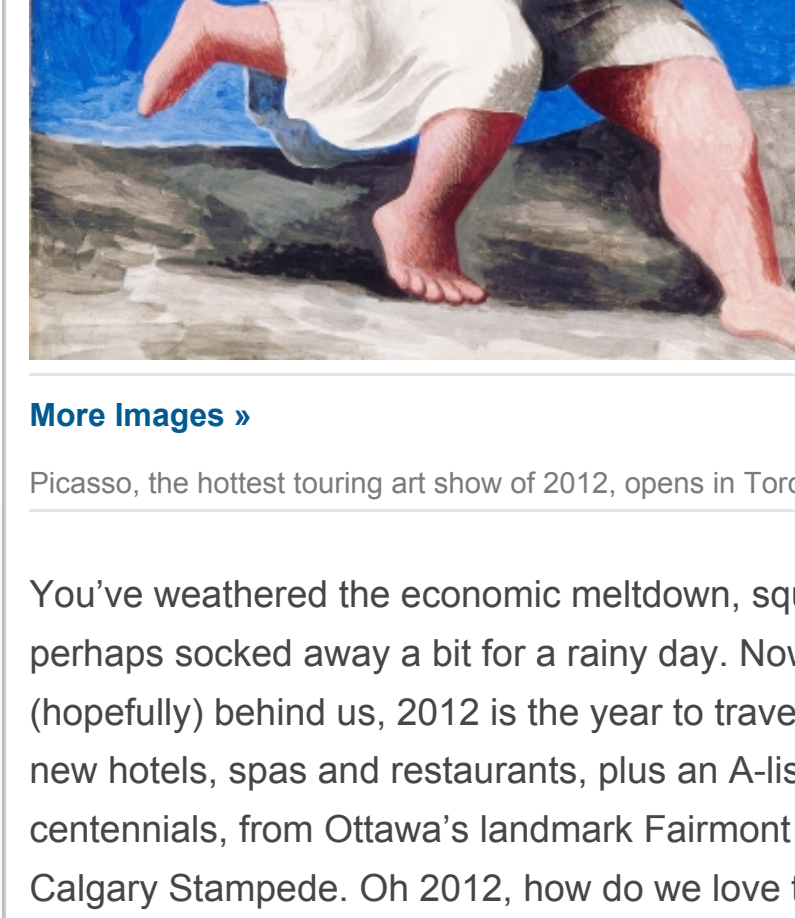


30 reasons to get up & go

BY MICHELE SPONAGLE, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN JANUARY 9, 2012

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Picasso, the hottest touring art show of 2012, opens in Toronto May 1.

You've weathered the economic meltdown, squeezed every penny and perhaps socked away a bit for a rainy day. Now that the storms clouds are (hopefully) behind us, 2012 is the year to travel, thanks to a fresh crop of new hotels, spas and restaurants, plus an A-list roster of noteworthy centennials, from Ottawa's landmark Fairmont Château Laurier to the Calgary Stampede. Oh 2012, how do we love thee? Let me count the ways.

1. Just eat it

Belgium has proclaimed 2012 to be the Year of Gastronomy. With some of the best chocolate, frites and beer on the planet, it's a good excuse to celebrate with copious noshing. On the streets of Brussels, the Taste Magician will roam with his hot plate at hand tcreatee impromptu dishes. Meanwhile, there's a beer route (with more than 650 types of beer) and events such as Malmédy's Giant Omelette Celebration and a Soup Festival in Roches-en-Ardennes.

2. Military salute

Towns across Ontario commemorate the bicentennial of the most momentous event in Canadian history: the War of 1812. In Ottawa, the Canadian War Museum opens an exhibit in June that will weave together multiple perspectives on the war. Four Wars of 1812 will feature 150 artifacts including the tunic worn by Sir Isaac Brock, the hero of Upper Canada who took a fatal shot during the Battle of Queenston Heights. Toronto's Fort York, which hosts the largest collection of 1812-era buildings, will also get in on the celebrations with a full roster of activities.

For all bicentennial events in Ontario, Quebec and the U.S., see [Visit1812.com](#).

