

# Canada:

## The New Frontier For Wildlife Safaris

> By Paul Stone

Mention the word safari and most people immediately conjure up images of African savannas with sleeping lions and bathing elephants. These days, however, tourism operators are offering similar experiences on every continent. North America is no exception. Canada in particular has become one of the most celebrated destinations for nature lovers and wildlife photographers, offering some of the most stunning mountain landscapes and charismatic mega fauna found anywhere in the world today.



Traditional dancer

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The Canadian Rocky Mountains are home to an amazing diversity of wildlife species. Five adjacent national parks, including Banff and Jasper, straddle the continental divide and occupy an incredible 12,000 square miles of pristine mountain wilderness, home to some of the continent's most well-known animals including grizzly bears and wolves. Moose and elk abound here and during the mating season, provide a spectacle rarely rivaled anywhere. The more enthusiastic wildlife watchers and photographers get out early in the morning when animal activity is at its peak and the light is most appealing.

To the east of the continental divide lie the prairie flatlands, home to the mighty herds of buffalo. For millennia these huge beasts have supported the unique and colourful culture of aboriginal people, generally referred to as Plains Indians. You can still witness this culture first hand by attending "Pow Wows," or dancing competitions, that take place every weekend throughout the country.

Migratory bird routes along the edge of the rocky mountain's range provide outstanding opportunities for birders as well. Seemingly exotic species such as white pelicans and ospreys are quite common at nesting sites along these flyways. A myriad of lakes and small ponds, created by prolific populations of dam-building beavers, provide excellent habitat and viewing for birds as well as buffalo and moose.

To the west lie the Coast Mountains and the Great Bear rainforest. Breathtaking

mountain scenery, fiords and glaciers provide a backdrop for world class whale watching and grizzly bear viewing. The rugged coastlines of the Pacific Ocean have been home to a rich and ancient aboriginal culture for over ten thousand years.

As a modern, developed, welcoming country, Canada provides a level of security, recreational opportunity and ease of travel not always guaranteed in many undeveloped countries. With an excellent system of high quality roads and highways, traveling is easy. The surest way however, to

maximize your chances of seeing the local wildlife and to fully appreciate the many natural and cultural aspects of Canada is to hire a professional, experienced guide or tour operator. ■

For more information regarding tours and safaris please contact Paul Stone, Director of Expeditions for Canada Photo Safaris at 250-442-2819 or visit his company website: [www.canadaphotosafaris.com](http://www.canadaphotosafaris.com)