

Into the Wild

Embrace
Canada's open
spaces with a
back-to-nature
break, writes
Nikki Bayley

As the world's second-largest country – that's a whopping 40 times bigger than the UK, but with only half its population – Canada offers plenty of opportunity for clients to lose themselves on an epic adventure into the wilderness.

Whether it's a ranch holiday on the prairies, discovering rare spirit bears and grizzlies in British Columbia's Great Bear Rainforest or paddling a canoe through the pristine lakes of Ontario's Algonquin Provincial Park, the opportunity for exploration is endless.

Better yet, these outdoorsy adventures combine easily with

some of the country's best city breaks, so travellers can do some speedy sightseeing in the city then get away from the stress of it all for a few days in the wilds of Canada.

► EXPLORE THE EAST COAST

Closest to the UK, Canada's east coast encompasses the cosmopolitan multi-lingual sprawl of Montreal and Toronto, where clients can get their fill of thrilling city life. Montreal excels with arts and cultural festivals, a terrific dining scene and plenty of French-Canadian history to explore. Toronto offers

major museums, world-class entertainment and second-to-none shopping opportunities.

From Toronto, head further into Ontario to explore the moose-filled wilderness of the Algonquin Provincial Park, which is a quarter of the size of Belgium. There are more than 2,400 lakes (Ontario means 'shining waters' in the language of the local Iroquois First Nations) to paddle and endless trails to hike.

Learn to paddle a canoe, stay in a traditional log cabin, go on excursions into the woods to hear the wildlife calls of the howling wolves and musical

melancholia of the loons (a duck-like water bird) then build a campfire and eat under the twinkling stars.

1st Class Holidays offers a three-day self-drive package from just £375 including log cabin accommodation, canoe rental and lessons, and forest hikes. All meals are included. A package including return transfers from Toronto costs from £535.

Take a long weekend to explore the lyrically-named Chic-Choc mountains – a lightly visited part of Quebec, about nine hours' drive (really not such a bad drive in Canada) from Montreal. [➔](#)





LEFT:
Algonquin
National Park

RIGHT:
Chic-Choc
Mountains

BELOW:
Lundbreck,
Alberta



PICTURES: LE QUÉBEC MARITIME / STEVE DESCHÊNES; TRAVEL ALBERTA

→ The Chic-Chocs are part of the gorgeous Gaspé Peninsula in the Parc National de la Gaspésie. Here you'll find high altitude mountains lush with Arctic-alpine plants and see caribou roaming freely on the tundra.

Stay in secluded comfort at the Chic-Chocs Mountain Lodge, where clients can enjoy the spa all year round, fish and kayak, bike and hike the trails in the summer, and snowshoe and ski in the winter. Kuoni offers a Chic-Chocs Mountain Lodge Experience add-on for two nights from £540 for two people.

▶ LIFE ON THE PRAIRIES

Alberta's main centres of Calgary and Edmonton make an excellent springboard to explore the beauty of the Canadian Rocky Mountains.

Calgary offers fun museums, an exciting dining scene with way more than the traditional staples of steak and potatoes, plus a chance to experience its past Olympic glories. Edmonton boasts one of Canada's best outdoor living history museums, Fort Edmonton Park; North America's largest urban park, River Valley Parks; and quirky neighbourhoods to explore.

Whether clients are then making the traditional loop through Banff and Jasper, or on their way back by train or car from the west coast, it's an easy add-on to hit the trails and live out those cowboy and cowgirl dreams.

Canada's heartland has fascinating First Nations history, endless flat prairies with dramatic



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huge skies and a chance to experience the vast open spaces of Alberta. Saddle up and head out on a camping trip to really get a slice of life at a slower pace.

Canter into Mystic Pass, through crystal-clear streams with the Rocky Mountains soaring up on both sides, before making camp for the night on a raised platform A-frame tent.

Explore the pristine backcountry before trotting back to a little luxury in the heart of Banff at Brewster's Mountain Lodge.

Frontier Travel offers a two-night/three-day riding and camping add-on including meals, plus one night in a Banff hotel and transfers from Calgary for £679.

▶ WILD WEST COAST WONDERS

Beautiful Vancouver shines with its glittering glass skyscrapers reflecting the soaring mountains and calm waters that surround it. Vancouver's dining and drinking scene is the toast of Canada, with craft breweries, distilleries and even nearby vineyards to check out, along with the big city staples of museums, tours, and shopping aplenty. →



RIGHT: Cycling in Edmonton



FAR RIGHT: Sonora Resort, BC



ASK THE EXPERT



Guy Theriault, External Relations and Visitor Experience Directorate, Parks Canada:

“Once you’ve had an urban experience in some of Canada’s great cities, you don’t have to go very far to connect with nature. La Mauricie National Park is only 124 miles from Montreal yet it’s home to lakes, forests, mountains and waterfalls. Even closer to a city is Rouge National Urban Park, located in the city of Toronto. The Pacific Rim National Park Reserve is your gateway to the rugged west coast of Vancouver Island. You can connect with nature on a one-hour walk or hike along the legendary West Coast Trail.”

→ It’s also just a 30-minute hop by seaplane to explore historic Victoria, or a short drive up the Sea-to-Sky Highway to dive into the outdoor adventure centres of Squamish and Whistler.

Clients can add a slice of wilderness adventure to their holiday by booking a stay at a fly-in lodge deep in BC’s protected Great Bear Rainforest. Stay in comfort in one of the all-inclusive floating lodges surrounded by



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mountains and untouched forest in the home of BC’s largest concentration of grizzly bears. View bears feasting on the annual salmon run either by boat or on a special viewing platform, enjoy wilderness hikes with a knowledgeable guide or paddle out in a kayak with nothing but the sound of your oar splashing in water.

Wildlife Worldwide offers The Bear Essentials from £2,795, including one night in Vancouver (room-only), one night in Campbell River (room only), four nights’ full-board accommodation at Knight Inlet Lodge, guiding and excursions.

If your client’s idea of ‘wilderness’ needs to come with a hefty dose of luxury, look no further than Sonora Lodge, one of Canada’s most upper-crust wilderness properties that’s part of the Relais & Chateaux group, with a full-service spa, top-notch restaurant and lavish lodge-style accommodation.

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Clients seeking off-the-beaten-track wilderness adventure may want to get completely off the grid by adding a Yukon component to their winter break. Just a two-hour flight from Vancouver, Whitehorse offers frontier excitement, the northern lights, dog-sledding and gold rush history in the great white north. Kuoni offers a Northern Lights of the Yukon trip for four nights from £926 for two people.



LEFT: The northern lights in Whitehorse, Yukon