

# explore™

## MEET CANADA'S ADVENTURE CATS

(INCLUDING  
GARY!)



### BUY CANADIAN

Best Gear  
from the Great  
White North

### HOME GROWN

10 World-Class  
Canadian Hotspots

CLEARWATER  
COUNTY HIKES

CAMPING  
LUXURY ITEMS

WILDFLOWER  
HUNTING

JASPER  
IN REHAB



MADE IN CANADA

SUMMER 2025 \$8.95 DISPLAY UNTIL SEPT 15



# ESCAPE THE CROWDS

DISCOVER  
NORTHERN  
ONTARIO'S BEST  
KEPT SECRETS

**This summer, leave the crowds behind** and discover a side of Ontario that feels like a secret waiting to be uncovered. Northern Ontario is where adventure, relaxation, and nature combine in a perfect summer getaway.



📷 Embark on a canoe expedition of a lifetime! / Moose River – Colin Field

ONTARIO  
*Yours to discover*

DESTINATION  
**NORTHERN  
ONTARIO**

PLAN YOUR TRIP TODAY >





**Hike to Scenic Vistas** / James Smedley

**Cultural Experiences** / Tiina Keranen

**Wild Blueberries** / Tiina Keranen

**Wilderness Camping** / Tiina Keranen

**Thundering Waterfalls** / Destination Ontario

Whether you're tracing the wild shoreline on the Lake Superior Circle Tour, winding through the Grand Algoma Tour, or cruising the peaceful stretches of the Lake Temiskaming Tour, each route offers its own kind of magic, just hours from Toronto and U.S. border crossings.

Along the way, discover the vibrant energy of northern cities like Sudbury, North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, and Thunder Bay, or lose yourself in the charm of small towns such as Nipigon, Little Current, Wawa, and Kenora, each with its own story to tell.

In every direction, you'll find something worth pulling over for: vibrant festivals, traditional pow wows, friendly farmer's markets, scenic lookouts, and endless trails, lakes, and rivers perfect for hiking, paddling, fishing or cycling.



**World Class RV Touring Routes** / Martin Lortz



**Pristine Wilderness Campgrounds** / Tiina Keranen



**PACK YOUR BAGS**, hit the road, and make this summer unforgettable in Northern Ontario. Visit [northernontario.travel](http://northernontario.travel) to explore the region.



## FEATURES



**30**

**BUY CANADIAN! SUMMER GEAR GUIDE**  
We scoured the Great White North for the best outdoor apparel, gear and equipment (and even an RV!) Canada has to offer. This year, keep your money north of the 49th—and buy Canadian.  
*By Ryan Stuart*



**40**

**EXPLORE THE WORLD IN CANADA**  
With 9.2 million square-kilometres to explore, Canada has the world within its borders. Satisfy your wanderlust with 10 all-Canadian destinations that rival the best places on the planet!  
*By Dania Rashid*



**48**

**ADVENTURE CATS!**  
Fearless felines: these nine cats are living their nine lives to the fullest.  
*By Alison Karlene Hodgins*



**56**

**LET'S VÉLO!**  
A slow cycling adventure through Southern France.  
*By Claudia Laroye*

**ON THE COVER**  
Gary the cat (@greatgramsofgary) relaxes on Cinquefoil Mountain in Jasper National Park. Photo by James Eastham

## DEPARTMENTS

**6 TRAILHEAD**

**10 THE LOWDOWN**

Clearwater County, Alberta; Recreating in Rehabilitation Zones; Wildflower Wanderings in Manitoba; Luxury Camp Items for Your Campsite

**20 FIRESIDE RANT**

Show Me the Numbers  
*By Ryan Stuart*

**22 PROFILES**

Frank Wolf  
*By Nora O'Malley*

**24 WILDSIDE**

The Canadian Way?  
*By Andrew Findlay*

**26 GADD'S TRUTH**

Intuition & Fear  
*By Will Gadd*

**28 JOURNAL**

Heart Strong  
*By Kendra Slagter*

**63 EXPLORE THE NATURAL WONDERS OF GASPE**

*By Jennifer Malloy*

**64 CROSSWORD**

Clues in articles!

**65 INTO GEAR**

Summer Stash  
*By Explore Staff*

**66 THE MOMENT**

Villa Vida Loca, Sunderland, Ontario  
*By Katie MacDonald*



Hiking • Mountain Biking • Rafting, Kayaking, SUP • World-class Fly Fishing • Dining • Shopping • Spa



Nestled in the Rocky Mountains of southeast British Columbia,  
Fernie is where rugged beauty meets a warm welcome.

Uncrowded, yet packed with adventure, Fernie invites you to explore, connect,  
and embrace the thrill of the outdoors. Just a short flight from Vancouver, BC  
or a scenic 3-hour drive from Calgary, AB.



[ExperienceFernie.com](https://ExperienceFernie.com) | [#ferniestoke](https://twitter.com/ferniestoke) |



# TRAILHEAD



BY DAVID WEBB

@davidebwebb



## ODE TO RV'ING

"What qualifies as a hike?" You wouldn't believe how many times I've been asked this—usually by outdoorsy newbies sheepishly wondering if what they did last weekend met some preconceived "adventure standard."

"If you call it a hike, it's a hike," I say. Sometimes I nudge them in the direction of walking upon natural surfaces, but heck, I'm not judge and jury of the outdoors. You said you hiked—you hiked.

I've been guilty of it too—proclaiming I took my five-year-olds for a "hike," then later downgrading the activity to "forest walk." Why though? It was a hike to them!

Same goes for camping. Despite my family having owned an RV park for some 75 years, until about five years ago I didn't have much personal experience actually using an RV. (You don't have to be Sherlock Holmes to figure out, based on a previous sentence, what changed about five years ago.)

Our first RV adventure as a family was right around our twins' first birthday. I told friends and co-workers we were going camping for a few days and everyone was really impressed we'd spend that long "camping" with infants.

"Well, it's in an RV," I said, somewhat guiltily... as if the RV didn't count as true camping.

It's all about perspective. To backcountry enthusiasts, a travel trailer like our 28-foot Kodiak may as well be the Château Frontenac. To folks more inclined to book at the Frontenac, it may as well be a lean-to in the woods.

To my wife, it's camping. To our kids, "we're going camping in the 'caravan,'" the bestowed name owing to an early love of the British cartoon *Peppa Pig*. We even pitch a Coleman tent to the side—I'll camp

with the boys while my wife enjoys the queen bed to herself.

It's still a natural experience. It's dirty feet. It's bacon sizzling in an outdoor kitchen. It's marshmallows on a (propane) fire.

It's camping.

What sprouted from a refusal to change diapers in a tent blossomed into an understanding that an RV turns campouts into vacations. Five, six, 10 days? Why not? Ten days in a tent with two adults, two kindergarteners and a dog? Not on a dare, thank you.

I may be preaching to the converted here. During a recent podcast with GoRVing Canada, I learned that 14 percent of Canadian households own RVs. That's about two million of us! Among readers of *explore*, we count members of Canada's own Explorer RV Club, plus a heavy amount of that overarching 14 percent.

Canada is built for RVs. Just take a look at our feature "Explore the World in Canada" (page 40) to see how we've strung together RV-friendly all-Canuck itineraries. It was too easy. Outfit your RV—or tent setup—with some of the best all-Canadian gear from the special Patriots' Edition of our summer gear guide (page 30). And RVs are very cat-friendly—so enjoy "Adventure Cats!" on page 48.

Whether you read at home, in a mobile home or in a tent you carried on your back—we hope you also enjoy two additions to *explore*: Field Editor Ryan Stuart's column "Fireside Rant" (page 20), where he digs deep into issues affecting Canada's outdoors; and a crossword puzzle (page 64), because, well, who doesn't love a good crossword? (All of the words are in the issue's articles.)

Happy summer, Canada. It doesn't last long up here—let's make the most of it. x

LIVE THE ADVENTURE  
**explore**™

EXPLORE-MAG.COM

**EDITOR**  
David Webb  
explore@explore-mag.com

**CREATIVE DIRECTOR**  
Branden Douglas

**FIELD EDITOR**  
Ryan Stuart

**MANAGING EDITOR,  
CONTENT & COMMUNITY**  
Alison Karlene Hodgins

**ART DIRECTION**  
relishideas.ca

**EDITORIAL ASSISTANT**  
Dania Rashid

**MARKETING  
COORDINATOR**  
Gabby O'Hara

**NATIONAL SALES  
MANAGER**  
Ben Hopper

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT  
MANAGER**  
Adrianna Szarek

**CEO**  
Boyd Liski

**CFO**  
Tyson Morris

**PRESIDENT/PUBLISHER**  
David Webb

**GENERAL ADVERTISING  
INQUIRIES**  
1-888-924-7524  
adsales@explore-mag.com

**CUSTOMER SERVICE**  
Weston Liski

**FINANCE MANAGER**  
Devin Cox

**DIRECTOR,  
CONSUMER MARKETING**  
Craig Sweetman

LIVE THE ADVENTURE  
**explore**™

**Subscription Hotline**  
1-888-924-7524

**Subscriber inquiries:**  
subscribe@explore-mag.com

**Subscription rates:**  
One year \$27 (taxes vary by province).  
US/INTL add \$10 per year.  
Customer Service: 1-888-924-7524

**Send name & address along with payment to:**  
Explore Magazine,  
1121 Sanford St, Winnipeg, MB R3E 3A1 Canada

**Explore™ is published four times per year:**  
Spring (March), Summer (June),  
Fall (September), Winter (December)

Contents copyright 2025 by Explore Magazine.  
All rights reserved.

Reproduction of any article, photograph or artwork without written permission is strictly forbidden. The publisher can assume no responsibility for unsolicited material.  
ISSN 0714-816X

1121 Sanford St | Winnipeg, MB | R3E 3A1 | Canada  
Tel: 1-888-924-7524

**Printed in Canada**

Canadian Publications Mail Product  
Sales Agreement No. 44026548

Postage paid at Montreal, QC. Return undeliverable  
Canadian addresses to: Circulation Dept.,  
1121 Sanford St, Winnipeg, MB  
R3E 3A1 Canada

Explore™ is a registered trademark of  
Explore Outdoor Media Inc.

Funded by the  
Government  
of Canada

Canada



WIN A

# WILDERNESS CANOE TRIP

ON THE NAHANNI RIVER

**Just by subscribing  
to Explore Magazine!**

Subscribe to Explore Magazine in 2025 and you'll be automatically entered to win a 14-day canoe trip for two on the iconic Nahanni River with Canoe North Adventures.

**TRIP VALUED AT \$20,000!**

**SUBSCRIBE &  
ENTER TODAY**

[EXPLORE-MAG.COM/SUBSCRIBE](https://explore-mag.com/subscribe)



Canoe North Adventures boasts a 35-year legacy guiding epic canoe adventures in Canada's Northwest Territories. Their certified River Guides are dedicated to sharing their knowledge for safe river travel as well as creating a supportive and heart-felt group experience during the expedition.

The trip for two prize package includes one-night hotel stay, Parks Canada fees, two licensed river-guides all camping/canoe/paddling gear (except for personal clothing), all meals, interpretive program provided by Dene youth & elders. Airfare not included.

For more information visit [canoenorthadventures.com](https://canoenorthadventures.com)

**RULES & REGULATIONS** You are automatically entered into this giveaway when you subscribe or renew/auto-renew your subscription to Explore Magazine in 2025. Existing subscriptions are also valid entries. You may enter without purchase by mailing your name, email and phone number to: Explore Magazine Sweepstakes, 1121 Sanford St., Winnipeg, MB, R3E 3A1. **CONTEST CLOSES** December 31, 2025. No cash value. Full rules and regulations at [explore-mag.com/nahanni-sweepstakes](https://explore-mag.com/nahanni-sweepstakes).

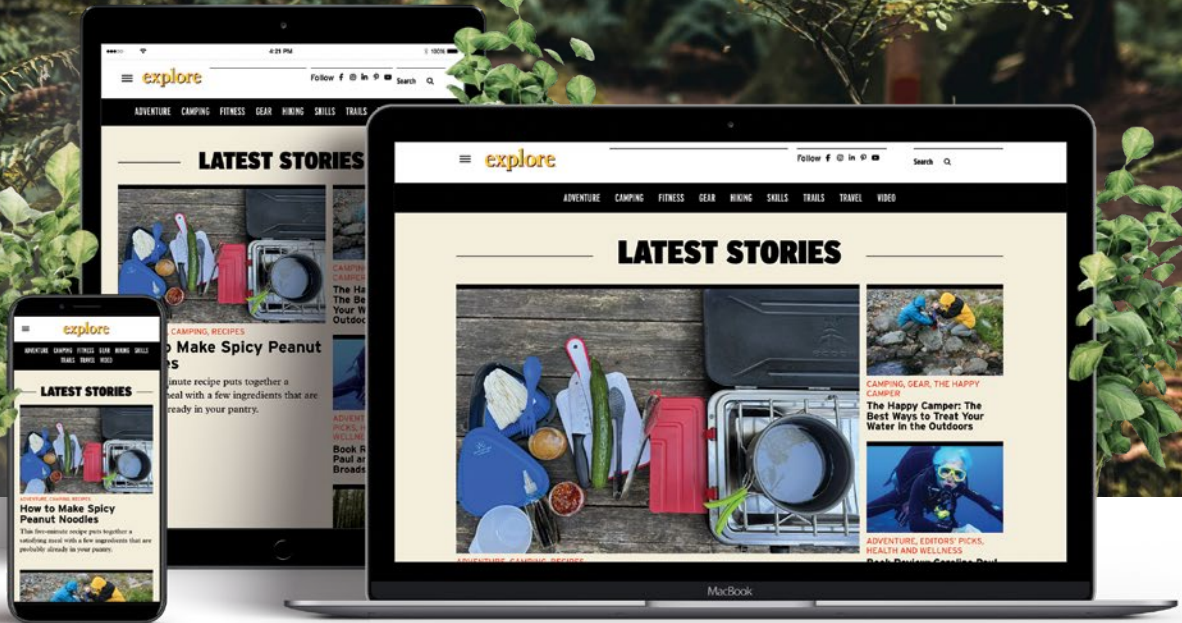


Discover More About the  
Northwest Territories at  
[spectacularnwt.com](https://spectacularnwt.com)  
#spectacularnwt

**SPECTACULAR  
NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES**



**explore**



# VISIT OUR ALL-NEW WEBSITE!

## IT'S CAPABLE IN ANY TERRAIN.

**Explore-Mag.com**

Get inspiration straight to your inbox—  
sign up for our free e-newsletter



Connect with us on Instagram  
for daily inspiration!



### LATEST HIKING ARTICLES:

How I Hiked One Of The World's Toughest Treks  
Hike in France off the Coast of Newfoundland  
5 Ways to Enjoy Your Java Outdoors While Being Sustainable

### LATEST CAMPING ARTICLES:

Camp Recipes with Only Canadian Products  
Reserve the Best Campsites in Atlantic Canada  
How to Build and Extinguish a Safe and Warm Campfire

### UPCOMING PODCAST EPISODES:

On-site in Chilean Patagonia  
A Breakthrough in Off-Grid Communications  
A Better Way to Travel

Available on Apple Podcasts,  
Spotify, YouTube Music & Amazon Music

Looking for new camping, hiking and survival gear? Visit [shop.explore-mag.com](https://shop.explore-mag.com)



**SHOP.EXPLORE-MAG.COM**

All the gear you need for your next hiking, camping or RV adventure is just a click or tap away.

LIVE THE ADVENTURE  
**explore™**



# An essential for any journey

Explore Magazine makes the perfect gift.  
Visit [explore-mag.com/subscribe](http://explore-mag.com/subscribe).

LIVE THE ADVENTURE  
**explore™**

# THE LOW DOWN



GO HERE

## CLEARWATER COUNTY, ALBERTA

*Power in these mountains: A new Indigenous guided mountaineering experience in the Rockies*

BY ALISHA MCDARRIS

**H**igh in the Rockies near Banff, above a perfectly calm alpine lake still crusted with a thin layer of ice at the edges, Tim Patterson bends over the water before we set off on the snow-covered trail. He prays in his native tongue, an Interior Salish I do not understand. But I do understand the feeling and power it represents as he asks for blessing and protection for our journey and honours the might that the water, rock and snow around us possess.

As he speaks, I, too, feel powerful, capable of accomplishing great things, of going far and testing limits, though our small group will conquer no summits today; that is a settler mindset. Today, after arriving via helicopter to this hidden basin, we will be present, see and feel the beauty around us, hear the layered stories of the people who have come before and revel in the power in the landscape.

That is, after all, how many of the region's original explorers viewed and existed within this austere environment. Both of my guides are Indigenous. Patterson, founder, owner and lead guide of Zuc'min Guiding, is a member of the Lower Nicola Indian Band, which belongs to the Nlaka'pamux Nation, and Tim Taylor, owner of Girth Hitch Guiding, is Métis. Both are impossible not to like.

Patterson appears stoic, but laughs easily and often, the kind of laugh that recruits not only his whole face, but his entire body. His joy is immediate and surprising, and I can't help but giggle along when

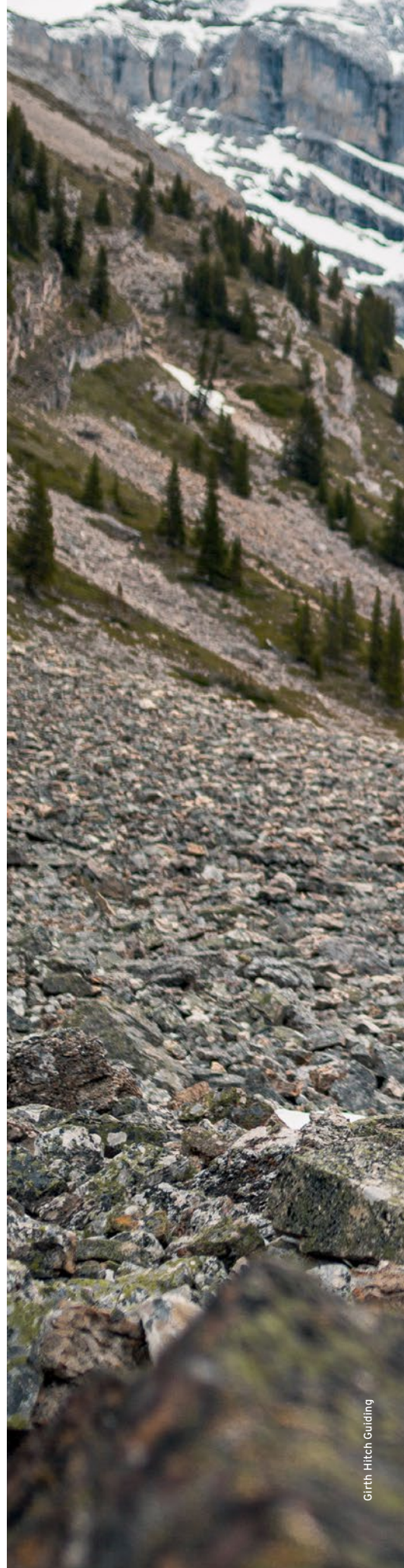
I see the tremors start to spread and his shoulders bounce. Taylor's smile is softer, welcoming and friendly, his eyes kind. He, at first, seems focused and serious, the stereotypical mountaineer, but his demeanor is gentle, quiet and comforting, and I find myself enjoying his company as much as the surroundings.

They both bring unique skills to the table. Patterson tells stories of the First Nations' explorers and what plants some of the dozens of Nations in Alberta still use for food, medicine and their livelihood. Taylor teaches me how to self-arrest and short-rope, technical knowledge required to guide novice and experienced mountaineers toward peaks and up sheer walls.

