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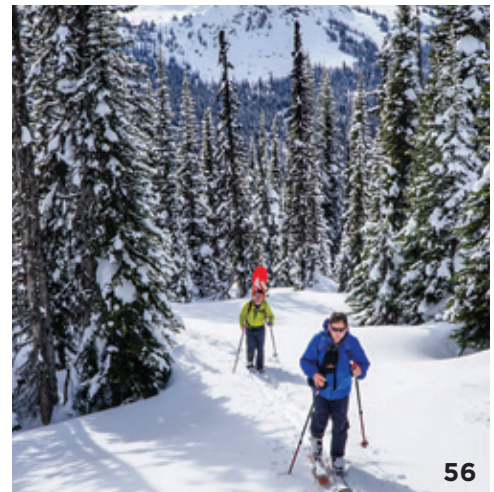
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Photo by Ryan Creary



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BY DAVID WEBB
@davidwebb



FAMILY FIRST

Are the articles on pages 16 and 38 representative of fundamentally opposing ideologies or can they live together in a single economy?

On page 38, Ryan Stuart details 15 family-owned outdoor operators in Canada. Lodges, ski hills, backcountry huts, guides—they're all in, and all in the family. It's something I know well. I'm the product of a family-owned business. My grandparents bought a slice of land on east-central Vancouver Island and opened it as "Deep Bay Auto Court & Fishing Camp" in the early 1950s. It's still going today, with my parents at the helm of Deep Bay RV Park since the late '70s. I recognize the importance of these businesses not only as valuable and innovative tourism operations, but for what they mean to the families involved. It was more than a career for the Webbs—as it is for the Bouldings, the Scurfields, the Langfords, the McDougalls and the other families mentioned in Stuart's article. It's a rich lifestyle. It's about prioritizing quality time, connections and nature.

And it's challenging. Go back a few decades and family vacations were usually spent at a regional campground or lodge. Today, lower airline costs, bucket list mindsets and societal pressures have families looking across oceans rather than to the getaway next door. When I was growing up in Deep Bay, we were part of a community of family-owned campgrounds. Now we're the only one left in the area.

Then there's the sharing economy as it enters the outdoor world. Yervana is an app that connects tourists with "locals" willing to guide them on hikes, bikes, skis, etc. (It's like an outdoorsy angle on Uber or Bumble.) And Campertunity offers any landowner a chance to rent out his or her property to campers. (It's like a "bring your own bed" version of AirBnB.)

So why would family-run businesses be worried about these trends?

Well—rather than booking a stay at an established campground or hiring a trained guide, for example, folks will have the option of pitching their tent in someone's backyard and connecting with a local who'll take them on a hike in his or her spare time. Perhaps, without many of the associated regulations and taxations to which conventional businesses are subject.

Yervana isn't likely to threaten the ACMG just yet, as most of their services are closer to being "shown around" rather than guided into technical terrain. Just like parking your van in somebody's yard, a *la* Campertunity, isn't quite the same as vacationing at an alpine lodge or national park.

However, both of these sharing economy outlets are in their infancy. There was a time when AirBnB actually meant "an air-bed on the floor of someone's house." Now, it's essentially upended the hotel industry. Uber and Lyft were designed as easygoing carpool apps; they now result in a 9.2 billion-kilometre annual increase in driven distances in the U.S. alone.

The sharing economy is here to stay. While even the nomenclature is pleasing—"sharing economy" sounds like a kindergarten teacher's fantasy—there are often casualties during such economic changes. It's about striking a balance.

So don't forget about Canada's longstanding family-owned businesses. There is something truly special about connecting with a multigenerational operation to explore the outdoors with their rich knowledge and passion at your disposal.

But you know, having a local drop-in to show me the freshest pow on her home slopes might come in handy too. ✕

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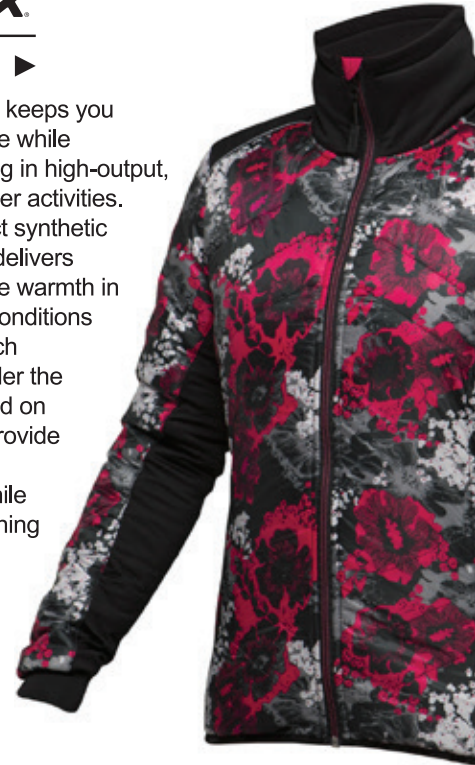


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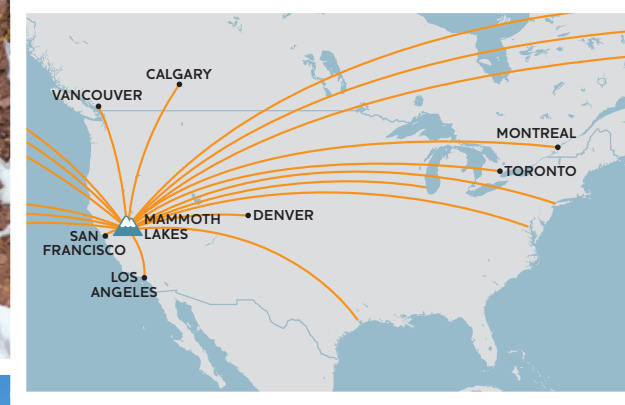
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2,758 m

Mammoth Mountain
Mammoth Lakes, CA
11,053 ft
3,369 m

Park City Mountain
Park City, UT
10,000 ft
3,048 m

Deer Valley Mountain
Park City, UT
9,570 ft
2,916 m

Steamboat Mountain
Steamboat, CO
10,868 ft
3,224 m

Aspen Mountain
Aspen, CO
11,212 ft
3,418 m

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Killington, VT
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Start Young

The article "The Hardest Hike" in your Summer 2018 issue (page 50) had me thinking for a long time about the role of nature in creating more resilient children who are well-connected to the wilderness and who also know instinctively to use nature to restore themselves. There is emerging evidence that the most effective antidepressants are not medicinal, but are about carefully crafted lives. This includes being in nature.

Quality time in nature gives us perspective and peace and boosts creativity and mental acuity. When meaningful, our time in the outdoors can be restorative and even spiritual. The men profiled in "The Hardest Hike" attest to this. While wilderness intervention programs are to be applauded, prevention of addictions and depression could help needless suffering from happening in the first place, and nature can be part of that strategy. I don't mean to simplify the complexities of addictions and mental health issues, but given the rise of very effective wilderness therapies surely we could start to use nature as part of a preventative and proactive approach.

Research continues to confirm that direct exposure to nature is essential for the physical and emotional health of children. So what would it take for society to prioritize this connection to nature, especially for impressionable children and youth? We're starting to see changes in early childhood approaches with forest schools, outdoor kindergartens and other nature-based education but we can't just leave this to the educators.

How can we advocate for children to have a spiritual awareness grounded in connecting with the world outdoors? Imagine families playing outdoors in nearby wild spaces, teachers teaching outside, doctors prescribing nature, more funding for youth nature initiatives and urban design that integrates nature instead of divorcing us from it.

If the wilderness truly brings us well-being, perhaps we ought to start earlier.

—Anita Hofer



Fee Crazy!

We live in Prince George, British Columbia and frequently backpack in Jasper National Park, where we have had an annual backcountry pass for more than 25 years. Earlier this year, we learned that Parks Canada will no longer sell annual backcountry passes. So now you get charged an \$11 booking fee plus \$10 per night per person—for each and every backcountry trip you take!

We usually spend anywhere from 20 to 25 nights in the backcountry of Jasper and Banff. On 21 nights this year, the cost for the two of us will be \$420 in backcountry camping fees plus \$110 in booking fees for \$530 total—not including the \$139 general vehicle parks pass.

An annual backcountry pass used to cost \$70 per person. Even if we call the relatively new online booking fee fair, we are looking at an extra \$280 per year to go backpacking in the mountain parks.

We're getting the paranoid feeling that Parks Canada is slowly trying to stifle backcountry travel in the name of environmental and habitat protection. They may say differently, but the facts sure looks like it. Traditional trails in Jasper have been turned into wilderness zones with no trail maintenance and several key damaged bridges have been left unfixed, effectively cutting off a couple of huge hiking areas.

Recently, we found it rather odd to pull up to a trailhead driving our Prius and see several huge RVs parked there—knowing that we are spending just about as much as they are to stay in the parks that night, even though we are on a trail that sees little or no maintenance whatsoever each year.

—Peter & Carol Zwiers X

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THE LOW DOWN



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ARROWHEAD PROVINCIAL PARK, ONTARIO

Journey into Muskoka's
wintertime adventure centre

BY DAVID WEBB

Muskoka is brisk and sunny. I'd been on the road for just over two hours since leaving Toronto and clear weather made the drive easy. However, I'm haunted by the sight of a staffer at the Muskoka Visitor Centre shaking her head back-and-forth like the pendulum of a grandfather clock.

"Nope, not there... Those trails are closed... No, those ones too." On it went as I watched two baby boomer Torontonians search for a place to lay down their skinny skis. And the green hemlock boughs alongside Highway 11 affirm the woman's somber assessment.

Am I dreaming? It's late-January. I've flown across the continent and driven to the heart of Ontario—how could there be no snow?

I'm on my way to Arrowhead Provincial Park, a wintertime recreation gem just outside of the community of Huntsville. Home to a collection of cozy cabins, a network of cross-country ski trails, a few snowshoe jaunts and a 1.3-kilometre ice-skating trail through the forest, Arrowhead is a well-loved



winter getaway. It's less than three hours from the Big Smoke if traffic's light, and in the dying days of January the ski conditions are usually stable. Except today. And for the past few weeks, I learn upon checking into my park cabin.

To be fair, there is residual snow within Arrowhead's protection. It's just been shellacked into a layer-cake over the past month. At the park gates, I wander to the shoreline of Mayflower Lake and just about end up on my butt the moment I step from the salty parking lot to the slick path. Most ski trails in the area are iced-over or worn down to the dirt. At least it's good ice-skating conditions...

A chatty youth outfits me with skis at the rental hut near Arrowhead Lake. His optimism has me keeping the faith that snowfall is impending. "Maybe tonight," he hints. Until then, he explains,

the Stubb's Falls Loop is a good snowshoe trail

"You won't even need snowshoes," he says, looking on the brightside. And he's right. I slip a pair of trail crampons over my boots and head out along the path that traces the Little East River towards Stubb's Falls. The metal teeth on my feet allow for goatworthy manoeuvring near the river's edge, ideal for enjoying a vista over the partially-frozen watercourse. It's late afternoon and the sun is tinting the tips of the birch trees orange. At Stubb's Falls, the river breaks loose of winter's grip and gushes over blackrock in a powerful sluice. Even with the poor snow conditions, it's hard to feel anything other than contentment in such a scene.

Stars speckle Arrowhead's night sky and a moondog hangs above the treetops. It's picturesque, but clear skies don't bring the white stuff. I turn ▶

Patiently waiting for new snowfall outside of one of Arrowhead's single-room cabins.



out the lights in my single-room cabin and doze off quickly in the park's silent night to dream of snow.

I'm on Pacific time, so morning comes quickly. I expect sunlight to stream in through the windows on another snowless day in Central Ontario. But it's bone-coloured. Dusky. Outside, snow flutters down the size of cornflakes. Three

inches have piled up on the handrails around the cabin's patio. The icy ground has morphed into a marshmallow wonderland. Unless I'm still dreaming, Ullr is here.

The East River Classic network—a series of green-circle-rated trails that start just a couple of hundred metres from my cabin—offers the ideal warmup for legs used to skis with metal strips

on the sides. Conditions are good. I break a trail for about four kilometres, tracing the river from the opposite bank as yesterday. After the long loop, a 1.5-kilometre connector leads past Big Bend Lookout—which peers over an oxbow cut by

the Big East River—then circles through the Roe Trail before depositing me at the Arrowhead Lake Warming Hut. I recall advice I received from that sage youngster about laying a cheese-and-onion sandwich wrapped in tinfoil on the woodstove until it's a crispy, gooey mess.

The snowpack has likely tripled by the time it peters out after dinner. Under a lightless sky, I leave my cabin for a tromp through the trails, kicking rifts into the downy snow and eventually discovering the start of

the ice-skating trail. A fire smolders in an iron pit and a collection of picnic tables, cubbyholes and hanging lanterns crafts an inviting scene. Tomorrow is the weekly Fire & Ice event—a torchlit night-skate that attracts crowds of locals to slide, socialize and sip hot cocoa. Today, it's empty; a snow palace just for me.

It's easy to see why Arrowhead is such a beloved wintertime escape. It's like a highlight reel of Ontario's snowsports all tucked into one 12-square-kilometre park. There are still half-a-dozen ski trails I'd like to slide—about 28 kilometres of classic and 18 of skate—plus a few more snowshoe trails. And I'll stay for the ice-skating loop, the warming huts with their woodsmoke smell, the dark skies, the icy lakes, the snow-tubing and the cozy cabins that glow amongst a mixed-woods forest. The latter is reason alone to visit, no matter what the conditions. But with a blanket of fresh snow—it's like a dream. ✕

THE LOW DOWN

TRAVEL PLANNER

Arrowhead Provincial Park is 230 kilometres north of Toronto, just a 10-minute drive from Huntsville. All services are available in Huntsville. Daily vehicle pass is \$17; adult ski passes are \$15. ontarioparks.com

Arrowhead Provincial Park has 10 heated one-room cabins, each of which can sleep up to five people. Each has electricity, refrigerator, gas fireplace and microwave; no running water or attached washroom. A comfort station and outhouses are located onsite. Bring your own bedding, food and mess kit. Reservations are recommended. \$125 per night.

Ski, snowshoe and ice-skate rentals are available in the park. Ski setups from \$23; snowshoes, \$12; ice-skates, \$10.

Running between January and March, **Fire & Ice** sees the skating trail in Arrowhead lit-up with tiki torches between 6:00 and 9:00 p.m. Check ontarioparks.com/park/arrowhead for the schedule.



REGIONAL ADVENTURES

About an hour east of Arrowhead in **Algonquin Provincial Park**, the Leaf Lake Trail Network (located at KM 53.9) offers 45 kilometres of track-set classic and skate-skiing. Challenge the 13.2-kilometre Pinetree Loop and 5.4-kilometre Fraser Lake Loop, both of which lead past a warming hut. Make sure to stop by the impressive Visitor Centre at KM 43 to discover more about the ecology of the region—and maybe spot some wild turkeys. ontarioparks.com/park/algonquin

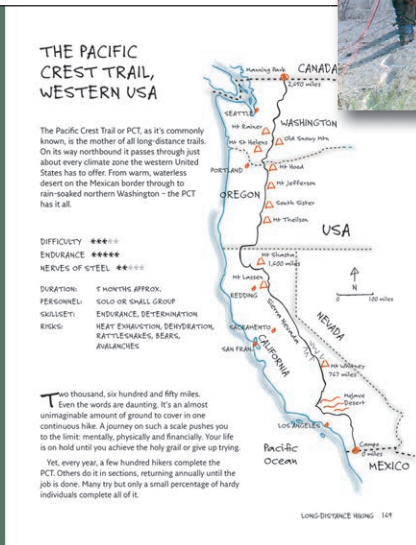
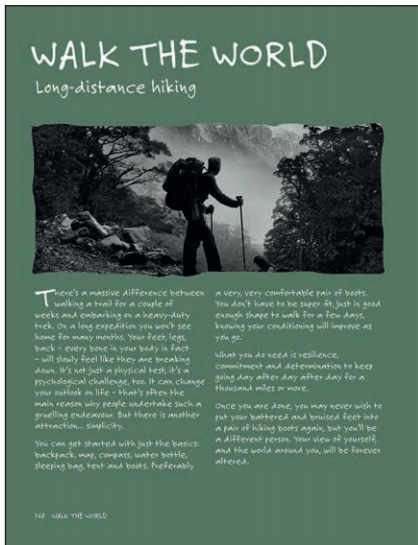
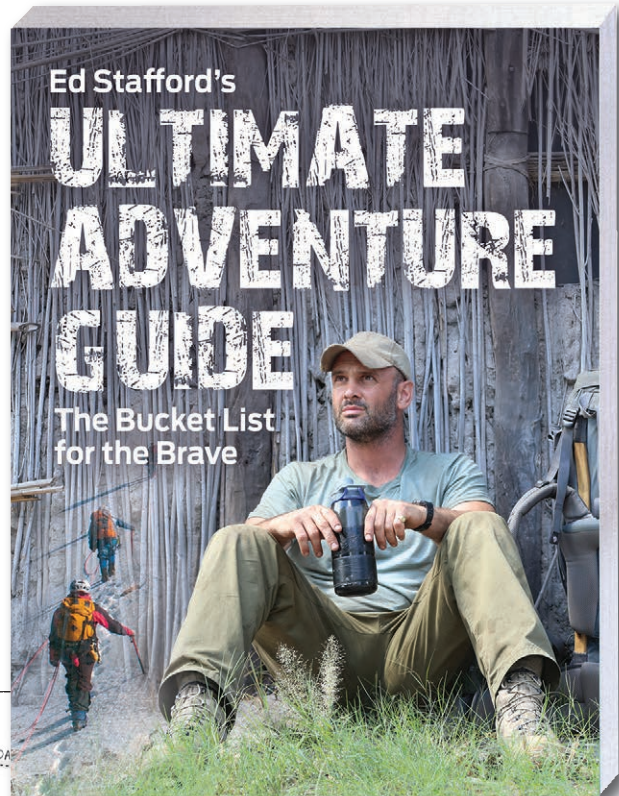
Circle through Algonquin and head to **Silent Lake Provincial Park** via Highway 60 (215 kilometres from Toronto). This park has 10 cabins (\$125 per night) and eight rustic yurts (\$86 per night). Forty kilometres of track-set cross-country skiing awaits, plus the scenic three-kilometre Bonnie's Pond Trail snowshoe path. All services are available in Bancroft, located 25 kilometres northeast of the park. ontarioparks.com/park/silentlake

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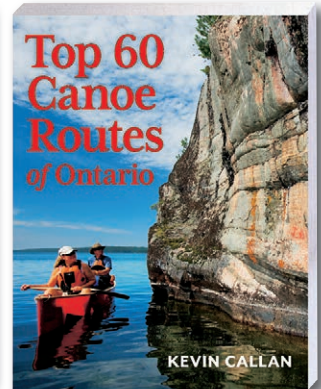
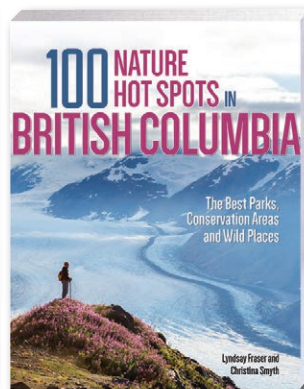
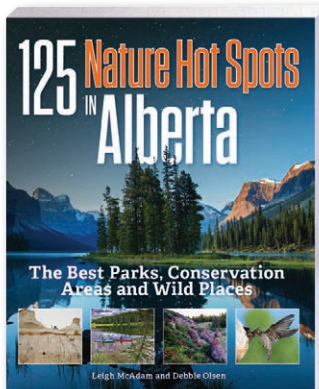
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CAPTAIN ED KEAN

I'se The B'y That Catches the 'Bergs: Meet Newfoundland and Labrador's Iceberg Cowboy

BY JENN THORNHILL VERMA



Captain Ed Kean and his team seek out icebergs in the North Atlantic, offshore from Newfoundland—these bergs are the purist source of water on the planet.

