



HIDDEN CANADA: 2025 EDITION

WHERE TO NEXT?

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12 COMMENTS SHARE SAVE FOR LATER GIVE THIS ARTICLE



The ***eighth edition*** of The Globe’s annual travel guide celebrates Canadian wanderlust with **10** new destinations

Canada is calling this year: Take the ferry to the supernaturally scenic Bell Island, NL; discover why St. Peter’s Bay, PEI is a great girlfriend getaway and Moncton’s St. George Street is hipper than you think; explore the fresh lakes of Manitoba, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, and learn why the world comes to Campbell River, B.C. before you walk through native Prairie in Saskatchewan and enjoy the retro charm of Waterton Lake, Alta.

MEEWASIN VALLEY, SASKATCHEWAN

BY BILL WAISER
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL



Sheep graze along the Meewasin Valley in Beaver Creek Conservation Area, a 15-minute drive south of Saskatoon.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SIK PICS PRODUCTIONS

A small flock of sandhill cranes soared directly overhead just as we reached a patch of native prairie. It was a detail that could not have been better if it were scripted.

The Beaver Creek Conservation Area, a 15-minute drive south of Saskatoon, closes to the public at 4 p.m. But for a few weeknights from late summer into early fall, about a dozen people can tour the site after hours and feast on a special “grazing supper” along the edge of the creek valley.



Grasslands expert Renny Grilz takes visitors on a guided walk through the Beaver Creek Conservation Area.

The conservation area falls within the larger Meewasin Valley Authority, which was designed in the late 1970s by renowned Canadian architect Raymond Moriyama to protect the South Saskatchewan River valley in and around Saskatoon. Beaver Creek’s grasslands are one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world today. It’s rare for land not to be broken by the plough, especially in Saskatchewan, and the area offers visitors a unique experience.

The dinner program begins late afternoon. Guests join grasslands expert Renny Grilz on a leisurely guided walk through the preserved area. The MVA resource management officer immediately heads for some native prairie and invites the group to lie face down, if we can. While Grilz talks about the regenerative forces of fire and grazing, we are encouraged to immerse ourselves in our surroundings: feel the ground, smell the vegetation and listen.



For a few weeknights from late summer into early fall, a handful of visitors can participate in an after-hours tour and a special “grazing supper” along the edge of the creek valley.



Sheep, which are regularly brought in to graze in the valley, play a crucial role in maintaining the health and diversity of the grasslands.

Our group of 20 stands and brushes off before wandering to the next stop nearby: a sand ridge. Peering down into a coulee, we are pleasantly surprised to find a small herd of resting sheep. A stock dog, perched atop a neighbouring rise, watches over them while local shepherd Jared Epp sits nearby.

Sheep are regularly brought in to help to maintain the health and diversity of the grasslands. We learn the animal’s role is fundamental to ecological integrity of the conservation area. Epp briefly describes the grazing habits of the sheep before calling on Dot, his border collie, to move the herd toward us, then back down and then toward us again. The sheep are close enough to touch before the dog moves them off again.

Grilz then leads us back to an interpretive centre where a long table has been set up on the back deck, overlooking the deep creek valley. The light from the sun, now lower in the horizon, catches the trees lining the valley. It’s a magical spot for dinner.



Saskatoon-based restaurant Odlā caters the “grazing supper,” which focuses on local, seasonal ingredients.

Odlā, a Saskatoon-based “farm-direct” restaurant caters the meal. It specializes in local ingredients, depending on the season and availability; even the meat comes from Odlā’s own pasture operation.

Supper was served family style, starting with a generous green salad with a dill-buttermilk dressing. The main course featured roasted striploin with red wine jus, honey-fennel carrots and garlic mashed potatoes. The tasty meal was made more delightful because tour guides joined the table, answering our questions about Meewasin and taking part in the conversation.

When it was time for dessert, guests took their chocolate mousse to a row of camp chairs on the other side of the building, where Epp enthralled his listeners with his stories about training stock dogs. He used a whistle and short voice commands to send Dot into action. Approaching the sheep in a low, predatory crouch, the dog moved the herd clockwise and then counterclockwise before bringing them to a standstill in front of us as the sun dipped below the horizon.

If you go

HOW TO GET THERE

Just outside Saskatoon, the Beaver Creek Conservation Area is reached by driving south on Lorne Avenue (it becomes Saskatchewan Highway 219, also known as the Chief Whitecap Trail). All proceeds from the Grazing Dinner support the MVA’s conservation and education programs. For details, visit: meewasin.com/experiences

WHERE TO STAY

Dakota Dunes Resort, is a 12-minute drive south of the Beaver Creek Conservation area, while many Saskatoon hotels are a similar distance north of the preserve.

WHAT TO BRING

An appetite, sturdy walking shoes and comfortable clothes that you don’t mind wearing when lying down in prairie grass.



THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: [OPENSTREETMAP](#)

The writer’s meal was covered by Tourism Saskatchewan. It did not review or approve the story before publication.

WATERTON LAKES NATIONAL PARK, ALBERTA

BY LARA PINGUE
THE GLOBE AND MAIL



The Prince of Wales Hotel overlooks Upper Waterton Lake. It was designated a National Historic Site of Canada in 1993.

PRINCE OF WALES HOTEL

The first thing to know about Waterton Lakes National Park, about a three-hour drive south of Calgary, is it isn’t Banff. The park reaches a peak of around 2,500 people in its high season and is virtually empty during the winter.

During my visit in July, we sidestep children on bikes and adults zig-zagging on Surrey bikes, the unwieldy four-seater ride of choice here among tourists who clearly thought they’d be easier. (I would know. I was one of them.)

