PG. 14

14 COLD-WEATHER WEEKEND ESCAPES

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WINTER 2022 #217

DEPARTMENTS

Meet Canada's "Apex Woman," on page 20.

ON THE COVER

Family-run Skeena Cat Skiing sees guests sleeping right in the deep stuff.
Photo by Northern BC Tourism/Abby Cooper

FEATURES

MAX RITTER; ISTOCK; FRANK WOLF; MARIE-PIER DESHARNAIS

TRAILHEAD

BY DAVID WEBB
@davidebwebb

IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

Woodsmoke sifted through the evergreens of Lynn Headwaters Park in North Vancouver. The sun, just an hour after its rise, was pink in the sky—eerily beautiful as it shone through a plume that had drifted in from some distant forest fire in British Columbia's interior.

It's a familiar refrain in the age of wildfires—itchy eyes and a tickle in your throat as you try to make the best of a bad air quality index. But something was different today. Because this wasn't July or August—the smoke seasons we've gotten used to over the past decade. Nor was it even September, shoulder smoke season.

This was post-Thanksgiving in October, though everything about the day screamed summer. The smoke in the air. Lynn Creek nearly dry, rather than flush with fall rains. Dusty trails and daytime temperatures forecast to hit the mid-20s. These Sunday morning hikes clear my head, refresh my soul and workout my heart. Today wasn't as relaxing, though, in the face of such a spectre of climate change.

As the editor of this magazine, I often hear a theme of reader feedback when we move to the topic of climate change: *we're getting too political. Stick to telling us where to go and what to do. I don't read this magazine for doom and gloom.*

Honestly, I get it. Our core purpose is Inspiring Outdoor Experiences. And the above paragraphs likely did not do that. But here's the tough truth, friends: the climate is changing. And as outdoor enthusiasts—people who depend on the climate for our recreational pursuits and passions—we can't ignore this change. Forest fire smoke in North Vancouver, in October, alongside a creek so dry salmon can't swim in it when they should already have been midway to their spawning grounds, is not a political stance. It happened; I was there. And this isn't a one-off. Smoke seasons now blot out our sun with regularity—this is new. Glaciers are receding upslope so fast maps have to be redrawn and climbing routes reimagined. Animal species are in decline in some places, and invasives are dramatically on the rise in others.

If you hike, camp, ski or paddle—you've been affected by this.

So, with this issue, we're taking a look at what our inspiring outdoor experiences will look like in the coming years and decades. What challenges will we face and how will we adapt? What will skiing look like in the 2030s? How will wildfires change the face of our hiking and biking routes? How will we need to adapt our typical behaviours to adjust to these changes? A six-part in-depth feature starts on page 36.

I hope it leaves you engaged and inspired, not blown-back and dejected. Because there are actions we can take. The future is not yet written.

But what is written are the articles in this issue—and there's plenty of inspiration in our pages yet. Like a family-owned skiing operation in northern British Columbia (page 8). Or the best winter camping gear (page 14). How about a profile of an inspiring Canadian mountaineer (page 20) or a roundup of winter weekend getaways (page 18)?

Combine that with our winter "Cool List" and Frank Wolf's latest expedition across the frozen North and I promise there is more meat than vegetables in this issue.

Let's get after it, adventurers. The world needs more of us out there. ✖

LIVE THE ADVENTURE
explore

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LETTERS

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Where's Logan?
Thanks for the great installment of "The Happy Camper" in your Fall 2022 issue. ("Don't Forget Dessert," Page 16.) Some great recipes!

One correction, in the "Logan Bread" section—it was mentioned that the location of Mount Logan is in Alaska. Logan is actually the highest mountain in Canada, at 5,959 metres and resides in Yukon. (The Hummingbird Ridge on Logan is still one of the most committed climbs in the world.)

—Jon Connick

Our face is red on that one! I've personally viewed the massif of Mount Logan from the seat of a de Havilland Beaver, and as I well know… we took off and landed in Haines Junction, Yukon. (And didn't cross international airspace.) Thanks for the correction. —Ed

Hut-to-Hut
I'm trying to "live the adventure," so Matt Mosteller's roundup take on ditching the tent and hiking to a roof over your head sounds epic. (Fall 2022, "Roundup," page 18.)

He rightfully points out viable options—it's a most welcome article. Ontario's Bruce Trail, despite being well established and well-known, would greatly benefit from having a guidebook for hut-to-hut style hiking. During the height of Covid, I looked at doing it, but I failed to figure it all out. Perhaps there's the workings of a story in there, a how to cobble together accommodations for a slow, medium and fast pace/a short, medium and long daily distance trek of the Bruce Trail.

Many other places in the world offer vast inn-to-inn trails. It's high time for Canada to get nightly roofs over hikers' and walkers' heads.

—Brian Johnston

Check out the article on page 14! You'll like what you see. —Ed

Budget Management
In the Fall 2022 issue, there was a letter to the editor (page 4) and an article addressing the cost of gear ("Price of Entry," page 44) as well as an entry in "Gear Guide" (page 14) for a $130 folding saw.

In the spirit of Frank Wolf's comment in "Price of Entry": "… the most expensive thing isn't necessarily the best thing." My tripping buddies and I use a 15-inch handsaw like the Maximum Hand Saw, which has an aggressive tooth pattern, comes with a magnetic teeth protector and protective sleeve and is $19.99 at Canadian Tire. It weighs 964 grams on my kitchen scale. The slightly heavier Stanley Fat Max saw is another good one—$30 at Home Hardware. Both have comfortable and robust handles and, being a handsaw, require no assembly and have no frame, so can cut through any thickness of wood.

Now I'm going to look for those $13 Kinco gloves!

—John Wipprecht

Great advice John! And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention explore-mag.com/store has an awesome handsaw for only $32.95 as well. –Ed

THE LOW DOWN

GO HERE

SKEENA CAT SKIING, BRITISH COLUMBIA

After more than a decade of fresh turns and steady growth, a family of northern BC skiers helps cat-skiing evolve beyond the expected in the most unexpected of places

BY MIKE BERARD

The Babine Range of British Columbia's Skeena Mountains is stunning. I am standing on a ridge in pristine white snow far above basecamp. It's a bluebird day. The peaks and ridges are illuminated pastel in the early morning light. Beside me, professional skier and adventure cheerleader Rory Bushfield is glowing even brighter, with the mischievous smile he's become famous for. We are both about to drop into the same kind of steep pitch you can find in most of BC's mountain ranges, but up here, just north of the province's midway point, there's a difference in the way we've arrived.

There are 21 cat-ski operations in Canada. Eighteen are in BC. Skeena Cat Skiing is the only dedicated cat-ski operation north of Valemount, which is 600 kilometres to the southeast. Looking around at the sea of snowy peaks in every direction, I wonder why there aren't more. While heli-skiing has been in the area for decades, it seems like ground zero for more skiing of all types. Then again, whomever tries to put down fresh tracks in the region will only follow in Jevon Zyp's footprints.

Zyp founded Skeena Cat Skiing in 2010, and I visited Skeena in that first year. The rustic operation was a modest affair. Located far down a country road on the outskirts of the northern outpost of New Hazelton, Skeena's basecamp was on a beautiful ranch in the valley, nowhere near the alpine where the good skiing takes place.

The way I remember it, the lodge featured a lot of plywood, standing in stark contrast to the expansive post-and-beam-and-glass lodges at most cat-ski operations. The meals were simple but tasty. Kokanee was the only brew of choice, but it was affordable and there was no shortage of it. The beer was cold, just like the frigid-but-deep powder days that followed.

Back then, a 45-minute drive delivered us to the snowline, where we transferred from a truck to snowcat and climbed until it was steep and deep enough to dive in. It was—as cat-skiing almost always is—fantastic, but it was still a very rough version of the real thing I

NORTHERN BC TOURISM/MATTIAS FREDRIKSSON

had experienced at other cat-ski ops. Zyp was undeterred, fuelled by his deep experience at three of the most notable cat-skiing operations in BC, and a dream to run one of his own.

OVER A DECADE later, Skeena Cat Skiing is well regarded in the province's ski scene thanks to a healthy amount of work by Zyp's family and friends. In 2017, Zyp brought his life partner, Jennifer Loring-Zyp into the business. During my visit at the end of the 2022 season, they show me around Skeena's well-designed base camp with a humble air, surrounded by their three energetic daughters, Araya, Leeara and EmmyLou.

The kids climb a parked snowcat with joy and practised expertise. It's a true family affair and unlike any cat-skiing operation I have ever visited. The series

Skeena Cat Skiing—it's a family affair.

IF YOU GO

Smithers Airport (YYD) is serviced daily by Air Canada and Central Mountain Air. Most of the tourism operators in the area suggest padding your trip with a day on each end to account for weather days or lagging luggage.

While Skeena Cat Skiing can supply loaner skis or boards, you should bring your own boots. Need to buy gear? **Local Supply Company** in Smithers has a full range of adventure gear, from skis and snowboards to camping supplies. They also stock stylish clothing, watches, and shoes. localsupplyco.ca

Skeena Cat Skiing runs from late December to late March. Trips from $800 per day. skeenacatskiing.ca

Skeena Cat Skiing, British Columbia

of insulated yurts is buried in metres of snow, with doorways hollowed out to allow access to ultra-comfortable sleeping quarters. In the centre, Skeena's main tent houses a roaring fire and long family-style table. Family comes first at Skeena Cat Skiing, and every one of them works hard in the resource-driven northern BC fashion. The daughters run around the cozy and welcoming lodge getting drinks for guests, preparing the table and cleaning up alongside a small crew of friendly staff who run the place with a smile on their faces. The food is far from rustic; we eat three delicious culinary masterpieces with local BC wines and an excellent selection of craft beer from the nearby towns of Smithers and Terrace. The company is good, and in the frigid sub-alpine air a fire crackles and snaps with the same excitement seen in the guests' faces.

THE LOW DOWN

Zyp cut his cat-teeth with Monashee Powder Snowcats, Chatter Creek Snowcat and Mustang Powder, all respected cat-skiing operations in BC's mecca of mechanized skiing, the Kootenay Rockies region. He eventually returned home, hell-bent on showcasing what the north of BC is capable of when it comes to snowcat-assisted shredding. He brought with him a lifetime of experience and a suite of opinions about how it should and shouldn't be done. Cat-skiing has been called "poor man's heli-skiing" and, to many, it'll be the only time they'll ski high alpine powder without chairlifts, moguls and crowds, but most single days of cat-skiing make a week at Whistler look cheap, not to mention mostly requiring a commitment to at least four days of cat-skiing, putting up a financial barrier for most mountain adventurers.

"We offer one of the most affordable cat-ski experiences in BC," says Loring-Zyp. "We hope to be matching our competitors in the next couple of years with the expansion of the base camp and terrain." The Zyps offer two-day packages for $1,600.

And locals need only apply—the Zyps believe locals should be able to enjoy the activities available in their own backyard, and what a backyard it is. Clocking in at 30,000 hectares, Skeena Cat Skiing operates on a portion of the second largest heli- and cat-skiing tenure in North America. Located 80 kilometres directly north of Smithers and 200 kilometres from the Alaskan Panhandle, the terrain Skeena accesses is as good as almost any Kootenay stash: big open powder bowls, truly steep slopes and more than enough gladed tree skiing. The views seem endless, and Skeena intends on expanding the skiable terrain, adding potential to an already vast playground.

WE LOAD THE cat with skis and snowboards on the outside. Some have brought their own. Others have rented powder-specific gear from the Skeena team. Either way, wider is better when it comes to skiing the deep powder snow we are headed to. We put in 15 runs and around 4,500 vertical metres on the first day.

Over the next two days, I ski some of the deepest snow of my season in between cat rides punctuated with tales of the last run: crashes, airtime and near misses. Part of the excitement of cat-skiing is not only the experience but sharing it with each other. Many who gravitate to this BC brand of skiing are brought back not only by the deep turns and beautiful views, but by the new friends, the food, the vibe and the extended family feelings. ✖

LOCAL ADVENTURES

Hudson Bay Mountain
A little-known grassroots ski resort gem with three lifts and endless fun. hudsonbaymountain.ca

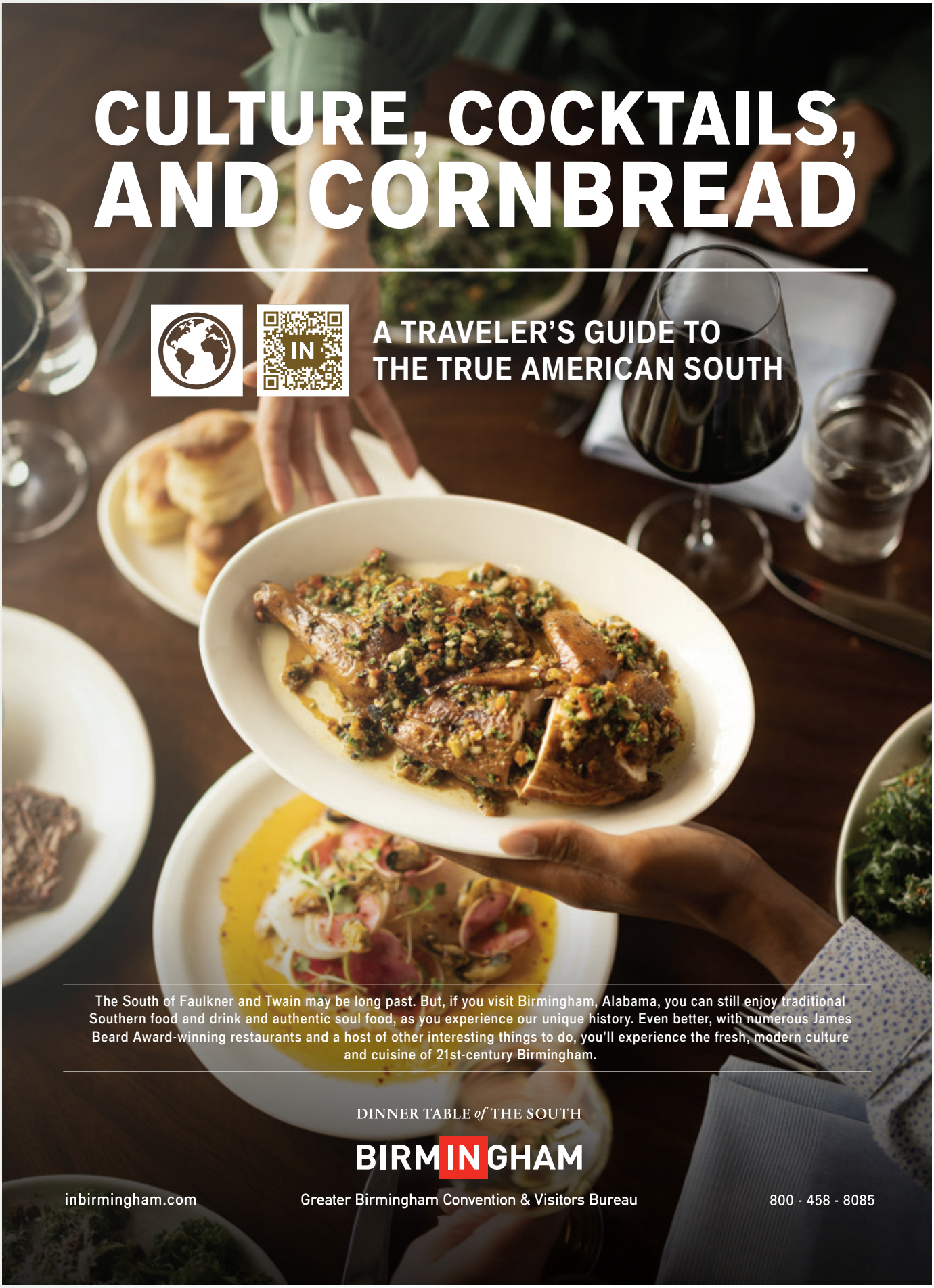
Bulkley Valley Nordic Centre
Popular, well-maintained cross country/Nordic skiing venue close to town and at the centre of Smithers' outdoor culture. bvnordic.ca

Shames Mountain
Deep powder. No lineups. Two hours and 15 minutes from Smithers. Shames is a legendary location in the world of ski resorts. mymountaincoop.ca

Skeena Heliskiing
Like cat-skiing, heli-skiing is an unforgettable experience but expensive. At this operation based at luxurious Bear Claw Lodge—located an hour and 40 minutes outside Smithers—the terrain clocks in at 2.35 million acres and they only take 12 guests a week. skeenaheliskiing.com

Hankin-Evelyn Backcountry Recreation Area
Backcountry skiing, snowboarding, and snowshoeing on a mountain positively choked with snow (and altruistic volunteering). bbss.ca/hankinevelyn

NORTHERN BC TOURISM/ABBY COOPER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NEWS

THE ISLAND PILGRIMAGE

A 700-kilometre, Canadian Camino is ready for walking

BY RYAN STUART

Laura MacGregor emerged from the pandemic more changed than most. Her disabled son Matthew died early in the spring of 2020 and her other two sons had "successfully launched."

