

WINTER

(remember to breathe)



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WINTER CAMPING
IN ALBERTA

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ALBERTA BAKERIES HEAT UP

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A FEW OF OUR FAVOURITE THINGS



Imagine yourself here: after a long and busy day on the mountain-sized toboggan hill, you put on your favourite cuddliest sweater and settle in with something hot – I meant cocoa, but you’re right, you need a buddy here. You cozy up together and watch the fire, while puffy snow sparkles and floats outside the window.

Alberta winter has warm things, like fireplaces, log cabins, hot cinnamon buns – and also nice cool winter things, like skating, skiing and winter walks (big and small). For this magazine, we gathered everyone’s winter trip ideas from the nice hot ones to the ice cold ones. Fire and ice

– plus some brave ideas that not very many people have thought of yet, like how to stay warm while winter camping. Here are just some of the things we love best about winter in Alberta.

We’ve Got Events

We’ve collected a bunch of fun winter events around the province, like World Cup skiing, winter carnivals and ice sculpture competitions. And just in case the surprising number of chili cook-offs didn’t make the list inside, you can always check out travelalberta.com for more events.

We’ve also got a whole story just about holiday traditions, like craft sales, light-ups, sing-alongs and more craft sales.

Outside Ideas

We have a story called “new and cool” about kick sledding – that sounds cool – lugging and tubing at Norquay. And if you like that you’ll probably like the winter camping how-to, where to winter hike or our ideas about ice skating and ice climbing. And as the home of the Canadian Rockies and the Birkie, we Albertans also proudly share a lot of love for skiing – so there’s a three-pager on downhill, cross-country and snowboarding.

Warm-ups

It’s almost as if the magazine has gone ahead and read my mind with the next few. We have a list of snug and cozy central Alberta guest ranches open in the winter, a recipe for comfort food and get this, the best small town bakeries. (I can’t wait to try some new bakeries – I hope there are sticky buns).

We hope, dear reader, you find a new winter holiday idea from our magazine and maybe find out when your traditional every-year favourites are happening too.

Happy winter travels,
The Travel Alberta Team

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CARVE, SHAVE, GLIDE AND CLIMB IT

DURING WINTER IN ALBERTA,
ICE RULES



By Joanne Elves

Scarves, mitts, toques and boots!

In Alberta we embrace the snow, ice and cold. We twirl, glide, slide and ride on ice. Take a spin around the province with me to see how we celebrate the cold.

On Frozen Pond

Oh yeah, we are Canadian and we love hockey. In Alberta we scrape the snow off a pond or lake, find a pair of boots to mark the goal crease and yell, "Game ON!" It's that simple.

Sometimes we take it seriously and enter tournaments. Take for instance the Sylvan Lake Pond Hockey Tournament (sylvanlake.ca). It started in 2009 with 34 teams lacing up their skates in -33°C weather. Sounds crazy, but chasing a puck as if the Stanley Cup is on the line, you don't feel the cold. Last year with Walter Gretzky dropping the puck on the opening faceoff and a few fans in the crowd dressed as the Hanson Brothers, it really did feel like the big league. Tournaments are held throughout the province including Lake Louise and of course anywhere we can scrape out a rink.

Alberta Pond Hockey Championships

Feb 14-16, 2014

albertapondhockey.com

Lac Cardinal

Lake Louise Pond Hockey Classic

Feb 22-23, 2014

banfflakelouise.com

Skate all Day and Into the Night

We don't always chase pucks in Alberta. Sometimes it's all about the outdoors being soooo quiet. I love heading out on a moonlit night when all I hear is my skate blades etching a line in the ice as I glide along the frozen meandering creek. I want to look up at the star cluttered sky but I know I'll trip into a snow bank. Maybe I'll wait until I'm back at the fire to admire the sky.

Finding a frozen pond, creek, river or lake in an Alberta winter is easy. Many places like Bowness Lagoon and Princes' Island lagoon in Calgary, Bower Ponds in Red Deer, Muskoseepi Park in Grande Prairie, and the stunning Lake Louise in Banff National Park offer popular natural rinks and meandering

creek trails swept for us to discover our inner figure skating star. Sylvan Lake offers a 5-km loop and I hear the road at the Cypress Hills campground will be a skating loop this winter. The gentle rolls of the road will be tricky but fun!

Learn to Carve Ice and Snow into Fanciful Creations

Have you ever admired an ice carving and wondered just how the delicate, crystal-like creation was made? Would you believe with chainsaws, axes, saws and hairdryers? While we are at the annual ice festivals throughout the province, we go to at least one ice carving competition to learn the art. It's amazing to watch as the pros cut, saw, grind, shave and melt blocks of ice into breathtaking mystical, medieval or fanciful figures. Then, we grab our little block of ice or compressed snow to bust, hack and break it into creations called shards, shavings and snow. It doesn't matter what we make – it's a fun way to experience winter.

