

Travel

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'My legs are burning, my heart is pounding and my skis are clattering on the icy snow'

Ben Clatworthy goes ski racing in the French Alps

2 Moraine Lake in Banff National Park



20 great Canadian adventures

From exploring the Rocky Mountains in a camper van to spotting whales off Iceberg Alley — Canada has it all, says **Aaron Millar**

West

1 Stay on a floating lodge

Opening this summer, the new Ocean House luxury eco-retreat in Haida Gwaii, a chain of more than 150 islands 62 miles off the coast of British Columbia, promises to be one of the best new wildlife experiences in the country. The 12-room floating guest lodge is surrounded on all sides by animal life, including pods of orcas, porpoises and the rare Haida Gwaii black bear.

Details Eight nights, including two nights in Vancouver, four nights all-inclusive in Ocean's House and flights, costs from £4,999pp (020 3588 6130, westernoriental.com)

2 The Rockies by RV

Western Canada's Rocky Mountain scenery is the stuff of legends: soaring limestone peaks surrounded by turquoise lakes and the wild beaches of the Pacific Coast. For many, the best way to see it is in a camper van, or RV. A new trip from Bon Voyage offers exclusive access to campsites in the most sought-after locations, including idyllic spots in Banff, Jasper and Yoho national parks.

Details A 16-night tour, with two nights in Vancouver, 13 days' RV hire, 12 nights at pre-booked campsites and flights, costs from £2,995pp (0800 3160194, bon-voyage.co.uk)

3

3 Go off-road and explore

Vancouver's first self-drive off-road adventure specialist, Hastings Overland, rents Jeeps kitted out with rooftop tents and custom-made kitchens, plus all the equipment you need for a unique 4x4 camping adventure. One recommended route traces the coastline of Vancouver Island, from the moss-covered rainforests of Pacific Rim National Park to the Gulf Islands.

Details Jeep hire, including all cooking and camping equipment, costs from C\$285pp (£163) per night for two to three people (00 1 250 893 6073, hastingsoverland.com) ▶



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13 Bears fishing for salmon in Alaska

EMMA KIRBY/GETTY IMAGES

4 Go grizzly spotting

In the remote backcountry of British Columbia's Cariboo Mountains, the new Grizzly Bay Glamping Lodge has been designed to provide the closest possible proximity to the bears and a true wilderness experience — but with great food, sundowner cocktails and all the comforts of home. Floating on the deepest fjord lake on Earth, the lodge has safari-style tents decked out with luxurious log-frame beds and private patios on the water's edge and 360-degree views of grizzly country all around. Guests head out twice a day on walking safaris through the ancient cedar forest, kayaks on the lake or jet boat tours along the salmon-rich rivers.

Details: Eight nights, including two in Vancouver, two in Whistler, four nights' glamping, car hire and flights, costs from £4,857/pp (020 8776 8709, frontier-canada.co.uk)



11 Rafting on the Nahanni

5 Take a boat trip on Desolation Sound

Cruise the pristine waters of Desolation Sound, a remote ocean bay 100 miles north of Vancouver, by day, and stay in luxury wilderness lodges by night on this five-day boat trip. The itinerary includes two nights at the new Homfray Lodge, with its gorgeous cedar cabins by the water's edge, and one night at the beachside Tsa-Kwa Luten Lodge, set in Vancouver Island's stunning Inside Passage. There is time in between to explore the waterfalls and wildlife of one of the world's great boating destinations: warm, sheltered water, mountains rising 8,000ft straight from the sea and the chance to spot orcas and dolphins, and even grizzlies feasting in rivers near by. **Details:** A five-day cruise, full board, including activities and the service of a guide, costs from C\$2,265/pp, not including flights or transfers to Lund, where the cruise begins (00 1 250 674 3286, coastalcruises.ca)

6 Explore in a Tesla

The Okanagan Valley, Canada's premier wine-producing region, four hours east of Vancouver, is one of the country's best-kept secrets: 120 miles of rolling hills, boutique vineyards and idyllic lakeside resorts. Pick up a Tesla Model S from Power Trips, based in Vernon, and head out to discover the region. Stay at Hotel Eldorado in Kelowna, right on the shores of Lake Okanagan.