"I went into the pandemic as a caregiver and mom and I came out of it not doing any of those things," says the part-time professor at Martin Luther University College in Waterloo, Ontario.

Last spring was the right time for MacGregor to hit pause and go on a long walk to re-centre herself. And the 700-kilometre, newly opened, Island Trail on Prince Edward Island seemed like the right venue.

THE LOW DOWN

"I was intrigued with the idea of seeing PEI and stringing together 32 days of continuous walking," says MacGregor. "I knew the terrain wasn't particularly demanding and that was OK. I was looking for a more personal and spiritual adventure."

That's exactly how Bryson Guptill designed the route. An avid hiker, in 2016 he and his partner walked the Camino de Santiago, an 800-kilometre pilgrimage route through Spain. He followed that up with the lesser-known Rota de Vincentina in Portugal. Walking town to town, immersed in the local culture and landscape, "it's an amazing experience," Guptill says. "But you have to go to Europe to do it."

Back home in PEI, the retired civil servant looked around and saw potential for a similar pilgrimage route on this side of the Atlantic. PEI is rich in small towns, B&Bs and family-run inns. There are lots of trails and rural roads. A loop around the island would be about the same length as the Camino. And as for the pilgrimage aspect: "you can't spend a month with yourself without getting a better understand of what motivates you," says Guptill.

So, he laid out a Canadian Camino in PEI. "I wanted to encourage Islanders and visitors to explore PEI at a slower pace," he says. "A lot of people thought I was crazy." The 704-kilometre route circles the province on a mix of trail, paved paths, red dirt road and quiet secondary highways. In the fall of 2019, he set out with three friends to walk the 32 sections, each about 20 kilometres long. From the experience he wrote a guidebook. Then Covid hit.

"[Which] gave us time to develop the route," Guptill says.

The provincial government paid for signage, and he rallied the tourism industry behind the idea. The sections of the Island Trail don't always start and finish within a short walk of a place to stay. Instead, they rely on B&B owners, shuttle drivers or taxis to get walkers to and from the route every day.

PEI opened to tourists in August 2021 and about 50 hikers showed up to walk parts of the route that first year. This year, that number jumped to more than 300, before damage caused by post-tropical storm Fiona ended the walking season a month early. Several businesses have opened to serve the trail and B&Bs booked 10,000 bed nights to walkers in 2022.

"It's been far more successful than anyone expected," Guptill says.

About 50 people have hiked the whole route—including MacGregor.

"The highlights were the sustained stretches of walking by the water and meeting all kinds of interesting people," she says.

While the route passes through the island's major towns and cities, most of it is in rural areas where walkers cross paths with farmers and fishermen. And, while she camped some of the time, the B&Bs were always more than a place to sleep, she says.

"The Island Walk was a chance to experience Canada in a new way," she says. "It's slow tourism. You really get to know the people. And yourself." ✖

Resources: The Island Walk website (theislandwalk.ca) houses everything an interested walker needs to plan a trip—including info on several PEI tour operators who help plan walks of varying lengths, including booking accommodation and shuttles.

Best time for a walk: May to June and September to the end of October the weather is ideal for walking and there are less tourists.

TOURISM PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

FOLLOWING THE FALCONS

A 3,400-kilometre expedition proves no park is an island

BY RYAN STUART

Inspiration comes in many forms. For Adam Shoalts's most recent expedition, it was the silhouette of a peregrine falcon.

In the spring of 2020, Shoalts watched the world's fastest animal zip across his neighbour's corn field and thought "why don't I follow it?" Two years later he did, canoeing one of the peregrine's migration routes from southern Ontario, through the most densely populated areas of Canada and into the wilds of Labrador and northern Quebec. The novel, 3,400-kilometre expedition was full of dangers (mostly human-made), heartening encounters with humans and realizations of interconnectedness.

Shoalts started his solo trip at Ontario's Long Point Provincial Park. It juts far into Lake Erie and is on the migration route for hundreds of species of birds, including falcons. On April 24, 2022, he loaded his gear in his canoe near the park's southern point, waited until a peregrine soared past and started paddling after it.

He followed the north shore of Lake Erie, turned down the Niagara River, portaged around Horseshoe Falls, paddled the Canadian side of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River and out into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Around Baie-Comeau, Quebec, he portaged 30 kilometres inland and began a long trek, connecting rivers and lakes, north to the George River. Ninety days after leaving Long Point he paddled into the Innu community of Kangiqsualujjuaq on Ungava Bay, near the northern tip of Quebec.

"It was very different from my previous expeditions," he says, which have included exploring untouched rivers and a solo trip from the Yukon to Hudson Bay. "I passed through some of the most densely populated parts of Canada and had to figure out how to navigate all kinds of human-made obstacles. It was a new curveball for me."

The busy shipping lanes were the most dangerous hazards. Crossing the entrance to the Welland Canal at Port Coburn in a snowstorm was terrifying. "I doubt a big cargo ship could see me in my tiny canoe, even if they were expecting someone to be paddling by in April… in a snowstorm," he laughs.

There were other obstacles. Long sections of metal and concrete shoreline prevented him from landing in stormy weather. Breakwaters forced him far offshore. He had to portage several dams. And all the urban sprawl made for some memorable campsites. He pitched his tent under Hamilton Harbour's Skyway overpass and Montreal's Jacques Cartier Bridge, on one of the Toronto Islands, and, when there were no other options, he knocked on a few doors asking permission to sleep in waterfront yards.

"Everyone was incredibly kind and generous," he says. "One of the most rewarding aspects of the trip was meeting so many people who gave me unprompted kindness."

Another surprise was the amount of wilderness amongst the masses. There was a long stretch of uninhabited shoreline along the Scarborough Bluffs, right in the heart of the country's biggest city. And for 24 hours along Lake Ontario, he didn't see another human.

"It reminded me of Lake Superior," he says. "In a world with ever-less green space, it was heartening that there is still lots of it, even in southern Ontario."

Still, it was a relief when he left the St. Lawrence and civilization behind. "It was just bears, rapids and the familiar dangers of the wilderness," he says.

In northern Quebec, before reaching the ocean he hiked across the tundra to the high cliffs of the Torngat Mountains where the peregrine falcons like to nest.

"The crowning moment of the expedition was seeing [a peregrine falcon] in southern Ontario and then seeing another nesting in the Torngats," he says. "That was pretty special."

Following the falcon's migration route across five biogeoclimatic zones showed him just how important every protected place is.

"We think of the Arctic as so far away, but it is dependent on what happens all across the country and the world," says Shoalts. "To protect the peregrine falcon and the Arctic ecosystem, it's crucial to protect the stopover places along the way. It's a reminder of how interconnected our world is." ✖

Shoalts is spending the winter writing a book about the trip. It will be his fifth book. adamshoalts.com

THE LOW DOWN

Shoalts on his first day of the journey—following the falcons into Canada's Arctic.

ADAM SHOALTS

WINTER CAMPING

Camping season in Canada is short—if you limit yourself to warm weather. Add winter and snow to your repertoire and, just like that, the season is endless. These key pieces will help make winter camping enjoyable.

BY RYAN STUART

THE LOW DOWN

A BIG, WARM PARKA

Arc'teryx Alpha Parka
($999; arcteryx.com)
"Hanging around" is cold and with the long nights of winter you will be doing lots of it. An oversized down jacket like the Arc'teryx Alpha Parka will help hold your body's heat in, so you stay warm. Designed for the coldest pursuit of all—ice climbing—it's stuffed with 850-fill down, with panels of synthetic insulation in sweatier zones. Even though the roomy, long cut layers over anything and it is reinforced for durability, the parka weighs only 710 grams, which you will appreciate—winter packs are heavy!

BREATHABLE INSULATION

Marmot WarmCube Active Novus
($380; marmot.com)
Because wet clothing sucks heat from your body, the biggest enemy to comfort in the cold is, ironically, sweating. To stay warm and dry, even when working hard, wear a breathable puffy like the Marmot WarmCube Active Novus. Gaps between the cube-shaped baffles allow excess heat and moisture to escape while you're moving. When you stop, the recycled, synthetic insulation fills in the gaps, locking in the heat. You can shovel, hike and ski hard in it, without worrying about getting sweaty and then cold.

A DOWN JACKET FOR YOUR FEET

Outdoor Research Tundra Aerogel Booties
($110; outdoorresearch.com)
Stuffed into confined spaces, standing on frozen ground and as far from our heart as a body part gets, toes and feet are especially susceptible to going numb. Keep them happy with a mini spa. Once you get to camp, change out of wet socks and slip into a puffy slipper like the Outdoor Research Tundra Aerogel Bootie. Along with a weather-resistant outer, grippy soles and an above the ankle cut, these ones combine synthetic fluff and Aerogel, a NASA developed insulation to keep your piggies wiggling.

A LIGHT BUT DEPENDABLE TENT

Nemo Kunai 2P
($700; nemoequipment.com)
A summer tent can't hack cold or snow-load. An expedition tent's overbuilt architecture is bulkier and burlier than most of us need (and pricey). Instead, look for a four-season tent like the Nemo Kunai 2P. The robust build and beefy poles will shrug off heavy snow and deflect winter winds much better than a summer tent. The fabric walls will trap body heat and block spindrift. And there's a little extra room and storage for all the extra gear required for winter camping. Yet it still only weighs a pack-friendly 1.95 kilograms.

A FOAM SLEEPING PAD

Big Agnes Hinman & Twister Cane
(Hinman: $100, Twister: $70; bigagnes.com)
Even the warmest winter sleeping bag won't ensure a cozy sleep unless it's paired with the right sleeping pad. The best strategy is to combine an insulated inflated pad with an R-value of four or higher, like Big Agnes Hinman, with a foam matt, like the Twister Cane. The air pad's insulation will bounce back body heat, while the foam's solid structure does a better job than air of halting conductive heat loss. Plus, the Twister Cane works great as a sit-upon at rest stops and around camp.

A KICK-ASS STOVE

MSR Whisperlite Universal Stove
(Stove: $220, base: $45; msrgear.com)
Canister stoves are convenient and efficient most of the year, but white gas works better in sub-zero temperatures. MSR's Whisperlite Universal Stove means you don't have to choose. It works happily with either medium and the stove is based on one of MSR's most dependable and durable camping stoves. To keep the Whisperlite from melting into the snow kitchen, add a Trillium Stove Base, a lightweight snowshoe that keeps it floating and stable.

A SUPER WARM SLEEPING BAG

Therm-a-Rest Polar Ranger -30C
($950; thermamest.com)
The best cold season sleeping bags can keep up with winter's temperature swings. When it's pushing the Therm-a-Rest Polar Ranger's -30 degrees Celsius limit, retreat right into the bag. A chimney around the face allows you to fully cocoon while funnelling breath out of the bag to prevent moisture buildup. As the temperature climbs, crack the entry zip or the two side gills. The latter double as arm holes: enjoy a coffee or read a book without leaving the warmth of the bag.

THE HAPPY CAMPER

GET TOOLED UP

Let's explore the top three winter camping tools and why they are so vital in the icy months

BY KEVIN CALLAN

The cold season is a beautiful time to be outdoors—but it can be hazardous. A simple mistake can quickly turn deadly. That's why my winter camping gear always seems more critical to me than the equipment I pack along for a summertime outing.

And there are three items I would never go without: axe, saw and ice chisel.

Winter camping can be labour-intensive at times—but these three tools will help make the workload easier.

KEVIN CALLAN (3X)

1 Camp Saw Selection

Before you split wood with an axe, you first need to saw it in sections. It's called bucking up firewood and it's a regular camp chore everyone needs to participate in.

A camp saw is essential for winter camping. But there's more to know about the design of a saw than meets the eye. Saw blades come in different toothing patterns. One style comes with two types of teeth: cutting teeth and raking teeth. How it works is that the cutting teeth "cut" into the wood and the rakers scoop out the sawdust and bits of wood. Usually there's a three-to-one ratio for cutting teeth to raking teeth. It's a great tooth pattern for either dry softwoods (conifers like balsam and spruce) or green hardwoods (deciduous like maple or birch). It's the most versatile blade and comes with most saws.

Next is the peg-tooth pattern. It has only one type of tooth which does both the cutting and the raking. It's best for dry hardwoods. The wood fibre of hardwood is tighter and denser, and the sawdust created is a lot finer. This pattern is best to cut through faster. Dry hardwood is also the big bonus to find while winter camping. Softwood is great to get the fire going, and a peg blade can still cut through it, but hardwood burns longer and hotter. This makes the peg-tooth pattern the best overall winter camping blade.

2 Top Axe Technique

The day one of the young male campers in our group whacked his groin with a hatchet was the day I decided never to bring an axe on a summer canoe trip again. It just wasn't worth the danger. An axe injury usually requires serious medical attention. During summer, firewood can more easily be garnered with a much safer camp saw.

However, the axe is a crucial tool for winter camping, especially when you need to get at the inner dry wood of a log. But the axe-in-the-groin incident was a horrific event; it was an injury which required a detailed rescue involving a

rescue helicopter and every strip of gauze available from my first-aid kit to slow down the bleeding while we waited for the chopper.

So, rather than forcing all young males to wear a groin protector while swinging an axe around camp in the dead of winter, I make sure to use the safe and proper technique to cut wood.

To safely split wood with a camp axe, I begin by sawing sections of a log. Anything smaller in diameter then my forearm I simply throw in the fire, but any piece bigger is split with the axe. I set the piece of wood upright, place the blade of the axe across the center of the log, and then strike the top of the axe head with another piece of wood. The axe works as an effective splitting edge rather than a cutting tool. No swinging is involved, which greatly decreases the chance of injury—especially to one's groin!

3 Ice Chiselling

Melted snow has a weird taste to it. Something between overdone toast and burned milk. That's why it's important to gather your water from a lake or river. But they can be covered in a layer of ice.

An ice auger is the quickest way through the ice. It's bulky and heavy though. So, I choose a traditional ice chisel. When used properly it becomes a very efficient way to retrieve water. The chisel is a heavy steel blade (bevelled on one side is best) with a steel sleeve in which to fit a long wooden pole into, which is, in turn, held in place by a screw. A leash is attached to it and your forearm to make sure you don't lose it down the ice hole.

You carry the chisel with you, which is attached to the elongated pole when you get to camp. It takes time, patience and skill to use the well-sharpened chisel to cut through to open water. It's a skill you either wear with pride or something you end up despising.

My group of winter campers play a game of paper, rock, scissors to choose who's going down to the lake to chisel the hole. I've lost more often than not. It's not bad once you get the hang of it though. Sometimes it's even a nice, peaceful time—hard labour mixed with tranquility. ✖

Forget melting snow for your water—go for the fresh stuff. And pack an ice chisel to help with the work.

