

TRAVEL

PARK HYATT TORONTO REVAMP  
DELIVERS NEXT-LEVEL LUXURY

Yorkville hotel  
a haven of simple  
elegance, with  
fine dining and  
exceptional service

Pandemic protocol: Ontario  
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Hyatt hotels follow the brand's  
Global Care and Cleanliness  
Commitment (hyatt.com); Park  
Hyatt Toronto is cash-free.



ROCHELLE LASH  
Hotel Intel

A visit to the newly reopened Park Hyatt Toronto was my first experience with that brand, the top tier of Hyatt's 18 hotel banners, and it lived up to its billing. It's all new since September: the soigné top-to-bottom restoration, intriguing gastronomy at Joni, luxurious guest rooms and the handsome Writers Room, an in-crowd bar on the penthouse floor.

At the hallowed corner of Avenue Rd. and Bloor St., Park Hyatt is a leading citizen of the fancy enclave of Yorkville. The fashionable boutiques are almost next door, and the Royal Ontario Museum and University of Toronto are across the street. **The restoration:** Opened in 1929 as Queen's Park Plaza, the hotel has always been an esteemed venue for weddings, charity balls and business conferences, and recently completed a four-year makeover by KPMB Architects with interiors by Studio Munge. It was worth the wait.

Alessandro Munge created a world of simple elegance with the finest marble and wood, as well as fabrics so sensuous you will want to reach out and caress the shimmering velvet sofas and supple leather chairs. The curved architectural elements and sleek design details have roots in art deco and streamline moderne, so there are no fold-erols or frills.

The original 346 guest rooms have been reconfigured into 219 more spacious rooms and suites, including the plush Presidential Suite with a spa-inspired bathroom.

"The new accommodations are the right size for luxury," said general manager Bonnie Strome. "And the mellow earth tones, walnut trim and recessed lighting create a soothing ambience. ... It's contemporary, but warm."

Among the perks you don't encounter everywhere are twice-daily housekeeping, an overnight shoeshine, a substan-



A two-level suite at the restored Park Hyatt Toronto features a "soothing ambience." PARK HYATT TORONTO



The redecorated Writers Room on the top floor of Park Hyatt Toronto has artwork inspired by literati such as Margaret Atwood, Farley Mowat and Mordecai Richler. PARK HYATT TORONTO

tial in-room bar, Staycast for TV streaming and, if you use the Hyatt app, Headspace guided meditation.

The hotel is also a forum for art, including works by Canadian Shannon Bool and Indigenous artist Nadia Myre.

"We are so proud of the remarkable restoration, which gives the hotel renewed luxe and life," said Strome. "But throughout our evolution, our goal has been to extend exceptional, personalized service."

It's working. The staff throughout the hotel are professional, friendly and helpful, and the concierges, many of them members of Les Clefs d'Or, are well informed.

**Dining and drinking:** Joni Restaurant has the deeply comfortable look of a lounge, with marble tabletops and leather seating in

colours of autumn, plus a fire-place at one end and a low-rise bar that is great for solo dining.

It's a relaxed look with serious food. Executive chef Antonio Soriano works mostly with Canadian ingredients, adding accents of France and Japan, and fashions delicate presentations using edible flowers and prettily carved vegetables.

"We love to improvise," said Soriano, "so we make our own special touches like miso, koji and apple purée."

Dinner appetizers include maitake mushrooms, beef tartare, poached lobster and a foie gras parfait, and main courses might be chestnut cappelletti or variations on trout, duck, lamb and rib-eye steak. Lunch features the Park Caesar with pork belly, roasted cauliflower, braised lamb pie,

the sky-high Park burger and the favourite Newfoundland shrimp tartine. Yes, there is dessert — unique confections of chocolate or fruit, with nuts and homemade ice cream and sorbets.

On the 17th floor, the popular Writers Room has been redecorated with after-dark velvet walls, leather seating and dark oak floors, and expanded with a fireplace and a sweeping outdoor terrace overlooking Queen's Park (Ontario's parliament). Art is strong here, too. The illustrious author and artist Douglas Coupland has fashioned collages of book jackets by literary muses such as Margaret Atwood, Pierre Berton, Farley Mowat and Mordecai Richler.

Mixologists shake and stir with inventive ingredients such as macadamia-infused bourbon,

IF YOU GO

**Via Rail:** viarail.ca, 888-VIA-RAIL (888-842-7245). Business and economy available on Quebec City-to-Windsor corridor.

**Park Hyatt Toronto:** parkhyatttoronto.com, 416-925-1234; 4 Avenue Rd., Toronto. World of Hyatt loyalty plan valid for 18 Hyatt brands. The Hyatt app accesses remote check-in, digital room key, housekeeping, accounts and Headspace meditation. Accessible features available. **Price:** Rooms start at \$579; suites at \$646, including fitness centre (by reservation). Pet-friendly, \$50 per day. Courtesy car at certain times.

**Joni Restaurant:** breakfast, lunch, dinner; vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free options.

**Writers Room:** from 5 p.m. daily.

**Living Room:** all-day menu. **Stillwater Spa (opening soon):** 13 rooms for massages/mani-pedis; sauna included with treatments.

**Ontario tourism:** destinationontario.com **Toronto tourism:** destinationtoronto.com

mezcal and tequila (both in one drink), vodka with cardamom, or gin laced with pistachio and lime. Rich and tantalizing bar bites include a foie gras doughnut, lamb tartare, wagyu beef and a mushroom crêpe. rochelle@rochellelash.com



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