

OFF AND RUNNING

ROUND UP THE KIDS AND HEAD OUT FOR AN ACTION-PACKED SUMMER VACATION. BY STEVE THRENDYLE

Ah, summer, the season of family vacations. The kids are screaming “Are we there, yet?” less than an hour after the minivan hits the road (and 20 minutes after the first pee break) and you’re now cursing your holier-than-thou attitude of turning down the DVD option, while Mum is cleaning up after another tossed-cookie episode on a twisty mountain or cottage road and trying to decipher outdated maps that don’t quite show all the “local” roads. And soon you’ll learn how long it takes to a get replacement automatic

transmission for a ‘93 Volvo wagon in, say, Port Alberni, B.C. Where are those all-inclusive family holidays when you need them?

The challenges are indeed daunting, but the good times to be had somehow banish all the bad stuff, and, with time, the horror stories become funny stories and an invaluable part of your family history. But the best way to ensure you’ll have a good time on the road this summer is to choose destinations that are truly worth the effort. Luckily in Canada, there’s no shortage of fantastic family-oriented vacation spots.

CAVENDISH GATEWAY RESORT Cavendish, P.E.I.

California may have Disneyland, but Prince Edward Island has Cavendish—and we like the Canadian version much better. Not really a town but a region, Cavendish encompasses some of the Maritimes’ top tourist attractions: Anne’s Land, Prince Edward Island National Park, the expansive beaches of Rustico Head and some of P.E.I.’s top golf courses. The Cavendish Gateway Resort keeps your family well-amused both inside and outside its comfortable property. On-site amenities include a heated indoor pool, activity room, tennis court and basketball nets (with complimentary racquets and balls), a playground and wagon rides. Specially priced family packages include passes to favourite tourist attractions such as Avonlea Village and Ripley’s Believe It or Not! Museum.

902/963-2213; 800/565-8881
www.cavendishclarion.com
www.qualityinncavendish.com

BLUE MOUNTAIN

Collingwood, Ontario

Ontario's favourite ski and snowboard resort offers even more activities once the snow melts. Taking a cue from big brothers Tremblant and Whistler, fellow Intrust resort Blue has fashioned a top-notch freeride-style mountain bike park. It's even offering a supervised kids' adventure camp where (just like ski school) parents can dump off the kids for several hours of riding, freeing the parents up to play a round of golf on Blue's fabulous Monterra course or thwack a tennis ball at the indoor tennis club. The great thing about a Blue Mountain summer is that hotel and condo rates are significantly discounted, whether you're staying at the luxurious Grand Georgian hotel (modelled after Canada's historic railway hotels), the Rivergrass Mountain Homes or the funky/traditional Blue Mountain Inn. After a hot day of mountain biking, hiking the nearby Bruce Trail or sharpening your groundstrokes at the tennis centre, the refreshing waters of nearby Georgian Bay provides fabulous beaches and marine activities in spades.

705/445-0231; 877/445-0231
www.bluemountain.ca



DELTA KANANASKIS LODGE

Alberta

Eschewing the summertime crowds found in nearby Banff National Park, Kananaskis Country is where Calgarians like to take out-of-town visitors for a real backcountry adventure. Nestled in the midst of a sprawling wilderness (and the Nakiska ski area, which was purpose-built for the 1988 Winter Olympics) is the Delta Kananaskis Lodge, which offers family fun for everyone. The kids can take their pick of horseback riding, cycling, hiking or even river rafting, while

Mum and Dad get to hit the links on the Robert Trent-Jones Jr. golf course or pamper themselves at the Summit spa and fitness centre. Perhaps the biggest highlight is the many kilometres of deserted pathways that traverse the floor of the Kananaskis River Valley, which are perfect for family cycling. The lodge has a supervised Kids Club with bingo, scavenger hunts, hikes, water activities and even bedtime stories by the fire. Parents will appreciate all the free time....

