Welcome to Canada

Canada is more than its hulking-mountain, craggy-coast good looks: it also cooks extraordinary meals, rocks cool culture and unfurls wild, moose-spotting road trips.

The Great Outdoors
The globe’s second-biggest country has an endless variety of landscapes. Sky-high mountains, glinting glaciers, spectral rainforests and remote beaches are all here, spread across six times zones. It’s the backdrop for plenty of ah-inspiring moments – and for a big provincial menagerie. That’s big as in polar bears, grizzly bears, whales and, everyone’s favorite, moose. The terrain also makes for a fantastic playground. Whether it’s snowboarding Whistler’s mountains, surfing Nova Scotia’s swells or kayaking the white-frothed South Nahanni River in the Northwest Territories, adventures abound. There are gentler options, too, like strolling Vancouver’s Stanley Park or swimming off Prince Edward Island’s pink-sand beaches.

Captivating Cultures
Sip a café au lait and tear into a flaky croissant at a sidewalk bistro in Montréal; head to an Asian night market and slurp noodles in Vancouver; join a wild-fiddling Celtic party on Cape Breton Island; kayak between rainforest-cloaked aboriginal villages on Haida Gwaii: Canada is incredibly diverse across its breadth and within its cities. You’ll hear it in the music, see it in the arts and taste it in the cuisine.

Foodie Fare
Canada is a local food smorgasbord. If you grazed from west to east across the country, you’d fill your plate like this: wild salmon and velvety scallops in British Columbia, poutine (golden fries topped with gravy and cheese curds) in Québec, and lobster with a dab of melted butter in the Maritime provinces. Tastemakers may not tout Canadian food the way they do, say, Italian or French fare, so let’s just call the distinctive seafood, piquant cheeses, and fresh, seasonal fruits and veggies our little secret. Ditto for the bold reds and crisp whites produced from the country’s vine-striped valleys.

Artistic Flair
The arts are an integral part of Canada’s cultural landscape, from the International Fringe Theater Festival (the world’s second-largest) in Edmonton to mega museums such as Ottawa’s National Gallery. Montreal’s Jazz Festival and Toronto’s star-studded Film Festival draw global crowds. And did you know Ontario’s Stratford Festival is the continent’s largest classical repertory theater? Even places you might not automatically think of – say St John’s or Woody Point – put on renowned shindigs (an avant-garde ‘sound symposium’ and a big-name writers festival respectively).
I’m always blown away by Canada’s vastness, its enormous open landscapes. You can drive for hours in many areas and see almost no one. I love that Canada’s wildlife spotting is for real – moose, bears, whales – you will see them if you go looking. I love that the nation’s most popular restaurant – Tim Hortons – is a doughnut shop named after a hockey player. And I’m just going to come out and admit it: the more I’m in Canada, the more I appreciate rock band Rush.

For more about our authors, see page 912
Canada’s Top 25

Haida Gwaii (BC)
1 Once known as the Queen Charlotte Islands, this dagger-shaped archipelago (p764) 80km off British Columbia’s coast is a magical trip for those who make it. Colossal spruce and cedars cloak the wild, rain-sodden landscape. Bald eagles and bears inhabit the ancient forest, while sea lions and orcas patrol the waters. But the islands’ real soul is the resurgent Haida people, best known for their war canoe and totem pole carvings. See the lot at Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, which combines lost Haida villages, burial caves and hot springs with some of the continent’s best kayaking.

The Rockies (BC/Alberta)
2 The sawtooth of white-topped mountains straddling the BC/Alberta border inspires both awe and action. Four national parks – Banff, Yoho, Kootenay and Jasper – offer opportunities for hiking, kayaking and skiing. The train (p46) provides another popular way to experience the grandeur: luminous lakes, jumbles of wildflowers and glistening glaciers glide by as the steel cars chug up mountain passes and down river valleys en route to points east or west. Right: Elk, Jasper National Park, Alberta
**Nahanni National Park Reserve (Northwest Territories)**

Gorgeous hot springs, haunted gorges and gorging grizzlies fill this remote park (p813) near the Yukon border, and you’ll have to fly in to reach them. Only about 1000 visitors per year make the trek, half of them paddlers trying to conquer the South Nahanni River. Untamed and spectacular, it churns 500km through the Mackenzie Mountains. Thirty-story waterfalls, towering canyons and legends of giants and lost gold round out the journey north.

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**Vancouver (BC)**

Vancouver (p634) always lands atop the ‘best places to live’ lists, and who’s to argue? Sea-to-sky beauty surrounds the laid-back, cocktail-lovin’ metropolis. With skiable mountains on the outskirts, 11 beaches fringing the core and Stanley Park’s thick rainforest just blocks from downtown’s glass skyscrapers, it’s a harmonic convergence of city and nature. It also mixes Hollywood chic (many movies are filmed here) with a freewheeling counterculture (a popular nude beach and the Marijuana Party political headquarters) and buzzing multicultural communities. Below: Science World (p642)
Niagara Falls (Ontario)

Crowded? Cheesy? Well, yes. Niagara (p122) is short, too – it barely cracks the top 500 worldwide for height. But c’mom, when those great muscular bands of water arc over the precipice like liquid glass, roaring into the void below, and when you sail toward it in a mist-shrouded little boat, Niagara Falls impresses big time. In terms of sheer volume, nowhere in North America beats its thundering cascade, with more than one million bathtubs of water plummeting over the edge every second.

Cabot Trail (Nova Scotia)

The 300km Cabot Trail (p50) winds and climbs over coastal mountains, with heart-stopping sea views at every turn, breaching whales just offshore, moose nibbling roadside and plenty of trails to stop and hike. Be sure to tote your dancing shoes – Celtic and Acadian communities dot the area, and their foot-stompin’, crazy-fiddlin’ music vibrates through local pubs.
Driving the Trans-Canada Highway

Canada’s main vein (p37) stretches 7800km from St John’s, Newfoundland to Victoria, BC and takes in the country’s greatest hits along the way. Gros Morne National Park, Cape Breton Island, Québec City, Banff National Park and Yoho National Park are part of the path, as are major cities including Montréal, Ottawa, Calgary and Vancouver. It takes most road-trippers a good month to drive coast to coast, so what are you waiting for? Fuel up, cue the tunes, and put the pedal to the metal.

Old Québec City (Québec)

Québec’s capital (p271) is more than 400 years old, and its stone walls, glinting-spired cathedrals and jazz-soaked corner cafes suffuse it with atmosphere, romance, melancholy, eccentricity and intrigue on par with any European city. The best way to soak it up is to walk the Old Town’s labyrinth of lanes and get lost amid the street performers and cozy inns, stopping every so often for a café au lait, flaky pastry or heaped plate of poutine (fries smothered in cheese curds and gravy) to refuel.

Montréal Jazz Festival (Québec)

Where else can you join more than two million calm, respectful music lovers (no slam dancing or drunken slobs) and watch the best jazz-influenced musicians in the world, choosing from 500 shows, many of which are free? Only in Montréal, Canada’s second-largest city and its cultural heart. BB King, Prince and Astor Piazzolla are among those who’ve plugged in at the 11-day Montréal Jazz Festival (p246) in late June. You might want to join them after your free drumming lesson and street-side jam session. The good times roll 24/7.
Northern Lights

Canada has a lot of middle-of-nowhere places, from the Saskatchewan prairie to the Labrador coast to its Arctic villages. They may not seem like much during the day, but at night the show begins. Drapes of green, yellow, aqua, violet and other polychromatic hues – aka the aurora borealis – light up the sky. The shapes flicker and dance, casting a spell across the heavens. Below: Aurora borealis, Wapusk National Park, Manitoba

Manitoulin Island (Ontario)

The largest freshwater island in the world and floating right smack in Lake Huron’s midst, Manitoulin (p170) is a slow-poke place of beaches and summery cottages. Jagged expanses of white quartzite and granite outcroppings edge the shoreline and lead to shimmering vistas. First Nations culture pervades, and the island’s eight communities collaborate to offer local foods (wild rice, corn soup) and eco-adventures (canoeing, horseback riding, hiking). Powwows add drumming, dancing and stories to the mix. Right: Powwow, Manitoulin Island
The Prairies (Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta)

Solitude reigns in Canada’s middle ground. Driving through the flatlands of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta turns up wheat, swaying wheat and then more wheat, punctuated by the occasional grain elevator rising up in relief. Big skies mean big storms that drop like an anvil, visible on the horizon for kilometers. Far-flung towns for respite include arty Winnipeg (p512), boozy Moose Jaw (p541) and Mountie-filled Regina (p535), sprinkled between with Ukrainian and Scandinavian villages. Top right: Grain elevator, Saskatchewan

Bay of Fundy

This ain’t your average bay, though lighthouses, fishing villages and other maritime scenery surround it. The unique geography of Fundy (p407) results in the most extreme tides in the world. And they stir up serious whale food. Fin whales, humpbacks, endangered North Atlantic right whales and blue whales swim in to feast, making whale watching here extraordinary. Tidal bore rafting, where outfitters harness the blasting force of Fundy’s waters, is another unique activity. Above: Humpback whale, Bay of Fundy
Charlevoix (Québec)

14 A pastoral strip of rolling hills north-east of Québec City, the Charlevoix (p291) region harvests much of the province’s food. Gastronomes road-trip out, knowing that the produce from the farms and orchards that flash by will end up as part of their next meal in true farm-to-table fashion. Village inns and alehouses serve the distinct, locally made produce: think a tomato aperitif with foie gras or pear ice wine served with fresh sheep cheese. Artsy towns such as Baie St-Paul and La Malbaie make good bases for exploration.