At Waterton townsite, deer lazily roam the sidewalks, seemingly bored and unbothered by the hikers heading to their next climb and families slurping ice cream.

I get the distinct small-town feeling that being on a first-name basis with the locals isn’t unusual.



Reaching the top of Bear Hump rewards hikers with a panoramic view of the town and the surrounding mountains.
LARA PINGUE/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

“It’s retro here,” explains Aynsley Baker, who runs the hiking gear supply shop in town, a store that’s been in her family since 1922.

For Baker, whose two children are sixth-generation Watertonians, there’s a fine line between wanting the rest of the world to discover this place and keeping it as it is today: quaint, quiet and not overrun by tourists.

There are no Airbnbs or bed-and-breakfasts, and most of the cottages here have been in the same family for generations. While tourism is ticking up, the park hasn’t hit a million visitors yet, a statistic that Baker is just fine with. “We’ve had people come in and say they had no idea Waterton existed,” she tells me.

On a hot blue-sky afternoon, I wander to the pebbly shores of the Upper Waterton Lake and wonder why nobody has jumped in yet – until I stick in my toe. It’s freezing. I later learn these glacier-fed waters, the deepest in the Rockies, only reach about 15 C at warmest. (I spot a couple brave souls on paddleboards later in the day, but the lakes are mostly quiet.)



Admire Waterton’s chain of lakes, among the deepest in the Rockies, on two wheels.

LARA PINGUE/THE GLOBE AND MAIL



Wildflowers are plentiful in the park, which boasts more than 400 varieties of plant species.

LARA PINGUE/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Hiking trails abound here. On a crisp, clear morning we head to Bear’s Hump trail, a 225-metre hike up the mountain on a path dotted with wildflowers leading to the stunning vista at the top. I don’t know it immediately, but I’m looking at the mountaintops of Montana.

Which brings me to the second thing to know about Waterton: this is a park that has deep ties to its American neighbours, a fact that felt quaint in 2024 when I visited, and downright nostalgic in 2025. Waterton borders Montana’s Glacier National Park; the combined parks were given an International Peace Park designation, the world’s first, and named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the mid-1990s.

The countries’ connection comes up again when we have high tea at the Prince of Wales hotel, which sits like an elegant, green-roofed sentinel at the foot of the lake. The hotel was built in 1927 by the Great Northern Railway to lure rich and thirsty Americans during prohibition. From the vaulted dining room, huge windows give us a postcard-like view of the mountains. Today, it’s all soothing music and hushed voices, but I try to imagine the rowdy scene of a hundred years ago.

Later, during a boat cruise on Upper Waterton Lake, our guide tells us to look at a grassy line cutting through a patch of trees on a mountainside. It’s a makeshift marker of the Canada-U.S. border, he tells us. We’re in Montana now, a border crossing that felt unremarkable at the time. Looking back now, I wonder, will gliding through American water still be so easy this summer?

Only time will tell.

If you go

HOW TO GET THERE

Waterton townsite in the [national park](#) is about a 3-hour drive south from Calgary; shuttle services run from Calgary and Lethbridge; the park has only one main entrance.

WHERE TO STAY

The family-owned [Bayshore Inn & Spa](#) offers simple, unfussy rooms in the heart of the village. Rooms start at around \$259.

WHAT TO BRING

Pack comfortable hiking gear and shoes, a hat, a water bottle and plenty of sunscreen for outdoor adventures.



THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: [OPENSTREETMAP](#)

The writer was a guest of Travel Alberta. It did not review or approve the story before publication.

GYRFALCON ISLANDS, QUEBEC

BY CHLOE BERGE
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL



Guests of Ungava Polar Eco-Tours, which began bringing visitors to the Gyrfalcon Islands last summer, can stay in one of its five fiberglass domes.

UNGAVA POLAR ECO-TOURS

From my window seat on the Air Inuit bush plane, I watched the boreal forest peter out, replaced by the low, undulating granite of the uninhabited Gyrfalcon Islands of Nunavik. Only small, dark lakes stood out among the archipelago, like pools of ink spilled on the saffron and umber autumnal tundra.

But as I would learn, this remote and seemingly barren landscape in northern Quebec, just below the Arctic Circle, creates a space that reveals something rare: perfect silence.

“That’s the thing about northern nature – it’s quiet,” says my guide James May, co-founder of Ungava Polar Eco-Tours, which began bringing visitors to the islands last summer. It’s a subtle, blink-and-miss-it beauty.

As the first 100-per-cent Inuit-owned and operated ecotourism company in Nunavik, Ungava represents a major shift away from the hunting and fishing lodges that long defined tourism here.



Wild crowberries are picked during a hike across the island led by Ungava, the first 100-per-cent Inuit-owned and operated ecotourism company in Nunavik.

UNGAVA POLAR ECO-TOURS

One afternoon on our tour, my group of five embarked on a hike across the island led by our guide, Siinasi Tassé. As we traversed spongy, lumpy reindeer moss and rushing crystalline streams, we stopped to fill buckets with crowberries, pausing to devour fistfuls of the tart fruit, and medicinal Marsh Labrador tea leaves, which we made into steaming cups of tea later back at camp. We reached a small valley scattered with remnants of a stone caribou hide and inukshuks, which were traditionally used to steer the animals toward the awaiting hunters.

