

The Best of Canada

Planning a trip to such a vast and diverse country can present you with a bewildering array of choices. We've scoured all of Canada in search of the best places and experiences, and in this chapter we share our very personal and opinionated choices. We hope they'll give you some ideas and get you started.

1 The Best Travel Experiences

- **Exploring the Cabot Trail** (Nova Scotia): This wildly scenic driving loop around Cape Breton Highlands National Park delivers a surplus of dramatic coastal scenery. Take a few days to explore the area. You can hike along blustery headlands, search for whales on a tour boat, and dabble around a cove or two in a sea kayak. See chapter 3.
- **Hiking Gros Morne National Park** (Newfoundland): When the earth's land masses broke apart and shifted 500 million years ago, a piece of the mantle, the very shell of the planet, was thrust upward to form tableland mountains of rock here. Spend a week or more trekking along the coastal trails, venturing to scenic waterfalls, and strolling alongside landlocked fjords. See "Gros Morne National Park: One of Canada's Treasures" in chapter 6.
- **Watching the World Go by at a Québec City Café** (Québec): On a sunny summer Saturday, sit outside at **Le Marie-Clarisse** restaurant in the Quartier Petit-Champlain at the foot of the Breakneck Stairs. From there you can watch the goings-on in one of the oldest European communities in the New World while enjoying some of the best seafood in town. A folksinger may do a half-hour set, and then be followed by a classical guitarist. See p. 291.
- **Spending a Night at the Theater in Toronto** (Ontario): Toronto has a reputation for producing some blockbuster shows. In 2006, the world premiere of a musical adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* will open here. Toronto theater has also recently included *The Producers*, *Wicked*, and a *Les Misérables* revival on its calendar. Just don't overlook the offerings from the city's excellent smaller troupes, such as the Canadian Stage Company (CanStage), the Tarragon Theatre, and the Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People. See "Toronto After Dark" in chapter 10.
- **Seeing the Polar Bears in Churchill** (Manitoba): In October or November, travel by train or plane to Churchill and the shores of Hudson Bay to view hundreds of magnificent polar bears, which migrate to the bay's icy shores and even lope into Churchill itself. In the evening, you can glimpse the famous aurora borealis (northern lights). Either take **VIA Rail's Hudson Bay train** (☎ 888/VIA-RAIL in Canada, or 800/561-3949

in the U.S.), a 2-night/1-day trip from Winnipeg, or fly in on **Calm Air** (☎ 800/839-2256). See “On to the Far North & Churchill, the World’s Polar Bear Capital” in chapter 13.

- **Horseback Riding in the Rockies** (Alberta): Rent a cabin on a rural guest ranch and get back in the saddle again. Spend a day fishing, then return to the lodge for a country dance or barbecue. Ride a horse to a backcountry chalet in the rugged mountain wilderness. Forget the crowded park highways and commercialized resort towns and just relax. **Brewster’s Kananaskis Guest Ranch** (☎ 800/691-5085 or 403/673-3737)

in Kananaskis Village, near Banff, offers a variety of guided horseback trips, including food, lodging, and the horse you ride in on. See p. 576.

- **Sailing the Great Bear Rain Forest** (British Columbia): About halfway up B.C.’s west coast is an isolated region of mountains, fjords, bays, rivers, and inlets. It’s one of the last places where grizzly bear are still found in large numbers, plus salmon, killer whales, otters, and porpoises. **Maple Leaf Adventures** (☎ 888/599-5323) runs a number of trips to this magic part of the world on a schooner. See p. 697.

2 The Best Family Vacations

- **Fundy National Park and Vicinity** (New Brunswick): You’ll find swimming, hiking, and kayaking at this extraordinary national park. And don’t overlook biking in the hills east of the park or rappelling and rock climbing at Cape Enrage. See “Fundy National Park: Exploring the Wild Coast” in chapter 4.
- **Prince Edward Island’s Beaches:** The red-sand beaches will turn white swim trunks a bit pinkish, but it’s hard to beat a day or two splashing around these tepid waters while admiring pastoral island landscapes. See chapter 5.
- **Ottawa** (Ontario): In this family-friendly city, you and your kids can watch soldiers strut their stuff and red-coated Mounties polish their equestrian and musical skills. Canoeing or skating on the canal is lots of fun, and Ottawa boasts a host of lively museums to explore—such as the Canada Aviation Museum, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and the Canada Science and Technology Museum. See chapter 9.
- **The Muskoka Lakes** (Ontario): This region is filled with resorts that welcome families. Kids can swim, canoe, bike, fish, and more. Because most resorts offer children’s programs, parents can enjoy a rest as well. And once you tell the small fry that Santa’s Village is open year-round in the town of Bracebridge, you won’t be able to keep them away. See “The Muskoka Lakes: A Land of Resorts” in chapter 12.
- **Whistler/Blackcomb Ski Resorts** (British Columbia): Whistler and Blackcomb’s twin ski resorts offer lots of family-oriented activities. You’ll find everything from downhill and cross-country skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling lessons in winter to horseback riding, mountain biking, golfing, in-line skating, paragliding, heli-skiing, swimming, kayaking, and rafting summer trips designed for families with school-age children. See “Whistler: One of North America’s Premier Ski Resorts” in chapter 16.

