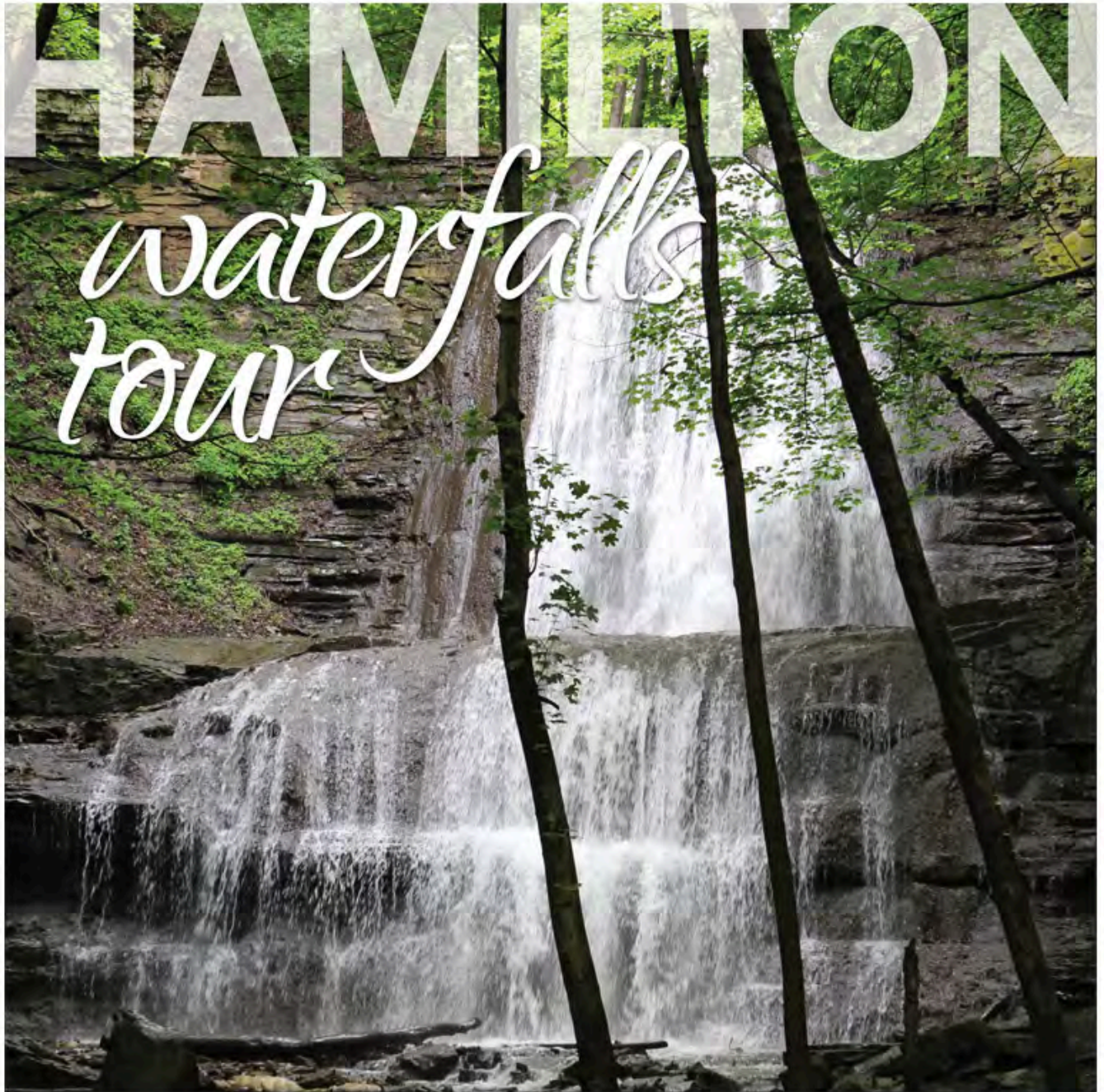


goodlife

MISSISSAUGA'S FINE LIVING MAGAZINE

[Home](#) | [Archive](#) | [Travel](#) | [Videos](#) | [About](#)



ABOVE Sherman Falls

Discover the cascading waters of Greater Hamilton

story and photography Joanne Lovering

Imagine waterfalls hammering down on smooth white rocks, shooting cool misty clouds onto your face, while you stand in the hot shade of a verdant Carolinian forest.

