

**The Guided Tourist
eGuide to**

NIAGARA FALLS



Brian Burns

The Guided Tourist eGuide to Niagara Falls

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“Their roar is around me. I am on the brink of the great water—and their anthem voice goes up amid the rainbow and the mist. Their chorus shakes the ground.” – Grenville Mellen, poet

Like the Grand Canyon, the Hoover Dam, and a select few other natural and man-made wonders of the world, Niagara Falls is one of those experiences that cannot be captured by any as-yet-invented recording medium. For millions, it is a bucket list item, one that is simply too powerful and dynamic to be conveyed by photography, video, or painting. The inadequacy, even, of human language becomes clear when a writer uses the term “bucket list” to describe a precipice over which enough water flows to fill two Olympic size swimming pools every second. The Niagara River, flowing northward, drops some 326 feet (99m) on its 36-mile (58km) journey from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario. Approximately half of that drop occurs all at once at Niagara Falls, creating a unique, subjective experience for each of the estimated 30-million people (and the number is growing) who visit this place each year from all corners of the world to witness the spectacle.

The Niagara River, along with the entire Great Lakes Basin of which the river is an integral part, is a legacy of the last ice age. Its geological history is fascinating, but it is the human history of the river and the Falls which captivates the imagination of most visitors—the early explorers who stood in stunned disbelief as they first laid eyes on the Falls, the swimmers who have attempted to fight their way across the merciless rapids, the “funambulists” who have walked across the gorge on

tightropes, the daredevils who have plunged over the brink by means of barrel, kayak, jet-ski, or simply the clothes on their backs. There are countless harrowing tales of the unfortunate who have waded or fallen, willingly or accidentally, into the rapids above the Falls and perished. Yet in rare cases, there are miraculous stories of those who survived such ordeals and returned to tell their tales.

The earliest eyewitness description of Niagara Falls comes to us from Father Louis Hennepin, a priest from the Spanish Netherlands who was the first white man to visit the Falls in the winter of 1678-1679:

“Betwixt the Lake Ontario and Erie there is a vast and prodigious cadence of water which falls down after a surprising and astonishing manner, insomuch that the Universe does not afford its parallel. At the foot of this horrible precipice we meet with the River Niagara, which is not above a quarter of a league broad but is wonderfully deep in some places. It is so rapid above this descent that it violently hurries down the wild beasts while endeavoring to pass it to feed on the other side, they not being able to withstand the force of its current, which inevitably casts them above six-hundred foot high...”

Father Hennepin obviously exaggerated the height of the Falls by a few hundred feet, but he wasn't the last to describe them with such dark adjectives as *horrible* or *violent*. Although today's visitor generally regards the place as breathtakingly beautiful, early explorers and sightseers often described Niagara Falls in its raw, natural state as *awful* and *terrifying*. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the word most often used to describe the place was *sublime*—a word that aptly applies today. Inevitably though, the engineering prowess of man was brought to bear upon taming and controlling the waters of the river for milling and hydroelectric power, thus artificially altering Niagara's already ever-changing appearance and behavior (one could reasonably find themselves in an argument over whether today's Niagara Falls is a natural or man-made wonder). Even with its manicured parks, modern conveniences, safety rails, and retaining walls, the dizzying height and deadly plunge of Niagara remains a wondrous mixture of gothic gloom and Godly grandeur.

The terrain, the geology, the movement—they change little over the course of a human lifetime. Yet the relentless flow of water over ancient bedrock carves recognizable changes into the landscape over the course of generations as the

Falls steadily carve their way upstream. When the Wisconsin Glacier retreated and gave birth to the Falls some twelve-thousand years ago, they flowed only 35 feet (11m) down a craggy hill near the present-day Lewiston-Queenston Bridge some seven miles (11km) downriver from where they flow today. Man's intervention, diverting and controlling the flow of the river's water for hydroelectric power and other purposes, has helped slow the rate of erosion. Still, one can't help but realize, while gazing through the rainbow mist into the mighty wall of tumbling water, hearing and feeling its pounding concussion onto the river below, that here Mother Nature will ultimately reclaim her own chosen course.

Thus, 30-million visitors are drawn each year to witness a place where mere adjectives clash and confound: the *exquisitely terrifying, sublimely alluring* spectacle of Niagara Falls. Yet it is not only the Falls themselves—as if they weren't enough—that make the Niagara areas of Ontario and New York such an attractive region to visit. The entire 36-mile (58km) length of the Niagara River is dotted with recreational areas, scenic routes, wine trails, bed & breakfasts, five-star hotels, amusement parks, unique shopping and dining experiences, historic sites, and one-of-a-kind adventures. All of these elements comprise one of North America's truly world-class tourist destinations, and a definitive "bucket list" experience—two Olympic-sized swimming-pools-per-second's worth, to be exact. As they would say in Hollywood, "we're going to need a bigger bucket."

With so much to see and do, planning your Niagara trip and knowing where to start can be daunting. We at Guided Tourist are committed to helping you learn more about your destination, what to know before you go, how to get there, and what attractions are worth your time and money once you arrive. It can be disappointing to come home from a vacation only to read about a destination or opportunity you missed because you didn't know about it beforehand. It is our hope that this eGuide will help make your journey more interesting, enjoyable, and complete, and that your visit to Niagara Falls and the Niagara Falls region will be safe, rewarding, and memorable for years to come.



Horseshoe Falls aerial view



Silhouette of Niagara Falls, Ontario shrouded behind the mist



Niagara Falls is the collective name for three waterfalls. From largest to smallest, they are the *Horseshoe Falls*, the *American Falls*, and the *Bridal Veil Falls*.

The flow of the Falls is controlled by man-made engineering; at most, only 50% of the natural capacity of water is allowed to flow over the Falls at any given time.

The first person to go over the Falls in a barrel, in 1905, was 63-year-old school teacher Annie Edson Taylor. Upon being extracted from her barrel at the foot of the Falls, bruised and battered, she said, “no one ought ever do that again.”

The crest of Horseshoe Falls is nearly a half-mile wide (2,200ft/670m). It drops an average of 188 feet (57m) into the Lower Niagara River.

Niagara Falls is generally estimated to be about 12,000 years old and is now seven miles upriver from where it began after the retreat of the Wisconsin Glacier.

The Niagara Gorge extends from the foot of the Falls for seven miles (11km) downriver to the foot of the escarpment at Queenston—its birthplace. Stand at any spot along that stretch, and you’re standing at a place where Niagara Falls once flowed.

The Niagara River gets its distinctive teal color from the ground-up rock and mineral “flour” that it creates along its journey—a colorful tribute to its power of erosion.

Currently, the crest of Horseshoe Falls is worn back (upriver) by about one foot (.3m) per year, but this rate of erosion is expected to slow over the coming years.

The terms *upriver* and *downriver* can be confusing when applied to the Niagara River, as it flows downhill from the south (Lake Erie) to the north (Lake Ontario). One easy way to keep your bearings with these two terms is to remember that anything that goes over the Falls, even though it is headed northward, is indeed going **DOWNriver**!



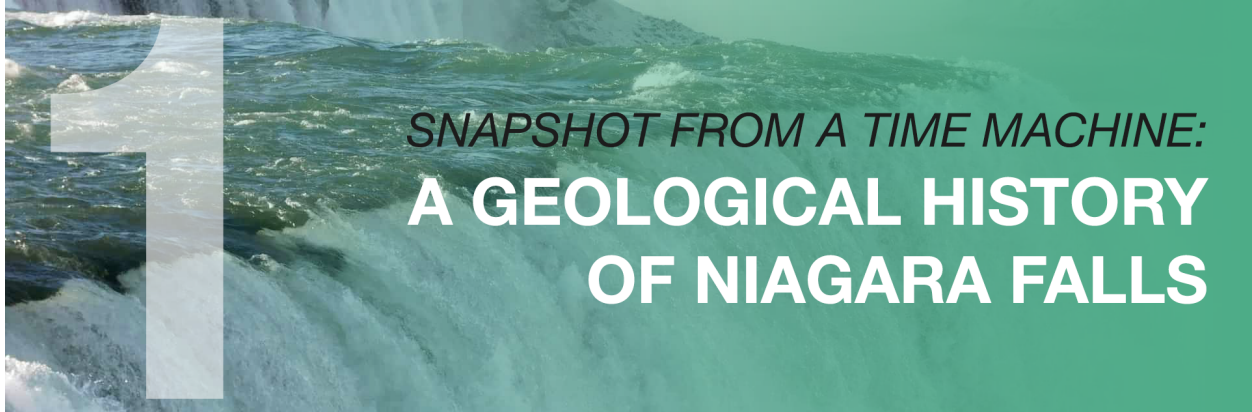
Horseshoe Falls, Table Rock Welcome Centre, Niagara Falls, ON



View of Niagara Falls, Ontario from Niagara Falls, New York (American Falls on the left)



Hornblower Niagara Cruise boat sails into the maelstrom of Horseshoe Falls



Niagara Falls was formed when glaciers receded at the end of the last ice age, known as the *Wisconsin glaciation*. During this time, water from the newly formed Great Lakes carved a path through the Niagara Escarpment en route to the Atlantic Ocean. Specifically, the waters of Lake Erie flowed over the top of the escarpment to reach a basin called Lake Iroquois, the forerunner of Lake Ontario. At first, the waters drained to the lower lake by way of a small intermediate lake called Tonawanda, which, in turn, drained over the escarpment through several spillways. Niagara-On-The-Lake was submerged and the Iroquois waters lapped at a shoreline just north of the present-day village of Queenston, Ontario. This was the birthplace of Niagara Falls some 12,000 years ago.

Initially, the Falls flowed only about 35 feet (10.7m) over a craggy incline now known as Roy Terrace. Its American counterpart, Eldridge Terrace, marks the shore of Lake Iroquois when Niagara Falls was born. As the water fell, it eroded the limestone and glacial material and began carving out what we now know as the Niagara Gorge, with the Falls eventually receding to their present location.

6,000 – 7,000 years ago the Falls encountered an ancient island similar in size to the present Goat Island. Water flowed around both sides of this island before falling over the edge of present-day Wintergreen Flats to the basin below, resulting in two separate waterfalls. The dual falls continued until the main gorge to the east eroded back far enough to cut off the secondary flow to the west of the island, at which point the Falls of Niagara became a single waterfall again, continuing its erosion southward. The Niagara Glen, a beautiful picnic area located on top of the Wintergreen Flats, is now a favorite site for thousands of

visitors each year. The site includes plentiful and well-marked nature trails leading to the river below.

But the Falls' retreat upriver was not uneventful. About 5,500 years ago, the melt waters broke through a rock barrier and intersected with an ancient riverbed that had been buried and sealed during the last ice age (now named *St. David's Buried Gorge*). It was a brief and violent encounter, a geological event lasting only weeks, perhaps even only days. The water crashed into this buried gorge, tore out the glacial debris that filled it, and scoured the old river bottom clean. When it was all over, it had left behind a 90-degree turn in the river that we know today as the Whirlpool, creating North America's largest series of standing waves—the Whirlpool Rapids.

After this event, the single waterfall stabilized in the area of the present-day Whirlpool Rapids Bridge and resumed carving its way through solid rock until once again becoming two separate falls near its present location 600 – 800 years ago. The crest line of the Horseshoe Falls was relatively straight until around the time of the founding of the U.S. in 1776 when the distinct horseshoe shape began to form.

In 1841, Charles Lyell, a British scientist and a father of modern geology, visited Niagara Falls. From observations of the rocks at the Falls and along the river, he was able to demonstrate without a doubt that the Falls had created the gorge from the edge of the escarpment at Queenston-Lewiston to its present location. Lyell's conclusions were supported by an equally distinguished pioneer American geologist, James Hall. Hall's independent studies for the State of New York included the first accurate survey of the rim of the Falls to establish a basis for measuring the rate of erosion. Niagara Falls has moved 7.1 miles (11.4km) upriver over the last 12,300 years.

The erosion rate of the Falls has varied and will continue to vary. That rate has slowed considerably in recent years due to two major factors: (1) the Falls currently flow over an erosion-resistant limestone caprock which began near the present-day Rainbow Bridge. As the Falls erode southward, the erosion rate will increase near Navy Island where they will reach a softer layer of rock. (2) water diversion for hydroelectric generating plants along the river has vastly reduced the rate of water flow.

Although it may appear stable and unchanging over the course of a human lifetime, Niagara Falls is a dynamic, ever-changing geological phenomena. The relentless and often fearsome will of nature has been witnessed at Niagara Falls by human eyes on numerous occasions over the past couple of centuries. Looking at the American Falls today, one can see that they recede or dip back into the gorge. The boulder field strewn at their base explains why; this piling of rock debris (called *talus*) has amassed as various sized pieces of rock have broken off the face of the gorge and crashed into the water below.

Table Rock was once a large shelf of rock that jutted out from the Canadian shore of Niagara Falls, just north of the present-day Table Rock Welcome Centre. Revealed in the mid-18th century as the Horseshoe Falls receded, Table Rock was the first major vantage point for tourists of the early and mid 19th century. In 1818, the first part of the rock collapsed, followed by minor rock falls in 1828 and 1829. The most notable rock fall occurred in July 1850, when roughly one-third of the point collapsed into the Niagara Gorge. A driver was washing his carriage on the point when the rock structure gave way. The man narrowly escaped, but the carriage was destroyed. Rock falls continued to occur at Table Rock until, in 1935, the remaining rock was blasted away by dynamite to prevent future disaster or tragedy.

The largest single rock fall ever recorded at Niagara Falls occurred on July 28, 1954. It involved part of the crest and viewing area at Prospect Point (US) at the north flank of the American Falls. The section that toppled was about 360 feet (110m) long by 130 feet (40m) deep by 50 feet (15m) high, and it is estimated that the fallen rock weighed 185,000 tons. There was some advance warning prior to this collapse. Water had been rushing into an elevator shaft at Prospect Point for six weeks before the rock fall. After the collapse this flow was observed to be greatly reduced. Also, on the morning of July 28, large fractures were found in the blacktop pavement of the Prospect Point viewing area.

Whether by man's engineering shortfalls or nature's wrath, one of the most tragic rock falls destroyed the Schoellkopf Power Station (US) on June 7, 1956. Schoellkopf was a huge facility built into the side of the gorge about a half-mile (.8km) downstream from the American Falls. Early in the day, water began seeping into the back of the plant from the wall built against the bluff, causing the wall to crack. At 5pm, the plant began flooding and collapsing into the Niagara

River, destroying two-thirds of the facility and six generators that produced more than 300,000 horsepower. One newspaper of the day reported the following account:

“The roar was awesome. It looked as if the whole gorge wall had opened up like the side of a skyscraper—down it came. Rocks and masonry burst into the air, splitting into thousands of pieces, and pelted the river like shrapnel. And a few fell on the Canadian side. A jet stream of water was unleashed. Three violent blasts followed. The river turned a sickly brown. White smoke poured upward from the gaping gorge mouth and the resounding echo died.”

Remarkably, the collapse resulted in only a single death when maintenance worker Richard A. Draper, 39, was hurled through a window into the river.

By the late 1960s, concerns were growing that further rockslides could erode the American Falls completely. To study the geological composition of the Falls and forestall their potential destruction, a joint American-Canadian commission decided to dewater them—to literally dry up the American Falls—for five months. The commission also wanted to study the feasibility of removing some of the talus from the base of the Falls. Over three days in June 1969, more than 1,200 trucks dumped nearly 28,000 tons of rocky fill into a 600-foot (183m) cofferdam upstream of the Falls, diverting the flow of the Niagara River away from the American Falls and toward the much larger Horseshoe Falls. With the Falls dry for the first time in millennia, the engineers conducted their investigation, which resulted in five basic conclusions:

1. *While it is technically feasible to remove the talus which has collected at the base of the American Falls, it is not desirable to do so at the present time.*
2. *While structural solutions are available to arrest erosion at the crest of the American Falls, the Falls should not be stabilized by artificial means.*
3. *A broad environmental study should be jointly carried out by Canada and the U.S. to identify and give priority to those measures which best enhance the total setting and beauty of the Niagara Falls area.*

4. *That the two flanks of the American Falls and the Goat Island flank of the Horseshoe Falls are sufficiently unstable to warrant remedial action.*
5. *A statistically minor element of risk from unpredictable rock movement will remain and must be accepted by the viewing public.*

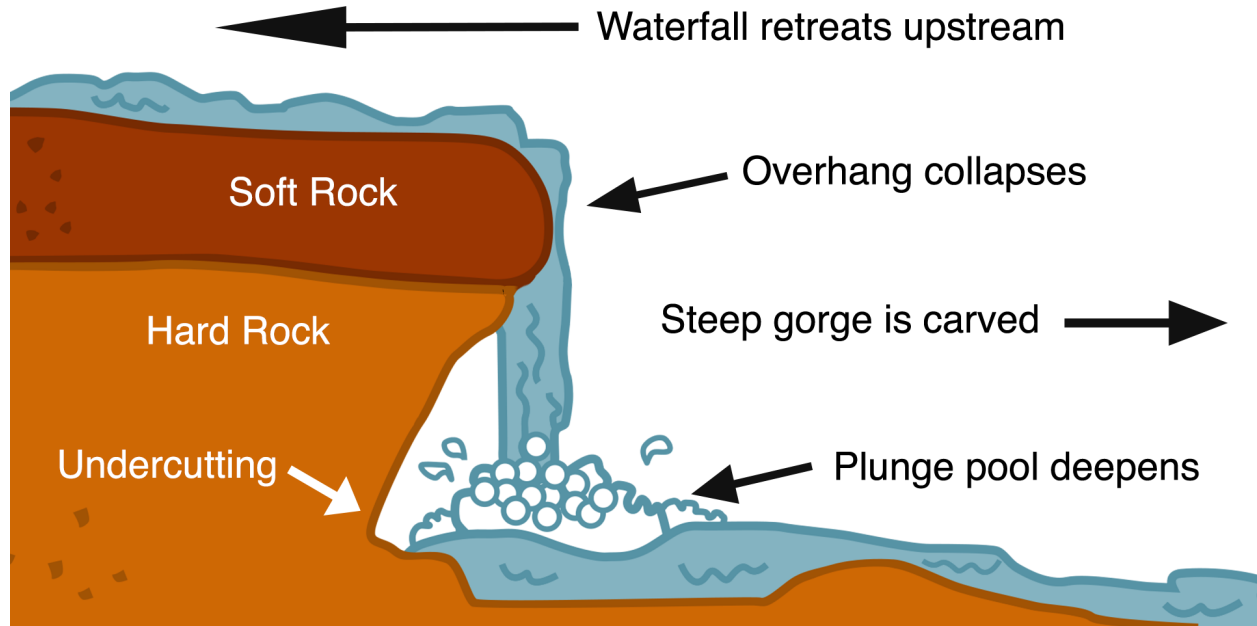
No one knows when the next major rock fall will occur at Horseshoe Falls. A stable position is abandoned when the crest line develops a notch configuration and the Falls retreat relatively rapidly until a new stable position is attained. It is also possible that the current or future flow and volume of the river will not be sufficient to carve out a deep enough plunge pool to accommodate rock falls. In this case, the Canadian Horseshoe Falls could be supported by talus in much the same way as the American Falls.

Climate change is also an influencing factor on the future of the Niagara River as an integral part of the Great Lakes Basin, which models indicate is drying up. Isostatic rebound continues to affect the basin, and consequently, the flow of water through the Niagara River.

Scientists speculate that a couple of thousand years from now the American Falls could dry up. It is a stationary feature collapsing by rock falls and landslides, carrying less than seven percent of flow before diversion. The water is shallow and spread out, therefore ineffective as a major erosive power. The Horseshoe Falls will notch back for about 15,000 more years, traveling upriver about four miles to a softer riverbed consisting of Salina shale, after which the rate of erosion will increase significantly. From that point the bedrock tilts downward to Lake Erie, so the Falls could be replaced by a series of rapids. 50,000 years from now, at the present rate of erosion, the remaining 20 miles to Lake Erie will have been undermined. There won't be a Falls anymore, but there will still be a raging Niagara river at work.

The very brief 12,000-year history of Niagara Falls is but a microscopic sliver of North America's 600-million-year geological timeline—one that is virtually unfathomable in comparison to the time we humans have been here. Like the deepest caverns and the grandest canyons carved into the earth, Niagara Falls affords us a unique opportunity; it allows us to witness and process, by means of

our imaginations, a snapshot from the time machine that is Planet Earth. And what a glorious snapshot it is.



Waterfall erosion



Niagara Gorge Wall



600 million years ago, a broad, shallow sea covered the Niagara Region of The Great Lakes, depositing mud, sand, and silt across the region and building up layers of limestone (formed from deposits of shellfish).

300 million years ago, uplift brought the bedrock above sea level and the inland sea dried up, leaving the underlying sediment as layers of soft rock. This same uplift is responsible for forming the peaks of the Appalachian and Adirondack Mountain ranges.

250 million years ago, rivers and streams began cutting through the soft rock and limestone of the region, forming major river systems which continued eroding away to form the pre-glacial basins of the Great Lakes.

60 million years ago, a second uplift tilted rock layers in the northern region of New York downward, toward the north, effectively reversing the direction of many rivers and streams. The tilting of the bedrock exposed multiple layers of rock, some soft, some hard. Quick erosion of the softer layers exposed dramatic bands of hard rock, and these protrusions are known as *escarpments*. Niagara Falls tumbles over a portion of the Niagara Escarpment.

18,000 years ago, four ice ages in a row sculpted the land, with the last, the *Wisconsin Glaciation*, piling 2-3 kilometers of ice on top of southern Ontario. These glaciers carved out the basins of the Great Lakes.

12,500 years ago the glaciers receded, and the Niagara Peninsula became free of ice.