Continued on page 6



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Walk or Climb it

Sliced into the seams of the Rocky Mountains there are canyon walks to watch the thundering waterfalls but in winter it all stops still. It's ice! Everywhere I look ice clings to rocks and cascades over cliffs. Frozen forms like billowing pillows lie at the bottom of solid waterfalls. Maligne Canyon Ice Walk in Jasper National Park is one of Alberta's deepest and narrowest canyons where the commotion is silenced by the blue chill of winter. I love strapping cleats on my boots and walking the icy trail under the towering walls to where ice climbers congregate to climb the thickest frozen falls. It's fun and pretty intense to watch them manoeuvre up the ripples, pinnacles and giant icicles using ice axes and sharp toe picks on their crampons.

I'm not brave enough to climb but maybe I'll return tonight with a headlamp to explore the canyon in the dark!

jasper.travel | 780-851-6236

Do the Ice Dance for Pike, Perch and Rainbow Trout

No, we are not fishing for ice – we are fishing through a hole in the ice for fish. And believe it or not, it's a great way to spend the day with family or a group of friends.

Our favourite spots up north are Calling Lake and Slave Lake for massive walleye. In central Alberta, it's Gull Lake for white fish and for bragging rights. Sylvan Lake is the place to fish for those big pike but usually we end the day with a tasty perch in the pan. Another great place to catch some perch is south in Elkwater.

My husband has a secret that helps him catch the most fish anytime we head to Chain Lakes south of Calgary. It's not a fancy lure, or an expensive fishing rod – it's the Great Alberta Ice Fishing Dance. I'm not making this up. He does some crazy jig to keep warm and sure enough the rainbow trout jump on.

For more information on ice activities in Alberta check out travelalberta.com



ICE CARNIVALS IN ALBERTA

WHEN WINTER HANDS US A FROZEN LANDSCAPE, WE MAKE IT INTO A FESTIVAL!

Ice Magic Festival is part of Banff National Park's Snow Days in the village of Lake Louise and the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise. It's like walking into a shaken snow globe. During the day, skating with the ice queen through her life-sized ice castle on the lake is always fun, and wandering through the ice sculptures in the evening – magical.

Ice Magic | Jan 17-26, 2014 | Snow Days | Jan 11-Feb 9, 2014
banfflakelouise.com | 403-762-8421

Ice on Whyte Festival brings us out of the house and into a winter wonderland to explore local restaurants and to watch the live music. The kids love to watch the ice carvers from around the world create whimsical, larger-than-life sculptures.

Jan 24-Feb 2, 2014 | iceonwhyte.ca | 780-758-5878

Silver Skate Festival in Hawrelak Park is Edmonton's longest running winter festival. Riding in sleighs pulled by big, thick-coated horses and joining in on a game of "jam can curling" are our favourite activities here.

Feb 14-23, 2014 | silverskatefestival.org | 780-488-1960

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WINTER ESCAPE PACKAGES



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www.howlingdogtours.com
1-877-364-7533 or 403-678-9588
mushing@telusplanet.net

UNLEASH THE MUSER – FAMILY SPECIAL

Adventure by dogsled in the Canadian Rockies near Canmore. Enjoy a two hour tour with your team of friendly huskies and a professional guide. Plenty of dog interaction and great photo opportunities.

STARTING AT
\$300

- PACKAGE INCLUDES**
- Two hour tour for two adults and one child
 - Transportation included from Banff or Canmore
 - Snacks and hot beverage

Valid Dec 1, 2013-Apr 30, 2014. Plus taxes. For two adults and one child (age 2-9), trail permitting. Not valid Saturdays or Dec 21-31, 2013; Jan 1, 2014; Feb 15-17, 2014, and Apr 18-20, 2014.

ANDERSON VACATIONS



301-1117 1 Street SW, Calgary
www.canadatravelsolution.com
1-866-814-7378 or 403-245-6200
info@andersonvacations.ca

SNOW TRAIN EXCURSION TO JASPER

All Aboard the Snow Train! Board the famous "VIA Rail Canadian" in Edmonton and take a scenic train ride through Winter Wonderland to the beautiful town of Jasper. Experience the mountain magic atmosphere of this picturesque small town and enjoy a fun snowshoeing adventure as well as a guided ice walk through the spectacular Maligne Canyon.

STARTING AT
\$699

- PACKAGE INCLUDES**
- VIA Rail from Edmonton to Jasper in Economy Class
 - Three nights of accommodation in Jasper
 - Discovery Snowshoe Adventure
 - Maligne Canyon Ice Walk

Valid Nov 15, 2013-Mar 31, 2014. Plus taxes. Prices are per person, based on double occupancy, and availability.

BANFF SPRUCE GROVE INN



545 Banff Avenue, Banff
www.banffsprucegroveinn.com
1-800-879-1991 or 403-762-3301
res@banffvoyagerinn.com

EVENING ICEWALK AT JOHNSTON CANYON

The Spruce Grove Inn has partnered with Discover Banff Tours to bring you a unique unforgettable Winter Experience. Trek along steel walkways to the famous Lower Falls of Johnston Canyon. Along the way, guests will pass through wildlife habitat, experience spectacular views, and learn how the canyon was formed!

STARTING AT
\$109⁵⁰

- PACKAGE INCLUDES**
- One night accommodations at the Spruce Grove Inn
 - Evening Ice Walk (two adult passes)
 - Bonus: Continental breakfast & souvenir head lamp

Valid Dec 7, 2013-Apr 1, 2014. Plus taxes. Per person. Subject to availability. Black-out dates: Dec 23, 2013-Jan 3, 2014.

