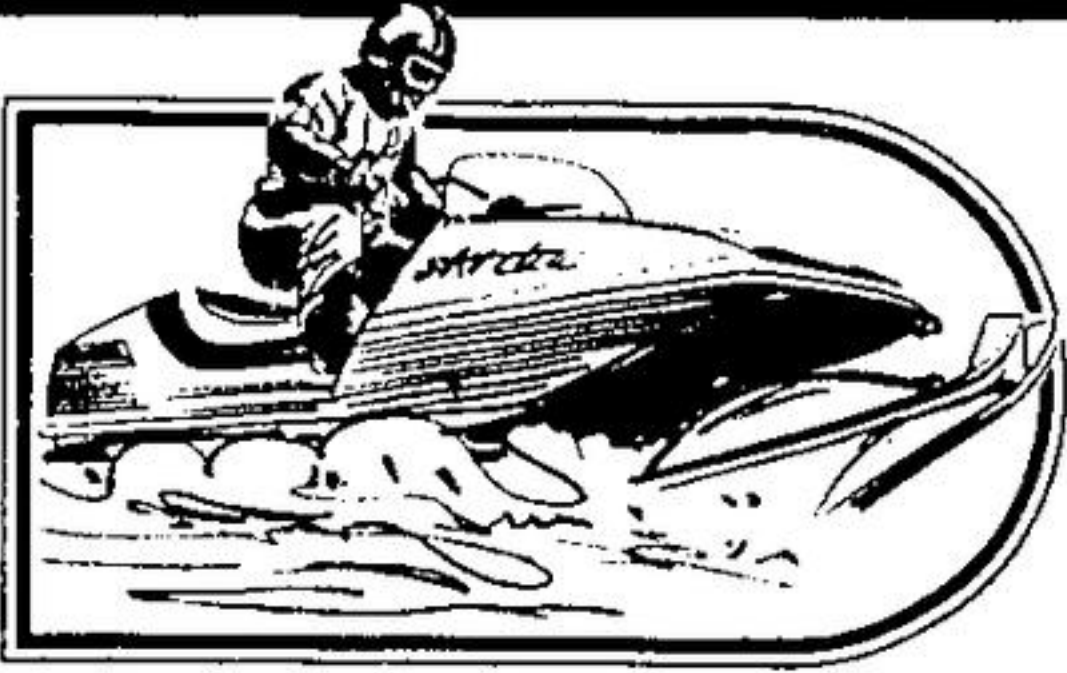


# Travel

## Let's Celebrate the Canadian Winter!



The piercing blue eyes of a Siberian husky can be frightening. The usually friendly nature of the breed is somewhat misrepresented by a gaze that penetrates with seemingly supernatural canine intelligence.

But at the annual Festival du Voyageur in St. Boniface, Manitoba, the Siberian huskies that race with them, are too excited to look at anyone for long. Tails are up and ears are perked, while feet dance in scarcely-contained anticipation of the sled dog races soon to start.

St. Boniface is a French-language community in Manitoba's provincial capital, Winnipeg. Every year since Manitoba's centennial in 1970, St. Boniface's Festival du Voyageur (Feb. 11 to 18, 1979) relives the spirit of the voyageurs — those early hunters, trappers, traders and adventurers who adopted Indian ways and added their own strength and bravery to help open Canada's frontier.

The Festival's origins go back to winter, 1816, when Jean-Baptiste Lagimodiere, the first pioneer of the Red River, donned his snowshoes, bade goodbye to his St. Boniface home and set out for a three-month, 2,896 km (1,800 mile) walk to Montreal, Quebec. His purpose was to deliver a message to Lord Selkirk, the well-known Scottish philanthropist who first settled the Red River colony.

Lagimodiere's memory is celebrated with snowshoe races, cross-country ski marathons, fiddling and jigging contests, beard-growing contests, nockey tournaments, ice sculpture contests, moccasin dances and an annual reincarnation of Lagimodiere in the form of a local personage dressed as an early voyager in rawhide, loque and striped sash. He attends and participates in festival events and welcomes and assists visitors.

Today's racing Alaskan husky is a mixture of Siberian husky, Alaskan malamute and hound breeds, producing a lean, trim fast dog.

