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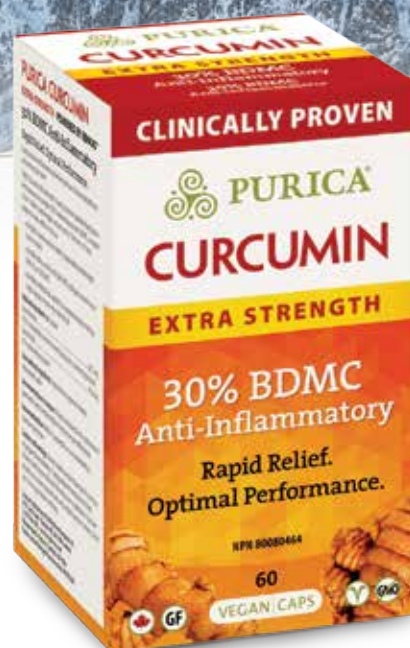


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# CONTENTS

SUMMER 2019 #202

## DEPARTMENTS

### 6 TRAILHEAD

### 10 LETTERS

### 12 THE LOWDOWN

Lake Superior Provincial Park;  
Profile: Alex Hall; Building  
an Adventurer; Fat-Tire  
Traditions; Surf Anywhere.



Raising an  
adventurous  
child.  
Page 20

### 22 JOURNAL

Ocean House Unveiled  
*By Alison Karlene Hodgins*

### 24 GADD'S TRUTH

Stop the Disappearances  
*By Will Gadd*

### 26 WILD SIDE

Pleasantly Uncomfortable  
*By Andrew Findlay*

### 28 ANGUS ADVENTURES

What Price, Our  
Environment?  
*By Colin Angus*

### 30 HAPPY CAMPER

Ottawa's Best Paddling  
Routes  
*By Kevin Callan*

### 66 THE MOMENT

Wildfire Sunset  
*By Bryanna Bradley*

## ON THE COVER

Pro surfer Pete Devries  
pedals his bike across the  
sands of Long Beach, in  
Pacific Rim National Park  
Reserve, searching for the  
perfect wave.

Photo by Marcus Paladino



## FEATURES

### 34

#### SUMMER GEAR GUIDE: DO EVERYTHING BETTER

Any gear can help you get outside—but GREAT GEAR enables bigger, better and more fulfilling adventures. Welcome to our summer gear guide—full reviews of 60 new items guaranteed to have you hiking farther, paddling longer, riding harder, camping better and getting outside more than ever before. Get ready to live the adventure and take summer for all it's worth.

*By Ryan Stuart*

### 46

#### SPEAK FOR THE TREES

There's a battle in our backwoods—resource-extraction butting heads with ecotourism and environmental stewards clashing with commercial interests. This issue, we're delving deep into these longstanding and vital issues with an examination of old growth forests on British Columbia's West Coast and in Northern Ontario's Temagami region. Plus—forest fire fighting goes high-tech!

*With Andrew Findlay, Conor Mihell,  
TJ Watt & Ryan Stuart*



46

### 58

#### CANOE LIKE A CANADIAN

A Chilean and a Swede team up to discover that paddling a canoe is more than a sport—it's a national identity.

*By Susan Nerberg*



58

# TRAILHEAD



BY DAVID WEBB  
@davidebwebb



## GO BEYOND GEAR

Welcome to the Gear Issue—home of our most extensive outdoor gear reviews of the year. I'd love to hear what you think of this summer's choices. Also in this issue, you'll notice several articles that zero-in on conservation, stewardship and environmental protection. I hope they too spur critical thought. (Hold onto your hats—we're going to talk about the carbon tax.) Gear and environmental stewardship can, in fact, connect.

Outdoor enthusiasts are conservationists at heart. An oil-paint artist from Mayne Island, British Columbia and an oil-patch worker from Fort McMurray, Alberta may not have a lot in common—unless they're both hikers. Then, they likely both care equally about preserving wild spaces. Likely too, they shop for the same hiking boots and wear similar backpacks.

The outdoors—bringing us together, Green Party and UCP alike.

Where we often differ is in our day-to-day. So let's for a moment look beyond conventional gear to items that, as outdoors-people and conservationists, we need to consider—whether you're an Albertan who drives a Prius or a Gulf Islander behind the wheel of an F-150. (Did you assume I was going to stereotype another way?)

Plastic has become a dirty word these days, despite the fact that we all use it every day in a thousand ways. Plastic is a wonder material—lightweight, long-lasting and eminently useful. But some decades ago we made a horrid mistake. We decided this new-fangled stuff—a substance designed to outlast metal or wood—should become single-use. Paper straws? No way—make 'em plastic. Compostable bags? Passé—bring on the indestructible! We're in well-documented trouble because

of it. It's with great irony that we're suddenly looking to things like paper straws as a 21st-century solution. (Ask your parents what they sucked on at the malt shop.)

As outdoors-people, we need to be looking beyond our gear, which in itself should be sustainably produced, to source everyday items that can minimize the impact on our planet. Reducing our consumption of these single-use plastics is a good place to start.

Paper or reusable straws are obvious. Reusable grocery bags—seriously, why are disposable plastic bags even a thing anymore? How about silicone sandwich bags, over traditional tossable ones? Do you use a reusable coffee mug, even during *Roll Up the Rim to Win* season? Or low-packaging products—think laundry detergent, food items, etc.?

What about the vehicle you drive? Will your next car be an EV or hybrid? Or perhaps, you'll simply opt for the adequate four-cylinder over the potent V6? I'm a big fan of keeping vehicles on the road for a long time rather than constantly buying new ones—to a point. You may be surprised to find out your '90s-era econobox is pumping out more carbon than a modern full-sized SUV.

All-or-nothing arguments are as dead as dinosaurs. No need to send me letters about "Speak for the Trees" (page 46), pointing out that *explore* magazine is printed on paper. Or that electric cars and silicone zip-locks use fossil fuels in their production. Yes, we use trees. Yes, we use oil. It's about considering our usage rather than simply resigning to it.

The time for debating action is over. All humans, but particularly those of us who connect so deeply with nature, simply need to act. ✕

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## CAMPING/THE HAPPY CAMPER

Kevin Callan shares camping tales, tips and tricks every Monday.

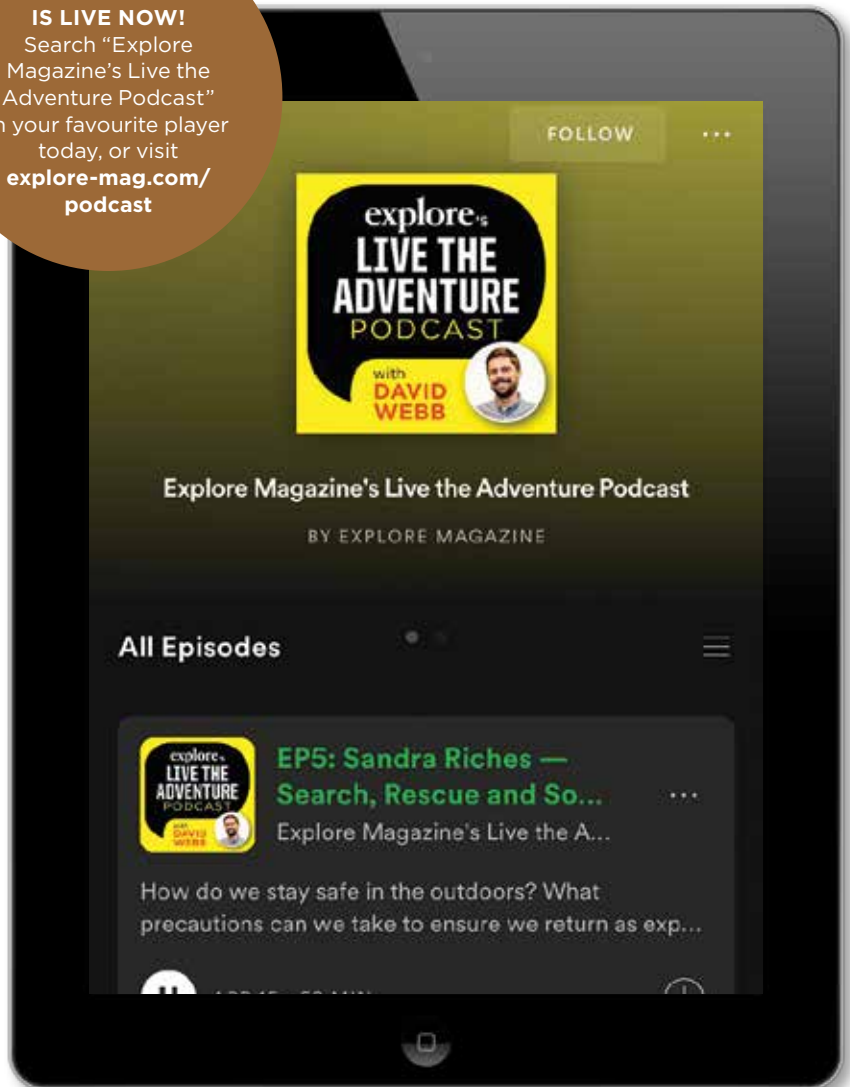
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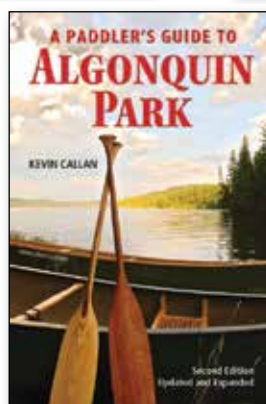
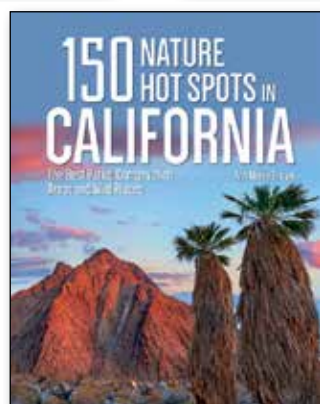
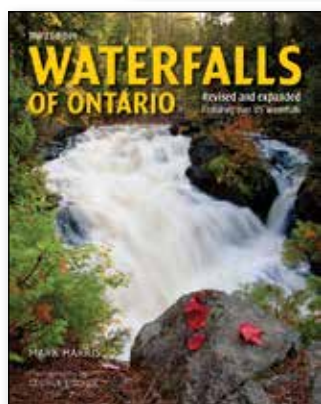
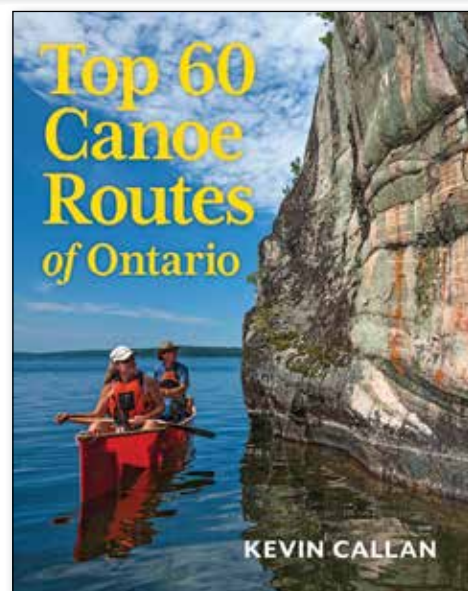
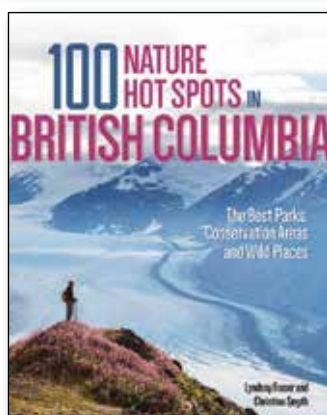
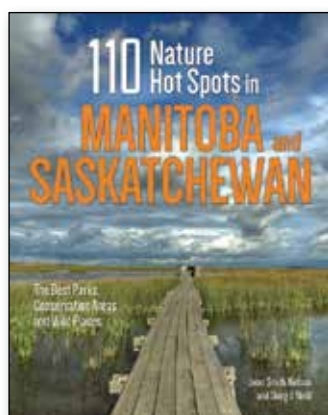
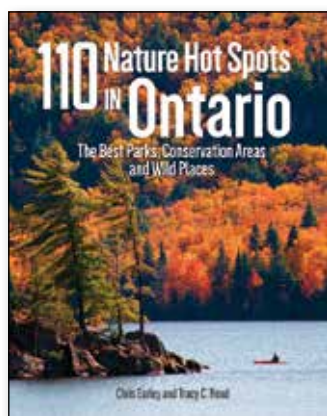
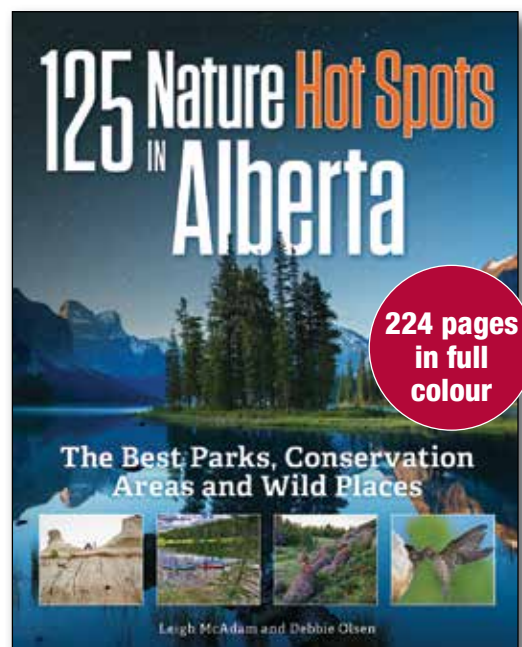
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# LETTERS

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## A Bad Moment?

*On page 66 of our Spring issue, we pondered the notion of responsibility in the outdoors—asking for readers to weigh in on a group of kayakers who dropped 33-metre Alexandra Falls, in the Northwest Territories.*

*It was a mesmerizing image. But the backstory told that two of the five paddlers needed to be rescued and some locals had criticized the move. Others applauded the effort—but apparently none of them read explore magazine. —Ed.*

Leaving aside the issue of using First Nations traditional lands, Bren Orton and his fellow kayakers shooting Alexandra Falls resulted in a flagrant misuse of government resources when 40 per cent of his group had to be rescued.

While it is also true the average Canadian should lead a much less sedentary lifestyle, it is for the same reason Orton should not have shot those falls: there is a significant increase in medical costs paid by the government. While getting into

nature is something all people should strive for, if participants' plans bear a likelihood of them having to be extracted, they should be re-examined. This includes a novice hiker going to the backwoods without a map, food or water, or an experienced kayaker shooting a 100-foot-high waterfall.

—Alex Duff

The unnecessary stunt of dropping 33 metres over Alexandra Falls is strictly a dangerous adventure.

Historically, humans have travelled to new places with the intent on finding resources that would provide subsistence. Dropping over a waterfall in a kayak is an unusual form of exploratory travel that is likely to result in injury, or even death. The fact that “two of the kayakers suffered injuries that required rescue” supports the notion that they are adventurers.

A sedentary lifestyle, one that I choose not to live, definitely has a host of negative implications for an individ-



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ual's physical and mental health. However, one could argue that such a lifestyle may actually be healthier than a lifestyle that includes dropping off a waterfall.

A visit to Alexandra Falls doesn't have to be a dangerous adventure. Surviving this fall is definitely an achievement. It's an achievement in egotism. Maybe a few members of the adventure community would be better off simply exploring.

—**Stewart Loker**

I have two issues with the whitewater kayakers who dropped the Alexandra Falls. Firstly, it was extremely disrespectful to the Dene, who consider the falls a sacred site.

Secondly, they put the lives of the EMS workers at risk. I have a nephew who is an EMS worker. He has a wife and two children. He is very willing to put his life on the line to rescue people involved in accidents but why should he do so to save

people taking unnecessary risks? If people want to take risks like this they should hire a private firm to be on hand to rescue them if need be and pay for it themselves.

—**Pauline Mcleod Farley**

I like a good thrill as much as the next person—however, for all the resources used for this particular kayaking adventure, a virtual reality simulation could have been built and shared. To get the full effect, the VR could be done in the shower!

—**Joanne Brown**

To me, these five kayakers, under the guise of "accomplishments," are just seeking an adrenaline rush. Present-day entertainment has to be loud, information available instantly and healthy lifestyles backed by scientific evidence. No wonder we have to drop off 33-metre waterfalls to enjoy ourselves.

I don't drop off 33-metre waterfalls to stay in shape and embrace a full and healthy lifestyle. I'm wondering if those who live a sedentary lifestyle could even comfortably get to the falls or consider dropping off them in the "guise" of staying in shape.

Safety and rescue people were available to help the two injured kayakers, but what if they'd been needed elsewhere at the same time? From a CBC news post, dated August 14, 2018, one of the kayakers told a Hay River volunteer firefighter: "It's no different when you're going into a fire. I think you're nuts." It is different. What that firefighter does is necessary, not thrill-seeking. What a slap in the face to the people who risk their lives to save lives. To me, this comment is an example of the arrogance and egotism of these "professionals." The attitude of "go where I want, do what I want" and not

considering the repercussions is too prevalent today.

Should the thrill-seekers be allowed to continue on their quest for higher, faster, riskier? Or was this an adrenaline-publicity-seeking stunt? I believe it was a stunt. I just hope these thrill-seekers don't leave behind loved ones.

—**Barb Koch**

#### Correction

On page 18 of our Spring 2019 issue, we incorrectly stated that G Adventures' Ripple Score refers to a percentage of the "tour's budget" that's spent locally. The Ripple Score actually refers to G Adventures' specific "in-country spend," and how much it remains in the local economy, supporting locally-owned businesses and benefiting local people.