THE
LOW
DOWN

Captain Ed Kean comes from a long line of saltwater cowboys in Newfoundland and Labrador. His work carries on the local tradition, but instead of fish, Kean and his crew harvest icebergs.

"We've been called everything: iceberg wranglers, iceberg cowboys, iceberg harvesters, the ice-men, frozen in time," Kean laughs it off, ending with a breathless, "Oh jeez." They've had an enormous amount of attention, having been profiled by dozens of media at home and abroad. They've even earned a place in the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame.

Today, the world-class wranglers are docked in Port Union, Trinity Bay North on the northeastern shores of Newfoundland. They're just back from a trip to Crouse Harbour, about 240 nautical miles northwest. It's an important detail for two reasons. First, fewer icebergs this season have forced Kean Marine Inc., the company Kean owns and operates, to hunt farther afield. They usually harvest icebergs in their own backyard, in Trinity Bay or Bonavista Bay. But 2018 is not turning out to be another banner year. In 2017, they harvested a whopping 1,200 icebergs; in 2016, they harvested 800. Kean doesn't offer his iceberg catch numbers (it's mid-season), but says they hauled the desired amount within 10 days. That's impressive given that weather hampered the start of the season.

That raises the second point about their recent trip. Kean and his crew arrived in port within hours of post-tropical storm Chris making landfall. Although Chris was downgraded from hurricane status the day previous, it still brought unseasonal rainfall, wind gusts and ocean swells.

"We just made it, put it that way," says Kean, his voice erupting

into laughter once again. Circumstances like these are familiar to Kean because the weather in these parts is predictably unpredictable. Case in point: when the rest of Canada was enjoying summer in late-June of 2018, Central Newfoundland was reporting yet another snowfall.

The job has its own inherent risks beyond braving the usual elements. As these icebergs move south from Greenland, they become increasingly unstable. Eventually, icebergs flip and calve before they fully melt. Misjudging an iceberg's stability or size (90 per cent lurks beneath the surface) can spell disaster for those nearby.

Then there's the cowboy part of the job. Fishing is considered Canada's most deadly sector and what Kean and his crew do is not a far cry from that profession. When they started iceberg wrangling, they used a net to lasso their

catch. Now, they use grappling hooks to secure and haul their icebergs aboard a barge. Then, they tow the barge to their iceberg-water-holding facility. The facility stores the one- to 1.5-million litres of water Kean and his crew harvest each season, which runs from May to August.

What do they do with all of that ice? Having been frozen 15,000 to 20,000 years ago, before the industrial revolution, this water is the purist on the planet. Since it may contain dust or debris, the water is physically filtered and tested for clarity. Then, it's distributed for use in a range of products: everything from water to beer and spirits like Iceberg Vodka (Kean's biggest client), to soap, cosmetics and more. But is he turning icebergs into cold hard cash?

"We haven't had too much trouble," he says, chuckling. He earns a decent living for himself and employs a small, highly-skilled crew. His crew are all Newfoundlanders, some having worked with him for 15 to 20 years. Kean says they are practically "military-grade" professionals.

"You've almost got to be—it's like fighting a battle... There's all kinds of breakdowns [on board]. You need a good welder. You need a good mechanic. You need people that understand the system that we got to harvest and how to use it... It's harder to get good people all the time, [but] a Newfie is a pretty reliable person."

The other folks that Kean relies on are the Canadian Ice Service, who do "ice recon" in navigable waters from spring to fall. He also calls upon his network of local fishermen from across the province. Ultimately, though, it all comes down to relying on Mother Nature.

"It's just the ice gods. That's what we say. We got to do whatever the ice gods want. Some days they are good to you, and some days they treat you bad." ❌

FAT-BIKE CENTRAL

One man's vision to make Sault Ste. Marie
Canada's fat-biking capital

BY CONOR MIHELL

Like so many other early adopters of the unlikely niche activity that's emerged as the biggest trend in mountain biking, Jan Roubal purchased his first fat-bike as a novelty item. Six years ago, he never imagined that a stout frame with no suspension, few gears and squishy, oversized tires would one day become his go-to "adventure bike"—let alone a phenomenon that's changing the outdoor sports scene in Roubal's blue collar northern Ontario hometown of Sault Ste. Marie.

"I was the weirdo riding my fat-bike around town," chuckles Roubal, 37, the owner of Sault Ste. Marie's Vélorution bike shop. "I think we sold three [fat-bikes] that first year."



CONOR MIHELL

Fast forward to 2018, and Roubal estimates there are 400 fat-bikes rolling around the city's snowy trails and frozen waterways. Cycling enthusiasts have been riding mountain bikes in the winter for decades, but the pursuit didn't take off until the 1990s and early 2000s, when a handful of hardcore endurance racers from Alaska conceived a virtually unstoppable bike with massive 10- to 12-centimetre-wide tires for excellent traction on hardpack and the ability to float through soft snow.

Since their arrival in the mid-latitudes about a decade ago, fat-bikes have thrived in the new reality of warmer winters with irregular snowfall and prolonged freeze-thaw weather patterns. Because of fat-bikes' confidence-inspiring stability and grip in all conditions, Roubal says many people are buying them as a year-round ride.

"More and more, you have to take what Mother Nature gives you," says Danielle Anstess, a competitive mountain biker and Vélorution employee. "Fat-biking is a perfect complement to skiing. When it's boilerplate, I hop on my bike and when there's a powder dump, I grab my skis."

With winters becoming decidedly less snowy in southern Ontario and northern Michigan, Roubal envisions Sault Ste. Marie (population 75,000) as a world-class destination for fat-biking. The city's 25-kilometre Hub Trail, popular with snowshoers, is easily accessible from residential areas and downtown; on Monday nights, Vélorution organizes a group ride on the Hub Trail, weaving from sidewalks to pathway to flowy urban single-track.

But it's venturing into the snowbelt hills north of Sault Ste. Marie and, during

FOR MORE INFORMATION

In Sault Ste. Marie, check out Vélorution (velorution.ca); in Thunder Bay, visit Petrie's (petries.ca) or Fresh Air Experience (freshairexperience.com); and in Muskoka, visit Liv Outside (livoutside.ca).

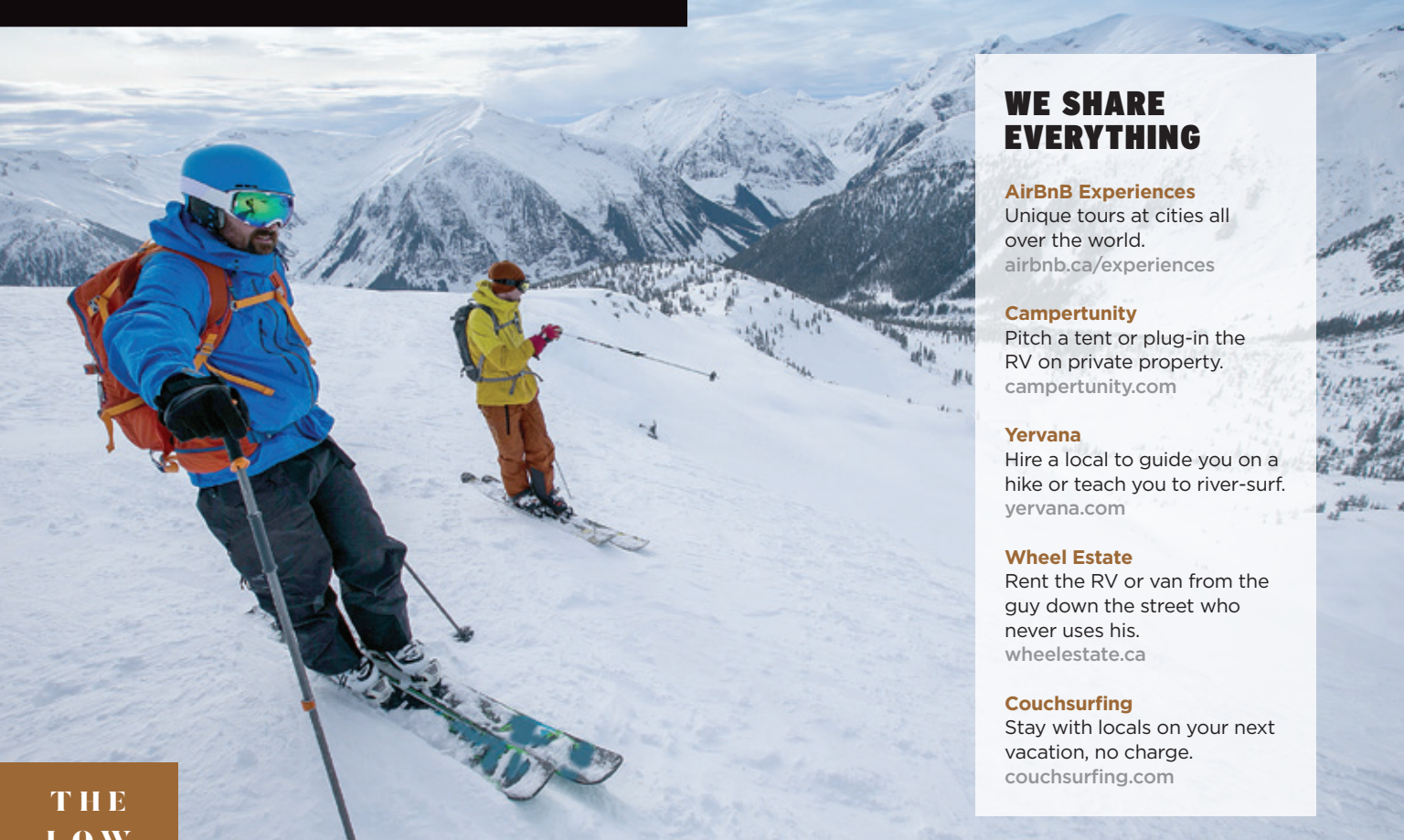
cold winters, tracing the icy shoreline of Lake Superior, that gets Roubal most excited. Last year, the Sault Cycling Club acquired a 70-kilometre, 13-horsepower mechanized groomer known as a Snowdog to maintain 18 kilometres of single-track at a golf course on the outskirts of town. The ultraportable Snowdog worked wonderfully in creating a solid base on tight trails, Roubal says. He's currently negotiating permissions to groom the cycling club's 26 kilometres of single-track at Hiawatha Highlands, a cross-country skiing facility. In March, 30 local riders and out-of-

towners descended on Stokely Creek, a nordic ski centre with over 100 kilometres of groomed trails just north of Sault Ste. Marie, for a season-ending, all-day ride linking double-track, frozen lakes and backcountry warming huts.

Fat-biking is flourishing in communities across Ontario. Thunder Bay boasts a mix of winter riding in urban forests and technical single-track on the city's outskirts; and the Cottage Country towns of Bracebridge, Parry Sound and Huntsville all have dedicated groomed trails for fat-biking.

"We're just trying to do our best to make our community the raddest one around," says Roubal. "When you travel around and see what other places are doing and the potential we have here, you realize just how much opportunity we have to get stuff going." ✕

LEFT: Jan Roubal is leading Ontario's fat-bike revolution.



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THE
LOW
DOWN



SHARE, SHARE ALIKE

The sharing economy comes to the outdoors

BY RYAN STUART

The lightbulb moment for Jim McGovern came after setting up two Ontario teenagers with a Whistler local. “They had the best day of skiing ever,” McGovern remembers. “The local elevated their experience. It’s something most of us want when we’re somewhere new, but there was no platform for meeting up with a local.”

For Guita Yazdani, it was a similar gap between experiences. One week she was camping on a private piece of land where she had lots of space, privacy and quiet, and a few weeks later camping at a cramped, crowded and noisy provincial park campground.

“There was none of the connection to nature that we had at the private campground,” she says. “It was a totally different experience—and that’s if you can find a campsite. You have to book months in advance. People are reselling reservations like concert tickets.”

Both cases led to new businesses: McGovern started Yervana, a platform that connects “explorers” with locals willing to guide them on outdoor adventures for a small fee; while Yazdani’s Campertunity matches landowners with space for a tent or RV with campers.

Both represent the collision of trends. On the one side are people increasingly looking for personal and authentic

experiences. On the other is the sharing economy, defined by businesses like AirBnB and Uber, that use the Internet to bridge the gap between under-utilized assets (in this case, local knowledge and land) and demand (travellers looking for something different). In between is time. “We often spend more time on the Internet looking for what we want to do than actually doing it,” observes McGovern.

Yervana and Campertunity, both based in Vancouver, British Columbia, make it easy to find unique ways of enjoying nature with a local twist. It sounds like everyone wins, but with any disruption to the status quo comes unintended consequences.

Yervana’s platform launched in June 2018. One half of the site are “locals,” people with inside knowledge on the mountain bike trails in Squamish or the best places to take nature photos around Banff. Prices range from \$20 to \$200-plus and most trips are in the Sea to Sky region

north of Vancouver or the Bow Valley west of Calgary, though McGovern is looking to expand in BC and Alberta and into Ontario. Locals apply to have their trips listed on the site. Yervana provides insurance if locals don’t have their own.

More than a marketplace, Yervana is a matchmaker, says McGovern. Rather than signing up for a trip and not knowing anything about the guide who will be leading it, Yervana encourages communicating with the locals beforehand.

“The goal is to build community, not a business,” McGovern says. “The path to purchase is to make a social connection before you buy.”

Even though many of the locals are not experienced guides, McGovern says search-and-rescue organizations are supportive of the service. Two-thirds of backcountry incidents involve solo, ill-prepared or ignorant users—all preventable by hiring a local. So far, he’s shied away from more technical activities like backcountry skiing and

ABOVE: Connecting with a local is now as simple as clicking on an app.

ice-climbing, preventing a conflict with the ACMG, the national mountain guiding overseer. He also approached bureaucrats in both provinces to ensure the company's insurance and regulations fit with park standards.

However, he is stirring up one potential hive of trouble—localism. In the ever busier backcountry, exposing areas to heavier use is rarely popular. McGovern hasn't heard anything negative and he isn't worried. "If I show you a secret stash at Whistler the chances of you being able to find it again are pretty slim," he says.

For its part, some stakeholders are welcoming Campertunity. Anyone with space on their property for a tent or RV can sign onto the site. Like AirBnB they list their amenities—there is no minimum—and describe the setting. The camping opportunities range from 200-acre ranches to small acreages with electricity, \$6 per night to \$50+. Some are offering extras like a visit with farm animals, meditation classes or horseback riding. Campers browse through the listings, which are mainly in BC and Alberta, though Yazdani says they want to expand nationwide.

"There's such huge demand we don't think we're taking any business away from campgrounds," she says. "We're just providing another option."

"In a time when RV shipments in North America are at an all-time high and the number of campgrounds is not growing, anything that increases supply is welcome," says Shane Devenish, president of the Canadian RV Association.

But he says that with a caveat. No one is opening new campgrounds because taxation and regulations are making it almost impossible. He wants Campertunity landowners to at least pay equivalent taxes as campgrounds.

Regardless of what regulators do, Yazdani and McGovern believe the business model is only growing.


"My prediction is the sharing economy is going to be bigger than the Internet," says McGovern. "It's going to have a bigger impact on how we interact with each other."

Yervana and Campertunity, like everything else in the sharing economy, rely on ratings of users and suppliers. In the future, figures McGovern, how you behave in a vacation suite or with a tour guide is going to matter. A lot.


"A credit rating is going to be passé," he says. "In the future you're going to have a reputation score."

And it's going to follow you around the Internet and right into the backcountry. ✕

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ARC'TERYX AT 30

Can this iconic Canadian brand continue to hold the high ground, 30 years on?

BY RYAN STUART



To understand why Arc'teryx thinks their Alpha SV jacket is worth \$900, consider everything that goes into every one of the company's pinnacle waterproof-breathable shells: 211 operations by 65 operators over a total of four hours and 38 minutes.

