

Snow your **OWN WAY**

Skiers aren't the only ones who can enjoy a Canadian winter as there is a wealth of seasonal activities away from the slopes for everyone, says **Alex Wright**



“CANADA COMES ALIVE IN THE WINTER AND THERE'S SO MUCH TO EXPLORE AND DO AS A NON-SKIER”



CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING IS AVAILABLE IN ALL OF CANADA'S PROVINCES

Look beyond the ski slopes of Whistler, Lake Louise and Mont Tremblant and there's so much more to Canada in winter. Whether your clients are adrenaline junkies or prefer gentler pursuits, there's a seasonal activity to suggest.

For the more energetic there is dog-sledding, snow shoeing, snowmobiling, heli-sightseeing, zip-lining, tubing, and ice-walking and climbing.

While for those who clients prefer to take a more laid-back approach there are wildlife tours, nature walks, star-gazing, exploring winter wonderland villages and festivals, relaxing in a hot tub, and hot chocolate and marshmallows by a cosy log-fire.

If retail therapy is their bag, they can get out of the cold and head to the underground cities of Montréal and Toronto, which are full of shops, cafes, restaurants and bars. But when up at street level, remember to pack your sunscreen and wrap up warm.

“Winter in Canada is great for everyone whether skiers or not; the roads are well-maintained in the snow, making hiring a winter-adapted car very easy,” advises Julie Thompson, Product and Marketing Manager for Frontier Travel. “Excursions such as showshoeing, ice-walks and sleigh rides are relatively inexpensive and are accessible to all.”

Due to being so geared up for winter, the activities on offer in Canada are almost limitless, says Adam Hanmer, Travel Trade Manager at Destination Canada UK.

“An infrastructure designed to cope with snow and ice means that travellers can concentrate on enjoying the crispness of snow underfoot,

the exhilaration of their first skating moves on a pristine lake, seeing the northern lights from the warmth of a hot tub whilst enjoying a steaming hot chocolate or exploring a Narnia-like forest on snowshoes, treading lightly on the eco-environment,” he says.

“You don't have to be a skier to engage with Canada's winters – but we do suggest warm boots and lots of layers to copy the locals' sense of winter dress and a sense of wonder.”

Meera Pain, Marketing Manager at First Class Holidays, adds: “Canada comes alive in winter, and there's so much to explore and do as a non-skier. From taking a horse-drawn sleigh ride around Lake Louise, famously known as the 'Jewel of the Rockies', and discovering spectacular frozen waterfalls on a Johnston Canyon Ice Walk to simply admiring the surrounding beauty and taking in the crisp winter air, a visit to Canada in winter is a must.”

One thing's for sure, with more than 450,000km² designated as 'National Park' visitors will never be bored exploring

“For a true Canadian experience, there are many kinds of winter activities available in Parks Canada places,” says Eric Magnan, Travel Media Relations Officer for Parks Canada.

“From a cosy day at the hot springs to skating on the world's largest skating rink, you won't even notice the cold as you warm up to winter.”

Alberta

Snowshoeing in Banff and Lake Louise

There's no better way to explore Canada in the winter than walking through the snowy tranquility under blue skies, breathing in



EASY RIDER



THE RIDEAU CANAL IN OTTAWA BECOMES A WINTER WONDERLAND



FAST TRACKS

► the crisp air of this spell-binding landscape. Strap on a pair of snowshoes and choose from the multitude of trails snaking through the pine forests and around snow-peaked mountains and icy lakes, including the Marsh Loop and Ink Pots for amazing views of nature close up, and finish with a long soak in Banff Hot Springs.

banfflours.com

Book it: Frontier Travel has a fly-drive package featuring two nights at the Pomeroy Kananaskis Mountain Lodge, three nights at the Fox Hotel and Suites in Banff and three nights in a lakeview room at the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise. Prices start from £1,940pp for a late-January 2020 departure. Flights from London to Calgary, with mid-size SUV car hire and excursions are included.

frontier-travel.co.uk

Ontario and Québec

Winter festivals in Ottawa, Québec City and Montréal

Québec City, Ottawa and Montréal turn into fairytale wonderlands in the winter. The Carnaval de Québec (February 7-16), features parades, shows, sports and parties, while Ottawa's Winterlude (January 31-February 17) includes skating on the Rideau Canal Skateway, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and a giant winter playground and ice sculptures.

Or for those looking to channel their inner Innuït, Montréal's Igloofest (January 16-February 1) is billed as the world's coldest music festival and takes place over three weekends. audleytravel.com

Book it: First Class Holidays is offering an Ontario, Québec & the Maritimes Winter Retreat, a nine-day tour of Toronto, Niagara Falls, Montréal and Québec City. It is priced from £652pp, departing December 1, and includes accommodation, business-class rail travel from Toronto to Montréal, a meal overlooking Niagara Falls and a winery tour. fcholidays.com

British Columbia

Action-adventure in Whistler

Whistler is the perfect base for adventure activities like ziplining, snowmobiling, ice climbing, heli-skiing, tubing and ice skating. There's even fat-tire biking, ice fishing and axe throwing, while the more sporty can test themselves with the biathlon (cross-country skiing and rifle shooting) at Whistler Olympic Park. premierholidays.co.uk

Book it: Prestige Holidays has a four-night stay at Delta Whistler Village (room only), starting March 5 2020. Prices start from £2,064pp, based on two sharing. Flights from Heathrow to Vancouver are included. prestige-holidays.co.uk

The Yukon

Dog-sledding and nature spotting in Whitehorse

What could be more exhilarating than racing through the snowy mountainside on a sled pulled by a pack of huskies? Get your own personal musher or take the reins yourself. Riders learn everything about this centuries' old practice used by native Canadians – from looking feeding the dogs to riding standing up. northern-tales.ca

Book it: Cox & Kings has a 12-day Yukon & Alaska Wilderness Drive that takes in Whitehorse's Yukon National Preserve, Kluane National Park, the Haines Highway, Chilkat Pass and Dawson City. Priced from £1,345pp, car hire, maps and directions are included. coxandkings.co.uk

Nova Scotia

Winter surfing in Halifax

For clients who like to do things a little differently, suggest they brave the waves and try winter surfing at Lawrencetown Beach near Halifax in January. The waves may reach up to 1.4 metres high, but this is no Bondi – the water is 0C or below, so suggest a good wetsuit. ecsurfschool.com



BOOK IT

| *Prestige Holidays* |
| 01502 367 222 |

Discover the Rocky Mountain resorts of Banff, Jasper and Lake Louise on this Winter Delights tour. It includes seven nights' accommodation, meals, a wildlife tour in Banff National Park, snowshoeing in Marble Canyon and an ice walk along Maligne Canyon. From £1,016pp, including coach transfers. prestige-holidays.co.uk