Today's racing sled weighs between 11 and 13 kg (25 and 30 pounds) and slides over snow with less resistance than well-waxed skis. Combining lightness and flexibility with sufficient strength to stay together under the strain of 15 lunging dogs, it is held together with rawhide or twine which prevents the cold, brittle wood from splitting.

Types of races, lengths of courses and size of purses vary with each carnival, but the excitement of these beautiful, gentle, yet anxious-to-win animals is contagious and the crowds love it.

Other winter carnivals feature a variety of unusual events, such as the annual Championship of Snowgolf during the last weekend (Feb. 17, 18) of the Mardi Gras of Winter (Feb. 10 to 18, 1979) in Prince George, British Columbia.

Snowgolf began in 1970 when members of a local Prince George golf club tried golfing in the snow just for fun. They recognized the game's potential, formed a board of directors and established the annual snowgolf championship.

By 1973, 500 golfers were showing up attired in crazy costumes matching the spirit of the sport. The original three-

hole course, with as many strokes as required, snowballed to the present three nine-hole courses, accommodating about 250 golfers per course. Some practical problems were solved with 152 mm (six-inch) tees and billiard-ball-size golf balls colored bright purple.

The annual snowgolf championship attracts numerous celebrities, primarily from the worlds of entertainment and sport, and prizes and mementos worth nearly \$10,000 are distributed annually.

Snowgolf led the way to other fun events during Prince George's Mardi Gras such as snow-football, ice bowling, ice tennis, snow-basketball and knurling, a game involving two teams armed with playing sticks resembling 3.7 m (12-foot) Q-tips. The object of knurling seems to be to pursue a small ball up and down a snowy field and have as much fun as possible.

More than 6,000 km (4,000 miles) away on Canada's Atlantic shore, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia holds its annual 10-day carnival in early February with its own unusual events.

Square dancing on ice, without the benefit of skates, takes place the last Saturday evening of the carnival. It's colorful event as 300 dancers tap and twirl their way around Graham's Grove pond in their bright square-dancing costumes against a background of snowy embankments. Normal shoes are worn, apparently with no ill effects, while music from a live band and instructions from a caller keep dancers hopping and audiences clapping.

Square dancing on ice joins hockey, broomball and ringette tournaments, sleigh rides, pet shows, art displays, figure skating championships, pancake-eating contests, tug-of-war competitions, gymnastics and an "old-fashioned, foot-stompin'" it's-all-right-to-wake-the-baby, farmhouse-kitchen hoedown", for a total of almost 70 events.

In Ontario, Canada's National Capital celebrates Ice Hog Day with a mini-carnival on February 3.

Ice Hog Day celebrations start with the emergence of the notorious Ice Hog who appears from his snow-den on the Rideau Canal to announce the beginning of spring. Of course, Ottawa spring starts no where near February 3, as the robed, checked, stamper-foot-to-keep-warm Ottawans and their visitors realize, but it's a nice thought.

Celebrations continue with pancake-eating contests, figure skating exhibitions, "ice hoggie" (resembling hockey), a torchlight parade with prizes for children in costume and bed races along the Rideau Canal in which the beds have skates and the runners wear hoods.

For those not familiar with ice hogs, they are reddish-brown furry fictional creatures, combining seal, beaver and groundhog characteristics. They apparently live under the Rideau Canal which in winter is said to be the world's longest man-made skating rink. Thousands of skaters annual take advantage of the 8 km (five miles) of ice that winds through the city.

Last winter Ottawa celebrated its first Ice Hog Day, but similar activities are

planned for 1979. It's an event that's small, informal and fun.

In Ontario's Muskoka district, about 160 km (100 miles) north of the provincial capital, Toronto, the Muskoka Winter Carnival keeps things hopping in mid-February in the towns of Gravenhurst, Bracebridge and Huntsville. Numerous events include a run-a-bed contest in which five-member teams push a bed for a short distance; a mid-winter golf game with tennis balls instead of golf balls; a teal-boiling contest in which participants must start a fire with only one match to boil a pot of water; spaghetti-eating contests; broomball, hockey and bowling tournaments; and for the really brave, a polar bear dip into Gull Lake at Bracebridge.

