

Wild Canada | From the Rockies to the Pacific

Holiday Duration: 15 Nights



Mountains and rainforest. Railway and ocean. Grizzlies and whales.

Journey deep into the wilderness on a remarkable circular adventure combining the freedom of a self-drive holiday, the romance of a daylight-only mountain railway, unforgettable grizzly bear encounters and one of the world's great coastal voyages. From the spectacular Canadian Rockies, Banff and Jasper National Parks, travel west aboard the legendary VIA Rail Skeena, following remote mountain landscapes and the mighty Skeena River towards the Pacific. Encounter wild grizzly bears in the pristine Kootenai Sanctuary, then sail through the breathtaking Inside Passage, surrounded by towering mountains, ancient forests and remote islands. On northern Vancouver Island, explore the untouched beauty of San Josef Bay and head out onto the Pacific in search of sea otters, humpback whales and orcas. Your adventure finishes with two relaxing nights in vibrant Vancouver, giving you time to unwind and enjoy the city before flying home.

This is a journey for travellers who want to slow down, get away from the crowds and experience the wild side of Western Canada.

This itinerary is flexible and can be tailor-made to suit you; if you want to add extra days in one area, extend your winter holiday in Canada or maybe change the direction of travel. Talk to one of our experts about how to make this holiday the perfect one for you.

Here's a day-by-day guide to your itinerary. Feel free to ask us to add other days or ideas and excursions by contacting us directly, so we can give you the best price.

Day 1



Calgary to Canmore

Your Canadian adventure begins as you fly from the UK to Calgary in Alberta.

Collect your SUV rental and make the short journey into the Canadian Rockies. Canmore sits in the Bow Valley, surrounded by some of the most dramatic scenery in Alberta and just a short distance from Banff National Park. Its relaxed atmosphere, independent restaurants and spectacular mountain setting make it an ideal base for the first part of your journey.

After checking into your hotel, enjoy a leisurely evening exploring the town or simply take in the mountain views from your accommodation.

3 nights Canmore (you can stay in Banff if you prefer)

Day 2-3



Canmore

You have two full days in the Canadian Rockies, with time to explore at your own pace. Canmore is surrounded by an extraordinary collection of peaks, forests and turquoise rivers, and there are countless ways to experience the landscape. Take a scenic drive through the Bow Valley, explore the trails around Canmore or venture into Banff National Park to discover some of the region's iconic scenery. Visit Lake Louise, walk beside the turquoise waters of Moraine Lake (a guided tour is the only way to access Moraine Lake and is recommended to access Lake Louise as well – we can include this in your holiday), take a scenic gondola ride above the mountains in Banff or simply enjoy one of the many spectacular viewpoints around the Bow Valley.

For those who prefer to slow down, Canmore itself is well worth exploring. Wander along Main Street, browse the independent shops and galleries, or settle into one of the town's excellent restaurants with the mountains providing the backdrop.

Day 4



Canmore to Jasper

Leave Canmore behind and head north towards Jasper, travelling along the spectacular Icefields Parkway — one of the world's most renowned mountain roads. The route passes some of Canada's most iconic landscapes, including Bow Lake, Peyto Lake, the Columbia Icefield and the magnificent Athabasca Glacier. One of the largest accumulations of ice south of the Arctic Circle and you will head out on Ice Explorer excursion onto the Athabasca Glacier and experience the spectacular Glacier Skywalk, suspended above the Sunwapta Valley.

Wildlife is another reason to take this journey slowly. Keep your eyes open for elk, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, deer and bears, particularly around the quieter sections of the highway. By late afternoon, continue into Jasper National Park and arrive in the mountain town of Jasper, your base for the next three nights.

With three nights here, you'll have plenty of time to experience the park at a relaxed pace rather than simply passing through.

3 nights Jasper

Day 5-6



Jasper

Head out on a cruise on the glacial waters of Maligne Lake, one of the most beautiful settings in the Canadian Rockies. Travel across the turquoise lake towards the famous Spirit Island, surrounded by towering peaks and pristine wilderness.

Venture out at dawn on a guided wildlife experience with a local naturalist. Jasper's vast wilderness provides habitat for bears, wolves, coyotes, elk and many other species. Your guide will help you understand the landscape and the animals that call it home.

And don't forget to look upwards after sunset. Jasper is part of the world's second-largest Dark Sky Preserve, making this one of the finest places in Canada to experience a truly dark night sky. On a clear evening, step outside your lodge and look for a spectacular display of stars, planets and perhaps even the Milky Way stretching across the mountains.

Day 7



Jasper to Prince George

This morning, your journey changes pace.

Return your rental vehicle at Jasper station and board the westbound VIA Rail Skeena. From this point onwards, sit back, relax and let the landscape unfold outside your window. The railway carries you away from the familiar tourist routes and deep into the wilderness of British Columbia. One of the day's highlights is the magnificent Mount Robson, the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies. From here, the scenery gradually changes as you travel west through increasingly remote country and into the Cariboo region.

Unlike many long-distance trains, the Skeena operates during daylight hours, meaning the journey is designed around the scenery rather than travelling through the night. At the end of the day, the train stops in Prince George, where you'll overnight before continuing your journey west.

1 night Prince George

Day 8



Prince George to Prince Rupert

Your railway adventure continues this morning as you re-board the train for the spectacular second half of the journey.