3 The Best Nature & Wildlife Viewing

- **Whales at Digby Neck** (Nova Scotia): For a chance to see fin, minke, or humpback whales, choose from a dozen whale-watching outfitters located along this narrow peninsula of remote fishing villages. Right, sperm, blue, and pilot whales, along with the infrequent orcas, have also been seen over the years. Getting to the tip of the peninsula is half the fun—it requires two ferries. See “From Digby to Yarmouth: A Taste of the Other Nova Scotia” in chapter 3.
- **Birds and Caribou on the Avalon Peninsula** (Newfoundland): In one busy day you can see a herd of caribou, the largest puffin colony in North America, and an extraordinary gannet colony visible from the mainland cliffs. See “The Southern Avalon Peninsula” in chapter 6.
- **Whales at Baie Ste-Catherine** (Québec): At Baie Ste-Catherine, about a 2-hour drive northeast of Québec City, and along the northern shore to the resort area of La Malbaie, hundreds of resident beluga and minke whales are joined by several additional species of their migratory cousins, including humpbacks and

blues. Mid-June to early October, you can spot the graceful giants from land, but whale-watching cruises depart from Baie Ste-Catherine for closer looks. See “The Charlevoix Region: Baie-St-Paul, La Malbaie & Tadoussac” in chapter 8.

- **Pelicans in Prince Albert National Park** (Saskatchewan): On Lavallee Lake roosts the second-largest pelican colony in North America. Bison, moose, elk, caribou, black bear, and red fox also roam free in this 400,000-hectare (1 million-acre) wilderness. See “Prince Albert National Park: A Jewel of the National Park System” in chapter 13.
- **Orcas off Vancouver Island** (British Columbia): The waters surrounding Vancouver Island teem with orcas (killer whales), as well as harbor seals, sea lions, bald eagles, and harbor and Dahl’s porpoises. In Victoria, **Seafun Safaris Whale Watching**, 950 Wharf St. (☎ 877/360-1233 or 250/360-1200; www.seafun.com), is one of many companies offering whale-watching tours in Zodiacs and covered boats. See chapter 16.

4 The Best Views

- **Cape Enrage** (New Brunswick): Just east of Fundy National Park, you’ll find surprisingly harsh coastal terrain of high rocky cliffs pounded by the sea. Route 915 offers a wonderful detour off the beaten path. See “Fundy National Park: Exploring the Wild Coast” in chapter 4.
- **Signal Hill** (Newfoundland): Signal Hill marks the entrance to St. John’s harbor. Never mind the history that was made here; it’s uncommonly scenic, with views of a coast that hasn’t

changed in 500 years. The North Head Trail is one of Newfoundland’s most dramatic, and it’s entirely in city limits. See p. 200.

- **Bonavista Peninsula** (Newfoundland): The peninsula’s northernmost tip offers a superb vantage point for spotting icebergs, even into midsummer. You’ll also see puffins, whales, and one of the most scenic lighthouses in eastern Canada. See “The Bonavista Peninsula: Into Newfoundland’s Past” in chapter 6.

- **Terrasse Dufferin in Québec City** (Québec): This boardwalk promenade with benches and green-and-white-roofed gazebos runs along the cusp of the bluff rearing up behind the original colonial settlement. At its back is the landmark Château Frontenac, and out front is the long silvery sweep of the St. Lawrence, where ferries glide back and forth, and cruise ships and Great Lakes freighters and tankers put in at the port. To the east is the trailing edge of the Adirondacks, and downriver you can see the last of the Laurentian Mountains. See chapter 8.
- **Niagara Falls** (Ontario): This is still a wonder of nature despite its commercial exploitation. You can experience the falls from the cockpit of a helicopter or from the decks of the *Maid of the Mist*, which takes you into the roaring maelstrom. The least intimidating view is from the Skylon Tower. See “Niagara-on-the-Lake & Niagara Falls” in chapter 11.
- **Agawa Canyon** (Ontario): To see the northern Ontario wilderness that inspired the Group of Seven, take the Agawa Canyon Train Tour on a 184km (114-mile) trip from the Soo to Hearst through the Agawa Canyon, where you can spend a few hours exploring scenic waterfalls and vistas. The train snakes through a vista of deep ravines and lakes, hugging the

hillsides and crossing gorges on skeletal trestle bridges. See “Some Northern Ontario Highlights: Driving along Highways 11 & 17” in chapter 12.

