

CANADA



DRAMATIC PEAKS,
MONUMENTAL
GLACIERS,
EMERALD-GREEN
OR ICE-BLUE LAKES.



ALBERTA

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In the vast and beautiful country of Canada, two national parks stand out head and shoulders above the others - Banff and Jasper, both in majestically rugged Alberta.

Soaring mountains vie with cobalt blue skies. And, if you're not careful, reflections in mirror-calm glacial lakes can confuse you as to which way's up and which way's down.

The 148 mile (237km) drive along Icefields Parkway, which traverses the Rockies from one park to the other, is considered one of the world's most scenic mountain drives. Everywhere you look you'll see perfect picture-postcard views. Dramatic peaks, monumental glaciers, emerald-green or ice-blue lakes, spectacular waterfalls and the awesomely huge Columbia Icefield, which feeds eight major glaciers.

Another great drive, which includes wildlife like bear, elk, deer and the magnificent eagle, is the Bow Valley Parkway that connects Banff and Lake Louise. If you're not one for simply looking at views, there are 1000 miles of hiking trails, more downhill and cross-country ski runs than you can poke a stick at and plenty of watersports.

In summer, canoe, swim or sail Lake Louise; heli-hike or heli-bike if you're game; fish the rivers, play golf and go horse riding. Wander through magnificent swathes of wildflowers in a high alpine meadow; explore the forests that carpet the valleys; or simply laze about in Upper Hot Springs.



Watch the sunset from Tunnel Mountain; enjoy Takkakaw Falls, Emerald, Moraine and Minnewanka Lakes; see mile-long trains wind in and out of the Spiral Tunnels; visit the Banff Gondola at Sulphur Mountain or the Cave and Basin historic site.

The snow is dry champagne powder and there are hectares of it in this most pristine and beautiful place. For the adventurous, try heli-skiing. And few kids won't love a sleigh ride and the Minute Maid Wilderness Adventure Park.

The little mountain village of Canmore, just west of Calgary, is also perfectly situated to enjoy all this and more. Snowshoe the wilderness of Kananaskis; ice fish for trout in Spray Lakes; delve into the depths of Rat's Nest Cave ... or simply wander the unique gift shops and galleries.

Lethbridge, down on the gently rolling prairie, has its fair share of beautiful areas that offer wonderful adventures. Windsurf the Wa-Wa on Waterton Lake or watch others try to master this wall of water and wind. You'll love the scenery too!

Canoe the Red Deer River past ranches and cottonwood stands to ancient fossil beds in Dinosaur Provincial Park; explore the rich heritage of the first nations at Fort Whoop-Up, Galt Museum and Writing on Stone Historic Site; be amazed by Head-Smashed-In, the world's oldest and best-preserved buffalo jump, and the massive monolith of Okotoks Erratic.

Even if you choose to simply play golf at the magnificent golf courses (complete with deer, canyons or mystic rivers), you will enjoy Alberta hugely.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Where Ontario is all about the great outdoors, British Columbia's Vancouver offers the rare mix of big-city buzz and extremely close outdoor fun.

Ringed by sky-piercing peaks on one side and water the other, it also has premier shopping and sophisticated nightlife. In other words, the best of all worlds.

Its climate is considered mild; but, when it's wet, go shopping. Fabric and textiles from Net Loft; unique carvings from BC Wood Co-op; and wall hangings from Malaspina Printmakers Gallery.



SEA LIONS, SEALS AND EAGLES CAN BE SPOTTED OFF THE PROMENADE, THOUGH MUCH MORE WILDLIFE IS FOUND AT THE BROKEN GROUP ARCHIPELAGO.



Granville Island is good for glass or jewelry; Kitsilano Maple Cream Ale from its brewery; and oysters and chips, followed by lemon meringue pie and organic coffee, at its Public Market. Robson Street is a shopping mecca all on its own.

Then there's downhill or cross-country skiing and snowboarding at Grouse or Cypress Mountain, just near downtown; fishing for salmon at the Fraser and Thompson Rivers; swimming off one of the 11 beaches; whale watching, surfing, diving and hiking.

