Wander the Ottawa Valley this winter in Renfrew County

Outdoor activities

Food and drinks

Cultural landmarks

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Lists are on the minds of many people at this time of year.

There are New Year’s resolutions to check off, projects around the house that need completing and your phone is a constant reminder of the daunting pile of to-do items accumulating at work.

But imagine, for a moment, a day without a list. Imagine a place where you can escape the everyday rules and your own rushed schedule and where the best days just happen.

Forget your usual haunts. Try the path less travelled and explore the true Ottawa Valley – the County of Renfrew.

While off the beaten path, it only takes a 20-minute drive from Kanata to see Eastern Ontario through new eyes.

Come wandering in Renfrew County.

Explore Renfrew County and escape the everyday
If you like...

**Outdoor sports**
Speed down the region’s highest vertical at one of the Ottawa Valley’s downhill ski hills (page 6-7) or glide through serene forests along dozens of kilometres of cross-country ski trails (page 22-23). Alternatively, challenge your friends to see who can reel in the biggest catch while ice fishing on a frozen lake (page 8).

**Food and drink**
Renfrew County is home to modern gastropubs, fine-dining restaurants and cozy establishments serving pub fare, all of which are guaranteed to satisfy the heartiest of appetites (page 16-17). Wash it down with a refreshing ale, hoppy IPA or dark stout as you sample the beers of Renfrew County’s unique craft breweries (page 10-11). In the mood for something different? Try the health beverage kombucha – a fermented tea-based drink – brewed in Laurentian Hills, near Chalk River (page 16).

**Culture and recreation**
Learn more about the history of the region and country as a whole by visiting Renfrew County’s many historical sites and facilities, including Canada’s only clock museum (page 20-21) and a tribute marking the birthplace of the modern-day NHL (page 15). Spend the night in an atmospheric B&B or lodge (page 18-19) before searching for that one-of-a-kind keepsake while browsing the county’s unique shops (page 12-13).
Every skier and snowboarder has a favourite run. There’s no competing with that.

But when you’re simply going through the motions of navigating each predictable turn and drop, it’s time for a change.

**Calabogie Peaks Resort** restores the novelty and excitement that drew you to the sport in the first place.

Step into your bindings at the bottom of the hill and glide straight onto one of the hill’s lifts before taking on one of Calabogie’s 24 trails.

With the region’s highest vertical and longest green beginner trail, skiing at Calabogie means guests spend more time actually skiing, and less time on chairlifts, on a mountain that’s synonymous with guaranteed snow and no ice.

Elsewhere, **Mount Pakenham** is an ideal spot for night skiing and carving through endless powder glades.

For a different type of adrenaline rush, jump onto one of Mount Pakenham’s tubes and go for a slide through picturesque woodlands, a perfect outdoor thrill for non-skiers and snowboarders.
Ice fishing typically requires a frozen lake, a warm hut and patience.

If you bring the latter, Renfrew County can take care of the rest.

Jocko’s Beach Resort, Calabogie Lodge Resort and Cedar Cove Resort can all help guests become acquainted with the sport.

Once your line is in the water, take a moment to experience the vast silence as the sun plays with the hues of blue and green embedded into the ice, sharply contrasting against the stark white snow.

A day of solo ice fishing can bring peaceful solitude, while an afternoon inside a hut brings friends and families closer together.

Canadian curling icon Clarence (Shorty) Jenkins reportedly once quipped that, “A curling rock is smarter than a human being.”

Was Jenkins correct? Renfrew County is the perfect place to try to outsmart the stones and learn the intricacies of the roaring game first-hand.

While curling may be a fiercely competitive game to some, it’s also one of the most sociable sports on the planet. That’s especially true during bonspiel tournaments, where many would argue that camaraderie is more important than skill.

Grab a broom and check out one of the county’s curling clubs in Arnprior, Cobden, Deep River, Pembroke, Petawawa and the town of Renfrew.

#ComeWander
Several years ago, three friends on a rafting trip had an epiphany: The Ottawa Valley is home to some of the best natural ingredients needed to create true hand-crafted beer, as well as great people who deserve a local beer to share with friends.

Whitewater Brewing Co. was born in 2011 out of this revelation and now boasts four mainstay beers and more than a half-dozen seasonals. That includes the Whistling Paddler, an English-style ale that the craft brewery says is “inspired by the moment when you come to realize that you’ve managed to leave all the concerns of the real world behind.”

Another rapids-inspired beer, the Class V IPA, may have a smooth appearance but is fraught with hidden dangers only found at the point of no return when the intense bitterness of this seemingly calm beer hits the back of your tongue.

