

Escape

THE FRENCH HOTELS THAT
COULD BE THE NEXT STARS
OF THE WHITE LOTUS
PAGES 00-00

OH, CANADA!

More of us are choosing this wild and wonderful country for our holidays over the politically fraught U.S. Luckily, our expert knows where to go – as he reveals in our unmissable guide



Happy hiker: York Membery in Canada. Above, Jasper National Park in Alberta

SPANNING North America from coast to coast, Canada is the world's second biggest country. It's around 40 times the size of the UK – with Halifax in Nova Scotia closer to London than it is to Vancouver, on Canada's Pacific coast. Scenery, unsurprisingly, varies dramatically from towering mountains to plains, lakelands and vast forests. The

by **YORK MEMBERY**

result is a huge choice of holidays and – for those who fall in love with America's neighbour (as I did long ago) – a lifetime of travelling opportunities. Over the past 30 years I've been lucky to visit all ten Canadian provinces, as

well as the Yukon territory in the far north, where a husky once memorably sidled up to me as I was eating breakfast. I treasure my trips to the wild country, sometimes visiting during winters when temperatures regularly touch minus 10C (14F), but mainly going in the warm summers, when you can expect daily highs of up to 30C (86F). And I'm not the only one. Visitor numbers are on the up, with around

TURN TO NEXT PAGE

Escape: Cover story



NIAGARA FALLS

Majestic: Visitors to the Canadian side of the famous falls won't be disappointed

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

900,000 British tourists visiting this year. Lately, some have been opting to holiday there rather than in the politically-divided USA.

Here are the Canadian towns and cities that are closest to my heart...

CHARLOTTETOWN, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

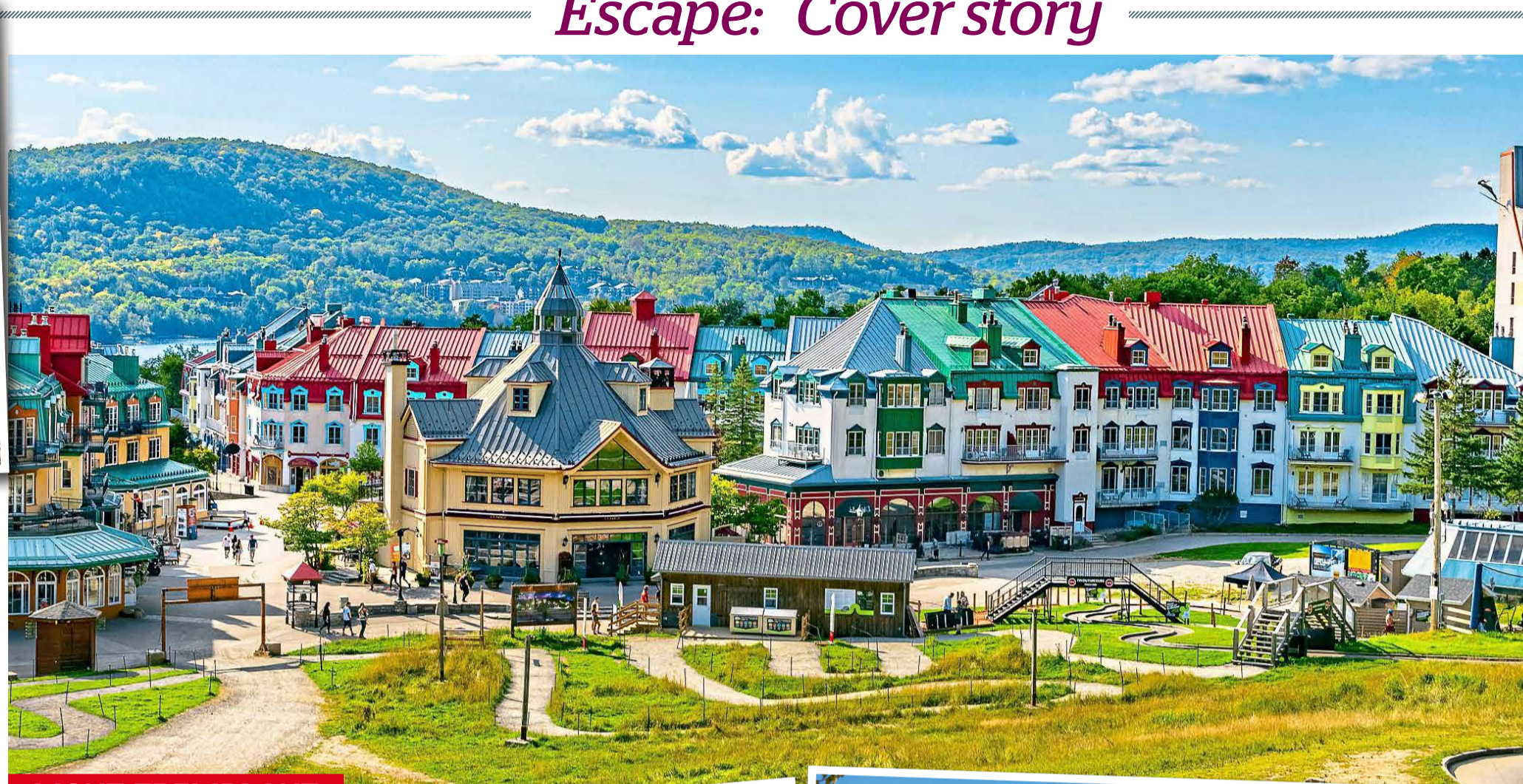
I HAVE long had a soft spot for the charming, toy town-style capital of Prince Edward Island, Canada's smallest province (about the size of Norfolk), which is linked to the mainland by the eight-mile long Confederation Bridge. The island is best known for

