

## No cliches in Calgary

THIS OUTDOORS HUB IS EQUAL PARTS APPETISING AND ADVENTUROUS IN NATURE

Words: Mhairri Woodhall, Calgary local, travel writer and Flight Centre Canada Travel Expert

➔ Calgary is a young, energetic city, and the people who live here are warm and welcoming. We're also exceedingly fortunate to live less than an hour from the Canadian Rockies. No matter the season, a day trip to Canmore, Banff or Lake Louise promises spectacular scenery and a peaceful escape from city life.

Calgary is probably best known for its western hospitality and 10-day summer spectacular – the Calgary Stampede. While many Calgarians do in fact own a pair of cowboy boots, the majority of us only dust them off for The Greatest Show on Earth, held in July.

What surprised me most about moving here four years ago from Vancouver – a super health-conscious city – was how

active Calgarians are. We love to spend time outdoors – exploring the city; walking, running and cycling along the Bow Valley pathway system; and hiking and biking in our mountain parks.

We also play outside throughout the winter months. Powder hounds can hit the slopes at WinSport – Canada Olympic Park in the city – or take a day trip to the Canadian Rockies' world-class ski resorts. You'll also find a host of outdoor rinks throughout our city parks for skating and impromptu hockey games. For an afternoon of free fun, grab a toboggan and fly down a snow-caked hill or strap on snowshoes and go for a picturesque trek.

As a foodie, I love the city's cocktail culture and array of innovative restaurants that specialise in everything from share plates and fusion, to authentic farm-to-fork fare. We're also known for our juicy, tender and flavourful AAA Alberta beef – and I'm the first to admit that I've enjoyed some of the best steaks of my life here. That said, our dining scene is incredibly diverse and we have some very creative chefs.

First up, orient yourself downtown at the 191m Calgary Tower, which has the world's highest 360-degree observation deck – the view from here is jaw-dropping. Visit during the day for breathtaking panoramas of the city, Bow River and Canadian Rockies, or at night to take in the sparkling skyline.

For breakfast, wander over to the East Village and grab a cup of Calgary's famed Phil and Sebastian coffee and a Sidewalk Citizen scone from the Simmons Building. Then, head to Studio Bell – home of the National Music Centre – to experience



Canada's rich music culture and vast collection of instruments.

Afterwards, wander west along the Bow River pathway to Prince's Island Park. While here, enjoy lunch at the regionally inspired River Café. As the inventive chef-created menu is built around seasonal produce the dishes will vary, however the experience is always flawless.

In the afternoon, enjoy a little retail therapy at The Core shopping centre in the heart of the city. High-end highlights include Holt Renfrew and the Quebec-based department store, Simons. If you're looking for vintage and local finds, check out Inglewood; one of Calgary's oldest neighbourhoods. After, pop into The Nash for a couture cocktail and share plate. The Sundance Saloon, with capel

pisco, vermouth di torino, prairie flowers cordial, white wine, lemon and autumn bog cranberry bitters, is a must-try.

When night falls, explore the restaurants along Calgary's famous 17th Ave. Top choices include Pigeon Hole for its extensive wine list and legendary English peas and charred cabbage dishes, and the handcrafted cocktails and delicious sliders and share plates at Cleaver. End the night at National for brews and bowling with the locals. **FC**

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➔ CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Calgary Stampede pays homage to First Nations cultures at Indian Village; ice skating in Olympic Plaza is a winter tradition; National Music Centre hosts exhibitions honouring a wide range of Canadian artists of all genres.

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