- **Moraine Lake in Banff National Park** (Alberta): Ten snow-clad peaks towering more than 3,030m (10,000 ft.) rear up dramatically behind this eerily green tiny lake. Rent a canoe and paddle to the mountains’ base. See “Banff National Park: Canada’s Top Tourist Draw” in chapter 14.
- **Vancouver** (British Columbia): With the most beautiful setting of any city in Canada or indeed the world, there are numerous places to take in the view of mountains, city, and ocean: with a martini in hand from the 42nd-floor **Cloud Nine** lounge (☎ 604/662-8328); on the oft-snow-clad peaks of **Grouse Mountain** (☎ 604/984-0661), accessible via a quick tram ride; or from the window of your harborside hotel room in the **Pan Pacific Hotel Vancouver** (☎ 604/662-8111). But the best way remains the cheapest: Round about sunset wander to English Bay Beach near the corner of Denman and Davie streets, grab an ice cream or a coffee or nothing at all, and watch as the sun shimmers red, and then descends behind Vancouver Island, lighting the Coast Mountains, Vancouver, and English Bay in a warm red glow. See chapter 15.

5 The Most Dramatic Drives

- **Cape Breton’s Cabot Trail** (Nova Scotia): This 280km (174-mile) loop through the uplands of Cape Breton Highlands National Park is a world-class excursion. You’ll see Acadian fishing ports, pristine valleys, and some of the most picturesque coastline anywhere. See chapter 3.
- **Viking Trail** (Newfoundland): Travelers looking to leave the crowds

behind needn’t look any further. This beautiful drive to Newfoundland’s northern tip is wild and solitary, with views of curious geology and a wind-raked coast. And you’ll end up at one of the world’s great historic sites—L’Anse aux Meadows. See “Gros Morne National Park: One of Canada’s Treasures” in chapter 6.

- **Icefields Parkway** (Highway 93 through Banff and Jasper national parks, Alberta): This is one of the world's grandest mountain drives. Cruising along it is like a trip back to the ice ages. The parkway climbs past glacier-notched peaks to the Columbia Icefields, a sprawling cap of snow, ice, and glacier at the very crest of the Rockies. See "Banff National Park: Canada's Top Tourist Draw" in chapter 14.
- **Highway 99** (British Columbia): The Sea to Sky Highway from Vancouver to Lillooet takes you from a dramatic seacoast past glaciers, pine forests, and a waterfall that cascades from a mountaintop and through Whistler's majestic glacial mountains. The next leg of

the 4-hour drive winds up a series of switchbacks to the thickly forested Cayoosh Creek valley and on to the craggy mountains surrounding the Fraser River gold-rush town of Lillooet. See chapter 16.

- **Dempster Highway** (from Dawson City to Inuvik, Northwest Territories): Canada's most northerly highway, the Dempster is a year-round gravel road across the top of the world. From Dawson City, the road winds over the Continental Divide three times, crosses the Arctic Circle, and fords the Peel and Mackenzie rivers by ferry before reaching Inuvik, a Native community on the mighty Mackenzie River delta. See chapter 17.

6 The Best Walks & Rambles

- **Halifax's Waterfront** (Nova Scotia): Take your time strolling along Halifax's working waterfront. You can visit museums, board a historic ship or two, enjoy a snack, and take an inexpensive ferry ride across the harbor and back. Come evening, there's fiddle and guitar playing at the pubs. See "Halifax: More Than a Natural Harbor" in chapter 3.
- **Cape Breton Highlands National Park** (Nova Scotia): You'll find bog and woodland walks aplenty at Cape Breton, but the best trails follow rugged cliffs along the open ocean. The Skyline Trail is among the most dramatic pathways in the province. See "Cape Breton Highlands National Park" in chapter 3.
- **Green Gardens Trail** (Gros Morne, Newfoundland): This demanding hike at Gros Morne National Park takes you on a 16km (10-mile) loop, much of which follows coastal meadows atop fractured cliffs. It's demanding but worth every step of the way.

See "Gros Morne National Park: One of Canada's Treasures" in chapter 6.

