

THE MAGAZINE FOR GLOBAL AFFINITY TRAVEL

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Bodie Island Lighthouse

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CAROLINA COAST

WINTER 2025



Viewing the Northern Lights in Manitoba

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Ice climbing in Alberta

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Paws Up Montana resort

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Snowmobiling in Canada

COURTESY CANADIAN WILDERNESS ADVENTURE

Snow Go

Winter trips are growing with groups

BY WENDY HELFENBAUM

Crunching through the snow, gliding across the ice or conquering a glacier are just some of the heart-pumping winter adventures designed to get groups outside and active. Whether the objective for your group is team

building or simply enjoying downtime surrounded by pristine nature, winter activities bring people together to create unforgettable memories. Here are eight ways to make the most of a crisp, snowy day.

SNOWMOBILING IN THE ROCKIES AND IN RENO

From zooming over fresh powder to taking in the spectacular mountain peaks, groups will love the adrenaline-pumping snowmobile tours arranged by Canadian Wilderness Adventures. With two locations in Whistler, British Columbia's backcountry — on Blackcomb Peak and in the Callaghan Valley — participants can embark on guided tours ranging from mild to wild, based on their abilities. Guest-to-guide ratio is seven to one, and the operator can accommodate between two and 60 people on a single tour. Groups can choose from two popular options: the leisurely Callaghan Cruiser for beginners, which runs to the historic Northair Gold Mine site, or Wilderness Run for intermediates, which heads to more rugged terrain through thickly forested trails and onto frozen lakes.

In Reno, Nevada, Sierra Adventures coordinates a variety of outdoor backcountry activities in the Reno Riverwalk area for groups of up to 40 people. Their Scenic Snowmobile Adventure enables riders to explore different trails and take in gorgeous views of Lake Tahoe and the surrounding mountains. Groups can go on wide open runs or slower scenic tours. Pick-ups from local hotels are included, and the snowmobiling activity can be combined with any of the outfitter's other winter sports.



GUIDED SNOWSHOEING IN GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK

Groups can explore 13 unique areas in Grand Teton National Park on snowshoes, and Jackson Hole EcoTour Adventures in Jackson, Wyoming, is the only company allowed to operate snowshoeing tours in the park. Groups of up to 120 head off the beaten path and into the back-country areas most visitors typically don't visit.

The outfitter offers half- or full-day options, which can also include a wildlife safari program or cross-country skiing, meeting the activity level of participants, from leisure to moderate or aerobic-paced adventures. The company is happy to customize private tours, too. All tours are designed to forge a connection between guests and the region's incredible wildlife, ecology, geology and history. Groups travel in customized safari-style vans and SUVs with roof hatches for unobstructed wildlife views and guaranteed window seats for every guest. Tours include meals, snacks and beverages, and participants are also provided with binoculars, maps and naturalist kits.

DOGSLEDDING IN MAINE

Dogsledding racer Alex Therriault and his family own the Ultimate Dog Sledding Experience, running guided dogsled tours on 250 acres of private woodland trails in Canton, Maine. The team can host groups with up to 16 participants at one time; larger groups are welcome with back-to-back runs and cozy time in the on-site yurt between tours.

Each sled holds two guests, and groups can choose from a 1.5-hour or 2.5-hour experience. Tours begin with an inside look at the life of a sled dog, where participants meet the animals in the micro kennel and learn about their history and daily routines. Most of the handcrafted dog sleds were built by Therriault's father and feature comfortable memory foam cushions, warm blankets and a weather-resistant sled bag to protect riders from wind and cold as the dogs pull groups through narrow forest paths. After the ride, guests can warm up with complimentary coffee, tea or hot chocolate surrounded by friendly sled dogs who are happy to take selfies. The longer tour features a fireside break in the forest with s'mores, along with tales from the trails from the guide.

WINTER HIKING OR CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING IN GERMANY

With more than 100 peaks rising up to 5,000 feet high, the southwest region of Germany offers ideal conditions for outdoor winter adventures. There are more than 1,200 miles of groomed cross-country ski trails in the Black Forest area, one of the largest connected ski areas in the German low mountain ranges, which have plenty of snow coverage surrounded by breathtaking landscape views.