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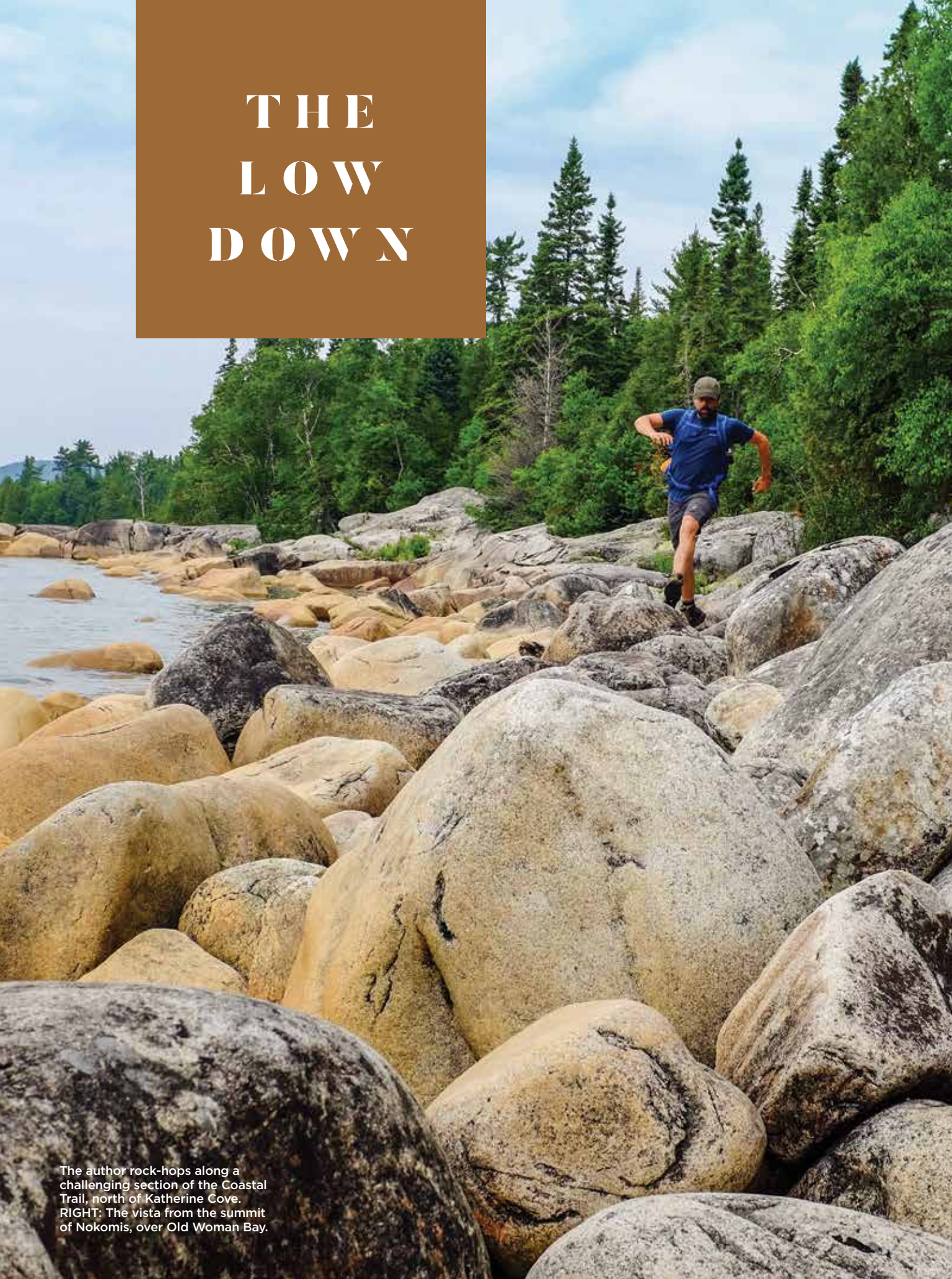
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# THE LOW DOWN



The author rock-hops along a challenging section of the Coastal Trail, north of Katherine Cove.  
RIGHT: The vista from the summit of Nokomis, over Old Woman Bay.





GO HERE

## LAKE SUPERIOR PROVINCIAL PARK, ONTARIO

A BC boy goes hiking along Canada's  
great inland coast

BY DAVID WEBB

**W**hat's the difference between a "walk" and a "hike?" My British Columbia roots offer an easy answer: *elevation*.

In the environs around Vancouver, this rings mostly true. An eight-kilometre walk? Richmond's Iona Beach. A hike of about the same distance? North Van's Mount Seymour Summit. East of the Rockies, it gets trickier.

Surely, the nominal elevation changes on Saskatchewan's Boreal Trail don't reduce that weeklong trek to a 120-kilometre "walk." Nor would I say I'm going for a "walk" on the Mantario Trail, a challenging 60-kilometre-long backpacking route that crosses between the two provinces for which it's named yet fails to gain more than a dozen metres while doing so. Ontario's Lake Superior Provincial Park also aims to challenge my notions of a *walk* versus a *hike*. And I'm about to spend three days letting it do just that.

The Trans-Canada Highway enters this 1,500-square-kilometre lakeshore wilderness about 125 kilometres north of Sault Ste. Marie, where the ecosystems of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence transition to the northern boreal forest. It's for the birds—some 250 species nest in the park. It's home to eight mapped paddling routes, including the epic 105-kilometre-long Coastal Route. More than 200 backcountry campsites speckle the mixed-woods forests, along with two drive-in campgrounds: 60-site Rabbit Blanket Lake in the north and 147-site Agawa Bay in the south. The latter, set on a volcanic pebble beach, is the best base-camp for its Superior sunsets alone.

Lake Superior fills me with angst. I'm a born-and-bred West Coaster, and as such, I'm smug with prideful notions about the unassailable beauty of BC. But this Great Lake is alluring. It breathes. This northern shore is wild and remote. The Pacific Coast is a land of plenty; Superior has an almost sinister nature. It was forged by violent volcanoes and Earth-scouring glaciers. It changes personas by the

hour—glassy calm by morning, swallowing ships by afternoon. The ambient temperature dips by what feels like 10 degrees between my campsite and the water's edge; Superior is a black hole from which even July's heat cannot escape. I love it here. But I'm married to the West, so I feel like I'm having impure thoughts about another.

I'll busy my mind with hikes. Or *walks*, perhaps? The first afternoon leads me to the Agawa Rock Pictographs, set at the terminus of a 500-metre-long trail just north of Agawa



Bay. Painted by Ojibwe First Nations on a fractured granite cliff at the edge of Superior, this collection of 400-year-old red ochre rock-paintings can only be viewed up-close on a calm day—even a short chop will wash over the path and make this waterside route impassably dangerous.

Although it's just one kilometre from my car to the pictographs and back, I can hardly call it a "walk" when I'm scrambling over slick-rock while icy cerulean waters lap at my heels. One wrong footstep means a rather cold and embarrassing swim. In bad weather, it would be much worse.

The pictographs are brilliantly preserved—a giant sturgeon, a war party





Relaxing at the terminus of the Agawa Bay Pictographs Trail.  
INSET: A 400-year-old rendering of *Mishipeshu*, a Great Water Lynx who lives in the lake.

and *Mishipeshu*, a Great Water Lynx who lives in the lake. It's well worth the... OK, I give... *hike*. Cue the first fiery sunset.

If there is a single reason to visit Lake Superior Provincial Park, the Coastal Trail is it. Sixty-five kilometres long, this route takes hardy backpackers up to a week to complete. Math isn't my strong suit, but Siri tells me that's an average of just 9.2 kilometres per day if you took the seven days, which most do. It seems a little on the short side for a daily average—hinting at the challenge to come.

I set out for a day-hike from Katherine Cove with a goal to get those nine clicks. Leaving the golden beach to a trailhead marked with a large blue "caution" sign, the Coastal Trail immediately bares its fangs. There are no great ups-and-downs. Just a million little ones. Running almost within eyeshot of the lake at all times, it's definitely coastal. But it's barely a trail. More like rock scrambles, soft-footed beach walks and bushwhacking strung together by sporadic blue trail markers, some of which are unnervingly far apart from one another.

Exposed veins of pink granite coarse through basalt and gneiss. Cubic boulders have me leaping like a frog and scrambling like a badger. My Spot X indicates 4.5 kilometres travelled by the time I reach a pebbly bay just south of the Coldwater River estuary. I've averaged fewer than two kilometres per hour. Seven days total sounds about right.

Out-and-backs are not my favourite routes to hike, as the return trip can seem a mundane repetition. The Coastal Trail has no such albatross. The boulder-strewn shores keep mind and feet so entertained it's like a new trail on the return trek.

I peel off my boots and soak in the cold water back at Katherine Cove. A pair of women approach to ask if I'd walked out to the nearest point, visible a couple hundred metres past the crescent of sand on which they laze.

"I've been gone five hours!"

"Was it hard?"

"Yes."

They anticipate more information, to which I add only an affirmation: "It was."

Cue sunset number two.

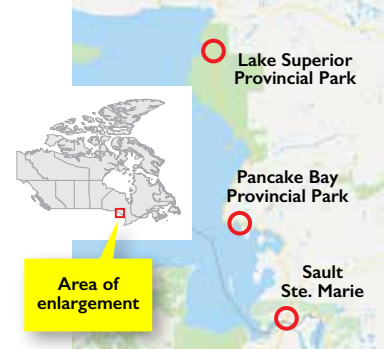
Two-hundred metres of elevation gain is a hike by any standard. And Nokomis, a loop-trail at Old Woman Bay in



the park's northern reaches, offers exactly that over its five kilometres. As one of the highest-elevation trails in the park, it winds through mossy spruce trees—where spring peepers hide and hop—up a dry creek bed to a cliffside trail adorned with gnarled pines that first teases with a vista of the infinite forests to the northeast then rewards with a panorama over Old Woman Bay. Bonus—I saw only five other hikers on my midweek-midday summer trot, impressively quiet considering Nokomis is easily accessed as a day-trip from the town of Wawa.

On this, my last day in the park, the vista over Old Woman Bay is as good a place as any to ponder the past three days. Hikes? Walks? Potato? Po-tato?

Fifty-five years ago, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart made a ruling with the famous phrase: "...I know it when I see it..." Potter was ruling on an obscenity case, but oddly enough it applies to Lake Superior Provincial Park too. Because, ultimately, I know hikes when I see them. Steep, flat and somewhere in between—Lake Superior's are as good as they come. ✕



## TRIP PLANNER

### Sault Ste. Marie

For travellers from the south or fly-ins, Sault Ste. Marie serves as a solid base to prepare for the adventures to come. The Holiday Inn Express (320 Bay Street) is right across from Atmosphere ([atmosphere.ca](http://atmosphere.ca)), handy for stocking up on camping supplies, and it's also walking distance to the waterfront.

[saaulttourism.com](http://saaulttourism.com)

### Lake Superior Provincial Park

Find Lake Superior Provincial Park's boundaries 125 kilometres north of Sault Ste. Marie or 16 kilometres south of Wawa, Ontario. Stock up on supplies in Sault Ste. Marie, at Agawa Crafts, about 50 kilometres south of the park boundary ([pancakebay.com](http://pancakebay.com)), or in Wawa ([wawa.cc](http://wawa.cc)). The park operates from early May to late October. Very limited services and cellphone reception within. [ontarioparks.com](http://ontarioparks.com)

### Pancake Bay Provincial Park

Located about 50 kilometres beyond Lake Superior Provincial Park's southern boundary, Pancake Bay Provincial Park is worth a stop. With 325 campsites near a 3.5-kilometre-long sandy beach, it's a popular place. Hike the Nature Trail (3.5-kilometre loop), which is found at the campsite, or the Lookout Trail (seven or 14 kilometres return), which treats to a panorama over Whitefish Point where the famous *Edmund Fitzgerald* sunk in 1975. [ontarioparks.com](http://ontarioparks.com)

## THE LOW DOWN





L I V E M O R E N O W





## ALEX HALL

A barren lands legend paddles on

BY CONOR MIEHELL

Alex Hall could mimic the sounds of migrating caribou. These guttural grunts, hauntingly rhythmic, once comprised the soundtrack of Hall's Eden—the Thelon River on the barren lands of Canada's Far North. Hall first ventured into the barrens by canoe nearly half a century ago; for 44 years he owned and operated Canoe Arctic Inc., the first guiding business in the Northwest Territories. Last spring, at age 74, Hall was ready for another season in the wilderness. A roster of clients was booked. Then, what was thought to be an encounter with ordinary kidney stones turned out to be incurable cancer. Hall was given a year to live.

Hall grew up in Brampton, Ontario, and attended summer canoe camp in Algonquin Provincial Park. In 1970, Hall was finishing his graduate thesis in animal ecology when he was invited to participate in a field study of wolves and caribou on Baffin Island. "I decided to go because the trip was free and I thought I might never get another chance to see the Arctic," Hall wrote in his 2003 memoir, *Discovering Eden*. "That decision, which seemed of little importance at the time, changed my life forever."

Hall caught his first glimpse of the barrens from the window of a tiny Cessna 180. "We broke through the clouds and there were all these caribou and snow geese down there on the lush, green tundra," he recalled in a telephone interview last autumn. "It blew me away. It was love at first sight."

In between jobs in southern cities, Hall embarked on long canoe trips in the Far North. His first journey in 1971 spanned 37 days on the Hanbury and Thelon rivers, ending in the community of Baker Lake on Hudson Bay. In 1973, Hall and

a partner paddled 11 weeks from Saskatchewan to the Arctic Ocean on four different waterways, a 1,900-kilometre expedition he described as "the greatest single adventure of my life."

After the trip Hall pitched a guiding business to government officials in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, and was issued a commercial permit in 1975. Canoe Arctic Inc. boasted a grand total of two clients in its first two years of operations. "Those were the toughest years of my life," wrote Hall. "But I am a very stubborn man."

Turns out, Hall's idea was more clairvoyant than naive. Outdoor adventure was experiencing its first wave of popularity, and the North exerted a siren's call. Business picked up in 1977 and by 1979, Hall's canoe trips were booked solid. He set up a year-round shop for his one-man business in Fort Smith and focused his trips on the wildlife-rich Thelon River. With the exception of a few blips, including the disruption of the economic crisis of 2008, Canoe Arctic Inc. has always operated near capacity.

The abundant caribou, wolves and grizzly bears of the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary, along with Hall's rich knowledge, were the main reasons for his success in the 1980s. Hall kept detailed records of encounters with the migratory Beverly caribou herd and tracked wolf dens on the tundra. He made a connection between fewer wildlife and mining and road development, beginning in the mid-1990s. The revelation made Hall an outspoken critic of industrial development in the Northwest Territories'

wilderness and a champion for the establishment of new protected areas, earning him glowing praise from Monte Hummel, president emeritus of World Wildlife Fund Canada.

Hall never imagined he would see his last herd of migratory caribou in 2003; today, the Beverly caribou have disappeared, the first time a group of migratory caribou has become extinct. "I always say what I was selling was the most remote wilderness in North America," said Hall. "What we see in a whole summer now wouldn't have been a good day's tally 20 years ago. The wilderness is there but the animals are gone."

Yet Hall's services remained in demand. Canoe Arctic's clients were typically in their 60s and affluent enough to afford the pricey air charters. (His most effective marketing was business card-sized ads in *The New Yorker* magazine.) Last spring, Hall was fully booked through 2019 when he received his stunning cancer diagnosis.

Serendipity struck during the painful process of cancelling trips, issuing refunds, selling off his fleet of canoes and equipment and coming to terms with his new reality—as well as chemotherapy treatments. Hall heard a radio interview with Dan Wong, a 33-year-old Yellowknife-based outfitter who was struggling to secure a guiding permit to canoe the South Nahanni River. Hall reached out and the two "hit it off," establishing a partnership that will allow Canoe Arctic Inc.'s Thelon River trips to persist under Wong's Jack Pine Paddle banner.

"Alex is a legend and he's also a gentleman," Wong told me. "I am so fortunate that he's given me his blessing and full support. Out of these heartbreaking circumstances he has offered me a huge boost. It's my responsibility to make sure his legacy goes on."

Alex Hall passed away peacefully on March 2, 2019. ✕

## THE LOW DOWN





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## FAT-TIRE TRADITIONS

Canada's First Nations are embracing mountain biking in a big way, with great benefits

BY RYAN STUART

As the maintenance manager for the Simpcw First Nation, Tom Eustache's job used to be pretty mundane: organizing grading of the roads on the reserve an hour north of Kamloops, British Columbia, mowing the school field, getting toilets fixed in the band's office and so on. Then he convinced the Chief and council to adopt mountain biking and now Eustache is riding single-track and calling it work.

"Sometimes I feel a little guilty about it, but then I take the kids out or see people in the community getting exercise," he says. "The trails get people out on the land instead of sitting in front of the TV. That's something."

Eustache spearheaded this trail-building about five years ago after he and his kids fell in love with mountain biking. They started reestablishing long-overgrown

trails on the hillside above the community. Interest grew. Eustache bought a fleet of bikes and introduced the sport to kids and adults. The community's health department noticed such an improvement in the health

of band members that it now funds trail maintenance.

The Simpcw are one of a steadily growing list of First Nations embracing trail-building and mountain biking. The sport is providing a way for bands to reconnect with their territory in a healthy and sustainable way.

The first to find value in fat tires was the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, in southern Yukon. A mountain biker in town used trail-building as job- and life-training for local teens. In the process, they carved out a quality trail network on Montana Mountain that's won praise from the International Mountain Bike Association.

But it was Patrick Lucas and Thomas Schoen that turned BC's First Nations into one of the most active trail-building communities in North America. When the duo met, Lucas was a planner specializing in First Nations communities and Schoen was developing Aboriginal-themed tourism projects. Both avid riders, they saw the potential for trail-building and mountain biking to benefit Indigenous communities.

The Simpcw were one of the first groups Lucas and Schoen worked with. They helped Eustache create an overall trail plan, train a trail crew in sustainable building methods and tweak the trails they'd already built to make them better.

"People in the band always talked about getting back on the land," says Eustache. "Traditionally that was hunting, but we're adaptable people. Our kids are riding bikes anyway. They might as well get to know their land while they do it."

In Burns Lake, in central BC, mountain biking gives kids on the Lake Babine Nation something to do with their free



Tom Eustache is helping his people stay fit and explore their traditional lands in a new way—on mountain bikes.

time rather than get in trouble, says Murphy Abraham, the former recreation coordinator for the band.

He bought the band a fleet of bikes and for the last two years he's organized two rides per week for kids. "The guys are hooked," he says. "Some of them bought their own bikes."

Whether it's trail-building or youth bike teams, Lucas says the focus of every project is community benefit. He hires locals to build the trails, giving them valuable work experience, transferable skills and a paycheck. The trails encourage economic development; many non-band members come to Simpcw to ride. And they provide health-boosting recreation opportunity, like a swimming pool but with far lower maintenance costs.

But possibly the biggest benefit is also the most subtle.

Building, riding and hiking those trails reasserts First Nations right and title to the land.

"No one was using this land before," Eustache says. "Now someone's out there every day. That connection to the land is really important to us as a people."

Today, Lucas uses the Simpcw's success as a model for other First Nations. He works full-time with bands across BC and Alberta, consulting, planning and building trail networks. Business is all word of mouth and it's spreading across the country and internationally. For him trail-building is more than a job. It's about healing.

"I watched a Simpcw elder ride the trails to a learning circle to teach a group of kids about residential schools," Lucas says. "At that moment the trails were more than trails. They were a platform for a healing journey. To me, that's reconciliation." ✕

THE  
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DOWN



## SURF ANYWHERE

Canadians are breaking geographical barriers to the sport of surfing

BY KERRY HALE

**B**ritish Columbia's west coast provides the backdrop for Canada's surfing epicentre. Pioneers have been surfing these frigid waters for many decades, as noted in Grant Shilling's book *The Cedar Surf—An informal history of surfing in British Columbia* (New Star Books, 2003).

"The great thing about surfing Vancouver Island is there are very few breaks which suffer from localism," explains Shilling. "The one well-known spot on the south island for localism has sorted itself out due to the abilities of younger, progressive surfers outstripping the abilities of the local, older population. As far as the west coast Tofino/Ucluelet area is concerned, the surf is mainly beach break, ever-changing with plenty of beach to share." But what about elsewhere?

By far the most defining limitation of the sport is access to surfable coastline. However, Canada also boasts the highest number of lakes in the world and abundant river systems; a staggering nine per cent of the country is covered by freshwater. Many of these bigger lakes provide rideable swells when conditions are suitable, and a lot of the rivers create powerful surges of water funnelling through confined spaces over a shallow bottom, providing limitless potential for river surfing.

In river surfing the wave is stationary, caused by a high volume of water flowing over a narrow pocket of rocks, thereby creating turbulence and a wave face. River surfers face upstream, enter the water quickly, catch the wave and remain stationary, yet enjoy the feeling of travelling quickly over water. River surfing has been documented as far back as the early 1970s in Munich, Germany, which

today offers the world's largest urban surfing spot.

Neil Eggsgard and Jacob Kelly Quinlan founded "Surf Anywhere" in 2008, a Canadian-based organization with the goal of ending geographical restrictions to surfing by transforming sections of rivers into surfing hotspots. Communities can be coached to identify surfing opportunities in local rivers and on how to approach their local municipality to build river-surf features. From there, coaching extends to fundraising and registering a non-profit, to the design and construction of unique river waves.