12,000 years ago, floods of glacial melt water rushed from Lake Erie down the Niagara Escarpment into Lake Iroquois (a precursor to Lake Ontario), forming several waterfall pathways. Eventually these are concentrated into one, becoming the Niagara River. At this time, Niagara Falls was further downstream at present-day Queenston, Ontario, and was a single waterfall.

10,000 years ago, the end of the last ice age filled Lake Ontario with melt water, and the Great Lakes began draining into the Atlantic Ocean.

Geologists estimate that roughly 500 years ago the Falls split into the American and Canadian segments that we have today.



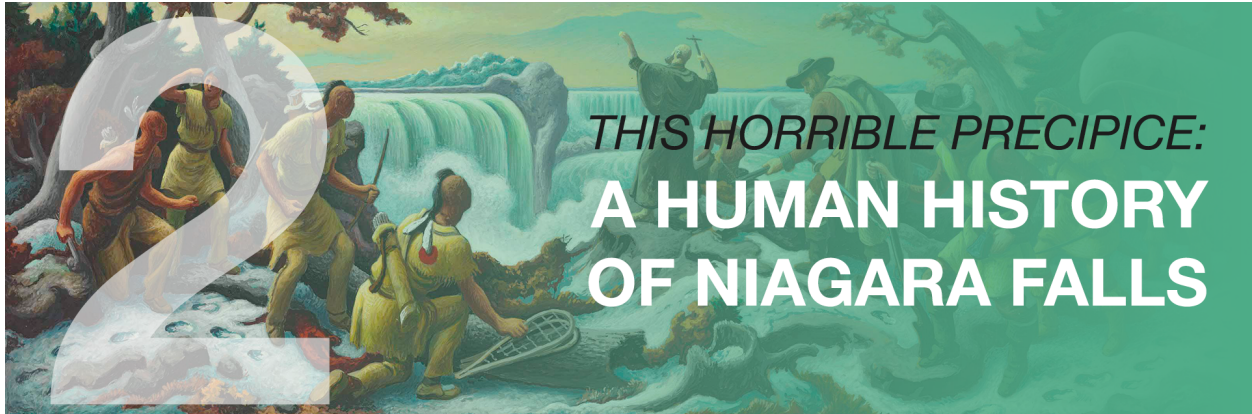
Niagara Whirlpool



Fallen rocks, or *talus*, at the base of the American Falls



Cup & Saucer Trail, Niagara Escarpment



Seeing, hearing, and feeling Niagara Falls for the first time is an awe-inspiring experience for visitors today. Multiply that sense of awe by a factor of a hundred or so, and one can begin to imagine what Father Louis Hennepin, the first explorer to bring us a written eyewitness description of the Falls, felt in the winter of 1678-79 when he first stumbled through the woods and stood at the brink of Niagara. The volume of water flow was at least twice what we see today. There were no guardrails, no safe viewing platforms, no manicured parks, nor paved pathways. This was the heart of the wilderness, and Niagara was a spectacle the likes of which Hennepin had never seen. He wrote:

“This wonderful downfall is compounded of two great cross-streams of water and two falls with an Isle sloping along the middle. The waters which fall from this horrible precipice do foam and boil in the most hideous manner imaginable, making an outrageous noise, more terrible than that of thunder; for when the wind blows out of the south, their dismal roaring may be heard more than fifteen leagues off.”

Hennepin had been sent, accompanied by René Robert Cavalier, Sieur de la Salle, on an exploratory mission to New France (Canada). He and La Salle would embark on separate paths of exploration in the New World, and both would come to figure prominently in North American history books for their adventures, misadventures, observations, and discoveries. Hennepin’s book *Nouvelle Découverte* was published in France in 1697 and printed in English two years later. Featuring his original sketch of Niagara Falls along with detailed descriptions of the site, the book sparked the imaginations of its readers and encouraged travel to the Niagara region.

The name *Niagara* comes from the Attawandaron, or Neutral Confederacy, the Indians who lived on both banks of the mighty river. Only a few years before Hennepin arrived, those Indians had been all but wiped out in the Beaver Wars by the Seneca nation of the Iroquois Confederacy. One group of Attawandaron were called *Onguiaahra* (“Near the big waters” or possibly “The Strait”), a word that became *Niagara* by Hennepin’s time—then, as now, the only surviving remnant of a vanished people. But the Niagara region had not had its last glimpse of human conflict.

The French and Indian War, in which the British, American Colonials, and the Iroquois Nation would fight the French and their Indian allies for territory, began in 1754 and ended in 1763 with the outcome being the British winning most of Canada. The British established Butlersburg on the western shore north of the mouth of the Niagara at Lake Ontario, across the river from Fort Niagara. It would serve as a trading post and safe-haven for Loyalists, later incorporated as the (temporary) capital of Upper Canada, and eventually renamed *Niagara-On-The-Lake*.

It was during the French and Indian War that Daniel Joncairs dug a narrow ditch above the Falls on the American side and was able to draw enough water from the river to turn a waterwheel and power his sawmill. Joncairs was the first recorded person to have harnessed the power of Niagara. He would not be the last. However, the large-scale harnessing of the river’s power, along with the unrealized tourism potential of the Falls region, would have to wait until territorial disputes were settled and boundaries firmly established.

In the War of 1812, the United States took on the greatest naval power in the world, Great Britain, in a conflict that would have immense impact on the young country’s future. Causes of the war included British attempts to restrict U.S. trade, the Royal Navy’s impressment of American seamen, and America’s desire to expand its territory. The United States suffered many costly defeats at the hands of British, Canadian, and Native American troops during the war, including the capture and burning of Washington, D.C. in August 1814. The American assault on Canada came to a halt after the Battle of Lundy’s Lane, one of the bloodiest battles ever fought on Canadian soil. After a six-hour battle, American forces retreated to Fort Erie. Nonetheless, American troops went on to repulse British invasions in New York, Baltimore, and New Orleans, boosting national

confidence and fostering a new spirit of patriotism. The ratification of the Treaty of Ghent on February 17, 1815 officially ended the war with *status quo ante bellum* (no boundary changes).

The early 19th century saw a blossoming network of roads and trails snaking steadily toward Niagara Falls in the interest of harnessing the river's power and exploiting the Falls' tourist appeal. In 1801 an American aristocrat, Theodosia Burr, daughter of Vice-President Aaron Burr honeymooned in Niagara Falls with her new groom Joseph Alston, thus beginning the tradition of the Niagara Falls honeymoon. Cabins and other accommodations began to spring up in the area. In 1805, former New York Representative Peter Porter purchased the American Falls and surrounding land from the United States. The Falls and surrounding lands on both the U.S. and Canadian sides would be privately owned until 1885.

The sister cities of Niagara Falls, Ontario and Niagara Falls, New York have stood in stark contrast to each other since their inceptions. Niagara Falls, Ontario was groomed and nurtured from the beginning as a world-class tourist destination. Niagara Falls, New York, on the other hand, despite past and current efforts at renewal and revitalization, continues to show its roots as a gritty industrial town. This contrast was established as early as 1818 when the Canadian side began developing tourist attractions and resorts while America began lining its side of the gorge with factories and mills. The first tourist attraction was built on the Canadian side, the precursor to today's *Journey Behind the Falls*; it was essentially a staircase to the base of the Falls at Table Rock, promoted as the *Sheet of Falling Water*.

Construction began on the Erie Canal in 1817 in New York. Built to create a navigable water route from New York City and the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes, it would run 363 miles (584km) from the Hudson River in Albany to Lake Erie in Buffalo. When completed in 1825 it was the second longest canal in the world and would greatly affect the U.S. economy over the next century. In Ontario, construction began on the Welland Canal in 1824. Paralleling the Niagara River, its purpose was to create a shipping route to avoid Niagara Falls. The completion of these canals ushered in a boom era for both the milling and tourism industries in the Niagara region.

In a cruel and pointless act that would be rightfully unheard of today, a group of entrepreneurs, led by William Forsyth of the Pavilion Hotel, organized the first publicity stunt at Niagara Falls in 1827. They dressed an old lake schooner up as a pirate ship and stocked it with “ferocious animals” (a buffalo, two small bears, two raccoons, a dog, and a goose). A crowd of spectators gathered as the vessel was set adrift upstream from the Horseshoe Falls. Just before the ship plummeted over the Falls its hull was split open by rocks and the bears escaped to Goat Island. The rest of the animals went over with the ship, and only the goose survived the plunge. This event might well be noted for establishing a tradition of ill-conceived judgment, often ending in tragedy, that has revisited Niagara on numerous occasions right up to the present day.

Sam Patch (AKA “The Yankee Leaper”) from Rhode Island was the first in a long line of daredevils to jump the Horseshoe Falls. On October 7, 1829 he survived an 85-foot (26m) dive from a platform on Goat Island. Disappointed in the size of the crowd, however, he made a second jump ten days later from a higher platform (135 feet/41m) and survived. His luck ran out when he died later that year performing a jump over the High Falls in Rochester, NY.

No human history of Niagara would be complete without a roster of the daredevils who have willingly gone over the Falls of Niagara, attempted to swim its Class VI rapids (the most dangerous in the world), or walked on high wires stretched across its fearsome gorge. For a brief exercise in raising the hair on the backs of our necks, or simply in lieu of a lecture on sound judgment, let’s pause the chronological narrative for a few moments and consider what happens to anyone who enters the unfathomably dangerous waters above or below Niagara Falls. Our case in point will be the recent story of Lindsay Burgess, who was hiking with her fiancé in the Devil’s Hole area of Whirlpool State Park, below and downriver from the Falls, on July 18, 2011. Burgess later told reporters that she wanted to “touch the beauty.” She walked out onto a large, flat boulder at the river’s edge, reached down to touch the swirling water, slipped, and fell into the river. The current immediately seized her limbs, pulling her violently down into the vortex of the ferocious Whirlpool. She fought desperately for life and breath. “It was like trying to tread water in a tornado,” Burgess recalled. Shortly after she fell in, an unlikely, but extremely fortunate series of events unfolded: a Whirlpool Jet Tour boat passed by and passengers spotted Burgess in the water. They alerted the boat’s captain, Corey Ziraldo. “I was able to drive the boat

immediately to where she was being held by the current,” Ziraldo said. Burgess had been under water for about a minute before the boat’s crew were able to pull her out. They administered CPR and transported her to shore where she was met by an emergency crew. Burgess entered the hospital on a respirator with doctors unsure whether she would survive. Fortunately, she did. Today, Lindsay Burgess would, no doubt, be the first to remind us that although beauty abounds along the Niagara River, it is an insanely dangerous idea to try to “touch the beauty.”

By the mid-1800s, the need had become more pressing for a means of safe passage across the raging Niagara river. In 1846, the Maid of The Mist opened its ferry service across the Niagara Gorge (The company was named after a local legend about an Indian princess who canoed over the Falls, choosing suicide over an arranged marriage with a brave she didn’t love). Two years later, the first suspension bridge was built across the gorge. The bridge took business away from the Maid of The Mist ferry service, so the company began offering boat rides right up to Horseshoe Falls, giving visitors an up-close, exhilarating experience of the Falls’ power. The Maid of The Mist cruise continues operation today on the American side of the Falls, while the more modern Hornblower Niagara Cruises offers a comparable experience on the Canadian side. Many visitors cite these cruises as **the** definitive experience of Niagara Falls, and the author agrees.

The water tumbling over Niagara Falls produces not only a stunning visual spectacle, but a rumbling cacophony of sound—an uninterrupted, thunderous roar that can be heard (and felt) for miles. The sound (and sensation) would have been much more intense in the mid-19th century, before more than half of the river’s waters were diverted for power and industrial use. It must have been surreal, then, for nearby residents to be stirred from their sleep during the night of March 29, 1848 by an utter, eerie silence. For the first time in recorded history, the Falls had stopped flowing. Strong westerly winds had piled ice at the mouth of the Niagara near Buffalo, damming the flow and bringing the Falls downriver to a mere trickle. For roughly 30 hours the Falls were no more than damp, dripping cliffs. It was reported that townsfolk explored the dry riverbed, finding artifacts from the War of 1812, workers demolished boulders that made boat navigation difficult, and entertainers performed where deep, icy waters had churned the day before.

Man, too, began to conquer, control, and reshape the Falls. The place's former gothic aura began to lift, giving way, on the Canadian side, to an atmosphere of vicarious, fearless frivolity; and on the American side, to an urgent, relentless spirit of industrial growth. In 1855, renowned bridge engineer John Augustus Roebling completed the Niagara Railway Suspension Bridge, the first rail bridge to cross the gorge, and the arrival of better rail systems led to a drastic decline in boat traffic. By this time, New York had completed a canal along which mills began to spring up, eventually lining the northern gorge downstream from the American Falls.

Charles Blondin (born Jean François Gravelet) was a French tightrope walker and acrobat—a *funambulist* in the parlance of his day—who began touring the United States in 1855. Ultimately, he would owe his celebrity and fortune to his idea to cross the Niagara Gorge on a tightrope, 1,100 feet (340m) across and 160 feet (49m) above the river, near the location of the current Rainbow Bridge. This he did on June 30, 1859, and a number of times thereafter, often with different theatrical variations: blindfolded, in a sack, trundling a wheelbarrow, on stilts, carrying a man (his manager, Harry Colcord) on his back, sitting down midway across while he cooked and ate an omelet, and standing on a chair with only one of its legs balanced on the rope.

The following year, Ontario native William Leonard Hunt, billing himself as “The Great Farini”, also walked across the gorge on a tightrope. Determined to outdo Blondin, Hunt showed off by stopping halfway across and using a rope to lower himself down to the deck of the Maid of The Mist. After sipping a glass of wine, he climbed back up and continued his walk. He then backtracked blindfolded with baskets on his feet. Hunt would be one of several over the coming years to try to steal some of Blondin's fame and fortune by performing harrowing tightrope crossings, but to the present day, Blondin remains the original and most noted Niagara Falls *funambulist*.

With the rise of industry continuing on the U.S. side of the river, the Niagara Parks Commission was established under order of the Ontario government in 1885 to preserve the natural scenery on the Canadian side. The commission began buying up land and demolishing businesses to create free space around the Falls. Recognizing a similar necessity on the U.S. side, New York's Niagara Reservation State Park was opened, the first state park in the United States. The park

encompassed 412 acres, including Prospect Park as well as Goat and Bath Islands. On the Canadian side, Queen Victoria Park was completed and opened in 1888. It originally encompassed 154 acres, but would grow over the years to become an extensive system of parks covering thousands of acres.

The city of Niagara Falls, New York was incorporated in 1892. William T. Love, who owned a large portion of land along the east side of the river, began planning a 7-mile (11km) long canal which would serve as a shipping lane to bypass the Falls. He also envisioned an enormous utopian metropolis which would welcome industry and housing for more than a million people; hydroelectric dams along the canal would power the city inexpensively. The project would ultimately be doomed by a series of financial setbacks, leaving only a kilometer of canal built, then abandoned. This ditch would later come to live in infamy as *Love Canal*.

On October 24, 1901, 63-year-old Bay City, MI school teacher Annie Edson Taylor became the first person to ride inside a barrel over the Falls. She performed the feat in a 4-foot (1.22m) tall oak and steel barrel with an anvil ballast. After resurfacing, she remained trapped in the river until her barrel drifted to a spot suitable for recovery. Although battered and bleeding, she survived, muttering, “nobody ought ever do that again” as she emerged from the barrel.

Visitors to Queen Victoria Park today might be surprised to know that the rock below their feet contains a staggering network of tunnels, penstocks, and structures that once collected the river’s water to produce electrical power for millions. The turn of the nineteenth century into the twentieth ushered in the age of hydroelectric power at Niagara Falls. In 1905, the Ontario Power Company (an American-owned firm) began drawing water from the river above the Falls to run through its power station built into the base of the gorge below (on the Canadian side). Paul N. Nunn, a pioneer in the use of alternating current (AC), described the power station and its layout in detail, and with a certain reverence in his recitation of the plant’s numerology:

“From the head-gates of the Ontario company three great steel-and-concrete tunnels or conduits beneath the surface of the park will convey nearly 12,000 cubic feet of water per second to the top of the cliff above the powerhouse. Thence, it will pass through 22 steel penstocks in shafts and tunnels down and out through the cliff to an equal number of horizontal turbines in the powerhouse below. From

the generators the electrical cables turn back through tunnels to the 22 banks of switches, transformers, and instruments of the distributing station above and to the transmission lines beyond, completing an equipment for more than 200,000 horsepower."

From an elaborate forebay positioned amidst the cascades on the upper river, water dropped through a gatehouse into one of three separate intake conduits. Following the curve of the river's shoreline, the distribution conduits ran to the area immediately above the powerhouse in the gorge. Here, the water they carried fell 180 feet (55m) through near-vertical penstocks to the plant's turbines. Reaching the powerhouse, the gravity-accelerated water drove more than a dozen turbines of various sizes. Once its power was exhausted in this way, the tailwater passed from the turbines into the discharge bays that line the front face of the plant. When the Ontario Power Generating Station was in service, the water rushing out of these bays and over the lip of the draft would have been a spectacular sight. The abandoned station can best be viewed today from Niagara Falls State Park in New York. Most of the station's underground components remain in place, though work performed in 2006 to prepare the building for transfer to the Niagara Parks Commission has sealed a majority of their access points, including the inlets of the distributor conduits. The powerhouse itself has been completely cleared of its turbines and control equipment, leaving it a dusty, empty space. Two of the plant's surge tanks remain in Queen Victoria Park today; both are open-topped and are used as a base for the high-powered lamps that illuminate the Falls at night.

Above and to the northwest of Horseshoe Falls can be seen the Beaux-Arts-style Toronto Power Generating Station, built in 1906 to supply power to Toronto, Ontario, 80 miles (130km) to the north. This plant was built on top of a deep wheel pit with turbines at the bottom turning generators at the top by means of long vertical shafts. The water from the turbines runs out through a brick-lined tailrace which eventually comes out at the base of the Falls. In its prime, it had a generating capacity of 137,500 horsepower (102,500kW). The plant ceased operations in 1974 as Ontario Hydro sought to make better use of the available water downriver at the Sir Adam Beck Hydroelectric Power Stations in Queenston. The vacant plant was designated a National Historic Site of Canada in 1983 due to its importance in the development of business, industry, and technology in Ontario, its status as the first wholly Canadian-owned hydroelectric facility at

Niagara Falls, and the unusual application of Beaux-Arts design to an industrial plant. For visitors staying in the Fallsview area, the vacant station makes for a pleasant walking or bicycling destination along the upper river rapids.

The grounds of the old Toronto Power Generating Station also provide a close-up view of another of Niagara's more unnerving legacies: *the barge*. Most visitors today eventually spot it as they scan the river rapids above Horseshoe Falls—an old iron scow lodged in rocks approximately 2,500 feet (762m) above the crest of the Falls. The two men who were rescued from that scow on the morning of August 7, 1918 had spent a night of indescribable terror trapped in the boat, expecting it to become dislodged from the rocks at any moment and carry them over the brink to their deaths. Had they been able to sleep soundly that night, their wildest dreams would never have led them to imagine the vessel would remain lodged at that very spot for visitors to see over 100 years later.

On August 6, 1918, Gustave Lofberg and Frank Harris were aboard the scow dredging up sand banks from the river upstream of the Falls. Shortly after 3:00 PM, tugboat captain John Wallace brought his vessel, the *Hassayampa*, over to bring the scow back to shore. While towing the scow, the *Hassayampa* struck and grounded on a rock shoal/sandbar, and the taut steel line connecting the tug to the scow snapped “like a thin string”. The 80-foot (24m) by 30-foot (9m) barge was set adrift and pulled rapidly toward the brink of the Horseshoe Falls.

Onlookers rushed to the scene by the hundreds and lined the banks of the river as the alarm was spread. They witnessed the two men struggling desperately on the barge. Lofberg and Harris could see the mist of the Falls growing closer by the second, its roar growing louder in their ears. Only after the scow had grounded on the rocky shoal did the two men deploy their anchor. Since a rescue boat was out of the question, the Niagara Falls (ON) Fire Department tried, without success, to use a grappling gun to shoot a life line out towards the barge from the roof of the Toronto Power Generating Station while awaiting the arrival of the U.S. Coast Guard from Youngstown, New York to bring a heavier grappling gun.

Lofberg and Harris began ripping huge timbers from the inside of the barge and were seen throwing them overboard. They were building a makeshift windlass (winch) in hopes that if a rope line from shore could reach them they would be able to secure the line to the barge before it became dislodged. A bungled

attempt could mean certain death, so it was with sheer determination and with their very lives at stake that they completed the clumsy windlass. A crew arrived from the Life Saving Station in Youngstown, NY and the rescue attempt was moved to the roof of the Toronto Power Station where a larger gun, capable of firing a lifeline to the scow, was mounted. The first shot with a lightweight rope was successfully shot over the barge, and Lofberg and Harris grabbed it. In the meantime, the rescuers tied a much heavier rope to the end of the lighter one. Lofberg and Harris began the long and arduous struggle of winding the rope out from the power house to the scow. The weight of the heavy rope was being carried downriver by the torrent and threatened in itself to dislodge the barge while more than 100 men on the power house roof pulled the rope taut to prevent this from happening. After hours of labor under terrifying conditions, Lofberg and Harris were able to bring the heavy rope, inch by inch, aboard the barge and secure it to the windlass. By this time, darkness had arrived.

While awaiting rescue, Lofberg tied himself to the barge. Harris, on the other hand, tied a rope around himself with the other end tied to a barrel. His thought was that if the barge broke free, he could jump clear and hope that the barrel would get caught up on rocks before reaching the crest of the Horseshoe. With nightfall, four huge searchlights were erected and trained on the scow and rescue rope. A breeches buoy (a chair-like attachment) followed the line, but became entangled only halfway across. Unable to continue because of the darkness and because their voices could not be heard above the roar of the Falls, the rescuers cut letters out of cardboard and placed them in front of the electric lights, thus making improvised signs. They read, "PULL IN ON THE SMALL LINE", "HOLD FAST", and "REST".