True, the Alpha is one of the North Vancouver, British Columbia, company's most labour-intensive products, but it's also representative of the attention to detail Arc'teryx puts into everything they've done since launching out of a Vancouver garage in 1989. And it explains how the company, as it turns 30 years old, maintains a reputation for building what's widely considered the best fitting and functioning outdoor gear despite rapid growth, an expanding worldwide manufacturing base and the temptation to follow their competition from the top of the mountain down to the masses.

"Arc'teryx is not distracted," says Doug Schnitzspahn, the Colorado-based editor of *Outdoor Retailer Magazine*, a publication covering the adventure sports gear industry. "They survive at a high price-point by being disciplined with

what they do and with the quality of the products they offer."

"Whatever we make, it is going to be best in class," says Dan Green, a longtime employee and now VP of design at Arc'teryx. "We've had lots of opportunity to chase big volume but we want to be really great at what we do. No one will put the Bird [Arc'teryx's logo] on something and blow it out. To put the Bird on it, it has to be worthy."

That's been the Arc'teryx ethos since Dave Lane and Jeremy Guard founded the company in 1989. They started with the

first heat-laminated climbing harness and then used the technology to improve the hip-belt on backpacks. Arc'teryx designers went on to innovate in other areas: the first waterproof zipper, cutting waterproofing seam tape in half to shave weight and developing new insulation technology, just to name a few.

Green says their design and development teams are some of the largest in the industry. When they want to, say, make an avalanche air bag pack, they build their own fan and battery. When they can't find a machine to form kneepads just so,

or test tear strength, they tinker their own. Dedicated teams focus exclusively on picking the season's colours or pattern-making.

"We're not a harness company or a jacket company, we're a design company," says Green. "With everything we do, our only goal is to make things work better. That leads us down a path we might not pursue if we just wanted it to look good."

At Arc'teryx, aesthetic is the product of good design, not the other way around, says Green. The company's streamlined and minimalist design ethos is evident on everything from advertising

THE LOW DOWN

THE LIFE OF THE BIRD

1989

Dave Lane and Jeremy Guard found Rock Solid, a climbing gear company.



1990

The duo changes the name to Arc'teryx, referencing the Archaeopteryx, the first reptile to develop feathers for flight. The name ties the brand to innovation and evolution with the Vapor climbing harness, the first to use heat-lamination technology.



1993

The same Vapor technology makes it possible to build a thinner, more comfortable hip-belt for the Bora backpack.



1996

Partners with Gore-Tex for the first time.



2001

Salomon Group buys the private company.





From a North Vancouver garage to the peak of the outdoor apparel world in 30 years—Arc'teryx has forged its reputation on quality.

to ski packs. It's part of their success as a Canadian brand.

"For BC manufacturers to compete with low-cost labour jurisdictions they need to maintain their advantage in some way and... that comes through superior design and outright innovation," says Andrew Wynn-Williams, BC divisional VP for the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, an industry association.

That focus hasn't wavered even as the company was gobbled up by bigger fish. Arc'teryx is a privately owned subsidiary of Amer Sports, a Finnish conglomerate that also owns Suunto, Salomon, Atomic and Wilson Sports.

They declined to provide financial information, however, in 2014 Arc'teryx told a reporter from *Powder Magazine*, a ski publication, that they were approaching \$300 million US in total sales. Since then, they've increased the number of head office and design centre employees from 325 to more than 500. In 2016, Arc'teryx opened a new factory and warehouse facility, called Arc'One, in New Westminster, just outside Vancouver. It's four times larger than their previous Canadian operations.

"Owning our own factory is a key competitive advantage," says Green. "It's one of the building blocks of the brand. Building Arc'One solidifies our commitment to quality manufacturing."

Domestic manufacturing also allows companies like Arc'teryx to remain nimble, says Marcus Ewart-Jones, chair of the BC Alliance for Manufacturing, an advocacy group. "If you take innovation to a Chinese factory, it will be copied," he says. "If it's a cool new product you lose all the market advantage." Plus, made in Canada holds a luxury cache, especially in Asia. "It's why companies like Canada Goose maintain their Canadian production," he continues. "If it was made in Vietnam it would lose some of its attractiveness."

Canadian roots also helped shape the company's attitude and expertise, says Green. "Canada has a pioneering, independent, entrepreneurial spirit," he says. "If there are

dragons to be slayed we're going to do it ourselves. And being based on the West Coast no question is why we are known for great Gore-Tex jackets."

Arc'One manufactures about 10 per cent of Arc'teryx products. The rest are outsourced to 22 partner factories spread around the world. It takes three years to teach a new factory how to make gear up to Arc'teryx's standard, says Shirley Chan, director of product commercialization and quality at the company. That's key to ensuring everything the company sells is worthy of the brand.

"When you train your sewers to sew 15 stitches per inch they can't switch to doing nine," she says. "You can't turn that attitude on and off."

And that defines the difference between Arc'teryx and everyone else, says Schnitzspahn. "Most companies don't have a clue what's going on at their foreign factories," he says.

Now heading into adulthood, the brand doesn't plan to change a thing.

"Our aim has always been to find a better way to make really great stuff," Green continues. "Even as we grow we make no compromises to our values. If anything, they're stronger." ✕

ARC'TERYX (2X); ISTOCK

2005

Amer Sports swallows Salomon Group, including Arc'teryx.

2010

Launches Veilance, a lifestyle clothing line using high-tech fibres.

2015

Plunges into the footwear world with climbing and hiking shoes.

2016

Enters the ski boot and air bag avalanche pack markets.

* * *

Opens Arc'One, a new factory and warehouse in New Westminster, BC.

2019

Celebrates their 30th anniversary.





GETTING STARTED

SUPERIOR SURFING

Looking for a unique and exciting surf experience? Look to the *other* North Shore—Lake Superior—and don't let a little snow scare you off

BY MELISSA GEILS

There is nothing worse than sitting in class during a great wave forecast. One day, my friend and I couldn't resist. The forecast was too good and the class was too boring. However, it was snowing. Hard. But that wasn't going to stop us from having a great surf session.

We donned our wetsuits and hit the waves. Our fathers also couldn't resist the waves. Having both left work early, they joined us on the beach. When we came out of the water, our hair was a solid block of ice, while our eyelashes and eyebrows were covered in crystals. Thankfully my friend's dad boiled a big tub of water, which had cooled to the perfect temperature by the time we climbed out of the lake. We dumped the warm water on our heads, which instantly dissolved the ice—the perfect finale.

Snow will never stop me from enjoying a good surf session. And it shouldn't stop you—here's how to surf Lake Superior this winter:

THE LOW DOWN

EQUIPMENT

Surfboard

For a beginner on Lake Superior, a nine-foot longboard with a fibreglass coating is stable and can catch waves in most surfable conditions. (Waves generally range from two feet to around 10 feet depending on wind.) Always use a leash.

Board Bag

The Great Lake shores are often rocky or gravelly—a quality board bag will save you a lot of damage.

Wax

Fibreglass boards are coated in a slippery epoxy to protect them from the water; however, this coating makes it difficult to maintain a solid foothold. That's why we rub wax on the top surface to give it a rough finish. Mr. Zog's Sex Wax sells products for various temperature ranges; "cold to cool" or "x-cold to cold" are the best options for Lake Superior.

Wetsuit

Water temperatures in Lake Superior hover around four degrees Celsius year-round, only warming up slightly in the summer months. Full-body wetsuits are a must when surfing here. A five-millimetre wetsuit, with boots and gloves, will allow you to surf right up until the lake begins to freeze.

SURF SHOPS

Natri Bros surf shop in Thunder Bay was opened by local surfer Jaakko Natri. He has a wide range of boards available for sale, as well as rentals, gear repairs and the knowledge to set you up with the board that best suits your abilities (rentals from \$50). Superior East Board Shop (superioreastboardshop.com; rentals from \$50) is a similar shop in Sault Ste. Marie and Surf Ontario (surfontario.ca; rentals from \$60) is located in Toronto. All are great sources of information for current surf conditions on the lake.



FROM TOP: Braving frigid temperatures, Ontario's surfers have forged a vibrant and welcoming surf community. Snowmobiles and surfboards craft a quintessentially Canadian scene.

SURF SPOTS

On the north shore of Lake Superior, it's common to drive long distances between towns to find good surf on a particular day—but it's worth the time. Local shops are your first options to find the best surf spots. Or try:

Around Thunder Bay, Wild Goose Beach (Wild Goose Beach Road, Shuniah) pulls big waves from a southern wind and Chippewa Park (2465 City Road, Thunder

Bay) delivers from an east/northeast wind.

Hydro Hill in Terrace Bay (west of town on Highway 17) is an incredible spot during winds from the south/southeast.

Pebble Beach (39 Howe Street) in Marathon is also worth a stop.

Neys Provincial Park (1004 ON-17, Terrace Bay) is a great spot to set up for weekend of surfing. Neys does not offer winter cabins/camping—however, the park is located

FROM TOP: ERIC BERGLAND; NATHAN MONK



close to the town of Terrace Bay (terracebay.ca).

CONDITIONS

Fall/Winter: From late-August to mid-December, days with surfable waves on Lake Superior's north shore are more common than those without. Waves will start to build once the wind reaches about 20 km/h coming off the lake. The required wind direction will vary for each surf spot, so you'll need to know which wind direction is coming off the lake before you choose a beach. Some helpful websites for tracking waves and wind are NOAA National Weather Service (weather.gov) and NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory (glerl.noaa.gov).

The colour-coding on each website's charts indicates the height of the waves in feet. Once the waves are around five feet in a specific area, you can take out your longboard. It's important to note these forecast sites provide the wave height further out in the lake. So, when it's five feet out there, it's likely only around one to two feet near shore (suitable for a

longboard). You can also download the app SurfingLakes (App Store/Google Play) and track waves from your phone.

Spring/Summer: There are instances during the spring and summer where weather will turn out some excellent waves (wind of around 20km/h). A thunderstorm/rainstorm passing over the lake will create high winds that form large waves. While a storm is building or directly following a storm are good times to hit the water. (Don't head out in the middle of a thunderstorm—see Safety.)

SAFETY

The power of the waves and the pull of the retreating water can be very dangerous even for good swimmers, and many places that offer big waves are in deep water. You should be comfortable in the water and a strong swimmer. Stay alert, as the weather can change quickly on the lake. Get out of the water during thunder and lightning. And always surf with a buddy. If you get caught in a bad situation, it's vital to have someone there to help you. ✘

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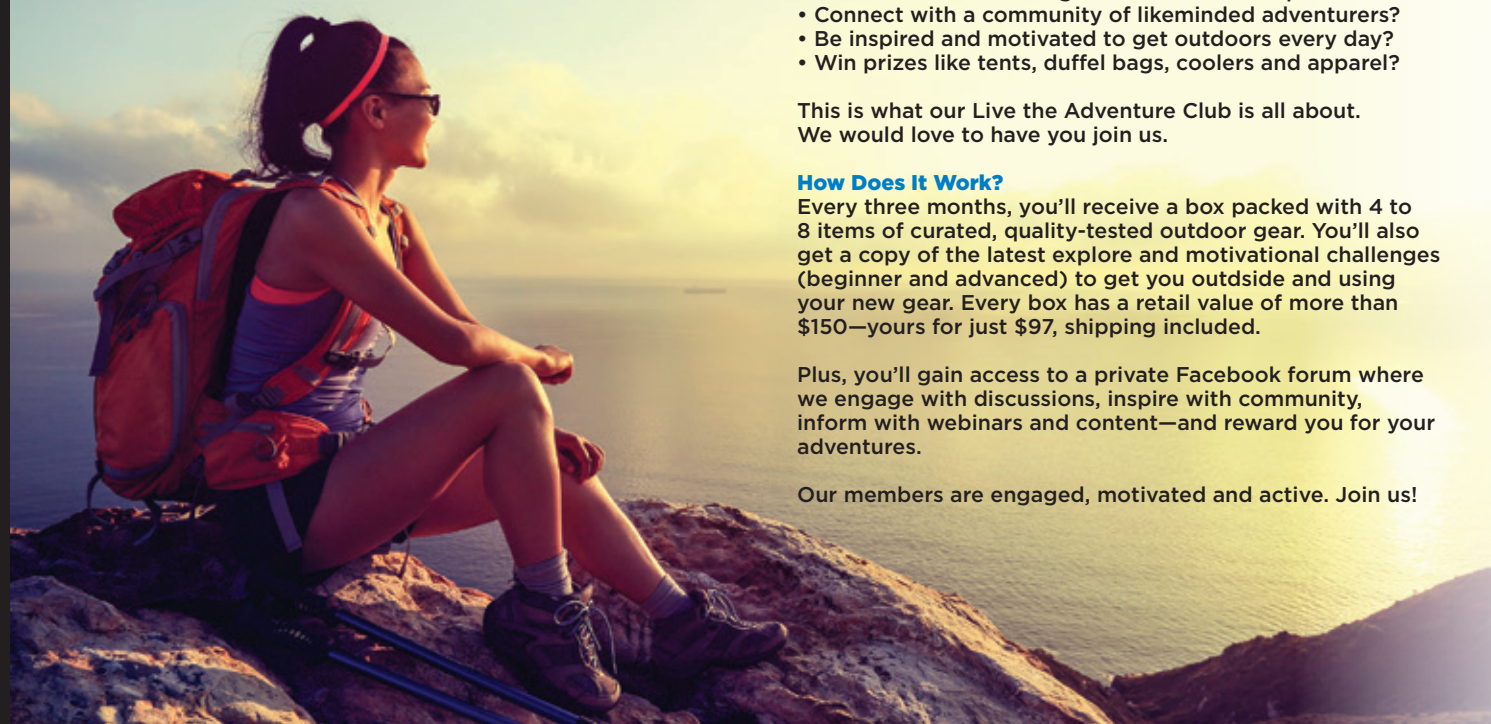
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& EXPLORING

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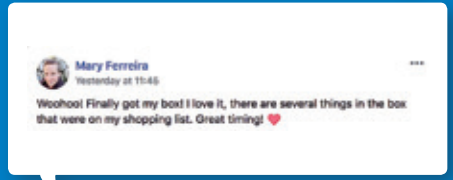
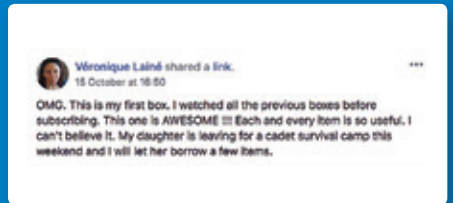
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GEAR GUIDE

WINTER GIFT GUIDE

Find the perfect adventure gift to fit any budget—and any adventurer

BY RYAN STUART

For the BACKCOUNTRY SKIER



\$100+

Salomon S/Lab Shift (\$650; salomon.com)

This is the first backcountry ski binding that skis like an alpine setup at the resort—locking onto a boot at the toe and heel—yet tours like a pin-binding in the backcountry. No more compromises.

\$50+

Mammut Aligator Pro Light

(\$90; mammut.ch)

An extendable handle, oval shaft and lightweight aluminum build makes moving snow easy with this shovel.



STAFF FAVOURITE!

\$15+

Hydro Flask 21 oz Bottle

(\$40; hydroflask.com)

Never end up with frozen water again. The honeycombed double-wall on this 621-millilitre vessel keeps water liquid all winter-day-long.



THE LOW DOWN

\$100+

MSR Evo Snowshoe Kit

(\$240; msrgear.com)

Getting into snowshoeing is easy with this package, which includes MSR's classic Evo Trail snowshoes, adjustable aluminum poles and a carrying bag.



For the SNOWSHOER

\$50+

Flylow Maine Line Glove

(\$55; flylowgear.com)

The warmth of a mitten and the dexterity of a glove. Flylow packed the lobster claw-style Maine Line with synthetic insulation and protected the leather with beeswax.



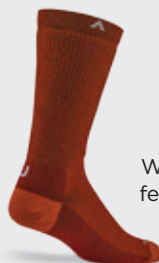
\$15+

STAFF FAVOURITE!

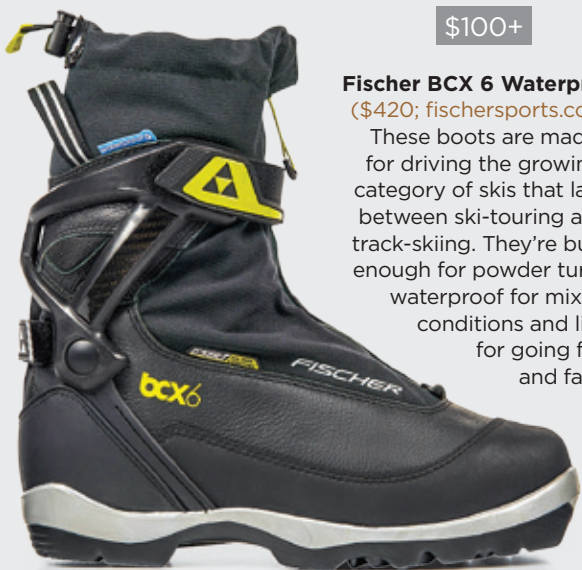
Wigwam Forge Crew

(\$18; wigwam.com)

Wicking and fast drying to fight blisters and cold feet, FreshGuard to kill funk and extra cushioning where it's needed, the Forge is everything we look for in a snowshoeing sock.



For the **CROSS-COUNTRY SKIER**



\$100+

Fischer BCX 6 Waterproof
(\$420; fischersports.com)

These boots are made for driving the growing category of skis that land between ski-touring and track-skiing. They're burly enough for powder turns, waterproof for mixed conditions and light for going far and fast.

\$50+

Skida Alpine Hat
(\$50; skida.com)

The outside of the toque is a stretchy polyester. The inside is fleece. Together they create a super-warm, sweat-wicking combo, perfect for hot climbs and cold descents.



\$15+

Sole Performance Medium
(\$28; yoursole.com)

The insoles in your ski boots probably suck. Replace them with these ones, which offer proper arch support and cushioning for better performance, comfort and warmth.

For the **WINTER CAMPER**



\$100+

Dakine Diablo Mitt
(\$255; dakine.com)

The three layers of the Diablo—a Gore-Tex outer mitt, down and synthetic insulated inner and a thin glove liner—keep hands toasty, dexterous and ready for any temperature and any job.



