

As it Turns 150, Canada Is Courting Americans with Deals and Steals

by HARRIET BASKAS

While global travel to the United States may be dipping due to recent actions by President Donald Trump's administration, tourism numbers for Canada are climbing.

And it's not just because Canada has the [most donut shops in the world](#) (per capita) or because Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau reacted so quickly and compassionately to Trump's anti-immigration orders.



The tourism spotlight is on Canada this year for plenty of other reasons, including:

The Lists

Both the [New York Times](#) and [Lonely Planet](#) put the [second-largest country in the world](#) (by area) at the top of their list of places to visit in 2017.

The Dollar

One U.S. dollar is currently worth about 1.30 Canadian dollars, making dining, shopping, lodging and admissions to attractions great deals for Americans taking their travel dollars north of the border.

The Parties

2017 is Canada's 150th birthday and there are sesquicentennial celebrations and events taking place across the country. Consider planning a trip around some of the highlights, or time your trip to one of the activities in Canada's handy (and constantly updated) [Passport 2017](#) app.

Ottawa, Canada's capital city, has some [serious celebrations](#) in store, from a four-day NHL [Stanley Cup 125th Tribute](#) (March 15-18) that will feature a hockey-themed concert, to [La Machine](#) — enormous mechanical creatures including a spider and a dragon that will do battle on the streets of downtown Ottawa July 27-30, to an underground multimedia experience ([Kontinuum](#)) from the end of June through September; and, on August 27, [Canada's Table](#), an open-air dinner for 1000 that will be set up right in front of the Parliament Buildings.



La Machine will bring fierce, gigantic mechanical creatures to downtown Ottawa July 27-30 to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday. 📷 Jean Dominique Billaud

Nationwide, [Parks Canada](#) is offering free admission for the entire year to all the national parks, national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas it operates.

That includes Alberta's [Banff National Park](#), which is Canada's first national park, and the [Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site](#) in Nova Scotia.

Quebec City's [Winter Carnival](#) is underway through February 12, with more than 200 activities, including snow sculpture contests, night parades, ice-skating, an ice palace and, for the very hardy, an end-of-festival snow bath.

When temperatures are warmer, between June 29 and August 20, about forty [tall ships](#) will be visiting coastal cities in Quebec to mark Canada's 150th anniversary. The flotilla convenes in Quebec City July 18 to 23 for a celebration including ship tours and maritime activities.

Located at a National Historic Site that served as the gateway to Canada for one million immigrants between 1928 and 1971, the [Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21](#) in Halifax, Nova Scotia, will be presenting an expanded version of "Canada: Day 1," an exhibition about immigrants' experiences on their first day in the country, from April through October, 2017.



Bow Lake in Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada.  Paul Zizka Photography

2017 marks [Montreal's 375th anniversary](#) and the city is celebrating with a year's worth of events and celebrations, including [Cité Mémoire](#), featuring a nightly display of characters from the city's history projected on the walls, streets and trees of Old Montreal. [Montréal Avudo](#), a multimedia program honoring the St. Lawrence River, includes installations and giant projections and will be performed 100 times between May 17 and September 2 in the Old Port of Montreal.

With its [To Canada with Love](#) line-up, Toronto is marking Canada's 150th anniversary with a year-long schedule of celebrations, commemorations, horticultural installations, and [exhibitions](#), including [Doors Open Toronto](#) (May 27 & 28), when about 150 architecturally, historically, culturally and socially significant buildings across the city open their doors and back rooms for tours and special events — all for free.

[Canada Place](#) in Vancouver hosts a major Canada Day (July 1) celebration each year and is planning an extended three-day celebration from July 1-3 with a fireworks show and other highlights to mark the country's 150th year.

And from June 21 to July 1 Victoria, B.C. will present [Spirit of 150 Victoria](#), which will include 11 days of free outdoor events in the Inner Harbor topped off on July 1 with a grand finale main stage programming and a giant fireworks display.

Ready to Head North?

The data crunchers at Priceline found that for weekends through the end of March (depending on your originating city) it's possible to take a weekend trip to one of Canada's major cities for under \$500, including roundtrip airfare and 4-star hotel rates.

For example, New Yorkers can fly to Toronto for an average \$183 roundtrip and stay at a 4-star hotel for \$85 per night (total cost \$438). Chicago-based travelers can fly to Montreal for about \$300 and stay in numerous 4-star (and some 4.5 star hotels) for under \$100 a night. 🌈