At first light on the morning of August 7, a second line containing the breeches buoy was successfully fired from the roof of the power plant to the scow. The rope was secured by Lofberg and Harris, but the line had become snarled with the primary rope line. The hero of the day was noted riverman William "Red" Hill, Sr., who tirelessly ventured out to free the tangled line several times and eventually assisted the men to safety. The scow still remains in place today, highly visible, caught on the shoal just out of reach of the Falls. In recent years, the vessel's rate of deterioration has advanced significantly, with some estimating it will be completely decomposed by 2030.

On January 23, 1938, a massive buildup of ice below the Falls, combined with strong winds coming off of Lake Erie, caused severe structural damage to the Honeymoon Bridge, a steel arch bridge spanning the Niagara Gorge downstream from the Falls. With onlookers prepared to witness its collapse, the bridge lasted several days until it crumbled under the pressure of the ice, causing three casualties. Three years later, on November 1, 1941, the Rainbow Bridge opened, replacing the Honeymoon Bridge. It is the nearest bridge to the Falls, and Canadian and U.S. customs are housed inside the bridge and complex.

During the 1950s, chemical plants, factories, and the U.S. military began disposing of toxic waste in mass quantities in the Niagara Gorge, while surrounding municipalities increased their release of raw sewage into the river. These practices would continue throughout the next two decades as fish and waterfowl populations waned. The city of Niagara Falls, NY had acquired William T. Love's land and failed canal in 1920 and sold it to the Hooker Chemical Company in 1947 for the purpose of disposing of toxic waste. It wasn't until the environmental movement of the 1980s that laws were enacted to prohibit these sources of pollution. As a result, the Niagara River, and specifically the Niagara Falls area, today has one of the highest concentrations of toxic waste sites in North America, as harmful substances from decommissioned plants and disposal sites continue to seep into the river.

In 1952 the Hooker Chemical and Plastics Corporation filled the Love Canal to capacity with an estimated 22,000 tons of toxic materials, then capped the site with a clay covering. The following year, in desperate need of land, the Niagara Falls, NY School Board insisted, by threat of eminent domain expropriation, on purchasing the canal and surrounding land for the construction of a new school. Hooker Chemical, weighing the hazards associated with building a school on the site against the more financially expedient choice of being absolved from any future liability, agreed to sell the site to the school board for one dollar. The company did provide a disclaimer stating that the land was contaminated and urging the board not to build on it. Contractors decided to relocate the school when they started digging into pockets of hazardous waste; unfortunately, the building site was relocated directly on top of the capped canal and the seal was broken. Nonetheless, the school and approximately 100 homes were built in on the site.

While Niagara Falls was glamorized in the 1953 film *Niagara*, starring Marilyn Monroe, the 1950s saw more than its share of rock slides and land loss around the Falls. In 1953 a series of cofferdams were built to block water from the western-most edge of the Horseshoe Falls so the Niagara Parks Commission could repair and reinforce the portion of the Falls closest to Table Rock, much of which had previously crumbled into the river. The following year, a large rock fall occurred at the American Falls' observation platform at Prospect Point; nearly 200,000 tons of rock fell into the gorge. Downriver, the Ontario Power Plant's American counterpart, the Schoellkopf Power Plant, collapsed into the Niagara River on June 7, 1956. 29 workers escaped while one fell into the river below and died. An estimated \$8 million in damage was done in minutes. When built in the early 1900s, the plant had featured penstock tubes that carried water down the outside of the gorge. Subsequent penstocks were tunneled into the rock face to hide them for aesthetic reasons, thus weakening the structure and leading to the disaster.

July 9, 1960 was a clear and calm day in Wheatfield, a suburb of Niagara Falls, NY. Seven-year-old Roger Woodward's family had only recently moved to the city of Niagara Falls, and Roger had spent this particular morning bored and lonely, wishing something fun might turn up. Roger's sister Deanne turned 17 that day. When a family friend, Jim Honeycutt, offered to take the brother and sister on their first boat ride that afternoon to celebrate Deanne's birthday, Roger's spirits lifted. Honeycutt was staying at Lynch Park, a trailer park on the river's bank with boat launches nearby. His 12-foot (3.66m) aluminum fishing boat with its outboard motor promised to provide an afternoon of adventure for Roger and Deanne, and they both jumped at the chance. The only condition, set by Roger's mother as she sent him out the door, was that he wear a lifejacket—her youngest didn't know how to swim.

As Honeycutt launched the craft, motored into the river, and headed west with the two siblings, young Roger Woodward had no knowledge of the Niagara River or the powerful and dangerous rapids and waterfalls that lay approximately eight miles (13km) downriver, to the west of their launching point. Waves rocked gently against the boat's hull, and the breeze was warm as they passed under the bright blue arches of the Grand Island Bridge. The thunderous Niagara rapids were not far beyond; the bridge serves as the unofficial turnaround point for most who dare venture even that close to the Falls. Fishermen stared in dismay from

anchored vessels as Honeycutt continued on course, his passengers oblivious to what lay ahead.

At one point, Honeycutt allowed young Roger to steer the boat, which rode the strengthening current toward a sandbar covered with seagulls. As it ventured closer to the shoal, the outboard motor hit something on the river bottom and began screaming. Gulls screeched and flew off in droves, and Honeycutt immediately cut the engine. But his boat had no anchor and no line—he was ill-prepared to be anywhere on water, let alone the Niagara River headed for the Falls. Now the boat was drifting helplessly. In desperation, Honeycutt grabbed the oars, fighting a current gaining in power by the second and infinitely stronger than him. In what Roger Woodward would later describe as Honeycutt’s “last heroic act,” he ordered Deanne to put on the only spare life jacket in the boat (Roger was already wearing one). Honeycutt had little time to ponder the mortal danger he and his passengers were in as a powerful, white-capped wave swamped the boat. When a second wave struck, the boat filled with water and all three on board were tossed out into the raging rapids.

“One minute you’re being dragged under water, you can’t breathe, you can’t get to air, you can’t get up,” says Roger Woodward, remembering the ordeal. “You’re upside down, you’re thrown around, then you come flying out of the water like somebody just spit you out. Then you just fall back into the water and it starts all over again.”

Roger was carried by the current to the middle of the river, while Deanne was pushed toward the shore. Roger describes the water as swift, yet becoming calm as he approached what he called “a void”. “I realized I was going to die,” he recalls. “I thought about my dog, I thought about what few toys I had, I thought about my mom and dad and how sad they were going to be when they found out that I died. And there was just total peace.” Woodward then entered what he calls a cloud—the 167-foot (51m) drop down Horseshoe Falls. Completely engulfed in mist and unable to see, he felt no sense of falling.

And then there was silence.

Meanwhile, John Hayes, on vacation from New Jersey, spotted Deanne in the water near Goat Island. He rushed to climb over the guardrail and began pleading

desperately for her to swim toward him. He extended his hand and Deanne caught onto his thumb, holding on for dear life. Another man, John Quattrochi, also from New Jersey, grabbed onto her life jacket and pulled her to safety just a few feet from the brink of the Falls. Once on land, Deanne's first concern was her brother. Quattrochi calmly whispered, "Pray for him." She did.

Roger's world went dark as he crashed into the water below. His adult-size life jacket forced him through the pummeling waters to the surface. Bobbing there, he vaguely saw the outline of a huge boat, and he did the only thing he could: he screamed.

The boat was the Maid of The Mist II, steered by Captain Clifford Keech, who was on the return leg of his tour to the Falls. To save Woodward, Keech had to maneuver the 60-foot (18m) vessel in choppy water so he wouldn't run aground or run over the child. He had to time the movement of the boat with the flow of the water to get close enough to throw out a life ring. The orange ring was thrown out once, but landed beyond Woodward's grasp. Twice, but again not close enough. On the third throw, the boy's arms just grasped the ring. He pulled himself up and held on as Keech's crew pulled back on the rope. He arrived on deck shivering and in shock. Only hours later, as he lay in a hospital bed, would it sink in that he had gone over Niagara Falls and survived.

With only a cut on her hand, Deanne was rushed to the hospital where she learned of her brother's miraculous fate. The body of Jim Honeycutt was recovered from the Niagara River four days later.

For years, Roger Woodward and his family dealt with the ordeal through silence—his parents encouraging their children to move on and forget—but in later years, Woodward became more comfortable talking about what happened. Woodward has spent his life since then in and around the water. He served in the Navy during the Vietnam War, married his childhood sweetheart, became a successful businessman and real estate agent, had three kids, and became a proud grandfather. He is a boating enthusiast and certified diver. But every time he recounts his ordeal, he becomes his seven-year-old self. "It's one of those things where, when I talk about it with someone, it takes me back there like it was happening right now," he says, "I can literally smell the water."

Over the years, Woodward has returned several times to the place where he made history as the youngest to go over the Falls and survive. During one return visit, Woodward took his son Jonathan on the Maid of The Mist tour for the first time. As he stood on deck, staring into the thick mist from which he once escaped, a mother approached him and asked if he would hold her young son so she could snap the boy's photo with the dramatic, watery backdrop. Woodward happily obliged, smiling widely as he held the boy, the Falls roaring in the background.

One has to wonder if the mother who possesses that photograph knows exactly what she has.

Want to retrace Roger Woodward's fateful eight-mile journey in a unique and interesting way? Run Google Earth on your PC, Mac, or tablet, and type in a search for "2080 River Road, Niagara Falls, NY". The location at the center of your screen is Lynch Park, the trailer park at which James Honeycutt was staying in 1960. It was from this vicinity that he launched his boat that Saturday afternoon and motored westward with Roger and Deanne Woodward on board. Zoom out to approximately 20,000 feet eye altitude, and you will see a tall, rectangular, greenish-yellow patch of ground to the upper left of Lynch Park. That is Love Canal, which you will read about shortly. Now zoom back in to approximately 10,000 feet eye altitude, keeping the Lynch Park location in the center of your screen, and move to the left (westward) along the Niagara River. Soon you will see a bridge where I-190 crosses the Niagara. That is the Grand Island Bridge, the "point of no return" at or before which Honeycutt should have turned his boat around that day. As you continue moving westward, you will notice the river's waters turning slightly "angry" and displaying cloudy, turbid streaks. It was somewhere along this stretch that the boat's engine failed. Keep moving westward, and you will notice the water cascading in a controlled path through the International Control Dam, which controls the diversions and dispatches the water between the New York Power Authority and Ontario Power Generation. Immediately past the dam, you will see the waters quicken into white streaks, cascading wildly and gravitating over rocks and ledges toward the Falls. Follow the waters' flow (you may need to scroll slightly northward), and you will get a great Google Earth aerial view of the gaping bowl of Horseshoe Falls, where Roger Woodward went over the crest in what has since been called "The Miracle at Niagara Falls".

While you're visiting the Falls via the Google Earth aerial view, why not zoom in and around the area to see if you can spot the abandoned Ontario Power Generating Station and the Toronto Power Station? If you find the latter, you won't be far from locating the old barge that's been stranded in the rapids for over 100 years. In fact, if you're a bit of a geek (like the author), you may find that a virtual search for various points of interest via Google Earth will actually help establish your bearings and enhance your visit to Niagara Falls once you arrive (or after you've left).

Over the years, William T. Love's abandoned canal in the Niagara Falls, NY suburb of Wheatfield had served as a makeshift swimming hole, a toxic waste dump, and finally, a covered and forgotten ditch on top of and around which developed a typical industrial middle-class neighborhood. 1978 would bring this particular neighborhood squarely into the public spotlight as it was discovered that here, just upriver from one of the world's greatest natural wonders, lay one of its worst environmental disasters.

Residents were suspicious of a black fluid that flowed out of Love Canal. In 1959, Aileen Voorhees had encountered a strange black sludge bleeding through her basement walls. For the next twenty years, she and her husband, Edwin, tried various methods of halting the irritating intrusion, yet nothing could stop the black liquid nor the chemical smell that permeated the entire household. They had treated the problem as a mere nuisance—all their lives, all of everyone's life in the city, malodorous fumes had been a normal ingredient of the ambient air. To the thousands of people who moved in during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, Love Canal was a nice neighborhood—working class and friendly. But weird things happened. When kids threw rocks against the pavement they exploded like firecrackers. Manhole covers launched themselves into the air without warning. Kids playing on yards and playgrounds suffered chemical burns and rashes from the grass. Dogs went bald.

Aileen Voorhees' daughter and son-in-law, Timothy and Karen Schroeder, bought a ranch-style home with a brick and wood exterior at 460 99th Street. One of their most cherished purchases for the home was an in-ground fiberglass pool enclosed by a redwood fence. Karen looked out of a back window one morning in October 1974 and noted with distress that the entire pool had risen up out of the ground.

She had no idea this was the first sign of what would prove to be a tragedy of epic proportions for her family and many others in the area.

In 1976, water from heavy rains and a record-breaking blizzard caused a significant amount of chemical waste to migrate to the surface around Love Canal, where it flowed out and contaminated the entire neighborhood. In the following years the area was stricken with higher than normal rates of stillborn births and miscarriages, and many babies were born with birth defects. Studies by government agencies observed more than 400 types of toxic chemicals in the air, water, and soil, with several of them known to be carcinogenic. A regional officer for the newly formed Environmental Protection Agency wrote to Washington, D.C., warning that the area around the canal was so polluted that the state's only option was to buy up the 40 – 50 homes closest to the canal and tear them down. Local officials panicked and asked for more tests, while the state health commissioner advised evacuating all pregnant women and children under the age of two.

Neighbors began sharing stories, slowly realizing that they had suffered more than their share of cancers and other illnesses. Further agency tests elevated their concerns. After years of rumors and unsettling data, news of the planned evacuation took the people of Love Canal from afraid to ballistic. They began organizing protest groups, the most visible of which was the Love Canal Homeowners Association (LCHA) led by local housewife Lois Gibbs. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter approved emergency federal aid so that New York State could start buying the homes of the 236 families closest to the canal. Thus, Love Canal dominated the news at the time as the first EPA Superfund Program Project.

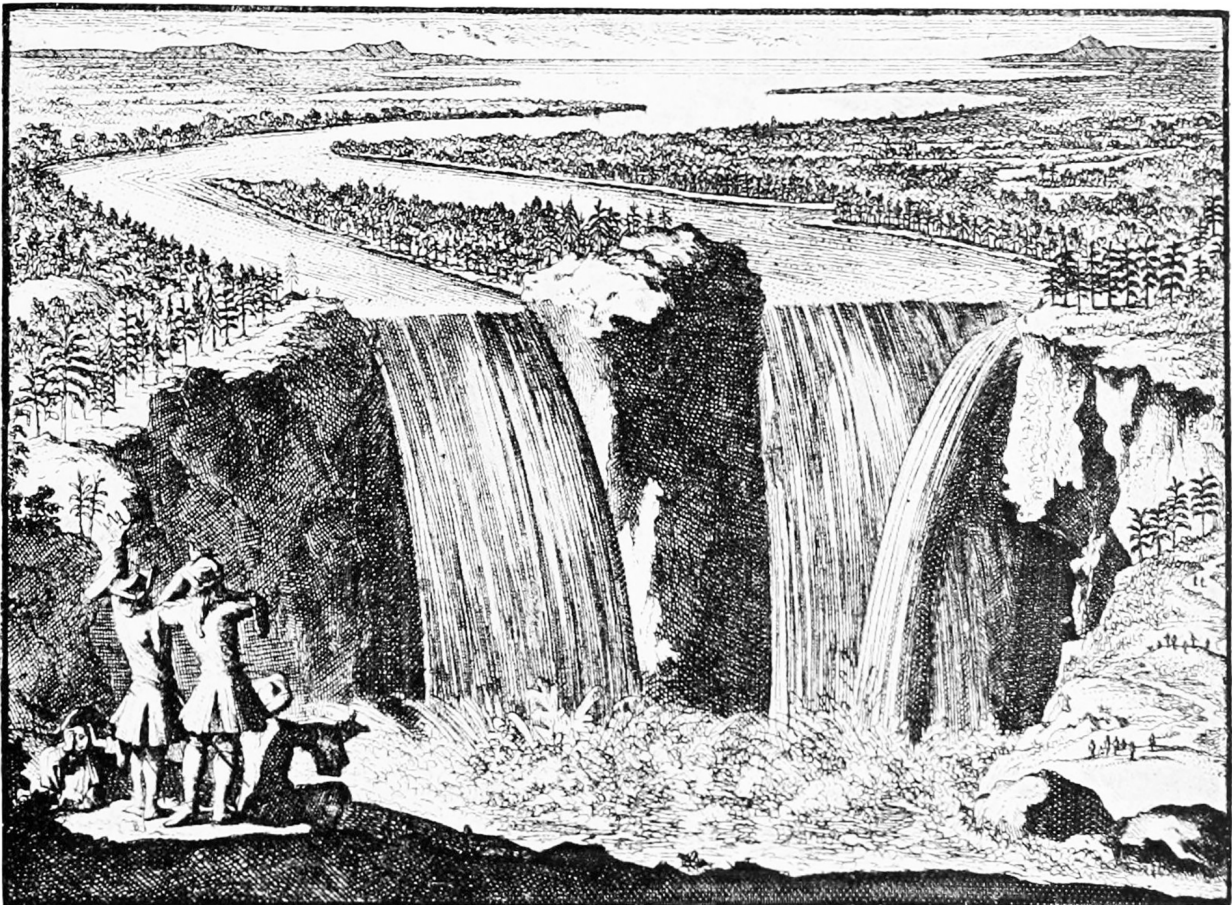
The highly-publicized legal wranglings between the residents of Love Canal and the state of New York, the Federal Government, and the Hooker Chemical Company (now Occidental Chemical Corporation) would continue over many years as the neighborhood was abandoned and most of its homes demolished. But the Love Canal disaster would re-emerge in the early 2000s when new residents were allowed to move into homes outside the containment area, assured that they were safe, only to discover the same chemical seepages and to suffer the same health problems as residents who had been evacuated decades earlier.

The Love Canal Containment Zone today comprises a fenced-in area of 36 square blocks. Signs just inside the fence warn potential trespassers of the hazardous waste, and the stems of chemical monitoring wells can be seen sticking out of the ground. The sparsely inhabited neighborhood outside of the forbidden zone has been renamed Black Creek Village. It is an eerie place to visit, especially for those aware of its toxic history. Barren streets, lined with buckling sidewalks, offer unwelcoming access to empty, ominously wooded lots. Crumbling driveways lead off into weeds and nothing more. One might spot an occasional abandoned TV, fire hydrant, or discarded food package in the underbrush. Remaining houses are scarce—some appear abandoned, yet some remain inhabited by diehard owners who aim to live out the rest of their lives in this mid-to-late-century ghost town.

The author, visiting in midsummer to feed a historical curiosity and snap a few photos, wondered whether the neighborhood air was still laced with its chemical harshness. As I drove away, leaving the haunting streets of Love Canal/Black Creek Village to future explorers, a sudden unseasonal sneeze attack revealed the answer.

The effects of man's intervention along the Niagara cannot be understated. The river and the Falls have been conquered, exploited, controlled, damaged, tainted, refined, reshaped, polished, and beautified, all to the detriment of the site's natural state. I refrain from using the term "original state" because the river's geology tells us that at its inception, the cataract was a puny thing. It also tells us that the Falls' natural progression is toward eroding themselves out of existence some ages from now. It is the timeline between those two states, where human achievement and human drama occur, that gives the Niagara Falls of today much of its magnificent allure. The waters have been harnessed and diverted to the extent that no one living today or beyond will ever witness the full volume and force of Lake Erie's unbridled waters cascading over the Horseshoe Falls. Nor will we be able to walk, unprotected by guardrails, out of an untamed wilderness to gaze over Hennepin's "horrible precipice" into the fearsome gorge below. It has all been tamed. Yet, the great monolithic tunnels, the superstructures, and the machinations engineered by man to convert that water diversion into hydroelectric power are of tremendous wonder on their own—man's own—terms. The tragedies and triumphs of the captains of industry, the colorful characters, the troubled souls, the daredevils—do they not draw us to Niagara

Falls in equal measure to the roaring cascades, the swirling columns of mist, and the spectacular rainbows?



An early depiction of Father Hennepin's view of Niagara Falls



John Augustus Roebling built the Niagara Railway Suspension Bridge, the first rail bridge to cross the gorge, in 1855. He would go on to design the Brooklyn Bridge, but would die before its construction began.

In 1850, an overhanging section of Table Rock, estimated at one-third its total size, broke free and tumbled into the Niagara Gorge. A driver was washing his carriage on the point when the rock structure gave way. The man escaped, but his carriage was destroyed.

Since the early 1900s, water diversion for hydroelectric power generation has dramatically reduced the volume of water flowing over Niagara Falls. This diversion has caused the plunge pool at the base of the Falls to drop by approximately 15 feet (4.6m), effectively increasing the height of the Falls by the same amount.

The Niagara Tunnel, completed in March of 2013, is 47 feet (14.4m) in diameter, and carries Niagara River water from far beneath the city of Niagara Falls, Ontario to the Sir Adam Beck Hydroelectric Generation Complex 6.3 miles (10.2k) away.

The Skylon Tower (ON), standing 520 feet (158.5m) above street level and 950 feet (289.5m) above the Falls, opened in October of 1965. The tower features a mall, observation deck, two restaurants (one of which rotates), and scenic “yellow bug” elevators that climb the exterior.

In 1944 it was discovered that, due to the natural recession of the Horseshoe Falls, there was insufficient rock remaining on the sides of the “Scenic Tunnels” (now called *Journey Behind the Falls*). Seen as an eminent danger to visitors touring the tunnels, new tunnels were constructed much further back from the originals, and visitors are now kept back at a safer distance from the tunnels’ openings into the waterfall itself.