SLEEP COZY IN THE COLD

From the rainy west, to the frozen north, across the vast prairies, through snowy Ontario and Quebec right to the wild Atlantic coastline—check out these 14 winter getaways sure to inspire

BY MATT MOSTELLER

THE LOW DOWN

Going Coastal

TOFINO, BRITISH COLUMBIA

You can't become *more* a part of the action. From nature to nautical, the six geodesic domes of **Wild Pod Luxury Glamping** are nested on a point, jutting into the sea—perfect for sunset gazing. Don't miss the cool shops and amazing eats in town, plus beach walks, wildlife tours, storm-watching—and you gotta try cold water surfing. (From $198; wildpod.ca)

Golden Moments

GOLDEN, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Into the woods you go! Maybe this is the therapy we all need? **Camp Moose Trail** offers up the fixings. This is forest bathing in style, as you enjoy the warmth of the wood stove in your canvas tent. Don't miss stargazing and have a soak in the wood-fired hot tub; it's a remarkable treat on cool nights. (From $259; campmoosetrail.ca)

Adventure Overload

FERNIE, BRITISH COLUMBIA

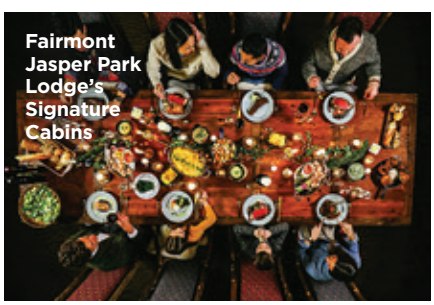
Raging Elk Adventure Lodging is offering new pod-style lodging, with a luxe twist, for half the price of other local options. It's located within walking distance of the historic Main Street of downtown Fernie, offering deluxe eats, boutique shops and one heck of Canadian Rockies backdrop to swing your head around—and explore. (From $49; ragingelk.com)

Mountain Classic

JASPER, ALBERTA

There is something so inspiring about immersing yourself in heritage, which is why we love our national parks. **Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge's Signature Cabins** offer that classic cabin experience steeped in tradition and with full service. Get up early to snowshoe the trails with your camera ready, as the Rocky Mountain peaks (and the roaming elk) provide amazing photo ops. (From $342; fairmont.com/jasper)

Camp Moose Trail



Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge's Signature Cabins

Where the Sky's Alive

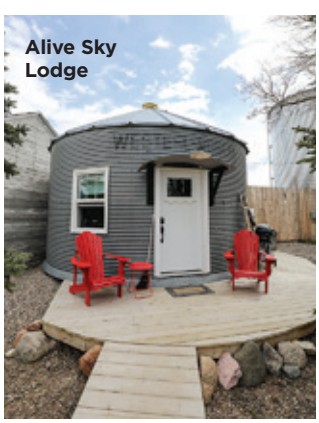
ROSETOWN, SASKATCHEWAN

Feel the wide openness; surrender yourself to no-rush mode and take in this big sky country. Return to the land, staying at **Alive Sky Lodge** in a converted grain bin. That's right—as they say, "it's BIN-credible." It's a guarantee that your posts will pique people's interests. What's more? It's even kitted out with its own hot tub. (From $215; alivesky.ca)

The Wild Parkland

RIDING MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK, MANITOBA

Enter a rugged, natural area that will make you feel free as you snowshoe and or cross-country ski right from your **Parks Canada oTENTik**. It comes complete with a woodstove to keep you comfy, of course, and there's wildlife everywhere in Riding Mountain—so keep that camera ready. (From $107; pc.gc.ca/ridingmountain)



Alive Sky Lodge

CLOCKWISE: CAMP MOOSE TRAIL; WILD POD LUXURY GLAMPING; FAIRMONT; ALIVE SKY LODGE

Wild Pod Luxury Glamping

Tiny House Vacation Rentals

Parks Canada oTENTik

CLOCKWISE: PARKS CANADA: TEN STONE MOUNTAIN LODGE; TWILLINGATE & BEYOND

Sleep in the Trees

HALIBURTON FOREST & WILDLIFE RESERVE, ONTARIO

'Tis the season for taking a winter walk in the woods, but don't worry, new-style snowshoes won't make you look like a waddling penguin. **Cabinscape** offers an array of decked out tiny homes to help you do just that. Check out Quasi Cabin, where a big helping of warm and cozy delights will greet you. If you can't pack light, sign up in advance for your gear to be delivered via snowmobile. (From $159; cabinscape.com)

Yurt Camp Delights

PARC NATIONAL DE LA JACQUES-CARTIER, QUÉBEC

Provincial park camping is taken to new heights at this affordable getaway, offering a myriad of tiny cabins and yurts. **Sépaq** is amazing and easy to book. Check out the yurts surrounded by nature in Parc national de la Jacques-Cartier, providing access to winter walks, snowshoe trails and cross-country skiing opportunities. (From $105; sepaq.com)

An Oceanside Bird House

GRAND MANAN ISLAND, NEW BRUNSWICK

Yes, it really looks like a bird house, with its ornate sleeping area perched above a wood-cabin lower floor—complete with panoramic views of the surrounding marsh and out to the nearby lighthouse. **The Bird House at Castalia Marsh Retreat** fits the cool factor and has a woodstove to take the chill away, which makes retreating here for a getaway easy. (From $125; castaliamarshretreat.com)

Big Seascape, Tiny Stay

MARGAREE HARBOUR, NOVA SCOTIA

Stay seaside, right on Margaree Harbour, bustling with activity to entertain along the stunning Cabot Trail—at **Tiny House Vacation Rentals**. This place is maxed-out for total comfort. You won't mind the view of the Cape Breton Highlands but given the beautiful craftwork inside, you'll need an extra nudge to venture outdoors. (From $145; tinyhousevacations.ca)

In the Trees, Near Atlantic tides

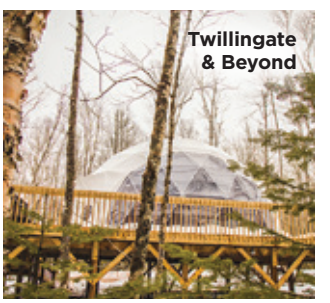
ALBANY, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

A treetop view greets you as you stay in elevated platforms. This super cool, nicely outfitted geodesic dome is aptly named the Great Horned Owl TreePod at **Treetop Haven**. Once you arrive, you may be tempted to escape the daily grind and relax here more often. Don't forget the lobster and groceries. (From $220; treetophaven.ca)

Iceberg Alley

TWILLINGATE, NEWFOUNDLAND

Twillingate & Beyond has the Drift Away Suite; artisan-detailed accommodation with an ocean view. It'll be tough to leave the windowpane, but make sure you enjoy the harbour's action with freshly roasted morning joe and locally made bread and jam.



Twillingate & Beyond

Plan outdoor day adventures and book in advance the evening treat of "Stay & Party," which will see one of the many talented local musicians play live in your room. (From $135; twillingateandbeyond.com)

Spring to Life

NORMAN WELLS, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Looking for something different? Plan a getaway in late spring, immersing yourself in the heart of the wilderness that surrounds **Ten Stone Mountain Lodge**. It's a fully equipped basecamp for wildlife viewing and snowshoe wandering, with a spectacular mountain backdrop greeting your every move. The flight will give you a high that lasts your entire trip. ($inquire; north-wrightairways.com)

Ten Stone Mountain Lodge

Starry Nights in the Arctic

POND INLET, NUNAVUT

Connect with **ATII Tourism** in Pond Inlet to learn how to survive in a wilderness environment. This 100 per cent Inuit-owned business offers a real Arctic experience which includes building your own place to stay—an igloo, that is—and most importantly, learning about Inuit culture, heritage and the beautiful natural environment that is their home. (Packages vary; atiitourism.com) ✖

MARIE-PIER DESHARNAIS

Apex Woman: Conquering the world's highest peaks

For the last three-and-a-half years, Québécoise Marie-Pier Desharnais has been a global nomad, living out of her luggage to chase mountainous dreams.

In March 2020, she went to Chile and conquered Ojos de Salado, the highest volcano on Earth, reaching an altitude of 6,893 metres. In the spring of 2021, she made Nepal her home and stood on top of 8,848-metre Mount Everest. This year, on July 22, 2022, she became the first person from Quebec and the first Canadian-born woman to summit 8,611-metre K2 in the Karakoram Range along the border of Pakistan-China.

"The first time I started even thinking about K2, I wouldn't even talk about it because hearing it sounded so surreal and crazy," Desharnais said over video chat from the back of a taxi in Lima, Peru.

K2 is known to be one of the most difficult and deadliest peaks on Earth. It's been widely reported that one person dies on the mountain for every four that reaches the summit.

ABOVE: Desharnais on the summit of K2 in 2022.

Desharnais says it was Nepali mountaineer Nims Purja, the star behind the documentary *14 Peaks: Nothing is Impossible*, who helped her believe she could climb K2. They met while Desharnais was climbing her first 8,000-metre peak, Manaslu, in the Nepalese Himalayas.

"He planted the seed of K2 in my mind. He made me feel that I was enough and that I had the skills. The fact that he saw something in me, he made me see those for myself. He unlocked something in me that I now see. Back then I think I was lacking the required confidence for such endeavour," said Desharnais, who turned 37 in December.

"This stayed in my brain and every subsequent year was dedicated to bringing me closer to K2. And the fact that he saw something in me that even I couldn't see myself, that was the greatest gift that anyone could give me."

Desharnais reached the top of K2 with Purja's climbing team and six other women, the largest team of women to ever reach the summit of K2. She says K2 taught her "humility."

"At the end of the day, even if you're a great frickin' climber, if the mountain decides that you are not going to make it, you won't. There's a huge amount of luck involved."

While her ascent to the summit of K2 was a gruelling 12-hours of non-stop climbing from Camp Three, from which she tackled her last push to the summit, it was during the "super sketchy" descent that she had the biggest fright when dozens of rocks started raining down, pelting her like bullets.

"At that point, I was just surrendering. I got hit; my left-hand joints cracked from a rock hitting me pretty hard. I was getting hit on my head and on my backpack. It was just so much."

A month after surviving the K2 expedition, she says she still feels "very low in energy." The experience jolted her back to the 2004 tsunami in Thailand, a disaster she survived as a 19-year-old backpacker and that ultimately drove her to study crisis management. When not on the world's highest mountains, Desharnais uses her master's degree to help countries around the world with projects related to resiliency and disaster management projects.

"My heart is in Victoriaville, Quebec with family, and my stuff is in a storage locker in Doha, Qatar."

Summiting K2 and Everest puts Desharnais in a real position to achieve her goal of successfully climbing five of the highest mountains in the world. She hopes to be in Nepal this spring to tick off a few other eight-thousanders: Kangchenjunga, Lhotse and Makalu.

"Nepal is my favourite place in the world. Not only did it change me, I just find the people there are the best people on the planet; the way they are and the way they think . . . It is there where I feel like I am the best version of myself."

Vinson and Sidley, a pair of peaks in Antarctica, are in her sights for this winter. Vinson Massif, at 4,892 metres, is Antarctica's highest peak and Mount Sidley is Antarctica's highest volcano. They are on her list because so few women have bagged them.

"The volcano is so remote. Almost nobody, male or female, has ever climbed it because it is so out of reach. I mean, if you're going to make it all that way to Antarctica, why not?"

Desharnais wasn't always into mountaineering and at one point in her life, she didn't even like camping. If you had told her 10 years ago that Nepal would be so dear to her, she wouldn't have believed it.

"A lot of people around me can hardly believe it. People change and passions get created," said Desharnais, noting that she first fell in love with the breathtaking mountains of Nepal on a solo trekking mission to Everest Basec Cmp after a break-up with the man she almost married.

She offers the following advice to women percolating Himalayan dreams:

"Don't think twice. Just go for it. Go discover something about yourself or about the world that is going to change you forever."

apexwomanproject.com ✖

MARIE-PIER DESHARNAIS

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LIVE THE ADVENTURE

MOVEMENT & THE MOUNTAINS

What can we learn from life in a mountain town?

We physically become where we live and what we do. My mountain hometown—Canmore, Alberta—is packed with retirement-age to much older men and women who are still routinely guiding, running, climbing, skiing and generally living an athletic and healthy lifestyle based on the mountains around them.

It's "normal" to take an extra hour or three at lunch to hit the Canmore Nordic Centre during the warmest part of a winter day. It's normal for there to be 30-plus pairs of shoes in the entryway for a family of four—and none of them will be dress shoes, those are buried under the recycling. It's normal for bicycles in any given household to outnumber cars (road bike, gravel bike, XC mountain bike, downhill bike, beater bike, e-bike). All of this inconspicuous consumption (you have to hide your bikes or they are stolen in seconds) coexists happily with bumper stickers that read, "Live Simply," and, "Animals Are People Too."

I've learned while riding my bike to watch out for any vehicle with multiple bumper stickers; that level of external emotion likely means the person behind the wheel isn't thinking about driving, but rather their various causes.

But this is also normal for mountain towns. Mountains attract dreamers, and despite mountains being the absolute definition of rock-solid reality, the people who come here do so to live their dreams. The people who dream of money, beach retirements and stock options move to cities, then work 50 weeks of the year to afford a second home in the mountains—which they visit for two weeks. Those who dream of snow, rocks, ice and raging rivers are often idealists. And just as surely as the elements shape the mountains, the mountains shape the people who live there. In my hometown, Olympians are both more respected and more common than the visiting movie stars. If you don't dream big, then big dreams won't happen. (I just wish people would use their turn signals a tad more while in pursuit of those dreams.)

ABOVE: Welcome to Canmore, where, like in many mountain towns—movement trumps money.

WHEN YOU LIVE in a mountain town, work schedules are more of a guideline than rigid, locked-in-place electrons. This reality is very difficult for those who live in cities to understand, especially when setting up meetings. What would seem like a simple question of, "Zoom call next Tuesday at 2:00 p.m.?" Might result in a reply of, "Maybe, depends if this storm system dumps a lot of snow or not. If it dumps, I'll be out skiing."

And if it's a powder day, everybody understands why you missed a call—at least in Canmore. Mountain towns value movement over money, which is good because

ISTOCK

it's really hard to make money in a mountain town, and bikes aren't free even if the mountains are (mostly).

When you live for a while in a mountain town you start to think the whole world is like your town, botched business calls aside. But then comes the dreaded shock of leaving the mountains and venturing into the flat areas of the world. This shock can be severe; suddenly snow is the enemy and going to the gym three times a week is seen as being healthy. Dress shoes outnumber running shoes, garages have cars in them and movement falls from near the top of the priority list to somewhere below mowing the grass (a well-tended lawn in Canmore is a sign both of environmental destruction and wasting time on unimportant stuff like lawns instead of, well, *moving*).

The freedom to move physically is one of the greatest freedoms in the world. The opposite of free movement is jail, the worst punishment we can come up with short of death. Yet, many people willingly trade the freedom of fresh air and unhindered movement to live in a place they don't want to be and work a job they don't like to earn money to buy nicer sofas and cars. In my town, this would be regarded as a form of willing, planned insanity; a sort of first-degree murder of the soul.

MOVE EVERY DAY. Go for a walk with your kids in a park; walk to the train instead of taking a cab. Just move a little bit. In most European cities, people walk more because, like the mountains, that environment invites walking. A few days walking through a European city vs. a North American city will show very quickly that without motion people tend to move less—and become less healthy as a result. I don't think we can bring the mountains to every city, but we do have climbing gyms and whitewater paddling courses in many urban centres. My local golf course bans walking ("carts only"), but in winter, some cities open their courses for Nordic skiing.

To me these activities are lifelong and help fix a lot of problems. I'm personally hoping that as I enter retirement age I too will find the secret fountain of youth many of Canmore's older generation seems to be drinking from. But if nothing else, I'm going for a walk outside today—and I hope you get one in too, however you can. ✖

WILD SIDE
BY ANDREW FINDLAY

WHAT, WHY & HOW

Imagine if we experienced adventure through the eyes of a child

Earlier this fall, a strong solar flare event made for a high probability of seeing northern lights from British Columbia's West Coast. My oldest daughter, Zola, and I walked into the backyard and stood under the starry sky hoping for the aurora borealis. They never showed. But the brilliance of the stars delivered—it was the kind of sparkling sky that provokes silent introspection, deep thoughts.

