



# The TRAVEL Issue

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Travel as a world citizen

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Travel for good

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7 LGBTQ2I-friendly destinations

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Great winter getaways

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The road to barrier-free travel

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# renaissance

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# Reader letters

**After reading all the responses** to favourite TV shows in the fall issue of *Renaissance*, I thought I would add mine. I grew up with three older sisters. When Dad bought us a television, it was an RCA 19-inch black and white. We could get two channels with an antenna on the roof. I remember watching *Captain Kangaroo* in the morning. I learned to tell time with *Father Clock*, a face in a large tree. There was also Mr. Green Jeans and Mr. Moose to teach us other things. The girls wanted *Ed Sullivan* and I wanted *Hockey Night in Canada*. At a very early age, I got a life lesson about sharing, and sometimes I didn't get my way. When I did get *Hockey Night in Canada*, I was a little boy in a candy store. I remember the tuner was on Channel 6 and time of game was 8 p.m. on Saturday. Esso was the sponsor and Murray Westgate was at the gas pump in the commercials. Ward Cornell was the interviewer during the intermission, and Foster Hewitt did the play-by-play – or in Montreal, Danny Gallivan. My favourite team was, and still is, the Chicago Blackhawks because when there were only six teams in the National Hockey League, the Hawks' farm club was the St. Catharines Teepees. Time has changed the broadcast schedule, the play-by-play announcers, the sponsorship, the commentators and, of course, the players. But this 70-year-old senior is still a kid in a candy store when I can watch the Hawks play the Leafs.

–William Krochak  
(District 14 Niagara)



**I just want to compliment** you on the fall issue of *Renaissance* magazine. It was varied and very, very interesting. As we walk/trudge through the meadows of old age, many of us have earned our PhDs in worrying, as the media seems to want to glorify negativity. Like our GPSs, we often need to “recalibrate” where we are going. Hope is not a noun – it is a verb! *Renaissance* most often allows us to do JUST THAT! Keep up the good work.

–Tom Davis  
(District 36 Peterborough)

**What a surprise** and joy to read the article “Caring, compassion and commitment” on pages 42 to 45 of the fall issue of *Renaissance*! I was in the same form of what was then called Toronto Normal School, 1948/1949, as Tom Hennessy! He was one of the more notable people in the class, possibly because he was a veteran with much more experience than many of us who had just graduated

from high school. In any case, I have not forgotten him, although we have had no contact for these many years. It was fascinating to read about his accomplishments. Please continue to publish profiles about noteworthy members. Thanks for so many interesting articles.

–Robert R. (Bob) Halfyard  
(District 14 Niagara)

**I was delighted to read** the article about Tom Hennessy in the fall issue of *Renaissance* magazine. We sang together for many years in the Blyth Festival Singers. He has a marvellous attitude toward life, and that smile on his face in the photographs was always present and genuine. Tom was always on the dance floor during our

ceilidhs and cabarets. I am so pleased to read that he has been honoured and that he is still the vigorous and joyful man who I knew then.

–Annette Lindsay  
(District 8 London, Middlesex)

**A great article about** Tom Hennessy in the fall issue of *Renaissance*. I have known him for about 40 years, since I was a principal in London. A finer man you will never meet. He and Joyce are a great team. May you both stay healthy for years to come. You both are wonderful examples of what we can do in life. Many thanks to you both.

–Donald Aldred  
(District 8 London, Middlesex)

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

We welcome your feedback, so please send your letters to [renaissance@rtoero.ca](mailto:renaissance@rtoero.ca). Letters may be edited for length and clarity at the discretion of the editor.

We asked RTOERO members Barbara Rogelstad and Peter Mernagh and writer Alison LaMantia to tell us where they would go if they could be teleported anywhere in the world.



**BARBARA ROGELSTAD**

“There’s no doubt in my mind that I would teleport the 7,500 kilometres to the tropical climate of Waikiki Beach in Honolulu. There’s nothing like sinking your bare feet into white

sand while eating a delicious breakfast of freshly squeezed orange juice, sausage, eggs, white rice and juicy morsels of pineapple. A cup of dark roast coffee will complete your breakfast, sipped while you walk along the wide, pristine beaches of Waikiki. Your senses are bursting as you inhale the ocean breezes and gaze on the clear turquoise-blue water, watching the surfers ‘catch a wave’ again and again with Diamond Head as a backdrop. Take me back to Waikiki Beach!” —*District 40 Brant*



**PETER MERNAGH**

“I would go to New Zealand. I have been in the airport in Auckland but never visited the country. There are many natural features, like Milford

Sound, and 30 per cent of the country is parkland. There is an abundance of fine wine and seafood to enjoy. I would rent a camper van and drive around the countryside, avoiding the larger cities while enjoying smaller towns and villages. January and February are summer months there, providing an escape from the Canadian winter.”

—*District 14 Niagara*



**ALISON LAMANTIA**

“I don’t crave hustle and bustle on vacations, nor am I particularly a thrill-seeker. And so, if I could teleport anywhere, it would probably be somewhere

isolated with lots of vegetation and water and warmth. A tree house in Costa Rica might do the trick! Or even an ocean-front beach house in PEI — where we stayed last summer, and I didn’t want to go home! Give me a comfy place to lay my head, access to nature and a way to make delicious food, and I’m happy.”

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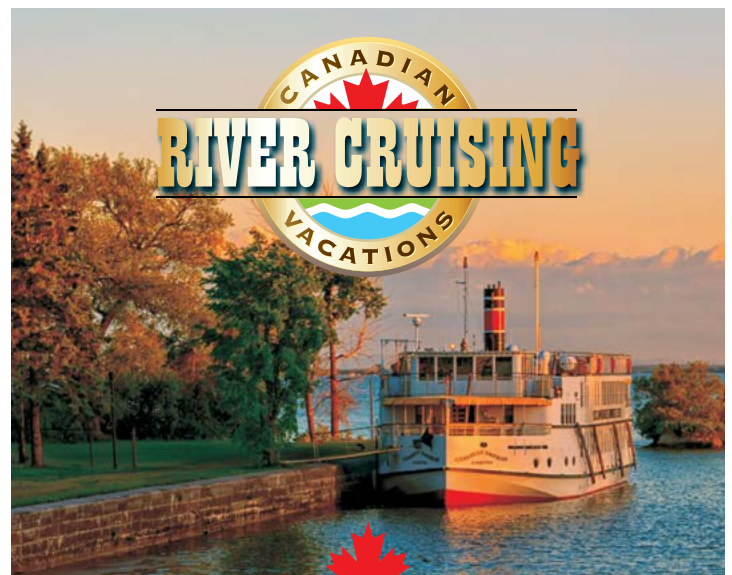
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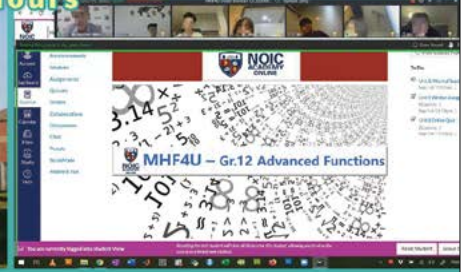
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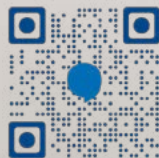
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# Buenos días! Fermoso día!



Before you go, learn  
the language

by **Martha Foster**,  
RTOERO Chair

**What a great time to be reading about**, and perhaps undertaking, travel. As the snow flies and the days get colder, many of us think about travelling to warmer climates, and many of these destinations do not have English as their primary language.

What a great time to expand your brain and to pick up a little of the language of the area you're planning to visit. It's great fun to be able to converse, even a little, in the language of the people with whom you are spending time. You can talk to people outside the usual tourist spots. You can ask questions. You don't need a tour guide or someone else to speak on your behalf.

Wait, there is more!

Recent studies have shown that learning two or more languages may help to avoid developing dementia — or at least stave it off. Many factors play a role in developing dementia and increasing the likelihood of getting the disease, but learning another language is one way to reduce that likelihood.

Why is this the case? That's the million-dollar question. It does not appear to be higher levels of education but rather the act of engaging the area of the brain that learning a second language stimulates. Possibly it's the process of language switching that helps. The speaker needs to turn on one language and turn off the other.

Research in this area is ongoing, but so far the data seems to support the idea that learning a second language can lessen the likelihood of developing dementia. So, as a part of preparing for your next trip, pick up that other language you've been talking about learning. You'll be able to engage more with the people of the country you're visiting and keep yourself and your brain healthier, longer.

For more information: [cbsnews.com/news/learning-another-language-may-help-delay-dementia/](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/learning-another-language-may-help-delay-dementia/) 📖

Bon voyage!  
Martha

# The joy of not travelling



Sometimes a staycation  
is just the ticket

by **Jim Grieve**,  
RTOERO CEO

**"Follow me, Grandma!"** The most dangerous words on the ski hill.

"Grandpa, will the story tonight be very scary? I hope so. Can we turn the lights lower?"

"Watch this, Grandma!" Four backward somersaults underwater.

"Try this one, Grandpa!" A bucket of water pouring out and lifting the trap door, permitting the golf ball to sail into the hole. A hole in one!

The wonderful feature available to us as members of RTOERO is the freedom to travel the world and know that we are well covered for medical issues and travel delays. Few can out-travel RTOERO members, who show up on every continent every year. From Lima to Land's End, Cape Town to Canberra, our members have an insatiable urge to learn and explore.

It has always perplexed me, though, that vacation or time away has to be associated with exotic travel plans and complicated air schedules. The expected response to "Where did you go on your vacation?" is "Somewhere out of the country." There is a palpable disappointment if the response is "We enjoyed multiple sleepovers with the grandchildren and loved exploring their imaginative worlds for a couple of weeks."

Many of our members travel the world every year. Many more elect to enjoy the occasional staycation when school is out so they can more deeply connect with family and friends nearer to home. Still others combine the best of both options and elect to share world travel experiences with their families.

Sharon and I love to travel and enjoy exploring the sights and learning other cultural traditions and languages. We also find pure joy in spending quality time, at our home, with our grandchildren, Madeline, Evan and Violet. There is something so special in the intergenerational connections between seniors and their grandchildren.

For RTOERO members, the world awaits. In between those exotic adventures, a staycation with loving grandchildren and family honours yet another beautiful world. 📖

Safe travels,  
Jim

# Supporting local programming

Transforming the RTOERO Foundation funding process

by **Alison LaMantia**



**When Mike Prentice**, executive director of the RTOERO Foundation, hung up a call with the director of an arts program for older adults last year, he knew the foundation was on the right track.

The director had wanted to apply for a foundation grant through the social-isolation funding stream to expand her successful community program but wasn't eligible. A key sticking point was the need for ethics approval. As the head of a grassroots

community organization, ethics approval wasn't something she could quickly obtain. It meant creating a partnership with a post-secondary institution — a step that wasn't part of her strategic plan. (Clinical or behavioural studies that involve humans require ethics review and approval. The purpose of approval is to make sure research meets federal ethical requirements and protects study participants.)

Prentice understood why focusing on

local needs was important. A recent foundation-funded report by the National Institute on Ageing called *Understanding Social Isolation and Loneliness Among Older Canadians and How to Address It* recommended that the foundation build the collective capacity of organizations to address social isolation and loneliness and improve overall service delivery to speak to the geographic variation in the needs of communities.

Prentice was already working on modifying the grant process so

PHOTO, DANILO ANDJUS

ethics would be required only if the organization applying required it themselves — for example, for academic research. The conversation further confirmed the need for the change: How could the foundation fund innovative programs, as stated in their mission, if organizations weren't able to apply?

"We realized we didn't need to impose that layer of complexity onto every organization looking for a grant," Prentice explains.

Last fall, the foundation ran its first grant cycle without ethics approval as a mandatory requirement. Loosening requirements for ethics approval was one of a handful of changes to the granting program designed to make the process more open, inclusive and efficient. Prentice spent two years learning the current system and talking to everyone involved. Together, they identified critical pain points.

"Our granting process is time well spent, it's the core of what we do, but we knew we could make it more efficient and effective to allow us to accept more proposals," says Prentice. "Too often, organizations develop their project around the funder's time line and rules; we wanted to remove that so as much as possible the projects aren't driven by us, but by the need."



There isn't a template solution for loneliness because communities are so different, and now more regionally based, grassroots programs will be eligible for foundation funding. Plus, the foundation will be in an excellent position to gather the results from the various programs it supports and amplify them, sharing learning and ideas that may benefit other

communities — helping to build that collective capacity.

The granting program's focus over the next five years is on innovative programs and action research to improve seniors' health care, build social engagement and combat ageism. And thanks to the changes to the process, the foundation can now handle more proposals and expects better-quality proposals.

## FOUR KEY CHANGES TO HOW THE RTOERO FOUNDATION GIVES OUT GRANTS

### Technology partnership to streamline the process

Prentice and his team negotiated a multi-year corporate partnership with SmartSimple, a technology company that offers a cloud-based grant-management solution. Moving the process online means all applications will come in following the standard format. There's no need for staff to save and email multiple documents for review and scoring. Everything is in one place, making it quicker and easier for grant applicants, reviewers and staff.

### Standard application fields and word counts

The online tool makes it easier to standardize the application and even set

word counts, a simple change that makes the process clearer and more equitable for applicants. The standardized format, paired with an updated scoring rubric, is expected to improve the review process and was a change driven by feedback from the peer review committee.

### Increased funding cycles

The foundation will no longer separate funding streams into two different grant periods. Instead, applicants can select a focus area of geriatrics research, seniors' health and wellness, or social engagement. The first year of implementation will be a chance to evaluate the feasibility of increasing to two funding cycles per year.

### Removal of ethics review as a mandatory requirement

The foundation will continue to fund research, as it's always done, and encourages proposals for research funding, which will require an ethics review. By no longer making that a mandatory requirement, funding can be made available to new groups, including grassroots and community-based organizations that aren't necessarily affiliated with a post-secondary institution.