“We’ve lived on the land for a long time,” Tassé said, who went on his first hunt when he was six years old. “Land isn’t just land, it’s heritage.” The hunting lodges that once dominated Nunavik catered to trophy hunters from southern Canada and the U.S. and decimated the caribou population before the hunt was outlawed in 2018. Combined with a warming climate that’s changing migratory routes, as well as habitat loss, it’s rarer to see the animals in this region now.

But we’re treated to other spellbinding sightings out on the water the next morning. With May at the helm, our small boat motored out onto the bay. Appearing like apparitions through the fog, minke whales breached the steely waters and the slick heads of bearded seals popped up. “It’s something you feel here, when you’re out on the boat,” Tassé said, looking out over the sea and pointing at his chest. “It’s freedom; it’s culture.”



Watch for muskoxen and other wildlife from small tour boats that weave through islands.

UNGAVA POLAR ECO-TOURS

Woven into every visit are insights into Inuit culture and tradition. Meals are created by Quebecois chef and restaurateur Kim Côté, but also offer the opportunity to taste traditional foods, including muktuk (beluga blubber and skin) and caribou nikkuk (dried meat)

On another morning, our small motorboat skirted past a glittering iceberg, weaved through islands – some of which are swallowed by the high tides here at certain times of day – and docked at one islet where we tracked two muskoxen. The grand, primordial beasts grazed nose-to-nose before galumphing up to a ridgeline, their shaggy coats swaying like the long hair of heavy metal guitarists.

Later, my eyes seized upon something swimming near the shoreline. I watched in astonishment as an Arctic wolf emerged onto the rocky beach, sending a spray of seawater off its coat with a wild shake and locking eyes with our group. Then just as quickly as it appeared, the wolf bounded up the hillside and was gone.

If you go

HOW TO GET THERE

From Montreal, head north on a flight to Kuujuaq, and onwards to Tiercel Island on an Air Inuit charter flight.

WHERE TO STAY

Guests of Ungava Polar Eco-Tours stay in one of five sturdy fibreglass domes that sleep two and can withstand the island’s gale-force winds and inquisitive polar bears. Week-long tours are all-inclusive at \$14,400 a person, and include flights from Montreal.

WHAT TO BRING

Pack for Arctic weather, which can be cold and unpredictable even in summer, including both insulated and rain jackets and sturdy hiking boots.



THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: [OPENSTREETMAP](#)

The writer was a guest of Nunavik Tourism. It did not review or approve this story before publication.

BELL ISLAND, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

BY JENNIFER BAIN
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL



Once a bustling mining town, Bell Island is the largest island in Conception Bay and a short ferry ride from St. John's, NL.
GORD FOLLETT/NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TOURISM

On the ferry to Bell Island, in Conception Bay, N.L., I join the people on deck who know to keep watch for “the boots.” What looks like a giant pair of wellies in the rocks. This natural feature delights locals who say their history was built on the backs of miners, farmers and fishermen who wear them.

It’s the first sign that this island – with its unusual geology, mining history and supernatural edge – isn’t like anywhere else in the province. Among other oddities, it’s the only place in North America that sustained two deadly torpedo strikes from German U-boats seeking to disrupt the supply of iron ore to Canadian steel mills during the Second World War.

Bell Island – barely 10 kilometres by three km – once boasted the world’s largest submarine iron ore mine and was nicknamed the Isle of Iron. It was first settled in the 1700s as a fishing community. Its rock was used as ballast in many boats and anchors before people realized the valuable iron ore content. The mining era ran from 1895 to 1966, tapping into a rich vein that runs beneath Conception Bay. In the mining heyday, the population of this tiny island topped at 13,000 but now around 2,200 remain year-round and most commute to St. John’s to work.



Theatre of the Mine, housed in the old #4 mine shaft, puts on performances about the island's deep history and folklore, featuring the ghosts of its past.

JENNIFER BAIN



On the northwest sides of the island, visitors will find Grebe's Nest, a cove where two beaches are joined by a tunnel that was blasted through the rock by miners-turned-fishermen.

JENNIFER BAIN

First, I take in a Theatre of the Mine performance held in a nearby mine collar, the surface portion of the old #4 Mine shaft – to learn about the ghosts of dead miners.

“Take a piece of iron ore so the fairies don’t get you,” says the sombre student who sells me a ticket.

Later, it’s cold and damp when I enter the #2 Mine for a tour and walk 200 metres into tunnels that slope at a 10-per-cent grade. In the mine’s 71-year history, 106 miners were killed. They worked without safety gear, with rats at their feet and with help from an underground stable of Clydesdale horses.

Tour guide Ray “Fox” Galway, a son and grandson of these miners, counters the grimness by breaking into Rita MacNeil’s Working Man to show off the mine’s acoustics.

In the mine museum, I admired the black-and-white portraits of local miners taken by Armenian-Canadian photographer Yousuf Karsh in 1953. In the gift shop I see iron ore samples selling for \$2. But as Tourism Bell Island’s Henry Crane later confides, “our nuggets are everywhere on the island and free for the taking.”

After the mine tour, I set out to hike along the popular Gregory Normore Coastal Walking Trail that loops around the perimeter of the island. Named for the man credited in folklore as Bell Island’s first permanent European settler (which isn’t actually true), the trail is about 22 kilometres long so I only tackle a few chunks of it.



The "Bell" of Bell Island, a distinctive rock formation just off the coast.

JULIAN CALVERLEY/NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TOURISM

For the easiest portion, I park by the Bell Island Lighthouse at the north end of the island and stroll left to see Freshwater Cove, Miner’s Point and some gorgeous sea stacks (isolated outcrops of rocks standing in the ocean). Then I do some sightseeing in the southwest and park just off Bell Road to take a path by the community gardens and admire a tiny island dubbed “the Bell” offshore and another sea stack called the Clapper.

