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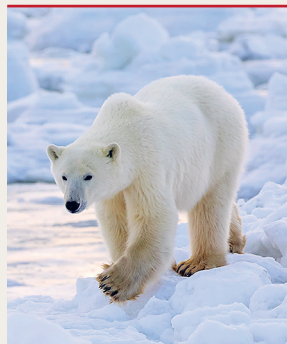
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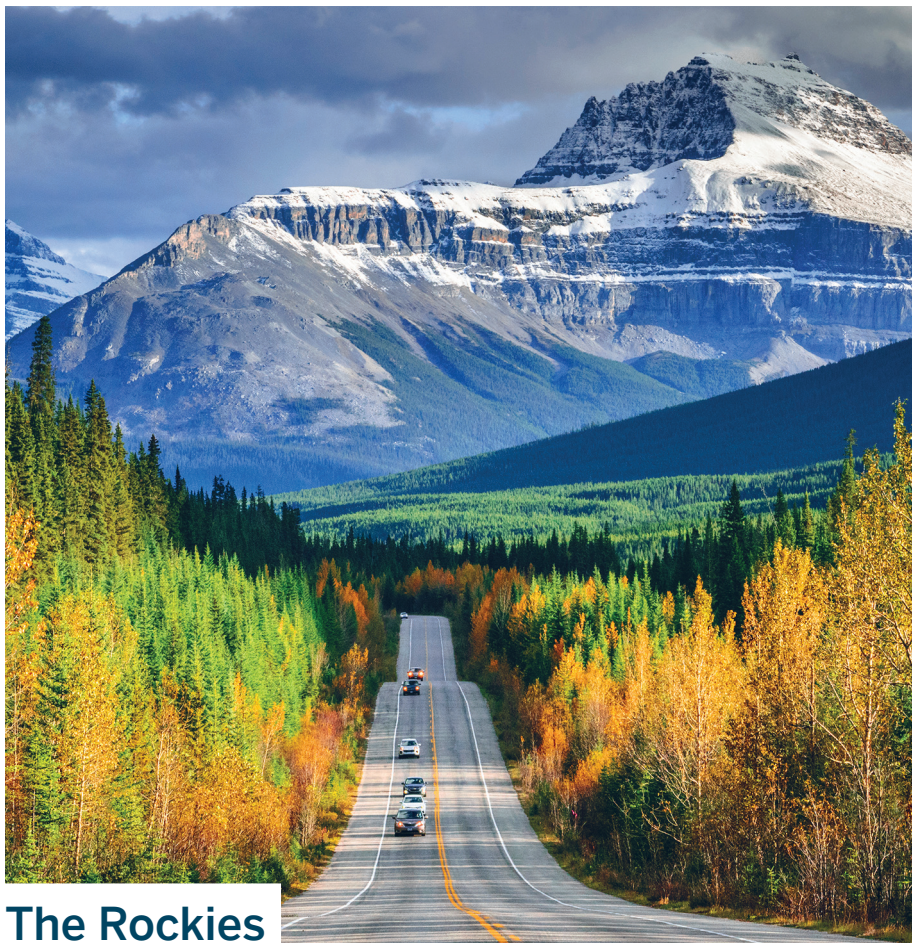
Polar bear (p290)

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Plan Your Trip

Canada's Top 12

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The Rockies

The brawny backbone of the nation

The sawtooth, white-topped mountains (p183) straddling the British Columbia–Alberta border inspire both awe and action with ribbons of hiking trails, rushing white water and powdery ski slopes. The train provides another popular way to experience the grandeur: luminous lakes, jumbles of wildflowers and glistening glaciers glide by as the steel cars chug up mountain passes and down river valleys en route to points east or west. Above: Icefields Parkway (p188); Right: Moraine Lake (p187)



Vancouver

Urban sophistication collides with feral wilderness

Vancouver (p199) always lands atop the 'best places to live' lists, and who's to argue? Sea-to-sky beauty surrounds the laid-back, cocktail-lovin' metropolis. With skiable mountains on the outskirts, beaches fringing the core and Stanley Park's thick rain forest just blocks from downtown's glass skyscrapers, it's a harmonic convergence of city and nature. Above: False Creek (p208)

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The Atlantic Provinces

Acadian, Celtic and Viking culture

Home to Canada's craggiest coastline, loneliest lighthouses and fiercest tides, in the Atlantic Provinces (p135) you can feel the full force of nature at work. They call Newfoundland 'the Rock', a fitting name for an island of thoroughly elemental attractions and aesthetics. Under-the-radar New Brunswick hides culturally rich Acadian villages, Nova Scotia is a place that's steeped in the sea, while Prince Edward Island presents a postcard-worthy picture of pastoral Canada. Right: Peggy's Cove (p138)



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Québec City

French-speaking and deliciously seductive

Québec City (p115) is one of North America's oldest and most magnificent settlements. Its picturesque old town is a Unesco World Heritage site, a living museum of narrow cobblestone streets, 17th- and 18th-century houses and soaring church spires, with the splendid Château Frontenac hotel towering above it all. Just walking down the street here is an aesthetic treat, unlike anywhere else in North America. Right: Terrasse Dufferin (p122) and Old Québec





Haida Gwaii

Witness the magic and mystery of pre-colonial Canada

Haida Gwaii (p245) forms a dagger-shaped archipelago of some 450 islands lying 80km west of the BC coast, and offers a magical trip for those who make the effort. Attention has long focused on the many unique species of flora and fauna that populate lonesome Gwaii Haanas National Park, which makes up the bottom third of the archipelago, but each year it becomes more apparent that the islands' true soul is the Haida culture itself. Above: Totem pole by artist Christian White





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The Niagara Region

Wine, history and a spectacular cascade

Crowded? Cheesy? Well, yes. Niagara Falls (p64) is short, too – it doesn't even crack the top 500 worldwide for height. But c'mon, when those great bands of water arc over the precipice, roaring into the void below, as you sail toward it in a mist-shrouded little boat, Niagara Falls impresses big time. Beyond it stretches a region (p61) speckled with vineyards and home to one of the country's best-preserved 19th-century towns. Above: Horseshoe Falls

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The Prairies

Fields full of wheat and dinosaur bones

The flatlands – boring? No way. Drive through uninterrupted fields of golden wheat in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta and you'll encounter stiff winds, bruised clouds and a horizon punctuated by old grain elevators and famously friendly prairie towns. In between lie the real highlights of the Prairies (p161): dinosaur bones, wind-eroded hoodoos, unexpected canyons and echoes of a stalwart Ukrainian heritage.

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