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MARK SISSONS

Mark is a Vancouver-based travel writer and photographer with a particular passion for telling outdoor adventure, snow sports and wildlife conservation stories. Over the past decade he has explored six continents and contributed to many major North American publications, including *Men’s Journal*, *Robb Report*, *National Geographic Traveler*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Explore Magazine* and *Canadian Traveller*. Mark combines his eclectic travel journalism with travel industry content strategy consulting and philanthropic initiatives primarily aimed at raising awareness about the issues facing African wildlife. His happy place is an African game reserve, a remote mountain trekking route or a heli-ski run. www.marksissons.com

PARM PARMAR

Parm, a consummate traveller from an early age, lives to explore the world. Anything to do with food, history and culture piques her interest. As a freelance lifestyle writer she specializes in travel and food. Her articles have appeared on her blog, Planet Blue Adventure along with online sites and print publications including: *Tripcentral.ca*, *Justluxe*, *Travelweek*, *Trivago*, *BillyYtz*, *Huffington Post Travel*, *Dine Magazine*, *Luxury Living* and *Food Network Canada*. When’s she’s not travelling she can be found editing videos and photos from her travels or checking out the latest eats in Toronto.

SANDRA MACGREGOR

Sandra is a Canadian writer and editor who specializes in travel, food and finance. Her work has appeared in a variety of publications like the *New York Times*, the *UK Telegraph*, the *Washington Post*, *Forbes.com* and the *Toronto Star*. She also combines her love of travel and saving money as a regular contributor at *The Frugal Travel Guy*. This wayfaring writer spends her free time exploring new destinations and she’s been fortunate enough to live for a year or two in captivating cities like Paris, France, Seoul, South Korea and Cape Town, South Africa.

HEATHER GREENWOOD-DAVIS

Heather is world traveller and storyteller. The freelance travel writer, speaker, blogger and family travel advocate is a Contributing Editor for *National Geographic Traveler* magazine and the resident travel expert on *The Social CTV*. Over the last 20 years, her pieces highlighting people and destinations around the world have appeared in national and international publications including *The Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Metro News*, *Canadian Living*, *Chatelaine* and others. When not running for airplanes you can find Heather sharing her travel finds on her website (globetrottingmama.com) and on social media (she’s @greenwooddavis on Twitter and @heathergd on Instragram).



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Discover Canada's

True Nature

A look at some of Canada's most scenic National Parks. Bringing you closer to the true nature of our beautiful country.

By Mark Sissons

ATHABASCA FALLS - JASPER NATIONAL PARK

To mark Canada's 150th anniversary, visitors can enjoy free access to all National Parks with a 2017 Parks Canada Discovery Pass. There has been so much interest in the free passes that Parks Canada reports it received more than 2.4 million orders in the first two months they were available. Here are four of the top parks to explore.

JASPER NATIONAL PARK

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The largest of Canada's seven Rocky Mountain National Parks, which together comprise a UNESCO World Heritage site, Jasper is an alpine wilderness teeming with wildlife, including bighorn sheep, moose, eagles, elk, wolves, lynx, cougars and grizzly bears. Here, nature is writ large – from massive glaciers and snow-capped peaks to towering waterfalls, deep canyons and pine scented valleys. In summer, you can stroll through meadows carpeted with brilliant swathes of delicate wildflowers, soak in the restorative waters of natural hot springs and paddle across pristine emerald lakes, or camp, hike, bike and even backcountry horseback ride over rugged mountain trails. In winter, there are opportunities for canyon ice walks, cross-country and downhill skiing, pond skating, snowshoeing and wildlife watching.

Best time to visit: Year-round.

QUTTINIRPAAQ NATIONAL PARK

You can't venture much farther north on land than Quttinirpaaq – an Inuktitut word for "Land at the Top of the World." Located on Ellesmere Island on the Arctic Archipelago just 800 kilometres from the North Pole, Quttinirpaaq is only accessible by Twin Otter charter aircraft. The most remote of Canada's National Parks, it is an almost alien world dominated by ice – a mesmerizing polar desert where ice caps swallow mountains, kilometres-thick glaciers flow into frozen seas and hardy wildlife like muskoxen, polar bears, Arctic hare and wolves freely roam. Quttinirpaaq is also an ancient Inuit homeland where hunters have long driven their dogsleds beneath the shadow of Barbeau Peak mountain.