Calgary Stampede (Alberta)

15 You can always find a few cowboys kicking up dust in booming, oil-rich Calgary. But when you look down and everyone is wearing pointy-toe boots, it must be mid-July, time for the Stampede (p576). Bucking broncos, raging bulls and lasso-wielding guys in Stetsons converge for the ‘Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth,’ which highlights western rodeo events and chuckwagon racing. A huge midway of rides and games makes the event a family affair.
Drumheller (Alberta)

Dinosaur lovers get weak-kneed in dust-blown Drumheller (p612), where paleontological civic pride runs high thanks to the Royal Tyrrell Museum, one of the planet’s preeminent fossil collections. The World’s Largest Dinosaur is here, too—a big, scary, fiberglass T-rex where you can climb up and peer out its mouth. Beyond the dino-hoopla, the area offers classic badlands scenery and eerie, mushroom-like rock columns called hoodoos. Scenic driving loops take you past the good stuff. Top: Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology

Viking Trail (Newfoundland)

The Viking Trail (p488), aka Rte 430, connects Newfoundland’s two World Heritage sites on the Northern Peninsula. Gros Morne National Park, with its fjordlike lakes and geological oddities, rests at its base, while the sublime, 1000-year-old Viking settlement at L’Anse aux Meadows – Leif Eriksson’s pad – stares out from the peninsula’s tip. The road is an attraction in its own right, holding close to the sea as it heads resolutely north past Port au Choix’ ancient burial grounds and the ferry jump-off to big bad Labrador. Above: L’Anse aux Meadows
Green Gables (Prince Edward Island)

18 How did the tiny town of Cavendish (p451) become one of PEI’s biggest moneymakers? It’s a long story – a whole book actually, about a red-pigtailed orphan named Anne. Lucy Maud Montgomery wrote *Anne of Green Gables* in 1908, drawing inspiration from her cousins’ bucolic farmhouse. Today fans descend to see the gentle, creek-crossed woods and other settings. Bonus for visitors: the surrounding area bursts with fresh-plucked oysters, mussels and lobsters to crack into.

Toronto (Ontario)

19 A hyperactive stew of cultures and neighborhoods, Toronto (p67) strikes you with sheer urban awe. Will you have dinner in Chinatown or Greektown? Five-star fusion or a peameal bacon sandwich? Designer shoes from Bloor-Yorkville are accessorized with tattoos in Queen West. Mod-art galleries, theater par excellence, rockin’ band rooms and hockey mania add to the megalopolis. It is far and away Canada’s largest city, as well as its most diverse – about half of its residents were born in another country.
The first polar bear you see up close takes your breath away. Immediately forgotten are the two bum-numbing days on the train that took you beyond the tree zone onto the tundra, to the very edge of Hudson Bay. Churchill (p528) is the lone outpost here, and it happens to be smack in the bears’ migration path. From late September to early November, tundra buggies head out in search of the razor-clawed beasts, sometimes getting you close enough to lock eyes. Summer lets you swim with beluga whales. Left: Polar bears, Churchill
**Hockey**

Hockey (p852) is Canada’s national passion, and if you’re visiting between October and April taking in a game is mandatory (as is giving a shout-out to the nation’s 2010 Olympic gold medal-winning team). Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg and Montréal all have NHL teams who skate hard and lose the odd tooth. Minor pro teams and junior hockey clubs fill many more arenas with rabid fans. And if you’re still looking for a fight, pond hockey brings out the sticks in communities across the land.

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**Baffin Island (Nunavut)**

The forlorn, brutal landscape of the Inuit, Baffin (p824) is home to cloud-scraping mountains and a third of Nunavut’s population. The island’s crown jewel is Auyuittuq National Park – whose name means ‘the land that never melts’ – and indeed glaciers, fjords and vertiginous cliffs fill the eastern expanse. The park is a siren call to hard-core hikers and climbers and more than a few polar bears. Baffin is also a center for Inuit art; studios for high-quality carving, printmaking and weaving pop up in many wee towns.
C’mon, can a place really ‘have it all’? Yes, if it’s Vancouver Island (p686). Picture-postcard Victoria is the island’s heart, beating with bohemian shops, wood-floored coffee bars and a tea-soaked English past. Brooding Pacific Rim National Park Reserve sports the West Coast Trail, where a wind-bashed ocean meets a mist-shrouded wilderness, and surfers line up for Tofino’s waves. Then there’s the Cowichan Valley, studded with welcoming little farms and boutique wineries, prime for wandering foodies.

Fall Foliage

Canada blazes come autumn, which should come as no surprise in a country that’s half-covered by forest. Québec’s Laurentian Mountains (p259) flame especially bright from all the sugar maple trees (which also sauce the nation’s pancakes). Cape Breton, Nova Scotia flares up so pretty they hold a festival to honor the foliage – it’s called Celtic Colours (p375), and it’s in mid-October. New Brunswick’s Fundy Coast and Ontario’s Muskoka Lakes area pull in leaf peepers, too. Top right: Radar Hill, near Tofino, British Columbia

Rideau Canal (Ontario)

This 175-year-old, 200km-long canal/river/lake system (p213) connects Ottawa and Kingston via 47 locks. It’s at its finest in wintry Ottawa, when it becomes the world’s longest skating rink. People swoosh by on the 7km of groomed ice, pausing for hot chocolate and scrumptious slabs of fried dough called beavertails. February’s Winterlude festival kicks it up a notch when townsfolk build a massive village of ice. Once it thaws, the canal becomes a boater’s paradise.
Need to Know

For more information, see Survival Guide (p867)

Currency
Canadian dollars ($)

Languages
English and French

Visas
Generally not required for stays of up to 180 days; some nationalities require a temporary resident visa.

Money
ATMs widely available. Credit cards accepted in most hotels and restaurants.

Mobile Phones
Local SIM cards can be used in European and Australian phones. Other phones must be set to roaming.

Time
Atlantic Standard Time (GMT/UTC minus four hours)
Central Standard Time (GMT/UTC minus six hours)
Pacific Standard Time (GMT/UTC minus eight hours)

When to Go?

High Season (Jun–Aug)
- Sunshine and warm weather prevail; far northern regions briefly thaw
- Accommodation prices peak (30% up on average)
- December through March is equally busy and expensive in ski resort towns

Shoulder (May, Sep & Oct)
- Crowds and prices drop off
- Temperatures are cool but comfortable
- Attractions keep shorter hours
- Fall foliage areas (ie Cape Breton, Québec) remain busy

Low Season (Nov–Apr)
- Places outside the big cities and ski resorts close
- Darkness and cold take over
- April and November are particularly good for bargains

Dry climate
Warm to hot summers, mild winters
Mild to hot summers, cold winters
Polar climate
Useful Websites
Canadian Tourism Commission (www.canada.travel) Official tourism site.
Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com/canada) Destination information, hotel bookings, traveler forum and more.
Parks Canada (www.pc.gc.ca) Lowdown on national parks.
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (www.cbc.ca) National and provincial news.

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For current exchange rates see www.xe.com.

Daily Costs

**Budget:** Less than $100

- Dorm bed: $25-40
- Campsite: $25-35
- Self-catered meals from markets/supermarkets: $8-12

**Midrange:** $100–250

- B&B or room in a midrange hotel: $80-180 ($100-250 in major cities)
- Meal in a good restaurant: from $20 plus drinks
- Rental car: $35-65 per day
- Attraction admissions: $5-20

**Top end:** More than $250

- Four-star hotel room: from $180 (from $250 in major cities)
- Three-course meal in a top restaurant: from $50 plus drinks
- Skiing day-pass: $50-80

Opening Hours

Opening hours vary throughout the year. We’ve provided high-season opening hours; hours will generally decrease in the shoulder and low seasons.

**Banks** 10am-5pm Monday to Friday; some open 9am-noon Saturday

**Restaurants** breakfast 8-11am, lunch 11:30am-2:30pm Monday to Friday, dinner 5-9:30pm daily; some open for brunch 8am to 1pm Saturday and Sunday

**Bars** 5pm-2am daily.

**Shops** 10am-6pm Monday to Saturday, noon-5pm Sunday; some open to 8pm or 9pm Thursday and/or Friday

**Supermarkets** 9am-8pm; some open 24 hours

Arriving in Canada

**Toronto Pearson Airport** Express buses ($28) run downtown every 20 to 30 minutes from 6am to midnight; taxis cost around $60 (45 minutes).

**Montréal Trudeau Airport** Public buses ($9) run downtown every 10 to 12 minutes from 8:30am to 8pm, every 30 to 60 minutes at other times. Taxis cost a flat $40 (30 to 60 minutes).

**Vancouver International Airport** Trains ($7.50 to $9) run downtown every 6 to 20 minutes; taxis cost around $40 (30 minutes).

Land Border Crossings The Canadian Border Services Agency (www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/bwt-taf/menu-eng.html) posts wait times (usually 30 minutes).

Getting Around

**Car** An extensive highway system links most towns. The Trans-Canada Hwy stretches from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island. Away from the population centers, distances can be deceivingly long and travel times slow due to single-lane highways. All major rental-car companies are readily available.

**Train** Outside the Toronto–Montréal corridor, train travel is mostly for scenic journeys.

**Ferry** Public ferry systems operate extensively in British Columbia, Québec and the Maritime provinces.

For more on getting around, see p880
**Legacy Trail, Alberta**
The paved trail between Banff and Canmore parallels Hwy 1 and is ideal for people who want to undertake safe, easy cycling through splendid mountain scenery. (p594)

**Rendez-Vous de la Baie, Nova Scotia**
This cultural center has an art gallery, musical performances, a museum, and information on activities and gastronomy in the Acadian region of Nova Scotia’s southwest coast. (p356)

**Parkbus, Ontario**
You no longer need to rent a car in Toronto to reach Algonquin and Killarney parks, or Tobermory on the Bruce Peninsula. Parkbus now offers a low-cost transportation alternative. (p884)

**Robert Bateman Centre, British Columbia**
Victoria’s new Robert Bateman Centre showcases the work – and campaigning environmentalism – of Canada’s leading nature painter. Dozens of photo-realistic artworks capture animals and landscapes in BC and beyond. (p687)

**Rio Tinto Planetarium, Québec**
Making stars look sexy, Montréal’s $48-million planetarium marries art and science with a theatrical light-and-sound show that makes good use of brand-new, state-of-the-art equipment. (p241)

**Fogo Island Inn, Newfoundland**
Part of a sustainable tourism plan to preserve Fogo’s heritage, this uberluxe, 29-room inn is an architectural wonder clasp-
If You Like...

Adrenaline Activities

**Whistler** If you want to ski or snowboard Canada’s best, Whistler (p675) reigns supreme. Ziplining and mountain biking take over in summer.

**Tofino** Little Tofino (p709) packs big adventure with its Pacific coast surfing, kayaking, hiking and storm-watching.

**Banff** In the heart of the Rockies, Banff (p584) has it all: skiing, snowboarding, hiking, rafting, horseback riding, mountain biking – phew.

**Laurentians** The mountain villages speckling the landscape outside Montréal let you ski, luge and rock climb (p259).

**Marble Mountain** Skiing and snow-kiting in winter, caving and kayaking in summer, and ziplining year-round in western Newfoundland (p496).

Wine & Spirits

**Wine Festivals Galore** Sip and spit at wine events (p866) across the country – from British Columbia (BC) to Nova Scotia.

**Niagara Wine Tours International** Cycle backroads from winery to winery on guided trips tailored to all fitness levels (p133).