The best waves in BC are off Long Beach in Vancouver Island's Pacific Rim National Park. Just near Ucluelet, a First Nation village, it also offers many miles of spectacular hiking trails through ancient rainforest, sandy beaches, rocky coves and pristine peninsulas.

The sport fishing is legendary - offshore and in the rivers and lakes. Sea lions, seals and eagles can be spotted off the promenade, though much more wildlife is found at the Broken Group archipelago. Grey, Humpback and Killer whales are a big feature.

Visit the Wickaninnish Interpretive Center; kayak the waters of Kennedy Lake, Barkley Sound and the Broken Group Islands; play the picturesque Long Beach Golf Course.

In NanOOSE Bay, clam digging is a favorite pastime. Birdwatch from the Qualicum National Wildlife Area; visit local artisans on the Art Loop and Scenic Drive; hike up the Notch for an outstanding ocean view.

There are interesting wrecks and abundant marine life for divers. Rathrevor Beach Provincial Park has 1.3 miles (2km) of beaches; the spectacular canyon at Englishman River Falls Provincial Park is framed between two cascading waterfalls.

Whistler is a pretty alpine village. It's also one of the world's most popular ski resorts. And, despite warm, dry summers and mild winters, you can ski most of the year round. When the snow's gone, you simply move to Blackcomb's glacier skiing and riding!

The parks and mountains are beautiful, the ski fields superb and the après-ski legendary. Snowboard, tube, or take a snowcat tour. Heli-ski, heli-board and snowshoe. You can even zipline above it all at high speed. Kids, go on sleigh rides and toboggans.

The 16 feet (5 meters) of powder snow, three mountains and long runs of Sun Peaks have all the fun snow sports, including ice skating under lights. Finish the day off in the hot tub. ▶

When the snow melts, golf the Graham Cooke designed course, hike and ride through the valleys and mountains or white-water raft. Tour the thousand lakes, visit a working cattle ranch, farmer's markets and fairs.

Do the same from Sicamous and Celista on the Shuswap Lake system. Also explore the Glacier and Wells Gray Parks; heritage of Revelstoke; and cruise the Cinnemousun Narrows to the Indian pictographs.

Cross-country ski the extensive trails of Larch Hills; try the slopes at Silver Star; and snowmobile the deep powder snow to your heart's content. It's truly awesome here!

Explore the orchard laden, winegrowing area of Okanagan Valley from Kelowna. Perched on the edge of Lake Okanagan, it's close to quaint wineries, lovely lakes and beautiful mountains.

For a blast from the past, take the restored vintage train; visit Father Pandosy's Mission; or cruise on the MV Fintry Queen. Kids will love Mariner's Reef waterslide park, Planet Spacewalkers and the long, sandy beach at the City Park.

You'll love the canyon and waterfalls at Bear Creek Provincial Park; the deep pools, black bears and bald eagles of Fintry Provincial Park; salmon fishing at Mission Creek Park; diving Paul's Tomb; and skiing Big White.

On the eastern edge of BC, we come to four huge mountain ranges. Panorama, Radium Hot Springs, Invermere and Fairmont Hot Springs are all great resorts. Panorama's steep slopes offer plenty of space to have fun in the snow. Radium's Hot Springs are free of smelly sulphur and curve against scenic cliffs. The old trading post of Invermere graces the sandy beaches of Windermere Lake. And the run-off from Fairmont's hot springs pool forms a lovely waterfall.



FISH WINDERMERE LAKE FOR TROUT AND COLUMBIA RIVER FOR KOKANEE SALMON, OR SIMPLY WATCH THEM SPAWN IN THEIR HUNDREDS.

Fish Windermere Lake for trout and Columbia River for Kokanee salmon (or simply watch them spawn in their hundreds); play the 18 hole Greywolf Golf Course; or relax at the lovely spring-fed Lake Lillian.

Whitewater raft in beautiful wilderness settings; hang-glide or para-glide from Mount Swansee over the Columbia Valley; rock or ice climb one of many awesome places; or hike to the Stanley Glacier.