\$50+

Zippo 6-Hour Rechargeable Hand Warmer
(\$50; zippo.com)

From warming cold fingers to reviving a dead phone, this kidney-shaped device solves a lot of potential winter problems. The lithium-ion battery is rechargeable and lasts up to six hours.



\$15+

Black Diamond Zip
(\$30; blackdiamondequipment.com)

Flashlight or lantern? The Zip does both. Shining through the frosted dome, the single 150-lumen LED casts a perfect glow for reading and cooking. An unfiltered light on the bottom directs a focused beam.



GEAR GUIDE

For the WINTER PADDLER

\$100+

Patagonia R4 Yulex Full Suit

(\$640; patagonia.ca)

Whether it's winter surfing in the Great Lakes or a SUP on downwind runs in a howling southeaster, this suit will keep you warm in cold water. It's made from sustainable natural rubber, lined with partially recycled fleece and is Fair Trade-certified.



\$15+

Red Paddle Inflatable SUP Electric Pump Adaptor

(\$40; redpaddleco.com)

Pumping up inflatable SUPs is a pain in the back. This adaptor lets any compressor do the hard work, including the one at your neighbourhood gas station.



THE LOW DOWN



\$50+

Chums Storm Series Downstream

(\$90; chums.com)

Keep essentials dry and safe on the water in this waterproof sling. Slip a phone in the see-through front pocket and an extra layer and a wallet in the four-litre main.

For the WINTER COMMUTER



\$100+

Timbuk2 Tuck Pack Reflective

(\$148; timbuk2.com)

The 20-litre roll-top design has internal and external pockets and a laptop sleeve. And when headlights hit this pack on a dark commute, it goes from "urban minimalist" to "can't miss it."



\$50+

Nite Ize Radiant 750 Bike Light

(\$60; niteize.com)

Strap it to a handlebar or mount it on a helmet—both doable tool-free—and let the 750 lumens guide the way and keep you safe. The rechargeable battery lasts up to 17 hours on low mode.

STAFF FAVOURITE!

\$15+



Buff DryFlx Headband

(\$25; buffcanada.com)

With wicking and fast-drying fibres, this headband is ideal for keeping ears warm in the cold. Hidden reflective hits add safety.



GEAR GUIDE

COMPILED BY DAVID WEBB

STAFF STASH

10 reasons to be excited for winter



Hurttä Trail Pack

(\$120; hurttä.com)

Straight from Finland, Hurttä dons North American pups in Scandinavian style. Their sleek, tactical-looking Trail Pack offers both a padded safety harness with dual leash-clips and detachable saddlebags with four pockets—so Fido can carry his fair share. Tough ripstop nylon ensures a long life and reflective hits on both the harness and pack keep your doggo visible on dark winter nights.



Oboz Wind River III Waterproof

(\$250; obozfootwear.com)

Is it the O Fit insole, which features low-density EVA pods for comfy cushioning? Is it the BDry Membrane, that sheds water and slush with ease while venting sweat? Is it the 4.5-millimetre directional lugs for tearing into muddy trails? Or is it the asymmetrical chassis that offers foot-cradling comfort? Whatever it is that makes these boots so comfy, we love wearing them on mucky winter trails. (Women's pictured, men's available.)



Spot X

(\$350; findmespot.ca)

An upgrade from the classic Gen3 satellite locator beacon, Spot X adds the ability to send and receive 140-character emails or text messages, along with rudimentary navigational features and, of course, the SOS function. The latter summons emergency assistance via the Globalstar satellite network; the former allows adventurers to stay in touch with home-base; both function when travels go way off-grid. And we appreciate the new month-to-month service plans so we can use the Spot X as needed and shelf it the rest of the time.



Merrell Thermo Rogue Mid Gore-Tex

(\$300; merrell.com)

The Thermo Rogue stands out because it's stripped down. With five-millimetre lugs and a Vibram Arctic Grip sole, plus 100 grams of Primaloft Aerogel Gold insulation, this boot is warm and stable in icy conditions. The bellows tongue and molded arch-shank add to the all-weather ability and comfort. However, at just 960 grams for the pair, these winter kicks are as light as most summer hikers.



IceBreaker Bodyfit Base Layer 200

(\$120 top/\$130 bottom; icebreaker.com)

When it comes to base layers, nothing is as cozy as 100 per cent merino wool. Plus, it offers great warmth-for-weight, wicking and extreme odour-resistance.

Take Icebreaker's revamped Bodyfit Base Layer. We wore the 200-weight tops and bottoms for five days without washing and our hiking partners never once complained.

MEC Travel Light Carry On

(\$60; mec.ca)

So compact it folds up into itself, MEC's new Travel Light Carry On expands into a 37-litre bag whenever you need it. Made of 70-denier ripstop nylon, this backpack features sturdy zippers with several pockets and mesh dividers. Weighing only 570 grams, it's easy to tote with you. And when it's unfolded, you'll be surprised how much it can fit—this bag packs everything for a full-day adventure or an overnight hike.





Helly Hansen LifaLoft Hybrid Insulator Jacket
(\$220; hellyhansen.com)

HH partnered with Primaloft to craft the filling on this new midweight piece—the quilted insulation on the front and back panels is made from 75 per cent Lifa fibres (HH's longstanding proprietary technical fabric) and 25 per cent synthetics. Arms and sides are wind-resistant fleece. The result? Extreme moisture management and temperature regulation, creating a piece we can wear while hiking or cross-country skiing in temperatures ranging from below zero to double-digits.



Columbia OutDry EX Diamond Piste Jacket
(\$800; columbiasportswear.ca)

What happens if you cross a down puffy with a rain jacket and a technical ski shell? You get this burly unit. Hydrophobic 900-fill down with heat-reflective inner panels? Check. Fully seam-sealed and waterproof-breathable? Yep. A powder skirt, goggle/media pockets, lift-pass pocket and wrist gaiters? You betcha. The full feature list reads like a novel—we just know it's warmer and drier than any ski jacket we've tested this year. (Women's pictured, men's available.)

Purica Complete 360
(\$48; purica.com)

Don't let the winter blues—or the winter flues—get you down. This soluble powder from Purica contains Ashwagandha, which has been used in traditional Indian medicine for centuries to increase energy and relieve stress, as well as eight medicinal mushrooms that can help boost your immune system, fight stress and improve sleep quality.



Gregory Praxus/Proxy 65
(\$220; gregorypacks.com)

This is one of the most feature-packed and innovative adventure travel backpacks we've seen. The 65-litre Praxus (men's) and Proxy (women's) offers padded laptop protection and an ActiveShield compartment that keeps dirty and wet gear separate from the rest. Multiple pockets, tons of padding for comfort and security, a shoe compartment and a removable hip-belt are just a few more key features of this versatile unit. (Also available with similar features in a 45-litre.)



THE
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DOWN

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THE HAPPY CAMPER BY KEVIN CALLAN

ICE, NOT SO NICE

Safe travels across the most Canadian of surfaces

I should have thought things through first before I called the police. I had just moved to a small Ontario town, near a lake. It was a late winter and the ice had been slow to form. When it did, it wasn't very stiff. I put my auger through at just under five centimetres. So when I saw some local ice anglers out, I contacted the authorities. I wasn't the only one concerned. A number of my neighbours, some of whom had lived there for well over 30 years, were yelling at the idiots to get off the ice. The anglers threw back a few choice words to let all the bystanders know they knew what they were doing. They obviously didn't. Not only was the ice too thin, they were fishing on a spot where an underground spring came bubbling up—one of the worst places to be.

The police arrived and agreed the fishermen were idiots to be on the ice so early after freeze-up. They also told us they can't arrest anyone for being an idiot. The police had no authority to tell them to get off the ice. I filmed the entire event and placed it on my social media. The local news saw it and put it on their evening report.

Rumour around town was that the fishermen were out to get me, which they did a couple days later. I was in the liquor store and so were they. One of them recognized me and there were a few harsh words thrown my way. The cashier broke it up—she had seen the footage on TV, agreed they were idiots and told them to leave the store.

TRAVELLING ON ICE can be dangerous. It can also be a great way to get around during the winter. Spend just a few hours hauling through the thick bush in deep snow and you'll realize



Travelling on ice is very nice—but safety concerns are paramount. When in doubt, stay off.
LEFT: Study the colour and texture of ice before setting foot atop it.

why travelling across frozen water is a better option. It's an open landscape where wind-packed snow is commonplace.

Ice can be extremely hazardous when your knowledge of good ice conditions is limited. Gaining experience is fundamental—but gaining it also means heading out on the ice. Beyond trekking with someone more knowledgeable than yourself, being extremely cautious is the next best thing.

Not all ice is the same. Clear ice—or what some call “blue ice”—is the densest. The liquid has frozen without particles mixed in, such as snow or slush. White ice is far less dense and forms when a flood of snow and slush refreezes. You'll probably notice air bubbles or larger air pockets throughout it. A greyish tone to the ice indicates water is present and it's definitely not safe.

The common rule is that you're safe to walk on ice if it's 10 centimetres thick. However, this is way too general. Each body of water is different and should always be viewed that way. If it's white ice, then you can never trust a uniform thickness. If there are springs from groundwater, or river mouths, then you're simply rolling the dice with every step you take. Other areas I try to avoid are sunken logs in swampy bits, around the edges of beaver lodges or where rocks are half-submerged—anywhere the ice can warm up and weaken around the edges. Even worse are areas where currents could exist, like points jutting out, between islands or where a lake

narrows. If there's a chance of a current, avoid it at all costs.

Large frozen lakes have an added danger: pressure cracks. Ice expands as it forms. You'll hear it groan as it thickens. As pressure builds and the ice is stressed, cracks will randomly form. Even high winds will shift the ice, pulling it apart or pushing it together. Open leads can form even if the ice is a metre thick. Many snowmobilers have perished, especially while travelling in the dark, due to pressure cracks. Moving at fast speeds, they either fall through an open lead or crash into an ice ridge. According to recent data from the Canadian Red Cross, 46 per cent of snowmobilers' deaths have resulted from immersion in open sections of water.

River ice also has its own issues. A river provides an excellent trail to lead you through the woods. However, there are a lot of variables, like narrows and fast currents, where the river will never freeze thick enough to be safe. It can be a deadly circumstance if you go through. The current can quickly take you under.

One of my past college students died this way. He was walking home after a late-night study group and chose the short section of the river to cross rather than a bridge further downstream. The current took him under when he fell through. They found his body two days later. If you choose to travel on river ice, make sure to keep to the edges where there is less flow and only on large rivers with little flow.

Yes, there are ways to get out if you fall through the ice. However, you don't want to fall through! ✕

THE BLOG

Check out Kevin Callan online every Monday at: explore-mag.com/camping





FISH EYES

A meditation on life and death on the Chilko River

First, they said this year would be a peak sockeye salmon run. Then they weren't sure after all. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) scientists responsible for assessing salmon stocks and predicting annual abundance have a tough assignment, to say the least. They're tasked with conjuring numbers that satisfy the demands of the commercial fishing fleet and sport fishing sector. On the other side of the equation, there are the conservationists and citizen streamkeepers.

Dozens of groups up and down the coast volunteer countless hours doing habitat enhancement on streams like Morrison Creek, the tiny waterway that runs through my daughters' school grounds, barely 10 kilometres long from headwaters to confluence yet home to three species of salmon as well as rainbow and cutthroat trout. It's like a living laboratory of salmon ecology.

Then there's the general public, which, on the west coast of Canada, has no shortage of opinions on what to do with the salmon resource and how best to manage it. For most people, abundant salmon are much more than an economic consideration—for

lack of a better word, the connection people feel to the cycle of salmon borders on the spiritual. To witness salmon returning to their spawning grounds is to mark the passage of another year with a hopeful sense that, yep, in spite of everything, the overlapping matrix of ecosystems that forms salmon habitat is still functioning.

From a conservation science perspective, salmon are extremely complex. First there's the integrity of freshwater habitat, which has suffered dearly from decades of careless logging practises and other resource-extraction activities, like mining. For example, the Mount Washington copper mine, located on the north side of the Vancouver Island ski hill with the same name, operated for four lame years in the 1960s before going bankrupt. As if by magic, the company and its executives vanished. The public was left on the hook for mine remediation and containment of acid rock drainage into the Tsolum River watershed from which the river's endemic salmon population is still recovering more than four decades later.

Climate change is tinkering with ocean temperature and salinity, impacting a

part of the salmon lifecycle that is difficult to study. Finally there's the cumulative pressures of commercial and sport fishing and the poorly understood threat posed to wild salmon by an almost entirely foreign-owned open-net-pen salmon aquaculture industry. On one hand, DFO is responsible for promoting salmon aquaculture, while on the other hand, it struggles to manage wild salmon (critics of the federal agency—kick over a rock anywhere on the coast and you'll find one—call it a blatant conflict of interest). Either way, salmon resource managers are presented with an unenviable Rubik's Cube of overlapping stakeholder interests and conservation decisions.


ABOVE:
Crimson sockeye persevere upstream, against all odds.

THAT'S WHY EVERY autumn, when I witness salmon journeying upstream to their nascent rivers to spawn I consider it a minor miracle. In early September, I travelled with my family to visit a friend, Brian McCutcheon, owner and founder of the whitewater rafting and adventure travel company ROAM, at a base camp on the banks of BC's Chilko River.

One morning I hit the water on a paddleboard with my daughter, Zola,

before the typical afternoon winds whipped up Chilko Lake. As we skimmed across the river, Zola and I peered into the emerald depths at darting schools of crimson sockeye. Though it was early in the season, the river was alive. Wildlife was beginning to assemble for the banquet. An osprey surveyed the scene from a massive treetop nest. Across the river, a mating pair of bald eagles floated on thermal updrafts before alighting on a giant Douglas-fir. The grizzlies—some have been recorded travelling all the way from the Bella Coola River valley to feed on Chilko salmon—had yet to arrive en masse. McCutcheon told us that at the sockeye run's peak, it's common to be able to sit in a kayak a five-minute paddle away from his lodge and watch a dozen or more grizzlies gorging on sockeye, which to the bears are like bulging packets of fat and nutrients critically important to their fall diet.

The Chilko headwaters are just one of roughly 10,000 distinct spawning locations in BC. Monitoring them requires resources, and according to a recent study by Simon Fraser University researcher Michael Price published last summer in the *Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences*, we're failing. Price found that DFO currently lacks


**CLIMATE CHANGE IS
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adequate data to assess the status of 50 per cent of all “managed salmon populations along BC’s north and central coasts.” Furthermore, he reported that annual counts of spawning streams have declined by 70 per cent since the 1980s.

Zola and I spent a few lazy hours paddling the Chilko River, widest where it exits its namesake lake. The Chilko River sockeye darting below our paddleboard were at the conclusion of an epic 800-kilometre upstream journey. It began when they exited the Strait of Georgia and entered the Fraser River near Vancouver International Airport, along with millions of other sockeye. At Lytton, sockeye bound for Shuswap Lake and Adams River branched into the Thompson River. Chilko sockeye

continued up the Fraser, before angling into the Chilcotin River at Junction Sheep Range Provincial Park. Finally, near Alexis Creek, they entered the Chilko for the home stretch.

Science still hasn't unravelled exactly how they navigate. Megan McPhee, a research assistant at the University of Montana's Flathead Lake Research Station, says they use a sort of internal “map and compass,” based on environmental cues such as day length, sun position, salinity and temperature gradient, to find where a particular river discharges into the ocean. Once in freshwater, they are guided by a sense of smell, following the unique chemical profile of their nascent stream with which they were imprinted as young smolts.

I try to explain this phenomenon to young Zola: a biological imperative to reproduce so strong that these fish will swim for days against the broiling currents of the Fraser River to arrive at the crystalline waters of the Chilko River. One life ends so that another begins. There is wonder in Zola's eyes. Pondering the lifecycle of salmon never gets old for me; an annual reaffirmation that given half a chance, a species as complex as salmon will persevere. ✕



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THE INNOVATORS

Indigenous people long ago mastered the art of staying warm and dry in winter

During the early days of European Arctic exploration, arrogance often hamstrung the efficacy and safety of northern sojourns.

The Inuit people had developed some of the most advanced technology for dealing with harsh Arctic conditions, including sophisticated clothing strategies and the use of sled dogs for transportation. However, decision-makers in the British Royal Navy refused to take advantage of this wisdom developed over thousands of years, instead disparaging it as “savage.” They adorned their men in cotton and wool uniforms, poorly designed for the extreme cold, and hauled their heavy sleds the “noble” way, with shivering men at the end of ropes. The ill-fated Franklin Expedition is an example of these misguided notions at work.

Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, a more progressive thinker, was one of the first Europeans to adopt Inuit technology. Prior to becoming the first to conquer the Northwest Passage, he spent two years in what would become Nunavut, learning crucial skills from the Indigenous people,

including dogsledding, seal hunting, clothing technology and countless other tactics for surviving in the extreme north.

Amundsen’s willingness to learn from the locals paid off, and his team made it through the Northwest Passage despite minimal resources compared to the Franklin Expedition. He then went on to become the first to reach the South Pole, using the same Inuit-developed technologies that allowed him to prevail in the North.

I COULDN’T HELP but think of these contrasting stories of success and failure tied to arrogance and humility 12 years ago when a Chukchi elder gifted me a reindeer hide to use as a sleeping mat. He insisted it would be much warmer than the high-tech insulated mat I’d been using during my winter-crossing of Siberia. I was initially skeptical, thinking it unlikely that a basic hide could outperform a top-quality marvel of modern engineering, but then I thought of Amundsen, and decided there was no harm in keeping an open mind to the concept.

The Chukchi People live in the northeast tip of Asia. Genetically, they are the most closely related people to the First Nations of North America. In fact, before political barriers were created during the Soviet Union, the Chukchi and the North American First Nations would move back and forth across the Bering Strait. As with their North American counterparts, the Chukchi people had developed some of the most advanced technology for dealing with Arctic conditions.