With an expanding craft brewery scene, the beers of Renfrew County are as diverse as the area’s landscape.

Treat your tastebuds to something new by wandering over to Calabogie Brewing Co., the town’s first-ever craft brewery.

Be sure to try their Double Bogie American IPA. The beast contains deliciously huge pine and grapefruit citrus flavours with enough booze and malt to provide a fair fight on balancing this epic ale.

A few kilometres south of Shady Nook, meanwhile, Square Timber Brewing Co. pays tribute to the Ottawa Valley’s logging heritage with its hand-hewn ales and lagers. Try their Timber Crib Pale Ale, west coast-inspired Big Pine IPA and selection of seasonal and special craft beers. Check its Facebook page for brewery opening hours.
Urban power centres, packed with the same predictable roster of similar stores, have eroded the art of window shopping and all but killed the hunt for hidden treasures.

Reconnect with your sense of curiosity and browse the county’s many independent retailers, each selling one-of-kind products that you can’t find anywhere else.

The Ottawa Valley is filled with antique and craft stores selling local artwork, gifts and treasures hand-made in Renfrew County.

Run your hands over the smooth wood carvings of Buddhas and mermaids or feel the warmth of hand-knitted sweaters at Grumblin’ Granny’s. For decades, the store has helped small villages and family compounds in developing countries earn a dependable source of income.

Closer to home, take a step back in time at Arnprior’s Antiques Treasures and Treats, a store that brings back warm memories for visitors with its small tables, rocking chairs and dressers that were fixtures in the homes of many grandparents.

Elsewhere, the store is brimming with antiques, collectibles, old-fashioned seasonal items and giftware, gourmet treats, gift baskets and cigars.

And, for those who are tired of generic Ikea furniture, A Sense of Country in Renfrew – constructed in the style of an old-fashioned general store – is a one-stop shop for home and cottage decor.
1) Which town is...
- Named after a former postmaster;
- Part of the Pinetree Radar Line;
- Ontario’s highest point at 1,600 feet above sea level; and
- Former home of outdoor clothing company Sierra Designs Co.

2) This famous gangster’s Canadian connection was...
- Built in 1942;
- Located 150 kilometres southwest of Ottawa;
- Nestled just outside Quadeville; and
- Found on Letterkenny Road

3) What local watering hotel was...
- Known as the Exchange Hotel in 1894;
- For seven decades operated by the Shulist family;
- Host of the Tuesday Night Blues Jam; and
- Home to best pierogies this side of Krakow

ANSWERS:
1. Foymount
2. Al Capone’s secret hideaway
3. The Wilno Tavern

County quiz: Little known Renfrew County facts

A new look at Canada’s national winter sport

As Ottawa prepares to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Stanley Cup, hockey fans can dive deeper into the history of Canada’s most cherished winter sport by visiting the birthplace of the NHL in Renfrew.

Slightly more than a century ago, millionaire businessman M.J. O’Brien and his son, Ambrose, owned the Renfrew Creamery Kings of the Upper Ottawa Valley Hockey League. After a Stanley Cup challenge with the Montreal Wanderers was denied, O’Brien helped unite several hockey associations that formed the National Hockey Association – the precursor to the National Hockey League – in 1909.

Today, Renfrew is home to the NHA/NHL Birthplace Museum. Its collections include championship rings, pictures of classic teams in their glory days as well as old jerseys, skates and trophies.

But hockey is more than just history in the Ottawa Valley. The area is home to the Renfrew Timberwolves and Pembroke Lumber Kings of the Central Canada Hockey League as well as the Jr. B Arnprior Packers.
Learning the details of what’s behind that fermented beverage fizzing in front of you may prompt a pause before you raise that glass to your lips.

With a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast, feeding off sugar and brewed tea, kombucha is a non-alcoholic low-sugar probiotic beverage.

But learning about its health benefits will likely cause you to ask for a refill. It’s full of antioxidants, vitamin B and beneficial acids, and is typically infused with herbs and fruit to produce various flavours and natural carbonation.

Laurentian Brew is run by a husband-and-wife team with a passion for kombucha, food, good company and the great outdoors. They’ve recently moved into their own brewery, but their kombucha is available on tap at the nearby Olive Tree health food store in Deep River.

If you’ve worked up an appetite, order one of the Rocky Mountain House’s crispy schnitzels, mouthwatering steaks, scrumptious salads or popular pub fare dishes.