In the middle of the island, I discover the Grebe’s Nest, a cove where two beaches are joined by a tunnel that was blasted through the rock by miners-turned-fishermen. In good weather, kayak tours can be booked through the island’s sea caves.

Whatever you do, head for a feed at Dicks’ Fish and Chips down by the ferry. Just be sure to pronounce the double “s” in Dicks’.

If you go

HOW TO GET THERE

Fly into St. John’s, then drive 10 minutes to Portugal Cove to catch the ferry to Bell Island. The five-kilometre crossing takes 20 minutes.

WHERE TO STAY

If you don’t day-trip from St. John’s, [Bell Island Cottages](#) has four cabins from \$130 a night.

WHAT TO BRING

Dress in layers, wear hiking boots and pack binoculars, a camera and a waterproof phone case.



THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: [OPENSTREETMAP](#)

BEAR RIVER, NOVA SCOTIA

BY VANESSA CHIASSON
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL





At low tide, visitors have a great view of the town's colourful buildings perched atop wooden stilts.

DAVE AND SKY/TOURISM NOVA SCOTIA

There are no bears in Bear River, N.S. The community’s name is likely a misinterpretation of Louis Hébert’s name. Hébert, a French explorer and apothecary, wintered alongside this tidal river with Samuel de Champlain (the founder of Quebec City) in the 17th century. Others attribute the moniker to Simon Imbert, another Champlain contemporary. What is certain is that Hébert left his mark on the area. He’s credited with planting Canada’s first grapevines here in 1611. Little did he realize that, more than 400 years later, another pharmacist would continue what he started.

Enter pharmacist-turned-winemaker Susan Wong and her husband Darren Carey, who grow 12 grape varieties at Bear River Vineyards.

Though I grew up in Nova Scotia, I had never visited this history-filled hamlet that’s just a 15-minute drive from Digby, the gateway to the Bay of Fundy. I thought I had a firm grasp on the province’s wines too. Nova Scotia is famous for its distinctive white wines, giving rise to North America’s first appellation: Tidal Bay. Nova Scotian reds, however, usually don’t hit anyone’s radar – including mine, until I tried Bear River Vineyards’ Emboldened red wine. A blend of Baco Noir and Maréchal Foch, two cold hardy grapes that can handle the harshest winters, the combination is smooth, spicy and – dare I say it – even a little bit sexy.



Bear River Vineyards, run by Susan Wong and her husband Darren Carey, has the only gravity-fed wine process east of Ontario.

JODY ROBBINS/TOURISM NOVA SCOTIA

While her background as a scientist is helpful, there’s more to Wong’s work than formulas and equations. “Winemaking is part science, but also a big part art and a large part magic,” she said.

The Bear River tasting room is a 4.5-storey wood and stone hay barn from 1883. You might spy some interesting odds and ends inside, including unusual door knockers, a repurposed bank vault and dairy vats that will never fit out the front door. This gorgeous hillside structure also doubles as a winemaking facility, and Bear River Vineyards has the only gravity-fed wine process east of Ontario. Something about that feels poetic. The wine has its own rhythm and ebbs and flows, just like the

nearby tides.

As impressive as the tasting room is, you’ll want to enjoy your drink outside to enjoy the view. It’s easy to see why the region has been nicknamed Nova Scotia’s “Little Switzerland.” There’s nothing that resembles the Alps, but the vibrant green hills, old farm buildings and fresh air are familiar.



Cross the river for picturesque views of the town.

DAVE AND SKY/TOURISM NOVA SCOTIA



Among the few small shops in the village is Sissiboo Coffee Roaster, a cafe and gallery.

ROVE PRODUCTIONS/TOURISM NOVA SCOTIA

You’d be forgiven for wanting to spend your entire visit at the vineyard but Bear River village is not to be missed. You’ll find cute cafes and interesting galleries, many of which are perched on spindly yet strong wooden legs. When your next-door neighbour is the Bay of Fundy, home to the highest tides in the world, you get creative with your building plans. Visitors should swing around the corner to the parking lot next to the Bear River Fire Department to catch a great view of the stilt-buildings.

As a Bluenoser, I thought I knew everything Nova Scotia had to offer, but I now appreciate what drew early explorers including Louis Hébert and modern adventurers like Susan Wong to put down roots in every sense of the word. Bear River is a tiny spot that offers something different, delightful and delicious.

If you go

HOW TO GET THERE

Bear River is 15 minutes from Digby, where there is a ferry terminal that offers regular connections to Saint John. The town is located off Highway 101, about 2.5 hours from Halifax. Time your arrival with low tide to see the village on stilts.

WHERE TO STAY

Bear River Vineyards has a one-bedroom rental unit in its historic barn. Stays include a private tour and tasting. The Bear River Millyard offers cabins, glamping domes and campsites.

WHAT TO BRING

Room in your suitcase to bring home bottles from Bear River Vineyards.



THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: [OPENSTREETMAP](#)

The writer was guest of Nova Scotia Tourism. It did not review or approve the story before publication.

KENORA AND LAKE OF THE WOODS, ONTARIO

BY CATHERINE DAWSON MARCH
THE GLOBE AND MAIL





Lake of the Woods, a 12 kilometre-long inland lake in Northern Ontario, is renowned for its boating culture and walleye fishing.

CATHERINE DAWSON MARCH/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Consider Lake of the Woods in Northern Ontario an enormous “hidden gem.” The 112 kilometre-long inland lake has 14,522 islands with more than 40,000 km of shoreline (not including all the islands) that borders Ontario, Manitoba and Minnesota.

