

HOW TO

Weak Canadian Dollar = Your Next Cheap Vacation

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The exchange rate for the Canadian dollar (or “loonie” to its friends) recently [set a 13-year](#) low versus the U.S. dollar, meaning American visitors are now seeing about a 30 percent discount on prices up north. Unlike Canadians, who see the exchange rate highlighted in their daily newscasts and papers, Americans are less aware of the recent changes. According to Rob Taylor, VP of the Tourism Association of Canada, Americans haven’t “jumped on the trend as much as they could.”

So what’s the best way for a U.S. traveler to take advantage of the great exchange rate? Stock up on maple syrup? Fill the suitcase with Canadian bacon? A coffee-and-doughnut binge at [Tim Horton’s](#)? Some answers may surprise you.

Go Whale Watching



British Columbia offers some amazing opportunities to see whales.

(Photo: Hiroya Minakuchi/Minden Pictures/Corbis)

In recent years, the Canadian dollar was on a 1:1 rate with the U.S. dollar, so most local goods and services have been locked into those prices accordingly. Meaning that any food, lodging, and activities in Canada are now essentially on sale for Americans. So if you’re planning a U.S. trip, consider similar options in Canada. Thinking of doing some whale-watching off the coast of Seattle? Shift your trip an hour north to [Vancouver Island](#). Watching Free Willy won’t be free, but his pals can be spotted for just 69 cents on the dollar.

Take a Ski Trip



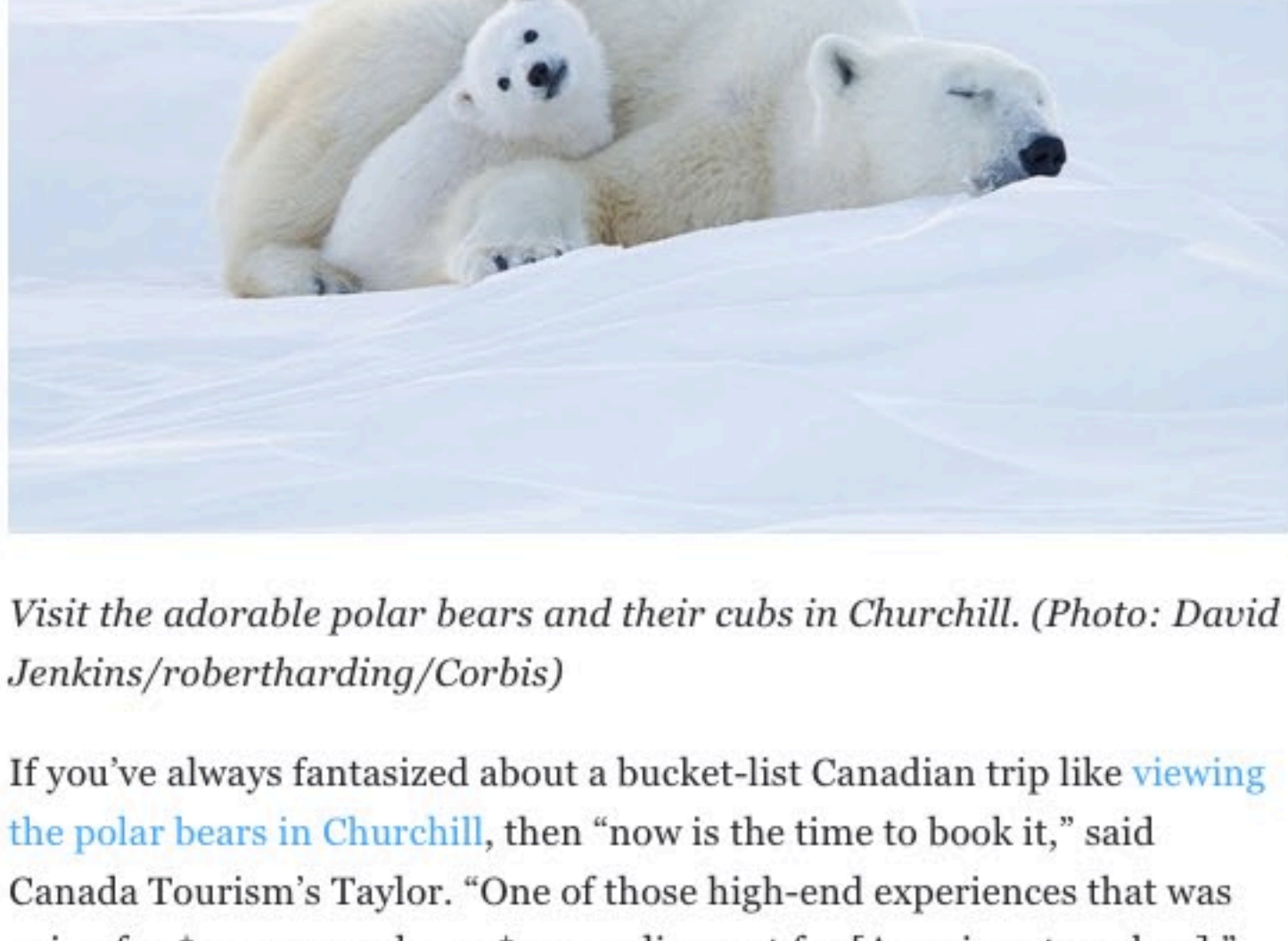
Forget Vail! Hit the slopes in Whistler instead. (Photo: Getty Images)