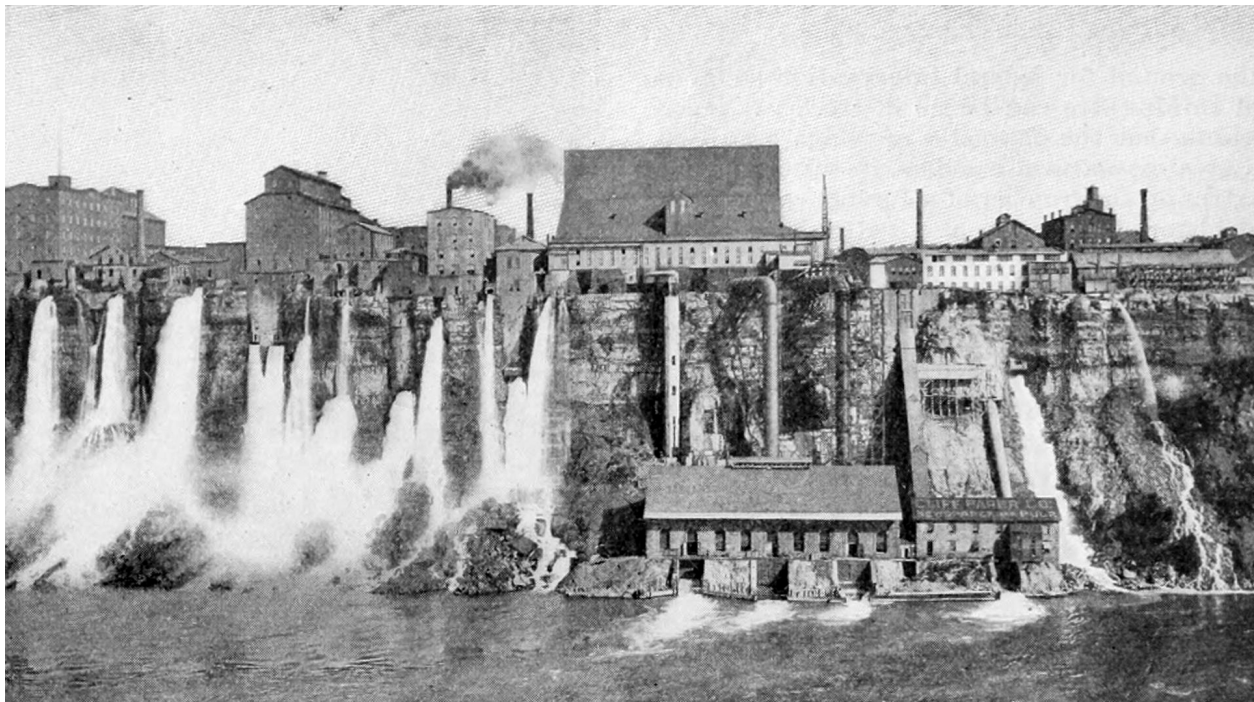
The Table Rock House was built by the Niagara Parks Commission (ON) in 1926. It served as a starting point for the Scenic Tunnels (now called *Journey Behind the Falls*), a snack bar, souvenir shop, wash and dressing rooms. Today it is called the Table Rock Welcome Centre, and is the heart of Niagara Parks on the Canadian side, offering what many consider the best views of both the Horseshoe and American Falls.

Designed by renowned Spanish engineer Leonardo Torres Quevedo, the Whirlpool Aero Car has been soaring across the Niagara Gorge on steel cables since 1916, offering spectacular views of the swirling Niagara Whirlpool and the Class 6 whitewater rapids below.

The city of Niagara Falls, New York was originally named *Schlosser* (after nearby Fort Schlosser). It was later named *Manchester* in the hopes that its industrial success would match that of its namesake city in England.



Map of Niagara Falls, NY – 1882



Niagara Falls, NY – Harnessing the river's power – late 1800s



Large chunk of Table Rock tumbles into the river



Celebrated funambulist Charles Blondin crossing the Niagara by tightrope



The old scow, stranded in place for over 100 years



Marilyn Monroe at Niagara Falls while filming the movie *Niagara* in 1952



The view down an abandoned street of former Love Canal community, Niagara Falls, NY



American Falls viewed from Niagara Falls, Ontario



When we stand near the edge of a high elevation and look over, our fear circuitry usually sends a signal that says, “back up, you might fall.” But there are certain restless souls among us in which that circuitry seems to get crossed, and the signal is misinterpreted as, “jump!” The first white man to bear witness to Niagara Falls more than three centuries ago felt it. “The temptation to throw one’s self down this incredible precipice is almost too great for resistance,” wrote Father Louis Hennepin in 1678.

Thus, an estimated 5,000 bodies have been found at the foot of the Falls over the course of Niagara’s recorded history. These deaths have been the result of stunts, accidents, and most often, as grim (mostly unpublicized) statistics reveal, suicides. It’s an awful way to go. One has to wonder, then, about the daredevils who tempt fate in and above the ravenous waters of Niagara. Do they do it in quest for fortune and fame, or simply because it is there? Do they resign themselves to placing a “nothing left to lose” wager, or do they fully expect to find themselves enjoying dinner on shore a few hours later? One thing is certain: among those restless souls, our conventional definition of “life” has been discarded and replaced by the term “existence”. While some of us in search of life’s meaning might read books on quantum physics or learn how to bowl, there are others whose need to “feel alive” is handled quite differently...

1829: Sam Patch “The Yankee Leaper”

Sam Patch, known as *The Yankee Leaper*, became the first famous American daredevil after successfully jumping from an 85-foot (26m) platform into the

Niagara River near the base of the Horseshoe Falls on October 7, 1829. Less than an hour before the scheduled noon jump, a chain securing the platform ladder to a Goat Island cliff wall snapped. The jump was rescheduled for 4:00 PM, and Patch jumped on time, plunging into the river feet first and appearing unhurt on shore a few minutes later. Bad weather and Patch's delayed arrival, however, had left a disappointingly small crowd, so he announced he would repeat the feat a second time on October 17. For his second jump, the platform was raised to a height of 130 feet (40m). Again, Patch plunged into the water feet first and emerged on shore to the approving roar of a pleasingly larger crowd.

Before returning home to New Jersey, Patch planned one more stop on his jumping tour: the Upper Falls of the Genesee River near Rochester, NY. This 100-foot (30m) drop was almost as spectacular as Niagara Falls. On Friday, November 6 at 2:00 PM, before a crowd estimated at 6,000 – 8,000 people, Patch climbed with his pet bear cub to a rock ledge in the middle of the river. After first pushing the bear off the ledge and watching it swim safely to shore, Sam jumped. The crowd cheered as he surfaced in the water below.

Apparently, however, the jump did not raise as much money from spectators as Patch had hoped for, so he decided to do a second jump a week later, on Friday the 13th. This jump—"Higher Yet!"—was publicized throughout the area with posters proclaiming "Sam's Last Jump!" This boast was to prove prescient. In front of 8,000 spectators, Patch jumped into the icy water but never surfaced. Observers noted that he did not jump with his usual erect form, and his body slammed awkwardly into the water. His frozen body was found four months later downriver near Lake Ontario.

1901: Annie Edson Taylor

Annie Edson Taylor was an American schoolteacher who, on her 63rd birthday, October 24, 1901, became the first person to survive a trip over Niagara Falls in a barrel.

Taylor was born on October 24, 1838 in Auburn, New York. She grew up to become a schoolteacher (receiving an honors degree in a four-year training course). During her studies she met and married David Taylor. They had a son

who died in infancy, and her husband died soon after. The widowed Taylor spent her working years in various jobs and locales, struggling to stay afloat financially. Eventually, she ended up in Bay City, Michigan where she opened a dance school, but had little success. She moved to Sault Ste. Marie in 1900 to teach music. From there, she traveled to San Antonio, Texas, then she and a friend went to Mexico City to find work. Unsuccessful, she moved back to Bay City.

Seeking financial security for her later years, Taylor resolved to go over the Falls. She used a custom-made barrel for the trip, constructed of oak and padded with a mattress. Several delays occurred in the launch, as no one wanted to be part of a potential suicide. Taylor persisted, and on her 63rd birthday, her barrel was put over the side of a rowboat, and she climbed in, along with her lucky heart-shaped pillow. After screwing down the lid, friends used a bicycle tire pump to compress the air inside the barrel. The hole used for this was corked, and Taylor was set adrift near the American shore south of Goat Island.

The river currents carried the barrel over Horseshoe Falls, and rescuers reached it shortly after the plunge. Taylor was discovered to be alive and relatively uninjured, except for a small gash on her head. After the journey, Taylor told the press, "If it was with my dying breath, I would caution anyone against attempting the feat... I would sooner walk up to the mouth of a cannon, knowing it was going to blow me to pieces, than make another trip over the Fall."

Taylor briefly earned money speaking about her experience but was never able to build substantial wealth. Her manager ran away with her barrel, and most of her savings went to private detectives hired to find it. It was eventually located in Chicago, only to permanently disappear some time later. Taylor spent her final years posing for photographs at her souvenir stand, attempting to earn money from the New York Stock Exchange, briefly talking about taking a second plunge over the Falls in 1906, attempting to write a novel, reconstructing her 1901 plunge on film (which was never seen), working as a clairvoyant, and providing magnetic therapy treatments to local residents.

Annie Edson Taylor died on April 29, 1921, aged 82, at the Niagara County Infirmary in Lockport, New York, and was interred in the *Stunter's Rest* section of Oakwood Cemetery in Niagara Falls, New York.

1911: Bobby Leach

After Annie Edson Taylor's successful trip over the Falls in a barrel, a battle of the sexes was sure to ensue. "Anything Annie can do, I can do better," boasted Bobby Leach to patrons of his restaurant on Bridge Street.

Leach had been a performer with the Barnum & Bailey Circus and was no stranger to stunting. For his plunge over the Falls, he used a custom-designed steel barrel. He spent six months in the hospital recovering from injuries he sustained during the fall, including two broken kneecaps and a fractured jaw. However, unlike Annie Taylor before him, Leach achieved some success from his endeavor. For several years he toured Canada, the United States, and England, recounting his harrowing journey at vaudeville shows and lecture halls, exhibiting his barrel, and posing for pictures.

Leach returned to Niagara Falls, New York in 1910 and opened a pool hall. While in his sixties he vowed to swim the Whirlpool Rapids but failed several attempts. During these aborted attempts, Leach was rescued by William "Red" Hill, Sr., a riverman who knew the Falls well and became famous in the area for later rescues.

In 1926, while on a publicity tour in New Zealand, Leach slipped on an orange peel and broke his leg. His health deteriorated rapidly after complications set in and the leg had to be amputated. Leach died on April 26th.

1920: Charles Stephens

Charles Stephens, also known as the *Demon Barber of Bedminster*, was an English barber and daredevil. He was the first person to die attempting to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel (he is also the third person and the second man to attempt this stunt).

To help support his family, which included his wife Annie and their eleven children, Stephens began supplementing his barbering income by performing stunts. After calling the stunt a "cool commercial proposition", Stephens went over the Horseshoe Falls in an oak barrel, using an anvil for ballast, which proved

to be fatal. Stephens ignored warnings from his advisers, fellow Niagara daredevils Bobby Leach and William “Red” Hill, Sr., who suggested he test the barrel beforehand. Stephens ignored the warnings and, as a result, was dragged under the Falls after the anvil broke through the bottom of the barrel.

Stephens’ severed right arm, the only part of his body ever found, is buried in the Drummond Hills Cemetery in Niagara Falls, Ontario. He received a Darwin Award for his death.

1928: Jean Lussier

Joseph Albert “Jean” Lussier, a 36-year-old man from Springfield, Massachusetts, came to Niagara Falls to make history by being the first person to go over the Falls in a rubber ball instead of a barrel.

After hearing about Charles Stephen’s death, Lussier went on vacation to Niagara Falls to learn more about the Falls and to pursue his own interest in challenging them, then on to Akron, Ohio where a rubber company would help develop his idea for a shock-protected rubber ball. The ball was 72 inches (182cm) in diameter with inner and outer steel bands to maintain the shape of the ball. It was lined with 32 inner tubes, and the only empty space was in the middle for Lussier’s body and an air cushion. The ball had 150 pounds of hard rubber stabilizer to prevent it from spinning top-over-bottom. Lussier had devised a system of valves to provide air from tanks containing enough oxygen to keep him alive for up to 40 hours in case he was trapped at the base of the waterfall.

On July 4th, 1928, Lussier eluded police officers and rowed his ball out to the middle of the Niagara River about two miles (3.2km) upstream of the Horseshoe Falls. The ball carrying Lussier was cut free and began its journey toward the Falls. It went over the brink at 3:35 PM, and three inner tubes burst, causing the frame to become badly damaged. At 4:23 PM, the ball was picked up by the Maid of The Mist tour boat and towed back to shore where it was discovered that Lussier had sustained only minor bruising.

To profit from his success, Lussier began selling off pieces of debris from his rubber ball to tourists. When he sold out, he began selling pieces of rubber that

he purchased from a nearby tire store. In 1952, at age 61, Lussier had a dream of being the only person to ever go over the American Falls as well as the Horseshoe Falls. He began making plans for another rubber ball twice as large as the previous one. Lussier gave up his dream when he retired in 1958 at the age of 67. He died of natural causes in 1971 at age 80.

1930: George Stathakis

George Stathakis lived in Buffalo, New York where he worked as a chef after emigrating from Greece. He was 46 years old and a bachelor when he made the decision to go over the Falls in a barrel. He hoped the revenue such a trip would generate might help him publish a series of books on metaphysics and philosophy.

With the help of friends, Stathakis constructed a barrel of wood and steel. The barrel was 10 feet (3m) long, over 5 feet (2.5m) in diameter, and weighed almost a ton. He was warned by noted riverman William “Red” Hill, Sr. that the barrel was too big and heavy. Also, against the advice of those who built the barrel to his specifications, Stathakis chose to include only one tank of oxygen—enough to last only 3 hours (there was space enough inside the barrel for several tanks).

Stathakis was strapped to a spring mattress inside his barrel and accompanied by his pet turtle “Sonny Boy”, who Stathakis claimed was 105 years old. Stathakis stated that if he perished and the turtle survived, “Sonny Boy” would carry the secret of the trip and would reveal it at the proper time. The barrel was cut loose just downriver from Navy Island, about 3 miles (4.8km) above the Falls, at 3:20 PM on Saturday, July 5, 1930. At 3:35 PM the barrel slipped over the brink of the Horseshoe Falls and plunged into the gorge below where William “Red” Hill, Sr. was waiting in a rowboat to tow it to shore. But the barrel did not emerge. It was trapped behind the wall of water where it remained until just after dawn the following morning. When it finally shot out into the main stream, Hill managed to bring it ashore, but hours more were needed to remove the many bolts that held the hatch in place. As expected, Stathakis, lying on the soaked mattress, had died from suffocation. His turtle “Sonny Boy”, however, remained alive and well until the following year when he died without ever having revealed “the secret of the trip.”

1951: William “Red” Hill Jr.

Red Hill Jr. was no stranger to Niagara Falls and the power it possessed. His father, Red Hill Sr. was well known for the many rescues he had carried out along the Niagara River. In July, 1950, Hill announced to the media that he would go over the Horseshoe Falls the following year in a ball similar to the one used by Jean Lussier in 1928. Hill’s younger brother Lloyd, not to be upstaged by his brother, attempted the journey in 1950 in a steel barrel. That attempt was thwarted when the barrel became lodged in a power plant weir just above the Falls. After Lloyd Hill’s rescue, his barrel slipped and disappeared, unoccupied, over the Falls.

Red Hill Jr.’s “ball” was, in fact, 14 rubber truck tire inner tubes covered with heavy canvas and held together with a thick net. The ends were packed with more inner tubes and the contraption was equipped with a hose and mask so Hill would be able to get air if needed.

At 2:30 PM on August 5th, 1951, Red Hill Jr. climbed into his homemade vessel and began his trip from Usher’s Creek, about a mile (1.6km) above the Falls. At 3:05 PM, Hill’s “thing” was spotted going over the brink and disappearing into the mist and thundering water below. Ten minutes later, the contraption was recovered, badly damaged, with only Hill’s shoes found inside. Four inner tubes had been torn loose and the netting was in tatters. The next day searchers pulled Hill’s battered body from the river.

1961: Nathan Boya (William Fitzgerald)

Nathan Boya (real name William Fitzgerald) was the first African-American to go over Niagara Falls. Very little is known about Fitzgerald. He claimed to be self-employed, but others have claimed he worked for IBM. He was 30 years old when he challenged the Falls unannounced and emerged virtually unscathed. He claimed the trip was for personal reasons as opposed to the fortune and fame that others sought.

Fitzgerald’s craft was a spherical frame of steel construction, roughly 72 inches (183cm) in diameter. A layered cover was placed over the frame, consisting of

rubber, sheet metal, and another layer of rubber. The ball was nicknamed the “Plunge-O-Sphere”. Learning from previous flaws, Fitzgerald installed an oxygen system capable of providing air for 30 hours as well as a re-breather to convert carbon dioxide to oxygen.

Shortly before 11:00 AM on July 15, 1961, a large, dark ball was spotted going over the Horseshoe Falls. When retrieved by Maid of The Mist employees, a man emerged from the vessel and identified himself as “Nathan Boya”. Niagara Parks Police were there to greet him when he came ashore and, as a result, Fitzgerald has the distinction of being the first person to be charged and convicted under the Niagara Parks Act. He was fined \$100.00 and incurred court costs of \$13.00. He gave no explanation for his trip, saying only, “I had to do it, I wanted to do it, and I am glad I did it.”

Fitzgerald appeared as a contestant on “I’ve Got A Secret” on August 30, 1961; his secret was, of course, “I went over Niagara Falls in a 6-foot ball.” Interviewed in 2012 for a *National Geographic* television special about Niagara daredevils, Fitzgerald finally revealed the reason for his stunt after decades of silence: he had broken off his engagement to a woman who he felt he had wronged, and he performed the dangerous stunt as a form of penance. Niagara had been their planned honeymoon destination.

Since his stunt, Fitzgerald has generally kept a low profile. As of this writing, he is reported to be living in the New York City area.

1984: Karel Soucek

Karel Soucek was a Canadian professional stuntman who lived in Hamilton, Ontario. He prepared for his 1984 Niagara Falls stunt by researching previous attempts, by sending unmanned barrels over the Falls to test the currents, and by dropping his barrel off the Niagara Escarpment in Hamilton to test its shock absorbance. Soucek’s custom-made barrel was nine feet (2.74m) long and five feet (1.5m) in diameter, bright red in color, and bore the words, “Last of The Niagara Daredevils – 1984”.

On July 2, 1984, Soucek's barrel was rolled into the Niagara River 1000 feet (305m) above the Horseshoe Falls with Soucek inside. In seconds, the barrel was swept over the brink and shortly thereafter, Soucek emerged bleeding but safe. He was fined \$500.00 for performing the stunt without a license. He had previously spent \$15,000.00 on materials and labor and \$30,000.00 to film the stunt, but quickly earned back all his costs from sales and interviews. Having tasted success, Soucek decided to build a museum at Niagara Falls, Ontario in which to display his stunting paraphernalia. He convinced a corporation to finance a barrel drop of 180 feet (55m) from the top of the Astrodome in Houston, Texas into a tank of water to pay for his project.

On January 19, 1985, as Soucek was enclosed in his barrel high above the floor of the Astrodome, the barrel was released prematurely and began spinning as it fell toward the floor. Instead of landing in the center of the water tank, the barrel hit the rim. Soucek, severely injured, was still alive when he was cut from the barrel. He died later while the Astrodome stunt show was still in progress. Stuntman Evel Knievel had tried to persuade Soucek not to go through with the stunt, calling it "the most dangerous I've ever seen".

Soucek is buried at the Drummond Hill Cemetery in Niagara Falls, Ontario.

1985: Steve Trotter

Steve Trotter was a part-time bartender from Barrington, Rhode Island with an upbeat personality and a relentless spirit for adventure. At age 22, he became the youngest person to have ever gone over Niagara Falls in a barrel. He is one of only a few people to have performed the stunt twice. He has also performed other illegal stunts.

Trotter had always sought to make a death-defying journey over Niagara Falls, which he spent several months planning in 1985. He arrived in Niagara on August 15, 1985 and announced he would carry out the stunt the following day. Police were waiting for him the next morning, foiling his attempt, and he was escorted by Canadian authorities with his barrel back to the U.S. border and released.

On August 18, 1985, Trotter began his second attempt from a location just upstream from the Horseshoe Falls. He used two pickle barrels placed end-to-end. The exterior was reinforced with layers of fiberglass, balsa wood for flotation, and covered with truck tire inner tubes for shock absorption. Trotter was strapped into an automotive racing harness and equipped with flashlights, life jacket, two-way radio, and oxygen tanks. At 8:30 AM, Trotter's 11-man crew launched his barrel into the Niagara River rapids a quarter-mile (.4km) from the brink. He went over the Falls and survived with only minor scrapes, later describing the fall as being "like the best roller-coaster ride you had as a ten-year-old." He was fined \$500.00 by the Niagara Parks Police.

Trotter appeared on *Good Morning America* and *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*. His photo was published in *Time Magazine*, and he also made the front page of *USA Today* and numerous other publications worldwide. He was selected by *Mademoiselle Magazine* as "One of the 10 Sexiest Men in the World".

1985: John David "Dave" Munday

Dave Munday was a skydiving instructor with 1,400 completed jumps under his belt. He was an accomplished helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft pilot. He couldn't swim, though, and was terrified of water—yet he had 20-year obsession with going over Niagara Falls in a barrel.

