

MENNONITE CHILDREN, ST. JACOBS • ON TOURISM/HERINGA

Region of Waterloo Nature, Nourishment and Novelties

BY E. LISA MOSES

The Region of Waterloo, a short one-hour drive southwest of Toronto is a unique blend of urban and rural flavours. Steeped in multicultural history, the region boasts adorable villages, sleepy townships and energetic cities bustling with fascinating festivals, epicurean delights, charming accommodations, irresistible shopping and countless activities and attractions that pamper, amaze and amuse.

CITY EXPRESSIONS

Home to North America's largest Oktoberfest drawing some 750,000 revellers, Kitchener has deep German roots, with 55 per cent of its population of German heritage. Many tourist attractions feature German and other cultural traditions all year round. Every December, for example, the famous Christkindl Market carries on a 400-year tradition where visitors shop for gifts, enjoy live entertainment and feast on German food. The first sign of spring is celebrated at the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival, noted in Guinness World Records as the largest one-day maple syrup event. Every June, the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Festival presents children's events, varied entertainment, international food

and artisans' wares from around the world. And at Funworx, Bingemans' indoor amusement park, families enjoy year-round excitement.

Kitchener's next-door neighbour, the city of Waterloo, is noted for a variety of cultural and sports events. These include Dionysia, the annual Greek food and wine festival, the Waterloo Busker Carnival, the Uptown Waterloo Jazz Festival and the Uptown Country Festival. In February, families can take their children and dogs to the Ice Dogs Festival. Waterloo's museums, galleries and historical sites round out this diverse city's attractions.

South of Highway 401, Cambridge is a magnet for shoppers and history buffs. Old town is marked by the Southworks Outlet and Antique Mall—one of Canada's largest—while Cambridge Centre boasts 140 retail stores and a year-round indoor ice-skating rink. Ancient stone structures housing galleries, eateries and shops define the historic town centre, which is also home to the University of Waterloo's internationally acclaimed School of Architecture. Families flock to the nearby African Lion Safari, the Butterfly Conservatory as well as to countless festivals. And along the banks of the Grand River is a well-developed trail system for strolling, cycling and hiking.



KITCHENER OKTOBERFEST • ON TOURISM/TAUB

COUNTRY DELIGHTS

A pint-sized town packed with curiosities and history, St. Jacobs is not to be missed. Mennonite history is well represented in the visitor centre's multimedia Mennonite Story, in their handmade quilts and through horse-drawn tours of Mennonite farms. The famous St. Jacobs Farmers' Market featuring masses of homemade delicacies, fresh produce, fish and meat is now accessible by antique train from Waterloo. The Mill has expanded to accommodate even more artisans and galleries, as well as the Maple Syrup Museum, the Home Hardware Exhibit of memorabilia and the Model Train Exhibit.

For a refreshing rural experience, visitors can enjoy walking tours or drives through the townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich with stops for German delicacies and Mennonite crafts, and for viewing historical structures such as Castle Kilbride in Baden and Ontario's last covered bridge in Woolwich. For classic car buffs, tiny New Hamburg hosts Canada's largest Moparfest every summer.

With such a variety of attractions and activities, the Region of Waterloo is well worth a visit. For more information, call 519-585-7517 or toll-free in North America: 1-877-585-7517. ●