To see all past grants and read more about the process, visit the foundation's website: [rtoero.ca/rtoero-foundation](https://rtoero.ca/rtoero-foundation). 📄

# Investing in a sustainable future

Should you buy an electric car?

by **Patricia Ogura**



**Noel Cooper** (District 34 York Region) bought his first EV in February 2022. Encouraged by technological advances in battery recycling and infrastructure developments, Cooper also likes the math: “I was paying close to \$300 for gas every month . . . that non-expense is paying for well over half the car payments.”

Owning the EV is “a tiny but real contribution to a moderate climate and cleaner air for my grandchildren,” Cooper says. “The planet needs millions of people to take similar actions soon to achieve a sustainable future. If not now, when?”

**Environmental stewardship** is a key RTOERO advocacy pillar. We all know that conservation, responsible use of resources, and protecting our air, land and water are critical to a sustainable future.

Transportation accounts for about one-quarter of Canada’s carbon emissions. As our population grows, along with the economy, so does the number of vehicles on our roads.

So it’s no wonder many members are considering buying an electric vehicle (EV) as a personal commitment to managing their carbon footprint. And asking lots of questions.

**Q** Will power grids withstand increased demand from the EV evolution?

**A** Electrical grids currently keep pace with EV usage, but to meet future needs, collaboration among government levels is essential. These efforts are underway. Upgrading the country’s power infrastructure and commitment to renewable energy through wind, solar and battery storage will provide solutions.

**Q** What about battery recycling?

**A** Companies such as Canada’s Li-Cycle Corp. and Lithion are making major advancements in recycling and repurposing batteries. They are minimizing environmental damage and supporting renewable-energy storage while creating new jobs. A new EV, because of manufacturing variables pertinent to each type of vehicle, has the larger carbon footprint. “After as little as two or three years, EVs’ lifetime emissions become dramatically lower than those of a combustion vehicle,” says Nino Di Cara, founder and president of Electric Autonomy Canada. He points to data showing that batteries outlast the life of EVs made today and adds, “The precious metals inside EV batteries are too valuable not to be recycled.”

**Q** Does Canada have the necessary charging infrastructure?

**A** A solid EV charging infrastructure — over 15,000 chargers — currently links Canada’s major markets. Challenges occur off major routes in lightly populated and northern regions. Over 60 per cent

of Canadians live in homes where they can install their own chargers, and the developers and owners of apartments or condos are installing chargers, so Di Cara is confident that the infrastructure will keep pace as more EVs hit the roads.

The federal government is investing billions, encouraging the rollout of charging stations nationally with customized incentives for multi-unit residential buildings, public places, shopping malls and workplaces and to support commercial fleets.

**Q** How will we recoup lost gas taxes?

**A** A number of models are being considered. Viable solutions include taxing EVs based on energy consumed, distance driven and vehicle weight. Accountability tools may involve routine odometer readings or GPS-tracking installed in your vehicle that will “report” the kilometres you drive. Saskatchewan has initiated an annual EV ownership fee, but it doesn’t take energy usage or vehicle weight into account.

Green energy solutions cross provincial jurisdictions and are the future.

Ensure your elected officials know how important green energy is to you. Visit [rtoero.ca/giving-back/advocacy](https://rtoero.ca/giving-back/advocacy) for more resources, including the RTOERO white papers and tips for advocating. ♻️



# Cut costs, not flavour

How to stretch your grocery dollars when food costs rise

by **Fran Berkoff**, registered dietitian

**A survey conducted** by Statistics Canada from April 10 to May 1, 2022, found that nearly three in four Canadians felt rising prices affected their ability to meet day-to-day expenses, including food. Not surprising, since between April 2021 and April 2022 the price of food rose by 9.7 per cent.

If you're feeling the sting of rising food costs, here are some tips to help you eat healthy, tasty meals on a budget.

1. Start with an inventory of your pantry, fridge and freezer. Check best-before dates and plan menus around foods whose dates are expiring. Stock up on canned goods, staples and frozen foods when they are on sale.
2. Before shopping, make a list. This will help you make thoughtful, healthier choices and cut down on impulse buying. Check out flyers, coupons and websites for specials for the items on your list. Making a master list of foods you often buy as a reference for your weekly list

provides an invaluable guide and means you'll be less likely to forget something major like milk or bread.

3. When comparing two brands to find the best buy, check the unit price, which is often displayed on the front of the grocery shelf on which the product sits. For example, a cereal price label will include a unit price for each 100 grams, making it easier to quickly figure out which brand is cheapest. Also, compare prices on generic and brand-name products. Sometimes there is a significant difference. Foods sold in single-serve packaging often cost more. Best to choose the full-size version and divide it up yourself.
4. Products getting close to their best-before dates and slightly bruised produce may be offered at a lower price or percentage discount but can be just as healthy as their more-perfect counterparts.

5. With meat prices on the rise, consider adding more plant-based proteins such as lentils, canned beans, nuts, chickpeas, edamame or other soy products to your diet. Your budget, your heart and the planet will welcome a vegetarian chili, a hearty curried lentil soup or stew, a tofu stir-fry or roasted cauliflower with hummus.
6. When buying meat and chicken, always check flyers for sales. If you find a great buy, stock up and stash it in the freezer. Look for cheaper cuts like eye of round and sirloin tip and cook them low and slow or marinate. Both lean ground beef and ground chicken are usually good buys, as are chicken drumsticks – they'll provide essential protein, vitamins and iron. Canned fish such as salmon, sardines and light tuna are often on special and are less expensive than fresh.
7. Local, in-season fruit and vegetables are usually less expensive, but right now it's winter and you'll do best with frozen and canned produce. You'll get lots of nutrition and no waste. Remember, frozen produce is processed at its peak of ripeness and nutrient content. If buying canned, look for no added salt and sugar. Frozen fruit does well in smoothies and added to cereal and yogurt.
8. Bulk buying can be economical but only if you know you will use it all or you have room to store or freeze it. Rice, grains, oats, legumes and lentils can be stored in airtight containers for a long time and used as the basis of inexpensive meals. When you cook them, make enough for one or two extra meals. For example, toss your leftover brown rice with some red peppers, onion, tomatoes, feta cheese and a light dressing.
9. Root vegetables such as carrots, squash, turnip, potatoes and beets have a long shelf life, tend to be less expensive and are nutritional all-stars. I often roast a big pan of root vegetables, eat them as side dishes on day one, then add them to soups or salads. 🌱



# Good news for latte lovers

Drinking coffee could lower risk of heart disease

by **Pauline Anderson**

**A recent study found that people who drink coffee,** even if they add sugar, have a reduced risk of death from heart disease or cancer.

Previous studies have linked moderate coffee consumption with boosted energy and mood and with lower rates of chronic disease and death. But this new research appears to be the first to find that adding sugar doesn't eliminate the health benefits of coffee.

The study, published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, included 171,616 participants recruited from the UK Biobank who completed at least one dietary questionnaire and didn't have cancer or cardiovascular disease when they enrolled in the study. Of these, 55.4 per cent drank unsweetened coffee, 14.3 per cent added sugar to their coffee, 6.1 per cent added artificial sweetener, and 24.2 per cent did not drink coffee.

Researchers grouped the coffee drinkers based on the number of cups of coffee they drank per day.

Over about seven years, 3,177 participants died, including 1,725 from cancer and 628 from cardiovascular disease.

After controlling for lifestyle and other factors that might

impact risk of death, the researchers found that coffee drinkers were significantly less likely to die from cardiovascular disease, cancer, or from any cause compared to those who didn't drink coffee at all. This was true whether the coffee was ground, instant or decaffeinated.

The study showed a U-shaped relationship with coffee. That means drinking very little and a lot of coffee was less healthy than drinking some. Those who drank two to four cups of coffee a day had the most pronounced benefits; for them, death was about 30 per cent less likely during the seven-year study period than for non-coffee drinkers.

Importantly, this was true whether or not they added sugar to their java.

While this study didn't find that adding sugar to coffee affected health benefits, other research has linked sugar consumption with negative health outcomes.

The bottom line: Drinking coffee, one of the most widely consumed beverages, likely has benefits that might counter-balance the negative impact of adding sugar. But research continues to better understand how coffee affects health.



### MIGRAINE SUFFERERS FEEL STIGMATIZED

**More than 30 per cent of** people who suffer migraines, even a few attacks a month, report being stigmatized. They feel their headaches are minimized or seen as an excuse to avoid family, work and social commitments.

The study, presented at the American Headache Society annual meeting, pooled data from almost 60,000 subjects who met criteria for migraine disorder and participated in web-based surveys in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

The surveys assessed the impact of migraines on work, home and social life and included two categories of migraine-related stigma reported by respondents: the degree to which others think a migraine is being used as an excuse — to avoid a commitment, for example — and the degree to which others minimize the impact of a migraine on the sufferer.

About 32 per cent of participants reported experiencing one or both migraine-related stigma categories often or very often. Almost half (47 per cent) of subjects with chronic headaches (15 or more headache days a month) felt stigma often or very often; however, even 25 per cent of participants with three or fewer headache days a month,

who made up about 59 per cent of the sample, reported experiencing stigma.

Past research comparing levels of stigmatizing attitudes toward different diseases has shown that migraine sufferers are more stigmatized than people with anxiety, asthma and even epilepsy. One study that used machine learning to assess the number of negative terms surrounding various diseases showed migraine disorder was right up there with gonorrhoea.

While the prevalence of migraine disorder decreases with age, a significant number of older people still experience them, many with accompanying hallmark symptoms of nausea and sensitivity to light and sound.

As with younger people, migraine triggers in older adults can include stress or anxiety, bright or flashing light, loud noises, sleep disturbances and alcohol consumption.

Treatments for seniors who suffer from migraines may include weight loss, physical activity and medications. However, certain drugs may be contraindicated in seniors who have diabetes, heart disease or other medical conditions.

### A POSITIVE ATTITUDE PAYS OFF

**Women who live** a glass-half-full kind of life appear to live longer, a new study has found.

The study, carried out by researchers in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, was published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

Researchers analyzed data from almost 160,000 participants in the Women's Health Initiative, which enrolled postmenopausal American women from 1993 to 1998 and followed them for up to 26 years.

Compared to the 40,000 least-optimistic subjects, the 40,000 most-optimistic women had an estimated 5.4 per cent longer lifespan. And they had a 10 per cent greater likelihood of living beyond 90 years.

The results applied across race and ethnic groups, even after controlling for chronic health conditions and depression.

Regular exercise, a healthy diet and other lifestyle habits did not fully explain the link. These factors accounted for only 24 per cent of the association between optimism and lifespan. 🧘

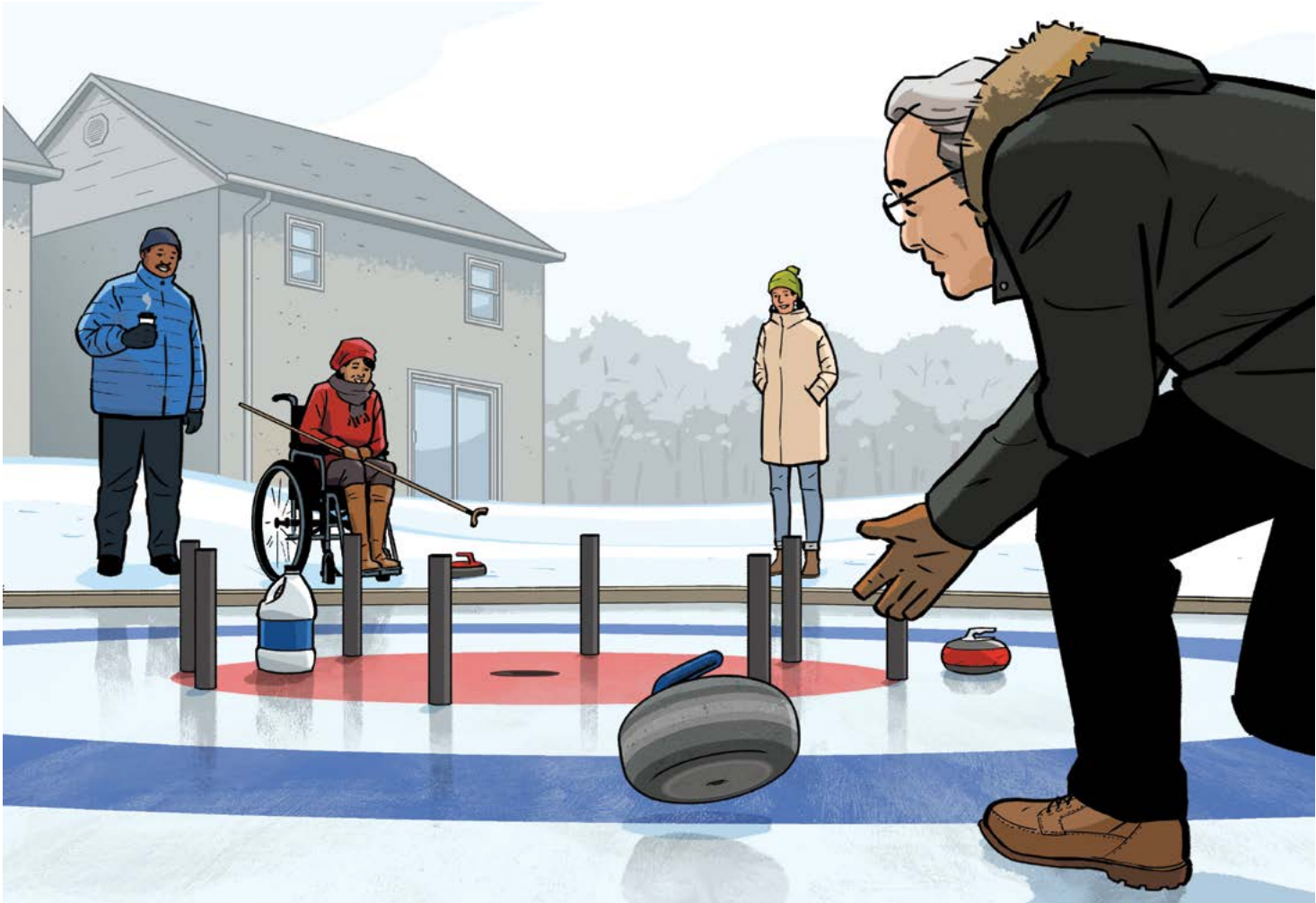


LEFT PHOTO, GORDON KOFF. RIGHT PHOTO, LAYLAND MASUDA

# Get crokicurling

Canada's new winter game for the whole family

by **Ylva Van Buuren** Illustrations by **Jori Bolton**



**H**ockey may be Canada's game, but crokinole and curling count as classic Canadian activities, too.

After all, the first known crokinole board was created in 1875 by a Perth County dad as a gift for his five-year-old son.

