



# Jason Jones takes Alberta detour for third season of hit TBS comedy series

Eric Volmers, Calgary Herald  
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Jason Jones and Natalie Zea are shown in a still image from the comedy "Detour" in this undated handout image. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Jason Jones is on the set of his sitcom *The Detour*, preparing for Alaska's frigid weather. The problem is, it's fake frigid weather. In reality, the actor, comedian and co-creator of the American sitcom is preparing for the day at CL Ranch, west of Calgary, where temperatures were expected to hit uncomfortable highs by the afternoon.

"I'm currently dressed in four different down layers to simulate Alaska," says Jones, in a phone interview from the set earlier this week. "So that should be great."

Alberta will be the location for eight of the 10 episodes of Season 3 of TBS's *The Detour*, which he co-created with Samantha Bee, his wife and fellow *Daily Show* alumna, based on their own family vacations.

Season 1 was shot in Georgia and Season 2 in New York. Jones can't really complain about the heat. When the storyline took the fictional Parker-Randall clan to Alaska, Jones scouted Alberta during a few icy days last March. The experience made him relieved that he was planning a summer shoot.

Alberta, of course, has played Alaska before in films such as *Mystery, Alaska* and *The Bourne Legacy*. So it seemed a perfect fit.

"Here's the thing about it: It's played it so much that people have come to expect Alaska to look like Alberta," Jones says with a laugh. "If you actually went out to Alaska to shoot, people would say, 'Nah, that's not Alaska.'"

Production began earlier this month, with the crew also shooting in Exshaw, Cochrane, Canmore, Beiseker, Moose Mountain and Elbow Falls.

Nomadic Pictures, which is also the Calgary production company for FX's *Fargo*, the Vancouver-shot *Van Helsing* and AMC's *Hell on Wheels*, signed on to help bring the project to the province.

"I'm a huge fan of the show, I think *The Detour* is one of the funniest half-hour comedies," says Nomadic's Chad Oakes, who is a producer on Season 3 of *The Detour*. "(Nomadic) has never done half-hour comedy before. It was important that we try something different."

Because it is half-hour comedy, the contentious \$5-million cap per project provision the government puts on the Alberta Media Fund, which provides support for film and TV makers, book and magazine publishing and sound recordings, was not as big an issue.

"The budget was lower than shows like *Hell on Wheels* or *Fargo*, so it was under the cap," says Oakes.

Jones was born and raised in Hamilton, Ont., and is no stranger to Alberta. His aunt used to live in Cochrane and he has made a number trips here to ski. But he has never shot here before.

"The crew is world-class, they honestly are," Jones says. "It's an overused expression, but they really are an incredible crew and I'm not just saying that because they are all looking at me right now. They are an exceptional crew, in fact some of the best I've worked with. They are making my job easy."

Jones does not want to reveal too many plot points for Season 3, which will again air on Comedy Central in Canada. But when Season 2 ended, Nate Parker Jr. (Jones), wife Robin Randall (Natalie Zea) and children Delilah (Ashley Gerasimovich) and Jared (Liam Carroll) had good reason to escape to Alaska.

"Robin has had previous trouble with the law, the United States Postal Inspection Service to be specific, and we have kind of gone on the lam," Jones says. "Up to Alaska, the last place you can hide out from the constabulary, and we are just trying to fit in in one of the weirdest places in North America."

Jones and Bee were encouraged to pitch a show based on their own family dynamics by a friend who worked at TBS who thought the couple's real-life interaction with their three children would make for a funny premise.

"He said, 'Is there a way to encapsulate that in a show?'" says Jones. "We pitched this idea of constantly moving the family, because that's always when you are most off balance. The first season was, I don't want to say an homage to (National Lampoon's) *Vacation*, but it's our version of *Vacation*. The second season was based on when we moved to New York and the crap that happened there. And the third season is up in Alaska, where we actually travelled for another family vacation. So basically I just write my life and throw in a little adventure along the way."

The first two seasons also had a few interesting cameos, including parts played by James Cromwell, Judge Reinhold and Bee, who played Nate's mother in the series. Season 3 will be no exception.

"I'm staring at the great Gordon Pinsent right now, and we're about to have a little fun," says Jones.

There will be others, but Jones doesn't want to give everything away. He does offer one intriguing hint.

Fans of The Daily Show will remember Jones's famous 2008 "Real Americans of Wasilla, Alaska" segment, where he visited the hometown of Sarah Palin, the former vice-presidential candidate and Alaska governor.

"Funny enough, the reason I went up to do those pieces was that great governor that we got to cover," Jones said. "We have a member of that governor's family cameoing in our show this year. I'll leave it at that."