

10 TERRIFIC TRAILS

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With the weather warming up, the outdoors beckons. After a long, dreary winter, residents are excited about discarding down jackets and boots and slipping into hoodies and running shoes. It's time to get those feet moving, and, luckily, there's no need to go far.

The GTA has many trails that provide the chance for exercise while enjoying a landscape that belies the urban environment. For an enjoyable local hike, make time to explore what this part of the province has to offer, with trails listed from east to west:

ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK

Welcome to Canada's first urban national park. Across from the Toronto

Zoo, Rouge offers visitors 10 hiking trails ranging from 0.5 to 7.6 kilometres. Some are easy, others require moderate skill with elevation gains of 20 metres up to 173 metres. Walk through Carolinian forests, traverse an old logging route, or visit wetlands, meadows and grasslands. It's a nice place to picnic, and you can fish in the Rouge and tributaries if you have a licence. The park boasts more than 1,000 species of plants, 247 bird species, 73 fish species, 44 mammal species, and 27 reptile and amphibian species.

DORIS MCCARTHY TRAIL

Named for the Toronto artist who lived in the Scarborough Bluffs area, this trail takes walkers and off-road cyclists down a moderately steep hill to the shore of Lake Ontario

and meanders along the base of the bluffs. See the sculpture that pays homage to McCarthy, view the cliffs, bird watch and stop for a picnic along the rocks. This out-and-back trail is accessed from Ravine Drive. It is also known as Gates Gully because the Gates Inn and Tavern stood nearby during the Upper Canada Rebellion and served as a rallying spot for the Scarborough Militia that defended Toronto.

LESLIE STREET SPIT

East of Cherry Beach on Ashbridge's Bay sits Tommy Thompson Park on the Leslie Street Spit. The spit is a human-created peninsula jutting into the bay, home to a variety of wildlife, including beavers, swans and ground-hogs. It is a stopover for migrating birds, making



it popular with birders. These critters share the space with eager walkers, cyclists, runners and rollerbladers. The park's flat, paved, multi-use trail runs most of the length of the spit. There are also designated pedestrian trails and nature trails that bring visitors closer to the park's wildlife. There are also lovely views of the lake.

MOUNT PLEASANT CEMETERY

A cemetery trail may sound macabre, but it is also quiet and beautifully landscaped. The cemetery is not only a burial place, but an arboretum with many old, magnificent trees. It's so popular with locals, cemetery manager the Mount Pleasant

Group has created one, three and five-kilometre trails. The grounds are well maintained year-round and walkers, runners and cyclists can enjoy cherry blossoms in season, as well as blooming magnolias, chestnut trees and other species. For a bit of cemetery tourism, visitors can seek the graves of musician Glenn Gould, prime ministers William Lyon MacKenzie King and John Turner, and Sir Frederick Banting and Charles Best, discoverers of insulin.

KAY GARDNER BELTLINE TRAIL

This trail is a wonderful option for a drizzly day because it is protected by tree canopy for much of its 4.5 kilometres. The dirt trail follows the rail bed of the old Toronto Belt Line Railway, stretching from Mount Pleasant Road to the Allen Expressway. Very popular with walkers, runners, cyclists and dog walkers and wide enough for physically dis-

tanced walks, it passes through Forest Hill and its rest stops are named for train stations of old. Iron horses line the bridge overlooking the subway line at Yonge Street, a favourite with children.

HUMBER RIVER RECREATIONAL TRAIL, SOUTH

The contiguous southern portion of this popular trail begins at Etienne Brulé Park near the Old Mill. It wends its way north through green spaces, around Baby Point, through Magwood Park and Lambton Woods and on to Lambton Park, home to the James Gardens. There are parallel routes, a paved multi-use path and a gravel/dirt trail for pedestrians. There are washrooms as well as park benches to sit and enjoy views of the Humber River, formerly a major Indigenous trading route. It is a lovely, albeit popular, urban wilderness, and

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ONLY HOUSING FOR 2SLGBTQ+ YOUTH SECURED THANKS TO GENEROUS INVESTMENT TO BLUE DOOR FROM THE NORTHPINE FOUNDATION



Pride Month is a time of remembrance and celebration. We remember and acknowledge past and present struggles 2SLGBTQ+ people experience due to discrimination. We celebrate and advocate for diversity, individuality, and equal rights.

This month, Blue Door is celebrating a milestone for their INNclusion program, the only transitional supportive housing for 2SLGBTQ+ youth in York Region. Blue Door is proud to announce a generous investment from The Northpine Foundation for the capital purchase of the INNclusion home. The home supports up to four (4) youth and a peer mentor. Since launching a year ago, INNclusion has supported 2SLGBTQ+ youth with stable transitional housing while fostering an environment of independence and growth.

The need for INNclusion is startling. Driven into homelessness often by identity-based abuse and discrimination, 2SLGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented among youth experiencing homelessness, with approximately 40% of youth identifying as 2SLGBTQ+. Struggling to cope, 1 in 3 youth attempted suicide in the last year.

To help young people on their own unique journey, INNclusion provides an environment where youth are safe and supported on their path of self-discovery and self-empowerment while sharing their experiences with peers that have also lived similar journeys. It is a uniquely powerful experience to know that you are not alone and that you have a support system around you to grow.

The investment from The Northpine Foundation will ensure the long-term stability of INNclusion and allow Blue Door to focus on growing and improving support for 2SLGBTQ+ youth. Together, both organizations are making space for 2SLGBTQ+ youth, ensuring their voices are heard and amplified.

Thanks to The Northpine Foundation there will always be a safe door to turn to in York Region.

To learn more about INNclusion or to access support, visit www.BlueDoor.ca



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