A small red salamander freezes as it spies your sandalled foot in its pathway. Jagged moss-covered boulders camber slowly away from your trail – so slowly that their movement can only be measured decade by decade. Maybe.

The still quiet life in these old woods is invigorating. But somehow, the peace and quiet of this sun-dappled afternoon surprises you. It might even shock you, because this is Hamilton. Fire-breathing, lung-assaulting Hamilton—the largest steel-manufacturing city in Canada. Home to the busiest port on Canada's Great Lakes, thanks to the constant delivery of iron ore and coal. Land of smoke-stacks, highways and factories. Indeed, industry does tell you half the Hamilton story, but now for the rest of the story.

Truth is, if you want to spend a weekend re-connecting with nature, your soul, your lover, there is no better way than to travel an hour westward from Mississauga, over the skyway and into Hamilton—the Waterfall Capital of the World, boasting about 120 diaphanous cascades, strung together by 45 kilometres of the Bruce Trail.

"The waterfalls here are inspiring and refreshing," says Jamie Kent, tour operator with *Grand Experiences*. "There is an awe I feel when I come across one in the forest and I watch and listen to it for a while. I feel invigorated. You can leave the city and walk into the forest and within a few minutes you are in another world. It is a very accessible wilderness, yet it is hidden."

The appreciation for this particular brand of awesome is why Kent, in conjunction with *Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association (HHBRTA)*, is launching a guided, five-day hike this fall along this world-renowned pathway.

The *HHBRTA* approached him to organize the walking wildflower and water experience as part of its mandate from the *Province's Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport*.

The Ministry recently reorganized Ontario into 13 zones, each run by independent not-for-profit organizations. The *HHBRTA* is one of these groups.

"The *Bruce Trail* and the *Niagara Escarpment's* waterfalls attract many locals and visitors to hike on their own so we wanted to offer an elevated experience and encourage economic spinoff," says Maria Fortunato, *HHBRTA* executive director.

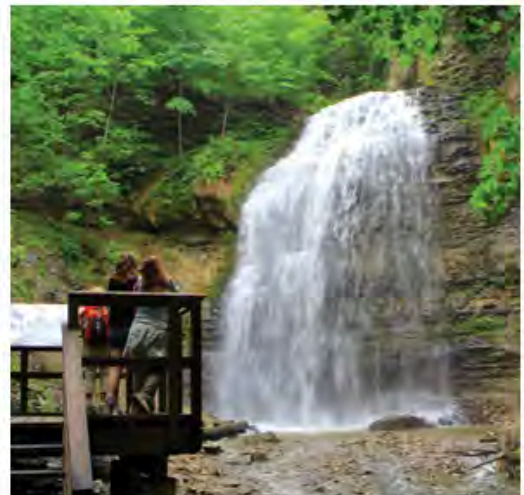
A trek along this trail provides glimpses of buttercup-strewn meadows, profiles of geological rock formations, little lime-green buggies and even a mysterious abandoned stone mansion, rumoured to have ghosts at night.

"It is by far Hamilton's best kept secret, which sounds pretty cliché but it is also pretty accurate," says Kent, a passionate canoeist, hiker and camper. "This city of about 750,000 people is known as a working class town and for its steel industry. Relatively few people realize the natural beauty of the *Niagara Escarpment's Bruce Trail* running through the middle of it and surrounding area. It has a great dichotomy, a tranquil natural wonder running through a large urban area."

