

On the Road with Nancy Brown: Autumn Adventures

From the Canadian Rockies to Yosemite, Travel Writer Nancy D. Brown takes you on a leaf-turning trek through North America's national parks.

BY NANCY D. BROWN

Like the trick-or-treaters who come annually to Diablo readers' doorsteps, leaves are beginning to fall, one-by-one onto our driveways, changing color to pumpkin orange and corn-husk gold. Fall is also the ideal time to explore North America's national parks; the summer crowds have dissipated, as has the heat, while the multicolored foliage takes center stage.

Hibernate and dine in comfort at Yoho National Park



Emerald Lake in Canada's Yoho National Park

At Yoho National Park in British Columbia, the bears are stashing their holiday candy of berries and bugs in their tummies, to tide them over for a long winter's nap. I had the pleasure of visiting [Cathedral Mountain Lodge](#), a rustic yet upscale lodge with 31 log cabins situated on the banks of the Kicking Horse River. I was there to watch the leaves change, look for wildlife in the Canadian Rockies, and enjoy the regional bounty of the area.

The lodge's Chef James Holmes specializes in local cuisine and serves only Ocean Wise-approved fish on his seasonally-inspired menu. Think pan-seared, maple-glazed scallops with shaved apples, followed by line-caught, sockeye salmon and warm housemade apple fritters drizzled with hot caramel sauce. This was enough to send me into hibernation, yet like the elk in the Canadian Rockies, I moved on to my next grazing spot.

Blue skies and bluer waters in Banff

Moraine Lake in Banff National Park proved even more scenic than Yoho National Park's Emerald Lake. The turquoise-blue waters of Moraine Lake were ideal for an afternoon canoe ride. Tired from paddling? Stick around for a gourmet dinner at [Moraine Lake Lodge](#). Better yet: reserve a lake-view cabin and snuggle in front of the wood-burning fire while you gaze at the leaves changing color through your window.

But to get up close and personal with the Canadian Rockies, join [Timberline Tours](#) for an autumn horseback ride into the



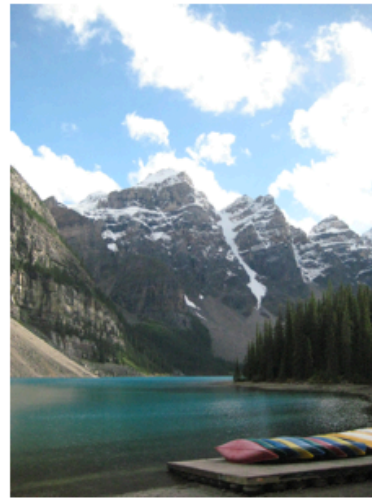
Guide Ron Arnett of Timberline Tours

larches. My group experienced sunshine, rain, and snow as we


ascended 7,500 feet to the Little Beehive, a natural rock formation that looks down upon Lake Louise.

Riders have the opportunity to stop at Lake Agnes Teahouse for light refreshments along the trail. But if

you prefer more upscale dining, stop at the [Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise](#) for hot cocoa or one of their delicious pastries from the deli after your horseback ride.



Canoes at Moraine Lake, Banff National Park



Catch the West Coast Fishing Club

While the 2010 fishing season is over at [West Coast Fishing Club](#), a resort and salmon fishing hotspot in Haida Gwaii—formerly the Queen Charlotte Islands—off the northern coast of British Columbia, anglers will want to make note of this five-star fishing experience. With top-of-the-line tackle and powerful Boston Whaler boats, not only is the Langara Island locale one of the best spots for salmon sport fishing, it also offers access to a Haida village (not unlike the heritage site in Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve on the southern end of the archipelago), and a chance to see killer whales, sea lions, and eagles circling in their natural environment.



Soak in all the amenities at the West Coast Fishing Club

From gourmet cooking classes with Executive Chef Ryan Stone to yoga classes or an “Angler’s Massage” at the spa, guests will be pampered with culinary delights and extraordinary views. If you haven’t tasted the local favorite – a Nanimo Bar, with its chocolate-coconut crumb base, light custard middle, and smooth semi-sweet chocolate finish – you are in for a tasty treat. Check the website for 2011 rates.

Celebrating the Seasons at Yosemite National Park

But Diablo readers don't need to cross the Canadian border to discover the fall splendor of our national parks. The Ahwahnee Hotel's "Vintners' Holidays" and "Chefs' Holidays" culinary series take place just a few hours away in Yosemite National Park. Vintners' Holidays takes place October 31 through November 2, and Chefs' Holidays, will be held January 12 through 14.

Vintners Holidays features winemakers from Benziger Family Winery, Freeman Vineyard & Winery, Plumpjack Winery/Cade Winery and Hidden Ridge Vineyard. Chefs' Holidays highlights Chef Michael Tusk of Quince in San Francisco, Chef Colin Ambrose of Estia's Little Kitchen in Sag Harbor, NY, and Jesse Ziff Cool of Flea Street Café in Menlo Park, CA.

Getting There

Air Canada began the first leg of my journey from SFO to Vancouver, BC. After fishing in British Columbia, I continued with Air Canada to Calgary, Alberta to begin the National Park fall foliage tour. From Calgary, I flew United Airlines back to San Francisco International Airport. I utilized Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) to and from the San Francisco Airport.

A lifelong resident of Contra Costa County, Nancy D. Brown grew up in Moraga. When she's not traveling, she lives in Lafayette with her husband and teens. Nancy is the Uptake.com Travel Editor, writes the What a Trip blog and is a Contra Costa Times Lamorinda Sun columnist. Horse lovers will find her at www.writinghorseback.com. Follow Nancy on Twitter at twitter.com/Nancydbrown

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