

This week's dream: Driving the Alaska Highway

Road trips don't get much more scenic than a springtime drive along the Alaska Highway, said Elaine Glusac in *The New York Times*. The nearly 1,400-mile roadway that connects Alaska to Canada "takes motorists through some of the most stunning landscapes in North America." Last year, my family drove all the way from Alaska to Idaho, passing through British Columbia, Alberta, and a total of five national parks on a trip "so packed with sights that I never cracked the novel I brought." The Alaska Highway got us roughly two-thirds of the way there, and photo ops continued to pop up as we headed southeast into the Canadian Rockies and onward to the Lower 48.

Our nearly 2,200-mile journey began in Alaska's Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, which at 13.2 million acres is as large as Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Switzerland combined. Upon entering Canada, we then crossed 600 miles of Yukon territory,



Jasper National Park's Maligne Canyon

"passing yawning valleys with snaking streams and long, glacier-fed lakes." Because cell service was spotty, we relied on a 1972 road map to guide us to Kluane National Park, which is home to Canada's tallest mountain and more than 2,000 glaciers. After several days of driving and camping in picturesque places, we explored Whitehorse, the walkable capital of the Yukon, where I splurged on a dinner of bison Bolognese.

Driving through British Columbia "felt like a safari." We saw black bears, caribou, wood bison, and thinhorn sheep as we made our way to Dawson Creek, the town that marks mile zero of the Alaska Highway. From there, we crossed into Alberta and drove south until "rising mountains, immense river valleys, and herds of elk" welcomed us to the Rockies. In Jasper National Park, we peered into the river-carved depths of Maligne Canyon, and on the road to Banff National Park, we took in "spectacular views of waterfalls and peaks winking in and out of the clouds."

A double rainbow arched overhead as we entered the picturesque mountain town of Banff for a night's stay, after which we detoured to nearby and relatively uncrowded Kootenay National Park. We had Marble Canyon to ourselves, and as we crossed the roaring river gorge, ruby-crowned kinglets surrounded us with song. *The Milepost* (themilepost.com) offers a detailed guide to the Alaska Highway.

Hotel of the week



Farmhouse style meets luxury.

The Weston Weston, Vt.

The Weston opened late last year, and already it's "the best little thing going on in Vermont," said Tori Latham in *Robb Report*. Operated by a hotelier family that once owned the Carlyle in New York City and the Beverly Wilshire in L.A., it combines five star-level service with New England village charm. All eight rooms and suites, many with gas fireplaces, are luxuriously furnished with art and antiques. A small gym, spa, and yoga studio sit on site, and the inn's "quintessential" French restaurant "roars with activity," because it's already become a favorite dinner destination of many locals and weekenders. westonvt.com; doubles from \$405

Getting the flavor of...

The Texas-New Mexico borderlands

To see three wildly different Western landscapes in four or five days, fly to El Paso, said Graham Averill in *Outside*. West Texas' largest city is "an ideal starting point" for a 300-mile road trip that loops in a trio of national parks, each with its own climate and terrain. Texas' tallest peaks can be found at Guadalupe Mountains National Park, and from the windy 8,751-foot summit of Guadalupe Peak, "the views stretching east over the plains are endless." Across the New Mexico border, Carlsbad Caverns National Park leads visitors out of the desert scrublands and into

"the cold, dark underground." You'll feel the temperature plunge if you descend via switchbacks to the Big Room, the largest cave chamber in North America. Spelunkers can venture deeper to see the bizarre rock formations called cave pearls in the Lower Cave. Finally, White Sand Dunes National Park preserves an enormous gypsum dune field that "rolls toward the horizon in a series of white tidal waves." You can buy sleds to slide down the 60-foot slopes as you explore.

The road from Nashville to New Orleans

For history buffs, there's nothing like the Natchez Trace Parkway, said Jessica Chapel and Mark Ellwood in *Condé Nast Traveler*. The scenic road follows a 444-mile travel corridor used by Native Americans as long as 10,000 years ago. Subsequently used by European settlers, slave traders, and soldiers, it passes numerous museums and historic monuments as it tracks southwest from Nashville to Natchez, Miss., bringing New Orleans-bound road trippers right to Louisiana's doorstep. Music enthusiasts will want to detour to Oxford, Miss., where the Blues Archive at the

University of Mississippi houses 60,000 recordings, as well as to the famous crossroads in Clarksdale where, legend tells, Robert Johnson sold his soul in exchange for blues guitar mastery. Natchez's Museum of African American History and Culture and the Smith Robertson Museum and Cultural Center in Jackson, Miss., offer deeper dives into Black America's past, and Civil War buffs should stop in Vicksburg, which was the site of a 47-day Union Army siege. It's also home to the Biedenharn Coca-Cola Museum, where, in 1894, Coke was first bottled.

How to avoid travel scams

"Travel scams are often hiding where you least expect them," said Serena Tara and Opheli Garcia Lawler in *Thrillist*. Scams are forever evolving, but knowing the most widespread can help. Cash App and other money-sharing apps are being exploited by scammers who take payment for home rentals they never intend to honor. Hotel guests, meanwhile, should double-check the property's URL when booking online and pay with a credit card, rather than a debit card, for added protection. Be equally vigilant about checking airlines' URLs and beware of online offers of free flight credits that require you to share personal information. The rideshare business is rife with scams, too. To avoid phony websites, use only official apps to book a ride. And never agree to pay your driver in cash, because the rideshare app will charge you as well.