Eggsgard is both president and wave-builder at Surf Anywhere. "We work with surfers, cities and wave teams around the world to create lasting river waves with great cultural, economic and environmental returns. Surf Anywhere builds the waves and surroundings to best fit the needs and desires of the community."

Eggsgard holds a H.B.Sc. from the University of Toronto majoring in physics and minoring in mathematics and German. He started river surfing in 2005 and has travelled around the world researching wave-building and surfing river waves. In

2006, he founded the Alberta River Surfing Association, one of the first of its kind and a model which many associations have followed.

Wave quality in Alberta's Kananaskis River was poor compared to other river surfing communities, such as the Lachine Rapids in Montreal. By 2007, Eggsgard began working on building features in the river. The project required a combination of fundraising, government grants, donated time, labour and professional skills. "The conditions in the Kananaskis River made it an excellent location for building waves. It was the perfect laboratory for wave-building because the river turned on and off [due to seasonal flow] making research and development easier there

I was fortunate to find river surfing and it became a way to scratch my itch."

He embarked on travels to river surfing communities around the globe, shredding close to 100 different river waves. "We used these experiences as an opportunity to learn the ins-and-outs of wave-building and community-building. We brought our knowledge home and continued to develop the Alberta river surf scene and built new surf waves. That's when I realized that river waves could be built in other cities around the world and I could improve people's lives in the same way the river had improved my own."

After more than a decade of learning and wave-building, both Eggsgard and Quinlan are confident wave-builders have



Mathew Robertson surfs in Alberta's Kananaskis Country, on the Rocky Mountains' eastern slopes.

THE  
LOW  
DOWN

than anywhere else in the world," says Eggsgard. "The goal was to adjust the design until we had plans for the perfect wave that could be shared with the world."

Surf Anywhere's co-founder, Jacob Kelly Quinlan, directs communications, media, fundraising, promotions and community management. "Being raised in Alberta I was forced to travel and learned to ride waves in hot tropical countries. I would pour all my savings into surf travel and seeking out the world's best beaches. Early on, however,

only scratched the surface of what is possible in creating river waves. The overall vibe is welcoming and chill—with no localism. Better still, river surfing eradicates geographical limitations to the sport, opening it up to countless numbers, many of whom reside in landlocked regions.

"I have met so many incredible people along the way," says Quinlan. "Together we are ushering in a new era of surfing, miles from the coast but still close to surfing's aloha spirit." [surfanywhere.ca](http://surfanywhere.ca) ✕



## GETTING STARTED

# BUILDING AN ADVENTURER

Lessons learned from raising an adventurous child

BY JENN SMITH NELSON

Going what seems like way-too-many miles per hour for a nine-year old, my son, Zevin, rips down Whistler Mountain unfazed. He negotiates the 50-plus sharply angled bends of a five-kilometre downhill mountain bike trail with ease. Though my hands are cramped and my legs

ache from 45 minutes of death-gripping the handlebars and an upright half-squat position, I follow behind,

desperately trying to keep him in my sights.

We reconnect at the bottom. His face is lit with exhilaration, mine with relief. "I thought you'd fall at least once," he jokes. We're revelling in new-found mountain highs and celebrating our mud-covered bottoms.

"Can we try a blue run now, mom?" he says. I (wearily) oblige. I'll never let on about the fear that coursed through my veins as we navigated the rain-slicked, steep, rocky trails.

I've been excited about this mom-and-son trip for so long, yearning to reconnect and dive back into nature, away from routine and the constant pull of technology. At this point I'm desperate for distractions that keep him focused on something other than the video games he left behind.

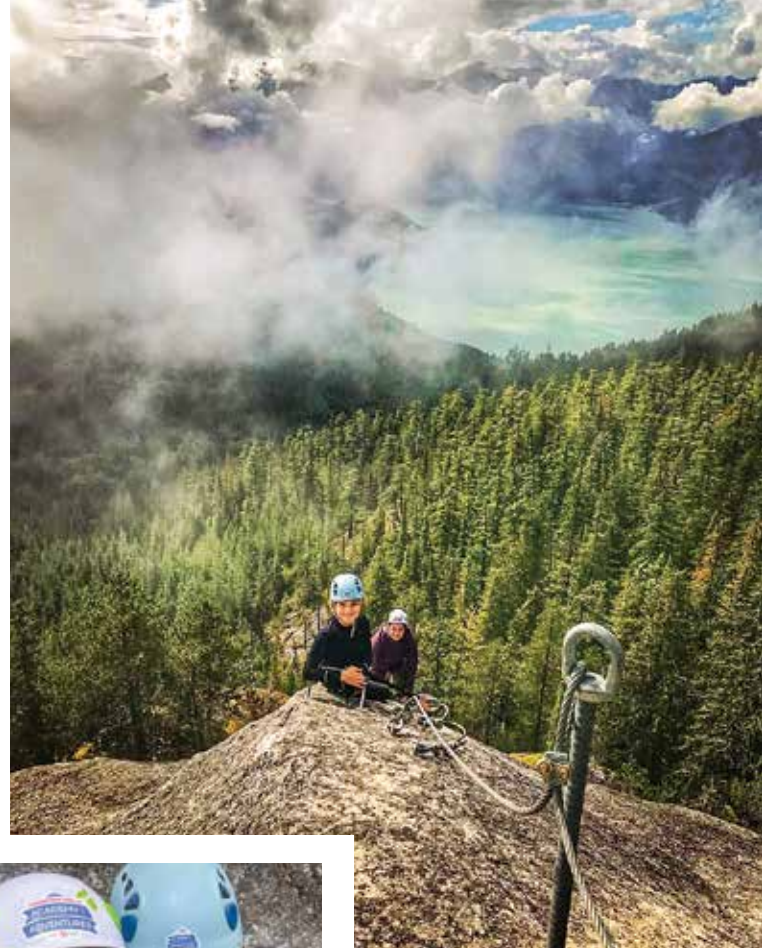
It's an ongoing issue but I'm hopeful. Travel offers plenty of opportunities to discover more worthwhile things

beyond the anticipation of a new Fortnite season. I know with Zevin, I have a fighting chance—I learned very early on that my son is hardwired for adventure.

**IT WASN'T AN** easy entry into this world, but like most of the adventures with my second-born, it was a true whirlwind. We dubbed him the "Miracle Baby of 2008," after surviving oxygen deprivation (due to a placental abruption) and acidic levels in the umbilical cord higher than my doctors had seen a newborn survive. Such a condition can result in cerebral palsy, brain damage and death, as well as a terrifying warning that he was fighting for his life following delivery. Thankfully, he didn't just survive, he thrived—instability revealing his strength and resilience.

From that day forward, I learned to never underestimate him. Instead of struggling, he displayed a physical aptitude, obvious even from infancy. Bouncing in a jumper at two months, crawling and walking by four and seven months, respectively, Zevin's confidence grew with each achievement from the get-go.

Luckily for him, he had a built-in adventure companion ready to champion his cause. Also a natural born monkey, I was the kind of kid that gave



The author has made a strong effort to help her son disconnect from the screen and push his limits in the outdoors—from mountain biking, to via ferrata (pictured, in Squamish, BC), to dogsledding and more.

my less-adventurous mom a near-heart attack or two. With excess energy and an appetite for adventure, I was climbing fences and escaping yards by the age of two. Spider-manning hallway walls, scaling my school to access the roof and jumping off of our garage were a few of my earliest "accomplishments" of which she reminds me to this day.

Sharing our adventure DNA, I try to make a conscious effort to help my son tackle new obstacles and activities by creating opportunities beyond the screen.

**IT'S NO SECRET** that today's parents face overwhelming pressure balancing playtime with technology. The reality is that from the time our babies can sit up, they've mastered tablets, toddlers are YouTube fanatics and nearly

every kid owns at least one gaming system. Keeping technology out of the picture is unrealistic—it's become a part of daily life and it's only going to evolve.

However, as one of the last of the free-range generation, I, like many other parents, crave more for my kids. I want them to feel that sense of wonder and independence I once did—one that draws them out of the house. Immersing them in nature is vital, encouraging curiosity is imperative and nurturing activities that make them tick is a must.

I'm lucky with my youngest. Because we are very alike, it's easy for me to plan adventures we can enjoy together. Though he can spend hours online gaming with friends, he's already amassed an impressive travel and adventure resume. From dogsledding in northern

THE  
LOW  
DOWN



Saskatchewan at four, and SNUBA diving (a cross between snorkelling and SCUBA) in Saint Lucia by seven, to our most recent trip in British Columbia, he's always been up for trying new things.

But it isn't always easy to pull him away from technology. In fact, it's become harder and harder.

**SO THAT'S WHY** last summer I upped the ante in BC, crafting an itinerary based on activities I knew would be a fit for him in particular, and that I could (hopefully) do alongside him.

Thankfully this time, it only took about a day for his focus to shift from screen time and return to the outdoors. By the time we made it from Whistler to Squamish, he had stopped pretending his umbrella was a Fortnite shotgun.

While in Squamish, he continued to respond amazingly to the environment.

His face expressed wonder and his energy could be felt; he virtually vibrated from excitement as we tried one new thing after another.

First, we tackled whitewater rafting down the Cheakamus River, and then scaled a mountain using via ferrata, where it took every ounce of my being to trust him to clip in and out of his harness to a secure line safely. Finally, we went rock-climbing on a nearly vertical face. Though my Spiderman technique had somewhat faded, I made it to the top of the pitch on my first go, but it was far from pretty. Zevin on the other hand was so impressive. Brute strength, flexibility and sheer determination had him zigging and zagging, nailing the difficult chimney-climb technique as he scrambled higher and higher.

This is nine! Where is 10 and beyond going to take us? I'm not sure but it's bound

to be wide-smile inducing. I'm going to continue to do my best to keep up, and keep lifting him up, too.

**THE JOY OF** seeing my son engaged in new, healthy activities makes me feel like I have a fighting chance to influence and further cultivate positive interests in his life. It doesn't happen as often as I'd like, however, it's times like this when I feel I am doing something right as a parent.

Beyond fun, travel allows for many moments of fulfillment, learning and togetherness. As parents we have the ability to help build our children by encouraging them to embrace independence and adventure, whether it be through travel or at home.

There will come a day when I won't be the one reaching the top first but that's OK, support comes in many forms. I'm just happy to be along for the ride. ✕

## ADVENTURES IN PARENTING

- Give them a gentle yet encouraging push—but know their limits, and never force them. Listen to your kids and trust their abilities.
- Model an adventurous attitude and learn a new activity with them. Make quality time fun!
- Teach them it's OK to not be the best at something right away—build confidence, praise independence and be their biggest cheerleader.
- Promote curiosity and allow them to suggest new things they'd like to try.
- Don't be afraid to introduce new activities, and choose destinations that offer a wide range of activities.



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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Ocean House afloat in the peaceful Peel Inlet of Haida Gwaii, British Columbia. An aerial view during the helicopter ride in. Serenity abounds in this off-grid region of the isolated archipelago.



## OCEAN HOUSE UNVEILED

*Uncovering mysteries on the Peel Inlet, Haida Gwaii*

**H**aida Gwaii has always struck me as a place of mystery. Relatively inaccessible, sacred and spiritual, this archipelago of rainforest-covered islands and wild Pacific waves is home to ancient totem poles, traditionally medicinal plants and the Haida, whose ancestors lived off the land in more than 100 villages. Intrigued, I accepted an invitation to stay onboard Ocean House, a remote eco-lodge floating on the emerald waters of the Peel Inlet.

Early on a Wednesday morning, 10 guests and I boarded a chartered flight from Vancouver's South Terminal to Sandspit, Haida Gwaii, where we transferred into a helicopter. It was my first time in a chopper, so I requested the co-pilot seat. Beneath my feet, bubbly green mountains and calm blue lakes zipped by.

Upon arrival at Ocean House, we were encouraged to explore the area alone but cautioned to take a radio and to sign-out any time we left the barge because of its remote location and proximity to sensitive places.

On our first group outing to nearby Kayousn Village, I spotted an eagle soaring above the pebbly beach. Jaylene, the resident cultural interpreter, stopped us before we tramped into the forest. "We have to let them know we're here," she said. She opened her mouth and let out a traditional song of peace.

Following a trail of white seashells, we hiked through the mossy forest, which was once home to about 300 Haida people. They lived in cedar long houses. Jaylene pointed out the corner poles, but it was difficult to imagine an entire community bustling about this silent wilderness.

Back on the boat, we stopped to pull up prawn nets. The smell filled the small boat

immediately. Seafood was on the menu for dinner.

But first, we had time to soak in the late afternoon sun on the deck. It'd been just 12 hours since I woke up in a hectic rush to the airport, and already I began to feel a sense of tranquility descending on our international group.

Most of the other guests were older couples ticking Haida Gwaii off their bucket list. But as Ocean House was only in its first season, I could easily see it as a retreat guests return to year after year. If they can afford it, that is.

A few days at Ocean House is a magical experience—and a big financial commitment. Guests are looking at just shy of \$6,000 per person for a four-night all-inclusive trip. For such a big chunk of change, the website is relatively vague, adding intrigue to the mystery. Perhaps they're wary to over-promise, especially consid-



## LEARN MORE

Ocean House offers three-, four-, seven- and 10-night packages. Customized trips are also available. Uncover more mysteries at [oceanhouse.ca](http://oceanhouse.ca).

ering everything is weather-dependant, including our tour the second morning: a trip to Ts'aahl.

A boat ride took us along the wild west coast through the swelling Pacific Ocean. The drops and bumps swirled my stomach until I sacrificed my breakfast to the salty waves.

Finally—mercifully—after a rocky, two-hour ride, we docked. After another traditional song, we stepped through spruce, cedar and hemlock forest to find two 300-year-old house frontal poles. Hidden in the trees, these poles once functioned as addresses.

Squinting through the branches, I gasped when I realized the giant redcedar in front of me was actually a carved pole. With Jaylene's help, I picked out the shapes: beavers, ravens, spirits, a mosquito and potlatch rings. On the top sat the three Watchmen, protecting from every direction—except behind, because you know who's behind you and threats don't come that way.

On Friday, we travelled to another moss-covered village. Jaylene pointed out culturally modified trees. We wandered alongside the ocean over slippery rocks cloaked in cognac-coloured seaweed, hoping for a glimpse of a black bear. We passed steaming piles of skat, but the bears remained shy.

On Saturday, I stayed close to the barge. I traced an old logging road through the forest where spirits are said to roam, paddled out in a kayak and joined the others for a communal ride in the carved cedar canoe as Jaylene sang paddling songs to keep us on tempo.

Between the available adventure activities, artist in residence, cultural interpreter, library, theatre room, luxurious accommodations and fine dining, Ocean House offers a unique, environmentally sustainable, cultural learning experience.

"The two main economies in Haida Gwaii are fishing and logging," Jaylene told me. "But those are depletable resources. The only thing you need for ecotourism is knowledge."

I learned a lot on this trip. From anthropological findings to historical stories and crests to subcrests, I'd only scratched the surface of the mysteries of Haida Gwaii. As I boarded the helicopter to fly home, I was happy to leave a little mystery behind. It means I have to come back. ✕



Carved poles and culturally modified trees are found in the woods around Ocean House—guides lead daily interpretive walks.



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## STOP THE DISAPPEARANCES

*Let's talk about responsibility in the outdoors*

**T**he first time I had a friend simply disappear in the mountains was in 2003. One summer day, American Scotty Marion flew off a Swiss mountain in

his paraglider, as he had thousands of times before all over the world. Scotty wasn't just a solid pilot. He was one of the best. He had thousands of hours in the air as a competitor, instructor and cross-country pilot. You have to be somewhat bold to ride thermals over mountain ranges, but I never saw him take wild risks in the sky. If anything, he was one of the mellower high-level pilots I flew with. Just a nice guy.

When he went missing, I was sure he'd turn up shortly, especially in a country as populated and well-organized as Switzerland. But 16 years later he's still out there somewhere. I remember the endless online discussions, the money spent on everything from more aerial searching (after the Swiss Government

called off theirs) to psychics (desperate people do desperate things and there are always those willing to take advantage of them). Nothing. Family and friends are still wondering. But Scotty's flight to nowhere was just the start of a bad trend.

The next disappearance was tougher somehow. Two more of my friends, Karen McNeill and Sue Nott, set off to do the first female ascent of Infinite Spur, an aptly named route in Alaska. It was cutting edge for 2006, and if they had of succeeded it would have been a monumental achievement. But, likely somewhere above the worst of the technical difficulties, they disappeared. I spent days speaking with rescue crews in Alaska, scanning their photographs, talking to family and waiting. The wait was worse than a death; the not knowing, and the slow dwindling of possibilities until the flame of hope finally choked out. Although recently my friends Dave Bridges and Alex

Lowe melted out of the Himalayan ice that had been their grave for 15 years, Karen and Sue are still out there, along with a half-dozen more climbers.

Climbers and pilots keep going missing, or are buried under slides and can't be found because they aren't wearing beacons. In 2006, this was excusable. It is no longer acceptable. I've seen too many family members looking blankly for explanations. There are solutions.

**IN THE LATE** 1990s, paragliders started performing so well that pilots could fly far enough from the hill to get truly lost. Competitions noticed the serious problem of missing pilots. In 2003, I was flying in a paragliding world cup in Venezuela when a Japanese pilot went missing. Two days later he showed up covered in fire-ant bites after spending the night hanging in the jungle, then fighting out for another day.

It was routine in the early 2000s to go on all-night "retrieve" missions for lost pilots, hoping their radio was charged enough to contact them if we got close. At the time, I was chasing world distance records and cell service wasn't usually that great. I'd land in random places and call on the radio, but the best bet was to walk out to a major road and start hitchhiking to a known location. Good retrieve drivers were worth their weights in gold; Canada's Vincene Muller set the standard, often finding pilots via some sort of telepathy, or smart guessing, even when the pilot himself didn't know where he was.

This all changed with the introduction of the SPOT emergency locator beacon. It would send your position every few minutes via satellite and you could simply look online to locate the pilot. Plus, if you crashed, you could hit the SOS button and help would be dispatched. There were some early glitches when an ambulance was dispatched to the bottom of a mountain, but in general the system dramatically cut down expensive and seemingly endless helicopter searches. Today, you can't fly in any competition without a satellite beacon, and no recreational pilot would take off without one (at risk of being

ridiculed by other pilots on the hill).

The ease of hitting the SOS beacon has probably resulted in some "unnecessary" rescues. But rescuing a person, according to my SAR friends, isn't the expensive cost to taxpayers. Finding lost people is—whether they are lost in a vast wilderness or in a relatively defined area, such as an avalanche below a face. Once they are located, a rescue is pretty straightforward.

**ABOVE:** Howse Peak, site of a tragic climbing accident earlier this year.





Some purists won't take avalanche or satellite beacons with them into the mountains because they don't want to affect the experience. I've seen a dozen accidents in the mountains during the last 30 years, and not one person said: "Don't call the helicopter for my broken leg, I want to suffer!"

I haven't truly lost a paragliding friend in almost a decade, but I continue to lose climbing friends, or have their rescues delayed for preventable reasons. Many ice and alpine climbers won't carry avalanche beacons because often the avalanches in that terrain are fatal. But not being able to find buried people exposes rescuers to massive risks. In 2015, a climber was buried on an ice route in Banff, and because he wasn't wearing a beacon it took roughly 100 times more searching for Parks Canada to locate his body. The massive crowd-funded searches in the Himalayas for Tom Ballard and Daniel Nardi, JC Lafaille, etc., all share a common denominator: the climbers weren't wearing a beacon or Recco strip. Had they been, the search would likely have been far shorter with a helicopter simply flying up the face until they got a ping. I'm sick of this preventable experience.