And curling was brought to Canada from Scotland; although details are sketchy, the likely story is that the 78th Fraser Highlanders regiment melted cannonballs to make iron curling "stones" and that they curled in the city of Quebec in 1759/1760.

Now, thanks to landscape architects Leanne Muir and Liz Wreford, you can play a hybrid version of both.

Muir and Wreford designed the game in 2017 when they were both working for Plain Projects, now Public City Architecture, in Winnipeg.

"We were brainstorming ideas to enter in the annual Warming Huts design competition for the Forks Market," explains Muir, who now teaches environmental design at the University of Manitoba.

The Forks is a 53-acre mixed-use space that features artful warming huts along its several-kilometre skating trail. "We wanted to submit something that would be fun and playful and attract people to come together and enjoy themselves," Muir says. With so many of the rules the same, they thought, why not create a game that combined curling and crokinole?

Public City entered the crokicurl idea. The next day, the competition jury told them that while it wouldn't work on the skating trail, "we loved the idea so much, we wanted to build one ourselves for another part of the market," says Dave Pancoe, site operations manager of special projects at The Forks.

The first public crokicurl rink opened at The Forks in 2017. "We got calls about it from everywhere, and visitors and passersby would always stop to give it a try."



### Here's how you play the game:

While curlers slide a rock along ice and crokinole players flick wooden discs toward the centre of their board, crokicurl uses a life-size crokinole board structure set up on an ice rink. There's an octagonally shaped playing surface with red and blue painted scoring circles, low boards circling the entire playing area, posts set up in a circular shape, and a recessed "button" in the centre. Each team of one or two players has four rocks of the same colour. Players take turns throwing, trying to get their rocks on the button.

"There's no learning curve for this activity," says Russ Duhaime, a curling coach in Haliburton, Ont., who makes his own crokicurl rink every year. He says the game can be played by anyone of any age and fitness level.

The only physical part is crouching down to throw the rock, says Muir. If you can't crouch down or are in a wheelchair, a short stick can be used to push the rock. Since the rink is shorter than a curling rink, you don't need to be especially strong to push the rock far and there's no sweeping like there is in curling.

Crokicurl is growing in popularity across the country and may well be coming to a public space or backyard near you this winter.

After hearing about the game at a conference, "we built our first crokicurl rink in 2018, and the game brings a lot of joy and interest to the area," says DeeAnn Mercier, executive director of the Broadway Business Improvement District in Saskatoon.

"Crokicurl is a great activity for Canada," she says. "It is accessible to all folks, gives people another way to try something new and have fun in winter, and it builds community."

It doesn't get any more Canadian than that.

### CROKICURL PLAYING TIPS

Download rules from Public City here: [publiccityarchitecture.com/crokicurl-rules-and-instructions](http://publiccityarchitecture.com/crokicurl-rules-and-instructions). In general, teams accumulate points by sliding their rocks onto the centre button.

- Wear footwear with good grip for the ice.
- Use the boards to brace your foot as you push the rock into the centre.
- If you can't bend down, use a stick of some kind to push the rock.

### GET READY TO ROCK!



#### USED CURLING ROCKS

Check local sports stores for refurbished curling rocks – you'll find them for sale online at sites such as Kijiji and eBay. Ask curling clubs if they are replacing their rocks – the old rocks can be refurbished so they're as good as new.



#### PLASTIC JUGS

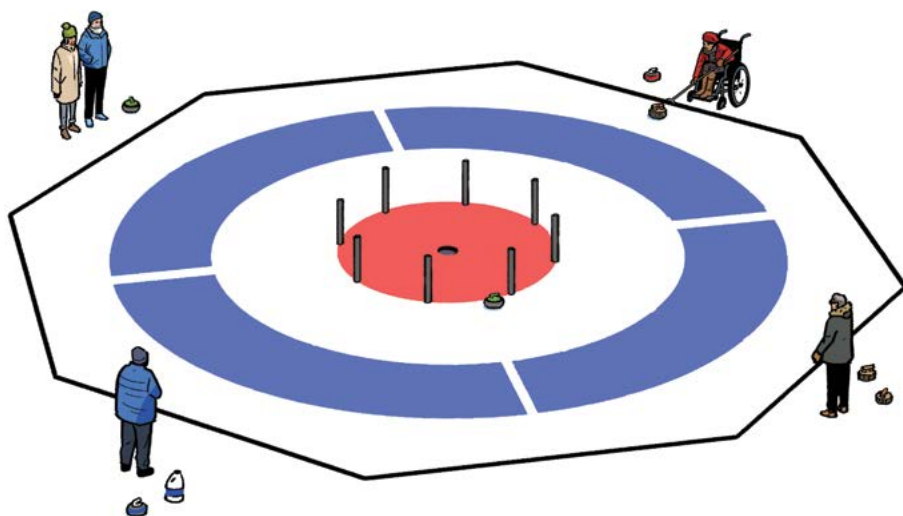
Fill empty plastic milk or juice jugs, the kind with handles, with coloured water – use a different food colouring for each jug so you know whose rock belongs to whom! Freeze.



#### DIY MIXING BOWLS

And if you're really ambitious, try mixing bowls filled with concrete.

[mindenoutersclub.com/make\\_your\\_own\\_curling\\_stones.html](http://mindenoutersclub.com/make_your_own_curling_stones.html)



### WHERE TO PLAY

- Check local curling rinks and community centres to see if they have decided to make an outdoor crokicurl rink. Rocks (lower-weight junior rocks) are usually supplied.
- Google public crokicurl rinks in your city and community.
- Make your own crokicurl rink by following directions from Public City Architecture. "Drawings are free to anyone who is interested because it is such a playful, joyful and accessible activity," says Muir.
- Make a cruder version. Duhaime made an ice rink in his backyard, and "for every inch in my crokinole board, I measured a foot." He spray-painted lines on the ice and chiselled out a button in the centre. He made rocks by cutting a fallen pine tree into slabs and rounding the edges. ♻️



# The armchair tourist

Vicarious travel can be a wellness booster

by **Brooke Smith** Illustration by **Nikki Ernst**

**P**eople travel for lots of reasons. For some, experiencing new places, people and cultures expands their worldview. Other people are after adventure — they want to test their limits. And sometimes people just want to relax and recharge.

But travelling isn't just fun and exciting; it's a wellness booster, too.

While looking after your physical and mental health is a given, "you also have to feed your soul," explains Shawna Leigh Clark, a wellness coach whose clients are mostly in their mid-50s to late-70s.

"[Travel] gets you out of the routine, out of the mundane, out of your comfort zone," says Robin Esrock, *Canadian Geographic* columnist and author of *The Great Canadian Bucket List*. "And, when you do those things, your life gets enriched."

Travel also provides stress relief for some — a good reminder that there's more to life than everyday responsibilities. "[Travel] allows people to have a wider perspective. I think people get a better sense of what's important in life," says Clark. "I think travel can help some people find a way to get a better life balance."

And travel can be like going back to school. "At the very cornerstone of this idea of travel is curiosity, the idea that we want to learn more — whether it's about food or culture or history or nature. We want to learn more about this world we live in," says Esrock. "And what a time to live in for the curious. We've got more access to more resources and information than any other culture in history. It's there for the picking."

Learning new things means using your brain, and, Clark reminds, "it's very important as we age to be learning new things, to keep our brains sharp."

"The reality is, there are a lot of people who — due to an accident or something beyond their own control — don't have that ability [to travel in person]," says Clark.

So, if you have limitations on travelling in person, can you reap these wellness benefits if travelling is not possible?

Yes, you can! Travelling virtually can provide just as many benefits as actually being there. And you're not restricted by available flights or worried about safety concerns; there's no jet lag and no worry about bad weather spoiling your trip.

Reading is a great way to travel, according to Esrock. "All books are travel books. If it's history, you're travelling back in time; if it's science fiction, you're travelling into the future. You're going on a journey."

There's also virtual reality. "One of the upsides of the pandemic has been this huge cultural shift and technological shift into virtual experiences," Esrock says. "Suddenly, every museum worth its salt has an amazing virtual tour."

Taking this a step further, armchair travellers can engage in an immersive experience by donning VR headsets. "People are putting on headsets and streaming Machu Picchu and Antarctica, where you can travel back in time and into the future, and learn about things without leaving your home," Esrock says. "I always say, when my bones are too old to let me travel, I'm going to get myself a VR headset and go everywhere."

"If you're unable to physically go someplace and experience the culture, if you're a person who gets as much out of experiencing somebody else experiencing it," says Clark, "you're going to get benefits. If it engages you in such a way and it sparks some joy in your life, then it's served its purpose."

## BEING THERE

The virtual reality program at Columbia Forest Long Term Care Centre in Waterloo, Ont., just rolled out again in spring 2022 after COVID shuttered most social events. (The centre piloted the program in 2019.)

“The headset is a little intimidating,” says Shalagh Cassidy, the centre’s recreation manager, “so we normally have to take it to a resident, show it to them and explain to them what’s going on, and then have them try it on. If it’s something that connects with them, they adapt really quickly.”

A volunteer sits beside the resident with a tablet; this allows the volunteer to see 2D images of what the resident is seeing in 3D. With the headset on, the resident can also hear any sounds, such as rushing waves or blowing wind or music related to the video.

There are any number of experiences: riding on a Mardi Gras float, flying a biplane, ascending in a hot-air balloon, skydiving, or walking

amongst the cows in the Alps (and hearing the cowbells), a camel ride in the Sahara (“You literally felt like you were on the camel,” says Cassidy, “and when you turned your head, you could see the other camels and the legs of the people riding”), swimming with dolphins (“For residents with mobility issues, you’d see them try to paddle, or, if they were lying in their beds, they would kick their feet because they actually thought they were in the water”).

For one resident, a nun, the volunteer suggested they go to Vatican City and see the Sistine Chapel. “She just blossomed. She was so excited,” says Cassidy. “The resident said, ‘I think we need to pray’ and began an ‘Our Father.’” When they finished the excursion, she actually broke into a hymn.

“She’s not a very verbal person in general,” says Cassidy, “so to have that interaction was really exciting.”

## SOURCES TO START YOUR VIRTUAL TRAVELS

**earthcam.com** – Check out live webcams in major cities around the world. Count the yellow taxis in New York’s Times Square, or watch revellers come and go at Dublin’s Temple Bar.

**heygo.com** – Enjoy a livestreaming platform for interactive travel and cultural experiences, hosted by local guides. Sign up and book tours for free. You can also leave an optional tip.

**Virtual tourism** – Watch interactive videos online. Explore the Great Barrier Reef ([attenboroughsreef.com](http://attenboroughsreef.com)), hosted by broadcaster and historian David Attenborough. Head to Dubai ([dubai360.com/scene/389-above-dubai-marina-8/en](http://dubai360.com/scene/389-above-dubai-marina-8/en)) or vacation in Bristol ([visitbristol.co.uk/bristolfromhome](http://visitbristol.co.uk/bristolfromhome)) from your couch.

**Books** – Immerse yourself in the pages of esteemed travel writers. Check out 24 famous ones from The Uncorked Librarian at [theuncorkedlibrarian.com/travel-writers/](http://theuncorkedlibrarian.com/travel-writers/). Or, simply delve into a great historical or science fiction novel.

## Heads up

A virtual reality headset is essentially a helmet-like apparatus mounted in front of your eyes. The technology makes 3D images appear to float in front of you. Each eye receives different perspectives of the same 3D image; that causes the brain to think it’s coming from slightly different directions. Sensors in the headset track how you interact with the virtual space.

A stand-alone VR headset (which works entirely on its own with no additional technology or equipment, like the Meta Quest 2) will cost between \$500 and \$700. There are less expensive headsets, but they require connectivity to a console or use with a cellphone. You can purchase most versions through Amazon or at Best Buy. 📺



PHOTO, COURTESY OF METAVERSE



The  
**TRAW**

# Travel as a world citizen

Sustainable tourism includes more than your carbon footprint

by **Stuart Foxman** Illustrations by **Jeannie Phan**

**“Sustainable tourism”** is a buzzy phrase these days, and as we emerge from pandemic travel restrictions, it’s no surprise that more and more of us are building sustainability into our travel plans. A 2022 survey from **Booking.com** showed that 76 per cent of us say sustainable travel is important.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, sustainable tourism “takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.”

Simply put, travelling as a world citizen means packing light, reducing your carbon footprint and exploring a destination while respecting — and supporting — the people, culture and environment.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council says the goal isn’t only to reduce the negative impacts of travel, but to actually contribute to outcomes from job creation to heritage preservation.

For many travellers, the environment is an obvious focus. Some embrace ecotourism, which revolves around experiencing and learning about natural areas. “That’s rewarding in itself and can be part of raising consciousness to think more deeply about the world around you,” says Adam Weaver, professor of hospitality, tourism and sport at Niagara College in Ontario.

Ecotourism also focuses on doing trips in an ethically managed way. Maple Leaf Adventures in Victoria, B.C., which runs expeditions along Canada’s West Coast, limits their number of guests, builds no structures and leaves nothing behind in the natural areas they visit. They provide skilled employment for local people, have protocol agreements with coastal First Nations, and supply their ships in local ports.

Environmental concerns can influence other travel decisions, like staying closer to home, taking the train instead of driving, or choosing accommodations with green best practices. No matter the trip you take, you can buy carbon offsets to mitigate the associated greenhouse gas emissions. Several organizations and airlines offer that service.