Polar bear dips are also held in Vancouver, British Columbia, every January 1. Last winter 984 participants raced into the 5 degrees C (41 degrees F) waters of English Bay (air temp. was 3 degrees or 37 degrees F) and swam a long, cold 9 m (100 yards) to a buoy bobbing in the distance. The first person there is the winner. For 30 minutes the remaining half-dozen or so hardies are sent out of the water by a lifeguard.

Another tough event is the annual Ice Floe Race in March at Peterborough, Ontario. Clad in wet suits and flippers, teams cut their own rafts from ice on the water's edge, jump aboard paddle 3 km (two miles) down the Otonabee River to the finish line, and then dive into the freezing water to swim ashore.

The ice floes, cut the day before, measure about 3 m by 4.5 m (10 feet by 15 feet) and are 254 to 457 mm (10 to 18 inches) thick. Up to 20 members are allowed per floe and last year 680 divers from Canada and the United States participated. Most use kicking power or paddles, but sails and parachutes are also used.

In Whitehorse, Yukon, during the last week of February, you're liable to be arrested if you're a beardless man or a slow-to-show-your-garter woman.

During Whitehorse's annual Sourdough Rendezvous, the Keystone Kops patrol the territorial capital to ensure everyone is active in reliving the gold rush days and most people who work in town comply by wearing costumes reminiscent of the times.

Among the numerous activities are sled dog racing, snowshoe racing, a tug-of-war, a log-sawing contest, arts and crafts displays, talent shows, and the Sourdough dancing girls performing the Can-Can. In mid-February, in the province of Quebec, the Chicoutimi Carnaval-Souvenir celebrates the previous century with historical pageants folk dances, the Old Nags Race, where horses come out of retirement for one more race, and Portaging Race where men, carrying 45.4 (100 pounds), run an 8 km (five-mile) course and auctions in front of the stores.

City residents dress in period costumes as do the waiters and waitresses in local restaurants. They serve the kinds of meals people would have eaten 100 years ago. The public market sells fresh French-Canadian food (much of it cooked while you watch), such as beans, bread and sausage.

On Sunday, after morning Mass, the church steps become

the scene of the traditional Sunday morning town crier announcement and auction.

King Trapper contests, such as those at the Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, winter carnival, are held at many winter festivals. Although King Trapper events vary with each carnival, all are reminiscent of the early skills trappers used for survival. Points are awarded for such activities as trap-setting, canoe-packing, muskrat-skinning, pole-climbing, log-packing, snowshoe-racing and animal calls.

Flour-packing contests, in which participants carry up to 45 kg (100 pounds) on their backs, have their roots in the days when supplies were brought in birchbark canoes and carried over numerous

portages. Pole-climbing is a test of speed based on the practice of shinnying up a tree to survey the land or escape animals.

Some carnivals separate King Trapper contests into male and female, professional and amateur, or junior and senior.

Other events at Prince Albert's winter carnival include baking contests, variety shows, hockey tournaments, cross-country skiing, fiddlers' championship, beard derbies, and sled dog races.

Of course, Canada's most famous winter carnival in the Quebec (Carnaval) to be held in 1979 from Feb. 1 to 11.

Long famous for French-Canadian exuberance and joie de vivre, the Quebec Carnival features parades, toboggan

slides, ice sculptures, tug-of-war competitions, skiing, skating, sled dog derbies, motorcycles races on ice, and plenty of singing, dancing and horn-blowing in the streets.

One of the more spectacular events is the winter canoe race across the St. Lawrence River and back again.

Sometimes referred to as the world's most dangerous boat race, this gruelling contest starts with five-man teams skidding their specially-designed, steel-braced vehicles across the ice near shore toward open water where they then set up a fast-clipping rowing pace. When the team reaches an ice floe, it jumps from the canoe, skids and jerks the vehicle over the bumpy, slushy ice, and hops back in to resume rowing.

It is an exciting, dangerous race and some teams drop out beaten by sheer exhaustion, but the winners always find new energy to celebrate their victory.