**IN TODAY'S WORLD,  
RESCUE IS GOING TO COME  
FOR US IF WE ARE MISSING—  
NO MATTER WHAT. HOW  
FAST THEY FIND US IS OUR  
RESPONSIBILITY, NOT THEIRS**

**RECENTLY, THREE TOP** climbers, two of whom I knew personally, went missing on Howse Peak in Banff National Park. Parks Canada searched for them and found gear, but had to complete the actual body recoveries while tied into hovering helicopters due to overhead hazard. It was a horrendous experience for them, for the families of the victims and for all of us who waited for news. None of the climbers were wearing a beacon or Recco strips. It's time for that to change. I don't fault the missing climbers for not wearing beacons, but I do fault our outdoor culture and I believe we need to change it.

Recco is a relatively new type of search system where a radar-reflector strip is sewn into clothing or gear. A rescuer can find the strip using a special handheld or helicopter-based detector, which can

search massive areas really quickly. It's not great for live avalanche recoveries, like an avalanche beacon, but it's incredibly light and cuts down on rescue time. (It has been attributed to live recoveries, though.) It also works for lost hunters and hikers, as well as climbers, and I'd like to see all outdoor manufacturers put it in their clothing and climbing harnesses. I've been working with Arc'teryx, Black Diamond and others to help make this a reality, but we as users also need to take some responsibility for not risking the lives of our rescuers (and possibly saving our own lives) by doing two simple things: wear a beacon and bring avalanche gear if in avalanche terrain, and bring a satellite communication system (InReach or SPOT).

"Purists" may revolt and say that having communications or rescue gear changes the experience. I don't care. Sit with the families as the search goes on for days. Talk to the SAR teams with the looks in their eyes from the stresses of being exposed to hazards for vastly more amounts of time than necessary. In today's world, rescue is going to come for us if we are missing—no matter what. How fast they find us is our responsibility, not theirs. Peace to the families and friends of those still missing. ✕

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Photo credit: Robert Brunet



**WILD SIDE**  
BY ANDREW FINDLAY



## PLEASANTLY UNCOMFORTABLE

*There are very good reasons to break out of your four walls this year*

**W**hy travel? Is it to discover and experience new places, cultures and people? Or is it to seek out things that make us feel comfortably at-home? If it's the latter, then why bother enduring airport security lines, shuttle buses, visas, menus you can't decipher, strange gastrointestinal disturbances and the other attendant hassles of travel? (I was once strip-searched at YVR years ago after returning from a ski trip in the Himalayas with a backpack that smelled like hash.) Instead, should you do the climate a favour and simply stay home?

Authenticity. It's the traveller's eternal quest. However, it is a search fraught with irony, for the very act of travelling can lead to an ever-increasing homogenization, and therefore an ever-diminishing supply of the resource we all crave—authenticity. Believe me, I know. I have enough stamps on my passport to confirm that I have personally contributed to this phenomenon through my work as a freelance writer.

**ON A RECENT** spring-break family surf trip, my wife and I took our kids to Cambutal, Panama. Until recently, this coastal village was mostly home to cowboys and fishermen living a quiet life at the end of a bumpy road on the Azuero Peninsula. In many ways, Cambutal remains on the outer edges, just barely beyond the reach of semi-reliable Internet service, with a small tienda stocked with beers, rum, some

fruit and veg, bags of chips, cans of tuna and beans, cigarettes and not much else.

It still has that feel of a traditional coastal Panamanian town, but it won't last. There is a growing number of hotels and rental properties owned by expats searching for waves of similar quality to nearby Venao, but without the generic beach town vibe, which has overwhelmed that surfer's town full of sun-stroked backpackers getting wasted and hanging around in hammocks between sessions.

Our host in Cambutal, Sean, is the kind of guy I can relate to easily. He got priced out of his hometown of Boulder, Colorado. After a trip to Panama, he fell in love with surfing, made a move to Cambutal and enlisted his sister to start a small, three-room hotel. Their one employee, Lincoln, is a twentysomething from Arkansas who blogs part time for a yoga app and pieces together whatever other employment she can find to sustain her life on the road. I get it. We all desire a place where life is simpler, more affordable and where there are opportunities that don't exist back home. Yet Sean and Lincoln, best intentions aside, will inevitably contribute to Cambutal's destiny as another Developing World paradise that's been fully colonized by ex-pats and recast into a slice of home—but with palm trees and a warm ocean.

The yoga mats have already arrived, along with the earnest gringos on soul-searching retreats. And we heard talk of someone opening a boutique wine store to assuage foreigners tired of Cuba libres and

Panamanian lager. High speed Internet is also just around the corner. That means cafes full of travellers staring like zombies at their gadgets will soon follow. I'm glad we experienced Cambutal when we did. Five or 10 years from now, it won't be the same. Then again, nothing in this world remains static.

**SO, AM I** a jaded traveller? Well, there's a part of me that is. Yet I still travel. My wife and I are raising two young daughters. Travel, and the rich experiences that come only when you step out from behind the comfortable four walls of your own existence, is becoming a large part of their lives.

I remember a sign from my tree-planting days in northern British Columbia that was posted at kilometre-zero of a logging road. It said: "Prepare for the unexpected." It struck me as a sort of contradiction in terms. But in a way, it summarizes the joy of travel. Sometimes shit happens, and you need to roll with it. If I could summarize why I still feel compelled to travel, given that I live in a place that is pretty much a slice of paradise, I suppose it would be to open myself and our children to the deep humanity that still exists on our troubled planet regardless of race, creed, culture, politics or any other often-polarizing demographic.

I love mountains and unfamiliar ecosystems populated with animals I've only ever seen on *Planet Earth* documentaries. I like rolling the dice with a palette-stretching menu written in a language I don't understand. But it's encounters with

**ABOVE:**  
The search for authenticity is fraught with irony.



people that always stick. In fact, my faith in humanity has been renewed many times by random acts of generosity from total strangers.

Not long ago, we took our kids to a private wildlife reserve in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Colombia. The owners had a domesticated cotton-top tamarin, an endangered monkey that fits in the palm of your hand and is endemic to northern Colombia. It was perched cutely on the shoulder of the woman at the reception. She told us that the monkey doesn't like kids. We laughed. Then five minutes later, after entering the reserve, I looked behind to see the monkey stalking us, cute no longer. Before my wife and I could react, the little devil raced up and bit one of our kids on the hand and the other on the back of the ankle. The animal's tiny incisors barely made hypodermic needle-sized punctures, but broke the skin nonetheless. Flashback to that sign on the logging road: *prepare for the unexpected*. For example, getting bitten by a monkey. It took a moment for the gravitas of potential rabies exposure to sink in, but when it did, our trip took an immediate 180.

So began our journey into the labyrinth of the Colombian health care system as

we scrambled to get the kids vaccinated for rabies—a virus with a 100 per cent fatality rate. Our street level Spanish, good enough for ordering cervezas and getting directions, quickly failed us. The story is long, but during this stressful journey we were the beneficiaries of extraordinary kindness from locals. As we sat in a crowded emergency waiting room, a man whose wife was stricken with Dengue fever stepped in to help when he heard us struggling to plead our case to the reception. While waiting for two days—which seemed like two weeks—for the vaccine to arrive, a cab driver who had become our friend drove us across Santa Marta to get some advice from his cousin who worked at a health clinic, with no expectation of being paid extra. Afterwards he texted us to ask how the kids were doing, as though we were part of his family. It can be terrifying for anyone, let alone young children, getting a preventative needle for a deadly disease in a crowded clinic where nobody speaks your mother tongue. In the end, we got the vaccine and our kids have a unique travel story to share, and the experience left me with a profound affection for the people of Colombia that I will never forget.

**I RECENTLY INTERVIEWED** a man from Kamloops who started a non-profit community development organization that offers volunteer trips around the world. On the surface, he seemed as ordinary as they get—a businessman and long-time Rotarian. But he was far from it. I asked him what he gets personally from volunteering overseas. He paused, then responded with one word, "Empathy." Interacting with cultures around the world has made him less judgmental and more understanding of people in general, regardless of their religion, social circumstances, cultural beliefs or sexual orientation.

In his TV series, *Parts Unknown*, the late iconoclastic New York chef Anthony Bourdain went deep, real deep. He shelved pre-conceived ideas and judgments and approached peoples and places on their own terms, exhibiting a courageous vulnerability that enabled him to find the core humanity that binds us all. It's gritty, messy and not always pleasant, but profoundly enriching. So much strife and conflict in the world is born from an ignorant, narrow-minded, assumption that yours is the only way. Leave the four walls once in a while—and by that I don't mean for a yoga retreat in the tropics—and you'll realize that it isn't. ✕



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## WHAT PRICE, OUR ENVIRONMENT?

*Preserving our planet is going to cost cash—are we willing to pay?*

**A**s outdoor enthusiasts, most of us understand the importance of looking after our wilderness—and we all do our bit, whether it's releasing a fish or practising no-trace camping. We can also make a difference from home, since our actions in civilization have the greatest impact on our local environment: treating our sewage, disposing of trash properly and preventing chemical discharges. So why should it be any different with air pollution?

Canada's carbon tax has become one of our nation's most politically divisive topics. Five provinces—Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario and New Brunswick—refused to implement the tax, requiring Federal intervention and court challenges.

The logic behind the carbon tax is straightforward: impose higher costs on carbon-based fuels and market forces come into play. People will look for greater efficiencies, such as purchasing smaller cars or using public transit. The ultimate goal is that we will emit less emissions, not only CO<sub>2</sub>, but also smog-causing particulates. (Even for those who choose not to

believe in human-caused global warming, this latter benefit is harder to deny. In Britain alone, around 40,000 people die every year from air-pollution-related causes.)

Much of the tax charged at the pump goes right back into the pocket of the consumer. In Ontario, for example, a family of four will receive an annual carbon tax rebate of \$307—almost completely mitigating (for the average family) the extra cost incurred.

So why is there so much opposition to a tax? Much of it is due to the short-sighted nature of human instinct. It reminds me of a conversation I had with a construction worker in a pub in London, England, where he bemoaned that his wife was bankrupting him by taking 50 quid from his wallet every week to put into their savings account. With the carbon tax, there is a myopic focus on the prices at the pumps. The rest—rebates, environmental benefits, cleaner cities—is too abstract.

One of the main arguments of carbon tax opponents is that higher gas prices will destroy economies. I took a look to see how this holds against reality.

The American state that has the lowest gas prices (according to GasBuddy) is Mis-

issippi. Forbes lists Mississippi as having the worst economy in the U.S. California has the highest gas prices in the U.S., yet has the third-strongest economy. In Western Europe, Norway has the highest gas prices, and the third-strongest economy. Spain has the lowest gas prices and, you guessed it, is one of Europe's worst economies.

Pretty much anywhere you look this correlation holds. Contrary to what Doug Ford will have you believe, higher prices at the pumps do not destroy economies. Currently in Canada, British Columbia has the highest gas prices, and it also has the best performing economy with Canada's lowest unemployment rate and the greatest rate of growth over the last decade.

So what province has the dubious distinction of having the lowest gas prices? It's Alberta. While Alberta often has a robust economy, its current economic situation is more in line with global correlations of economy to gas prices. Alberta has one of the highest provincial unemployment rates (only bested by a couple of chronically-economically-challenged Maritime provinces) and poor economic growth.

**ABOVE:**  
As outdoors-  
people, we  
have a debt  
to pay.





Of course, the relation of gas prices to the strength of economies is simply correlation, not causation. High gas prices are not necessarily a contributing factor to economic strength, but it does indicate that having higher gas prices does not prevent the formation of robust economies. As to why economies with lower gas prices typically underperform, that's not entirely clear.

High gas prices are not necessarily the result of carbon taxes. So how exactly does a carbon tax impact an economy? Two good examples are BC and Norway, two regions that have had long-term carbon taxes in place.

BC implemented a carbon tax 11 years ago, becoming the first jurisdiction in North America to do so. Since then, according to RBC Economic Research, it has had the greatest rate of economic growth in Canada. The carbon tax has also been instrumental in stimulating cleantech industries, contributing to BC's overall tech boom, further diversifying its economy and moving away from its resource-extraction origins. According to the Globe and Mail, BC is now labelled as Canada's new economic powerhouse and attributed the fuel tax, in part, to this growth. And most importantly, the very reason for implementing carbon taxes in BC

**OF COURSE, THE REASON  
FOR IMPLEMENTING THE  
CARBON TAX ISN'T TO BENEFIT  
THE ECONOMY, IT'S TO  
HELP PROTECT OUR PLANET  
AND ENSURE FUTURE  
GENERATIONS CAN ENJOY  
THINGS LIKE CLEAN AIR AND A  
STABLE CLIMATE**

has worked. Emissions have dropped by 4.7 per cent over the last 11 years.

Norway is often compared with Alberta, having derived a large part of its wealth from oil, so it's a particularly relevant example to look at. Overall, Norway has followed a very similar trend to BC (except on a larger scale) since implementing its carbon tax. Its economy has strengthened and it is decreasing its reliance on the roller-coaster economics of resource extraction. The technology sector is booming, and despite low oil prices, Norway currently has an ultralow unemployment rate of 3.7 per cent. This has allowed them to keep their emissions from barely rising despite a significant increase in oil extraction.

Of course, the reason for implementing the carbon tax isn't to benefit the economy, it's to help protect our planet and ensure future generations can enjoy things like clean air and a stable climate. While these may seem like good reasons to implement this change, for many people it seems outrageous. Even for those who don't care that climate change will displace millions of people from their homes due to rising sea levels or cause extinctions as animal habitats are destroyed, there are more immediate and self-serving reasons to support reducing emissions. A reduction in pollution benefits the people living in local regions, while nurturing new technologies such as electric and fuel-efficient cars. Innovation flourishes, making nations economic leaders instead of laggards and enabling their economies to flourish not falter.

It's our choice, whether to be the Londoner who bemoaned his wife for saving the money he wanted to spend on beer, or to recognize that a few cents per litre is contributing to a better future. Particularly for those of us who love recreating in the outdoors, it will help ensure our natural environment is there for generations to come. ✕

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## OTTAWA'S BEST (AND LESS-KNOWN) PADDLING ROUTES

*Use Canada's capital city as your hub to explore these incredible paddling routes*

**N**any paddlers associate wilderness canoeing with the Canadian Shield—a great slab of rock most obvious in Ontario's northern parks. A short drive from the city of Ottawa, however, this two-billion-year-old stone also dominates the landscape by way of a southern extension known as the Frontenac Axis and the Algonquin Dome.

### Charleston Lake

Charleston Lake Provincial Park, located between Ottawa and Kingston, is home to a well-established campground full of RVs and hippie vans. But it also holds prime interior canoeing—particularly in the southwest corner of Charleston Lake.

The park offers 13 interior sites organized into clusters at Bob's Cove, Hidden Cove, Buckhorn Bay, Captain Gap, Slim Bay and Covey's Gap. There is a launch and parking lot at the far end of the main campground, past the interpretive centre and second beach. It's closed off to motorized boat traffic.

### Bonnechere River

The Bonnechere River is situated in the northern portion of the Madawaska Highlands, between the Ottawa River and the southeast corner of Algonquin Provincial Park. Highway 62 and Bonnechere Provincial Park campground

act as the take-outs. The put-in is north of the highway, a few kilometres from of the town of Round Lake Centre, at the end of Turner's Point Road.

The Bonnechere River is managed under two separate parks; the southeast corner of Algonquin protects the upper portion and Bonnechere River Provincial Park defends the lower stretch. I've paddled both sections on weekend outings. The section of river that exits Algonquin and flows into Round Lake is the more scenic of the two, being a part of the Ottawa Valley watershed, rich with forested uplands towering above the basin floor.

A quick glance at the river here will tell you a great deal about your journey to Couchain Lake. If the tea-coloured water is flowing easily over the cobblestone, then you're in luck. Otherwise, there's likely not enough water to paddle this section. You'll have to drive back along Turner's Point Road and make use of the Couchain Lake access point, 1.7 kilometres past the park boundary (no permit is required here).

Then why even bother with the upper section? It's the most scenic; a place where a couple strokes of the paddle take you from the near-north climate, almost Savannah-like, to the far south, where spruce trees and columbine plants give way to birch and white trilliums.

### Wendigo to Radiant Lake (Algonquin)

On a canoe trip from Wendigo to Radiant and back, I discovered one of the best trips Algonquin's east end has to offer. The access point is reached by turning south off Highway 17, just west of Deux Rivieres, on Brent Road. The permit office is just half-a-kilometre down the gravel road. From there it's a 16-kilometre drive down Brent Road, left onto Wendigo Lake access road and another couple of kilometres to the launch site.

It's an easy jaunt down to Radiant by way of a series of small lakes and the North River. You're almost guaranteed to see a moose here. I've seen a lot of moose on previous canoe journeys here, but the one I spotted with my daughter was particularly special.

Prior to the trip, my daughter, seven at the time, reminded me how she had yet to see a moose—and she'd been paddling at my side since she was six weeks old! I promised her we'd see one this time. I also read a quote from Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the*

*Woods* to help characterize their appearance: "Hunters will tell you that a moose is a wily and ferocious forest creature. Nonsense. A moose is a cow drawn by a three-year-old."

After hearing that she became insistent that we see one. She got her wish and I became the best-dad-ever, for a whole week at least.

### THE BLOG

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





**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** A sandy respite on the Wendigo to Radiant Lake route. Moose-spotting on the Bonnechere River. The serene and lush Upper Ottawa River.



### York River

The lower section of the York River, where it flows from Egan Chutes Provincial Park into the Ottawa Valley's Conroy March (a marshy section of the Madawaska River), is a perfect two-day outing for canoeists looking for a leisurely getaway.

Algonquin tribes once used it while retreating from the invading Iroquois. Fur traders used it as part of a transport route from Georgian Bay to the Ottawa River. Lumber companies flushed their logs down it. Now, it's basically been forgotten.

Egan Chutes Provincial Park is 11 kilometres east of Bancroft, along Highway 28; the public access road is northeast of the highway bridge. Three cascades drop down in succession at the beginning, then it meanders through a mixed forest canopy and cuts into sandy banks, all which make great bush campsites along the way.

The trip ends at the ecologically significant Conroy Marsh, made famous by Group of Seven member A. J. Casson. Because of its size, the marsh is an easy place to get lost in. Two kilometres downstream from Conroy Rapids, the waterway spreads out over 2,400 hectares, with Robinson Lake to the west and Winter Lake, Garden Lake, One Mile Bay and the mouth

of the Little Mississippi River to the east. It's best to stay in the centre of the main channel and eventually you'll meet up with Negeek Lake, where the York River flushes into the Madawaska River. From here it's just a short paddle west, under the Highway 62 bridge, and then veer left to the public launch in Combermere.

### Grants Creek/Pooh Lake

Pooh Lake gets little maintenance, except by a local canoe club, but it gets little use as well. And the extra bonus is a visit to an obscure lake named after *Winnie the Pooh*.

There are two ways to reach Pooh Lake, located just outside of Algonquin's eastern boundary. The first is to paddle up Grants Creek—a new and unmaintained Waterway Park developed through the Ontario Living Legacy project. And the second is a bumpy ride down Menet Lake Road, marked on the left side of Highway 17, just north of Driftwood Provincial Park and about three kilometres south of where Grants Creek flows into the Ottawa River.