Details: Six-days' rental of a Tesla electric car costs from C\$999 (00 1 250 306 2564, powertrips.ca). Hotel Eldorado has doubles from C\$299 a night (00 250 763 7500, hoteleldoradokelowna.com)

20 Quirpon Island, Newfoundland



9 Stay on a houseboat

This year marks the peak of a four-year cycle for millions of sockeye salmon returning to the Adams River in Shuswap to spawn. From September 29 to October 21, the Salute to the Sockeye festival will take place in Roderick Haig-Brown Park, home to one of the largest salmon runs in North America. Stay on a houseboat on the Shuswap Lake (many with rooftop sun decks and slides into the water) for access to the main viewing points and the chance to explore the beaches, waterfalls and superb hiking around its shores.

Details: A six-night houseboat rental during the salmon run costs from C\$2,960. Fuel costs extra. Fly to Vancouver and transfer to Sicamous (00 1 250 836 2505, waterwayhouseboats.com)



Downtown Toronto

10 See the aurora

North

The Northwest Territories calls itself the Aurora Capital of the World with good reason. A new trip from Prestige Holidays includes three nights in Blachford Lake Lodge, the only fly-in wilderness resort in the area. See the lights from two aurora decks, outdoor hot tubs and saunas, private teepees and igloos set up around the grounds — even in the middle of their frozen lake. Spend the days dog-sledding, snow-shoeing and cross-country skiing.

Details: Five nights, including two nights in Yellowknife, three nights' full board at Blachford Lake Lodge, ski-plane transfers and international flights to Yellowknife, costs from £3,868/pp (01502 567222, prestigeholidays.co.uk)

11 Nahanni River rafting

Flowing 336 miles through the sublimely beautiful mountains of the Northwest Territories, the Nahanni River is to paddlers what Everest is to climbers. This 12-day group trip from Frontier Canada travels along one of the river's best sections, suitable even for first-time rafters: 150 miles from the spectacular Virginia Falls, nearly twice the height of Niagara, to the First Nation village of Nahanni Butte. It passes 3,000ft river canyons, natural hot springs and forests teeming with bears, caribou and moose. Camping out on riverside beaches with lots of luxury comforts and time to explore on foot each day, this is one of the world's greatest bucket-list adventures.

Details: Twelve nights' full board, including flights and activities, costs from £6,350/pp (020 8776 8709, frontier-canada.co.uk)

12 See polar bear cubs

Wapusk National Park is home to the world's largest polar bear denning site. About 25 miles southeast of Churchill, on the arctic shores of Hudson Bay, the park's 1,000 resident bears come to mate in spring, with the mothers building dens to nurse their young through the winter. But it's in mid-February when the real magic happens. Staying at Wat'Chee Lodge, a once-secret base camp for professional wildlife photographers, this exclusive trip is timed to take you to the best den sites just as the cubs emerge for their first, clumsy steps on the ice.

Details: Eight nights in February and March, including all meals, activities and internal flights, costs from £7,455/pp. International flights cost extra (01273 691642, naturatworldsafaris.com)

7 Heli-ski safari in BC

Spit time between two luxury wilderness lodges, one on the edge of the Great Bear Rainforest, the other on the slopes of British Columbia's highest peak, with a private helicopter to whisk you up to more than two million acres of private-access backcountry terrain each day. Led by expert guides, with certified avalanche training and equipment, this is a chance to have one of the world's most untouched winter environments all to yourself, descending more than 100,000 vertical feet in eight awe-inspiring days.

