

# CANADA

# NOW

**Take a  
Wilderness  
Safari in  
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Columbia**

**Eat Your  
Way Around  
Montreal**

**Explore the  
New Niagara  
Falls**

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with the  
Kids**

**+ More  
Immersive  
Experiences  
from the  
Editors of T+L**

A person is lying on a tufted, light-colored sofa on a wooden deck. They are wearing dark pants and white socks, with their feet propped up. A round wooden table in front of them holds a book and a small red container. In the background, a wooden canoe is docked on the deck, and a body of water stretches towards a forested shoreline under a bright sky. The scene is framed by the wooden beams of a pergola or deck structure.

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The Marble River, on British Columbia's Vancouver Island (page 24).



I CONFESS to becoming easily distracted these days. Between emails, texts, DMs on Instagram, my son's requests for a second glass of milk before bed, and my attempts to finish a Julius Caesar biography I bought on my Kindle in 2015, my attention span has never been more fractured. But I am starting to grasp that the greatest luxury, other than time, is the freedom to focus on one thing. To become experts, truly immersed, in a single place or topic.

With that in mind, I am thrilled to share T+L's Canada special: a 36-page deep dive into the wonders our neighbor to the north has in store. Our editorial team assembled a cast of contributors with an eye toward highlighting the breadth and diversity of this magnificent country. You can follow writer John Vaillant and photographer Grant Harder as they wind their way through the wilderness of British Columbia, encountering nature at its most elemental. In Ontario,

Heather Greenwood Davis profiles Niagara Falls, a time-honored destination ready for another look, as well as new family-friendly activities in Toronto. Montreal's French-influenced food scene has been well documented; the city's Jewish food scene, a little less so. Nathan Englander's culinary journey, along with the accompanying pictures by Dominique Lafond, gives you a taste of this rich culture.

We also showcase the work of Catherine Blackburn, Martha Kyak, and Tania Larsson, Indigenous designers embracing their heritage through fashion. Creativity, vibrancy, ingenuity: three qualities I am celebrating as we move forward in 2022.

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**ON THE COVER** The floating living room at Nimmo Bay, a resort in British Columbia (page 24). Photograph by Grant Harder.

▶ Shopping on Queen Street, in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

## Surprise and Delight

Most travelers venture to Niagara Falls for the picture-perfect view. But as *Heather Greenwood Davis* discovers, a clutch of new visitor experiences can help you see this world wonder in a whole other light. *Photographs by Lindsay Lauckner Gundlock*

AS WE DROVE past North America's largest waterfall, Lezlie Harper, the founder of **Niagara Bound Tours** ([niagaraboundtours.com](http://niagaraboundtours.com)), told the story of a sign that once hung in downtown Niagara Falls, Ontario.

"It read 'Don't forget to see the falls,'" she said with a laugh, before gesturing to the majestic cascade in front of us. "As if you could miss it!" I laughed, too, but the truth is that, for many years, I had blithely driven past this wonder of the world with barely a glance.

When I was a kid growing up in a Toronto suburb, Niagara Falls was the place I begrudgingly visited when relatives flew in from out of town. I didn't know then that it is actually a trio—Horseshoe Falls, American Falls, and Bridal Veil Falls sit side-by-side along the Canada-U.S. border—or that the charms of the region extend far beyond its main attraction.

But last autumn, I took a four-day trip with a girlfriend, Viji, and was reintroduced to the landmark and the city—along with its quaint little sister about 25 minutes north, Niagara-on-the-Lake. And on this visit, I found a new appreciation for the place I thought I knew.

### DAY ONE

Viji and I started at—where else?—the falls. Over lunch at **Table Rock House Restaurant** ([niagaraparks.com](http://niagaraparks.com); entrées \$19–\$35), which is perched at the edge of Horseshoe Falls, we oohed and aahed at the crashing curtain of water right in front of us. Next, we took a short stroll to the **Niagara Parks Power Station** ([niagaraparks.com](http://niagaraparks.com)), which used the falls to provide electricity to much of the region for a century, beginning



ILLUSTRATION BY FRANCESCO ZORZI



▲ Artichokes with Calabrian olives, Parmesan, and gremolata at Two Sisters Vineyard.

▶ Waverly Beach, a key location on the Underground Railroad used by enslaved people to enter Canada.



in 1905. It recently reopened as an interactive museum that highlights the lives of the people who worked at the plant. We also took a hard-hat sneak peek at an upcoming attraction. Starting in July, a glass elevator will take people 180 feet underground into the old Tailrace Tunnel. The descent mimics the route the water once took through the power plant. After disembarking at the bottom, guests will be able to stand on an outdoor platform for an entirely new vantage point of the falls.

That evening, we had dinner at **AG Inspired Cuisine** ([agcuisine.com](http://agcuisine.com); prix fixe \$62), a restaurant set in a former creamery in downtown Niagara Falls. The menu—which included a winter-squash bisque, juniper-roasted deer loin with a vegetable cassoulet, and a cranberry poached pear—celebrates Niagara terroir, and much of the produce comes from the restaurant's own farm 10 minutes away.

Later in the night we returned to the power station to experience *Currents: Niagara's Power Transformed*, an immersive indoor light and sound show. As we stood in the shadows of the turbines we'd learned about earlier, projections brought the workers and machinery to life and helped convey the importance of the plant to the region and the province. Afterward, we retired to the historic **Old Stone Inn Boutique Hotel** ([oldstoneinnhotel.com](http://oldstoneinnhotel.com); doubles from \$79), located steps from the water.

### DAY TWO

On our second morning we met Harper, our guide for a tour that followed the journey of the enslaved Africans (including Harper's own ancestors) who made their



▲ Inside the Niagara Parks Power Station, a new museum.

way to Canada. Most history books stop with their arrival via the Underground Railroad, but Harper shared what happened in the decades that followed. She told us about Josiah Henson—a once-enslaved man who found his way to freedom along with his wife and four children, inspired Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and became a founder of one of the most successful Black communities in southern Ontario. Harper also talked about the predecessor of the NAACP, a civil rights organization called the Niagara Movement, which had its initial meeting in 1905 in Fort Erie, a town on the Niagara River. As I looked out at the powerful waters, I found it hard not to become emotional at the thought of the men, women, and children who risked their lives to cross over to freedom.

Viji and I continued our drive along the river to meet Tim Johnson at the **Landscape of Nations** ([lon360.ca](http://lon360.ca)). He is the director of the Landscape of Nations 360° Indigenous Education Initiative, a nonprofit that aims to educate Canadians about the contributions of Indigenous peoples. Johnson walked us across the site of the War of 1812’s pivotal Battle of Queenston Heights. We paused just outside a collection of rails meant to symbolize a longhouse, an Indigenous style of dwelling, before following a stone trail through a memorial built to acknowledge the Six Nations’ aid in the war.

Visitors can enter without a guide, but being with Johnson allowed Viji and me to ask questions and reframe the history we’d been taught as kids. I made a mental note to book a full Indigenous Niagara Living Museum tour when the program launches this spring.

Afterward, we wound north to Niagara-on-the-Lake and checked in to **124 on Queen Hotel & Spa** ([124queen.com](http://124queen.com); doubles from \$168). Our apartment-like two-bedroom suite sat above a row of shops, offering views of the old-fashioned main street below. Renovations will soon add a lounge for both guests and locals, plus a hydrotherapy-focused spa.

After a long day, we were thankful to be just steps from **Treadwell Cuisine** ([treadwellcuisine.com](http://treadwellcuisine.com); prix fixe \$71), an upscale restaurant in Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Old Town. I ordered *steak frites* with a Cabernet Franc from the local Stratus Vineyards, while Viji went for a Sauvignon Blanc from nearby Five Rows Craft Wine to pair with her pan-seared

scallops. From our window booth, we watched a parade of shoppers wander the street outside and remarked on how rarely we take the opportunity to sit and absorb the scenes around us. It was a simple pleasure to do just that.

**DAY THREE**

This is wine country—there are more than 50 vineyards in the Niagara region along Lake Ontario—and Niagara-on-the-Lake is particularly renowned for its ice wines. We began our tasting tour just outside of town with lunch at the intimate **Two Sisters Vineyards** ([twosistersvineyards.com](http://twosistersvineyards.com); entrées \$17–\$40). As it turns out, sipping Cabernet Francs and Rieslings while nibbling a delicate beef carpaccio and crisp pizza is a good way to spend an afternoon. What seemed like just a couple of hours

later, we were back at the table, this time indulging in a dinner of roasted Ontario duck breast at **Trius Winery & Restaurant** ([triuswines.com](http://triuswines.com); prix fixe from \$51). Winemaker Craig McDonald paired his award-winning vintages with chef Frank Dodd’s creations, which included butternut-squash soup and a spiced-pumpkin blondie dessert.

