

JANUARY/
FEBRUARY 2016

JUST FOR CANADIAN DENTISTS

life + leisure



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+ ON ICE in QUEBEC

- + OFFICE MANAGER as a key asset
- + the ultimate MUSCLE CAR
- + skiing BC's SLACKCOUNTRY
- + sipping SHRUBS



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PAGE 37

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inside: CONTINUING DENTAL EDUCATION CALENDAR

where will you meet? TAMPA / WHISTLER / TAHITI / ISRAEL / NOVI >>

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15



32

FEATURES

15 **Down river** Floating along the Irrawaddy in Myanmar

32 **On ice** Hanging with baby seals in Îles de la Madeleine

COLUMNS

- 8 **photo prescription**
Israel through the camera lens
- 11 **pay it forward**
From Zimbabwe to Winnipeg
- 12 **motoring**
The ultimate muscle car
- 13 **the thirsty dentist**
New essential ingredient: Shrubs
- 29 **practice management**
What professions garner respect
- 30 **the wealthy dentist**
The key person on your team

DEPARTMENTS

- 5 **January/February mix**
- 23 **CE calendar**
- 37 **sudoku**
- 38 **small talk**
Dr. Theo Dombrowski



COVER PHOTO Young monks overlook pagodas in Myanmar, where the beauty of this still rather undiscovered country unfolds in leisurely fashion on a river cruise (page 15).

on water ...and ice

Wind and wails. On the Îles de la Madeleine in late winter you get plenty of both.

It's still the sharp edge of winter on the far eastern reaches of Quebec in the middle of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The wind howls and the snow whirls. And atop the surrounding ice floes is the rather wild serenade of the cries of baby harp seals just hours old.

Late February into early March is the annual migration and calving season, and a short helicopter ride offshore sets you amidst a scene unlike any other—anywhere. Only on the Îles de la Madeleine can you get so close to these "white coats" (page 32).

But if you've had enough of being on ice this winter, try floating instead...down the Irrawaddy River in Myanmar. From saffron-robed monks to mist-shrouded mornings,

it's a journey into a land still much undiscovered and untouched (page 15).

And if that's too far-flung, there's warmth closer to home in southwestern Florida. Take a break in Tampa and nearby St. Petersburg/Clearwater, where the Gulf of Mexico is the stage for some prime sunset-watching, and maybe even spotting a manatee or two (page 23). For a little more grit and urban edge, check out the local street-art scene that's causing a stir (page 5).

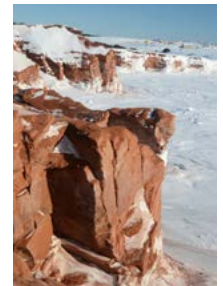
Also still drawing everyone's attention: *Star Wars*. And James Bond. These enduring icons—along with sparkling wine (good all year long and anytime, of course) and classic, icy images of the Arctic—are our must-have picks in this issue (page 7).

If you're still enjoying the cold front,

The archipelago of Îles de la Madeleine is home to an annual harp seal migration in late winter. Here, on ice floes in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, is where you can come face to face with baby seals or "white coats." Story on page 32.



ice,
ice,
baby



B. SLIGL

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then we're also sharing still-cool (i.e. hot) ski spots with fresh tracks. Hit two best-kept-secret spots in northern BC for some great slackcountry (and if you don't know what that is, go to page 6).

But things are starting to slowly warm up, and we get the fresh-flavour tastebuds going with the latest drinks trend: shrubs. Think fruit juice for adults that can take a serious spiking (page 13). We really heat it up in Israel for a photography session with our expert, and Society of American Travel Writers' 2015 photo competition award winner, Michael DeFreitas. He tells how to photograph a trip's unexpected moments, from juice vendors to devout worshippers (page 8).

From eastern Canada to the far east, northern BC to southern Florida, it's time to start forging a new year's worth of travel. And while you're planning, please keep in mind those less fortunate. We're proud to be part of a special fundraiser that supports Médecins Sans Frontières' efforts in aiding Syrian refugees. Contributions made to the "Arbutus for Humanity" MSF Drive will be matched by a private donor—and you'll be entered in a draw for Dr. Theo Dombrowski's "Arbutus" painting (page 38). Thank you!

