



9. SPRING IN THE CAPITAL

In the National Capital Region, spring is usually associated with the sight of tulips. Each spring, Ottawa welcomes one of the largest tulip festivals around. During the month of May, millions of tulips decorate the capital, attracting thousands of visitors. As the official gardener of the National capital region, the National Capital Commission (NCC) designs, plants and cares for the tulips in the region. That is close to one million tulips, which include 100 varieties, in 120 flower beds, across 30 different locations. (source)

History

The NCC created the first tulip beds in the Capital in 1945, after the Second World War. The first tulips were a gift from the Netherlands (100,000 bulbs) in thanks and recognition for Canada's role in the liberation of the country. As such, tulips are a symbol of lasting friendship between Canada and the Netherlands.



The tradition continues to this day: every year, the NCC plants the gifted bulbs in Commissioners Park. These tulips set the scene for the Canadian Tulip Festival, an event the NCC proudly supports and hosts. The first Canadian Tulip Festival was held in 1953 at the suggestion of world-renowned photographer Malak Karsh.

Top spots for tulips in the capital (source)

- **Commissioners Park:** With over 100 varieties of bulbs, Commissioners Park is a showstopper, and our major tulip display site. It hosts 30 tulip beds, including the Queen Juliana Gift Bed, which features the bulbs donated by the Netherlands. It also hosts a test bed, where our landscape architects test new tulips before mass planting them.
- **Along the Rideau Canal:** The iconic Rideau Canal corridor is also a must-visit during spring. Take a stroll or a spin on the Queen Elizabeth Driveway or the Rideau Canal Western Pathway to see the tulips – and catch some amazing sights. Also, this route connects two great places to see the tulips: Commissioners Park and downtown Ottawa.
- **Downtown Ottawa:** Parliament Hill may be under construction, but there's still a lot to see in the area. Major's Hill Park, for example, is one of the best sites to see tulips blooming in the spring. To see more tulips, check out the planters along Confederation Boulevard and the displays at the National War Memorial.
- **Downtown Gatineau:** The Quebec side also boasts beautiful tulip displays. Areas planted near the Alexandra Bridge, Jacques-Cartier Park and the Canadian Museum of History are worth a visit. Besides the tulips, these destinations offer magnificent scenes of the river and Parliament Hill. Plus, they are within walking distance from Major's Hill Park.