On July 28, 1985 at approximately 1:00 PM, a truck carrying Munday's barrel pulled up to a spot on the Canadian shoreline approximately 2.5 miles (4km) upriver from the brink of the Falls. An aluminum and unbreakable plastic barrel measuring 6.5 feet (2m) wide by 3.25 feet (1m) long was launched into the river. "To Challenge Niagara July 1985" was inscribed on the side of the barrel. Inside, Munday was prepared to become the 9th person to go over the Falls. Unbeknownst to Munday, a police officer had spotted the launch. As Munday rode his barrel towards the Falls, Ontario Hydro was alerted, and the water level quickly reduced at the International Control Dam. The water level dropped 5 feet (1.5m) in 3 minutes, trapping Munday in a hydro pool well upstream of the Falls.

On October 5, 1985, at approximately 9:00 AM, Munday launched his second attempt to go over the Falls, now planning to be the 10th person to do so (Steve

Trotter had become the 9th person just a few weeks prior). This time Munday's team unloaded the barrel and launched within 450 feet (137m) of the brink. The barrel went over the Horseshoe Falls within seconds and became trapped at the base for 90 minutes before Munday was rescued, shaken, but unhurt. He was fined \$500.00 for stunting in the Niagara Parks and \$1,000.00 for breach of probation for his previous thwarted attempt. This time, he promised the court he would not try the stunt again, assuring them that the ride was "a terrifying experience" that he had no desire to repeat. By making that pledge, he avoided a possible 90-day jail sentence.

"Super Dave" Munday, as some now called him, would fail to keep his pledge.

1989: Peter DeBernardi & Jeffrey Petkovich

In September of 1989, Peter DeBernardi, 42, and Jeffrey Petkovich, 24, both from the Niagara Falls area, came to the Falls to become the first two-man team to go over them. DeBernardi had built a \$1,500.00 barrel, weighing 1,500 pounds, which had a keel for direction, a two-way radio system, 90 minutes of oxygen supply, a ballast control, and a double hatch assembly. This vessel also included double Plexiglass windows so that the two men could see outside.

On September 28, 1989 at 5:30 PM, DeBernardi and Petkovich, resting head-to-head inside the barrel, began their journey. The barrel was launched just 200 feet (61m) from the precipice, and only 25 seconds later, the bright yellow barrel with the inscription "Don't Put Yourself on the Edge – Drugs Kill" went over the brink. When recovered by workers on the *Maid of The Mist* boat dock, both DeBernardi and Petkovich were uninjured.

On August 14, 1990, the pair made an attempt to go over the American Falls together, but were foiled by New York State Parks Police when a patrolling officer stopped a truck and discovered DeBernardi's new 10-foot (3m) diameter yellow Styrofoam ball contraption inside.

1990: Jesse Sharp

Jesse W. Sharp was a 28-year-old bachelor from Ocoee, Tennessee who attempted to ride over the brink of the Horseshoe Falls in a 12-foot (3.6m) kayak on June 5, 1990. Sharp, unemployed at the time, was an experienced whitewater kayaker. Three people who accompanied him to Niagara Falls to videotape his trip later told police that Sharp had been planning the stunt for years.

Sharp's idea was to gain enough speed in his kayak to propel himself well off of the Falls and clear of the pummeling water which would surely crush and kill him. He would then transverse the rapids below, eventually ending up 4 miles (6.5km) downstream in Lewiston, New York. He was so confident of success that he had parked his car at Artpark in Lewiston and made dinner reservations for that evening.

Powerhouse operators, noticing what was about to unfold, quickly diverted water from the river in an attempt to ground Sharp's kayak, but to little avail. Sharp simply skirted around the rocks. Just as he reached the Falls, he raised his paddle high above his head and keeled over the brink, vanishing into the raging waters below. Because he wanted his face to be visible on film during the trip, Sharp refused to wear a helmet. He also refused to wear a life jacket, believing it would interfere with his ability to escape in the event that he was caught underneath the Falls.

His body has never been recovered.

1993: John David "Super Dave" Munday

By 1993, "Super Dave" Munday had earned quite a reputation as a stunt man, having been the 10th person to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel, then having made a successful trip through the Great Gorge Rapids and the Niagara Whirlpool in a barrel in 1987.

On September 26, 1993, Munday survived his second successful trip over the Horseshoe Falls riding in a 660-pound altered diving bell that he had purchased from the Canadian Coast Guard. 200 pounds of the diving bell was dedicated to

counterbalance, and the vehicle was painted with a red maple leaf motif. During his journey, Munday was knocked unconscious, yet only suffered minor bruises and cuts.

In a 2011 newspaper interview, Munday stated that he doesn't like being called a *daredevil*. "It really wasn't much of a big deal," he said, "I've done skydiving and that's a bigger thrill than going over Niagara Falls."

1995: Steve Trotter & Lori Martin

After a flurry of publicity following his 1985 trip over the Horseshoe Falls, Steve Trotter slipped out of the limelight for almost a decade. He returned to Niagara Falls in the summer of 1995 with a newly constructed 12-foot (3.7m) barrel made from two water heater tanks welded together and coated with Kevlar. Trotter, now age 32, wanted to challenge the Falls for a second time. On this occasion, he brought his girlfriend, Lori Martin, age 29, to join him on the journey.

On June 18, 1995, the barrel was launched approximately 300 feet (91m) above the brink of the Falls along the Canadian shore. The barrel went over the Falls and was caught in the rocks below. Emergency Services personnel were required to risk their own lives by climbing over the guard rail to secure the barrel and pull Trotter and Martin to safety. Both were transported to the Greater Niagara General Hospital for treatment of minor injuries. They were subsequently arrested for the illegal stunt. The barrel remained in the water for nine days until it could be removed by a crane. Trotter and Martin became the second couple to journey over the Falls together, and the first "co-ed" couple to do so.

Trotter spent two weeks in jail and was fined \$5,000.00. Martin paid a \$2,000.00 fine.

1995: Robert Overacker

At about 12:35 PM on the afternoon of October 1, 1995, Niagara Falls visitors were stunned when they spotted a jet-ski barreling across the Cascade Rapids of the upper river toward the brink of the Horseshoe Falls. 39-year-old Robert

Overacker of Camarillo, California had spent seven years carefully preparing this jaw-dropping stunt. But not quite carefully enough.

Overacker was a 39-year-old graduate of a California stunt school who raced cars at Ventura Raceway. He also bought and sold British import cars. His reason for going over the Falls was to draw attention to the plight of the homeless, and his jet-ski was decorated with “Save The Homeless” stickers. His plan seemed simple: he carried a rocket-propelled parachute on his back that he planned to activate just as he went over the brink. He would ditch the jet-ski and float safely down to the waters below.

In video footage captured by witnesses, the stunt appears to have gotten off to a good start. The footage shows Overacker maneuvering his jet-ski expertly through the rapids. At the brink of the Falls, he let go of the jet-ski and threw his hands above his head as the craft fell out from under him. Both disappeared into the mist. As witnesses scanned the waters below for some sign of Overacker, his step-brother and a friend who had helped plan the stunt both realized something had gone horribly wrong. It was later determined that Overacker ignited the rocket to deploy the parachute as planned, but it had not been packed properly and was not bound to his body. He was unaware of the fatal error until just before he slammed into the water, which police later explained would have been like hitting hard cement. Several tourists reported seeing Overacker at the base of the Falls moving his arms as if trying to swim. He was lifted aboard the Maid of The Mist tour boat and taken to shore where medical personnel tried unsuccessfully to revive him. He was pronounced dead approximately one hour after his jump.

In a surprising and further heartbreaking footnote, an autopsy later revealed that Overacker had suffered neither broken bones nor severe injuries from the 180-foot (55m) fall. He had drowned.

2003: Kirk Jones – Act 1

Kirk Jones saw Niagara Falls as a way out, a means of escaping the mundanity of his life. “I was a 40-year-old man with no purpose,” he told *Outside Magazine*. He struggled with depression, drugs, and alcohol, and he lived off his parents’

largesse. “I never thought anyone would be interested in me,” he told one newspaper.

Jones was a 40-year-old out-of-work auto parts salesman from Canton, Michigan. His parents had recently closed the family business and retired to Oregon, leaving Jones without a job or home. He was single and was, by all accounts, a bit of a sad sack, yet an affable and well-liked one. His friend Bob Krueger drove him from Michigan to Niagara Falls and the two paid visits to the waterfall to gauge the crowds and figure out where and when Jones could jump so he wouldn’t get busted if he survived. Jones bought a cheap video camera from a pawn shop and enlisted Krueger to be his videographer—they practiced using the camera in the parking lot of the motel where they were staying. “I’m not gonna lie, we were partying,” Krueger described his relationship to Jones at the time.

At dawn on October 20, 2003, after a night of heavy drinking, Jones consumed another pint of vodka for “liquid courage” and went to the river with Krueger. Wearing jeans, white sneakers, a red sweater under two thick winter jackets, and a baseball cap, Jones hoisted his leg over the railing just feet from the precipice. He had written a goodbye note to his friends and family and left it in Krueger’s car with the remaining \$30.00 of his dad’s money. A concerned woman saw Jones and asked, “You’re not going to jump, are you?” Jones replied, “I think I will.”

Krueger’s video, later recovered by police, completely misses Jones entering the water. Instead, it shows a blur of movement as Krueger runs desperately along Table Rock to a spot where he could see to the bottom. “Kirk, goddamn, Kirk!” he screams, “My buddy just went over the Falls!” Onlookers can be heard gasping as they spot Jones swimming leisurely on his back, smiling, then keeling feet first over the drop. They assumed they had witnessed one of the 25 or so suicides that occur at Niagara Falls each year. But then, down below, a miracle: Jones emerged, crawling onto the rocks. Dazed, he tossed off the two winter jackets and lay down for a moment. Then he struggled to his feet, looked up at the stunned audience, and raised his arms in a ‘V’ as the crowd cheered.

“I left every problem I had at the bottom of the gorge that day,” Jones later said.

As park police set about bringing charges against him, Jones was held in a psychiatric ward for examination and treatment. There, he irritated the nurses by

hogging the ward's only phone, on which he conducted interviews with any media outlet that would have him. But during an interview two days later with Niagara Falls Police detective Rick Berketa, Jones described the events leading up to the jump. He had been bragging to the media that his performance was a stunt, but during the police interview, he maintained that it was actually a suicide attempt. He described his struggles with depression and discord with his older brother. He told Berketa, "I knew in my mind there was no damn way I could make it."

Jones was banned from the park for two years. He paid a fine of \$3,000.00 for the stunt and was ordered to pay an additional \$1,408.00 for lost revenue sustained by the *Journey Behind the Falls* attraction during his rescue. But it seemed like a small price to Jones for the instant fame he acquired. He appeared on *Inside Edition* and *Good Morning America*. He met his idol, Alice Cooper, who reportedly paid for Jones' hotel room after the stunt, where Jones and his newfound buddies reportedly racked up a bar tab totaling several thousand dollars.

Dick Gordon, the owner of *Toby Tyler Circus*, offered Jones a \$50,000.00 contract and a percentage of photograph sales if Jones would join his troupe. "He had a lot of media attention," Gordon says. "I thought he might be a draw—the World's Greatest Stuntman sort of thing." Jones accepted the offer but was an awkward fit. He was a heavy drinker and out of shape; he didn't exactly fit the bill of the World's Greatest Stuntman. He was dressed in a white suit with gold sequins and rhinestones to lead llamas into the ring during opening processions. Later, he was tasked with cleaning elephants. He had no complaints—he felt that the circus had given him a second chance in life. But the good times didn't last—the circus folded after a few months, and Jones was out of work again.

After the death of his father, Jones would suffer a lengthy string of misfortunes, including serving jail time for selling cocaine and later getting caught shoplifting at a Walmart. By 2014, the luster of fame and fortune had long since dulled, and Jones was back where he started: broke, jobless, hopeless, and alone. He began plotting to restore his faded glory and could see only one way out of his predicament: he would conquer Niagara Falls again.

2017: Kirk Jones – Act 2

On the morning of April 19, 2017, Peggie Bastian and her husband, Ron, were having coffee on the porch balcony of their condominium in Niagara Falls, New York when they noticed two men removing a large translucent ball from a flatbed trailer in the parking lot below. The Bastians watched quizzically as the men rolled the ball toward the river. Moments later, Peggie snapped a few pictures of the ball floating in the water. Later that day, tourists spotted an empty rubber ball spinning in the river against some rocks. Police discovered an abandoned 2001 Honda Minivan with open rear doors and an empty snake cage inside. They also found a camera-equipped drone on a small island in the river. A video from the camera showed the drone taking off, hovering for a time over the water, then falling to earth.

A month and a half later, on June 2, a boater discovered Jones' body 12 miles (19km) downriver from the Falls where the Niagara flows into Lake Ontario. He had died at age 53. His pet albino boa constrictor, *Misty*, was never found. For months after Jones' death, his body remained unclaimed at the Erie County Medical Examiner's Office in Buffalo, New York. Eventually, the body was handed off to a funeral home, which cremated the remains.

Investigators have yet to piece together a clear chronology of what unfolded the day Jones' made his second attempt to defy the Falls (or commit suicide). It is unknown whether he fell or was thrown out of the inflatable ball—or whether he ever made it inside at all. He had created a website that featured a photo of the Falls with a picture of himself and his boa constrictor, *Misty*. The website heading read: "Believe in the impossible Kirk Jones + Misty Conquer Niagara Falls NY 2017." Experts on exotic pets pointed out that the snake could not have survived in the cold water. Investigators were contacted by a Michigan man who told them he had come to the Falls with Jones to "help him with a stunt"—the man said that he helped carry the ball into the state park but decided the stunt was too risky and left.

Tim Baxter, director of operations at Oakwood Cemetery, a short drive from where Jones went into the water, followed the story closely. He felt sadness for Jones: "Here was a guy who just seemed to want recognition, but whose mortal remains were unclaimed and anonymous." Thanks to Baxter, Oakwood provided

Jones a plot in the cemetery and a headstone. Today, Jones' ashes are stored in a small green box in the back of Baxter's office near the cemetery entrance. Baxter says he intends to bury Jones near Annie Edson Taylor in the stunts' section just as soon as the headstone is ready. Kirk Jones can then take his place in history as one of the doomed daredevils of Niagara Falls... unrecognized no longer.

Many have attempted to swim, boat, or ride out (in various barrels and other contraptions) the raging Class VI rapids downriver from the Falls. These are the most dangerous whitewater rapids on Earth, and few attempts to conquer them have been successful. Seasoned Niagara River rescuers offer up grueling tales of watching bodies circle around the river's great Whirlpool for days or even weeks before they can be recovered.

In addition to the daredevils who have gone over the Horseshoe Falls or through the Whirlpool Rapids, there are the *funambulists*—tightrope walkers who have made harrowing country-to-country crossings high above the Niagara Gorge as spectators watched with bated breath, men cursing and women fainting. The earliest and most celebrated high-wire acrobat was Jean-François Gravelet, more famously known as *The Great Blondin*. Blondin understood the appeal of the morbid to the masses, and he reveled when gamblers took bets on whether he would plunge to a watery death. From 1858 to his final performance in 1896, it was estimated that Blondin had crossed Niagara Falls 300 times and walked more than 10,000 miles (16,093km) on his rope.

Blondin upped the ante with each performance—every crossing seemed doubly as daring as the last. He crossed at night with locomotive headlights affixed to each end of the cable. He crossed with his body in shackles. He crossed carrying a table and a chair, stopping in the middle to try to sit down and prop up his legs; the chair tumbled into the water, and Blondin nearly followed, but regained his composure. He made a round-trip carrying his manager on his back. He sat down on the cable, ate a piece of cake, and washed it down with champagne. In his most famous exploit, he carried a heavy iron cookstove and utensils on his back, walked to the center of the cable, fired up the stove, and cooked an omelet. When the breakfast was ready, he lowered it to passengers on the deck of the *Maid of The Mist*.

Other funambulists followed, performing hair-raising feats of their own in hopes of stealing some of Blondin's thunder, but none were as successful or memorable. The appeal of tightrope walking at Niagara Falls had all but faded away by the end of the 19th century. It seemed that everything that could be done on the high-wire had been done. Then along came Henri Julien Rechatin.

Rechatin held the world endurance record for high-wire balancing when he arrived at Niagara Falls in January of 1967. Trying to bring the past excitement of tightrope walking back to the citizens and tourists of Niagara, Rechatin made several proposals to conduct high-wire acts throughout the year. He left town after all his proposals were refused by the Niagara Parks Commission.

Rechatin returned to Niagara Falls in 1975. This time he proposed to be the first person to remove a straitjacket while hanging upside down over the Falls from a helicopter. Authorities threatened him with charges if he proceeded, and he abandoned the idea. But on June 3, 1975, Rechatin went to the observation deck of the Skylon Tower, 525 feet (160m) above the ground. Working from a small wooden deck on the outer edge of the deck, he performed a chair balancing act. Using two oak chairs, he balanced one on top of the other, then climbed up and balanced himself for thirty seconds. He repeated the feat three times, but this didn't seem to quench his and his team's thirst for danger.

The next day Rechatin, his wife Janyck, and motorcyclist Frank Lucas arrived in the dark before dawn at the Southern Terminal of the *Spanish Aero Car* (now known as the *Whirlpool Aero Car*), a cable gondola ride that, true to its name, crosses the Niagara Gorge high above the river's deadly Whirlpool. Without permission and without fanfare, the trio began crossing the Whirlpool on the cable that supported the Aero Car. Lucas had a modified motorcycle to ride on the cable with a metal frame constructed above it to support Rechatin and another metal frame below it for Janyck to hang upside down by one of her feet.

In the middle of the crossing, the wind picked up and the rear wheel of the motorcycle began to slip. Lucas had no prior experience riding a motorcycle across a wire (imagine that), so as the trio approached the Northern Terminal, Rechatin took a balancing pole and wire-walked the rest of the way. He then attached a rope to the motorcycle and pulled it to the Aero Car, inside which the trio waited until the ride's operator arrived to open for business. Needless to say,

police officers were waiting for them when they returned to the Southern Terminal.

Stunting has become more difficult in recent times due to the Niagara Parks' increased vigilance and increasingly stiff penalties—permission is rarely granted. One recent exception was on June 15, 2012, when world-famous acrobat Nik Wallenda was allowed to perform a high-wire crossing of the Niagara Gorge at the Horseshoe Falls. “Super Dave” Munday was not happy when news reached him that Wallenda might be granted permission to perform the stunt. Munday suggested that if such permission were granted, then he should be entitled to a refund of the monies he was fined (plus interest) for going over the Falls in his barrels in 1985 and 1993.

Despite the difficulties and dangers involved, present and future daredevils will inevitably succumb to the pull of Niagara Falls. Why? Because it's there. Steve Trotter, the youngest person ever to (intentionally) go over the Falls in 1985, has suggested in recent years that he may someday become the oldest person to do so as well. With his typical exuberance, Trotter explains: “Daredevils and stunts have always been a part of Niagara Falls. It's legend up here, you know? I can see the police and all the authorities... their point of view, trying to keep daredevils from coming here, and they don't want anything to do with us anymore, but... whether they like it or not, we're here to stay. It's legend, baby!”



William Hunt (known as *The Great Farini*) vowed to duplicate and surpass many of Blondin's amazing tightrope walks, which he did. However, the stunts were more of a struggle for Farini; his movements were more strained and awkward, and audiences winced in discomfort as he nearly fell on several occasions.

In 1861, the original *Maid of The Mist* boat was sold at public auction to a Canadian company. In order for the deal to go through, Captain Joel Robinson accepted the task of navigating it through the deadly Whirlpool Rapids, the Whirlpool itself, and the Devil's Hole Rapids to deliver the vessel to Lake Ontario. The boat was badly damaged in the journey, and Captain Robinson was so shaken that he gave up his career and retired into seclusion afterwards.

Maria Spelterini was the only woman to cross the Niagara Gorge on a tightrope, which she did on July 8, 1876 as part of a celebration of the U.S. Centennial. She crossed again on July 12, this time with peach baskets strapped to her feet. She crossed blindfolded on July 19, and on July 22 she crossed with her ankles and wrists manacled.

Captain Matthew Webb was the first recorded person to swim the English Channel for sport without the use of artificial aids, swimming from Dover to Calais in less than 22 hours on August 25, 1875. He drowned on July 24, 1883 while attempting to swim the Niagara's Whirlpool Rapids.

On July 11, 1886, Carlisle D. Graham survived his first trip through the Whirlpool Rapids in a barrel, although the journey made him extremely ill and dizzy. For his second attempt on August 8, he decided to keep his head outside of the barrel, which rendered him hearing impaired after the journey. Nonetheless,

Carlisle would go on to complete a total of four trips through the rapids in his barrel.

Carlisle D. Graham loaned his barrel to Martha Wagenfuhrer, who became the first woman to successfully navigate through the rapids and Whirlpool alone on September 6, 1901.

On June 22, 1887, tightrope walker Stephen Peer performed a successful crossing of the Niagara Gorge from Canada to the U.S. side. Three days later, on June 25, he was found dead on the bank of the Niagara River directly below his wire cable. He had fallen while attempting an unscheduled night crossing after an evening of heavy drinking.

Major league baseball player “Big” Ed Delahanty died when he was swept over Niagara Falls in early July of 1903. He was kicked off a train by the train’s conductor for being drunk and disorderly. He started his way across the International Railway Bridge connecting Buffalo, New York with Fort Erie, Ontario and either fell or jumped off the bridge. Whether he died from his plunge over the Falls or drowned on the way is uncertain.