being the home of Lucy Maud Montgomery, who penned *Anne Of Green Gables*. The pretty white clapboard cottage which inspired the 50 million-selling children's classic is a 40-minute drive north of Charlottetown.

The island is credited with being the birthplace of the 'idea' of Canada and also claims to be the country's 'Food Island'.

I can certainly recommend the delicious seafood at the city's Lobster on the Wharf restaurant (lobsteronthewharf.com).

MY TIP: Every two years a musical about freckle-faced Anne is staged in Charlottetown (confederationcentre.com) and it's due to be performed again next summer. Further afield, do a stretch of The



MONT-TREMBLANT

Island Walk (theislandwalk.ca), a 435-mile trail looping the island.

DAWSON CITY, YUKON

THERE'S nowhere quite like Dawson City, centre of the Klondike Gold Rush in the 1890s and located in Yukon in Canada's far north.

Much of the 'city' (population 1,600) closes down during the dark, frozen winters but the summers are pleasant (although the mozzies can be troublesome) and it's light until late.

To get there you take a two-hour 20-minute flight from Vancouver to Whitehorse, from where it's a six-hour drive or another 40-minute flight away.

A walk through Dawson's cluster of late Victorian-era heritage buildings is like stepping back in time to the gold rush era, as is a visit to Diamond Tooth Gertie's (diamondtoothgerties.ca), where the dancing girls flash their frillies while doing the can-can during a nightly vaudeville show in the summer.

MY TIP: Try your luck at gold panning, and have a Sourtoe Cocktail, featuring a mummified human toe, at the Downtown Hotel (coasthotels.com/the-downtown-a-coast-hotel).

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

THE biggest city on Canada's Atlantic seaboard has reinvented itself since its far off days as a British garrison town, although visiting Halifax Citadel National Historic Site (parks.canada.ca) is still a must.

The harbour area has been revitalised, and its 2.5-mile boardwalk is now dotted with museums and hip food shacks. One of my favourite restaurants, however, is the downtown Little Fish (littlefishwinebar.com) which serves a tasty Crobster (crab and lobster) roll.

Be sure to take a tour of the harbour, too (halifaxharbourtours.ca).

The proud maritime city is also the perfect springboard to see the province. Visit historic towns such as Annapolis Royal and Lunenburg, and drive the wonderfully scenic 185-mile Cabot Trail around Cape

Breton Island, linked to mainland Nova Scotia by a causeway.

MY TIP: Visit Halifax's Fairview Lawn Cemetery, the final resting place for 121 victims (more than any other location) of the Titanic sinking in 1912. It's a moving experience.

JASPER, ALBERTA

THE Rocky Mountain resort of Jasper - along with Jasper National Park - suffered serious wildfire damage in the summer of 2024, but is very much open for business again. It's not as well known as the Rockies' Lake Louise (the most famous lake in Canada) but the scenery is just as stunning and boasts amazing wildlife: everything from bears to elk and moose.

Take a cruise around Maligne Lake, home to Spirit Island (a sacred indigenous islet), and go for a hike in the Opal Hills, famous for their wild flowers.

If you're a golfer, try out the Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge (fairmont.com) golf course, one of the best in Canada.