If you're in a hurry to reach Pooh Lake, and your vehicle can manage a rough ride, then Menet Lake Road is your best bet. Simply follow the dirt road for approximately 10 kilometres, and then veer left to the side road before the main road crosses Grants Creek. A short portage is marked on the right side of the roadway, just past where a bridge crosses over the creek to a cabin owned by the Grants Creek Hunting Club. It's another 20-minute paddle upstream from here to Pooh Lake, with a few exposed rocks and a large beaver dam just before you get to the lake.

## TOP OUTDOOR OUTFITTERS

**Charleston Lake:** Charleston Lake Provincial Park (canoe rentals), [ontarioparks.com/park/charlestonlake](http://ontarioparks.com/park/charlestonlake)

**Bonnechere River:** Algonquin Bound Outfitters, [algonquinbound.com](http://algonquinbound.com)

**York River:** Trips & Trails Adventure Outfitting, [tripsandtrails.ca](http://tripsandtrails.ca); Algonquin Bound Outfitters

**Grants Creek:** Algonquin Bound Outfitters; The Portage Store Algonquin Park, [portagestore.com](http://portagestore.com)

**Wendigo/Radiant:** Algonquin Bound Outfitters; The Portage Store Algonquin Park

**Upper Ottawa:** Algonquin North Outfitters, [algonquinnorth.com](http://algonquinnorth.com)

Learn more about Ottawa at [ottawatourism.ca](http://ottawatourism.ca).

Side routes can be added as well to Owl, Christopher Robin, Piglet and Eeyore lakes.

### Upper Ottawa River

I'm enthralled with the Upper Ottawa River. Between Mattawa and Driftwood Provincial Park is an outright oasis. The scenery is amazing, with the steep-walled corridor of Quebec's Laurentian hills to the left and the surprisingly undeveloped Ontario shoreline to the right.

The river is more lake-like; without the obvious flow, you wouldn't know it was an actual river. The Ottawa measures over 1,200 kilometres, drains an area of 146,300 square-kilometres and is the second-longest river in Canada. The Algonquin called it *Kitchissippi* meaning "Great River" and the deepest part is roughly 100 metres.

There are many hamlets and lodges to end your trip along the way. For a full week excursion, however, finish just past where the Dumoine River flushes out into the Ottawa at the day-use beach in Driftwood Provincial Park. ✕

## CAPITAL CITY PADDLING

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**Rideau Canal:** Urban put-ins on this UNESCO site include Patterson Creek and Dows Lake Pavilion on the west side of the canal, Clegg and Waverley streets on the east side and Hartwell's Lockstation as well, located near Carleton University.

**Rideau River:** It's not just canoes—Ottawa SUP (1314 Bank Street; [ottawasup.ca](http://ottawasup.ca)) has rentals and lessons on the scenic and smooth Rideau River. Hourly rentals, group classes and multiday rentals are available.

**Ottawa River:** West of Ottawa, this water-course is known for epic whitewater. In the city, it's a calm place to paddle—put-in at the north end of Blair Road, Rockcliffe Yacht Club, Rowatt Street or Dick Bell Park, near the Nepean Sailing Club.

**Gatineau Park:** With 360 square-kilometres to explore, Gatineau delivers wilderness right next door to Canada's capital. Find flatwater paddling on Lakes Philippe, La Pêche and Meech. All are surrounded in serene forests and offer expansive sandy beaches.



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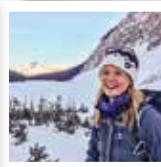
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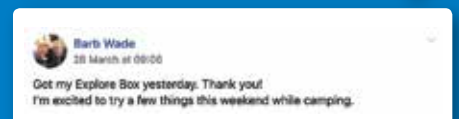
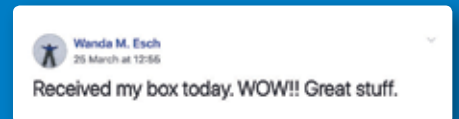


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# SUMMER GEAR GUIDE

*By Ryan Stuart*

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live the adventure and take  
summer for all it's worth:





# HOW TO BACKPACK BETTER

**A**ny trip can be amazing... or totally suck. The difference often comes down to the details. In the backcountry, the little things matter and so does asking the right questions. Did you pack enough snacks? Did you take the right fork? Who invited you? Basically, ignore the usual rule of life and *do* sweat the small stuff.

## Company

The destination can put you in the right place, but often it's the people that separate the good trips from the great trips. Our advice: as the length of a trip increases, so should your vetting of companions.

## Pants

Jackets and shirts may get all the attention, but a good-fitting pair of pants is essential and shockingly hard to find. The **Arc'teryx Sigma SL Pant** (\$200; [arcteryx.com](http://arcteryx.com)) is a rare bird. They're super light so you won't overheat, wind- and water-resistant so you won't freeze and look casual enough you won't feel like a dork getting an après drink.

## Personal Space

It's hard to like anyone when you've only got 14 square-feet of personal space, so bring a tent that's rated for one more person than you're housing—the weight gain is usually less than a snack—or get an **MSR Zoic 2** (\$500; [msrgear.com](http://msrgear.com)). The three-season tent melds about a kilogram per person with nearly 17 square-feet per person, and plenty of elbow room.

## Eating Well

No matter what, when or where the next meal, the **Morsel Spork** (\$13; [morselspork.com](http://morselspork.com)) is the right tool for the job. It combines the classic weight- and bulk-saving spork with a reinforced spatula that works well for spreading and scraping.

## Pack Space

The fourth law of physics states that whatever size pack you bring, you will fill it. Yes, weight matters more, but bulk throws off balance, wastes energy, requires heavier packs and steals room in the car for the beer. Cutting unnecessary items and squeezing air out of stuff sacks helps shrink packs. As does **GSI's Escape Series pots** (from \$60; [gsioutdoors.com](http://gsioutdoors.com)). Because the sides are silicone, they collapse into discs, eliminating one of the bulkiest items in a pack. They're loaded with features, none better than heat exchanger bottoms that increase stove efficiency and cut fuel needs.

## Repair

Things break. Bring a repair kit, first aid kit and a tool, like the **Leatherman Free P2** (\$156; [leatherman.com](http://leatherman.com)). To make it easier to use, Leatherman ditched the tiny nail-nicks for their lifting tools in favour of bigger levers that make it easy to open the nine tools, even one-handed. They lock in place with magnets, improving the performance and longevity of the unit. ▶





## HOW TO HIKE FURTHER

**S**etting yourself up to go the extra mile opens up possibilities. Knock off a longer trip in less time. Arrive in camp with more energy. Create more time for casting a line, soaking in the view, bagging a peak or roasting s'mores. It's not hard—there are plenty of things you can do to move one foot in front of the other faster.

### Go With Fewer People

The bigger your group, the slower you'll go. Each person adds about eight minutes per hour. So if you and a buddy figure it will take four hours to do a hike, add about 30 minutes for every person you invite.

### Learn to Hike Faster

No one runs a faster 10K just by saying they *want to*. Same goes for hiking. If you want to hike faster, you have to

train. On walks around town, increase your cadence. Start with intervals of a minute or two of fast walking with a minute or two at a normal pace. Move on to sustained speed for the whole walk.

### Take Fewer Breaks

Try to only stop once per hour; set an alarm if needed. At each break, have a snack and water. And be bold: start cold. Before hiking, check your layering so you won't have to peel one off in five minutes.



### Wear Lighter Shoes

We take about 1,250 steps per kilometre. No wonder a pound on the foot is equal to about five on the back. When buying a new pair of hiking shoes, fit and protection come first and second, but weight is a close bronze. For most hiking situations, the **Salomon Outline Mid GTX** (\$180; [salomon.com](http://salomon.com)) sweeps the podium. Salomon's last is famously friendly to many foot shapes. The mid-height Outline supports the ankle enough for backpacking on trails and the Gore-Tex liner keeps feet dry. For all that, these kicks are impressively light, 415 grams—less than many running shoes—and sneaker-comfortable.



### Lighten Your Load

A growing pool of gear serves solid comfort with little weight. That includes the **Six Moon Designs Lunar Duo** (from \$200; [sixmoondesigns.com](http://sixmoondesigns.com)) and **Therm-a-rest NeoAir Uberlite** (from \$230; [thermarest.com](http://thermarest.com)). Hiking poles prop the Lunar Duo tent to 114 centimetres high and 137 centimetres wide, roomier than most two-person tents. Yet, it weighs about 1.25 kilograms and is legitimately stormproof. Therm-a-Rest claims the Uberlite is the lightest air mattress around. Blow it up and it still provides enough comfort for just about any princess, with six centimetres of insulated cushioning.





## Wear Breathable Clothing

Unless it's actually raining, keep the waterproof clothing in the pack and wear something like **Helly Hansen's Vana Windbreaker Jacket** (\$130; [hellyhansen.com](http://hellyhansen.com)). The wind shell shields from howlers and beads light rain. At only 140 grams, its weight goes unnoticed and, almost translucent, it releases body heat beautifully.



## Use Hiking Poles

Here are three good reasons to give trekking poles a try: they reduce compressive force on the knees by 25 per cent, decrease muscle damage over a day of hiking and increase calories burned by recruiting more muscles.

**Leki's Micro Black CLD** (\$300; [leki.com](http://leki.com)) are the most user-friendly poles we've tried. They assemble in one firm pull, collapse just as easily, are very light and the length adjusts on the fly.



## Don't Fear the Dark

It's always a good idea to bring a headlamp. Usually for "just in case" but also for starting early or finishing late. In any case, the **BioLite HeadLamp 330** (\$60; [bioliteenergy.com](http://bioliteenergy.com)) is ideal because it integrates the trail-flooding light into the elastic headband, reducing bouncing of the beam.



## Use Better Insoles

Stock footbeds are usually thin and unsupportive. Replace them with **Superfeet's Trailblazer Comfort** (\$60; [superfeet.com](http://superfeet.com)). The shape supports the foot to reduce fatigue and locks it in place to reduce foot movement. It's also cushioned to disperse impact and wicking to prevent blisters.



## EDITOR'S PICKS

*13 essentials we're sporting this summer*

BY DAVID WEBB

## GREGORY ZULU 30

(\$150; [gregorypacks.com](http://gregorypacks.com))

At 30 litres, the Zulu is ideal for a gear-heavy day or a lightweight overnight. For either, the adjustable Freefloat suspension offers a comfy fit with ample ventilation. We particularly like the sunglass stow-loop, quick-attach hydration hanger and included rain-cover.





## HOW TO STAY DRY

Rain is inevitable. That it will ruin the day is preventable.

### BEFORE YOU GO

#### Ditch the Cotton

Cotton clothing kills. It doesn't wick sweat, takes a long time to dry and sucks warmth from the body. Leave it at home and bring clothing made from wool, nylon or polyester. **The Black Diamond Rhythm Tee** (\$99; [blackdiamondequipment.com](http://blackdiamondequipment.com)) wraps merino wool around a nylon core. NuYarn dries five times faster than regular merino and increases stretch by 35 per cent.



#### Avoid the Worst Weather

Forecasts up to 48 hours out are pretty accurate. Use them to tweak the itinerary to hike in the best weather, or at least avoid the nastiest.



#### Splurge on Rain Gear

Our suggestion for buying rain gear: spend more and buy quality. It will hurt once, but pay off with years of use. For a jacket go with **Arc'teryx's Zeta SL Jacket** (\$380; [arcteryx.com](http://arcteryx.com)), a three-season shell made with Gore-Tex Active, a light but waterproof membrane that breathes well enough for hot, humid hiking. Match the performance with **Gore's C5 Active Trail Pants** (\$200; [gorewear.com](http://gorewear.com)). The same company that makes Gore-Tex is making their own clothing and these light and packable pants fit great. Whatever you buy, regular cleanings preserve the durable water repellent finish.

#### Reapply Waterproofing

When water droplets stop running off your jacket, pants or boots, clean them then reapply the waterproofing. **Nikwax** ([nikwax.com](http://nikwax.com)) makes something for every piece of gear.



### WHEN YOU'RE OUT THERE

#### Act Before You Get Wet

Unless you can see the end of the trail, as soon as the drops start falling put on your waterproof gear. It takes a lot longer for wet gear to dry out than it does to change into rain gear. That includes a pack cover to protect your pack—most outdoor stores sell universal ones.

#### Wear Gaiters

They're sweaty. They're dorky. They take extra time to put on. But something like **MEC Kokanee Gaiters** (\$49; [mec.ca](http://mec.ca)) or **Avventura Outdoors Hiking and Snowshoeing Gaiters** (\$36; [avventuraoutdoors.com](http://avventuraoutdoors.com)) will keep your feet drier, longer, especially on really muddy trails.



#### Put a Hat On It

Rub a few coats of the included Otter Wax to the flat-brimmed, organic cotton **Coal Richmond SE Cap** (\$40; [coalheadwear.com](http://coalheadwear.com)) and rain will stay out of your hair and off your face all day long.



#### Bring a Tarp

It's pretty hard to get out of wet gear inside a tent without getting everything soaked. Bring **MEC's Scout Tarp** (\$70; [mec.ca](http://mec.ca)) and some sections of rope to create a dry area outside for dressing, cooking and hanging out.





### Slip on a Shirt

Who wants to swim in a shirt? Slip into the **Seea Gaviotas Surf Suit** (\$160; [theseea.com](http://theseea.com)), a long sleeve, one-piece swimsuit. The body is C-Skin, a slightly insulated, buttery-soft fabric. The sleeves are restriction-free (read: paddling friendly) nylon and spandex. Both are UV-proof and slip through the water.



### Slide on Sunglasses

Sunglasses block about 99 per cent of the UV rays from hitting the eye, preserving sight in the short and long term. They also reduce squinting, which prevents wrinkles. For anyone who finds shades uncomfortable, give the **Ombraz Armless Sunglasses** (\$188; [ombraz.com](http://ombraz.com)) a try. They use an easy-to-adjust string strap instead of arms to hold them securely on your face.



### Slap on a Hat

To shade ears, neck and nose simultaneously, a hat needs at least seven centimetres of brim all the way around, like the **Conner Hats Brays Beach Sun Hat** (\$76; [connerhats.com](http://connerhats.com)). Made of raffia straw, it's rated to UFP 25+ and is tough, crushable and breathes. When it gets windy and wavy, tag in the **Patagonia Surf Brim Hat** (\$49; [patagonia.ca](http://patagonia.ca)). With a neck strap and fast-drying fabric it can take a licking and keep on protecting.



### Seek Out Shade

The best way to stay sun safe is to get out of it. When there's no trees or buildings in sight, bring your own with the **Kelty Big Shady** (\$250; [kelty.com](http://kelty.com)). This real Big Shady stands tall, more than three metres, protects 150 square-feet of ground, angled sides block late-day rays and it's waterproof. ▶



## HOW TO BE SUN SAFE

**K**ey West, Hawaii, Palau: the number of places banning sunscreens with oxybenzone and octinoxate is growing. Various organizations have found that the powerful UV blockers and ubiquitous sunscreen ingredients harm coral reefs. A growing number of companies are scrambling to create sunscreens that don't use the two chemicals, but dermatologists worry the new formulations don't block the skin cancer-causing rays as effectively. Until they're convinced, always incorporate the "four S" approach.

### EDITOR'S PICKS

#### PURICA MAGNESIUM EFFERVESCENT

(\$19-\$34; [purica.com](http://purica.com))

It's easy to get your daily dose of magnesium when it tastes this good. Mix the fruity powder in H<sub>2</sub>O and you'll have the minerals you need to reduce cramps, build bones and lower blood pressure.



#### ADVENTURESMART TRIP PLAN APP

(Free; [adventuresmart.ca](http://adventuresmart.ca))

Trip plans save lives. And AdventureSmart is making it easier than ever with this Trip Plan app. Available for iOS and Android, just register and fill out your plans and both you and your family will enjoy peace of mind. (Plus, SAR will have the info they need just in case.)





## HOW TO BE MORE SUSTAINABLE

Nothing any one of us does is going to grow back the glaciers or shrink the Pacific garbage patch. But if you're not part of the solution, then you are part of the problem. When it comes to gear, that means using what you have for as long as you can, borrowing or renting if you don't need to own, purchasing used gear whenever possible and, if you have to buy new, choosing the most sustainable, longest lasting, product you can, like these four:



### Houdini Polartec Power Air

(\$250; [houdinisportswear.com](http://houdinisportswear.com))

When you wash any synthetic fabric, microscopic bits break off. The micro-fibres slip through water treatment, enter the water cycle and are now found in pretty much every body of water on Earth and are climbing the food chain. To combat the problem, Polartec improved its materials and knitting process, reducing shedding by 500 per cent. Houdini used the mid-weight fabric to make a fleece with a big hood, high collar and tons of warmth.

### Eagle Creek Migrate Wheeled Duffel

(from \$109;  
[eaglecreek.com](http://eaglecreek.com))

To make this burly duffel highly water-resistant, Eagle Creek worked with Asian recyclers to reclaim the plastic that's used to make vehicle windshields shatter-proof. They applied the recycled PVB coating to a Bluesign-approved heavy-duty poly fabric. A doctor-bag style zipper opens the duffel wide open for easy gear sorting and it carries with handles, backpack straps or rolls. Four sizes.



### Boulder Denim Canadiana

(\$128; [boulderdenim.com](http://boulderdenim.com))

Performance jeans may sound like an oxymoron but these really do check the boxes. Denim manufacturing is notoriously dirty business, but Boulder avoids denim's usual polluting processes by using a Quebec manufacturer with leading environmental standards. Made for climbing, the stretchy jeans are overbuilt. And they're stain-resistant, setting you up for years of use.



### Costa Sunglasses Panga

(\$345; [costadelmar.com](http://costadelmar.com))

Costa supports organizations like OCEARCH, which researches sharks, the Surfrider Foundation's Coastal Defenders program and Indifly, an organization that helps start up sustainable sport fishing industries in Guyana. And they're constantly improving the sustainability of the materials they use, including recycled fishing nets in some frames and bio-based resins in others, including the large-framed Panga.





## Rumpl Shammy Towel & Blanket

(\$30; [rumpl.com](http://rumpl.com))

This thing's so soft you'll want to get wet just so you can wrap yourself up in it. The polyester and spandex blend sucks up moisture and dries faster than any other towel. Best part: it doesn't pick up sand, making it an ideal beach blanket.



## Red Paddle 9'6" Compact Inflatable SUP

(\$2,200; [redpaddleco.com](http://redpaddleco.com))

Like the name suggests, this might be the smallest stand-up paddleboard where it counts—*off the water*. On the water, it's a full-length, 10-centimetre-thick board that's as stiff and stable as the best inflatables. Deflated, a patented construction process allows it to pack down to about 60 litres, about half the size of a similar sized board. ▶

## HOW TO GET WETTER

**T**hese new products will make being on and under the water better than ever.

### Nite Ize Runoff Large Packing Cube

(\$60; [niteize.com](http://niteize.com))

NiteIze reinvented the waterproof zipper with a toothless design that's easy to open and close. On the Packing Cube, it cracks a big opening for easy gear stuffing and it's see-through so it's easy to view what's inside.

### H2O Audio Amphibx & Surge+

(\$160; [h2oaudio.com](http://h2oaudio.com))

Lock any smartphone in the soft and waterproof Amphibx case, pair it to the Surge+ earbuds (Bluetooth or wired) and don't worry, even in the roughest water. The case is waterproof to three metres and hooks on the earbuds lock them on. Plus, your touchscreen remains useable.



### EDITOR'S PICKS



### BARCOUNTRY POCKET COCKTAILS

(\$10; [barcountrycocktails.com](http://barcountrycocktails.com))

Unless you plan on packing your cocktail shaker to the backcountry, BarCountry is the easiest way to enjoy a complex campsite libation this summer. Just add booze and water. The Old Fashioned is particularly nice on a cool summer eve.

