



A good backcountry lodge can put together a safe ski program for guests regardless of the conditions. The outing at Purcell Mountain Lodge includes windswept plateaus with views of the Selkirk Mountains.

"My standard of care is 'would I take my son out there?'" Latimer tells us our first morning.

He also shares that the Canadian Avalanche Centre has just issued a special avalanche alert due to the unstable snow conditions.

"So we're staying inside and playing monopoly?" I ask hopefully.

Wrong. A good backcountry lodge can put together a safe ski program for guests regardless of the conditions, Latimer assures me.

Over the next three days he does just that. Five of us ski across windswept plateaus with magnificent views of the Selkirk Mountains. We hear the thunder of falling ice in nearby Glacier National Park. We whoop joyfully down a forested glade in thigh-high powder. We breathe in the resinous scent of fir trees, ski beside a babbling brook trimmed with sparkling snow, sip hot tea in the shelter of a snow-drift and wonder whether we might just be in Hawaii, the sun on our faces is that warm. And we do it all safely.

Buffalo Mountain Lodge

We spend our last night at another Canadian Rocky Mountain Resort — this one in Banff atop Tunnel Moun-

tain. Like the restaurants in its sister lodges, Sleeping Buffalo offers a distinctive menu of Rocky Mountain cuisine and a wine list that has repeatedly won The Wine Spectator's Award of Excellence.

But it's the post and beam architecture I'll remember most about Buffalo Mountain Lodge, which carries through to our room. It's so cosy with its feather duvet, wood-burning fireplace, old-fashioned claw-footed bathtub and heated slate bathroom floor that we don't want to leave, not even to ski. So we don't. The next day we arrange for a late checkout and lounge in our pyjamas until it's finally time to go. Downhill and cross-country skiing at nearby Mt. Norquay, Sunshine Village and Lake Louise will just have to wait for another time.

More packages available

Canadian Rocky Mountain Resorts and Purcell Mountain Lodge offer two more Lake to Peaks Alpine Escape packages this year: April 2-8 and April 9-15 with more to come next year. Rates start at \$2,100 per person, plus tax and include minimum six nights accommodation, most meals, helicopter flights and guided skiing at Purcell Mountain Lodge.



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