

'A Christmas Story' house raises spirits

Setting of the classic film brings to life Ralphie and his family

The cult-hit film "A Christmas Story" holds a special place in the hearts of millions of fans who eagerly await Christmas Eve to watch their favorite holiday movie.

The tradition dates nearly three decades and it grows each year. Unforgettable characters and storylines make it one of the best holiday movies of all-time.

Ralphie is determined to get a Red Ryder BB gun for Christmas – even if he'll shoot his eye out. The Old Man curses "the way other artists might work in oils or clay." And poor Randy is bundled up so tightly for school that he can't put down his arms.

It truly is an original. It's unknown the last time Mother Parker had eaten a warm meal. The Old Man comes to life once his "major award" arrives. And Scut Farkus – "what a rotten name" – is a villain unlike any other, staring devilishly with his "yellow eyes."

The hidden gem, however, is the Parker home. The coal-dust-spewing domicile is intimate and old-fashioned. Spigots are built into the walls of the kitchen sink. The radio plays "Little Orphan Annie" and the family makes fond memories inside this humble house.



STORY TIME – Fans can visit the house from the classic holiday hit "A Christmas Story" in Cleveland. Image: A Christmas Story House & Museum.

Fans can learn more about the home by visiting it. The "A Christmas Story House & Museum" is located in Cleveland and is open year-round, seven days a week for public tours and overnight stays are an option.

The Bumpus House, too, is open

for overnight stays. Located to the left of the A Christmas Story House, it's the fictional home of Ralphie's unruly neighbors and their smelly hound dogs. It has a pair of accommodations: The "Hound Dog Haven" that can accommodate four guests

and the "Stolen Turkey" suite that can house as many six guests.

The museum features original props, costumes and memorabilia from the film, as well as hundreds of rare behind-the-scenes photos. Among the props and costumes are the toys from the Higbee's window, Randy's snowsuit, the chalkboard in Miss Shields' classroom and the family car.

And don't forget about the "major award." The legendary leg lamp sits in the front window, illuminating "electric..."

Purchase mementos at the museum gift shop. Take home your electric leg lamp or Ralphie's bunny suit. Figurines, decoder pins and replicas of the Parker tree star also are available – and so is the Red Ryder BB gun.

A visit is a step back in time – to a simpler place. It offers fans an up-close viewing and an opportunity to learn more about the film. It also should inject a burst of holiday spirit – no matter the time of the year.

Spend a long weekend or just make a day of it. "A Christmas Story House & Museum" is well worth the trip.

And remember never to put your tongue on a flag pole during the winter season.

Adventure awaits at Canadian Rockies

Parks, mountains, lakes and more offer walk on wild side

There aren't enough adjectives to describe the beauty of the Canadian Rockies. Magnificent, splendid and glorious may quickly come to mind, but they barely scratch the surface.

Words paint a picture in our minds, but nothing tells a true story better than witnessing it with our own eyes. Natural wonders have been spurring our senses from the beginning of time.

Snow-covered mountains, winding canyons and fascinating rock formations are among the many treasures waiting to be discovered. Meadows carpeted with wildflowers and supernatural glacial lakes put a bow on this gift of travel.

Banff National Park is 80 miles west of Calgary. Its spectacular views have lured Hollywood icons and British Royalty, but the brightest stars are the local elk who wander the streets. Gushing Bow Falls sits adjacently to the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel. Inspired by a Scottish castle, it took an army of stone-carvers and masons nearly two decades to complete.

The Banff Gondola sends passengers on an eight-minute ride to the summit of Sulphur Mountain. Marvel at 360-degree views of Banff, the Bow Valley and six scenic mountain ranges



MASTERPIECE – The Canadian Rockies reflect off Moraine Lake in western Canada. Image: Horticulture. Adobe Stock.

that ascend 7,486 feet above sea level.

Snow domes and Victoria Glacier surround Lake Louise, 36 miles west of Banff. The water's mysterious blue-green color is the result of fine, glacial "rock flour" particles suspended in the water.

Moraine Lake sits 10 minutes from Lake Louise. The invaluable location once graced the Canadian \$20 bill.

Lofty peaks, including the third-highest mountain in the Rockies, arise from this crystalline waterway.

Appreciate stunning scenery while traveling Bow Valley Parkway. The 35-mile excursion should include a stop at Johnson Canyon. Seven waterfalls are hidden inside secluded rock walls and accessible by a walking trail. Bighorn sheep and mountain goats

frequent the limestone cliffs near Upper Falls. Cross the Continental Divide into Yoho National Park to visit Takakkaw Falls – a cascade higher than Niagara Falls.

Icefields Parkway – called "20 Switzerlands in one" – links Lake Louise to Jasper. The 143-mile parkway offers a constant changing of the mountains, waterfalls, icefields and more than 600 glaciers – the most among other roads on the continent.

Columbia Icefield feeds six major glaciers. That is where you can board an Ice Explorer – an all-terrain vehicle with tires five feet in diameter – for a trek across the Rockies' biggest icefield and the Athabasca Glacier. The four-mile-long tongue of the ice is the greatest ice mass outside the Arctic Circle.

Witness spectacular scenery, including the Athabasca Falls, on the road to Jasper. Canada's largest mountain park is home to Mount Robson, the tallest peak in the Canadian Rockies. Considered the backbone of the world, it allows visitors to make a thrilling ascent up Whistler Mountain aboard the Jasper Aerial Tramway.

Regality rarely comes easy, but a visit to the Canadian Rockies is a trip meant for a king and queen.