3. Adventure ventures

Shake up your travel routine and do something really different. Tour operator G Adventures has introduced some new programs, such as Live Like a Local (grape harvesting in northern Tuscany, anyone?) and forays into exotic locales such as Burma or sub-Saharan Africa. See [gadventures.com](#)

4. Sixties in swing

Mid-century modern fans already know that Palm Springs, California, has a rich cache of cool specimens. On March 1, the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands will open to guests. A. Quincy Jones designed the house (circa 1966) as a desert hideaway for ambassador Walter Annenberg and his wife Leonore.

5. Abstract thinking

Toronto's Art Gallery of Ontario is the one and only Canadian stop for the hottest touring art exhibit in 2012: Picasso: Masterpieces from the Musée National Picasso, Paris, which opens May 1 and goes to Aug. 23. While the museum in Paris is being renovated for its reopening later this year, 150 works from the Spanish artist, spanning 75 years of his career, are roaming around the globe. Catch them while you can.

6. Golden opportunity

The Golden Gate Bridge celebrates its 75th birthday with its own festival May 26 and 27. Fun fact alert: The U.S. Navy once proposed that the bridge be painted in yellow and black horizontal stripes. Good taste prevailed and "international orange" was the hue of choice, selected by architect Irving Morrow. See [goldengatebridge75.org](#)

7. Flight pattern

It seems that 2012 will be a big year for flying. Hamilton's Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, one of the top attractions in that area, turns 40. It's looking good for middle age, showcasing more than 40 vintage aircraft. Meanwhile, in Santa Monica, the brand new Museum of Flying throws open its doors some time early in the year to focus the spotlight on Douglas Aircraft.

See [warplane.com](#) and [museumofflying.com](#)

8. Green scene

Attention, city planners. If you've messed up your city by dissecting it with highways (yes, you Toronto), there's hope for you. Dallas will be opening a park this fall that is built over top of the Woodall Rodgers Parkway. It will reunite the city, provide a seamless green expanse of parkland in the process, and hide a bit of urban ugliness.

9. Tea for two

In Boston, a new Tea Party Museum opens in spring near the site where angry Bostonians dumped chests of tea into the harbour in 1773 to thump their noses at the tax-inflicting Brits. (The Tea Party also refers to a group of whining and scarily vocal conservatives, but let's leave politics out of this.) See [bostonteapartyship.com](#)

10. Of Titanic proportions

Besides Belfast, where the Titanic was built, no city has closer ties to the ill-fated ship than Halifax. As the 100th anniversary of its sinking is commemorated, the city will be the place to be with 24-related sites (including three cemeteries).

See [Titanic100.ca](#)

11. Star struck

Luke Skywalker and other notable Star Wars characters are intergalactic celebrities at the Montreal Science Museum from April 19 to Sept. 16. The exhibit, Stars Wars Identities, will feature costumes, models and artwork from the films. Light-sabre-wielding fans welcome. It moves to Edmonton on Oct. 27. [starwarsidentities.com](#)

12. Cold comfort

It's all about ice, ice, baby. Snow Village is the world's first hotel chain of ice villages in the world. The latest to open comes to Parc Jean-Drapeau from Jan. 6 to March 31 in Montreal. It includes places to chill out, such as a restaurant, Amarula Ice Bar and even an ice chapel, if romance sweeps you away.

13. Art smart

The Art Gallery of Hamilton is one of the province's finest. It has been around since 1912 and continues to evolve. Come spring, AGH is opening a storefront with retail, event and performance space on James Street North, a hopping centre for the arts well worth exploring.

14. Take me out to the ball game

Baseball fans may care: Fenway Park, the home of the Boston Red Sox, celebrates its centennial. On April 20, the New York Yankees will battle the Sox, just as they did on that day 100 years ago (when the Yanks were called the Highlanders).

15. Hot stuff

Is celebrity chef Daniel Boulud trying to take over the kitchens of Canada? The freshly renovated Ritz-Carlton Montreal is home to Maison Boulud and the new Four Seasons Yorkville (in Toronto) will have a Café Boulud when it opens in the summer.

16. The luxe life

Toronto is finally getting its share of five-star properties with a new crop of big-name hotels slated to open in 2012. Jan. 31 sees the debut of the Trump International Hotel in the financial district. The Shangri-La and the Four Seasons Yorkville will offer needed rooms in time for the busy Toronto International Film Festival in September. Both are destined to be prime star-spotting destinations. Elsewhere, the Fairmont is poised for world domination in the luxury property world with openings of new properties in Jaipur, India, Kyiv, Ukraine and Azerbaijan. Go forth and multiply!