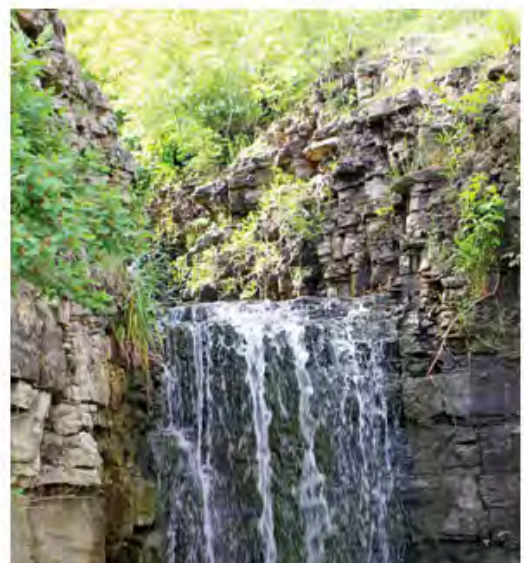
Jamie plotted out a wonderful walk boasting waterfalls of many varieties including ribbon, cascade, curtain and terraced. For admirers of the long tall waterfall, the tour offers an opportunity to gaze at *Tews Falls* which is 41-metre-high. That is just nine metres shorter than the famous *Niagara* nearby.



Falls at the Ancaster Old Mill



Tiffany Falls



Then there is the popular 21-metre *Webster's Falls*, a tiered creation surrounded by groomed parkland and treed trails.

Devil's Punch Bowl features a large curved watery display adjacent to a relaxing lookout point where the steel city sprawls at hikers' feet. It is adorned with a large cross illuminated at night.

Explorers of Felker's Falls over on the east Mountain feel like they are deep inside the woods, although it is quite accessible.

Those who like to climb a little enjoy *Dundas Peak*, where on a sunny day they feel the rays beating down hot on their shoulders, while enjoying the serenity of the green valley below.

The grand five-day, four-night experience covers 45 kilometers of trails, passes 28 waterfalls and offers food from local farmers markets and fine restaurants and then gives rest in the best area hotels. Cost is \$1,198 per person.

Weekend walkers may prefer the \$588 two-day two-night all-inclusive 25-kilometre walking tour featuring 19 waterfalls. Food includes local cuisine such as the *Ancaster Old Mill* and *Dymont's Farmers Market*.

These "walking tours" are now trending in Europe as savvy travel companies get hip to the fact that all vacationers do not want the adrenalin rush of downhill cycling and bungee jumping. Yet, some travellers feel a week on the beach may put them into a catatonic state their brains will recover from only through use of interactive electronic stimulation. The *HHBRTA* is capitalizing on this new idea for tourism.

"The popularity of walking holidays in Europe was something we consciously considered when putting together our tourism experience," says Fortunato. "We wanted to develop an experience that stands apart from other regions and provides Ontario with new experiences to attract visitors to Ontario."

The *Bruce Trail* is world famous, yet until now a visitor could not have a guided experience of the Bruce Trail with its many waterfalls, she says. Kent and Fortunato have changed all that.

Travellers with the silvery haze of *Upper Princess Falls* still fresh on their skin may be surprised to walk through a clearing and see trucks and automobiles on a bridge travelling along Hwy 403. But this, the jarring juxtaposition of man and nature is part of the region's unique beauty.

"I love that the *Bruce Trail* is so close to where people live and work in the Hamilton area and yet it is an oasis of green where nature can thrive," says Beth Gilhespy, executive director at the *Bruce Trail Conservancy*. "It's a great getaway place right in our backyards. The Bruce Trail Conservancy's motto is 'Close to nature, close to home', and I really feel that Hamilton is the perfect example of that blend," she said. In fact, this combination of two diverse realities defines and distinguishes the unique beauty of the area. Here, the *Bruce Trail* is not akin to the predictably pristine *Algonquin Park*. Yet, this progress amidst the pine trees can be fascinating. It is this swirling of two worlds that garnered *The Niagara Escarpment* the designation of a *UNESCO* biosphere reserve.