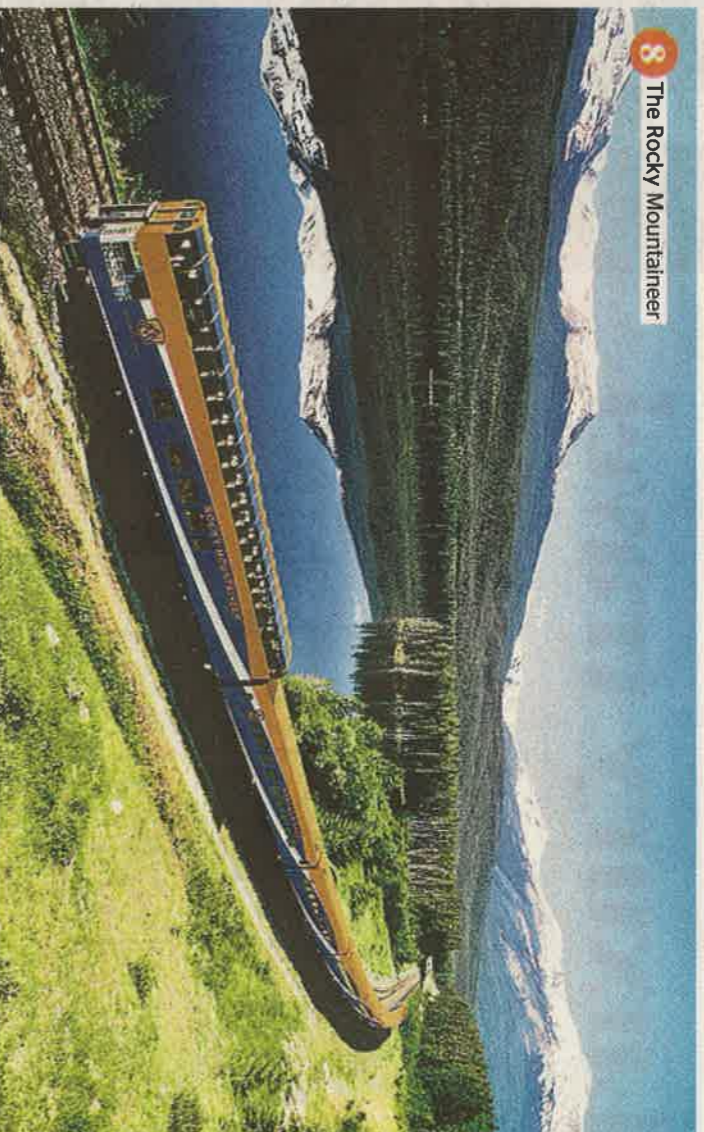
Details: Seven nights' full board, including flight transfers to Bella Coola, 20 hours' helicopter time and the services of guides, costs from C\$16,860/pp (00 1 604 932 3000, bellacoolaheliskiing.com)

8 Rockies by rail

The famous Rocky Mountaineer train, which travels from Vancouver to Jasper and Banff National Park offers one of the most spectacular journeys in the world. This year, the new Journey Through the Clouds Outdoor Adventure package adds a little extra magic, with an extended range of activities either side of the standard two-day rail trip. Highlights of the group tour include: traditional Voyageur canoeing on the turquoise waters of Lake Louise, a 4x4 off-road adventure across Athabasca Glacier and a trip down the Bow River. **Details:** The ten-night trip, including activities and two days on the Rocky Mountaineer, costs from C\$4,399/pp. International flights to Vancouver and from Calgary cost extra (0800 5677542, rockymountainholidays.com)



8 The Rocky Mountaineer



See the aurora in the Northwest Territories



accommodation, car hire, select activities, internal flights to St John's, where the trip departs, and international flights to Montreal or Toronto, costs from £2,089pp (020 3588 6130, westernoriental.com)

17 Go hiking in Quebec

The 60-mile Traversée de Charlevoix is one of the best long-distance hiking trails east of the Rockies, and this new trip from World Expeditions makes it easy — and enjoyable — to complete. Hiking hut to hut between backcountry refuges, each with wood-burning stoves, proper beds and gorgeous views, means cosy nights and home-cooked meals at the end of each day, and because your luggage is transferred ahead for you there are no heavy bags to carry. Crossing the most stunning parts of Quebec, from the breathtaking panoramas of Hautes-Gorges-de-la-Rivière-Malbaie National Park to the caribou herds of Grands-Jardins National Park, this is the business class of backpacking.