One great current savings example is for skiing. Colorado’s [Vail resort](#) is charging a staggering \$175 for a one-day ski lift ticket during a holiday weekend. Visit the equally expensive [Whistler ski resort](#) in British Columbia, and your daily ticket will cost the equivalent of \$77. And the savings aren’t just for budget travelers: rooms at the [Four Seasons](#) in Vail are priced at \$795 per night for an upcoming weekend, while similar rooms at the Four Seasons Whistler can be had for \$523 USD.

Related: [This Is Why Québec City Is the Ultimate Winter Destination](#)

Add in the discounts for food, transport and local Kokanee beers, and your ski trip just got a whole lot cheaper. Brad Kasselman, co-owner of Whistler’s [Coast Mountain Photography](#) told Yahoo Travel: “Whistler is just rocking with Americans right now.”

View the Polar Bears

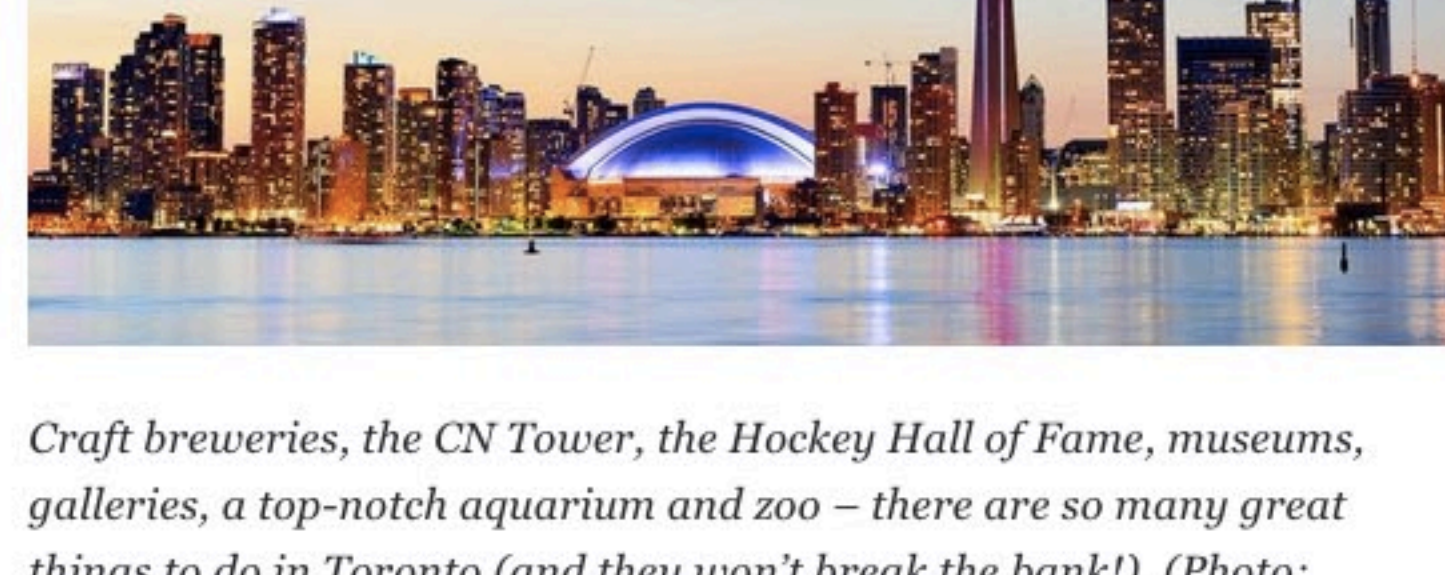


Visit the adorable polar bears and their cubs in Churchill. (Photo: David Jenkins/robertharding/Corbis)

If you’ve always fantasized about a bucket-list Canadian trip like [viewing the polar bears in Churchill](#), then “now is the time to book it,” said Canada Tourism’s Taylor. “One of those high-end experiences that was going for \$9,000 now has a \$3,000 discount for [American travelers].”

And although their trips are priced in U.S. dollars, Adventure Canada just announced a 30 percent discount for its summer [Heart of the Arctic](#) wildlife and cultural cruise.

Head to Toronto



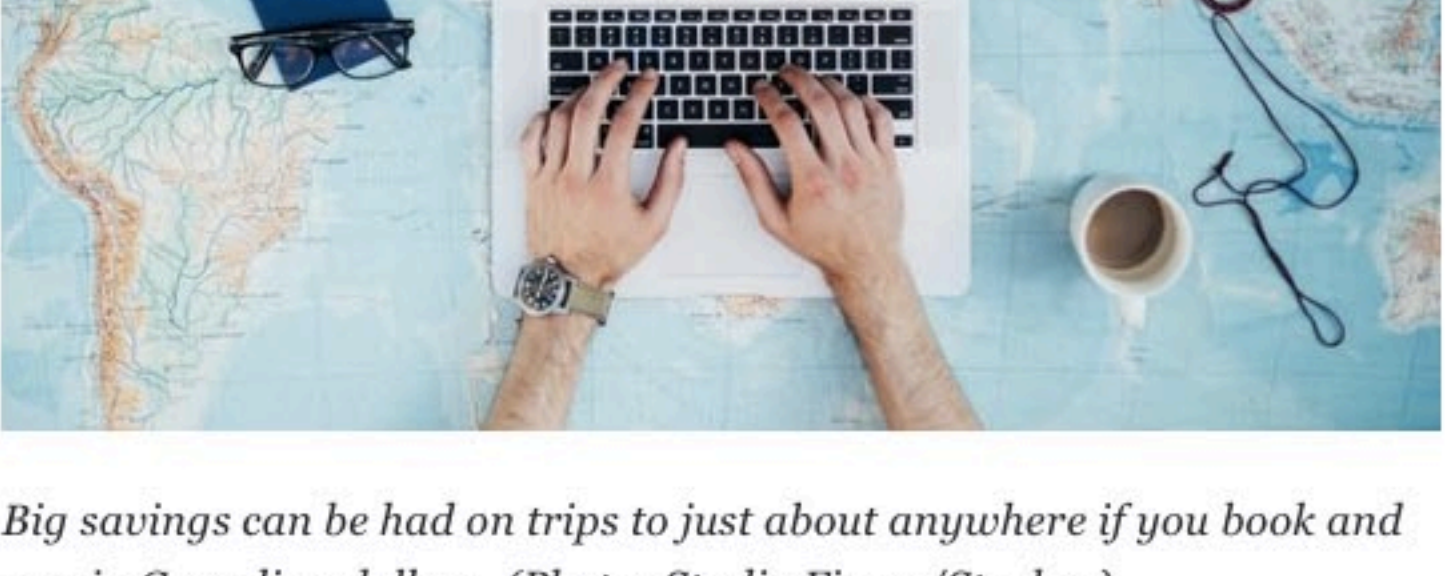
Craft breweries, the CN Tower, the Hockey Hall of Fame, museums, galleries, a top-notch aquarium and zoo – there are so many great things to do in Toronto (and they won’t break the bank!). (Photo: Thinkstock)

