

# The Best of Canada

**P**lanning 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 blustery headlands, scope 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 awesome tableland mountains of rock here. Spend a week or more trekking 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 Cafe** (Québec): Perched just overlooking the pedestrian-only rue du Petit-Champlain, the terrace of **Le Marie-Clarisse** restaurant offers a catbird seat to the world. A more pleasant hour cannot be passed anywhere in Québec City than here on a summer afternoon, over a platter of shrimp or pâtés. (In winter, cocoon by the stone fireplace inside: The rooms are formed of rafters, brick, and 300-year-old walls, and evoke the feel of a small country inn.) See p. 286.
- **Checking Out Toronto Theater, Dance, and Music** (Ontario): Sure, Toronto likes its blockbuster shows, which are usually housed at the Royal Alexandra or the Princess of Wales theaters. However, the offerings from the CanStage, Soulpepper, Opera Atelier, Tafelmusik, and the Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People are innovative and consistently excellent, too. And seeing the Canadian Opera Company or the National Ballet of Canada onstage at their new home—the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts—is breathtaking. 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. 575.

- **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 bears are still found in large numbers, plus salmon, killer whales, otters, and porpoises. **Maple Leaf Adventures** (☎ 888/599-5323 or 250/386-7245) runs a number of trips on a 28m (92-ft.) schooner to this magic part of the world. See p. 694.

## 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 plenty of attractions and programs for kids, too. Don't overlook biking in the hills east of the park or rappelling and rock climbing at Cape Enrage, either. See “Fundy National Park: Exploring the Wild Coast” in chapter 4.
- **Prince Edward Island's Beaches:** The red-sand beaches here might 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. The island possesses several children's amusements nearby, as well. See chapter 5.
- **Mont-Tremblant Ski Resort** (Montréal): The pearl of the Laurentians is Mont-Tremblant, just an hour and a half from Montréal and the highest peak in eastern Canada at 968m (3,176 ft.). It's a mecca in the winter

for skiers and snowboarders from all over and is repeatedly voted the top resort in eastern North America by *Ski* magazine. Development has been particularly heavy in the resort town; the area gains back some of its charm in the summer with thinned-out traffic. See “North into the Laurentian Mountains” in chapter 7.

- **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 fries 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, in-line skating, 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.

- **Travel the Klondike Gold Rush Route** (The Yukon): Follow the Klondike Gold Rush, traveling from Skagway, Alaska, up and over White Pass, to the Yukon's capital, Whitehorse. Canoe through the once-daunting Miles Canyon on the mighty Yukon River. Drive to Dawson City, and visit the gold fields, walk the boardwalks of the old town center, and listen to recitations of Robert Service poetry. Pan for gold and attend an old-fashioned musical revue at the opera house. Inexpensive public campgrounds abound in the Yukon, making this one of the more affordable family vacations in western Canada. See chapter 17.

### 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 plethora of 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 mainland cliffs. See "The Southern Avalon Peninsula" in chapter 6.
- **Whales at Baie Ste-Catherine** (Québec): About a 2-hour drive north of Québec City in the upper Charlevoix region, hundreds of resident

- minke and beluga whales are joined by blue, fin, and humpback whales in the summers. Mid-June to early October is the best time to see them. They can be spotted from land, but whale-watching cruises offer closer looks. The website [www.whales-online.net](http://www.whales-online.net) provides up-to-date info on activity in the region. See "Upper Charlevoix: St-Siméon, Baie Ste-Catherine, & 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** (☎ 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 a 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. Besides 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 within city limits. See p. 194.
- **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): Every narrow street, leafy plaza, sidewalk cafe, horse-drawn *calèche*, and church spire in Québec City breathes recollections of the provincial cities of the mother country of France. Atop the bluff overlooking the St. Lawrence River, this handsome boardwalk promenade, with its green-and-white-topped gazebos, looks much as it did 100 years ago, when ladies with parasols and gentlemen with top hats strolled it on sunny afternoons, with the turrets of the Château Frontenac as a backdrop. At night, the river below is the color of liquid mercury, and music from the *boîtes* in Lower Town echoes faintly. 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 up to 3,000m (9,843 ft.) rear up dramatically behind this gem-blue 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: 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 300km (186-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 farther. 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 "The Great Northern Peninsula: Way Off the Beaten Path" in chapter 6.
- **Icefields Parkway** (Hwy. 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 (9.4-mile) loop, much of which follows coastal meadows atop fractured cliffs. It’s demanding but worth every step. See “Gros Morne National Park: One of Canada’s Treasures” in chapter 6.
- **Vieux-Montréal** (Montréal): The architectural heritage of the historic Vieux-Montréal, or “Old Montréal,” district and the Vieux-Port (Old Port) waterfront promenade adjacent has been substantially preserved. Several small but intriguing museums are housed in historic buildings, and restored 18th- and 19th-century structures have been adapted for use as shops, galleries, boutique hotels, cafes, studios, bars, and apartments. In the evening, many of the finer buildings are illuminated. Today, especially in summer, activity centers around Place Jacques-Cartier, where street performers, strolling locals and tourists congregate. 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 home to the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art and to private art collections such as the Stephen Bulger Gallery; 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. 665.

