

Luxury Hideouts

in the Canadian Rockies

Discover Canada's most magnificent accommodations for a perfect mountain getaway.

By CAROLYNE KAUSER-ABBOTT

The majestic Canadian Rockies: ice-covered, serrated ledges of granite and limestone. It is difficult to imagine the era when these mountains were submerged by ocean currents. Long after, the dinosaurs disappeared, the waters receded, and the craggy cliffs attracted nomadic tribes in search of the healing attributes from energy vortices. Canada's first explorers crossed the immense range on horseback, looking to improve their fortune in search of golden ore. The vast landscape was then somewhat tamed with the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in 1885 as coast-to-coast travel could now be accomplished with relative ease.

Commencing in the 1880s, Canadian Pacific Hotels constructed some of Canada's most iconic and magnificent accommodations. Many of these properties, such as the Banff Springs Hotel and Chateau Lake Louise, endure today as attractive lodging for travelers from around the globe. These hotels are postcard-perfect with striking architecture and stunning natural backdrops.

As fabulous as these mountain properties are, they have certainly lost the exclusive, luxurious charm of yesteryear, drawing visitors by the busload. However, escaping the camera-toating crowds to soak up some real mountain luxury is still possible. Following is a hypothetical itinerary for a few precious days in some Canadian Rockies' hideaways – a perfect mountain getaway.

Itinerary: Banff and beyond

The main drag in the resort town of Banff is festooned with souvenir shops, sports outlets and tourist menus, offering many opportunities to underwhelm a seasoned traveler. However, perched high on Sulphur Mountain below Banff's Upper Hot Springs, the Eden Dining Room in the Rimrock Resort Hotel rises well above the average. This dining room has received the auspicious AAA 5-Diamond award for Chef David Hassell's innovative cuisine. Working with local

products, his inspired tasting menus include Saskatchewan grains, Alberta elk and west-coast sturgeon. After dinner, you can enjoy a digestive in the wood-paneled bar and then retreat to room number 800, one of two signature Grandview suites with a stunning Bow Valley view and rich mahogany furnishings. Tomorrow your destination is Lake Louise.

Built in 1942, the architecture and décor of the Post Hotel & Spa is reminiscent of Switzerland. The design choices have much to do with long-time owners André and George Schwarz, two brothers with roots in the Swiss Alps. This property has long been associated with the prestigious Relais & Châteaux brand, and their impeccable service starts at the front desk, where guests are invited to make themselves at home. You can take a seat by the roaring fire and gaze towards the icy blue Victoria Glacier. Or curl up under a toasty blanket and read a book in the wood-carved envelope of the library. A day spent hiking the local trails is good reason to indulge in the Temple Mountain Spa or to find a comfortable perch at the bar for a specialty cocktail.

Located in Yoho National Park, [Emerald Lake] is aptly named after its surreal turquoise waters. A lakeside track of just over three miles allows you to view the remarkable water from every angle.

The Post has 94 inviting guest rooms all stylishly furnished with natural pine, plush seating, blissful linens and thick, inviting duvets. When you reserve, ask for one of the 50 rooms with a wood-burning fireplace, where the rundle-stone hearth and overstuffed furnishings may tempt you into a catnap.

The Watson House, named after the hotel's original owner, is a 3,000-square-foot cabin with room for eight. It is essentially a private home, complete with an inviting terrace with views of the flowing aqua-colored creek, plus a full kitchen – not that you will feel like cooking, with the Post Hotel's renowned dining room and Wine Spectator Grand Award cellar just steps away. For a memorable occasion, private dining among some of the 23,500 bottles (2,200 different labels) can be arranged.

Heading west from Lake Louise you quickly reach the British Columbia (B.C.) provincial border marked by steep peaks, a seemingly-endless evergreen forest and a single strand of asphalt. Field, a hamlet with a population of just over 200 people, is the first settlement of any note after Lake Louise. Field is known for rewarding hiking trails and rock climbing within easy reach of the village. Initially, Field was established as a tent camp during the era of railway construction. Once the metal rails were set in place, the CPR focused marketing efforts towards the adventurous tourist. Wealthy voyagers were thus attracted to mountain towns and secluded lodges. For a time, Field enjoyed some of that business as visitors flocked to the Mount Stephen House, which was built in 1886. As the Canadian economy



Pipestone River



Emerald Lake sunrise

developed and passenger rail travel was replaced by freight, the importance of Field declined, and the Mount Stephen House was torn down.

Today, savvy visitors arrive in Field for a combination of outdoor pursuits and a gem of a restaurant, aptly named the Truffle Pigs Bistro. Run by three foodies, the restaurant is open most days for lunch and dinner. Their lunch menu boasts hearty fare; try a juicy burger from their 'Patty' list. The Bistro's dinner selection reads like a Canadian map of coast-to-coast regional ingredients; you might be tempted by Boss Hog's Boo-Ya-Base with PEI mussels or Green Salt Duck Leg Confit cassoulet – dishes inspired by global flavors.

Located just a few minutes away from Field is Emerald Lake Lodge, a sparkling bauble in the Canadian Rocky Mountain Resorts' group of hotels. Located in Yoho National Park, this lake is aptly named after its surreal turquoise waters. A lakeside track of just over three miles allows you to view the remarkable water from every angle. The main building is the base camp for cocktails at the unique bar, salvaged from a Yukon saloon, or for sumptuous dining inspired by early railway travelers.

Private cabins surround the main lodge with accommodation for 85 guests. The term 'cabin' may not immediately conjure up thoughts of blissful luxury, but once you see the stone fireplaces and down-filled duvets, you will be convinced. The most exclusive of all is the Point Cabin, boasting panoramic views from the wrap-around balcony and two-person hot tub.

As appealing as it is to cocoon in a fluffy down-filled duvet staring out at Emerald Lake, there is one more stop on the travel agenda. The Kicking Horse Resort in Golden B.C., a skiers' paradise in winter months, is transformed in summer into a hiker and mountain biker heaven. After a stunning 12-minute ride on the Golden Eagle Express gondola, you arrive at the Eagle's Eye restaurant. Perched on the top of the mountain at 8,033 feet, this restaurant can boast that it is the highest dining room in Canada. The culinary experience and the 360-degree views of five Canadian national parks will not disappoint. After a delicious meal of farm-to-fork creations prepared by Sylvain Bourget and Marcus Molfetner, you may want to check into one of two exclusive alpine suites.

The Eagle's Nest suites are as private as it gets. Once the restaurant is closed and the last guests have descended to the village, you are left in solitude in the Canadian Rockies, snuggled under your eiderdown-duvet with a view to die for. ■



The Rimrock Resort Hotel

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Golden, British Columbia, V0A 1H0
Canada
Tel: +1 (250) 439 5425
Web: www.kickinghorsesort.com

EMERALD LAKE LODGE
Address: P.O. Box 10
Banff, Alberta, V0A 1G0
Canada
Tel: +1 (250) 343 6321
Web: www.cmr.com/emerald

POST HOTEL & SPA
Address: 200 Pipestone Road
P.O. Box 69
Lake Louise, Alberta, T0L 1E0
Canada
Tel: +1 (403) 522 3989
Web: www.posthotel.com

THE RIMROCK RESORT HOTEL
Address: 300 Mountain Ave.
P.O. Box 1110
Banff, Alberta, T1L 1J2
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Tel: +1 (403) 762 3356
Web: www.rimrockresort.com

TRUFFLE PIGS BISTRO
Address: 100 Center Street
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Canada
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The Eden Dining room at The Rimrock Resort Hotel.



Patio dining