**Taste Trail** Take a self-guided driving tour through rural Prince Edward County’s farms and vineyards (p197).

**Myriad View Distillery** Visit Canada’s only legal moonshine producer and put hair on your chest with its mouth-burning, 75% alcohol elixir (p443).

**Merridale Estate Cidery** Sip the six apple ciders or brandy this distiller stirs up in Vancouver Island’s verdant Cowichan Valley (p701).

Historical Sites

**L’Anse aux Meadows** Poke around Viking vestiges that Leif Eriksson and friends left behind in Newfoundland (p493) around AD 1000.

**Québec City** History is palpable throughout the walled city (p271) where the French put down stakes in 1608.

**Louisbourg** Munch soldiers’ rations and bribe guards at Nova Scotia’s recreated 1744 fortress (p385).

Live Music

**Montréal** The city hosts Canada’s most prolific indie rock scene, known for its bo-ho, underground clubs (p229).

**North by Northeast** Nearly 1000 bands spill off stages throughout Toronto for a rockin’ week in June (p93).

**Evolve Festival** The hills around Antigonish, Nova Scotia host this summer fest (p374), a sort of young, funky, jam-band Woodstock.

**Horseshoe Tavern** Toronto’s legendary venue (p113) is the place for emerging acts to cut their teeth. Buzz bands take the stage most nights.

**Batoche** See the moody prairie site where Métis leader Louis Riel clashed with the Canadian army over land rights in 1885 (p552).

**Klondike Sites** The rush was on after prospectors struck gold in the Yukon in 1896; preserved structures in Dawson City (p791) tell the tale.

IF YOU LIKE...SURFING

**Lawrencetown Beach** in Nova Scotia gets exceptional wrapping waves. Learn to ride them at a surf school (p344).
George Street  This St John’s street (p468) is chock-full of musical pubs – supposedly more per square kilometer than anywhere in North America.

Red Shoe Pub  World-renowned Celtic fiddlers scorch the strings on Cape Breton Island (p376).

Lighthouses

Peggy’s Cove  This lighthouse (p345) near Halifax is absolutely picture perfect – which is why it’s one of the most photographed of all time.

Point Amour  Atlantic Canada’s tallest lighthouse (p504) pays off with killer views over Labrador’s black-rock landscape and iceberg-strewn sea.

Cape Enrage  The 150-year-old cliff-top tower (p420) presides over the highest, meanest tides in the world (hence the name).

Lighthouse Park  Point Atkinson Lighthouse (p670) gets a whole park named after it in West Vancouver.

Swallowtail  Set on New Brunswick’s Grand Manan Island, this lighthouse (p410) looms atop a moss-covered cliff with seals swimming below.

Roads Less Traveled

Route 132, Québec  Rocky shores, glinting silver churches and wooded hills from Ste-Flavie to Forillon National Park (p302).

Highway 17 along Lake Superior, Ontario  Fjordlike passages, hidden beaches and primeval forests coated in mist on the lake’s northern shore (p178).

Old River Road (Route 102), New Brunswick  Farmhouses, hay barns and wildflowers
alongside an island-filled river (p399).

**Route 199, Québec** Wee coastal road passing sand dunes and fishing villages on the Îles de la Madeleine (p321).

**Highway 37A to Stewart, BC** Vintage toasters and converted school-bus restaurants along with the requisite glaciers (p771).

**Route 470, southwest Newfoundland** Rippled coastal ride past windswept terrain and fishing hamlets (p501).

### Wildlife-Watching

**Churchill** Polar bears rule the tundra at Hudson Bay’s edge (p529), while beluga whales chatter in the river.

**Digby Neck** Endangered North Atlantic right whales, blue whales, humpbacks and seals swim offshore from Nova Scotia (p357).

**Gros Morne** They say there are six moose per square kilometer in Newfoundland’s premier park (p488), plus caribou and black bear.

**Khutzeymateen Grizzly Bear Sanctuary** Guess what creature lives here? The refuge, near Prince Rupert, BC (p761), is home to more than 50 big guys.

**Wood Buffalo National Park** Shaggy bison and packs of huge wolves play out nature’s deadly dance (p629).

**Icefields Parkway** The scenic road (p588) in the Rockies pretty much guarantees bear and elk sightings.

**Algonquin Provincial Park** Moose and loons provide quintessential Canadian viewing; howling wolves provide the soundtrack (p190).

**Victoria** Resident pods of killer whales ride the local waves (p686).

### Art

**National Gallery of Canada** The Ottawa museum (p209) holds the world’s largest collection of Canadian and Inuit art among its trove.

**Art Gallery of Ontario** This big Toronto institution (p79) boasts rare Québécois religious statuary, First Nations carvings and works by the famed Group of Seven.

**UBC Museum of Anthropology** Vancouver’s top collection centers on soothing, beautifully carved totem poles (p645).

**Sunshine Coast Gallery Crawl** Artisans’ studios stud the BC coast (p683). A purple flag fluttering over a property means the artist is in.

**Cape Dorset** This small, wintry town (p827) in Nunavut is the epicenter of Inuit art. See soapstone carvers in action at local studios and co-ops.

### Seafood

**Digby** Foodies from around the globe saliva over the giant, butter-soft scallops from this Nova Scotia town (p358).

**St Ann’s Lobster Supper** Don a bib and crack into a crustacean in this quintessential Prince Edward Island church basement (p450).

**Malpeque** Head to the tiny PEI town where the namesake oysters come from, famed for their moist, briny taste (p453).

**Coast** It’s where Vancouver’s movers and shakers sate their salmon and oyster cravings (p653).

**Red Fish Blue Fish** This takeout shack (p693) on Victoria’s waterfront serves sustainably caught seafood in dishes such as wild salmon sandwiches and oyster tacos.

### Markets

**Kensington Market** It’s a blast rummaging through the vintage shops of this bohemian Toronto neighborhood (p83).

**Summer Night Market** Taste-trip through steaming Malaysian, Korean, Japanese and Chinese food stalls at this huge bazaar (p672) in Richmond, near Vancouver.

**Marché Jean Talon** Farmers from the surrounding countryside bring their fruits, veggies, cheeses and sausages to Montréal’s lively marketplace (p251).

**St Lawrence Market** Butchers, bakers and pasta makers fill Toronto’s awesome 1845 market hall (p73). Art and antiques make appearances, too.

**Salt Spring Island Saturday Market** Gobble island-grown fruit and piquant cheeses while perusing local arts and crafts on a day trip from Vancouver (p719).

**Halifax Seaport Farmer’s Market** With 250 vendors, this

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**IF YOU LIKE...WRECK DIVING**

The east coast of Canada teems with 4500 sunken ships. The Empress near Rimouski (p306), Québec, is a famous one.
market (p342) is a prime spot to people-watch and buy organic produce, wine and seafood.

**Beaches**

**Basin Head Beach** Many PEI locals rate this sweeping stretch of sand (p444) as their favorite; the grains ‘sing’ when you walk on them.

**Sauble Beach** The warm, clear waters are why this shore near Southampton, Ontario (p148) was voted Canada’s best freshwater beach.

**Eastern Shore Beaches** Several white-sand beaches with life-guards, boardwalks, swimming and even surfing brush the coast near Halifax (p344).

**Greenwich** Follow the boardwalk over marshlands and dramatic dunes onto PEI’s most unspoiled, pink-sand beach (p445).

**Long Beach** Located near Tofino, it takes a pounding from the Pacific’s waves, but that’s why surfers and beach bums flock here (p707).

**English Bay Beach** This sandy curve in downtown Vancouver bustles with buskers, sunbathers and volleyballers (p640).

**Starry Nights**

**Moose Factory** There are no roads to this speck on the Ontario map (p187), just a small Cree settlement and ecododge.

**Torngat Mountains National Park** Labrador’s raw, chilly tip (p507) is about as isolated as you can get, with no towns for hundreds of kilometers.

**Yellowknife** The Northwest Territories’ far-flung, kitted-out capital (p800) lets you see the lights while dogsledding.

**Churchill** Visit Manitoba’s little piece of Hudson Bay (p528) around October and you’ll have northern lights with a side of polar bears.

**Whitehorse** The Yukon’s arty main town is another up-there spot with outfitters who’ll take you out under the night sky (p775).
Month by Month

January
Ski season is in full swing, and many mountains receive their peak snowfall. Toward the end of the month, cities begin their winter carnivals to break the shackles of cold, dark days.

Ice Wine Festivals
British Columbia’s Okanagan Valley (www.thewinefestivals.com) and Ontario’s Niagara Peninsula (www.niagarawinefestival.com) celebrate their ice wines with good-time festivals. The distinctive, sweet libations go down the hatch amid chestnut roasts, cocktail competitions and cozy alpine-lodge ambience.

February
Yes it’s cold, as in ‘coldest temperature ever recorded’ cold (that’d be Snag, Yukon on February 3, 1947 a –62.8°C). But that doesn’t stop folks from being outdoors. February is a party month, filled with all kinds of wintry events.

Chinese New Year
Dragons dance, firecrackers burst and food sizzles in the country’s Chinatowns. Vancouver (www.vancouverchinatown.com) hosts the biggest celebration, but Toronto, Calgary, Ottawa and Montréal also have festivities. The lunar calendar determines the date.

Québec City’s Winter Carnival
Revelers watch ice-sculpture competitions, hurdle down snow slides, go ice fishing and cheer on their favorite paddlers in an insane canoe race on the half-frozen, ice-floe-ridden St Lawrence River. It’s the world’s biggest winter fest (www.carnaval.qc.ca).

Winterlude in Ottawa
Another snowy bash, this one along the Rideau Canal, where skaters glide by on the 7km of groomed ice. When they’re not sipping hot chocolate and eating beavertails (fried, sugared dough), the townsfolk build a massive village entirely of ice (www.canadascapital.gc.ca/winterlude).

Yukon Quest
This legendary 1600km dog-sled race (www.yukonquest.com) goes from Whitehorse to Fairbanks, Alaska, through February darkness and -50°C temperatures. It’s the ultimate test of musher and husky. Record time: 10 days, 2 hours, 37 minutes.

World Pond Hockey Tournament
Small Plaster Rock, New Brunswick plows 20 rinks on Roulston Lake, rings them with straw-bale seating for 8000-odd spectators and invites 120 four-person teams to hit the puck. Teams travel from as far as the UK, Egypt and the Cayman Islands (www.worldpondhockey.com).