Choosing an eco-trip or being mindful of the impact of getting to your destination count, but so does every other decision you make as you plan your holiday.

Sustainable travel is connected to the idea of ethical consumption, points out Karla Boluk, associate professor in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. “Every time we spend money on food, accommodations or activities, there are responsible and ethical choices,” she says.



It's tempting to look for familiar stores or restaurants when you travel, but you didn't decide to leave town so you could feel like you were still there, did you? Travel is about new places and new experiences, so shop and dine at locally owned stores and restaurants. When you book your holiday, ask your travel agent if the hotel you're considering trains and employs local people, offers decent working conditions and pays fair wages, sources locally and invests in the community. Look for third-party sustainability certifications. And use your Spidey senses to sniff out claims that are simply marketing.

"People need to understand whether the organization they're booking with is doing the right thing for the area they operate in as part of their mission, or whether it's a sales tactic," says Kevin Smith, an owner of Maple Leaf Adventures.

Tourism should broaden your horizons, not flatten someone else's culture. So think of socio-cultural sustainability too. Some mass tourist development has shunted aside local culture, or co-opted it to treat customs/rituals/places like a theme-park sideshow. With more sustainable travel, the businesses involved in culture are either majority-owned/operated by members of that community or work closely with those communities to create authentic cultural experiences.

Here's another way to frame your travels: What do you take and what do you leave? Keith Henry, CEO of the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, hopes travellers take away learning and understanding while leaving a net positive impact.

"Are you spending money on Indigenous-owned experiences or experiences owned by a tour operator? Are you taking from the area in a way that creates other pressures? We're also trying to balance visitor demands with cultural and community sustainability, and that's a delicate balance," says Henry.

Beyond formal events and activities, you can also experience cultural appreciation by simply interacting with residents rather than maintaining two solitudes. That's harder when travellers choose "enclave tourism," where everything happens in a self-contained environment, segregated from the surrounding locale.



From top: Ancient monumental poles on Haida Gwaii, on B.C.'s northern coast; guests examine a map on the bridge of the *Cascadia*; Maple Leaf Adventures' 138-foot catamaran *Cascadia*.

"The foundation of tourism is nature and culture. If you diminish or destroy either, you don't have a product," says Daniel Scott, a professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Management at the University of Waterloo.

When you consider sustainable travel in its broadest context, it's easy to see how seemingly small choices can have a positive impact, says Richard Butler, a retired academic and researcher who focused on tourism, resource management and conservation and is now based in Prince Rupert, B.C.

"You don't have to be perfect; you just have to be a little bit better. We've picked up on the idea that holidays are where we escape from reality. But too much, and we escape common sense," says Butler, co-author of the book *Are We There Yet? Traveling More Responsibly with Your Children* and contributor to two dozen other books on travel.

Collectively, there are billions of opportunities to make a difference. Pre-pandemic, global travel stood at 1.5 billion international tourists annually, according to the World Tourism Organization. Domestic travel adds billions more. Travel and tourism

generate just over 10 per cent of the global GDP.

"That's the largest voluntary transfer of wealth in the world," says Scott.

Our cumulative travel decisions and actions are also a transfer of impacts. We live in one big world. Travel brings us together. It can make that world more resilient, or more fragile. Sustainable tourism can ease the pressures on the environment (natural and built), improve economic prospects for local communities and populations, honour their heritage, and help them to protect themselves.

Think about it this way, says Weaver: Our own communities are on someone else's travel plans. "In a globally connected world, origins are destinations, and destinations are also origins," he says.

Consider Banff in Alberta, says Scott. It's as precious a destination as Machu Picchu in Peru. We wouldn't want tourism to harm the economies, lakes or cultural heritage in our own backyard, would we? So why would we want that to happen anywhere else?

Sustainable tourism can make an indelible impression on you and the places you visit, now and into the future. That's always a trip worth taking. ☘

PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM TOP, COURTESY OF MAPLE LEAF ADVENTURES, JEFF REYNOLDS/MAPLE LEAF ADVENTURES, SIMON AGER/MAPLE LEAF ADVENTURES



## My life-changing retirement adventure

by **Peter Mernagh** (District 14 Niagara)

**In the fall of 2003**, a teacher on our staff at St. Martin School invited Ted van der Zalm, co-founder of the charitable organization Wells of Hope, to speak to the students about his experience drilling water wells in Guatemala.

Here was an opportunity for adventure in my retirement, I thought – where do I sign up?

On October 4, 2004, I climbed behind the wheel of an old mini school bus and joined the convoy of drilling rigs and pickup trucks driving 5,000 kilometres from St. Catharines, Ont., to Laguna El Pito, in the mountains near Jalapa, Guatemala, where we set up the tents that would be home for the next six months.

It was the genesis of a journey that would open my eyes, mind and heart in a way I never experienced in my 32 years as a teacher, principal or consultant.

At the beginning, my responsibilities included teaching three of Ted's children in the morning and purchasing fuel for the drilling rigs and food for the camp. I had learned a little Spanish before I left, which was helpful.

October 14, 2004, my first afternoon: Laguna El Pito is about 2,000 metres above sea level, and my ears popped three times as I drove back from the town of Jalapa with food and fuel for the drilling rigs. I had driven the wrong way down a

one-way street, right in front of the police station. The officer simply motioned me to back up; no ticket, no problem.

Among the trees along the side of the road I saw the adobe brick houses, the lagoon where women washed clothes and filled their plastic containers with drinking water. Women with stacks of firewood on their heads plodded up the roadway, and raggedly dressed children played in any level space they could find.

I have driven to Guatemala twice since 2004 – the second time after Hurricane Stan; the police escorted us from the Mexican border to Guatemala City because the bridges had been washed out. I have flown down about 25 times. The first few years, I spent several months in Guatemala; later I'd go twice a year and stay for a month or so. I travelled mostly with Don Evans, a retiree from Dunnville, Ont. I was introduced to Don at the Buffalo airport in November of 2009 when we were both headed to Guatemala. My wife, Irene, came with me once, but it just wasn't her calling.

Over the years as Wells of Hope expanded its role, my responsibilities changed.

As my Spanish improved, I interacted more fully with the local people and began to understand a little more of the Xinka culture. I became the host

for high school groups from Canada that arrived during the school year with their teacher chaperones. I also taught a little English in some of the local schools. When several Canadian doctors volunteered to help, I arranged with the local hospital to have them do



Peter Mernagh and Don Evans.

clinics. I did some of the translating and became much more aware of the health issues of the local population. The high incidence of parasites was proof of the lack of potable water.

We began to construct the first of 23 schools and made improvements to five others, ultimately providing 5,300 students and their teachers with better facilities. While our experienced construction volunteers worked on the sites, I arranged for the necessary materials.

When I sent pictures of corn-stalk schools and dirt-floor classrooms to my former school board, they were happy to donate used desks and computers.

The original drilling-rig cable we brought from Canada proved inadequate to drill 800-foot wells in the mountains. In 2010, fundraising allowed the purchase of a much more advanced drilling rig, and to date 32 wells are operational, serving some 90,000 Indigenous people. A building was constructed on the campsite to teach sewing, and a business component was added for women who want to start sewing businesses. Visiting groups from Canada have helped build adobe houses for single mothers. Agricultural initiatives have taught local women how to grow vegetables that can be sold, as well as providing some space for them to grow produce for their families.

For about seven years I organized dental clinics through Kindness in Action, a volunteer dental group from Alberta. We held dental clinics in schools, which required me to work closely with school personnel and the local Indigenous leaders. My team of volunteers kept the dentists fed and the camp clean, while my friend Don ensured that the electrical generators and compressors worked during those clinics.

After the clinics wrapped up, Don and I toured parts of Guatemala and El Salvador on two small Suzuki motorcycles we had purchased. Travelling by motorcycle was a great way to experience the country close-up and provided interesting interactions with many Guatemalans.

In 2018, we started the construction of the first locally staffed medical centre in the mountains. COVID caused some delays, but in 2021 the centre became functional, providing a much-needed service to the local community.



Peter Mernagh and Don Evans with children at an "escuelita" (school).



Above: Peter Mernagh with community member Susanna and her youngest child.



Left: The drilling rig.

I originally came to Guatemala for a retirement adventure. But I soon realized that what I really wanted from the experience was an opportunity to improve people's lives.

My eyes were opened to the challenges of life that beset the subsistence farmers and people who live in the mountains. No social safety nets, poor medical facilities, almost no source of steady income, lack of free education, lack of clean water, no sewage treatment and on and on.

I learned that it's what you don't see that is more important than what you observe initially. When you look past the obvious signs of poverty, your mind and your heart open up to the needs of another human being.

Through my years of volunteering, I have met some incredible people who are dedicated to helping others. My volunteering has provided a significant life purpose. I have a greater appreciation of so many things we take for granted in Canada and see in the simple lives of the mountain people that happiness

can be achieved with strong family ties, faith and a determination to succeed despite the challenges. I learned that understanding the culture and working in cooperation with the local people are necessary for a project's success.

Your heart is touched when you learn the names of the poor and their family situations. It's touched when you see a dental or medical situation that won't be resolved. It's touched when you know the school children are every bit as capable as Canadian children but few, if any, will advance past high school or have a decent chance at a better life than their parents.

My last visit was late November 2018. My plane tore down the runway of La Aurora International Airport, and the familiar buildings of Guatemala City disappeared as the plane gained altitude; the peaks of the local volcanoes were visible as we turned north. In eight hours or so, I would be back in Canada, but a piece of my heart would remain in the mountains, calling me back when the pandemic has run its course. ☺





Insider intel on the most welcoming spots for a worry-free, so-gay vacay

by **Doug Wallace**

**I'm gay, so every time I think about travelling somewhere,** I first check out the rating of the country in question on Equaldex.com, a website that explores the global progress of LGBTQ2I rights. It monitors censorship and employment discrimination laws, along with those on marriage, adoption and gender identity, even polling public opinion as well. I'm not a fearful traveller, just pragmatic, and curious about how enlightened the destination will be — or not.

While there's no real difference between what heterosexual and LGBTQ2I travellers will find fun and exciting in the long run, sophisticated or not, feeling welcome is important. Nobody wants that whiff of prejudice or intolerance to ruin the holiday buzz. These nations are just a few that showcase the best of themselves, scoring high on the Equaldex and proving they're not just merely tolerant, but accepting.

### Costa Rica

With the best rights record in Central America, Costa Rica is an LGBTQ2I favourite destination. And while most may favour the south coast's Manuel Antonio region and surrounding national parks, Guanacaste in the north plays an excellent host. This tourist hub connects eco-adventurers to the rainforest, parkland or beach via the airport at Liberia. Expect an incredibly diverse terrain, volcanic hot springs and mud baths, horseback riding and nature reserve treks.

**Where to stay:** Andaz Costa Rica Resort at Peninsula Papagayo has a series of infinity pools designed to mimic an afternoon along the riverside. Be sure to have a massage in the treehouses of the hilltop Onda Spa. Search "Andaz Costa Rica Resort At Peninsula Papagayo" at [hyatt.com](https://www.hyatt.com).

### Spain

Madrid and Barcelona are two of the most LGBTQ2I-friendly cities in the world. Spain is a leader in human rights with a culturally liberal attitude, welcoming and accepting despite the strong arm of Catholicism. Both cities also have world-class Pride festivals, Madrid's being the largest in Europe. Outside the city centres, the coastal towns of Sitges (south of Barcelona) and Torremolinos (a suburb of Málaga) have long been the gay hubs of the Spanish Riviera, bastions of the international gay scene. Better bring along a few new swimsuits.

**Where to stay:** Palacio de los Duques Gran Meliá mixes Old World splendour with modern magic, particularly with regard to the decor. Do not sidestep the courtyard restaurant, Dos Cielos.

[granmelia.com/en/hotels/palacio-de-los-duques/](https://granmelia.com/en/hotels/palacio-de-los-duques/)



## Argentina

Argentina scores extremely high on the Equaldex, with green checkmarks for everything: gay marriage, non-binary gender recognition, housing non-discrimination, blood donation, banned conversion therapy, the works. Not only that — the tango! Nights are just as steamy as the humid afternoons in Buenos Aires, the capital city. The Malba art museum is well worth checking out, filled with contemporary Latin American works. Explore the bars and restaurants of Palermo and Palermo Hollywood, and chow down at the upmarket steakhouses. Shopping here is great because everything is boutique-unique. Brush up on your *Evita* tunes.

**Where to stay:** The trendy Fierro or CasaSur hotels in Palermo have everything you need, rooftop pools included. [fierrohotel.com](http://fierrohotel.com), [casasurhotel.com](http://casasurhotel.com)

## Iceland

The arts-oriented culture, amazing food, other-worldly topography and healing waters are just four of the many reasons I adore Iceland. Another good reason is the high hip factor and the warm welcome, thanks in part to the steady stream of visiting Europeans of all stripes. And like that of many small cities, the gay scene in Reykjavik is scattered among the tiny bars and restaurants on its main strips. Iceland's geographical oddities are a major draw: sprawling waterfalls, volcanic lava fields and geothermal spas. Anchor your visit to Iceland Gay Pride, usually the first weekend of August.

**Where to stay:** Formerly the city's main apothecary, the Apotek Hotel by Keahotels yields modern-historic chic in the heart of town, with slick rooms and a stylish lounge.

[keahotels.is/apotek-hotel](http://keahotels.is/apotek-hotel)

## Portugal

I like Lisbon more than Paris. There, I've said it. Truly, you can't beat the extraordinary architecture, black-and-white mosaic-tiled public squares and colourful buildings. The old Alfama enclave; the fado music halls; the boho Baixa, Chiado and Bairro Alto neighbourhoods — it's all so pleasant and charming, the food authentic and reasonably priced. Laid-back Porto, too, is postcard-perfect, as is the south coast's Algarve, with its dramatic landscape and seaside escapes.

**Where to stay:** Hotel da Baixa presents good value, extraordinary Pombaline architecture and total comfort across 66 rooms.

