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WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS N.P., ALASKA Wilderness Unbound

No. 1 America's largest national park is also one of its least crowded—yet surprisingly accessible. At 13 million acres, this daunting expanse of mountains, rivers, and mammoth glaciers is six times the size of Yellowstone but gets only 40,000 annual visitors. "It's where Alaskans themselves go to get away," says Shannon Lowry, a former editor at *Alaska* magazine. The park and preserve offer backpacking, mountaineering, river running, glacier hiking, flightseeing, even big-game hunting—in the wildest of settings. "Some wildernesses have well-developed trails, signs, and maps," says park ranger Megan Brokaw. "But this park is truly undeveloped." Make the town of McCarthy—an eight-hour drive from Anchorage—your base of operations. From there you can mount a multiday adventure or dabble in nearby attractions, such as the historic ghost town of Kennecott or the Root Glacier. "You don't need permits," says Brokaw. "A fundamental part of the experience at this park is your freedom."

NUNAVUT, CANADA Adventures on Ice

No. 2 For top-notch adventure in the treeless tundra, head to Nunavut, Canada's newest territory (1999), which covers a fifth of the nation, extending north and west of Hudson Bay. Book ahead with a tour operator or all-inclusive lodge and plan on flying: No roads go to Nunavut.

"Sea kayak in the chiseled fjords of north Baffin Island," suggests Robin Duberow of Arctic Odysseys. "It's one of the few places you can see both land and sea mammals at once, including the elusive narwhal." Trek to the North Pole, sleep in an igloo, dogsled to the floe edge, and camp beneath the haunting aurora borealis. Finally, visit Inuit communities at Gjoa Haven on the Northwest Passage.

GASPÉ PENINSULA, QUEBEC Canada's French Coast

No. 3 Escape to Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula, where a decidedly French atmosphere permeates a landscape of mountains, forests, cliffs, and scattered coastal villages. Every

exertion brings special rewards. At the Gaspésie Park, 25 of the highest summits in Quebec make hiking sublime, also kayak or hang glide, and watch for a herd of rare woodland caribou. Follow the International Appalachian Trail, an extension of the famous Georgia-to-Maine route, to Cap Gaspé. "The views encompass the entire peninsula," says Jean-Guy Chavarie of Forillon National Park. Don't miss the Jardins de Métis, where 40 acres of English-style gardens include rare Himalayan blue poppies. Picnic on the Île Bonaventure, home to the continent's largest colony of gannet seabirds.

OREGON & CALIFORNIA COAST The Northwest Unspoiled

No. 4 For the legendary beauty of the Pacific Coast without the crowds, head to the 260-mile stretch between Florence, Oregon, and Eureka, California. It's practically untamed. Hike the whole route via the Oregon Coast Trail and the nearly complete California Coastal Trail, both with scenic beaches, bays, and forested bluffs. Or just drive, stopping at vari-