- **Old Montréal** (Québec): Wander the cobblestone streets, where you'll find some remains—above and below the streets—of what founder Paul de Chomedey, sieur de Maisonneuve, christened Ville-Marie in 1642. Aboveground, buildings have been restored into homes, stores, restaurants, and nightclubs. Horse-drawn carriages clop and creak along the streets, past the heart of the district, Place Jacques-Cartier, which is lined with cafes. Below ground, a tunnel leads from the new Museum of Archaeology to the old Custom House. See chapter 7.
- **Toronto's Art & Design District** (Ontario): The stretch of Queen Street that runs west of Bathurst Avenue has been recently reinvented as the Art & Design District. This isn't just a marketing ploy—the title is well deserved. The area is the new home of the Museum of Contemporary Canadian

Art; it's also the neighborhood to see some of the best local design talent, with block after block of unique boutiques, small but edgy galleries, and plenty of cafes. See chapter 10.

- **Lake Superior Provincial Park** (Ontario): Follow any trail in this park to a rewarding vista. The 16km (10-mile) Peat Mountain Trail leads to a panoramic view close to 150m (about 500 ft.) above the surrounding lakes and forests. The moderate Orphan Lake Trail offers views over the Orphan Lake and Lake Superior, plus a pebble beach and Baldhead River falls. The 26km (16-mile) Toawab Trail takes you through the Agawa Valley to the 25m (82-ft.) Agawa Falls. See “Some Northern Ontario Highlights: Driving along Highways 11 & 17” in chapter 12.
- **Johnston Canyon** (Banff National Park, Alberta): Just 24km (15 miles) west of Banff, Johnston Creek cuts a deep, very narrow canyon through limestone cliffs. The trail winds through tunnels, passes waterfalls, edges by shaded rock faces, and crosses the chasm on footbridges before reaching a series of iridescent pools, formed by springs that bubble up through highly colored rock. See “Banff National Park: Canada’s Top Tourist Draw” in chapter 14.

- **Plain of Six Glaciers Trail** (Lake Louise, Alberta): From Chateau Lake Louise, a lakeside trail rambles along the edge of emerald-green Lake Louise, and then climbs to the base of Victoria Glacier. At a rustic teahouse, you can order a cup of tea and a scone—each made over a wood-burning stove—and gaze up at the rumpled face of the glacier. See “Banff National Park: Canada’s Top Tourist Draw” in chapter 14.
- **Stanley Park** (Vancouver, British Columbia) is something of a miracle—a huge, lush park (one of the largest city parks in the world) right on the edge of a densely populated urban neighborhood. Stroll the famous Seawall that skirts the entire park, visit a striking collection of First Nation totem poles, or simply wander among the giant trees and magnificent plantings. See p. 668.
- **Long Beach** (Vancouver Island, British Columbia): Part of Pacific Rim National Park, Long Beach is more than 16km (10 miles) long and hundreds of meters wide and is flanked by awe-inspiring rain forests of cedar, fir, and Sitka spruce. Beyond the roaring surf you’ll see soaring eagles, basking sea lions, and occasionally even migrating gray whales. See chapter 16.

7 The Best Biking Routes

- **Nova Scotia’s South Shore:** Not in a hurry to get anywhere? Peddling the peninsulas and coasting along placid inlets is a great tonic for a weary soul. You’ll pass through graceful villages such as Shelburne, Lunenburg, and Chester and rediscover a quiet way of life. See “The South Shore: Quintessential Nova Scotia” in chapter 3.
- **Prince Edward Island:** This island province sometimes seems like it was

created specifically for bike touring. The villages are reasonably spaced, the hills are virtually nonexistent, the coastal roads are picturesque in the extreme, and a new island-wide bike path offers detours through marshes and quiet woodlands. See chapter 5.

- **Old Port Route** (Montréal): The city has 239km (148 miles) of biking paths, and the Métro permits bicycles in the last car of its trains. One

popular route is from the Old Port west along the side of the Lachine Canal. A little under 11km (7 miles) one-way, it's tranquil, vehicle-free, and mostly flat. You can rent bikes at the Old Port. See "Outdoor Activities & Spectator Sports" in chapter 7.

- **Ile d'Orléans** (Québec): You can enjoy a day or two of biking around this bucolic island 15 minutes downriver from Québec City. A main road runs around the island, never far from the water's edge. You can stop at a pick-your-own orchard or strawberry field or in a tiny village with 18th- and 19th-century houses and churches. Two roads cut across the island at the southern end, and a third does the same a little beyond midpoint. You can rent bikes on the island. See "Day Trips from Québec City: Ile d'Orléans & More" in chapter 8.
- **Niagara Region** (Ontario): The flatlands here make for terrific biking terrain. A bike path runs along the Niagara Parkway, which follows the Niagara River. You'll bike past fruit

farms, vineyards, and gardens with picnicking spots. See "Niagara-on-the-Lake & Niagara Falls" in chapter 11.