Although I expected the reindeer hide to work reasonably, I was taken aback by just how great my first night with it was. The coarse, stiff hollow hairs kept me well off the ground and provided excellent insulation. It wasn’t long before I jettisoned my store-bought mat in favour of local technology better suited for the -50 degree nights I was facing.

Here in Canada, as winter descends upon us, I thought it would be interesting to investigate various strategies that Canada’s original inhabitants utilized to make our coldest months more comfortable. Some of these ancient innovations have

ABOVE:
For the author, local knowledge trumped modern tech in Siberia.

already been incorporated into modern technology but I wouldn't be surprised if they still hold secrets we can learn from for today's winter adventures.

Rain Protection

The Indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest had to endure some of the greatest rainfall in North America; however, they learned to protect themselves with help from the cedar tree. Hats and cloaks made from very tightly woven cedar bark shed the rain while allowing full breathability.

The Inuit required even more robust raingear since it also had to double as a dry suit when they were kayaking in rough and cold Arctic waters. They learned that clothing made from seal or whale intestines with the seams sealed with glue rendered from bones made for a watertight, yet breathable garment. The original job of the intestine in the animal is to be a semi-permeable membrane, which made it the ideal material, basically the Gore-Tex of the day.

You may not know it, but wool is already used to make clothing and goes under the name of Rayon, Lyocell, Modal or Viscose, and perhaps one day tree bark will also make it into our modern clothing repertoire.

I'll pass on the whale intestines, but modern waterproof-breathable membranes essentially use the same system.

Cold Protection

Fur was king for keeping our original inhabitants warm. Fur was obtained through standard hunting practises, and the entire animal was used for various aspects of First Nations' lifestyle. Even the needles used to sew pieces of hide together were made from animal bones. Maintaining cold-weather clothing was a full-time job, and even the act of dressing and looking after the garments was a science, ensuring that moisture didn't build up and damage didn't occur from improper use. For bedding, fur, once again, was the mainstay of a comfortable night's sleep. Generally, stiffer furs such as caribou or deer were used for sleeping mats, and softer furs were used as blankets.

While we see a lot fewer fur coats nowadays due to ethical concerns, and pretty much no fur mattresses or blankets for the same reasons, there is no denying the impact they've made on our society. We strive to make our clothes and blankets just as warm, and use both natural and synthetic fabrics to achieve that goal.

Transportation

Originally, winter transportation was usually on foot, and various designs of snowshoes were developed across Canada depending on local snow conditions. The Iroquois and Mohawks designed long and narrow snowshoes, good for speed, which helped them outrun large game animals hindered by deep snow. In the far north, the Inuit used dogsleds to transport supplies and animals they had hunted. Toboggans also have their origins here in Canada, being used by Cree and other groups to transport supplies (and children).

Snowshoes are still one of the best ways to make progress through deep snow and let's face it—nothing beats tobogganing down a snowy hill. (And it's still the best way to haul gear through the snow.)

AS CANADIANS WE pride ourselves on our ability to handle winter and for that we owe the Indigenous people a lot of credit. They figured out how to survive and thrive in cold conditions and we've borrowed from that knowledge to enjoy and delight in all that this season has to offer. So, grab your toboggan and faux-fur collared parka and have some fun. ✕



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icebreaker



THE BIG MELT

In an instant, climate change becomes personal

Last summer, climate change became personal in the form of a half-dozen large rocks crashing down the mountain toward me and the two guests I was guiding.

We were following a classic mountaineering route above Lake Louise, Alberta, with the goal of spending the night in Canada's highest inhabited dwelling—Abbot Pass Hut. As we walked upward, we talked about the relatively remote but real possibility of rockfall in the area we were about to climb through. It seemed slightly formulaic as the hazard wasn't high—a chant against evil as much as a recognition—but in a minute, our quick discussion would save our lives.

Rockfall is as much a part of life in the mountains as snow, but we plan the timing of our climbs to avoid being in the lethal zones during the times of day when rocks are most likely to fall. That remote possibility was now a reality. I watched the rocks bouncing for a long second, and then yelled, "Right!" We all moved quickly across the snow to get out of the firing line. We avoided the worst of it, but one guest was hit in the arm, breaking her humerus. For the first time in my life, I made a rescue call for my own group.

My sense of failure was and is deep. In more than 35 years of taking people into the mountains—climbing, kayaking and paragliding—this was the first person in my care who had been injured. Her terrific attitude and serene acceptance of a painful situation did not make it any easier. I had gotten something very wrong about that day and place.

In the days and months after the accident, I spoke to dozens of other guides, Parks Canada Public Safety rescue personnel and other mountain people around the world. I wanted to understand what happened. The area wasn't generally regarded as a high rockfall hazard zone and the day was near perfect: cloudy and cool. I wrote an accident report that noted it had been a long and very hot summer with multiple days over 30 degrees Celsius

prior to the accident. I checked weather records and noted that the number of days with above-freezing temperatures above 3,000 metres was surprisingly high. (If we don't get good, hard freezes at night the rocks tend to melt out from the snow and permafrost capping many of our peaks.)

A half-dozen guides sent me public and private notes and posted on a guides' forum about the close calls they had in the mountains that same summer, including pictures of a massive rockfall early in the morning in the same area my accident occurred. And then more pictures of rockfall in similar areas assumed to be "reasonable." The sense in the guiding community was that something was really different now. Too much heat for too long, even up on top of the peaks.

LATERAL MORAINES

KICK rocks out all day in a constant fusillade, and can now make joining up popular ski traverses more difficult. There's a massive wall of near-vertical rubble on many of the glaciers I used to easily ski on and off even 35 years ago. Every mountain range I fly over on my paraglider or on a carbon-spewing airplane has vast areas of clean rock exposed, with either relatively small glaciers left or no glaciers at all in the huge scar of what was ice even a few years ago. Last week, I helicoptered off the ice in Greenland, and I could see the fresh outlines of the recently deceased glaciers like chalk lines at a fictional crime scene. The terrain looks exposed and somehow vulnerable, as though surprised to see the light, and stretches as far as you can see up and down the coast. Last summer, more guides posted dramatic rockfall pictures, from the Alps to the Andes, with a surprising number again above Lake Louise. The Abbot Pass Hut has stood in its current location for almost 100 years. But last summer it had to be closed for the first time ever because the ice in the rocks underneath it started melting away.

Guides now discuss how the approaches to many of our most popular routes may be the most hazardous parts of our days. On many routes, our season ends earlier and without safe frozen snow-cover. One route in British Columbia's Bugaboos is a sliding mess of car- to house-sized boulders perched over an ice core nobody remembers seeing; our old approach just doesn't work. Entire climbing routes are falling off faces around the world. In the Alps, the Swiss and Italians are building giant protective walls in some villages as the permafrost melts and muddy landslides roll down the hillsides. The mountains have always been a dynamic place, but the speed of change is startling and often faster than we who live and

work here can keep up with. When permafrost is at -1 degrees Celsius and the world warms up a degree, it's not just a degree warmer outside—the world changes.

I DON'T "BLAME" climate change for my accident any more than I blame the sun for a sunburn.



I DON'T "BLAME" CLIMATE CHANGE FOR MY ACCIDENT ANY MORE THAN I BLAME THE SUN FOR A SUNBURN

failure to recognize the danger and update my plan as a result. More sunscreen; less faith in frozen ground. This is how it is in the mountains; we have to see them as they are, and adapt. I didn't recognize a hazard that was evolving faster than I kept up with it. We who live in the mountains and north see the changes first-hand, and those changes may not be as obvious outside the vertical world. But they will be, and we will all have to adapt and adjust our perceptions or be hit with our own rocks. The rate of change may be faster than our rate of understanding.

Nothing encourages change like a falling rock. My guest re-wrote her life in response to "her" rock, and her action is inspiring me to also re-frame what is important for my family and life. I'm not thankful for those rocks as they could have killed us, but I will learn from them. ✕



Canada's only herd of domestic caribou, otherwise known as reindeer, on the Mackenzie River Delta.



TRUE ARCTIC IMMERSION

Reindeer, reindeer, all around...

Muffled by snow, the pounding hooves of several hundred reindeer stampeding across the tundra feel like a low rumbling in my chest. They spill over a rise, sending up clouds of powder as they trot down to join the main herd gathered on a frozen lake. It's -28 degrees Celsius and I'm less than 50 metres behind this thundering expanse of dark-brown antlers.

My guide and snowmobile driver, Kylik Kisoun Taylor, had been skirting the perimeter of the lake for grizzly and wolf tracks when we came across these renegade reindeer munching amid low shrubs. He swung around behind them, gently coaxing them away from potential predators towards the safety of the wide-open lake.

I step off the snowmobile and walk towards the herd, whose steamy breaths billow into the brilliant blue sky. When I'm near enough to hear their soft grunts, I stop. As thousands of big brown eyes return my stare, I realize the thudding in my chest now is my own stampeding heart.

This is, after all, my first crack at reindeer herding, the highlight of a unique four-day Arctic immersion in the Northwest Territories' wilds.

AT INUVIK AIRPORT in March, I met Kylik—33 years old, one-quarter Inuvialuit, one-quarter Gwich'in and half Ontarian—a dynamic character dressed in a traditional ring seal parka and wolf-fur gloves made by his mother. An active board member of the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, he's also the owner

of the company Tundra North Tours, whose Canadian Arctic Reindeer Signature Package has brought me 200 kilometres beyond the Arctic Circle.

Kylik plunges our group of five straight into Northern culture by zipping from the airport along 117 kilometres of smoothly graded ice road past barges, tugboats and a coast guard vessel frozen into the Mackenzie River's northern arm until spring. Road signs remind drivers that the speed limit is 70 km/h. After 90 minutes we're in the former Hudson's Bay Company post of Aklavik, a typical Inuit hamlet of 800 where a group of boys slap a puck around a small grid of dirt roads lined in simple houses.

In the living room of Kylik's friend, traditional artist Annie C. Gordon, we chat and check out her handmade fur mitts, parkas and beaded mukluks as ▶



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Guide and owner of Tundra North Tours, Kylik Kisoun Taylor, left, is helping bring back (and market) traditional Inuit skills, such as igloo-building. Dinner on the tundra—char sashimi, muktaq, moose and caribou jerky. Local kids in Aklavik play hockey on the icy streets. Annie C. Gordon of Aklavik displays her handmade wares. Night time north of the Arctic Circle.

well as the snow goggles, caribou-handled knives and half-moon ulus crafted by her husband, Danny C. Gordon, who's out working his trapline that day.

Over tea and warm biscuits, Kylik talks about growing up north of Toronto, then visiting his Inuvialuit mother's hometown of Inuvik at the age of 16. "I had a transformational experience when I first came to the North, and I need to share that," he says. "Indigenous communities are losing their Arctic skills, but their culture is a resource here and tourism has the power to harness it." He is also turning things around by taking those skills back to the Inuit so they can get work and be paid to bring back their culture.

At sunset, on a short trek in from the road, our base camp atop a frozen lake 16 kilometres outside Inuvik comes into

view: a cluster of igloos, an illuminated ice tipi and a canvas trapper's tent that is our communal kitchen and living room. That's where our cook, retired teacher Judy Francey, is belting out an Inuvialuit gospel song while skinning a rabbit for a dinner she'll prepare on the woodstove.

The welcoming, convivial atmosphere between locals and guests in the tent reminds me of my many visits "out on the land" with Inuit families, but this is the first time I've experienced that unpretentious, part-of-the-family vibe on a guided trip. Sleeping in a real igloo is also a first for me, albeit a modestly gentrified experience with candlelight, a warm sleeping bag and heated mattress atop reindeer pelts on a snow bed.

Well after midnight Kylik wakes me up. I scurry outside the entry tunnel to watch kaleidoscopic curtains of rippling

green and yellow Northern Lights shimmy across the sky until my fingers are numb.

IN THE MORNING, Kylik is sawing blocks of packed snow with a guide from Tuktoyaktuk, Noel Cockney, who arrived to help build another igloo. We all join in, learning to line up the snow chunks on an angle like a snail's shell for strength. Kylik taught himself igloo-building since locals had lost that skill over half-a-century ago.

After an Arctic char lunch, we take to snowmobiles for the first time, a hilarious experience as we careen across the sparkling snowy landscape to check in on a traditional trapline. That evening we settle onto reindeer pelts in an igloo to dine on a diverse Arctic smorgasbord spread across a chic illuminated ice table. We nibble reindeer, moose and beluga jerky, *muktaq*—

whale blubber—smoked whitefish, dried char as well as char sashimi, raw and frozen, called *quak*. I crave the perfect pairing of an icy vodka shot.

The morning of our third day we're ramped-up over breakfast in anticipation of our upcoming reindeer escapade. We drive north on the new \$300 million year-round 138-kilometre gravel road from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk—the first all-weather road to Canada's Arctic Coast—that opened in late 2017. Then we hop on snowmobiles and head inland for 30 minutes, spotting two foxes en route. Finally we come across Canada's only free-range herd of reindeer—as many as 3,000, including babies called "bullies."

Originally from northern Russia, the Canadian government imported them via Alaska in the 1930s—officially as a potential food source for Inuit, though it's widely believed to have been part of a plan to corral nomadic Northerners into communities. The herd is now privately owned by a descendent of the reindeers' original Scandinavian Sami herders. Their meat is sold to locals, wilderness lodges and is shipped to Yellowknife.

We spend the day amid the reindeer who are virtually identical to indigenous

IF YOU GO

Tundra North Tours' four-day Canadian Arctic Reindeer Signature Adventure can be booked January 1 through April 15, 2019. The package includes all meals, hotel, B&B and igloo accommodation and on-tour transportation. From \$5,200 per person. tundranorthtours.com

Three airlines service Inuvik: Canadian North (canadiannorth.com), First Air (firstair.ca) and Air North (flyairnorth.com).

wild caribou, but these creatures are docile, often trained to pull sleds. Kylik has plans to include sledding experiences in the future when his dream of a 12-room wilderness lodge with its own landing strip is completed in the not-too-distant future.

We meet Tony Lalong, the official reindeer wrangler, whose job it is to keep the herd together and protected from predators. In late spring, he shepherds them 60 kilometres west to their calving grounds on nearby Richards Island to rear their young.

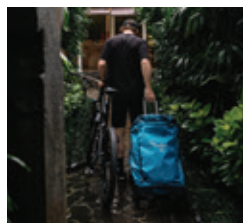
In late afternoon we continue north on the Tuk Highway as it loops and curves around frozen ponds called the Eskimo

Lakes. We leave the Richardson Mountains behind and the boreal forest shrinks then vanishes at the tree line. The landscape is a panorama of shades of white. Just before arriving in Tuk, surreal-looking pyramids rise from the flat tundra glowing pink in the sunset, conical "pingos" that are giant frost heaves with ice cores. It's magical.

"You haven't seen the Arctic unless you come in winter," says Kylik.

After two-and-a-half hours we reach the Inuvialuit community of Tuktoyaktuk (population 900) with its empty, snow-blown streets and the town pier frozen into the Arctic Ocean. Shed roofs are piled high with caribou antlers and sled dogs peek from husky huts. Kylik opens the door into the warm, inviting Tuktu B&B where owner Maureen Pokiak is cooking. A Saskatchewan teacher who came north for a year in the 1970s, she never left. Her husband, James, she apologizes, is away on an overnight muskox hunt.

We talk about the road and the potential pros and cons of being connected to the rest of Canada as Maureen serves a traditional multi-course Inuvialuit dinner of fish, whale and bannock. As a fitting conclusion to our trip, the meal ends with a big bowl of delicious reindeer soup. ✕



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All in the Family



Jureand Glacier Hotel

THE FAMILY THAT ADVENTURES TOGETHER, STAYS TOGETHER. THAT SEEMS TO GO DOUBLE FOR FAMILIES WHO OWN OUTDOOR BUSINESSES—AND CANADA HAS A LONG, RICH HISTORY OF FAMILY-RUN ADVENTURE OPERATORS

By Ryan Stuart



Whether it's a backcountry cabin in British Columbia or a B&B on the Newfoundland coast, generations of adventurers raised their businesses and their families at the same time. When it's all in the family, hospitality is personal. From dogsledding to downhill skiing, summer camps to ranching, here's how to get in on the family love: ›

Selkirk Mountain Experience is one of several family-run backcountry lodges in British Columbia. Turn the page to learn more.



Strathcona Park Lodge

THE BOULDING FAMILY

Vancouver Island, BC

ACTIVITIES: Canoeing, climbing, hiking

FAMILY ROOTS: The names of Myrna Boulding's relatives—some of the earliest settlers to the area—grace waterfalls, rivers and mountains on central Vancouver Island. So it was fitting that Myrna and her late husband Jim Boulding started an accommodation and guiding business in 1959 that took tourists to these same places. Today, their son Jamie and his wife Christine Clarke run Strathcona Park Lodge. All of Jamie's siblings, many of the in-laws and several of the grandkids have worked at Strathcona over the years. And the family atmosphere extends to the employees: the Bouldings have lost count of the couples



The Boulding family's roots in Strathcona Provincial Park go back 60 years.



who met at Strathcona and went on to get married.

WHAT TO DO: During the school year, Strathcona mostly caters to school groups that come to learn everything from rock

climbing to sea kayaking. Come summer, there are camps for teenagers and families, cabins to rent next to the lake and guided trips to discover the little-known backcountry hiking,

whitewater paddling and sea kayaking nearby. Winter is the off season, but cabins are still available for hunkering down and disconnecting.

FIND OUT MORE: strathcona.bc.ca



The Beglinger family was raised on the snowy slopes near Revelstoke, running the lodge as a family to this day.

