

City travel

## Where to find Bohemian-chic in Cowtown



Calgary's Inglewood neighbourhood features creative charcuterie, collector-quality knives and a wine and whiskey-centered dessert cafe among other delights

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While the building frenzy has slowed in Calgary, this city seems intent on growing upward and outward, the construction crane a kind of metaphor for the industrious, open-for-business Alberta brand.

So under the glare of the high-intensity lights that illuminate the ongoing construction of The Bow – soon to be the city's massive (for Calgary) sky-scraping monolith at 58 storeys – it's nice to know a few more human-scale, bohemian nooks still exist downtown.

Just start from the city centre and head due east – 9th Avenue is the route to Calgary's creative and bohemian core. It stretches from the iconic Calgary Tower, east past City Hall and into the funky neighbourhood of Inglewood, where some of the earliest storefronts now house eclectic entrepreneurs.

Le Germain, the city's newest and finest hotel 🏨 at 9th Avenue and Centre Street, is a good place to start with Charcut, a cool, locovore eatery, at its base. From here, it's an easy 10-minute walk to historic Fort Calgary at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow rivers, where the North-West Mounted Police first set up shop in 1875. These days, the city is busy cutting new roadways through the largely empty stretch between the riverbank and the old rail yards that flank 9th Avenue – making the area “developer ready” for the planned East Village revitalization – but once you get past this bit of no-man's land, you're into Inglewood.

With historic homes lining the riverbank – and the names of pioneers like Burns, Fraser, Douglas and Aull chiselled into the façades of the brick buildings along the avenue – it's easy to imagine what Calgary's oldest neighbourhood might have been like a century ago. Many of the shops still have creaky wood floors and high, pressed-tin ceilings, and the area has a casual vibe, with old-fashioned pizza joints flourishing next to high-end furniture stores. It's here that you'll find a hodgepodge of places to poke through, from used bookstores and fashion 👗 boutiques to some of the city's finest restaurants, whether you're up for a five-course meal or an awesome Italian sausage sandwich.

Aside from shops, though, Inglewood is home to a vibrant cultural scene. You might see local legend country singer Ian Tyson or indie roots rockers on the Ironwood Stage, or you can take in one of 150 shows at the summer Fringe Festival.

**CHARCUT ROAST HOUSE** “Char” stands for the char-grilled meat from the custom rotisserie and “cut” for the vintage meat slicer that turns house-made charcuterie into papery pieces, but this new eatery is about a lot more than meat. Chefs and owners John Jackson and Connie DeSousa are serious scratch cooks – their creative menu, based on local, artisan ingredients, changes daily. Try the lamb ham or pig-head mortadella with crunchy dill pickles, tuna conserved in olive oil with lemon, and rotisserie roasted organic chicken and beef. There’s an open kitchen, cool communal table and huge selection of craft beer. 101 899 Centre St. SW; 403-984-2180 403-984-2180; [charcut.com](http://charcut.com)

**BITE GROCETERIA** This is nirvana for serious cooks – Bite carries the foie gras, local lamb, wild game and other fine local and imported ingredients used by the city’s top chefs, and some of them contribute their own creations (from veal jus to rice pudding) to the coolers too. Come for the superb sandwiches and soup, and Julie Denhamer will turn you on to a great cheese or a piece of must-have cookware. 1212 9th Ave. SE; 403-263-3966 403-263-3966; [bitegroceteria.com](http://bitegroceteria.com)

**NECTAR DESSERTS** Skip right to dessert at Nectar – a groovy café where the sweets are paired with wine and Scotch whisky (or great coffee and tea) and the comfortable space is open late. Don’t miss the lemon tarts, macaroons and retro Red Velvet cake. Come on Wednesday nights for chocolate fondue or Sundays for afternoon tea. Upstairs, 1216 9th Ave. SE; 403-263-8486 403-263-8486; [nectardesserts.com](http://nectardesserts.com)



Cinda Chavich for The Globe and Mail

Lemon tarts are just one of the many exquisite desserts that can be found at Nectar.

**EYE ON DESIGN** Women seeking something unique to wear need look no further – this clothing boutique carries boho-chic lines – including Lauren Vidal, Sunlight Paris, Sarah Pacini and Sympli the Best – plus great chunky jewellery. Take the skinny spiral staircase downstairs for deals. 1219A 9th Ave. SE; 403-266-4750 403-266-4750; [eyeondesign.ca](http://eyeondesign.ca)

**CIRCA VINTAGE ART GLASS** This shop’s collection of mid-century modern art glass in Canada includes stunning Italian table lamps, spacey light fixtures, colourful Scandinavian vases and the kind of funky glass ashtrays once found in your parents’ basement. A museum of modern glass works from the 1950s and 1960s. 1226A 9th Ave. SE; 403-290-0145 403-290-0145; 877-290-0145, [www.circa5060.ca](http://www.circa5060.ca)

**ROUGE** Rouge is routinely rated among the top three restaurants in Calgary – thanks to chef and co-owner Paul Rogalski's commitment to fresh, locally produced, artisan ingredients. Some are so fresh they come from the kitchen garden growing next to this historic house built in 1891, which was once home to pioneer A.E. Cross. Today, the kitchen bursts with Rogalski's and restaurant chef Michael Dekker's inspired flavours – such as smoked arctic char and lemon balm mousse, or Alberta elk and Agria potato perogies, seared foie gras and duck confit tourtière with crab apple gastrique – and that's just the starters. 1240 8th Ave. SE; 403-531-2767 403-531-2767; [rougecalgary.com](http://rougecalgary.com)

**SPOLUMBO'S FINE FOODS & ITALIAN DELI** For freshly made gourmet Italian sausages, or the city's finest panini sandwiches, no one comes close to the three ex-Stampeder football players behind Spolumbo's Deli. Come for a beefy lunch or to fill your cooler. 1308 9th Ave. SE, 403-264-6452 403-264-6452, [www.spolumbos.com](http://www.spolumbos.com)

**KNIFEWEAR** Former chef Kevin Kent's hamonoya (knife store) has every perfectly hammered blade laid out in a glass case like the steel showpiece it is. He'll put one of his fine Japanese knives into your hand when you arrive, pass you a potato and introduce you to the Zen of slicing. Chefs shop here, collectors too. 1316 9th Ave. SE; 403-514-0577 403-514-0577; [www.knifewear.com](http://www.knifewear.com)



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**CHOKLAT** Chocolate fanatic Brad Churchill imports his own cocoa beans and roasts them onsite, making his single origin, 70-per-cent cocoa chocolate bars and truffles from scratch. 1327A 9th Ave. SE; 403-457-1419 403-457-1419; [sochoklat.com](http://sochoklat.com)

**SUZIE Q BEADS, BUTTONS & BIJOUX** The mother of all bead shops. Whether you want to slide into a class and create your own baubles, or pick up a new Trollbead for your bracelet, Suzie Q has lots of sparkly and shiny things. 1401 9th Ave. SE; 403-266-1202 403-266-1202; [suzieqbeads.com](http://suzieqbeads.com)

**CAPO** Arguably the finest Italian chef in Calgary, Giuseppe Di Gennaro creates the kind of contemporary haute cuisine at Capo that you might expect in Naples or Milan. Watch the master at work in his open kitchen – perfect technique makes for exquisite plates. #4 1420 9th Ave. SE; 403-264-2276 403-264-2276; [caporestaurant.ca](http://caporestaurant.ca)