After dinner, we experienced one of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s most beloved attractions: the **Shaw Festival** ([shawfest.com](http://shawfest.com)), which began in the early 1960s as an annual event that celebrated the works of George Bernard Shaw, but now includes a variety of productions in three theaters. We saw *Desire Under the Elms*, Eugene O’Neill’s complicated, tragic love story, and made plans to return to see Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* in the spring.

**DAY FOUR**

On our final day, Harper’s words not to forget the falls were on my mind, so we headed back to where our journey began. We were ready for some downtime, so we booked sessions in the Hydrotherapy Infinity tub at **Christienne Fallsview Spa** ([christiennefallsviewspa.com](http://christiennefallsviewspa.com)). As I sank into the steaming waters and stared at the falls and the gardens that surround them, I thought of the little girl who’d once underappreciated this gem. No longer. This, I thought as the bubbles worked their magic, was the postcard memory I came for. 🌐

Heather Greenwood Davis, a writer and on-air personality for National Geographic, is a frequent contributor to T+L.



◀ Niagara Falls at twilight.

## Canadian Creatives

Three Indigenous designers tell *Elizabeth Cantrell* how their work is rooted in a strong sense of place—and how travelers can support their communities.



From far left: Martha Kyak; a polar bear in Sirmilik National Park; an InukChic parka in woven fabric and reused fox fur; a hand-stitched work by Inuit artist Annie Taipana at the Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: FRED CARROLL/COURTESY OF MARTHA KYAK; BLICKWINKEL/ALAMY; JENIA KOSI/PHOTILET.COM; PHOTOGRAPHY/COURTESY OF INUKCHIC; CINDY HODKINS/ALAMY; COURTESY OF CATHERINE BLACKBURN; CAREY SHAW/COURTESY OF CATHERINE BLACKBURN

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: RAZELLE BENALLY/COURTESY OF TANIA LARSSON; COURTESY OF DESTINATION CANADA; COURTESY OF TANIA LARSSON; COURTESY OF WANUSKEWIN HERITAGE PARK

### MARTHA KYAK

Founding Artist, InukChic Designs

#### Hometown

Pond Inlet, Nunavut. I now live in Ottawa, Ontario.

#### Crafting traditions

I grew up in a very traditional Inuit community; we spoke only our language, Inuktitut. There were only two stores, and we had to make a lot of our own clothing, so sewing was part of our culture. That's how I started making parkas. And then I learned to make *amauti*, which is a parka used to carry a baby, and that is a bit more complex.

#### Signature materials

I use tanned sealskins, which are soft and flexible, to create my parkas. In Nunavut, hunting is still the main way of feeding your family and the community. Nothing is wasted.

#### Inspiration

Inuit women, including me, have a lot of stick-and-poke tattoos on their faces, hands, arms, legs, and chests. Many of my fabric designs are based on those traditional tattoos. For example, the Inuit have a shallow oil lamp called a *qulliq* that has a wick running

across the middle. When it burns, the flame dances across the top in a zigzag pattern. I have those same shapes tattooed on my own body and use them in my designs.

#### Favorite places

Nunavut is a vast territory with so many beautiful places. **Sirmilik**

**National Park** ([pc.gc.ca](http://pc.gc.ca)) is near where I'm from, which is very far north in the Arctic. I also suggest the **Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum** ([nunattasunakkutaangit.ca](http://nunattasunakkutaangit.ca)), in Iqaluit, where you can learn about Nunavut history and culture. [inukchic.squarespace.com](http://inukchic.squarespace.com).

### CATHERINE BLACKBURN

Jewelry Designer

#### Hometown

Patuanak, Saskatchewan.

#### Crafting traditions

I grew up watching my *setsuné* [grandmother], who was an extraordinary beader and garment maker. I would watch as she skinned the animals and tanned the hides, and I would be in awe as she took these beautiful golden-brown pieces of leather and turned them into the most extraordinary pairs of beaded mukluks [soft boots] or beaver gauntlets [oversize mittens].

#### Signature materials

I use traditional and nontraditional



materials, including antique and contemporary beads, smoked hides, caribou and moose hair, porcupine quills, feathers, and rhinestones.



#### Inspiration

Adorning our bodies has always been a way of life for Indigenous people. In the early 19th century, though, Christian



### TANIA LARSSON

Jewelry Designer

#### Hometown

I was born in France, but my mom was Gwich'in and grew up in the Northwest Territories. We moved to northern Canada when I was 15, and I'm now based in Yellowknife.

#### Crafting traditions

My grandma used to make all of my mom's and her siblings' parkas and mukluks by hand. So that love of the handmade was definitely passed down to me.

#### Signature materials

I tan my own moose and caribou hides and also use gold, silver copper, and beads. I'm now incorporating musk-ox horn.

#### Inspiration

I want to create a sensory

experience for the person wearing my pieces. For example, when you buy a piece of my beadwork, it's made on smoked hide. The wood that I harvest to treat the hide has a distinct scent. I love how you go through your day and get a whiff of that smoky perfume from the jewelry. Whenever we use all of the parts of an animal, we're honoring its gifts.

#### Favorite places

A place I love to go every year is **Thaidene Nëné National**

From left: Tania Larsson; rafting in Nahanni National Park Reserve; beaded, tufted earrings by Larsson.



**Park Reserve** ([pc.gc.ca](http://pc.gc.ca)) for its clear waters and amazing fishing. The river in **Nahanni National Park Reserve** ([pc.gc.ca](http://pc.gc.ca)) is perfect for canoeing. [tanialarsson.com](http://tanialarsson.com).

From far left: Catherine Blackburn; one of Blackburn's chokers, made with caribou hair and vintage Venetian beads; the interpretive playground at Wanuskewin Heritage Park, in Saskatchewan.

missionaries suppressed this form of expression. My work in adornment is an act of reclamation. It symbolizes the fact that we refuse to be minimized. My goal is to speak to my own contemporary presence and experience as an Indigenous woman, and celebrate that.

#### Favorite places

I encourage travelers to learn the history of the land they're visiting. In Saskatchewan, I recommend **Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park** ([cypresshills.com](http://cypresshills.com)) and **Wanuskewin Heritage Park** ([wanuskewin.com](http://wanuskewin.com)), which has art exhibitions and an Indigenous-owned gift shop. [catherineblackburn.com](http://catherineblackburn.com).

## Queen of All She Surveys

For *Nina Caplan*, a stay at Quebec City's most venerated hotel is a return to an era of movie stars and statesmen, high heels and sumptuous style.

IT WAS IN DECEMBER, a few years ago, that I first visited Fairmont Le Château Frontenac, whose fairy-tale silhouette rises on a promontory above the St. Lawrence River. I was smitten. But what, I wondered, would Samuel de Champlain—who founded Quebec City on this very rock—have thought of the astonishing building that looms where his fort once stood?

He would certainly have appreciated the wave of warm air that greeted me as I walked into the chandeliered lobby. (Interiors were a lot chillier in this part of the world in 1608.) The snowfall outside wasn't heavy, but it was more than I had seen over the past decade back home in England, and I happily sipped scotch in the 1608 Bar as tobogganers hurtled down the steep triple-lane slide outside. There's nothing so cozy as a comfortable chair, a strong drink, and a view of people cavorting in subzero temperatures—although cozy is an odd word to describe a 610-room hotel built more than a century ago in the style of a Renaissance French château.

The hotel was designed by American architect Bruce Price and built in 1893, at the behest of William Cornelius Van Horne, president of the Canadian Pacific Railway. He wanted to lure the glitterati to Quebec City—by train, of course. He predicted the



Today, Fairmont Le Château Frontenac claims to be the world's most photographed hotel.



Château Frontenac in 1912. Right: The hotel's salon, photographed in 1924.



FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF CANADIAN PACIFIC ARCHIVES (2); NICHOLAS MCCOMBER/GETTY IMAGES

Château would become “the most talked about hotel on the continent.”

Drink done, I went looking for ghosts. Charles Lindbergh, Grace Kelly, and Montgomery Clift once walked the corridors. During Prohibition, Americans came to party with free-flowing booze, and they kept coming long after the ban ended. In 1943, Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt met here to plan the Allied campaigns.

Québécois journalist Monique Duval recalled visiting “this magnificent hotel” in 1939 as an awestruck teenager. Part of the Fairmont group since 2001, it is still both glamorously international and, in the words of local newspaper *Le Devoir*, “so prominent in the city’s consciousness that there is even no sign over its entrance.” Looking out over the St. Lawrence from my bedroom, I, too, felt like an enthralled adolescent.

If “le Château,” as locals call it, turned out just as Van Horne wished, perhaps it’s because Price—like his daughter, the etiquette guru Emily Post—knew just how things should be done. Even the fact that he took inspiration from Old France feels deliberate, a reminder that Quebec and English Canada are very different places. Not that the province was always united in admiration of the new arrival: Montreal was envious, Quebec City triumphant. “If you Montrealers want class and style,” the papers crowed, “come spend a few days at Château Frontenac.”