[hoteldabaixa.com](http://hoteldabaixa.com)

## The Netherlands

Amsterdam has always been first out of the gate when it comes to liberal attitudes; the first bars for men opened there in the 1920s. The Netherlands was also the first country in the world to recognize same-sex marriage. Reguliersdwarsstraat, the heart of Amsterdam's LGBTQ2I community, was developed in the 1980s, one of the first gay streets in Europe. Young and hip, tourist-friendly and romantic, the city is as free-spirited as it has always been.

**Where to stay:** The Dylan along the Keizersgracht canal is close to the gay 'hood and all the local landmarks. Make time to book a table at the Michelin-starred Restaurant Vinkeles.

[dylanamsterdam.com](http://dylanamsterdam.com)

## Curaçao

This tropical paradise at the south end of the Caribbean, a constituent country of the Netherlands, takes a live-and-let-live stance on its LGBTQ2I community. The prime minister regularly speaks at the island's September Pride events, an effort unheard of in most other Caribbean nations. The capital city of Willemstad enjoys a culture of cool, due in part to the Dutch tourists who visit year-round. Your vacation checklist includes 35 white-sand beaches, fun beach clubs, incredible scuba diving, great restaurants and eclectic museums — including the excellent Kura Hulanda Museum. Blue Curaçao margaritas? Yes, please.

**Where to stay:** The Pietermaai Boutique Hotel is within a stone's throw of the hip bars, top restaurants, chic beach clubs and Willemstad laneways.

[pietermaiboutiquehotel.com](http://pietermaiboutiquehotel.com)





Pack your bags  
and leave the  
cold behind

by **Sue Horner**

**If you needed a reminder**, the past two-plus years have made it clear: You can plan all you like, but nothing is guaranteed.

That may be why snowbirds are rethinking their usual travel. More Canadians are checking off bucket lists and trading winters in Florida and Arizona for something completely different. Some take a 60-day cruise. Others alternate travel weeks with resort stays to cover two months exploring places like Southeast Asia.

Others want to settle in a reasonably priced pied-à-terre within walking distance of everything they need. Here are some of the top destinations that fit the bill.

### Mexico

A mild climate and low cost of living draw more Canadians to Mexico than any other country. Many rent homes in San Miguel de Allende, in the foothills of the Sierra Madre mountains. Its vibrant arts scene attracts artists and writers, plus it offers restaurants, historic architecture and outdoor activities like horseback riding.

Other popular spots are Oaxaca, the “gastronomic capital of Mexico”; Lake Chapala, an attractive and inexpensive retirement community; Puerto Vallarta and Playa del Carmen, for beaches, restaurants, bars and music; and Manzanillo, a fishing paradise.

### Portugal

The number-one European destination for Canadians is Portugal. You’ll love its mild climate, wonderful seafood and fabulous wine and port. It’s also relatively inexpensive to eat and to get around.

Portugal is also a top golf destination, particularly in the Algarve, the most southern part of the country. Lisbon has Old World charm plus bustling shopping districts, restaurants and cafés. Porto has culture, entertainment and a centre classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Combine your stay with a Douro River cruise out of Porto or visit the less-crowded Azores islands, three of which are UNESCO-designated biospheres.

### Spain

Spain offers sunshine and moderate temperatures and is one of the most affordable countries in Europe. Cities are walkable and have excellent and cheap public transportation, rich history, culture and music. Fish, fruit and vegetables are plentiful, restaurant meals are inexpensive, and the wine is outstanding.

Barcelona has seaside views, museums, stunning architecture and a laid-back lifestyle. Valencia is the birthplace of paella and a haven for food lovers. Costa del Sol is one of the warmest parts of the country. Granada is rich in history and is the least expensive to live in. Madrid is in the exact centre of the country, making it a good base for exploration.

### Costa Rica

This is another favourite with Canadians, thanks to its tropical climate, spectacular mountain views, beautiful beaches and reasonable cost of living.

The Central Valley has both big cities and smaller towns. San José has some of the best shopping in the country, while Jacó is a lively coastal resort town. Lake Arenal is Costa Rica’s largest freshwater lake and offers outdoor activities in a quieter rural area. The Gold Coast is home to more than 65 beaches, with access to restaurants, golf courses, yoga studios and healing retreats. The Central Pacific coast is known for shopping and beautiful beaches, and it’s home to the country’s largest LGBTQ2I community.

## Cuba

Canadians flock to Cuba for its affordability and its beaches. The weather is balmy in winter, which is also their dry season. You'll find direct flights from Montreal and Toronto into beach destinations, but Havana is a two-hour shuttle away from them. Buses are cheap and it's easy to get around. You can rent apartments, two-bedroom houses or all-inclusive long-stay properties.

Try Havana, with its cobbled streets, historic buildings, active nightlife, museums and theatres. Varadero on the northern coast is best for beach lovers. Also look at smaller and quieter cities like Cienfuegos, a Caribbean port city; Santa Clara, a creative community with old colonial buildings; and Trinidad, a UNESCO World Heritage city with stunning architecture and a lively cultural scene.

## Panama

Panama has the top spot in *International Living's* Annual Global Retirement Index ([internationalliving.com/the-best-places-to-retire](http://internationalliving.com/the-best-places-to-retire)). The index looks for pleasant weather, plentiful amenities, housing options, cost of living and more. Panama checks all the boxes.

You'll find existing communities of snowbirds in Panama City, a bustling city and leading culinary destination; Coronado, a laid-back beach town with a golf course, supermarkets and country club; and Boquete, a lush haven in the mountain region with a spring-like climate, cultural events and outdoor activities. Playa Blanca has some of the best resorts, white sands and dry weather.



## Malta

This country is a popular port of call for Mediterranean cruises for its mild winters, plentiful sunshine and rich history. Malta is one of the smallest countries in the world, making it easy to get around with inexpensive bus rides. Activities include sailing, fishing and some of the best scuba diving in the Mediterranean.

Gozo is quiet and has a rural feel, but it has all the amenities you need. St. Paul's Bay has museums, restaurants, shops and theatres and is a popular choice of snowbirds. Valletta has many restaurants and appeals to those who value culture and history. Mdina is a small UNESCO-listed town that was a set for *Game of Thrones*.



## Belize

This Central American country is off the beaten track and known for its natural beauty and laid-back lifestyle. Divers and snorkellers enjoy the marine life, and the country also draws hikers and bird enthusiasts.

You'll find Mayan relics, rivers, rainforest and rich history in the Cayo District. Corozal is a sleepy town built on a Mayan site. Ambergris Caye is an island known for snorkelling, and nearby Caye Caulker is a similar but smaller beachfront community. Placencia is a charming seaside town with beautiful beaches, restaurants and chic shops.

## Dominican Republic

DR is known for its beautiful beaches, warm waters, slower pace of life, outdoor activities and affordable housing and food. Seafood and fruit are plentiful, and coffee and chocolate are made locally. An extensive bus system easily gets you around.

You'll find affordable apartments and villas in the capital of Santo Domingo, with its cobbled streets, shopping, dining, bars and theatres. Las Terrenas is a laid-back, walkable, multicultural beach town that supports an active lifestyle. Punta Cana is a popular tourist destination, with plenty of restaurants, shops and bars. Cabarete in the lush mountain area is both culturally vibrant and good for hiking and mountain biking.

## British Columbia

Want to stay in Canada? While the rest of the country is still slogging through winter, Victoria welcomes the start of spring in January. Several hotels have "snowbird rentals," with monthly rates from October to April. Travel agencies also have extended-stay options with one-bedroom suites with kitchens.

Smaller communities to try include Ucluelet, a world-renowned fishing destination and a centre for whale watching. Parksville has a growing retirement community in a climate perfect for an active lifestyle. The area has golf courses, a vibrant arts scene, and is a short drive to skiing at Mount Washington.

## Do your research

With so many options, ask friends and travel agents for recommendations, and try short-term stays before committing to several months. If you want to travel solo, check if your travel agency offers "hosted group travel," which lets you tag along with an organized group.

Above all, appreciate the differences in your home-away-from-home, and spare a thought for the friends and family left shivering in Canada! ☺



## Choose your long-stay vacation

Many travel agencies are on board with long-stay vacations and have created packages that include airfare, accommodations, a local host and more. One example is Merit Travel ([merittravel.com/rtoero-en](http://merittravel.com/rtoero-en)), an RTOERO-preferred sponsor offering special benefits for members.

The company offers four-week vacations in multiple countries, letting you live like a local with the perks of a tourist, including a Merit host. Merit created their long-stay approach for a small RTOERO group about 15 years ago, and the idea has grown in popularity with members ever since.

Jackie Moir, manager of affinity partnerships and business development in Merit's retail division, shares these questions to help you pick a destination:

1. Is it important to get a direct flight to the destination? There are flights from all major gateways in Canada to connect to Merit groups, with direct-flight departures from Toronto.
2. How close is the arrival airport to your living quarters? Merit's long-stay properties are less than a one-hour drive from the airport.
3. How mobile are you? Consider your accommodation; can you get a ground-level unit? Also consider how easily you can get around. Steep cliffside trails and cobblestone streets in many places in Europe may look charming but are hard to walk on.
4. Do you want a beach or city environment? Or both? Merit's long-stay properties are within a short walk or bus ride of a beach.
5. What type of activities are important to you? Check if the location offers golf, hiking, water sports or other outdoor activities, or is ideal for touring museums, art galleries and architectural gems.
6. What's your preferred daytime temperature? Portugal and Spain have moderate temperatures in the winter months, ranging from 15 to 20°C. Places like Costa Rica will be much warmer.
7. Do you prefer a full-service resort or a self-sufficient house or apartment? Check if you get meal service or access to kitchen facilities.
8. Do you plan to mostly cook at your home, or do you want to be close to restaurants? Choose locations within walking distance or a short local bus ride of restaurants, markets and shops. 🍷

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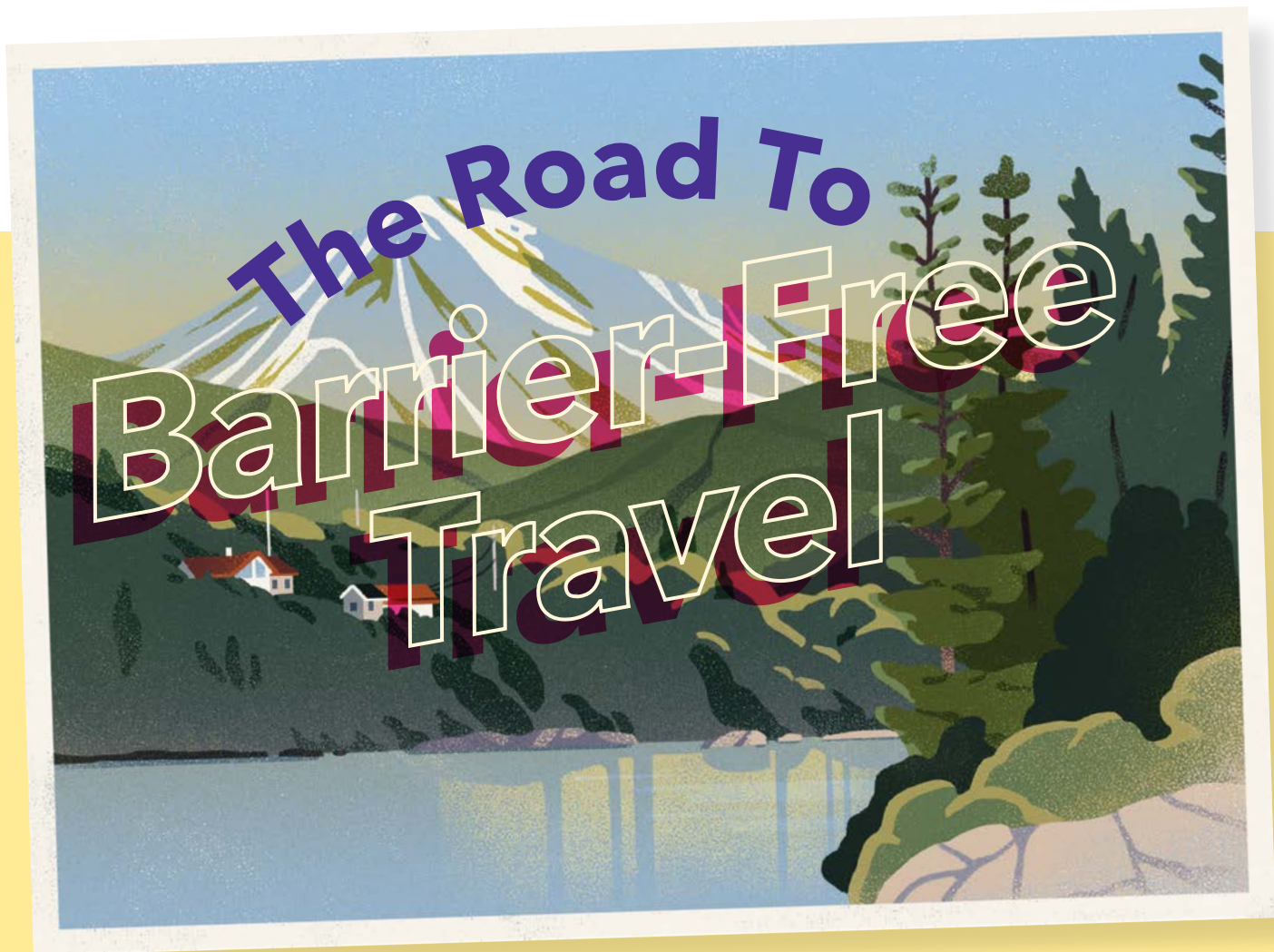


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Picture a world where everyone can go – anywhere

by **Rick Hansen**, founder, Rick Hansen Foundation

**Of all the wonderful places in the world** I've been fortunate to see – as an international athlete, on the Man in Motion World Tour, and in my ongoing work as an advocate for a barrier-free world – I can truly say that Canada is one of the most beautiful places on Earth because of its majestic natural landscape.

