





# ALPINE WONDER

From coast to coast, there's no finer place to hit the slopes and enjoy the great outdoors

BY HEATHER HUDSON

Canada, we have a bad habit. When the first snowfall hits, we're dreaming of making a break for tropical climes. Sure, January in the north doesn't deliver palm trees and sandy beaches, but it might just offer something better: true winter.

Crisp mountain air, powdery slopes, natural beauty and cozy fireside relaxation can only be found in a few places in the world. And some of them are right here at home.

Want to experience Canada at its finest? Here are four vacation destinations that celebrate the versatility, excitement and splendour of snow — no passport required.

## BANFF/LAKE LOUISE

### ALBERTA

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Glacier-fed lakes, towering mountains, snowy peaks and winding trails are all hallmarks of this magical area nestled in the Canadian Rockies.

Locals and visitors alike enjoy one of the longest ski seasons in North America here, with three choice ski areas: Mount Norquay, Sunshine Village and the Lake Louise Ski Resort.

A single lift ticket will grant you unlimited access to almost 8,000 acres of terrain, including ski shuttles to all three resorts and tubing at Mount Norquay. Other exciting winter activities include:

- The Banff Upper Hot Springs, which boast an average temperature of 37 degrees Celsius, and is surrounded

- by mountain peaks;
- Banff Natural Park, which provides naturalists to take you and your family exploring the wilderness by snowshoe — there's even heli-snowshoeing available for the more adventurous;
- The Banff Gondola, which allows you to ride to the top of Sulphur Mountain for a prime view of six mountain ranges;
- Dogsledding through Banff National Park;
- Ice fishing in serene Spray Lakes just outside Banff National Park — your guides will even cook and serve your catches.

## WHISTLER BLACKCOMB BRITISH COLUMBIA

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From the grandeur of its two mountains — Whistler and Blackcomb — to the stunning array of activities, to the huge selection of restaurants, spas and accommodations, you could visit Whistler once a month for a lifetime and still not experience everything it has to offer.

If you're an avid skier or snowboarder, zipping down two of the longest vertical drops on the continent has to be on your bucket list.

The ski hills are just a part of the action. Other activities include:

- Whistler Heli-Skiing, which thrills even the most hard-core adventurers, including 173 glaciers and 475 runs;
- Whistler Sliding Centre, which features a public bobsleigh program that teaches you the basics and then sends you down the world's fastest track;
- The Peak 2 Peak Gondola, which is the longest and highest lift in the world;
- The famed ScandinaVe Spa Whistler, which has a number of spa locations throughout the resort; and
- The Coca-Cola Tube Park, which offers seven lanes of family fun for all ages.



## BLUE MOUNTAIN ONTARIO

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Step into a Scandinavian-style alpine village for an exhilarating experience on the shores of Georgian Bay. Brought to you by the same developers who built Mont-Tremblant and Whistler, Blue Mountain is Ontario's answer to world-class skiing and snowboarding and a resort-style vacation hotspot only 90 minutes from Toronto.

The largest ski resort in the province features 364 acres of skiable terrain, including 42 day trails, 30 night-skiing and snowboarding trails and the Badlands Terrain Park, which is teeming with half-pipes and jump-on jump-off rails. Runs range from beginner to double black diamond.