Northern Manitoba Trappers’ Festival
The Pas puts on a weekend of frosty anarchy featuring dogsled races, snowmobiling, ice sculptures, torchlight parades and trapping
games (www.trappers-festival.com). Bundle up: the daily mean temperature is -16.1°C.

March
Snow lessens and temperatures moderate from the brunt of winter. Ski resorts still do brisk business, especially mid-month when kids typically have a week-long school break.

Sugar Shacks
Québec produces three quarters of the world’s maple syrup and March is prime time when the trees get tapped. Head out to local sugar shacks, scoop up some snow, put it on a plate and have steaming syrup from a piping cauldron poured onto it.

Regina Powwow
Students at First Nations University of Canada initiated this Saskatchewan powwow (www.fnuniv.ca/pow-wow) 30-plus years ago to celebrate spring and give thanks for the land’s rebirth. Dancers arrive from around North America, and traditional crafts and foods abound.

Vancouver Wine Festival
Vancouver uncorks 1700 wines from 200 vintners at the Vancouver International Wine Festival (www.vanwinefest.ca), a rite of spring for oenophiles. You’re drinking for art’s sake, since the event raises funds for the city’s contemporary theater company.

April
Apart from the far north, winter’s chill fades and spring sprouts (though the weather can waver, so be prepared for anything). It’s a good time for bargains since ski season is winding down but the summer influx hasn’t yet begun.

Stratford Theater Festival
Canada’s Stratford, a few hours outside Toronto, nearly outdoes England’s Stratford-upon-Avon. The Stratford Festival (www.stratfordfestival.ca) plays a monster season from April to November. Four theaters stage contemporary drama, music, operas and, of course, works by Shakespeare. Productions are first-rate and feature well-known actors.

World Ski & Snowboard Festival
Ski bums converge on Whistler for 10 days of adrenaline events, outdoor rock and hip hop concerts, film screenings, dog races and a whole lotta carousing (www.wssf.com). Heed the motto: Party in April. Sleep in May.

May
May is a fine time for shoulder-season bargains and wildflower vistas. The weather is warm by day, though nippy at night. Victoria Day at month’s end marks the official start of summer.

Tiptoe Through the Tulips
After a long winter, Ottawa bursts with color – more than three million tulips of 200 types blanket the city for the Canadian Tulip Festival (www.tulipfestival.ca). Festivities include parades, regattas, car rallies, dances, concerts and fireworks.

Chocolate Festival
Plays about chocolate, painting with chocolate, jewelry making with chocolate – are you sensing a theme? Québec’s Fête du Chocolat de Bromont (www.feteduchocolat.ca) is all about the sweet stuff. The best part: eating the chocolate. Bromont lies 75km east of Montréal.

June
Take advantage of long, warm days to hike, paddle and soak up the great outdoors (but bring repellent for black flies). Attractions don’t get mega-busy until later in the month, when school lets out for the summer.

Hot Docs
Want to learn more about Ontario’s Hwy 7? Millionaires who live in Mumbai’s slums? Belly dancers working in Cairo? Toronto hosts North America’s largest documentary film festival (www.hotdocs.ca), which screens 170-plus docs from around the globe.

Luminato
For 10 days in early June, big-name musicians, dancers, artists, writers, actors and filmmakers descend
on Toronto for a celebration of creativity that reflects the city's diversity (www.luminatofestival.com). Many performances are free.

★ North by Northeast

Around 1000 emerging indie bands spill off the stages in Toronto's coolest clubs. You might catch the rock stars of tomorrow. Film screenings and comedy shows add to the mix. Over its 20-year history, NXNE (www.nxne.com) has become a must on the music-industry calendar.

★ Montréal Jazz Festival

Two million music lovers descend on Montréal in late June, when the heart of downtown explodes with jazz and blues for 11 straight days (www.montrealjazzfest.com). Most concerts are outdoors and free, and the party goes on round the clock.

★ Pride Toronto

Toronto's most flamboyant event (www.pridetoronto.com) celebrates all kinds of sexuality, climaxing with an out-of-the-closet Dyke March and the outrageous Pride Parade. Pride's G-spot is in the Church-Wellesley Village; most events are free.

★ Elvis Festival

If you're in Penticton, British Columbia in late June and you keep seeing Elvis, rest assured it's not because you've swilled too much of the local Okanagan Valley wine. The town hosts Elvis Fest (www.pentictonelvisfestival.com) with dozens of impersonators and open-mike sing-alongs.
Saskatchewan Jazz Festival
Come show your soul patch at this jazzy 10-day festival (www.saskjazz.com) at venues throughout Saskatoon. Blues, funk, pop and world music are also on the agenda. Herbie Hancock and Ziggy Marley are among the acts that have trekked to the prairie.

July
This is prime time for visiting most provinces, with the weather at its warmest, a bounty of fresh produce and seafood filling plates, and festivals rockin’ the nights away. Crowds are thick.

Country Music in Cavendish
Some of the biggest names in country music come to Prince Edward Island for the Cavendish Beach Festival (www.cavendishbeachmusic.com). They croon beachside while campers get their party on. This is one of the largest outdoor music festivals in North America and the island swells with people.

Montréal Comedy Festival
Everyone gets giddy for two weeks at the Just for Laughs Festival (www.hahaha.com), which features hundreds of comedy shows, including free ones in the Quartier Latin. The biggest names in the biz yuck it up for this one.

Winnipeg Fringe Festival
North America’s second-largest fringe fest (www.winnipegfringe.com) stages creative, raw and oddball works from a global lineup of performers. Comedy, drama, music, cabaret and even musical memoirs are on tap over 12 days.

Arctic Art
The Great Northern Arts Festival (www.gnaf.org) in Inuvik, Northwest Territories, draws scores of carvers, painters and other creators from across the circumpolar world. It’s an ideal place to buy arctic art, watch it being made, or participate in workshops.

August
The sunny days and shindigs continue. Visitors throng most provinces, and prices reflect it. It can get downright hot and humid away from the coasts.

Festival Acadien
Acadians tune their fiddles and unleash their Franco-Canadian spirit for the Festival Acadien (www.festivalacadien.ca) in Caraquet, New Brunswick. It’s the biggest event on the Acadian calendar, with singers, musicians and dancers letting loose for two weeks in early August.

Newfoundland Rowing Regatta
The streets are empty, the stores are closed and everyone migrates to the shores of Quidi Vidi Lake for the Royal St John’s Regatta (www.stjohnsregatta.org). The rowing race began in 1825 and is now the continent’s oldest continuously held sporting event.

Edmonton Fringe Festival
You thought Winnipeg’s fringe fest was something? Edmonton’s is even bigger. That’s right: it’s North America’s largest fringe bash, staging some 1600 performances of wild, uncensored shows over 11 days in mid-August. Acts are democratically chosen by lottery (www.fringetheatreadventures.ca).

Canadian National Exhibition
Akin to a state fair in the USA, ‘The Ex’ (www.theex.com) features more than 700 exhibitors, agricultural shows, lumberjack competitions, outdoor concerts and carnivalia at Toronto’s Exhibition Place. The 18-day event runs through Labour Day and ends with a bang-up fireworks display.

September
Labour Day in early September heralds the end of summer, after which crowds (and prices) diminish. But the
weather is still decent in most places, making it an excellent time to visit. Plus moose mating season begins!

**Prince Edward Island Fall Flavours**
This island-wide kitchen party merges toe-tapping traditional music with incredible seafood at events over the course of three weeks (www.fallflavours.ca). In Charlottetown, don’t miss the oyster-shucking championships or the chowder challenge.

**Toronto International Film Festival**
Toronto’s prestigious 10-day celebration (www.tiff.net) is a major cinematic event. Films of all lengths and styles are screened in September, as celebs shimmie between gala events and the Bell Lightbox building. Buy tickets well in advance.

**Newfoundland Coastal Cookout**
The wee town of Elliston in eastern Newfoundland gathers many of Canada’s best chefs and has them cook at stations set up along a gorgeous 5km coastal trail. Foodies flock in to eat and hike and eat some more (www.rootsrantsandroars.ca).

**Canadian Deep Roots Festival**

Workshops are available with some of the performers, so you can learn to drum, strum or fiddle.

**October**
With fall foliage flaming bright and the weather dawning cool but comfortable, October welcomes lots of visitors. Grab a stick, because hockey season gets underway.

**Celtic Colours**
With foot-stompin’ music amid riotous foliage, this roving festival in Cape Breton attracts top musicians from Scotland, Spain and other countries with Celtic connections (www.celticcolours.com). Community suppers, step-dancing classes and tin whistle lessons round out the cultural celebration.

**Oktoberfest in Ontario**
Willkommen to this nine-day beery Bavarian bash in Kitchener, supposedly the largest Oktoberfest outside of Germany (www.oktoberfest.ca). The sauerkraut, oompah bands, lederhosen and biergartens bring 500,000 people to clink steins under the tents.

**November**
After the fall-color events and early in the ski season, this is an offbeat time to visit. It’s cold, but just a tease as to what’s coming over the next three months.

**Canadian Finals Rodeo**
If you missed the Calgary Stampede, here’s your other chance to see top cowboys test their skills with bucking broncos, steer wrestling and lasso throwdowns (www.canadianfinalsrodeo.com). Held in Edmonton mid-month.

**December**
Get out the parka. Winter begins in earnest as snow falls, temperatures drop and ski resorts ramp up for the masses. ’Tis the holiday season, too. Resorts get especially busy over the last few weeks of the month.

**Mountain Time**
Powder hounds hit the slopes from east to west. Whistler in BC, Mont-Tremblant in Québec and the Canadian Rockies around Banff, Alberta, pull the biggest crowds, but there’s downhill action going on in every province (snowboarding and cross-country skiing, too).

**Niagara Festival of Lights**
The family friendly Winter Festival of Lights (www.wfol.com) gets everyone in the holiday spirit with three million twinkling bulbs and 125 animated displays brightening the town and the waterfall itself. Ice-skate on the ‘rink at the brink’ of the cascade.
This 1450km route from Toronto to Québec City encompasses Canada’s largest cities, mightiest waterfalls and prettiest islands.