17. Drama and divas

The theatrics go into high gear with an epic outdoor production of Verdi's La Traviata. The action takes place on a stage built over the waters of Sydney Harbour in Australia for a three-week period, starting May 24. It just makes one of the world's greatest cities that much more dramatic.

18. Getting high

Hot-air ballooning has not been allowed near Uluru (Ayer's Rock) until now. Outback Ballooning has permission to take guests into the skies over land that still looks untouched by time. And golf enthusiasts can hit the links at Australia's first desert course, part of Ayers Rock Resort. See [outbackballooning.com.au](#) and [ayersrockresort.com.au](#)

19. Spirit of the west

For the second year in a row, the world's most illustrious cocktail festival will stop over in Vancouver. Tales of the Cocktail is usually a New Orleans staple, but it hit the road for the first time last year with an event in Vancouver. It will return to Vancouver July 25 to 29 during its 10th edition. Meanwhile, Dine Out Vancouver returns for a 10th anniversary run from Jan. 20 to Feb. 5 with 220 restaurants offering three-course, prix fixe menus (priced at \$18, \$28 or \$38).

20. Brew view

Raise a glass to celebrate 200 years of beer gardens in Munich, Germany, starting Jan. 4. Expect many excuses (aka reasons) to do so with a full slate of sudsy events all year. See [muenchen.de](#)

21. Swiss engineered

The JungfrauBahn, that marvel of Swiss railway construction, kicks off centenary events with an illumination of the Jungfrau by light artist Gerry Hofstetter, near Wengen, Switzerland.

22. The big O

There are rumours that the Summer Olympics are being hosted in London from July 27 to Aug. 12.

23. Pop goes the resto

Among the top spots to love Calgary is Charcut Roast House, guided by the talents of John Jackson and Connie DeSousa. One more reason will be the pop-up version of the meat-centric eatery, called Charpop. The menu and exactly where the restaurant will be located are, under wraps, but it has been revealed it will appear for just three days, from Jan. 15 to 17.

24. Grand allusion

Can you image the skyline of Ottawa without the Fairmont Château Laurier? Not a chance. As of June 1, it will have been part of the city for 100 years. Bon anniversaire!

25. Tech spec

At Universal Studios Hollywood, the latest attraction to pump up the thrill factor is Transformers: The Ride-3D. It has one of the most elaborate roaming flight simulators anywhere, ensuring you'll get a real rush of adrenalin, coming May.

See [universalstudioshollywood.com](#)

26. Creative endeavours

David Hockney will have to fight off the Summer Olympics in London for his share of the bigger spotlight. The Royal Academy of Arts opens David Hockney RA: A Bigger Picture on Jan. 21 (until April 9). Coinciding with that event is the debut of the Hockney Trail in Yorkshire. It will allow visitors to walk in the footsteps of Britain's greatest living artist. See [royalacademy.org.uk](#)

27. Coast to coast

In April, oh-so-chic South Beach Florida will welcome a freshly dressed boutique hotel with a slight British flair. The Lord Balfour (named after the colourful Brit P.M.) opens with 64 airy guest rooms that channel the beauty of the Art Deco era. Originally built in 1940, the Lord Balfour sits in tony SoFi, as the locals call it, at Ocean Drive, south of Fifth Street. See [lordbalfourmiami.com](#)

28. State of the union

She might be 100, but Arizona's looking good as it celebrates its centennial as a state. Her mountains and desert landscapes are gorgeous as ever and her cities, from Sedona to Scottsdale, home of Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West (show on facing page), are vibrant and vital. See [Az100years.org](#)

29. Yee haw

The Calgary Stampede (July 6 to 15) hits a milestone year — a young 100. The action continues ... cowboy boots, wranglers and stetson required.

30. The puck stops here

The Ottawa Senators serve as hosts for the first NHL All-Star Game to be played in Ottawa. The roster of events starts on Jan. 26 as a lead-up to the big game on Sunday, Jan. 29, at Scotiabank Place. Even if you can't make it to the game, it will be televised in more than 150 countries. If you do go, comb your hair and don't paint anything on your chest.

Michele Sponagle is a Paris, Ont.-based writer and editor who will celebrate her own milestone in 2012 by turning 50.

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