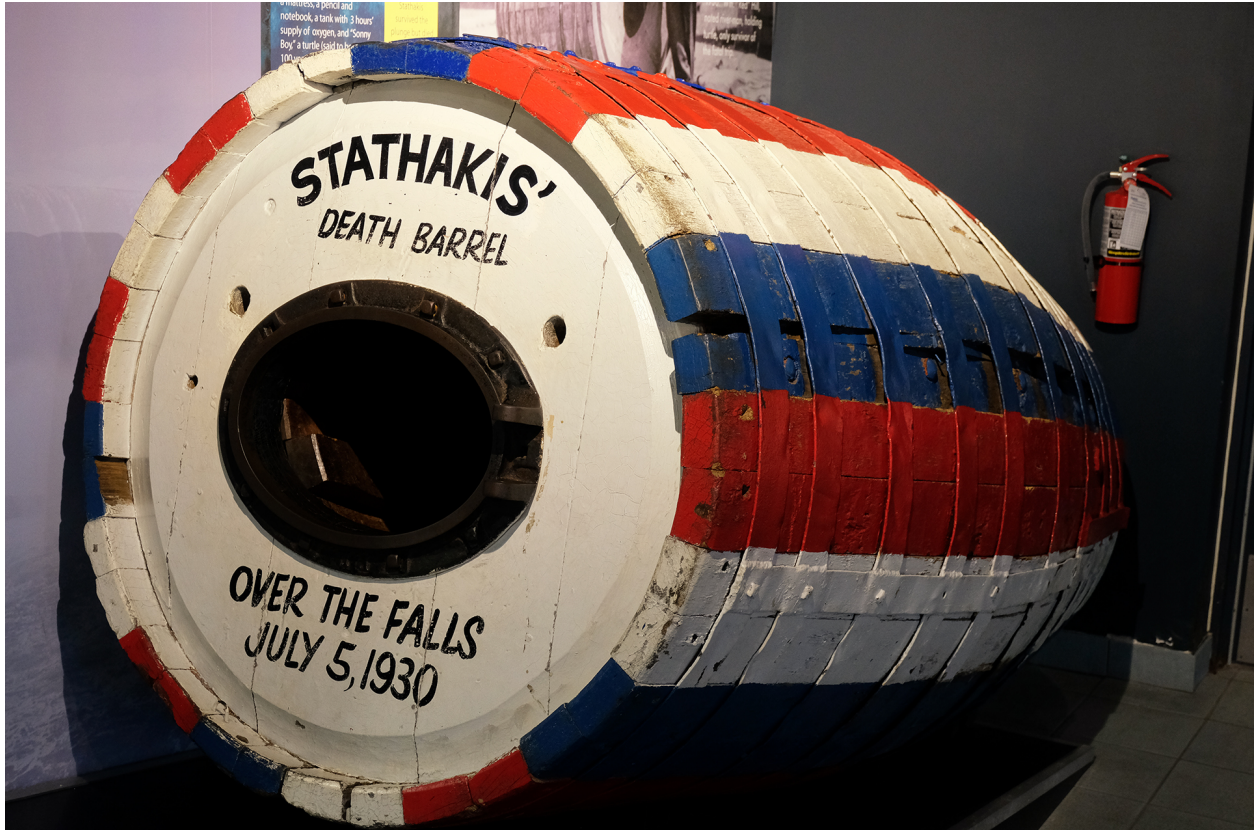
Ayano Tokumasu, a Japanese exchange student studying in Toronto, was visiting Niagara Falls along with some of her classmates on August 14, 2011 when she climbed over a safety railing to pose for a photo. When she got up to climb back over the railing, she lost her balance, slipped into the rushing waters near the brink of the Horseshoe Falls, and was swept over. Her body was recovered five days later.



Annie Edson Taylor (right) – first person to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel in 1901



At the brink – the daredevil's view



George Stathakis' death barrel – on display at the Niagara Daredevils Exhibit



Kirk Jones survived his first trip over the Falls, but not his second



Niagara River Class VI rapids – the most dangerous in the world



Nik Wallenda crosses by tightrope at Horseshoe Falls



Niagara Falls, Ontario or Niagara Falls, New York?

Niagara Falls, New York has made strides toward becoming a more desirable and accommodating tourist destination in recent years, but outside the scenic grounds of Niagara Falls State Park, the city's gritty industrial roots show prominently. Niagara Falls, Ontario, by contrast, has been groomed and nurtured as a world-class tourist destination. More than two-thirds of those who visit the Falls choose to base their visit in Niagara Falls, Ontario. By popular tourist consensus, the Canadian side offers an overall cleaner, safer, and more welcoming destination, better views of both the American and Canadian Falls, and a broader selection of scenic vistas, attractions, and activities.

Do I Need A Passport to Enter Canada?

If you are a citizen of the United States, you **will** need a passport—not to enter Canada, but to re-enter the United States. To enter Canada from the U.S., you will need to carry proof of your citizenship, such as a birth certificate, certificate of citizenship or naturalization, or photo identification.

If you are traveling by airplane, train, or bus, be sure to check your carrier's specific guidelines/checklists for passport, documentation, and other requirements prior to your departure date.

If you are traveling to Canada from a country other than the U.S., you are advised to check Canadian requirements for travel from your country of origin as well as your carrier's guidelines/checklists.

Entry requirements are always subject to change, so always check current requirements prior to departure.

Seasonal Considerations

The scenery of Niagara Falls and the Niagara Region undergoes extreme transformations throughout the cycle of seasons... from the lush greens of summer into the fiery colors of fall, then from the bitter chill of winter into the early blooms of spring as temperatures warm and the region stirs back to life. Each of the seasons offers its own unique and extraordinary glimpse of Niagara, and visitors should plan accordingly.

Summer is tourist season. Although the best weather in Niagara typically occurs from mid-May until mid-September, the peak season is during the months of July and August. This is shorts and t-shirts weather, with average temperatures rising from 65°F (18°C) in May to 70°F (21°C) in August. All of the area's popular attractions (like the Niagara Hornblower and Maid of The Mist boat tours) are open and running. This is also the time when the least amount of water is diverted from the Falls for hydroelectric use, so the Falls themselves are most spectacular to view during tourist season.

By fall, the bustling crowd has thinned out and the roaring waters diminished as more of the river's flow is diverted for hydroelectric power generation. Yet autumn offers its own list of reasons to fall in love with Niagara. The foliage explodes in spectacular reds, oranges, and golds, and the trails and roadsides invite the casual visitor to enjoy rambling hikes and drives through the countryside during harvest time. Average fall temperatures descend from around 64°F (18°C) in September to a bone-chilling 30°F (-1°C) in December—long sleeves, long pants, and hardy jackets are definitely in order.

Winter brings an entirely different dimension of beauty to Niagara Falls. With guaranteed sub-zero temperatures, this natural wonder transforms into a frozen

wonderland. The mist, blown by ice-cold winds, sprays nearby walls, lamp posts, trees, and buildings to create lovely ice sculptures and frozen works of art. Average winter temperatures drop from around 30°F (-1°C) in December to 25°F (-4°C) in January before starting to inch back up toward their springtime range. Bundle up warmly and bring your camera to capture the frosted beauty, but make sure to include shoes that will help you keep solid footing—the ground and walkways will be slippery and dangerous.

Springtime at Niagara Falls brings the promise of newly roaring waters, verdant fields, eager tourists, and the reopening of the area's attractions one-by-one. The parks awaken with blooms of daffodils and tulips, and the roadsides and hiking trails beckon to those wanting to reunite with nature after the winter's chill. Average spring temperatures range from approximately 36°F (2°C) in late March to 70°F (21°C) by late June. A variety of clothing is in order, but most visitors will forego the shorts and t-shirts until late spring.

Getting to Niagara Falls

By Air

There are four major airports in surrounding areas that charter airlines from around the world. Once you land, rental cars, airport limousines, trains, buses, airport shuttles, and taxis are available to transport you to Niagara Falls.

Toronto Pearson International Airport (YYZ)

As Canada's largest and busiest airport, Toronto Pearson International Airport sees nearly 50-million passengers annually. The airport is located 78 miles (125km) from Niagara Falls, and is about an hour-and-a-half drive.

Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport (YTZ)

Located on Toronto Island, Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport welcomes nearly three million passengers annually from Canada and the U.S. via two airlines: Porter and Air Canada. The airport is located 79 miles (127km) from Niagara Falls, and is just over an hour-and-a-half drive.

John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport (YMC)

Seeing close to 350,000 passengers a year and serving several destinations across North America, Hamilton International Airport is less than a one-hour drive to Niagara Falls.

Buffalo Niagara International Airport (BUF)

Located approximately a 45-minute drive from Niagara Falls, Canada, the Buffalo Niagara International Airport hosts approximately 100 non-stop flights a day and is usually the best and least expensive hub for travel to Niagara Falls from within the U.S.

By Train**Amtrak**

Amtrak offers routes and rail vacation packages to Niagara Falls from various rail hubs across the United States. To make an Amtrak reservation, you can (a). call Amtrak Vacations at 1 (800) 268-7252 and speak with a Rail Vacation Specialist, (b). book online at www.amtrakvacations.com, or (c). visit or call your local travel agent.

GO Train

The GO Train is part of GO Transit, the regional transit provider for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton areas. Weekend only train service runs from Toronto to Niagara Falls during May long weekend, and then every weekend from July 1st

through to Labor Day. WEGO is available at the train station to transport you to your destination, as are taxis and Ubers.

VIA Rail

As Canada's national passenger rail service, VIA Rail offers direct departures from Toronto, New York City, and Cleveland to Niagara Falls once daily with evening return service. Connections from origins throughout Canada, especially Ontario and Quebec, are readily available.

By Car

From New York State

If you're driving from New York State, there are three bridges available to cross into Canada: Peace Bridge, Queenston-Lewiston Bridge, and directly into Niagara Falls via Rainbow Bridge. There is a limited fee for using each bridge when entering Canada of a few dollars that must be paid in cash—accepted in either American or Canadian dollars.

From Toronto

When coming in from the Toronto area, take Gardiner Expressway West until it turns into Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW). Continue on the QEW toward Niagara, exiting on the ON-420 to Niagara Veterans Memorial Highway East. The trip should take about an hour and a half, however, if traveling during peak traffic (rush hour/weekends) the trip time can double.

By Bus

GO Bus

A part of GO Transit, the regional transit provider for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton areas, the GO Bus works with the GO Train to transport passengers from across Ontario to Toronto and then directly to Niagara. With stops in St.

Catharines, Niagara-On-The-Lake, and Niagara Falls, passengers can easily and affordably travel into Niagara from across Ontario.

Greyhound and Megabus

Greyhound and Megabus charter daily buses direct from Toronto, ON and Buffalo, NY to the Niagara Falls Bus Terminal (4555 Erie Ave.) in Niagara Falls, ON. With bus connections to Toronto from across Canada and to Buffalo from across the U.S., there are several origin locations to choose from.

Getting Around Niagara Falls

By Car

Automobile traffic in the respective cities of Niagara Falls, ON and Niagara Falls, NY is typical of most medium-sized metropolitan areas with the exception that it can get congested in areas near the Falls themselves. Rush hour, holiday, and event traffic can also be congested throughout both cities. Bridge crossings between the two cities can involve wait times ranging from a few minutes to well over an hour depending on season, time of day, and tourist presence. The author is a notably impatient motorist, yet I find driving around the Niagara area to be pleasant and relatively stress-free.

Parking

While driving around Niagara Falls is fairly easy, finding parking can be a challenge. Paid parking lots near the Falls accommodate all kinds of vehicles from RVs and buses to automobiles and motorcycles—cash or credit cards are accepted. Free parking lots can be found at selected scenic points and attractions along the route between Niagara Falls and Niagara-On-The-Lake. The WEGO bus line is highly recommended for those who wish to avoid spending excessive time searching for parking.

By Bus

WEGO is a state-of-the-art bus system that provides convenient routes and schedules throughout Niagara Falls, ON and the Canadian Niagara Parks area. The routes are color-coded, allowing for easy transit within Niagara Falls as well as to and from Niagara-On-The-Lake. WEGO's three different bus lines all meet at Table Rock next to the Horseshoe Falls. This is the main transfer hub from the Blue and Red lines serving the city tourist areas to the Green line that runs through Niagara Parks.

By Bike

Bicycling in the immediate proximity of the Falls can be dicey due to the congested foot and motor traffic in the area, however, the 35-mile (56km) Niagara River Recreation Trail is a cyclist's dream. Along its length, you will find scores of attractions, restaurants, and shops, most with bicycle racks and restrooms. Paralleling the Niagara River on the Canadian side, the trail extends from historic Fort Erie through Niagara Falls to end at Fort George in Niagara-On-The-Lake. Along the way, you'll be treated to historic sites and breathtaking scenic vistas that make this trail one of the finest in the world.

On Foot

You'll find an abundance of foot traffic in and around Niagara Falls and Niagara Parks. For hiking and pedestrian sightseeing, the entire area is spectacularly scenic and welcoming. It must be noted, however, that you will be doing a *lot* of walking between various attractions, even within the immediate vicinity of the Falls themselves—this is a vast area. If you plan on walking to the Falls from the Fallsview tourist area, and/or vice-versa, you will be negotiating a high, steep bluff—the Fallsview moraine—and you may want to take advantage of the *Falls Incline Railway*. This wheelchair-accessible transit system provides a fast and convenient link between the elevated tourist area and the Table Rock Welcome Centre overlooking the Falls below.

Before planning a walking tour of Niagara Falls, be sure to assess your physical fitness for the task—you'll be getting a *lot* of exercise.

Lodging in Niagara Falls

Hotels/Motels

Niagara Falls, ON offers lodging to suit virtually any budget, taste, or requirement. The city's main concentration of hotels/motels lie in close proximity to the Falls in the Fallsview tourist area. Choices range from 5-star hotels and resort properties featuring adjoining casinos and waterparks to inexpensive no-frills motor inns featuring cable TV and swimming pools.

Bed & Breakfasts, Inns, & Boutique Hotels

The route between Niagara Falls and Niagara-On-The-Lake is dotted with charming bed & breakfasts, rustic inns, and boutique hotels. Many of these offer overlooks of the Niagara River, the vineyards of Niagara-On-The-Lake, and other scenic vistas.

Accessibility

There are a number of ways to gain access to wheelchairs or other mobility rentals when visiting Niagara Falls. The most convenient place to rent a wheelchair is the accommodation at which you are staying; it is suggested that you inquire at the time of booking to ensure one is available upon arrival. Several Niagara Parks attractions offer free wheelchair rentals on a first come, first serve basis, while others charge a nominal fee.

There are businesses in and around Niagara Falls that offer mobility equipment rentals, including wheelchairs, scooters, and walkers; some of them offer delivery and pickup for an additional fee.



Rainbow Bridge connects the cities of Niagara Falls, NY and Niagara Falls, ON



The WEGO Bus Line is a convenient way to get around in Niagara Falls, ON



Many businesses in Niagara Falls, ON will add a Tourism Improvement Fee (TIF) to your bill. These fees are meant to go toward city improvement, but surprisingly, no governing body oversees proper disbursement of the funds. It is at each business's discretion whether the fee is mandatory or can be waived upon request. It never hurts to either (a). ask politely, or (b). push back assertively.

Various architectural styles, from Gothic Revival to Classical, can be found around Niagara Falls, ON. The old banks, the railway station, Bampfield Hall, Park Place, Ellis-Taylor House, and others are eye-catching attractions for tourists, especially those interested in the town's history.

Construction on the modern Niagara Parkway began in 1908; it was completed from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario in 1931 as a scenic road with gardens and manicured lawns along its length. The Parkway was referred to by Sir Winston Churchill, having driven down it, as "the prettiest Sunday afternoon drive in the world."

During some winters, an agglomerate mass of ice can form at the base of the Falls, creating a true "ice bridge" across the river from Canada to the U.S. In 1912 one of these ice bridges broke, carrying three people who had wandered out onto the ice to their deaths.

Every evening at dusk, Niagara Falls is illuminated by an array of colored LED lights, turning the cascades into an incredible, multi-colored water and light masterpiece.

In addition to the Falls' illumination, dazzling fireworks displays are presented above the Falls on regularly scheduled evenings throughout the year.

Bounded by the Fallsview moraine and the Niagara River Great Gorge, Queen Victoria Park features a captivating collection of unique native and international plants among its beautifully maintained gardens.

While it is advisable to have at least some Canadian currency on hand in Niagara Falls, ON, most local restaurants, attractions, and shops accept U.S. dollars as well.

During the filming of the movie *Niagara* in 1952, Marilyn Monroe stayed for two weeks in room 801 at the General Brock Hotel (now the Crowne Plaza Niagara). Guests still request to stay in room 801 when visiting Niagara, and the hotel will accommodate them if the room is available on the requested date(s).



The winter wonderland of Niagara Falls – dress accordingly!



Illuminated Horseshoe Falls



Fireworks over the American Falls



Visitors at Table Rock marvel at the scale of Horseshoe Falls



Rainbow Bridge

Most American visitors catch their first glimpse of Niagara Falls as they cross the Rainbow Bridge, the gateway between the cities of Niagara Falls, NY and Niagara Falls, ON. The Rainbow Bridge can be crossed by auto, on foot, or by bicycle. It's also a great location for viewing both the American and Horseshoe Falls, not to mention the nightly (seasonal) fireworks displays. There is a nominal crossing fee for autos, and a smaller fee for pedestrians.

The Rainbow Bridge, built in 1941, has a deck that lies 202 (61.5m) feet above the Niagara River and is 950 feet (289.5m) in length. The water current under the bridge averages 26-30mph (41-48kph) and the water depth is in excess of 175 feet (53m). It is estimated that six-billion pounds of water cross under the bridge per minute. The bridge's abutments are 50 feet (15m) above the water to avoid damage to the bridge from winter ice in the river (which destroyed the previous bridge, The Honeymoon Bridge, in January of 1938).

Greeting visitors on the Canadian side of the Rainbow Bridge is the Carillon Bell Tower, built in 1948, which contains huge bells that play music that rings throughout the Niagara Falls tourist area. A musician known as a *carillonneur* played the bells from a piano style keyboard until the entire mechanism was automated in 2002. Movie buffs will also recall that the Carillon Tower played a significant role in the Marilyn Monroe motion picture "Niagara", filmed on location in 1952.

Queen Victoria Park

Queen Victoria Park is a linear park that runs from just southwest of the Rainbow Bridge to the very brink of the Horseshoe Falls. Established by a Provincial Park Act in 1885 and opened in 1888, the park is considered the centerpiece of the Niagara Falls recreational tourist area. In addition to offering visitors their most up-close-and-personal experience of Niagara Falls, Queen Victoria Park also contains a valuable collection of unique native and international plants and beautifully maintained gardens. Walking through the park beside the Falls, you'll find a rock garden, hanging baskets, a Hybrid tea rose garden, and attractive carpet-bedding displays. Park benches and well-groomed lawns are perfect places to relax or take photos. The park is also the focal point of the annual winter *Festival of Lights*.

Quite simply, Queen Victoria Park is your access point not only to the Falls, but to many of the premier attractions in the immediate vicinity of the Falls—it is a place you are likely to visit several times during your stay in the area. If you are lodging in the Fallsview District, keep in mind that it is separated from Queen Victoria Park by a steep moraine that will require substantial physical stamina to traverse on foot—you may want to plan your excursions to and from the park via the Falls Incline Railway, a fully accessible and climate-controlled tram system that provides riders a unique vantage point as they rise and descend along the inclined track.

Fallsview Tourist Area

The Fallsview Tourist Area is the main tourist district of Niagara Falls, ON. It is the home of many of the city's hotels, such as the Niagara Falls Hilton, Niagara Falls Marriott Gateway, and the Comfort Inn Fallsview. Niagara Falls Casino Resort is also located near the center of this area. Fallsview is linked to Queen Victoria Park, the Table Rock Centre, and other main attractions by the Falls Incline Railway.

Hornblower Niagara Cruises

Considered by many to be Niagara's most iconic experience, Hornblower Niagara Cruises offers a boat tour that gets you as close as possible to the magnificent Niagara Falls. This legendary boat tour takes place aboard a state-of-the-art Hornblower catamaran and journeys past the American Falls, Bridal Veil Falls, and into the heart of the Canadian Horseshoe Falls. The free plastic ponchos provided prior to the journey are a must; you will be boating into the mist, right up to the Horseshoe Falls, and you will get wet!

Table Rock Welcome Centre

The *Table Rock Welcome Centre* is the heart of Niagara Parks. The *Niagara's Fury* and *Journey Behind The Falls* attractions are located within the facility, along with gift shops, a food court, and information desks. All areas of Table Rock are fully accessible and wheelchair rental is available during summer months at the Welcome Centre. You will also find photo services, automatic teller machines, currency exchanges, and a first aid station. Paid parking is available just across the street at the Falls Parking Lot, and the WEGO bus terminal is nearby as well.

Journey Behind The Falls

To truly stand at the heart of Niagara, you'll first need to descend 125 feet (38m) by elevator. From there, you'll have the opportunity to explore 130-year-old tunnels through the bedrock and to feel the thunderous vibration of the Horseshoe Falls. The observation deck at the foot of this 13-story-tall wonder will leave you breathless (and maybe a little wet), but don't forget the viewing portals cut straight through the rock, offering a once-in-a-lifetime view of one-fifth of the world's fresh water crashing down in front of you.

Niagara's Fury

Niagara's Fury is a 360-degree multi-sensory theater that allows you to discover the ancient story of Niagara Falls in 4D. Water will bubble and spray as you travel downriver. Snow will fall all around, simulating the last ice age, and the moving platform beneath your feet will help you understand the power of nature as this

family-friendly attraction provides a great introduction to your Niagara Falls adventure.

WildPlay MistRider Zipline to the Falls

The MistRider Zipline to the Falls at Grand View Marketplace takes you on a breathtaking ride into the gorge, towards the base of the Canadian Horseshoe Falls. You'll start out dangling from a precarious 220 foot (67m)-high vantage point before plunging down a 2,200 foot (670m) wire, soaring past the American Falls at speeds of 40+mph (70+kph), and landing atop the Falls observation deck at the base of the Horseshoe Falls.