Visiting Nunavut's largest National Park doesn't come cheap, with tours starting at around \$8,000. But considering Quttinirpaaq's extreme remoteness and unrivaled Arctic beauty, a journey here is a once-in-a-lifetime adventure. Observe Arctic wildlife beneath a summer midnight sun. Trek across one of the planet's most extreme and undisturbed environments while searching for traces of indigenous ancestors and early explorers. Or simply marvel at Mother Nature's raw, savage beauty in this barren yet utterly beautiful polar ecosystem on an epic journey to Canada's magnificent far north.

Best time to visit: Summer, either on a group tour organized by Parks Canada, or unsupported on an independent backcountry adventure after being flown in by Parks Canada.

QUTTINIRPAAQ NATIONAL PARK



WOODY POINT LIGHTHOUSE AT GROS MORNE NATIONAL PARK

IVVAVIK NATIONAL PARK

Meaning 'a place for giving birth' in the language of the Inuvialuit, Ivvavik has protected the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd since it was created in 1984. The only one of our National Parks created as a result of an aboriginal land claim agreement, it comprises 10,000 square kilometres of pristine northern wilderness – from the steep cliffs of its Arctic coastline and deltas that provide breeding sites for millions of birds, to ranges of mountains divided by steep gorges that remained unglaciated during the last ice age. And yet this northern tip of Yukon, which Gwich'in and Inuvialuit people have called home for centuries, sees barely 100 tourists per year. Many of them come to raft the mighty Firth River that winds through the English Mountains en route to the MacKenzie Delta and the Beaufort Sea.

Arriving on a Parks Canada chartered Twin Otter at Sheep Creek Station, encounter a tableau of natural beauty. Trained aboriginal staff lead you on rigorous hikes through spectacular tundra and boreal forests, and along brilliantly coloured canyons to places with names like Inspiration Point, Halfway to Heaven and Wolf Tors. You may even spot grizzly bears, Dall sheep, Arctic foxes or wolves while golden eagles and raptors circle high overhead.

Best time to visit: Summer.



KAYAKING IN PACIFIC RIM PARK

PACIFIC RIM NATIONAL PARK

Saturated in millennia-old indigenous Nuu-chah-nulth culture and famed for its rugged coastline dotted with enormous beaches and old growth rainforest, Pacific Rim National Park is one of Canada's most popular National Parks. Stretching south from the whale-watching centre of Tofino, the park spans part of Vancouver Island's wild west coast – famous for its spectacular Pacific storms that draw awed visitors from around the world every fall and winter.

Take an easy interpretive stroll along the picturesque Wild Pacific Trail near Ucluelet or a challenging multi-day trek along the legendary West Coast Trail. Learn to cold water surf like the pros. Paddle among the Broken Islands, one of the world's premier sea kayaking destinations. Whale-watch from shore or on a boat, keeping an eye out for some of the estimated 20,000 grey and Orca whales that transit past here each year. Explore one of the world's oldest temperate rainforests at Clayoquot Sound. Or kick back and relax while watching a ferocious winter squall pummel the shoreline while you dine in style on classic west coast cuisine.

Best time to visit: Year-round

GROS MORNE NATIONAL PARK

Designated a UNESCO World Heritage site, Atlantic Canada's second largest National Park is a starkly beautiful expanse of craggy, mist-shrouded mountains, wind-swept highlands and landlocked fjords on the eastern coast of Newfoundland. From its rocky beaches and lush coastal forests to its barren uplands, this geologically fascinating and breathtakingly scenic park is punctuated by the panoramic peak of Gros Morne Mountain and the ancient glacial and geological formations called the Tablelands. Here, you can ascend from flower-filled lowlands high into the alpine tundra in search of caribou, ptarmigan (also known as a snow quail) and snowshoe hare. Paddle past the sheer cliff sides of Western Brook Pond, a waterfall-fed freshwater fjord, and explore coastal pathways and trails leading to beaches hidden among sea stacks – all the while soaking up the colourful traditions of the charming seaside communities that make Newfoundland so unique.

Best time to visit: Year-round.



IVVAVIK NATIONAL PARK, FRITZ MUELLER 2 © PARKS CANADA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

ABOUT THE FREE 2017 PARKS CANADA Discovery Pass

Each pass allows one car and its occupants access to all National Parks, National Marine Conservation Areas and National Historic Sites across the country. You can order up to five passes on the Parks Canada website: www.pc.gc.ca

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