Backcountry Lodges of BC

VARIOUS FAMILIES

Various Locations, BC

ACTIVITIES: Backcountry skiing, snowshoeing,

FAMILY ROOTS: Marty Schaffer grew up at Blanket Glacier Chalet, at 1,770 metres in the Monashee Mountains, west of Revelstoke. As a teenager he was guiding groups onto the namesake glacier, while his parents Al and Marion prepared dinner or shovelled snow. Marty is part of a generation who grew up at backcountry ski operations in British Columbia and are now taking over from their parents. Take Jasmin Caton. Before she could walk, she was travelling around Valhalla Mountain Touring's tenure on her dad's back. Don and Lynda started and ran the ski-touring lodge near Nelson until they

retired and Jasmin took over. Or take Reudi Beglinger. Tutors used to spend the winter at Selkirk Mountain Experience so his two daughters didn't have to go to school in nearby Revelstoke. And it's not just ski-touring: Jeff Gertsch is the owner and head guide at Purcell Heli-skiing, a company founded by his father Rudi. (The 70-something senior still does his share of guiding.)

WHAT TO DO: All the operations are unique, but they also share one thing: the opportunity to ski deep powder in big mountains.

FIND OUT MORE: blanketglacierchalet.com; vmt.ca; selkirkeperience.com; purcellheliskiing.com

Sunshine Village

THE SCURFIELD FAMILY
Banff, AB

ACTIVITIES: Skiing, ski-touring, snowshoeing
FAMILY ROOTS: Skiing in Sunshine Meadows, near Banff, started in 1929. The log cabin that now houses Mad Trapper's Salon and Bruno's Bistro was where the early visitors stayed—and the first chairlift was installed in 1941. Ralph T. Scurfield bought the resort in 1981. When he died in an avalanche while heli-skiing a few years later, his kids took over running the resort. Today, his son, Ralph D., is the CEO, President and majority shareholder. The younger Ralph's daughter runs the media and communication department.

WHAT TO DO: Ski, obviously. Lifts carry skiers onto three different mountains and 120 runs range from alpine steps to mellow cruisers. But there's also excellent snowshoeing just beyond the ski area boundary to Three Isle Lake and Quartz Ridge. From just about everywhere the views of Mount Assiniboine are iconic. As the highest elevation resort in the country, Sunshine Village has one of the longest seasons in North America, from November until May Long Weekend.

FIND OUT MORE:
skibanff.com



Sunshine Village is one of the few family-owned ski resorts left in Canada.

The Arsenault family pioneered dogsledding in Alberta's Kananaskis Valley.



Snowy Owl Sled Dog Tours

THE ARSENAULT FAMILY
Kananaskis Country, AB

ACTIVITIES: Dogsledding
FAMILY ROOTS: Connie Arsenault was the first to bring dogsledding to Kananaskis Country, west of Calgary. She convinced Alberta Parks to let her run tours in Spray Lakes Provincial Park in 1983. In the early years she did it all herself, from running the kennel to guiding the tours, building her family from 10 dogs to 180. Her husband Charles joined the team in 1997. When he died unexpectedly, in 2006, their two sons Jereme and Carlin came on to help. Now there's hope Jereme's two daughters will follow in the family's tracks.

WHAT TO DO: To really get a feel for dogsledding, pass on the half- and full-day tours and sign on for The Ghosts of Fortune Mountain. The two-day trip follows the Spray Lakes through the Rocky Mountains for 40 kilometres to a wilderness camp. After caring for the dogs, it's time to relax inside a canvas tent or in front of a campfire. Dinner is a luxurious feast of filet mignon, hot drinks and desert.

FIND OUT MORE: snowyowltours.com



Historic Reesor Ranch

THE REESOR FAMILY
Cypress Hills, SK

ACTIVITIES: Horseback riding, hiking, snowshoeing

FAMILY ROOTS: Chasing the pioneering dream, W.D. and Alice Reesor moved to the Cypress Hills area of Saskatchewan in 1900. Despite killer storms and the remote location, by 1904 the couple moved their four sons into a log cabin on a piece of ranch land that remains with the family today. Today, fourth generation Scott Reesor runs the operation with the help of his kids.



With a family history dating back more than 100 years, the Reesor family is serious when they call their ranch “historic.”

WHAT TO DO: Beyond a working farm, the Reesors welcome anyone to experience the cowboy lifestyle. Saddle up with the family and ride into the grassy hills or help round up the herd. ATV tours

head across the prairie. Back at the ranch, the historic Arts and Craftsman style homestead is a B&B, there are several private cabins to rent, plus casual dining during the summer. Located

on the edge of Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, the ranch is an ideal base for exploring the park’s hiking and biking trails.

FIND OUT MORE:
reesorranch.com



Churchill Wild

THE REIMER FAMILY
Churchill, MB



Decades of family history in the Churchill area equates to vast regional knowledge passed on to guests.

ACTIVITIES: Nature viewing, photography

FAMILY ROOTS: For Jeannie Reimer, tourism on the Hudson Bay coast goes back nearly 100 years. Her grandfather ran a trading post and her parents started Webber’s Lodges, a series of luxury fishing businesses. It was working here that Mike Reimer met Jeannie. They fell in love and got married.

After guiding and exploring from a Churchill base, they eventually followed their pioneering roots and set out on their own.

WHAT TO DO: Churchill Wild mostly runs polar bear walking tours and photo safaris out of three remote, fly-in lodges, Dymond Lake Eco-Lodge, Seal River Lodge and Nanuk Polar Bear Lodge. The polar bear-

viewing coincides with the ice-free season on Hudson Bay, roughly July through November. More recently the couple has begun Northern Lights viewing, fittingly based out of the lodge where they met, North Knife Lake Lodge, located 200 kilometres southwest of Churchill in Manitoba’s boreal forest.

FIND OUT MORE:
churchillwild.com

Falcon Trails Resort

THE CHRISTIE AND HAMILTON FAMILY

Whiteshell Provincial Park, MB

ACTIVITIES: Alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, fat-biking

FAMILY ROOTS: Craig Christie and Barb Hamilton started Falcon Trails Resort with a few cabins in the woods of Whiteshell Provincial Park, 1.5 hours east of Winnipeg. The business evolved and expanded beyond the cabins and now includes a small ski resort, cross-country trails and summer eco-cabins. Craig and Barb raised three daughters here and now, all grown up, they and their partners have taken on running the operation.



Let the Christie and Hamilton family be your guides while exploring Manitoba's Whiteshell Provincial Park and area.



WHAT TO DO: Stay in one of the nine lakeside cabins or the larger Boreal Lodge and bring the whole bag of winter toys. Spend half-a-day skiing or snowboarding.

Test out your precision on the biathlon range. Cross-country ski into the forest of Whiteshell. Fat-bike on the designated trails. Snowshoe across the lake.

At the end of the day, ease sore muscles in the sauna and soak in the star-filled skies.
FIND OUT MORE: falcontrailsresort.com

From the 1950s to today, the Langford family has been illuminating the wilds of Algonquin Provincial Park.

Voyageur Quest

THE LANGFORD FAMILY

Algonquin Provincial Park, ON

ACTIVITIES: Snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, dogsledding
FAMILY ROOTS: Canoe tripping runs deep in John Langford's genes. A distant family relative started Langford Canoe & Kayak. His mother grew up in the lakes around Algonquin Provincial Park and was a camp counsellor, canoe tripping in the area during the 1950s. John got the wilderness bug too, starting Voyageur Quest so he could spend weeks of the year lounging, fishing and paddling in the park. John's wife Eva works with the company as well.

WHAT TO DO: The early summer guiding led to building Algonquin Log Cabin on Surprise Lake in Algonquin's northwest corner. The log cabin may be off-grid, but a 10-metre rock fireplace makes sure it's always cozy. Outside the beautiful building is the winter wilds of Algonquin Provincial Park. The summer crowds are long gone leaving waist-deep snow, frozen lakes and endless forest to explore. Follow ski trails through the trees, break your own on snowshoes, track and listen to resident wolves or learn to mush a dogsled team.

FIND OUT MORE: voyageurquest.com



TOP: FALCON TRAILS RESORT (2X); BOTTOM: TRAVEL ONTARIO



Northern Edge Algonquin

THE LUCIER FAMILY
Algonquin Provincial Park, ON

ACTIVITIES: Ice-skating, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing

FAMILY ROOTS: Todd and Martha Lucier initially came to Algonquin Provincial Park on their honeymoon. The first time they travelled away from their kids was for a canoe trip in Algonquin. And when Todd quit his teaching job it was at their cottage on Kawawaymog Lake that the young family set up a retreat centre. From the humble cottage, they built a multifaceted base for using nature to help people reconnect with themselves. All three of the couple's adult children work for the business.

WHAT TO DO: To immerse yourself in winter, sign up for Northern Edge's Fire & Ice: A Winter Retreat. Based out of their rustic lodge on Kawawaymog Lake, near the western boundary of Algonquin Provincial Park, the three-day retreat leaves days open to explore the area with or without a guide. Snowshoe, cross-country ski, kick-sled or skate on the lake and nearby hills, while a chef prepares a dinner full of local ingredients. Shut the day down with a sauna, a campfire and star gazing.

FIND OUT MORE: northernedgealgonquin.ca

The Lucier family, like many others, were so inspired by a natural area they devoted themselves to it entirely.

Lure of the North

THE MARRONE FAMILY
Various Locations, ON

ACTIVITIES: Snowshoe expeditions

FAMILY ROOTS: Most guiding companies add winter trips to round out their summer business. Not Dave and Kielyn Marrone. Their passion is winter and their preference is multi-day trips using old school equipment. The couple taps family members for many of the diverse skills needed to run a guiding company: Kielyn's brother helps guide trips and her mom sews traditional clothing. Dave's mom is the logistics wiz, while his brother is the webmaster.

WHAT TO DO: Relaxing in a T-shirt inside while it's -30 degrees outside. That's the Marrone's style of winter camping. Lure of the North specializes in traditional winter camping expeditions in a few different areas of Ontario. They use wooden snowshoes to pull toboggans loaded with gear, including a woodstove and canvas wall tent. At night they sleep on tree boughs and cook and dry gear by the heat of the woodstove, which also keeps the tent toasty warm no matter the weather.

FIND OUT MORE: lureofthenorth.com



Get old school with the Marrone family—they'll take you out on the land with the tools of yore.



The Normand and Lessard family prioritized togetherness and connections over the rat race when they opened Au Chalet en Bois.

Au Chalet en Bois Rond

THE NORMAND AND LESSARD FAMILY
Quebec City, QC



ACTIVITIES: Fat-biking, snowshoeing, ice-skating, cross-country skiing, ice-fishing
FAMILY ROOTS: With two kids at home and more on the way, Charles Lessard and Geneviève Normand wanted out of their busy corporate lives and into a lifestyle that was more family-centric. So, they bought Au Chalet en Bois Rond and moved their family of four (now six) to the riverside cottages north of Quebec City.
WHAT TO DO: From the small collection of cottages, Charles and Geneviève have created a village of 55 cabins for rent and an endless buffet of winter activities to try. Five kilometres of cross-country ski trails wind through the property. There's ice-fishing, skating and a hockey rink on a small lake. They can help line up horseback riding, dogsledding or snowmobile tours. There's a small downhill ski area at the nearest town, Saint-Raymond. And 30 minutes away is the outdoor playground of Vallée Bras du Nord where it's possible to backcountry ski, ice-climb and fat-bike.
FIND OUT MORE: auchaletenboisrond.com

Wilson Sporting Camps

THE WILSON FAMILY
McNamee, NB



With more than 150 years of family history, the Wilson family is primed to highlight the beautiful Miramichi River.

are just as good for any kind of fun in the snow. Rent a cabin at Wilson's and toboggan down the hill to the Miramichi River. Snowshoe and cross-country ski through the forest. Skate on the outdoor rink. Warm hot chocolate on a campfire. And then finish the day with a home-cooked meal in the lodge's licensed restaurant.
FIND OUT MORE: wilsonscamps.nb.ca

ACTIVITIES: Snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, sledding, fishing
FAMILY ROOTS: Atlantic salmon fishing on the fabled Miramichi River is what the Wilson family has done since 1855. Today, the fifth generation of Wilsons, Keith, Bonnie and Karl, runs the lodge and cabins near McNamee, New Brunswick, and the family business has expanded from fly fishing to a base for all kinds of wilderness fun, including sledding, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.
WHAT TO DO: In winter, most people come to this part of New Brunswick to snowmobile in the deeper snow of the Christmas Mountains. But the conditions

Trinity Artisan Inn

THE GOW FAMILY
Trinity Bay, NL

ACTIVITIES: Hiking, whale- and bird-watching,
FAMILY ROOTS: John and Tineke Gow first came to Trinity Bay, three hours northwest of St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, for a holiday. They fell in love with the old fishing village and bought a historic home. That led to starting an inn, then a restaurant and eventually managing rental homes for their guests who also fell in love with the place and bought their own homes. About a decade ago, their daughter Marieke joined the operation and has since taken over from her parents.
WHAT TO DO: The inn closes and Trinity shrinks to 50 residents in the winter. But from May to October there's tons to do in the area. It is one of the best spots in Newfoundland for whale watching. Puffins nest nearby. There are seven coastal hiking trails within a short drive and plenty more that climb nearby hills for epic scenery along the coast. And Trinity is home to seven historic sites, including a working blacksmith, and a local theatre company performs every night during the summer.
FIND OUT MORE: trinityvacations.com



Let the Gow family show you why they fell in love with Trinity Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador.



Kanoe People

THE MCDUGALL FAMILY

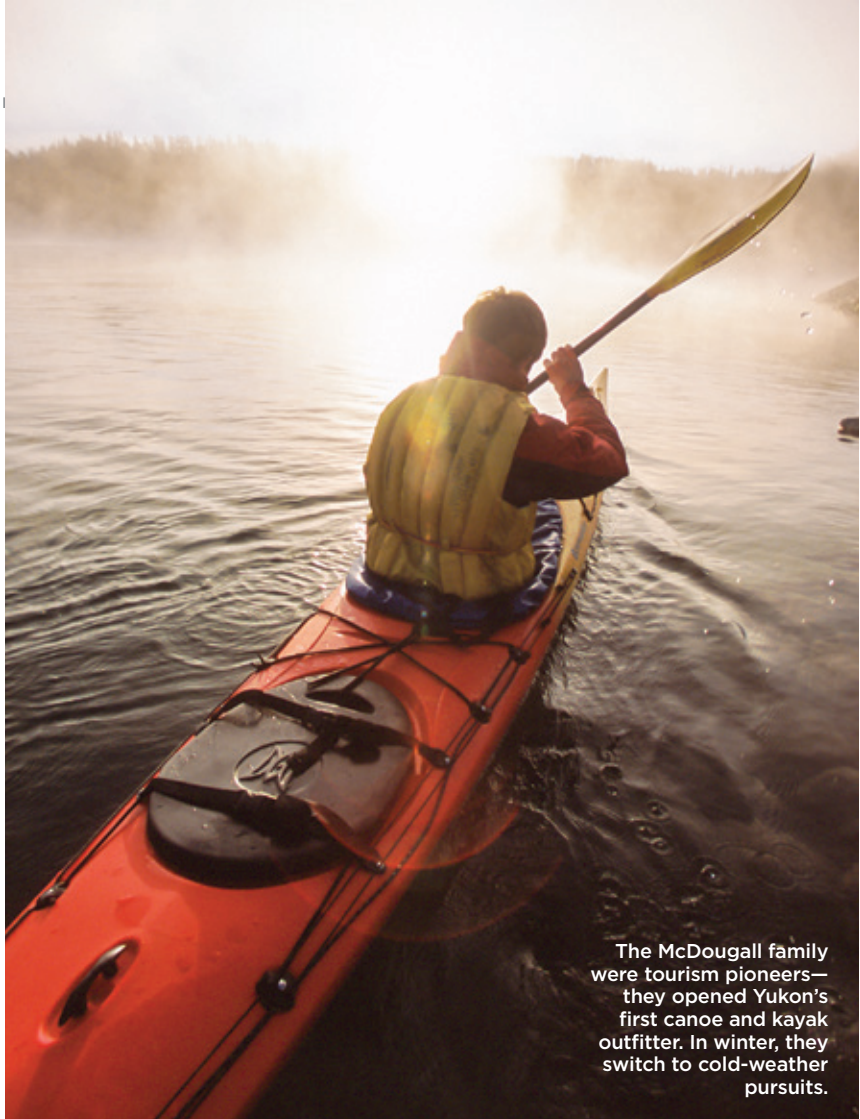
Whitehorse, YT

ACTIVITIES: Dogsledding, snowshoeing, ice-fishing, canoeing, kayaking

FAMILY ROOTS: Joanne McDougall's mom was born on the shores of Lake Laberge, the iconic lake on the Yukon River north of Whitehorse. Her grandfather was Frank Slim, a well-known riverboat captain. Scott, her husband, was an early canoe outfitter in the territory. Together, they opened Kanoe People on the shores of the Yukon River. It's now the oldest outdoor store in Whitehorse. Their kids were raised working in the shop (their daughter is the manager) and in the cabins they opened on Lake Laberge.

WHAT TO DO: When winter freezes the Yukon River in Whitehorse, the front door of their summer operations, Kanoe People, moves to Fox Bay Retreat, a 2,000-square-foot lodge and four cabins on the shore of Lake Laberge. It's possible to rent a cabin and do your own thing, or have Kanoe People set up whatever you want to do, including ice-fishing for lake trout, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, dogsledding and watching the Northern Lights.

FIND OUT MORE: foxbayretreat.com; kanoopeople.com



The McDougall family were tourism pioneers—they opened Yukon's first canoe and kayak outfitter. In winter, they switch to cold-weather pursuits.



The Hibbard family in 1991—rafting runs in their blood, with a family history in the area dating back 60 years before that.

Nahanni Wild

THE HIBBARD FAMILY

Various Locations, NT

ACTIVITIES: Canoeing, rafting, hiking

FAMILY ROOTS: The company's history on the Nahanni River extends back to the 1930s when Dick Turner came to the area. His son, Don ran some of the earliest trips to the Nahanni's famous canyons, motoring tourists upriver in a scow. David and Wendy Hibbard bought the company off Don in 1992 and named it Nahanni Wild. Their three kids, Joel, Dana and Luke, grew up helping out during the busy summer season and are now part of the Nahanni Wild team.

