from Montreal. The station is a few kilometres north of downtown. Take a bus or taxi into the centre. Book on VIA Rail.
- **By bus**: Long-distance coaches link Kingston with Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. Check the operator for the exact stop.
- **By car**: Highway 401 passes north of the city. Toronto and Montreal are each about 3 hours away. Ottawa is about 2 hours.

Getting around

- **Public transit**: Kingston Transit runs buses across the city. Buses accept coins or a Kingston Transit smart card. Check the site for current payment options. See Kingston Transit.
- **Taxi**: Available in the city. Useful for the train station and for evenings.
- **On foot and by bike**: Downtown and the waterfront are flat and compact. Paths follow the lakeshore, and cycling is easy in summer.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

Downtown and the waterfront are flat and compact.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Lakeshore paths are pleasant in summer, but routes outside the centre are less direct.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?** Not for the downtown core. A car helps for Wolfe Island, the Thousand Islands and Prince Edward County.
- **Parking**: Paid lots and street parking are common downtown. Fees are higher near the waterfront and market.

Food & drink

Kingston is known for its dining scene, with many restaurants in old stone buildings. Look for Ontario wines and craft beer on menus.

Eat around Market Square behind Kingston City Hall, where patios fill in summer. Princess Street and Ontario Street along the waterfront have many more options. Tipping of 15 to 20 percent is normal in sit-down restaurants.

What to eat & drink

DINNER

Tourtière
A savory meat pie, traditionally made with pork, beef, or game, especially popular in Quebec.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Poutine
Fries topped with cheese curds and hot gravy, originally from Quebec and now popular nationwide.

Bannock
A simple fried or baked bread with roots in Indigenous cooking, found in many regional variations across the country.

Montreal-style Bagel · Bagel montréalais
A smaller, sweeter, denser bagel than the New York style, boiled in honey water and baked in a wood-fired oven.

Maple Syrup · Sirop d'érable
Syrup tapped from maple trees, mainly in Quebec and Ontario, used on pancakes and in baking and savory dishes alike.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Butter Tart
A small pastry shell filled with a sweet, gooey butter, sugar, and egg filling, sometimes with raisins or pecans.

Nanaimo Bar
A no-bake dessert bar from British Columbia with a chocolate-crumb base, custard filling, and chocolate topping.

DRINKS

Caesar
Canada's signature cocktail: vodka, Clamato juice (tomato and clam broth), and spices, served with a celery stalk.

Canadian Whisky
A lighter, smoother style of whisky than Scotch or Bourbon, often blended with rye.

Ice Wine
A sweet dessert wine made from grapes frozen on the vine, produced mainly in Ontario's Niagara region and British Columbia's Okanagan Valley.

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Safety & health

Kingston is a safe city for visitors. Normal city care is enough. Keep valuables out of parked cars. Some downtown streets get noisy late at night when students are in town.

Winter needs warm layers and boots with good grip. Ice and wind off the lake can be harsh. In summer, bring sun protection and insect repellent for trails and islands.

History

The Mississauga Anishinaabe and earlier peoples lived along this shore. The French built a fur-trading fort here in 1673, called Fort Frontenac. British Loyalists settled the town in the 1780s.

Kingston was the first capital of the Province of Canada, from 1841 to 1844. *Sir John A. Macdonald*, Canada's first prime minister, grew up here. Fort Henry was built to protect the Rideau Canal, which opened in 1832. Kingston City Hall dates from the same period of growth.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Canada at a glance:

CURRENCY
CAD $

EMERGENCY
911

ELECTRICITY

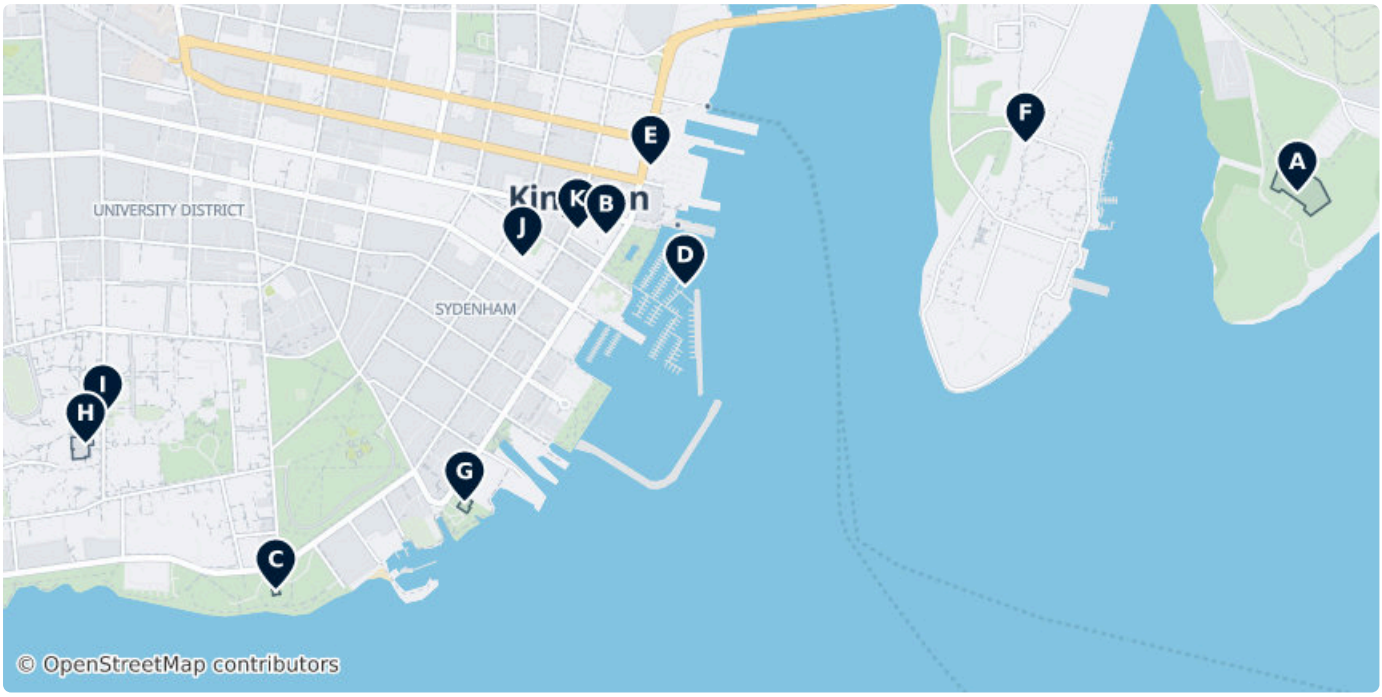
Type A / Type B
120 V · 60 Hz

LANGUAGES
English, French

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Kingston Essentials

Kingston, Canada's first capital, is defined by its 19th-century limestone architecture and strategic military history. This list features the UNESCO-listed Fort Henry and the Martello towers of the Kingston Fortifications. Explore the neoclassical City Hall and the historic Queen's University campus. Along the waterfront, discover the 1849 waterworks at the Pump House Museum or depart from Confederation Basin for cruises through the 1000 Islands. The Kingston Public Market, operating since 1801, remains the city's central gathering point.





A Fort Henry

Fort Henry National Historic Site is located in Kingston, Ontario, Canada on Point Henry, a strategic, elevated point near the mouth of the...

2 Fort Henry Dr, K7K, Canada (44.23083, -76.45974)

forthenry.com



B Kingston City Hall

Kingston City Hall is the seat of local government in Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

216 Ontario St, Kingston, ON K7L 2Z3, Canada (44.22992, -76.48050)

cityofkingston.ca/city-hall, +1 613 546 4291



C Murney Tower

Murney Tower is a Martello tower in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, whose construction dates to January 1846.

Kingston (44.22227, -76.49041)

Mo–Su 10:00–17:00

murneytower.com



D Shoal Tower

A mid-19th-century Martello tower located in the Confederation Basin, built in 1847 as part of the city's harbor defense system.

Canada (44.22883, -76.47812)

E Kingston 1000 Islands Cruises

Sightseeing tours departing from downtown Kingston that explore the St. Lawrence River, the Admiralty Islands, and the city’s historic waterfront.

(44.23139, -76.47916)



F Royal Military College

The Royal Military College of Canada, abbreviated in English as RMC and in French as CMR, is a military academy and, since 1959, a degree...

4 General Crerar Cres, K7K, Canada (44.23188, -76.46790)

G Pump House Museum

Located in the city's original 1849 waterworks, this museum features restored Victorian-era steam pumps and exhibits on local industrial history.

Ontario Street 23, K7L 2Y2 Kingston (44.22417, -76.48475)

Tu–Su	10:00–17:00, 12:00–17:00

kingstonpumphouse.ca, +1 613-544-7867



H Agnes Etherington Art Centre

The Agnes Etherington Art Centre is located in Kingston, Ontario, on the campus of Queen's University.

University Avenue 36, Kingston (44.22542, -76.49612)

May-Aug Tu–Fr	10:00–16:30
May-Aug Sa–Su	13:00–17:00
Sep-Apr Tu–We	10:00–16:30
Sep-Apr Th	10:00–21:00
Sep-Apr Fr	10:00–16:30
Sep-Apr Sa–Su	13:00–17:00

agnes.queensu.ca



I Queen's University

Queen's or Queens University may refer to:

51 University Ave, Kingston K7L3N5, Canada (44.22603, -76.49561)



J St. George's Cathedral

St. George's Cathedral in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, is the cathedral church of the Anglican Diocese of Ontario.

270 King St E, Kingston K7L, Canada (44.22944, -76.48300)



Kingston Public Market

Established in 1801, Ontario’s oldest public market operates in Springer Market Square behind City Hall, hosting local farmers and artisans.

322 King St E, Kingston K7L, Canada (44.23003, -76.48136)

kingstonpublicmarket.ca

DATA SOURCES

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