As they both lead our group up inclines, I marvel at the waterfalls and avalanches careening through narrow vertical crevasses, proof of the power these mountains hold. Mountains are still topped and streaked with snow in early June, appearing to mark the end of the world, a beauty so magnificent it cannot be contained or represented by mortal adjectives.

No cell service means I am unencumbered by news, social media and deadlines. There is nothing here but to be, to wonder and to be grateful. From saddles that offer views of the endless range that is the Rockies, but also from camp, when all is quiet and fellow climbers crawl into their tents, and all that's left is the intermittent whisper of wind and stars so vibrant I don't need my glasses to spot the Big Dipper.

Here, there is just the world, with all of its





natural wonder, barely touched by man, still existing as it was always meant to. And as we hike or climb or rest in the sun at the edge of the shadows of peaks, my guides



show me a different way of looking at the mountains, with less of a conquering mindset and more with an Indigenous worldview. Both Tims speak of the concept of two-eyed seeing, an idea “as diverse and varied as there are Nations, languages and cultures that make up First Peoples in Canada,” Patterson explains, but involves bringing together Indigenous and Western knowledge systems by accepting that Indigenous Peoples have and continue to use both academic and traditional concepts when

solving current environmental issues.

It seems to also carry over into how my guides exist in and alongside nature. They stop and identify plants and rock features, tell stories of the First People to wander in these mountains long before settlers marched westward from the coast, naming peaks after men as they went (I learn most Indigenous cultures do not name natural features this way), and speak of fall lines and temperature variations that determine how safe it is to travel here, a melding of science, history and living culture.

Taylor and Patterson meet each guest where we are as outdoor adventurers. Under Taylor’s instruction, I ascend toward Mount Owen with a small cohort while several companions stay with Patterson lower down on the col. It’s a unique benefit of having two guides; not everyone has to enjoy the same objectives in the mountains. It makes me want to return with parents, my husband, friends; we could all have a meaningful experience no matter how we wish to explore.

At base camp, we gather to snack as dinner is prepared for us in the massive dome tent nearby. We sip hot chocolate spiked with Glenfiddich to warm ourselves after plunging into frigid tarns and laugh so loud our howling bounces off the canyon walls.

Here is a power impossible not to revere, and I spend every waking moment before I have to hop back in a helicopter and head to civilization reveling in the magic of a place made more extraordinary by the people who guide me through it. ✕

## Other Activities

Many other Indigenous-led tours are available in the surrounding area. Mahikan Trails offers a plant walk with insights into various native plants and how Indigenous cultures use them for everything from food to medicine.

**mahikan.ca**

Bikescapes and Indigiscapes partner to offer the only Indigenous-led bike tour within the boundaries of Banff National Park. **bikescape.ca**

At the Columbia Ice Field, IceWalks offers Indigenous-focused walking tours on the glacier. **icewalks.com**

Fireside chats with Matricia Brown of Warrior Women offer a way to sit and listen to stories and ask questions at the Jasper Museum. **warriorwomen.ca**

### EAT & STAY

Juniper Hotel Bistro in Banff serves up nature-inspired cuisine and big views. **thejuniper.com**

Aurum Lodge is located nearby in Nordegg and offers not only a relaxing place to stay before or after your trip, but breakfast, too. **aurumlodge.ca**

Dining and refreshment options abound in Banff townsite. **banfflakelouise.com**

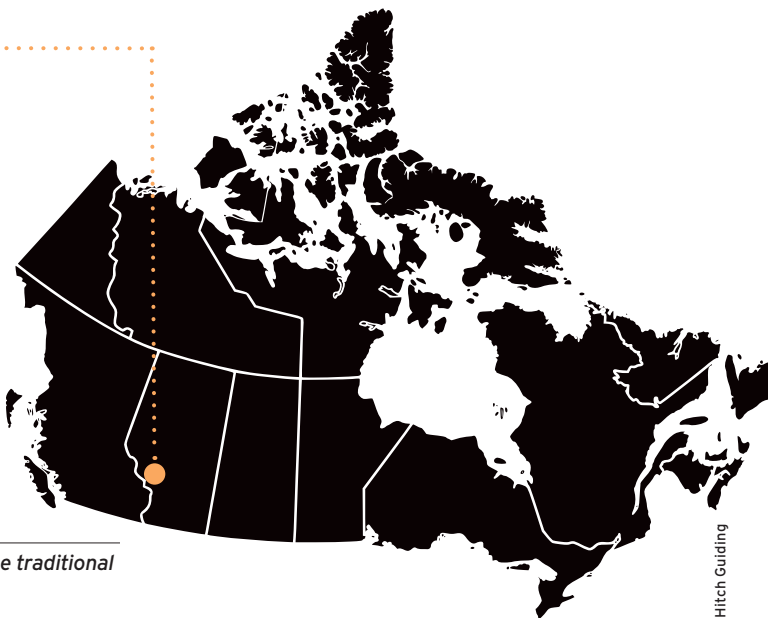
## If You Go

There’s one **Girth Hitch Guiding Cline Tarns Indigenous Ways Heli-Hiking Camp** experience in July (and several non-Indigenous-focused mountaineering experiences). Registration includes most of the gear you’ll need, including tents, full meal service prepared by a dedicated camp chef, a helicopter ride into base camp and four days of adventure. From \$2,299; **girthhitchguiding.ca/cline-tarns-heli-hiking-camp**

### HOW TO GET THERE

Head to Clearwater County in the Cline River Valley just 43 kilometres from Icefield Parkway, northeast of Banff National Park on Highway 11. Start and end your trip at Rockies Heli Canada. **rockiesheli.com**

*Alberta’s Clearwater County is located on Treaty 6 Territory, home to the traditional lands of the Blackfoot, Cree, Saulteaux, Stoney and Métis people.*



# GET A LITTLE OUT THERE



## TRAVEL NEVADA INVITES YOU TO COME AND EXPERIENCE NEVADA FOR YOURSELF

We are eager to show you our stunning landscapes, cities, culture, and of course, outdoor adventure. Follow in the footsteps and itinerary that was curated for Explore Magazine contributor Kathryn Anderson.

Your Travel Nevada ground package includes the following inclusions:

- 1 night of accommodation in Reno, Nevada
- 1 night of accommodation in North Lake Tahoe, Nevada
- 1 night of accommodation in Fallon, Nevada
- 2 nights of accommodation in Ely, Nevada
- 1 night of accommodation in Tonopah, Nevada
- 1 night of accommodation at Tarantula Ranch, Nevada
- Return flights for 2 from your closest Canadian Port into Reno, Nevada and home from Las Vegas, Nevada
- Reimbursement of up to USD \$500.00 for car rental and fuel (with receipts)

Your trip prize also includes these gear prizes provided by ROI:

- Speed Lite Pro Hiking pack from DEUTER
- Pair of the Alpha Fast hiking boots from Kayland
- Merino T-shirt from Devold of Norway

This road trip will allow you to experience our "Neon to Nature", "Death Valley Rally", "Free Range Art Highway", "ET Highway", "Great Basin Highway", "Loneliest Road in America" and "Lake Tahoe Loop" road trips. Learn more here: [travelnevada.com/road-trips](https://travelnevada.com/road-trips)



Giveaway subject to rules and regulations outlined on contest entry page, hosted at [explore-mag.com](https://explore-mag.com)

**ENTER  
TODAY:**



[explore-mag.com/contest](https://explore-mag.com/contest)

# THE LOW DOWN



## NEWS

# RECREATING IN REHABILITATION ZONES

*Should we return to natural areas after disasters? If so, how do we do it responsibly?*

BY RYAN STUART

**A**fter living in Jasper, Alberta for years, Graham Wylde thought he knew his backyard. But when he returned to the town after a major wildfire last summer, he discovered boulders and creeks where, before, he had only seen forest.

“It threw off my sense of place,” says Wylde, the visitor experience manager for Jasper National Park. “I was seeing the place through a new lens.”



It took time to reorient himself, and he says visitors should expect the same when they return to the park or any area after a wildfire or natural disaster. It’s something we will all have to reckon with. As the Earth warms, wildfires are becoming more common and more severe. That means Canadians across the country will be recreating in charred landscapes and rehabilitating ecosystems more often.

It’s already happening. Four of the five most destructive and costly forest fire seasons in British Columbia’s history occurred since 2017. An area larger than England (15 million hectares) burned across Canada in the record 2023 fire season. And the fires are not just burning distant forests: Fort McMurray in 2016,

Lytton in 2021, Halifax and Kelowna in 2023 and Jasper in 2024, just to name a few.

All those major fires burned parks and trails. Reopening the recreation areas as soon as possible is always a priority, says Wylde, but safety is always the priority.

The first step, after the fire is declared, is to assess the area. Crews look for unstable slopes, rock fall hazards and, the biggest danger, scorched trees that are still standing. These are unstable and could

fall, particularly in windy or wet weather. Chainsaw crews cut the most dangerous trees, but, “We can’t cut every tree that might come down,” says Wylde. “It’s a very dynamic landscape.”

Outside of national parks, the response may be to log the burned area, says Wayne Darlington, the manager for Parks Capital Planning and asset management for the Regional District

of Central Okanagan. Several parks he oversees burned in 2023. After the initial assessment, they determined the best way to manage the danger was to log parts of the park.

“It sounds harsh, but it’s the most efficient way to move forward and get parks reopened,” he says.

After the salvage logging, they replanted trees and shrubs in parts of the park with input from local First Nations and let other areas regenerate naturally—which is more common in national parks. Only once the hazard abatement and replanting are done are trails and parks reopened.

The process can take years, particularly when the damage is as extensive as it is in Jasper National Park. Many areas of the

park remain closed, though Wylde stresses that all the recreational experiences that were available before the fire are still an option in Jasper. Wardens will continue to reopen areas as crews manage the hazards, but visitors are encouraged to remain vigilant in any burned areas, particularly during stormy weather.

The reward for patience is a renewed sense of dynamism of nature.

“Fire reminds us that these are not stagnant places,” Wylde says. “Already plants are regrowing. You will be able to appreciate and enjoy the process of forest succession for many years to come.” ✕

## Rules for Re-entry

Recreating in rehabilitation zones is not that different than using any other natural area. It’s just even more important to act responsibly.

1. **Be patient.** The folks who manage parks and trails are working as fast as they can to reopen, but safety takes time.
2. **Stay out of closed areas.** Reopening zones is more complicated than it can look. Entering closed zones can put you and rehabilitation crews at risk.
3. **Stay on trails.** When parks reopen, the ecosystem is especially vulnerable to damage, so it is more important than ever to stay on designated trails.
4. **Give wildlife lots of room.** Fires open up sightlines, reducing the chances of surprise encounters, which is a good thing. But wildlife may be more sensitive than normal.

# LIVE FREE... DEET FREE!



*Fight the bite!*

UP TO  
**12** HRS

AGAINST TICKS &  
MOSQUITOES



PiACTIVE.com

KUUS INC.COM



Proudly Canadian  
Canadian at Heart, Family at ore



ROUNDUP

## WILDFLOWER WANDERINGS IN MANITOBA

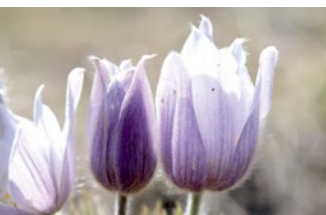
*A seasonal guide to six provincial wild blooms*

STORY & PHOTOS BY SHEL ZOLKEWICH

*It's a wonder I don't walk headlong into a spruce. My eyes are always cast down, scanning for the next wild bloom. I have my not-so-fashionable 1980s shoulder bag ready to go, packed with a DSLR camera, a water bottle, a heavy-backed book in case I want to press a few blooms. It's time to find some flowers in Manitoba.*

### MAY-JUNE NARCISSE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Late snow doesn't stop the prairie crocus from pushing up through the gravelly soil to catch the first warm rays of the season. Those pale blue petals certainly make it look like a member of the crocus genus, but this local favourite more closely resembles a buttercup, botanically speaking. The *Anemone patens* grows from seed and not a bulb as a true crocus does. Those hairy



petals cluster around its yellow centre, keeping the plant warm on chilly nights. They like sunny and sandy spots,

where the soil isn't so good, so each spring I head to Narcisse Wildlife Management Area and easily find them blooming in the same spots. Prairie crocuses like to grow in colonies, so if you spot one, have a spin around. Others are likely to be lurking.

Narcisse Wildlife Management Area happens to be home to the world's largest concentration of red-sided garter snakes. By mid-May, they are churning in mating bundles in the dens and along the trails. You might catch the last of the crocus blooms, but if not, there are many more wildflowers to be spotted in this protected area.



### JUNE BROKENHEAD WETLAND INTERPRETIVE TRAIL

By the time June rolls around, we're thick into wildflowers with the majority of species in bloom. Among them is a collection that goes by the names northern small, large yellow, pink, showy, small white, Franklin and ram's head. These are lady slippers, aptly named because, well, they look like slippers. The northern yellow ones grow in abundance in the low area just off our orchard here at the farm. These are small flowers, about the size of my thumb, and they let me know it's early June. For a

more impressive version, I head to the east side of Lake Winnipeg, to the Brokenhead Wetland Interpretive Trail where the pink variety (which can be almost purple) blooms in the bogs and under the pines. And along a lonely stretch of an old highway nearby, the showy variety urges me to have a closer look in the ditches.

It's almost like you get two wildflowers in one with three-flowered avens. *Geum triflorum* produce a stem with three blooms that hang downward—they are solemn beauties. But once pollination is complete, the flower heads turn upright and wispy seed heads begin to grow, giving them an



ethereal silhouette. It's why they also go by the name prairie smoke, grandfather's beard or torchflowers.

Between the ditch and the rickety barbed wire that serves as a useless fence grows wild blue flax. Maybe it's because I have a thing for blue wildflowers or perhaps it's because they greet me at our driveway, but I adore these June blooms. The colour is a trendy periwinkle and the flowers rarely stay in one spot. Instead, they bob and weave in the breeze, a blue ballet that nods to the soon-to-bloom lilacs. The *Linum lewisii* is named for the North American explorer Meriwether Lewis of Lewis and Clark fame.

## JUNE-JULY Pisew Falls Provincial Park

The first time I spotted a calypso orchid, I let out a yelp that made my husband think I had twisted my ankle on the boreal trail. But no, it was just my jubilation at finding one of Manitoba's rare orchids. Named after the Greek nymph who was good at concealing herself, these thumbnail-sized flowers are simply beautiful with their pink petals, white lip, purple spots and a yellow beard. They grow in clumps and favour boggy spots with plenty of cover overhead. I found these on the trails at Pisew Falls Provincial Park in July, where mosses and mushrooms like to grow.



## JULY-AUGUST Churchill

The stemless raspberry is just one of over a surprising 500 plants that grow in the transitional zone between the northern boreal forest and southern extremes of tundra, namely around Churchill. These pretty pink blooms give way to tiny, sweet dewberries, a nice treat while you're looking for even more northern

flowers. Some of my favourites include the snow-white blooms of Labrador tea, the tiny, star-shaped flowers of the alpine azalea and sheathed cotton grass that dances in the breeze.

*Tip:* While wildflower wandering around Churchill, be aware that water hemlock grows here. All parts of this plant are extremely poisonous and it's nearly impossible to distinguish from its non-poisonous cousin,

the water parsnip. To be safe, steep clear of all white flowered, umbrella-like plants with divided leaves. Equally important is to always venture out with a bear guide. ✕



## For Finding Flowers

Invest in a few reference books including *Manitoba Wayside Wildflowers* and *Edible and Medicinal Plants of Canada. Wildflowers of Churchill and the Hudson Bay Region* by Karen L. Johnson is excellent for northern species.

Your smartphone may include a plant app that works with the camera, and that's an excellent way to get pointed in the right direction, but always check your reference books to confirm an identification.

The best way to find a bloom is to know its habitat. For example, most lady slippers like to have wet toes, so look for boggy areas, wet ditches or shady spots under spruce trees. Crocuses and avens like dry, sandy ridges with plenty of sun. Unbroken or restored meadows will always have a good variety of wildflowers, especially in June.

If you're camping, RVing or wandering on the trails, crouch down and peer into that secret world under the canopy of trees. You might just find a coveted calypso orchid.

# THE LOW DOWN



## THE HAPPY CAMPER

# LUXURY CAMP ITEMS FOR YOUR CAMPSITE

*Even when you carry it on your back or in a canoe, there's always room for comfort*

BY KEVIN CALLAN

*All backcountry campers create equipment lists they check over and over again before embarking on their wilderness adventures. They include must-have items, such as a first-aid kit, navigational device, cozy sleeping bag and a roll of toilet paper—the bare necessities needed for any trip in the woods. But what about the list of luxury items; those pieces of gear that really don't need to be stuffed down the side of your pack but the urge to take them along is overpowered by common sense?*

*Here are my must-have-but-I-don't-really-need items to lug along a grueling portage or elevated hiking trail.*

### Camp Chair

A lightweight camp chair is the number-one item listed by my backcountry camping mates. Yes, you can sit on a soft rock, a smooth log or use an old growth pine for a back rest, but there is nothing more comfortable than a camp chair. I've tried a few. I detest the ones where the poky legs sink into the soft earth at the campsite, and I loathe the ones with a mesh bottom to aerate your tush on a hot day and provide a place for pesky mosquitoes to attack come dusk. If money wasn't a consideration, then I'd splurge on the YETI Trailhead Collapsible Camp Chair (\$400; yeti.ca).

Mine was half the price—Helinox's Chair Zero High-Back (\$230; helinox.ca) weighs just over a pound, and I placed mini tennis balls onto the legs to keep me from sinking into the dirt. My backside is safe from mosquito bites, and each day of the trip, my knees, ankles and glutes thank me!

### Camp Pillow

Rolling up your old camp sweater works okay as a place to rest your head at night. So does your damp PFD. But there's nothing better than a true camp pillow. The inflatable pillows are lightweight. The



Sea to Summit Aeros (\$65; seatosummit.com) weighs a mere 85 grams but can deflate in the middle of the night. The Nemo Fillo (\$60; nemoequipment.com) is a hybrid: compressible and inflatable, with a removable external layer that can easily be washed. I prefer those foam pillows—like the Therm-a-Rest Compressible Cinch (\$48; cascadedesigns.com)—that scrunch down nicely in the pack. It's on the heavier side (243 grams) but it's darn cozy. If you prefer the lighter, inflated kind, here's a tip I've learned along the way: inflate the pillow only halfway, wrapping it in your down jacket. It really adds more comfort for your noggin.



### E-Reader

Reading a good book will help you pass the time while being windbound or weathering a long rainstorm. Books can be heavy, however. But a digital format is smaller, lighter and becomes a back-up flashlight if needed, inside the tent. You can choose between a Kindle or Kobo. The Kindle

Paper White and the Kobo Libra are top sellers; I prefer the Kobo brand. The battery lasts much longer than you would expect. Some suggested titles to download prior to the trip: *The Hobbit*, *Wuthering Heights* or anything by Sigurd Olson.

## Fancy Coffee Maker

I am perfectly fine with cowboy coffee in the morning—the process of throwing ground coffee beans into a pot of boiled water, letting it sit for a minute or two and then swirling it around your head to force the leftover bits and pieces to settle to the bottom. But some of my campmates dislike having such a rustic cuppa and want a better brew. They've tried quite a few, with the AeroPress Go (\$70; [aeropress.com](http://aeropress.com)) getting the best feedback. It's simple to use and makes a really good tasting coffee. But it weighs in at 226 grams.