"When I look at the stars and imagine that the universe goes on forever, it kind of makes my head explode," she said.

Damn right kid. Mine too. Besides anxiety and joy, exhaustion and happiness, stress and relief—and a host of other contrasting emotions—kids also bring a sense of wonder and curiosity to the life of a parent that is priceless. They also remind adults how little they know about the world. I love adventuring with my kids because they tend to look around with eyes wide open. They ask questions about everything. I don't mean the spacey tweenager kinds of questions like, "How do I turn on the dryer?" or, "What's for sup?" I mean questions about natural phenomena that we grownups have seen and experienced many times before but take for granted and haven't invested the time to truly investigate and understand.

Last summer my family and I hiked the West Coast's Nootka Trail. As is always the case when my wife and I extract our two kids from the classroom or from the routines of home life, they were full of questions.

"What's sea foam?" Zola asked me one day as we played line tag on the beach at Calvin Falls and made foamy off-white beards out of the stuff. The best I could come up with was, "It's not pollution." I made a promise to my kids that any question on this trip left inadequately answered, I would return to later. So here I am, a few months late, doing my homework.

My answer was only partially correct. Most sea foam forms naturally from dissolved organic matter and algae, but it can also contain human-caused pollutants such as detergents and oils. Next time I might think twice about those foam beards.

"How do sea urchins make babies?" Sabine asked me as we explored tidal pools at Bajo Point. I mumbled something about sperm and eggs, then shifted the conversation to trail snacks, always a reliable diversion in the backcountry. Turns out, female and male sea urchins—outwardly indistinguishable from one another—broadcast clouds of eggs and sperm into the ocean that in turn form millions of larvae. Only the lucky few make it back to the rocky shoreline to grow into their adult form. At the larval stage these creatures have another strategy for keeping their DNA in the gene pool—asexual reproduction, or reproduction without requiring two parents to create offspring. Who knew? I sure didn't.

A few days later we basked in the sun at Third Beach, watching as an incoming tide flooded into a lagoon where minutes before we swam in fresh water.

"Why doesn't Comox Lake have tides?" Zola asked. I proceeded to give a canned speech about how the gravitational pulls of our moon and sun are responsible for the tides on Earth. "I know that," said Zola, impatiently. "But why don't lakes have tides?"

The sheer volume of oceans makes them susceptible to the tug of the sun and moon's gravity. Lakes are simply too small to be affected, although the Great Lakes are large enough to experience a very small tide that sees water levels change up to five centimetres, twice a day. I shared this explanation with my kids. We all found it less than satisfactory and agreed that further exploration of this subject was warranted. That's how it went for four glorious days on the outer coast of Nootka Island with two inquisitive kids and a couple of adults weighed down by heavy packs and some guilt over having batted well below average on almost every one of their questions.

ABOVE: It takes fresh eyes to show us how much we still must learn.

Along the way we would see a pair of wolves foraging the intertidal shelf, a black bear digging for shellfish, a rotting whale carcass, a whale skeleton carefully reassembled on a giant driftwood log, a shipwreck and countless other things to pique our curiosity. I have always had the romantic notion that being outside is the greatest classroom there is, and ever will be. And I'm reminded of this every time we go adventuring as a family; that and how much I still have to learn. ✖

ISTOCK

Donjek Glacier, Kluane National Park

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BOREAL FORAGING

Take a journey into the world of foraging—and cooking au naturel—in the golden fall foliage of northern Alberta

TOP: Kevin Kossowan is inspired by the entire forest in his cookery and mixology. ABOVE: Many of Kossowan's courses feature long-table dining in the boreal forest. RIGHT: Every type of wood has its own characteristics when used for cooking—as demonstrated in Kossowan's "wood library."

It's a bluebird day and golden yellow leaves crunch under my feet as I follow a narrow pathway, hiking behind Kevin Kossowan into the Tawatinaw River Valley in Rochester, Alberta.

I'm suddenly transported to the boreal forest, admiring an impressive wild basecamp complete with full kitchen and dreamy dining space and listening to Kossowan introduce himself. Led to wild food spaces by happenstance, he shares how his journey inspired a decade-long career producing film and television content; specifically, his *From the Wild* web series which features culinary possibilities of wild food foraged from the Canadian wilderness.

With a mentality that eating outdoors is best done by creating meals inspired by discovering treats beneath your feet, he also runs field cookery workshops sourcing accessible seasonal flavours and ingredients and sharing how they can be integrated into dishes in unexpected ways.

He directs a group of us to a handmade raised table and asks everyone to grab a tea made from chaga; a fungus that grows on dying birch trees. "The mouth feel is light like a really fine coffee," he says.

Keen to hear how the day will unroll, we learn that tea drinking, plant introduction, bush cookery, forest-inspired mixology and dining are all on the menu.

"The entire menu is formed by the location," Kossowan says as we set off down a trail he felled and cleared. We stop frequently and examine ingredients like highbush cranberry, one of 15 fruits found on the four-hectare property, with a flavour profile he describes as "funky," smelling like stinky socks.

"Every couple of weeks there's a new ingredient," he states. He also impresses the idea that while in nature, it's important to enjoy the moment, embracing seasonality as it changes. While it's easy to think of berries and mushrooms as items that can be foraged, trees are food too. "Birch trees produce quite a few different things. There's a fun intersection between food and utility in that it provides a bunch of food things—and firewood and fire starter."

Another predominant tree is trembling aspen, which is host to oyster mushrooms in June and July. Mushrooms, we learn, are very seasonal. May is morel season and late September, honey mushrooms can also be found around the bases of birch.

Kossowan encourages foraging newbies to start with plants over mushrooms. "'Is that edible?' I get asked. My answer is, often yes . . . There's not a lot of toxic plants in Western Canada."

Curious, I ask about the best time to forage and learn that late May and mid-September are rich times in the river valley as fall mushrooms and berries such as chokecherries, highbush cranberry and hawthorn appear.

"There's a whole host of flavours that exist here that you probably wouldn't expect," he says, "like citrus and nut flavours." Apparently, you don't have to look far. "You can pretty much spend an entire hour in the parking lot because there is always stuff growing where you stop."

A blue jay screams in the distance, steal-

COOKING KIT

Looking to branch further into the world of camp cooking? We recommend starting with a proper kit—and skipping single-use containers and packaging. Peruse the Outdoor Kitchen collection at hydroflask.com/outdoor-kitchen for inspiration.

TOP: JENN SMITH NELSON; BELOW: KEVIN KOSSOWAN (2X)

CLOCKWISE: Kossowan's classes sell out early—it's best to book over winter to ensure a spot. Dutch oven cooking al fresco with a homemade tripod. Kossowan offers courses specifically on mixology as well. Three artful plates, virtually entirely crafted from the natural surroundings of northern Alberta.

From the Wild

FORAGING SCHOOL

From the Wild's basecamp is located approximately 100 kilometres north of Edmonton, Alberta. Courses range from a half-day foraging walk to full-day cooking and mixology courses. Courses run from May to September—but book up well in advance. From $75.
fromthewild.ca

ing attention from our charismatic leader as he proves his point gesturing to multiple species including beaked hazelnut, dewberry leaves, wild strawberry, wintergreen berries, aspen producing oyster mushrooms and wild roses. "We use all of those for food, but I want people to think of everything in the forest as a possible kitchen thing."

It's time for a quick lesson in bushcraft cookery. Kossowan pulls out a cooking element, small tin pot, bottled herbs and spices and already prepped ingredients including chanterelle lobster butter, wild onion cream, organic farrow, parsley, spruce needles and chaga. Chopping up the needles, he asks us to pause and think about the flavours while tasting the dish. We all take a spoonful and note mushroom, wild onion and spruce.

Back at camp, Kossowan's inspiration from trees takes centre stage as he explains his wood library concept. Stacked in neat, sorted piles in the kitchen pantry is trembling aspen, white spruce, alder, birch, pine and tamarack—one of the longest-burning woods. Using various woods allows a connection to each species through individual flavours and cooking properties; each having different impacts on the speed of the fire, heat and smoke level.

"Does anyone know about fireweed?" he asks, holding up a bunch of long leaves. I volunteer my familiarity with it when it's flowering but have never thought of it as food. We sip on a plant-inspired cocktail made from fireweed syrup, lemon and crémant d'Alsace. We also snack on onion cakes made by onsite Chef Alexei Boldireff that are flavoured with sweet and spicy lodgepole pine dip, fireweed tea, sweet cicely and lemon. So delectable, they instantly change my viewpoint on how much camp food can be elevated.

We move to the mixology tent for a lesson. He begins by chopping a massive ice block, a technique handed down from his father, adding the chunks to a lineup mix of vintage glasses.

"Often we're looking for three to five in-season ingredients that taste like actual plants from the store." Though a gin lover, the first concoction is a tequila margarita featuring sea buckthorn liqueur, lime and spruce sea salt. Here he explains, sea buckthorn acts basically as "the orange flavour of this place." In this environment, other citrus flavours like lemon can be derived from conifers.

Before moving onto the second cocktail, we use a sea buckthorn berry as a palate cleanser and share some laughs over the topic of mushroom names and possible toxicity. "If it sounds like a death metal band," Kossowan says, "it's probably toxic for you," noting Death Caymus and Destroying Angel species as examples.

The afternoon winds to a close with a lesson in campfire cooking and we take a seat at the long table in anticipation of the main course. While we enjoy warm, camp-cooked focaccia, Kossowan demonstrates how by assembling a tripod over fire and adjusting the poles using bowline knots, one can cook using a Dutch oven. He shows us how to tie the knot and then gives us a rundown of his most prized cookery items.

A dinner of confit duck leg covered in double cream, maple lardons and charcoal onions, is served with iced forest tea made from fireweed, Labrador tea and black currant. It's so serene as white-fronted geese fly above and leaves float ever so slowly down.

It is only fitting that a day of forest dining ends with a dessert inspired by trees under the trees. "It tastes like fall," says chef Boldireff, serving a sticky toffee pudding topped with spruce caramel and highbush cranberry jelly.

If fall had a taste, I'd agree this was it. ✕

CLOCKWISE: KEVIN KOSSOWAN; JENN SMITH NELSON (2X); KEVIN KOSSOWAN (3X)

THE COOL LIST

THIS ISN'T HOT. IT'S ICE COLD. AND THAT'S THE WAY WE LIKE IT—BECAUSE OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS DON'T HIBERNATE, WE CHARGE INTO WINTER WITH GUSTO

By David Webb

Outdoor enthusiasts are just built different. A new season doesn't bring lament over the passing of the old—we jump into every month with enthusiasm and inspiration, eager to explore our environs anew. And winter is no different.

Powdery slopes. Crisp nights under a blanket of stars. Frozen lakes. Wild storms. After all, there's no such thing as bad weather… well, you know the rest. So, let's take winter for all it's worth. Read on to discover what's cool in Canada this season.

MAX RITTER

COOL EXPERIENCE

HELI-SKIING

If you polled the country asking for bucket-list outdoor experiences, there is one that would keep showing up again and again: heli-skiing. Perhaps the ultimate portrait of thrills and exclusivity, heli-skiing is an industry born in British Columbia while feeling as elusive as a yacht trip in Monaco.

I get why. I've had the good fortune of heli-skiing three times. My first was 17 years ago, at Mike Wiegele Heli-Skiing in Blue River, BC. I crossed off my own bucket-list by shredding turns alongside Mike himself—a member of the Holy Trinity of Heli. But at the same time, I met the Walton family (like Wal-Mart Waltons) on their family vacation. And chatted with a plastic surgeon from

Los Angeles who had rented a private chalet and a private helicopter for himself and his wife—for a month. So, its reputation is not without warrant.

Enter CMH Purcell in Golden, BC. Located just a couple minutes from downtown Golden, this heli-ski operation sets itself apart by offering day trips. This takes a knee-weakening price tag of multi-day all-inclusive operations and brings it down from the stratosphere. Sure, at two-grand a day, it's not cheap… but how many bucket-list experiences can you tick-off for less? On my first Purcell experience, I met a pair of liftees from Lake Louise who'd saved their pennies and made the trip.

And it's worth it. So worth it. From the moment that Bell 212 spins its rotor, howling like Ullr enraged, lifting off like you're defying gravity then swooping over the Columbia River and deep into the empty Purcells—it's a wild ride. Smiles and good vibes only, a sentiment that grows as you clip-in atop an empty peak with hundreds of vertical metres of untracked powder ahead. Get ready for endless fresh turns—this area can see more than 20 metres of snowfall in a season. And the rush keeps building as your expert pilot swoops in from overhead and lands the helicopter within a few metres of the pickup point like it's being lowered down on wires.

A chopper can always find fresh stuff—and CMH Purcell has 2,000-square-kilometres of tenure and more than 250 runs to choose from. Are you ready to ski 4,000-plus vertical metres in a day? cmhheli.com

CANADREAM

COOL ROAD TRIP

WINTER RV'ING

You didn't think motorhomes were only for summer, did you? With seven pickup depots in Canada and recreational vehicles built to handle snowy roads and chilly temperatures, a new form of winter road trip awaits. These units feature high-efficiency furnaces, insulated hot water tanks good for -30-degree Celsius use, generators, vent pillows, cab blankets and more! Whether you choose to camp beside the slopes at BC's Red Mountain Resort, Panorama or Big White Ski Resort; park at Camping Lac-Morin, near Stoneham, in Quebec; cruise to Winterlude in Ottawa this February or just forge you own path—you gotta try a cold-season roadie. canadream.com

COOL SKI RESORTS

FOUR OF THE BEST GET UPGRADED

Panorama, one of BC's best for families, is seeing three new developments this year. First, a brand new slopeside hotel—The Approach—is slated to open this December, steps from the Mile One Express Chairlift. Also, the beloved Monster X snowcat, for in-bounds cat-skiing, is getting a twin to shuttle more powder hounds into the Taynton Bowl. And if you're an Ikon Pass member, Panorama is now onboard! panoramaresort.com

BELOW: NORTHERN BC TOURISM/ANDY COCHRANE; RIGHT: PANORAMA

Banff National Park's trio of **Lake Louise Ski Resort**, **Mt. Norquay** and **Banff Sunshine** all have news this year. Banff Sunshine will have 900-plus new indoor and outdoor seats this year—ideal for mid-day chillout vibes. Lake Louise is opening its brand-new Juniper Chair, with five blue runs for building skier confidence. And Mt. Norquay fans can rejoice at the re-opening of the steep-and-deep Artillery Chutes. skibig3.com

COOL DESTINATION

TUMBLER RIDGE, BC

Where is the next "off-radar" adventure destination? We can't say for sure, but it might be Tumbler Ridge, BC. Set about four hours northeast of Prince George, BC, or six hours northwest of Edmonton, Alberta, Tumbler Ridge has made a name for itself with white-water rafting and abundant dinosaur fossils during summer—but this hotbed of waterfalls might be an even cooler winter getaway. Try snowshoeing to the fantastic Shipyard Titanic, where rock formations resemble the namesake vessel (four kilometres return). Or trek to frozen Bergeron or Babcock Falls (two and nine kilometres return). Ice-fish for rainbow trout on Moose Lake. Ski-tour on the pyramidal massif of Terminator. Then relax under the northern lights before tucking in at one of three modest hotels. tumblerridge.ca

COOL APPAREL

RESORT WEAR FOR WINTER

Mention "resort wear," and some people think of linen suits and floppy sun hats. We know better—resort wear, as in ski resort, has a waterproof-breathable membrane, warm insulation and a DWR coating. This year, we think Helly Hansen is doing it best.

Start on top with the Helly Hansen Odin Infinity Insulated Jacket ($1,000; hellyhansen.com). Named after the top-dog in Norse mythology, you can expect godlike performance from this bombproof jacket. With HellyTech Professional, it's fully waterproof, windproof and breathable of course, but the standout is the 80-grams of LIFALOFT insulation, which will keep you shredding well into the minus-double-digits. On the safety side, it has an integrated whistle and a RECCO reflector; on the convenience side it has massive pockets and a helmet-compatible hood.