- **Highways 1 and 93 through Banff and Jasper National Parks** (Alberta): Also called the Icefields Parkway, this well-maintained wide highway winds through some of the world's most dramatic mountain scenery. Take the Bow Valley Parkway, between Banff and Lake Louise, and Parkway 93A between Athabasca Falls and Jasper for slightly quieter peddling. Best of all, there are seven hostels (either rustic or fancy) at some of the most beautiful sights along the route, so you don't have to weigh yourself down with camping gear. See chapter 14.
- **Stanley Park Seawall** (Vancouver, British Columbia): Vancouver's Seawall surrounds the Stanley Park shoreline on the Burrard Inlet and English Bay. Built just above the high-tide mark, it offers nonstop breathtaking views, no hills, and no cars. See chapter 15.

8 The Best Culinary Experiences

- **Fresh Lobster** (Nova Scotia & New Brunswick): Wherever you see the wooden lobster traps piled on a wharf, you'll know a fresh lobster meal isn't far away. The most productive lobster fisheries are around Shediac, New Brunswick, and all along Nova Scotia's Atlantic coast. Sunny days are ideal for cracking open a crustacean while sitting at a wharf-side picnic table, preferably with a locally brewed beer close at hand. See chapters 3 and 4.
- **Newfoundland Berries:** The unforgiving rocky and boggy soil of this blustery island resists most crops but produces some of the most delicious berries you can imagine. Look for roadside stands in midsummer or

pick your own blueberries, strawberries, partridgeberries, or bakeapples. Many restaurants add berries (on cheesecake, in custard) when they're in season. See chapter 6.

- **Dining at the Best in Montréal** (Québec): Montréal boasts one of the hottest dining scenes in Canada. The current favorite is **Toqué!** (☎ 514/499-2084), the kind of restaurant that raises the gastronomic expectations of an entire city. The silky greeting-to-tab performance of the kitchen and waitstaff is a pleasure to observe, and the postnouvelle presentations are visually winning and completely filling. No restaurant in eastern Canada surpasses this contemporary French gem. See p. 238.

- **Sampling Smoked Meat in Montréal** (Québec): Somewhere between pastrami and corned beef, this deli delight appears to have had its origins with the immigration of eastern Europeans during the late 19th century. Meat eaters are ravenous at the sight and aroma of it, and *the* place to inhale smoked meat is **Chez Schwartz** on The Main (☎ 514/842-4813). Elegant it's not; immensely satisfying it is. See p. 243.
- **Eating Ethnic in Toronto** (Ontario): The United Nations has called Toronto the world's most multicultural city, so it's no surprise that the restaurant scene reflects that diversity. Whether you try the excellent sushi at **Hiro Sushi** (☎ 416/304-0550), fiery Thai at **Young Thailand** (☎ 416/368-1368), or imaginatively updated Greek at **Pan on the Danforth** (☎ 416/466-8158), your taste buds will thank you. See "Where to Dine" in chapter 10.
- **Dining along the Wine Route** (Ontario): The Niagara Region enjoys its own unique microclimate, a fact that explains why this is one of the lushest, most bountiful parts of Canada. Sampling the local wines is a great way to spend an afternoon, particularly if you add lunch and dinner to your itinerary at a vineyard restaurant such as **On the Twenty** (☎ 905/562-7313) or **Vineland Estates** (☎ 905/562-7088). See "Niagara-on-the-Lake & Niagara Falls" in chapter 11.
- **Feasting on Danish Specialties** (Manitoba): Enjoy seven superlative dishes, from *frikadeller* (Danish meat patties served with red cabbage and potato salad) to *æggekage* (a Danish omelet served with home-baked bread) at the warmly inviting **Bistro Dansk**, Winnipeg (☎ 204/775-5662). See p. 510.
- **Going Organic in Calgary** (Alberta): You'll walk through a quiet tree-filled park on an island in the Bow River to reach the bustling **River Café** (☎ 403/261-7670). An immense wood-fired oven and grill produces soft, chewy flat breads and smoky grilled meats and vegetables, all organically grown and freshly harvested. On warm summer evenings, picnickers loll in the grassy shade, nibbling this and that from the café's picnic-like menu. See p. 556.
- **Dining at a Hotel in Lake Louise** (Alberta): At its cozy dining room in an old log lodge, the **Post Hotel** (☎ 800/661-1586 or 403/522-3989) serves up the kind of sophisticated yet robust cuisine that perfectly fits the backdrop of glaciated peaks, deep forest, and glassy streams. Both the wine list and the cooking are French and hearty, with the chef focusing on the best of local ingredients—lamb, salmon, and Alberta beef. After spending time out on the trail, a meal here will top off a quintessential day in the Rockies. See p. 597.
- **Serving Up Exquisite Canadian Cuisine in Edmonton** (Alberta): The **Hardware Grill** (☎ 780/423-0969) is a stylish restaurant in a historic storefront with easily one of western Canada's finest dining rooms. The chef captures the best of local produce and meats without being slave to the indigenous foods movement, instead taking a Pan-Canadian view of fine dining. Fresh B.C. oysters and salmon, Alberta steaks, Québec foie gras, and Maritime lobsters are artfully prepared, and it's especially exciting to make a meal of the menu's ample selection of small plates—savoring these exquisite culinary explosions is the gastronomic equivalent of foreplay. See p. 625.