Spend two days in the multicultural mecca of Toronto (p67), and wallow in the wealth of architecture, art museums, restaurants and nightclubs. Spend day three at Niagara Falls (p122), then begin your eastward haul. The Loyalist Parkway (Hwy 33) rambles shoreside in winery-laden Prince Edward County (p196) and pulls into colonial Kingston (p199). From there, the misty, mansion-covered Thousand Islands (p204) dot the St Lawrence River; Gananoque (p204) makes a good break for a day in their midst. Make a half-day stop at Upper Canada Village (p207), a re-created 1860s town, before heading to Ottawa (p208) for a couple of days to get your culture fix at the national museums. Save room for your next stop, Montréal (p229), where the French joie de vivre seduces via Euro-cool clubs and foodie-beloved cafes. Had your fill? Swing over to the Laurentians (p259) to spend a day or two and hike, cycle or ski yourself back into shape. Finish in Québec City (p271) – the charismatic old town, walled and dramatically poised on a bluff, will leave an impression long after you return home.
The world's longest highway – a 7800km belt of asphalt cinched around Canada's girth – is technically a patchwork of provincial roads. Scenic stretches alternate with mundane ones; many of the best sights require a detour off the highway.

The road begins in St John’s (p460), Newfoundland, Canada's oldest city and a heck-of-a-pub-filled good time. It rolls all the way through the province until it hits the sea, at which point you must ferry over to North Sydney, Nova Scotia, where the road resumes on Cape Breton Island (p375). Continue to New Brunswick – or take the longer route to Prince Edward Island (p431) – then follow the St John River via Fredericton (p393) to Québec. The Gaspé Peninsula (p307) entices as a pastoral side-trip east. Otherwise, the highway follows the St Lawrence River to romantic Québec City (p271).

Carry on the urban theme in Montréal (p229) before plunging into Ontario near museum-fortified Ottawa (p208). From there, follow in fur traders’ footsteps to Sudbury (p174) and Sault Ste-Marie (p176), the gateway to the Algoma wilderness that inspired the Group of Seven painters. Savor the superb stretch of road skirting Lake Superior to Thunder Bay (p182). And voila, there goes week two.

Next the highway enters the prairie flatlands of Manitoba, where Winnipeg (p512) provides an enlivening patch of cafes and culture. The road dawdles under Saskatchewan's big skies until reaching bad-ass Moose Jaw (p541), where Al Capone used to hide his bootlegged booze. In Alberta, dinosaur junkies can detour to Drumheller (p612). And put on your cowboy boots before arriving in Calgary (p571), a former cow town that’s become one of Canada's fastest-growing cities. So passes week three...

You’re in the Rockies now. They offer a dramatic change of scenery as the highway meanders through Banff (p584) before entering British Columbia at Yoho National Park (p749) and reaching its highest point (1643m) at Kicking Horse Pass. The mountains eventually give way to river country. The most memorable section leads through the Fraser River Canyon (p725) from where it’s only a quick jaunt to multicultural Vancouver (p634) and the ferry to Victoria (p686). Snap a picture at the Mile 0 sign. You made it!
Wild Eastern Excursion

Wild, windswept and whale-riddled, this 1700km route through Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Labrador and Québec unfurls sea-and-cliff vistas, Viking vestiges and much more.

Start in **Halifax** (p332) and spend a few days enjoying the beer, farmers markets and cosmopolitan life. Then hit the road to Celtic-tinged Cape Breton Island for two days. It’s about a five-hour drive and a connecting causeway means there’s no ferry involved. You won’t have time to traverse Cape Breton in depth, but you can certainly get a feel for its beauty in pastoral **Baddeck** (p382) and along the art-studio-dotted **St Ann’s Loop** (p381). Industrial **North Sydney** (p383) is nearby for the ferry to Newfoundland. It’s a six-hour sail over the Cabot Strait to **Port aux Basques** (p499). The ferry goes daily, but be sure to book in advance. Spend a day in the sleepy town, then steer for **Gros Morne National Park** (p488), about four hours north on the Trans-Canada Hwy. This World Heritage site is rich with mountain hikes, sea-kayak tours, fjord-like lakes and weird rock formations. After soaking it up for three days, continue on the Viking Trail to its awe-inspiring endpoint: **L’Anse aux Meadows** (p493). This was North America’s first settlement, where Leif Eriksson and his Viking pals homesteaded 1000 years ago. Poke around for a day before backtracking about two hours to **St Barbe** (p493), where the ferry for Labrador departs. Reservations are wise for the daily, two-hour crossing.

And then you’re in the Big Land. (Actually, the ferry lands in Québec, but more on that province later.) Turn your wheels northeast and head for **L’Anse Amour** (p504), intriguing for its tall lighthouse and shipwreck-strewn hiking trail. Further along is **Red Bay** (p506), Canada’s newest World Heritage site, which preserves a massive, 16th-century whaling port. To really get away from it all, drive 90km onward to Mary’s Harbour and spend the night on the offshore island that holds **Battle Harbour** (p506), a restored village. After a few days in Labrador, it’s time to head back. Before getting on the ferry, detour for a few hours down Rte 138 in Québec. It makes a beautiful drive past waterfalls and lookouts to see the crashing surf. Afterward, you’ll need a couple of (long) days to retrace your path to Halifax.
Prepare to feast on a smorgasbord of scenic delights on this 2000km trek, which loops through British Columbia and Alberta.

Start with a couple of days in mountain-meets-the-sea Vancouver (p634), where you’ll be spoiled by urban hiking, biking and other activities, plus western Canada’s best cuisine scene. Make the wine pilgrimage east through rolling hills to the lake-studded Okanagan Valley (p727), famous for its fruit orchards, crisp whites and bold reds. Kelowna (p736) makes a good sipping base in the area.

Next it’s time to get high in BC’s Rocky Mountains. A trio of national parks pops up in quick succession, each providing plenty of ‘ah’-inspiring vistas. Mt Revelstoke (p747) has a cool scenic drive and hikes. Glacier (p748) has 430 of its namesake ice sheets. And Yoho (p749) is home to looming peaks and crashing waterfalls. Golden (p748) is a convenient base.

Cross the border into Alberta, and park it in Banff (p590). You won’t be able to stop the cliches from flying forth: grand! majestic! awe-inspiring! Allot plenty of time – at least three days – for hiking, paddling, gawking at glaciers and spotting grizzly bears (best done from a distance). Sapphire-blue Lake Louise is a must, surrounded by alpine-style teahouses that let you fuel your hikes with scones, beer and hot chocolate.

From Banff, the Icefields Pkwy (Hwy 93) parallels the Continental Divide for 230km to Jasper (p604). Try to keep your eyes at least partially on the road as you drive by the humungous Columbia Icefield and its numerous fanning glaciers. Foaming waterfalls, dramatic mountains and the sudden dart of a bear (or was that a moose?) are also part of the journey. Jasper itself is bigger and less crowded than Banff, and offers superb hiking, horseback riding, rock climbing, mountain biking and rafting.

It’s a shame to have to leave, but we must return to Vancouver. The Yellowhead Hwy (Hwy 5) plows south to Kamloops (p725), a handy spot to spend the night before motoring back to the City of Glass.
French Canadian Sampler

Get a taste of Gallic Canada on this 700km jaunt through New Brunswick and Québec.

Start in Caraquet (p429) and immerse in Acadian culture at the historic sites and via local foods such as *pets de soeur* ('nun's farts' in English – try one to see if you can figure out why). If you visit in August, the fiddle-fueled Festival Acadien takes over the town.

Ramble east through Campbellton (p430) and cross into Québec. Rimouski (p306), on the St Lawrence River, is your target. Explore its intriguing museums and delicious cafes, and day-trip east up the Gaspé Peninsula on Rte 132, where fluttering Acadian flags, tidy farming hamlets and rocky shores flash by.

From Rimouski, a ferry crosses the river to Forestville, from where you can head south to welcoming Tadoussac (p297). It’s all about whale-watching in this boho little town; zodiacs motor out to see the blue whales that patrol the area.

Finish your trip in atmospheric Québec City (p27). Check in at a cozy inn, wander the Old Town’s labyrinth of lanes and stop often to sip in the corner cafes.

Heart of the Maritimes

This 650km loop lassos the core of the Maritime provinces (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island).

Eat and drink your way through Halifax (p332), then make a break northwest for New Brunswick. Festive Shediac (p425) is home to the world’s biggest lobster sculpture and – no surprise – the local cooked version is a highlight.

Barrel over the 12.9km Confederation Bridge (p435) that links New Brunswick to PEI and begin the pilgrimage to Anne’s Land. Anne, of course, is the fictional red-headed orphan of Green Gables fame, and Cavendish (p451) is the wildly developed town that pays homage to her.

Continue the red theme by exploring the red sandstone bluffs at Prince Edward Island National Park (p446). Stop in PEI’s compact, colonial capital Charlottetown (p435) before taking the ferry from Wood Islands (p442) back to Pictou (p372) in Nova Scotia. You can stroll Pictou’s boardwalk and, if you’re lucky, the town might be hosting its First Nations Powwow. It’s about two hours from here back to Halifax.
**Bite of British Columbia**

You don’t have to drive far to experience a range of landscapes in southern BC. Ocean, mountains, forests, islands – all present and accounted for in roughly 550km.

Begin in **Vancouver** (p634) and take a couple of days to check out the indie shops, foodie fare, and forested seawall vistas of Stanley Park. On day three, drive to the **Tsawwassen ferry terminal** (p665) for the dreamy boat trip to Swartz Bay on Vancouver Island. Zip over to **Victoria** (p686), spending an overnight exploring the picture-perfect capital and its historic buildings. On day four, drive north up the island on Hwy 1, stopping off at **Chemainus** (p701), a former logging settlement that’s reinvented itself as an art town. Continue north for a late lunch and an overnight in **Nanaimo** (p702), then, next morning, catch the ferry back to the mainland’s Horseshoe Bay terminal in **West Vancouver** (p669).

From here, the Sea to Sky Hwy (Hwy 99) runs cliffside through formidable mountains to **Whistler** (p675). The resort town has heaps of adrenaline activities and fun, ski-bum bars to occupy your final few days. It’s 130km back to Vancouver.

**Klondike Highway & Around**

Heed the call of the wild, and set your wheels for this epic roadway. Know it’ll be a lot of driving for one week (approximately 30 hours), but the road is the main attraction for the trip.

Start in **Skagway** (p786), Alaska, as the Klondike Hwy does, then leave the cruise ships behind and enter the rugged land Jack London wrote so much about. Follow the road to lively **Whitehorse** (p775), with its groovy arts and organic bakeries, then continue north to offbeat **Dawson City** (p789). Linger a few days and check out the gold rush historic sites, take a mine tour and blow a kiss to the dancing girls. Day-trip to **Tombstone Territorial Park** (p796) for its wide, steep grandeur.