WHAT TO DO: Canoeing or rafting the Nahanni is the most obvious option. With more descents down the famous river than probably anyone else (80 plus) David is the most experienced guide on the main channel and its tributaries. But the company also guides several other well-known northern rivers including the Tatshenshini, Thelon, Keele and Mountain. And they've begun guiding hiking trips in the little known Ragged Range, the aptly named glaciated peaks above the Nahanni River.

FIND OUT MORE: nahanniwild.com ✕

FROM TOP: YUKON GOVERNMENT/DEREK CROWE; NAHANNI WILD

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Photo Credit: Alex Beckett



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WALKING
INTO THE
ICE
AGE

ONE DUDE. ONE DOG.
AN 18-DAY CROSSING
OF BAFFIN ISLAND.
WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

*Story & Photos
by Jim Baird*

48



Ancient glacial ice rises up two kilometres from deep fiords within the desolate, snow-spattered Baffin Mountains. Here, the last Ice Age lives on. The 6,000-square-kilometre Penny Ice Cap atop these mountains is the most southerly remnant of the Laurentide Ice Sheet that covered northern North America east of the Rocky Mountains some 18,000 years ago.

It's day 13 of my Arctic trek on Baffin Island. I am all alone, save for the company of my Husky-Malamute, Buck. I feel like we're taking the Ice Age head-on. Buck's face is deeply etched with snow as we're hit with frigid winds of more than 100 km/h. I'm scared. I left my pregnant wife behind in the weeks prior to heading off on this odyssey. I've journeyed to a majestic yet unforgiving land; a mountain-shrouded ice world to venture on a demanding route that crosses the Arctic Circle. There is no shelter. The snow all around is too light for cutting crucial snow blocks. A thought plagues my mind: *I might die out here.*

I begin scouring the landscape for protection. *There's got to be a way to survive.* After all, Akshayuk Pass, of which I was in the middle, is a traditional Inuit travel route and it has offered safe passage to many who have ventured into this wind-ravaged corridor to cross Baffin Island's Cumberland Peninsula. At the same time, though, I know people have perished here in recent history.

BAFFIN ISLAND IS huge. It's the largest Island in Canada and the fifth-largest island in the world. At 500,000 square-kilometres it's well over double the size of Great Britain yet has a population of only 11,000. Baffin has always resonated in my mind as an icon of the far north and for years I'd wanted to visit the island's Auyuittuq National Park for a traverse of Akshayuk Pass. Remote Auyuittuq encompasses the pass and the entire Penny Ice Cap, along with much of the surrounding mountain scenery and adjacent fiords.

Auyuittuq is an Inuktitut word meaning "the land that never melts," which describes the ever-present Penny. I wanted to witness Baffin's beauty firsthand and test my own self-sufficiency against the remote Arctic wilderness. Among the most prominent features in the pass is Thor Peak, a soaring massif of black granite that boasts a free-fall of 1,250 metres—the largest vertical drop in the world. I'd seen photos of Thor in magazines and even saw James Bond parachute off it the 1977 film *The Spy Who Loved Me*. Indeed, this trip was a pilgrimage for me—with Thor as the centrepiece. ▶

IT'S MID-APRIL and I'm in Qikiqtarjuaq, Nunavut; a small Inuit hamlet of 550 people that developed around an American Cold War base in the 1950s when nomadic Inuit began establishing permanent settlements. Walking around town, I see a polar bear skin stretched out to dry in front of someone's house. A couple of friendly locals offer me raw caribou wrapped in fat and fermented caribou stomach. I'm also surprised to see two other groups of adventurers in town at the same time as me—and they have plans to trek through the pass as well.

As the park staff tells us during a brief orientation, it's very rare for that many people to be heading through the pass within a few days of each other. Being like-

minded folks, we all make friends pretty quickly and a guy from one of the groups suggests I join them on their 80-kilometre snowmobile lift to the head of the fiord where the pass begins.

"No thanks, I'll walk."

They appear a little concerned, but I came prepared to do just that. My plan is to walk a total of 200 kilometres. Starting from Qikiqtarjuaq, I'll venture south along the sea ice of the eastern Baffin Island coast before cutting west into a deeply recessed fiord which I will follow to Akshayuk Pass. Once through the pass, I'll continue for a final 30 kilometres on the sea ice to complete my journey in the community of Pangnirtung. If all goes well, it will take me 18 days.

With my gear spread on the snow just outside of town, I'm loading my sledges and making sure I have all I need before heading out. My wife, Tori, wanted me to call before I began, so I have my satellite phone out when a hardened Inuit landsman pulls up on Ski-Doo. He tells me about polar bears. He'd seen two the day before—right in the area where I was headed. He tells me how it's very dangerous at this time of year because the sows are coming out of hibernation with their cubs. They're hungry and protective. I ask him if there have there ever been any attacks in the area. He nods, and rides off.

I'm aware of the polar bear danger and my outfit includes a bear fence of trip-lines rigged to fire 12-gauge shotgun blanks. I also have bear spray and bear bangers

My plan is to walk a total of 200 kilometres. Starting from Qikiqtarjuaq, I'll venture south along the sea ice of the eastern Baffin Island coast before cutting west into a deeply recessed fiord which I will follow to Akshayuk Pass. Once through the pass, I'll continue for a final 30 kilometres on the sea ice to complete my journey in the community of Pangnirtung



at the ready, not to mention Buck, who's proven to be adept at warning me of approaching bears. It is recommended to carry a 12-gauge shotgun armed with slugs, or a large-calibre rifle, on trips through polar bear country, but I'm unarmed. Parks Canada generally doesn't allow non-Indigenous people to carry firearms in the park—news I'd learned only a few days before my trip. News which had my wife very apprehensive.

With my sledges loaded, I call my wife.

"Bears? Not a concern. The locals say that they've all come out of hibernation now and are way further out from shore on the sea ice."

If there is ever a time for a little white lie, this is it.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The author heads into Akshayuk Pass after waiting out two days of bad weather. Buck, all smiles, as the pair enters Akshayuk Pass after reaching the head of North Pangnirtung Fjord on day six. The morning of day 14—after the author had made his camp in the shelter of a dune, following hurricane-force winds the day before.

IT'S DAY FOUR and the weather has been perfect, I'm making good time when Buck stops to examine a seal den hidden in the sea ice at his feet. The Inuit train huskies to seek out such dens and Buck is a natural, but the presence of fresh seal-scent makes me anxious. Seal comprises the majority of polar bear diets. The bears' sense of smell is so acute they can smell a seal on top of the ice from more than 30 kilometres away.

Moments later, I see a large object on the sea ice way in front of me; I zoom in with my video camera to discover it's just an abandoned snowmobile. I breathe a sigh of relief and I move on. Later that afternoon, I cross polar bear tracks. I dust a thin layer of snow off one to get a better idea of which

way the bear was moving. Unfortunately, it seems like it's also heading deeper into the fjord. I follow the tracks with my eye and watch them head up the sloping edge of the fjord, where the hungry bear must have gone to investigate some rabbit runs. Come evening, I stop to camp near some impressive cliffs but it's hard for me to find a snow drift that's deep enough to securely stake-in my tent and bear fence. I manage to make do, using a heavy sledge for one tent anchor and a pile of snow blocks around my tent. It's not ideal, but it's the best I can manage. Buck and I climb into the tent and drift off for a well-deserved rest.

It's pitch-black when I'm suddenly jerked out of my sleep by Buck's barking. I hear ▶

Seal comprises the majority of polar bear diets. The bears' sense of smell is so acute they can smell a seal on top of the ice from more than 30 kilometres away



ABOVE: The author and his trusty dog, Buck, relaxing at camp on the sea ice of Pangnirtung Fiord—one day before the trip's end. RIGHT: Windy Lake Emergency Shelter, day 16. Shelters such as this dot Akshayuk Pass every 13 kilometres so travellers can escape potentially deadly weather conditions.

a noise outside. I take no chances. I fumble for my bear banger and I fire it through the ventilation hole in my tent. The explosion reverberates deeply, slowly petering-out as it echoes off the steep cliffs of the fiord. All is silent when I roll over to go back to sleep. In the morning, I discover the culprit through prints in the snow. An Arctic fox had slipped under my fence looking for food. It was no polar bear, but I praise Buck for sounding the alarm.

The beautiful weather I'd been experiencing is over. It's howling wind as I head up the frozen Owl River on day seven. I'm in the pass now and the polar bear danger is behind me, but the storm has me more worried than the bears ever did. Two kilometres into my travels, I have to turn back for the safety of an emergency

shelter. Small, sturdy emergency huts are found roughly every 13 kilometres through the pass; they're welcome refuges in trying conditions. I'm happy I don't have to wrestle my tent up in the ripping winds. I end up spending two full days in the shelter before the weather breaks and I can travel again.

It's day 12 and after a few solid days of travel through the spectacular pass, I'm pinned down by high winds again. As I break camp the following morning, I'm worried my decision to travel this day is a bad one, but I push on. The winds are howling as I make my way up a steep, 125-metre hill to the height-of-land between the Owl and Weasel rivers. It's hard hauling and Buck is having trouble because when he stops to take a break,

his sledge starts pulling him downhill causing him to reverse his steps creating slack in his rope, which tangles around his legs and pulls him down. An injury to my trusty companion would be nearly as serious as an injury to myself, so I need to keep going back to help. Soon, I'm leap-frogging all the sledges up the steep hill. It's challenging but all is working out—save one thing, I'm dumping sweat, a very dangerous thing to do during wintertime in the Arctic.

With the big climb behind I'm at the highest point in my journey, having gained 420 metres since leaving the ocean. As I head through a small canyon, the wind becomes extreme. A deep cold starts sinking in as I walk onto a small lake. I'm using all my strength to push myself into



us from the icy wind. Finally, I'm able to wrestle-up my canvas tent. Buck and I climb in and I fire up my double-burner Coleman stove for warmth. I change my clothes and sip a warm drink while the sturdy tent shakes in the gusts. It's ironic, the wind that almost killed me is the same thing that created the sand dune and resulting drift that saved me.

IT'S DAY 15 and I'm travelling down the frozen Weasel River, approaching Thor Peak. The river is sheer ice as heavy winds have rendered it almost completely devoid of snow. With little friction, my sledges are easy to haul. The spikes on my boots are key, but at this point I wish I had ice skates. Making good time, I'm finally standing in front of the focal point of my pilgrimage, Thor Peak. It does not disappoint, but scenery of a similar magnitude is everywhere. All around, I see peaks bursting through the low-lying clouds. The majesty of the mountains, the forces of nature, the Ice Age-scoured moraines and the unforgiving Arctic wilderness is humbling.

I feel small and I recognize that you can't feel small without accepting that there's something larger than yourself, whatever that may be. Yet this was a feeling that manifested through a decision. At that moment, disappointment and anger could have consumed me.

Buck had knocked over my tripod, smashing my Nikon D750 on the ice as we approached Thor. Aside from the personal gratification I'd gain through photographing this big moment, and the heavy expense of replacing professional camera equipment, I have tangible ▶

the wind here, yet I'm travelling at a snail's pace. I stop, drink some hot tea and put my heavy parka on but it's not making much of a difference.

My mind starts racing. My thoughts go to my wife and our future child, I beat myself up for deciding to leave my tent today. But I manage to slow down and think. The snow under my feet is too soft to build a shelter, so I look through the plumes of wind-whipped landscape and see a four-metre-high snow-covered sand dune. I trudge over to it to discover it's only partially blocking the wind, but there's a hard-packed drift behind it. I dig down into the drift with my shovel and then start cutting and shaping snow blocks with my machete. If I can build a sturdy wall, I'll be able to block the gale enough to set up my tent.

As I work, my face becomes laden with ice and Buck shivers as he gets drifted over with snow; this is a real survival situation. The wall begins to take shape and shelters



The majesty of the mountains, the forces of nature, the Ice Age-scoured moraines and the unforgiving Arctic wilderness is humbling



Icy Weasel River, flanked by the jagged and beautiful peaks of Baffin Island. The author spent 18 days travelling through this area last March, with only his dog as a companion.

responsibilities to meet—this magazine article, for one, in addition to sponsors who were relying on photos. It was devastating. Right after it happened I looked at Buck with building anger. I was about to scream at him, but his sheepish look made me hold back. It wasn't his fault. I decided to take the event as part of the moment's

lesson; to enjoy Thor totally in the moment and in complete purity.

ALPINE GLACIERS GLARE down from high altitudes on day 16 and though still unstable and cold, the weather is on my side as I cross the Arctic Circle. Later the same day the pass widens, opening into

a fiord. My feet touch the sea ice again, and I've just completed my traverse of Akshayuk Pass. It's day 17 and I'm pushing hard to finish my trip on time.

Finally, I can see all the way out of the fiord to the horizon on the frozen Arctic Ocean. I strain my eyes to see a small spattering of rectangles at the base of a mountain and I realize I'm looking at Pagnirtung, about 10 kilometres in the distance. A big smile takes over my face, *I'm going to make it.*

Then I hear my phone *bing*. I'd turned it on to take pictures after Buck smashed my DSLR. I'm amazed to suddenly have reception; I call my wife to tell her I'm OK. I have to hold the phone off of my ear as she cheers.

It's not until early on day 18 that Buck and I haul through a historic Hudson's Bay Company blubber station and up to the hotel in Pagnirtung where we receive congratulations from locals and other travellers. I've done it—and right on schedule too. The hotel manager is so proud of Buck that she tosses him two leftover steaks. She then offers me some leftover soup. Now, it's my turn to look sheepish.

"Uh... sure," I say, watching with envy as my dog devours a couple pieces of marbled prime rib. But at this point I'm used to Buck being the star of the show. And he deserves it. ✕





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WHY. WE. SKI.

MERGING RAIL TRAVEL AND
SKI-TOURING CREATES THE
PERFECT MEDITATION
ON WHY WE LOVE OUR
MOUNTAINS SO MUCH

By Matt Mosteller



Ski-touring and rail travel—both historic and relatively slow methods of travelling. Both are just the right speed to gaze at white-dipped rocky spires, share reflective chatter with friends and put yourself in that dreamy autopilot mindframe that’s so often lost in a typical workweek.

My friends and I had a hankering for the old ways of escaping the hamster-wheel; sitting in an iron horse and chugging away on steel lines seemed the perfect way to venture into a snowy land. Ski-touring by train is possible in British Columbia’s Robson Valley region, near and around the communities of Dunster, Valemount, McBride, Penny and Sinclair Mills. So our mission was to travel by VIA Rail and hit a series of flagged rail stops to slash fresh powder and spend downtime in a historic lodge and various old cabins along the route. ▶



The VIA Rail line hits numerous ski-touring locales as it travels west from Jasper, Alberta, towards Prince George, British Columbia. BELOW: Touring into Dave Henry Lodge at the edge of Mount Robson Provincial Park.



ABOVE: Classic lodges like Dave Henry offer a relaxed pace, prioritizing serene ski-touring and socialization. Olympic snowboarder Mat Morison pilots the chopper at Yellowhead Helicopters. RIGHT: What we're all here for—deep powder and big mountain views.

Yup—we were giving new meaning to the term “fresh tracks” aboard the Skeena train in the vast mountain ranges of the Cariboo and jagged spires of the Canadian Rockies, between Jasper, Alberta and Prince George, BC.

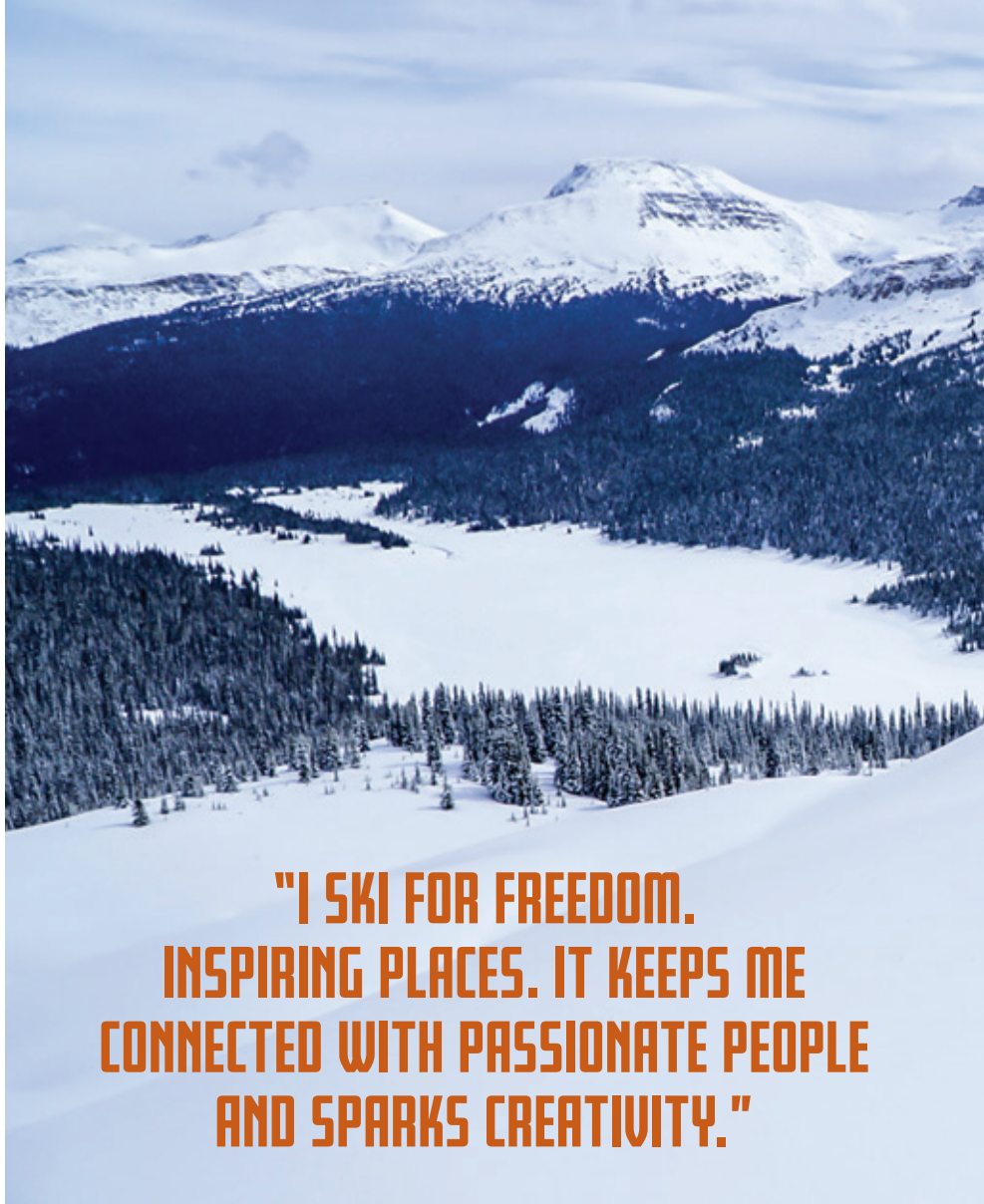
THE DAY STARTS dark, cloudy and cold as our six-person group boards the train in Jasper. Ice forms on the parallel tracks. Trees stretch as far as I can see; it's one big train rolling through thousands of sticks. My rail playlist is loaded—includes “Big Train” by John Fogerty and “Brakeman’s Blues” by Johnny Cash—as we chug into the wilderness.