Explore Radium Hot Spring's quaint little shops; drive past the Great Blue Heron Rookery; admire the stunning views from the Kootenay Valley Viewpoint and the Continental Divide; absorb the atmosphere at historic Fernie.

Wherever you end up going, the blue skies of summer, russets of fall, white wonderlands of winter and green verdancy of spring will leave you breathless. And keen for more.





IN WINTER, SKI OR SNOWBOARD THE HILLS, ESPECIALLY BLUE MOUNTAIN; TRAVERSE THE TRAILS CROSS COUNTRY ON SKIS, SHOES OR SNOWMOBILE; SNOW TUBE OR DOG SLED. AT THE END OF THE DAY, SOAK IN THE HOT BATHS AND COLD PLUNGES AT LE SCANDINAVE SPA.



ONTARIO

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This is the state to visit when you want a mixture of stunning wilderness and cultural sophistication. Thanks to a temperate climate, the Great Lakes and the awesome Niagara Falls, the area around Toronto is a vacationer's paradise.

Stretched across the border with the US, Niagara Falls is one of the most awesome sights in the world. The three sets of falls may not be all that high, but they're incredibly wide and powerful. On the Canadian side, aptly named Horseshoe Falls draws people in their millions.

If gazing at the falls from every conceivable angle isn't enough, there's a theme park, Marineland, and three indoor waterparks. Those who like heights, go up on the SkyWheel, to the top of the Skylon Tower, or catch the rainbows on a helicopter ride. A must-do is a boat ride on Maid of the Mist, which hovers a few feet off the falls. For something completely different, go to the wineries on the Lake Erie north shore.

Wasaga Beach, with the longest freshwater beach in the world, Thornbury and Collingwood all cluster around the southern shores of Lake Huron on the beautiful Niagara Escarpment, a world biosphere preserve. Fishing is a year round thing, with dozens of huts dotting the ice, or boats bobbing in the azure water.

In summer, it's sun, swimming, watersports, diving the countless wrecks in Georgian Bay, walking, biking or playing golf. The adventurous can traverse a web of zip lines, walkways hovering above 200 year old maples and oaks, as well as a suspension bridge to the labyrinth of caves and crevices at Scenic Caves.

Become a human sundial at Keppel Henge; drive along the beautiful, winding shore; stop at Cave Point Cliffs and Grotto Underwater Passage.

In winter, ski or snowboard the hills, especially Blue Mountain; traverse the trails cross country on skis, shoes or snowmobile; snow tube or dog sled. At the end of the day, soak in the hot baths and cold plunges at Le Scandinave spa.

Kids will love the Candy factory, go-carts and Botanical Park. Parents reward yourself at the great restaurants in Thornbury - the Dam Pub has a huge selection of scotches - or shopping in Collingwood.

All are close enough to Toronto for a day trip. Good things to do while there are a visit to the restored masterpiece, Elgin and Winter Garden Theater Center; the Art Deco, Canada Permanent building; labyrinth at the Church of Holy Trinity; and haunted Mackenzie House.

Otherwise, go shopping in PATH's 19 miles (30km) underground network of shops, atriums and food courts. Take your lunch outdoors to the beautifully sculpted Tor Music Garden and then wander through the multiple ethnic neighborhoods.

A little east is Lake Simcoe, where you'll find Barrie and Shanty Bay. The beaches are great and there are more hill ski runs here than anywhere else in Ontario.





WITH OVER 250 LAKES IN WHICH TO FISH AND PLAY, YOU CAN EXPLORE IN CANOES, KAYAKS, ROWBOATS AND SAILBOATS. THIS IS A VACATION PLAYGROUND.



If you're not here for the lovely setting and the summer or winter fun, you'll be here for Barrie's two 18 hole championship golf courses. Otherwise, go rock climbing, treetop trekking, ATV and motorbike riding.

On Lake Simcoe's opposite shore, is peaceful Brechin, with 8 miles (16km) of navigable waterways and great beaches. Apart from the usual snow and watersport opportunities, try your hand at paddleboating or bicycle your way around the inlets and coves. This is lovely country!