And if you visit in winter, you'll find Marmot Basin (skimarmot.com) is quieter



CHARLOTTETOWN



VANCOUVER

Don't miss: Mont-Tremblant, park and village (main picture), lobster rolls in Charlottetown and a bike ride round Stanley Park

guage friendly part of the largely French-speaking province. Start your visit in picturesque Old Montreal, the city's birthplace, but walk to the top of Mount Royal Park for the best city views. Tuck into a lunchtime salt beef sandwich at the city's legendary Jewish deli, Schwartz's (schwartzsdeli.com). Then, in the evening visit trendy Atwater Cocktail Club (voted the third best in Canada) and try its signature 40 Thieves cocktail, made with Canadian rye, lemon, pineapple, sesame oil and tahini.

MY TIP: Spend a day at Mont-Tremblant village (tremblant.ca), a ski resort turned summer playground, a two-hour drive away, where you can hike, cycle and take a cable car up the mountain.

NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO

PRESIDENT Trump might think the US has 'the biggest' and 'the best' of everything but sorry, Mr President, when it comes to Niagara Falls, Horseshoe Falls (on the Canadian side) is tops.

The mighty cascades - a one-hour 40-minute bus ride from Toronto - and the adjoining Niagara Falls town might be tourist magnets, but nothing can prepare you for the power and majesty of the falls when you take a boat trip (niagaraparks.com) to see them up close. Yes, you're going to get wet but that's part of the fun.

Try to also fit in a visit to the nearby historic town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, with its quaint clapboard houses and tree-lined roads, for a very different experience.

MY TIP: Not everyone knows it but Canada produces some very drinkable wines, so take a winery tour at the family-run Peller Estates (peller.com) situated in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

TORONTO, ONTARIO

THE most cosmopolitan city in the country, Toronto is Canada's answer to New York. The 1,815ft high CN Tower (cntower.ca) might have dominated the skyline since the 1970s but a rocket-style trip to the top is still a thrill, and the view from the top is breathtaking.

Try Toronto's famous peameal bacon sandwich at St Lawrence Market (stlawrencemarket.com), and for quality pub grub and beer check out the Queen and Beaver (queenandbeaverpub.ca).

After seeing the sights, head for Union Station, the departure point for the iconic Canadian sleeper train (viarail.ca), which departs for Vancouver (2,775 miles west) twice a week.

MY TIP: Spot a Hollywood A-lister during the Toronto International Film Festival (tiff.net) in September - I was almost run over by Richard Gere's limo at the festival one year.

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

CRADLED between the mountains and the Pacific, this west coast city has one of the world's most beautiful natural settings. Trendy Robson Street, with its coffee shops, restaurants and fashion stores, is a great place to people watch.

But the 1,000-acre Stanley Park, with its 13,000-step looping seawall walk - perfect for a hike or cycle ride - is the jewel in the city's crown.

Catch a ferry across the harbour to the North Shore's Lonsdale Quay (lonsdalequay.com), with its indoor market and food outlets, and take a cable car up Grouse Mountain for super views from the restaurant complex at the top (grousemountain.com).

Finally, for a special treat, book a day trip on a floatplane to Victoria, on Vancouver Island, from Vancouver harbour (harbourair.com).

MY TIP: Head for the Alibi Room (alibi.ca) in Gastown for a neighbourhood-style restaurant-bar, serving good food and beers.

AND THE PLACES TO AVOID...

■ **FOR all Vancouver's many attractions, steer clear of the notorious East Hastings Street district with its druggies and alcoholics - it's got a depressing Skid Row vibe.**

■ **DRILLERS, truck drivers and riggers can make big money in Fort McMurray, nerve centre of the huge oil sands development in northern Alberta, but it's not the most scenic of places.**

■ **THE mountain resort of Banff is the de**

facto capital of the Canadian Rockies, but bus loads of tourists descend on its main thoroughfare, Banff Avenue, in summer so best to avoid during peak season.

■ **WINNIPEG'S Historic Exchange District may be a fascinating place for a stroll, but the city's Portage and Main interchange has been dubbed 'Canada's windiest street corner'. And having stood there myself, I can confirm that it's on the breezy side.**

than big-name ski resorts such as Whistler, Lake Louise and Banff, allowing you more time on the ski slopes.

MY TIP: Treat yourself to a delicious cinnamon bun or homemade ice cream at Jasper's Bear's Paw Bakery (bears-pawbakery.com), in Jasper town centre.

MONTREAL, QUEBEC

EVERY summer Canada's second city comes alive with festivals, including the Montreal Jazz Festival (montrealjazzfest.com) and Just For Laughs (hahaha.com).

With its mixed Anglo-French heritage, Montreal is also the most English-lan-