Most holiday resorts in the area also have scenic, plowed

paths for walking, hiking or snowshoeing, so guests can take in the serenity and silence among the fir trees. In the northern part of the forest, in Freudenstadt, visitors can enjoy extended circular hikes through Loßburg or a leisurely hike over the Kienberg, where groups can warm up at the Lauterbad mountain hut. This region of Germany boasts 430 miles of groomed cross-country ski trails, where guests can spot the Alps and Vosges in the distance.

NIGHT SKY STARGAZING AND VIEWING THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

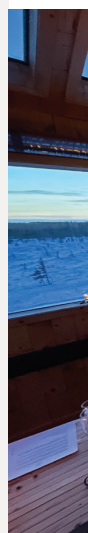
Fairbanks, Alaska, is known as one of the best places in the world to see the Northern Lights. With minimal light pollution and few crowds, the city is well positioned directly under the auroral oval, where aurora activity is concentrated. That means groups can often see the aurora directly overhead, filling up the entire sky, rather than off in the distance. And because Fairbanks receives less than a quarter inch of precipitation in the prime aurora viewing month of March, the Northern Lights are visible for four out of five nights when the sky is clear and dark enough.

Another top global destination for Northern Lights viewing is Churchill, Manitoba, which is also located where intense auroral activity occurs, producing spectacular displays of the aurora borealis. During winter, the region's water sources are completely frozen over, which reduces condensation and results in clear skies for ideal viewing conditions, especially in February and March. Frontiers North Adventures offers a luxury culinary experience beneath the aurora on the frozen banks of the Churchill River. Dan's Diner, a custom-built venue, features panoramic windows and skylights. Groups enjoy a seven-course gourmet meal featuring local ingredients, followed by cozy views of the Northern Lights for those who prefer to stay indoors.

Lake Placid in the Adirondack Mountains offers some of the East Coast's most pristine dark sky environments, and groups staying at the luxurious Whiteface Lodge will be treated to first-class stargazing experiences at nearby prime spots, including Mount Jo and the John Brown Farm State Historical Site.

ICE CLIMBING IN BANFF AND CANMORE, ALBERTA

For groups seeking a challenging "bucket list" experience, an ice climbing training course in Alberta is a terrific option. Alpine Air Adventures provides certified mountain guides at a six-to-one ratio to lead beginners or veteran climbers of all ages. Participants will learn essential skills — such as using crampons and ice tools and how to belay on ice — so they can climb safely and confidently on glaciers. Groups will gain practical experience on frozen waterfalls throughout the daylong excursion, including safety practices in a cold-weather environment.





Snowshoeing in Grand Teton National Park

COURTESY JACKSON HOLE ECO TOUR ADVENTURES



Dan's Diner in Churchill, Manitoba

COURTESY TRAVEL MANITOBA

Ice climbing runs from November through April. Depending on the weather, the company takes groups to Banff, where they'll explore Johnson Canyon, a renowned spot with stunning glacier views; Lake Louise Falls, with panoramas of the historic Lake Louise Chateau; or Canmore, where participants will climb Grotto Canyon or Junkyards — both of which feature impressive ice formations.

Other group options can be found in Lake Placid, New York, with Adirondack Adventures — the Adirondack Mountains have some of the best ice climbing in the United States — and with the American Alpine Institute, which runs guided excursions in several locations around the country, including programs in Alaska, California, Colorado and Washington.

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ICE FISHING IN MINNESOTA

Fishing hosts private ice-fishing events on Lake Minnetonka — one of the most iconic lakes in the Midwest — for groups of 15 to 150 people, with a fully guided, all-inclusive day on the ice, complete with nine heated Ice Castle units and pre-drilled fishing holes. The company provides fishing lessons, electronics and baiting hooks. The luxury fishing huts feature televisions, fish finders and underwater cameras that are hooked up to the TV, and each house can host up to eight people.

Fishing also sets up fun outdoor activities, such as putting greens, fire pits, a bag toss and fish fries, to complement the ice fishing experience.

MORE WINTER FUN IN MONTANA

At Paws Up Montana, a year-round resort and working cattle ranch, groups can participate in dozens of winter activities and stay in luxury homes, most sitting on four-acre lots. Located on 37,000 acres of land about 35 minutes from the Missoula International Airport, the property features 100 miles of trails and a wide river, making it ideal for horseback riding, ice fishing, snowshoeing, dogsledding, guided snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and a chance to explore the snow-covered terrain on electric snowbikes called MoonBikes. There are also special winter events, including a guided backcountry biathlon inspired by the Olympic Games, with cross-country skiing and target shooting.



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