- **Enjoying Dim Sum in Vancouver's Chinatown** (British Columbia): With its burgeoning Chinese population, Vancouver's Chinatown has more than half a dozen dim-sum parlors where you can try steamed or baked barbecued-pork buns, dumplings filled with fresh prawns and vegetables, or steamed rice-flour crepes filled with spicy beef. One favorite is **Sun Sui Wah** (☎ 604/872-8822). See p. 666.
- **Eating Local in Lotus Land** (British Columbia): Self-sufficiency is the new watchword on the West Coast, with

top chefs sourcing all their ingredients locally. On Vancouver Island, the **Sooke Harbour House** (☎ 800/889-9688 or 250/642-3421) offers lamb from nearby Salt Spring Island, seasoned with herbs from the chef's own garden. See p. 726. In Vancouver, the **Raincity Grill** (☎ 604/685-7337) makes a specialty of fresh-caught seafood and local game, while the vast selection of B.C. wines by the glass makes dinner an extended road trip through the West Coast wine country, with no need for a designated driver. See p. 662.

9 The Best Festivals & Special Events

- **International Busker Festival** (Halifax, Nova Scotia): In early August, the 10-day International Busker Festival brings together talented street performers from around the world, performing in their natural habitat. Best of all, it's free. See p. 92.
- **Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival** (St. John's, Newfoundland): How did such a remote island develop such a deep talent pool? That's one of the questions you'll ponder while tapping your feet at this 3-day festival, which is laden with local talent. It's cheap, folksy, and fun. See p. 199.
- **Winter Carnival** (Québec City, Québec): Ice sculptures, parades, a canoe race across the frozen St. Lawrence, and an impressive castle of ice are among the principal features. The general jollity is fueled by a nasty drink called Caribou, whiskey sloshed with red wine. See p. 300.
- **Toronto International Film Festival** (Ontario): Second only to Cannes, this film festival draws Hollywood's leading luminaries to town for 10 days in early September; more than 250 films are on show. See p. 413.
- **Stratford Festival** (Ontario): This world-famous festival of superb repertory theater, launched by Tyrone Guthrie in 1953, has featured major players such as the late Sir Alec Guinness, Christopher Plummer, Dame Maggie Smith, and the late Sir Peter Ustinov. Productions, which run from May to October or early November on four stages, range from classic to contemporary. You can also participate in informal discussions with company members. See "Stratford & the Stratford Festival" in chapter 11.
- **Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival** (The Pas, Manitoba): This festival celebrates the traditions of the frontier pioneers each February with world-championship dog-sled races, ice fishing, beer fests, bannock baking, moose calling, and more. See p. 518.
- **Calgary Stampede** (Alberta): In all North America, there's nothing quite like the Calgary Stampede. Of course it's the world's largest rodeo, but it's also a series of concerts, an art show, an open-air casino, a carnival, a street dance—you name it, it's undoubtedly going on somewhere. In July, all of

Calgary is converted into a party and everyone's invited. See "Calgary: Home of the Annual Stampede" in chapter 14.

- **Celebration of Light** (Vancouver, British Columbia): This 4-night fireworks extravaganza in late July and early August (www.celebration-of-light.com) takes place over English Bay. Three of the world's leading

manufacturers are invited to represent their countries in competition against one another, setting their best displays to music. On the fourth night, all three companies launch their finales. Up to 500,000 people show up each night. The best seats are at the "Bard on the Beach" Shakespeare festival across False Creek. See chapter 15.