Details Six nights' full board, including equipment and the services of a guide, costs from £995pp (020 8875 5060, worldexpeditions.co.uk)

18 Play golf and cruise the coast of Nova Scotia

This new trip from One Ocean Expeditions combines small-ship adventure cruising around the spectacular coastline of Nova Scotia with the chance to tee off on some of the best golf courses in North America. Highlights include the 36-hole Cabot Links, along the stunning seascapes of Cape Breton Island, and the five-star championship

13 Hiking in the Yukon

In the late 19th century, at the height of the Klondike Gold Rush, more than 30,000 prospectors hiked the 33-mile Chilkoot Trail from Dyea, in southern Alaska, to the Yukon, in northern Canada. Follow in their footsteps on this remarkable adventure, backpacking for five days through rainforests and river valleys (where you can spot bears salmon fishing), over high mountain passes and glaciers. Then spend six days canoeing the Yukon River, wild camping under the blazing lights of the aurora and fishing for your supper each night.

Details The 14-night trip, including camping equipment, most meals and flights, costs from £3,715pp. Departs July 15 and August 12 (keadventure.com)

East

14 Ottawa by motorboat

This year, for the first time, Europe's largest operator of canal-boat holidays, Le Boat, will offer self-drive motorboat trips on the Rideau Canal, a 125-mile series of rivers, lakes and man-made waterways that stretch across southeastern Ontario from Kingston to Ottawa. Highlights of the ten-day trip, from Smiths Falls to the capital and back, include hiking through the cedar forests and muskrat marshes that line the canal, exploring Ottawa and, perhaps best of all, just sitting out on the sun deck, watching Ontario's blissful rural countryside drift by.

Details A boat for four people for ten nights costs from £2,580, not including flights to Ottawa or transfers to Smiths Falls, where the trip departs (0844 4172028, leboat.co.uk)

15 City break in Toronto

New direct flights from British Airways, launching this May, make reaching the vibrant cosmopolitan city of Toronto easier than ever. Not only does it have some of the best restaurants, bars and nightlife in the country, as well as a huge range of summer activities, from urban beaches and boat tours on Lake Ontario to festivals just about every week, but it's also perfectly placed for some world-class day trips. Niagara Falls, 80 miles south, and Muskoka Lakes, where the city's rich and famous play, 140 miles north, are both must-sees.

Details BA's new direct flights from Gatwick to Toronto cost from £367 return. The Shangri-La Toronto has gorgeous design and excellent food. Doubles cost from £435 a night (0800 0283337, shangri-la.com)

16 Drive the Viking Trail

This new self-drive itinerary follows the 300-mile Viking Trail, one of Canada's least well-known but best east-coast road trips, hugging the rugged coastline of Newfoundland. The route includes the 1,000-year-old village at L'Anse aux Meadows — the oldest known European settlement of the new world. The real highlight, though, is the province itself. Newfoundland is unlike anywhere else on Earth, an isolated island with its own culture, dialect, architecture and food. See 300,000 Atlantic puffins crowd the cliffs of Witless Bay and whales off the coast of St Anthony, stop off at tiny fishing villages for fresh-caught salmon and sail through the 2,000ft-deep, glacier-carved fjords of Gros Morne National Park.

Details A ten-night trip, including

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19 Take the Ocean Train

Travelling from the hip city of Montreal, on the southern tip of Quebec, to Halifax, on the eastern shores of Nova Scotia, this 836-mile overnight sleeper journey is little known outside the country, but is one of the best ways to experience Canada's wild Atlantic coast. Staying in a private sleeper cabin, with use of a restaurant and panoramic dome car, you will travel through French Canada's most picturesque countryside, watching the crash of surf as the quaint fishing villages of the Maritimes gradually rattle into view. Two days each are spent in three of Canada's most historic cities: Montreal, Quebec and Halifax.

Detail The seven-night trip, including six nights in hotels, one in a cabin on the train and a choice of three excursions, costs from US\$2,590pp. Flights to Montreal cost extra (0800 9870337, canadiantrainvacations.com)

20 Spot whales along Iceberg Alley

Every spring enormous icebergs are calved in Greenland and sent, with the prevailing winds, direct to the east coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, drifting down a route known as Iceberg Alley. At the same time up to 22 species of whales return to these waters, including blue, minke and the world's largest population of humpbacks. This new trip from Discover the World combines both events in a 12-day road trip that includes an iceberg safari cruise, boat trips into the towering fjords of Gros Morne and the chance to snorkel with humpback whales.

Details An 11-night trip, including car hire and all excursions, costs from £1,731pp. Flights to St John's, Newfoundland, where the trip departs, cost extra (01737 214291, discover-the-world.co.uk)