### MERRELL CHOPROCK

(\$150; [merrell.com](http://merrell.com))

This is one of the sportiest sandals we've seen. Sockless fit, solid support and full protection means we can wear the Choprock on mucky hikes or tough portages. They drain and dry in a flash, so our tootsies stay comfy all day.



### YETI LOWLANDS BLANKET

(\$250; [yeti.com](http://yeti.com))

It's an amped-up picnic blanket. Measuring 140 by 200 centimetres, this burly unit weighs three kilograms, is duvet-soft on the top and military-tough on the bottom. Keeps bums dry, shakes clean of rain and dirt and packs nicely in an included sling case.

### BUFF TRUCKER CAP JUNIOR

(\$30-\$40; [buff.com](http://buff.com))

We live in trucker caps all summer long, so why not pass the fun along to the next generation? Rather than junior swimming in an adult-size cap, snag a kid-fitted trucker from Buff. Sizes fit four to 12 years-old; multiple designs available.





## HOW TO SPEND LESS

**Y**ou don't have to spend a lot to get great gear.



### Osprey Rook 65

(\$220; [osprey.com](http://osprey.com))

The Rook's everything you need in a multi-day pack. There's a ventilated back panel that's customizable and super comfortable, an integrated rain-cover and 65 litres of storage spread between a lid and body. It also comes in a women's-specific fit.

### Rab Ignition 1

(\$190; [rab.equipment](http://rab.equipment))

When a brand synonymous with high performance makes a sub-\$200 sleeping bag, buy it. The Ignition carries the same attention to detail as Rab's expert kit, but they saved with synthetic fill rated to seven degrees Celsius, perfect for summer camping.

### Outdoor Research Apollo Jacket

(\$130; [outdoorresearch.com](http://outdoorresearch.com))

The Apollo is a budget waterproof-breathable jacket worth buying. It's surprisingly breathable, well featured, tough enough to withstand some bushwhacking and weighs a shockingly respectable 340 grams.



## HOW TO RUN FASTER

### Nathan VaporAir 7L 2.0

(\$200; [nathansports.com](http://nathansports.com))

Think of the VaporAir as a utility vest that weighs almost nothing. The silky smooth fabric on the inside prevents chaffing, plenty of pockets keep snacks and accessories handy, and hidden straps adjust the fit as you suck the bladder dry.



### Ultimate Direction Hydrolight Short

(from \$84; [ultimatedirection.com](http://ultimatedirection.com))

Why carry it when you can wear it? Built into the waistband of these layered running shorts are sleeves for two 300-millilitre squirt bottles and a pocket big enough for a fat phone.

### Inov-8 Roclite 275

(\$175; [inov-8.com](http://inov-8.com))

Reinforced mesh upper for additional durability, graphite in the outsole provides longevity and grip and a footplate protects and flexes. The Roclite 275 is light done right.







### Big Agnes Copper Spur HV UL2 Bikepack

(\$280; bigagnes.com)

Already a wicked tent, Big Agnes optimized the Copper Spur for backpacking on a mountain bike by taking an already awesome backcountry tent, shortening the poles and stuffing it in a waterproof handlebar bag. With an extended footprint in the vestibule, this tent is useful no matter what kind of "packing" we're doing.



### Osprey Seral

(\$115; osprey.com)

Mountain biking is one of the few scenes where fanny packs are practical and almost fashionable. There's enough room in the seven-litre Seral to carry water (in a 1.5-litre bladder), tools, food and a layer. Sitting on the hips, the pack doesn't bounce—even while taking air—and leaves your back free to breathe.

## HOW TO MOUNTAIN BIKE BETTER



### Rocky Mountain Altitude

(from \$3,800; bikes.com)

The Altitude magically marries efficient pedalling, nimble handling and stable descending, the trifecta of all-mountain riding. Rocky's secret sauce is geometry that shifts weight over the rear tire for climbing but also allows for settling into the bike for pinning it down the steep stuff. Adjust a nut on the frame to customize performance even further. ▶

### EDITOR'S PICKS



### RX BARS

(\$36 for 12; rxbrands.ca)

RX Bars are unlike any protein bar we've seen. They list their key ingredients as the most prominent part of their labels—boasting just a handful of simple foods in each bar, as well as 12 grams of protein to boot.

### HELLY HANSEN HH ACTIVE LIGHT LS

(\$60; hellyhansen.com)

Wick the sweat and stop the sun—that's what these new base layers from Helly Hansen do, and do well. These shirts even incorporate recycled coffee grounds into the Lifa fabric to create UPF 50 protection. We wear the long-sleeve for hiking and the polo to the beach.



### FREEVISION VILTA-SE SPECIAL EDITION 3-AXIS SMARTPHONE GIMBAL STABILIZER

(\$150; freevisiontech.com)

Whether you're an aspiring YouTube star or you simply want to shoot video your friends can watch without getting nauseous, the active stabilization on this Bluetooth-enabled gimbal does the trick. Offers tripod and handheld modes and fits phones up to 8.9 centimetres wide.

### OBOZ SAWTOOTH II MID WATERPROOF

(\$180; obozfootwear.com)

Oboz's signature snug heel-cup and wide toe-box combo keeps the Sawtooth II from slipping while allowing toes to spread and move. Arch support is top-notch too. It's a waterproof hiker that's just as comfortable on day-hikes as multiday treks.



## HOW TO EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY

### Pedego Elevate

(\$6,700; [pedegoelectricbikes.ca](http://pedegoelectricbikes.ca)) Electric mountain bikes are the future, mostly because they're damn fun. And in a growing pool of them, the Elevate stands out in value. Like all e-bikes, the Elevate crushes uphill with three pedal-assist modes and further customization via Bluetooth. Cross-country and downhill, it handles like a regular bike, but costs thousands less than most other quality battery-powered rides.



### Fuse Chicken Universal Charger

(\$85; [fusechicken.com](http://fusechicken.com)) Free yourself from carrying a charger for every device. For newer phones and devices, the Fuse Chicken Universal charges cord-free. For everything else, the single wall jack has mates for just about every kind of cord out there. It's also a 6,400mAh power bank.

### Ekster Tracker Card

(\$85; [ekster.com](http://ekster.com)) Never lose your wallet just by adding this card. Charge the Tracker in the sun, link it on the TrackR app and slip it in next to your credit card. The app uses crowd-sourced GPS to track your individual card to its last pinged location, anywhere on Earth.



## HOW TO GET INSPIRED

Our ancestors didn't bench-press, burpee or crunch, they lifted rocks, climbed trees and dug up roots. In *The Practice of Natural Movement* (\$60; [victorybelt.com](http://victorybelt.com)) the founder of the MovNat fitness system reintroduces the movements humans evolved to do.

Killian Jornet is arguably the fastest man in the mountains. Steve House is an accomplished alpinist. And Scott Johnston is a sought-after trainer. They bring their skills and backgrounds to *Training for the Uphill Athlete* (\$47; [patagonia.ca](http://patagonia.ca)), the first book devoted to mountain running and ski mountaineering.

The Canadian Rockies aren't just for hiking. That's the thrust of *Bikepacking the Canadian Rockies* (\$25; [rmbooks.com](http://rmbooks.com)). Ryan Correy unlocks 10 multi-day mountain biking routes in the mountain national parks and makes the trips approachable to anyone, with personal stories and plenty of tips. ✕



### EDITOR'S PICKS

#### MARMOT BOLT ULTRALIGHT 2-PERSON TENT

(\$480; [marmot.com](http://marmot.com)) Weighing only one kilogram, the Bolt Ultralight 2-Person is ideal for backpackers. Vertical walls and a 2.6-square-metre floor mean weight doesn't sacrifice space. Interior pockets, a taped-seam fly and colour-coded poles add touches of luxe.

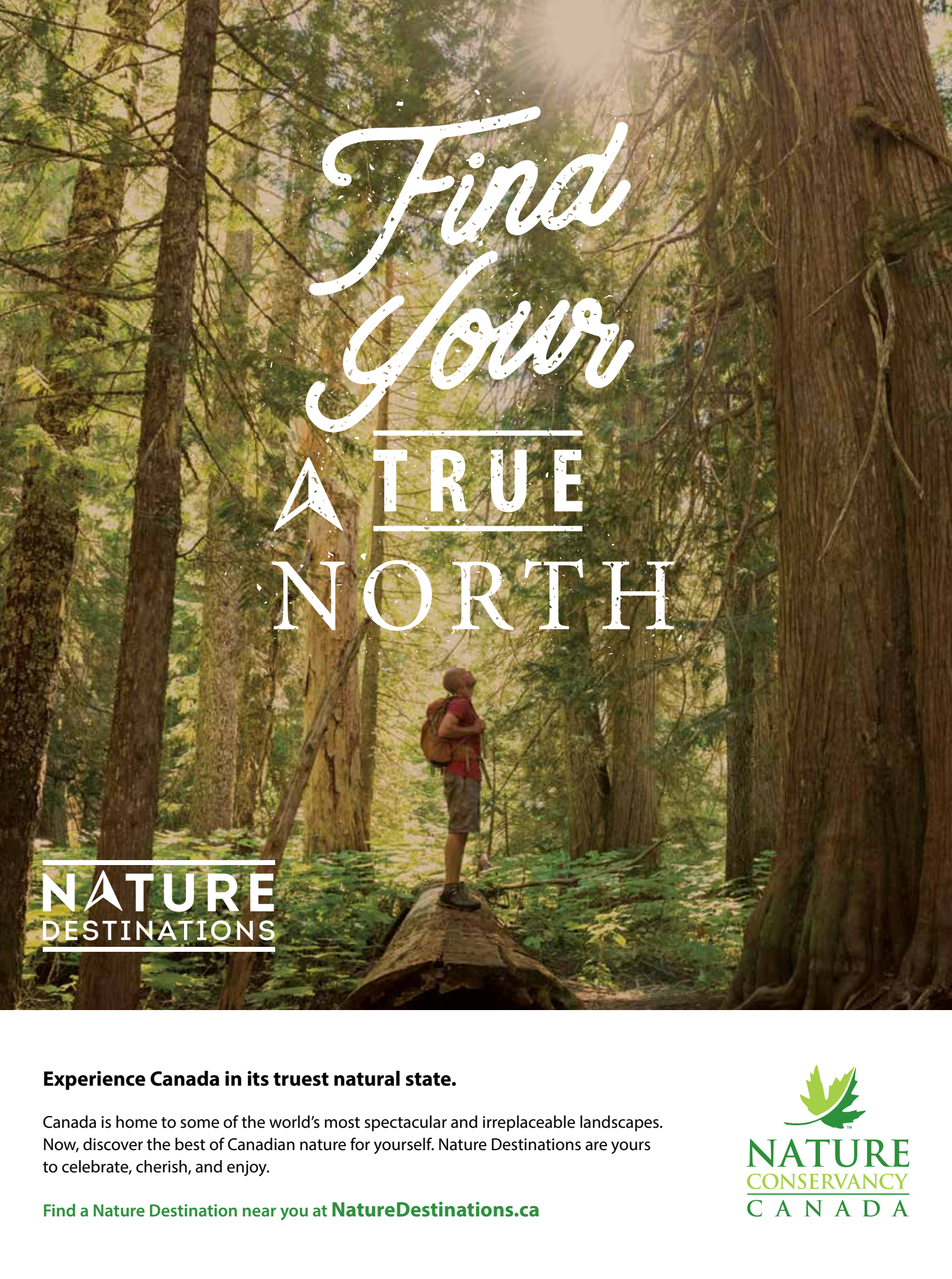


#### HOTCORE PRODUCTS FUSION 150

(\$195; [hotcoreproducts.com](http://hotcoreproducts.com)) This mummy bag merges synthetic insulation on the bottom with ethically-sourced down on top to keep us warm at -5 degrees Celsius. It weighs 1.1 kilograms and packs small. We love the fabric loops and attached cord, which keeps the bag affixed to a sleeping pad.





A person with a backpack is standing on a large log in a dense forest. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating a warm, golden glow. The text "Find Your TRUE NORTH" is overlaid on the image in a white, stylized font. "Find Your" is in a script font, "TRUE" is in a bold, sans-serif font with horizontal lines above and below it, and "NORTH" is in a large, bold, sans-serif font.

# Find Your TRUE NORTH

**NATURE**  
DESTINATIONS

**Experience Canada in its truest natural state.**

Canada is home to some of the world's most spectacular and irreplaceable landscapes. Now, discover the best of Canadian nature for yourself. Nature Destinations are yours to celebrate, cherish, and enjoy.

Find a Nature Destination near you at [NatureDestinations.ca](http://NatureDestinations.ca)


The logo features a stylized green leaf above the text "NATURE CONSERVANCY CANADA".

**NATURE**  
CONSERVANCY  
CANADA





# SPEAK FOR




Photographer TJ Watt in the nook of an ancient redcedar nicknamed the Fortress Giant, in the unprotected Jurassic Grove near Port Renfrew, British Columbia. RIGHT: Author Conor Mihell portages through Temagami, home to Ontario's oldest forests.

46





# THE TREES



There's a battle in our backwoods—resource-extraction butting heads with ecotourism and environmental stewards clashing with commercial interests. This issue, we're delving deep into these longstanding and vital issues with an examination of old-growth forests on British Columbia's West Coast and in Northern Ontario's Temagami region

**PLUS:** FOREST FIRE FIGHTING GOES HIGH-TECH AND BACK TO NATURE

*With Andrew Findlay,  
Conor Mihell, TJ Watt  
& Ryan Stuart*



# BC'S BATTLEFIELD

WITH TWO-THIRDS OF VANCOUVER ISLAND'S OLD-GROWTH FOREST CUT DOWN, IS IT TOO LATE TO TURN THE TIDE?

*Story by Andrew Findlay*

*Photos by TJ Watt*

In 2005, three years after graduating from high school, TJ Watt stood at the base of a 1,000-year-old western redcedar in the Walbran Valley's Castle Grove, on Vancouver Island. He looked up. The massive trunk soared into the canopy. A few determined rays of sunlight pierced to the forest floor, illuminating electric green moss in pools of light. Branches, filigreed with lichen, arched above like the flying buttresses of a Gothic cathedral. Up there in the loft of this massive tree and its neighbours lived a world of microscopic life difficult to imagine. You'd have to be made of stone not be moved in the silent presence of

these giants. It can be spiritual, in the way an avowed atheist might feel a stirring of faith upon stepping through the doors of an ancient church.

Watt was certainly moved by the sheer beauty of these old-growth giants, and also by the realization that most Vancouver Island valley bottoms outside of existing parks and protected areas had already been razed to stumps. Roughly 1.5 million hectares, or about 75 per cent of the original two million hectares of productive old-growth forest on Vancouver Island, has been cut.

"Going to the Walbran completely blew my mind. Walking through this forest with



Clearcut logging of old-growth forests by Western Forest Products in the Walbran Valley on Vancouver Island. BELOW: Tourists wander amongst the giant old-growth trees of the Lower Avatar Grove near Port Renfrew, now known as the "Tall Trees Capital of Canada."



thousand-year-old trees was stunning," says Watt, who grew up west of Victoria, British Columbia, in Metchosin. "But we had driven through miles and miles of clear cut forest to get there."

The experience set the young man's life on a trajectory that would put him onto the front lines of forest activism and conservation. Following this Walbran Valley trip, the Victoria news weekly *Monday Magazine* published Watt's photo of forest activist Ken Wu standing on a massive stump. The sale ignited his burgeoning interest in photography. So the next year he enrolled at the now defunct Western Academy of Photography hoping to combine his love of nature photography





with conservation. Around the same time he started driving the backwoods of Vancouver Island hunting for trees.

**"I BOUGHT AN** old Subaru so I could get around," Watt says. It was mostly an obscure pastime. But that would all change one December day in 2009. He had enticed a buddy to join him on a tree-hunting mission between Cowichan Lake and Port Renfrew. They spent the day driving up and down logging spurs in the Cowichan Valley, a part of southern Vancouver Island that is the definition of industrial logging devastation. ("Green on the outside, brown on the inside," says Watt.) Towards the end of a thus-far fruitless day, they neared Port Renfrew and spotted huge cedar candelabras poking above the canopy next to the Gordon River. They drove up a side road for a few kilometres, parked, then

walked downhill back towards the river into an almost magical world.

"I knew right away that we had found something special," Watt recalls about the moment he first encountered the cedars of what would soon become known as Avatar Grove.

It was remarkable given that this grove of massive trees was less than a half-hour drive from Port Renfrew on a road that almost anyone could manage in a low clearance, two-wheel-drive vehicle, yet likely wasn't known by anyone other than some foresters, and likely the Pacheedaht people at some point in time.

Imagine if the conquistador Hernan Cortes stumbled across a small mountain of gold on the outskirts of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan, ripe for the plunder, when he arrived in 1519. That might have been how Watt felt when he first wandered into Avatar

Grove. Except the only plundering Watt was interested in was how to leverage this magnificent grove of cedars for some much needed publicity and awareness-building around the sad state of old-growth on the southern part of the island. Avatar Grove also proved the conservationist's knack for coming up with catchy and marketable names (recently he was party to another big tree find near Port Renfrew, this one of moss-covered maples and Douglas-firs—they called it "Mossome Grove," a mashup of "moss" and "awesome").

When Watt returned to Victoria and showed Ken Wu photos of his "find," the seasoned activist was incredulous. He needed to see it with his own eyes. The pair returned in early 2010 and found freshly hung flagging tape indicating that this chunk of primordial West Coast forest was slated for logging. ▶



**AN URGENT PROTECTION** campaign kicked into high gear. Wu and Watt teamed up to launch a new conservation organization, the Ancient Forest Alliance, and quickly went to work, capitalizing on the popularity of James Cameron's blockbuster film *Avatar*, and Watt's magnificent big tree photos.

"It was wild. People started visiting *Avatar* by the thousands and media coverage went viral—locally, nationally and internationally," Watt says.

The province's hand was forced. In 2012 the Liberal government protected *Avatar* Grove as part of a 57-hectare old-growth management area. It was a step short of provincial park status, and the province had to compensate the tenure holder Teal-Jones Group for an equal area of old forest elsewhere on the island.

Still, the *Avatar* campaign helped in a big way to boost public interest in Vancouver Island old-growth protection that Watt says had gone cold since the days of Clayoquot Sound and the War in the Woods in the early 1990s.

By most standards, these remain dire times for ancient forests on Vancouver Island, even though the BC Government says old-growth is well protected. The Ancient Forest Alliance disagrees. They claim the BC government inflates the amount of remaining and protected old-growth on Vancouver Island by including vast tracts of stunted marginal forests that grow in bogs, on steep rocky mountainsides and in the high subalpine zones where the trees are smaller and generally of low to no commercial value.

(According to Watt, the government includes roughly 300,000 hectares of low productivity forest in the total of remaining old-growth, and of the 520,000 hectares of old-growth protected, only 160,000 hectares of that amount of land includes what is considered productive old-growth.)

"It's a way to disingenuously allay the fears of the public that our old-growth forests are in danger, which in truth they are," Watt says. "Government is removing the context, which is how much has been logged since European colonization. Therefore their baseline for comparison is skewed."

Contrary to some common misperceptions, the Ancient Forest Alliance is not calling for the end of logging on Vancouver Island. However, the non-profit is asking for a massive change in approach to how government manages forest lands.

Canada's ninth-widest (known) Douglas-fir before and after it was cut down in a BC Timber Sales cutblock in the Nahmint Valley near Port Alberni, on Vancouver Island.



