



Golf in Speyside's Highland heaven

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TRAVEL

The great outdoors



PADDLE POWER:
Yvonne in Algonquin Park where moose, right, roam

Paddling her own canoe in Canada's wilds, Yvonne Gordon finds moose, Ice wine and a famed Irishman

The canoe glides noiselessly through the water. Dense clusters of tall pine trees line the banks to left and right. Further on, the waterway widens and lush fields of green reeds along the river's sides take the place of solid

banks. A red-winged blackbird perches precariously atop a reed as it sways gently beneath the bird's weight.

There are six of us in a large, open Canadian canoe. When all of us are paddling together, we move along swiftly enough, though as novices we take every bend of the river far too wide, not know-

ing who should be paddling on which side to turn the boat. Luckily the water is flat with no rapids to tip us over.

We're on a morning canoe trip in Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada, about three and a half hours' drive north of the city of Toronto. The park has a rather astonishing 10,000 ▶

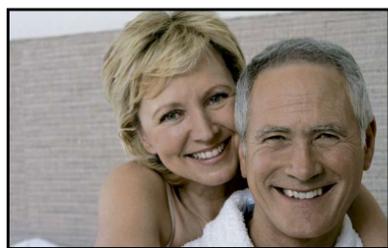


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LAND OF ICE AND FIRE: Ever wanted to explore Iceland, the land of the glaciers, hot springs and volcanoes? Abbey Travel has three nights in Reykjavik from €538pps in October and November. Price includes direct flights, transfers and B&B in the three-star Reykjavik Lights Hotel. Optional excursions include a jeep safari of the capital's volcanic outskirts, a Northern Lights and Blue Lagoon, above, tour and horse riding. See abbeytravel.ie or call (01) 804 7100.

CLASH OF THE TITANS: Days after Serena Williams thrashed Caroline Wozniacki in the US Open, you can already book to see them meet again in Wimbledon next year. Keith Prowse offers packages between June 29 and July 12 from €473pp incl. flights, accommodation, transfers, and match tickets – keithprorowse.ie or call (01) 878 3500.

► interconnecting lakes and rivers and no less than 1,500km of canoe trails. It's also home to moose, bears and wolves – but this doesn't put off the thousands of summer visitors who come for kayaking, hiking, mountain biking and camping.

The main aim of the morning becomes to spot a moose along the river – though on this rainy morning our guide Keegan, who is steering the boat from the back, says the moose are probably sheltering under the trees as their coats can get very wet. Apparently they don't like strong sun either, they overheat. Suddenly they don't seem like the hardy animals I had imagined in this northerly wilderness. However, when we do later spot one on the road, I realise how enormous they are (much bigger than a deer) and how thoroughly impressive their antlers are.

We see beaver lodges along the water's edge – big round mounds covered with sticks, and some rare yellow water lilies on the surface. The rain brings out plenty of biting black fly, too – though as Jeremy in Algonquin Outfitters later jokes: 'The bugs aren't bad, they're just enthusi-

HIGH POINT: The CN tower dominates the Toronto skyline



Toronto is a high-rise world apart

astic.' Jeremy is also enthusiastic – as he prepares some large packs at the outfitting shop – to set people up for canoe trips. The specialists can arrange everything that's needed, from sleeping bags and tents to cooking gear and food, all packed and ready to fit into a canoe – handy for those who want to include a canoeing trip as part of a wider holiday.

The outfitters also give lessons in canoeing and what is known as 'portage'. Because the park has so many connecting rivers and lakes, portage – carrying the canoe across a patch of land – is an important part of every trip. So they make sure everything is as lightweight as possible and can help plan routes where trails between two lakes or rivers are not too long.

Later in the day we drop into the Algonquin Visitor Centre, where park ranger David Legros walks us through the displays of stuffed moose, deer, wolves, beavers and various birds, tell-

ing us he has seen up to seven moose in a single day. Just as he is saying this, someone starts writing on the Wildlife Sightings Board at reception that they spotted a moose 20km away, I can't help but notice the previous entry, too – that three black bears were recorded in the campsite at 4am.

I ask if wolves are ever recorded and David tells us that visitors rarely see wolves but do sometimes hear them, and that there's a public wolf howl every Thursday in August. This involves hundreds of visitors lining the roads, all waiting to hear the otherworldly call of the wolves. The chief howler howls at the wolves and they howl back. 'It's just magical,' says David. 'The hairs go up on my arms when I think about it.'