On my way to dinner at Champlain, one of the hotel’s restaurants, I peeked into the kitchens, where Alfred Hitchcock filmed a police chase for *I Confess*. I ate guinea fowl at my table in Champlain beneath glowing wine bottles in a glass display case. The décor has been updated but an old-fashioned formality remains, and I dressed accordingly: Duval wrote of coming to tea in high heels and white gloves. A rich history, a touch of polish, and a dollop of eccentricity: if le Château is the sign over the entrance to this chilly city, it offers the warmest welcome. *fairmont.com*; doubles from \$230.

**Nina Caplan**, who lives in London, is the author of *The Wandering Vine: Wine, the Romans and Me*.

### A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

Three new getaways along Canada’s Atlantic seaboard.

**GROS MORNE INN**  
Slated to open this spring, this 15-room mountainside eco-lodge offers a base for exploring Newfoundland’s Gros Morne National Park. The inn will balance wellness—a spa with a cedar sauna and hot tubs overlooks Bonne Bay—with environmental initiatives, such as serving sustainably caught local seafood at Taste, the hotel’s restaurant. *grosmorneinn.com*; doubles from \$302.

**SLAYMAKER & NICHOLS**  
This new property in Charlottetown, the tiny capital of Prince Edward Island, takes its name from a traveling circus that set up on the site in 1864. Its three guest rooms have cast-iron claw-foot tubs, record players, and other cozy touches. The downstairs gastropub serves updates of classic dishes, such as eggs Benedict with grilled Halloumi and a lobster roll that delivers a sriracha-aioli kick. *slaymaker.ca*; doubles from \$175.

**MUIR, AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION**  
This design-forward hotel in Halifax, Nova Scotia, has a gallery that spotlights regional artists. The 109 guest rooms are accented with modern tartans—a nod to the province’s Scottish heritage. *muirhotel.com*; doubles from \$254.  
—SAMANTHA FALAWÉE



ONTARIO

## And the Kids Came, Too

Finally ready to take that family vacation? With new exhibits that invite kids to explore the country's history—plus classic Toronto outings that parents can enjoy—Canada's biggest city is ready to welcome the whole clan. *By Heather Greenwood Davis*

**FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN**

**Little Canada** ([little-canada.ca](http://little-canada.ca)), which opened last August, features miniature models of Canadian cities, like the European-style buildings and cobblestoned streets of Old Quebec, and landscapes, like the towering Rocky Mountains. With moving cars, trains, and boats, thousands of LED lights, and mini people “walking” the streets, the

installation brings the country's attractions to life. Your child can even become a part of these little settings, thanks to an on-site scanner that prints tiny 3-D versions of visitors. At **Black Creek Pioneer Village** ([blackcreek.ca](http://blackcreek.ca)), costumed interpreters demonstrate what life was like in the 1860s. Kids can try out a musical instrument, work alongside a tinsmith, or take in a collection of more than 2,000 period toys.

**FOR TEENS AND TWEENS**

The **EdgeWalk** ([cntower.ca](http://cntower.ca)) lets kids aged 12 and older circumnavigate the famous CN Tower, walking



Iqaluullamiluuq (First Mermaid) that can Maneuver on the Land, a sculpture by Mattiusi Iyaituk and Etienne Guay, on display at Winnipeg Art Gallery's Quamajuq wing.

along an outdoor platform 116 stories above the ground (don't worry, harnesses and safety gear are provided). Fashion-forward teens looking for activities closer to the ground will love the Queen Street West neighborhood, with its vintage-fashion shops and quirky cafés. They'll also be steps from the MuchMusic building, the former studio of the iconic Canadian TV channel, which, like MTV, launched the careers of many famous VJs. Stroll by and tell the kids about the good old days of waiting to actually *buy* an album on CD.

**FOR KIDS OF ALL AGES**

Take the whole family to the **Bentway** ([thebentway.ca](http://thebentway.ca)), a year-round trail and outdoor event space under the Gardiner Expressway, just steps from Lake Ontario. Check the website for seasonal offerings, which range from an ice-skating track in the winter to a roller-skating rink in the summer. When the kids have worked up an appetite, head to Kensington Market to sample foods from around the world, including Swedish coffee, Baja-style tacos, and Jamaican patties.



## Origin Stories

These new institutions are illuminating Indigenous art in Canada.

EVEN LOCKDOWNS and border closures can't stop creativity. Over the past two years, multiple museums, galleries, and art centers made promising debuts across Canada, with a focus on Indigenous art and perspectives. **Qaumajuq** ([wag.ca/qaumajuq](http://wag.ca/qaumajuq)), a separate wing of the Winnipeg Art Gallery, is now the world's largest museum devoted to contemporary Inuit art. It contains sculptures, prints, textiles, and several thousand carvings displayed in a glass vault visible across three floors of the gallery.

The new multimedia Museum of North Vancouver, or **MONOVA** ([monova.ca](http://monova.ca)), charts the city's trajectory from forestland to logging community to industrialized urban center. Members of the Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, whose traditional territories encompass present-day North Vancouver, helped design the museum's welcome circle, which showcases a collection of archival photographs and recorded oral histories.

Established by four artists of Anishinaabe and Kanienkha:ka heritage, **Daphne** ([daphne.art](http://daphne.art)) is Montreal's first Indigenous-run art center, featuring works by contemporary artists from Quebec and beyond. Since the center opened in May 2021, exhibitions have ranged from metalwork by Teharihulen Michel Savard, a member of the Wendat First Nation, to illustrations by Kaia'tanó:ron Dumoulin Bush, an Onkwehonwe/French-Canadian artist. — CAROLYN B. HELLER

Looking out at the Toronto skyline from the CN Tower. Right: Skating on the Bentway.

MANITOBA

## Out and About in Winnipeg

Dubbed the “Gateway to the West,” Manitoba's capital was one of North America's fastest-growing cities in the late 19th century. Back then, development was centered around the Winnipeg Grain Exchange, the heart of

Canada's booming wheat trade. Now the Exchange District is brimming with restaurants, breweries, and distilleries that recall this history, while also bringing the city bang up to date. Here's where to step out in style.



FROM LEFT, COURTESY OF DESTINATION TORONTO; TOM RIDOUT/ALAMY; ILLUSTRATION BY FRANCESCO ZORZI

COLLECTION OF NUNAVIK INUIT ART, AVATAQ CULTURAL INSTITUTE/COURTESY OF WAG

**James Ave. Pumphouse Food & Drink**

Built in 1907, this pumping station was an engineering marvel that pulled water from the Red River for more than 70 fire hydrants in the growing downtown. Last September, it found new life as a restaurant. Try the

pesto-and-cheese-curd naan or the cauliflower schnitzel, alongside a hearty portion of classic poutine. [instagram.com/thepumphousefooddrink](http://instagram.com/thepumphousefooddrink); entrées \$13–\$23.

**Nonsuch Brewing**

Named for the first trading ship to reach Hudson Bay (which

forms the northeastern border of Manitoba) in 1668, this brewery focuses on Belgian and European styles. Sink into one of the velvet couches in the taproom and try the latest drafts. [nonsuch.beer](http://nonsuch.beer).

**Patent 5 Distillery**

Sip on a Lions & Tigers & Berries cocktail, made with the house

berry gin, green-strawberry bitters, vermouth, and the French aperitif Pineau. The liquors are produced in a former livery stable, and the tasting room's oak panels and stained-glass windows were salvaged from a century-old hotel. [patent5.ca](http://patent5.ca). — ANNE HAWE

## Above and Beyond

Whether seen from on high or down on the ground, the icy wonderland of Yukon's Kluane National Park is a place like no other. *By Eva Holland*

ON A CRISP GRAY morning last October, I sat in the passenger seat of a single-engine plane as it climbed above **Kluane National Park & Reserve** ([pc.gc.ca](http://pc.gc.ca)), in western Canada's Yukon territory. A dense layer of cloud hung above us, but farther ahead, at the top of the glacier-carved river valley, the sky was clear. We popped out from under the cloud almost at the same moment that the rock, running

▼ Flying over the Donjek Glacier in Kluane National Park & Reserve.



water, and evergreen forest below us began to vanish under a layer of ice. Soon, the plane was soaring over the Kluane ice field, a conglomeration of glaciers so vast and unbroken that it appears from the sky as one wide, white expanse: the world's largest ice field this side of Antarctica or the Arctic Circle.

Around the ice field's edges, glaciers reach down into the valleys and melt into lakes and rivers, or hurl themselves into the cold ocean at the northern end of Alaska's Inside Passage (a naturally sheltered sea route between the mainland and the islands of the Pacific Northwest). In some places, the mantle of ice is more than 3,000 feet thick.

