



Is it mid morning or middle of the night?

LIGHTEN up

CRUISING THE LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN

Mother Nature can offer little that's more intoxicating than 24 hours of daylight. However, you have to head pretty far north (or south) to avail yourself of this vitamin D overdose. Although eight countries claim territory above the Arctic Circle, it is Norway's chillingly beautiful landscape that has the most allure. Since 1893, charming postal boats have been plying its coastline, and travellers in the know have been hopping on board updated vessels to marvel at the unequalled sights: polar bears, whales, seals and puffins set amid a dramatic panorama of fjords.

Nowadays, passengers can also take in one of the many on-board environmental lectures. Factor in fabulous food — from non-stop caviar to smoked-salmon smorgasbords — during the Hurtigruten Arctic cruises in June, July and August.

Looking for a face to face with a glacier? After crossing 80 degrees parallel, you can zoom off in a small, inflated PolarCirkel boat and, if you're lucky, bear witness to skyscraper-size chunks of ice tumbling into the water, setting off mini tidal waves. A (voluntary) dip in the Arctic Ocean is also offered, so pack your Speedo. I lasted a

gruelling two seconds in the glacial water — but don't be surprised to see passengers from the Nordic countries go for a swim!

These cruises start off in one of Europe's hippest capitals, Oslo, which also boasts frequent northbound flights for those seeking endless light. From there, it's an easy jump to the largest island in the Svalbard archipelago, Spitsbergen, home to the "doomsday vault," a facility carved into the permafrost that houses thousands of crop varieties from around the globe. You can also tour Longyearbyen, with its top-notch Arctic history museum and pretty houses painted in primary colours. Even in summer, though, be sure to pack a parka (hurtigruten.us, click on Spitsbergen).



TRUNK SHOW

Battered and worn, my luggage embarrassed me. That is, until I spotted vintage-style suitcases featuring pink leather straps and candy-stripe interiors online. I put in an order.

Because of their lovely boxy frames, SteamLine Luggage's updated versions of old school travel pieces are not only perfect for ensuring clothes emerge unwrinkled, but the smallest one can double as a chic handbag. Come to think of it, the eminently affordable cases are pretty enough to be displayed at home and could easily assist with the conjuring of romantic adventures (steamlineluggage.com).

Looking for museum-quality pieces? Even though you wouldn't check such items, it never hurts to look timeless when travelling. Tips on how to fix your own vintage trunks are included at brettunsvillage.com/trunks.



Easy riders

ROUTE VERTE

With summer comes the desire to catch a few rays, breathe deeply and, for many of us, get in shape. Best-case scenario: a trip that combines all three. The National Geographic Society has dubbed Quebec's Route Verte number one out of 10 top biking routes in the world. The 4,000-plus kilometres of paths — including gorgeous trails from the St. Lawrence River to the Laurentian Mountains — make this the most extensive network in North America. So grab a two-wheeler and remember: Nothing is sexier in warm weather than a tanned pair of shapely quads (routeverte.com).

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