The list of Canadian winter carnivals is almost endless. Activities range from the conventional such as skiing, skating and snowmobiling, to the more unusual such as snowgolf and knurling, but the common denominator is fun and an exciting, colorful climax to winter's white dazzle.

So grab your mittens, pull on your tuque and visit the carnival nearest you. Everyone is welcome!

For general information on Canada as a travel destination contact the Canadian Government Office of Tourism, Ottawa, Canada.

### Car renters move out of airports

SYNDICATED TRAVEL NEWS — Canadians, who travel more miles a year than any other nation, have already pioneered the fly-drive method of getting around in a hurry for business and pleasure. Now they're adding a new twist to the air-car era: it's called off-airport car rental.

Here's how it works. Normally the busy executive or vacation-in-progress arrives on a flight and is anxious to get his baggage into his rented car and get going. So he located the car-rental agency booth in the airport and, as often as not, has to join the lineup because there are quite a few other people wanting cars, too. . . . all equally busy and some with advance car reservations.

Some rental companies, in Canada — certainly the Canadian-owned Holiday Rent-A-Car System is one of them — have decided recently that there had to be a better way than operating costly in-airport rental offices. So they've gone outside the airport — in most cases a mere mile or so — to less expensive real estate where they can manage their cars better.

And to serve their customers better they run a mini-bus shuttle service between the airport main entrance and the off-airport rental office.

"There's no doubt it is working beautifully for us," comments Jim Tennant, vice-president of marketing for Holiday Rent-A-Car, which now has 18 off-airport locations in Canada as well as 20 in the U.S.

"In almost every case now we are cutting down on the customer waiting time . . . getting them on their way at least several minutes faster than with the in-airport locations," says Tennant.

It saves money, too. The car-rental agencies have to pay anywhere from 10 to 16 percent of their revenue to the airport terminal operator (the federal government in the case of international airports) for in-airport locations, and now

a good deal of this saving is being passed on to agency customers. In addition, the agencies can park and service their cars on less expensive real estate some distance from the airport.

This saving more than offsets the cost of the mini-bus operation.

Tennant points out that while the delays at many Canadian in-airport locations had already reached the alarming stage for the rental agencies, it was the certainty of growing delays in the future which convinced them to act.

"We could foresee situations developing in Canada — especially at Toronto airport — similar to what we had to cope with at New York's La Guardia," explained Tennant. "There the delays were regularly 25 minutes or more and that's a long time for even the most patient customers to stand in line. We were having trouble finding employees who would serve the public in those conditions. It was dangerous."

### Clarification

In last week's Herald travel section it was incorrectly reported that Cochrane's Travel has won awards from both Cunard Lines and Sunlight. In fact, Cochrane has not won an award from Sunlight.

It was also reported that the devaluation of the Canadian dollar would not affect the price of a Sunlight holiday. The holiday purchase price will be guaranteed only if the ticket is paid in full at the time of booking. The Herald regrets the error.

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Thu Jan 26	Feb 2	Feb 9	Feb 16	Feb 23	Mar 9	Mar 23	DC-10	Tue Jan 2	\$299
Thu Feb 2	Feb 9	Feb 16	Feb 23	Mar 2	Mar 16	Mar 30	DC-10	Tue Jan 9	\$299
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Thu Feb 16	Feb 23	Mar 2	Mar 9	Mar 16	Mar 30	Apr 13	DC-10	Tue Jan 23	\$299
Thu Feb 23	Mar 2	Mar 9	Mar 16	Mar 23	Apr 6	Apr 20	DC-10	Tue Jan 30	\$299
Thu Mar 2	Mar 9	Mar 16	Mar 23	Apr 6	Apr 13	Apr 27	DC-10	Tue Feb 6	\$299
Thu Mar 9	Mar 16	Mar 23	Apr 6	Apr 13	Apr 27	May 11	DC-10	Tue Feb 13	\$299
Thu Mar 16	Mar 23	Apr 6	Apr 13	Apr 20	May 4	May 18	DC-10	Tue Feb 20	\$299
Thu Mar 23	Apr 6	Apr 13	Apr 20	Apr 27	May 11	May 25	DC-10	Tue Feb 27	\$299
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