High peaks were all around us. There was 13,944-foot Mount Kennedy, where a tattered copy of JFK's inaugural address, left at the summit by Bobby Kennedy in tribute to his brother, is thought to still lie, frozen, under the snow. And straight ahead, the plane's nose pointed at 19,550-foot Mount Logan: the tallest mountain in Canada. Kluane, Canada's fifth-largest national park at more than 8,000 square miles, encompasses these giants and more. Yet this remote wilderness sees only around 30,000 visitors per year, most of them in the warmer months of May through September.

Even from 10,000 feet in the air, it's difficult to grasp the scale of this landscape. Ordinarily, flight turns the world into miniature, but the ice field only seemed more imposing as we climbed. Crevasses yawned, and I spied what looked like avalanche-prone terrain on the steep sides of the mountains. It was lovely, and it was terrifying.

In the 18th century, the Irish philosopher Edmund Burke articulated a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime, describing that feeling of awe evoked by the things he called "terrible objects." These were places, experiences, and landscapes that, as the British nature writer Robert



▲ Hiking the park's popular King's Throne Trail.

► The Finnish barrel sauna and outdoor hot tub at Mount Logan EcoLodge.

Macfarlane puts it, "seized, terrified, and yet also somehow pleased the mind by dint of being too big, too high, too fast, too obscured, too powerful, too something, to be properly comprehended." Too big, too powerful, too something—that's Kluane.

I was still struggling to grasp what I had seen when the little plane from **Rocking Star Adventures** ([rockingstar.ca](http://rockingstar.ca)) set me down again on an airstrip in Haines Junction, a small town perched on the edge of the park. I drove to the **Mount Logan EcoLodge** ([mountloganlodge.com](http://mountloganlodge.com); doubles from \$275, including meals), a comfortable and convenient base for exploring Kluane. Once at the lodge, the peaks were everywhere I turned: out the windows of the main building, where owner Roxanne Mason and her small staff serve delicious family-style meals (on my second night: seared tuna steaks with a root-vegetable mash, then bourbon crème brûlée); from the hot tub where I soaked; and from the cozy little barrel cabin—one of several glamping-style outbuildings scattered around the property—where I would sleep that night.

Later that afternoon, I headed out with my guide, John Lewicki, for a 4 x 4-assisted hike along one of the river valleys I'd flown over that morning. We bounced along in the vehicle while one of the lodge's dogs, Freya, raced ahead. At one point, a long, graceful lynx bounded away and out of



sight as we passed. Eventually we parked and hiked to a viewpoint overlooking the Dezadeash River and the omnipresent mountains. We paused to unwrap bagels with smoked salmon and cream cheese, warming our hands on cups of tea.

From the plane earlier that day, the trail we were now following had been visible only as a thin line. Now, hiking that same line, I felt like I was tracing my fingers around one piece of an enormous jigsaw puzzle. From above, the view had been sublime in the word's original sense—it was almost too much to take in. But I could now weigh this one piece of Kluane, take in its shape and heft, and fit it into the larger picture. Another time, maybe, I would get to know a different piece—through a rafting trip on the Dezadeash, say, or a hike on one of the area's other trails. But for now at least, a small part of this extraordinary place was more than enough. 🌐

Eva Holland is a Yukon-based writer and a correspondent for *Outside* magazine. She is the author of *Nerve: Adventures in the Science of Fear*.

PETER O'HARA AND JENNA DIXON/COURTESY OF TRAVEL YUKON

FROM LEFT, PETER O'HARA & JENNA DIXON/COURTESY OF TRAVEL YUKON; COURTESY OF MOUNT LOGAN ECOLODGE. ILLUSTRATION BY FRANCESCO ZORZI

# from Bagels

On a tasting tour of Montreal's bakeries, delis, and lunch counters, *Nathan Englander* explores the city's Jewish culinary traditions, past and present. *Photographs by Dominique Lafond*



Cream cheese, smoked salmon, tomato, and onion on a bagel at Beautys Luncheonette. Opposite: The menu board at Lester's Deli, a study in old-school Montreal.

# to Brisket

<p>ASSIETTES DE VIANDES MEAT PLATTERS 18.40</p> <p>10.95</p> <p>10.95</p> <p>13.95</p> <p>AVEC PAIN DE SEIGLE ET CORNICHONS WITH RYE BREAD AND DILLS</p> <p><b>EXTRA</b> Fromage suisse Swiss Cheese 1.30</p> <p>COMBINAISONS <b>EXTRA .90</b></p> <p>Cheese Cake 7.45</p> <p>Prots Cake 7.75</p> <p>ie 5.25</p>	<h2>BURGERS</h2> <p>Hamburger 6.45</p> <p>Cheeseburger 6.95</p> <p>Burger <b>Sammy Salami</b></p> <p>Hot Dog</p> <p>Club Roll</p> <p>Fromage grille / Grilled Cheese</p> <h2>DE NOTRE CUISINE / FROM OUR KITCHEN</h2> <p>Salade Dinde Grillé / Grilled Turkey Salad 15.95</p> <p>Steak de foie / Liver Steak 15.95</p> <p>Steak d'entrecôte / Rib Steak ??</p> <p>Smoked meat omelette 11.95</p> <p>Saucisses et oeufs / Franks and Eggs 10.95</p> <p>et fèves / Franks and beans 10.95</p> <h2>BOISSONS / DRINKS</h2> <p>Boissons gazeuses / Soft Drinks 2.75</p> <p>Café ou Thé / Coffee or Tea 2.75</p> <p>Chocolat chaud / Hot Chocolate 2.75</p> <p>Jus / Juices 2.75</p> <p>Perrier 3.95</p> <p>Eau de source / Spring Water 1.95</p> <p>Breuvage à l'ancienne / Old Fashioned Drink 3.95</p> <p>Espresso 2.00</p> <p>Allongé 2.00</p> <p>Cappuccino 3.00</p> <p>Thé glacé maison 1.95</p> <p>Stewart's RACINETTE</p>
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◀ St.-Viateur bagels, fresh from the wood-fired oven.

▶ Breakfast is served at Beautys.



Beautys Luncheonette? I called Louis in Texas, where he's lived for nearly 50 years, and told him to swap his cowboy hat for a yarmulke and hop on a plane.

**LOUIS AND I** started out early on a Saturday in the old Jewish neighborhood of Mile End. St.-Laurent Boulevard, which cuts through it, was a kind of immigrant thoroughfare a century back. With the French settling to the east and the English to the west, Greek, Chinese, and Jewish immigrants were crowded along the boulevard in the middle. This is where Louis's grandparents (and my kids' great-great-grandparents), Litvaks from Belarus, opened their fruit stand and where Louis's father grew up.

Peek at a side street and you can't help noticing a winningly bizarre architectural feature of this very wintry city. Perilous-looking and often beautiful outdoor staircases and landings are affixed to the fronts of the houses, as if you took the common spaces that go inside a building and stuck them outdoors—which is literally what they did. I didn't even get to ask what happens when they freeze before Louis told me the story of his father, as a little boy, tumbling down a flight of those icy stairs.

We met Mélissa Simard, our guide from 'Round Table Tours, outside St.-Viateur Bagel, a storefront



◀ Brunch at Arthurs Nosh Bar, including (clockwise from top left) the "grand slam"—fried chicken, eggs, and pancakes; chickpea-and-veggie-topped "Moroccan toast"; French toast; and shakshuka.

▶ The counter at Wilensky's Light Lunch.

**TWO YEARS IN** and it's still a surprise to find myself living in Canada. Back in 2019, I followed my Houston-born wife from Brooklyn to Toronto for her job. I have no connections up this way, but Rachel's family history gives me and the kids instant Canadian roots. Unfortunately, on the bagels-and-lox, pastrami-on-rye front, those roots haven't done much to convert this New Yorker to the northern versions of those cherished immigrant foods.

My Toronto neighbors shook their heads. If I wanted to be successfully evangelized to Canadian Jewish cuisine, they said, I needed to visit Montreal, their capital of kosher-style eats. So last September I rented a car, threw my toothbrush and a defibrillator in the trunk, and headed off for a weekend marathon of nitrates and carbs.

This sort of gastronomic pilgrimage called for a spiritual guide. Who better than my Montreal-born father-in-law, Louis, who could give me the family history while we ate *karnatzel* at his beloved Snowdon Deli and tucked in to the time-honored breakfast of hungover McGill students—the "mish-mash" at



empire that churns out a thousand dozen bagels a day. You may be wondering: if I invited Louis along for that very purpose, why would my guide need a guide? First, he's been in the States so long he doesn't have any information about anything that happened in the province of Quebec after 1969. And second, Mélissa's Jewish Montreal tour came so highly recommended that we couldn't resist. I'm glad we didn't. Every minute was pure pleasure.