Next, follow the Top of the World Hwy (Hwy 9) across mountain tops to the Alaskan border, and connect down through the US and onto the Alaska Hwy in the Yukon at **Beaver Creek** (p784). The road between here and well-stocked **Haines Junction** (p782) is sublime, paralleling Kluane National Forest and the St Elias Mountains. The gawk-worthy Haines Hwy rolls in to **Haines** (p785), Alaska, where your journey ends.
Wispy fog and dense birch forests give this park a distinctly primeval flavor. Shore-clasping drives and day hikes reward with isolated beaches, crashing waterfalls and mysterious, red-ochre pictographs. (p179)

Spanning the southern border of Saskatchewan and Alberta, the park’s silence, isolation and unique microclimate are satisfying to the deepest levels of the soul. (p544)

The Siksika (Blackfoot) First Nations have opened a superb historical center on their reservation. There’s a museum, plus guided tours and trails through quintessential prairie landscapes. (p626)
**PANGNIRTUNG**
This artistic Baffin Island Inuit community is the gorgeous launching pad to the soaring cliffs and utterly spellbinding magnificence of Auyuittuq National Park. (p825)

**TORGAT MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK**
You’ll have to fly or boat in to Labrador’s chilly tip, home to polar bears and some of the highest peaks east of the Rockies. Local Inuit guides lead the way for otherworldly hiking and flightseeing. (p507)

**GASPÉ PENINSULA**
This is the windswept, rocky spot where Jacques Cartier landed in 1534, surrounded by steep limestone cliffs, pebble beaches, whales, seals and the ever-crashing sea. (p307)

**CHIPUNETICOOK LAKES**
Disappear into the wilderness in this 180km chain of untouched lakes hugging the border with the US state of Maine. Canoeists, in particular, will find their bliss in the forest-cloaked waterways. (p402)

**TAYLOR HEAD PROVINCIAL PARK**
This beachy park on Nova Scotia’s undeveloped eastern shore juts out into the Atlantic, offering trails of wildflowers and beach grass and plenty of perfect sheltered coves for kayaking. (p388)
Plan Your Trip

Scenic Drives & Train Trips

Canada – blessed with a huge expanse of wild landscapes, with motorways unfurling right through the good parts – is made for road-tripping. Spiky mountains, ocean vistas, moose and Tim Hortons doughnut shops flash by. Even if you have just one day, you can take a gobsomaking journey. With more time you can really roll....
Sea to Sky Highway

Otherwise known as Hwy 99, this cliffside roadway offers a heart-leaping, humbling drive from Vancouver’s ocean to Whistler’s peaks. It begins at sea level, clasping the shore of Howe Sound, before twisting into the Coast Mountains and climbing through old-growth rainforests. You’ll rise 670m (2200ft) during the 130km route, with plenty of opportunities for scenic vistas, waterfall gaping and outdoor activities along the way.

Highlights

In West Vancouver, not long after you cross the Lion’s Gate Bridge, drop by Lighthouse Park to see the picture-perfect namesake structure along with shimmering sea views. Next you’ll pass Horseshoe Bay, where ferries glide in and out for the 20-minute ride to Bowen Island – a rustically charming retreat populated by writers and artists.

Back on Hwy 99, about 30km north is the kid-friendly Britannia Mine Museum. Descend into the former copper pit for an underground train tour, followed by gold panning. About 6km onward you’ll hear the rushing waters of Shannon Falls Provincial Park. Pull into the parking lot and stroll the 10-minute trail to British Columbia’s third-highest waterfall, which gushes 335m down the rock face.

Continuing your drive, you’ll soon see a sheer, 652m-high granite rock face looming ahead. It’s called the ‘Chief’ and it’s the highlight of Stawamus Chief Provincial Park. Climbers go ga-ga over it. The town just beyond is Squamish, a haven for mountain bikers, hikers, kiteboarders and microbrew aficionados. It’s a great spot to hang out for a day.

Nearby Brackendale attracts thousands of salmon-hungry eagles in winter. Hikers will want to pit stop at Garibaldi Provincial Park. Pull over at any of the designated trailheads to meander past scenic alpine meadows and breathtaking mountain views.

Back on the road, you’ll be in Whistler before you know it. Canada’s favorite ski resort combines a gabled, Christmas card village with some jaw-dropping dual-mountain terrain. Skiers and snowboarders will be in their glory in winter, while summer is almost as busy with mountain bikers and hikers.

When to Go

This is a beautiful, well-maintained drive any time of year.

Time & Mileage

It’s 130km from Vancouver to Whistler on the Sea to Sky Hwy. You can drive it in under two hours. But why hurry? It works best when stretched into a two- or three-day jaunt.
Resources


Mountain FM Radio (107.1) Provides handy traffic and road-condition updates en route.

Drive BC ([www.drivebc.ca](http://www.drivebc.ca)) Driving conditions and alerts.

Rockies Rail Route

Rail buffs consider the Jasper to Prince Rupert train a must-do journey. It traverses epic Canadian scenery, from the cloud-wrapped peaks and glacial streams in Alberta’s Rockies to the hauntingly beautiful Pacific coast of British Columbia. In between a whole lot of pine, spruce and hemlock trees whiz by, as do rustic settlements, rivers and sawmills. But then – did you see it? A black bear loping trackside. And totem poles that mark an ancient aboriginal village veiled by trees. And
unbelievably turquoise lakes glistening in the valleys...

**Highlights**

The train – a retro silver bullet from the 1950s – chugs during daylight hours only, so you see the landscape in all its glory. (You spend the night in Prince George, a long-standing lumber town at roughly the halfway point.)

The route traces an old aboriginal trading path. It climbs over the Yellowhead Pass at 1130m and follows the Skeena River to the ocean. You can’t help but relax, what with the train’s gentle swaying and storybook images flashing by: bridges, canyons, tunnels, snowy mountains.

The trip starts and ends with a scenic bang. Jasper National Park has the white-dipped peaks and glistening glaciers you see on postcards, while Prince Rupert is a misty, unspoiled town with an intriguing aboriginal heritage. Both are hot spots for adventure seekers.

**When to Go**

Mid-June to late September is peak period, when ‘touring class’ tickets (which include tour guides, meals and access to the train carriage with a panoramic dome) are available. The rest of the year only ‘economy class’ seats are available.

**Time & Mileage**

The train runs year-round, departing three times a week on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. The 1160km trip between Jasper and Prince Rupert, including an overnight stay in Prince George, takes 33 hours.

**Resources**

- [Via Rail](www.viarail.ca) Prices and specifics on train routes.
- [Prince George Tourism](www.tourismpg.com) Lodging listings for your overnight stay.
- [Prince Rupert Tourism](www.visitprincerupert.com) For help planning onward adventures.
Thousand Islands Parkway

The Thousand Islands Parkway rolls along a pastoral strip by the St Lawrence River, where a fog-cloaked constellation of 1800 islands floats between Kingston and Brockville, Ontario. The road offers dreamy vistas and dainty Victorian towns, where you can pull over to spend the night at an inn or take a boat ride through the isles, many of which hold rambling old mansions and castles. It’s a mist-kissed trip into a slower, gentler era.

Highlights

Even though the islands start around Kingston – a pretty, historical town with loads of museums on everything from shipbuilding to penitentiaries – the scenic drive doesn’t really pick up until the town of Gananoque, some 33km east along Hwy 401. That’s where the parkway dips south of the highway and rolls into gorgeous territory.

Gananoque is the area’s star for ambience, filled with quaint inns and manicured gardens. It’s also the jump-off point for boat cruises through the islands, especially to Boldt Castle, a turreted, gothic palace by the gent who was the original proprietor of New York City’s famous Waldorf Astoria Hotel. It’s technically in the USA, so bring your passport.

Ivylea is 22km onward, where soaring bridges link Ontario to New York State over several islands. Halfway across there’s an observation deck with killer views (mists permitting). If boat tours aren’t your thing, you can keep driving over the bridges and reach Boldt Castle by car.

Back on the parkway, the road continues to snake along the river, with furry green islands dotting the water beside it. In 18km you’ll come to Mallorytown, the home base for Thousand Islands National Park. Twenty rugged, pine-laden islands are protected, home to lumbering turtles and peregrine falcons. It’s a sublime area for backcountry camping and kayaking.

The parkway moseys on, hugging the river for a few more kilometers before rejoining Hwy 401 for the final approach into Brockville. This is another atmospheric town, with opulent 19th-century manors and vintage-looking streets where you can imagine the clip-clop sounds of carriage horses that used to ring through the area.

When to Go

June through September is peak season when the weather is most pleasant. May and October are good shoulder-season times. Many boat companies and activity outfitters close between November and April.

Time & Mileage

The parkway runs for 35km between Gananoque to just north of Mallorytown. The islands themselves stretch from Kingston to Brockville (about 90km). With boat trips or detours into the USA, you’ll need a full day, and it’s well worthwhile to spend the night along the way.

Resources

1000 Islands Gananoque Visitor Services Centre (www.1000islandsgananoque.com) Activity, restaurant and lodging info.
Above: Bridge connecting Canada and the US, Thousand Islands Seaway
Right: Rowing on the St Lawrence River
Cabot Trail

The Cabot Trail rings Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia’s lush tip. Driving it is a singular, brake-smoking journey. The road twists and climbs over coastal mountains, and around every bend something awesome reveals itself: ocean views, dramatic cliffs, breaching whales just offshore or moose snacking by the roadside. Celtic and Acadian communities dot the area, and their crazy-fiddlin’ music vibrates through local pubs. Their unique foods get heaped on local plates, too, so loosen the belt for a full cultural immersion.

Highlights

Most road trippers start at Chéticamp, a deeply Acadian fishing community known for its crafty hooked rugs and lively music. It’s also the gateway into Cape Breton Highlands National Park, where moose and bald eagle sightings are common. To stretch your legs, the park’s hiking trails zigzag to spectacular, edge-of-cliff sea vistas. And how about some Acadian stewed chicken and potato pancakes with molasses? Chéticamp’s eateries are prime for sampling.

Next along the roadway you’ll reach Pleasant Bay, known for its whale-watching tours and its Tibetan Buddhist monastery, where the monks give tours. Continuing onward, Meat Cove is a good place to look for whales from shore. Park by the town’s trailhead, walk out a short distance, spend an hour gazing at the ocean, and you’re almost guaranteed to see a pod of frolicking pilot whales.

Little fishing towns, world-famous golf courses, lighthouses and divine seafood houses pop up as you keep heading around the Cabot Trail. The area around St Ann’s is a center for Celtic arts. Baddeck is the unofficial end of the road, a beautiful spot to wind down and take in a traditional ceilidh (gathering for fiddling and dancing) in the town parish hall.

