

# Village of St. Jacobs

it's like travelling back in time

story Laurie Wallace-Lynch    photography courtesy of St. Jacobs Country

Although St. Jacobs is just over an hour drive from Mississauga, it feels like you have travelled back in time to another era. Located just 8 kilometres north of Waterloo, as you get close, you are likely to see a few horse-drawn, black buggies driven by Mennonites who farm this rich land. The distinctive clip-clop of horses' hooves echo through the quiet stillness of the morning as you enter the historic Village of St. Jacobs.

The village is like a *Currier & Ives* postcard. Historic stone and red brick buildings line each side of King Street. They are cottage-cute garden shops, intriguing upscale clothing and decor shops, brimming with must-have merchandise. A few recommendations include *Lizzy R*, *La Crème*, *Xclusive Elements*, the quilt shop at *The Mill*, and *Timber Barn* for some great renovation ideas. In the village you will also discover a coffee roaster, a craft brewery, cafés, restaurants, a bakeshop, the original *Home Hardware* store, *The Mennonite Story* Visitor's Centre, *The Maple Syrup Museum*, *St. Jacobs & Aberfoyle Model Railway* and more.

Just 3 kilometres from the village you will find the famous *St. Jacobs Farmers' Market*, *St. Jacobs Outlet Mall* and *Market Road Antiques*. Plan to spend at least a day exploring the market, another day exploring the village and seeing the sites.

Jenny Shantz, public relations manager for St. Jacobs Country assisted in coming up with an itinerary the entire family will enjoy.

If you plan to stay longer than a day, she recommends *Homewood Suites by Hilton*, an all-suite hotel with kitchen, living room and separate bedroom with ensuite. Kids will love the indoor pool while parents appreciate the complimentary breakfast.

"Head to *Block Three Brewing Company*, a family friendly

brew house where you can mingle with locals and then head over to *Jacob's Grill* for a nice dinner," suggests Jenny. It has a beautiful outdoor summer patio.

Saturday is Farmers' Market Day. It opens at 7:00 A.M. The market was established in Kitchener and moved to its current location in 1975. In September 2013, fire destroyed the main building. Temporary tents were erected to house vendors until a new structure was built. With over 500 vendors in peak season, spread out over three buildings plus an outdoor area, the village boasts Canada's largest year-round market. Prominent among the vendors are Old Order Mennonites, Amish farmers and skilled artisans who sell handmade quilts, jams and jellies, maple syrup and produce grown on local farms.

Right outside the quilt shop cabin you can buy tickets to hop on the horse-drawn trolley. *St. Jacobs Horse Drawn Tours* has a number of destinations including a Mennonite farm and quilt shop.

*Market Road Antiques* has over 100 antique dealer booths under one roof, selling everything from estate jewellery to china, decor and more. Meanwhile, kids and adults alike love to hop aboard the *St. Jacobs Train Ride* that runs the 3K stretch between the market and village on market days.

Visit *The Mennonite Story* to learn about the culture and history of the Anabaptist-based religion and its local roots.

*The St. Jacobs & Aberfoyle Model Railway* is "a 3,000 square foot space depicting Southern Ontario circa 1950's when steam and diesel locomotives existed, complete with trains, cars, houses and villages," explains Jenny. "The lights go down and the trains and buildings light up."

Learn all about maple syrup at the *Maple Syrup Museum* and then head to *Hamel Brooms* to watch the age-old

method of making brooms by hand. Afterwards, head to the *Stone Crock Restaurant* and enjoy their elaborate buffet, which includes an incredible array of homemade pies. Order traditional dishes from the menu including the highly recommended wiener schnitzel.

Then, enjoy live theatre with a variety of musicals and comedies produced by *Drayton Entertainment* at their two unique theatres in St. Jacobs Country.

"St. Jacobs is a church community, so it's usually pretty quiet on Sundays," says Jenny. "Hop in the car and head into the country to see the farms and stop by the West Montrose

Covered Bridge, one of the few remaining covered bridges in Ontario. "We call it St. Jacobs Country because it is more than just the Farmers' Market and the Village," says Jenny.

Settling in the area began in 1830, but the arrival of Mennonites from Pennsylvania started in the early 1850s. The village was originally named Jakobstettel (Jacob's Village) after Jacob C. Snider who built a sawmill, flour-mill and woolen-mill after creating a dam. By 1855, the population was 400. Today more than a million people visit the historic village each year. For more information visit [www.stjacobs.com](http://www.stjacobs.com) 📍