Any ideas, comments or questions? Reach us at feedback@InPrintPublications.com.



BELLE SAISON

STORY + PHOTOGRAPHY BY BARB SLIGL

*Winter, wind and white coats
on the isolated archipelago
of Îles de la Madeleine*



The red cliffs of Îles de la Madeleine. TOP Baby harp seal or “white coat.” OPPOSITE, TOP One of the signature bold hues of the houses that dot the islands. OPPOSITE, BOTTOM Locals clambering down snowy, icy cliffs to explore the frozen seascape...and set up lawn chairs to sunbathe.

Flying out of Gaspé, I see the eastern edge of Quebec marked by a long string of lights hugging the shoreline. Far below is opaque snow and then translucent ice, a marbled surface that only reveals its larger pattern at flying altitude. Ice blobs, almost-perfect circles, grow bigger and bigger the farther we fly offshore, and the glow of the plane glistens, illuminated in watery veins like phosphorescence. I spot a star, then another, another, and Orion’s Belt and then Orion himself looming large over this wintry hinterland.

It doesn’t seem possible that there’s anywhere to land nearby, yet just 35 minutes away is another world, les Îles de la Madeleine, an isolated, crescent-like sweep of islands that’s almost closer to Newfoundland than Quebec.

As lights again appear on the horizon, the ice seems thicker and unrelenting, and I think of the news of a ferry getting stuck en route to the Îles. I spot a bright glow below and trace a thin strip of road that leads to a bridge across icy nothingness with three cars crawling along it, their headlights illuminating the never-ending white. We land... amidst what seems like nowhere.

At the airport my rental car is already running, keys in, unlocked. “Nobody locks their car here,” tells a local—or their house. People around me exclaim, “Ah, *bonjour! Ça va? Très bien.*” Kiss, kiss. As the French Canadian do. I’m immediately warmed by Québécois spirit and banter. Yes, another world.

I meet otherworldliness again the next dawn. A ball of fire rises over the dark outline of the islands as if to portend something momentous—like the birth of thousands of “white coats” just offshore. Late winter brings an annual migration of harp seals to the Îles, where they give birth atop the surrounding ice floes. Think the blink of doe eyes, the tremble of delicate whiskers, the slow *wriggle, wriggle* of soft, furry bodies against wind-sharpened tufts of snow and the glare of white-on-white in a lunar landscape set in the middle of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.

On the heli ride across the ice, I pick out the “U” shapes of seals, perched in a perfect curve. Their lumbering land-wriggle across the ice leaves crisscrossing snail-like trails. We land upon the ice and I step out into a bright winter scene...and a cacophony of cries—as

if I've been dropped amidst thousands of meowing and yipping kittens and puppies. It's eerie, these babies crying across the ice, and tugs at my heart. But the little fur-balls are fiercely guarded by their mothers, as a fellow-photographer learns after his too-close-for-comfort tripod is toppled by a big mama.

Also disconcerting, and in stark contrast to all the snow-white, are the globules and streaks of blood. It's a jarring sight, until I realize these are frozen crimson bits of afterbirth. Canada may still support the seal hunt (94,000 harp seals were commercially harvested in 2013), drawing international ire and an EU ban on seal products, but babies are off limits and on the Îles it's all about seal *watching* that celebrates rather than bludgeons these furry creatures on floes.

It's a small window of time—the last week of February until the second week of March—when tourists from Israel to Japan (the largest percentage of visitors) come here to observe the nomadic harp seals calve on vast ice fields. Being in such close contact with days- or hours-old white coats is unlike anything else. An hour trudging on the ice in -30°C amidst those big eyes and chorus of cries feels like mere minutes. One couple from Switzerland, who went out with me in the morning, immediately booked another tour for the next day.

But my adventure continues on shore. Beyond seal watching, I take in the winter culture of Madelinots and hole up in a historic convent, Domaine du Vieux Couvent, check out artisans, sample cheese at Fromagerie du Pied-du-Vent, where "the sea wind adds its pinch of salt," and visit the Musée de la Mer to discover "vivre aux Îles—vivre les Îles." I get the lay of the land by driving myself along Chemin des Caps, which is as it says, a road that winds from cape to cape to cape... These capes' cliffs are made of the Îles' signature rich, rust-red rock, another crimson contrast against the sea of white.