Honestly, it’s hard to miss. But most Southern Ontarians have no idea this idyllic expanse of islands, boreal forest and Canadian Shield exists. The name Lake of the Woods is believed to be a mispronunciation of its Ojibway name Pikwedina Sagainan, or the “inland lake of the sand hills.”

Today it’s renowned for a freewheeling boating culture and enviable walleye fishing. Yet Manitobans and Americans mostly have it to themselves. Time to take this gem back, Ontario!

Start in the gateway town of Kenora, population 15,000 or so, which hugs LOTW’s northern shores. Businesses here, including the grocery store and hospital, often have a dock for customers. Though Kenora has a long history of industry – fur trade, logging, mining and railroad, today it’s the best jumping off point to explore the lake.

One of the best ways is to hire a fishing guide at Lake of the Woods Marina, even if you’re not really into fishing. Our guide, Mike Davis, showed up with a sweet ride: a 19-foot-long, 115 horsepower speed boat. He took us to his favourite spots – some so far from the busy waterways near town that only pelicans floated by. When Davis killed the engine, solitude enveloped us.

“If we don’t get a bite in five minutes, we move,” he said. I thought he was joking. He wasn’t. Three minutes after I dropped my line (Davis handled the live bait ickiness) he talked me through reeling in a 17-inch walleye. When the fish come that fast, fishing is actually fun. Locals also know where the best billionaire homes are, so on your way back into town enjoy the shameless looky-loo tour.

Road trippers pushing across the country should break up the drive in Kenora, too. Pull in for a night, if only to explore the scenic bays and islands closer to town on board a local institution: the M.S. Kenora. On busier days, you might not be able to hear the guide’s commentary or even find a seat but the two-storey tour boat but it does have a liquor licence and snacks to complement the views.



Kenora is home to Husky the Muskie, a 12-metre tall statue first erected in 1967 and later rebuilt in 1995 to bring awareness to water pollution prevention in Ontario's lakes.
CATHERINE DAWSON MARCH/THE GLOBE AND MAIL



The Lake of the Woods Brewing Company in Kenora serves up locally made craft beers and ciders in a historic firehall.
CATHERINE DAWSON MARCH/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Soak up the local kitsch by taking a selfie with the 12-metre tall Husky the Muskie statue and enjoy the town’s excellent local cafes. (In June, follow the smell of roasting coffee onto the lake to find the Nautical Coffee pontoon boat.) On the waterfront, Boathouse Lakeside Grill probably wins best patio overlooking busy Rat Portage Bay. (Kenora used to be called Rat Portage when it was a Hudson Bay outpost – the name is another mispronounced Ojibway word that meant country of the muskrats.) Visitors should eventually walk away from the water to get a table at Lake of the Woods Brewing Company, a lively taproom built in a historic firehall. The vibe is friendly with excellent, locally made craft beers and ciders and there’s walleye on the menu, amongst the usual pub grub.

If the weather is fine, escape to Kenora’s Coney Island via pontoon shuttle from the harbourfront for a beach day. Because getting out onto that enormous freshwater expanse is what turns a small town visit into an extraordinary experience.

If you go

HOW TO GET THERE

Kenora is an exit off the Trans-Canada Highway, some two days drive from Toronto, or 2.5 hours from Winnipeg. Southern Ontarians can also fly to Winnipeg, rent a car and drive east into Ontario.

WHERE TO STAY

Short visit? Book the bayside [Clarion Lakeside Inn](#) (ask for a water view). Rental splurge? Consider the luxurious, remote 10-room [Grace Anne II Lodge](#), a 90-minute speedboat ride from town. Private chef and outdoor activities included. Prices available upon request.

WHAT TO BRING

Pack a bathing suit, an Ontario fishing licence and get out onto the water.



THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: [OPENSTREETMAP](#)

The writer was a guest of Tourism Ontario and Kenora. Neither approved or reviewed the story before publication.

CAMPBELL RIVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

BY MARSHA LEDERMAN
THE GLOBE AND MAIL



Walk the suspension bridge in Elk Falls Park, just outside Campbell River.

BLUETREE PHOTOGRAPHY

Sometimes you have to venture very far from home to have a light bulb moment about it. Such was the case for Amanda Mailman, a lifelong resident of Campbell River, B.C., who was travelling in the Galápagos Islands when she had a revelation. “All of these international tourists are excited to see these seals,” she recalls. “I’m like, I sit in my front yard and look at these all day long.”

An idea was born.

During my few days in and near Campbell River (where I stayed at the hotel Mailman built after her epiphany) I saw seals, sea lions, bears, whales. Salmon jumping from the water. Eagles circling above.

Campbell River is on the east coast of Vancouver Island. On the 50th parallel (as a local monument announces), the city is a sort of gateway to the north island, and famously home to the island’s northernmost traffic light.



In the northeast of Vancouver Island, Campbell River is the gateway to the north island and all the beauty it has to offer.

JEROEN MIKKERS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Hardly overrun with tourists (yet), Campbell River is an ideal base for wildlife viewing and other outdoor adventures. It is world famous for its salmon fishing, I’m told. You can also kayak, bike and hike, including at nearby Strathcona Provincial Park. There are sandy beaches for exploring. You can even snorkel with the salmon, especially in peak season, late summer.

When I learned that the Great Bear Rainforest is reachable on a day trip by boat, I booked our tickets for what turned out to be a fruitful wildlife-seeing mission with Homalco Wildlife & Cultural Tours. Once we landed, we saw several grizzly bears sauntering down the river, hunting for salmon. We also saw all kinds of marine life from the boat, stopping to admire humpback whales – bobbing close enough that I could hear spurts from the blowhole.

