

Finding a Home in



Cycling along the Rideau Canal during the Canadian Tulip Festival.

Ottawa

When Chris and Charlie Kates began considering a move away from their long-time hometown of Toronto, Ottawa was one of the top contenders, and not just because one of the couple's sons was living there. A lawyer and legal historian, Chris had spent a good deal of time in Canada's capital over the years, so she says, "I knew the city pretty well—at least the downtown part—and I really liked it."

Comparatively affordable property prices were a selling point for the Kateses. "We're in line with the national average," says Chris Nash, a sales representative for Royal LePage Team Realty. "The average condo price is \$260,982, and the average detached home is roughly \$420,000."

With a population of almost 950,000, Ottawa has amenities convenient for most neighbourhoods, including seniors' centres and recreational facilities. "Our fitness class is only 10 minutes away, and my singing practices are about five minutes away," Chris Kates says. "You can get anywhere you want in a short period of time."

Driving is also less hair-raising than it is in many other large centres, says Sandy Stalder, who, with her husband, Fred, moved here from Winnipeg in 2016 to be near their children and grandchildren. "I'm surprised how



Members of seniors' centres. Nepean Seniors Recreation Centre.



comfortable I am driving around Ottawa," she says.

Getting around is poised to become even more convenient, with the planned 2018 opening of a new light rail transit (LRT) system. "In a couple years' time, 70 per cent of the population will be living within five kilometres of an LRT station," Nash says.

Availability of high-quality specialized health care services was another consideration for the Kateses, and with two hospitals, a medical school, and one of the country's top heart institutes, Ottawa more than met their requirements. "We have great health care," says Nash, who explains that his late father received prompt top-notch cancer treatment. "For example, The Ottawa Hospital is one of three facilities in



retirement destinations



Canadian War Museum is incredible,” Chris Kates says) and attending classes and events put on by the city’s post-secondary institutions. “We’re taking a current-events course; the instructor is

the country to have a surgical

a professor at Carleton University,” Chris notes.

radiation knife. They have state-of-the-art facilities.”

After living in Ottawa for three years, Chris Kates has come to value the city’s cleanliness, relative quiet, and diversity. “We get a lot of people from outside Canada, including people who are involved in the embassies,” she says.

With an abundance of green space, scenic waterways, and an extensive system of walking and bike paths, the city also features an array of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, from kayaking and canoeing to cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and skating. “We hadn’t realized how much green space there was around us,” Sandy Stalder says, noting she and her husband are looking forward to using the canoe and bicycles they brought with them.

With several ski hills and resorts nearby, as well as a multitude of picturesque small towns, the surrounding area also has a great deal to offer. “We had a blast going to the apple orchard with our grandchildren,” Sandy Stalder says. “If you want a French-Canadian meal, it’s only a 10-minute trip across the river to Aylmer and Gatineau in Quebec,” adds Chris Kates, who has visited Ontario villages such as Manotick and Almonte during Ottawa Newcomers’ Club Walk and Talk outings.

As for cultural pursuits, Ottawa offers a wide range of options, including the National Gallery of Canada, the National Arts Centre, and a number of museums, including ones devoted to science, technology, and aviation, in addition to other theatres and performance venues.

“We have season tickets to the theatre and to football,” Sandy Stalder says.

The Kateses enjoy availing themselves of the museums (“The

Many of the cultural and recreational activities in Ottawa are budget-friendly, and, Chris Kates says, “Ottawa offers a lot of free activities,” including skating along the Rideau Canal (the country’s biggest outdoor rink), free museum admissions at selected times, and countless festivals, including Winterlude and Bluesfest. “One weekend in July, you could walk from Jazzfest to Ribfest, get something to eat on your way to the electronic music festival, and then go to Fringe Fest to watch a theatre production,” Nash says.

“It’s just a very, very vibrant community,” Chris Kates says. “I love it here.”



Café Cognac, Gatineau, QC; Casino du Lac-Leamy; apple picking; Canadian War Museum; bottom: Canada Aviation and Space Museum; National Gallery; Canadian Museum of History.



Photos: Ottawa Tourism (canal, Chamberfest, JazzFest, casino, and museums); Images Ontario (children and gallery); Nicolas Mineault (cote).