

WE'RE ALL HEADING FOR...

Alberta



The Calgary Tower offers views of the city



The stunning views of the Canadian Rockies are hard to beat

The western Canadian province of Alberta is possibly one of the most picturesque destinations in the world – as stars such as Anne Hathaway and Jake Gyllenhaal can testify.

Home to the Canadian Rockies, the appeal of the sweeping prairie land is obvious from the moment you arrive – and it's no wonder so many films have been shot here. Whether you're seeking an authentic cowboy adventure in snow-covered mountain terrain or simply want to live it up in the bustling city of Calgary, there really is something for everyone.

CITY LIFE

Calgary, nestled between the foothills of the Rockies and the prairies, blends cosmopolitan style with an unspoiled mountain backdrop.

Admire the stunning scenery from the top of Calgary Tower and test your nerves by walking across the glass floor at 190 metres up. Or get your bearings by indulging in some shopping. Stroll along Stephen Avenue's pedestrian mall, shop till you drop at Chinook Centre or bag a bargain at Deerfoot outlet mall.

If you'd rather immerse yourself in history, try the Heritage Park Historical Village – the setting for Brad Pitt's film

The Assassination Of Jesse James... Here actors help create a "living museum", so you can explore the prairie town as well as learn what life was really like in the 1860s.

For a tasty lunch try the park's Selkirk Grille overlooking the Heritage Town Square. Choose authentic Canadian specialities such as bison or lobster, or classic options such as corn dogs and burgers.

PARTY LIKE THE NATIVES!

The city really comes alive in summer during the Calgary Stampede. Dubbed "the greatest outdoor show on earth", the festival attracts



Anne and Brad have filmed in Alberta province



Watch cowboys in action at the Calgary Stampede

Head off on a trail ride through the countryside



visitors from all over the world for a week-long party. But the fun doesn't stop there – the nightlife is great all year round.

Begin your evening with a unique dining experience at Buzzards Cowboy Cuisine restaurant, where you can earn a sheriff's "I had a ball" badge for sampling some of the more daring items on the menu – such as a bull's testicle!

If that's not your cup of tea, put your cowboy boots on for a night of dancing at the hottest bar in town – Ranchman's. This cowboy hot spot has hosted a number of memorable movie moments from films such as *Brokeback Mountain* and *Cool Runnings*. Try your hand at square dancing, have a go on the mechanical bull or do as the locals do – "munch'n'mingle".

If the night is still young and you're up for some more fun, be sure to pay a visit to one of Prince Harry's favourite nightspots, Cowboys, which is within stumbling distance of one of Calgary's top hotels, The Fairmont Palliser.

Located in the heart of downtown Calgary, this opulent hotel has spacious rooms and suites, as well as a selection of restaurants specialising in fine dining.

HEAD SOUTH

After your city stay in Calgary, head to southern Alberta for a colourful taste of the Wild West.

Make your way to the picturesque Mountain Meadow Ranch located near the Waterton Lakes National Park at the foot of the Canadian Rockies for an adventure you'll never forget. The friendly

cowboys will show you around their working ranch and teach you some impressive skills, such as lassoing, before getting you set up for horse riding.

From here you'll trail ride your way into the wilderness of the Rockies and see some of the most breathtaking landscape imaginable – and in parts you'll be quite literally only a stone's throw from the Montana border of the US.

In the evening you can listen to bear stories around a cosy campfire and relax in a hot tub before retiring your sore bum to a log cabin for some well-deserved rest.

The next day, ride back down the mountain to the ranch, ready to head off to the Kimball River Sports headquarters for an exhilarating day of white-water rafting down the St Mary river.

Relive your adventures over dinner at Cobblestone Manor historical restaurant in nearby Cardstone and then watch the sun go down at the Payne Lake Lodge.

Finally, you can embrace Canada's First Nations native heritage with a visit to Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park. Here you'll learn about the fascinating traditions of the Blackfoot people, watch tribal Indian dances and can even stay overnight in a tepee in the valley.

Whatever your personal taste, a holiday to beautiful Alberta offers a diverse range of activities and unforgettable cultural experiences that will no doubt leave you itching to discover more of Canada. But don't just take our word for it! ■

Elizabeth Gardiner

BOOK IT!



ALBERTA

GETTING THERE

Air Canada (www.aircanada.ca) flies to Calgary from Heathrow for around £527 per person including taxes.

WHAT TO DO

Calgary Tower (www.calgarytower.com).

Heritage Park Historical Village (www.heritagepark.ca).

Calgary Stampede (www.calgarystampede.com).

Mountain Meadow Ranch (www.mountainmeadowtrailrides.com). Raft & Ride packages cost from around £45 per person.

Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park (www.blackfootcrossing.ca). Tepees start from around £167 for two to eight people.

EATING/DRINKING

Buzzards Cowboy Cuisine (www.cowboycuisine.com).

Ranchman's (www.ranchmans.com).

Cowboys (www.cowboysniteclub.com).

Cobblestone Manor (www.thecobblestonemanor.com).

WHERE TO STAY

Fairmont Palliser Hotel (www.fairmont.com). Double rooms from around £55 per night.

Payne Lake Lodge (+1 403 653 4883) Double rooms from around £50 per night.