IMAX Theater Niagara Falls/Niagara Daredevil Exhibit

IMAX Theater Niagara Falls is the home of the IMAX film, *Niagara: Miracles, Myths & Magic*, allowing you to discover the human history of Niagara Falls in IMAX. The facility also houses the *Niagara Daredevil Exhibit*, which lets you hear the stories, feel the fear, and touch the actual daredevil barrels. Nothing is behind ropes—they are not delicate after all; these are the true vessels that survived the plunge (even when their passengers didn't).

Skylon Tower

The *Skylon Tower* is a combination observation tower and restaurant that offers visitors an extraordinary dining experience, along with a spectacular, revolving view of Niagara Falls. The tower was completed and opened in 1965. It stands 520 feet (160m) above street level and 775 feet (236m) above the base of the Falls. The tower features three outside mounted "Yellow Bug" elevators that carry passengers to and from the two dining rooms and the observation deck at the top. The base of the tower features a number of gift shops, fast food restaurants, and a large amusement arcade. As of this writing, the facility is a bit dated and not as well kept as other attractions in the area.

Fallsview Indoor Waterpark & Resort

North America's largest indoor waterpark and resort is just a two-minute walk from Niagara Falls and features 16 waterslides, a massive indoor wave pool, hot springs, and an outdoor sundeck and pool for summer fun. The facility is directly connected to *Falls Avenue Resort*, which features three hotels. The *Fallsview Indoor Waterpark & Resort* has been voted #1 in amusement parks & water parks in Canada by TripAdvisor for several consecutive years.

Fallsview Casino Resort

Built on the Fallsview moraine overlooking the Horseshoe Falls, *Fallsview Casino Resort* is the largest and most elegant gaming resort facility in Canada. Fallsview offers a world-class casino with over 3,000 slot machines and 130 gaming tables. The resort also features a 374-room luxury hotel, full-service spa and fitness center, dozens of shops and restaurants, an intimate 1,500-seat state-of-the-art entertainment venue, and over 30,000 square feet of meeting and convention space.

Falls Illumination & Fireworks Displays

Every evening throughout the year beginning at dusk, Niagara Falls is transformed into an incredible, multi-colored water and light masterpiece. Special lights are housed in the Illumination Tower, next to Queen Victoria Place, on the roof of Table Rock Centre, at the brink of the Horseshie Falls, and deep in the Niagara Gorge, across from the American Falls. Together, these lights work to turn Niagara Falls into a breathtaking view not to be missed.

On scheduled evenings, dazzling fireworks displays are presented over Niagara Falls. You can catch Canada's longest running fireworks series throughout the summer, during the *Winter Festival of Lights*, and on select other holidays throughout the year.

Clifton Hill Tourist Area

Clifton Hill is one of Niagara Falls' major tourist promenades. The street, just a few blocks away from Niagara Falls, contains a number of gift shops, wax museums, haunted houses, video arcades, restaurants, hotels, and themed attractions. Clifton Hill has a vibrant, carnival feel, somewhat akin to that of the Las Vegas strip—it's bustling sidewalks are testament to its popularity. For visitors, particularly families and teenagers, it is a major amusement area and center for night life. Through the years, the attractions on Clifton Hill change frequently; therefore, we will cover some of the current main attractions.

Wax Museums

The first wax museum in Niagara Falls was the *Louis Tussaud's Waxworks*, which opened in 1949. It was the first of many wax museums to come. Its location on the Hill closed in September 2000 when its lease ran out, and it has since reopened just above the Hill on Victoria Avenue. It is noticeably similar to *Madame Tussaud's* (Madame Tussaud was the great-grandmother of Louis Tussaud) due to how the figures are placed in the reach of visitors.

Another wax museum, *Movieland Wax Museum of the Stars*, showcases many famous celebrities from movies, music, and television, although this museum has all but a few of their figures behind glass or out of reach. This museum includes a hall of horrors and a wax hand studio. There is also the *Rock Legends Wax Museum*, featuring many musical (mostly rock & roll) icons from the 20th and 21st centuries, which is located near the corner of Centre St. and Victoria Ave., at the top of Clifton Hill.

Each of these museums has its own interactive areas where visitors can pose with figures, appear to get electrocuted in an electric chair (this option is available at *Movieland*), or have your hands sculpted in wax (*Movieland*). There is also a wax hand studio located in the front display room of the *Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum*.

Miniature Golf Courses

Clifton Hill is home to *Dinosaur Adventure Golf*, Canada's largest mini-golf (70,000 sq. ft), located beside The *Skywheel* ferris wheel, that features to-scale dinosaurs, sand pits, a river, and a 50 ft. (15.24m) "active" volcano/waterfall. In close proximity to *Dinosaur Adventure Golf* is *Wizards' Golf*, an indoor, 18-hole, glow in the dark mini golf course located directly next to *Ripley's Believe It or Not!*. There is also *Wild Safari Mini Putt*, located inside *Adventure City*.

Haunted Houses

There are five year-round haunted houses on and around Clifton Hill: *The House of Frankenstein* (which is located next to the *Ripley's 4D Moving Theater*), *Dracula's Haunted Castle* (located next to *Big Top Entertainment Centre*), and *The Haunted House* (near the bottom of the Hill) are on Clifton Hill, while *Nightmares Fear Factory* is located on Victoria Avenue.

Restaurants

There are a number of restaurants on or nearby the Hill. These restaurants include Kelsey's, Ruby Tuesday, Dairy Queen, Wendy's, Burger King, Tim Hortons, Hooters, Montana's Cookhouse, Boston Pizza, Rainforest Cafe, Mama Mia's, Hard Rock Cafe, Pizza Pizza, Subway, and the privately-owned Clifton Hill Family Restaurant.

Video Arcades

There are three prominent video arcades on Clifton Hill, the largest of which is *The Great Canadian Midway*. This arcade houses hundreds of video games where players can redeem earned tickets for prizes at the ticket counter. The complex also includes carnival rides. Boston Pizza and The Great Canadian Midway are both connected to *Strike! Rock and Bowl*, a video arcade with a rock & roll themed 10-pin bowling alley. Across from the Great Canadian Midway is a video arcade called *Adventure City*, which is attached to the *Rain Forest Cafe*.

Other Attractions

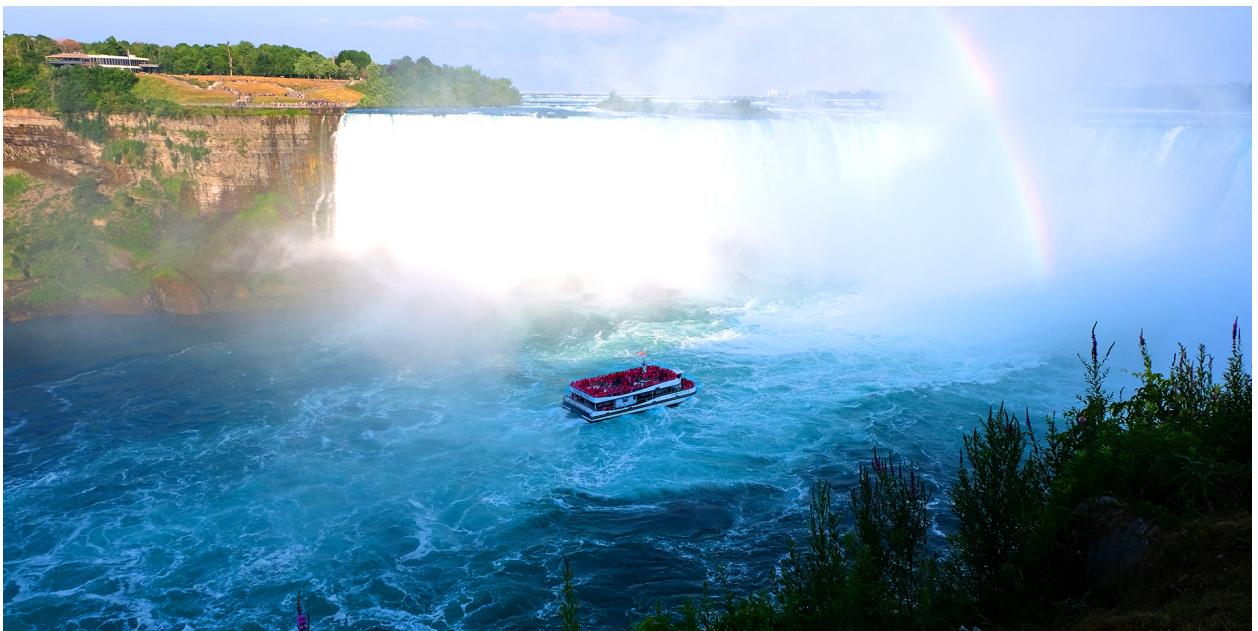
Other attractions on and around Clifton Hill include *Niagara Speedway* - an elevated go-cart racing track, the *SkyWheel* - a giant ferris wheel that towers 175 feet (53m) over the Niagara Falls horizon, and the *Canada Trading Company* - a favorite destination for souvenir shoppers.

Lundy's Lane

This historic thoroughfare became famous because of the *Battle of Lundy's Lane*, one of the deadliest battles of The War of 1812. Although it is located some distance away from Niagara Falls' main tourist areas, Lundy's Lane offers a tantalizing variety of attractions, dining, accommodations, and shopping. It is touted as "the place where locals go to eat." It is also a shopper's paradise, as it is lined with storefronts ranging from small boutiques to abundant plazas. The Niagara Falls History Museum, the Waves Indoor Waterpark, the Niagara Falls Farmers Market, and the Lundy Manor Wine Cellars can also be found here, and Lundy's Lane is easily accessible from other tourist areas of Niagara Falls via the WEGO Red Line busses.



The often-present rainbow arcing out of the mist at Horseshoe Falls



Niagara Hornblower Cruise boat carries passengers into the mist



The city of Niagara Falls, Ontario was originally named Clifton (incorporated in 1856). The name of the town was changed to Niagara Falls in 1881.

Niagara Falls is approximately 81 miles (130km) from Ontario's capital of Toronto, which is across Lake Ontario to the north. The area of the Niagara Region is approximately 690 square miles (1800km).

One of the most impressive scenes in the movie *Pirates of The Caribbean* was filmed at Niagara Falls: As Captain Barbossa sails to the edge of the earth to rescue Captain Jack Sparrow (played by Johnny Depp), he must navigate several obstacles, including a gut-wrenching drop over a colossal waterfall. To get the shot, producers hung a crane over Horseshoe Falls to get the perfect view of the rushing water.

The Skylon Tower rises to 518 feet (158m) above street level, and on a clear day, visibility from the tower's observation deck is 80 miles (129km). Even so, the Skylon Tower is not the tallest building in Niagara Falls, Ontario. That distinction currently belongs to the Hilton Niagara Falls Tower 2, which rises to 600 feet (183m) above street level.

One of the bloodiest battles of the War of 1812 took place on July 25, 1814 at Lundy's Lane in what is present-day Niagara Falls, Ontario. A total of 7,500 Americans and Canadians fought for six hours. At the end, 1,000 soldiers lay dead or wounded.

Prior to 1886, when the Statue of Liberty was erected, the Falls at Niagara were the symbol of America and the New World. Visitors from all over the world targeted Niagara as a must-see during a visit to North America.

Before choosing Orlando, Florida as the home of his second theme park, Walt Disney seriously considered building Disney World in Niagara Falls.

Planning a trip to Niagara and can't wait to see the magnificent Horseshoe Falls? Well, you can see them right now by pointing your web browser to www.earthcam.com, typing *Niagara Falls* in the search field, and choosing your view.

Inspired by a photo of Niagara Falls, inventor and electrical engineer Nikola Tesla yearned to harness its power. This inspiration eventually led to his invention and cooperation in construction of the first AC hydroelectric power plant. Today, a sculpture of Tesla stands in Queen Victoria Park where he stands atop one of his AC motors and keeps watch over the great waters that helped bring his work to fruition.



A WildPlay MistRider Zipline passenger sails past the American Falls and Maid of the Mist



Discover the sights and sounds of Clifton Hill



Horseshoe Falls viewed from Skylon Tower



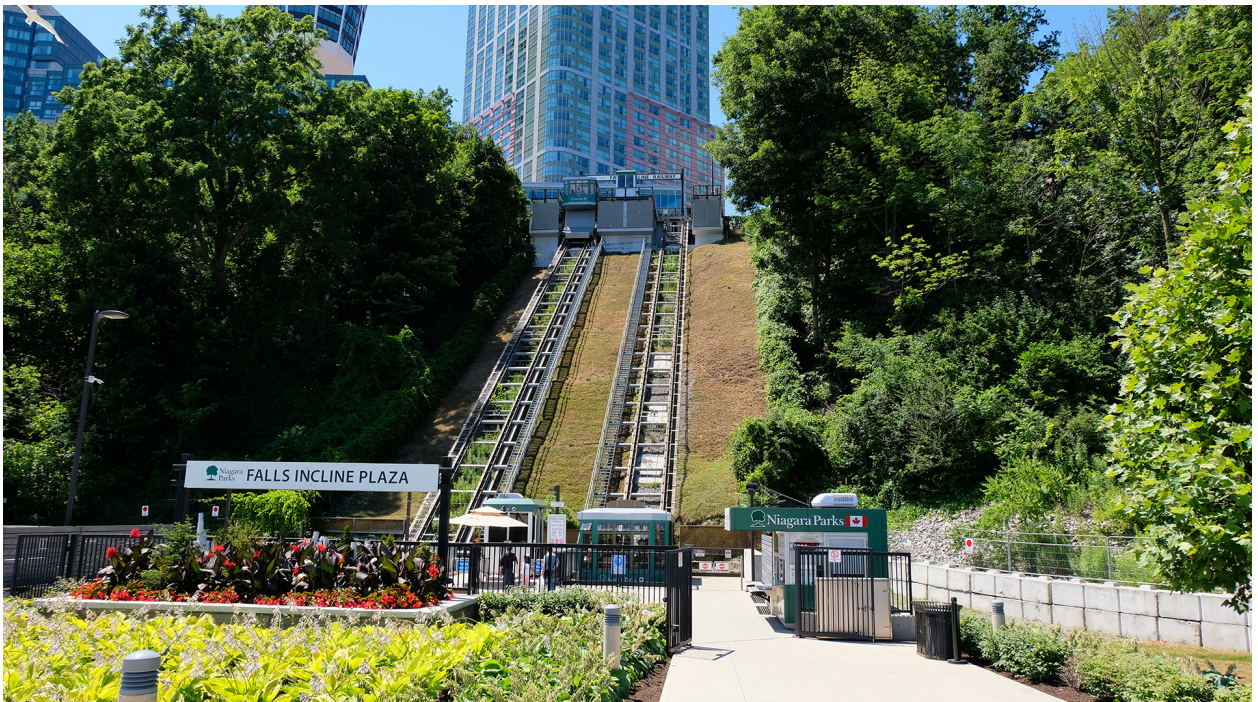
American Falls and Bridal Veil Falls viewed from Skylon Tower



Clifton Hill comes to life after sundown



The Table Rock Welcome Centre offers information, amenities, gifts, snacks, and more



The Falls Incline Railway: easiest way up and down the hill between Fallsview and the Falls



Niagara Parkway is a scenic road along the Niagara River that starts as a rural riverside highway in Fort Erie, becomes a major city thoroughfare at Table Rock, Niagara Falls, and continues winding its way generally northward to Niagara-On-The-Lake with a total length of 35 miles (56km). A drive along Niagara Parkway will carry you past historic forts and homesteads, bed & breakfasts, marinas, churches, lavish homes, recreational trails, scenic overlooks, vineyards, villages, botanical gardens, major hydroelectric facilities, and much more, all while providing spectacular views of the Niagara River and the Niagara River Gorge. A popular local tale is that Sir Winston Churchill, after having been driven along the parkway, called it “the prettiest Sunday drive in the world.” Not only is it a scenic, and at times breathtaking, drive—many of the major attractions along the Niagara River are accessible from this road. Any visitor spending more than a day or two at Niagara Falls could not go wrong by planning to traverse Niagara Parkway in its entirety. Let us start in Fort Erie and head northward...

Fort Erie

Old Fort Erie is a War of 1812 National Historic Site. History buffs will enjoy experiencing the sights and sounds of a fort under siege and learning about Niagara’s pivotal role in the War of 1812. Old Fort Erie offers the opportunity to step back in time and relive history with daily tours, musket demonstrations, and the annual Siege of Old Fort Erie reenactment. Meanwhile, the modern city of Fort Erie offers ample beaches, parks, and waterfronts for summer fun, along with

Safari Niagara, an outdoor zoo featuring walking tours, a tram ride through animal habitats, and various kids' activities.

Rural Niagara Falls, ON

Willoughby Historical Museum

The Willoughby Historical Museum is a small but charming window into the area's past. Located a short distance from the site of the Battle of Chippewa (July 5, 1814), this former schoolhouse provides multiple displays to explain the intricacies and experiences of different peoples at this battle and throughout the War of 1812. Visitors are invited to enjoy two interactive exhibits: take a turn weaving on the loom or connect a call through the central phone operating system which is still working. The grounds of this museum also provide a great place to stop and stretch your legs or even enjoy a family picnic.

Fort Chippawa

The Battle of Chippawa, fought on July 5, 1814, was the opening engagement of the Niagara campaign of 1814, the longest and bloodiest military operation of the War of 1812. Niagara Parks acquired the site of this battle in 1995 and has preserved 300 acres of the pristine battlefield, the last remaining site from the War of 1812. A self-guided walking tour is available to help visitors retrace the events of the battle.

International Control Dam

To preserve Niagara Falls' natural beauty and to ensure an "unbroken curtain of water" is flowing over the Falls, a treaty was signed in 1950 by the U.S. and Canada to limit water usage by power plants. The International Control Dam is a weir that controls the water diversions from the Niagara River and dispatches the water between the New York Power Authority and Ontario Power Generation in accordance with the terms of the treaty. The dam was completed in 1954.

The treaty allows higher summertime diversion at night when tourists are few and during the winter months when there are even fewer tourists. The dam allows water from the upper river to be diverted into the intakes for American and Canadian power stations. Two tunnels on the American side take water under the city of Niagara Falls, NY and three tunnels on the Canadian side divert water under the city of Niagara Falls, ON. Once past these cities, the water flows into two canals and then into two large reservoirs: Behind the Canadian Sir Adam Beck Power Plant is a reservoir covering 750 acres, and a similar reservoir on the U.S. side behind the Robert Moses Station.

Dufferin Islands

Dufferin Islands are a group of scenic man-made islands that have become a popular area for locals and tourists alike. Comprised of 10 acres, the quiet and secluded area features several small islands connected by bridges and footpaths. In recent years, efforts have been made to further naturalize this area with the introduction of fish, the installation of bird feeding stations and bird boxes, as well as planting indigenous vegetation appropriate to the environment. Dufferin Islands is free to all who go; it is a tranquil place for a picnic or simply to relax and enjoy nature.

Toronto Power Generating Station

The Toronto Power Generating Station is a former hydroelectric facility that stands abandoned on the Canadian bank of the river along Niagara Parkway just as one approaches the Falls. Completed in 1906 in the Beaux-Arts style, the station was built to supply hydroelectric power to the city of Toronto, Ontario, 80 miles (130km) to the north. This is the generating station that figured so prominently in the harrowing rescue of two men from a barge that broke loose from its tug one afternoon in 1918 (see Chapter 2). This barge, or *scow* as it is sometimes called, can be seen (and photographed) at the most close-up view possible from the back of the Toronto Power Generating Station's grounds.

Niagara Falls, ON

Niagara Falls

At this point in your journey along Niagara Parkway, you can watch as the river's placid blue-green flow turns into white raging rapids just before it plunges over the brink of the Horseshoe Falls into the Lower Niagara River 188 feet (57m) below. To your left is the main parking area for the Horseshoe Falls and the Table Rock Welcome Centre, which is your jumping off point for several major attractions including *Journey Behind The Falls*, *Niagara's Fury*, and your best views of Niagara Falls themselves.

Between Niagara Falls and the Rainbow Bridge just a few blocks north, you'll find some of the area's major attractions and adventures, including Hornblower Niagara Cruises, the WildPlay MistRider Zipline to the Falls, Oakes Garden Theatre, and the many sights, sounds, and flavors of Queen Victoria Park.

Bird Kingdom

Bird Kingdom is the world's largest free-flying indoor aviary, where you will encounter hundreds of exotic birds, animals, and reptiles as you explore pathways throughout the multi-level rainforest. Within Bird Kingdom's jungle area lies a rare Javanese House from the 1800s, the only one of its kind in North America. This architectural masterpiece is constructed entirely of hand-carved teak and was built without nails.

White Water Walk

Whirlpool Rapids Gorge is the section of the Niagara River Gorge north of the Whirlpool International Bridge and south of the Niagara Whirlpool. Here, the width of the gorge narrows dramatically, creating a stretch of Class VI whitewater rapids considered to be the wildest and most dangerous in the world.

The White Water Walk is the quickest and least strenuous method of viewing the Whirlpool Rapids. It is wheelchair accessible, and visitors are transported to the base of the Niagara Gorge by elevator where a lengthy boardwalk provides access to several viewing areas.

Whirlpool Aero Car

Designed by renowned Spanish engineer Leonardo Torres Quevado, the Whirlpool Aero Car has been soaring the Niagara Gorge since 1916. The antique cable car is suspended from six sturdy cables and offers spectacular views of the swirling Niagara Whirlpool and the Class Vi whitewater rapids of the Niagara River.

Although the Whirlpool Aero Car travels between two points on the Canadian shore, riders of this historic cable car actually cross the international borderline between Canada and the U.S. a total of four times each trip due to the way the river elbows.

Niagara Whirlpool/Niagara Glen Nature Reserve

The Niagara Whirlpool is a natural whirlpool that occurs where the Niagara River flows into an ancient buried gorge (Saint David's Buried Gorge) and makes a sharp right turn. It is estimated that the whirlpool formed approximately 4,200 years ago and has a maximum depth of 125 feet (38m). The whirlpool naturally spins in a counterclockwise motion during normal flow of the river, but when more water is diverted to the surrounding hydroelectric power plants, the flow often reverses.