DELTA BANFF ROYAL CANADIAN LODGE



459 Banff Avenue, Banff
www.deltabanff.com
1-800-661-1225 or 403-762-3307

WINTER AT THE LODGE

Get cozy in your room after a relaxing soak at the Banff Upper Hot Springs and wake up to a delicious full breakfast in our Evergreen Restaurant before a day in winter wonderland.

STARTING AT
\$199

- PACKAGE INCLUDES**
- One night accommodation with breakfast in the Evergreen Restaurant
 - Two adult passes to the Banff Upper Hot Springs
 - Free Self or Valet Parking

Valid Nov 1, 2013-Apr 30, 2014. Plus taxes. Per night. Based on double occupancy in a Delta room, other room types available for an applicable fee. Subject to availability. Rates vary on seasonality.

CHARLTON'S CEDAR COURT



513 Banff Avenue, Banff
www.charltonresorts.com
1-800-661-1225 or 403-762-4485
res@charltonresorts.com

WINTER WARM UP

A Classic Mountain Getaway awaits at Charlton's Cedar Court.

STARTING AT
\$129

- PACKAGE INCLUDES**
- One night accommodation
 - A welcome gift of sparkling wine and truffles
 - Two adult passes to the Banff Upper Hot Springs
 - Continental breakfast in our breakfast nook

Valid Nov 1, 2013-Apr 30, 2014. Plus taxes. Per night, based on double occupancy in a deluxe room, other room types available for an applicable fee. Subject to availability. Rates vary on seasonality.

THE COAST PLAZA HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTRE



1316 33 Street NE, Calgary
www.calgaryplaza.com
1-800-661-1464 or 403-248-8888
res@calgaryplaza.com

SHOPAHOLICS GETAWAY

One night accommodation in a comfort room for two, \$50 shopping voucher to one of Calgary's largest shopping centres, breakfast for two, complimentary beverages in Barrington's Lounge.

STARTING AT
\$169

- PACKAGE INCLUDES**
- One night accommodation for two people
 - Two breakfasts
 - \$50 shopping voucher to CrossIron Mills Shopping Centre
 - Complimentary beverages in Barrington's Lounge

Valid Nov 1, 2013-Jan 31, 2014. Plus taxes, per night, per couple. Weekends only (Friday, Saturday, Sunday). One \$50 voucher per night.



SCROOGE SKI PACKAGE

If you want to pinch a few pennies, and still give your spirit a lift, this unique Jasper ski getaway is right for you!

STARTING AT
\$152

PACKAGE INCLUDES

- One night accommodation
- Marmot Basin lift ticket
- Lunch at Marmot Basin
- Breakfast at Mountain Park Lodges
- 15% off any additional meals at any Mountain Park Lodges restaurants

Jasper
www.mpljasper.com
1-888-852-7737
sales@mpljasper.com

Valid Opening Day-Dec 19, 2013. Plus taxes, per person, based on double occupancy. Based on a standard room at the Marmot Lodge. Other room types and prices available. Limited availability. Not valid with any other offer. Some restrictions apply.



SHOPPING EXTRAVAGANZA

Enjoy a \$50 gift card per night for use at CrossIron Mills when you book the Shopping Package. Book online or call 1-866-716-8101 and ask for rate code PACKHOL.

STARTING AT
\$179

PACKAGE INCLUDES

- One night accommodation
- \$50 gift card per night for use at CrossIron Mills
- Mall directory and CrossIron Mills souvenir items
- Special offers throughout the mall

2620 32 Ave NE, Calgary
www.sheratoncavaliercalgary.com/shop
403-291-0192 or 1-866-716-8101
reservations@sheratoncalgary.ca

Valid until Mar 31, 2014. Plus taxes, subject to availability at the time of reservation. Three night maximum, one \$50 voucher per night. Non-exchangeable and non-refundable. Available Friday through Sunday night stays. Services offered in the package are non-exchangeable and non-refundable. Not to be combined with other offers or promotions and subject to change.



BANFF ADVENTURER

The perfect weekend getaway. So much to do and enjoy in Banff National Park. This package is perfect for a getaway in winter wonderland. The Heli Snowshoeing Excursion will ensure you never forget your time in the Rockies and the Evening Icewalk and Campfire will let you relax by the fire while listening to some of the great stories about this mystical place.

STARTING AT
\$864

PACKAGE INCLUDES

- Two nights accommodation in Banff
- Three day mid size car rental
- Heli snowshoeing excursion
- Evening Guided Icewalk at Johnston Canyon with campfire

www.canadatravelsolution.com
1-866-814-7378 or 403-245-6200
info@andersonvacations.ca

Valid Nov 15, 2013-Mar 31, 2014. Plus taxes. Per person, based on availability and double occupancy. Based on seasonality.



STAY LONGER AND SAVE – JASPER

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- 20% ON FOUR NIGHTS OR MORE!

76 Connaught Drive, Jasper
www.sawridgejasper.com
1-800-661-6427 or 780-852-5111
jasper@sawridge.com

Valid Nov 01-Dec 22, 2013 and Jan 2-Apr 30, 2014. Plus taxes. Based on three night stay for two people, per night, subject to availability. Blackout dates: Nov 7-8-9, 2013; Feb 14-15-16, 2014; Mar 28-Apr 05, 2014.

