

LOVE IT LIKE A LOCAL

INTO THE WILDERNESS

From sailing Canada's rugged coastline to foraging adventures with its new-generation chefs, these unique wilderness experiences transport travellers into the country's wild heart, alongside the people who love them most.



Hidden away on the Bedwell River on Vancouver Island is a place so serene it's hard to imagine ever wanting to leave. Touted as a complete wilderness glamping experience, Clayoquot Wilderness Resort is everything you would imagine, and more. For executive chef Michael Pataran, the inspiration for his menu is never far from the island's fir and cedar-laden landscape and pristine waterways. "I've been here for two years and I'm still discovering new local ingredients – there are just so many producers. Seafood is particularly abundant in the region: we work with British Columbia spot prawns caught in the same river system the resort is on, halibut, sturgeon, clams, scallops, black cod and oysters. But we also love to use the fabulous butter and cheeses of local small producers, as well as the many different mushrooms we forage in the forests surrounding the resort."

After living internationally for years, Pataran's return to Canada has brought him back to a place where he can engage with all that he loves about the lifestyle. "Fresh pristine mountain and ocean air, a plethora of ingredients, and chilly nights by a campfire," he says. "What more could I want?"

When the vision for this retreat was formed 20 years ago, the idea of a luxury wildlife retreat with tented accommodation was somewhat ambitious.

"The thing that most impresses me is where the resort

sits internationally, considering its humble beginnings," says Pataran. "It started out as a passion project and morphed and flourished into a renowned, world-class resort in the middle of the remote wilderness; an incredible achievement by anyone's standards."

The resort's remarkable food and wildlife offering, against the island's backdrop, ensures an iconic Canadian experience. Floor to ceiling windows in the Ivanhoe lounge guarantee views over the remarkable landscape whilst sipping cocktails before dinner. Guests are also invited to eat and relax in the retreat's Cookhouse; a centralised dining space where the coveted fireside table on the deck is always hotly contested. Meanwhile at the kitchen bar things remain lively as diners talk to the chef during evening service.

For Pataran, the opportunity to chat with visitors and recommend local experiences is integral to his job.

"The passion of local foragers, artisans and guides to celebrate and showcase Mother Nature is second to none here," he says. "I love talking about them and when I can, introducing them to guests. And naturally, the wildlife is so incredible. Anyone who comes to the area cannot leave without a wilderness eco-safari in Clayoquot Sound to see the ancient rainforest bears, whales (grey, humpback and killer whales), sea lions, sea otters, bald eagles and more." wildretreat.com

SMOOTH SAILING

Any entry into the remote Haida Gwaii archipelago of islands needs to be by boat, preferably handcrafted from local Douglas fir and cedar trees with polished brass fittings. Sitting gracefully upon wildlife-filled waters, the *Maple Leaf* takes its eight passengers on a journey to some of Canada's most scenic bays, estuaries and secluded beaches off the coast of British Columbia. The ship's immersive nine-day itinerary explores the archipelago from north to south, ancient to modern, including Gwaii Haanas and the UNESCO World Heritage site S̄gang Gwaay village (Ninstints). Everything you could possibly need or need to know is answered by the ship's crew, which includes a naturalist and an on-board chef. As darkness falls, the ship slips into secluded bays for overnight anchorages while days are filled with fishing, swimming and shore trips to ancient First Nation villages with a background cast of baleen whales, dolphins, porpoises, black bears and birdlife appearing with every tack of the sails. This year the *Maple Leaf* fleet has also expanded to include a new 138 foot luxury catamaran for Haida Gwaii adventures. mapleleafadventures.com

UP CLOSE

It's hard not to be both surprised and thrilled when a polar bear looks in your window, but at Seal River Lodge in Manitoba's arctic region it's par for the course. Deep in polar bear territory, the remote lodge's unparalleled access makes for a privileged wildlife experience. Of the estimated 20,000 to 25,000 polar bears left in the wild, approximately 60 per cent are located in Canada and this is one of the most exciting places to see them. Overlooking the spectacular Hudson Bay, this family-owned-and-operated lodge is the gateway to the tundra landscape and its wild inhabitants; an invigorating and incredibly personal way to meet the locals. churchillwild.com

WATER'S EDGE

Expect great seafood experiences at Trout Point Lodge in the maritime-rich province of Nova Scotia. Think salmon, mussels, oysters and lobsters, as well as opportunities to cook the local bounty at the lodge's renowned cooking school. Take advantage of this isolated retreat on 40 pristine hectares next to the Tobetic Wilderness Area with activities such as fly fishing, kayaking, riverside wood-fired hot tubs and a forest bathing experience. With its nature border and location at the convergence of two rivers, the lodge guarantees plenty of wildlife sightings including black bears, flying squirrels, grouse, deer, beaver, owls, loons and – if you're in luck – moose. troutpoint.com

A GOURMET TRAVELLER PROMOTION



EDITOR'S PICK



TAKE ME THERE
PLAN YOUR CANADA ESCAPE

CLAYOQUOT WILDERNESS RESORT, BC
Clayoquot Wilderness Resort is a Relais & Châteaux all-inclusive eco-safari luxury resort located 40 minutes by boat from Tofino, Vancouver Island.

MAPLE LEAF ADVENTURES, BC
All BC expeditions depart from Masset on Haida Gwaii, which is serviced by Pacific Coastal Airlines departing from Vancouver and inland Air Charters departing from Prince Rupert.

SEAL RIVER LODGE, MANITOBA
Seal River Heritage Lodge is open from July to November. Packages include flights from Winnipeg to Churchill, air transfers to the lodge plus meals.

TROUT POINT LODGE, NOVA SCOTIA
The lodge is a 45-minute drive from the Yarmouth Ferry Terminal. The closest international airport is Halifax, around three hours' drive north of the lodge.

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