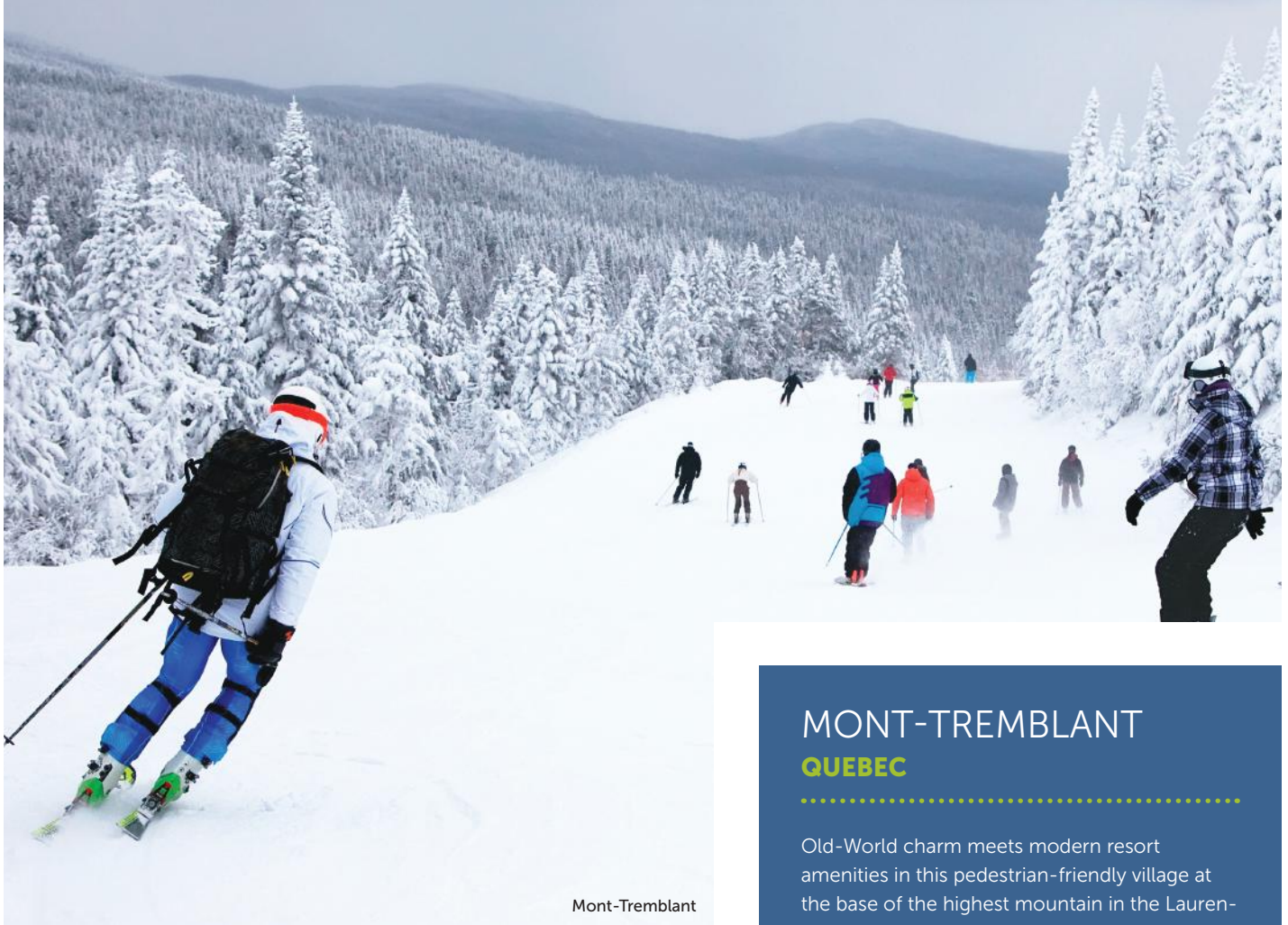
Just as popular as the skiing opportunities is the bustling 40-acre village lined with dozens of shops specializing in everything from fashion, to sports equipment, to furniture.

Some of the winter activities that don't involve skis or a snowboard include:

- Hike 'N Tube snow tubing, which offers a fun downhill experience for everyone;
- Being pampered at any of the village's deluxe spas;
- A mountain snowshoe tour, which starts with a ride up the mountain before stopping to snowshoe along one of the highest elevations along the Bruce Trail;
- The Ridge Runner Mountain Coaster, a ride that takes you on twists and turns 1,085 metres down the mountain through varied terrain; and
- The Snowmobile Dinner Tour, which guides you along the top of the escarpment and stops for dinner.







Mont-Tremblant



## MONT-TREMBLANT

### QUEBEC

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Old-World charm meets modern resort amenities in this pedestrian-friendly village at the base of the highest mountain in the Laurentians. As the second-oldest ski resort in North America, Mont-Tremblant takes its heritage seriously with cobblestone streets and traditional Québecois food, music and activities — all with the state-of-the-art facilities you've come to expect in a present-day ski town.

With 662 acres of terrain, skiers and snowboarders have their pick of 96 ski trails on four slopes. Even non-skiers often travel up the lift to take in the breathtaking views of the Laurentians from the 875-metre apex.

When they're not skiing, visitors flock to activities such as:

- A snowshoe and fondue tour that starts at the summit, includes a hearty meal in a log cabin in the heart of the forest and culminates in a satisfying shuffle back down the mountain by the light of the moon;
- A dogsledding adventure that puts you in the musher's seat through the forest before you make a pit stop for hot chocolate;
- A nighttime spin around the enchanting ice rink lined with twinkling lights and accompanied by lively music;
- A horse-drawn sleigh ride through nearby fields and forest; and
- Soaking in the outdoor Scandinavian baths perched in the mountainside oasis along the Diable River.