



■ The top of the Horseshoe Falls next to the Table Rock Centre. Photography: Courtesy of The Niagara Parks Commission

Niagara Falls

North America's Natural Wonder

By Lynn Cicchelli

You can't really prepare yourself for the feeling you get when you see Niagara Falls in person. You might have seen pictures of the falls, maybe watched a documentary about them, but until you witness this sight in person you might never fully understand the magnificence and wonder that is Niagara Falls.

Long known as a popular honeymoon destination, the Niagara Falls region in Canada now appeals to a new generation with a street filled with fun activities, breathtaking tours, and even an indoor water park, making this an ideal family vacation destination.

Clifton Hill is like the Times Square of the Falls area. This street leads you down to the majestic falls on the Canadian side and is jam packed with attractions, restaurants,

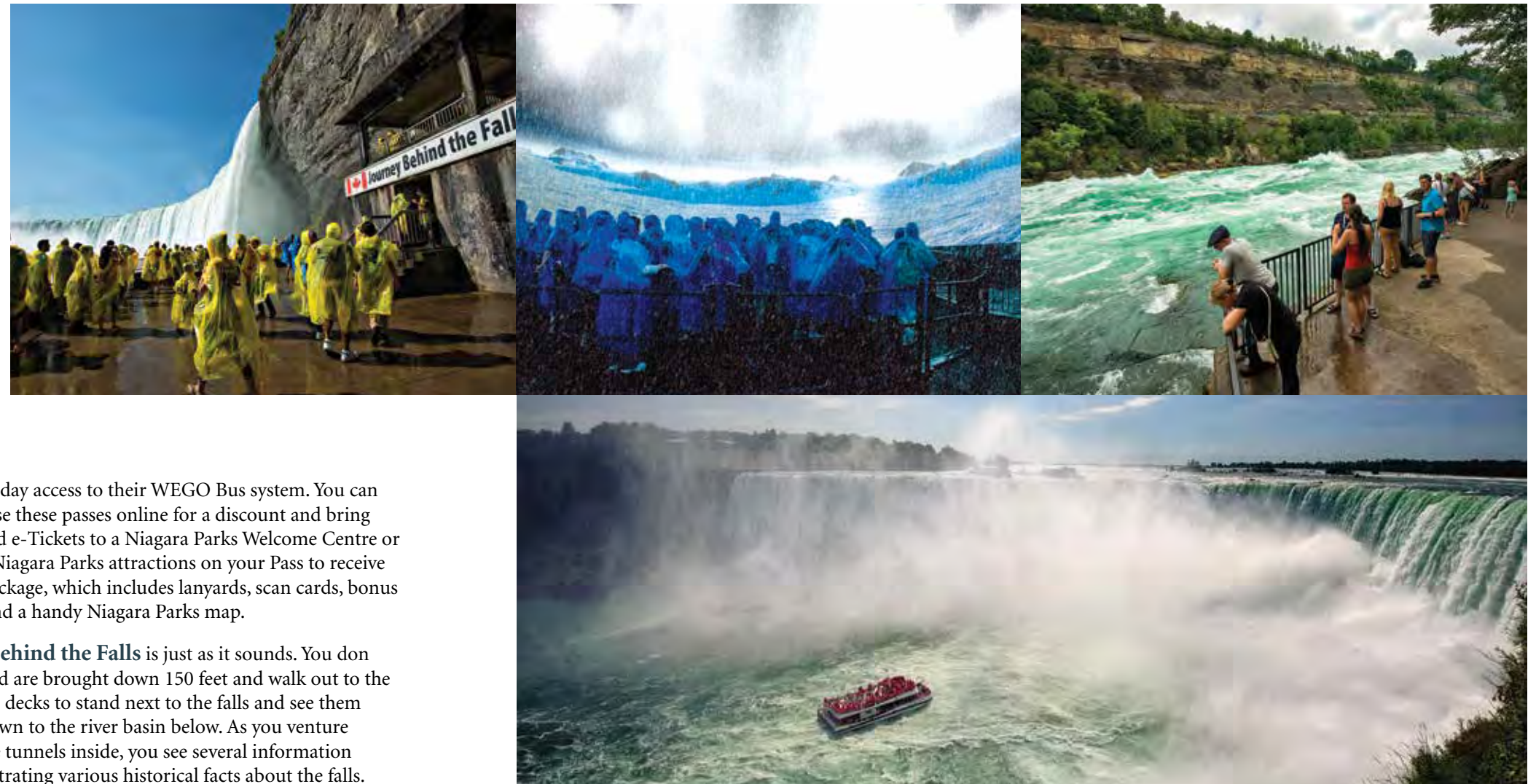
■ Hornblower Niagara Cruise as it ventures into the falls. Photography: Courtesy of The Niagara Parks Commission

hotels, and more! You'll find numerous arcades, wax museums, haunted houses, souvenir shops, dinosaur miniature golf, and great dining options along the way.