When to Go

July and August are peak season, with the nicest weather. September and October are good months to go, especially the latter for the Celtic Colours festival. Many places close from November through May.
The Cabot Trail winds for 300km around Cape Breton Island’s northeastern tip. The highlights lie on the coastal portion between Chéticamp and Baddeck. You can do the drive in a day, but that’s pushing it, as the road is narrow, hilly and slow-going most of the way.

**Resources**

**Cabot Trail Working Association** (www.cabot-trail.travel) Lists accommodations, restaurants and events for towns along the way and has a useful interactive map.


**TOP 10 ROAD TRIP ALBUMS**

These Canadian artists – some old, some new, spanning genres and provinces – will provide the proper soundtrack for your trip. Load up the iPod, hit shuffle and ‘keep the car running,’ as the first group on our list sings.

- Arcade Fire *Neon Bible*
- Tragically Hip *Fully Completely*
- Neil Young *Massey Hall 1971*
- The New Pornographers *Mass Romantic*
- Rush *Moving Pictures*
- Great Big Sea *Road Rage*
- Feist *The Reminder*
- Bachman-Turner Overdrive *Bachman-Turner Overdrive II*
- Stompin’ Tom Connors *Ballad of Stompin’ Tom*
- Jill Barber *Chansons*
Plan Your Trip

Travel with Children

Deciding where to go with your kids in Canada can be a daunting decision. Mountains, prairies, beaches, ice fields and easy-going cities are strewn across six time zones. Yet between sure-bet wildlife sightings, meeting real-life cowboys, hands-on learning about pirate history, roaming the plains for dinosaur fossils and ice skating on mountain lakes, it’s impossible to make a bad choice. Add the fact that Canada caters to kids better than nearly any other country in the world and you may find yourself (as many do) bringing the kids back year after year.

Best Regions for Kids

Vancouver
Sandwiched between sea and mountains, build a sandcastle one day and go snowboarding the next while enjoying the comforts of the city.

Canadian Rockies
Hike, ski, camp or snowshoe while looking out for moose, bear, elk and whistling marmot.

Montréal
Historic streets, year-round ice skating, an inner-city beach and the Biôdome full of critters will make you understand the meaning of joie de vivre.

Maritime Provinces
Climb a lighthouse, sail on a pirate ship, whale watch and beach hop in summer; watch the trees turn red, orange and gold in fall.

Toronto
Chase through parks in summer, ice-skate in winter and don’t forget to visit Niagara Falls!

Canada for Kids

As if seeing moose, eagles and whales or running around in the snow, on the beach or in the woods all day wasn’t fun enough, everywhere you turn, those crafty Canadians have cooked up some hands-on learning experience, living history lesson or child-oriented theater.

Museums & Monuments
Most large Canadian cities have science museums that specialize in hands-on activities while, at historic sites strewn across the country, costumed thespians get you right into the period and often have demonstrations of everything from blacksmithing to cooking. At some of these places there are also puppet or theatrical performances for children and other events such as hayrides. Teens usually enjoy these sites as well since they are often large and diverse enough for self-exploration and touch on subjects they’ve studied at school.
Outdoor Activities

Canada is all about open spaces, fresh air, rivers, lakes and mountains, snow, sand and wildlife.

► Most Canadian cities are endowed with parks and promenades set up for even the tiniest cyclists, but finding a child-sized bike rental can be hit or miss. For a cycling-oriented holiday try the mostly flat Confederation Trail that traverses bucolic Prince Edward Island or the traffic-free Kettle Valley Trail (KVR; British Columbia) that’s one of the least strenuous stretches of the Trans Canada Trail.

► The Canadian National Park system contains easy strolls as well as longer hiking trails that teens might enjoy. Horseback riding is widely on offer and can be especially fun in cowboy country around Calgary.

► Most lake areas offer canoe rentals perfect for leisurely family outings, while seafront regions are packed with kayak outfits. For a bigger adrenaline rush for older kids, try white-water rafting or ‘playboating’ spots, particularly on the Ottawa River in Beechburg.

► There are plenty of fishing lodges, but you’d be surprised at how lucky you can get just casting into any lake or river. Likewise, try clamming (PEI and BC are tops) – ask locals where to go and bring a shovel and a bucket.

► On the coasts and the Bay of Fundy, whale watching can be thrilling, but be prepared with seasickness pills, extra snacks, sunscreen and warm clothes.

► The tiny summer waves on the east and west coast are an excellent way to start learning surfing: rent a board or wetsuit or take a class.

► Heading out skiing or snowboarding is an obvious family choice. Children under six often ski for free, ages six to 12 usually pay around 12% to 50% of the adult price and ages 12 to 18 pay a little more than 33% to 75% of the adult price. Then, of course, there’s also ice skating, sledding and snowshoeing.

Eating Out

Everywhere you turn in Canada you’ll find fast food and fried fare. If you’re health conscious, a hurdle will be finding more wholesome options; in small towns your only choice might be to self-cater. Fortunately there are plenty of cabin and family suite-style options that allow you to cook for yourself, and some B&Bs will also let you cook. In cities, every restaurant option is available from vegan to steakhouses.

Easy-to-find Canadian foods your kids will love if you let them include poutine (French fries topped with brown gravy and cheese), fish and chips, Montréal-style bagels (wood-fired, dense and slightly sweet), pancakes or French toast with maple syrup, bear-claw doughnuts, butter tarts, and Nanaimo bars (crumb crust topped with custard and then melted chocolate). You may all gain a few kilos on this trip!

Most Canadian restaurants offer booster seats and child-friendly servers as soon as you steer your progeny through the door. However, families with even the most well-behaved children may not feel comfortable at fine-dining establishments.

Children’s Highlights

History Lessons

► Dinosaurs Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology, Drumheller (Alberta)

► First Nation Haida Gwaii (British Columbia), Head-Smashed-in Buffalo Jump World Heritage site (Alberta), Aboriginal Experiences (Ottawa), Wanuskewin Heritage Park (Saskatchewan)

► European Colonization L’Anse aux Meadows (Newfoundland), Louisbourg National Historic Site (Nova Scotia), Fort William Historical Park (Ontario)

Winter Wonderlands

► Winter Carnivals Québec City Winter Carnival, Cavalcade of Lights (Toronto), Vancouver Festival of Lights

► Ice skating Rideau Canal (Ottawa), Lake Louise (Alberta), Harbourfront Centre (Toronto), Lac des Castors (Montréal)

► Skiing, Snowboarding & Sledding Whistler-Blackcomb (British Columbia), Norquay (Banff), Mont-Ste-Anne (Québec)

► Dog-sledding Yellowknife (Northwest Territories), Iqaluit (Nunavut)
**Wet & Wild**

- **Beaches** Prince Edward Island and British Columbia
- **Surfing** Lawrencetown Beach (Nova Scotia), Vancouver Island (British Columbia)
- **Kayaking** Johnstone Strait (Vancouver Island), Georgian Bay (Ontario)
- **Canoeing** Algonquin National Park (Ontario), Bowron Lakes (British Columbia), Kejimkujik National Park (Nova Scotia)
- **Fishing** Lunenburg, Nova Scotia (lobster), Point Prim, Prince Edward Island (clams), Northern Saskatchewan (freshwater fish), Maritime Provinces (deep-sea fish)

**Urban Adventures**

- **Calgary’s Cowboys & Cowgirls** Calgary Stampede, Heritage Park Historical Village, horse rides at family ranches
- **Vancouver’s Outside Action** Capilano Suspension Bridge, Stanley Park
- **Toronto’s Heights & Depths** CN Tower to the subterranean corridors connecting downtown
- **Montréal’s Culture Infusion** Old Montréal, Little Italy
- **Halifax’s Pirates & the Titanic** Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Titanic graveyards

**Theme Park Delights**

- **Canada’s Wonderland** (p88) Amusement and water park, Toronto
- **Galaxy Land** (www.galaxyland.com; West Edmonton Mall; day pass adult/child from $37/31; ☀11am-9pm Mon-Sat, to 6pm Sun) World’s largest indoor amusement park, Edmonton
- **La Ronde** (p242) Amusement park, Montréal
- **Calaway Park** (p580) Amusement park and campground, Calgary
- **Playland** (www.pne.ca/playland; Hastings Park; day pass adult/child $33/24; ☀10am-6pm, variable by date, May1–late Sep) Oldest amusement park in Canada, Vancouver
- **Avonlea** (p451) Anne of Green Gables–themed park, Prince Edward Island

**EXTRAS BY AGE**

**Babies & Toddlers**

- Kids’ car seats: car-hire companies rent them for high rates; in Canada babies need a rear-facing infant safety seat, while children under 18kg (40lb) must be in a forward-facing seat.
- A front or back sling for baby and toddler if you’re planning on hiking and a stroller for city jaunts (nearly everywhere is stroller-accessible).
- Sandcastle or snowman-making tools.

**Six to 12 years**

- Kids’ car seats: children between 18kg (40lb) and 36kg (80lb) should have a booster seat. Seatbelts can be used as soon as a child is either 36kg, 145cm (4ft 9in) tall or eight years old.
- Binoculars for young explorers to zoom in on wildlife.
- Field guides about Canada’s flora and fauna.
- A camera to inject newfound fun into ‘boring’ grown-up sights and walks.
- Kite (for beaches).

**Teens**

- Canada-related iPhone or Android apps.
- Canada-related novels (find a list of Young Adult Canadian Book Award winners at www.cla.ca).
- French-Canadian phrasebook.
Above: Roller coaster, La Ronde amusement park, Montréal, Québec

Right: Dinosaur replica at the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology, Drumheller, Alberta
Planning

Traveling around Canada with the tots can be child’s play. Lonely Planet’s *Travel with Children* offers a wealth of tips and tricks. The website *Travel For Kids* (www.travelforkids.com) is another good, general resource.

When to Go

Festivals fill Canadian calendars year-round and most are very family-oriented. Summer is the most festival-heavy time, with lots of outdoor-oriented get-togethers from jazz festivals to rodeos. Fall is a lovely time to visit Canada if you can arrange it around your children’s school schedule. At this time the trees are changing colors, daytime temperatures are still manageably warm and most of the crowds have gone.

The best time for fresh snow and snow sports is January to April. Santa Claus parades usually kick off the holiday season in November and early December. Around the same time or just after, come the festivals of light where you can expect fireworks, parades and Christmas tree lightings.

Accommodations

Hotels and motels commonly have rooms with two double beds. Even those that don’t have enough beds may bring in rollaways or cots, usually for a small extra charge. Some properties offer ‘kids stay free’ promotions, while others (particularly B&Bs) may not accept children. Ask when booking.