The Primula Coffee Brew Buddy (\$7; [primulaproducts.com](http://primulaproducts.com)) comes in at a close second for its miniature size and weight (31 grams). It consists of a fine mesh filter and a simple plastic wide-rimmed disk to rest on top of your camp mug. The only issue is that it's not suitable for large groups. When I'm with a group, I always pack a lightweight titanium French press made by the German company Bestargot (\$56; [bestargotcamp.com](http://bestargotcamp.com)). It weighs only 200 grams and is insanely durable. My friends love it, and if that doesn't scream backpacking luxury, I don't know what does.

## Bathing Suit

I generally skinny dip while on trip. I don't get why you'd pack a swimsuit on trip. You'd have to hang it to dry every time you use it, and it creates a barrier between the cool refreshing water and your sweaty worn-out body. However, I have been caught more times than I can count bare naked on my campsite while a flotilla of campers float by in their canoes.



A lightweight, quick-drying, bathing suit doesn't take up too much space in your pack—and is well worth that embarrassing moment while travelling in a heavily trafficked park. Patagonia makes some cool suits for men and women, such as the classic Wavefarer Boardshorts, but I think Level Six excels in this one. Their Presley Boardshorts for men and their Pearl One-Piece Swimsuits for women are both big sellers. But for me, it's got to be Level Six's Pro Guide Lined Short (\$135; [levelsix.ca](http://levelsix.ca)). Plus, they're Canadian!

## Whisky Flask

A collapsible flask containing a litre of whisky can go a lot further than a Nalgene of wine. Add a dash of lake water to your wee dram as the sun begins to set and soak in the solitude. Of course, I'm talking about a single malt whisky. Not a deep south bourbon or a harsh Canadian rye. I'm talking about a barley malt Scotch whiskey distilled from barley and made in Scotland.

Scotch can be peaty and rich, light and smooth or somewhere in between. Anything sounding Anglo Saxon and aged 10 to 18 years old is acceptable for camping trips, but brands from the Isle of Islay, such as Lagavulin 16 year old, Ardbeg 10 years, Bowmore 17 years, Caol Ila 18 years or Laphroaig 10 years are legendary among my camping mates. Ten-year-old Talisker from the Isle of Skye is a great choice. And Highland Park from Orkney Islands in northern Scotland is the most economical liberation in its class and was the go-to for many Hudson's Bay Company employees. ✕

## Even More Luxury

For those who believe that experiencing nature shouldn't mean sacrificing life's little luxuries, we've discovered a game-changer. The EcoFlow Wave 3 Portable Air Conditioner unit will be your new best friend this summer.

This unit delivers 6100 BTU of cooling (and heating) to your campsite, van or cabin, letting you relax in comfort no matter the weather. It's incredibly quiet, so it doesn't interrupt the sounds of nature, and also comes with an add-on battery you can enjoy for hours, creating an ideal environment wherever you're adventuring. Plus, you can charge it via solar power, which is pretty awesome. Consider it your personal climate control for the ultimate happy camper experience (\$1,699; [ca.ecoflow.com](http://ca.ecoflow.com)).

—Adrianna Szarek



# FIRESIDE RANT



BY RYAN STUART

## Show Me the Numbers

*The outdoor industry is big in Canada. It's time we know how big*

If it wasn't for Greg Hill's insatiable thirst for adventure, he could have made a great accountant. Whether it was tree planting, ski touring or driving an electric car to his next

adventure, Hill's mind was doing math. "I'm always running the numbers in my head," he says.

In his autobiography, *I Could Die At Any Moment*, he recounts some of these calculations. How many more trees did he have to plant to afford a winter of skiing? Was he still on pace to hit two million vertical feet of ski touring? Will he have enough charge to reach the next trailhead?

Importantly, it wasn't just in his head. He meticulously recorded and published the stats and accomplishments because he knew people weren't going to just take his word for it. Hill understood that in Western society, data drives decisions, whether its who gets sponsorship or shares the forest and fish.

Emotions and politics definitely play a part, but when it comes to dishing out money and prioritizing one thing over another, numbers do most of the talking. That's why the provincial and federal governments need to start tracking the outdoor recreation industry across Canada.

Right now, government economists and statisticians track bits and pieces—tourism and skiing, for instance. Industry associations also collect data, say the number of mountain guides or the economic impact of rafting on the Ottawa River. But it's not wholesome, like the all-encompassing stats governments collect

about forestry, mining or oil and gas.

It's time outdoor recreation had an equally rich accounting of its contribution.

First, because it is probably much more valuable than most people realize. Protect Our Winters (POW) Canada, a climate change-focused non-profit, crunched the numbers for a broad definition of outdoor recreation that included 23 activities, everything from RV'ing to rock-climbing. It estimated the industry contributed \$101.6 billion to the Canadian economy in 2024 and employed more than one million people. That makes hiking, camping, golfing, skiing and the rest of it more valuable than forestry and a bigger employer than every resource sector.

The second reason is that, until the numbers are collected by governments, any claims remain open to the same skepticism Hill would have endured if he had bragged about his climbs without the data from his Suunto to back him up. Plus, unless the data is comparably collected, it is impossible to measure outdoor recreation against the many benefits of logging or building a dam.

That's important. Critical minerals, national pipelines, the need for more electricity: the demands on the Canadian landscape are increasing. Often, recreation and industry are compatible. But not always. Throw in reconciliation and decision-making becomes challenging. The lack of comparable data makes it almost impossible



to weigh the value of a trail network against the value of logging the same forest.

Numbers also reveal gaps in knowledge. Because he was always "crunching the numbers," Hill knew when he was falling behind on his goal, which gave him the opportunity to figure out a way to catch up. Until we do the same with outdoor recreation, we won't know if the industry is

**“IT ESTIMATED THE INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTED \$101.6 BILLION TO THE CANADIAN ECONOMY IN 2024 AND EMPLOYED MORE THAN ONE MILLION PEOPLE”**

surging ahead or falling behind. Or where a little investment could have a big impact.

This is not new territory. The Bureau of Economic Analysis in the U.S. started tracking outdoor recreation in 2012. Since then, the industry has grown 36 percent, outpacing the rest of the economy, and is now worth more than \$1.2 trillion.

The path to tracking outdoor recreation is easy to follow and it doesn't take an accountant, or an explorer with a math talent, to see the potential of Canada knowing its own number. ✕



# The Weekender

Setting A New Standard in Versatile Vanlife by Travois Vans and NOMAD VAN

**Built with intention. Designed to evolve.  
Ready for wherever you're headed next.**

Crafted for life on the road and rooted in safety, the Weekender by Travois Vans and NOMAD VAN blends smart design with everyday functionality. Inspired by the iconic Westfalia, this bold evolution in van life fuses high-end craftsmanship with unmatched versatility, adapting to your lifestyle with up to 33 floor plans, seating for 2-8, and sleeping for up to 5.



[travoisvans.com](http://travoisvans.com)

NOMAD

↑ VAN ↑

[nomadvan.ca](http://nomadvan.ca)

NOMAD VAN Weekender Powered by VanEquipped Canada in Collaboration with Travois Vans

# PROFILES



BY NORA O'MALLEY

## Frank Wolf

*Prolific adventurer, writer, filmmaker and environmentalist*



**F**rank Anthony Wolf has tasted Beluga whale in the Canadian Arctic with the Inuvialuit. “It tastes like buttery ham, the muktuk, if you eat it raw,” says Wolf from his home in North Vancouver, British Columbia, a pitstop between his winter gig as a polar bear guide in Churchill, Manitoba and a month-long, 900-kilometre spring kayak trip from Prince Rupert, BC, to Prince of Wales Island, Alaska.

“Everyone is wired differently. Some people have said to me, ‘It’s very privileged what you’re doing.’ Well, I don’t make any money off of it and you’ll see how privileged you feel when you’re dragging upstream in a cloud of black flies for two weeks,” he joked.

“It’s not a vacation. It’s work, and it’s almost like a martial art or art in itself. It takes a certain kind of person, and there are people out there that love that outdoor challenge where there’s no safety net and you’re just beholden to your own wits, mind and vision to make it work. It’s just the way I’m wired.”

Wolf was born in Toronto in 1970. His late German father sailed across the Atlantic Ocean from Venezuela to Great Britain and down the California Coast, up the Panama Canal to Florida—in retirement. He describes his Danish mother as a free-spirit who likes to go against the grain.

“I’m a hybrid of both of them, I think,” chuckles the 54-year-old.

Some of Wolf’s self-propelled expeditions of Canada include a four-man rowing journey of the Northwest Passage (check out his documentary “The Hand of Franklin” on YouTube), circumnavigating both

Vancouver Island and Haida Gwaii in a kayak and cycling 2,000 kilometres, in winter, from Dawson City, Yukon to Nome, Alaska.

“On these journeys I kind of shed my urban skin and become my ideal self. There is something to be said for living very simply, using your body, using your mind, connecting yourself to the land as people have for thousands of years and immersing yourself in a mission. I think everyone in life needs a mission, a purpose.”

His first major trip, at 24, was a 171-day, 8,000-kilometre canoe journey from the Bay of Fundy, Saint John, New Brunswick to Vancouver, BC. The journey was completed “the way they used to do before floatplanes,” by portaging, lining-up waterways, paddling lakes and upstreams and “basically just taking what the land gives you.”

“Once I did that, I knew what I wanted to do. That’s what really sparked my creativity, my focus,” says Wolf, who holds a bachelor’s in history from London, Ontario’s Western University and a diploma in outdoor recreation from Capilano University College in North Vancouver.

Wolf is known for his feature magazine writing and has authored two books on his long-distance adventures: *Lines on a Map* (2018) and *Two Springs, One Summer* (2024), both published by Rocky Mountain Books.

*Two Springs, One Summer*, Wolf’s first long-form narrative, is an unfiltered account of an attempted 280-kilometre ski expedition across Baffin Island, a 1,750-kilometre canoe trip through the

Northwest Territories and Nunavut, and a 550-kilometre ski retracing of the 1854 expedition of legendary explorer John Rae.

The book was penned from his family cabin in Parry Sound, a place he calls the ideal writing space with no Wi-Fi and one bar of cell service.

“Writing a book is kind of like any kind of journey, just take it one day at a time, don’t look at the whole picture and eventually you’ll get there. Just an hour a day, every day.”

He brings a bunch of pens, a pencil as back-up for frigid Arctic nights and a classic 240-page black Moleskin notebook on every trip.

“I have a whole library of these journals and each one has a different trip in there. I diligently journal every night. No matter what, I will never miss an evening of journaling on these trips,” says Wolf, adding that when he sits down to write the story, he looks for themes—like time, loss or Sasquatch—that connect each expedition.

“We’re lucky being in Canada. I mean really, it’s the only place on the planet where you have this vast, very free area of wilderness that anyone can go and explore unhindered by other people. You can go to these areas and you won’t see any people for 30 days, 60 days, whatever it is. It’s just you and the animals that are out there in this landscape.” ✕

@frankwolf70

# Survival classic!

Mod. F1 has been used since August 1995 by the Swedish Air Force as their official survival knife. Now with our new secure Zytel sheath with a dual locking mechanism. Highest quality, safest design.

Visit [www.fallkniven.com](http://www.fallkniven.com) for more information.

## DC4

Double sided diamond/ceramic whetstone. The back of the leather pouch can be used as a leather strap together with a stropping compound.



## F1 (VG7 steel)

Displayed together with our new Zytel sheath with a dual locking mechanism for a tight and safe fit.

 @officialfallkniven  
 FallknivenSweden

[www.fallkniven.com](http://www.fallkniven.com)  
[info@fallkniven.se](mailto:info@fallkniven.se)



Canadian distributor:  
[www.bushcraftcanada.com](http://www.bushcraftcanada.com)



  
**6,200**  
and counting...

That's how many  
Canadians have signed  
the Subaru Canada—  
Leave No Trace Pledge.



For every pledge, we  
plant a tree. That's a lot  
of trees. But our goal  
is 10,000.



Help us get there!

[takethepledge.leavenotrace.ca](http://takethepledge.leavenotrace.ca)



# WILD SIDE



BY ANDREW FINDLAY

## The Canadian Way?

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood—which one will we take?*

**D**espite making a living as a writer (which includes making things up sometimes), I'd be hard pressed to imagine some of the absurdities emerging from the New America under the Trump Administration 2.0.

Consider recent comments from Lee Zeldin, Trump's pick for administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In an interview with Fox Business Network about the slashing of pollution-control and climate change mitigating regulations, here's what he had to say:

"It means that it's going to be easier to purchase a car. It's going to be easier to heat your home. Operating a small business is going to be easier. People who are looking for employment are going to have more opportunities."

I Googled the EPA. The organization's stated mission is "to protect human health and the environment."

Its mission is not, presumably, to sell cars. Zeldin, entrusted to lead environmental protection for the Trump administration, made this comment straight-faced and with complete sincerity. It's a testament to the alternate reality that Americans, and unfortunately the rest of the world to some degree, are having to live with every time a smug Trump brandishes his gold-leafed pen and signs another executive order.

There's more. The president recently

told his interior secretary to review policies for public lands, with a focus on freeing up more land for fracking, drilling and mining. Under threat are cherished wilderness areas, such as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in northern Minnesota and Oak Creek Canyon near Sedona, Arizona—just two of many.

Some may wonder, *That's an American problem, so what does this have to do with*

David Eby chimed when he announced a plan to fast-track 18 resource projects, among them an LNG export facility in Kitimat, three gold mines and several pipelines and wind power projects.

We need economic development, and cutting expensive time-wasting red tape for resource projects could be a positive. But not if it comes at the expense of environmental protections and regulations.



Fast-tracking projects works only if government ministries are well-staffed and resourced to ensure said projects are reviewed thoroughly and held to the highest possible environmental standards.

That's why these pronouncements have the signs of knee-jerk reactions. Just because the current U.S. is threatening to cut protections and regulations and "drill baby, drill," to

Canada? A lot, actually. As Canadians rally around the flag in the face of Trump's senseless trade war, everyone is talking about how to make our economy more resilient and less dependent on trade with our southern neighbour. It's an important discussion to have. Diversifying trade is never a bad thing. But in the push to buffer our economy from tariff threats, there's also been calls from some quarters to fast-track oil pipelines, mining and other resource extraction mega-projects.

For example, British Columbia's New Democratic Party leader and premier

use Trump's crass slogan, doesn't mean Canada should follow suit. Instead, we should see it as an opportunity to double down on environmentally responsible resource development and investment in parks and protected areas.

America's loss could be Canada's big win. Here's why: There's been a huge drop in Canadians wanting to visit the U.S. and, instead, want to spend their travel dollars at home or in other countries. According to Statistics Canada, return trips by car from the U.S. were down 30 percent in March while return flights dropped almost

14 percent over the same month last year. However, Destination Canada expects inbound U.S. travel may continue to grow despite frosty relations between our countries. Part of the attraction, no doubt, is the low Canadian dollar.

However, Americans and many other nationalities also visit Canada for unparalleled nature-based experiences, outdoor adventure and recreation. And clearly, more Canadians are planning to recreate at home rather than head south of the border, eating in restaurants, shopping, staying in hotels, going on tours, biking, hiking, paddling, watching wildlife, climbing and camping.

In a world that seems to have gone mad, it's a good time to recognize how important the outdoor recreation economy is in Canada and the extrinsic value of protected places and wilderness. The outdoor sector has been struggling for years to get a seat at the table alongside mining, forestry, oil, gas and other extractive industries when the government makes important land use decisions. Oddly, it's been a tough sell, probably because entrenched industries are a powerful lobby that have the ear of many

politicians and bureaucrats.

But the numbers speak for themselves. A recent study showed that outdoor recreation annually generates 1,096,849 full-time equivalent jobs. According to the study, conducted by climate scientists Nat Knowles and Cassidy Grimes, and Daniel Scott, executive director of the Interdisciplinary Centre on Climate Change at the University of Waterloo, outdoor recreation is second only to oil and gas in Canada in terms of economic contribution and tops the field in employment.

Yet, as pro-skier and Protect Our Winters (POW) spokesperson Mike Douglas said at a Whistler event in April, the sector is vastly under-represented in the political halls of power. When he donned a suit and headed to Ottawa to meet with government officials on behalf of POW last year, Douglas noted that, within the same year, the federal government had put out the welcome mat for more than 1,400 oil and gas industry lobbyists. That speaks volumes about priorities.

Not as easily quantifiable, but no less important are the public health and lifestyle benefits of outdoor recreation. More people

getting outside, active and fit will take a huge burden off the health care system. You don't need to be a physician to figure that out. Many people choose to live in communities with easy access to nature, trails, lakes, rivers, mountains and ocean. These outdoor amenities make it easier for companies to recruit talent.

It's beyond time that we recognize the economic value of outdoor recreation and adventure tourism. Doing that means equally recognizing the value of wise and environmentally conscious resource stewardship and development. Yes, these are challenging and confusing times. People will lose their jobs in this ugly isolationist trade war and the temptation and pressure to green-light drilling, logging, mining, pipelines and other mega-projects will be there. But chasing this New American dream scripted by the rich for the rich that treats the natural environment as expendable is a race to the bottom.

Trump's picks for important positions borders on farce, like Lee Zeldin. However, it's also a reminder for all of us in Canada to hold our heads high and see this as an opportunity to do things right. ✕



# You Took the Pledge. Now Live It.



YOU TOOK THE WILD PLEDGE to travel mindfully, tread lightly, and respect every living thing along the way. Now it's time to live those values out loud.

- From the rugged coastal trails to the ancient rainforests of Vancouver Island North, your journey means something. Every step you take in this wild place matters – to the land, to the wildlife, to the people who call it home.
- Whether you're watching orcas breach in the Johnstone Strait or standing in awe among thousand-year-old cedars, remember: *the wild gives back what we give it. So let's give it our best.*

LIVE THE WILD PLEDGE. EVERY TRIP. EVERY TIME.



Learn how to #LiveTheWildPledge at [vancouverislandnorth.ca/takethepledge](http://vancouverislandnorth.ca/takethepledge)

# GADD'S TRUTH



BY WILL GADD

## Intuition & Fear

*In the outdoors—and in life—when should we “trust our guts?”*

**W**hen I was in my teens, my family took a trip to the West Coast and I saw real waves for the first time. I was already a solid swimmer and strong kayaker, so I immediately saw the potential for bodysurfing despite never having been in the ocean before. I still vividly remember the fatigue in my arms as I finally crawled back up out of the water's roar, choking salt water and thinking, “Damn, I'm a kayaker, good swimmer *and I almost died?*”

My experience was not unique: In his excellent book *Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why*, Laurence Gonzales writes about the tourists who arrive in Hawaii, see the sparkling blue water, and jump in. Just as I did. An unfortunately large number die despite, like me, thinking it all looks perfect.

How we make decisions matters when we're outside, whether canoeing on a lake or skiing an avalanche path. Is it safe? Dangerous? Why, and how do we know? Do we go off our “guts,” or our reason and logic?

When the UK's Royal Air Force asked me to speak at a conference on leadership and decision-making, I was very honoured—but also terrified.

The RAF are justifiably famous for being among the world's best at leadership, and I'm, well, a pro athlete. The other speakers were a list of PhDs and corporate achievers all the way to the head counsel for Space X. Yeah.

My gut said, “Don't do this, you'll get eaten alive in that environment!”

But my brain said, “You could learn a lot there, go!”

One of the other speakers was Gerd Gigerenzer, a world-renowned researcher

and writer on the subject of intuition and heuristics. His books, including *Gut Feelings: The Intelligence of the Unconscious*, had a big impact on my risk-assessment view. I often try to be logical instead of emotional in my decision making, but Gigerenzer argues our unconscious mind can often do a better job than our systematic mind, especially when we need to do it fast. And over the years listening to that small voice that says, “Something is off here...” has saved my life several times.