As you make your way down Clifton Hill, you can begin to hear the roar of the falls. You'll start to feel the spray of water from the falls just a few short blocks away. Some tourists walk with umbrellas and others with rain ponchos, but others just take in the mist as a badge of honor. Walking closer to the falls, the roar intensifies and the view is just breathtaking.

On the Canadian side, you can easily view the falls that make up Niagara Falls: the American Falls, the Bridal Veil Falls, and the Canadian, or Horseshoe, Falls. At night, the falls are illuminated in a rainbow of colors.

By far, the best bang for your buck is the **Niagara Falls Adventure Pass**. It includes admission to four top attractions: Journey Behind the Falls, Niagara's Fury (4D multi-sensory movie), White Water Walk, and Hornblower Niagara Cruises,



■ From left to right: Journey Behind the Falls, Niagara's Fury, the White Water Walk, Hornblower Niagara Cruise.
Photography: Courtesy of The Niagara Parks Commission

as well as 2-day access to their WEGO Bus system. You can pre-purchase these passes online for a discount and bring your printed e-Tickets to a Niagara Parks Welcome Centre or one of the Niagara Parks attractions on your Pass to receive your full package, which includes lanyards, scan cards, bonus coupons, and a handy Niagara Parks map.

Journey Behind the Falls is just as it sounds. You don ponchos and are brought down 150 feet and walk out to the observation decks to stand next to the falls and see them crashing down to the river basin below. As you venture through the tunnels inside, you see several information points, illustrating various historical facts about the falls. Within these tunnels, you can walk out to gated landings that let you actually stand behind the falls. Just amazing!

The **Hornblower Niagara Cruise** gets you as close as possible to the falls. (Be prepared to get wet!) This thrilling tour takes you along the American Falls and Bridal Veil Falls and into the center of the Horseshoe Falls to experience these wonders falls firsthand. (*The best time to schedule the Hornblower Niagara Cruise and Journey Behind the Falls is first thing in the morning when the lines are shorter.*)

Niagara's Fury is a 4D movie experience that walks you through the history of Niagara Falls and how they came to be. You'll feel the ground beneath your feet rumble, feel the spray and bubble of the river, and view the most awe-inspiring visuals illustrating how nature formed these wondrous falls. (*Book Journey Behind the Falls and then Niagara's Fury right after since they are both located at the Table Rock Centre.*)

Finally, the **White Water Walk** takes you right next to these class 6 rapids (making them the most dangerous). You take an elevator ride down to a boardwalk and stand

right next to these amazing white-capped rapids. There are two observation areas, which offer breathtaking views of this natural phenomenon. (*If you are venturing to the White Water Walk, just know it is several miles away from the other attractions. Rather than walk, it's probably best to hop on the WEGO bus via the Purple Line to get there.*)

There are so many hotels in the area. Your best bet is to find one close to the falls. Parking tends to get a little pricey, but if you stay at a hotel off Clifton Hill or on Victoria Avenue, you can easily walk to the activities in Niagara Centre. (*And if you purchase the Niagara Falls Adventure Pass, you can utilize the WEGO bus system as part of your package!*)

Niagara Falls has now become our family's favorite vacation destination. In the words of my favorite 10-year-old: "It's the coolest place ever!"

HELPFUL LINKS:

Niagara Parks (*purchase the Niagara Falls Adventure Pass here*):
niagaraparks.com

Niagara Falls Tourism:
niagarafallstourism.com

Tourism Niagara:
tourismniagara.com

Niagara Canada:
visitniagaracanada.com

Niagara Falls Bridges (*provides real-time traffic updates on border crossings*):
niagarafallsbridges.com



■ The Niagara Skywheel located on Clifton Hill provides amazing views of the falls.
Photography: Shutterstock