10 The Best Luxury Hotels & Resorts

- **Keltic Lodge** (Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia; ☎ 800/565-0444 or 902/285-2880): It's got grand natural drama in the sea-pounded cliffs that surround it, plus a generous measure of high culture. (Jackets on men at dinner, please!) The adjacent golf course is stupendous, and some of the national park's best hikes are close at hand. See p. 112.
- **Kingsbrae Arms Relais & Châteaux** (St. Andrews, New Brunswick; ☎ 506/529-1897): This new deluxe inn manages the trick of being opulent and comfortable at the same time. The shingled manse is lavishly appointed, beautifully landscaped, and well situated for exploring charming St. Andrews. See p. 127.
- **Dalvay-by-the-Sea** (Grand Tracadie, Prince Edward Island; ☎ 902/672-2048): This intimate resort (just 30 rooms and cottages) is on a quiet stretch of beach. The Tudor mansion was built by a business partner of John D. Rockefeller, and the woodwork alone is enough to keep you entertained during your stay. Bring your bike. See p. 165.
- **Loews Hôtel Vogue** (Montréal, Québec; ☎ 800/465-6654 or 514/285-5555): What was once just an anonymous midrise office building has turned into the king of the hill of Montréal hotels. The Vogue targeted international executives on the go,

and little was left to chance. Even the standard rooms come with fax machines, four phones, computer ports, bathroom TVs, and whirlpool bathtubs. Tins of caviar are tucked into the minibars. People with cell-phones at the ready fill the lobby espresso bar and adjacent dining room. Even after two changes in management, the Vogue remains steady on its course. See p. 230.

- **Langdon Hall** (Cambridge, Ontario; ☎ 800/268-1898 or 519/740-2100): This quintessential English country house, built in 1902 for the granddaughter of John Jacob Astor, is now a small hotel where you can enjoy 80 hectares (200 acres) of lawns, gardens, and woodlands. The guest rooms feature the finest amenities, fabrics, and furnishings. Facilities include a full spa, a pool, a tennis court, a croquet lawn, and an exercise room. The airy dining room overlooking the lily pond offers fine Continental cuisine. See p. 456.
- **Manitowaning Lodge Golf & Tennis Resort** (Manitowaning, Ontario; ☎ 705/859-3136): This resort on Manitoulin Island is an idyllic island retreat. A lodge and cottages are set on 4.5 hectares (11 acres) of beautiful gardens. The lodge, with its huge hand-hewn beams, a mask of the Spirit of Manitowaning, and images of the First Nations protective spirit,

provides a serene setting to restore the spirit. See p. 466.

- **Delta Bessborough** (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; ☎ 800/268-1133 or 306/244-5521): Canada is famous for its historic, turn-of-the-20th-century luxury hotels built by the railways, but none is more unexpected than this massive French château in the midst of the Saskatchewan prairies. Beautifully restored, the Bessborough is more than a relic—it's a celebration of the past. Expect exemplary service, comfortable rooms, and the giddy feeling that you're on the Loire, not the South Saskatchewan River. See p. 534.
- **The Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise** (Banff National Park, Alberta; ☎ 800/441-1414 or 403/522-3511): First of all, there's the view: Across a tiny gem-green lake rise massive cliffs shrouded in glacial ice. And then there's the hotel: Part hunting lodge, part European palace, the Chateau is its own community, with sumptuous boutiques, sports rental facilities, seven dining areas, two bars, magnificent lobby areas, and beautifully furnished guest rooms. See p. 596.
- **Fairmont Hotel Macdonald** (Edmonton, Alberta; ☎ 800/441-1414 or 780/424-5181): When the Canadian Pacific bought and refurbished this landmark hotel in the 1980s, all the charming period details were preserved, while all the inner workings were modernized and brought up to snuff. The result is a regally elegant but friendly small hotel. From the kilted bellman to the gargoyles on the walls, this is a real class act. See p. 621.
- **Westin Bayshore Resort & Marina** (Vancouver, British Columbia; ☎ 800/937-8461 or 604/682-3377): Vancouver's only resort hotel with its own marina, the Westin Bayshore looks out across the Burrard Inlet to the mountains and west to the vast expanse of Stanley Park. The finishes throughout are top quality, the beds divine, the pool is one of the largest in North America, and the size of the hotel (which includes a spa and conference center) makes it like a small, luxurious city. See p. 652.
- **Brentwood Bay Lodge & Spa** (Victoria, British Columbia; ☎ 888/544-2079 or 250/544-2079): Every detail has been carefully considered and beautifully rendered in this contemporary timber-and-glass lodge located on a pristine inlet about 20 minutes north of downtown Victoria. With its contemporary rooms, fabulous spa, fine dining room, and host of amenities, guests experience the luxurious best of the Pacific Northwest. See p. 721.
- **The Wickaninnish Inn** (Tofino, British Columbia; ☎ 800/333-4604 in North America, or 250/725-3100): No matter which room you book in this beautiful new lodge, you'll wake to a magnificent view of the untamed Pacific. The inn is on a rocky promontory, surrounded by an old-growth spruce and cedar rainforest and the sprawling sands of Long Beach. In summer, try golfing, fishing, or whale-watching. In winter, shelter by the fire in the Pointe restaurant and watch the wild Pacific storms roll in. See p. 738.
- **Four Seasons Resort Whistler** (Whistler, British Columbia; ☎ 888/935-2460 or 604/935-3400): This grand—even monumental—hotel is the classiest place to stay in Whistler, which is saying something. This is a hotel with many moods, from the Wagnerian scale of the stone-lined lobby to the precise gentility of the guestrooms to the faint and welcome silliness of the tiled and back-lit stone fixtures of the restaurant. This is a great hotel that's not afraid to make big statements. See p. 766.