I had questions for Gigerenzer, and finally had the opportunity to ask him in a military mess tent outside the speaking

sure they were doing what their guts told them was the right thing.

“Just trust your gut” is often presented as the solution to all things hazardous. And after a bad outcome I'll also often hear a member of the group say something like, “I thought something was off, but I just didn't listen to my instincts.” Whether we call this sensation our instincts, gut feelings, intuition or Spidey Sense—we all think they are important. And that if we “listen to our inner voices” we will make better choices, especially in places with significant hazards, from avalanche terrain to unfamiliar cities.



Gavin de Becker writes eloquently about intuition in his book, *The Gift of Fear: Survival Signals That Protect Us from Violence*. De Becker runs security for Hollywood stars and Silicon Valley's elite, but his basic idea is that we tend to be overly logical and often ignore our onboard warning system, fear. And fear is often seen as the enemy, not a friend: “Overcome your fear!” is a rallying cry of just about any self-help book (and I wouldn't have gone to that conference without overcoming my own fear). “Be positive and brave!” seems to be the

venue. My gut reaction to a military mess tent was that the food would be military in nature, but the RAF is good at a lot of things other than just airplanes. Perhaps because of the excellent food and company (other than an intense guy in a wrinkled suit jacket and Red Bull hat), Gigerenzer kindly took the time to answer my many questions. Mainly I wanted to see what the limits were to “trusting your gut.” Because I see a lot of bad outcomes in the mountains and industry when people were

theme at many of the conferences I speak at. But Becker thinks that our minds have evolved over millions of years to recognize violence/other hazards coming our way, often before our logical brain can sort out the subconscious signals. Whether it's a mugger in a dark alley or a weak snowpack, some layer of our minds recognizes these hazards and communicates them with the emotion of fear, not a logical, “Hello, this is your subconscious, we have a hazard assessment for you, please pay attention.”

Other writers from Malcolm Gladwell (who does seem to have heavily used Gigerenzer's work without giving him much credit) and Daniel Kahneman (*Thinking, Fast and Slow*, which has had a huge impact in the professional avalanche forecasting community) also dive into the power of using our non-linear brains when we need to make fast decisions. And I've read all this material and see the positive side of it—but I keep coming back to the bad outcomes I've seen in the outdoor world, my beach experience as a teenager and even the reports of industrial incidents. Why did their intuition lead them toward a slope that was dangerous to ski, or to turn a pressurized valve and release molten sulphur all over themselves? It often looks good and we feel good and go for it, but very bad outcomes result.

If our intuition and subconscious are so good, why is this?

The elderly, impeccably dressed and well-spoken Gigerenzer leaned forward in the tent's military green light when I asked him this, and said in his soft German accent, "So your question is, when to trust your gut in a high-hazard environment, yes? This is a good question. Do people in the outdoor area think about this a lot?"

I answered that we do, and his work, along with Kahneman's, are big in our world. Gigerenzer had no idea about his influence and seemed delighted to hear this, but he and Kahneman have a long-running feud over how our unconscious/intuitive systems work, and I could tell I had done the equivalent of farting loudly by bringing Kahneman's name up. But, after some intense discussion, Gigerenzer circled back to my question and said roughly, "Trust your negative intuition when you're an expert *or* not an expert in a field. But only trust your positive intuition when you are an expert in that high-risk area."

This to me is helpful. It doesn't solve all the problems of not recognizing high-hazard environments like my Pacific Ocean situation, but if I think about that experience, I remember my brain going, "Man, those waves are *big*, how do you get out of that?" I didn't know enough to make good decisions about the beach, and if I had slowed down and asked the gnarly old surfer lounging in the sun, I probably would have learned something (and not almost died). Or maybe I wouldn't have gone in, and missed the experience, but not almost died... So, whether we're pushing a

canoe off the dock for a long lake crossing as the clouds build or lining up a steep chute, if we feel that "negative" intuition growing then we should listen to it.

If we're wrong and nothing bad happens we don't lose that much most of the time, or maybe we do some reassessments (Kahneman's "slow thinking") and decide it's actually OK if we modify our objective a little. Not much downside to that, and a lot of upsides (surviving).

But if we are in environments we recognize as high hazard but that we are not experts in evaluating (10,000 plus hours and high levels of education give or take) then our positive instincts may kill us. Even for experts, placing too much trust in "positive" intuition in some environments may be a problem.

There is, as always, a huge amount of grey between the absolute end points of "always trust your gut" and "all decisions should be logical." Overcoming your fear/instinct/intuition when the stakes are low (even blowing a presentation in front of the RAF isn't going to kill me) is probably a good thing.

But in high hazard environments? Thinking positively and overcoming our fear may kill us. ✕



## EXPERIENCE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

We offer a variety of exciting arctic adventures with our unique packaged tours.

Learn more about us  
[arcticbayadventures.com](http://arcticbayadventures.com)

**VisitCrawford**  
**Everyone Needs a Getaway!**

**48 Miles** of water trails  
**8 Lakes & 93 Streams**

**814-333-1258**

**PA**

# JOURNAL

STORY & PHOTOS BY KENDRA SLAGTER

## Heart Strong

*When a heart attack threatens to cut her dad's adventures short, this father-daughter duo does what they do best: hit the trail together*

There are moments in life that etch themselves into your memory, refusing to fade with time. Among my most treasured memories are summiting my first mountain at 17, working the fields alongside my host mother in Uganda and celebrating a sixth-grade graduation in a remote Himalayan village. But then, there are the memories I wish I could forget—like the day my mother called to say my dad had a heart attack.

At 58, my dad is an ultrarunner, drawn to the grueling 100-kilometre distance. His love for the sport has carried him through countless ultramarathons. When he's not working, he's running. And when he's not running, we're hiking. Together, we've thru-hiked everything from Ontario's Bruce Trail to the Tour du Mont Blanc.

That's why, when my mom called to say my dad had a heart attack, I was stunned. In the midst of fear, confusion and searching for answers, one thought became painfully clear:

*Life is short.*

In 2021, two years before my dad's heart attack, we set out to tackle British Columbia's Sunshine Coast Trail. Stretching 180 kilometres from Desolation Sound to Saltery Bay, it's Canada's longest (and only free) hut-to-hut hiking trail. Based on our experience, we figured we could complete it in seven days. We were wrong.

The trail's relentless elevation shifts tested us in ways we hadn't anticipated. We could have pushed through, but at the cost of truly enjoying the journey. So, we made the decision to slow down—swimming in lakes, stretching out lunch breaks and stopping to appreciate the old-growth forests.

We left 45 kilometres short of finishing. Though we never regretted this decision, the trail always felt unfinished—a blank spot on our thru-hiking resume.

My dad's heart attack in 2023 reminded us that life is too short to keep pushing dreams off until *someday*—especially when you have the chance to chase them now.

Ten months later, once he was stable, we made the decision to go back and complete the trail from start to finish, no matter what it took. We wanted to prove to ourselves that we could finish it. But more than that, it was a feat we wanted to accomplish together.

terrain. While everything around us seemed unchanged, there was a renewed sense of purpose in our steps, a reminder that we were here to finish what we started.

The Sunshine Coast Trail stretched before us, winding through towering old-growth forests where moss draped over fallen logs and ferns curled at our feet. Slugs inched lazily across the damp earth, birds chirped unseen from the canopy and the smell of wet soil filled the cool morning



It felt good to be back. There was something comforting about the weight of my pack, heavy with 10 days' worth of food and gear. Every step forward felt familiar, like slipping into an old rhythm. The first section of trail felt like we had never left. The huts, perched on their mountaintops or nestled in the forests, were exactly as we remembered, their sturdy frames standing strong against the elements. The same climbs and descents tested our legs, and the trail wound its way through familiar

air. The SCT was still and quiet, as if time had paused, waiting to welcome us back.

But what felt like a peaceful return soon turned into a battle.

A week before we started the hike, my dad's heart had gone into atrial flutter—a condition that made his heartbeat erratic, sometimes dangerously fast. At the time, it seemed manageable, but as we climbed steep switchbacks and pushed up endless ascents on Day 5, it was clear his heart wasn't cooperating.

I watched him closely, my heart pounding for a different reason. My dad had always been the strong one—the one who could run 100 kilometres without a second thought. Now, he was hunched over his trekking poles, eyes down, forcing his body to move. Every break, every hesitation was a reminder that something had changed.

As days passed, breaks became less about wonder for our surroundings and more out of necessity. His frustration grew with every climb, his limits shifting not by choice.

By Day 6, we faced a difficult decision. After a grueling, steep descent, we found a damp log to rest on. Rain misted through the trees as we sat, the quiet of the forest surrounding us. My dad's head hung low as his eyes welled with tears.

"I don't know if I can keep going," he admitted softly.

A lump formed in my throat as we sat in silence for a few moments. He wasn't just my hiking partner; he was my father, the man who had always seemed unshakable. Now, sitting beside him, I realized that, for the first time, he wasn't deciding whether he wanted to push forward—he was deciding if it was safe to.

After a long moment of reflection, we decided to press on with a new mindset. The goal wasn't speed; it was stability. It was about moving forward, however that looked. I was determined to help my dad in whatever way he needed.

And at that moment, what he needed was space.

I hiked ahead, glancing back to make sure I could still see him. He moved steadily and deliberately. Sometimes I'd catch him pausing—his head tilted back to admire the trees or grinning at strange-looking mushrooms. The challenge was still there, but so was his joy. The trail hadn't taken that from him.

The following morning, we woke in a crowded hut. Our plan for the day was ambitious: make it to Walt Hill, one of the most breathtaking spots on the trail. There was a particular camping spot at the edge of the mountaintop, big enough for just two tents and offering uninterrupted views of the landscape below. I wanted that spot for us.

At 5 a.m., I slipped out of my sleeping bag and got my dad's approval to hike ahead alone. The forest was thick with fog, the air heavy with the scent of damp earth. As I walked, the weight of the past week caught up with me, and I broke down in tears—

not from sadness, but from release of all the emotion I was carrying.

Instead of feeling weak, it fueled me.

I climbed toward Walt Hill, reaching the summit by 10 a.m. I dropped my pack, set up camp for us and took a quick break to enjoy the view as the fog lifted, revealing endless mountains bathed in golden light. After soaking it all in, I packed up and made my way back down the trail, eager to meet my dad and help him reach the top.

**“AFTER A LONG MOMENT OF REFLECTION, WE DECIDED TO PRESS ON WITH A NEW MINDSET. THE GOAL WASN'T SPEED; IT WAS STABILITY”**

We met halfway up the ascent to Walt Hill. I expected to find him exhausted, struggling through the climb. Instead, he was smiling. I offered to carry some of his gear, but he shook his head.



"I want to do this myself."

And I knew he could.

Hiking those last five kilometres into camp together felt like a gift. In that moment, I was reminded of something I already knew but often forgot: every moment I have with my dad is a gift.

There will come a day when one of us has to walk these trails alone. But rather than feeling crushed by that fact, we chose to let it deepen our appreciation for the time we have now.

On Day 7, we crossed Dixon Road—the point where we had exited on our first attempt. Stepping beyond it felt like stepping into new territory, a quiet but powerful victory that reignited our spirits. With the finish line just days away, we embraced the trail with fresh eyes. The quiet crackle of a campfire, the glow of a hut nestled in the trees, the rush of a river lulling us to sleep. Even the steep climbs, once grueling, now felt purposeful.

Our final morning was golden. We lingered over coffee, watching the remnants of last night's fire send wisps of smoke curling toward the treetops. We wandered through the forest, the light filtering through the canopy, illuminating the emerald floor beneath our feet. Then, the air changed—the scent of salt, the distant crash of waves. The ocean was near.

That first breath of salty air felt emotional, as if we were shedding the weight of the journey. We had carried so much—not just our packs, but the struggles along the way. My dad adjusting to his post-heart attack body, me watching him push through his limits. But as we neared the shore, we weren't just finishing a trail. We were emerging stronger, together.

I never expected to have to support my dad in this way at this point in my life. And as much as I wished the reality were different, I was proud—proud to be here, walking beside him, every step of the way.

We set out to finish a trail, but what we really did was rediscover each other.

The Sunshine Coast Trail tested us in ways I never expected. It forced us to slow down, to listen more closely—to the forest, to our bodies, to each other. And in doing so, it revealed something deeper: the strength of a bond that's been built over years of shared miles, quiet moments and hard climbs.

I've always admired my dad for his toughness and his drive. But this hike showed me a different kind of strength—the kind that shows up even when your body falters, the kind that keeps going even when the trail feels endless.

Walking beside him, supporting him in this chapter of our journey, was the greatest gift I could have asked for.

We finished what we started. But more than that, we created something we'll carry with us for the rest of our lives: the knowledge that no matter what lies ahead, we'll always have these steps, this story—each other. ✕

# BUY **SUMMER** **GEAR** **GUIDE** CANADIAN!

*We scoured the Great White North for the best outdoor apparel, gear and equipment (and even an RV!) Canada has to offer. This year, keep your money north of the 49th—and buy Canadian*

BY RYAN STUART

**F**rom the world's best whitewater canoes to silky sunscreen, Canadian companies produce just about everything we need to get out there. Some of it is also made in Canada!

These companies are not only expert makers—they are also experts in the

field. So, while we checked out some of the best Canadian-designed and/or manufactured gear—we also tapped the companies for advice on how to use it, so you can be faster, dryer, safer and more comfortable... all while flying the flag.

Let's get to it—with the best of Canada for 2025:



**BONUS**  
HOW-TO GUIDE INCLUDED!





## Hettas Tempo

**\$238; hettas.ca**

Women's feet tend to be more triangular in shape, have more curve to their instep, a higher ankle bone and their fifth metatarsal bone sticks out farther. Yet, most women's running shoes are "shrink it and pink it" versions of a men's shoe, says Lindsay Housman. Informed by research out of Simon Fraser University, she founded Hettas to make better women's running shoes. Beyond a women's-first fit, the Cruise model is a lightweight and highly breathable road shoe loaded with super critical foam for cushioning, and a Pebax plate for rebound and propulsion.

### How to Shop for New Running Shoes

Fit is important when buying footwear, but when it comes to running shoes the cushioning, materials and design details are equally vital, says Housman. Finding the right pair comes down to one piece of advice: "Ask more questions."

Three questions to start with:

1. Was this shoe designed with me and my anatomy in mind? Think gender-specific last, pronation control and other biomechanic features.
2. What is the durometer of the cushioning foam? Durometer is a measure of firmness. This mostly comes down to preference, so use your existing shoes as a reference point.
3. What is the foam construction? Avoid compressed. Single polymer supercritical foam is the gold standard for consistency, longevity and sustainability.



## Northern Ultralight Sundown

**From \$356; northernultralight.com**

Born on the trail and constantly in refinement is the best way to describe Scott Matson's design process. He developed the Sundown to hike the Continental Divide Trail seven years ago and continues to tinker with the 48-litre pack's materials and design after every hike. The minimalist design includes a roll top, large main pocket and outside mesh pockets. Matson and his small team make each Sundown pack in Nelson, British Columbia, by hand.

### What Not to Bring on a Big Hike

A rite of passage for many long-distance backpackers is the "shake down:" a newbie hiker spreads all their gear out, and a veteran sorts it into three piles: must haves, maybes and nopes. Matson, founder of Northern Ultralight, says this is something you can also do yourself. Here's how:

1. Collect all the gear you are considering bringing.
2. Sort it into the three piles. This is a subjective process, but it can help to weigh each item. "Be hypercritical and get as many items as possible in the 'maybe' pile," Matson says.
3. Review your maybe pile. "It is OK if many, or even most, of these items make the 'must-have' pile," Matson says. "The important part is to critically assess each piece of gear, while being honest about the value it may/will provide in the backcountry."



## Durston Gear X-Dome 1+

**\$541; durstongear.com**

Ultralight backpackers tend to be picky about their gear, so it says a lot when they rave about a company the way they do Durston Gear. Dan Durston founded the eponymous brand with the X-Mid, one of the first trekking pole tents that actually felt both useable and sturdy. Its success informed the X-Dome, Durston's first freestanding tent. The double walled tent weighs less than a kilogram yet feels roomy for one person and stands strong in 60-kilometre winds and pounding rain.

### When to Save and When to Splurge

Sometimes the sting of high prices pushes us to make decisions that hurt more later. Other times, cheaping-out has no consequence. Knowing when to save and when to splurge comes down to experience and Durston is happy to share his.

#### SPLURGE ON...

**Insulated Gear:** Buying premium 850 fill-power down sleeping bags and insulated layers saves weight and pack space.

**Trekking Poles:** Carbon fibre is lighter and stronger than aluminum.

**Training:** Invest in courses to develop skills, so you can cut weight on things like backup navigation devices and extra technical equipment.

**Practice:** If you hike with trekking poles, a good place to cut weight is to learn how to pitch a trekking pole tent.

#### SAVE ON...

**Water Bottles:** A reused Gatorade bottle weighs one-third of a typical Nalgene and will last for thousands of kilometres.

**Rain Gear:** In warmer weather, lightweight, low-priced rain gear with a no-name membrane provides all the protection you need at a fraction of the cost and weight of a jacket made with a famous membrane.

## Rux 70 L

**\$369; rux.life**

A group of Whistler friends started Rux because they realized if it was easier to organize their gear, they would have more time to play. The result is a modular and integrated storage system. The base is the Rux 70L, a tote-box hybrid that's super tough, highly water-resistant and ready for storing, strapping, stacking and hauling. To take organizing to the perfectionist levels—they also have a bunch of accessories pockets, bags and even a cooler, that clip in and onto the 70L.

### How to Pack for Adventure Travel

Pack a small carry-on backpack that doubles as a hiking pack, shoes that can run, hike and are casual enough for the bar, versatile chinos that are technical but also good looking, wool T-shirts and a great waterproof jacket. Everything does double-duty!





## Northern Teardrop Trailer Overland Offroad

**\$24,000; [northernteedrop.com](http://northernteedrop.com)**

The inspiration for Northern Teardrop in general, and the Overland Offroad specifically, is a modern reality: finding secluded spaces means going a little farther, and getting there is mostly getting harder, not easier, says Dale Olinyk, the founder. The Overland Offroad is designed to get there. It weighs less than 1,200 pounds, well within the capacity of SUVs and light trucks and even many cars. It's also ready for a beating, with no delicate accessories or electronics that could rattle and fail. Instead, it comes well equipped with plenty of storage, an insulated interior, awning and a design that's smart and simple.

### How to Trailer Better

After 25 years of towing RVs, Olinyk knows a thing or two, including these tips for making trips smoother.

1. Carry kayaks, SUPs and the like on the tow vehicle, not the trailer. This way you can leave the trailer at the campsite and drive to the launch site with the toys.
2. A rule of thumb for backing up a trailer: hold the steering wheel at the bottom. Whichever direction you want the trailer to go, push in that direction in small increments.
3. Choose a portable solar panel over a permanent rooftop or hood-mounted model. You can park the trailer in the shade and still chase the sun with the panel.
4. The ultimate sleeping orientation is with the front of the trailer a little higher than the back. To dial it in, open the door to 90 degrees. If it swings closed, start unpacking. If it stays put or swings open, raise the jack.
5. One of the handiest items is a small folding table. It's an essential for cooking, eating, card playing and, maybe most importantly, beer pong.



# 7mesh Atlas Shirt LS

\$120; [7mesh.com](http://7mesh.com)

7mesh traces its roots, and its name, to the region between the company's Squamish, BC, headquarters. This is a mountain biking mecca, a popular road and gravel cycling destination and the traditional lands of the Skwxwú7mesh people. The name 7mesh nods to the First Peoples and its gear nods to exploring their backyard. The Atlas's stretchy, synthetic fabric is silky and light, it wicks moisture and protects the skin with a UPF 30 rating.

