

# Celebrate spring Ottawa-style with the Canadian Tulip festival

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Each spring, Ottawa hosts the Canadian Tulip Festival, the largest of its kind in the world. Over two weekends in May, locals and visitors alike usually stroll along garden beds to enjoy the beauty of over a million tulips in bloom, and attend special events that honour the festival's historic international roots.

Although the 2021 edition is restricted to locals only due to COVID-19, everyone can join the online celebrations through the festival's virtual programming. Read on to find out what to expect when you visit Canada's capital for the Canadian Tulip Festival in the future—perhaps for its 70th anniversary in 2022!

## Festival history

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During World War II, Princess Juliana of the Netherlands, along with her young daughters, took refuge in Ottawa. During that time a new royal baby, Princess Margriet, was born and the Dutch flag flew proudly at the top of the Peace Tower to announce her arrival.

When the family was able to return to a liberated Europe, they sent gifts back to their Canadian protectors and friends, including 100,000 tulip bulbs. This gift has continued every year since 1945, becoming known as the “Tulip Legacy,” and recalling the deep historical roots of this festival and the special relationship between the two countries.

## Experiencing the festival

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In 2021, the festival can only be enjoyed by locals with a physically distanced stroll, however, there is an opportunity to *virtually* attend from anywhere in the world! Using Zoom, you'll be able to connect with a personal guide and enjoy a 360-degree view of 30 gardens.

In 2022, the festival plans to celebrate a return to grandeur as it commemorates its 70th anniversary. Visitors should again be able to enjoy all the different ways to experience the beautiful tulip festival in Ottawa.

The festival's main site is Commissioners Park, along the Rideau Canal, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. During the festival, the area becomes a visual delight of colour and swells with visitors looking to admire, photograph or sketch the largest display of beautiful tulips in the city.

Commissioners Park is set along Dow's Lake which makes it a pretty spot for a picnic or to rent paddleboards, kayaks or canoes for a fun and active afternoon. You can further explore the Rideau canal in spring, summer and fall on a boat trip, perfect for larger groups.

Although the tulips bring visitors from far and wide there's usually more programming to enjoy during the festival, including workshops, guided walking tours, a kid's zone with fun activities for the little ones, craft stalls to browse, and delicious snacks available from food trucks.

## **Additional floral displays**

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Other spots around the city where you can see tulips during the festival include Major's Hill Park. Located downtown right behind the famous Fairmont Château Laurier, this green space features picturesque flower beds with Parliament Hill as a backdrop. You can easily access the vibrant ByWard Market neighbourhood from there or enjoy a leisurely walk along the Rideau Canal or travel by bike along the flat paths to Commissioners Park.

If your legs need a rest you'll be happy to know that you can access most tulip sites by public transportation (OC Transpo) or you can also book a seat on Gray Line's Discover the Capital Hop-On Hop-Off Bus Tour.

Come admire the bounty of beautiful spring tulips in bloom during the Canadian Tulip Festival in Ottawa and experience this living gift of friendship and gratitude.