

and its underground precinct is one of the marvels of modern planning.

Ottawa and Quebec City are both within easy reach of Montreal in a day. Ottawa, Canada's capital, is also its cultural heart, with the National Arts Centre and the National Gallery of Canada. Quebec City retains a lot of its historical charm and is, with the university, another lively centre for French Canadian culture.

On the rural side, Montreal is close to the Laurentians, a mountain area whose villages formed the subject of paintings by some of Canada's best known painters. Today it is a fashionable centre for skiing (particularly apres-ski!) and all kinds of recreations — fishing, swimming, hunting, canoeing, sailing. More pastoral in atmosphere is the Eastern Townships region of southern Quebec, with its apple orchards, farms and wild, untouched land in between. Here also there is skiing.

Vancouver, on the Pacific coast, has a milder climate than Toronto or Montreal. If you're feeling energetic, you can ski on Grouse Mountain (one of the best ski mountains in Canada) in the morning, come down for lunch in Vancouver and go Pacific salmon fishing in the afternoon. In summer there's good swimming right on the doorstep. Restaurants make a speciality of seafood — and beefsteaks. Vancouver boasts the second largest Chinatown in North America (the largest is San Francisco) and there is a quaintly interesting area called Gastown, packed with small boutiques and restaurants, which was where the original settlers established themselves.

Very English Victoria

Nearby Victoria, a day trip away, is frequently described as "more English than England" — a good place to drop in if you're feeling homesick. There's even a replica of Anne Hathaway's cottage. And the food is very English. The buildings are full of historical interest, particularly the local Parliament buildings: outlined in lights, they can be seen several miles away.

Vancouver's main attraction (for long-distance tourists particularly) is its proximity to the Rockies, which come right to the edge of the city. There's scope for trail riding and mountain hiking, and plenty of buses and trains for the rest of us to get right into this huge scale mountain range. The main sport in the area is fishing: this is particularly good in the Campbell River area to the north, where the famous Tyee salmon are caught from July to September. Campbell River is also a centre for hunting, especially deer, and gentler activities such as bird watching and beach combing. The famous mineral hot springs at Harrison are three hours' drive outside the city.

Appropriately, Vancouver has a magnificent aquarium displaying over 8,300 specimens — 650 species. Killer whales and dolphins occupy a 480,000 gallon outdoor pool with an underwater viewing area from which one can see both

above and below the surface of the water. As the waters of British Columbia support one of the richest arrays of marine life in the world, the aquarium displays forms of life seldom seen elsewhere. It also has a tropical gallery and a section for creatures from inland waters. An otter pool houses sea otters from the Northwest coast: once rendered nearly extinct by fur hunters, these animals are now making a comeback along the Pacific coast where once they lived in great numbers.

Vancouver is not exactly a cultural Mecca, but it does have its art galleries and

performing arts (the latter mainly confined to a winter season). The area attracts a lot of landscape artists, whose work is sold in small commercial galleries. Notably, the Emily Carr collection is in Vancouver: she was an important figure in the history of Canadian art, closely linked with the Group of Seven.

Full details and numerous brochures for would-be travellers can be obtained from the Canadian Government Office of Tourism, Canada House, Trafalgar Square, London. S.W.1.

City people play at rural living

Especially at certain times of the year, the eyes of city people tend to glaze over with a dream of getting away from all the rush and scramble to re-establish contact with nature. They don't just want to see it through the glass of car windows: no, it must be more real and basic than that. Chuck the rat race and get back to fishing and hunting your own food, sleeping under canvas, riding and roughing it over the hills.

Most of them do nothing about it. The very few get rid of their city lives and go crofting in Scotland or grow vegetables in deepest Wales, and a very tough go it turns out to be. But there are ways of meeting the dream half way — a fact recognised and provided for by the Manitoba Farm Vacations Association, formed in 1972.

The association was formed in recognition of a growing interest among city residents in Canada in finding temporary escapes from city life for a summer retreat

on a farm or ranch. Now the programme has been extended round the year for people who want autumn hunting quarters, bases for winter skiing or snowmobiling, or just to watch the arrival of spring on the prairies. Some 50 farms have joined the host programme, offering a range of different features from minibike trails at Pilot Mount to horseback riding at Interlake.

You select your farm according to your interests, whether they be swimming, boating, camping, hiking, or just relaxing and being near the land. Guests can live in the house of their host family, sharing meals and leisure; or they can camp on the farm, sharing facilities such as hot showers and the occasional meal. The cost of such a vacation is low: a week's stay with accommodation and food included costs about \$60 (£24.80) for an adult and \$35 (£14.50) for a child. For those camping with their own equipment, the cost is of course less.



About a day's drive out of Vancouver is the Mount Robson Provincial Park. The many small lakes and streams abound with trout.