Nearby Coboconk, in the scenic Kawartha Lakes region, has a fine sand beach, boardwalk and lovely waterfront area. With over 250 lakes in which to fish and play, you can explore in canoes, kayaks, rowboats and sailboats. This is a vacation playground. Wine buffs, make the journey to the wineries at Prince Edward County on Lake Ontario.

Severn Bridge and Gravenhurst are also part of this historic Trent-Severn Waterway, so boats are everywhere. Bring your fishing rod and marshmallows to roast on the nightly camp fire. Kids will love the toboggan run.

Skate the frozen lakes in winter and definitely ice fish. In summer, fish the weirs at the narrows in Orillia and play the casino after dining at one of the superb restaurants all year round.

Georgina Island, with its First Nation population, wildflowers and wildlife, is worth a visit. Go on a Lady Muskoka cruise, fish, sail and swim Sparrow Lake and take the kids to drive-in movies. Golfers, play Mike Weir's championship golf course.

Dwight and Baysville edge the Lake of Bays, on the Haliburton Water Trail. Again, this is about winter snow and summer watersports. Of course, the autumns are a glorious splash of red, gold and orange leaves. When seen against the green pines and blue lake, it's unforgettable.

Check out the lookout tower in Dorset, as well as the general store and icecream parlor; Dwight is known for its canoes, antique shops and trading posts; Baysville's gallery has lovely watercolors and gourmet homemade jams. The waterfront is also well worth a visit.

Explore the wilderness of Algonquin Park; venture into the ruins of Bigwin Island's historic inn; swim at Dwight's sandy beach. Catch fish at any one of the many lakes; cook it for a picnic at Oxtongue River Provincial Park; finish the day off by taking photos of stunning Ragged Falls.

Go shopping in Huntsville; drive past old log cabins and stone houses to Utterson where you can play hockey on the pond; or simply laze next to a blazing log fire.



Haliburton is a great place from which to explore the highlands. There are all the summer and winter sports you could wish for, as well as a host of other things to do. The trails heading north to Whitney are excellent.

Tour Lake Kashagawigamog; watch car racing on ice in Minden; go back in time at the Hawk Lake Loge Chute. At the Forest and Wildlife Reserve, walk among the clouds up in the tree canopy; get up close and personal at the Wolf Center; practice your astronomy and a whole heap more.

Nestled in the York River Valley is Bancroft. Like Haliburton, the fishing and snowmobiling is great. Those who like rocks and minerals will be in heaven.

Play at beautiful Baptiste Lake, then visit any of the four fantastic provincial parks, including Algonquin with its delicate orchids and giant moose. Eagles Nest has a breathtaking view of the valley, Egan Chute waterfall is worth the walk; and you'll pick up nice souvenirs at Madonna House and the Princess Sodalite Mine.

Further off the beaten track is Lake Nipissing and Monetville, in the heritage French River area. Renowned amongst anglers, its many islands, bays and inlets, rivers, rapids and waterfalls will entrance those who aren't keen on fishing.

Catch up on the history of this old trading post; go hunting for game; visit Sturgeon Falls, the Elevated Lake and Parry Sound.

Way on the eastern edge of Ontario, you'll find Calabogie and Cobden. Surrounded by rolling hills and shining lakes, this is another vacation paradise summer and winter.

When you're not playing in the sun or snow, visit the markets in Cobden; ride the Ottawa River's rapids at Beachburg; or take the kids to Logos Land waterpark.



Ottawa, with its casino, exciting hockey games and live theater, is only 80 minutes away. While you're there, meander the historic Rideau Canal; look out for ice sculptures in winter; and lose yourself in the pleasures of the historic ByWard Market (day and night).

Treat yourself to a sweet BeaverTail pastry; watch the Mounties go through their paces; and, if you've got the appetite to travel for another two hours, go on to Montreal for Inuit carvings and exquisite furs.

Not nearly as mountainous as Alberta or British Columbia, the softer hills of Ontario hold abundant charms of their own. Which one are you going to pick to put on your bracelet?