



Paul Zizka

The family-run Lake O'Hara Lodge in Yoho National Park has lakeside cabins with cozy rooms.



Jeremy Koreski

Paddle-boarding is part of the Wilderness and Wildlife Adventure package at Nimmo Bay Wilderness Resort.



Outer Shores Expeditions

Trips to Pacific Rim National Park Reserve are among the adventures offered by Outer Shores Expeditions.

Price is right for a Canadian adventure

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2 Sail the Salish Sea and explore Canada's Gulf Islands on the classic wooden schooner *Passing Cloud*. Or cruise the mystical islands of Haida Gwaii, home of ancient cultures. **Outer Shores Expeditions** offers these and other tours off Canada's West coast between April and October.

Your inner explorer will be richly rewarded as you help the crew hitch ropes in the salty sea breeze, examine nautical charts in the exquisite main salon or watch for whales breaching off the bow. The schooner accommodates up to six guests in four private state-rooms.

Three- to nine-day trips begin at \$684. outershores.ca.

3 Get off the grid in comfort at **Lake O'Hara Lodge** in Yoho National Park in Canada's Rocky Mountains. This family-run lodge celebrates 90 years of back-country hospitality in 2016. In winter, the big draws are ski touring and snowshoeing with certified mountain guides.

In summer, guests connect with nature by hiking the alpine circuit or paddling the



Jeremy Koreski

From Nimmo Bay Wilderness Resort, fly by helicopter to an alpine lake for an afternoon of fishing.

pristine lake.

Winter rates (January-April) are about \$500 per night for two people. Summer rates (mid-June-October) start at about \$470 per night for two people. Two nights minimum. Prices include all meals and afternoon tea. lakeohara.com.

4 Go on safari with **Churchill Wild**, a tour operator with three lodges on Hudson Bay in northern Manitoba. This is where you can come face to face with polar bears; the company pioneered

walking safaris with these magnificent animals. Depending on the season, you'll see them against ice and snow, on red-tinged autumn foliage, or on grassy tundra abloom with wildflowers. In summer, guests can swim with beluga whales. More than 50,000 migrate here annually.

The company's oldest lodge at Seal River has recently been added to National Geographic's Unique Lodges of the World collection.

Eight-day packages range

from about \$6,400 to \$8,500 and include airfare from Winnipeg. churchillwild.com.

5 Enjoy Canada's famous east coast hospitality at **Fogo Island Inn**, Newfoundland. The architecturally interesting inn — it looks a bit like a grounded ship — was built by an islander to help the local economy after the collapse of the cod fishery. A visit here helps sustain a community — and you become part of it.

Go for a walk with *Make and Break*, the inn's New-

foundland dogs, or join the locals around a kitchen table or bonfire and hear their stories and songs. Fogo Island Inn claims to have seven distinct seasons. Rates at the 29-room inn start at \$700 per night or with full board from \$980. fogoislandinn.ca.

6 Go for gold. A Gold Floor room, that is, at one of Canada's historic **Canadian Pacific** hotels, now part of the Fairmont brand. The Fairmont Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City is one of the

oldest, opening in 1893. A couple years ago, the much-loved castle underwent a \$75 million upgrade.

Gold Floor guests enjoy private check-in, concierge services and complimentary breakfast and canapés in a private lounge with views over the city and St. Lawrence River. Low-season rates are around \$335. High-season rates (June-August and December) range between \$685 and \$930. fairmont.com/frontenac.

More deals: It's not just Canadian destinations that are a great deal right now, but tours priced in Canadian dollars worldwide. Check out luxury Canadian tour operators such as Butterfield & Robinson and custom tour designer Quench Trip Design. The latter is offering an epicurean journey through South Africa in March with Johannesburg-born winemaker Norman Hardie. The 12-day tour from Cape Town is priced at \$6,975 CDN per person. Right now, that's less than \$5,000 USD. quenchtravel.com/epicurean-south-africa-with-norman-hardie.

Suzanne Morphet is a freelance writer in Victoria, British Columbia.

Boom times for Chinatown

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Visiting the Lees

Maxwell takes visitors into the clan buildings that have been a Chinatown fixture for years. The buildings are like community centers or second homes for people who share a common last name, such as Lee or Chin.

At the Lee Building, Maxwell shows me photos of various Lee family reunions held regularly around the world.