- **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 peninsulas and coasting along placid inlets is a great tonic for the weary soul. You'll pass through graceful villages such as Shelburne, Lunenburg, and Chester and rediscover a quiet way of life en route. 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 here are reasonably spaced apart, 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.
- **Montréal's Lachine Canal** (Montréal): Montréal boasts an expanding network of more than 350km (217 miles) of cycling paths and year-round bike lanes on city streets. The Lachine Canal was inaugurated in 1824 so ships could bypass the Lachine Rapids on the way to the Great Lakes, and the canal now has a nearly flat 11km (6.8-mile) bicycle path on either side of it that travels peacefully alongside locks and over small bridges. You can rent bikes in the Old Port. See "Outdoor Activities & Spectator Sports" in chapter 7.
- **Québec province's *Route verte* (Green Route):** In summer 2007, the

province officially inaugurated the *Route verte*, a 4,000km (2,485-mile) bike-path network that stretches from one end of Québec to the other and links up all regions and cities. The idea is modeled on the Rails-to-Trails program in the U.S. and cycling routes in Denmark and Great Britain. Inns along the route are especially focused on serving bikers, with covered and locked storage for overnight stays and carb-heavy meals. See p. 275.

- **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 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 wharfside 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 it also produces some of the most delicious berries in Canada. Look for roadside stands or pick your own blueberries, strawberries, partridgeberries, or bakeapples. Many restaurants add these berries to desserts (cheesecake, custard) when they're in season, too. See chapter 6.
- **Pigging Out in Montréal** (Montréal): See what its cultish fans have been raving about. **Au Pied de Cochon** (☎ 514/281-1114) looks like just another storefront restaurant, but it's packed to the walls 6 nights a week because of its slabs of meat, especially pork. "The Big Happy Pig's Chop," weighing in at more than a pound, is emblematic. Foie gras comes in nearly a dozen combinations, including stuffed into a ham hock, with *poutine*, and in a goofy creation called Duck in a Can which does, indeed, come sealed in a can with a can opener. See p. 234.
- **Indulging in a Tasting Menu Dinner in Québec City** (Québec):

Higher-end establishments in both Montréal and Québec City are increasingly offering menus that let you sample the chef's wildest concoctions, and "surprise menus" are equally popular—you don't know what you're getting until it's right in front of you. The imaginative menu at **Laurie Raphaël** (☎ 418/692-4555) has included silky-smooth foie gras on a teeny ice-cream paddle with a drizzle of port reduction, Alaskan snow crab with a bright-pink pomegranate terrine, and an egg yolk "illusion" of thickened orange juice encapsulated in a skin of pectin served in a puddle of maple syrup. Dazzling! See p. 285.

- **Indulging in Toronto's Gastronomic Scene** (Ontario): Toronto is blessed with a host of stellar chefs, such as Mark McEwan (**North 44**, ☎ 416/487-4897), Susur Lee (**Susur**, ☎ 416/603-2205), Chris McDonald (**Cava**, ☎ 416/979-9918), Marc Thuet (**Thuet**, ☎ 416/603-2777), and Jamie Kennedy (**Jamie Kennedy Wine Bar**, ☎ 416/362-1957). This is your chance to find out why they're household names. See "Where to Dine" in chapter 10.
- **Tasting the World 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), modern Indian cooking at **Xacutti** (☎ 416/323-3957), classic French cuisine at **Bistro 990** (☎ 416/921-9990), 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** (☎ 888/846-3526 or 905/562-7088). See “Niagara-on-the-Lake & Niagara Falls” in chapter 11.
- **Cutting Edge in Winnipeg** (Manitoba): After Makoto Ono took first place honors as Canada’s top chef in 2007, his small and quirky **Gluttons Bistro** (☎ 204/475-5714) suddenly became a must-dine destination for gourmands from across the country. Putting an Asian spin on traditional Canadian foods, Ono delivers seriously delicious and inventive food that’s the perfect summation of Winnipeg’s multicultural yet emphatically midcontinent spirit. See p. 505.
- **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 picniclike menu. See p. 554.
- **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 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. 624.
- **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. 663.
- **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. 721. 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. 660.