We follow a lake-filled valley into Mount Robson Provincial Park on the BC side. Through rock-walled canyons, we can hear the gushing roar of Pyramid Falls as we pass by, soon following the Fraser River into an expansive valley of scattered farms.

I fully expect the seats to be filled with old-time miners, forest workers and possibly seekers of solace in the outdoors. Most were tourists taking in the magical landscape of BC for the first time. We're prepared to stand out a bit—no one else is using a locomotive as a chairlift.

Settlements along the way which were once bustling communities are now just pinpricks in their humbling surroundings. Peaks cascade to rail tracks on both sides as we creep down the grade. The VIA Rail's Skeena train

IF YOU GO
Visit davehenry.com to book your self-catered or fully guided ski touring experience.



“I SKI FOR FREEDOM. INSPIRING PLACES. IT KEEPS ME CONNECTED WITH PASSIONATE PEOPLE AND SPARKS CREATIVITY.”

offers regular stops at towns along the route and special-request flag stops to access smaller communities. No squinting at road signs needed though; the conductor will let us know when we've arrived.

“First stop, Dunster, British Columbia,” the smartly dressed conductor calls out. Sleepy eyes glean our way as we step out into freshly fallen snow next to the restored Dunster Train Station, originally built in the early days of the ill-fated Grand Trunk Railway.

WE ARE BOUND for a deep, snow-laden spot. Departing from the nearby Yellowhead Helicopters base, our destination is Dave

Henry Lodge. Owned by experienced adventurers Liz Norwell and Brian McKirdy, but not well-known outside of the core ski-touring circles, this classic delivers freshies and historic charm in spades. Our pilot, former Olympic snowboarder

Matt Morison, not only manoeuvres the chopper with precision but offers some pow-slashing pointers on the flight in.

Dave Henry Lodge was built by the pioneering McKirdy family. The big mountain standing sentinel behind Valemount, British Columbia, is named after them. They know snow and love everything nature. In the 1950s, they built this lodge in a place that pays homage to both. This haven is located in one of the few local flat spots, next to a frozen lake cradled by big mountains at the edge of Mount Robson Provincial Park.

On an early spring morning, we assemble. Donning skins, we break trail across the lake and head to one of the many ridges that provide access to powdery bowls. Within the first hour, our sense of adventure is already being put to the test; we are bombarded by the first of a series of stormfronts. We detour the next switch-back in our skin-track into a nearby old-growth canopy for protection. Peeking out on the ridge, we see our bounty of first >



BRITISH COLUMBIA'S BACKCOUNTRY BOUNTY

Get your powder fix at these seven cabins:

Ozalenka Cabin

Located west of McBride, seven kilometres from the trailhead where 1,700 metres of elevation gain awaits, it takes a trek through a forested valley and alpine meadow to reach this cabin. Offering glacier views and ridge skiing, this comfy traditional cabin is operated by the Ozalenka Alpine Club. Reservations must be made in advance by calling 250.569.2596.

Eagle Valley Cabin

Just west of McBride, in a spectacular valley filled with big peak and glacier views, this cabin is a nine-kilometre tour in (1,300 metres of elevation gain). Reservations must be made in advance by calling 250.569.2596.

Hermit Thrush Cabin

This unique seven-sided log cabin perched at 1,920 metres above Valemount is accessed by a 5.8-kilometre ski in, with elevation gain of 1,920 metres, giving you a spectacular view of McKirdy Mountain while you venture to alpine ridges for your turns. hermitthrushcabin.com

Red Mountain Cabin

Access is located at the flag stop of Penny, understood to be the last place in Canada where mail is delivered by rail. Start with a six-kilometre ski up a forested valley of tall trees, then begin the last six kilometres of your climb to reach the cabin. Reservations can be made by contacting the Prince George Backcountry Recreation Society. pgbrs.org

Dezaiko Alpine Lodge

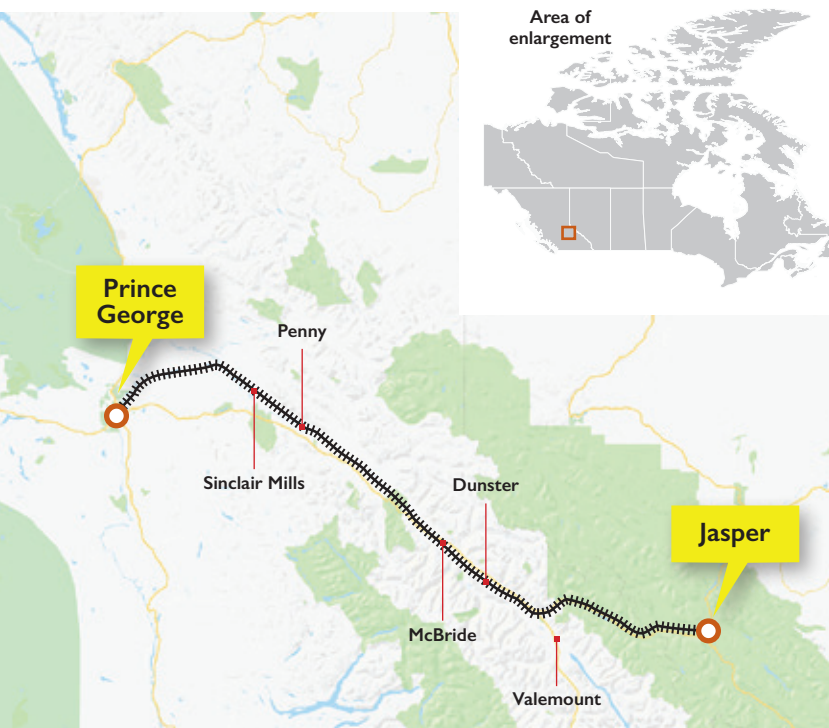
The old logging town of Sinclair Mills is the staging area for catching the helicopter to this powder delight. It's run by industry pros Craig Evanoff and Bonnie Hooge, who offer a classic lodge experience on the edge of a spectacular alpine region. Deep bowls of powder or laps of terrific tree skiing await. dezaiko.com

Swift Creek Cabins

Operated by Liz and Brian at Dave Henry Lodge, this cluster of cabins is located about 15 kilometres from Dave Henry. Touring from the cabins, within minutes you break through the forested canopy and ski up a ramp into a wide alpine bowl. davehenry.com

Mallard Lodge

Snuggled up against the border of Alberta's Jasper National Park, Mallard Mountain Lodge is accessed by a flight with Yellowhead Helicopters, in Valemount. A large tenure offers a multitude of ski-touring options and powder-filled laps off ridgelines, deep bowls and peak ascents. canadianadventurecompany.com





Cabin life at Dave Henry Lodge, post ski—craft beer on the patio; a warm woodstove to relax by; endless mountain routes to plan the next day's adventure.



"TO ME, THIS TRIP WAS A GATHERING TIME. IT'S ABOUT NATURE AND SHARING GOODNESS."



Helicopter Access

Yellowhead Helicopters not only provides flights into the commercial ski touring lodges of Dave Henry Lodge and Mallard Lodge, but also access to other cabins in the surrounding region. 250.566.4401



Getting There

Visit viarail.ca to book your journey on the Via Rail Skeena service between Jasper, Alberta and Prince George, BC. Make sure to review the schedule if planning to get on and off at flag stops, as some of the communities do not have any lodging.



Taxi Services

Zero Two Ninety offers transportation from VIA Rail stations near McBride, British Columbia. 250.569.0290; 778.258.0145

Contact Valemount Taxi for pickup at the VIA flag stops or drop off at Yellowhead Helicopters or the starting point for ski-touring routes. 250.526.8294

tracks and perfectly slotted sticks to swerve amongst; a round of hoots and hollers in order as we descend to the valley floor with snow spraying our faces the whole ride down. The sun eventually graces the sky but not until well after 15 centimetres of fresh buries our tracks.

Day after day of deep nonsense. With names like Pig, Park and Sun bowls, each powdery descent offers a mix of rolling terrain and perfect missions to fill our faces with fresh snowfall. Peering across the valley of endless peaks, we were the beneficiaries of moisture and were soon eyeing more routes. Next up—East Pass, a longer journey.

Rising early, we take five hours to reach East Pass, using our existing skin track put in the day before on Pig Bowl. We climb quickly out of the trees to enjoy a nice ramp up; some route-finding is needed around rocky bluffs before climbing to the saddle, rimmed by rocky points on each side. This one feels good. Fresh snow, cribbed in deep here, offers a sweet descent back into Pig Bowl or the option of finding a steeper shot down the South Ridge. But the fields of flakes in Pig Bowl beckon. Fact is, the cold craft beer was also calling as it's a straight shot to the porch from here.

Sitting on the sunkissed deck, we can easily pick out superb lines on Mount Josephine in the distance, calling at me

with her powdery braids—each leaving from a spine that I can access right from the valley floor.

LODGES LIKE DAVE HENRY and others in this area of BC are idyllic settings to enjoy adventure skiing. Being so remote with no snowmobiles to contend with, this became our private ski area. Right from the front door is access to kilometres of skiable, mellow pow-shots and tree-lines, along with longer missions to reach pillow lines and big basins that hold some pucker-worthy chutes.

Afterwards, snuggle in, stoke the woodstove and play a game of cards around the communal table. It brings us together.

By rail, then by ski. Timeless travel. ✕

GET THE SKILLS

If these trips sound like a dream but you lack the appropriate ski-touring and/or avalanche skills, contact **Yamnuska Adventures** in Canmore, Alberta—industry leaders in mountain education for 40 years. A multitude of courses and guided adventures await—including skiing, snowboarding, avalanche and more. yamnuska.com



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CARMEL TWO WAYS

Look beyond the boutiques to find an outdoorsy destination both exciting and serene

Set on California's Central Coast, just a two-and-a-half-hour drive south of San Francisco, Carmel-by-the-Sea is best known for its Hugh Comstock-designed cottages, wine tasting rooms and boutique shopping. And, of course, that Doris Day owns a hotel in-town and Clint Eastwood was mayor in the '90s.

But there's a flipside to this cutesy 'burg. I looked beyond the boutiques to discover that Carmel is fit for the outdoor enthusiast—on land and sea.

CARMEL BEACH IS a halfmoon of whitesand that crests gently from Pebble Beach golf course in the north towards Point Lobos State Reserve in the south. Windbent Monterey cypress line the

beach, which is flanked by obsidian-coloured wave-beaten rocks. Dog owners can let their pups roam free. You can swig open liquor, in the evenings. But above all it's known as a NorCal surfing hotspot. Well—*sort* of known, anyway.

During my two days in the area, I noticed a relative dearth of wave-chargers. Sure, there were some local kids in the waves but considering the ease of access from several communities (Carmel, Gilroy, Monterey, Pacific Grove), the consistent head-height shore break and the fact that the 21-and-over crowd can have a brewski on the beach post-surf, the water seemed relatively empty. Open waves were ubiquitous and the scene was inviting.

Locals I spoke with told me Carmel Beach gets surfable when the waves hit about one metre and keeps its shape until the break is well overhead. Mid-tide is optimal for waves; be wary of rips at any time. The best waves are found at the base of 8th Street, which is conveniently right where the main beach access is found.

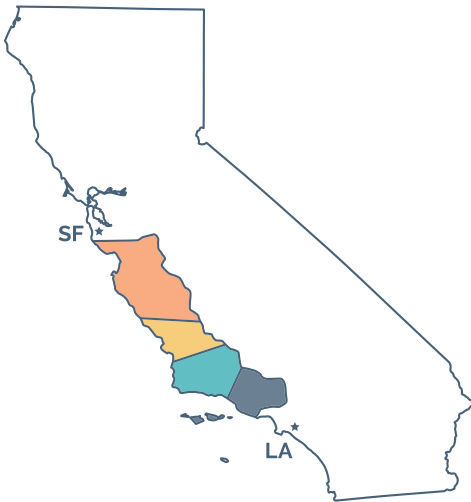
While a few hard-charging locals head to Carmel Beach to get in the Green Room, newbies will find waves and whitewash to learn on too. And remember—water temperatures are akin to Tofino, not Tijuana; a 4/3 mm wetsuit is a minimum, thicker in winter. Lessons and rentals are >



TOP: Carmel Beach is a destination both serene and exciting. BOTTOM: Enjoy some shinrin-yoku by the sea at Point Lobos.

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available at several places in Carmel—the Lamp Lighter Inn is a good place to start.

LOCATED ABOUT FIVE kilometres south of Carmel, Point Lobos State Reserve is a showpiece of Pacific ecosystems. Hike past a field of wild lilac and rose and into a stand of Monterey pine, cypress and impressively gnarled coast live oak. Keep your binoculars handy for birdlife such as cormorants and great blue herons; mammals like deer or bobcats; and marine life that includes otters, sea lions and sea elephants. Lagoons and rock formations carve up the stony shoreline. Scuba divers and kayakers cherish the area, paddling above or finning through the rich kelp forests.

The “hikes” are more aptly called “walks” in Point Lobos. An hour here, a half-hour there—15 marked routes, when connected, will occupy most of your day. Granite Point Trail, which starts at a historic Whaler’s Cabin (now a museum), offers a solid start, or simply

follow the sound of crashing waves and birdsong as you self-guide through this charming coastal forest. Looking to spend a few hours? Trek along the coastal path—easily done in a half-day—this series of connecting paths treats hikers to marine vistas throughout its length.

Beyond the vibrant natural world, Point Lobos has a rich cultural history dating back more than 2,500 years to the original peoples of the land, the Rumsien. Visitors interested in delving into both sides of this area are advised to participate in a guided hike. Offered regularly by volunteers from the Point Lobos

Foundation, these 90-minute walks are scheduled throughout the year.

It’s important to remember this is a reserve, not a park. It’s held under the strictest standards of environmental stewardship. No pets. No campfires. No touch. No take. Just *shinrin-yoku* and wild waves. The best of both worlds—land and sea. ✕

IF YOU GO

Carmel-by-the-Sea:
carmelcalifornia.com
 Point Lobos Foundation:
pointlobos.org
 Lamp Lighter Inn:
carmellamplighter.com

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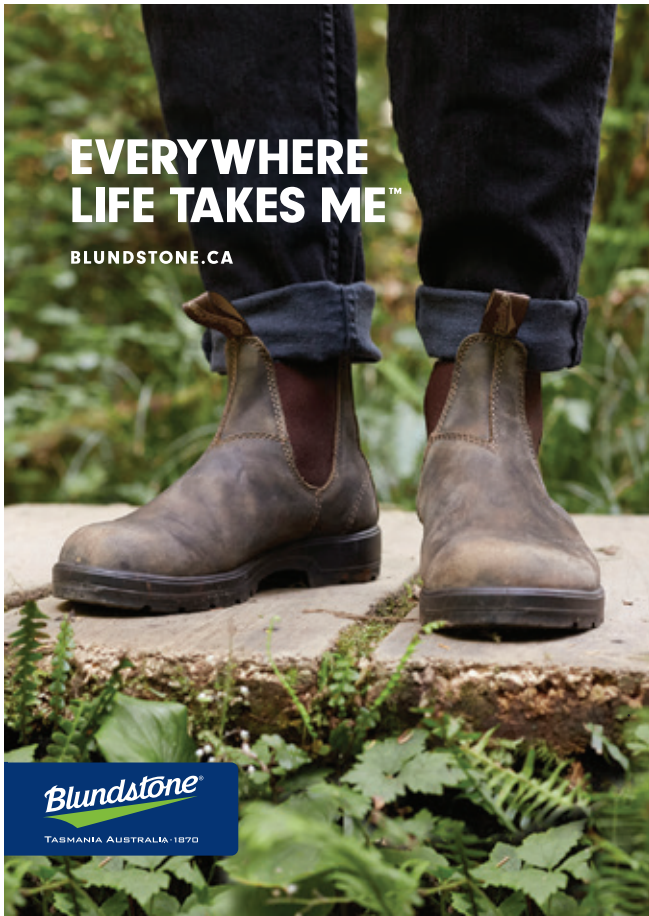
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THE MOMENT



Photo by Geoff Coombs

Photographer Geoff Coombs captured his friend, AIDA freediving instructor Andrew Ryzebol, as he finned beneath the ice on Georgian Bay last winter. It's an ethereal, otherworldly image of a pastime shared by few. As Coombs explains: "Our motivation for shooting under the ice is mainly out of pure fascination and for the unique images we can capture in such clear water. The environment emits a mysterious and beautiful mood that makes you feel really in touch with the moment. It's something that is hard to put into words, but even when we're shivering and our toes and fingers are going numb, we still have smiles on our faces."

Details:

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Aperture: f/4
ISO: 500
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Photo by Dave Best

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