## How to Dress for Hot Weather Biking

Riding in the morning or picking a shady trail is the best way to avoid the heat. When that's not possible, 7mesh's Katie Kirkpatrick has three suggestions.

1. Choose your bottoms wisely. The lighter your undershorts, the cooler you'll be on the ride.
2. Air flow is key. Let the air in with loose fitting shirts and baggy shorts with vents.
3. Move the sweat. Ditch cotton, which holds moisture and opt for wicking fabrics, which generate more cooling and feel more comfortable.
4. Cover up. Keeping the sun off your skin helps prevent overheating. Wear a light coloured, long-sleeved shirt with a UPF of 30 or higher.



# Mustang Survival Hudson CCS Dry Suit

\$1,600; [mustangsurvival.ca](http://mustangsurvival.ca)

Mustang Survival's logo may not be as recognizable as some longtime Canadian brands, but there's a good chance you've worn a PFD sporting that seahorse emblem. Since its founding in downtown Vancouver in 1967, Mustang has focused on marine survival gear. Some of the most complex products, like the new Hudson CCS Dry Suit, are still manufactured at the Vancouver factory. The Hudson features Mustang's proprietor Marine Spec BP waterproof and breathable fabric, designed specifically for saltwater environments. It's rugged, customizable and ready for year-round paddling and boating.

## How to Dress for Paddling's Rule Number Two

Paddling's second Golden Rule (after wearing a PFD) is to dress for the water temperature. It's a recognition that cold water immersion is deadly, even on a hot day. In a lot of places in Canada, that creates a conundrum: how do you dress for 10 C water when it's 25 C outside? There are two main options: a wetsuit or a dry suit.

**WETSUIT:** Typically made from neoprene, wetsuits insulate by trapping air, which reduces conductive heat loss.

**Pros:** Versatile, several different designs, relatively inexpensive

**Cons:** Not windproof, need the right weight and coverage for conditions, gets a clammy feeling over time

**DRYSUIT:** Like a rain suit, but totally waterproof and sealed, keeping water away from the skin, while extra layers provide warmth.

**Pros:** Use layering to adjust warmth, comfortable for extended use, dry skin, relief zipper.

**Cons:** Neck gasket can be uncomfortable; expensive; hotter to wear.

**Bottom line:** Let preference, need and budget be your guide. Both options will feel warm on a hot day, but at least the water provides easy access to cooling off.



# Backseat Bivy

\$119; [backseatbivy.com](http://backseatbivy.com)

Nick Haycock thinks car-camping has a bum reputation. Rather than dirtbagging, he thinks it is far more luxurious than a tent. All it takes is a Backseat Bivy. The Bivy fills the gap between a folded-down backseat and the front row, adding several inches of sleeping length, turning a spinal torque into comfort. The design is adjustable to almost any vehicle, and it packs up small, leaving plenty of room for the oversized sleeping pad and a pillow.



Haycock says turning your getaway car into a Hilton-on-wheels is easy.

1. Choose the right vehicle: Ditch the SmartCar for something with a full-size backseat that lays flat.
2. Upgrade your sleeping pad: Exped makes one specific for cars, but any thick foam or luxury air mat makes a huge difference.
3. Invest in window shades: The best ones block the sun for lazy mornings and have a bug mesh for maintaining air flow.
4. Change your mindset: If the weather's crummy, embrace your nomadic lifestyle and do something urban.



## GOSO Cookware Outdoor Gourmet 2 Pan Set

\$299; [gosocookware.com](http://gosocookware.com)

Brent Firkser loves nothing more than cheffing up a gourmet meal on a camp stove in the back-and-beyond of BC. But camp cookware wasn't up to the task, so he made his own. GOSO's Outdoor Gourmet pans are carbon steel, a material popular with French chefs, which is naturally non-stick, tolerant of high heat and highly durable. They're not lightweight, but the detachable handle makes them packable, and they work on everything from induction stoves to flaming coals.

### How to Make Campfire Frinatas?

Firkser's favourite camping creations comes from Canadian food influencer Christopher Nuttal-Smith's camping book, *Cook It Wild*. "It's easy to prepare, it's novel and, most importantly, delicious."





## Reigning Champ Stretch Warp Knit Coach's Standard Short 9"

**\$135; reigningchamp.com**

With its mild climate, plentiful paths and ocean to alpine scenery, it makes sense that Vancouver would spawn a running-focused brand like Reigning Champ. It specializes in modern apparel that combines simple designs and technical materials. Take the Standard Short: the recycled knit fabric is super stretchy for easy movement and dries fast. They felt at home at the climbing gym, while trail running and on the brewery patio.

### How to Run Faster for Longer

One of the biggest factors in predicting who will win an endurance race is fatigue resistance. It's common sense: it takes more energy to run a given pace at kilometre 30 than it did in the first kilometre. Higher fatigue resistance means the change is smaller, leaving more energy for the finishing kick. New research, published in the *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, provides insights into how to improve it: strength training. In a study of 10K runners, the addition of regular reps of heavy weights and plyometrics improved fatigue resistance compared to a cohort that just ran.

Try three rounds of six repetitions:

**With Weights:** Squats, single leg squats, calf raises

**Plyometrics:** vertical jumps, drop jumps, horizontal hops, horizontal bounds

## AquaQuest Guide Ultralight

**\$120; aquaquestwaterproof.com**

AquaQuest knows wet. The Vancouver Island company literally lives in a rainforest. Their first product, way back in 1994, was affordable dry bags for paddling and boating. More recently they've turned that expertise towards tarps. The Guide Ultralight is a lightweight nylon with a double treatment of silicone and polyurethane. It's also fixed with a bunch of tie-out grommets, which makes it easier to pitch the tarp and keep it taut, even in nasty coastal weather—naturally.

### How to Turn a Tarp into a Tent

The Holden Tent is an easy-to-pitch tarp set-up that creates a very protected sleeping area. It works in many situations, and it creates an A-frame-like shelter that sheds even the nastiest weather.

**Equipment Needs:** A square or rectangular 10x10 feet or larger tarp; a vertical pole; five stakes; an eight-foot cord.

**Step 1:** Lay tarp out. Stake out the two back corners.

**Step 2:** At the opposite end of the tarp, where the entrance will be, find the middle of the tarp and prop it up with a vertical pole.

**Step 3:** Attach cord to pole top, pull away from staked-out back side and secure with stake.

**Step 4:** Secure two front corners by pulling tarp tight, and stake.

**Step 5:** Adjust tension at all four corners until tarp feels secure.





## Hillsound BTR Stool 14

\$100; hillsound.ca

Hillsound products fill whitespace. They started with trail crampons that were more user-friendly than mountaineering crampons, but more robust than spikes. Then it was a better gaiter. Their latest product are D-shaped packing cubes that actually fit in a backpack. Then there's the BTR, a.k.a. Better Than a Rock. The compact three-legged stool fills the gap between a measly foam pad and an overkill camp chair. It is lightweight, packs up smaller than a one litre water bottle, pops up in seconds and is comfortable enough to lounge in for a relaxing lunch.

### How to Take Better Breaks

Done right, a break can actually help you hike faster and farther. Rest allows the body's energy systems to recover and relieves muscle fatigue, which, over a long haul, can help maintain intensity and prevent injury. Research suggests it takes at least five minutes for the body to recover and Saul Bank, at Hillsound Equipment, has some ideas on how to make the most of that time.

**Elevate Your Rest:** Sitting on the ground can be uncomfortable or cold—especially on damp or rocky terrain. Pack a lightweight stool (like the BTR) or a foam pad.

**Stay Organized:** Store the things you know you'll need, like snacks, sunglasses, phones and binoculars or more in easy-access pockets. Use packing cubes (like Hillsound's PackStack) to make extra layers and other gear easy to find.

**Pick Your Rest Spots Carefully:** To maximize time, plan to take breaks in places you know you will likely want to linger anyway: at water sources, viewpoints and trail features. Also consider the weather: rest in shaded areas to cool down in summer or sheltered spots in windier seasons.

**Listen to Your Body:** Breaks aren't just physical pauses; they're a mental reset, too. Plan to take one roughly every hour and more often when you're route-finding or travelling through technical terrain.

## KINeSYS SPF 30 Clear Zinc Cream

\$32; kinesysactive.ca

After Wade and Lisa Heggie's experiences with skin cancer, they hunted down the best sunscreen they could find—Vancouver-based KINeSYS—and took over the business. They kept the local suppliers and proven formulas. Their Clear Zinc Cream, like all KINeSYS's sunscreens, is water- and alcohol-free, carries the industry maximum 80-minute water-resistance and is hypoallergenic. Plus, unlike most mineral sunscreens, it doesn't leave a white cast.

### Choose the Best Sunscreen

The sunscreen rack proves the fallacy of choice: spray, lotion, sticks, different SPF ratings, waterproof or not, zinc, titanium, hybrids, reef safe and too many "-zones," "-ates" and "-lenes" to keep track of. Each has its pros, cons and best applications. Here's some advice:

- SPF 30 is enough. Higher numbers only yield minor improvements in protection.
- Sticks for winter. The water-free formulation helps protect the skin from cold and wind.
- Zinc oxide for sensitive skin. It packs plenty of protection and is the gentlest formulation.
- Avoid sprays on the face. And use them in well-ventilated areas.
- Check the expiration date. Sunscreens have a three-year shelf life (maximum).

#### SUNSCREEN CHOICES BY SPORTS:

##### WATER-BASED

**ACTIVITIES:** Swimming or whitewater paddling

**Priorities:** Long water resistance, reef-safe

**Pick:** zinc oxide or lotion

**SWEATY ACTIVITIES:** trail running, mountain biking

**Priorities:** Sweat-proof, easy to reapply

**Pick:** spray-on

**ALL-DAY COVERAGE:** hiking, canoeing, sea kayaking

**Priorities:** high SPF, water resistance, long lasting

**Pick:** mineral or sprays

**COLD WEATHER:** skiing, snowshoeing, cross country skiing

**Priorities:** skin protection

**Pick:** stick



# Northern Sun Lightweight Down Jacket

**\$200; [northernsuncanada.com](http://northernsuncanada.com)**

There's a time and place for specialized gear, but most of the time—walking the dog, a casual hike, travelling—there's no need. Jason Crowley and his business partner restarted Northern Sun to bring versatility into outdoor worthy gear. Consider their Lightweight Down Jacket. A puffy like this is a staple of just about any trip, or at least the drive to the airport. Northern Sun stuffed their version with 700-fill down (mostly duck) and use a water-resistant nylon outer for protection. What makes it stand out is that it stuffs into a pocket to moonlight as a neck pillow.

## How to Travel Lighter

It's harder than ever to only bring carry-on luggage. Shrinking bag size limits mean every item has to do more. Luckily there are many Canadian designed products up to the challenge.

**Sole's Jasper Chukka** is one of the most sustainably-built shoes and is ready to go from easy trails and then straight out to dinner. **\$169; [yoursole.com](http://yoursole.com)**

A casual looking, storm-worthy jacket is an essential and few walk the fine line better than the **Nobis Onyx**. **\$550; [nobis.com](http://nobis.com)**

No one will know the **Foehn Brise Schoeller Chino** is anything but a good looking slack until the mud and water bead right off. **\$180; [wearfoehn.com](http://wearfoehn.com)**

With no wheels or hard edges, **Herschel's All Season Duffel** carries more than a comparable-sized roller and, with pack straps, goes where no roller can. **\$170; [herchel.com](http://herchel.com)**



## The Wild Tribe

**From \$849; [thewildtribe.ca](http://thewildtribe.ca)**

Anyone shopping for a stand-up paddleboard faces a conundrum: a rigid board is nice to paddle but hard to transport and store; an inflatable is easy to transport and store, but not as fun to paddle. Rather than navigate these trade-offs Trois Rivières' Nicolas Bedard decided to create his own. The Wild Tribe makes inflatable SUPs that paddle more like a rigid board because they are thinner, stiffened with stringers and made of a tougher PVC.

## How to Shop for a SUP

Whether buying rigid or inflatable, The Wild Tribe's Nicolas Bedard says choosing a SUP comes down to three factors.

**Capacity:** Typically measured in pounds, it's a measure of bounciness. Take your weight, add a third and then more if you plan to paddle with a dog or carry a heavy pack.

**Width:** Under 30 inches wide is fast but tippy. Over 33 is very stable but slow. Most people will want something in between.

**Length:** Generally, the longer the board, the faster it will go, but the harder it will be to turn. For covering distance, opt for an 11-foot board or longer. ✕

# EXPLORE T



# THE WORLD IN CANADA

*With 9.2 million square-kilometres to explore, Canada has the world within its borders. Satisfy your wanderlust with 10 all-Canadian destinations that rival the best places on the planet!*

BY DANIA RASHID

**A**ccording to a 2024 survey by Abacus Data, 71 percent of Canadians who intend to travel this year plan to do so within Canada. That's not surprising.

In light of newly imposed tariffs and rising political tensions, a growing number of Canadians are rethinking their cross-border plans, with many opting instead to explore destinations at home—motivated not only by rising costs but by a renewed sense of national pride and economic solidarity.

There's never been a better time to explore what's already in our own backyard. Now, more than ever, us Canadians need to stand behind local businesses, support domestic tourism and connect with the landscapes and communities that make this country home.



*Fascinated by Iguazu Falls, Argentina & Brazil?*

## Head to Ontario's Niagara Falls!

Niagara Falls are probably why they coined the term “one-in-a-million.” Let’s begin with the iconic rapids: the sheer height and volume of the falls and the startling green hues are enough to make anyone realize that this place is *not* overrated.

Here, you can enjoy a thrilling zipline ride towards the rapids or the peek-a-boo viewpoints at the Journey Behind the Falls ([niagarafallstourism.com](http://niagarafallstourism.com)). Of course, you’ll have to book a *Maid of the Mist* boat tour ([maidofthemist.com](http://maidofthemist.com)), an immersive experience intimately close to the falls where you’ll vibrate along with the thundering crash of 2.3 million litres of water, feeling the rising mist soak through your clothes and wonder if you’re about to *become* the Falls. Visitors can also enjoy the White Water Walk where you’ll see the gorge that was carved by the relentless erosion of the Niagara River and the whirlpool rapids.

And if you need another reason to go, Niagara offers convenience and ease of travel, located just a 90-minute drive from Toronto. The surrounding area is teeming with top-tier wineries that provide intimate tours, refined resorts that offer luxurious amenities and family-friendly activities such as the Clifton Hill attractions ([cliftonhill.com](http://cliftonhill.com)) which include carnival rides, golf mini putt, a wax museum and the Niagara SkyWheel.

## *Always Wanted to See Australia's Sunshine Coast?* Try British Columbia's Sunshine Coast!

Imagine warm, golden sun rays twirling atop emerald water and rugged cliffs embellished by lush tall trees that provide just enough shade to wipe away the worries of yesterday. Welcome to BC's Sunshine Coast, a 180-kilometre expanse of land that boasts pristine natural beauty, charming coastal villages and a laid-back atmosphere.

Escape the hustle and bustle of the city and emerge into a fairy tale dream of kayaking through crystal-clear waters, hiking along scenic trails like the renowned hut-to-hut Sunshine Coast Trail through Powell River's breathtaking backcountry and camping at one of 10 epic campsites built for every type of adventurer—Mt. Richardson Provincial Park campsite is a

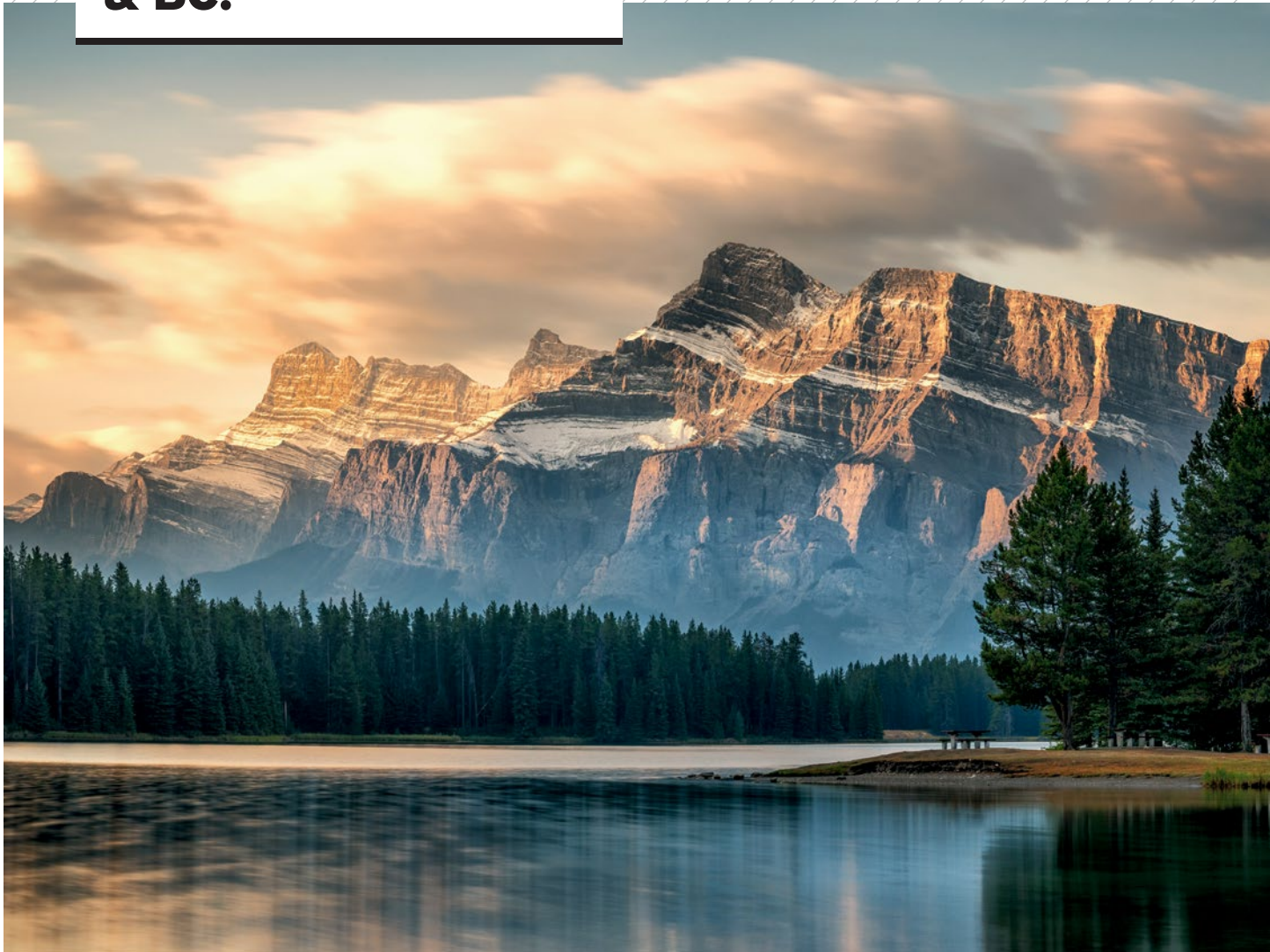


standout for its a rustic, serene experience.