## 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. 87.
- **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. 194.
- **Montréal Jazz Festival** (Montréal): The city has a long tradition in jazz, and this enormously successful July festival has been celebrating America's art form since 1979. Spread out over 11 days, close to 150 indoor shows are scheduled. Wynton Marsalis, Harry Connick, Jr., and even Bob Dylan have been featured in recent years, with smaller shows that highlight everything from Dixieland to the most experimental. See p. 259.
- **Carnaval de Québec** (Québec): Never mind that temperatures in Québec can plummet in February to -40°F (-40°C). Canadians happily pack the family up to come out and play for the 17 days of the city's winter festival. There's a monumental ice palace, dog-sled racing, ice sculptures competitions, outdoor hottubbing, zip-line rides over crowds, and dancing at night at outdoor concerts. See p. 296.
- **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. 406.
- **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.
- **Festival du Voyageur** (Winnipeg): There's no better antidote to February cabin fever than a midwinter festival, and this is western Canada's largest. The festival celebrates the French-Canadian trappers and explorers called voyageurs who traveled the waterways of Canada in canoes. Held in St. Boniface (Winnipeg's French Quarter), the festival brings together traditional French-Canadian food, music and high spirits. See p. 494.
- **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 early 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](http://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. 107.
- **Kingsbrae Arms Relais & Châteaux** (St. Andrews, New Brunswick; ☎ 506/529-1897): This 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. 123.
- **Dalvay-by-the-Sea** (Grand Tracadie, Prince Edward Island; ☎ 902/672-2048): This intimate resort (it has fewer than 35 rooms and cottages total) 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. 159.
- **Hôtel Le St-James** (Montréal; ☎ 866/841-3111 or 514/841-3111): Old Montréal's surge of designer hotels spans the spectrum from superminimalist to gentlemen's club.

The opulent Le St-James sits squarely at the gentlemen's club end of the range. A richly paneled entry leads to a grand hall with carved urns, bronze chandeliers, and balconies with gilded metal balustrades, and the 60 units are furnished with entrancing antiques and impeccable reproductions. A stone-walled, candle-lit spa offers massage and full-body water therapy. See p. 225.

- **Fairmont Le Château Frontenac** (Québec; ☎ 800/441-1414 or 418/692-3861): The turreted hotel opened in 1893 and has hosted Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip; during World War II, Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt had the entire place to themselves for a conference. Luxurious rooms are outfitted with regal decor and elegant château furnishings. Bathrooms have marble touches and every mattress was replaced in 2006 and 2007. Fairmont Gold floors, with a separate concierge and a lounge with an honor bar, offer expansive views of the St. Lawrence River and the old city below. See p. 277.
- **Park Hyatt Toronto** (☎ 800/233-1234 or 416/925-1234): Talk about having it all—the Park Hyatt boasts a beautifully renovated Art Deco building, a creative dining room (Annona), a serene spa, top-notch service, and

one of the best views in the city from the rooftop terrace lounge (where they mix a mighty martini, too). This is a place to relax and let yourself be pampered. See p. 385.

- **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 81 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. 452.

- **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. 530.

- **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. 595.

- **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, a real class act. See p. 620.

- **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. 452.

- **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. 745.

- **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.

- **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 guest rooms 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

- **Shipwright Inn** (Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; ☎ 888/306-9966 or 902/368-1905): This in-town, nine-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. 163.
- **At Wit's Inn** (St. John's, Newfoundland; ☎ 877/739-7420 or 709/739-7420): This centrally located B&B is bright, cheerful, and whimsical. Opened in 1999 by a restaurateur from Toronto, the inn preserves the best historical elements of its century-old home while graciously updating things for modern tastes. See p. 198.
- **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 11 rooms, 7 with private bathroom. See p. 459.

- **Thea's House** (Banff, Alberta; ☎ 403/762-2499): Thea's House manages to combine rustic charm and modern elegance, right in the heart of Banff. 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. 587.
- **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. 716.

## 12 The Best Camping & Wilderness Lodges

- **Green Park Provincial Park** (Tyne Valley, Prince Edward Island; ☎ 902/831-7912): Can't afford your own well-maintained estate? This provincial campground makes a decent

substitute. Set on a quiet inlet, the 88-hectare (217-acre) park is built around an extravagant gingerbread mansion that's still 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 for 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; ☎ 866/633-5661, or 705/633-5661 in summer, 416/483-4393 in winter): Located 8km (5 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. 473.
- **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.