Pair the Odin with the Verglas BC Pant ($375). Although designed for ski-touring, we enjoyed the articulated knees and gusseted crotch for ease of movement and the HellyTech Professional waterproof-breathable membrane when weather got nasty. Add a thigh pocket big enough for a transceiver and detachable suspenders and there's not much to complain about.

When the ski day is done, hang your gear above the heater and slip into the delightfully cozy Patrol Puffy Parka ($400). Big and thick, this Primaloft BLACK insulated and long-cut parka has massive pockets, reflective hits and is Bluesign-certified for its sustainable production. hellyhansen.com

FLIP THE SEASONS

This winter, flip it around and visit when the crowds don't.

WINTER IN PRINCE ALBERT

The last time I was in Saskatchewan's Prince Albert National Park, the snow had just begun to fly. Much of the town of Waskesiu was closing up for winter and the trails were empty and vibrant in fall colours.

That first night, over dinner at the Hawood Inn, I asked our server what was her favourite time of year in the park. "Winter," she responded after a long pause, then described Nordic skiing from her front door at night, with the aurora borealis dancing overhead and not a soul to disturb the silence; a full moon reflecting off the fresh snow creating near-daylight conditions and air so crisp it feels like you could break it with a slice of your hand. pc.gc.ca/princealbert

ON FROZEN POND

Drive about an hour northeast of Thunder Bay on the Trans-Canada Highway and you'll find yourself in the town of Dorion, on the shores of the narrow thumb of Black Bay. This bay, an offshoot of Lake Superior, tends to freeze ahead of the Great Lake—and it does so more smoothly and consistently. That's when the fun starts.

Snow-kiting season starts when the ice is thick and the snow has stayed. Think kiteboarding, but you stay dry and put a snowboard or skis on your feet. It's likely best that you have tried and succeeded at traditional kiteboarding before you ride the ice; but even as a spectator sport, this flipside of Lake Superior is worth checking out. superiorkiteboarding.ca

COOL INITIATIVE

TRANS CANADA TRAIL UPGRADES

You know the TCT is the world's longest trail. You know it runs through every province and territory in Canada. But did you know Destination Canada (our national tourism organization) and the Trans Canada Trail signed a memorandum of understanding in Fall 2022? Eleanor McMahon, President and CEO of the Trans Canada Trail, said "Our research tells us that trails are vital in supporting the well-being of Canadians and that trails tourism is an underleveraged opportunity in Canada. We have a tremendous opportunity to activate Canada's trail-based tourism economy, supporting job creation, economic development in local communities and regenerative tourism."

This translates into millions of dollars being allocated to trail upgrades, awareness, tourism product development and other initiatives. Since 80 per cent of us live within 30 minutes of the trail and there are more than 28,000 kilometres to explore—in all seasons—the possibilities are endless. tctrail.ca

COOL SKILLS

AVALANCHE SAFETY

If you're planning to explore the mountainous backcountry this winter, you should fall into one of two categories: you've taken an avalanche safety course, or you're about to. If you're the latter and live within a drive of the Calgary area, we recommend

Yamnuska's Avalanche Safety Training 1 (AST 1). There's no better way to spend $275 this season. yamnuska.com

COOL GEAR

ARC'TERYX LITRIC

Ten years. That's how long the designer who helped create this revolutionary avalanche airbag backpack toiled toward perfection. You may be familiar with avalanche airbags—we recommend their use for backcountry skiing and boarding—but this is all-new. Using a long-life lithium-ion battery and a high-performance inflation system, the Arc'teryx Litric forgoes compressed air (meaning airline travel is a-OK) while inflating at a rapid pace if the slope slides. It's easily re-packable and each charge is good for two inflations. The system adds just over a kilogram to your choice of 16-, 32- or 42-litre backpack. Made in partnership with ORTOVOX, look for this game-changer on shelves over winter. arcteryx.com

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: TOURISM SASKATCHEWAN/ERIC LINDBERG; ISTOCK; CHILE JURGENSON; ISTOCK

TRAVEL GUIDE SPECIAL

GREATEST HITS COMING TO ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA IN 2023

JAN **©DISNEY'S 100 YEARS OF WONDER**
The Walt Disney Company is celebrating 100 years of wonder with special events, experiences, and limited-time offerings at the ©Disneyland Resort in Anaheim. There will be two all-new nighttime spectaculars, never before seen parades, special food offerings and more! The celebration will take place throughout the resort all year long. disneyparks.disney.go.com

FEB **BLACK HISTORY PARADE & UNITY FAIR**
For over 40 years, the annual celebration has kicked off Black History Month in Downtown Anaheim, campaigning for inclusive world history year-round. The parade highlights important community members and groups while sharing black history along with plenty of delicious food and entertainment. oc-hc.org

MAR **WONDERCON**
The expanded Anaheim Convention Center now comfortably accommodates this event produced by Comi-Con International. Each year, 70,000+ fans and industry leaders converge around comic-book, anime, sci-fi and film culture, and cosplay. comic-con.org/wea

APR **ANGELS BASEBALL**
Catch a game at Angel Stadium as the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim kick off another baseball season. Snack on nachos or peanuts and grab a beer at Anaheim's very own Brewery X, now located inside the stadium. angelsbaseball.com

MAY **GARDEN GROVE STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL**
For over 60 years, the neighbouring city of Garden Grove has brought the community together in celebration of the area's prolific strawberry fields. The legendary Strawberry Festival includes a parade, rides, contests, games, festive floats, entertainment, strawberry themed-food and more for the whole family to enjoy. strawberryfestival.org

JUN **VIDCON**
VidCon returns to the Anaheim Convention Center where the world's leading digital creators, platform innovators, and fans converge in one place. VidCon invites creators, fans and brands all together to experience the online magic. vidcon.com

JUL **OC FAIR**
The summertime fair in nearby Costa Mesa is a must-visit event. Its concert series features classic rock tributes and has a steady reggae presence which sets the stage for bigger acts. Rides, games, a petting zoo and exotic dining options go far beyond typical carnival fare. ocfair.com

AUG **VANS US OPEN**
Don't miss the annual US Open Surf Competition in nearby Huntington Beach. Soak up the sun while watching California's talented surfers take on the waves while exploring local artisan vendors, workshops, diverse food offerings and other sporting competitions including BMX and skateboarding. vansusopenofsurfing.com

SEPT **BEER SCENE**
Anaheim, a city founded by German immigrants is now home to over 20 breweries. Visitors now have several options to taste the unique flavors of Southern California, where there's always fun on tap. Experience countless beers, ciders and wines at local favourites: Unsung, Ballast Point, Brewery X, Radiant Beer Co., Karl Strauss and more! Don't forget to try Brewheim's special craft beers in celebration of Oktoberfest all month long! visitanaheim.org/blog/stories/post/guide-to-anaheim-beercation

OCT **ANAHEIM'S FALL FESTIVAL & HALLOWEEN PARADE**
First led by Babe Ruth in 1924, this annual pageant attracted 150,000 spectators and was televised across Southern California at the height of its popularity. Now, a new generation has taken up the mantle of organizing, float-building and performing the parade route, uniting all tourists and locals alike. downtownanaheim.com/events

NOV **ANAHEIM DUCKS HOCKEY**
Cheer on the Anaheim Ducks as they kick off another hockey season at their home stadium, Honda Center. Experience Honda Center's new food offerings at their concession stands, restaurants and suites as well as the food trucks at Puck Drop Patio. Honda Center has also introduced mobile ordering, to avoid the lines and give guests more time to enjoy the games. nhl.com/ducks

DEC **MUZEO EXPRESS**
At the end of each year, Muzeo Museum and Cultural Center team up with the Train Collectors Association and the Toy Train Operating Society to create elaborate seasonal model train displays. The interactive exhibit includes life-sized railway history unique to Southern California and viewings of holiday favourite, The Polar Express on select evenings. muzeo.org

Check out **visitanaheim.org** for more info on your next Anaheim vacation!

visit Anaheim

COOL FITNESS

DOG SKIJORING

Got a dog that likes to run—no, *needs* to run? Pack up your skate-skiing Nordic gear, order the Omnijore Dog Joring System from Ruffwear ($225; ruffwear.com) and get ready for a wild ride. You ski, and Fido, attached via long-lead harness, provides some extra pup-power to create a dynamic duo. Check your local ski area for regulations—or use backcountry touring skis and head off-piste.

COOL CAMPING

TWO OF ONTARIO'S BEST

Camping might just be best in winter. No bugs. No crowds. Skiing, skating, snowshoeing and crisp air that invigorates the soul. Maybe you'll spot a trace of the aurora borealis on the northern horizon, or a moondog above a frozen lake? Even if you don't own a wall-tent or -30 sleeping bag, you can still partake.

We love the simple cabins ($135 per night) at **Arrowhead Provincial Park**, near Huntsville. A good step up from tenting, these cozy units are located near the wooded skating trail and next to an extensive cross-country network.

Or head to **Silent Lake Provincial Park**, to the east of Arrowhead, and book a yurt ($99 per night) in the forest. Simple beds and bunkbeds inside and a firepit, barbecue and picnic table outside may just be the decompression trip you need. ontarioparks.com

COOL VIEWS

CAPE SMOKEY, NOVA SCOTIA

From the grassroots ski-bum days of the 1970s to today, and the installation and operation of Atlantic Canada's first and only gondola, one thing has not changed at Cape Smokey: the views from atop Cape Breton Island's 320-metre massif. Extending over the Cape Breton Highlands and down to the frigid Atlantic coast, it's worth the eight-minute ride to the top for this vista alone. Clip-in and ski right to Cabot Trail or snowshoe a two-hour return trek from the summit to a serene lake. capesmokey.ca

FROM TOP: ISTOCK; DAVID WEBB; TOURISM NOVA SCOTIA/ @DAVEYANDSKY

NOT COOL

ALL-SEASON TIRES

Still a holdout on winter tires? Get a bus pass, please. For the rest of us, we know true 3PMSF (three-peak mountain snowflake) winter tires are a must for driving in winter. Stopping distances are reduced by up to three car-lengths at just 50 km/h; rubber stays grippy at even Winnipeg-winter-levels of cold. Need proof? During the first winter that Quebec mandated winter tires, back in '08, La Belle Province saw 600 fewer auto accidents.

There are a lot of great options on the market—we like the Gislaved Nord*Frost 200. Because if the Swedes can't make a good snow tire, who can? gislaved.ca

NOT COOL

SKIS ON THE INSIDE

Unless you enjoy the thrill of a decapitation risk every time you drive to the slopes, it may be time to invest in a roof rack. We like the modular style and quality build of Thule's system. Match a set of Wingbar Evo crossbars ($800) with the Thule Snowpack (from $430) and you have a winning setup.

Don't ski? You still want to save the interior of your ride from mud, snow, ice, salt and grime. A rooftop basket, like the Canyon XT ($600), is ideal for snowshoers and winter campers, and snaps on the Wingbar Evo with ease. thule.com

NOT COOL

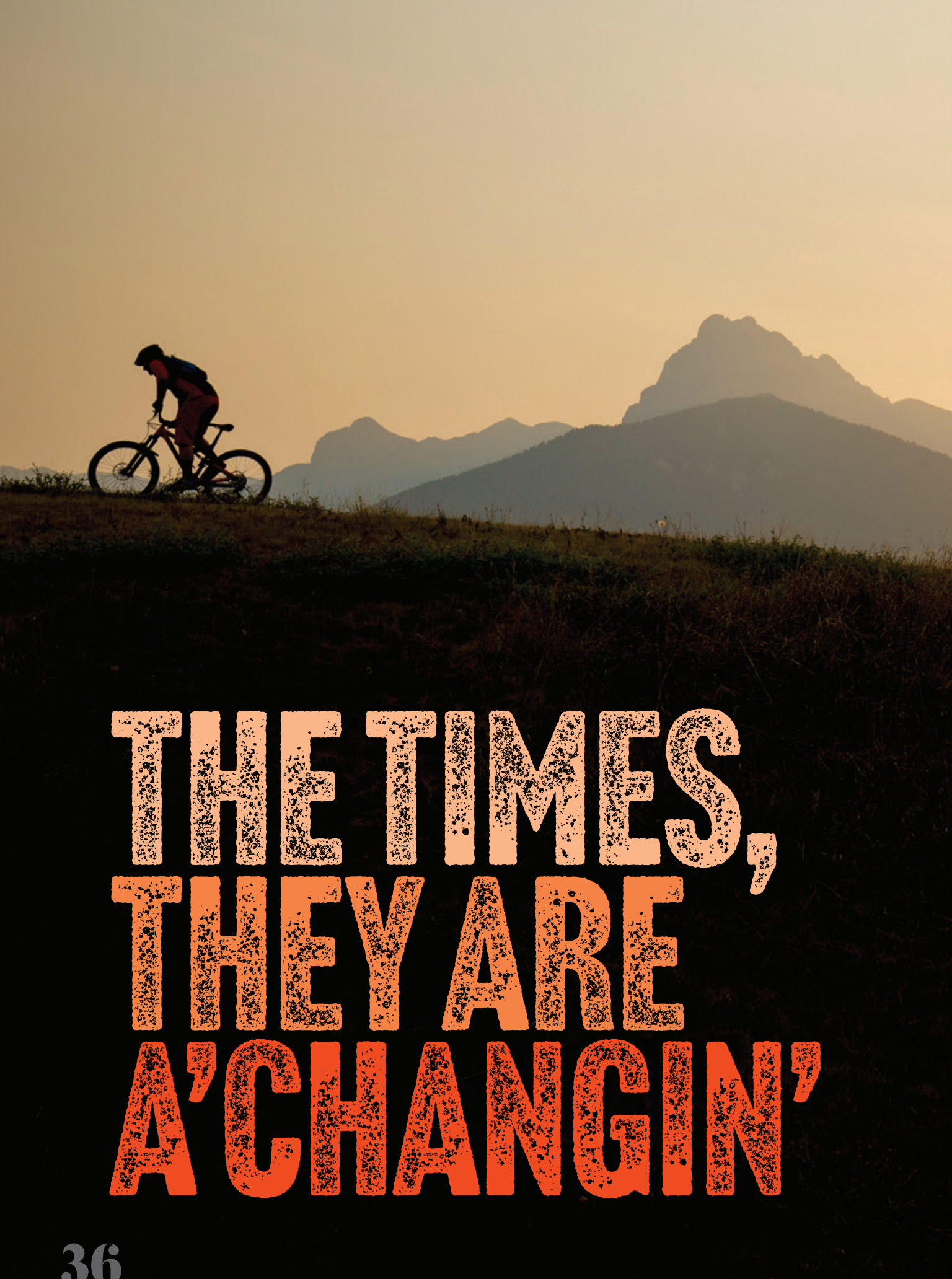
FAIRWEATHER CYCLING

What, you don't ride in winter? Why not? Whether you live in Victoria or Sault Ste. Marie, year-round cycling is always an option.

For the rainy coast, invest in wet-weather gear—like the Transit Jacket and Pants from Showers Pass (from $175; showerspass.ca).

In snowier climes, you'll need traction. A fat bike could be your steed of choice—but if you'd prefer to keep a one-bike garage, just swap out for studded tires, like the Schwalbe Marathon Winter Plus ($120; schwalbetires.com).

FROM LEFT: ISTOCK; THULE; ISTOCK



THE TIMES, THEY ARE A'CHANGIN'

ISTOCK

OUR PASSIONS DEPEND ON INTACT NATURAL SPACES, RECREATIONAL ACCESS AND FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS. ALL OF THIS AND MORE IS IN JEOPARDY FROM CLIMATE CHANGE. SO, WHAT WILL OUTDOOR RECREATION LOOK LIKE IN THE YEARS AND DECADES TO COME? WHAT CHANGES CAN WE EXPECT AND HOW WILL THEY AFFECT OUR OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES?

