

# ASK THE experts

Natalie Marsh canvasses the experts for their top tips on selling a self-drive in Canada for 2021



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## 1 Get off the beaten track

As London-based travel trade manager for Destination Canada, Adam's goal is to promote Canada as a tourism destination. He works with travel agents and tour operators to help them sell Canada product, and has been with the tourism marketing organisation for six years.



Adam Hanmer  
travel trade manager,  
Destination Canada

### HE SAYS

I believe a self-drive is the best way to explore Canada thanks to the fact the cities are relatively small, the roads are wide and the people are really friendly. The great thing about self-drive is that you can go at your own pace, and the drive really becomes part of the holiday, with amazing scenery along the way. Canada is also perfect for campervans or RVs, which is a good selling point in the current climate.

If clients haven't got kids and they're not restricted to school summer holidays, suggest an autumn trip to eastern Canada. The fall colours are especially superb in Quebec, but also in Ontario and the Maritimes.

If you're super-confident with Canada, you can put things together yourself, but I'd always recommend booking with a tour operator.

Canada is a big country; specialists can work out what level of driving clients want to do and make sure they're not packing too much into each day. I think the key thing with Canada is not biting off too much. You can always get your clients to go back, but I always think you see more if you go a little slower.

You can also get a bit more off the beaten track with self-drive, and it's a great way of connecting with locals too; you might even pick up some insider tips along the way.

## 2 It's all about the freedom

Denise heads the Canada department at Prestige Holidays and loves all things Canadian. She has been putting Canada holidays together for 34 years, lived in Calgary for 13 years and has travelled extensively across Canada and the US.



Denise Hunn  
director of Canada tour operations,  
Prestige Holidays

### SHE SAYS

It's so easy to drive in Canada, with very little traffic and well-maintained, clearly signposted roads. For first-time visitors I'd recommend a self-drive along the west coast, starting in Calgary, then on to Banff, through the Rocky Mountains, on to Jasper and Clearwater, and then into the Okanagan Valley, which is the wine area of British Columbia. I'd make Vancouver my last stop. That's a perfect itinerary for couples and families, because there are so many activities – wildlife viewing, canoeing, kayaking, white-water rafting and mountain biking, to name but a few.

In terms of other regions, the Atlantic provinces are especially beautiful and really underrated, with history, wildlife (including excellent whale-watching), wineries, gold-sand beaches and family-friendly activities among the draws. Halifax is just a six-hour flight from the UK, and there's a diverse range of accommodation, with lots of lovely country inns.

Encourage customers to pre-book everything, including excursions, so they know how far they've got to drive each day.

Driving holidays should be relaxing. It's all about having the freedom to go off and explore at your own pace.

## 3 Be flexible with dates and routes

Brian has been in the industry for 49 years, holding management roles at Shearings Holidays and First Class Holidays, where he is now product manager. He looks after purchasing and supplier relations to ensure the best products for clients, including self-drives and motorhome holidays.



Brian Hawe  
product manager,  
First Class Holidays

### HE SAYS

Make sure you allow self-drive clients enough time to be able to stop and enjoy the sights without being rushed. In summer, the roads can be a bit busier, so it might take longer than the route says.

Be flexible with dates and routes to get the best availability and price. Being open to staying somewhere other than the hotspots can also pay dividends when it comes to finding the best value.

For second or third-timers who've already seen the more popular spots, suggest the likes of Vancouver Island or, for an outback-style experience, the Yukon. In the east, there's the natural beauty of the Algonquin, the great lakes coastline and the wonderful scenery and gallic charm of Quebec province. There's also Nova Scotia, which is now gaining popularity with first as well as second-time visitors thanks to its wide-open spaces, stunning beauty and amazing food.

I'd recommend trying to add further value to a booking by tagging on an extra activity, such as an Alaska cruise, a trip on the Rocky Mountaineer, a bear-watching excursion or, for Quebec itineraries, The Ocean train from Montreal to Halifax. You'll delight customers because you'll have offered more than the norm.

My final tip would be to encourage clients to book early for 2021 – there are two years' worth of bookings to fit into one year.