StayInMedicineHat.com

You won't believe what happens here!

Medicine Hat is known for being a little bit off the beaten path. Maybe that's why you can literally reach out and touch most of the experiences still. You can walk through a 100 year old pottery factory, feeling the aura of workers from the past and there are no ropes or barricades. You can sit four feet away from multi-platinum selling artists like Matthew Good and soak in the energy from the band. You can borrow snowshoes for free and truly be the only person on the path enjoying the serenity of nature. All this and more is waiting for you in Medicine Hat. We have Great Deals available for whatever you want to immerse yourself in (and they make trip planning easy) all listed on StayInMedicineHat.com/great-deals.

For those that are looking for an up close experience surrounded by welcoming locals, Medicine Hat is your next destination. But don't take our word for it, ask our friends online: [facebook.com/staymedicinehat](https://www.facebook.com/staymedicinehat) twitter.com/staymedicinehat

#thishappenshere



We are thrills.



WEST EDMONTON MALL

westedmontonmall.com facebook.com/wemattractions twitter.com/official_wem

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SLIDE INTO FAMILY FUN!

Welcome to Southern Alberta's only four-star hotel. Featuring twin giant waterslides, full service casino, luxury day spa, restaurants, lounges and so much more! We have something for the entire family. Come relax and enjoy some family fun.

STARTING AT
\$99

PACKAGE INCLUDES

- One night accommodation
- Complimentary use of our giant indoor waterslide park, hot tub, lane pool, kiddies pool and sauna

1051 Ross Glen Drive SE,
Medicine Hat
www.medhatlodge.com
1-800-661-8095 or 403-529-2222
res@medhatlodge.com

Valid until Mar 30, 2014. Plus taxes, subject to availability. Blackout date: Dec 31, 2013.

HISTORIC SITES & MUSEUMS,
ALBERTA CULTURE



EXPERIENCE SOUTHERN ALBERTA'S HISTORY ANNUAL PASS

Purchase the Annual Pass for the Provincial Historic Sites and Museums in southern Alberta, including: Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, Frank Slide Interpretive Centre, Remington Carriage Museum and Lougheed House, then plan to visit these sites as often as you wish for a whole year.

STARTING AT
\$20
for adults

PACKAGE INCLUDES

- Unlimited access for one year
- Sites are open year-round



www.HeadSmashedIn.org (403) 553-2731
www.RemingtonCarriageMuseum.org (403) 653-5139
www.frankslide.org (403) 562-7388
www.LougheedHouse.com (403) 244-6333

Valid for one full year from the purchase date. Taxes included, cannot be combined with other discount offers. Passes to be purchased at the sites listed.

FANTASYLAND HOTEL



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Enjoy an unforgettable night in a theme room starting at \$198 plus your choice of one of two special packages.

STARTING AT
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PACKAGE INCLUDES

- One night in theme room of your choice
- One of the following add-on packages:
Movie Night In – Bottle of wine with your choice of in-room movie.
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17700 87 Avenue,
Edmonton, AB, T5T 4V4
www.fantasylandhotel.com
1-800-RESERVE (737-3783)

Valid until Dec 23, 2013. Plus tax, subject to availability. Call-in only. Some restrictions and blackout dates may apply.

HIGH COUNTRY INN



RELAX IN THE ROCKIES

Get away for a relaxing retreat to the Canadian Rockies this winter at the High Country Inn. Enjoy two nights accommodation with a delicious deluxe continental breakfast both mornings and one fabulous dinner at Ticino's Restaurant or El Toro's. Then ease your cares away with passes to the Banff Upper Hot Springs.

STARTING AT
\$269

PACKAGE INCLUDES

- Two nights accommodation in a standard room
- Deluxe continental breakfast for two (both mornings)
- One dinner for two at Ticino's or El Toro's
- Two passes for the Banff Upper Hot Springs

419 Banff Avenue, Banff
www.banffhighcountryinn.com
1-800-661-1244
info@banffhighcountryinn.com

Valid Jan 5-May 15, 2014. Plus taxes, based on double occupancy and subject to availability. Dinner choices are limited to select menu. Present coupon at time of booking and upon check-in.



101 Clematis Avenue, Waterton Park
www.watertonlakeslodge.com
403-859-2150
reservations@watertonlakeslodge.com

ENJOY THE SERENITY OF WATERTON

Come stay in Waterton this winter and experience the serenity of the park. Relax, restore and indulge in delectable food from Vimy's Lounge and Grill. To enhance your package, add ski or snowshoe rentals to experience some of the best backcountry and cross-country touring in Canada.

STARTING AT
\$99

PACKAGE INCLUDES

- One night in a standard room
- Dinner at Vimy's Lounge & Grill
- \$50 to include your choice of snowshoes, cross-country skis or backcountry tourism skis for two

Valid Nov 12-Dec 19, 2013 and Jan 2-Apr 30, 2014. Plus taxes. Subject to availability, based on double occupancy. Not valid on Holiday Weekends. Cannot be combined with any other offers or special packages. Dinner voucher \$20 value per person. \$149 with ski/snowshoe rentals.