By Ryan Stuart

Boil it down and climate change is about cumulative impacts. A two-degree shift in temperature is insignificant on its own, but spread across the globe, it melts glaciers, washes away shorelines, crumbles mountains, burns forests, dries out rivers and pushes species to extinction.

In other words, climate change is having a major impact on outdoor recreation and wild spaces.

In the following series, we will explore some of the ways a shifting climate is affecting, and will affect, the way we experience our favourite playgrounds. You'll read about what you can do to stop the spread of invasive species, how to stay safe in crumbling mountains, why wolverines and skiers don't mix and how to save coastlines from sea level rise.

Researching these stories, we learned a lot of alarming information, but that's not what stuck. No matter how dire the scenario, every one of the dozen or so experts we talked to still has hope. Brooklyn Rushton summed it up best. A climbing guide who literally watches glaciers melting, she also has a masters in climate change and is writing a related PhD thesis.

"It's easy to be depressed about the destruction humans are doing," she says. "But I like to think about how any massive change also brings new life and growth. It is an opportunity to learn and go forward, in a better, more sustainable way."

NAVIGATING THE NEW

Climate change is changing the mountains. To stay safe, follow the guides.

A map doesn't lie. But that doesn't mean it's always right. Especially these days.

That's the lesson Brooklyn Rushton learned in Jasper National Park's Tonquin Valley last summer. The topographic map told her she was standing on the Fraser Glacier but surrounded by dirt and rock, she saw a different reality. The glacier had retreated 500 metres upslope.

"Maps and guidebooks are out of date," says the aspiring mountain guide. "Because the mountains are changing so rapidly, you can't expect the terrain to look the same as it did even five years ago." (Let alone when cartographers made the maps or climbers wrote the route description.)

Rushton understands this reality better than most. She did her master's in climate change and recently finished a paper on the impact of climate change on guiding. For the latter, she interviewed members of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides. Ninety-nine per cent told her global warming was changing their job. They told her about classic climbs disappearing as glaciers and snowfields melt, increased rockfall from melting ice and permafrost and the unpredictability brought by extreme weather events.

It's all forcing them to be both more proactive *and* more reactive. To prepare for increased uncertainty and risk, guiding companies are investing in better weather forecasting and pre-trip hazard assessments. Often that leads to avoiding areas they historically worked in because the risks are too high or evacuation too difficult. At the same time, they're taking a humbler and more flexible attitude into the mountains. Instead of counting on climbing a route with tried-and-true tactics, they're making more judgement calls in the moment.

It's important insight both in understanding the local impacts of climate change and how to travel safely in an increasingly dynamic environment, says Rushton.

"I think we can learn a lot from mountain guides," she says. "Things are going to be different. You have to be adaptable and approach everything with fresh eyes."

Glacier recession is so dramatic in certain areas that traditional climbing routes are being redrawn and re-imagined season-after-season. Some are vanishing entirely. (Glacier recession in Jasper's Columbia Icefields pictured above.)

PARTICIPATION RIPPLE

Changes in the weather will change how and when we play.

Will our recreational pursuits further give way to the needs of vulnerable species?

> **Maps and guidebooks are out of date. Because the mountains are changing so rapidly you can't expect the terrain to look the same as it did even five years ago"**

Guide Brooklyn Rushton interviewed members of the ACMG for her master's degree—99 per cent told her that climate change was affecting their jobs. The takeaway? Listen to the people who spend time in the mountains.

Wolverines like cold, inhospitable places—the kind of habitat softies like wolves and cougars avoid. That's even true for raising their kits. Wolverine mothers make dens in early February, usually partially out of snow, in places where the powder falls deep and lingers until the new family abandons the den in May.

Few other animals use this habitat—except humans searching for north-facing powder slopes. As winters become warmer and shorter, skiers are going to focus more on this terrain, to the detriment of wolverines.

"Wolverines don't want to be around humans," says Matthew Scrafford, a scientist with Wildlife Conservation Society Canada who studies the largest member of the weasel family.

"As we see an increase in magnitude of recreation in these areas, wolverines could be pushed out of their optimal denning habitat."

It's one example of how climate change will alter when and where we recreate, and the ripple effect shifts in participation will have.

"There's a lot we can think about and predict about future use patterns, but we're mostly guessing," says Matthieu Roy, the chief trail experience officer with the Trans Canada Trail.

Looking at other areas with hotter weather is the best proxy, he says. That means more cycling and paddling, less ice fishing and snowshoeing. And for summer sports, people tend to recreate earlier in the day and deeper into the shoulder seasons.

"Does that mean we need to extend the hours of operation for a park? Do we have to change the washroom cleaning schedule to accommodate early risers? Or keep campgrounds open longer in the fall?" Roy wonders. "We need more data before we can make these decisions."

They also have to consider that British Columbia or Ontario isn't California or Arizona. Tree cover might make unbearable temperatures in the desert rideable in the north, says AJ Strawson, the executive director of the Canadian chapter of the International Mountain Bike Association. The trends aren't all moving in one direction, either. More people working from home spreads out use throughout the day and the week. But if snowstorms become less common, climate change may foster an attitude among powder-loving skiers of, "get it before it's gone, and we will see busier peak times," he says.

Then there are forest fires and floods and hurricanes. As they increase in occurrence and severity, we're already avoiding them. August was prime mountain biking season in BC, but after several smoky summers, riders are now opting for the spring and fall trips, Strawson says.

These shifts create a lot of potential repercussions. It's impossible for us to anticipate them all, but the more we invest in research—for instance, studying the interaction of wolverines and backcountry skiers—the better equipped we'll be to act before it's too late.

ISTOCK (4X)

THE AGE OF ALIENS

Climate change will benefit invasive species—but recreation can help stop the spread.

In 2007, biologists in Kejimkujik National Park and National Historic Site realized they had a big problem. In the maritime portion of the Nova Scotia park, eel grass was disappearing at an alarming rate. By 2010, only two per cent of the intertidal meadows remained in the Port Joli estuary. The entire park's ecosystem was suffering—eel grass beds are nursery habitat for juvenile fish and invertebrates, and all the bigger animals that eat them.

The culprit was the European green crab. It had arrived in Nova Scotian waters in the 1980s, likely in a ship's ballast waters. Native to Europe and northern Africa, it didn't have any natural predators in the Maritimes and as a prolific breeder—females can produce 185,000 eggs at a time—it quickly increased its range, with a detrimental impact on ecosystems, particularly eel grass meadows.

Green crabs are the definition of an invasive species. And climate change will likely favour these invaders. They often out-compete native animals and plants, particularly after major disturbances like extreme weather events, and have a higher tolerance for variable conditions, like warmer weather, says Kelli Sherman, the operations supervisor for the Canadian Council on Invasive Species.

"Invasive species love degraded ecosystems," she says. "Climate change is going to exacerbate their spread."

There are at least 1,400 invasive species in Canada, ranging from wild pigs to strangling vines; tiny insects to hefty carp. Collectively they do a lot of damage. The council reckons NGOs, municipalities and the provincial government spend $50.8 million a year trying to control invasive species just in Ontario. Nationally, invasive species cost the forestry industry $720 million in losses every year. And Sherman says invasive species decimate biodiversity—they might be responsible for 40 per cent of all species extinctions, says the United Nations. The best strategy for controlling them is containment.

"A lot of the spread of invasive species is through recreational vectors," Sherman says.

The most well-known path is moving dirty boats and ATVs. Invasive species hitchhike along to the next trail or lake. But muddy hiking boots, mountain bike tires and even tent stakes can also transport plant seeds hundreds and thousands of kilometres. Much of the council's work focuses on educating people about cleaning their toys before hitting the road, particularly when moving from south to north, says Sherman.

ISTOCK (3X)

LEFT: Green crabs are a species invasive to Nova Scotian waters, likely having arrived via a ship's ballast. BELOW: Kejimkujik National Park and National Historic Site has seen an influx of these crabs, negatively affecting the local ecosystems and out-competing some native species.

> **"Invasive species love degraded ecosystems. Climate change is going to exacerbate their spread"**

"Typically, the more remote the place, the fewer invasive species present, the bigger the issue if you bring in new ones," she says.

That's because once invasive aliens are established, they are almost impossible to eradicate. Though there are exceptions.

In Kejimkujik, Parks Canada started trapping the green crabs and replanting eel grass beds. They've removed millions of the pests and the effort is paying off. The eel grass has reclaimed more than 30 per cent of its former range.

THIS IS GOING TO HURT

Climate change is a health emergency, too.

It only took one mountain bike ride for Carl Tessmann to feel the smoke in his body.

"It burned the back of my throat, I had a bit of a cough, and my voice was deeper than usual," he says.

This was last summer, and the forest fires weren't even close. Tessman was riding near Whistler, British Columbia, while the smoke was coming from northern Washington State, a couple of hours drive away.

"You don't need fire at your doorstep to be impacted," says Jeff Eyamie, Air Quality Officer with Health Canada. "Wildfire smoke can transport all around the world."

The smoke degrades air quality and research links it to breathing issues, low birth weights and increased risk of stroke, cardiovascular disease and other illnesses. Climate change will increase the number and intensity of forest fires, leading to more smoke in the air and more health issues. It's one of the more obvious and direct ways that global warming threatens human health, but it's definitely not the only one.

The Climate Atlas of Canada, a multimedia website produced by the Prairie Climate Centre at the University of Winnipeg, notes climate change will increase the number of days rated as extremely hot and extremely cold. But there are also more nuanced health concerns. Warmer waters favour algal blooms that produce harmful toxins. Longer growing seasons mean more pollen in the air—and more sneezing, coughing and congestion for allergy sufferers. More frost-free days and wetter weather encourages mosquito production. Along with the diseases they carry, like West Nile Virus, and the range where they can spread those diseases.

One of the most concerning diseases for hikers, bikers and anyone that likes spending time outdoors is Lyme disease, says Robbin Lindsay of the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg. It's mostly carried by deer or blacklegged ticks and passed on to humans when they bite. As warmer winters allow blacklegged ticks to expand their range, they bring Lyme disease with them and infect a growing number of Canadians. Cases have increased across Canada from 144 in 2009 to more than 2,800 in 2021, according to Health Canada data. The hard-to-diagnose disease can have long-lasting and debilitating effects.

"We see, essentially, an epidemic of Lyme disease in Canada," Lindsay says.

The same could be said for wildfire smoke. Smoky skies were a rare event on the BC coast, but Tessman says they are now so common people talk about a fifth season between summer and fall: "smoke season."

Research shows the impacts of breathing in forest fire smoke are short-lived, but the mental strain of thick smoke and the threat of fires burning homes and towns continues to grow. Climate change's most obvious threats may be physical, but with so much to worry about the most lasting impacts may prove to be mental.

Climate change brings health hazards to outdoor enthusiasts.

REWILDING FOR RESILIENCE

When it comes to fighting climate change, nature beats technology.

When post-tropical storm Fiona slammed into the Maritimes last September, Danika van Proosdij watched the sustained winds and storm-surge with more worry than most. The professor at Saint Mary's University in Halifax resides in the path of the storm, but the trepidation was more to do with her role as the director of the TransCoastal Adaptations Centre for Nature-based Solutions. Fiona was about to test her work.

Immense storms like Fiona and other extreme weather events are the most obvious impacts of climate change. They destroy all kinds of human-made infrastructure, but the recreation kind—trails, campgrounds and outhouses—are particularly vulnerable.

BC Parks says fires and floods have cost the agency an average of $3 million per year over the last five years. In 2018, an independent consultant estimated Parks Canada needs to spend between $1.6 billion and $3.3 billion to prepare its parks and sites for extreme weather. Faced with these steep price tags, both agencies, and many others, are reconsidering how and where they build (and rebuild) with an eye on durability and sustainability. Often that means looking to nature for guidance.

"More than ever, thoughtful planning and appropriate design is important when building resilient trails and other park infrastructure," says Danika Medinski, BC Parks's capital investment facilities engineer.

This is most easily done with new projects, says Ted Morton, a trails technologist with McElhanney's Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure, based in Kamloops, BC. For instance, building a bridge to withstand a 100-year flood event, instead of the old 25-year standard, or over-engineering a trail kiosk so it can handle a record snowfall.

"Adding additional resiliency in design has become the normal way of thinking," he says.

The challenge is cost. Building to a higher standard can easily double the price of a project, says Morton. On the flipside, not doing so may mean rebuilding the infrastructure every few years.

Protect Our Winters Canada helps organize outdoor enthusiasts, in order to inform decision-making and spearhead climate action.

TAKING ACTION

POW Canada on the most important thing you can do.

To John Meisner, political action on greenhouse gas targets is like progression in sport. Day-to-day it happens in slow-motion: seconds shaved off the marathon time or a smoother landing to a freestyle ski trick.

Storm damage to the popular Berg Lake Trail in Mount Robson Provincial Park, BC. TOP LEFT: Fiona's aftermath on Nova Scotia's north shore.

> "More than ever, thoughtful planning and appropriate design is important when building resilient trails and other park infrastructure"

That's why Parks Canada and BC Parks aren't automatically fixing everything that gets destroyed.

On July 1, 2021, just as record heat eased in BC, an intense rainstorm hit Mount Robson Provincial Park. The Robson River burst its banks, flooding a campground and shelter, washing away part of the Berg Lake Trail and damaging bridges. Instead of sending crews right in, BC Parks has spent more than a year considering its options for rerouting vulnerable sections to make the trail more resilient to future flooding events.

That often means working with nature, instead of against it, says Saint Mary's van Proosdij. Since 2018, the Insurance Bureau of Canada has recognized that natural environments have an important role in preventing catastrophic losses.

Tree and shrub root systems resist erosion. Wetlands absorb flood waters and dampen wave energy, protecting shorelines. That's why van Proosdij thinks, "it's important to preserve natural ecosystems where they exist and restore what's lost."

Her team works with various levels of government and NGOs to reestablish more natural flows to rivers, tides and beaches. The projects cost less than, say, raising the height of all of Nova Scotia's 214 kilometres of dikes to meet future sea level rise. They focus on armouring the critical infrastructure and removing barriers everywhere else. The return of rivers and tides and living shorelines promote native plant growth, biodiversity and carbon sequestration. It's better for recreation. And it makes the coast more resilient.

In the aftermath of Fiona, van Proosdij revisited sites she had worked on in PEI. Where native plants lined the shore, they had absorbed the wave energy and there was little damage. In comparison, nearby rock-protected shorelines had eroded up three to four metres.

"When we restore and rebuild natural habitat, nature benefits and we benefit," says van Proosdij. "We all can win."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ISTOCK; BC PARKS; ISTOCK

"At first it seems really hard, but over time you look back and realize it's happening and it's doable," says Meisner, the content strategist with Protect Our Winters Canada. His political parallel, "There's no debate anymore on whether climate change is happening and its impact on the environment. That's progress."

POW Canada works to mobilize the adventure sport community to take action on climate change and other environmental issues. So, we thought we'd ask Meisner for suggestions on what we should be doing to play our part in solving the climate crisis. Instead of a laundry list of daily actions, Meisner had a surprisingly simple request—vote.

"We like to encourage action from the top down," he explains. "There is a role for grassroots, personal efforts, but we think influencing federal targets is more important."

It's a matter of scale: the average Canadian will produce about 1,152 metric tonnes of carbon emissions in a lifetime. That's among the highest globally but is still less than one second's worth of global emissions.

"Large scale change is what we are after," says Meisner.

