



BOOMER *Travel*

Themed **TRAVEL**

Celebrating our preferences



CHASING THE SPIRITS
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Photograph by David Redondo

Whether intentional or accidental, we all engage in themed travel, seeking out what we're comfortable with, what makes us happy. Travel expands our horizons, but it also stokes our interests. Would a nature lover be happy spending a week plodding through museums? Would an art buff enjoy using vacation time at amusement parks? Would an adventurer want to take a lengthy bus tour devoted solely to historical homes?

If your trips already buttress your interests, consider planning the itinerary around what floats your boat, with the extras tucked in around the edges. The trips on these pages target themed itineraries. What attractions regularly show up in your travels?

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Therapeutic NATURE

BY GIGI RAGLAND



The magic of nature lifts our spirits. A walk in the woods, breathing in the fresh, piney smell of the forest, a vigorous hike to a mountaintop or a leisurely stroll along a soft sandy beach with the sounds of the seashore serenading you with every step – we enjoy these enriching, transformative moments for the value to experience something beyond the ordinary.

Photographs courtesy of Tourisme Quebec



Along the Whale Route, there are multiple ways to experience whale watching with excursions on water – and on land.

And in those restorative moments, sometimes we are offered a “diamond” that amplifies the experience, making it shine like no other. Perhaps the walk in the forest meets with a view of deer sipping from a stream, or along your alpine hike the screech of a raptor echoes from the mountaintops, or the stroll near the seashore turns into a marvelous marine mammal display, as a whale breaches before you.

These are just a few of the nature and wildlife moments that can be enjoyed on a visit to the Quebec Maritime Region, with plenty more diamonds to discover as you explore the Whale Route along the uncluttered, pristine coastline of Côte-Nord.

EXPLORE THE WHALE ROUTE OF QUEBEC

In the Quebec Maritime region, a scenic coastal landscape only a three-hour drive from Quebec City, lies one of the most under-the-radar and unique areas in the world to witness whales frolicking and feeding within a protected marine park playground.

The Whale Route, positioned along the Côte-Nord/Northern Shore of the St. Lawrence River, offers a virtual “whale soup,” a chance to see up to 13 species of whales cavorting along the cold waterway that follows the throat of the river to the mouth of the Saguenay Fjord and St. Lawrence Estuary. Every year between spring and fall, all types of whales, big and small, navigate their way from the Atlantic Ocean into the St. Lawrence in search of sustenance. It’s the season to gorge on the seafood buffet awaiting



them where they will feast on krill, fish and plankton.

Along the Whale Route, there are multiple ways to experience whale watching with excursions on water – and on land. Some whales swim so close to shore that they can be seen from the banks and coastal walkways. The beautiful location is perfect for those who desire land-based observation where you can hike, bike or walk



Photograph by Mircea C

along the marine park shoreline. It's even possible to glimpse the local group of rare beluga whales that make the St. Lawrence home year-round. They can be seen skimming the top of the waterline in groups. Their silvery-white bodies shimmer as sunlight catches them surfacing.

To get the most out of a visit, plan to stay in the charming bayside village of Tadoussac, known as Canada's first trading post. Opt to overnight at the historic Hotel Tadoussac, where the elegant resort's bay view is the best in the area. At any point, you may witness a whale breaching as you lounge on a lawn chair or stroll the lengthy seaside walkway. But it's also best to remember that the mammals do not perform on cue. The thrill, though, of hearing a puffing whale spout, when you least suspect it, is completely enchanting.

In Tadoussac, a visit to the Marine Mammal Interpretation Centre (CIMM) provides a great educational component to a whale-watching trip. You'll learn all about the 13 species of marine mammals that inhabit the local waters. You will be greeted by an amazing 40-foot skeleton of a sperm whale spanning the length of the room. Visual displays, sound recordings, whale song courses, skeleton collection and special videos round out the experience. Walk out on the rocks near the water to observe minke whales, belugas and seals, should they decide to make an appearance.

For those who enjoy sleeping under

MER ET MONDE ECO TOURS, LES BERGERONNES:

For an ultra-unique experience, try the Sound and Light Show kayak excursion, where paddlers see the marvel of bioluminescence and listen to whale sounds using a hydrophone.

MerEtMonde.ca/en

MARINE ENVIRONMENT DISCOVERY CENTER, LES ESCOUMINS:

Dive or snorkel in the St. Lawrence estuary with a professional guide with the Marine Environment Discovery Center. FQAS.qc.ca

FJORD EN KAYAK, L'ANSE-SAINT-JEAN:

Learn more about the Saguenay Fjord and river system with a short guided kayak tour. FjordEnKayak.ca

SAIL, CRUISE, ZODIAC AND OTHER ADVENTURES ALONG THE WHALE ROUTE:

AventureQuebec.ca/en/cote-nord

QUEBEC MARITIME REGION:

QuebecMaritime.ca

WHALES OF THE ST. LAWRENCE:

BaleinesEnDirect.org/en/

the stars and camping close to the water, make your way to the coastal village of Les Bergeronnes, a 30-minute drive from Tadoussac. This is where you will find Mer et Monde, an eco-tour company that provides camping sites with platforms perched on the rocky shoreline near the water's edge. Not only can you see whales from the comfort of your tent, but you can also hear the nighttime lullaby of puffs and whale snorts and possibly awake to your own "breach-o'clock" personal whale parade plying the waters below. Mer et Monde specializes in a variety of educational kayak tours with a chance to observe marine mammals in their natural habitat. Add to your visit with a stop at Cap-de-Bon-Désir Interpretation and Observation Centre, Parks Canada. The site includes a lighthouse and short hike through a coastal forest to the lightkeeper's house, where whales are often seen from the shore.

In the 775 miles from the village of Tadoussac to Blanc-Sablon, there's a lot to see and discover along the Whale Route of Côte-Nord. No doubt you will leave with more than a few "whale tales" to tell friends and family back home. **B**

Gigi Ragland is a freelance travel and food writer who enjoys otherworldly experiences all across the globe, including her northern lights hunt in BOOMER's October-November 2016 issue.