1101 Bow Valley Trail, Canmore
www.georgetowninn.ca
403-678-3439
info@georgetowninn.ca

SNUGGLE IN THE SNOW

Stay in our unique Victoria Suites while snuggling in front of your own fireplace and your very own private two person Jacuzzi tub. Enjoy some red, white or sparkling wine while sharing a Ploughman's Appetizer Platter. Wake up refreshed and marvel at Canmore's winter beauty while feasting on our "Famous Stuffed French Toast" or other scrumptious breakfast items. Sound good? Then call us now to book!

STARTING AT
\$199

PACKAGE INCLUDES

- One night in a Victoria Suite equipped with fireplace and jacuzzi tub
- Bottle of red, white or sparkling wine with a Ploughman's Appetizer Platter
- Breakfast for two

Valid Nov 12-Dec 19, 2013 and Jan 2-Apr 30, 2014. Plus taxes. Per couple. Not valid on Holiday Weekends and is based on availability. Cannot be combined with any other offers or special packages.



140 Kananaskis Way, Canmore
www.mysticsprings.ca
403-609-0333
stay@mysticsprings.ca

SPEC "TUBULAR" FAMILY FUN

Canmore's Ultimate Family Resort is offering a spectubular time in a two bedroom/two bathroom chalet! Connect and laugh as only a family can while tubing down a mountain and then swimming in Canmore's largest outdoor heated pool!

STARTING AT
\$269

PACKAGE INCLUDES

- One night in our two bedroom two bathroom chalets
- Tubing for two adults and two children at Mt. Norquay
- Two free pool noodles for the outdoor heated pool

Valid Nov 12-Dec 19, 2013 and Jan 2-Apr 30, 2014. Plus taxes, based on availability, based on a family of four, midweek or weekend. Not valid on Holiday Weekends. Cannot be combined with any other offers or special packages.



1818 Mountain Avenue, Canmore
www.silvercreekcanmore.ca
403-678-4242
reservations@silvercreekcanmore.ca

ZEN AND BREAKFAST AT SILVER CREEK

Stay in a mountain zen inspired one bedroom condo, relax and soak in a two person tub, sleep in peace, wake up refreshed and then savour a delicious breakfast for two at Canmore's Georgetown Inn, featuring their signature stuffed French toast and full English breakfast.

STARTING AT
\$185

PACKAGE INCLUDES

- One night in a one bedroom suite equipped with a two person soaker tub
- Two hot full breakfasts, coffee, tea and juice at Canmore's Georgetown Inn (gratuity and breakfast sides not included)

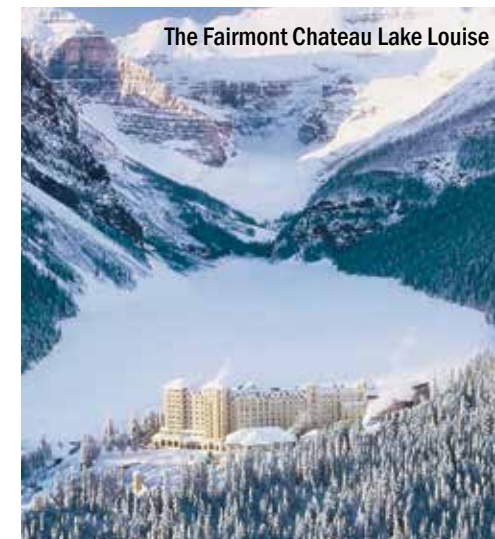
Valid Nov 12-Dec 19, 2013 and Jan 2-Apr 30, 2014. Subject to availability, based on two people, not valid on Holiday Weekends. Cannot be combined with any other offers or special packages.



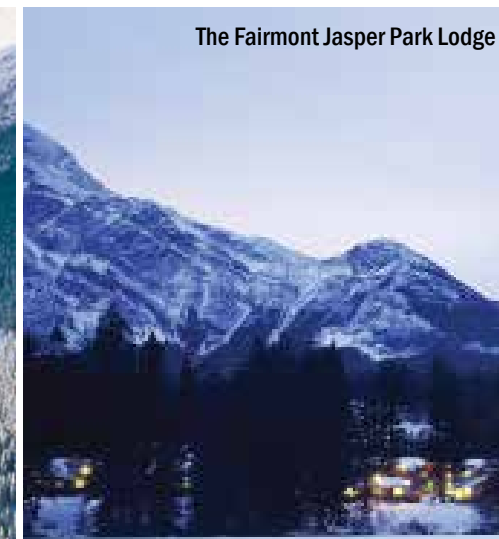
SKI PACKAGES
STARTING FROM
\$259*

Skiers will marvel at the natural beauty of Fairmont's Rocky Mountain ski destinations. Ragged peaks, high cliffs, and glistening blue lakes overlaid by snowy blankets that dazzle in the bright sunlight. If you crave waist-deep powder and black diamond runs, or just an afternoon on the bunny hill, it doesn't get better than this.