Another good option are ‘cabins,’ which are usually rented out by the week and come with kitchens, any number of bedrooms, and other perks such as barbecues. You can find full listings with each province’s visitors guides online and in print (order them for free at each province’s tourism website).

Camping is huge in Canada and many campgrounds also offer rustic cabins (bring your own bedding) that sometimes have kitchens, fire pits or barbecues. Some grounds offer exotic options such as teepees or yurts, while others have swimming pools, minigolf or might be on a lake. Bring twice the bug spray.

What to Pack

Canada is very family oriented so anything you forget can probably be purchased in-country. Breastfeeding in public is legal and tolerated, although most women are discreet about it. Most facilities can accommodate a child’s needs; public toilets usually have diaper-changing tables.

What you will need is layered clothing for everyone, as it can get spontaneously cool even during the summer months. Sunscreen is a must – you’d be surprised how much you can burn on the greiest of days – as are rain gear and bug spray. It’s also a good idea to bring activities for lengthy car rides since getting anywhere in Canada can involve very long distances.

THE FINE PRINT

Children who are traveling to Canada without both parents need authorization from the nonaccompanying parent. Sometimes this is enforced and other times not but to play it safe you’re better off with a notarized letter. Divorced parents should carry copies of legal custody documents.
You can’t go wrong in Canada. Each region has eye-popping landscapes and a slew of activities to match. Ontario, Québec and British Columbia (BC) – the most populated provinces – are the ones with the most going on. In addition to outdoor action, they hold Canada’s largest cities – Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver – with multicultural museums, sophisticated eateries and wee-hours nightlife. Alberta booms in the Rockies with parks and oil-rich towns. Manitoba and Saskatchewan in the Plains hold big wildlife and arty surprises. The salty Atlantic provinces are tops for seafood munching and whale watching. And the far north is the place to lose the crowds (and roads) and get well off the beaten path.

Ontario

Cuisine
Parks
Culture
Farms & Vineyards
At a geological and climactic nexus, Ontario is ripe with agriculture and viticulture. The province’s wines are internationally recognized – well-matched to the delicious farm-to-table fare.

Fresh Air
If you’re looking for a simple stroll, a multiday backpacking trip or some time on the water, Ontario supplies anything from green city spaces to massive provincial parks. This is the place to bring your binoculars and break in your hiking boots.

Museums
From tiny sports-memorabilia shrines to world-class collections of ancient artifacts and geological remnants, Ontario is a museum mecca.

Québec

Culture
Winter Sports
Architecture
Joie de Vivre
Imagine: sipping a café au lait and eating a flaky croissant on a sidewalk terrace while the murmurs of a foreign language waft through the air. It’s easy to be swept away by the Québécois zest for life when fine wines and foods are so accessible.

Snow
The Laurentians’ jagged peaks offer skiing and snowboarding opportunities, but it’s the French panache of Mont-Tremblant that draws the international crowds.

Historic Style
Nowhere are the vestiges of Canada’s colonial past more apparent than in the cobbled streets and grandiose facades of Old Montréal, and within the ancient city walls of Québec City’s Old Town.

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Nova Scotia

Culture
Activities
History

Cultural Mix
Tartan shops, native French speaking villages and First Nation communities are all within kilometers of each other, rendering the province one big cultural melting pot.

Coves, Cliffs & Tides
Coastal coves rich in flora and fauna beg you to go paddling. Cape Breton Island’s vertiginous cliffs and the Fundy Coast with its megahigh tides are also gorgeous areas for adventure and wildlife.

Time Warp
Nova Scotians don’t just preserve their historical vestiges, they get into period costume and re-enact old-time activities from lace making to blacksmithing, recreating the scene as it might have been hundreds of years ago.

New Brunswick

Activities
Fishing
Wildlife

You in a Canoe
From the tranquil Chiputneticook Lakes to the quicksilver Tobique River, New Brunswick is absolutely tops for canoeing, surely the most Canadian of activities. You can even meet artisans who still make canoes.

Tie Your Flies
New Brunswick’s famed rivers are the kind anglers dream of – where they flycast into the current and within minutes reel in a fat silvery salmon or speckled trout.

Puffin Lovin’
Whether you’re a hardcore birdwatcher or you just want to glimpse a moose, New Brunswick’s got plenty of animal action to go around. Your best bet: observing rare Atlantic puffin on desolate Machias Seal Island.

Prince Edward Island

Culture
Cuisine
Beaches

All About Anne
Personified by LM Montgomery’s redheaded star of the Anne of Green Gables series, PEI is as pretty as it’s portrayed in the books. Red sands mimic Anne’s hair, while white picket fences paint the real-life backdrop.

Lobsters & Spuds
The province vies with Idaho as potato capital of the Americas. Seek out town halls serving supersized suppers of the island’s famous lobster – alongside PEI spud salad!

Pink & White Sands
PEI showcases sienna beach flats topped by red-and-white lighthouses, cream-colored dunes and stretches of white sand that ‘sing’ when you walk on them.

Newfoundland & Labrador

Seascapes
Culture
History

Great Big Sea
‘There’s one!’ someone shouts, and sure enough, a big, barnacled humpback steams through the water, backdropped by a vista of hulking icebergs. Whether you’re hiking along-shore or out in a boat, Newfoundland’s sea delivers.

Strange Brew
The brogue is vaguely Irish and the slang indecipherable. Plates arrive with cod tongues, bakeapple jam and figgy duff. This place is so offbeat it even has its own time zone: a half hour ahead of the mainland.

Viking Vestiges
Feel the Vikings’ edge-of-the-world isolation at L’Anse aux Meadows, Leif Eriksson’s 1000-year-old settlement set on a bare, forlorn sweep of land.

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p457
**Manitoba**

- **Wildlife**
- **Open Spaces**
- **Culture**

**White Bears & White Whales**

Polar bears prowling the ice: that’s what sub-arctic Churchill is all about. The hemisphere’s biggest predators turn up by the hundreds in the fall. Out on the water in summer, expect to see scores of shockingly white beluga whales.

**Muskeg & Wheat**

Drive through the south and you’ll be mesmerized by kilometer after kilometer of wheat, punctuated by giant grain elevators. In the sub-arctic north, a year-round evergreen swath grows in the rich muskeg – think marshy soil from eons of plants.

**Oh Winnipeg!**

This surprising oasis of great dining, fun nightlife and hip culture rises up from the prairies around it.

- **p510**

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**Saskatchewan**

- **Wildlife**
- **History**
- **Culture**

**Moose & Critters**

Although remote, the web of backroads that stretch across this huge province are not empty. Saskatchewan is alive with Canada’s iconic critters, especially moose, which love roadside salt pools.

**Revolution Rocks**

In 1885 Louis Riel fought the law and, while the law won, he and a band of followers almost beat the army at Batoche, an Aboriginal town that declared independence after the national government broke treaties.

**The Good Twins**

Regina and Saskatoon both offer plenty to do after dark. Inventive restaurants using the province’s produce combine with pubs serving regional microbrews.

- **p532**

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**Alberta**

- **Activities**
- **Winter Sports**
- **Festivals**

**Banff & Jasper**

Two parks, hundreds of miles of trails, and acres of easily accessible wilderness. If you’re ever going to fulfill your latent hiking ambitions, these protected areas are the places to do it.

**Cross-country Skiing**

While Alberta’s downhills resorts heave with skiers, the backcountry is so quiet you can almost hear the snowflakes fall. There’s nothing like breaking trail in Jasper’s roadless Tonquin Valley on a pair of cross-country skis.

**Fringe Festival**

Edinburgh invented it, but Edmonton has taken the concept of ‘alternative theater’ and given it a Canadian twist. At the International Fringe Festival, cutting-edge performers offer comedy, satire and weirdness.

- **p554**

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**British Columbia**

- **Landscapes**
- **Cuisine**
- **Wildlife**

**Breathtaking Scenery**

From jaw-dropping mountains and multifjorded coastlines to dense old-growth forest and lush islands, BC is an idyll for landscape-lovers.

**Dining Delights**

From North America’s best Asian dining scene in Vancouver to a cornucopia of regional seafood and produce, local flavors are a foodie focus here – accompanied, of course, by a BC wine or micro-brewery beer.

**Wildlife Wonderland**

The Inside Passage is alive. Hop a ferry along the coast and stay glued to the deck for orca, whale, seal and birdlife sightings. Ashore, the entire cast of animal characters is here, especially huge grizzlies in the north.

- **p630**
**Yukon Territory**

**Wildlife Parks History**

**Bears, Oh My!**
The Alaska Hwy cuts across the lower Yukon on its twisting journey to its namesake state. But stop to admire the wildlife and you may not bother reaching your destination. Keep your eyes peeled for bear, moose, bison, wolf and elk.

**Unimaginable Beauty**
Kluane National Park is a Unesco-recognized wilderness of glaciers cleaving through granite peaks. You won’t just feel small here, you’ll feel minute.

**Gold!**
The Klondike gold rush of 1898 still shapes the Yukon with its spirited sense of adventure. Paddle your way to Dawson City, a time capsule town that’s as lively now as then.

**Northwest Territories**

**Northern Lights Activities Winter Sports**

**Aurora Borealis**
Fantastically remote and light-pollution-free, NWT is prime for seeing the green-draped flickerings. Outfitters take you far into the night, with heated viewing areas to fend off the chill.

**Nahanni National Park**
Nahanni National Park is a Unesco World Heritage site that offers some of the most spectacular river kayaking in Canada. With no road access, it is a true back-of-beyond adventure.

**Dog-sledding**
With zero ski resorts, the Northwest Territories specialize in more esoteric winter activities such as dog-sledding. This traditional form of arctic transportation is a thrilling way to travel.

**Nunavut**

**Wildlife Culture Parks**

**Arctic Animals**
Yes, animals live up here, it’s just that they’re not easy to spot. Hook up with a professional arctic outfitter for rare viewings of polar bear, caribou, walrus, narwhals and beluga whales.

**Aboriginal Art**
Shopping is the last thing on most Nunavut travelers’ minds, but genuine Inuit art is one of the region’s biggest draws. Unlikely souvenir outlets can be found in Cape Dorset, Pangnirtung and Iqaluit.

**Untamed Wilderness**
With annual visitation numbers that rarely hit three figures, Nunavut’s four national parks guarantee an extreme wilderness experience. Sky-high costs are tempered by the moon-like emptiness of the incredible terrain.

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On the Road