This is a different world from that of Toronto, where we had just spent a few days. One of the high points of the city sightseeing – pun intended – was din-



PLAYWRIGHT: Tribute to George Bernard Shaw

GETTING THERE

Air Canada Rouge has year-round direct Dublin-Toronto flights with return fares from about €800 including taxes, see www.aircanada.com or call 1800 709 900. For boat trips to the Toronto Islands, see www.mariposacruises.com. Canoe outfitting in Algonquin Park starts from €154 per person for two days including food, camping gear and canoeing equipment, see www.algonquinoutfitters.com. Accommodation at Deerhurst Resort in Huntsville starts from €134 per night plus tax, see www.deerhurstresort.com. For more information on Ontario, see www.travelontario.co.uk



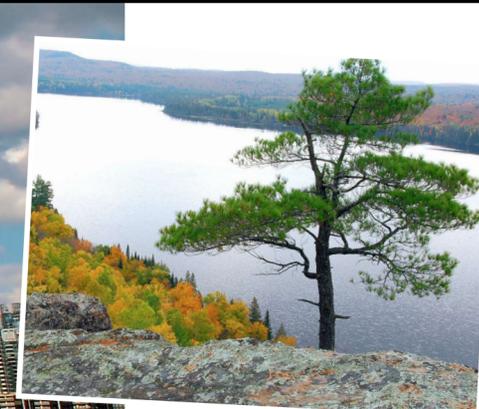
TIDY TOWN: Heritage buildings in Niagara-on-the-Lake

ner at the 360 Restaurant in the CN Tower, a revolving restaurant in what is, at 1,815 feet, one of the world's tallest buildings.

Here we saw panoramic views of the city

and its architecture as well as the inner harbour of Lake Ontario and the Toronto Islands. The Toronto Inner Harbour was the setting for an early evening boat race when

we were dining. The yachts with their white sails scattered around the bay made a great view, though there wasn't much wind – and when the restaurant had completed a full



REMOTE BEAUTY: Splendid autumn colour and a lone pine tree in Algonquin Park

360-degree revolution and we came back around to the yachts about an hour later, they were still in the same position.

A boat cruise to the Toronto Islands made for another relaxing outing in the city and, as well as seeing views of the CN Tower and the waterfront, we saw the boat docks, picnic areas and bird conservatory on the car-free islands. There are public barbecue areas and beaches and the islands are a popular spot for fishing, too.

Covering more than a million square kilometres, the province of Ontario is full of surprises. On our way to Algonquin, we stopped off at Inniskillen Wines to taste the area's famous Ice wine – a sweet wine made from frozen grapes picked during the winter at -10°C. We also visited Niagara Falls, which while worth seeing was very busy with tourists.

But the biggest surprise of all was in the nearby town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, about half an hour's drive from the Falls. This pretty town with its heritage shop fronts, white fences and horse-drawn carriages hosts an annual George Bernard Shaw festival featuring more than 800 Shaw performances a year. It is so popular that it runs in three different theatres in the town for eight months a year. There's also a statue of the Irish playwright in the centre of the town, and a restaurant called the Shaw Café and Wine Bar. Even GB himself would have been surprised at it all...

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Taking the fairytale railway line along the magical Rhine valley

WHEN I saw the podgy men wearing T-shirts emblazoned with slogans that read 'Slovenia Railway Museum' and 'Steam Locomotive Museum, Vienna', I feared I had stumbled into a trainspotters' holiday.

But I needn't have worried as I set out on a five-day Rhine Valley rail trip. My fellow passengers – including the would-be train drivers – made the journey from London St Pancras to Cologne and Remagen highly enjoyable.

The Rhine Valley, with its half-timbered houses, its steep, vineyard-covered hills and fairytale castles is a magnet for tourists.

by Sarah Lucas

Roads and rail tracks run either side of the river. Pleasure boats and commercial barges add euros to the German economy.

We stayed in Remagen, south of the former West German capital Bonn.

Remagen is a pretty town on the left bank of the Rhine. It's best known for its bridge, captured by the Americans during WWII when it was the only significant one still standing over the Rhine.

The bridge collapsed in March 1945, hastening the end of German resistance along the Rhine. Two towers, either side of the river, are all that remain, one housing a Peace Museum.

We travelled by train along the Ahr Valley – the most northerly of Germany's wine-producing regions – to Cologne to see the Dom, one of the largest Gothic cathedrals ever built.

From there we went to Beethoven's birthplace in Bonn, where a statue of the angry-looking composer glares down at the surrounding Münsterplatz, and then on to Rudesheim, a bustling tourist-fest with its year-round Christmas shop.

A boat took us back along the Rhine to Remagen one day, past Königswinter and the Hotel Dreesen, where in 1938 Hitler met British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain – who returned to London triumphantly declaring 'Peace in our time'.

Rail travel can be surprisingly soothing, especially if someone else handles the plethora of tickets, as our guide did.

We took the Eurostar, the Thalys – Belgium's high-speed train – double-deckers and had several journeys on the MittelrheinBahn, the local Middle Rhine Train, which has stops all along the river.

My favourite train was the inappropriately named Vulkan Express – surely one of the slowest expresses in the world – to the Eifel Mountains. It's ex-Swiss Railway stock, and even the pedestrians you see alongside are speedier. At least it set me up for a lingering glass of Sekt, German prosecco, at the wine museum in Mayschoss.

■ *Diamond Rail Holidays* (see diamondrailholidays.co.uk) offers a six-day Great Little Trains Of The Rhine Valley holiday (ex-London) from €750pp. This includes five nights' half board at the Pinger Hotel in Remagen, Eurostar, all rail trips and the services of a guide.



HIGH CHURCH: The massive Cologne Cathedral, which is one of the largest Gothic churches ever built, and the Hohenzollern bridge