403/591-7711
www4.deltahotels.com

BELLA PACIFICA CAMPGROUND

Tofino, B.C.

The crashing surf of the nearby Pacific Ocean may lull even the most colicky baby to sleep at this fabulously located campground on Mackenzie Beach, a bay or two north of world-famous Long Beach and Pacific Rim National Park on B.C.'s wild west coast. You can't get much closer to the beach than the tent sites that run along the tree-lined bluff. Pitch your



tent behind a tree or make sure it's been sturdily guy-wired since the wind can whip up at any time. For families, the advantage of the Bella Pacifica site is its short distance to the über-funky town of Tofino. Outdoor activities are as endless as the Pacific Ocean, with perhaps the trendiest being an introductory surfing lesson. (Surf Sister caters especially to girls, while the highly respected Bruhwiler Surf School has been praised in *Surfer* magazine.) Hearty Long Beach surfers, swathed in seven-mm neoprene suits from head to toe, are a special breed of

person, but the summer months are definitely the warmest times to be in the water. Whale watching is a staple of the eco-tourism industry, while fishing, birding and kayaking are popular as well. Luckily, campfires are permitted at Bella Pacifica so that you can warm up after a day in the surf. Should you and the kids happen to get rained out, the thoroughly fabulous Middle Beach Lodge is located just up the road.

250/725-3400
www.bellapacifica.com

CAPE BRETON ISLAND/ FORTRESS OF LOUISBOURG

Nova Scotia

One of the most spectacular drives in all of North America, the 300-km-long Cabot Trail on Nova Scotia's Cape Breton Island, is not to be rushed through—though you might want to stock up on Gravol if the kids easily get carsick. Your family will be thoroughly charmed by the hospitality of Cape Bretoners, and there are dozens of things to do during the summer months, from taking in high-spirited ceilidh festivals (Cape Breton is home to an astonishing number of award-winning musicians, including Natalie McMaster, bad-boy Ashley MacIsaac, the Barra MacNeils and, of course, Rita MacNeil and the Rankin Family) to playing at any one of Cape Breton's fabulous golf courses. Two national parks, Cape Breton Highlands and Fortress of Louisbourg, are nearby. The Glenghorm Beach Resort is, as it says, right on a stretch of "ruggedly beautiful" beach. Here you'll find whale watching, fishing, golfing (at the nearby Highland Links Golf Course, rated in the top 100 in the world) and an on-premises pool for those who find the briny Atlantic a bit cool for their liking. Beachfront bonfires at night are a specialty. The Glenghorm is also pet friendly—good news for Rover.

Glenghorm Beach Resort
Ingonish, Nova Scotia
902/285-2049; 800/565-5660
www.capebretonresorts.com/glenghorm



Photo: Tourism British Columbia

MANOIR STE-GENEVIÈVE

Quebec City

Located virtually in the shadows of the world-famous Fairmont Chateau Frontenac, the Manoir Ste-Geneviève is a gem of a hotel located inside the walled citadel of Quebec City. Only nine rooms are for rent in this *p'tit auberge*, but they're spacious enough for families and number 8 even has a small kitchenette. Historic walking tours abound, not only inside the citadel but in the Chateau Frontenac itself. Perhaps the best time to visit is from July 7–17, during the annual Summer Festival, a family-friendly event. Buskers, acrobatic troupes, circus clowns and, of course, musical performances by both francophone and internationally recognized artists (Wyclef Jean, George Thorogood and even the Violent Femmes!). For families craving open spaces, take a baguette and cheese and head up to the Plains of Abraham for a picnic lunch and a history lesson. Paved in-line skate trails, playing fields and a magnificent view of the St. Lawrence River await, as does the Musée de Quebec and the Battlefields Museum, with interactive exhibits that make the Battle of the Plains of Abraham come alive.

418/694-1666
www.quebecweb.com/msg/



Photo: Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture and Heritage