A group of middle-aged women play mah-jongg on the ground floor, the tiles clacking away as the women chat. We climb the stairs to see a lovely shrine, with oranges and burning incense sticks left as offerings to honor deceased relatives.

At the similar Chin family complex, we clamber up the stairs and gaze at sepia-tinted ancestral photos and beautiful wood chairs and tables with stunning mother-of-pearl inlays that speak to craftsmanship of another time.

"I love this spot," she tells me as we open a door and duck

out onto a small covered balcony overlooking the street. "It's a great place to watch the action on Chinese New Year."

In the distance, over the roofs of the buildings, you can see Vancouver's famous mountains capped with white snow in January.

Outside we stroll past shops with Chinese signs selling sausages, ducks and dried shrimp. The pungent smell of five-spice seasoning drifts through the air.

We also pass cheap souvenir shops with Vancouver T-shirts for sale.

"Five for \$10," says one sign. "Compare at Vancouver Airport: \$5 to \$6 each."

The area attracts more than a few trendy types, as well.

We pass a shop selling German currywurst, as well as galleries, a beautiful coffee spot called Musette and a vintage store that has a barber-shop in the back and sells coffee in front.

A guy with a playoff beard worthy of an NHL Stanley Cup finalist is sitting in front of a sign that says "Basic coffee, \$2.50. Fancy sh--, \$4."



Photos by Jim Byers/Special Contributor

Vancouver's mountains are always in the background, especially in this view from the balcony of the Chin Building. Vancouver's Chinatown is one of the largest in North America and the biggest in Canada.

A legendary tailor

Chinatown abuts Vancouver's Gastown, one of the trendiest areas of the city and a place where immense gentrification has taken place. It's also near the Downtown East Side, where many homeless folks still camp out and panhandle in this relatively warm corner of Canada. It makes for an interesting dynamic.

Maxwell explains there's some tension in the area as Chinatown is a national historic site, yet the city wants more development. The natural

forces of the marketplace are tough to stop in such a convenient, interesting part of town.

"The shops here used to be 85 percent Chinese-owned. Now it's more like 65 percent."

Our final stop is a tailor shop run by 93-year-old Bill Wong, a legend in these parts who was honored with a city party the year he turned 90.

Wong studied mechanical engineering in college and graduated just after World War II had ended. But he wasn't allowed to practice engineering because of his race, so he studied anatomy

and became a tailor instead. He now makes bespoke suits for some of the city's top names at Modernize Tailors on Pender Street.

Wong says he likes all aspects of his work, but particularly enjoys alteration and repair.

"Bring your old clothes and we'll restore them for you," he tells me. "It reduces consumption and makes the world a better place."

Can't argue with that.

Over in Railtown

Not far from Chinatown is another booming area, a small wedge of land called Railtown. Startup tech firms are often found in cheap office space in the area, as are offices for Herschel backpacks and Aritzia. More accessible for visitors is the spectacular setting at the Settlement Building on Dunlavy Avenue, a glorious old industrial building that now houses a great cafe called Belgard Kitchen and a craft brewery called Postmark Brewing.

Around the corner at Railtown Cafe, they make everything from killer scones to a

If you go

Good to know: The Canadian dollar has been slumping badly, giving American consumers a huge advantage on the exchange rate.

Vancouver info: tourismvancouver.com

brisket that's moist and tasty enough to make a Texan proud.

"I've seen the neighborhood grow up before my eyes," said owner Dan Olson, who has worked at such prestigious spots as the Hotel Bel-Air in Los Angeles and at the Four Seasons Resort and Club at Las Colinas. "It used to be that you'd ask a cabdriver to take you to Railtown and they had no idea where it was."

And how's Olson's barbecue? "I'm not so much a sauce guy as a dry rub guy," he tells me. "I like to do it low and slow."

Spoken like a true Texan. *Jim Byers is a freelance travel writer based in Toronto. His trip was subsidized by Tourism Vancouver and Tourism British Columbia. Email: jim@jimbyerstavel.com.*



Postmark Brewing's Dominic Giraldes shows off his new blond ale at the brewery, in Vancouver's Railtown district adjacent to Chinatown.



Bill Wong, 93, can still be found at his Pender Street tailor shop nearly every day. His son, who's in his 60s, has apparently had to keep an eye on Dad lest he work too much.