Want more of a low-key day? Spend it at the bustling farmers' markets followed by a trip to the Sunshine Coast Museum & Archives where you'll learn about the history of the longest running television series in Canada, *The Beachcombers*, and

end off with a rejuvenating spa treatment. The region's picturesque towns, such as Gibsons and Sechelt, offer a rich arts scene, featuring local galleries, artisanal shops and delicious farm-to-table dining experiences for the ultimate coastal getaway. [sunshinecoastcanada.com](http://sunshinecoastcanada.com)

*Imagining Switzerland's  
Famous Alps?*  
**Try the Rocky  
Mountains in Alberta  
& BC!**



Canada's Rocky Mountains are a living, breathing world of contrasts: rugged peaks coexisting with delicate ecosystems and calm lakes. The rocky giants not only produce postcard-perfect photos but also demand your attention—one moment you're standing at the edge of a glacial lake so clear it feels surreal, and the next, you're hiking through alpine meadows that hum with wildflowers and distant waterfalls.

Take the scramble up Mount Victoria (North Peak) within both Banff National Park and Yoho National Park ([parks.canada.ca](https://parks.canada.ca)), where each handhold will take you closer to the top of the world. The 19-kilometre

ascent, with about 1,700 metres of elevation gain is a challenging workout for both body and mind, mingled with the astonishing sceneries—sweeping valleys dotted with ice-blue lakes, snowfields clinging to the peaks and glaciers that feel like they've been frozen in time. Or, for a more relaxed trek, try the Lake Agnes Trail in Banff, a 7.4-kilometre trail with about 500 metres of elevation gain, that leads to a seasonally open teahouse where you can enjoy drinks and food. Heads up: some day-use areas may be closed—particularly Jasper National Park's Overlander area, Maligne Canyon and the Whirlpool drainage—due

to the 2024 Jasper Wildfire.

For something more intimate, the hidden paths of Jasper's Maligne Valley reward the curious with a handful of wildflowers, rushing streams and shaded groves. Here, you're more likely to hear the hum of a solitary woodpecker than see traffic lights or hear the honk of a car. Afterward, retreat to one of the numerous secluded lodges with floor-to-ceiling windows, where you can savour a much-needed cocktail or a bowl of wild mushroom soup while the mountains stand silent in the dusk.

[travelalberta.com](https://travelalberta.com); [banfflakelouise.com](https://banfflakelouise.com); [parks.canada.ca](https://parks.canada.ca)



*Captivated by the Terrain of Hormuz Island, Iran?*  
**The Bay of Fundy, New Brunswick & Nova Scotia, Will Impress!**

The Bay of Fundy, located between the coasts of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, is a hidden natural wonder—literally. Famous for having the highest tides in the world that can be as great as 16 metres, entire landscapes are hidden and revealed within a span of 12 hours. The shape and size of Fundy amplifies the pattern

of the tides, and the water level rises and drops dramatically, acting like a veil for the surrounding land.

At Burntcoat Head Park, observe the marine life from tidal pools, marvel at fossils, take a photo in front of one of the 60 lighthouses and explore the dark caves. Try your hand at tidal bore rafting, found only in Nova Scotia, a veritable rollercoaster ride on water. For adventure-lovers, trek along seafloor pathways at low tide, and when the

tide ascends, kayak through its wild waters.

The region is also home to the Fundy Trail Provincial Park ([nbparks.ca](http://nbparks.ca)), where travellers can hike, bike, camp or simply drive through spectacular forests and coastal vistas, all while keeping an eye out for seals, bald eagles and whales. And did I mention fossils? As a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a UNESCO Global Geopark, you can dig for dinosaurs that roamed the lush forest that once covered the land 300 million years ago. [tourismnewbrunswick.ca](http://tourismnewbrunswick.ca); [novascotia.com](http://novascotia.com)

**LOAD UP THE RV**

*Canada is made for RV travel, and there's no better way to experience its diverse landscapes than through a coast-to-coast journey broken into manageable, regional road trips. Here are eight scenic routes to quench your wanderlust.*

**Western Canada: BC & Alberta**

- 1. Sunshine Coast to Squamish, BC**  
**Distance:** ~200 km + ferry from Langdale to Horseshoe Bay  
**Highlights:** Scenic drive along Highway 99 from Vancouver. RV-friendly campgrounds dot the route  
**Pro Tip:** Reserve BC Ferries in advance for RV accommodations
- 2. Squamish to Sun Peaks Resort, BC**  
**Distance:** ~470 km  
**Highlights:** Sea to Sky Highway, Whistler, mountain lakes  
**Pro Tip:** Sun Peaks has RV-accessible parking and nearby campgrounds
- 3. Sun Peaks to Alberta's Rocky Mountains**  
**Route:** Via Jasper → Banff → Canmore  
**Distance:** ~550 km  
**Highlights:** Icefields Parkway, Lake Louise, glaciers, lakes  
**Pro Tip:** Reserve Parks Canada sites early—summer fills quickly

**Central & Northern Canada: Ontario, Quebec & Nunavut**

- 1. Manitoulin Island to Niagara Falls, ON**  
**Distance:** ~666 km  
**Highlights:** Muskoka cottage country, roadside farm stops, Georgian Bay  
**Pro Tip:** To get to Manitoulin Island, take the Chi-Cheemaun Ferry from Tobermory, which is RV-friendly—book ahead
- 2. Niagara Falls to Ottawa (to fly to Nunavut)**  
**Distance:** ~576 km  
**Highlights:** Vineyards, towns like Kingston, Ottawa's historic landmarks, Parliament Hill  
**Nunavut Tip:** No roads in—park your RV and fly from Ottawa to Iqaluit  
**Pro Tip:** Secure long-term RV parking near Ottawa International Airport
- 3. Ottawa to Quebec City, QC**  
**Distance:** ~483 km  
**Highlights:** Scenic river drives, French villages, historic architecture  
**Pro Tip:** RV campgrounds are located just outside the city

**Atlantic Canada: NB, NS & NL**

- 1. Bay of Fundy to North Sydney, NS (to take a ferry to Newfoundland)**  
**Distance:** ~563 km  
**Highlights:** Coastal cliffs, fishing towns, Cape Breton Highlands  
**Pro Tip:** Marine Atlantic ferries allow RVs—book well in advance
- 2. North Sydney to Newfoundland's East Coast Trail (via ferry)**  
**Distance:** 6–8 hours  
**Highlights:** Rugged coastal trails, puffins, sea cliffs  
**Pro Tip:** Stay at RV-friendly sites near trailheads on the Avalon Peninsula



*Got Lyon, France,  
on the Brain?*  
**Book a Trip  
to Quebec  
City Instead!**

Quebec City makes you question why Belle from *Beauty and the Beast* wanted much more than a provincial life. The quaint city's cobblestone streets and historic architecture, like the iconic Château Frontenac, are famous worldwide, and the old-world charm of the city truly feels like stepping into a fairy tale storybook.

For those seeking thrills, Quebec City offers unique experiences like ziplining across the enchanting Montmorency Falls, where you'll soar above the foaming white



water and the views of the surrounding greenery will wrap around you like a blanket. If you're an active traveller, don't miss the city's bike tours with companies like Vélo Québec Voyages ([veloquebecvoyages.com](http://veloquebecvoyages.com)) or Discovery Bicycle Tours ([discoverybicycletours.com](http://discoverybicycletours.com)), an exploration around its darling neighbourhoods and European-esque

buildings guided by local experts. Nearby Jacques-Cartier National Park's ([sepaq.com](http://sepaq.com)) deep-cut glacial valley is the ideal backdrop for kayaking or canoeing 26 kilometres along calm rivers, perfect for families and children. Or get your heart pumping at the treetop obstacle courses in the Forest of Montmorency to experience nature from above. [quebec-cite.com](http://quebec-cite.com)

*Dreaming of the  
White Cliffs of Dover, England?*  
**Head to Newfoundland  
and Labrador's  
East Coast Trail!**

The East Coast Trail in Newfoundland and Labrador spans over 330 kilometres along the island's rocky Atlantic coastline, weaving through dramatic cliffs, clandestine coves, ancient forests and historic fishing villages. The trail offers a rare combination of wilderness and cultural heritage. Choose a path, find campsites or accommodations and undertake the journey that will quite literally show you a new perspective with every turn.

What sets the East Coast Trail apart are its unique landscapes: the trail boasts



incredible geological features, such as the towering sea stacks of Cappahayden and the fossil-rich cliffs of Mistaken Point, another UNESCO World Heritage site. Along its paths, you'll encounter over 30 historic sites, from old lighthouses to remnants of early settlements that show a glimpse into Newfoundland's past. Experience the heart of Canada's

wilderness in encounters with moose, puffins nesting on sea cliffs, whales making their way up north and seabirds pecking at the water. Walk over sea stacks, through fjords, over a suspension bridge, around blowholes and over cliffs and experience every element from the icebergs to the beach. [eastcoasttrail.com](http://eastcoasttrail.com)

## *Are the Mountain Towns of Austria Calling?* **Squamish, BC, Will Answer!**

Squamish, BC, is a tucked-away town that sits at the foot of the Stawamus Chief, a monolithic granite face that looms over the area. Its towering cliffs and dense forests look like oil paintings, offering eight scenic provincial parks to experience adventures that will get your boots dirty and your tops sweaty. On your way, stop in for an underground tour at the Britannia Mine Museum ([britanniaminemuseum.ca](http://britanniaminemuseum.ca)), a National Historic Site, to travel back to 1914 into a copper mine by mine train.

For bikers, Squamish is a mecca of diverse terrain, from Half Nelson with its smooth berms to Airplane Mode with its

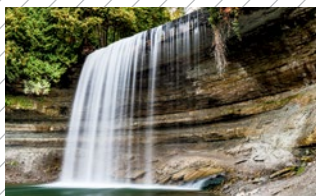
phenomenal jumps and fast pace. The mountain biking trails here stretch around 1,000 kilometres—twisting through old-growth forests, climbing the ridgelines and descending technical routes on the Sea to Sky highway. The town's

quiet, yet confident energy seeps into its trails, providing riders an experience that's less about crowds and more about the connection between you, your bike and the land.

[exploresquamish.com](http://exploresquamish.com)



## *No Need to Travel to the Scilly Isles, UK...* **Manitoulin Island, Ontario, Has What You Need!**



Manitoulin Island is a refuge of gorgeous cliffsides and placid waters. Beyond its charming small towns, Manitoulin's real allure lies in its natural features—vast, wild landscapes that stretch in every direction, from dense forests to hidden caves carved by ancient waters to the irregular shoreline that reflects pink, purple and orange hues during sunset hour.

As the largest freshwater island in the world, it offers a rich

diversity of adventure opportunities often overlooked by the travellers immersed in its views. The island's river systems carve intense ravines, where you can scramble over rocky outcrops, sunbathe on sunny beaches and explore secret pools pleated beneath thick flora. Cycling through Manitoulin, you'll ride winding roads that take you past sweeping vistas of the North Channel, while forested paths will lead to secluded, but staggering viewpoints. Whether you're on two wheels or venturing into its deep ravines, Manitoulin is a place where each discovery feels like a secret shared only with you. [exploremanitoulin.com](http://exploremanitoulin.com)

## *In Love with Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, France?* **Sun Peaks, BC, Has That European Vibe!**

As the second-largest ski resort in Canada, the Sun Peaks Resort boasts over 17 square kilometres of pristine slopes, with an impressive mix of terrain for all levels.

Bike down the mountains, go trail running through magnificent wildflowers and ride the chairlift for a 360 degree view of the alpine.

At Sun Peaks Resort, summer bursts with adventure. Mountain bikers can tackle the About Time trail, an intermediate cross-country path connecting the village



to the Morrissey Platter and chairlift. Hikers are drawn to Embleton Mountain, near Heffley Lake, renowned for its abundant wildflowers, including rare chocolate lilies. After exploring, cool off at Heffley Lake, just a 14-kilometre drive from the resort, offering clean waters ideal for swimming and boating. [sunpeaksresort.com](http://sunpeaksresort.com)

# Looking for the Edge of the World—Antarctica? Then Head North To Nunavut!

Nunavut, Canada’s northern frontier, is the best place in Canada where you can experience the tundra—an arctic biome undecorated by vegetation, lined with permafrost. Nunavut’s sheer remoteness gives it a certain edge-of-the-world feel, where the icy land is as much about isolation as it is about integration.

The territory’s glaciers and rivers form some of the most dramatic terrain on the planet. Descending through ice-carved valleys, you navigate a landscape shaped by forces millennia in the making, revealing pockets of life like seals basking on ice floes or the distant whale surfacing from frigid waters.

While fat biking may seem unlikely in the



far North, Nunavut’s terrain offers unique biking corridors, like the 97-kilometre Akshayuk Pass that leads you across coastal plains and surreal landscapes. Here, you can witness an abundance of caribou, seals and polar bears in their natural habitats, often from the vantage of its iconic expedition cruises. These cruises, like the 20-day Quark Expeditions Inc. cruise

([quarkexpeditions.com](http://quarkexpeditions.com)) that exhibits the best of the Western Arctic or the journey from Kangerlussuaq, Greenland to Kugluktuk, Nunavut with Adventure Canada ([adventurecanada.com](http://adventurecanada.com)), also allows travellers to feel the enormity of the Arctic landscape in a way no land-based exploration can provide. [travelnunavut.ca](http://travelnunavut.ca)

## A COUNTRY OF CAMPSITES

Located a short drive from the falls, the Niagara Falls KOA Holiday ([koa.com](http://koa.com)) is a private campground that offers amenities like a heated pool, mini-golf and large sites for both tent camping and pull-thru RVs.

Tucked into a secluded cove, the Smuggler Cove Marine Provincial Park campground ([bcparks.ca](http://bcparks.ca)) on BC’s Sunshine Coast offers stunning coastal views and access to the ocean via canoe or kayak.

Whistler’s campground in Jasper National Park, Alberta ([parks.canada.ca](http://parks.canada.ca)), is located along the beautiful Athabasca River, and is a well-maintained spot for both tent campers and RVs who want to be surrounded by the majestic Rockies.

Situated within Fundy National Park, the RV-friendly Chignecto North Campground ([parks.canada.ca](http://parks.canada.ca)) offers easy access to the famous Bay of Fundy tides, as well as hiking trails and panoramic ocean views.

Just outside Quebec City, Parc de la Jacques-Cartier ([sepaq.com](http://sepaq.com)) is provincial park that features nature-rich and sunny campgrounds nestled in a glacier-carved valley. It’s great for those looking for hiking, canoeing and enjoying nature, yet still close to the city. Both for tent and RV camping.

At the base of the iconic Stawamus Chief, the Stawamus Chief Provincial Park Campground ([bcparks.ca](http://bcparks.ca)) includes tent and drive-in sites and is ideal for those looking to explore Squamish’s world-class outdoor activities.

Though more remote, Iqaluit offers basic campsites that allow you to experience the rugged Arctic environment ([travelnunavut.ca](http://travelnunavut.ca)). You’ll be immersed in Nunavut’s unique landscapes, with access to hiking and bird-watching opportunities, especially near the coast.

Located on the East Coast Trail, La Manche Provincial Park ([parksnl.ca](http://parksnl.ca)) offers both rustic and more developed sites, with accommodations for RVs. This campground is ideal for hikers, offering stunning ocean views and access to the scenic coastal trail.

The charming Providence Bay Beach Campground ([providencebaypark.com](http://providencebaypark.com)) on Manitoulin Island, Ontario, offers stunning lakefront views of Lake Huron and easy access to swimming, fishing, and hiking. It’s a quiet, family-friendly site for tent and RV camping.

Near Sun Peaks Resort, the private McGillivray Lake Campground ([sitesandtrailsbc.ca](http://sitesandtrailsbc.ca)) offers RV and camping amenities and a more secluded experience, with scenic views of the surrounding mountains and forest.



# ADVENTURE Cats!

*Fearless felines: these nine cats are living their nine lives to the fullest*

BY ALISON KARLENE HODGINS

**GARY**  
@greatgramsofgary

“Is that a cat?”

Three girls fawn over the two bright green eyes and whiskers peeking out of a backpack. “Is she friendly? How do I train my cat to go outside?”

Most reactions to seeing a cat walking on a leash, riding in a backpack or perched on someone’s shoulders are similar to when you see an adorable dog outdoors, but adventure cats spark more curiosity—and, sometimes, even concern.

Although we consider dogs “man’s best friend,” cats can also be amazing adventure companions. Contrary to popular belief, cats aren’t just lazy lap warmers, sunspot nappers and stealthy mousers—around the world, people are paddling, skiing, cycling, camping and hiking with their cats.

I spoke with the BC SPCA, Humane Canada, a veterinarian and nine adventure cat owners about proper training, harmful stereotypes and how to get your kitty outdoors safely and responsibly.

It turns out, the trails aren’t just for dogs.

---

When I started dating my partner, I welcomed his two indoor-only cats—a nine-year-old Havana Brown named Archer and a two-year-old Tuxedo named Mattie—into my life.

Before, I’d considered myself more of a dog person, attributing characteristics like friendliness, loyalty and devotion to dogs. Even though I had a cat growing up, Socks

**“I GET THAT QUESTION A LOT—‘HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN HE DOESN’T WANT TO WALK?’ BECAUSE HE STOPS WALKING. IT’S QUITE CLEAR.”**

was an indoor-outdoor tabby who spent her days prowling the neighborhood and her evenings curled up on my mom’s lap.

Mattie and Archer were different. Archer showered me with love as he cuddled me incessantly, wrapping around me



**FREYJA**  
@freyja\_siberian

like a fuzzy scarf, purring with his light green eyes closed and flopping onto my lap whenever I didn’t give him enough attention. Mattie, an oddball with a fixation on metal, also became attached to me—when he wasn’t playing with coins and depositing them in his food dish like payment.

Working from home, my cats became fixtures in my day. I became Cat Mom. My furry companions provided love, laughter and comfort; I wanted to provide the best life for them.

I wondered: were they missing out by spending their lives indoors?

---

Barbara Cartwright, CEO of Humane Canada, a non-profit animal welfare organization, says cats belong outdoors in a safe and responsible way. “Everyone belongs outdoors,” she says, “but it’s how they’re outdoors. If a cat can stay with and come back to their owners, that’s great! Otherwise, [they should] always be on a leash, a patio or an outdoor run system so that the cat can still be outside.

“We make assumptions about cats and then we treat them that way, so they are independent,” she continues. “They don’t like going outside, they’re afraid of things. Whereas if, just like with humans, you treat them with respect and you give them bite-size challenges and they have success with those challenges, then they’re going to want to keep doing it.

“Should you take a cat who’s only been indoors and is afraid to go outdoors and force them outside for some ideological reason? No. But can you give them the choice? Can you open the door and see? You can try the harness on and, if they enjoy it, then take the next small step.”

“There are misconceptions about cats, like they don’t like water, they don’t need exercise, it’s normal for them to sleep all day, they don’t have personalities, they’re not social, they don’t get lonely... but cats have emotional needs, and they can get bored,” says Dr. Mansum Yau, a veterinarian with 15 years of experience and the author of *The Ins and Outs of Cat Carriers*.

One major concern with free-roaming cats is the impact on wildlife, specifically birds. Roughly 11 percent of animals brought into WildArc, the BC SPCA's wild animal rehabilitation centre, in 2024 were "caught by cat" for a total of 230 wild animals. In their welfare statement, the BC SPCA encourages all cat guardians to provide "safe, suitable outdoor access (e.g., catio [cat patio], leash walks) that prevents them from preying on wildlife."

In Vancouver's Stanley Park, Freyja the Siberian saunters down the trail on a harness and leash like the fluffy queen she is. Freyja's mom, Sayaka, and I stand still as statues while Freyja watches squirrels and birds. When I look up, I notice baby birds fluttering above my head, close enough to touch. It's a moment I never would have experienced if I was hiking by myself, when I would have hurried over this bridge.

Sayaka says, "I usually let [Freyja] lead the way. If there's somewhere that she shouldn't go, or if a dog is coming, then we take control, but most of the time, she's the boss. Even in daily life, she's the boss."

