

## From Tofino to Saint John, the 18 best places in Canada to kiss

By Michele Sponagle, Ottawa Citizen February 12, 2011

A kiss is just a kiss, but when you add that something special -a great view, a cosy corner or a once-in-a-lifetime-bonding moment -it can be elevated to an entirely new level. Get away from it all and let your love shine brighter without the daily tarnish of overloaded schedules and housework. Take your beloved to a fabulous spot that's sure to leave you lovestruck: Just add water ...

... and romance seems to bloom. A good smattering of favourite kissing spots have an element of H2O to them. An informal survey of lovey-dovey couples that I know found that there is something magical about Peggy's Cove, N.S. The gusts whipping off the ocean make your hair flutter, wild and free, like you're a super model in front of a wind machine. That must be it.

And there's the cuddle factor. No matter what time of year you visit, there's a nip in the air, so squeezing up closer to your special someone is a good move. But before you snuggle up and make him or her scream because of your cold feet, chase the chill away with a big bowl of seafood chowder and a slab of homemade gingerbread cake from the Sou'wester Restaurant, overlooking the cove. Now, that's a recipe for romance.

### On the wild side

On the west coast, Tofino ranks up there for swoon inducement. If you've never been to this spot on Vancouver Island, picture the beaches of Florida -- white sand, palm trees, hotdog carts along the boardwalk and sunbathers lying on multi-coloured beach towels. Now imagine the opposite of that.

Tofino is untamed, looking the way God (or whomever) left it, with driftwood strewn over a beach that's the colour of roasted chestnuts, edged with straggly pines.

Fortunately, the inns around Tofino make the most of the view. The Wickaninnish Inn gets many twosomes all dewy-eyed about love. Weddings are performed on the beach just about as often as espresso is served in the restaurant. You can blame the view or the waves, but I blame the Ancient Cedars spa and its Cedar Sanctuary, a private little cabin that overlooks the bay. You can book a massage for deux and soak up some ocean air. It rouses the soul ... and perhaps more.

### Mountain high

One province over, it's the mountainous beauty of Banff that has duos breathless. And there's no better spot to enjoy the view than the outdoor Jacuzzis at the Fairmont Banff Springs. In the winter, do the dash from the heated indoor pool area and plunge into the steamy water. Snowflakes may be falling, but you're surrounded in a cocoon of warmth.

### Light s how

If you're not afraid of the cold, then head up north to where you can see the Northern Lights.

There is an aura of mystery around the aurora borealis. It is believed that children conceived under the lights will be highly intelligent. Because of the low light pollution in Saskatchewan, you'll spot them there. Between September and April, the Yukon is the place to be. Watch the ribbons of light dance in the sky from the comfort of your hot tub at your B&B. You'll rarely find a more kiss-inspiring setting.

### Wining and dining

But puckering up isn't just about picture-perfect scenery. It's about intimacy, too -- the kind that makes you feel like you're all alone someplace. Take the Hapinez Wine Bar in Saint John, N.B. This is the epitome of comfy and cosy. The room is divided with benches, stone walls and long tables, so private nooks are plentiful. Grab yourself a glass of wine (a plethora are available by the glass) and find yourself a smooching spot.

Restaurant-wise, if you plan on smooching, the best tables are smallish and round. Circular banquettes are good too. Knees may touch and you're close enough to hold hands with some privacy. The Globe in Montreal and Brassaii on King Street West in Toronto has them. Avoid places that jam tables in tightly. These are conversation killers and unlikely to lead to good night kisses.

### Sides Of Cheese

When it comes to romance, cheesiness is acceptable. So go ahead and take a horse-drawn carriage ride around Quebec City or Niagara-on-the-Lake. Or book a room with a round bed. They're a bit scarce, but you'll find one in The Igloo Suite at the Fantasyland Hotel in Edmonton, in the Godin Suite in the Opus hotel in Montreal and in the round room of the Ice Hotel near Quebec City, accented by red curtains and red pin lighting no less.

And then there are sunsets. Stroll along any Hawaiian beach and you'll see oodles of couples pressed together watching nature's splashy daily finale.

Canadian sunsets can be just as spectacular. The flatness of the prairies provides a perfect canvas on which to splash colours in their purest shades. Because, to quote Corner Gas's Brent Butt, "there's nothing to get in your way."

To appreciate the beauty of Toronto, catch a sunset from a Mariposa Cruise. From a distance, the mean streets of the city are paved in a golden light. Or head north to Georgian Bay or Muskoka to listen to the sounds that come with a great sunset -- the stillness, the cry of a loon, the crackle of a bonfire.

### Cook up something hot

Old fashioned types still believe that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. But cooking for someone isn't nearly as much fun as cooking with someone. Sign up for cooking classes at The Dirty Apron in Vancouver. Its "It Takes Two" classes are super popular and along with teaching you some new tricks, chef David Robertson has a strong belief in the "kiss the cook" philosophy. Ottawa's Le Cordon Bleu has classes for twosomes as well, but is already sold out for 2011. Do book now for 2012 if you're planning to tango in the kitchen together.

### Smooching Studies

Besides just having fun, there are some good reasons why you should travel and do new things together. A study by the Interpersonal Relationships Laboratory of New York State University found that if couples spend just two hours each week engaging in a new, exciting activity, it gives a dramatic boost to their marital satisfaction. It's all tied to a soupy mix of hormones related to love.

And while on the topic, let's point out that a great kiss is important. Another study, this one by evolutionary psychologist Gordon Gallup of the University of Albany, determined that 66 per cent of females would end a relationship if that first kiss wasn't stellar, as would 59 per cent of men. It's not just about technique. As you're smooching, hormones transmitted through breath and saliva send clues about whether this is a good match or not.

If you really want to snag and keep that special someone, remember this: kissing is like real estate. The most important thing is location, location, location.

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