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Camp Canada

By Dennis Gaub for KOA Kompass

To paraphrase Sir Winston Churchill, you would be hard-pressed to top Canada as a travel destination and Canadians as your hosts.

In 1951, the former British prime minister said: "There are no limits to the majestic future which lies before the mighty expanse of Canada with its virile, aspiring, cultured, and generous-hearted people."

More than a half-century later, the world's second-largest country still beckons. Canada's appeal - [38.9 million foreigners entered the country last year](#) - rests on its reputation as a safe, clean and friendly nation, according to Monica Campbell, media relations manager for the [Canadian Tourism Commission](#).

U.S. tourists heading north will find that their money still goes reasonably far. Bank of Canada exchange rates have made U.S. dollars worth between \$1.27 and \$1.40 Canadian from the start of 2004 through the end of July.

Campbell said U.S. tourists should be aware of tighter security requirements at border crossings. Incoming visitors need a passport or proof of citizenship consisting of a birth certificate and photo ID.

Canada's transcontinental expanse encompasses hundreds of outstanding events and attractions. Arguably atop the list are 13 places designated as [UNESCO \(United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations\) World Heritage sites](#). They are:

- [Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump](#), located in southwestern Alberta, harkens to Canada's past. Aboriginal peoples of the Great Plains, who relied on bison for food, clothing, shelter, tools and fuel, hunted the animals by stampeding herds over cliffs such as this one. The jump was in continuous use for more than 5,500 years. In places, bison remains are piled up to 11 meters deep.
- [L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site](#), located on the tip of Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula, is the site of the first European settlement in North America. While most people date the discovery of the continent to 1492, the remains of the Viking community at L'Anse aux Meadows dates from approximately 1000 AD. Visitors can explore the remains of the timber-and-sod long houses and the first iron works in the New World.
- [The Fortifications of Québec National Historic Site](#) provides the opportunity to hear the tale of over three centuries of the military past of Québec - the only remaining fortified city in North America. Accompanied by a guide-interpreter, visitors can trace the history of the fortifications while enjoying spectacular panoramic views of the city. The Fortifications are open year round; tours are available seasonally.
- [Dinosaur Provincial Park](#), in Alberta, contains some of the most important fossil discoveries ever made from the "Age of Reptiles", including about 35 species of dinosaur, dating back some 75 million years.
- [Nahanni National Park Reserve](#), located in the Northwest Territories, protects a portion of the Mackenzie Mountains Natural Region. You can have a wilderness experience here. Key features of the park are South Nahanni River, a spectacular whitewater river lined by four great canyons, Virginia Falls, sulfur hot springs, alpine

tundra, mountain ranges, and forests of spruce and aspen that sustain many species of birds, fish and mammals.

- [Anthony Island \(SGaang Gwaii\)](#), a small island off the west coast of British Columbia's Queen Charlotte Islands, highlights a culture and society that lasted for millennia. Remains of the village of Ninstints (Nans Dins) display the Haida people's art and way of life. Epidemic diseases in the 19th Century devastated many villages, including Ninstints. By the 1880s, most of the inhabitants had died or moved away, and by 1900 only rotting remnants of the cedar houses and monuments remained. What remained was preserved in 1958 within Anthony Island Provincial Park. The ruins, slowly being overtaken by the lush rain forest, have been compared to the lost jungle cities of Mexico and Cambodia.
- [Wood Buffalo National Park](#), located in Saskatchewan, is the country's largest national park and one of the largest in the world. It was established in 1922 to protect the last remaining herds of bison in northern Canada. Today, it protects an outstanding and representative example of Canada's Northern Boreal Plains.
- Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks, straddling the Alberta-British Columbia boundary, identifies a site that includes four national parks - [Banff](#), [Jasper](#), [Yoho](#) and [Kootenay](#) - and three British Columbia provincial parks - Mount Robson, Mount Assiniboine and Hamber. Banff National Park, one of the world's premier destination spots, spans 2,564 square miles of valleys, mountains, glaciers, forests, meadows and rivers,
- [Gros Morne National Park](#), in Newfoundland and Labrador, is an area of great natural beauty with a rich variety of scenery, wildlife, and recreational activities. Visitors can hike through wild, uninhabited mountains and camp by the sea.
- [Old Town Lunenburg](#), in Nova Scotia, recently celebrated its 250th birthday. Across two-and-a-half centuries, the community has faced adversity many times, always responding with resiliency and adaptability. Over the years, the town has been sustained by farming, then fishing and shipbuilding, and now, heritage tourism.
- [Miguasha Park](#), located in the Quebec town of Nouvelle on the shores of the estuary of Riviere Restigouche, is an outstanding fossil site where one can find the fossils of spores, plants, invertebrates and 23 species of fish.
- Two Canadian parks, Yukon's [Kluane National Park](#), and British Columbia's Tatshenshini-Alsek Wilderness Park, combine with two U.S. parks, Alaska's [Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Reserve](#) and Glacier Bay National Park, to make up the [largest international protected area in the world](#). Located on the border between Alaska and Canada, Wrangell-St. Elias and Kluane parks contain a huge chain of glaciers. Mount Logan (5959 m/19,545 ft), Canada's highest peak, lies within Kluane. This also is important wildlife habitat. Trumpeter swans, Dahl sheep, bison and sea lions are among protected species.
- Alberta's [Waterton Lakes National Park](#) and Montana's [Glacier National Park](#), which in 1932 were designated by Canada and the United States as an "international peace park," the first such joint recognition in the world. Rugged, windswept mountains rise abruptly out of gentle prairie grassland in spectacular Waterton Lakes. Several different ecological regions meet and interact in a landscape shaped by wind, fire, flooding, and abundant plants and wildlife. Waterton's fabled lakes include the international Upper Waterton Lake, the deepest lake in the Canadian Rockies.

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