I am fortunate to have been born and raised in British Columbia, and some of my earliest childhood memories are of fishing, camping, hiking and other outdoor adventures. As a teen, these activities were key to my physical and mental recovery after the accident that resulted in my spinal cord injury and paralysis. Today, any time I can spend in nature is the downtime I need to find peace and joy.

One of my favourite places to travel for outdoor adventure is the small community of Atlin, located in the northwest corner of British Columbia, bordering Yukon and Alaska. The town of about 450 is on the shore of the pristine, glacier-fed Atlin Lake – the largest natural freshwater lake in the province.

Atlin exists off the beaten path, at the intersection of the past and future. There is a rich history visible in the buildings that still stand from the gold-rush era and the continued

presence and influence of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation. The community is developing a shared vision and is working together with a view of the future anchored in shared responsible stewardship of the environment, sustainable business practices and relationships. Atlin is also on an accessibility journey led by champions who are committed to ensuring everyone can fully enjoy all that the community and its surroundings have to offer.

I am grateful that I am able to experience the outdoor wonders of Atlin, but I know my experience is not common to everywhere that people with disabilities wish to travel and explore. For people with disabilities, travel can often be daunting rather than exciting; worrisome rather than restful – particularly outdoors.

As pandemic restrictions lift, we're seeing a resurgence in travel that can be an opportunity to rethink and expand accessibility in tourism. This would serve not only people with disabilities but also the rapidly growing population of aging baby boomers and their parents with age-related accessibility needs. These underserved groups include people with the desire to travel and explore, and the means



to contribute to the tourism industry that is significant to the economies of many places.

For more than 35 years, I've advocated for a barrier-free world where people with disabilities can fully experience and engage with the world around them in the places where they live, work, learn and play. The outdoor experiences I've had over my lifetime have fuelled my commitment to conservation, contributed to my character, established deep friendships and created memories that have left an indelible mark on me. This is why I continue to support innovative solutions to remove barriers and raise awareness of the potential of people with disabilities so that everyone can go everywhere.

The following locations have been rated by a trained accessibility professional in the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification program and have achieved a level of meaningful accessibility. Please contact these locations directly to ensure they are suitable for you to incorporate into your next trip.

1. Observation deck at Peggy's Cove, N.S.
2. CN Tower, Toronto, Ont.
3. Canada Science and Technology Museum, Ottawa, Ont.
4. Juniper Loop nature trail in Lighthouse Park, West Vancouver, B.C.
5. Scout Island Nature Centre, Williams Lake, B.C.

For lots of practical tips on travelling with a disability, visit [rickhansen.com](http://rickhansen.com) and search "travel." 🌐



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**DELMANOR.COM**

# Holiday market magic

Deck the halls – and more – with help from these holiday markets

by **Doug Wallace**



**Can you hear the sleigh bells?** Annual holiday spirit comes alive at Canada's best European-style holiday markets – so great for bundled-up family fun. Shopping lists are checked off at lightning speed and holiday cheer is spread happily around. The old bearded fellow himself may well find his way there, too.

## Montreal

There are a number of holiday bazaars in Montreal, but the Great Montreal Christmas Market at Quartier des Spectacles is the best all-round outing, thanks in part to its proximity to the extremely good Le Central gourmet food hall and the new Esplanade Tranquille public square, which features a skating rink. You can easily make an adventure out of your visit to the 30 chalets displaying the goods of local and regional artisans.

[QUARTIERDESSPECTACLES.COM](http://QUARTIERDESSPECTACLES.COM)

TOP PHOTO, COURTESY OF DISTILLERY WINTER VILLAGE. BOTTOM PHOTO, SUSAN MOSS TOURISME MONTREAL





## Banff

More than 80 artisanal vendors from the Bow Valley and surrounding regions gather at Warner Stables in Banff National Park in the weeks leading up to the 25th. Old World traditions here include giftware, live music, hot pretzels and sweet treats. Expect cocktails and mulled wine in the outdoor fire lounge and, of course, the dazzling Santa's House. Make a note to buy your tickets in advance.

[BANFFCHRISTMASMARKET.COM](http://BANFFCHRISTMASMARKET.COM)

## Toronto

The recently rebranded Distillery Winter Village sees the pedestrian-only cobblestones of the old Gooderham & Worts Distillery District filled with twinkling lights, artisanal wares and seasonal treats. Anchored by a 50-foot-tall tree, this holiday paradise is woven into the permanent boutiques, galleries, restaurants and microbreweries, housed in what is the largest collection of Victorian industrial architecture in North America.

[THEDISTILLERYWINTERVILLAGE.COM](http://THEDISTILLERYWINTERVILLAGE.COM)



## Millarville, Alberta

For the first two weekends in November, day-trippers head to the hamlet of Millarville in Foothills County, just outside Calgary, for this market, which is held at the racetrack. One of the premier craft shows in Alberta, this event sports handcrafted wares in both indoor and outdoor venues, supported with food trucks, great music, live reindeer and a visit from You Know Who. Yes, there will also be elves.

[MILLARVILLERACETRACK.COM/CHRISTMAS-MARKET](http://MILLARVILLERACETRACK.COM/CHRISTMAS-MARKET)



## Winnipeg

As Canada's biggest champion of handmade Canadian crafts, Signatures Handmade Market knows how to do the holidays up right. About 150 vendors converge on Winnipeg's RBC Convention Centre for three days in late November to showcase their holiday wares: decorations, home decor items, jewellery, artwork and food. This is Winnipeg's premier holiday shopping event, with handmade gifts that last a lifetime.

[SIGNATURES.CA/WINNIPEG](http://SIGNATURES.CA/WINNIPEG)

## Charlottetown

The Charlottetown Christmas Festival does it up right, spreading holiday joy throughout various parts of town, with artisans and craftspeople coming together for old-fashioned good cheer. Prince Edward Island's premier holiday market lasts a whole month — plenty of time to get in on the light displays, outdoor Victorian market, a Whoville-esque village, Peake's Wharf Christmas Village, walking tours and wine tastings. Other fun fringe benefits include live music, horse and wagon rides, and entertainment for the kids.

[DISCOVERCHARLOTTETOWN.COM](http://DISCOVERCHARLOTTETOWN.COM)





## Quebec City

Two words: German cakes! The German Christmas Market, the largest holiday shopping spree in Old Quebec, features gifts and handmade wares created by more than 90 exhibitors, plus German treats – bratwurst, mulled wine, gingerbread and more – terroir products and pop-up performances. The festive atmosphere, traditional wood kiosks and twinkly lights mirror the renowned markets of Europe. Go for the goods – and stay for the live performances, choirs and free activities.

[QUEBEC-CITE.COM](http://QUEBEC-CITE.COM)

## Vancouver

Coal Harbour sets the scene for a European-inspired village of old, where you can shop for festive gifts by more than 80 local artisans. Sweet and savoury delicacies are paired with mulled wine, plus German and Austrian beers. Visitors can enjoy live entertainment on the “Flying Stage,” and there are scavenger hunts for the kids. The market is also great for a lunchtime visit or an after-work drink. Yuletide fun times ahead, including festive photo ops. Tag them @VanChristmas.

[VANCOUVERCHRISTMASMARKET.COM](http://VANCOUVERCHRISTMASMARKET.COM)



## Kitchener

Kitchener is home to the largest German community in Canada, so they have the holiday traditions down pat. More than 100 vendors congregate in early December for Christkindl, which offers a large indoor component along with outdoor fun. City Hall, Carl Zehr Square and King Street host traditional kiosks filled with handmade gifts. Visitors can also enjoy delectable food, special German treats, mulled wine, and music and dance performances.

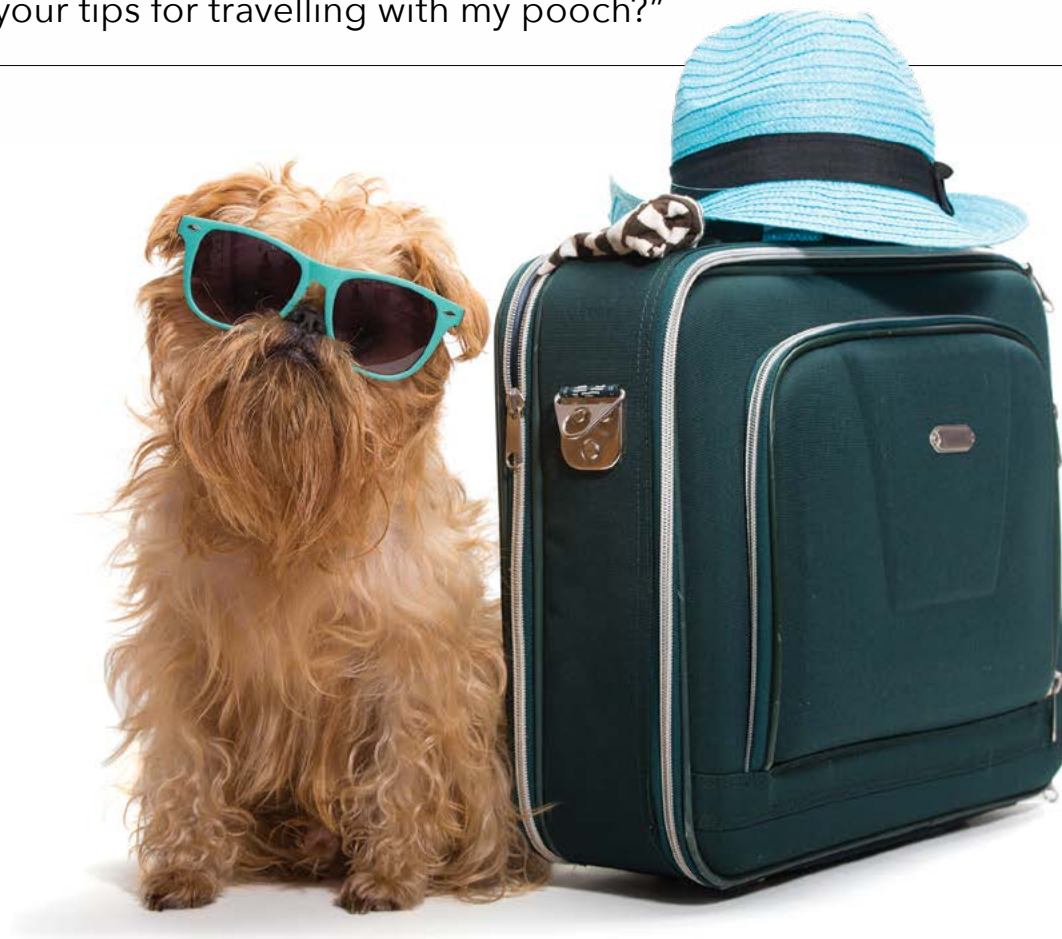
[CHRISTKINDL.CA](http://CHRISTKINDL.CA) 🍷



PHOTOS, FROM TOP TO BOTTOM, COURTESY OF VILLE DE QUÉBEC, VANCOUVER CHRISTMAS MARKET, CHRISTKINDL

# Taking your pet on your trip

“What are your tips for travelling with my pooch?”



**Our pets are part of the family**, so it's hard to leave them at home. And if you don't have a network of family or friends to look after your pet when you head out of town, they may have to come along, particularly if you're going on an extended journey. And if you're crossing the border, do your homework to make sure you have all the paperwork in order. Here are a few tips to keep in mind.

## Travelling by car

Two words: Heads inside! Long gone are the days when we used to throw the dog in the back of the pickup! Never let animals roam free inside the car. Always use a crate — secured with a seatbelt, if possible — and always in the back seat, never in the front, where their irresistible faces can be a distraction for the driver. Make lots of pet pit stops, particularly if you have an older animal. And we've all heard the horror stories about drivers who leave animals alone in the car. If it works, bring a friend, so you can take turns looking after your pet at rest stops.

## Travelling by plane

Book a direct flight. Airlines have different regulations with regard to pets, so do your due diligence and check carrier sizes and immunization requirements well in advance. No anti-anxiety medicine is allowed unless prescribed by a vet. Keep in mind that pets have to go through security, too. Three more words: No full stomachs! Choose the cabin over the cargo hold if your pet is small enough. The hold is often loud, cold, rough or all three. Make sure that the carrier is labelled, that your pet has proper identification and that its collar won't get caught in the cage en route.

## Travelling by train

Via Rail has specific guidelines with regard to transport cages, pet age and weight, and pet safety. Check [viarail.ca](http://viarail.ca) for details.

## Planning a hotel stay

Hotels are increasingly pet-friendly, often going out of their way to welcome you and your pet with treats and special amenities, but plan ahead to make sure the hotel policies are right for your particular pet situation (you might have to leave the snake at home).

Wherever you end up and however you get there, try to be a good guest, particularly on your guard if your pet is hairy, smelly, noisy or needy — or incontinent — and even more so if there are other animals present in the home or hotel. 🐾



**Doug Wallace**

Editor & publisher, TravelRight.Today, and your in-the-know friend for travel tips and trends.



# Let's cook together

A trio of recipes to cook with your crew

by **Elizabeth Baird**

**Cooking together makes wonderful memories.** Stirring the pot, rolling out a bit of pastry, grating cheese — time flies while you get to know someone, deepen friendships and forge family ties. The bonus: a delicious supper to share. This trio of recipes is designed to invite many hands into the making.

## **GNOCCHI WITH ROASTED RED PEPPER AND TOMATO SAUCE**

If ever there was a recipe to make together, the honour goes to gnocchi, potato dumplings dressed with homemade tomato and roasted pepper sauce and generous sprinkles of Parmesan. This dish is adapted from one shared by Daiene Vernile, television journalist and retired member of the Ontario Legislature.

