



In Georgetown you can go lobster fishing, lay the bait for mackerels or feel the thrill of catching crabs (inset) on a crab trap

Saskatchewan, in the heart of Canada's prairie lands, is way off the tourist map, but offers a peek into a world of unmatched tranquility, says Rishad Saam Mehta



## Rustic retreat



Regina's RCMP Heritage Centre has an impressive collection of memorabilia, photographs and weapons

It's a windy sort of Wednesday in Regina, the capital of Saskatchewan. I'm standing in front of Hotel Saskatchewan waiting for chef Milton Rebello. A month ago I had never imagined that my travels would ever take me to Regina in the middle of Canada and here I was standing with the city's most famous chef!

I was on a food and drink trip and I vaguely remember learning in school that Saskatchewan is the wheat bowl of Canada. In fact, 54 per cent of the country's wheat produce comes from here. But today Milton is taking me and my fellow travellers to a farmer's market.

Farmers from the countryside have arrived in the square across from the Victoria Park and are unloading their homegrown produce. There are delicious-looking peaches, pears and plums on offer, freshly harvested radishes, tomatoes, garlic, bell peppers, zucchini and corn.

While Regina's farmer's market is crammed full with fresh homegrown produce, the farmer's market at Saskatoon (far right) is a livelier affair with buskers jamming and cafés full of people



Named after Queen Victoria in the 1880s, Regina was once the capital of the newly settled and wild North Western Territories, a land mass larger in area than present day Europe. Today, it's the capital of Saskatchewan and while it may not be the place you'd be lining towards for a Canadian holiday, there is enough to do here.

That evening we head to Beaver Creek Ranch at Lumsden, which is 40km away. Run by Brenda and Barry Clemens, the ranch offers fun and interactive programmes. But since this is a foodie trip, we're here for a cowboy cookout — big steaks char-grilled on live coals and corn on the cob with a few greens on the side.

Regina is also home to Canada's famous Royal Canadian Mountain Police's (RCMP) Depot Division where all cadets get their initial training. There is also the RCMP heritage centre, which completely enthralled me with its exhibits.

Next we head to the Bushwacker Brewing Co. Ltd, housed in a 1914 classic warehouse. Their flagship product is

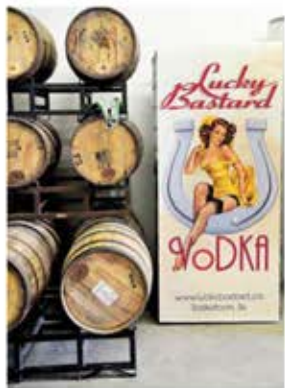
the blueberry mead, which is released for sale on the first Saturday of December every year. When doors open at 11am, 6,000 bottles are sold within the first two hours. The mead usually lasts until the first week of January after which you have to wait until December again.

The next day we drive to Saskatoon, which is 260km to the south, and I, at once, spot an Indian connection — in the form of a shiny black and chrome Royal Enfield complete with a sidecar. It seems that North America imports quite a number of this endearing Indian automotive classic.

The farmer's market that we visit in Saskatoon is a grander affair located in what was once the city's electrical garage. The market has a lively feel to it with buskers jamming and cafés doing brisk business.

Next we head to a funky distillery with a disarmingly honest name. The owners always had a passion for manufacturing small quantities of classy alcohol and when they won a lottery to the tune of 14.6 million Canadian Dollars they realised that dream and quite simply named the enterprise Lucky Bastard Distillery. Of course, the Canadian Registry of Enterprises went red collar upwards at this brazen honesty and they had to register the company as LB Distilleries, but thankfully the bottles of their smooth whisky, vodka and liqueurs bear the original cheeky name. They also have a speciality vodka called Chai Vodka which is infused with the very spices that

The Lucky Bastard Distillery's speciality Chai Vodka is infused with the spices that go into Indian masala chai



### READY RECKONER

For more on Regina go to [www.tourismregina.com](http://www.tourismregina.com) You can find out about Beaver Creek Ranch at [www.beaver-creekranch.ca](http://www.beaver-creekranch.ca) Information on what to do in Saskatoon can be had at [www.tourismsaskatoon.com](http://www.tourismsaskatoon.com) The farmer's market in Saskatoon also has online presence at [www.saskatoonfarmers-market.com](http://www.saskatoonfarmers-market.com) The LB Distillery is a nice place to visit. Log in at [www.luckybastard.ca](http://www.luckybastard.ca) To book a lobster fishing trip in Georgetown, PEI go to [www.tranquillitycoveadventures.com](http://www.tranquillitycoveadventures.com)

go into Indian masala tea.

My next adventure in Canada takes me two flights and a three-hour time difference to the east to a little place called Prince Edward Island. This is one of Canada's three Maritime Provinces and is the smallest in terms of land and population (it's most famously the home of Anne of Green Gables, but I'm after a different game). Yet, it is very big on seafood in any restaurant in Charlottetown — the capital.

My plan, however, is to go lobster fishing with Tranquillity Cove Adventures in Georgetown 50km to the west of Charlottetown. I spend a tranquil afternoon on that boat as the skipper and his crew teach us how to haul traps, handle lobsters and band their pincers.

Anticipating the fresh lobster that will feature for dinner tonight I realise that my time in Canada is coming to an end and that it has been quite the gastronomic journey.

Photographs by author