In Arnprior, the recently opened Lumbertown Ale House gastropub is drawing rave reviews with its seasonal menu and revolving beer taps, while Krave Bistro attracts crowds with its all-fresh homemade menu.

For a table with a view, make a reservation at the Spectacle Lake Lodge located between Barry’s Bay and Algonquin Park. The dining room overlooks Spectacle Lake, and the waterfront restaurant is locally renowned for its gourmet quality and extensive ever-changing menu.
For many travellers, a hotel is merely a means to an end: A generic room in which to store your bags and sleep at night.

But those who wander off the beaten path are often rewarded with stays in unique B&Bs, guesthouses and lodges that become an integral part of one’s experience in a new destination.

Watch the sun set over Golden Lake, curled up next to a wood stove overlooking the snow-swept shore line inside a peaceful and serene cottage at Greystone.

In Eganville, check out the Hobit Bed & Breakfast. Despite its recent renovations, the property retains its century-old charm and gives guests a peaceful retreat with the property’s cozy nooks, porches and decks.

If you’re looking to more closely tie in activities with your stay, consider visiting the Deakins B&B in Killaloe. Immerse yourself in the life of a Canadian maple syrup farmer and engage in hands-on activities ending with the production of your own maple syrup in a half-day workshop in the Deakins maple forest and rebuilt 1910-style sugarhouse.

For those who prefer exploring independently, there are several unique Canadian experiences in the area surrounding the Deakins B&B. They include the Madonna House Pioneer Museum, Champlain Trail Museum and the Manido Chiman (Spirit Canoe) Collection, housed in the Omâniwinini Pimâdjwowin Algonquin Way Cultural Centre in the First Nations community of Pikwakanagan.
On June 25, 1930, the O'Brien Theatre opened its doors in Renfrew to rave reviews about its superior sound system and beautiful ornate interior.

With an admission price of 45 cents, patrons were led to their seats by an all-female usher staff to watch the opening movie, Sally, a comedy starring Marilyn Miller.

The theatre changed hands several times in the ensuing decades. It was extensively repaired and renovated prior to reopening in 1994.

Today, it’s a popular place to watch current Hollywood hits in a unique setting as well as take in art, independent and foreign films. A large theatre pipe organ occasionally thrills audiences with periodic concerts and movie prelude music. Its sister theatre in Arnprior is another historic film house in Renfrew County that’s been similarly restored.

For another unique experience, visit Canada’s only clock museum in Deep River.

The Canadian Clock Museum opened in 2000 and is home to more than 2,500 horological items dating back to the 1800s, as well as dozens of galleries devoted to the country’s many timepiece manufacturers.

A guided tour, included in the admission fee, is offered to visitors to provide more historical and technical details.

To learn more about the history of the region, visit the Barry's Bay Railway Station. Constructed to accommodate the region’s booming 19th century lumber industry, the first locomotive roared through in 1894.

Today, the station operates as a cultural centre for the Township of Madawaska Valley and houses a visitor information centre, art gallery as well as artifacts and photos relating to the village’s railway history.
Cross-country skiers come to Renfrew County to experience the sport the way it was meant to be: In silence, except for the sound of your skis gliding across the snow, and surrounded by mature trees.

Apart from the groomed trails, the fluffy snow blanketing the forest floor is untouched, save for the odd deer and rabbit tracks.

West of Calabogie, near the Calabogie Peaks Resort, are the Madawaska Nordic trails running along old logging roads that wind their way through a picturesque forest landscape. With plenty of gentle inclines and declines, the trails are well marked and colour-coded for levels of difficulty, although most sections are suitable for skiers of all abilities. A 2.5-kilometre snowshoe loop has recently been added.

Elsewhere in the Ottawa Valley, members and day users alike are welcome at the more than 14 kilometres of trails maintained by the Opeongo Hills Nordic Club in the Brudenell area.

Interested in cross-country skiing but don’t know where to start? Volunteers from the Pembroke Area Cross Country Ski Club offer lessons, and rentals are available from Gearheads in Petawawa.

For a memorable experience, try cross-country skiing by moonlight along the Silver Spoon Trails that are maintained by the Deep River Cross Country Ski Club.

Their facilities include a chalet, viewing platform and a well-equipped ski cabin that’s available to members for overnight use.

Looking for something completely different? With a “fat bike” – mountain bikes with super-large tires – you can now cycle the Ottawa Valley’s trails all winter long. For trail maps, visit the Beachburg Off Road Cycling Association website.
Come wander west this winter

www.OttawaValley.travel

www.countyofrenfrew.on.ca