**GNOCCHI**

2 lb (450 g) oval baking potatoes,  
4 medium-large  
1 tbsp (15 mL) salt  
2 1/3 cups (580 mL) all-purpose flour,  
divided

**ROASTED RED PEPPER AND TOMATO SAUCE**

1/4 cup (60 mL) extra virgin olive oil  
1 large onion, diced  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
1 medium carrot, diced  
2 sweet red peppers, roasted, peeled,  
seeded and diced  
1 can (28 oz/796 mL) plum tomatoes,  
undrained  
1 tsp (5 mL) salt  
1/2 tsp (2 mL) pepper  
1 cup (250 mL) freshly grated  
Parmesan  
1/2 cup (125 mL) shredded  
fresh basil

**Gnocchi:** Scrub potatoes; bake at 400°F (200°C) until tender when pinched, about 45 minutes. When cool enough to handle, peel and mash in a bowl until lump-free. While the potatoes are still warm, work in the salt, then 2 cups (500 mL) of the flour, 1/2 cup (125 mL) at a time, kneading to form a soft, slightly sticky ball. Cut into 8 pieces; cover and let rest for 30 minutes.

Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with clean tea towels; sprinkle towels with half of the remaining flour, saving the rest as needed for rolling and shaping the dough.

Roll each piece of dough into a rope about 12 inches (30 cm) long and 3/4 inch (2 cm) thick. Cut each into 1-inch (2.5-cm) pieces. Dip a fork into the remaining flour, and, holding the fork with the tines curving down, lightly roll each piece of dough over the tines to create ridges. Place on the floured towels. Make-ahead: Cover and refrigerate for up to a few hours.

**Sauce:** Meanwhile, in a large saucepan, heat the oil over medium-low heat; sweat the onion, garlic and carrots until softened, about 8 minutes. Add the peppers, tomatoes with their juices, and salt and pepper. Mash very well. Bring to a boil, stirring often; reduce heat and simmer until the

sauce is thickened enough to mound on a spoon. Stir 1/4 cup (60 mL) of the Parmesan into the sauce. Make-ahead: Refrigerate for up to 3 days; reheat to serve.

To serve, drop the gnocchi in 2 batches into a large pot of rapidly boiling salted water and cook until they surface, 4 to 5 minutes. With a slotted spoon, remove the gnocchi to a warm bowl; pour on the sauce and toss well, adding a little of the gnocchi cooking water, if necessary, to loosen the sauce. Sprinkle with remaining Parmesan and garnish with basil.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

**Tip:** If using fresh sweet red peppers, roast them at the same time as the

potatoes. Jars of already-roasted sweet red peppers are available at the supermarket.

**Tip:** A food mill or ricer is the best tool for smooth potato puree.

**Sauce:** In a skillet or shallow pan, heat the oil over medium-low heat. Stir in the garlic and let soften slightly without browning, about 3 minutes. Add tomatoes, salt and pepper, stirring to combine the flavours. Cook gently, stirring from time to time until the tomatoes start to wrinkle and soften. Mix in the parsley. Remove from the heat and set aside. Reheat to serve, adding a splash more of olive oil if needed to loosen the sauce.



**WEDGE SALAD WITH CHIVE DRESSING**

Cut the heart of a Bibb lettuce into 4 to 6 wedges, or separate into the tenderest leaves. In a measuring cup, whisk together:

- 1/4 cup (60 mL) each mayonnaise and buttermilk**
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) sour cream**
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) snipped chives or thinly sliced green onion**
- 2 tsp (10 mL) cider vinegar**
- 1 tsp (5 mL) Dijon mustard**
- Pinch of salt and pepper**

Spoon over the lettuce; garnish with thinly sliced radish and more chives or green onion. Other garnish options include cherry tomatoes, crunchy croutons and baked pecans.

**RASPBERRY AND WHITE CHOCOLATE RUGELACH SLICES**

Rugelach are a traditional Jewish crescent-shaped cookie. There are instructions for this shape below, as well as an easier sliced version. The best part of the recipe: the sweet baking aromas escaping from the oven. The finale is the first bite, and bliss.

- 1 cup (250 mL) unsalted butter, softened**
- 1 pkg (250 g) regular cream cheese, softened**
- 3 tbsp (45 mL) granulated sugar**
- 2 tsp (10 mL) finely grated orange or lemon zest**
- 1/4 tsp (1 mL) salt**
- 2 cups (500 mL) all-purpose flour**
- 1 egg, beaten**
- 1 tsp (5 mL) water**
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) coarse granulated sugar, approximate**

**FILLING:**

- 3/4 cup (180 mL) raspberry jam**
- Dash almond extract**
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) chopped white chocolate chips**
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) coarsely chopped sliced almonds**
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) granulated sugar**

Line 2 rimless baking sheets with parchment paper. Arrange oven racks in top and bottom thirds of oven. About 10 minutes before baking the rugelach, heat oven to 350°F (180°C).

In a large bowl, beat together the butter and cream cheese until smooth and creamy. Blend in the sugar, orange zest and salt. Mix in the flour, 1 cup (250 mL) at a time, to form a soft



dough. Divide into quarters; shape each into a thick playing-card-size rectangle. Wrap and chill until firm, about 1 hour. Let come to cool room temperature before rolling.

Meanwhile, stir together the jam and almond extract in one bowl and the chocolate, almonds and sugar in a second bowl.

On a lightly floured surface, and working with a quarter of the dough at a time, roll dough to a 12x8-inch (30x20-cm) rectangle. Spread 3 tbsp (45 mL) of the jam evenly overtop; sprinkle with a quarter of the chocolate mixture. Roll up from one long side to make a tight log. Wiping your blade as needed, slice into 1-inch (2.5-cm) rounds. Place upright and 1 inch (2.5 cm) apart on prepared baking sheet. Repeat with remaining dough, jam and chocolate mix. Refrigerate for 1 hour. In a small bowl whisk the egg with water; brush over the pastry. Sprinkle top with coarse sugar.

Bake 2 baking sheets at a time, rotating and switching pans halfway through, until golden, about 25 min-

utes. Let cool on pans for 5 minutes; transfer to racks to cool. Make-ahead: Layer with waxed paper in airtight container and store at room temperature for 2 days, or freeze for 2 weeks. Makes 48 Rugelach Slices.

**GINGER APRICOT RUGELACH SLICES**

Measure out 3/4 cup (180 mL) apricot jam, chopping any chunky pieces finely. Combine 1 cup (250 mL) desiccated coconut or chopped sliced almonds, 1/2 cup (125 mL) each diced candied ginger and semi-sweet mini chocolate chips and 1/4 cup (60 mL) granulated sugar. Follow method for the raspberry version above.

**TRADITIONAL RUGELACH CRESCENTS**

Shape dough into 4 discs; wrap and chill. Roll out, 1 disc at a time, on lightly floured surface to 11-inch (28-cm) round. Spread jam and chocolate mixture over dough. Cut into 12 wedges, like cutting pieces of pie. Starting at wide end, roll up each wedge toward centre. Reduce baking time by about 5 minutes. 🍪

PHOTO, KELLY VISEL

# Hudson and Oak tableware

Home goods for the everyday

by **Andrew Dobson**



**Hudson and Oak is a women-owned** company based in Vancouver known for designing chic, minimalistic and functional home goods.

If you're looking to refresh your tabletop, check out the company's bestselling pieces: the Everyday Latte Mug, Large Plate and Ridged Glassware.

All Hudson & Oak tableware items are made from 100 per cent porcelain, with non-toxic glaze, free from lead and any heavy metals. They're available in four attractive colours: cloud, lilac, nude and salted caramel.

And we love that the sets are stackable, helping save you space in the kitchen! Available online or at shops across Canada. ([hudsonandoak.com](http://hudsonandoak.com))



## Cold-brew coffee maker

Looking for the perfect gift for java junkies? Hamilton Beach's new Convenient Craft Rapid Cold Brew & Hot Coffee Maker is just the ticket.

Enjoy smooth, cold-brew coffee in less than six minutes instead of the usual 12- to 24-hour wait, and brew a piping-hot cup in three.

Bonus: The slim design takes up minimal counter space.



## Ina Garten Go-To Dinners

The beloved Barefoot Contessa is back with a new cookbook of easy, go-to recipes she knows will turn out perfectly every time. Cooking night after night during the pandemic inspired her, she says, to rethink the way she approached dinner, and the result is this collection of delicious recipes, including freeze-ahead, make-ahead, prep-ahead and simply assembled. Overnight Mac & Cheese, Tuscan White Bean Soup and Scrambled Egg Cacio e Pepe are mouth-watering marvellous! Available at [chapters.indigo.ca](http://chapters.indigo.ca).



## Chapman's winter ice cream treats

Chapman's, Canada's award-winning ice cream company, is launching two new frozen treats this holiday season: Gingerbread Mint Ice Cream Bars and Winter Cocoa Ice Cream Cones. The cutlery-free sweets are the perfect end to a festive family dinner or — heck — just when you want a treat. Available at grocery stores across Canada.

## Tre Stelle CHEEZMADE

Canada's iconic dairy brand Tre Stelle recently made waves at the Restaurants Canada show with the launch of its innovative CHEEZMADE Chicken-less Burger and Chicken-less Nuggets.

Made from real cheese blended with spices to create the same taste and texture as chicken, they're vegetarian and halal, high in protein and calcium, and made without any artificial flavours or colours. Available at grocery stores across Canada. 🌱



PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, COURTESY OF HUDSON AND OAK; CHAPMAN'S; TRE STELLE; CHAPTERS; HAMILTON BEACH





# Festive drinks to sip and savour

Celebrate the season in style

by **Charlene Rooke**

## Hot Cider Toddy

Combining the best of both worlds, this cocktail blends the fruity spice of mulled cider with the gentle warmth of a hot toddy. Spike it with The Glenlivet 14 Year Old, a single malt Scotch finished in cognac barrels: Since brandy is commonly added to mulled wine or cider, it builds the perfect bridge between two seasonal favourites.

Make this recipe in a slow cooker, in any quantity you want. For example, using a one-cup measure as a proportional “part” in this recipe, you’ll end up with around 1.5 litres, or about eight 6-ounce servings.

## Hot Cider Toddy

- 2 parts The Glenlivet 14 Year Old Scotch
- 3 parts non-alcoholic apple cider
- 1/4 part lemon juice (optional: Instead of lemon juice, add a pat of salted butter for a Hot Buttered Cider Toddy)
- 1/4 part honey water (equal parts honey and water, thoroughly combined)
- Whole spices, such as cinnamon sticks, cloves, nutmeg
- Aromatics, such as orange peel or fresh ginger slices

In a slow cooker, combine all ingredients and heat covered on low for up to four hours or on high for one hour. (You can also use a pot on the stovetop, but do not let liquid come to a simmer or boil, or the alcohol will evaporate.) Ladle into heatproof mugs or glasses to serve.

## Bright bubbles

New-generation no-alcohol bubbly (made like normal wines, then de-alcoholized) sparkle brilliantly. Swedish company Oddbird uses no colouring, artificial flavours or additives in its delicious, guilt-free Blanc de Blancs and Rosé sparklings. Naughty, which is not only alcohol-free but gluten-free, vegan, organic and halal, is made by U.K. company Thomson & Scott, an eco-savvy B Corp, in sparkling Chardonnay and Rosé bottlings. Hospitality veteran Dejou Marano was pregnant when she created Prima Pavé, collaborating with a winery in northern Italy to use local grape varieties for a line of premium non-alcoholic sparkling wines; the Rosé Brut scored 94 at this year’s International Wine & Spirit Competition, the highest score for such a product at the show. Find them at online stores like [clearsips.ca](https://clearsips.ca), [soberlicious.ca](https://soberlicious.ca) and [notwasted.ca](https://notwasted.ca).



## To give and to get

Ontario’s Cottage Springs Beverage Co. has a holiday-countdown box with 12 cans of craft-cocktail cheers. In B.C., local distilleries like Shelter Point, Sons of Vancouver and Okanagan Spirits package mini-bottles of small-batch spirits, and online whisky clubs like [thewhisky-concierge.com](https://thewhisky-concierge.com) also curate luxe advent collections of Scotch and global whiskies for shipping to many provinces.

## Cocktail party calculations

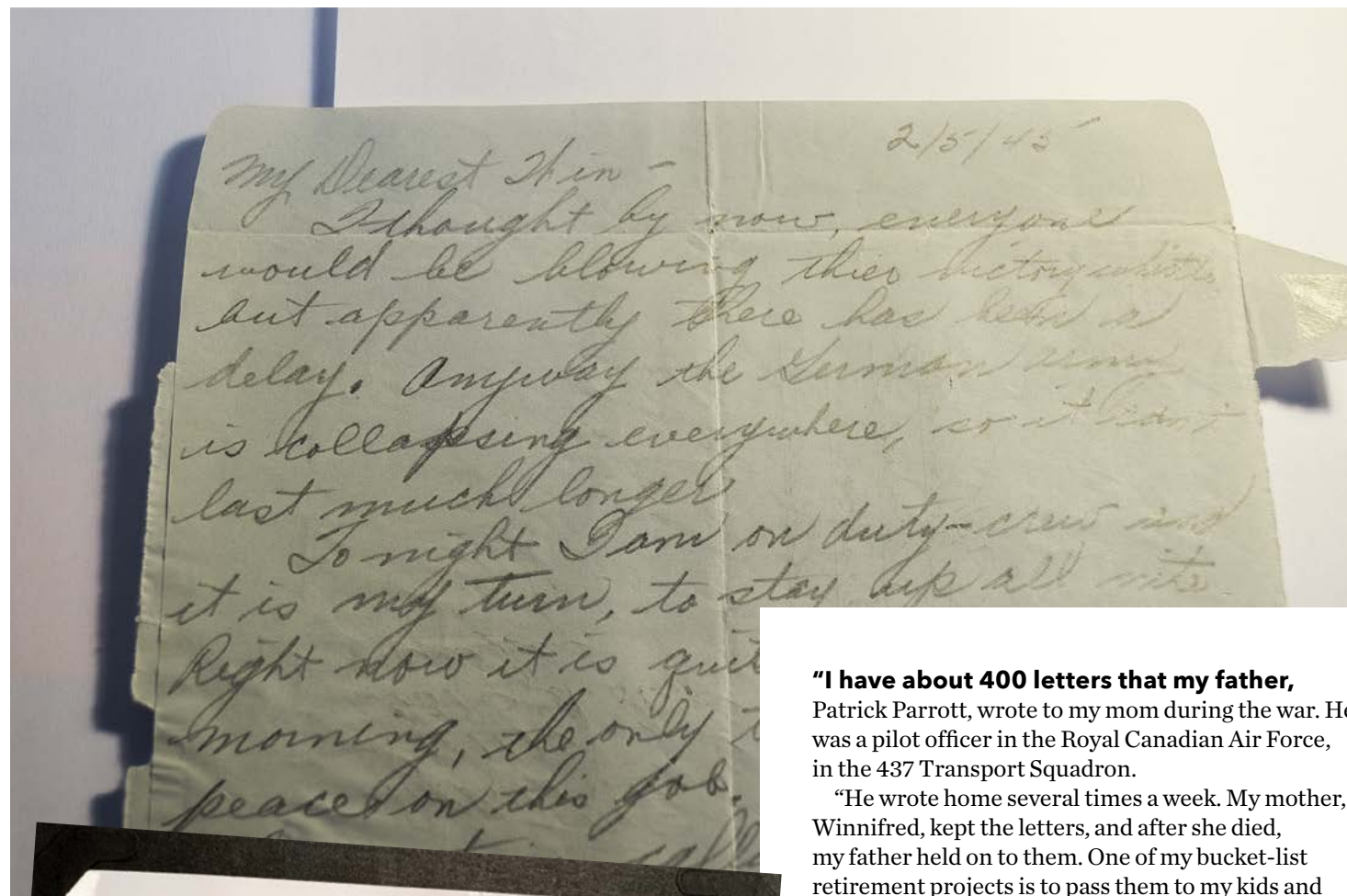
Count on 1.5 drinks per person per hour. In a standard 750-millilitre bottle, there are five servings (5 ounces each) of wine and 16 servings (1.5 ounces each) of liquor. Sprinkle in some cans of beer, cider and one-pour hard sodas or cocktails, and you’re good to go.

