

ROCK CITIES

GET YOUR GROOVE ON IN THESE FIVE ROCK 'N' ROLL TOWNS

BRYAN BORZYKOWSKI

Don't be a slave to your iPod—pack up your leather pants and hit the road to explore these rock 'n' roll towns.

Winnipeg

It may be easy to knock the 'Peg for its sub-zero climes, but without the frigid temps Neil Young may have taken up surfing instead of the guitar. There's not much else to do in the winter besides bundling up and heading out to watching top-notch indie talent, such as local up-and-comers [The Details](#), who have graced the stage at [The Pyramid Cabaret](#) (176 Fort St.) or roots-rock duo [Twilight Hotel](#), set to play at the [West End Cultural Centre](#) (586 Ellice Ave.) later this month. If you'd rather hear the blues, stop by the 78-year-old [Windsor Hotel](#) (187 Garry St.), but not before chowing down at the nearby [Keg Steakhouse](#) (115 Garry St.). For big acts, splurge on a show at the [MTS Centre](#) (260 Hargrave St.), where the likes of Aerosmith, Justin Timberlake and homegrown heroes Randy Bachman and Burton Cummings have rocked the house.

Halifax

In the days of '90s grunge, Halifax was known as the Seattle of the North. Flannel-clad bands such as [Sloan](#) and [Thrush Hermit](#) emerged from the town's club scene to give Halifax its reputation as a true rock 'n' roll town. These days, cool kids flock to [The Marquee Club](#) (2037 Gottingen St.) to see up-and-coming Haligonian acts. Stop by the ship-like [Seahorse Tavern](#) (1665 Argyle St.) for Wednesday wing-night and catch new acts like current East Coast buzz band [Two Hours Traffic](#). If you're flying in to catch your favourite top 40 stars, check into the posh [Halliburton Hotel](#) (5184 Morris St.), before heading over to the [Halifax Metro Centre](#) (1800 Argyle St.). The 10,000-seat stadium has hosted everyone from heavy-metal legends Metallica to country sweetheart Dolly Parton.

Vancouver

Though it's often overshadowed by Toronto and Montreal, the Vancouver music scene is a hotbed of fresh indie talent. Dig that West Coast vibe at [Richard's on Richards](#) (1036 Richards St.). The venue has seen everyone from old-school [Treble Charger](#) to rising stars [Tapes 'n Tapes](#) take the stage. For something grander, head over to the 79-year-old [Commodore Ballroom](#) (868 Granville St.), where past performers have included U2, KISS and Count Basie. After the show, head over to the [Clubhouse](#) (255 W. 2nd Ave.) for late-night Japanese fare—this kitschy eatery rolls out the maki until 1 a.m.

Athens, Georgia

Move over N.Y.C., America's real rock mecca is [Athens, Ga.](#) This small university town gave birth to R.E.M. and The B-52's, and is now home to dozens of other blistering hot independent acts. See musical newbies tear it up at the place where all Athens bands get their start, the [40 Watt Club](#) (285 W. Washington St.). Immerse yourself in Athens music history with a trip to Jefferson River Road to see what's rumoured to be the burned out frame of the real "Love Shack," the cabin made famous by the B52's smash single. R.E.M. fans stop for soul food at Weaver D's Delicious Fine Foods (1016 Broad St.)—the band borrowed the restaurant's slogan, "Automatic for the People" for the name of their 1992 album. Music history purists can flip through stacks of rare vinyl at used-record outlet [Wuxtry Records](#) (197 E. Clayton St.).

Detroit, Michigan

Detroit might be known as the Motor City, but there's more to see here than just cool cars. Alice Cooper, The White Stripes and the revered R&B Motown scene all call the Big D home. Needless to say, there's no shortage of places to see high-energy acts in the original Rock City. [The Fillmore Detroit](#), (formerly the State Theatre, 2115 Woodward Ave.), built in 1925, still puts on big shows including an upcoming April show by Toronto's indie darling, [Feist](#). [The Majestic Theatre Centre](#) (4120-4140 Woodward Ave.) spans an entire city block and features two live music venues, five bars and sixteen bowling lanes. Stop by the Majestic Café for a pre-show plate of Guinness- and maple syrup-braised ribs.