The boss's pace is *slow*, but I'm captivated by her confidence, curiosity and awareness of the world.

The pet *paw*-rents I spoke to told me that their cats derive benefits like mental stimulation, exercise and enrichment from supervised outdoor adventures.

Many say their cat's natural instincts and stronger senses give them a greater awareness in the Great Outdoors. Hayley, mom of a seven-year-old Siberian named Reinhardt, recalls the time she encountered a bear while hiking around Emerald Lake in Yoho National Park. "Reinhardt was on edge, and I didn't really understand what was going on... until I saw the bear. It was about 25 metres away from us, splashing in the water. It followed us along the trail for about five minutes."

Mariko, mom of Tofino, a five-year-old domestic longhair based in Vancouver, says, "Sometimes, when cats stare far away, they can sense something much better than us. It could be a squirrel, or it could be a bear, so I always pay attention to what she's looking at and how she moves."

Moss-green eyes shift up, enraptured by something in the forest. What has captured the focus of this floofy, four-legged feline?

It's a tree.

"He loves trees," Danny says of his cat

Mugen, a one-year-old Maine Coon. His partner, Celine, adds, "I'm obsessed with rocks, so me and Mugen look at trees, rocks and bugs. Because we have to keep such a close eye on Mugen, we're more aware of our surroundings. It's a slower pace and we stop to smell every flower. It really redefines hiking for us."

I wander with Danny, Celine and Mugen through Burnaby's Central Park, a pet-friendly area with pockets of shaded forest. The trio tends to adventure between 4:00 and 7:00 a.m. It's Mugen's favourite time of day, and the trails are much quieter.

Adventures with cats require protectiveness, patience and the willingness and ability to turn back. Hayley, Reinhardt's mom, says, "We don't always finish the trails, [but] I wouldn't have

## WHAT ABOUT DOGS?

Outdoor dogs are not quite as novel as their feline friends. But a lot goes into a well-trained, safe hiking pup too! Luckily, we found the made-in-Canada solution: DogPacking.com. Produced by veterinary surgeon Krista Halling, this online resource is chock-full of tips to help you get your dog to the local trail—or the far side of the globe.

[dogpacking.com](https://dogpacking.com)



# HOW TO TRAIN YOUR CAT TO EXPLORE

Top five tips from Laura J. Moss, author of *Adventure Cats: Living Nine Lives to the Fullest*.

1. Start harness and leash training indoors
2. Use positive reinforcement
3. Distract and destress with their favourite toys
4. Reward with high-value treats
5. Always end on a positive note

noticed little flowers and small details going by myself at my own pace.”

Adventure cat parents are impressively dedicated. Marina, mom of General Picchu, a three-year-old Siberian based in Toronto, put her high-altitude trekking on pause to adventure with Picchu instead. “[Extreme adventures] can wait. Let me just do this with him so he can enjoy this time with me.”

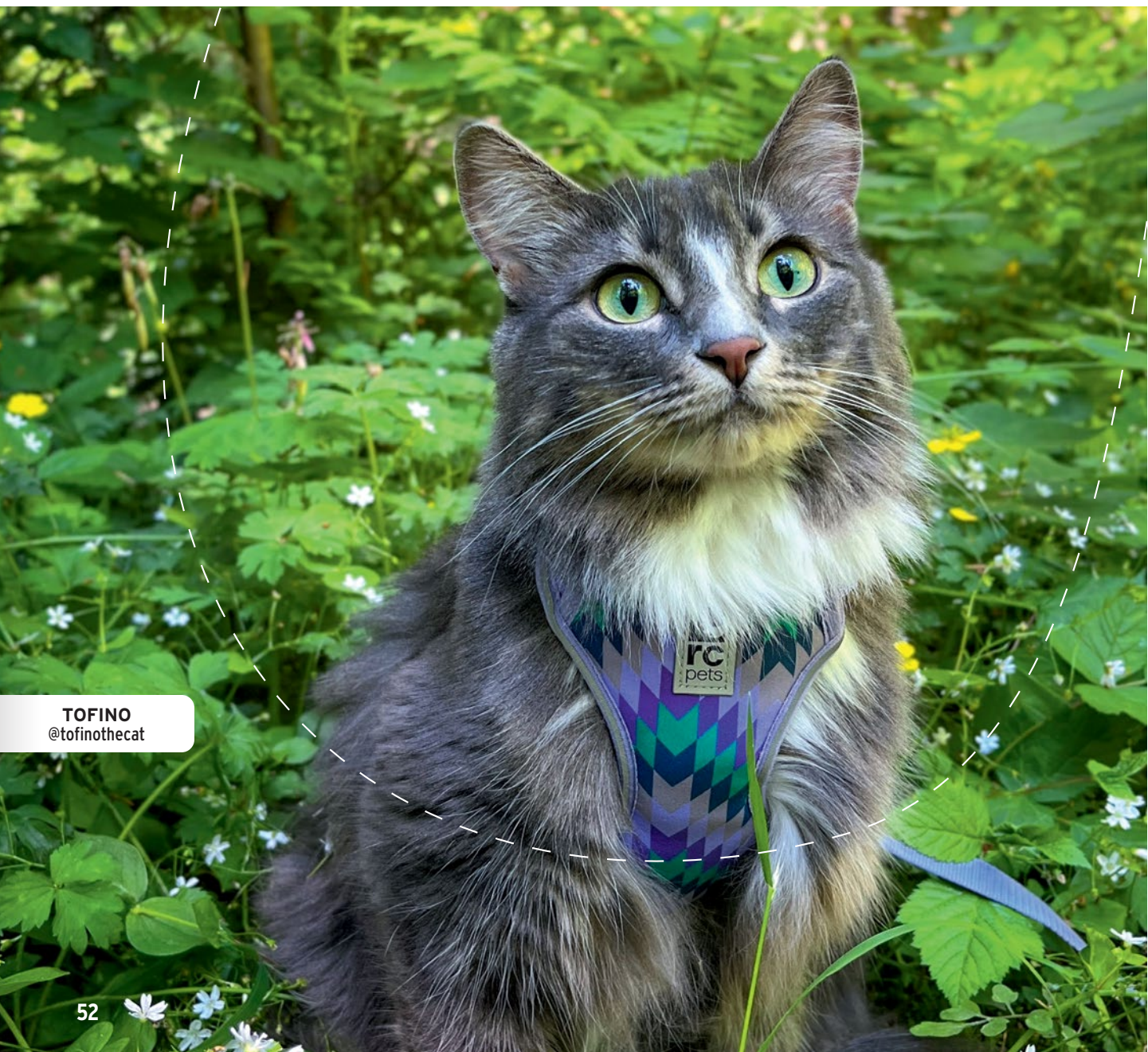
Kitty purrs accompany the crackling of a campfire. Little paws knead biscuits on warm sleeping bags. Could there be anything cuter than a cat camping? For Teddy, a seven-year-old tabby, camping is the best adventure.

Selvynna, Teddy’s *meow*-mom, says, “I think he likes camping the most because he gets to stay in a small area that no one else

comes in, and he gets to sniff all the bushes and take his time. There’s no rush to go anywhere.”

Gary, a 10-year-old domestic shorthair based in the Canadian Rockies, became internet famous for a more extreme sport—(cat)skiing with his social media manager, James. However, Gary’s favourite activity is paddling. “He likes to sit on the front of our inflatable pack raft, enjoy the sun and get rocked to sleep gently by the waves.”

Gary has hiked almost five kilometres in one day, but his longest day on the trail was 36 kilometres—for most of which, he was carried. When he’s tired, Gary “sits in the middle of the trail and waits for me to pick him up,” James says. “I get that question a lot—‘how do you know when he doesn’t want to walk?’ Because he stops walking. It’s quite clear.”



TOFINO  
@tofinothecat



**REINHARDT**  
@siberian\_reinhardt

Tail flicking, an orange-spotted Savannah prowls through the bushes. His huge, slanted eyes take in the foliage, sturdy paws balancing over wooden beams and cute meows alerting us of his whereabouts—along with his bright red harness and a GPS tracker.

Kendall and Dennis used to let their cats roam their neighbourhood with AirTags on, but everything changed when one-year-old Olive was hit by a car. Now, they take Olive's brother Knut on supervised adventures. "I think we all needed some family bonding time. I was pregnant, and it was quite therapeutic for us to go on hikes and see Knut having such a good time, even though we were all super sad about Olive. It was quite healing," Kendall says. Knut sometimes hikes off-leash, but she always keeps a watchful eye on him.

Kahlee Demers, manager of Companion Animal Welfare and Policy at the BC SPCA, says leash walking is better and

safer because you have full control, but "if you're taking all the necessary precautions, I think you can let your cat off leash. Keep an eye in the sky for predators like eagles and pay attention to what's on the ground: bears, coyotes and cougars." She also advises checking your municipal bylaws first.

Dr. Mansum cautions, "As a vet, I see the ugly side of things. I see cats that were hit by cars or lost for a month or poisoned. I wouldn't want to let my cat outside unattended."

Even if you intend to keep your cat on leash, Dr. Mansum says, "no harness is 100 percent escape-proof. Cats are contortionists."

Kahlee adds, "a poorly fitted harness can do a lot of damage. Your cat can escape or be uncomfortable and have negative associations with the experience."

Practicing recall is important. "[Cats and dogs] have differences, but [cats are] just as smart and capable of learning and can provide just as good company," says Dr. Mansum.

"Unfortunately, a lot of people think that cats

can't be trained, but there are some very smart cats that have trained their humans."

James says, "Gary's definitely smarter than one of our dogs. Our Lab took two years to learn how to shake a paw and still knows fewer tricks than Gary."

Most people who encounter outdoorsy kitties on the trails and in the campgrounds have *paw*-sitive reactions. Some express concern for the well-being of the cat, wondering if it's animal abuse to walk a cat on a leash. Others seem confused why a cat is outdoors at all—shouldn't they be at home?

Kendall, Knut's mom, says, "Some people are dismissive—mostly dog owners. But those are just grumpy people in general, who probably have been scowling at everyone else on the trail, too. Most dog owners are super nice and think it's great to see a cat outdoors."

"Those conversations are always a little bit difficult," Hayley says about meeting off-leash dogs in leashed areas. "I think they don't take you seriously if you have a cat, but it is [serious]." She says that she can tell Reinhardt is happy and enjoying



**PICCHU**  
@adventure.cat.picchu

the outdoors when "he'll smell things, meow and do his little happy trot."

Dr. Mansum, who has a 14-year-old adventure cat named Boo, says, "It's good for people, especially kids, to see cats outside in a positive way. When I took Boo to [North Vancouver's] Capilano Suspension Bridge, there were kids who were scared to go on the bridge and their mother said, 'look, if a cat can do it, so can you.'"



**KNUT**  
@knutandolive

If you want an adventure cat, Sayaka, mom of Freyja, says, “Don’t do it because it’s trendy. Do it because you truly want to commit and care about the cat. Also, have the option to give up if the cat says no.”

Selvynna, Teddy’s mom, advises, “If you see cats on social media doing something adventurous, you might think that your cat should do the same [thing], but you don’t see the cats that don’t do that, or all the times it was unsuccessful.”

“It’s definitely a lot of work to take your cat outside and takes a lot of patience,” Danny and Celine, Mugen’s parents, say. “We often get frustrated and flustered, but we come back to the fact that he’s a cat. Cats do their own thing at their own pace, and there’s nothing we can change

about that. We like to think that the extra affection he gives us after these adventures is his way of saying thank you.”

Mariko, Tofino’s mom, says, “I love nature, but when I’m with my cats, it’s extra fun. And sometimes it’s hard to make a plan with your friends. People are busy. But your cat’s always available for you.”

James has a similar outlook for his adventures with Gary. “[When] you want to get out and do things, sometimes it’s hard to motivate yourself to do it by yourself, so you can bring a friend, even if they have four legs and are furry.”

---

According to Humane Canada, cats are still undervalued in society when compared to dogs. “I feel like we’ve done a disservice to cats

# GEAR GUIDE: 6 (P)AWESOME GEAR ITEMS FOR ADVENTURE CATS

## Knut Recommends: Tractive Mini

This GPS and health tracking collar provides your pets live location on an app. It also monitors sleep patterns and activity and gives health alerts. Get on the leaderboard in your community. \$69 + \$7 monthly subscription; [tractive.com](https://www.tractive.com)



## Mugen Recommends: RC Pets Primary Harness

Danny and Celine say, “We love this harness because it’s lightweight, minimal and secure. It comes in three sizes (S, M, L). We started with the small when Mugen was just three months old, and he’s graduated to a large. Most importantly, RC Pets is a Canadian company based in BC.” \$18; [rcpets.com](https://www.rcpets.com)



## Emily Recommends: The Navigator Convertible Cat Backpack

Emily Miethner, co-founder of Travel Cat, says, “This is our bestseller. What our customers love the most is how sturdy it is, especially the top, because many cats like to ride on the top as shoulder cats. You can have one cat riding on top and one cat inside.” \$280; [yourcatbackpack.com](https://www.yourcatbackpack.com)



## Freyja Recommends: Lambwolf Nomad Leash

Let your kitty follow her natural curiosity with this waterproof leash. Made of a soft vinyl coated nylon that’s lightweight and easy to clean, the long line extends to six metres. \$60; [lambwolf.co](https://www.lambwolf.co)



## Tofino Recommends: PETSFIT Portable Litter Box

This foldable litter box will be the *purrfect* camping companion: machine-washable, waterproof and private, this travel cat litter box suppresses bad odours and fits most cats up to 12 pounds. \$42; [petsfit.com](https://www.petsfit.com)



## Kahlee Recommends: A familiar blanket

This is “another tool that you can use to help your cat get more comfortable. It smells like home; it smells like them,” Kahlee says. Barbara says her black cat named Merlin loves making biscuits on fleece blankets. Sacrifice one of your (already fur-covered) blankets to become an outdoor comfort zone.



Archer & Mattie



**BOO**  
@drmansum

in a lot of ways,” says Laura J. Moss, author of *Adventure Cats: Living Nine Lives to the Fullest*. “We don’t give cats choices. They eat the food we provide at the times we provide it; we control what they smell and the temperature they’re in. By giving them options, whether that’s to go outside or just crack a window... most cats don’t have that opportunity, and I don’t think it’s because people are inherently cruel, we just don’t think about it.”

Cat owners are also stereotyped as “crazy.” Although cats, just like any pet, have distinct personalities, people tend to classify them as aloof and uninterested. “I know people who are like that too, and it doesn’t mean that’s all people,” Laura says.

The cat parents I spoke to cautiously reported hateful rhetoric they’d received on the trails or online, including abhorrent racist comments, like, “are you just walking your cat so that you can eat it later?”

This appalling behaviour does not belong in the outdoor adventure community. Cats belong in the outdoors, with space to explore safely and responsibly, just like dogs. So, the next time you see a feline on a leash, give the owners some encouragement and friendliness. We all need to be reminded that we are welcome to enjoy the outdoors—cats included.

Adventuring with these cats has been fantastic, but I put off writing this article because it’s been too painful for me. A few months ago, Archer’s breathing became ragged. One evening, he wanted to smell



**TEDDY**  
@theoretically.teddy

the fresh air on the patio, and my partner promised him, “I’ll take you outside tomorrow.” But tomorrow never came.

Anyone who has lost a pet knows they are beloved members of our family, and their absence leaves a hole in the fabric of our lives that no patch can truly mend. I hope that Archer, with his soft, chocolate-coloured coat and endless cuddles, is somewhere at peace, eating unlimited Temptations treats. I hope he enjoyed his life with us. I hope he was happy. I miss him terribly.

Tomorrow isn’t promised. So, I’ve slowly started to train Mattie to wear a harness, bringing him on the patio with me. He loves sniffing, listening to birdsong and lying in the pools of sunshine that warm our deck. He hates the sound of garbage trucks.

Will Mattie ever be an adventure cat? I don’t know. But through a series of small steps, I’m going to let him choose. ✕

## BEFORE YOU GO OUTDOORS...

- Visit your veterinarian
- Update your cat’s vaccines and antiparasitic treatment
- Spay and neuter your cats
- Pack a fully stocked first-aid kit, including Benadryl in case of bug bites, stings or allergic reactions
- Use a breakaway collar with an identification tag in addition to a microchip
- Have a plan B (e.g., a friend to take care of your cat, a trusted boarding facility available nearby) when organizing an overnight adventure

**To learn more about cats and adopt a cat in your area, visit your local SPCA.**

# LET'S VÉLO!

*A slow cycling  
adventure through  
southern France*

STORY & PHOTOS BY  
CLAUDIA LAROYE



**W**e're heading north, and I'm the sweeper. I wait for the other 20 cyclists to secure paniers and wheel away before mounting my e-bike.

I'm secretly delighted to bring up the rear of our group, forced to go slower than my bike's turbo setting of 25 kilometres per hour. I feel the sun and breeze on my face, smell the earthy brackish wetlands and admire fields of red poppies, their crêpe-like petals waving as we pass.

I've enjoyed e-biking trips on three continents, and the chance to clock some kilometres during a leisurely week of cycling and sightseeing in the scenic south of France was too good to pass up. I've signed on with the Italian leisure company, Girolibero, for a one-week bike and barge journey that begins on the shores of the Mediterranean and ends in the former Papal capital of Avignon.

Our cycling route follows the Rhône, one of Europe's major rivers, whose flow and width have made it an important shipping and transportation route since ancient times. This morning, the fifth of our six-day ride, our group of pedal-heads stops for a tasting at an olive oil farm.

Pascal Ndiaye, the owner of Moulin de Romanou, a small press that extracts oil from the farm's 1,300 olive trees in Théziers, proudly explains the workings of the family-owned operation, then offers oil tastings from a ceramic decanter.

The cold pressed olive oil is pungent and peppery as it hits the back of my throat, I widen my eyes in surprise. The spicy Picholine olives are a local variety in southern France and produce an intense oil

that would liven any summer salad on my dining table back home in Vancouver.

"*C'est bon?*" *Oui*, it is very good.

I buy some oil for the road, place it into my panier next to my water bottle and lunch and wave *adieu* to Pascal. Our cycling tour is all-inclusive (except for alcohol), and my husband and I plan to enjoy our picnic in the shade of Roman antiquity—the magnificent first-century triple-tiered

arches of the Pont du Gard aqueduct.

The slow travel pace of our cycling adventure, covering about 250 kilometres over six days, with its mix of energetic outdoor experiences and cultural opportunities to meet local makers and artisans, finds me in my happy place. The chance to enjoy shots of olive oil or glasses of wine before the clock strikes noon is my type of adventure.

With over 26,000 kilometres of cycle paths and greenways winding through historical villages, towns and landscapes, France is a paradise for cyclists. After all, the country is home to the thrilling yet gruelling annual Tour de France race.

We've chosen this region as much for its winding cycling routes through vineyards, olive groves and salt marshes as for the chance to travel through the picturesque



scenery of southern France, following the Rhône River through the Camargue and Provence. Our itinerary highlights include protected wetlands populated by pink flamingos, rolling hills covered in symmetrical vineyards, cycling up the Alpilles (a chain of low mountains) and visiting the famous bridge and Papal palace of Avignon.

The ViaRhôna, a recently completed 800-kilometre network of routes stretching

from Lake Geneva to the Mediterranean, has been designed to take full advantage of this landscape. The Rhône delta is relatively flat and suitable for families with children as young as 12 years old.

Our trip involves seven nights of sleeping on a barge and saddling up for daily cycles along small country roads, villages and several sections of the ViaRhôna. The route is considered to be moderately difficult; a safe and exhilarating way for cyclists of all levels to experience these stunning regions of southern France.