At the end of the long day, we returned to our hotel. Naturally Pacific Resort opened last year – an upscale hotel on a golf course, with an indoor pool opening to the elements; an outdoor hot tub; first-class spa and a restaurant that uses produce grown on the property.

Not that most people would travel here for a swish hotel, but it’s a nice place to land after a busy day exploring all that nature. And it could be a local-tourism game-changer.



Rooms at the Naturally Pacific Resort offer scenic views of the surrounding mountains.



The resort, which is on a golf course, also has a pool, a first-class spa and restaurant on site.

MICHAEL VANAREY/NATURALLY PACIFIC RESORT

MICHAEL VANAREY/NATURALLY PACIFIC RESORT

Previously a logging hub, this part of British Columbia experienced severe economic losses when the industry dried up. But other gains have resulted.

As we kayaked through the tranquil channels of the Campbell River estuary, my guide, Leah Hill, told me how, when she was growing up there, log booms on the river blocked out the sunlight, making the waters inhospitable for fish, seals and other wildlife. Salmon were literally jumping out of the water as she explained this. “When you let Mother Nature do her thing, she will care for us.”

For something a little less wild but still sporty, the Velocity driving range next to the hotel was a huge hit with my teenager. We both became a little obsessed with TopTracer, an immersive golf game where you hit balls into the driving range as cameras track your shots, allowing you to see the results on screens.

There are urban experiences here too. I enjoyed the Campbell River Art Gallery (and its gift shop). Afterward, I visited Freyja Croissant Bakery & Coffee Shop for house-made pastries so good, they alone could entice me back to Campbell River. Not that I need a peaches & cream cruffin for that. But days of whale-watching, bear-spotting, kayaking, hiking, experience-showering and flailing at the driving range can sure work up an appetite.

If you go

HOW TO GET THERE

From Horseshoe Bay, take a B.C. Ferry to Nanaimo and drive north. Pacific Coastal Airlines flies to Campbell River. Air Canada and WestJet fly to the Comox Valley Airport.

WHERE TO STAY

The 100-room Naturally Pacific Resort, a short drive from the oceanfront, features hospitality offerings that rival any big-city property.

WHAT TO BRING

Bathing suit, watersports and hiking gear, golf clubs. Rainwear and sunscreen (welcome to B.C.).



THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: [OPENSTREETMAP](#)

The writer was the guest of Destination British Columbia and Naturally Pacific Resort. They did not review or approve this article.

ST. PETERS BAY, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

BY DAKSHANA BASCARAMURTY
THE GLOBE AND MAIL



St. Peter's Harbour Lighthouse, a symbol of the history of one of PEI's first French settlements, is located on a dune-lined beach beloved by locals.

TOURISM PEI

Sitting on a picnic bench at Rick’s Fish & Chips on Prince Edward Island, I held my first lobster roll of the season in one hand and, with the other, scratched a blackfly bite on my neck. The itchy sensation was soon replaced with numbing coolness as my friend Jenny pressed her canned drink against my skin.

Tears sprang to my eyes. It was a simple act of tenderness that reminded me how nice it was to be on the Island with the undivided attention of a friend, both of us child-free for three days.

For me and so many other Canadians, PEI has always been a family destination. But that weekend in late June (just before the start of high tourist season) I was discovering a different way to experience the Island.

St. Peter’s Bay, on the northern coast of PEI, has a sleepy, rural charm and was the perfect setting for an unhurried, grown-up escape. We shared the road with farm vehicles, put the day’s first footprints into the sand at a tucked-away beach and one morning had a strange, reckless breakfast of hotel coffee and half a dozen oysters served by the world’s cheesiest – and most charming – shucker at Julio’s Oyster Express.



Biking down a small dirt path called Lighthouse Road will bring visitors along a scenic route to St. Peters Harbour Lighthouse and its surrounding beaches.

TOURISM PEI

For most visitors to this area, the biggest draw is Greenwich Beach, part of Prince Edward Island National Park, with its floating boardwalk and sloping sand dunes. But on the other side of the bay from Greenwich – and down a blink-and-you’ll-miss-it dirt path called Lighthouse Road – is St. Peters Harbour Lighthouse. It’s on a dune-lined beach beloved by locals where the sand is littered with oyster and mussel shells and sun-bleached driftwood. If you go early enough in the morning, you can feel like you’re the first visitor to discover it.

There’s a lot you can see by car on PEI, but even more that can be taken in by bike. At high season on the busiest segments of the Confederation Trail, cyclist traffic is heavy enough that you’ll have to ride single file. But there were long stretches of our 24-kilometre round-trip from St. Peter’s Bay to Morell where Jenny and I rode side-by-side without encountering another soul. We coasted through grassy fields, patches of forest and along the boulder-lined bay, hardly breaking a sweat – because we’d wisely rented e-bikes from Confederation Trail Bike Rental Adventures.

Not that tranquility was hard to find in St. Peter’s Bay but it felt necessary to seek out the epicentre of it at Mysa, the Island’s first Nordic spa.



St. Peters Bay Roman Catholic Church overlooks a mussel farm in St. Peters Bay.
TOURISM PEI



Mysa, PEI’s first Nordic spa, offers a complete thermal experience.
TOURISM PEI

Late one afternoon, half a dozen spa-goers leaned back on Adirondack chairs, sunbathing with their noses poked into paperbacks. Others suppressed shrieks as they turned buckets of frigid water on each other’s heads.

