



SHOPPING SECRETS: TORONTO

An insider's guide on where to shop – and eat – in the big city.

BY Tiffany Thornton

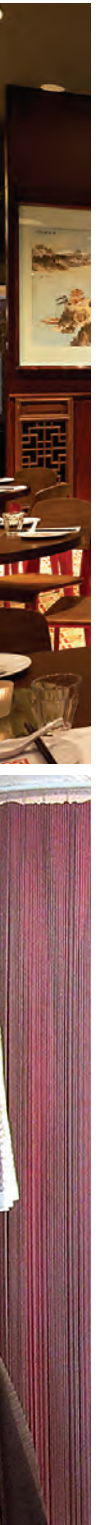
Since its first settlement by native tribes and later the French and English, Toronto has been a trading centre. Today it is a culturally diverse hub filled with international culinary scents that linger across the city.

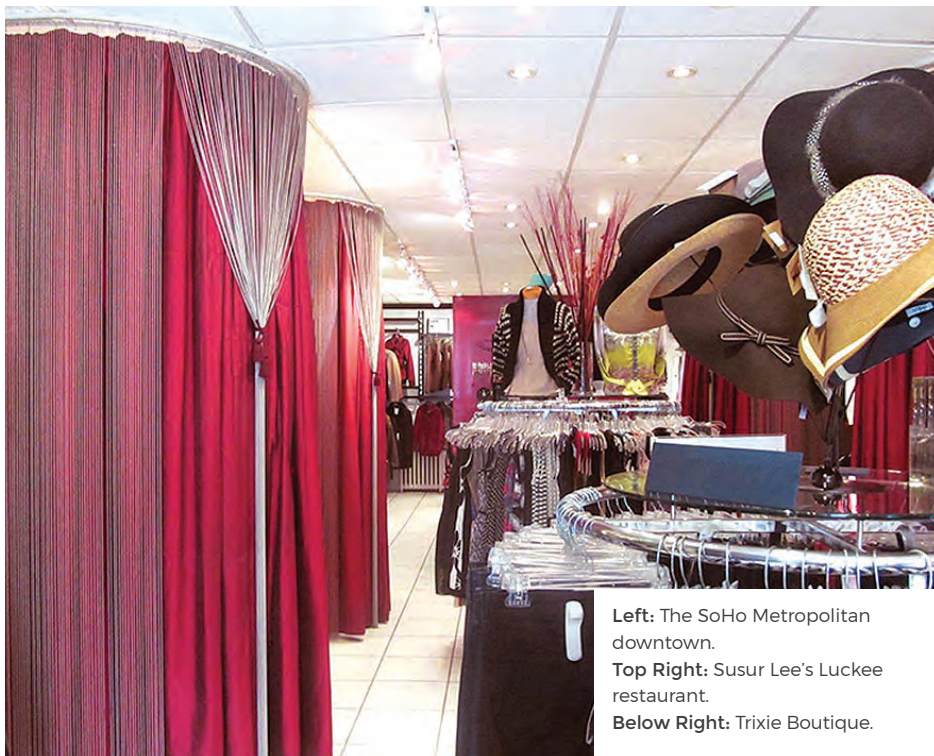
The city certainly reflects a variety of vibes. From the top-notch art scene to the hip nightlife and the fabulous shopping, one can spend hours strolling the distinctive districts. Yet few people who visit take the time to explore what lies beyond the main tourist shopping, dining and entertainment spots. This is where the magic—and eclectic—hidden Toronto lies.

I flew Porter to arrive in the heart of the city—the city centre airport revealing impressive views of the towering skyline as you begin your descent. Porter's service is reminiscent of a time when flying was a classy experience, and the flight attendants' attire is reflective of this sophistication. I enjoyed a complimentary glass of champagne on the flight before landing and embarking on my shopping adventure.

Every special shopping trip needs to start with the feeling that you are on a special mission to uncover that fabulous find that leaves everyone asking, "I just have to know: *Where did you get that?*" You casually reply that you just happened to stumble upon this amazing boutique.

A great place to begin the shopping magic is a stay at the chic, ultra-luxurious Soho Metropolitan in Downtown Toronto's entertainment district. It is surprisingly affordable, especially in the off season. Drop off your bags in one of the Soho's sleekly designed rooms with stellar city views. Freshen up after your flight and get ready to shop!





Left: The SoHo Metropolitan downtown.
Top Right: Susur Lee's Luckee restaurant.
Below Right: Trixie Boutique.

Before you leave be sure to make reservations – they book up fast – at Toronto’s hottest Asian-inspired restaurant, Luckee. Run by top chef Susur Lee, it’s adjacent to the hotel. Luckee serves up some of the best dim-sum around, infused with a delectable twist. Your palette will be tingling for more long after you’re done.

Now you are all set to traipse about the city and do some serious shopping in Yorkville, Toronto’s upscale hub. In the sixties Yorkville was considered the coolest bohemian spot in the city. Check out Over the Rainbow, which boasts the largest selection of denim in Toronto. We all want that perfect pair of jeans, and with over two hundred and fifty styles, you are bound to leave with more than a couple of pairs in your shopping bag.

Enjoy a cocktail afterwards at the Hazelton Hotel’s One Restaurant, owned by top chef Mark McEwan. Located right in the heart of Yorkville, it boasts a superb patio, topnotch service and is a must-do while on a shopping frenzy.

Then hop on the subway and head west to Bloor West Village. With over 400 shops, this vibrant neighbourhood has some shopping treasures. Check out Trixie, touted as “Toronto’s best kept secret.” The helpful staff will act as your personal shopper. With an amazing variety of women’s clothing brands and a strong selection of Canadian designers, you will not be disappointed.

What clothing ensemble is complete without jazzing it up with some amazing jewelry, scarves, or even a funky hat? Accessorize Me is an established boutique with something for everyone, whatever your style. From the bold to the understated, it’s all here.

Everyone who wears glasses knows how expensive frames and lenses can be. The perfect pair of sunglasses that frames your face beautifully can set you back almost as much as the price of a return plane ticket. Luckily, there is a place that few know of where you can get prescription sunglasses for around \$60, lenses included; and prescription glasses, both frames and lenses, for just \$50. Even if you don’t wear glasses, having a few great frames to play with is a must. Megasave Optical in Bloor West Village has a wonderful selection at great prices.

When you are all done head back to the uber-chic SoHo Met with your fabulous finds to settle in and enjoy your dinner reservations. I can guarantee that with all these shopping secrets you will be coming back to T.O. more often than you think. **S**