To help make it happen, POW equips its 25,000-person membership with tool kits, advice and election report cards. The goal is to inform, empower and offer hope. Because, Meisner says, no one landed their first backflip or set a PR without first believing they could. ✖

THE WILD EDGE

A 300-KILOMETRE SKI JOURNEY ALONG THE HIGH ARCTIC'S NORTH WATER POLYNYA ILLUMINATES LIFE ALONG CANADA'S WILDEST EDGE

Story & Photos by Frank Wolf

We're skiing along what looks and feels like two worlds colliding—a place more akin to the moon than Earth. All hard edges and light, the shattered landscape is littered with broken plates of ice, immobilized upright in the frozen alabaster plain that stretches endlessly before us. Our goal today is to get off the sea and around the toe of a massive unnamed glacier that will lead us onto the Devon Ice Cap. Weaving through the icy maze, we spot a stark brown blob in the distance ahead of us. As we get closer, we see that this anomaly has life—it's wiggling around and flashes six large ivory tusks. We suddenly realize we've come upon a group of three walruses basking in the sun by an ice hole.

Reputedly one of the most dangerous creatures in the Arctic, walruses have been known to attack kayaks and other boats and have even chased people for short bursts along the ice. These two adults and young one are extremely docile, though, and allow my travel partners Dave Garrow and John McClelland to settle in six metres from them to observe, while I circle around and snap a few images. This Atlantic species can reach over 1,000 kilograms in weight and is layered in thick folds of blubber, reminiscent of Jabba the Hutt from *Star Wars*. Quite fitting in this alien landscape.

The biggest of the trio exhales, its pungent breath rolling over us like a tidal wave, reflecting its diet of benthic mollusks that it harvests from the ocean floor. Some walruses have been known to also kill and eat seals, but those rogue beasts have deep yellow tusks stained by the flesh of their prey. These three look like they've just been to the dentist for a cleaning as their tusks are pearly white, so we know they're of the pescatarian persuasion and we have no reason to fear.

WE'VE COME TO Devon Island—the largest uninhabited island on this planet—to investigate the North Water Polynya. Only a kilometre out from us and our big-toothed friends, the polynya is a year-round area of open water. Despite temperatures in the -50-degree Celsius range in the deep of winter, this ocean ▸

zone—called *Pikialasorsuaq* in Inuktitut—manages to stay liquid due to the upwelling of warmer south Atlantic waters by a powerful system of currents constantly cycling up from the deep. At 85,000 square kilometres, it is the largest polynya on Earth. As a result, it's one of the most biologically productive marine areas in the Arctic Ocean—an ecologically important microclimate that provides rest and sustenance for species like bowhead whales, narwhal, belugas and these chunky pinnipeds lying in front of us.

Plankton that grows under the polynya's shelf ice is the base lifeform in the synchronized food chain here. The plankton are fed on by fish like cod, which are eaten by species like the ringed seal, which in turn are predated upon by apex predators like the polar bear. This is truly a place on the outskirts of the planet; the wild edge of life and culture that is home to a surprising collection of castoffs and misfits uniquely qualified to call this place home.

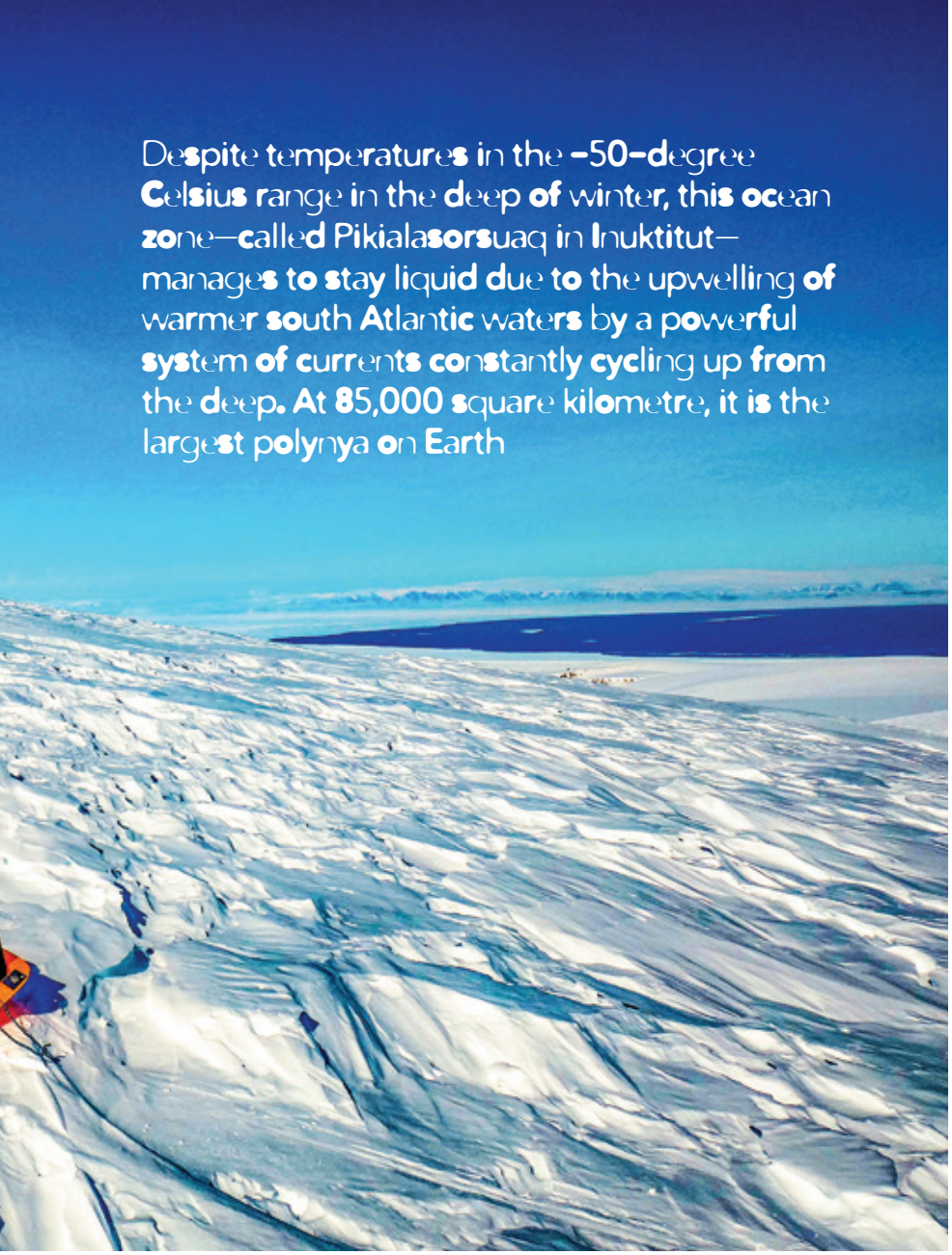
WE ARRIVE IN the hamlet of Grise Fiord on Ellesmere Island via Kenn Borek airlines. A small outfit that flies twin otter planes, KB runs two regular weekly flights to this community from Resolute Bay, with the planes having a capacity of only nine passengers and 1,100 kilograms of payload.

Our aircraft banks off the surrounding mountain faces that hem in Grise and lands smartly on the short gravel runway. In terms of living on the edge, the 130 people who reside here in one of Canada's northernmost communities literally do—perched on the high Arctic shores of Jones Sound with Devon Island 70 kilometres across the way. The original name for the community was coined by Norwegian explorer Otto Sverdrup in 1893. He heard the snorting and grunting of a colony of walrus as he passed by. They sounded like a plethora of pigs to him, so he called the place Grise, which means pig in Norwegian. Though still commonly referred to by this name, it's been given a new and more appropriate handle by the Inuit—Aujuittuq—which means "Place that never thaws." It's May 6, 2022, and despite the sun circling around us with 24 hours of daylight, everything is still locked in snow and ice with the temperature a relatively balmy -12 Celsius.

The people here are very warm and friendly, giving us a wave, a smile, or a "Welcome to Grise Fiord!" greeting as we pass by. Contrary to their sunny disposition, the origins of this community are rather dark. In order to claim Ellesmere as part of Canada to consolidate sovereignty over the region, in 1953 the government

TOP: Dave working his way up to the Devon Ice cap from the sea ice, with the polynya in the background. ABOVE: Dave and John observe three walruses, hauled out on the sea ice.

Despite temperatures in the –50-degree Celsius range in the deep of winter, this ocean zone—called Pikialasorsuaq in Inuktitut—manages to stay liquid due to the upwelling of warmer south Atlantic waters by a powerful system of currents constantly cycling up from the deep. At 85,000 square kilometre, it is the largest polynya on Earth



TOP: Kids riding their bikes along the shores of Grise Fiord. ABOVE: Polar bear tracks over the sea ice—one of many sets the trio encountered during their expedition.

transplanted Inuit from Nunavik (northern Quebec) to this windswept outpost in order to establish a permanent settlement.

The migrants were promised an improved and more traditional Inuit life in their new home but instead found themselves in a waking nightmare. Unfamiliar with the hunting and fishing in the region, in a land where it's suddenly dark for 24 hours per day in the winter, most of the newcomers wanted to return home but were refused. Many of them starved as they struggled to survive on this moonscape until they were given more aid and taught to hunt and fish the area by Inuit brought up from Pond Inlet and Arctic Bay who were familiar with high Arctic subsistence techniques.

We visit Larry Audlaluk at the hamlet office. He's a prominent local advocate and Member of the Order of Canada, who came here when he was two years old as one of the original transplants from Nunavik with his parents. His father died ten months after they arrived, and he recalls the struggle of trying to survive on this outer fringe of the world. "We were never told we were put here to keep Canada out of the hands of foreign interests… we were just left here and then simply abandoned. My parents called Ellesmere 'Prison Island.'"

In 2010, the residents here were given an official apology and recognition for how they were treated at the time, but, as Larry says, "You can't eat recognition." You'd never assume such sordid history in this seemingly idyllic hamlet, ringed by mountains and fronted by ocean—but a raw wound from the wrongs they endured still lingers beneath the surface.

WE'D PLANNED THIS trip to happen a couple of years ago—but then the pandemic sideswiped that intention. Our supplies had been already shipped up here and they've sat in storage ever since. We do an inventory of the boxes being held at the local grocery store and find that they've been pilfered and we're missing 17 dinners. Whoever grabbed them probably thought we'd never show up to claim them. We fill the gap with instant ramen noodles and rice from the store, then assemble our sleds and equipment for the journey. To expedite our time here, we've arranged with local outfitter Terry Noah to be transported across to Devon by snowmobile to Ward Point, from where we'll ski the sea ice to the polynya, then loop back by traversing the Devon Ice Cap, glide down the Sverdrup Glacier, explore Cape Hardy and then ski across Jones Sound to our finish in Aujuittuq—a 300-kilometre journey.

Terry is only 29 years old but is the go-to guy when it comes to transporting and guiding people around Ellesmere. His father's family were brought in during the 1950's from Arctic Bay to teach the

Nunavik Inuit like Larry's family how to hunt and fish the area… but they were also not accommodated when they wanted to return home, left to make the best of it with everyone else in Grise.

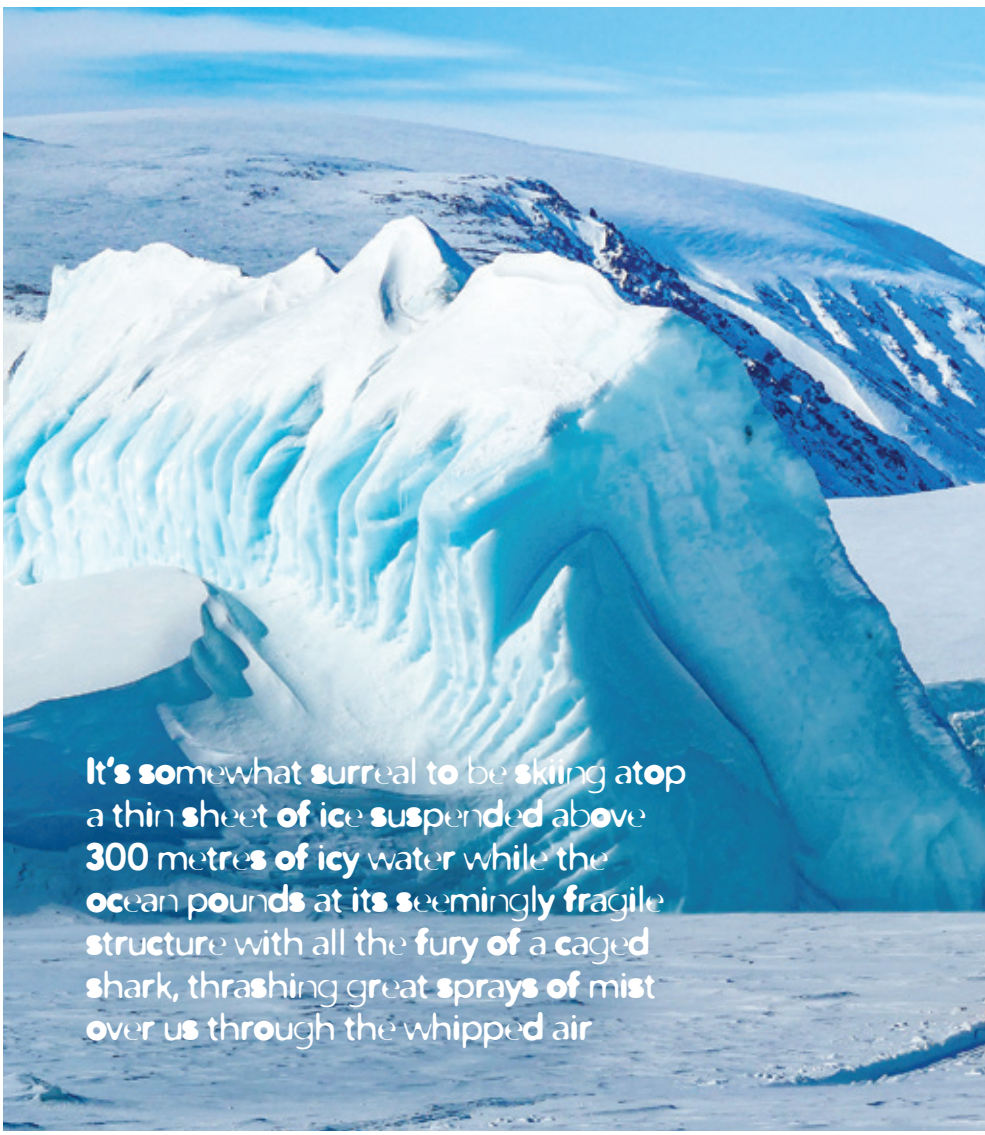
"My father was running a dog team by the time he was 12 years old," Terry says proudly. His dad is now 70 and has effectively passed down his knowledge of the land to his son. Partway across Jones Sound, Terry stops his snow machine suddenly, runs 15 metres back and pounces on a spot in the sea ice. The snow collapses and a seal den is revealed. If he'd had a harpoon, there would have been fresh meat for his dog team.

"How'd you know there was a den here?" Dave asks.

"I could tell by how the snow was formed over this rise. It had an indent in it that tipped me off."

A small capelin lies inside the den, the fish freshly caught by the seal, which left its meal and escaped with its pup in order

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The team shuttles gear over the toe of the Sverdrup glacier to the ice of Jones Sound. Approaching the entrance to the Devon Ice Cap from Cape Fitzroy. John checks a seal den freshly dug up by a polar bear. An iceberg materializes from the fog on the east coast of Devon.



