

PHOTOS THIS PAGE © 2015 BATA SHOE MUSEUM, TORONTO, CANADA / RON WOOD



## Another way men get high

**Toronto's Bata Shoe Museum** is celebrating its **20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year** beginning this May. The downtown museum has a collection of 13,000 shoes spanning 4500 years. Many of the museum's edgiest high heels are on display now through May 2016 — all of them belonged to men. ***Standing Tall: The Curious History of Men in Heels*** explores the fancy footwear from the early 1600s to today and why some men — from privileged rulers to “hyper-sexualized” rock stars — preferred them to flats. “When heels were introduced into fashion at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, men were the first to adopt them,” Elizabeth Semmelhack, the museum's senior curator recently said. “And they continued wearing heels as expressions of power and prestige for over 130 years.” John Lennon's original 1960s Beatle boots are on display as are platforms worn by Elton John in the 1970s. Adults \$14. Thursdays from 5 to 8PM by donation. tel: (416) 979-7799; [batashoemuseum.ca](http://batashoemuseum.ca).

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:**  
 This small boy's shoe dates from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. Toronto shoemaker Master John made these boots in 1973. These silk shoes from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century are said to be papal.





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The first house that **Frank Lloyd Wright** designed in **Southern California** is now open for self-guided tours after a six-year, \$4.5-million restoration. Built in LA between 1919 and 1921, the **Hollyhock House's** floors, windows, doors, decorative moldings and paint colours have been brought back to their original state. Wright called the house's architecture "California Romanza," using a musical term that means "freedom to make one's own form." There's a central garden and many interior spaces are connected to exterior ones. The rooftop terraces feature views of the LA basin and Hollywood Hills. The house was commissioned by Pennsylvania oil heiress Aline Barnsdall in 1919 — and named for her favourite flower — who also wanted a theatre of her own to produce her avant-garde plays. A dormitory for actors, a studio for artists and two secondary residences were planned, but the contract was cancelled in 1921 because of cost. Thursdays to Sundays. Adults US\$7. tel: (323) 913-4031; barnsdall.org.

## Wright this way



## High tea, high up, high price

Afternoon tea is an English institution and this summer you can have it high above **London** at **The Shard**. This June, the Renzo Piano-designed skyscraper is launching **Sky-High Tea** on the open-air sky deck of the building's 72<sup>nd</sup> floor, which boasts dizzying views of St. Paul's Cathedral, the Gherkin and Tower Bridge. A Fortnum & Mason picnic "Hamplering" of classic finger sandwiches, scones, clotted cream, raspberry jam and the British grocer's signature Royal Blend tea will cost £85 (\$155) for two. Panoramic views are included. Bookings are open now for the June 23-to-September 8 season. [theviewfromtheshard.com](http://theviewfromtheshard.com).



# Japan's new wings

One of **Japan's** most famous and well-preserved castles reopened in March following a more than five-year renovation. Guests can now take in the architecture of **Himeji-jo Castle**, which dates from the beginning of the Edo Period (1603-1868), sans scaffolding (the building's exterior was repainted). The castle became Japan's first UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993. It consists of 74 structures, including a kitchen in the inner court in case the castle fell under siege and an attempt was made to starve its occupants. Among its many gates are mechanisms for dropping stones on intruders and, of course, there are holes in the walls for firing guns. But the castle is elegant, too. Its white plaster walls are evocative of an egret (*shirasagi*) with its wings spread, which gives the castle its nickname, Shirasagi-jo. At night, the entire castle is lit up so a visit after sunset is recommended. [himeji-kanko.jp](http://himeji-kanko.jp).



## New trains for thought

**Via Rail Canada** packages are now available through the **Amtrak Vacations** program. The new partnership between the two rail services means that you can now plan trips to Canada and the US in one transaction. The **Cross Canada** itinerary, for example, visits Toronto and Niagara Falls before departing for Jasper/Banff and then Vancouver where travellers can then take off for any of the cities that Amtrak services in the US. The **Capital to Capital** tour includes Toronto, Niagara Falls, Ottawa and Montreal, then a transfer to an Amtrak station for NYC, Philly and Washington. tel: (800) 268-7252; [amtrakvacations.com](http://amtrakvacations.com).



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# Plant yourself here



Kirstenbosch Garden in Cape Town.

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The **2015 International Garden Tourism Awards** were presented in Toronto recently. Organizations were honoured for the development and promotion of the garden experience as a tourism attraction. The Garden of the Year award went to **Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden** ([sanbi.org/gardens/kirstenbosch](http://sanbi.org/gardens/kirstenbosch)) in Cape Town, South Africa. Established in 1913, the 36-hectare garden graces the slopes of Table Mountain. The New Garden Experience of the Year award went to **Dubai Miracle Garden** ([dubaimiraclegarden.com](http://dubaimiraclegarden.com)). It opened in 2013 and is home to 150 million flowers. The Top 10 North American Gardens Worth Travelling For (listed alphabetically, not rank) are below. For more: [gardentourism.blogspot.ca](http://gardentourism.blogspot.ca).

**Butchart Gardens**, Brentwood Bay, BC  
**Chanticleer Garden**, Wayne, PA  
**Denver Botanic Gardens**, Denver, CO  
**Desert Botanical Garden**, Phoenix, AZ  
**Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden**, Miami, FL  
**Huntington Botanical Gardens**, San Marino, CA  
**Jardín Botánico Culiacán**, Culiacán, Mexico  
**Longwood Gardens**, Kennett Square, PA  
**Montreal Botanical Garden**, Montreal, QC  
**Vallarta Botanical Gardens**, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico 🇲🇽