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## REASONS 10 TO VISIT

New Zealand Herald, Auckland

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Dreaming of escaping the everyday? Holiday in Canada next year to experience otherworldly landscapes, unique wildlife and cosmopolitan cities writes **Cassie Tannenberg**.

**C**anada has the pretty ports, soaring mountains, surf beaches, glacial lakes and outdoorsy vibe that are familiar to Kiwis and yet utterly different. It's a land of extremes with auroras, polar bears and floating icebergs to the north; ski resorts, rolling prairies and wildlife in the centre and maritime provinces to the east. This month, Canada reopened its borders to fully vaccinated international visitors. Here's why it should be on your 2022 travel wish list.

#### Vancouver

Nudged by nature from the Coast Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, Vancouver is a visual stunner that's famous for being a location where you could ski and surf on the same day. Head to Grouse Mountain for winter thrills or summer trails then on to Kitsilano Beach, a popular local recreation area. Hire a bike to cycle the Stanley Park seawall in downtown Vancouver and visit Granville Island Public Market for local eats. Don't miss the Vancouver Canucks at Rogers Arena — Michael Buble is a celeb fan of the professional hockey team.

#### Rocky Mountaineer

Canada's famed Rocky Mountaineer luxury train journey is back on track and celebrating its belated 30th anniversary, which was derailed last year. The fully immersive Rocky Mountaineer journeys through Western Canada run from May to October with travelers alighting for overnight hotel stays. Whether you opt for



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SilverLeaf or GoldLeaf service, you're guaranteed awe-inspiring views of mountains, canyons, rivers and wildlife complemented by a superior level of service and gourmet cuisine.

### Polar bears

Dubbed the world's polar bear capital, the tiny settlement of Churchill in Manitoba and its sparse icy landscape offer the optimal opportunity to spot these mammals in the wild on an off-road tundra buggy experience. The prime time to see polar bears is during October and November before they transit from the tundra to pack ice.

### National parks

Soaring mountains, grazing wildlife, panoramic views — check, check and check. Covering 450,000sq km of protected areas from well-known spots such as Jasper National Park and Banff National Park in Alberta to Dark-Sky Preserves (Saskatchewan's Grasslands National Park is the darkest, while Wood Buffalo National Park in Northwest Territories is the world's largest), adventure abounds in every corner of Canada's 48 national parks. Canada also contains more than 50 per cent of the globe's natural lakes. Plan ahead with a Parks Canada Discovery Pass for unlimited admission to more than 80 Parks Canada sites for 12 months.

### Northern lights (aurora borealis)

After a dip in frequency last year (among other worldwide issues), the aurora borealis is in the ascent phase of its 11-year solar activity cycle in 2022. Canada's Yukon and Northwest Territories sit above the Arctic Circle and this raw, untamed terrain with little light pollution provide the

perfect conditions for aurora chasers. Stay in Whitehorse in the Yukon or Yellowknife in Northwest Territories to view these mesmerising dancing lights from a cosy lodge right in town.

### Cruises

Bound by the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, Canada has a coastline that's made for

cruising in all seasons. The wish-list Inside Passage from Vancouver hugs the west coast of Canada up to Alaska through a series of interlocking waterways with more than 1000 islands, coves and fjords. The Northwest Passage, which connects the two oceans via the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, had its first commercial cruise in 2012 due to the previously impermeable year-round ice. Leaf peepers will adore a North Atlantic cruise in autumn to view the spectacular autumn colours, while winter is ideal to experience the northern lights.

### Road trips

Take to the open road for a similarly immersive experience. The 300km Cabot Trail on Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia traverses the island's Scottish heritage, quaint fishing villages and seaside diversions from surfing to indulging in fresh seafood. For a road trip you'll want to take at a glacial pace, Icefields Parkway is a 232km scenic stretch named for the nation's largest icefield and connects Banff and Jasper national parks.

Or embark on the 120km drive along the Sea-to-Sky Highway from Vancouver to Whistler,

stopping for waterfalls, mountain views and a ride on the Sea to Sky Gondola.

### Toronto

A multicultural city of 240 official and unofficial neighbourhoods, Canada's largest city has plenty of attractions from the 553m CN Tower for a 360-degree view to the PATH, an underground pedestrian walkway network that spans 30km with 1200 eateries, shops and services, so you never have to go up to a snowy street. Basketball fans can check out 2019 NBA Championship winners Toronto Raptors at Scotiabank Arena.

### Ski resorts

Swap your favourite New Zealand resort for the Canadian Rocky Mountains and that famous champagne powder. From back-country runs to the Whistler Blackcomb mega resort with 3200ha of skiable terrain, Canada's resorts take winter to a breathtaking next level. The Mountain Collective Pass holders can access two free days each at select independent



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Canadian resorts, including Lake Louise, Sun Peaks and Panorama.

### Montreal

A joy of travelling within Canada is the dual language. With its European influences, Montreal is distinguished by its French-Canadian accent and exceptional artistic and cultural heritage. The historic city has charm aplenty from the ornate Notre-Dame Basilica inspired by the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris to the cobblestoned historic district of Old Montreal.

Check alert level restrictions and Ministry of Health advice before planning to travel. [covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz) and [safetravel.govt.nz](https://www.safetravel.govt.nz)



Clockwise from top: Ski, shop and surf all in the same day when you stay in Vancouver; Visit Yukon and Northwest Territories to see these famous lights; Fully experience Canada's natural landscape with a drive; Take your pick of world-class ski resorts. Photos / Albert Normandin; Benjamin Suterh; Kari Medig; Andrew Strain



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Visit Canada between  
October and November  
2022 for prime polar bear-  
spotting. Photo / Unsplash