For example, the group is calling for a science-based plan to protect endangered old-growth forests, sustainable logging of second-growth forests, support for First Nations land use planning and sustainable economic development, an end to raw log exports and incentives for the retooling and development of BC mills and value-added facilities to handle second-growth logs.

However, there's a larger theme at play these days. Thanks in large part to the tall tree hunting efforts of Watt, Wu and others; more and more people, and not just tree hunters, are beginning to view big trees left standing as more economically valuable than cutting them down and turning them into lumber and paper.

**BACK IN THE EARLY** 2000s, if you had asked Watt if he could ever see himself sitting

on a Chamber of Commerce board, he probably would have laughed in your face. Times change. Today he's on the board of the Port Renfrew Chamber of Commerce, an indication that this once logging- and fishing-dependent community is looking at forests through a different lens. Between the *Avatar* Grove, Big Lonely Doug, Red Creek Fir, San Juan Spruce and the Jurassic Grove, Port Renfrew is enjoying a mini tourism boom. The community has become a poster child for tall tree tourism. In fact, Port Renfrew now proudly calls itself "Canada's Tall Tree Capital."

Though the Port Renfrew chamber hasn't quantified the economic impact, president Dan Hagar says anecdotal evidence and conversations with tourists over coffee at Tommy's Diner suggests it's significant, alongside sport fishing. Through his company, Handsome Dan's, Hagar manages



**"WE WENT AGAINST THE GRAIN WHEN WE SAID AS A COMMUNITY THAT FORESTRY IS NOT THE ONLY WAY TO GET VALUE OUT OF TALL TREES. IF YOU LEAVE THESE TREES STANDING, PEOPLE WILL COME AGAIN AND AGAIN. CUT THEM DOWN AND YOU'LL MAKE SOME STUFF BUT THE FOREST WILL NEVER BE THE SAME."**



between 25 and 30 rental properties, an enterprise that started in 2012 with just two properties: his and his brother-in-law's. Occupancy has more than doubled in that time period.

"We're getting people from Europe, Australia, New Zealand and the United States who are coming here for the trees. For many of them it's a once-in-a-lifetime experience," Hagar says.

In 2015 the Port Renfrew chamber called for the halt of controversial logging in the Walbran Valley. The following year, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities endorsed a resolution put forward by a Metchosin councilor calling for the protection of Vancouver Island's old-growth from logging. Hagar, born and raised in Saskatchewan, doesn't consider himself a "tree hugger." He's more of a pragmatist, willing to look at trees in a different light.

"We went against the grain when we said as a community that forestry is not the only way to get value out of tall trees," Hagar says. "If you leave these trees standing, people will come again and again. Cut them down and you'll make some stuff but the forest will never be the same."

It's similar to the trophy hunting versus bear-viewing argument. However this is not an easy shift to make, especially for a bureaucracy accustomed to enabling the status quo bottom line interests of large forest companies. For communities like Port Renfrew, this extractive approach to forest management appears increasingly like dinosaur thinking. The \$2 billion per year wilderness tourism sector has been in a protracted fight for a proper seat at the table alongside industry.

Back in 2012, a 60-hectare stand of timber was flagged for logging above a base camp

used regularly by Quadra Island-based sea kayaking company Spirit of the West Adventures across from Robson Bight, off Vancouver Island's northeast coast. The company compared the economic impact of logging versus sea kayak tourism and the numbers were compelling. Timber value would be roughly \$3.6 million from a single harvest with a 60-year logging rotation. Sea kayak tourism in the area for Spirit of the West was worth roughly \$25 million over the same 60-year period, generating more than 20,000 person days of employment.

"It was our own crunching of numbers based on the revenue from harvesting that was estimated by TimberWest versus our own revenue from running our tours at the site. Not an academic undertaking for sure, but reasonably sound assumptions I think," says Spirit of the West co-owner Rick Snowden. "The end result of it all was that TimberWest scaled back their cuts and, with our input, did some careful block design considering the landscape to make sure most cuts weren't going to be visible from our kayaking routes. Kind of the best real-world scenario that we could have gotten out of it, but it sure took a lot of pressure on our part to get TimberWest to change much of their plans."

**FOR TJ WATT**, the battle continues even with the current New Democratic Party of BC government that campaigned on a promise of stricter controls over old-growth logging. So far, a couple of years into their mandate, it has been disappointing, Watt says. The most recent budget in February gave little for forest activists to cheer about. Every year, another 11,000 hectares of old-growth are cut on Vancouver Island and Watt continues to beat around the back roads of Vancouver Island searching for big trees.

"I'm hunting for them all the time. It's my major passion," Watt says. "When I'm alone out there in the forest I realize that nature could not have done a better job of creating an ecosystem. And when people experience that for the first time, it's powerful." ✕



# TEMAGAMI'S WAR IN THE WOODS

THREE DECADES AFTER A LANDMARK BLOCKADE TO  
SAVE ANCIENT PINES, BATTLES RAGE ON BETWEEN  
CONSERVATIONISTS AND LOGGERS IN ONTARIO'S  
TEMAGAMI CANOE COUNTRY

*By Conor Mihell*

**T**he map of northern Ontario's 650,000-hectare Temagami region bursts with water: massive lakes sprawl across the landscape; rivers radiate like capillaries; and ponds form a constellation against the emerald backdrop of some of Canada's most majestic forests. Lakes and rivers, ponds and creeks, tied together by countless portages—it's the sort of place that, as a canoeist, causes my pulse to quicken and makes the interludes between wilderness trips feel interminable.

Of course, Ontario boasts plenty of canoe country. Algonquin Provincial Park is about the same size as Temagami, with nearly as many well-established canoe routes; in northwestern Ontario, paddlers in Quetico Provincial Park and neighbouring Minnesota's Boundary Waters follow in the wake of the fur-trading Voyageurs; and the vast wilderness of Wabakimi and Woodland Caribou provincial parks nudge into the alluring boreal forest of Ontario's far north. Yet for many, Temagami holds a near mystical appeal—in part due to its history as one of Canada's oldest tourist destinations and the birthplace of youth summer canoe camps.

Just as legendary, Temagami is ground zero for Canada's environmental movement. Its tall pines were the impetus for the country's first forest blockade and its endangered wilderness—largely unprotected and continuously sought after by resource industries—remain a flashpoint of conflicting emotions.

A late spring nearly derailed my plans to get a closer look at the battleground for Temagami's latest war in the woods. Within a day of ice-out, my wife, Kim, and I launched our canoe and linked a series of lakes and waterways with dozens of ancient portages to reach the Solace Wildlands. This W-shaped, 10,000-hectare tract of untouched wilderness may soon be penetrated by a major logging road. It was a hard trip, but worth the effort. Over a lazy lunch at a cascade known as Talking Falls, we lingered on warm, polished rocks and heard the steady flow of the Yorston River whispering our names.

**FIVE HOURS BEYOND** Toronto's suburbs, a billboard alongside Highway 11 welcomes northbound travellers to *N'Daki Menan*, the homeland of the Deep Water People, also known as Temagami First Nation. Located at the height of land separating the Great Lakes watershed from the Ottawa River, this dome of Canadian Shield granite includes Ontario's highest point, the 693-metre Ishpatina Ridge. Within this region, archaeological evidence reveals 3,250 kilometres of *Nastawgan*—a network of canoe routes and snowshoe trails dating back 5,000 years, replete with Indigenous pictographs, spiritual sites and seasonal gathering places often repurposed as modern campsites.

The *Nastawgan* remains active partly because of outsiders. New England-based Camp Keewaydin established the world's first youth canoe camp on Lake Temagami in 1901, adopting Indigenous technology like birchbark canoes and tumplines to retrace the *Nastawgan*, often with Ojibwa guides. Each summer, Keewaydin still dispatches "sections" of boys and girls into the Temagami wilds in traditional wood-canvas canoes, loaded down with old-fashioned wooden grub boxes called "wannigans." Tourism was Temagami's first industry. The Canadian National Railway called it "the gem of the Northland." A 1923 brochure proclaimed, "Each rugged promontory and towering hill, the watered valleys and the rocky islands remain as they were centuries ago, clothed in the forest primeval."

The white pine forest around the perimeter of Temagami's huge, amoeboid namesake lake was protected in 1901; meanwhile, early loggers, using handsaws and draft horses to cut and haul trees in



LEFT: CONOR MIHELL RIGHT: EARTHROOTS



Archival image from Temagami's "War in the Woods," when, in 1989, protesters stepped in to prevent the logging of these old-growth forests. LEFT: Wild Temagami is a canoeists' paradise, thanks in part to the serene old-growth forests therein.







Kim Mihell paddles through the serene Temagami landscape—where conservationists and industry butt heads to this day. BELOW: Bob Rae is arrested while protesting logging in Temagami in 1989—he would be elected Premier of Ontario one year later.

the winter months, barely made a mark on the rugged hinterlands. Mechanized logging—which relies on a network of roads to access timber with industrial harvesters, skidders and tractor trailers, and employs techniques like clear-cutting—didn't arrive in Temagami until the late 1960s.

About the same time, the region's first environmental controversy was brewing. A grassroots coalition of activists and First Nations forced the province to scrap a 1972 plan to develop a ski resort at Maple Mountain, a remote highland that's revered amongst Indigenous people as "the place where spirits go."

"Maple Mountain became the vital focal point for a broader protectionist stand to save the surrounding wilderness from clear-cut logging operations," writes author, artist and outfitter Hap Wilson in

his 2009 memoir, *Trails and Tribulations*.

Wilson was hired by the provincial government to produce a guidebook of Temagami area canoe routes in 1976. He and a partner paddled and portaged over 3,500 kilometres in a single season; the first edition of Temagami Canoe Routes sold out, convincing the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to extend Wilson's contract as a backcountry canoe ranger.

Always aware of the threat of logging, Wilson devised a clever—albeit labour-intensive—approach to protect his beloved wilderness. "Whenever there was a proposed logging cut near or within a sensitive area," Wilson writes, "I would chart out and propose a hiking trail in that same block of land. The strategy... was to get canoeists off the water routes and onto land-based trails where the protection of viewscapes could be included in the

master plan... much to the chagrin of local foresters whose old arguments in favour of clear-cuts to the shoreline were founded on the fact that paddlers never stray far from the water trails."

Wilson's footpaths passed beneath the towering old-growth forests of Temagami Island, which had been slated for harvest; others ascended the lofty peaks of Ishpatina Ridge and Maple Mountain, affording canoe-trippers with panoptic views of the

Temagami wilderness. These forests were saved—early victories in the conservation movement.

Eventually, Wilson soured on government work after eight years on the job. In 1983, the provincial government created Lady Evelyn-Smoothwater Provincial Park, a wilderness preserve encompassing only a fraction of Wilson's recommended area. Despite booming popularity in canoe-tripping in the backcountry, the maintenance budget was slashed. "Within the confines of the district forestry office the deference went to those cutting down the forests," Wilson writes, "not to those in favour of protecting it."

By the late 1980s, logging companies were pushing roads towards the Wakimika Triangle, a virgin forest that ranked amongst the largest remaining swaths of ancient red and white pine on the planet. Working under the auspices of the Temagami Wilderness Society (now Earthroots), a non-profit organization he co-founded, Wilson garnered the support of the traditional Ojibwa occupants of the area to build a network of spectacular hiking trails north of Obabika Lake, an endeavour which otherwise was illegal. Ultimately, the Wakimika controversy set the stage for an 84-day blockade of the Red Squirrel Road, including 344 arrests, in the fall of 1989. A



TOP: CONOR MIHELL; BELOW: EARTHROOTS



famous photograph captured soon-to-be Ontario premier Bob Rae's arrest.

"This massive act of peaceful civil disobedience was new to Canada and laid the groundwork for the protests that would follow in Clayoquot Sound, BC, [in 1993]," notes Amber Ellis, who participated in the blockade and now serves as Earthroots' executive director. "This was a time to build momentum and connection through grassroots activism, face-to-face interaction, rallies and speaking events. It was a time before the Internet and social media. The public rallied to save this iconic place that most had never been to nor would many ever experience first-hand. This legacy continues to make Temagami a flashpoint between logging and conservation."

**THE WAR IN** the Temagami woods ebbed and flowed in the 30 years following the Red Squirrel Road blockade. When he came into office in 1990, Rae made good on a promise to put a temporary end to logging in Temagami.

**LARGE WILDLIFE LIKE EASTERN COUGARS AND WOLVES CANNOT THRIVE WITHOUT VAST SWATHS OF UNDEVELOPED LAND; CORRIDORS ALLOW INDIVIDUAL ANIMALS—AND THEIR GENES—TO MINGLE ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE, INCREASING SPECIES' LIKELIHOOD OF SURVIVAL. WHAT'S MORE, THEY ALSO ENABLE TREES AND PLANTS TO MIGRATE, ADAPT AND BECOME RESILIENT IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

In 1999, Ontario's Living Legacy (a land-use strategy) made modest expansions in protected areas, including the Wakimika Triangle. However, industrial development continued to gnaw away at Temagami's core. The stunning aquamarine waters, austere quartzite cliffs and old-growth red pine forest of Wolf Lake, in the southwest corner of Temagami canoe country, was the site of a dustup in 2012. After vocal public outcry, the province upheld a ban on logging in the area but extended an Alberta company's permission to explore for minerals.

The current threat of road development in the Solace Wildlands came after the government rejected Sudbury-based Vermillion Forest Management's request to build a bridge across the Sturgeon River, a waterway provincial park, to access cutblocks. With the benefit of provincial funding, the forest company's Plan B is a new, roundabout, 25-kilometre primary logging road through the heart of Solace. Construction began last winter but was stalled by a variety of provincial and federal regulations, including fish habitat

provisions. In response, the non-profit Friends of Temagami began with a "Save Solace" campaign last spring. Within eight months over 20,000 people had signed its online petition.

"We haven't pushed it very hard," says Friends of Temagami vice president Tierney Angus, pointing to the limbo regarding building permits. "But we don't think they built 1.8 kilometres of road for nothing."

**PADDLING, WADING AND** portaging upstream on the narrow Yorston River, Kim and I are following a Friends of Temagami team that's investing sweat equity into this poorly maintained canoe route. Freshly cut blowdowns mark the steep, rocky path circumventing a thundering 15-metre cascade; further upstream, Talking Falls is more subtle. It's here the new logging road would cross the Yorston, violating one of the finest campsites in Temagami—a pine cloaked spur of granite angling into a whirlpool, where Kim and I briefly splash

canoeists. Formalizing and expanding Temagami's patchwork of protected areas holds great potential for long-term tourism revenue. As it stands, a handful of youth summer camps inject an estimated \$3.5 million into the local economy each year; the success of businesses along Algonquin's Highway 60 corridor and the canoe-crazed town of Ely, Minnesota, on the doorstep of the Boundary Waters (the world's number-one canoe-tripping destination) alludes to a sustainable economy.

At Talking Falls I realize that Kim and I are tracing a corridor of vestigial wilderness, bookended by Lady Evelyn-Smoothwater and Chiniguchi provincial parks to the north and south, respectively. This sort of natural connectivity—a 50-kilometre greenway—is essential for long-distance paddlers and critical to preserving biological diversity. Large wildlife like eastern cougars and wolves cannot thrive without vast swaths of undeveloped land; corridors allow individual animals—and their genes—to mingle across the landscape, increasing species' likelihood of survival. What's more, they also enable trees and plants to migrate, adapt and become resilient in the face of climate change.

**NEARLY A DECADE** ago, Canada joined over 190 countries in signing the United Nations Convention on the Conservation of Biological Diversity, pledging to protect 17 per cent of its lands and inland waters by 2020. With the deadline fast approaching, only 11 per cent of Ontario is protected. Protected areas can achieve conservation objectives and support a sustainable economy—and, with the proper consultation with local First Nations, Ellis says Temagami could serve as a prime example.

At the heart of Ellis' vision is "a continuous protected area encompassing the broader [Temagami] region." She insists that the province could redirect timber companies to less-sensitive areas, safeguarding the remaining pockets of old-growth forest and roadless areas like the Solace Wildlands, without compromising the forestry industry's bottom line. Not only would this contribute to the federal government's 17 per cent protected areas target, "cultural and recreational values would be better protected, new ecotourism opportunities would be created," she says, "and managing a larger protected area versus a patchwork would be easier from a regulatory perspective."

With a lasting truce, the map of Temagami would be complete. ✕



A forest fire near Peachland, in British Columbia's Okanagan.

## FOREST FIRES: RETURNING TO NATURAL

THE BIG-DATA, HIGH-TECH, NEW-ATTITUDE TO FIGHTING FOREST FIRES

By Ryan Stuart

In the “Holy Shit” fire, Ed Struzik saw the future. In 2003, the science writer and author embedded with a fire crew in British Columbia’s Kootenay National Park battling a blaze racing along Highway 93, towards the border of Banff National Park. It was so destructive and aggressive it inspired the same startled awe from everyone who flew over it—“Holy shit!”—hence the nickname. A fire manager told Struzik the blaze was an omen of the fires of the future.

“He was correct,” says Struzik, the author of *Firestorm: How Wildfire Will Shape Our Future*, a book inspired by the fire and published in 2017. “Every year brings a bigger, more impressive fire than the previous one.”

But despite the evacuations, close calls, smoky summers and growing scientific evidence calling for change, public attitude and government management towards wild fires remains stuck in the past, leaving anyone who lives near the forest in danger.

“Everyone knows what we have to do,” says Struzik. “Governments are just really slow to respond. I’m afraid it’s going to take something like the Carr Fire [a California wildfire that killed 88 people]

to get government to respond in a meaningful way.”

We got ourselves in this mess. Fire was always a natural cycle in the boreal forest, essential for keeping it healthy. A century of fire suppression has left the forest across Canada unnaturally old, diseased and full of dead wood. Encroaching urbanization is putting more humans and infrastructure in fire’s path. Warmer, drier weather patterns due to climate change increase the fire risk and the number of lightning strikes, the spark for about half of wildfires.

It’s a combustible mix. Since 1970, the national cost of fighting fires increased by an average of \$120 million per decade, according to National Resources Canada. BC alone spent more than \$500 million fighting fires in the record-setting 2017 season, when an area double the size of Prince of Edward Island burned. Another NRC study found that climate change will extend the fire season across the country by 30 days and double the number of fires by 2040.

That means more evacuations, more property destroyed, more smoky days. Last summer Calgary, Alberta, recorded a record number of air quality advisories due to

forest fire smoke. The blazes are getting more extreme too, burning larger areas of forests, more violently. It used to be rare for fires to become powerful enough to generate *pyrocumulonimbus* clouds, or pyroCbs—giant, rain-less thunderstorms that are impossible to fight, says Struzik. In the last five years, they’ve become more common, popping up all over the world. One fire in BC produced multiple pyroCbs in a single afternoon, sending smoke into the upper atmosphere and spreading it all the way to the North Pole.

We knew this was coming. *Firestorm 2003*, a report commissioned by the BC government after the major 2003 fire season, warned of bigger fires in the future. In 2005, the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, a mix of provincial, territorial and federal politicians, published the *Canadian Wildland Fire Strategy*, a plan to tackle increasing fire risk. Both mentioned actions like more prescribed burns, cleaning out forest near communities, getting rid of piles of waste wood left by forestry operations and fireproofing homes. Both reports were quickly forgotten.

But with major fire events in the last three seasons there’s a renewed call for

action, says Mike Norton, the national lead for the Canadian Forest Services Wildfire Risk Management program.

“If all we do is focus on fighting fires, we’re going to lose,” says Norton. “To make Canada more resilient to wildland fires, we need to develop the tools and strategies to manage the forest fires of the future.”