Inside St.-Viateur, three people work the wood-fired oven, the rings of dough going in on one side, and a mountain of hot sesames resting on a kind of off-ramp to the cooling bin on the other. No need to fear the weekend-morning bagel line in Montreal. It just moves and moves. There's no scooped-out-oat-with-a-light-shmear-double-toasted-with-onion-tomato-and-a-black-coffee-please at this location. You just get your bagels and go.

My first hot-out-of-the-oven St.-Viateur sesame was a truly transcendent, fully religious experience. I don't know what the term for polyamory is in the bagel world, but—with due respect to my home city—a honey-boiled, wood-fired, crisp on the outside, light and chewy on the inside, St.-Viateur's sesame delivered a life-changing first bite. I was in love!

Mélissa took us from there to Lester's Deli, which is in a fancy-looking French-Canadian stretch of the neighborhood, though at that hour it was mostly dog walkers on their morning constitucionals and Hasidim in big fur *shtreimels* heading off to shul. Despite my sesame-bagel success, I was still nervous about trying the deli. I calmed myself with the knowledge that, should the restaurants fail us, Louis and I could make our own gefilte fish back



◀ Slicing into the famous smoked meat at Lester's.

▲ The finished sandwich, in all its nitrate-steeped glory.

at the hotel. We were staying in a Four Seasons that lives on top of the Holt Renfrew Ogilvy department store. Both of our rooms were equipped with luxuriously giant soaking tubs perfect for stocking live carp (exactly as Louis's grandmother did in a smaller bathtub not far from where we stood).

I needn't have worried. Lester's more than delivered from the instant that its owner, Bill Berenholz, came by to say hello and pretended to squirt mustard on my father-in-law—a gag he'd clearly repeated infinite times but that still killed. The deli itself has a 50s-era, sepia-toned interior, with tchotchkes and bric-a-brac on every non-table surface. The walls are covered with photos, including the requisite signed headshot of William Shatner, captain of the *Enterprise* and Montreal's favorite Jewish son.

When our tasting plates showed up, each had a half sandwich, chopped liver, and a lightly cured lox. The half serving made sense, as we had many more places to go. Also, it was still only 8:30 in the morning.

Then, dear reader, I had my first taste of a Montreal smoked-meat sandwich, on the softest rye bread I've ever had. This is what I had driven all this way for—and the smoked meat was absolutely astounding. It was moister and more melt-in-your-mouth than pastrami, its New York cousin. Bill told me that they cure their beef with a wet brine before smoking and then steam-heat it. They use the brisket cut, whereas pastrami comes from the navel. With no shortage of pride, he said that it's an intentionally more tender cook, before tracing smoked meat's history back to Romanian charcuterie.

After I cleared my plate (and most of Louis's), Mélissa took us on a Jewish literary spin. We passed the homes of poets Melech Ravich (who translated Kafka into Yiddish) and Rokhl Korn, and stopped outside a former residence of Mordecai Richler, Montreal's most famous Jewish writer. The neighborhood library now bears his name, and an artsy mural of Richler graces a small building nearby. It's an impressive tribute, as long as you don't compare it to the 20-story mural of Leonard Cohen over on Crescent Street.

Richler's career-making novel, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, was made into a movie that was partly shot at Wilensky's Light Lunch. Sharon Wilensky, whose father, Moe, was the restaurant's founder, told me he appeared in the film as "Sid," the assistant to the actor playing his fictionalized self.

Wilensky's is a perfectly appointed time capsule, with a classic lunch counter and a working soda fountain from which Sharon drew my first-ever chocolate egg cream, a drink I'd only ever heard my Brooklyn-born dad wax lyrical about.

Sharon had tears in her eyes when she shared that, despite taking over, it was still her father's store. She continues to serve "the special," their signature sandwich, composed of grilled salami and bologna on a roll that has likewise been grilled and, in the process, flattened. The sandwich comes with mustard—always. There was a stretch where you could order one without mustard for a nickel surcharge. Those loosey-goosey days are long gone.

**LOUIS AND I** said our goodbyes to Mélissa and roamed the city before our meal at Beautys Luncheonette. Opened in 1942 by Freda and Hymie Skolnick, Beautys is a sparkling white-tile and chrome diner with sensational blue banquettes. We walked in on a sweet scene, as three generations of Skolnicks were working that day. There was Larry, the gray-haired son of Freda and Hymie, along with Larry's daughters, Julie and Elana, and Elana's 17-year-old daughter, Ruby, in a white apron, waiting on customers and learning the business.

▼ Guinea fowl with chanterelle mushrooms and poached livers at the Argentine-inspired restaurant Beba.



I swooned over their cheese blintzes before digging in to the aptly named "mish-mash," an omelette with everything thrown in. There are peppers and salami and hot dogs and onions, along with a side of home fries and a toasted bagel for your troubles.

For every multigenerational restaurant like Beautys keeping the faith, there's a new one bringing its own twist to Jewish deli traditions. Arthurs Nosh Bar is the shining star on that front. I'd eat everything there, including the pink neon sign hanging over the door. Its owners—Raegan Steinberg and her husband, Alex Cohen—magically turn everything under their roof into something both delicious and visually stunning. I went for the "latke smorgasbord," which consists of a pressed challah roll, scrambled eggs, gravlax, a latke, and Israeli salad. We couldn't resist ordering the *syrniki*, their extraordinarily fluffy cottage-cheese pancakes, for the table. In the words of my people, they're to die for!

**ON SUNDAY**, Louis and I checked out of the Four Seasons, telling ourselves we couldn't live there forever. (Though, with a number of floors dedicated to apartments, apparently some people can.) We had cleared the day for the family-history tour, which meant a visit to the cemetery and Louis's schools, as well as pilgrimages to other ancestral sites. Then we'd partake of the sandwich that had been built up to me more than any of the others. Lunch would be at Snowdon Deli, Louis's lifelong spot, whose smoked meat I'd been hearing about ever since Rachel introduced me to the parents.

To get to the other side of town we crossed Mount Royal, the mountain in the center of the city after which Montreal is named. It's home to a massive park designed by none other than Frederick Law Olmsted, of Central Park fame. At the top there's a scenic overlook, an easy spot for Louis to point out the St. Lawrence River, in the middle of which the island of Montreal sits. And not only is Montreal an island. It's part of an archipelago—which makes it sound like it should be more tropical than it is.

On the west side of the mountain, beside a Gordian knot of highway interchanges, a fetching three-story orange sits in the middle of a parking lot, like a rising blood moon. This structure is home to Gibeau Orange Julep, the single place to which my wife requested I pay homage. To her, skipping it would be like visiting Paris without seeing the Eiffel Tower. Louis handed me my cup with a bottoms-up look, and we both took a pull off our straws. The drink that Orange Julep churns out is neither shake nor juice. What it tastes like is the milk you'd get if you mated a Holstein cow with a navel orange and then fed the offspring a diet of pure sugar.

It's a short drive from there to Louis's childhood home. After possibly frightening the current owners with our lurking, we walked to the one and only Snowdon Deli. From the outside—well, let's say it has the façade of a well-maintained medium-security prison. But inside, it's all *heimische* communal warmth. A waitress called me “sweetie,” and the hostess made sure we were cozy in our booth.

At this point, I was worried for my father-in-law, for his Proustian smoked-meat memories, for the exalted claims he had made. We ordered two sandwiches, kasha and bow ties, poutine, and, to top it off, a *karnatzel*—a dried sausage specific to Montreal Jewish delis—because you shouldn't starve.

Without generosity or favoritism, I can tell you it was an extraordinary smoked-meat sandwich. Better even than I dreamed. Louis's deli did not let him down. And I implore you, even if you're staying by McGill or Mile End, it's worth crossing the mountain to get to Snowdon Deli. The sandwich is that good.

By afternoon, I felt like the deli version of a coal miner at the end of his shift. My hands

were half-cured themselves, and I had mustard lining my nails. That's when we hit Schwartz's, the most famous of all the delis, which is partly owned by Celine Dion. Rumor has it that she sings and picks up everyone's checks when she pops by. We ate our sandwiches and then checked in to the newly renovated Le Germain Hotel. The redesign has a 1960s theme, so that, for Louis, it's a modern, Peloton-equipped embodiment of his Montreal heyday. The bathrooms are wallpapered with images of former Habs hockey greats. I was sincerely happy for him, knowing he could brush his teeth while staring at his hero, Big Jean Béliveau.

**EVEN IF YOU** eat eight lunches, dinnertime comes regardless. We pointed the car toward a restaurant called Beba, out in the borough of Verdun. When Louis was growing up, Verdun was a working-class, “dry” county. It's not where he'd expect to find a cutting-edge bistro.

We pulled up to Beba, a little gem on the corner. Though I was happy for a romantic dinner with my father-in-law, I was already dreaming of coming back on a date with my wife. Beba's owners, Ari and Pablo Shor, are Argentine Jewish brothers who moved to Canada as boys. They opened in the summer of 2019, meaning they had a scant few months before the pandemic shuttered the place and they found themselves selling empanadas out of the front door.