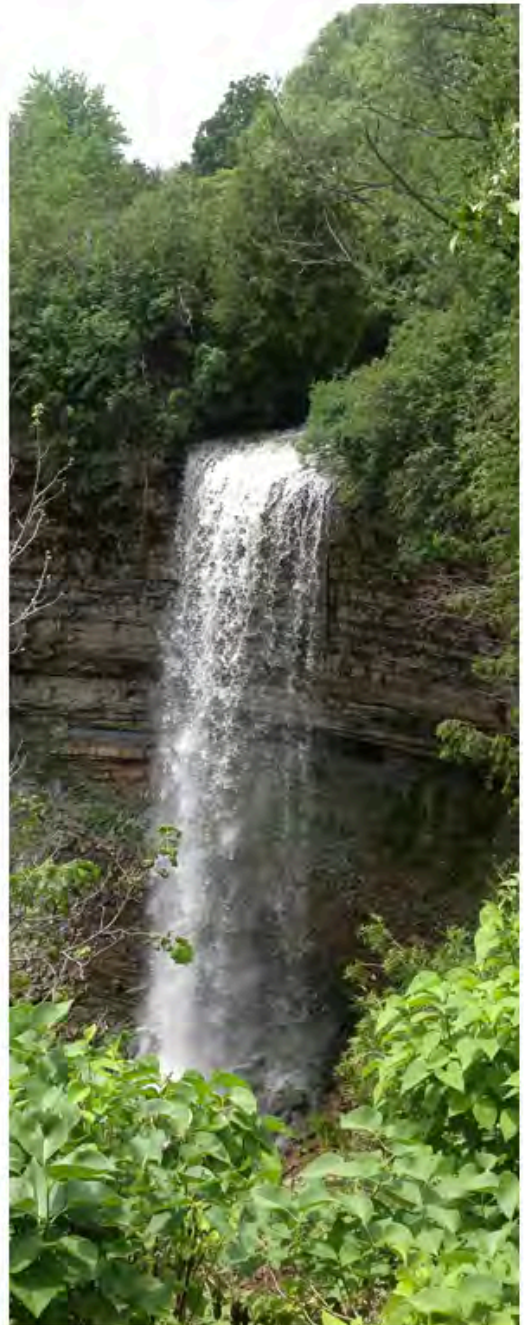
Places with this title share their experiences conserving nature amidst human activity with the *World Network of Biosphere Reserves*. There are currently 621 places in 117 countries similarly honoured.

"I really like the fact the tour explores a world biosphere," says Kent. "It is a feature appreciated by the world, but unknown by many locals. You are experiencing something of global significance."

According to Gilhespy (holder of an MSC from University of Guelph where she studied geology, geography and geomorphology), the Hamilton part of the trail intrigues her for many reasons including its rocks.



Upper Princess Falls



Tews Falls

There is a lot of what looks like limestone along the way. However, Gilhespy declares excitedly this is a misnomer and trekkers should know the light-coloured rock is actually dolostone.

Limestone is made up of crystals of calcite, she explains. Over time, magnesium from sea water can infiltrate the structure of the limestone, replacing some of the calcium and forming crystal dolomite. Rock made of a mixture of calcite and dolomite crystals is called dolostone and is slightly harder than limestone. That is just one of the facts knowledgeable guides may share with hikers along these peaceful pathways to paradise.

Walkers might learn a new word or two. "Camber*" is what a large rock is doing when it slowly moves away.

Whatever your personal pace, whether you prance, stroll or camber along the delightful dirt trails, you are likely to feel a renewed appreciation for the power of rushing water to refresh and rejuvenate your tired city soul.

For more information about the tour and other Hamilton Halton Brant experience packages go to:

<https://grand-experiences.com/trips/booktrip/21>

or visit

<https://www.grand-experiences.com> GL