Jenny and I traded whispered gossip in the barrel sauna. We nestled into the comfy floor loungers in the sunny relaxation room with our books. I looked up from mine and for a few meditative minutes watched the wind ruffle the tall grasses in front of the glistening bay, where hundreds of black buoys bobbed on top of the water like giant peppercorns, holding up ropes on which mussels were farmed.

The mussels reminded me we should probably head back to our cottage to shower and change before dinner and I said as much to Jenny. But she didn’t respond. Book splayed open on her chest, Jenny was enjoying the first guilt-free nap she’d had in years.

If you go

HOW TO GET THERE

St. Peter’s Bay is a 40-minute drive from the Charlottetown Airport and 45-minute drive from the Wood Islands ferry terminal.

WHERE TO STAY

Mysa Nordic Spa & Resort has a few guest cottages on site and rooms start at \$349 a night plus spa passes. Rodd Crowbush Golf & Beach Resort in nearby Morell has rooms starting at \$179 a night.

WHAT TO BRING

A good friend, a good book and a swimsuit.



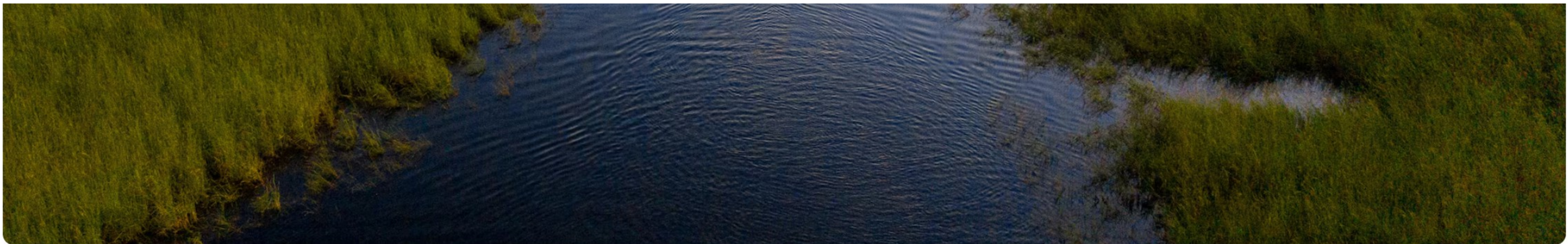
THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: [OPENSTREETMAP](#)

The writer was a guest of Tourism Prince Edward Island. It did not review or approve the story before publication.

WHITESHELL PROVINCIAL PARK, MANITOBA

BY **SHEL ZOLKEWICH**
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL





Whiteshell Provincial Park covers 2,700 square kilometres of Manitoba, and has 200 lakes for visitors to explore.

TRAVEL MANITOBA

In a province that’s overflowing with lakes and rivers, it’s hard to pick the best nature spots in Manitoba. But somewhere near the top of the list is Whiteshell Provincial Park.

It’s a vast park, covering more than 2,700 square kilometres, and it has 200 lakes. Because of its size, there’s something for everyone, whether you love the deep, dark forests or the wide-open lakes. Hiking, canoeing, mountain biking, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing are big here, along with cottaging, camping, boating and angling in the more developed areas.

The towns of Falcon Lake and West Hawk Lake, which are within the provincial park, have all the little luxuries – hotels and vacation rentals, restaurants, gas, convenience stores and gift shops. In between, there are pockets of civilization, but for the most part, nature owns this landscape.

What makes it even better is the addition of Voyageur Houseboats, where I spent a few summer days floating, fishing and feeling the gentle swell of ancient waters.



With its vast and varied terrain, Whiteshell Provincial Park is ideal for hiking, canoeing, mountain biking, boating, camping and much more.

TRAVEL MANITOBA

The small company rents out four luxury floating micro cabins and moors them in inlets surrounded by nature on all sides. These cabins feature fine woodworking details, vast windows to take in the view and top-notch finishes on countertops and floors.

I met Voyager Houseboats owner J  r  my Faure on the dock at the Pinawa Marina inside the park for my orientation. He covered everything from using the boat’s

shower and composting toilet to operating the KayaArm, a Canadian invention that lets me get safely into and out of a kayak on this solo trip.

Even though I’m comfortable driving a boat, I’m rather relieved to know that Faure, acting as captain, will take the helm and deliver me to one of the mooring spots on the Winnipeg River. He says having a captain makes the experience accessible for everyone, even if you have no boating background.



Voyageur Houseboats rents its luxury floating micro cabins to visitors looking for unique accommodation close to nature.
JÉRÉMY FAURE/VOYAGER HOUSEBOATS

After he secured my houseboat mooring, Faure headed back in a jet ski. In this calm alcove, I felt the magic of the park close at hand. It’s a quiet spot, away from cottages and off the beaten path for boat traffic. Towering spruces stand out on the shoreline, rocky outcropping is lit by the setting sun and there’s a picturesque island in the distance. To complete the scene, a bald eagle flies low then rests on the tallest spruce. It was easy to feel I had the entire 2,700 square kilometres of the park to myself.

The houseboat’s outdoor space is excellent. There are two couches that are perfect for sunrise reading sessions and an extra wide hammock, suspended over the water, is the best place for luxury and nature to meet during my stay.

Each houseboat is well-outfitted with a kitchen, barbecue on the deck, drinking water, fridge, French press for coffee and just 12V USB outlets to power or charge devices. Inside, the table and benches fold down into a queen bed, plus the boat has a pair of bunk beds.

