

Jennifer Bain

111 Places
in Calgary
That You Must
Not Miss

Photographs by Christina Ryan



emons:

Foreword

For the Bain-MacKenzie Clan.

May you treat every step in life as a great adventure.



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I gasped when I first laid eyes on Calgary. I had just graduated from journalism school in Ottawa, bought a Volkswagen and driven through four provinces for a summer reporting job at the *Calgary Herald*. After crossing the prairies, I watched Calgary rise dramatically out of nowhere, with the Rocky Mountains looming in the background. The Rockies are an hour away, but leaving work, I'd smile at the hazy outline of them while flying down the Deerfoot and 16 Avenue to get home. I line-danced at Ranchman's, went to my first Calgary Folk Music Festival, ate in Chinatown and soon moved to a "character building" just off Electric Avenue (a now-defunct night-life district). I covered my first murder and first Calgary Stampede. I would decamp to Edmonton, Calgary's rival, but frequently made the six-hour, round-trip drive on weekends just to visit Crossroads Market when it was a flea market along the Trans-Canada Highway.

Don't let Cowtown's nickname or the big shebang known as the Calgary Stampede mislead you. This thoroughly modern city of 1.3 million is the best place in Canada to eat steak, but ranching happens elsewhere in the province (I should know – I married a bison rancher from southern Alberta). Calgary is actually an energy epicentre – hence the city's latest slogan on signs at the city limits: "Be Part of the Energy."

And so I became part of the energy, doing this deep dive into all things Calgary. Here's the big takeaway: people often take their cities for granted, travelling well-worn circuits between work, school, home and favourite haunts. They don't realize this is the birthplace of Stampede Wrestling, the Caesar and ginger beef. They have yet to admire sidewalk stamps, surf on the Bow River or dodge undetonated explosives in Weaselhead Flats. So please use this love letter to Calgary to take you somewhere weird, wonderful and new. But please be mindful that due to Covid-19, opening hours are in flux.

Yours in travel, Jennifer Bain

20 — Calgary Courts Centre

Take a fast, free ride

For an ear-popping elevator ride with an unexpected view, go to the Calgary Courts Centre. The glass and concrete courthouse boasts twin towers linked by one of the world's biggest cold-climate, glass atriums. The 26-storey atrium is 125-metres (410-feet) tall with full-height glass. It houses two main elevator banks, each with six glass-enclosed cabs. A low-rise set only goes up 12 floors, and a high-rise set covers 24 floors but travels from the ground to the 12th floor in one shot before servicing the upper floors. The elevators can go so fast that people complained, and the speeds were lowered. You can enjoy wonderful eastern views of downtown.

When the 93,000-square-metre (1,000,000-square-foot) courthouse opened in September 2007 on an entire city block, it became the largest such centre in Canada and boosted advanced technology and airport-like security. The premier at the time called it “a world-class addition to the city’s skyline,” and people praised the open and transparent design. It has 73 courtrooms and houses the Court of Queen’s Bench in the 24-floor north tower, and the Provincial Court of Alberta in the 20-floor south tower, all replacing five smaller courts. Those four gorgeous brass doors displayed outside the main entrance came from the old Provincial Court building.

The Calgary Indigenous Court sits Wednesdays in Courtroom 1800, which was modelled after a teepee. This court – which is open to the public – lets people sit in a circle at the same level and takes a restorative justice approach through peacemaking and connecting people to their culture and communities. An eagle feather is used for taking oaths, and special ventilation allows for the burning of sweet-grass in smudging ceremonies. In the lobby, look for a quote etched in glass behind the information desk by former Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker, “Freedom is the right to be wrong, not the right to do wrong.”



Address 601 5 Street SW, Calgary, AB T2P 5P7, www.albertacourts.ca | **Getting there** CTrain to 6 Street SW (Blue or Red Line) | **Hours** Mon–Fri 8:15am–4:30pm | **Tip** Walk by the 1912 Burns Building, named for Patrick Burns, a former Canadian senator and local cattle mogul – and Calgary’s first millionaire. Burns, A. E. Cross, George Lane and Archibald J. McLean were the famous “Big Four,” who financed the first Calgary Stampede (237 8 Avenue SE).

27__ Cold Garden Beverage Company

Gnomes, pink flamingos and plastic greenery

Well hello, tacky disco gnome! Suspended from the craft brewery ceiling on chains is a smug-faced, silver-bearded gnome, resplendent in an outfit fashioned from royal blue and teal mosaic tiles and sporting black sunglasses and a plastic lei. The owners of Cold Garden Beverage Company dressed him themselves, ordering the base shape from Foam Works and then carefully gluing all those 1-inch square mosaic tiles. The unnamed gnome was created to hang over their booth at the Calgary International Beerfest one year. A pineapple and a flamingo got the same treatment other years. All three now hang in the eclectic tasting room.

“I have a weird obsession with fake flowers and AstroTurf,” admits Blake Belding, who owns this place with Dan Allard. Evidence of that obsession can be found all around the space that transformed a former powder coating and welding shop. The brewery picked its name after hearing that Calgary was named for a hamlet on the Isle of Mull in Scotland that in turn drew its name from old Norse words *kald* and *gart* (meaning “cold” and “garden”). With the name set, the garden-themed interior unfolded organically. Plastic plants came from dollar stores and movie set donations. Customers can’t stop bringing in old couches and gnome toys.

“This Must Be The Place,” screams a large neon sign inside the dog-friendly space. It’s the title of a Talking Heads song that Belding played at the end of brewing day when he was a mere home brewer. The sign hangs over a counter decorated with multi-coloured foam pool noodles, which are also used to insulate hanging refrigeration lines. Cold Garden is one of six spots that make up the “Brewery Flats” fellowship in Inglewood. Try their seven core beers and a cider, plus 20-odd seasonal flavours.



Address 1100 11 Street SE, Calgary, AB T2G 4T3, +1 (403) 764-2653, www.coldgarden.ca, drink@coldgarden.ca | **Getting there** CTrain to City Hall (Blue or Red Line) | **Hours** Daily 11am–midnight | **Tip** Visit the taproom and tour Wild Rose Brewery in an old airport hangar at the former Currie Barracks (5505 72 Avenue SE, www.wildrosebrewery.com).