▶ Gibeau Orange Julep, a roadside fast-food joint known as much for its spherical 1945 building as for its signature orange drink.

◀ The breakfast melt at Beautys: bacon, eggs, cheese, and tomato on grilled challah.

◀ Rue de la Commune, a boulevard in the Old Montreal neighborhood.



## EAT YOUR WAY ACROSS MONTREAL

### WHERE TO STAY

#### Four Seasons Hotel

This 169-room property near downtown offers true elegance. [fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com); doubles from \$380.

#### Le Germain Hotel

A modern hotel steps from McGill University. [germainhotels.com](http://germainhotels.com); doubles from \$244.

### WHERE TO EAT

#### Arthurs Nosh Bar

A super-stylish space. Don't miss the *syrnik!* [arthursmtl.com](http://arthursmtl.com); entrées \$9–\$15.

#### Beautys Luncheonette

A cheerful atmosphere and homey food. [beautys.ca](http://beautys.ca); entrées \$4–\$16.

#### Beba

An elegant Argentine bistro. [shopbeba.ca](http://shopbeba.ca); entrées \$33–\$64.

#### Gibeau Orange Julep

A giant orange that serves hamburgers, hot dogs, and its signature drink. [orangejulep.ca](http://orangejulep.ca).

#### Lester's Deli

Spectacular smoked meat. [lestersdeli.com](http://lestersdeli.com); entrées \$4–\$18.

#### Schwartz's

The most famous smoked-meat deli. [fb.com/schwartzsdeli](http://fb.com/schwartzsdeli); entrées \$6–\$19.

#### Snowdon Deli

A family-friendly spot off the tourist track. [snowdondeli.com](http://snowdondeli.com); entrées \$6–\$18.

#### St.-Viateur Bagel

The classic Montreal bagel. [stviateurbagel.com](http://stviateurbagel.com).

#### Wilensky's Light Lunch

The star is “the special”: salami, bologna, and mustard on a roll. [top2000.ca/wilenskys](http://top2000.ca/wilenskys); sandwiches \$4–\$6.

### WHAT TO DO

#### 'Round Table Tours

Eating and drinking adventures, including MéliSSa Simard's 3½-hour Jewish Montreal tour. [roundtablefoodtours.com](http://roundtablefoodtours.com); from \$58. —N.E.

Ari, the chef, is humble despite an impressive kitchen pedigree. He describes himself as “cooking the food of immigrants.” True to the brothers' heritage, the restaurant has an Argentine-Jewish-influenced menu, which allows for Ashkenazi, Spanish, and general Mediterranean and South American flavors. The eggplant arrived, topped with end-of-the-season romano beans, *ajo blanco*, and bright, roasted red peppers, which Ari said are exactly as his parents always made them.

Whenever Ari describes a dish's origins he says something like, “We were doing it this way, then someone in the kitchen had an idea and I said, ‘Let's try it.’” Beyond being charming, his open-mindedness infuses the whole place with a collaborative feel. Nothing summed that up more than the day's special, inspired by a friend of Ari's in Hong Kong. It was Beba's take on drunken chicken—a plate of guinea fowl au jus,

brined for two weeks and served with chanterelles and poached livers. I've been writing for more than 20 years, and I don't think I've typed this word before, but here it is: that dish was straight-up *sublime*.

All the while, Pablo worked the wine, offering up dizzily great choices. We drank a Vermentino from Liguria called Meigamma, followed by a glass of a super-smooth volcanic red. Louis thought the wine a perfect complement to our whole weekend. “Some sulfites to go with our nitrates,” he said at first sip.

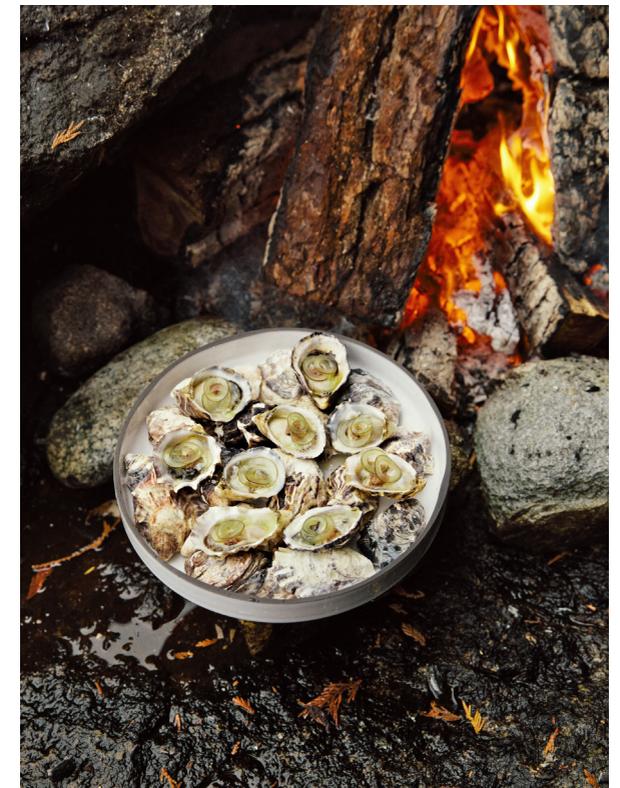
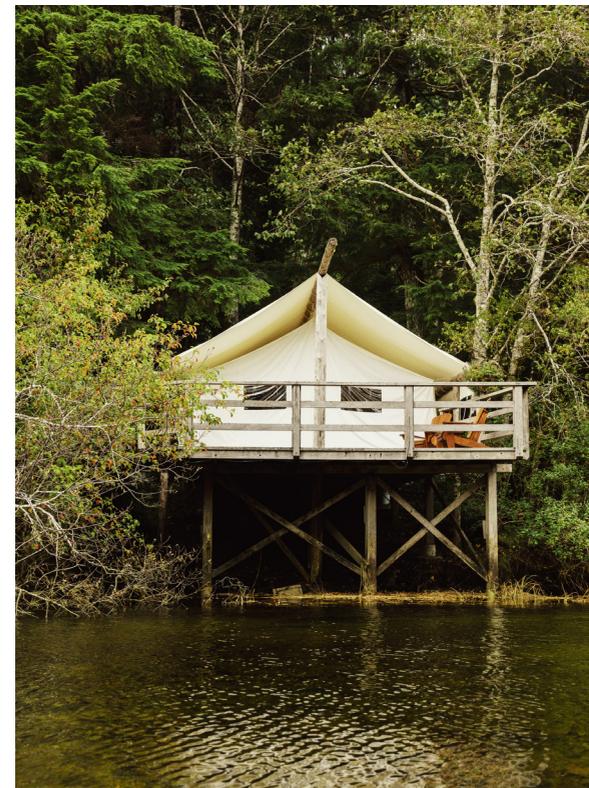
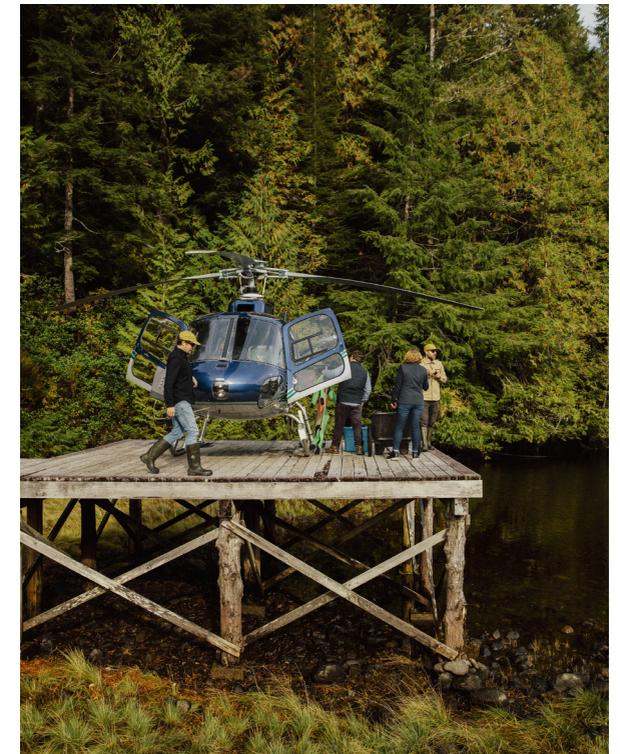
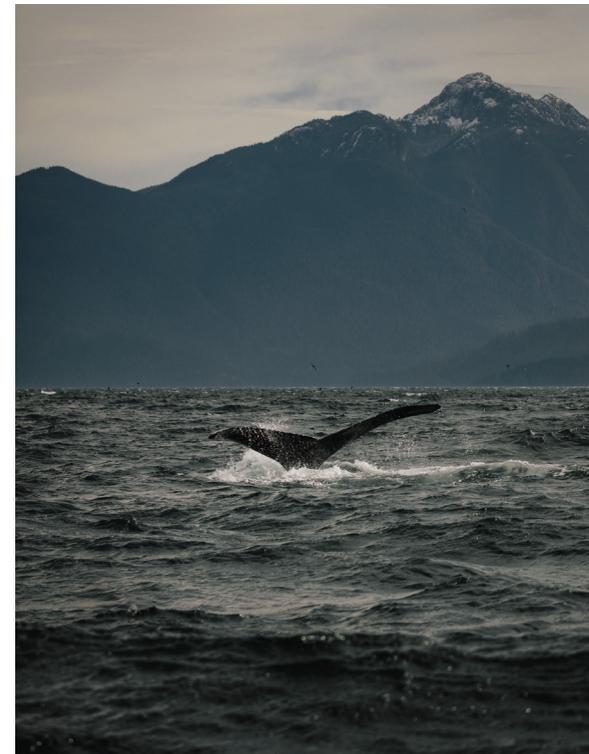
It was a dream final dinner that brought it all home. The ancestral foods. The family-run kitchen. And all of it served with a side of locally sourced Canadian culinary gumption—every dish a testament to a tradition-loving and ever-changing Montreal. 🌐

Nathan Englander is the author of five books, including, most recently, the novel [kaddish.com](http://kaddish.com).