11 The Best Bed & Breakfasts

- **The Manse** (Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia; ☎ 902/624-1121): There's not a bad room in this four-room B&B, built in 1870 on a low hill in the picturesque village of Mahone Bay. Spend the day browsing local shops, then retreat in the evening to the casual luxury of this top-rated lodge. See p. 88.
- **Shipwright Inn** (Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; ☎ 888/306-9966 or 902/368-1905): This in-town seven-room B&B is within easy walking distance of all of the city's attractions yet has a settled and pastoral feel. It's informed by a Victorian sensibility without being over-the-top about it. See p. 170.
- **At Wit's Inn** (St. John's, Newfoundland; ☎ 877/739-7420 or 709/739-7420): The centrally located B&B is bright, cheerful, and whimsical. Opened in 1999 by a restaurateur from Toronto, the inn preserves the best of the historical elements in this century-old home while graciously updating it for modern tastes. See p. 203.
- **Beild House** (Collingwood, Ontario; ☎ 888/322-3453 or 705/444-1522): On Fridays, you can sit down to a splendid five-course dinner before

retiring to the bed that belonged to the duke and duchess of Windsor. A sumptuous breakfast will follow the next morning. This handsome 1909 house contains 17 rooms, 7 with private bathroom. See p. 464.

- **Thea's House** (Banff, Alberta; ☎ 403/762-2499): Banff's most upscale B&B, Thea's House manages to combine rustic charm and modern elegance. This refined log-and-stone lodging is a short walk from the busy throngs along Banff Avenue, but it feels miles away in terms of restful comfort. Expect antiques, pine furniture, luxurious amenities, and a friendly but discreet welcome. See p. 589.
- **The Haterleigh Heritage Inn** (Victoria, British Columbia; ☎ 866/234-2244 or 250/384-9995): This exceptional B&B captures the essence of Victoria's romance with a combination of antique furniture, original stained-glass windows, and attentive personal service. The spacious rooms boast high ceilings, large windows, sitting areas, and enormous bathrooms, some with hand-painted tiles and Jacuzzi tubs. Everything is immaculate, and the suites make for wonderful romantic weekends. See p. 718.

12 The Best Camping & Wilderness Lodges

- **Green Provincial Park** (Tyne Valley, Prince Edward Island; ☎ 902/831-7912): Can't afford your own well-maintained estates? This provincial campground makes a decent substitute. Set on a quiet inlet, the 88-hectare (219-acre) park is built around an extravagant gingerbread mansion that's open to the public. See "Prince County: PEI in the Rough" in chapter 5.

- **Gros Morne National Park** (Newfoundland): Backpackers will find wild, spectacular campsites in coastal meadows along the remarkable Green Gardens Trail. Car campers should head to Trout River Pond, at the foot of one of Gros Morne's dramatic landlocked fjords. See "Gros Morne National Park: One of Canada's Treasures" in chapter 6.

- **Arowhon Pines** (Algonquin Park, Ontario; ☎ 705/633-5661 in summer, 416/483-4393 in winter): Located 13km (8 miles) off the highway down a dirt road, this is one of the most entrancing places anywhere. You can enjoy peace, seclusion, and natural beauty, plus comfortable accommodations and good fresh food. There are no TVs or phones—just the call of the loons, the gentle lapping of the water, the croaking of the frogs, and the splash of canoe paddles cutting the surface of the lake. See p. 478.
- **Tunnel Mountain** (Banff, Alberta; ☎ 403/762-1500): If you find Banff too expensive and too crowded, these campgrounds—three within 5km (3 miles) of town—are a great antidote. Most sites have full hookups, with showers and real toilets. And you'll pay just one-tenth of what hotel dwellers are paying for equally good access to the Rockies. See "Banff National Park: Canada's Top Tourist Draw" in chapter 14.
- **Clayoquot Sound** (British Columbia): The best place to camp in B.C. is on a wild beach on the shores of this vast forested fjord, with only the eagles for company by day and an endless supply of burnable driftwood at night. Much of the coastline is Crown or public land, so there are limitless places to camp (and it's free). The only trick is you need a kayak to take you there. Along the way you'll see thousand-year-old trees and glaciers and whales and bald eagles. See chapter 16.