

and-a-half hours to build a decent cave, and it's hard work," says Terry Deamer, who heads Taste of Wilderness Tours' snow-cave expeditions. "But it's an amazing experience. Once inside, it's absolutely quiet; if the wind's howling, you'd never hear it. And it stays roughly at zero inside, even when it's 30 below outside."

780-827-4250; www.tasteofwilderness.ab.ca

10 TOBOGGANING ON STEROIDS

Bobsled and Luge Rides, Calgary

This ain't no midway ride, "it's an authentic bobsled ride on an Olympic track," says Canada Olympic Park's Chris Dornan. "In 61 seconds you take all 14 corners at about 125 km/h and experience g-forces five times your body weight – the same as an astronaut." We should probably mention that you're a passenger, safely squeezed between a professional pilot and brakeman. Eh? You want to go it alone? Try the 45-second luge plunge. Some instruction required; screaming optional.

403-247-5452;
www.canadaolympicpark.ca

11 SLEIGH WHEN

Longriders Horseback Riding, Gibbons

Last year owner/operator Ken Dobush was a tad busy with 122 hay and sleigh rides in 23 days. "Our teams are very popular for Christmas parties," he explains. But if you can't make it out to the Longriders ranch just northeast of Edmonton, his teams of Clydesdales, Percherons or Belgians "are very mobile. We'll come to you." As for the complete on-site experience: Mosey out to Gibbons for an hour-long sleigh ride, followed by tobogganing and a bonfire. Or snuggle fireside on the ranch deck overlooking the Sturgeon River. 780-998-0305; www.albertahorses.com

12 COOLEST COMBO GETAWAY

Great Canadian Adventure Co. Ski-Dogsled-Snowshoe Trio, Canmore area

For when you want to snowshoe, *he* wants to cross-country ski and the kids want a dogsled ride. From home base at Eagle's Nest Bed and Breakfast in Canmore, this Taste of Winter package includes guided

snowshoeing and cross-country skiing in the Spray Valley, Hogarth Lakes or Mount Chester areas with Mahikan Trails, as well as dogsledding with Mad Dogs & Englishmen Expeditions. Bonus: two-person

Jacuzzis back at the B&B.
780-414-1676;
www.canadawinteradventure.com

13 FROZEN IN THE HEAD LAMPS

Night Tracks Tour, Banff

Equipped with headlamps and ice cleats or snowshoes, small groups escorted by White Mountain Adventures interpretive guides see the Johnson Lake area in a different light. They may hear wolves howl, see nocturnal animals not usually glimpsed by day and learn to identify animal tracks under a canopy of stars. Highlight: the dance of the Northern Lights (which, unfortunately, has no set performance schedule). 1-800-408-0005, 403-760-4403; www.whitemountainadventures.com

343-760-4403; www.whitemountainadventures.com

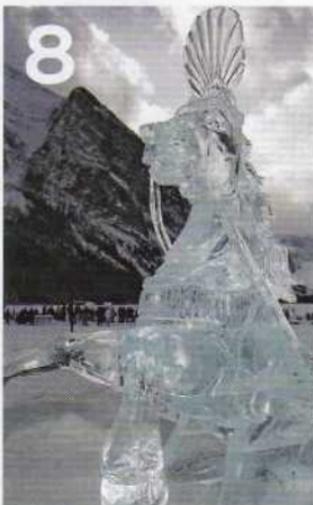


Photo: © Alan Wiggert

14 BEST PLACE TO SPOT A SKIING

Viking Birkebeiner Ski Festival, east of Edmonton

Horned helmets, fur vests, birchbark leggings, swords and shields – at a ski event? About 1,900 participants, 650 volunteers and lots of cheering spectators at Canada's only Birkie re-create a dramatic event in Norway's history: the 1206 rescue of an infant prince-in-hiding by two warriors who skied him to safety over two mountain ranges to his rightful throne, ending a civil war. "It's a true story," says the event's Cathy Schreiner. It's also a great excuse to dress as a Viking, no questions asked. "Little kids make tinfoil horns, but the serious skiers doing the full 55-km route don't usually wear costumes – just the spectators." Maybe not, but many "carry the baby" – a 5.5-kilogram pack representing the weight of the infant heir. February 8, 9.

780-430-7153; www.canadianbirkie.com

15 FREEZE-FRAME PHOTOS

Winter Magic Photography Weekends, west of Nordegg

As owners/operators of the ecotourism-award-winning Aurum Lodge, Alan and Madeleine Ernst work hard to minimize their inn's environmental footprint. So what could be more appropriate than a photography workshop where participants "take only photos, leave only footprints"? Now in their fourth year, these photography workshops are equally popular because of who teaches them – acclaimed photographer Darwin Wiggert, "one of Canada's best nature photographers," notes Alan. Wiggert guides participants to his not-so-secret spots in the Rockies where "they keep taking photos no matter how cold it gets. The batteries give out before they do." November 15 to 18, February 7 to 10 and February 20 to 24. 403-721-2117; www.aurumlodge.com



Photo: © Alan Wiggert