For those looking for an urban experience, Toronto offers [fine dining](#), lodging and entertainment comparable to a major U.S. city, now at a fraction of the cost. The [Shangri-La Hotel](#) there is offering 25 percent off a winter family package, which when added to the 30 percent currency savings gives you roughly half off room prices. While you’re there, buy some tickets to see your hometown team play the NHL’s [Toronto Maple Leafs](#) or NBA’s [Raptors](#) and the savings will get you a beer or three.

Related: [Toronto: the Ultimate Mother-Daughter Weekend Getaway](#)

Andrew Weir, VP of Toronto Tourism said another potential big-ticket savings item in his city is for the convention business, where “when you add meeting space and a couple hundred hotel rooms, the savings is just huge.” But for now, he said, “the biggest difference is that Americans already coming to Toronto are returning home to find a pleasant surprise in their credit card bill.”

Go to Alaska...or South Africa?!



Big savings can be had on trips to just about anywhere if you book and pay in Canadian dollars. (Photo: Studio Firma/Stocksy)

One surprising benefit of the weak Canadian dollar is that Americans can save big money by booking trips with Canadian tour companies that have priced trips in their local currency. The exchange rate is providing a 30 percent discount — even for travel outside of Canada. Maureen Golden, co-owner of Vancouver-based [Maple Leaf Adventures](#) told Yahoo that “because our trip prices were set in Canadian dollars last April, they are quite an insane deal for our American guests right now — even for trips to Alaska!”

The company’s 10-day “Alaska Supervoyage” priced at \$8,000 Canadian dollars is now nearly \$2,500 cheaper with U.S. dollars. So through the magic of exchange rates, the weak Canadian dollar has made it cheaper for Americans to travel to America — as long as you book a Canadian-dollar priced trip.

Related: [Strong Dollar = Europe on Sale. 6 Cool Things You Can Actually Do Now](#)

[Quench Trip Design](#), a Toronto-based custom-itinerary travel company is offering similar effective discounts for those purchasing travel with U.S. dollars — for trips to anywhere on earth. Fancy a vintner-guided 11-day [wine-tasting tour](#) in South Africa this spring? The \$6,975 Canadian dollar price for this trip has become 30 percent more affordable for U.S. dollar customers, essentially because China is buying less oil from Alberta.

Fly Canadian



Wherever you want to go, if you book through Air Canada, you can enjoy a night’s stay in Vancouver, Montreal, or Toronto for free or next-to-nothing! (Photo: iStock)

Even if you’re already planned a trip from the U.S. to Europe or Asia, you can still take advantage of the cheap Canada dollar with a stopover in a Canadian gateway city, as long as you fly Air Canada. While Air Canada’s international travel fares appear to be adjusted for U.S. dollars, the airline is offering a new [free stayover program](#) for travelers connecting through Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver. Business and Premium Economy customers can get a free night’s stay in a local hotel (from \$49 for economy passengers). Plus, there is no charge to alter the itinerary for this extra night stay — on the inbound and/or the outbound flights. And of course, during your stay in these cities, you’ll be getting that exchange rate discount on food, shopping, and activities. More Tim Horton’s [maple dip doughnuts](#) for everyone!