***Packages include accommodation and lift tickets. Package inclusions may vary based on the destination. For reservations or more information please call 1-800-257-7544 or visit fairmont.com/ski**



The Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise



The Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge



The Fairmont Banff Springs

THE GREAT HOLIDAY FEAST

By Cinda Chavich

We usually just call it The Big Bird – and I don't mean the fluffy yellow fellow from kids' TV.

The Bird is the holiday turkey and at this time of year, you'll find one being carved at Christmas dinner tables all across Alberta. It's a tradition going back to those Dickensian feasts, the steamed puddings and roasts that arrived on the prairies with the first British ranchers in the late 1800s.

Luckily, they found wild turkeys for their celebrations. The native Merriam's turkey, with its glossy brown plumage and bright blue head, can still be found along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

And I'm looking one right in the eye here at Dirt Willy Game Bird Farm just outside Edmonton – an impressive creature, its bronze tail feathers glinting iridescent colours and fanned out in a spectacular display.

Most of the turkeys we consume today are the white domestic type, but I'm here for the premium local bird, the kind Alberta's top chefs serve this time of year. It will make a smaller roast, but once it's brined and stuffed with classic bread, onion and celery stuffing, I'm sure it will be the tastiest bird on the block.

Indulgent gourmets head to the best local butchers for a "turducken" – a boneless turkey stuffed with a boneless duck and a chicken – and fill it with sage and chestnut or wild rice stuffing.

Alongside the main event, I'm serving "the trimmings" – mashed potatoes and gravy, the aforementioned stuffing, and a variety of homegrown vegetables. Local purveyors are on my grocery list, so it's off to one of the city farmers' markets that run most weekends, even in winter (albertamarkets.com).

With sweet carrots from Beck Farms, a plate of pickled asparagus and beets from

Edgar Farms, and potatoes from Poplar Bluff on the side, designing a feast around Alberta products is easy. I'll even get fresh salad greens and tomatoes from greenhouse growers like organic farmer Gull Valley.

Most families have a favourite dish that's part of the feast. Like so many prairie settlers, my ancestors came from Eastern Europe, so perogies and cabbage rolls are part of my Christmas dinner menu. For dessert, there's a very British steamed carrot pudding from my husband's family, along with my mother's Scottish shortbread and fruitcake. Of course a few batches of Christmas cookies are a must for nibbling throughout the day. Try your hand at the recipe included on the next page.

Like the classic Christmas song goes, Jack Frost may be nipping at your nose, but there will be chestnuts roasting on an open fire and a big turkey dinner to make the season bright!

GET YOUR GOBBLER

Visit major hotels for big holiday buffets and formal turkey dinners, or simply head to a local diner for a turkey and gravy Blue Plate Special. The Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel, Buffalo Mountain Lodge, Chateau Jasper and the Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge are magical places to tuck into a Christmas feast in a snowy setting. Order wild turkey at La Ronde in Edmonton or Calgary's River Café. Or try that post-holiday classic, a hot turkey sandwich smothered in gravy, almost anywhere.

SHORTBREAD COOKIES

My mother's shortbread – from *The Girl Can't Cook* by Cinda Chavich.

Makes about four dozen.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 4-5 cups all-purpose flour, sifted

DIRECTIONS

With electric mixer, cream butter and sugar until fluffy.

Gradually add flour, mixing with a spoon, until crumbly; dough should be very stiff and barely hold together.

Avoid using your hands or warming mixture, which makes the cookies hard.