That’s the goal of the *Blueprint for wildland fire science in Canada*. Published by Norton’s group this year, it’s a business case for investing more money and resources in forest fire research in Canada.

That means directing research resources where they’re needed and encouraging more communication between researchers, Indigenous groups, industry and fire managers. It also means bringing fire-fighting into the 21st century: flying drones to observe dangerous blazes, using satellites to track fires and direct resources in real time, and harnessing artificial intelligence, big data and machine learning.

“We’re not going to wait for smoke,” says Norton. “We can use technology to predict where the fire will start and put resources in the right place beforehand.”

Right now it remains aspirational. One of Norton’s chief jobs is to find the money, from public or private sources, to implement the blueprint’s recommendations. And even if all six were fully funded they would take years to implement.

“The situation is not going to get better. It’s going to get worse,” says Struzik. That’s why a growing list of communities aren’t waiting for the provincial and federal governments to act. They’re investing in fire-smart planning on their own.

“We’re facing serious wildfire challenges,” Struzik says. “Nothing is really going to change until we change how we think about fire—from something bad to a natural thing that needs to happen.” ✕





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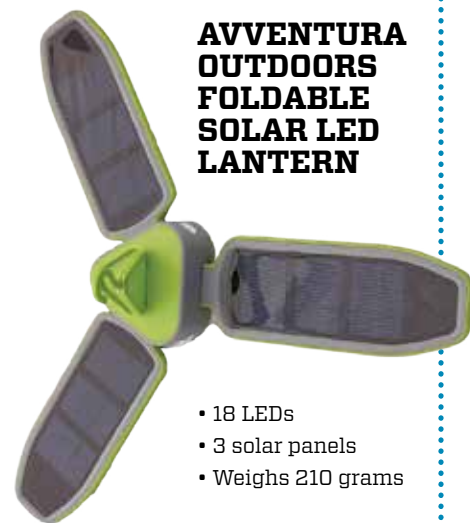
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# CANOE *Like a* CANADIAN



**A CHILEAN AND A SWEDE TEAM UP TO  
DISCOVER THAT PADDLING A CANOE IS MORE  
THAN A SPORT—IT'S A NATIONAL IDENTITY**

*By Susan Nerberg*

58







**T**he rock comes straight toward us. I swear I was keeping an eye out for obstacles from my vantage point in the bow, but now that boulder seems to leap from the froth.

"Rock ahead!" I shout to my stern paddler, Alejandro, before tripling an expletive. There are so many other obstacles to worry about. "Go left!" I urge Alejandro, who is also my partner in life, while I throw in a cross-bow draw. I know he's supposed to be calling the shots, but I want to avoid dumping in this spot. (Again.) Our canoe barely skims the rock. But barely is good enough—we paddle hard to keep forward momentum before tilting and eddying out with a sigh under a cluster of fragrant pines. This section of the Madawaska River isn't called Rock Gardens for nothing.

**FOR MANY CANADIANS**—in my mind, even the average Canadian—manoeuvring through a set of river-rapids in an open canoe seems commonplace. Not to me. Growing up orienteering and cross-country skiing in Sweden, I didn't have a clue what a pry stroke or a cross-bow draw were before Alejandro and I checked in for our five-day whitewater canoe course at Madawaska Kanu Centre. (Neither did he, a former elite track-and-fielder in Chile.) MKC is the canoe and kayak resort in the lush Ottawa Valley that will give us the skills we need to go river-tripping, which will officially begin with a multiday trip down Algonquin Provincial Park's Petawawa River in less than two weeks. But I also see it as a way to honour our second citizenships, to finally become true Canucks. Besides, my first and only prior experience canoeing down a Canadian river nearly ended in a break-up—with Alejandro.

Having paddled once in Sweden, where a canoe is called a "Canadian" (*kanadensare*), I decided to take control on an excursion early in our relationship. I sat down by the rudder—that's how I referred to the position in the back—and commandeered Alejandro, who had never set sandal in a canoe, to take the front seat. Bad idea—because, really, I had zero idea. Shortly after putting in, I realized we were going nowhere. The canoe, though, seemed to be going everywhere—everywhere I didn't want it to go.

"You said you knew how to do this!" Alejandro hissed, boiling with frustration.

"Well, you're not helping me," I replied. We argued so vehemently about how to get the canoe to go where we intended it to go that we floated by a deer so closely we could have felt its breath, without even noticing it.



**CLOCKWISE:** Madawaska Kanu Centre has been teaching paddlers the strokes since the late 1960s. The Madawaska's whitewater is managed by a partnership with Ontario Power Generation, which opens the Bark Lake Dam to keep water flowing Monday through Thursday. The author and her partner used their new skills to tackle a multi-day trip on the Petawawa River—camping by the riverside each night (and using their canoes as buffet tables). Stefi Van Wijk, MKC director and Canadian whitewater royalty. Running the whitewater learning course at MKC, on the Madawaska River.

On day one with MKC we're running into similar issues. Rated a class II, the Madawaska River has some class III rapids, like Rock Gardens, Narrows and Gravel Pit, that test more than our patience. But there are also flat sections that let us take in the scenery and watch minks play on the treed riverbanks. Each morning starts below Bark Lake Dam. (The dam is run by Ontario Power Generation, which in an unheard-of-elsewhere agreement with MKC, keeps the water flowing during daytime, Monday through Thursday, to ensure a high-enough volume in the river

below to practice whitewater paddling.)

We start by practising water rescue and safe swimming, learning pries and draws, tilting, crossing eddy lines and doing S and C curves and build up from there. We get to lunch with only a minor skirmish when one of us confuses the pry with the draw and we almost tip over. After that it's all downstream.

Little had I known that learning whitewater paddling would be similar to learning a new language—to speak like a *kanadensare*, if you will. To become a proficient tandem river runner you need equal parts pad-

LEFT: MADAWASKA KANU CENTRE; FROM TOP RIGHT: MADAWASKA KANU CENTRE; SUSAN NERBERG (2X); MADAWASKA KANU CENTRE



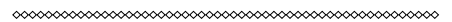


dling skills and diplomacy. In other words, communicating like Lester B. Pearson while carrying a big paddle. It doesn't take more than a couple of hours at MKC to realize I'm severely lacking in both.

As we head out on the river again after lunch and the following two days, Alejandro and I don't click; we don't find the same language. Since he's paddling in the stern, I want him to tell me exactly what to do and when, while he's thinking that since I seem to know what to do, he doesn't need to tell me. It's a rough ride. Instructors Erin and Andy put us in separate canoes to practice our strokes in peace. Alejandro and I finally reach a turning point on day three, when we sit down for lunch with Stefanie Van Wijk, a canoe guide and instructor and the daughter of MKC's owners.



LITTLE HAD I KNOWN  
THAT LEARNING  
WHITEWATER  
PADDLING WOULD BE  
SIMILAR TO **LEARNING**  
**A NEW LANGUAGE**—  
TO SPEAK LIKE A  
KANADENSARE, IF YOU  
WILL. TO BECOME A  
PROFICIENT TANDEM  
RIVER RUNNER YOU  
NEED EQUAL PARTS  
PADDLING SKILLS AND  
DIPLOMACY



Stefi, as everyone calls her, is taking over the running of the business from her parents, Olympic paddler Claudia Kerckhoff-Van Wijk and Dirk Van Wijk, a canoe and rafting guide, with her sister Katrina, an extreme athlete/kayaker and graphic designer working with the family business from her British Columbia base. Grandparents Christa and Hermann Kerckhoff immigrated from Germany in the late 1960s and started canoeing, "because they wanted to do the Canadian thing," Stefi says. They did it so well, they decided to start teaching the sport, modelling MKC on a European ski school. (Grandpa went on to compete for Canada in the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich.)

Veering from the family's high-performance focus, Stefi went to work as a river ▶







guide with canoe-outfitter Black Feather at 15, and ever since her interest has been in canoeing for the pleasure of being in nature. "What I want MKC to do is to teach the language of the river," she says about the company's canoe and kayak programs. We tell her about the challenges we're having communicating and (mostly on my part) diplomacy. "Canoeing isn't always about performing," she says. "It's about chilling—going with the flow and having fun."

On the final day of the course, I wake up before the sun. I blame it on the rain pounding our corrugated cabana roof, but it's more likely nerves about graduation day on the Ottawa River. Repeating sections on the Madawaska, we knew what was coming at us, even if the execution was wobbly. Today, we'll be paddling into the unknown. But over french toast, yogurt and granola in the dining room, which is adorned with, among other craft, an Inuit kayak and a

canoe used in the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Erin reminds us we know what to do. She's right—in theory.

As soon as we put in, I can feel the tug of the current. It's pushing and pulling with a force we hadn't felt on the Madawaska, but we're having fun riding in and out of the froth created by tributaries along the way. There's a portage down a set of tall cliffs in the middle of the river and enough class III rapids to keep us sweating despite the rain. At one point, Erin motions to our group to eddy out. She explains that we'll be going over a ledge, one canoe at a time. "I'll go first and wait downriver; Andy will stay above. Keep left of the big boulder, and paddle hard," she says before disappearing.

It's our turn. I hear Alejandro's voice from behind: "Let's go! Just remember to help me out." The adrenalin flows as fast as the river, fuelling some inner power to stay clear of the boulder. We go over the ledge with a *boof*. Paddling madly, I feel the canoe getting tippy. "Paddle forward!" I yell. I hear Erin on river left: "Paddle! Paddle hard!" But we start rocking even more. We flip. I hold on to my paddle and swim ashore. "What the hell were you doing?" I ask Alejandro. He's smiling, so I can't be mad.

"I did nothing," he replies. "I just held onto the gunwales and went for the ride." I can't believe what I'm hearing. Erin confirms it; she saw him. "You had it until your partner stopped paddling," she tells me. Alejandro smiles. "I had to know what it was like," he tells me.

The rest of the day seems like a breeze. Sure, we hit more rapids, some tricky enough



FROM TOP: The view downriver from a campsite on the Petawawa—cliffs adorned with white pine and silver maples. Manoeuvring through whitewater on the Petawawa River—a handy use of skills learned at MKC.



that we decide not to run them (we've figured out when it's best *not* to go with the flow). On the final stretch, I turn to the stern and ask Alejandro if he thinks we're ready for our multi-day trip on the Petawawa River. "Of course," he says. I make him promise not to do that holding-on-the-gunwales thing. "Of course."

**THE PETAWAWA RIVER** has some wicked rapids. As we're staring down the maw of Crooked Chute on our four-day expedition with Black Feather, I see mangled pieces of aluminum canoe. Having no desire to tempt fate, I'm hoping this is where we'll do our first portage. "Yeah, it's a bit sketchy," says Mark Orzel, our guide and the trip leader. That's an understatement.

But the scouting mission on the rocks are a good way for Alejandro and me to keep practising river-reading after our course at MKC. It's also a good way to see the river in a broader context, as Mark tells us about the river being a part of the area's forestry history. "Those metal rings bolted into the rock are from the logging past," he says. And going even further back in history, the river was a part of a network of water routes that connected Indigenous people and provided trading routes.

Considering we have no history as wilderness paddlers, we signed up with Black Feather, which offers river expeditions across the country—from the Soper in Nunavut to the Peel in the Yukon—with instruction thrown in for those who want it. We are the newbies on this Petawawa trip, a 50-kilometre jaunt where we're learning how to pack a canoe and how to portage, while testing our new skills. We also get to enjoy being in nature, swimming, hanging out around the campfire and eating delicious food served from the "countertop" of an upside-down canoe.

As we approach the Thompson Rapids—there's an upper and a lower portion—we



The remnants of canoes can be found along the river, having been mangled in some of the bigger rapids, such as Crooked chute or Big Thompson Rapids.



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INDIGENOUS PEOPLE  
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TRADING ROUTES



eddy out on river-right and exit our canoes. Mark takes us on a hike downstream and onto a set of boulders above the rushing water. He surveys it, then looks at us. "So, what line do you see here?" Alejandro and I discuss and agree on an option. Mark confirms our choice of a line between boulders then over a tricky ledge. Still, he makes the decision not to run it—it's too risky. Walking back to pick up our canoes for the portage, I've got mixed feelings. "It's disappointing," Alejandro says. Like him, I was stoked to give it a go, but at the same time I feel relief. We make it smoothly through Lower Thompson, and it seems that we at least solidify our communication skills. Which work well as long as he is in the stern and I'm in the bow.

Swapping roles one morning, I take the driver's seat. There are a number of class II rapids ahead of us, tricky enough to give me a challenge but not so hard we can't clear them, even with the roles reversed. We set out after agreeing on the line. But as soon as I have to make a decision, I freeze. I mess up my pry with my draw, and we're off on the wrong course. I can't even see where we're going, because Alejandro is blocking the view, being taller than me. That rock we're supposed to go past is all of a sudden under the canoe. We can't get off it, so we step out. But doing so flips the canoe over and pins the boat against another rock so hard the gunwale snaps. Our gear goes down the rapids. At least someone is downstream to drag it to shore.

I'm frustrated and embarrassed by my failure. I vow never to sit in the stern again, leaving that job to Alejandro. Our fellow paddlers, however, offer encouragements. So when we get to the ripple that feeds into ▶



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Tripping on the Petawawa River with Black Feather on day-one of the four-day, 50-kilometre journey down the lower Petawawa, which flows through Algonquin Park.

(cont'd from page 63)

McManus Lake, I ask Alejandro to steer to the shore. I want to give sterning another try.

"You know you can do it. Just keep your cool. You know what to do and when," Alejandro says as we push off. I pick my line, taking us into the centre of the river before moving over toward the right bank. I'm doing my prides and draws and asking Alejandro for help when I need it, or asking him to paddle forward. I'm actually navigating our boat this time—and I'm enjoying it.

It's calm enough that I think back to the only time I paddled in Sweden. The skies were so sad that day they made the canoe well up with tears. Bailing and whining, my 11-year-old camp friends and I struggled not to cry ourselves. What was the point of this exercise? We were soaked, cold and hungry. Swimming across that boreal lake would have been better, or even running a trail through the forest alongside it. But this was just flat, and I'd never heard of flat-water canoeing. The sport wasn't for me.

What I'm realizing as I take us downstream without tipping is that I was the one who wasn't a sport. But I'm in control, and this is anything but flat.

**LEAVING THE LAST** rapids behind, we start our final push across McManus Lake. Our expedition is coming to an end. Plying the sun-splashed

waves with a steady paddle-stroke—my mind flips through images of the past couple of weeks: our canoe going down the Madawaska without us; the friends we made; camping under the stars that watch over Algonquin Provincial Park; the fear I felt when the Ottawa seemed to want to drag us under; and the bear cub that swam in front of us yesterday morning on the Petawawa. I go over the skills we've learned and how awesome it is to have found a new way of exploring the wilderness. And I think about what it means to live in a country that puts a canoe on its currency and where you'll find an entire museum dedicated to the watercraft.

It's a great joy when it all clicks with your paddling partner and you navigate through a class III rapid together without dumping. I still haven't mastered diplomacy like LBP and my paddle seems awfully underweight, but I've come to see the advantages of going with the flow. I *am* Canadian. And I figure Alejandro is, too, even if he doesn't put it as bluntly. On the drive home from Algonquin, he looks over at me. "So when are we doing this again?" ✕

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## THE MOMENT



**By Bryanna Bradley**

Tofino, British Columbia-based photographer Bryanna Bradley captured this stunning image at Cox Bay, Tofino, on August 14 of last year. Pictured are local surfers Mathea and Sanoa Olin, with an ominous red sunset behind them—a phenomenon caused by smoke from the forest fires that raged across BC last year.

**Details:**

Model: Nikon D750  
Lens: 300mm f/2.8  
Shutter Speed: 1/400 sec  
Aperture: f/4.0  
ISO: 250  
Focal Length: 300mm





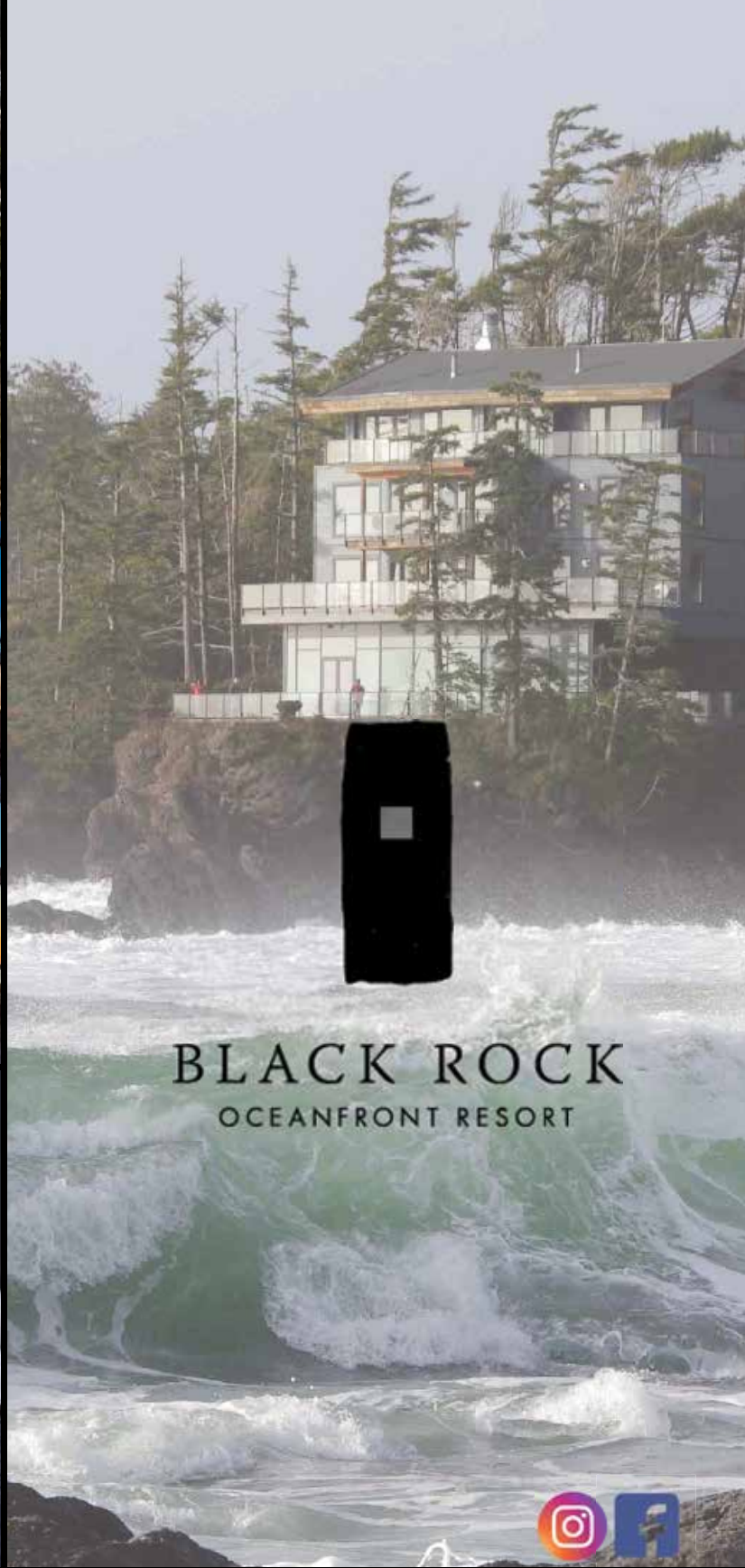
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# = GOLDEN RULES =



Photo by Andrew Chad

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