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**TRAVEL**

# Oh Canada! U.S. dollars go far when the whole country is on sale

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International family travel can be a tricky business. On the one hand, there's so much world out there to see. On the other: terror alerts, the expense of trying to feed and entertain the whole family, and long travel times. All of which can make it very easy to talk yourself out of a trip.

If only there was a place with worldly charm that was close enough to get to easily, felt safe, and didn't cost you an arm and a leg. There is. Canada — thanks to a strong U.S. dollar and a falling Canadian loonie — is on sale. One Canadian dollar is about 70 U.S. cents. Book a flight or just hop in the car and head for the border to take in one of these five truly Canadian experiences for less. We guarantee you'll be singing the country's praises all the way to the bank.

## **Sweet deal in Ontario**

Get to: Toronto, Ontario

Why: There's something about that northern air that makes Canadian maple syrup the best there is.

Why now: A warmer winter means that production will be underway sooner than usual, and could result in a record-setting production year. Good-natured Canadians will be more than happy to share the bounty.

The deal: Ontario has more than 60 maple syrup-producing farms, which means you can have your pick of where you go. Most offer family-friendly experiences where you cannot only watch it be made, but also have a treat or two while you do so. Tour prices at most farms come in at about \$7.50 USD per person. Time your visit for April 2 or 3

and the price will even better: Free! The second annual Maple Weekend will offer everything from pancake breakfasts and horse-drawn sleigh rides to production tours and demos.

## **Lazy days in Quebec**

Get to: Montebello, Quebec

Why: Montreal and Quebec City tend to steal most of the French province's tourists, but if what you're after is a charming weekend getaway with the kids during which you're hoping your biggest concern will be how many times you'll indulge in the decadent foie gras poutine during your stay, this is your spot. The gorgeous Fairmont Chateau Montebello fills up quickly. For good reason: On any given day, guests in yoga pants, slippers and robes reading books and playing board games make up the majority of loungers around the six-sided, 80-foot-tall fireplace in the hotel's main hall.

Why now: In the winter, outdoor enthusiasts will love the snowshoeing, dogsled rides and curling lesson options, as well as the outdoor skating rink. In the summer, fishing, bear watching, horseback riding and hiking will keep kids excited and engaged.

The deal: The hotel is intimate and popular. Book now to lock in summer dates and you'll be rewarded. The July Family Month promotion offers rooms from \$206 USD (\$279 CDN) per night including daily buffet breakfast and your choice of a family fun activity. (Choices include a family pass to the phenomenal Parc Omega — a nearby wildlife park where animals roam free and eat right from your car window.)

## **Prehistoric monsters in Alberta**

Get to: Drumheller, Alberta

Why: What Roswell is to aliens, Drumheller is to dinosaurs. Year-round, the town celebrates the prehistoric animals that once roamed these badlands. From the world-famous Royal Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology (filled with incredible artifacts and interactive models) to the world's largest dinosaur (an 86-foot-tall Tyrannosaurus rex whose mouth acts as a lookout point over the town), you'll be able to satisfy any dinosaur fan.

Why now: New dinosaur discoveries are being found in the area all the time and your family can participate in archeological digs that vary according to age. Don't feel like

getting dirty? "Hellboy" — a Regaliceratops skull found by a member of the public in 2005 — is now on display inside the paleontology museum.

The deal: The town's Ramada Inn offers comfortable rooms, free buttered popcorn, and a giant pool and waterslide. Its Royal Tyrell Museum Package starts at \$110 USD (\$150 CDN) and includes a skip-the-line museum family admission pass for two adults and up to six kids.

## **All about Anne in PEI**

Get to: Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island (PEI)

Why: The real island home of the fictional redheaded Anne of Green Gables is a popular spot for fans from around the world. There's plenty of Green Gables lore to see here — from namesake chocolates to the house that author Lucy Maud Montgomery based her stories around — but it's not the only reason to come. A wealth of festivals that celebrate music and art, theatrical productions that impress, and seafood suppers that require loose-waisted pants all make Prince Edward Island the perfect Canadian getaway.

Why now: Canadians know to book cottages in PEI early to beat the summer rush. Waiting to reserve accommodations won't net you a better deal, and it might mean you won't find a spot.

The deal: The Island's The Vacation the Kids Took Over packages offer a variety of three-night packages at various cottages and resorts for stays between June 18 and Sept. 1. One example: A three-night stay in a two-bedroom chalet at the four-star Fairways Cottages for \$580 USD (\$789 CDN), plus taxes. The deal includes a four-day, unlimited entrance pass to the best area family attractions and beaches for a family of four.

## **Wildlife and road trips in British Columbia**

Get to: Blue River, British Columbia

Why: British Columbia is a thing of beauty. From the cosmopolitan charm of Vancouver to the sky-high old-growth forests of Vancouver Island, and beyond to the warm waters of Osoyoos, a road trip offers breathtaking views of mountain, ocean and sky.

Why now: Spring brings new life to the province. When you aren't marveling at the size

of trees wider than your car or at the gourmet offerings of chefs who rely on Pacific Ocean bounty, you'll be wondering about the animals that call the West Coast home. Spend time in Clearwater; Alpine Meadow Resort offers incredible views and comfortable log cabin accommodations off the beaten path.

The deal: The River Safari company in nearby Blue River will offer your family the experience of a lifetime. Book the Super Safari package for tours on land and water of Grizzly Bear Valley. Kids will have fun playing lookout as your eagle-eyed guide points out the local bears who call the temperate rainforest home. Packages are \$110 USD (\$150 CDN) for a 2.5-hour tour. Stay for lunch — the forest-to-table meals in the restaurant are to die for.

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