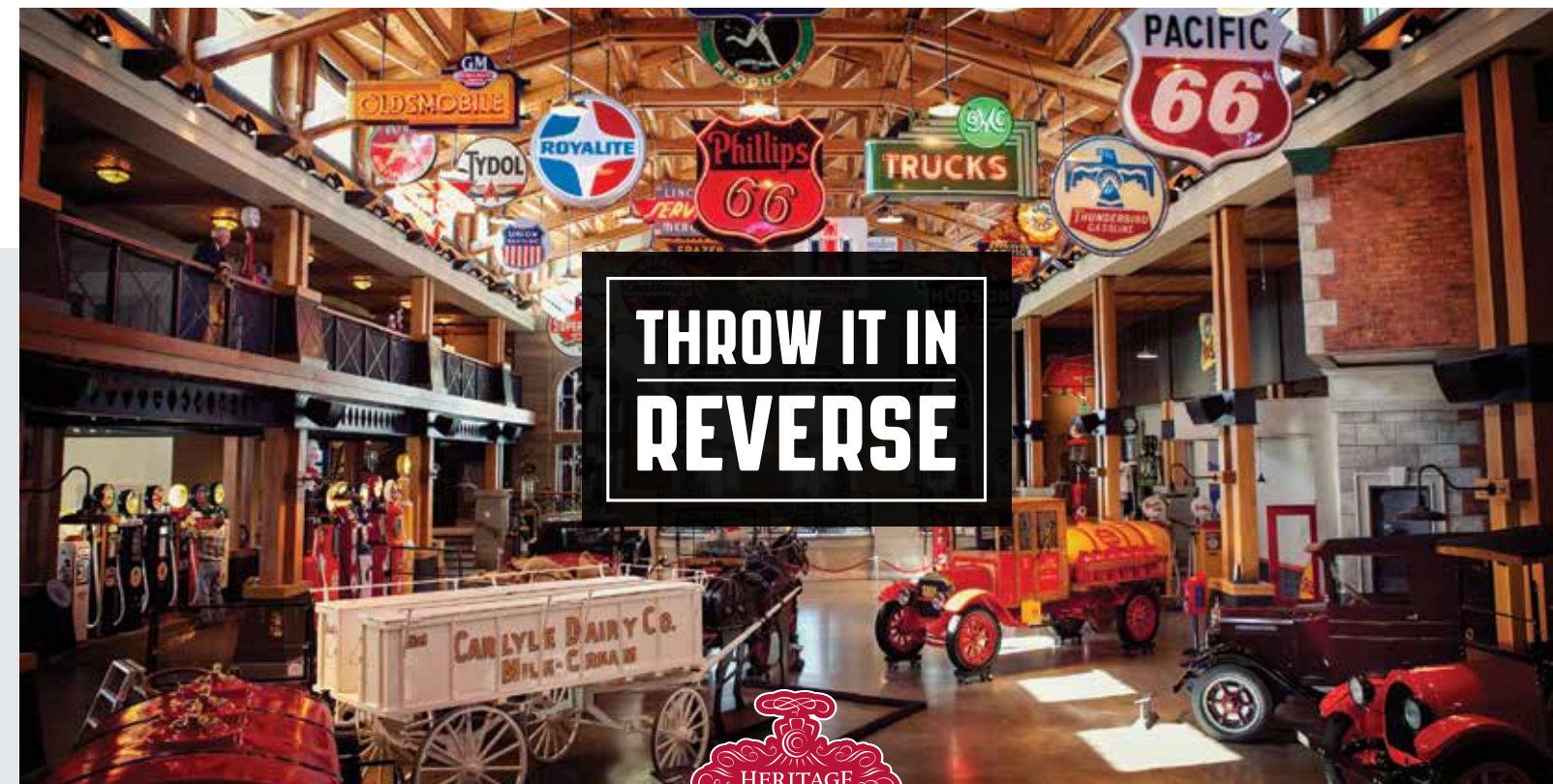
Dump dough onto work surface. Using a wide knife, pat into a square, about 3/4 inch thick. Cut into 3/4 X 2 inch bars.

Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Using a spatula, lift cookies onto sheet, placing 1/2 inch apart. Poke top of each cookie lightly with a fork.

Bake at 325°F for 30-40 minutes until edges barely colour.

Cut squares apart while still warm. Cool on racks.

Try to save a few for Santa on Christmas Eve!



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THE WINTER GUEST RANCH EXPERIENCE



By Megan Kopp

Snow flies from beneath giant hooves as the draft horses pick up the pace across the frozen ground. Overhead, the moon begins to shine and the mid-winter sky glitters like a million diamonds. Sleigh rides and nature's wonder – all part of the promise that is the winter guest ranch experience.

I've been to guest ranches during the summer, but central Alberta during winter offers adventures perfect for the snow-filled season: horseback trail riding in the snow, sleigh riding and snowshoeing.

At Anchor D Guiding and Outfitting (anchord.com) west of Turner Valley, there's even more. Tugging on my puffy down coat as I step out onto the porch of Grandpa's cabin – the two bedroom log home “named in honour of my kid's grandpa” says owner/outfitter Dewy Matthews – the brilliant blue morning sky highlights the high foothills of the ranch.

Dewy pulls up with Waylon and Willie hitched to the hay sleigh. “Want to come help feed the horses?” he shouts from behind the reins. I've already booked a mountain day ride – the conditions are perfect – but this is an extra bonus. Hopping onto the sleigh, we chug along as the team hauls the huge round bale out to pasture where over one hundred of the ranch horses mill around waiting for the bale to unroll. With the job done, I grab a quick coffee and get ready for the mountain trail ride.

I could have chosen a two- or three-hour winter trail ride, but when the snow levels and weather conditions are right, the mountain ride is a must-do. “This country is special,” notes Dewy. He's been itching to get out for a ride and today I'm heading out on a trail up Green Mountain. “Lots of rides

go through the trees, but here we go above the treeline.” Bluerock, Gibraltar, Mist – these mountains are what you came to see.

Lunch is spent circled around the fire, warm drinks in hand and Bavarian smokies sizzling at the end of long sticks. My appetite seems boundless, fuelled by the excitement of the ride and majesty of the views over Sheep River Valley. Dewy dives into a tale about Pat Burns and his property in the valley with large coal deposits and how the coal mine was shut down in 1918 before the proposed rail line to Okotoks was built. The Burns family still owns six sections in the valley... hmmm, I think as a grey jay flies past to settle in a nearby tree... lucky family.

The day replays in my head as I lie in the comfort of my bed in the loft of Grandpa's cabin. The thick clouds rolling in near the end of the trail ride were proof that the weather forecaster was on track – snow is on the way. How much snow, I wonder as I drift off, lulled by peaceful silence.

Dragging on my winter boots in the morning, I gasp as I throw open the door – a picture perfect winter wonderland awaits. Grabbing my camera, I snap photos of snow-laden evergreens, the cabins tucked snugly under thick white blankets and Cruiser and Doc hauling today's hay sleigh out to the hungry mob waiting in the pasture.

