

GO GADGET GO

Don't hibernate, this winter. Instead celebrate with a roster of gadgets and gizmos to give you a warm glow



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Room For Improvement

Damn, we're late to the party. Studying Ontario's climate, whilst wrapping the North Star* season in Cape Breton, we'd hoped to catch the last breaths of warm weather over this way.

Only last week, Toronto temperatures were in the high teens, though by last Saturday (when we finally made it back to The Six) the mercury had dipped to 10 degrees.

But hey, we'll take it. It's good being home, even if being back on these shores reminds us that winter is looming.

Canadian summers are one thing, but when Mother Nature's chilly arsenal displays, we're all in.

And, from what we can see, it seems many of you are of a similar mind.

Yes indeed, folks, countrywide, are spending more time than ever out of the city during the colder calendar.

They're cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking and embarking upon a battery of adrenaline pumping pastimes that winter tempts.

With the surge in interest comes a surge in gadgets designed to make things easier and more fun. Come on — if you can employ new tech to make winter (at least feel) more temperate, why wouldn't you get out there?

WINTER IS ELECTRIC

With electric vehicles enjoying popularity, it's no surprise to learn that next level snowmobiles are similarly electrifying. The Envo SnowKart (\$\$5,879.00 at EbikeBC.com) is equipped for snowy adven-



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ture — from collecting firewood to backwoods exploration.

With up to two hours ride time per charge, the SnowKart makes short shrift of winter terrain including ice and hard packed slush. Thanks to electric tracks, and a front ski that will ride on 30 cms of powder, this sturdy, winter beast is well equipped.

HEY, JOE

Self-reward is important for health and happiness, so add a little "me time" to your schedule. Coffee, for instance, isn't simply a hot drink, it's a personal indulgence that brings a smile to caffeine loving lips everywhere.

For temperature-controlled Joe on the go, the Ember Travel Mug (\$229.98 at Chapters.Indigo.ca) sets an exact drinking temperature and

keeps it steady for up to three hours so your drink is never too hot, or indeed, cold.

DOWNHILL ALL THE WAY

If you're looking for an easy to navigate sled, the Hammerhead Pro HD by Yukon Charlie's (\$232, Amazon.ca) offers patented spring steering, polycarbonate skis and a powder coated 6,000-gauge alu frame to get you down the mountain at speed.

Add in lightweight construction to make up-hill returns a breeze, it just goes to show you can be fast, without being furious.

WINTER DRONING

The drone user should be totally comfortable, so wrap up in layers that can be adjusted when temperatures fluctuate. Touchscreen compatible gloves make sense too, so bag a pair to optimize your endeavours.

Keep your drone (and its batteries) warm by leaving in the car until required. After take-off, hover for a few minutes to ensure batteries have a good charge, and that operating temperature has been attained.

Land with ample battery charge in reserve — 20 to 30 per cent is ideal. If snowy, your camera may underexpose, so balance slightly above zero. Finally, just like sunglasses for the lens, use filters to soften any white-out effect.

Our friend Chris Meiorin is Drag Lake's veritable drone master — he recommends the Mavic Air 2 drone

(\$999, DroneShopCanada.ca).

HANDS-FREE ILLUMINATION

The Etsfmoa Unisex LED Beanie Hat with Light (\$17.99, Amazon.ca) is a one-size-fits-all toque with excellent insulation against winter.

With a built-in rechargeable LED light, three brightness settings and 10-hour runtime, it charges via a USB port. We use ours, after dark, when bringing in logs — it's a game changer.

CLIMB EVERY MOUNTAIN

The Polaris Sportsman Touring XP 1000 (from \$16,199, ATV.Polaris.com) is a welcome addition to an already stellar range of smart forest-bound vehicles.

Featuring all-wheel drive, engine braking, descent control and power steering, it's got all your needs wrapped up in one modern "moon buggy chic" package.

So, are you ready to use technology to boldly go where no one has gone before?

C'mon, if Canadian icon William Shatner can make it into outer space, a winter trip into the (looming) frozen forest should feel like a walk in the flippin' park. Hey, for what, precisely, are you waiting?

Watch for Colin and Justin on Colin and Justin's Hotel Hell (CBC Gem) and on Cityline (Citytv). Find the Colin and Justin Collection in stores across Canada. Visit www.colinandjustin.tv.

Fire it up

A fireplace is a great way to add instant heat and drama

JESSICA CINNAMON

The definition of "home" typically includes "warmth" in some capacity — whether it's a warm aesthetic, a cozy physical touch or a welcoming ambiance.

And in my design experience, it's usually a combination of all three. Perhaps one of the easiest ways to satisfy your craving for a warm home is by adding a fireplace.

Regardless of the season ahead, a fireplace is a desirable addition to any home — and I'd even argue — a great feature in most rooms.

Whether it's in a more traditional

setting, such as a living room or family room, or a less-conventional placement such as the kitchen, a bedroom or bathroom, a fireplace is a great way to add instant heat and drama.

CHOOSING A FIREPLACE

When choosing a fireplace, explore all your options, from wood-burning to gas and electric, each with its own pros and cons. Do your research. After all, this is a long-term investment, with many factors to consider.

Wood burning fireplaces are the OG — a classic option, delivering flickering light, heat, sound and a smell that can't be duplicated, however hard the "copycats" may try.

With that being said, wood-burning fireplaces are also far more involved when it comes to installation and investment, often requiring major structural work and a chimney built of masonry, which may not be a viable option in some homes.

Gas fireplaces are a popular choice for many homeowners today, much more affordable to install than their wood-burning counterparts.

In truth, gas units may even improve your home's energy effi-

ciency and reduce your utility bills. A gas fireplace can be installed virtually anywhere in your home, and with the simple flick of a switch, you can heat an entire room in minutes.

I recommend gas as an easy, low-maintenance alternative that still provides all the ambient beauty of a traditional wood-burning unit.

Lastly, electric fireplaces are a great plug-and-play option for condos or houses where a gas line is not possible. Electric fireplaces have come a long way in terms of their design attributes, offering a realistic flame and the sound of crackling logs, with some units even equipped with a realistic "smoke" effect — a great solution in the absence of a gas or wood-burning unit.

Tip: Consult with a designer and consider energy-efficiency, cost and the required ongoing maintenance of each type of fireplace unit, as well as what is feasible within the built structure of your space.

STYLES FOR MILES

As important to your fireplace's function is its style, I often remind my clients that the fireplace should complement your home's overall aesthetic.



The fireplace is a natural focal point and a gathering place in a room.

Remember, the fireplace will be the focal point of the room, so pay thoughtful attention to details such as the firebox and surround, the trim, mantel, chimney and the wall around it, to ensure a seamless addition.

The mantel is a great place to infuse your unique style preferences, in terms of the mantel itself and your chosen décor around it.

I love the look of a wood beam in lieu of the traditional mantel. An added touch unique stone can create an impressive look and depending on the details, can compliment a variety of different decor styles,

whether classic, contemporary or something in between.

The fireplace is a natural focal point and a gathering place in a room. So, bring on the cooler days and darker nights ahead.

In fact, with the right fireplace to complement your home, you might even welcome the dark days and long nights ahead of winter.

Jessica Cinnamon is principal designer and founder of Toronto based Jessica Cinnamon Design Inc., a design firm known for creating stylish and well curated interiors. Visit www.jessicacinnamondesign.com.