



Bellevue House
National Historic Site of Canada
 parkscanada.gc.ca

Cultural Explorer

You seek constant opportunities to embrace, discover, and immerse yourself in the entire experience of the culture, people and settings of the places you visit. Not content to just visit historic sites and watch from the sidelines, you want to participate in the modern-day culture as well. You often attempt to converse with locals, attend local cultural festivals, or go off the beaten track to discover how people truly live.

Sir John A. Macdonald moved to Bellevue through its owner, Charles Hales, a tea merchant. This can explain the nicknames Bellevue house received – Tea Caddy Castle and Pekoe Pagoda- from Kingston’s conservative residents in the 1840s. The unique, asymmetrical architecture of the house stirred conversations in town but Macdonald saw its look and location outside the city as ideal for his ailing wife, Isabella Macdonald.

You’ll see why the elaborate and private nature of the house and grounds convinced Macdonald it would be an idyllic and cathartic resolution to Isabella’s unfortunate condition. While strolling the grounds you can recognize the Italianate architecture, signature to Bellevue, but also smell the crisp breeze from Lake Ontario and see the sun shining down on the vegetable garden. The abundance of vegetables you see now is quite similar to when Macdonald was at Bellevue – Isabella looked over the garden with the help of servants and gardeners.

Bellevue house was a modest abode during Macdonald’s time. You’ll learn he was not rich but not poor, able to have Bellevue House whilst financing his mother Helen’s house downtown Kingston. In the house you’ll notice its spaciousness and roominess – one can only imagine its size for just Isabella and John A.! Notice the status division in the house, typical of that time, with maids and servants occupying the lower half of the house and residents occupying the upper floors. Bellevue reveals a more personal side of the Macdonald’s life and reflects the modest yet astonishing character of Sir John A. Macdonald.

Speak to our Parks Canada staff to make the most of your visit!
www.canada.travel/eq

For the Cultural Explorer we suggest...

Tea and Theatre – Thursdays and Fridays are a time to try some of Sir John A’s Scottish style scones, shortbreads and teas. If you decide to join the site on Sundays, you could also join us for tea and Theatre, where you can travel back in time with period actors revisiting the ways of the 1800s.

Inside the minds of a Lady or Gentleman – The era of Etiquette was upon the Macdonalds’ during their time at Bellevue House. One must follow the rules and regulations of everyday life. Enter the house with this in mind and come for our etiquette demonstration tour at ... for a peek into 1840’s lifestyles.

Period games - Bring out the child in you and try playing historical games. You can be enthralled by a game of graces, boules, or even try a game of chess. You can also join the gardeners who may be preparing a bird watching break, deciphering the types of bugs or predators that call the garden home, or picking the weeds between your favourite vegetables and herbs.

Herbs and Remedies – How did the people heal? What medicine did they have? Discover the plants and ways of healing during that period. Work with the gardeners to learn the different herbs that would help people administer the sickly or light-hearted.

Barriers down – Walk through the house and enter certain rooms as the Macdonald family would have. Discover the views from the guest room windows and the views of the orchard that John Clark, Isabella’s brother, would have enjoyed during his time at the house – the trees in bloom in the spring, the growth of the apples during the summer, and the apple picking in the fall.