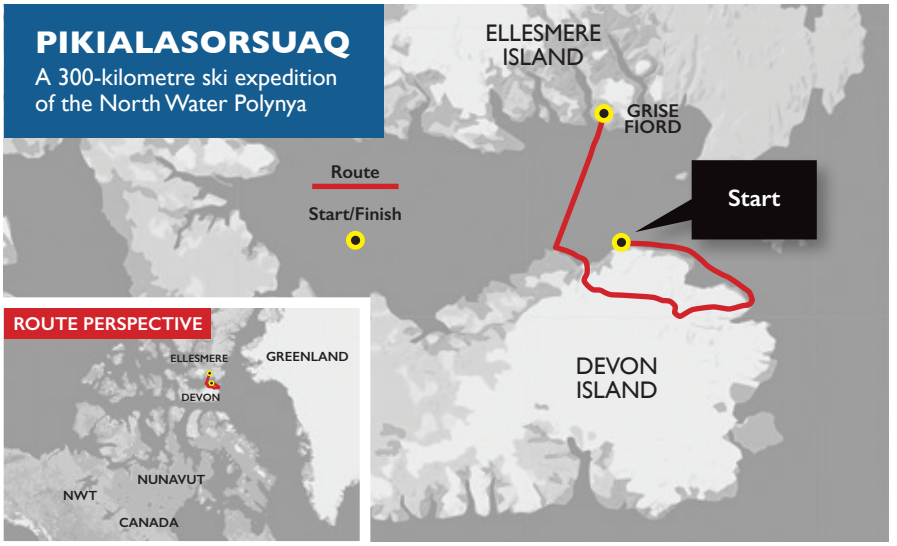
not to end up on Terry's chopping block. We carry on across and are eventually dropped off in an area of broken ice. As we unpack, we discover that one of our four-litre fuel cans has sprung a leak and lost half its contents during the bumpy ride across. We make do by filling a couple of our water bottles with gasoline borrowed from Terry's jerry can, which our multi-fuel stove can still burn.

As we set up, Terry tells us a story of being attacked by a polar bear when he and his father were out hunting. He was butchering a seal when the Nanuk popped out from behind a pile of broken ice and jumped him.

"The bear was on me, and my dad was hitting it with a seal hook. I rolled and reached out for the gun, grabbed it and killed the bear while it was right on top of me."

After telling the story, he looks around.

"There's lots of bears around here… are you guys prepared?"



"We've got a shotgun, cracker pistol and bear fence." Dave replies.

"Sounds like you guys are ready," Terry says. "Watch out in this rough ice. Bears sleep during the day behind the broken pieces… you might wake one up as you ski by. Keep your eyes and ears open."

With that warning, he and Nolan jump on their machines and are off, leaving us to our mission.

THE NEXT DAY, we ski through a patina of jagged panes sprinkled on an ivory sheet. Polar bear tracks are absolutely everywhere, crisscrossing our ski track from every possible direction. We expect one of the beasts to pop up at any moment, so we head to the smooth ice further offshore for better travel—and a better view of our surroundings.

On our way out, we see some very fresh tracks leading to a big hole in a snowbank. John cautiously creeps up to it with shotgun in hand. We peer inside and realize the bear had simply excavated a seal den and quite possibly ate the contents. Looking around we see no sign of the predator, and figure it's been well-fed anyhow. Despite our trepidation, all three of us want to see a polar bear up close and personal; to be in the presence of the supreme hunter and lord of this ice world. Balancing on the fine line of existence, the *Ursus maritimus* depend on ice in order to acquire food. Up here, the ice season is thankfully still consistent and the bear population healthy. A bump of a couple of degrees on the thermometer is all it would take to extend the open water season by a couple of months and put these animals in peril.

On the outer east coast of Devon, a thick fog rolls in, limiting visibility to less than one kilometre. We know the open water of the polynya is not far away but are not exactly sure where. We've had an increase in bird sightings as glaucous gulls, a flock of eider ducks, ravens and snow buntings indicate we are close to this expansive mixing bowl of life.

As we set up camp on the ice, we suddenly stop and gape as a nearby iceberg appears from the mists like a ghost ship. Having calved off from the massive glaciers of Greenland on the other side of Baffin Bay, this behemoth has settled in for the winter, locked solidly in the seasonal ice just off of Devon. The fog closes, and just like that the millennia-old berg slips from view.

The next morning, a heavy southwest wind blows in. Spindrift hisses around our tent, but there is another, more ominous sound rising above it. It's the roar of the polynya, stirred from its misty slumber. We arise from the tent and see that we've camped only a few hundred metres from the open water, its blue line visible just beyond the ice.

After the usual morning of eating breakfast, drinking coffee and melting snow for our daily ration of water, we strike out for the margin. The sea is wild, churning with whitecaps. The stunning peaks of Coburg Island seem just a stone's throw away across Lady Ann Strait. It's somewhat surreal to be skiing atop a thin sheet of ice suspended above 300 metres of icy water while the ocean pounds at its seemingly fragile structure with all the fury of a caged shark, thrashing great sprays of mist over us through the whipped air. Too rough for whale spotting, we veer away from the polynya to our rendezvous with the walruses, and the next phase of our journey across the Devon Ice Cap.

HIGH ON THE Devon Ice Cap, my sled rolls over for the third time in five minutes as we struggle over endless rock-hard sastrugi (snow drifts). The wind is howling at 90 km/h, the spindrift-like sand blasting us in the face as we struggle forward.

It's been a cursed climb up from the sea ice, skirting the toe of an unnamed glacier to get to this point. Our effort pays off as we stand 1,200 metres above sea level and have an unobstructed view of the Pikialasorsuaq, its blue curve cutting into the stark white surroundings. Icebergs that were hundreds of feet high when we passed by them are mere specks on the surrounding shelf, and Greenland is clearly seen on the other side. From this perspective, you can see how crucial the Polynya is to sustaining life up here—a turquoise oasis in a desert of rock and ice.

The ice cap seems to stretch out endlessly, with broad rolls veiling mountains encased in 800 metres of ice. It seems so stark, clean and lifeless. We're not the only visitors up here though, as we pass by the meandering tracks of a wolverine, coming from nowhere and going seemingly to nowhere else. It apparently decided to cut right across Devon Island, straight over the ice cap. We drag sleds laden with all we need to survive out here while this versatile and vicious scavenger travels free and uninhibited, completely at home and comfortable in this most inhospitable of places. I envy its unencumbered efficiency as a I bump along the glacier with my heavy load.

FROM TOP: A polar bear prowls the sea ice in front of Sverdrup Glacier. An ancient Dorset stone dwelling at Cape Hardy on Devon Island. A muskox skull excavated from the ice looks across Jones Sound from Cape Hardy.

My mind wanders to a group of scientists we met en route in Resolute. They were chartering a plane and setting up camp at the centre of this ice cap about 30 kilometres as the raven flies from where we're skiing. There would be four of them up there with two snowmobiles for a month. Their mission was to find a lake that exists under the ice cap using radio echo sounding (RES) technology. If they find the lake, I wonder, then what? Very much the opposite of the efficient wolverine, their operation sounds to me like a Monty Python skit brought to life—the most esoteric and seemingly laughable of studies. I quickly tabulated the cost… it must run at least a couple hundred thousand dollars to have them up there. By comparison we're on a dirtbag budget, having used airline points and camped out in airports to get here. Despite the disparity in our funding however, I suppose what we're doing is no less odd than those glaciologists. None of us really have a good reason to be up here—only the wolverine belongs.

On day six of our crossing of the ice cap, we approach our exit route through the Sverdrup Glacier. We reached a high point of 1,400 metres over the broad expanse of the ice cap a couple of days ago and are now into our final descent back to sea level. The glacier here is quite benign when it comes to crevasses, as high Arctic glaciers tend to be. We probe our campsites every night and any cracks we find are an inch or two wide at most. We have a rope, harnesses and all the other kit required to travel safely over crevasse-strewn terrain, but nothing in the landscape has indicated any hazards so far, so we've skied unroped the whole way.

We ski over a smooth blanket of sparkling diamond snow on a windless, sunny day, the entry to the glacier tongue now in view. John is just in front of me when he suddenly disappears from view. It takes a couple of seconds to process it, but I realize he's just fallen into a crevasse. Only his head is visible in front of his sled. He instinctively caught himself with his arms and has smartly laid his poles across to support his weight. He undoes his harness and I pull the sled away, so it doesn't slip into the crevasse and pull him down. He methodically removes his skis, and Dave tosses him a rope and pulls him clear of the crack.

"My feet were swinging free in the air down there," Johnny says.

He sits contemplating and analyzing the moment aloud: "It was weird, only a couple of seconds before I fell in, my 'Spidey Sense' was tingling. I was going to tell Frank to give me some more space and tell Dave we should rope-up through this section... then *bang*! I went in."

Now we rope up, and then tiptoe for an hour or so until we're safely down in the

flats of Sverdrup. Johnny has a bruised thigh and damaged one of his ski bindings, but we're lucky to have come out of the crevasse incident relatively unscathed—a warning, and a pass, from the high Arctic Gods.

IT'S THE END of day 15, and we're camped on the sea in an area of glare ice about five kilometres west of the toe of Sverdrup. We've just finished dinner and the three of us exit the tent to take in the calm evening. Dave steps out just ahead of me and his eyes suddenly bulge.

"Holy shit! There's a polar bear—right there!"

I stand up and look back over the top of the tent and see it: a large male, only 15 metres away, walking toward our camp. It's coming from the same direction we did so may very well have been tracking us. The red beacon of our tent out here in the open would also have certainly aroused its curiosity. Once we all step outside, the bear seems to shy and turns away. It walks sideways to our camp and gives us a good, long look from every angle. We observe each other for a while, the bear settling down at a safe distance, contemplating us for about 15 more minutes before merging into the broken ice along the shore, not to be seen again.

We're all ecstatic to have seen the bear, this symbol of the high Arctic in its element, visiting us out in this wild setting that it calls home. Though the bears are theoretically the apex predators up here, that isn't really true. People up here predate upon the bears far more than the other way around. Twenty-five of the creatures have been killed so far in the Aujuittuq region this season; 10 of them by trophy hunters who have come up from the south and paid approximately $30,000 to do so. The funds from these hunts inject vital money, but it also leaves me wondering how detrimental it is to remove that many animals from the top of the food chain. I'm only a visitor here though, and the management of polar bears is best entrusted to the Inuit, who have deep bonds with this creature and more than anyone know that their fortunes are interwoven—an ancient symbiosis that transcends our modern view of these animals.

At 1:00 a.m. I awake to the howl of the wind. The tent fabric is smacking my face and I see Dave bracing the tent from the inside with his hands. It dawns on me why this area of sea ice is completely clear of snow. It is directly in line with Cook Creek—a waterway that cuts a deep valley into Devon, which funnels any south wind right over the spot we're camped. Though the tent is anchored down with ice screws, it is sideways to the blast and two of the poles are now permanently bent. We wait it out until 6:00 a.m.; thankful the tent didn't blow away with us in it.

The wind batters us as I manage the stove and snow-melting duties, sitting on my Therm-a-Rest in the vestibule. I unzip the tent door, stepping into the maelstrom to pack up my sled. The wind rams inside and my sleeping pad instantly blows out the small crack at the bottom of the tent like it's been released from a spaceship airlock. It happens so fast I have no chance to grab it and then helplessly stare across Jones Sound as my mattress spins away into space like an untethered astronaut, lost in the ether of this Martian storm.

We plug-on all day in the wind, which becomes more manageable once we clear the fury of the Cook Creek blowhole. We head for the lee of Cape Hardy, a high rocky point that juts into Jones Sound and points directly across to Grise Fiord, 70 kilometres away to the north. Our plane is leaving in a few days, so we have plenty of time and decide to settle in here and take a full day to explore and enjoy the area.

On our day of unstructured play, Dave takes a luxurious afternoon snooze in the tent, while Johnny explores the area along the shore and finds a muskox skull frozen in the sea ice that he excavates and displays on a prominent rock. I wander beyond our camp, over a rise and into a snow-veiled meadow.

Poking around, I find evidence of human habitation. The remains of five structures are lined up along the shore, oval in shape and framed with neatly stacked stones. I've seen these on a past journey—they're prehistoric Dorset dwellings. Positioned for a clear view of the water on either side, the abodes are ideally located for these ancient people to spot game and easily launch boats and sleds.

I climb partway up the rocky peak behind the meadow and settle onto a ledge for a bird's-eye view of the area. I clearly see all five dwellings from my perch, with Jones Sound stretching out toward the distant peaks of Ellesmere. Our journey has only given us only a taste of the challenges these people faced, and an appreciation of their hardy nature. The Dorset existed in a time before modern technology, using whatever they could glean from the surrounding windswept rock and ice.

LIFE ISN'T ALWAYS hard up here though, for the Dorset or for us. When the elements ease, you're really able to savour the reprieve and surrounding beauty. In my windless nook on the slope, it is warm and comfortable. I lay back on the sun-heated stone, close my eyes and drift away into a nap on the edge of the Earth. ✖

The team of Frank Wolf, John McClelland and Dave Garrow on day 20, at the finish in Grise Fiord.

Winter ESSENTIALS

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COMPILED BY EXPLORE STAFF

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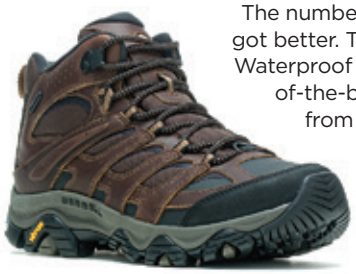
This incredibly warm, incredibly durable and incredibly lightweight snow boot will make you fall in love the second you open up the box. The strong EVA outer shell, in combination with the soft polyester liner, enhances both comfort and insulation. Design-wise, the boot has been inspired by traditional Japanese road worker boots. This is a boot made for harsh, snowy weather conditions.

Arc'teryx Nuclei FL
($350; arcteryx.com)
When do we wear our Nuclei FL? We follow the acronym: F for "fast" and L for "light." Windproof, highly water-resistant and stuffed with light and warm Coreloft synthetic, this puffy is ideal for committed winter ascents and athletic snowshoe trips. Slip on the insulated hood when the wind howls and watch the DWR shed the wet stuff.

Merrell Moab 3 Thermo Mid Waterproof
($215; merrell.com)



The number-one hiking boot just got better. The Moab 3 Thermo Mid Waterproof combines the same out-of-the-box comfort you expect from a Moab with PrimaLoft® Gold Eco insulation and Vibram® IceTrek for unparalleled winter performance.

Helly Hansen LIFALOFT Air Insulator Jacket
($350; hellyhansen.com)

Helly Hansen's LIFALOFT insulation combines light weight and breathability with high-levels warmth retention in a low-maintenance package. As such, the DWR-treated, five-pocket Air Insulator Jacket makes an ideal layering piece during winter's deep freeze or worn on its own during milder days. Plus, you have to check out this unit's unique exposed interior insulation, which further enhances breathability without reducing warmth-retention.

Taku Waterproof Jacket
($489; mustangsurvival.com)
With dedicated features like the Marine Loop and neoprene cuffs for exceptional protection, this versatile waterproof jacket performs in various inshore marine environments. While the streamlined design reduces unnecessary bulk, it utilizes articulated shoulders and elbows to allow for high comfort and mobility. Three-layer MarineSpec SP construction creates breathable and durable waterproof performance.

Skwalwen Botanicals Kw'as Cocomint Lip Balm
($8; skwalwen.com)
This luxurious lip balm combines organic coconut oil, cocoa butter and peppermint essential oil to condition the lips, leaving them fresh and silky smooth. These botanical ingredients are perfectly balanced for a long-lasting balm that helps keep lips healthy.

Golden Destination App
(Free; tourismgolden.com/localapp)
Looking for an adventure vacation this winter? Try Golden, British Columbia—and start with their new Golden Destination App. Find accommodations, places to eat and drink, activities, attractions and events to match your interests. Search "Golden BC Canada" in the App Store or on Google Play. Browsing on a computer? Check out the desktop widget: tourismgolden.visitwidget.com.

LOCATED ON THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORY OF THE IN-SHUCK-CH NATION.

Photo by Chris Kimmel

Call it "Plan B." After a few good days of travel and mixed climbing west of Port Douglas (a remote community at the north end of Harrison Lake, British Columbia), Adam Palmer and Chris Kimmel were forced to make a tough decision.

The forecast had taken an unexpected turn and a long-lasting and severe winter storm was moving in from the north. In a last-ditch effort to avoid those extreme conditions, the duo used a Garmin InReach to contact a pilot and arranged for a speedy escape back to the city.

Details:
Model: Canon EOS 5D Mark IV
Lens: Tamron SP 70-200mm F/2.8 Di VC USD A009
Shutter Speed: 1/8000 sec
Aperture: f/2.8
ISO: 250
Focal Length: 70

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