# THE SHAPE *of* WATER

Floating on the rivers and streams of Vancouver Island and coastal British Columbia, **JOHN VAILLANT** finds a place where nothing is impossible.

Photographs by **GRANT HARDER**



▲ Clockwise from top left: A whale in Johnstone Strait near Nimmo Bay, a resort in coastal British Columbia; preparing for a helicopter adventure at the resort; oysters with pickled bull kelp at Nimmo Bay; a waterfront tent at Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge, on Vancouver Island. Opposite: Sweeping views on the aerial approach to Nimmo Bay.

**DIRECTLY IN FRONT** of us was an unnamed waterfall as tall as a skyscraper—one of half a dozen tumbling into this remote valley.

“How high do you think it is?” I asked.

Fraser Murray, owner-manager of Nimmo Bay, a resort in British Columbia’s Great Bear Rainforest, hazarded a guess: “Five hundred feet maybe?”

“Let’s find out,” said our pilot, Riley Wilson, who proceeded to drop our five-seat Bell 206 helicopter through the air as fast as the water in front of us was falling. In moments, we were hovering eye-to-eye with the base of the falls, which plunged down among car-sized boulders before joining the river below. Then, with one eye on the altimeter, Wilson took us up again, filling our field of vision with tumbling white water. “Watch for mountain goats,” he said. They are white, and it’s hard to tell them from the scattered patches of early October snow dotting the upper reaches of this valley.

I was mesmerized by the torrent in front of me. “Four hundred feet,” Wilson said as we ascended. “Five hundred. Six hundred. Seven hundred.” We popped up over the lip of the

falls and found ourselves in a glacial bowl filled with dark-sapphire water, nature’s own infinity pool. “Seven hundred and fifty feet.” Even Murray was impressed, and he grew up in this region.

**THERE IS NO** easy way into the hidden recesses of British Columbia’s coastal wilderness. For starters, the shoreline is more than 15,000 miles long—a convoluted maze of islands, inlets, and fjords, some of which snake inland for a hundred miles. Drop a rock into the water and it may not hit bottom for a thousand feet. Tucked away in these forested coves and bays you’ll find a handful of lodges, and their remote environments offer a tacit guarantee: you simply cannot survive out here unless you’re in the hands of people who know what they’re doing.

Last fall, I visited Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge and Nimmo Bay, two lodges that have been thriving here for decades now. Both were founded by visionaries who established barge-based toeholds in prime

▼ Two-bedroom guest cabins at Nimmo Bay.



▶ Guide Justin Szabo snorkeling in a stream where salmon spawn near Clayoquot.

▼ Sea lions basking on a rock near Nimmo Bay.





▲ The author sits down to a waterfront lunch at Nimmo Bay.

locations, gradually adding on not just lodges, cabins, and outbuildings but also docks, helipads, even horse stables. To arrive dockside and be greeted with cocktails by a host clad in late-season fleece and Gore-Tex is to experience a wondrous conundrum: How can a place so wild feel so welcoming and luxurious? I grappled with this question every day I was out there, and I loved it.

Small boats, floatplanes, and helicopters are the preferred modes of transport. To my delight, I arrived at Nimmo Bay in a Grumman Goose, the legendary flying boat of World War II fame. The last ones in commercial service operate out of Port Hardy, at the north end of Vancouver Island, the launching pad for many journeys into these hinterlands. Equipped with retractable wheels and pontoons, the Goose holds 10 people plus gear; the pilot steers with a wheel that looks like it came off a vintage tractor. These planes fly low out of necessity, and the view from the 80-year-old jump seat is breathtaking: small islands, almost all uninhabited, dot this inland sea like green muffins scattered across an aquamarine baking pan. Beyond them, larger islands, and then countless mountains, some frosted with fresh snow or ancient glaciers, ripple outward to the horizon. There is not a town, or even a house, to be seen.

Nimmo Bay is nestled deep within the mid-coast's rain forest. The lodge is the brainchild of Craig Murray and his dauntless wife, Deborah, Fraser



▲ Guests can borrow a pair of boots from Clayoquot before a horseback ride.

Murray's parents. While raising their three children, the Murrays took an outside-the-box approach to upscale wilderness hospitality: an off-grid floating lodge, a waterfall-powered Pelton wheel for electricity, and helicopters for unparalleled remote access. Initially the focus was on fishing, but over the years, the lodge's mission has broadened to include health and wellness, ultra-local cuisine, and wilderness experiences that emphasize immersion and connection over simply catching fish.

Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge, perched at the head of Bedwell Sound on the western coast of Vancouver Island, has been in operation since 1998 (as of 2020, it is managed by the Australian company Baillie Lodges). A logo says a thousand words, and the one stamped onto Clayoquot's menus may be unique among the world's luxury resorts: a horse and a whale. A couple hundred yards from the main lodge, fat, glossy, salmon-fed black bears lounge and graze in the horse paddocks, often with the horses. It's weird, but it seems to make sense here where, between land, sea, and staff, all needs are met—no matter how many legs (or fins) you have.



▲ The author crossing a stream on horseback near Clayoquot.

At both lodges, the segue from sea to river to forest is as seamless as a card trick, but this is how it is in the watercolor blur of B.C.'s coast: out here, it's not either/or. It's both/and.

**I AM A BIT SKEPTICAL** of bespoke adventuring, but these lodges deliver it. During some quiet moment around coffee time or cocktail hour, a guide will appear, exuding competence and genuine good cheer, and say something to the effect of, "Here we have a vast and beautiful wilderness at our doorstep—mountains to the back of us, ocean in front, rivers all through it—and we'd love to show it to you. By kayak, paddleboard, motorboat, helicopter, or horse? In a bathing suit, wet suit, or no suit at all? Would you prefer to settle in for a cocktail of the bartender's own invention by the fire, on a floating deck, or in a hot tub with a waterfall?"

Guests don't have to come with a plan, but it helps, and I brought with me an old dream. Once upon a time, I worked as a commercial salmon fisherman, but as beautiful as these iconic fish may look on the line or the dinner plate, nothing matches seeing them in the water. I explained this to Will Hazen, one of Nimmo Bay's head guides: I wanted to

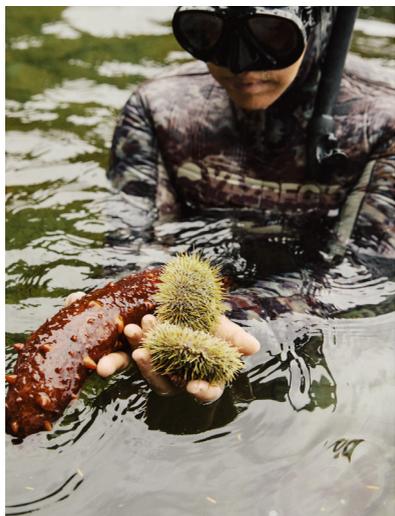


see salmon on their own terms, eye to eye. "Let me see what I can do," he said.

Hazen said this because this is what guides say at Nimmo Bay and at Clayoquot, where I requested the same thing. Both are located in prime salmon, whale, and bear habitat. Between Nimmo Bay's fleet of custom-built, high-speed boats and the flock of helicopters at its disposal, there are few places you can't go. The same goes for Clayoquot: if you can stand on it, they can land on it. Sunset champagne toast on a mountaintop with hundred-mile views? Pick a peak. Fancy a "rip and dip" (a naked plunge in a remote summit lake)? They can make it happen.