At one curve in the road I have to stop and get out. I bundle up and follow the footprints of those before me (this is an island of avid walkers) down a steep embankment (with a handy rope someone's set up for easier access). I meander through a winter wonderland, under arches and icicles, past snowy tufts and formations. I meet a Japanese couple on snowshoes with fold-up chairs slung across their backs. They trek out onto the frozen sea and set up their chairs to sunbathe.

I'd join them, but I move on to the next cape and walk through red-tinged snow to the Cap Hérissé lighthouse. I stop countless

times to take photos of candy-hued clapboard houses...red, yellow, blue, green...a rainbow of which every islander and visitor has a favourite (mine's a solitary yellow one atop a crest). I continue and stop again to watch a group of men manually moving an ice-fishing hut, grunting "un, deux, trois, GO!" in a mash-up of French and English. I walk around Île aux Goélands or Gull Island—there may be 300km of beaches to explore on the Îles in summer, but in winter one can wander pretty much *anywhere*—and watch the sunset.

Overloaded with sensory stimulation, I partake in some après-Îles at Les Pas Perdus, a lively bistro in Cap-Aux-Meules, for poutine (with local Pied-du-Vent curds) and Écume beer (an apt name that translates to "sea foam") from local brewery À L'Abri de la Tempête. I linger over a *blanc* brew infused with *gingembre et citron* and named for Vieux Couvent. The Îles are self-reliant and produce everything from locally caught lobster to island-roasted coffee beans. There's even an industry spurred out of the sand, Les Artisans du Sable, which makes gorgeous pieces using the Îles' very soil.

"We're pretty crazy about sand," says owner Pauline-Gervaise Grégoire, whose parents started the business in their hippie days, using recycled dental tools to sculpt shapes. Every Madelinot has a favourite beach. Hers is Old Harry, where she says the best sand is found. It's also Réginald Poirier's, the owner of Vieux Couvent. He loves the sound it makes. "Our sand is like a little ball. Not dust. So when you walk on it, it is *chou chou chou*."

But I'm content with the *crunch, crunch, crunch* of the snow. The next day, I walk along another shoreline, navigating phantasmagoric crusts and pieces of ice to stand at the foot of more red cliffs. Like sand dunes, the snowdrifts cover everything. This is Îles sand in winter.

Back inside the warmth of Vieux Couvent, I look out the window and my footprints are gone. The wind blows—huffs, puffs, grunts, groans—ceaseless and comforting. It's as if I'm in a lighthouse. Snow is curling, twirling, spiraling in all manner of patterns, dancing with the wind upon the icy surface outside. I gaze at the whirl of white as the snow and wind tango manically, and sip another local brew called Belle Saison with hints of the Îles' summer captured in a bottle. And I wonder if that season can be as lovely as this *belle saison* of winter. ●



IF YOU GO
DISCOVER Îles de la Madeleine: tourismeilesdelamadeleine.com.
SEAL WATCH via a helicopter tour with Chateau Madelinot: sealobservation.com.
STAY at Domaine du Vieux Couvent: domaineduvieuxcouvent.com. **EAT + DRINK** at Les Pas Perdus restaurant (pasperdus.com) and À L'Abri de la Tempête brewery (alabridelatempete.com). **GO BEYOND** in Quebec Maritime (quebecmaritime.ca) and *la belle province* (quebecoriginal.com).



OPPOSITE, TOP TO BOTTOM The red cliffs at Cap Hérissé; seals made of local sand at Les Artisans du Sable; Belle Saison brew. THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Île aux Goélands, a popular destination over the frozen seascape that's only accessible in winter; bright-yellow clapboard house; mama and baby seal; more red cliffs off Chemin des Caps; Anse-à-la-Cabane lighthouse on the south end of the islands; frosty winter-wonderland view from Domaine du Vieux Couvent; and Réginald Poirier, owner of the old convent that's now a high-end boutique hotel.