If you go

HOW TO GET THERE

Located on the northwestern border of Whiteshell Provincial Park, Pinawa is roughly a one-and-a-half-hour drive from Winnipeg. Follow Highway 59 north and take Provincial Road 307 east to reach the riverside town.

WHERE TO STAY

A three-night stay aboard a Voyageur Houseboat starts at approximately \$1,360. Daily rates start at \$420 a night, two nights minimum. Sheets, pillows and pillowcases are provided, but guests need to bring their own blankets and food.

WHAT TO BRING

If you’re fishing, make sure to bring a rod and a valid Manitoba fishing license.



THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: [OPENSTREETMAP](#)

The writer was a guest of Tourism Manitoba. It did not review or approve the story before publication.

ST. GEORGE STREET, NEW BRUNSWICK

BY BARBARA BALFOUR
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL



St. George Street, in the heart of downtown Moncton, as seen from the top of Notre Dame de l'Assomption Cathedral.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RANZ BONTOGON/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

In a family-owned deli in the heart of Moncton’s St. George Street, I bite into a coffee-chocolate bacon grilled cheese, the smoky sweetness mingling with the gooey white cheddar dripping down my face.

The decor here at Notre Dame de Parkton is pure Acadian nostalgia – religious artifacts, kitschy icons and a sense of irreverent homage that feels completely at home in Moncton’s artistic core.

This is no ordinary sandwich shop. It’s a much-loved institution that reflects Moncton’s shifting identity, built by a family who traces their lineage to the area’s original Acadian settlers. The family also owns the Laundromat Espresso Bar just a few doors down.



Notre Dame de Parkton's signature "91 maple" grilled cheese, with kettle chips, soup and a pickle on the side.



Notre Dame de Parkton staff serve up a plate of tacos from its diverse menu that reflects Moncton’s shifting identity.

Visitors to St. George Street discover downtown Moncton’s cultural pulse, and these independent businesses keep its energy raw and real. Decades of evolution, decline and now resurgence have shaped the avenue into the eclectic neighbourhood it is today.

Once a natural midway between residential neighbourhoods and the railway, St. George Street was a vital thoroughfare for working-class Acadians in the 1950s. It thrived with movie theatres, drugstores and grocery shops, buzzing with life.

By the 1960s, suburban expansion, shopping malls and car culture pulled people away. As businesses shuttered, the area struggled with a reputation for being rundown and unsafe.

More recently, a slow, steady revival has been underway. Artists and entrepreneurs now see potential where others saw decay, creating spaces that breathe new life into the street.

The Laundromat Espresso bar, for example, draws an eclectic crowd, from Moroccan newcomers sipping late-night tea to eastern Europeans thrilled to find their hometown’s pilsner in the beer fridge. The late-night bar remains a haven for the city’s diverse, creative counterculture.



The stained-glass windows in Notre-Dame-de-l’Assomption Cathedral were crafted by French master glassmaker Auguste Labouret.

Perhaps St. George Street’s most striking landmark is Notre-Dame-de-l’Assomption, the cathedral that’s towered over the city since 1939. Today it is an active church with limited service hours and a digitally interactive museum operated by secular non-profit organization, MR21.

It uses immersive storytelling to show visitors the life and vision of Archbishop Melanson, who was one of the builders of the cathedral and led the province’s entire Acadian community.

Massive digital panels animate its breathtaking stained-glass windows, crafted by French master glassmaker Auguste Labouret. He chose to depict only women, a rare tribute in ecclesiastical art and a nod to the cathedral’s dedication to Mary, the patron saint of the Acadian people.

A short walk along the street, step into Epoch Chemistry, a coffee shop with a focus on eco-conscious roasting. Visitors who sign up for the \$40 tastings take a deep dive into brewing methods and exotic coffee flavour profiles.



Epoch Chemistry is a coffee shop with a focus on eco-conscious roasting that offers coffee tastings.

Mine kicked off with a bright, citrusy cold coffee lemonade, then moved into the velvety smoothness of a flat white. Just when I thought I hit peak indulgence, an espresso-based Old Fashioned mocktail reset my palate before the grand finale: a scoop of locally made ice cream, crowned with expertly pulled espresso and a sprinkle of cacao nibs.

By the time you step back onto the street, still buzzing from caffeine, homemade treats and conversation with friendly locals, it’s clear St. George Street is anything but static. Like the historic landmarks that anchor it, this neighbourhood is constantly reinventing itself, blending past and present in ways that keep you wondering what it will do next.

If you go

HOW TO GET THERE

St. George Street is part of the downtown core, located parallel to Main Street and on the No. 51 city bus route.

WHERE TO STAY

The new Hyatt Place Moncton is a 10-minute walk from St. George Street. It features a well-equipped gym, pool, and a hot buffet breakfast is included. Rooms from \$180 a night.

WHAT TO BRING

An appetite for hidden gems and the willingness to be surprised by what you find.



THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: [OPENSTREETMAP](#)

The writer travelled as a guest of Tourism New Brunswick. It did not review or approve the story before publication.

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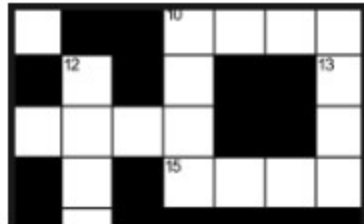
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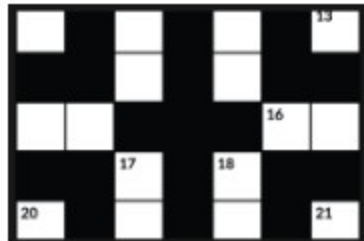
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