Niagara Glen Nature Reserve is located near the whirlpool and is one of the most well-preserved remaining examples of Southern Ontario's original Carolinian forest. The park features scenic overlooks of the whirlpool and gorge as well as several hiking trails through the forest. It is open to the public daily, as long as weather permits.

Niagara Helicopters

Niagara Helicopters is your opportunity to experience an exhilarating and breathtaking aerial view of Niagara Falls and the entire Niagara region. From the sensation of lift-off to the excitement of soaring above the turbulent rapids and cascading waterfalls, your flight path provides a perspective like no other; on a clear day you will see the outline of Toronto to the north and the shores of Lake Erie to the south. Niagara Helicopters is Niagara's premier year-round aerial attraction.

Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens/Butterfly Conservatory

Established in 1936, the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens presents visitors with 99 acres (40 hectares) of beautifully maintained gardens that include perennials, rhododendrons, azaleas, a formal parterre garden, herb and vegetable plantings, and a world-famous rose garden featuring over 2,400 roses. This parkland is also the home of the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture, an institution that provides unique practical training to horticulture students on the grounds of the Botanical Gardens.

Located on the grounds of the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens, visitors to the Butterfly Conservatory are transported to a tropical paradise full of lush vegetation, trickling waterfalls, and thousands of vibrantly colored butterflies. Over 2,000 butterflies, made up of 45 different species, call this beautiful space home. The self-guided walking tour of the Butterfly Conservatory begins with a short, informative video presentation.

Sir Adam Beck Hydroelectric Generating Stations/Floral Clock

Sir Adam Beck Hydroelectric Generating Stations I & II and the Sir Adam Beck Pump Generating Station are operated by Ontario Power Generation. Following the development of several smaller generating stations around Niagara Falls in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Province of Ontario authorized the construction of the first publicly owned generating station in the province. At the time it was built, it was the largest hydroelectric generating station in the world.

These stations divert water from the Niagara and the Welland Rivers above Niagara Falls which is then released into the lower Niagara River. The stations produce 2,678,000 horsepower (1,997 MW).

As of this writing, the stations are no longer offering tours to visitors, but they are definitely worth stopping to take a look at on your drive along Niagara Parkway.

Just behind the Sir Adam Beck Power Plant, near the Lewiston-Queenston International Bridge, lies a unique and very popular stop—the Floral Clock. The intricate designs on the face of this large clock are created with up to 16,000 carpet bedding plants and are changed twice each year. The planted face of the clock is maintained by Niagara Parks horticulture staff, while the mechanism inside is kept in working order by Ontario Hydro. The tower at the back of the clock houses Westminster chimes that ring out each quarter hour.

Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours

Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours offers a one-hour ride upriver into the Niagara Gorge, through the Devil’s Hole rapids, to the very edge of the Niagara Whirlpool... and back. If you are looking for a wild ride, this is it! Passengers can choose between either a “jet dome” (enclosed) or “wet jet” (open air) experience—the latter will leave you soaking wet. As you speed along the river, your guide will tell you all about the fascinating history of the Niagara area, local points of interest, and the mechanics of the impressive vessel you are touring in, which is capable of slicing over the standing waves and making astounding 360-degree turns. Rest assured, you’re in capable hands as all captains and Whirlpool Jet Boats are certified by both the U.S. Coast Guard and Transport Canada.

Queenston Heights

The Queenston Heights is a geographical feature of the Niagara Escarpment immediately above the village of Queenston. The promontory forms a cliff face of approximately 300 feet (100m). Queenston Heights was the site of the War of 1812 Battle of Queenston Heights, where Major General Sir Isaac Brock was killed in action in the defense of Upper Canada.

Roy Terrace Garden

Roy Terrace Garden marks the place area the Niagara Falls began thousands of years ago before erosion carved them back to their present-day upriver location. This secluded area features a Cana Lily garden, as well as a monument erected by the Niagara Parks Commission at the entrance to Queenston Heights. From Roy Terrace, a stairway gradually climbs toward Brock's Monument.

Brock's Monument

Brock's Monument is a 185-foot (56m) column atop Queenston Heights, dedicated to Major General Sir Isaac Brock, one of Canada's heroes of the War of 1812. Brock and one of his Canadian aides-de-camp, Lieutenant Colonel John Macdonell, are interred at the monument's base on the heights above the battlefield where both fell during the Battle of Queenston Heights. The current monument was built between 1853 and 1856, replacing an earlier monument, and is the most imposing feature of Queenston Heights National Historic Site. It is the 3rd oldest war memorial in Canada.

Queenston

Mackenzie Printery & Newspaper Museum

The home of William Lyon Mackenzie, rebel publisher of the *Colonial Advocate*, a newspaper dedicated to political reform, is Canada's largest operating printing museum, devoted to displaying historic presses and covering more than 500 years of the letterpress printing era. The museum contains Canada's oldest press—circa 1770—and you can get hands-on experience of working one of eight operating presses.

Laura Secord Homestead

Laura Secord was a Canadian heroine of the War of 1812. She is known for having walked 20 miles (32km) out of American-occupied territory in 1813 to warn British forces of an impending American attack.

The lovingly restored Laura Secord Homestead will take you back in time and enchant you with stories of her adventures and surroundings as interpreted by authentically costumed guides. Light refreshments, ice cream, Laura Secord chocolates, and a selection of quality souvenirs are available.

Niagara-On-The-Lake

Nestled in the corner of the Niagara Region on the southwestern shore of Lake Ontario, the picturesque Niagara-On-The-Lake epitomizes old town charm—a destination in and of itself for many visitors to the area. This must-visit village is bordered on both sides by waterfront, with arbor-framed streets among lush boulevard gardens. Wander through the heritage district as you discover whimsical boutiques, enthralling antique shops, and delightful bistros—maybe even a horse-drawn carriage or two. Make yourself at home in a cozy hotel, spa, retreat, or B&B, and enjoy some of the unique shopping and dining experiences on offer. Beyond the quaint little town, explore the area's many wineries, breweries, and distilleries, a world-class theater, important historical landmarks, and stunning waterfront views.

Ontario Wine Country

Beyond its downtown area, Niagara-On-The-Lake's biggest claim to fame is Ontario Wine Country. The area boasts close to 40 wineries, most with award-winning vintages, international accolades, and distinct Niagara tastes, including that of world-famous Niagara Icewine. Whether you set out on a guided tour, hop on two wheels and bike from each winery, or dine at one of the many delectable winery restaurants, the Niagara Region has something for every grape lover.



Fall colors along the Niagara Parkway



Queenston Heights Restaurant with Brock's Monument in background



Niagara Parkway is one of the oldest roads in Ontario. Predating it, an aboriginal trail along the west side of the Niagara River existed before the arrival of Europeans.

When the first Welland Canal was opened in 1829, Niagara Parkway (then named Niagara Road) became a towpath for vessels exiting the Welland River. Oxen on the road would tow boats against the rapid current of the Niagara River as they exited the canal and continued south to Lake Erie.

Fort Erie's Erie Beach, Crystal Beach, and Bay Beach are considered the best beaches in the area, drawing many weekend visitors from the Toronto, ON and Buffalo, NY areas during summer months.

The Niagara Gorge begins at the base of present-day Niagara Falls and ends at the Niagara Escarpment near Queenston, Ontario, where the Falls originated some 12,000 years ago.

For history buffs, over 100 monuments and plaques that identify the landmarks, events, and people important to the history of the Niagara Region are placed along the Niagara Parkway.

The Canadian shoreline of the Niagara River is maintained by the Niagara Parks Commission (commonly shortened to *Niagara Parks*), an agency of the Government of Ontario. The Commission was founded in 1885.

The Niagara River Recreational Trail is a scenic 35-mile (56km) hiking and biking trail running the entire Canadian coastline of the Niagara River from Fort Erie northward to Niagara-On-The-Lake.

Niagara Icewine is a dessert wine produced from grapes that have been frozen while still on the vine. The sugars and other dissolved solids do not freeze, but the water does, allowing for a more concentrated grape juice to develop. This results in a smaller amount of more concentrated, very sweet wine.



Floral clock at Queenston, ON



Whirlpool Jet Boat tours offer the wettest and wildest ride you'll ever experience!



Spring, summer, fall, or winter – Niagara-On-The-Lake is billed as Canada's prettiest town.



Plentiful vineyards and wineries welcome you to Ontario's Niagara Wine Country



Relaxing boutique hotels and cozy bed & breakfasts await at Niagara-On-The-Lake



Niagara Falls State Park

Recognized as the oldest state park in the United States, Niagara Falls State Park was established in 1895 (originally named *Niagara Reservation*). In addition to its views of the American Falls, Bridal Veil Falls, and the Canadian Horseshoe Falls, the park overlooks the Niagara Gorge and allows access to the Maid of The Mist tour boats, Cave of the Winds, Goat Island, the Prospect Point Observation Tower, a statue of Nikola Tesla, and the movie *Niagara: Legends of Adventure* which is shown at the Niagara Adventure Theater. The park also offers a museum, food concession, a movie theater, a gift shop, fireworks, hiking and nature trails, picnic tables, recreation programs, and fishing. The *Top of the Falls Restaurant*, on Goat Island overlooking the Horseshoe Falls, is also available within the park.

Niagara Falls State Park Visitor Center

A great place to begin your visit to Niagara Falls, the Niagara Falls State Park Visitor Center provides guests with interactive displays and exhibits. The Visitor Center is set within acres of brilliant floral gardens that have been designed to depict the Great Lakes region above the Falls, including grassy areas in the shapes of Lakes Michigan, Superior, Huron, and Erie, as well as a walkway that follows the course of the Niagara River. It is open year-round.

The Visitor Center also features the Niagara Adventure Theater, the Park's main gift shop, a café, and a patio grill where visitors can enjoy deli sandwiches, specialty coffees, ice cream, and other beverages and snacks.

In addition to serving as headquarters for authentic Niagara Falls souvenirs and merchandise, the Visitor Center is a convenient place to purchase a Niagara USA Discovery Pass, which is available seasonally. The Discovery Pass is essentially a passport that allows you to save on multiple park attractions, including the Maid of the Mist, Cave of the Winds Tour, Aquarium of Niagara, and Niagara Adventure Theater. You can use the pass during one visit or on multiple visits to Niagara Falls State Park.

Maid of the Mist Boat Tour

Considered by many to be the ultimate way to experience Niagara Falls, the Maid of the Mist is a boat tour that starts and ends on the American side, crossing briefly into Ontario during a portion of the trip. The boat takes its passengers past the American and Bridal Veil Falls, then into the dense mist of spray inside the curve of the Horseshoe Falls. Although not quite as large and modern as their Canadian counterparts, *Niagara Hornblower Cruises*, The Maid of the Mist boats have an illustrious history going all the way back to the original Maid of the Mist boat christened in 1846 as a border-crossing ferry.

Cave of the Winds

The Cave of the Winds, discovered in 1834, was a natural cave behind Bridal Veil Falls. Guided tours began in 1841, through Goat Island and descending down a staircase closer to the Falls, into the cave. A rock fall in 1920 all but destroyed the cave, forcing the tour to close. A modified version of the tour officially reopened in 1924, bringing visitors to the front of the Bridal Veil instead of behind it, on a series of wooden walkways and decks.

Today's Cave of the Winds is an iconic tourist attraction at the same site. An elevator takes passengers from an area between the American and Canadian Falls down to the level of the Niagara River at the base of the American Falls. A series of redwood decks and platforms allow sightseers to walk right up to the base of the Bridal Veil Falls, into tropical storm conditions, with water crashing and spraying down around them and flowing beneath the decking. Due to potential damage by ice buildup at the Falls during the winter months, the Cave of the

Winds decking is disassembled each fall and then rebuilt each spring by park staff. The decking is not secured to the rocks below by bolts or other construction materials; the wood beams are simply wedged into the rock crevices.

Goat Island

Goat Island is the land mass in the middle of Niagara Falls between the American Bridal Veil Falls and the Canadian Horseshoe Falls. The island has no residents but is a destination for tourists visiting the Falls on the U.S. side. It features several viewing points, including Terrapin Point, and is connected to the U.S. mainland by two bridges that carry foot, car, and trackless train traffic. It is also connected to the smaller Luna Island by a pedestrian bridge. Goat Island lies within the broader Niagara Falls State Park. It is largely wooded and interlaced with foot trails.

Prospect Point Observation Tower

The Prospect Point Observation Tower, originally built in 1961 and extensively refurbished between 2001 and 2003, stands at 282 feet (86m) with its base at the bottom of the gorge. The tower includes a concrete plank observation deck that extends out over the gorge, an ornamental steel deck railing system, high-speed elevators to and from the river bank below (where the Maid of the Mist boat tour embarks), restroom facilities, and a gift shop. Some eight million visitors annually enter the tower at the ground level from Niagara Falls State Park.

Niagara Adventure Theater

The Niagara Adventure Theater, located at the Niagara Falls State Park Visitor Center, features stadium seating for 314. *Niagara: Legends of Adventure* screens every 45 minutes and lets you witness Niagara Falls' incredible stories and history in air-conditioned comfort. Headsets are available with translation in Spanish, Mandarin, and Korean.

Aquarium of Niagara

The Aquarium of Niagara features over 40 exhibits, including the Penguin Coast exhibit, 200 aquatic animal species, and daily penguin, shark, and tidal pool feedings for people of all ages to enjoy. More than 1,500 aquatic animals live at the Aquarium, representing ecosystems ranging from the Great Lakes to coral reefs. Highlights include California sea lions, Peruvian penguins, seahorses, sturgeon, and more. Outside, visitors can enjoy the vibrant life-sized painting of a whale, known as the *Whaling Wall*, created by famed environmental marine life artist Wyland. The Whaling Wall offers a glimpse of the underwater world waiting inside the Aquarium.

Niagara Gorge Discovery Center

A showcase of the natural and local history of Niagara Falls and the surrounding area, the Discovery Center features information on the natural and local history of the Niagara Gorge. The Center houses hands-on interactive displays, 180-degree multi-screen theater experience, a towering rock-climbing wall, complete with fossils and geological formations, and a gift shop.

Schoellkopf Power Station/Maid of the Mist Winter Storage Facility

The Schoellkopf Power Station was built in three sections between 1905 and 1924, and at the time of its completion was the largest hydroelectric power station in the world. The complex included offices, gatehouses, and other buildings at the top of the Niagara Gorge, and turbine-generator stations located at the base. Water was diverted from the Niagara River above the Falls by a 4,600-foot (1402m) canal that ran through the city to the edge of the gorge. The power station suffered a catastrophic collapse on June 7, 1956. 29 workers escaped while one fell into the river below and died. An estimated \$8 million in damage was done in minutes.

In 2013, the Maid of the Mist began construction on the site as a location to store their boats during the harsh winter months. As a part of that project, the original

elevator shaft was restored and elevator access to the Gorge and the Schoellkopf site was granted.

Niagara Gorge Trailhead Center

The Niagara Gorge hiking trails all begin at the Niagara Gorge Trailhead Center, the gateway to some of the best hiking and biking trails in the region. The local Gorge Trail System offers both easy trails to follow and challenging sections of trails that have steep stairs to climb and rocks to scramble over. Please be aware that conditions are ever-changing in the Niagara Gorge, and hikers should be prepared with sturdy footwear as well as ample supplies of water. Hikers **MUST** stay on marked trails and avoid entering the water. Guided Niagara Gorge hiking tours are offered mid-May through October. Popular hikes include the Great Gorge Scenic Overlook Hike, the Upper Great Gorge Hike, the Devil's Hole Rapids and Giant Rock Hike, and the Whirlpool Rapids Adventure Hike.

Niagara Scenic Trolley

The guided Niagara Scenic Trolley gives passengers an overview of the Park and offers historical anecdotes, fun facts, and tips for visiting the Park's most popular attractions. These trolleys run on eco-friendly natural gas; they are heated in the winter and air-conditioned in the summer to ensure passenger comfort. Niagara Falls State Park is ADA-compliant, and the Niagara Falls Scenic Trolley makes it easy for those with limited mobility to see all of the incredible sights the Park has to offer.

Accessibility

Guests at Niagara Falls State Park can rent bicycles, wheelchairs, strollers, and kid wagons. The rentals tent is located outside of the Visitor Center on the lower level behind the building.

Beyond Niagara Falls State Park

Old Falls Street

The three-block radius of Old Falls Street offers many family-friendly activities, along with downtown hotels, restaurants, and shopping in Niagara Falls, NY. Old Falls Street starts at the main entrance to Niagara Falls State Park at Prospect Park. Along Old Falls Street you'll find the full-amenity Seneca Niagara Resort & Casino, and Smokin' Joe's Native Center, a unique shopping and cultural experience for all.

Oakwood Cemetery

Oakwood Cemetery is the final resting place for families whose names are associated with the growth and development of Niagara Falls as a great industrial city and a world-renowned tourist attraction. Among those buried at Oakwood are Annie Edson Taylor, the first person to travel over the Falls in a barrel, Homan Walsh, the young kite flyer whose kite and ropes sent the cable across the gorge for the first suspension bridge, and the famed "Hermit of Goat Island". The cemetery also includes a memorial to "Comrades of the Grand Army of the Republic", veterans of the Civil War.

Niagara Power Vista Center

The Niagara Power Vista Center, located about 10 minutes north of Niagara Falls State Park, offers activities ranging from a seat-gripping virtual reality ride to hands-on experiments that allow you to discover the energy of New York. A virtual ride takes you plummeting from the sky and into the Niagara River, shooting through the penstocks and swirling around a spinning turbine, then zipping at high speeds along high-tension power lines across the landscapes of New York State. This highly-rated attraction is free to all.

Lockport Cave & Underground Boat Ride

The Lockport Cave & Underground Boat Ride in Lockport, NY is about a 30-minute drive from Niagara Falls State Park (via Route 31 East). It offers a 70-minute guided tour through America's past, where you will explore the newly rehabilitated "Flight of Five" Erie Canal Locks 67-71, constructed in 1838. You will also view ruins from the industrial revolution, walk through a water tunnel that was blasted out of solid rock, encounter stalactites, flow stone, various geological formations, and artifacts left behind in the underground caves by the men who built the tunnel in the early days of the Erie Canal.

The underground boat ride, both unique and mysterious, gives you the opportunity to marvel at artifacts left by miners on the Erie Canal over a century ago, as well as to view cave formations in their early stages of development. Visitors describe the ride as peaceful, yet eerie, as the boat glides through the lifeless water, illuminated only by small, sporadically placed electric lights.

Lockport Locks & Erie Canal Cruises

Take a two-hour cruise down the historic Erie Canal, which was man-made to create passage between the Hudson and Niagara Rivers in the 1800s. This cruise takes you past five of the original 1800s Erie Canal locks. Three-million gallons of water will fill locks 34 and 35, the only double set on the Erie Canal, and raise the boat 50 feet (15.25m). You'll pass under Lockport's "Upside Down Bridge" as well as the "Big Bridge" (the widest in the U.S. at 299 feet (91m) wide, through the "deep rock cut", and under two lift bridges.

Other Attractions

New York's Niagara Region offers a plethora of additional attractions awaiting your discovery and exploration, including Bike the Falls Tours, Escape Niagara (western New York's largest escape complex), Frank Lloyd Wright's Martin House Complex, 1st Choice Fishing Charters, the Niagara Wine Trail, Old Fort Niagara, Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours and Niagara Jet Adventures, Artpark, and Rainbow Air Helicopter Rides.



The American Falls dewatered in 1969 for a join American-Canadian geological study...



and looking much prettier today with water flowing over their crests



The Erie Canal originally ran 363 miles (584km) from where Albany meets the Hudson River to where Buffalo meets Lake Erie. When completed in 1825, it was the second longest canal in the world (after the Grand Canal in China) and greatly affected the development and economy of New York and the United States.

Prior to being protected, the lands surrounding Niagara Falls on both sides of the river were largely controlled by private interests. Landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, an early champion of the Falls' surroundings, helped prepare a report which argued for increased public access to the Falls and recommended that the state purchase lands for that purpose.

The Maid of the Mist boat tour has carried some notable passengers. On his 1860 tour of Canada, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) rode on the Maid of the Mist. Marilyn Monroe rode in June 1952 while in Niagara Falls to film the movie *Niagara*. Mikhail Gorbachev was a passenger in 1983.

The population of Niagara Falls, NY has continued to decline from a peak of 102,394 in the 1960s due to the loss of manufacturing jobs in the area. In the 2010 census, the city had a total population of 50,193. Despite the decline, Niagara Falls State Park and the downtown area closest to the Falls continue to thrive as a result of tourism.

In 1901, a man with an unusual name—Henry Perky—opened an unusual factory in Niagara Falls, NY—The Natural Food Company (nicknamed the *Palace of Light* because of the way the building's windows allowed sunlight to bathe

the interior)—and started manufacturing an unusual product—the now world-famous breakfast cereal Shredded Wheat.

Anchor Bar in nearby Buffalo, NY is home to the original buffalo wing, a popular dish now found across the country.

Tourism has always been a secondary niche for Niagara Falls, NY, as it focused more on the manufacturing of petrochemicals, abrasives, metallurgical products, and other materials.

Two bridges connect the cities of Niagara Falls, New York and Niagara Falls, Ontario: The Rainbow Bridge and the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge (which formerly carried the Canadian National Railway).



A mother and baby seal at Aquarium of Niagara



Base of Bridal Veil Falls with Cave of the Winds scaffolding in the background



Hikers on the Gorge's Hiking Trails are rewarded with some of the area's most scenic vistas



Prospect Point Observation Tower rises high over the precipitous Niagara Gorge



Learn about Niagara's massive power projects at the Niagara Power Vista Center



Experience the peaceful, mysterious Lockport Cave Underground Boat Ride

The Guided Tourist eGuide to Niagara Falls

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