

Welcome to Canada

Canada is more than its hulking-mountain, craggy-coast good looks: it also cooks extraordinary meals, rocks cool culture and unfurls wild, moose-spotting road trips.

The Great Outdoors

The globe's second-biggest country has an endless variety of landscapes. Sky-high mountains, glistening glaciers, spectral rainforests and remote beaches are all here, spread across six time zones. It's the backdrop for plenty of *ah*-inspiring moments – and for a big provincial menagerie. That's big as in polar bears, grizzly bears, whales and, everyone's favorite, moose.

The terrain also makes for a fantastic playground. Whether it's snowboarding Whistler's mountains, surfing Nova Scotia's swells or kayaking the white-frothed South Nahanni River in the Northwest Territories, adventures abound. There are gentler options, too, like strolling Vancouver's Stanley Park or swimming off Prince Edward Island's pink-sand beaches.

Captivating Cultures

Sip a *café au lait* and tear into a flaky croissant at a sidewalk bistro in Montréal; head to an Asian night market and slurp noodles in Vancouver; join a wild-fiddling Celtic party on Cape Breton Island; kayak between rainforest-cloaked aboriginal villages on Haida Gwaii: Canada is incredibly diverse across its breadth and within its cities. You'll hear it in the music, see it in the arts and taste it in the cuisine.

Foodie Fare

Canada is a local food smorgasbord. If you grazed from west to east across the country, you'd fill your plate like this: wild salmon and velvety scallops in British Columbia, poutine (golden fries topped with gravy and cheese curds) in Québec, and lobster with a dab of melted butter in the Maritime provinces. Tastemakers may not tout Canadian food the way they do, say, Italian or French fare, so let's just call the distinctive seafood, piquant cheeses, and fresh, seasonal fruits and veggies our little secret. Ditto for the bold reds and crisp whites produced from the country's vine-striped valleys.

Artistic Flair

The arts are an integral part of Canada's cultural landscape, from the International Fringe Theater Festival (the world's second-largest) in Edmonton to mega museums such as Ottawa's National Gallery. Montréal's Jazz Festival and Toronto's star-studded Film Festival draw global crowds. And did you know Ontario's Stratford Festival is the continent's largest classical repertory theater? Even places you might not automatically think of – say St John's or Woody Point – put on renowned shindigs (an avant-garde 'sound symposium' and a big-name writers festival respectively).



Why I Love Canada

by Karla Zimmerman, Author

I'm always blown away by Canada's vastness, its enormous open landscapes. You can drive for hours in many areas and see almost no one. I love that Canada's wildlife spotting is for real – moose, bears, whales – you *will* see them if you go looking. I love that the nation's most popular restaurant – Tim Hortons – is a doughnut shop named after a hockey player. And I'm just going to come out and admit it: the more I'm in Canada, the more I appreciate rock band Rush.

For more about our authors, see page 912