Our cycling journey began in the lesser-known region called the Camargue, where the wide Rhône River delta spills into the Mediterranean Sea. Briny wetlands and salt marshes burst with fish, sea grass and tiny pink shrimp that reflect native flamingoes in bright rosy plumage.

Jutting up from the marsh, the high stone walls of the Crusader fort of Aigues Mortes stands out as starkly today as they would have in the 1200s, complete with watch towers, iron gates and shops stocked with replica medieval weaponry.

Our floating hotel is the *Caprice*, a low-slung barge docked in a canal and painted in the colours of the French flag. The barge plies the fast-moving coffee-coloured waters of the Rhône, slowly passing fields of asparagus, rustic stone farmhouses and lines of Côtes du Rhône grape varieties between Aigues-Mortes, Avignon and then back seasonally from March to October.

Each morning, the air is fresh and cool as we tuck into a breakfast of charcuterie, fruit, eggs, yogurt and baked goods made by Juliano, the on-board chef.

Helmut Witt, our head

guide, is a fit and twinkle-eyed 74-year-old German who completes the daily safety briefing in French, English and his native tongue, switching languages with ease. Our four-person crew ensures that each guest's bicycle is tuned daily so that, when we're ready to ride, it's without worry of breakdown or mechanical failures.

When that does happen, he whips out the repair kit or medical bag to mend affected



bike or body parts. There is an easy schedule to keep as the ship moves while we cycle from destination to destination, but there's also ample time to linger on

## “OUR GROUP OF 21 CYCLISTS IS A CHATTY AND FRIENDLY MIX OF GUESTS FROM CANADA, ENGLAND, GERMANY, NEW ZEALAND AND THE UNITED STATES”

benches in shady parks or over daily gelatos and a cold Kronenbourg 1664 Blanc in the heat of the afternoon.

Our group of 21 cyclists is a chatty and friendly mix of guests from Canada, England, Germany, New Zealand and the United States. On the deck and dining room onboard our floating hotel, we swap cycling and hiking stories during the hours of navigation or over pre-dinner glasses of local rosé while anchored at the riverside quay.

Temperatures linger in the high teens to low 20s Celsius, making our 380-metre

ascent on the fourth day of our trip into the Alpilles, or the “Little Alps” between Arles and Avignon, less of a sweaty huff-and-puff affair and more an enthusiastic cycling experience.

The limestone massif of the Alpilles rises between the Rhône and Durance Rivers and is unique in the region. The higher slopes are chalk-white and shaded by Mediterranean pines; the lower hillsides are cultivated with olive and almond groves, and carpeted with a maquis, a Mediterranean shrubland that only sheep and goats graze on.

Carved on the natural plateau of the limestone cliffs is Les Baux-de-Provence, a stone village dating to the Middle Ages, built on the site of an ancient Neolithic settlement.

After locking our bikes outside the village, we wander the narrow warren of medieval alleyways, stopping to picnic on a quiet bench in a 13th century churchyard overlooking the sprawling Provençal valley. Taking in the village and valley views, I can see why Les Baux is regularly cited as one of the most beautiful villages in France.

---

Each day introduces us to a different village, varied cycling route and an immersive cultural experience. I'm a curious traveller, so every new place or person we encounter propels me onwards.

In Arles, our city guide outlines how former resident Vincent van Gogh became inspired by the light and shadow play in this ancient Roman city, whose First Century amphitheatre still hosts concerts, plays and camarguaise—thrilling and bloodless competitions between man and bull every year.

Vallebrègues, a compact village that was once an island on a river subject to frequent flooding, feels like a world apart. A traditional wicker-weaving industry formerly thrived in this quiet town, where residents were often cut off from the rest of Provence, dedicating themselves to a traditional craft that once employed hundreds of weavers.

The hamlet isn't a well-known tourist locale. But it's easily accessible by bike and is exactly the kind of delightful destination that slow cycle travel excels at uncovering for guests.



Wherever your travels take you, we make  
RV adventures even MORE rewarding!

As an Explorer RV Club member, not only will you receive access to exclusive benefits and savings, but you'll become part of Canada's largest national RV enthusiast club, where everyone is family.

- ✓ FREE EdvantagePerks membership – enjoy savings and discounts from over 60 brand partners
- ✓ Exclusive discounts at RV dealers
- ✓ Up to 10% off RV Insurance\*
- ✓ Fuel savings with Petro-Canada
- ✓ Low-cost emergency roadside assistance  
...and so much more!

Plus, a one-year **Explore™ Magazine** subscription and a 20% discount at Explore's Gear Shop.



**Join for the benefits, stay for the community.**

See why thousands of RVers are already, part of the Explorer RV Club.

Visit [explorerrvclub.com/exploreSummer25](http://explorerrvclub.com/exploreSummer25)

or

Call **1-800-999-0819** and reference **exploreERVC2025**

\*For full offer details, visit [explorerrvclub.com/exploreSummer25](http://explorerrvclub.com/exploreSummer25)

## If You Go

Book your own eight-day cycling adventure in southern France with Girolibero. Tours depart from May to October and cover a total distance of approximately 250 kilometres. To follow my cycle path, book the Bike and Barge Tour of Provence and Camargue from Aigues Mortes to Avignon from \$1,870.

[girolibero.com](http://girolibero.com)



At a small workshop, the floor is dusted with remnants of the white and brown willow reeds (*osie*) that are used to fashion custom baskets for customers from across Europe. Craftsman Daniel Benibghi grows and harvests his own wicker reeds for weaving baskets and products and conducts classes and workshops for the basketry-smitten. His atelier is next to the small but charming Vallebrègues Basketry Museum, proudly displaying works and tools from a nearly bygone era.

Avignon, with its famous bridge, enormous Palais des Papes (Papal Palace) and proportional, boxwood-framed vegetable gardens is the tour's final stop. My legs have become used to the daily ride

of 40 to 50 kilometres, and the only pain of our final pedal push from the town of Aramon to the gates of this imposing walled city is the regret that our journey is nearly at an end.

### “EACH DAY INTRODUCES US TO A DIFFERENT VILLAGE, VARIED CYCLING ROUTE AND AN IMMERSIVE CULTURAL EXPERIENCE”

The city's 12th century Pont d'Avignon bridge, the subject of the children's song “Sur le pont d'Avignon” once linked the banks of the Rhône, but now has just four of its 22 arches remaining.

The Palais des Papes was home to nine 14th-century popes and the substantial Papal treasury. I wander its cavernous rooms and manicured exterior gardens, astonished by the sheer size and enormity of the complex, which is still one of the largest and most important medieval Gothic buildings in Europe.

Cycling by day while enjoying the comforts and camaraderie of barge life by night is an ideal way to experience active adventures and cultural delights in southern France. I'll take my slow pace any day and leave that famous French bike race to the pros. ✕

explore.  
CERTIFIED PROPERTY



# YOUR INSPIRING ESCAPE AWAITS

EXPLORE ADVENTURE ISLAND

RED ROCK LAKE



**WIN A 5-NIGHT STAY AT  
EXPLORE ADVENTURE ISLAND!**

Enter today for FREE at  
[explore-mag.com/island-giveaway](https://explore-mag.com/island-giveaway)



Explore Certified Properties by Timber Escapes are exclusive cottages that blend luxury accommodation with wilderness adventure. Enjoy hiking, paddling, wildlife watching and more—all onsite or nearby.

LEARN MORE ABOUT EXPLORE CERTIFIED PROPERTIES:  
[DESTINATIONS@EXPLOREOUTDOORMEDIA.COM](mailto:DESTINATIONS@EXPLOREOUTDOORMEDIA.COM)

Book your stay at Explore Adventure Island or Red Rock Lake by contacting Timber Escapes today.

# EXPLOREWEAR

DESIGNED IN CANADA | SUPPORT CANADIAN MEDIA | SHOW YOUR LOVE FOR EXPLORE

▼  
Explore  
Forest  
Hoodie |  
**\$59.95**

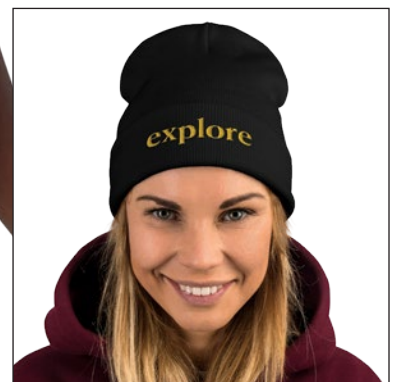
▶  
Explore  
Topography  
T-Shirt |  
**\$34.95**



Explore Five-Panel Cap | **\$29.95** ▲



Explore Large Organic Cotton  
Tote Bag | **\$36.95** ▲



Explore Embroidered Toque | **\$27.95** ▲



Custom print-on-demand apparel and accessories available exclusively  
from Explore Magazine. Order your ExploreWEAR today!  
[shop.explore-mag.com/collections/explorewear](http://shop.explore-mag.com/collections/explorewear)

**explore**™

# EXPLORE THE NATURAL WONDERS OF GASPÉSIE: QUÉBEC'S PLAYGROUND FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Visit the maritime regions of Québec for unparalleled outdoor experiences

BY JENNIFER MALLOY

Located in Eastern Quebec, the Gaspésie region is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts looking to immerse themselves in true nature. From watching whales dip and dive in the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the thrilling rush of river rafting, this coastal paradise offers a plethora of activities that cater to every type of adventurer.



## Whale Watching: A Majestic Marine Encounter

The waters off the Gaspé Peninsula are rich in marine life, making it an excellent location for whale watching. Seven species of whales can be spotted here, including humpbacks and minke (depending on food availability), along with white-sided dolphins and harbour porpoises. The best way to experience these majestic creatures is on a boat tour. Local operators offer tours that depart from Gaspé and Percé.

## Sea Kayaking: Paddle Through Pristine Waters

For those who prefer a more intimate encounter with nature, sea kayaking in Gaspésie is unparalleled and can be enjoyed in La Haute-Gaspésie, Gaspé and Percé. The region's coastline, with its cliffs and coves, provides a tranquil backdrop for even beginner paddlers, along with the possibility to experience colonies of grey and harbour seals. Equipment rentals, lessons and guided tours are readily available.

## PLAN YOUR ADVENTURE

Whether you're drawn to the call of humpback whales, the challenge of weathered trails or the serenity of coastal and deep sea fishing, Gaspésie offers an array of experiences that connect you with nature. With distinct landscapes and rich marine offerings, it's a destination that promises an adventurous trip of a lifetime.

## Bonaventure Island: A Birdwatcher's Paradise

Located in Parc National de l'Île-Bonaventure-et-du-Rocher-Percé, Bonaventure Island is home to the world's most accessible northern gannet colony, where over 110,000 large yellow-headed black and white birds nest on its cliff. Visitors can stretch their legs by exploring the island's four hiking trails, each featuring wildlife and surrounding seascapes. A highlight of the area is Percé Rock. This striking stone has a natural arch and spans 471 metres. It looks like a ship floating in the salty waves offshore. The rock formation serves as a nesting site for bird species such as razorbills, cormorants and black legged kittiwakes.

## Sea Fishing: Cast Your Line in Rich Waters

The region's abundant marine life makes it a prime destination for sea fishing. Anglers can venture into the Gulf of St. Lawrence to catch a variety of species, including striped bass and mackerel, or simply enjoy fishing from the village wharves alongside long-term residents. *Destination Haute-Mer* departing from Matane and *Rats de Marée* departing from Bonaventure provide guided fishing trips, ensuring both novices and experienced fishermen have a rewarding experience.

## Hiking the International Appalachian Trail

For avid hikers, the International Appalachian Trail (IAT) in Québec offers over 650 kilometres of diverse terrain to get your boots dirty. Starting in Matapédia, the trail winds through the Matapédia



Valley, Parc National de la Gaspésie and culminates at Forillon National Park. Hikers can choose from various routes, ranging from short day hikes to multi-day treks with differing levels of difficulty and three types of accommodation (huts, shelters and tent platforms) with options for guided tours along the way. For a quick trek with the payoff of great views, consider the 4.5-kilometre Mont-Ernest-Laforce Trail. For a challenge, attempt the highly recommended 17.4-kilometre Mont-Albert loop—which has 870 metres of elevation gain.

## River Rafting and Canyoning: Embrace the Rapids

The York River and the Bonaventure River, known for pristine waters, are popular spots for rafting; however, with over 1,400 kilometres of rivers, you won't run dry on alternative rafting options. Canyoning enthusiasts can explore Sainte-Anne-des-Monts and Gaspé waterfalls, rappelling down rocky cliffs and sliding down cascading water. ✕

## HOW TO GET THERE

From Montreal, it's a 574-kilometre drive to Sainte-Flavie, the gateway to Gaspésie. From Québec City, it's 344 kilometres. Both Montreal and Québec have major airports with car rental options.



← Visit [quebecmaritime.ca/GoToGaspesie](http://quebecmaritime.ca/GoToGaspesie) to plan your adventure.

# CROSSWORD



## Across

- 3. Site of sea stacks; thru-hike
- 6. Breed of feline
- 10. Largest freshwater island
- 12. An iconic boat ride to a waterfall
- 14. The end of a first hiking attempt on a hut-to-hut trail in BC
- 16. French cycling network
- 18. Québec's Playground
- 19. Brand of Editor's RV
- 20. Not a wetsuit

## Down

- 1. Fantasy book perfect for "glamping"
- 2. Jasper is a \_\_\_\_\_ zone
- 4. Sunscreen type for sensitive skin
- 5. Go there
- 7. A location in both Australia and Canada
- 8. POW Spokesperson
- 9. Elusive wild blooming flower
- 11. Orange-spotted adventure cat
- 13. *I Could Die At Any Moment* author
- 15. Small travel-trailer shape
- 17. Buttery ham delight

**ANSWERS IN NEXT ISSUE!**



# INTO GEAR

## Summer Stash

*Get equipped with six summer essentials*

COMPILED BY EXPLORE STAFF

### **Petzl CORE** (\$85; [petzl.com](http://petzl.com))

The Petzl CORE is a rechargeable lithium-ion battery designed for Petzl headlamps, including the ACTIK, TIKKA and IKO, offering a sustainable and cost-effective alternative to traditional disposable batteries. Its 1,250 mAh capacity offers significantly longer runtime and delivers higher lumen output, reducing frequent battery replacements. With its lightweight design and easily rechargeable micro-USB port that provides the versatility to be charged on-the-go, the Petzl CORE is your eco-friendly power solution.



### **YETI Ranchero™ Backpack** (\$350; [yeti.ca](http://yeti.ca))

The easy access Ranchero Backpack is the ultimate companion for those who blur the lines between work and play. Durable and functional, it features water-resistant TuffSkin Nylon, a stable GroundControl Base and thoughtful compartments for everything you need on the go. Thanks to a cutting-edge RipZip Opening, one quick pull gives you full access to the pack's spacious main compartment and everything inside.



### **YETI Hopper M20 Backpack Soft Cooler** (\$450; [yeti.ca](http://yeti.ca))

Throw a day trip worth of snacks and beers on your back. The Hopper M20 Soft Cooler allows you to put the day on your back—literally. This hands-free cooler comfortably straps on like a backpack to keep you mobile while a strip of ultra-strong magnets keeps the cold locked in. Now available in Rescue Red.



### **Columbia Konos Featherweight Shoe** (\$130; [columbiasportswear.ca](http://columbiasportswear.ca))

It's rare to find an athletic shoe that does it all—or at least, most of it. Columbia's Konos Featherweight is that One Shoe. A light, breathable upper (261 grams total), combined with a thick Techlite cushion for maximum impact absorption and all-terrain grip suitable for city streets and gravel trails means this shoe works for anything from coffee-walks to trail runs. We like the Mango-Stormy Blue colour scheme for a bit of fun.



### **ZOLEO Global Satellite Communicator** (\$199; [zoleo.com](http://zoleo.com))

ZOLEO connects with your smartphone to provide seamless global messaging that follows you in and out of cell coverage—plus added safety features you can count on worldwide, including industry-leading SOS alerting. Enjoy peace of mind that you can count on during your backcountry trips with limited-time savings to match. Save \$70 on ZOLEO until June 12!



### **Kuma Outdoor Gear Bear Buddy Heated Chair**

(\$360; [kumaoutdoorgear.com](http://kumaoutdoorgear.com))

Settle in and stay warm together in a Bear Buddy Heated Chair—designed for comfort, connection and the Great Outdoors. Equipped with two separate Bluetooth™ buttons, ADDHEAT Control Systems and stem glass holders on either side—you'll have plenty of room to cozy up together in this chair. Designed by Kuma Outdoor Gear, a proudly Canadian brand known for quality gear that stands up to the elements. x



## THE MOMENT

By Katie MacDonald (@yourmatiekatie)

Tucked in the stillness of the forest near Sunderland, Ontario, this cozy A-frame cabin was the perfect escape to celebrate my birthday with my husband. This morning, I woke up early and took a moment for myself, something I don't often get to do as a mom to young kids. Wrapped in a blanket, I slipped into the hammock with a book, surrounded by the hush of the forest.

The cabin stood like a postcard; the perfect background to my first morning of

another lap around the sun. This moment, simple as it was, became one of my favourites from the trip. It reminded me that joy can hide in stillness, silence and in nature. Sometimes moments like this stay with you, not because they were grand, but because they felt like a deep exhale after holding your breath for a little too long.

Travel can give you more than just new places. Sometimes it hands you back parts of yourself you forgot were there, that you'd only find somewhere this peaceful. ✕

### DETAILS

|               |                                  |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| MODEL         | Nikon Z30                        |
| LENS          | NIKKOR Z DX 16-50mm f/3.5-6.3 VR |
| SHUTTER SPEED | 1/50                             |
| APERTURE      | f/3.5                            |
| FOCAL LENGTH  | 17.5mm                           |
| ISO           | 400                              |





Seek and you will find.

# = GOLDEN RULES =



## Adventure Awaits in Golden, B.C.

Surrounded by six national parks and on the doorstep of the Canadian Rocky Mountains, Golden offers a wide range of scenic hiking opportunities from easy and relaxing walks to challenging overnight hikes.

Golden is a hub for outdoor activities, including mountain biking, whitewater rafting, canoeing, climbing, and more. Experience the thrill of adventure and end the day in an authentic, friendly mountain town. We hope to see you out there!

 Start planning: [tourismgolden.com/explore](https://www.tourismgolden.com/explore)

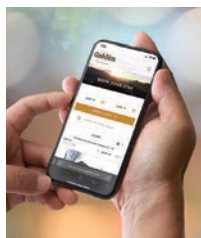


### Basecamp Lodge Golden

Unleash your inner adventurer at Basecamp Lodge Golden - the ultimate mountain retreat just minutes away from Kicking Horse Mountain Resort. Book direct and save.

1-250-344-9838

[www.basecampresorts.com/goldenlodge](https://www.basecampresorts.com/goldenlodge)



### Book Accommodations Direct

Enhance your experience with our online reservation system. Simply browse the accommodations page, customize by date, type, location, and amenities, check availability, and book.

[book.tourismgolden.com](https://book.tourismgolden.com)

Find more hints and tips on travelling safely and responsibly at [www.tourismgolden.com/travel](https://www.tourismgolden.com/travel)



[lovethenationalparks.com](https://lovethenationalparks.com)

Photo by Mich Winton



**YETI** BUILT FOR THE WILD.

SAGUENAY-LAC-SAINT-JEAN  
RAMBLER® 295ML STACKABLE LOWBALL  
RAMBLER™ 1.9L PITCHER  
TUNDRA® 65 HARD COOLER  
AVAILABLE AT [YETI.CA](http://YETI.CA)