And as always, be sure your guests have a safe way to return home, whether it’s a designated driver, taxi, Uber – or spending the night in the guest room. 🍷

# Wartime letters home

Shining a light on my parents' hopes and dreams

by **Barbara Rogelstad** (District 40 Brant) as told to Martin Zibauer



**"I have about 400 letters that my father, Patrick Parrott, wrote to my mom during the war. He was a pilot officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force, in the 437 Transport Squadron.**

"He wrote home several times a week. My mother, Winnifred, kept the letters, and after she died, my father held on to them. One of my bucket-list retirement projects is to pass them to my kids and grandkids; not in a shoebox they'll have to sort through, but in an electronic document they can access and share.

"Mothers often carry the details of family history, but because my mother died when she was only 48, much of my parents' background is foggy. I only have one side of the story — the boxes have only my dad's letters.

"I once asked him, 'Where's your shoebox, with Mom's letters to you?' The RCAF airmen, he said, were allowed only a small container for their uniforms, badges, medals and anything else they wanted to bring home after the war. He just couldn't fit all the letters he'd received. He had to leave Mom's letters in England.

"I've had the boxes for years, but I spent a long time just looking at them, wondering what to do. I started by putting the letters in chronological order and into protective sheets, and then into binders. But I couldn't just give my kids two huge, cumbersome binders and say, 'Pass them around.'



Barbara Rogelstad's dad, Patrick Parrott, and his Tiger Moth.



Patrick and Winnifred Parrott, Barbara Rogelstad's parents, on their wedding day.

“A few years ago, I began transcribing the letters into an electronic book. I copied them exactly as my dad wrote them, with the spelling and grammar mistakes. If he spelled out an abbreviation or underlined something, so did I.

“Now, I’m scanning my old photos and adding bookmarks for every name he mentions. Clicking on a name links to other pages it appears on. I’m part of a Lambton County genealogy group, and some members have parents who my dad mentions. I can easily find stories and information and pass them on. Transcribing Dad’s letters from 75 years ago has connected me today to people who share a link with my family history.

“The first letters start when my dad enlisted and began training, first in Toronto and then Montreal. My mother then was working in the war department at Mueller’s in Sarnia. Mueller’s transitioned from manufacturing plumbing supplies to munitions. My dad worried about her.

“At one point, my parents made plans to both take trains to Toronto to meet at the King Edward Hotel — Dad was afraid he’d be sent overseas before they could get married. My mom told her parents she was meeting up with a girlfriend. It’s odd to read about your parents doing what was considered improper then, but they were young and the letters make it clear they were crazy in love.

“He came home for a couple of weeks when they got married, and then went back to finish his flight studies in Montreal, at McGill. The letters start to show a real sense of commitment and maturity. He’d apologize for not writing much; he was studying hard for exams he needed to pass to become a pilot. He seemed to really dig deep at that time and commit to serving his country.

“Many of the pilots, including my father, aspired to become bomber pilots. Bomber pilots were very skilled, flying planes at night, in all kinds of weather and in the chaos of fighting. But he stayed in transport services throughout the war, picking up the wounded and prisoners of war, sending gliders in, even flying paratroopers over. Dropping paratroopers required flying very low and was more dangerous than other missions.

“The pilots would check to see if they recognized the wounded soldiers. A number of times, my mom asked him to look out for someone specific. Matt Ness was one name; he was missing and his family didn’t know where he was. Perhaps Matt was badly wounded and didn’t know who he was and my dad might recognize him. When Holland and France were liberated, my dad spent time in hospitals there visiting injured soldiers, and he actually did reconnect with some old friends that way.

“As the war in Ukraine is unfolding, I’m seeing parallels to my dad’s letters. Here we are again, sending Canadians over. Although they’re not right in the war in Ukraine, they are prepared for it. That’s what my dad was doing at first: flights at night, in the fog, in the winter — just to make sure they could get over to the continent and back no matter what.

“After he was stationed in England, the letters became more serious but much less detailed. In 1944 and ’45, he couldn’t reveal where he was. If anything he wrote gave away too much, military censors would cut out details — they’d actually cut away the paper with scissors and stamp the letter ‘Censored.’

“The letters express his hope that one day he and Mom could move into their own home — she lived with her parents while he was away. She loved dancing, she played piano by ear, she

hung out with her girlfriends and would go with them to dances on weekends — these are details I learned from the letters.

Along with some odd tidbits: She really enjoyed painting walls.

“He often asked my mother to send ink, pens and paper — all hard for him to get in wartime. And he wanted to know if Mom was hearing the same songs on the radio, which ones were



popular, and my mom’s opinion of different lyrics. He wrote about Vera Lynn’s ‘We’ll Meet Again’ — and other songs that, it seemed, brought up strong feelings for my dad and made him think of his wife and home. I believe he used music to trigger the love they felt and to stay connected.

“My dad would reminisce about Saturday nights spent dancing in Kenwick Park on the shore of Lake Huron, close to Sarnia. Through my own teenage years, there were dances with live bands there. We’d be dancing on essentially a cement slab with a stage. But it was outside, by the lake, and candlelit — it was beautiful. And the same dances happened there when my parents were dating. We all share that experience.

“Soon after the war ended, his buddies in the navy and the army starting going home. But for months, the pilots were still dealing with the aftermath. My mother sent newspaper clippings of the VE Day celebrations in Sarnia. He wrote, ‘I wish I could have been there to dance in the streets, but we still have work to do over here.’

“The airmen would wait for their ‘number to come up,’ when they could take the boat home — at one point he wrote he was number 95, then 93 and so on. He did consider staying on in the RCAF. He would have moved up in rank and pay, but at this point he’d been away four years. Four years and 400 letters.

“Recording his letters, for me, is a labour of love and a gift for my kids. I can make it easier for them to learn about their grandparents. For my brother, too, it will be such a gift to read through the letters and all the details of Mom and Dad.” ✿



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# Get away without breaking the bank

How to be a savvy travel shopper

by **Lesley-Anne Scorgie**

**A**fter two years of limited travel, and with mandates pretty much being lifted, it's no surprise that just about everyone wants to sip mojitos on a beach somewhere in the company of their closest friends and family. Travel can be costly, though, and the pandemic travel shutdowns have contributed to higher costs.

But savvy travel shoppers can still get away without breaking the bank by hunting for deals and travelling with a group.

You'll be working harder for deals, but you can still find them.

When demand is high, prices are going to be high. But patience and good planning will help you save. Flying during the week and at off-peak times helps reduce costs. Comparing hotels and B and B accommodations allows you to scan for prices, star ratings, location

and guest reviews. Cashing in loyalty points, especially when there's a sale, can effectively double savings. Being flexible with your timing, location and activities allows you to capitalize on last-minute deals. The more fixed your plans are, the more you're likely going to pay.

Travel with a group of friends or family, but set clear boundaries.

The success of your group holiday depends on expectations you set in agreement TOGETHER. Without these boundaries, your trip could be miserable. The benefits of group travel are huge, though: time to reconnect, money saved by booking and buying things together, and extra hands to help with kids, grandkids and pets.

## Pay attention to these areas:

Who's paying for what? Are you splitting the Vrbo evenly or is one person/

family paying for the majority of it because they get the master suite? Have the taxes and fees been accounted for in your bookings? Is one person responsible for paying the entire set of costs (flights, food, accommodations and entertainment), and then expecting to be reimbursed? If so, do they want cash, an e-transfer, gift cards — and when?

Get clear on costs by making a shareable spreadsheet; Google Sheets is a popular option. Populate the cells with all the costs you can possibly think of. Then, start talking — who's paying for what, when is reimbursement expected, and on it goes.

If you're out buying dinner or tickets for the aquarium, the easiest way to keep things even is to split the bill precisely how everyone ordered. Just ask for separate checks upfront and have each person pay for their own tickets.

Think twice about travelling with a penny-pincher or a spendthrift. If you already know that your travel partners are not on the same page about what you want to spend, don't travel together. The best example is the case of the traveller who prefers to sip free water and mooch off leftovers rather than participate in, and pay for, their portion of the group dinner you all planned. On the flip side is the traveller with no financial constraint, especially after a few drinks. They're the people who order a \$150 bottle of wine and expect you to pay for half, whether you wanted the wine or not.

How do you want to spend your time? What do you all want from the travel experience? Are there events or activities you want to do (or not)? Is the goal relaxation, partying, family time, adventure? Is it totally OK if you all do different things during the day and come together in the evening (this can be helpful when travellers have different budgets)? Not everything needs to be pre-planned or programmed, but it helps to get clear about how everyone generally wants to spend their time, and on the costs for activities. I think it's worth noting that there are hundreds of free activities for groups: beach days, hiking, biking, running, picnics and so on.

What are the boring obligations (if any) from each person? Who's going to do the dishes or laundry? Is there a designated chef? Is one person responsible for the meal planning, restaurant bookings or gas-tank filling? 🍷

# Learning and laughter

We asked: Do you listen to podcasts?



Hockey podcasts and *Freakonomics*.

Alain Dube  
(District 27 Ottawa-Carleton)

A few: curling, current hot topics, personal development.

Audrey Krotz  
(District 9 Huron-Perth)

TED Talks, *Radiolab*, *Hidden Brain*, *The Moth*, *Learning and Laughter*.

Barbara Lazier  
(District 13 Hamilton-Wentworth, Haldimand)

Alan Alda, *Clear+Vivid*; Peter Mansbridge, *The Bridge*; Kate Graham, *No Second Chances*; Malcolm Gladwell, *Revisionist History*; Dr. Christopher Labos, *The Body of Evidence*; Adam Grant, *WorkLife*.

Bonnie McEachern  
(District 31 Wellington)

*Crime Weekly*. A deep dive into true crime that is always fascinating and educational.

Brenda Moen  
(District 11 Waterloo Region)

We enjoy podcasts on road trips. Crime and mysteries like *Listening In*.

Cameron Fraser (District 15 Halton)

*Secret Life of Canada*. *The Village*. Other CBC podcasts.

Claude Arcand (District 34 York Region)

*New York Times' The Daily*, CBC podcasts like *Kuper Island*, *Canadaland*, *Globe and Mail's The Decibel*.

Craig Hawryshyn  
(District 47 Vancouver Island)

*Freakonomics*, *Science Vs*, *Quirks & Quarks*, *The Daily*. Podcasts are great for walks, riding and car trips.

Dwight Stead (District 14 Niagara)

Malcolm Gladwell's *Revisionist History*. He presents in an interesting way stories forgotten or overlooked.

Elizabeth Elefteros  
(District 8 London, Middlesex)

*Body Stuff*, *Armchair Expert*, *Last Day*, *A Slight Change of Plans*, *Ten Percent Happier*, *Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness*, *Renegades*, *The Happiness Lab*.

Elizabeth Dean  
(District 27 Ottawa-Carleton)

*My Favorite Murder*.

Glenn Silver (District 7 Windsor-Essex)

*Duolingo*, *Writers and Co.*, *Rumble*, *Munk Debates*, *The Book Review*, *Tapestry*, *Ideas* and lots more on CBC Radio.

Heather Donaldson (District 39 Peel)

It's like reading while I drive or walk! My current fave is *Someone Knows Something* by David Ridgen. All about cold cases.

Janet Black (District 15 Halton)

*White Coat*, *Black Art*; *The Dose*; *The Gritty Nurse*; *Sickboy*; *Seat at the Table*; *Finding Cleo*; *Someone Knows Something*; *One Minute Norwegian*; *One Minute Irish*; *Irish Mythology*; *The Troubles*; *Irish History*; *We*, *The Irish*.

Joanne McBay (District 23 North York)

*The Big Story* because it's Canadian and informative.

Laura Roberts  
(Actively employed member)

Alan Cross, *Ongoing History of New Music*.

Liz Albrecht-Bisset  
(Actively employed member)

*The Tennis Podcast*, *The Rest Is History*, *Political Gabfest*, *Pod Save the World*, *FiveThirtyEight*.

Angela Redish  
(District 42 Mainland British Columbia)

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