This is where the landscape becomes truly wild. The railway follows the broad, rushing waters of the Skeena River, passing through deep valleys, forested mountains and remote communities. Watch for glimpses of Indigenous heritage and the historic landscapes of British Columbia's interior as the train makes its way towards the coast. Dense coastal rainforest replaces the drier interior forests and the mountains become increasingly dramatic. By evening, you'll reach Prince Rupert, a small coastal city sitting at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.

After two unforgettable days on the railway, settle into your waterfront accommodation and enjoy your first evening on the coast.

3 nights Prince Rupert (number of nights may vary to fit it with the Inside Passage schedule)

Day 9-10



Prince Rupert

Prince Rupert is your gateway to one of the most remote and wildlife-rich corners of British Columbia.

Your highlight here is a full-day marine expedition to the Khutzeymateen Grizzly Sanctuary, one of the world's most remarkable places to encounter wild grizzly bears. Travelling by boat through the spectacular coastal wilderness, you'll enter a protected landscape of steep forested mountains, tidal waterways and pristine rainforest. Here, grizzlies can often be seen foraging along the shoreline or moving through the intertidal zone. Rather than viewing wildlife from a vehicle or a busy tourist platform, you'll experience these magnificent animals from the water, surrounded by the extraordinary landscape they call home.

The experience is as much about the journey as the bears themselves: mist-covered mountains, ancient rainforest, remote islands and the feeling of being genuinely far from civilisation.

Back in Prince Rupert, you'll have time to explore this atmospheric harbour city. Don't miss Cow Bay, where you can enjoy some of British Columbia's exceptional seafood. Fresh Pacific halibut and wild BC salmon make an excellent final taste of the coast before your journey south.

Day 11



Prince Rupert to Port Hardy

Today, leave the road and railways behind once again. Board a BC Ferries vessel for the spectacular voyage south through the Inside Passage towards Port Hardy on Vancouver Island. This is not simply a transfer from A to B. It is one of the great scenic journeys of North America. For around 15 hours, the ship threads its way through a labyrinth of islands, narrow channels and towering coastal mountains. Mist hangs over ancient forests, waterfalls tumble down sheer rock faces and the outside world seems to disappear completely.

Keep your binoculars close. Depending on the season and conditions, you may spot humpback whales, orcas, bald eagles and other marine wildlife along the route. The Inside Passage is a fitting finale to the wildest part of your Canadian adventure. Arrive into Port Hardy late in the evening and transfer to your hotel.

3 nights Port Hardy

Day 12



Port Hardy

Today, venture deep into the remote northern wilderness on a San Josef Bay tour. This is the kind of experience that makes this journey so different from a conventional Canadian holiday. Travel into the wild landscapes of Cape Scott Provincial Park, where dense coastal rainforest gives way to a spectacular remote shoreline. The journey itself is part of the adventure, taking you well away from the developed tourist trail. San Josef Bay is famed for its enormous sandstone formations, sea stacks and dramatic Pacific coastline. When the tide and conditions allow, you'll have time to explore the beach, walk among the towering trees and take in the extraordinary scenery.

This is a place where the scale of the landscape really hits home. There are no city skylines or crowds here – just ancient rainforest, wild coastline and the Pacific Ocean.

Day 13



Port Hardy

Today, head back onto the water with Coastal Rainforest Safaris for an unforgettable wildlife adventure. The waters around northern Vancouver Island are among the richest marine environments on Canada's Pacific coast, and your safari will take you into this spectacular wilderness in search of some of its most iconic inhabitants. Keep watch for sea otters, often seen floating among the kelp beds, as well as whales travelling through the coastal waters. Depending on the season and conditions, sightings can include humpback whales, orcas and other marine wildlife, while bald eagles and other coastal birds are frequently part of the experience. Between wildlife encounters, look up towards the shoreline. Ancient temperate rainforest rises directly from the water, creating the extraordinary combination of mountains, forest and ocean that makes this part of British Columbia so special. Unlike a conventional wildlife attraction, this is a genuine wilderness experience. There can be no guarantee of exactly what you'll see – and that's part of the magic.

Day 14



Port Hardy to Vancouver

Today you will take a scenic domestic flight from northern Vancouver Island to Vancouver, crossing the Georgia Strait and leaving the wilderness of northern Vancouver Island behind. Within a few hours, you'll have travelled from remote coastal wilderness to one of Canada's most vibrant cities, surrounded by mountains, ocean and rainforest.

Spend your final afternoon at leisure. Walk or cycle along the famous seawall in Stanley Park, explore the cobbled streets and historic buildings of Gastown, browse the shops downtown or settle into a West Coast restaurant for a final memorable dinner.

It's the perfect opportunity to relax after the adventure and reflect on everything you've experienced.

2 nights Vancouver

Day 15



Vancouver

Spend a full day in Vancouver and experience the city at your own pace or choose from a range of optional experiences.

Explore Stanley Park, visit Granville Island's famous market, explore the galleries and restaurants of Yaletown or head across the harbour to North Vancouver and discover Capilano Suspension bridge. Alternatively, simply find a waterfront restaurant, order a glass of wine and watch the sun set behind the mountains.

If you are interested in a holiday to Canada please contact us on 020 8776 8709 to discuss your plans with a Canada expert, or send an email to canada@frontier-travel.co.uk with your requirements and we will put together your ideal itinerary and quotation. Let us take you there.