For my adventure, I needed a wet suit, a mask, a snorkel, and a river with salmon running in it. It was mid-October—late for salmon—and, in Canada, wild runs have been severely impacted by fish farms, overfishing, and, increasingly, climate change. But they are still out there. Our plan was to locate a school and float down into it, driftwood fashion. In our first attempt, at the foot of a massive waterfall lined with aspens shedding golden leaves, conditions were excellent, but the fish were skittish and wouldn't let us approach. We tried another river, but the water was so deep and turbid from a storm that the fish weren't easily visible. We would have to look elsewhere.

**THIS HIGHLIGHTS** a key aspect of the experience at lodges like Nimmo Bay and Clayoquot: these are not canned activities. The coast is a dynamic place; weather changes, wildlife moves, rivers and tides rise and fall. To be happy and successful requires adaptability and flexibility. The upside is that a traveler may get to experience something seasoned guides see only once in a season, or once in a lifetime. I had the rare privilege of weathering an autumn gale



▲ From left: Nimmo Bay guide Sarah Glenn diving for sea cucumber and sea urchin; a Wilderness Seaplanes Grumman Goose at the resort's dock; a row of floating buildings at Nimmo Bay.



▲ Seared scallops, miso-glazed eggplant, pickled fiddleheads, tomato, and nasturtium at Clayoquot.



► Deborah Murray, one of the founders of Nimmo Bay, with her granddaughter in the resort's floating outdoor living room.

in one of Clayoquot's ingenious canvas-walled tents. Built along a narrow estuary, these fanciful pavilions appear airy and graceful, but they are built like tanks. The rain was torrential that night, and the tent walls heaved in the gusting wind; overhead mature Sitka spruce and red cedar groaned under the strain. With only two layers of canvas between me and the warring elements, I felt like I was in the storm—part of it, and yet magically safe and warm and dry. I drifted off to sleep marveling at that ongoing conundrum: How can I be sleeping under a massive duvet, in a luxurious suite warmed by a cast-iron stove, and still feel like I'm outside? It was thrilling and comforting at the same time. In the morning, I awoke to birdsong and racing clouds. Just beyond the window, a line of water droplets shimmered like fairy lights along the edge of the canvas roof. You need a hundred words for water here.

**BACK AT NIMMO BAY**, which favors pretty shingled cabins over canvas tents, Hazen and Murray wouldn't give up on my salmon dream, and neither would our helicopter pilot. Many of the guides, boat operators, and pilots grew up in the region, so they know it like it's their neighborhood. Soon, we were descending into a wedge-shaped valley thick with cedar that had never seen an axe or saw. Flowing below us was the river, a French braid of copper-colored stones shimmering beneath a layer of water so clear that only reflections revealed its presence. Fish were

everywhere. Wilson settled the helicopter gently on a gravel bar, and we suited up.

Salmon have evolved to avoid large creatures that are moving rapidly, so Murray and I did the opposite: nothing. We just drifted with the current, facedown, the river bottom mere inches from our masks. By imitating the fish instead of hunting them, we got to be with them, and in so doing we participated in something truly ancient. Salmon have been embarking from and returning to this coast for millions of years. In those shallow waters we got a glimpse of deep time.

**I DO NOT** think of myself as "old," but after spending time with these enthusiastic young people, I found myself thinking, "My God, I feel young again!" It's like we were kids playing a spontaneous, made-up game in one of the most beautiful places imaginable. One of my favorite activities was paddleboarding down the Bedwell River. It had never occurred to me to do such a thing, but it occurred to Justin Szabo, one of the guides at Clayoquot. He thought this would be a fun way to search for salmon—and who was I to disagree?

I was new to the sport, and I haven't had so much fun in the water in a long time. Paddleboarding, it turns out, is a perfect way to explore this coastline's protected rivers, bays, and estuaries. The visibility is better than from a kayak, and a paddleboard is much easier to get onto. Its maneuverability enabled us to tuck into the tightest spaces and explore the shallowest creeks. Somewhere in there, you might find a centuries-old pictograph, or your own private waterfall (the only other place I've seen so many is Hawaii).

I am not a crier, but I swear there were times as I looked around—at the flickering reflection of ocean ripples on a rock face, at a river's movement over

sunlit stones—when my throat caught and I found myself momentarily stunned by the sheer, raw beauty of the place.

This variety of experience—physical, sensual, gustatory, aesthetic, therapeutic, immersive—doesn't come cheap. But what the premium price is really buying, besides extraordinary access, is a quality of attention. Murray calls this style of guiding *omakase*—a Japanese concept in which you put yourself in the hands of a master chef and let him work his magic. A businesswoman from Calgary summed up the success of this approach: "Nothing's out of reach here," she told me, "and it helps you reach yourself. I haven't felt this relaxed in three years."

The guides, pilots, boat operators, chefs, servers, and massage therapists are not just "staff" in the functional sense; they are all substantial individuals who love this coast and whose winning combination of true adventurousness and extraordinary people skills made me feel like I was on a wild lark with good friends. One of the things that struck me

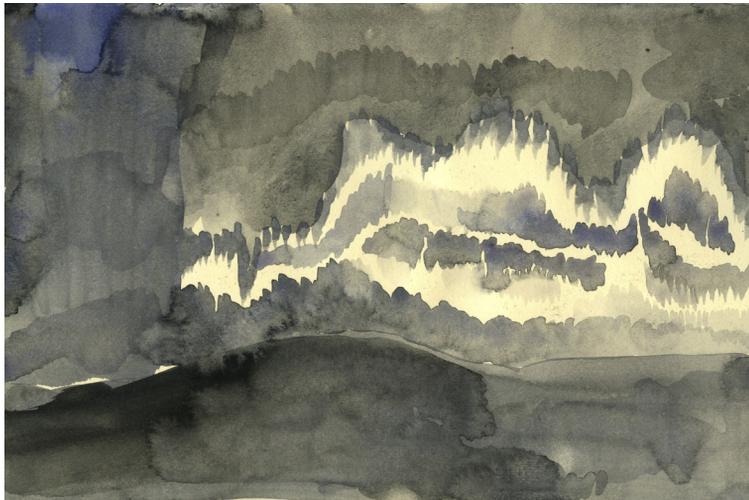
at both lodges was how happy the other guests seemed to be—no matter the weather. One couple in their seventies kept to themselves the whole time, but on the night of the storm I got a glimpse of them through the window of Clayoquot's dining room. The way she was smiling at him—so openly and youthfully, you could see how they fell in love all those decades ago. This is what you hope will happen on a trip like this, and I witnessed it with my own eyes.

My fellow guests, it must be said, were people who can afford to go wherever they want—and yet one woman said to me, with real emotion in her voice, "I've been here for four days, and I don't want to go home."

I felt the same way. 🌐

*Nimmo Bay* ([nimmobay.com](http://nimmobay.com); cabins from \$1,230 per person, all-inclusive) and *Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge* ([clayoquotwildernesslodge.com](http://clayoquotwildernesslodge.com); tents from \$1,029 per person, all-inclusive) can arrange custom three- to seven-day trips.

**John Vaillant** is a journalist and the author of *The Golden Spruce* and *The Tiger*. His latest book, *Fire Weather* (Knopf), will be published later this year.



The northern lights as seen from Peabody Point, near Molerualik Lake on King William Island.

## Light Show

Writer and artist *Leanne Shapton* remembers two formative encounters with the aurora borealis—a starker and more sublime sight than she had imagined.

I FIRST SAW the northern lights behind my parents' barn in Caledon, Ontario, an hour north of Toronto. I was 15. I climbed onto the garage roof to get a better look. I loved sitting on that roof. I'd bring paperbacks up there, Margaret Laurence and Alice Munro, and read until my fingers went cold and my mother called me in for dinner. That night, my father yelled at my brother and me to get outside. I went, bootless and coatless. When I saw the aurora borealis leaping, pale blue and green across the northern sky, my heart leaped, too. I followed the sweeping lines as they revealed the far and the away, and the vast, vast breadth of the sky, Canada, the planet.

Twenty-five years later I saw them again, as I stood almost 2,000 miles to the north of my parents' garage—so far north that the lights appeared to the south of us. I was

camping with Louie Kamookak, an Inuit oral historian, and his students on King William Island in the Arctic archipelago, where I was researching an article about Victorian naval history. Kamookak tapped on our tent in the middle of the night. "Are you awake?" he asked. "The lights are out."

The photographer and I zipped into our parkas. The night was cold, clear, and brightly lit by the massive flickering sky, like the screen on an electric fireplace, but miles tall. In photographs the lights are green, like the eyes of animals at night in flash pictures. But in the Arctic, they swung from cold white to warm. My mouth hung open at the show, but it was the scale, more than anything, that was affecting. The brilliant insignificance, the luck of life, the awe—that's what the northern lights illuminate. 🌐

**Leanne Shapton is art editor of the *New York Review of Books* and the author of many books, including *Swimming Studies* and *Guest Book*.**