Welcome to the DUNDAS VALLEY

The Dundas Valley is one of Southern Ontario’s most spectacular natural areas. Highlights of the 1200-hectare conservation area include lush forests, colourful meadows, cold water streams, stunning geological formations and an array of rare plants, birds and wildlife. The area is part of a large glacial valley that spreads out into Lake Ontario.

The Dundas Valley is as rare and unique as any protected area in the world, but it is not in the middle of the wilderness; it is the heart of the Canada’s 10th largest city. It is eight times larger than New York’s Central Park! The geographical area of the Valley is more than 6,000 acres (2,400ha), including Spencer Gorge and the Escarpment rim in Ancaster, Dundas, and Flamborough. Today, the Hamilton Conservation Authority protects 3,000 of those acres (1,200 hectares), thanks largely to the efforts of concerned citizens.

Trail Centre
A replica of a Victorian train station, the Dundas Valley Trail Centre is the hub of the valley’s trail network. The Centre has a food concession, washrooms, interpretive displays, brochures and maps detailing the Dundas Valley.

THE TRAIL SYSTEM

A 40 kilometre trail system developed and maintained by HCA and sections of the world famous Bruce Trail provide access to almost every part of the Dundas Valley. The trail network is organized around three major trails: The Main Loop Trail, The Bruce Trail, and the 13-kilometre Hamilton to Brantford Rail Trail.

Bruce Trail
A section of the Bruce Trail travels through the Dundas Valley. Canada’s oldest and longest marked footpath, it spans more than 885 km of mail trail and 400 km of associated side trails. No cycling is permitted on the Bruce Trail. For more information, visit: brucetrail.org

Hamilton to Brantford Rail Trail
Canada’s first inter urban trail, and one of the regions most important walking, cycling and equestrian routes as part of the Trans Canada Trail. Links to Paris and Cambridge extend the Trail to 80 kilometres.

Main Loop - 3.4 km loop
The Main Loop Trail is a journey through a mature deciduous forest, hemlock groves, stream valleys, an old apple orchard and open meadows. Points of interest also include the Trail Centre, Hermitage Ruins, Sulphur Spring and Hermitage Cascade. Allow 90 minutes.

Monarch Trail - 5.1 km one way
Branching off the Main Loop Trail at the top of the Mierick orchard, this trail leads through mature deciduous forests, meadows, and rolling hills. The top of Groundhog Hill provides a panoramic view of the Valley. Allow 1.5 hours.

Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere
The Niagara Escarpment is an internationally recognized landform and is the cornerstone of Ontario’s Greenbelt. A landscape of rich biodiversity, home to hundreds of Ontario’s Species at Risk, vital watersheds, agricultural areas and 450 million year old geological history. Designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Niagara Escarpment is a treasure to protect for future generations.

Carolinian Forest
The Dundas Valley is part of a once vast and unthawed deciduous forest stretching from Southern Ontario to the Carolinas, known as the Carolinian Forest. This Carolinian Forest can be found nowhere else in Canada. This area accounts for only one percent of Canada’s geographical area, but is home to 25 percent of Canada’s population, and home to one-third of Canada’s endangered species. The Dundas Valley is one of 10 nodal parks along the Escarpment, and is home to 585 species of plants and animals, 55 of which are rare or endangered.

The Hermitage and Gatehouse Museum
The Hermitage, located just off the Main Loop Trail, is a popular spot to visit while in the area. The ruins are a beautiful and picturesque place to stop while on a hike. The ruins were restored and reopened to the public in the summer of 2016. The Hermitage can be used for wedding ceremonies.

Griffin House
An excellent example of Ancaster’s early history is preserved in a simple 1.5 acre house just west of the Hermitage Ruins. Emigrants Griffin and his wife, Priscilla moved to the area in 1829 to escape slavery in the United States, possibly making use of the Underground Railroad. Group tours and themed hikes are organized by the Fieldcote Museum.

HCA Trail Etiquette
- Stay on marked designated trails. There are many rare and sensitive plants that can be easily damaged or destroyed.
- Respect and share the trail with other users.
- Watch for and obey all trail closure signs.
- Respect neighbouring landowners by staying off private property, maintaining privacy for landowners and avoiding excessive noise.
- Bicycles are not permitted on the Bruce Trail.
- Alcohol is not permitted at any time.
- Pack out what you pack in. Please leave our natural areas clean.
- The Niagara Escarpment is full of wonders and can also be dangerous. To enjoy this area safely, please stay on marked trails and behind all fences and barriers. Keep children within arm’s reach and away from cliff and escarpment edges.

PETS
All dogs in the Dundas Valley Conservation Area MUST be on a leash at all times.
Conservation Authority regulations require dogs to be on leashes for the safety of the wildlife of the area, and also for the safety of school groups that are in the Dundas Valley for Environmental Education programs.

Remove dog waste from the trail and dispose of it in the garbage.

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The Dundas Valley Conservation Area is home to the Hamilton Conservation Authority’s Outdoor Environmental Education Programs and has provided more than 500,000 students with the opportunity to explore and discover Hamilton’s unique natural areas. HCA Outdoor Environmental Education programs encourage elementary and secondary students to get outside to experience and connect with the natural environment through hands-on, outdoor active programming. These year-round programs are designed to assist students and teachers to develop sensitivity to the environment while meeting current curriculum guidelines.

For over 15 years, the Dundas Valley Conservation Area has hosted the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Envirothon, an environmental competition for high school students.

Throughout the summer, HCA also offers Eco Adventure Day Camps, introducing young adventurers to activities that will help them get excited about the great outdoors!

For more information please contact the Education Coordinator at 905-627-1233 or hcaenved@conservationhamilton.ca.