After brunch cooked in the cozy cabin kitchen, there's time for one run down the infamous toboggan hill before packing up to head back to the city. Maybe even time for two!

There are two other winter ranch pursuits that are indoors, but maybe just as enjoyable, depending on your mood: hibernating in the lodge to trade stories with other like-minded visitors and digging your fork into home-cooked Western heritage meals. Find the best fit for you – from ranches with dining facilities featuring homestyle fare, to self-catered cabins like the ones at Anchor D.

WINTER GUEST RANCH EXPERIENCES

There are lots of guest ranches in central Alberta that offer a range of winter activities from sleigh rides to winter riding adventures to overnight cabin stays. Here's an overview of a few of them.

Myown River Ranch – southwest of Sundre What's cool here is that you get the entire ranch to yourselves! The ranch is tucked away in the foothills right on the banks of the Red Deer River. myownriverranch.com

Rolyn Hills B & B and Guest Ranch – east of Red Deer Choose from rooms in the ranch house or a self-catering cabin called The Homestead. rolynhills.com

Heritage Ranch – Red Deer Go on a Winter Night Lights Sleigh Tour or take the gang for a ranch Christmas party! heritageranch.ca

Rocking R – Strathmore Combine your winter ranch stay with a relaxing, warm spa treatment. rockingruestranch.com

Red Lodge – Bowden See a real working cattle and horse ranch and enjoy homestyle cooking year round in the dining lodge. redlodgeoutfitters.com



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WINTER CAMPING

QUIET, COZY AND AFFORDABLE

By Lynn Martel

Beyond the sparkling-white field of snow before us, a horizon of diamond-sharp peaks pierce the forget-me-not-blue sky. Looking west from our camp, pitched in a meadow at the edge of a forest, our brightly coloured tents dot the pristine snow like colourful children's toys, and the sun casts long golden rays as it sinks lower in the evening sky.

Tossing another log on the fire, the flames leap and dance as warmth radiates from glowing red coals. With a steaming mug of hot chocolate in one hand, I rotate the skewer in the other until the marshmallow at the end is golden brown. Handing it to my niece, wrapped in a down duvet that frames her rosy cheeks, a grin spreads across her face.

"Marshmallows taste even better in winter!" she exclaims.

In the morning we cook up a feast of pancakes and bacon drizzled in real maple syrup. Pancakes cooked on an open fire, I decide, taste better in winter too. After breakfast we strap on snowshoes

and head out in the direction of the forest. Soon a game of "I spy" erupts, as we discover the distinct calling cards imprinted on the snow surface by rabbits, squirrels, the ever-prolific pine marten and even an elusive wolverine.

The next day, we all enjoy cross-country skiing, after which we agree a steaming pasta dinner was never so delicious! Later, snuggled by our campfire, we also decide the stars twinkling in the crisp winter night sky appear brighter and more intense. Then, as if on cue, northern lights emerge, dancing and swaying on the horizon like a shimmering kaleidoscope.

Planning our next winter camping weekend, we learn that across the province, Alberta Parks campgrounds are open for camping year-round. Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park has 61 campsites available on a first come first service basis in the winter. They even have some that are serviced with power. Book a special tour of this unique park or walk along trails and explore the hoodoos on your own.

Dinosaur Provincial Park (dinosaurpark.ca), a UNESCO World Heritage Site, hosts the ancient remains from the Cretaceous Period.

This winter, cozy into your site as you take in the mythical view of your surroundings before checking out one of the five self guided trails that are open year-round.

Our family also concludes that winter camping's affordability even leaves us with money for ski hill lift tickets, dog sled tours or a dip in the hot springs. And with early sunsets bringing long nights, there's time for board games, playing cards or snuggling up with that book you never have time for at home.

To plan your next winter camping adventure, check out albertaparks.ca

TIPS FOR A HAPPY WINTER CAMPING EXPERIENCE

- Check ahead to find out what services are available before you leave home
- Dress in layers that you can add or remove as you move indoors and out
- Bring hand and foot warmers
- Bring a flashlight for outhouse visits – the nights are longer in winter!
- Bring extra clothes in case yours get wet, especially for kids building snow forts
- Bring board games, playing cards and a telescope for nighttime entertainment
- Do not forget hot chocolate!



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www.devonian.ualberta.ca

Deep Freeze – Arts on the Ave

Edmonton | January 11-12
deepfreezefest.ca

Wetaskiwin Snow Drags

Wetaskiwin | January 18
history.alberta.ca/reynolds

Ice on Whyte Festival

Edmonton | January 24-February 2
iceonwhyte.ca

Canadian Birkebeiner Festival

Edmonton | February 7-8
canadianbirkie.com

ROCKIES

Canmore Nordic Festival

Canmore | November 22-December 15
tourismcanmore.com

WinterStart Festival

Banff | November 29-December 22
banfflakelouise.com

Ice Magic Festival

Lake Louise | January 17-26
banfflakelouise.com

Jasper in January, 25 years

Jasper | January 17-February 2
jasper.travel

Winter Magic Festival

Hinton | February 12-24
hinton.ca

NORTH

Vermilion Winter Fair

Vermilion | November 16-17,
December 6-8, January 25-26
thegoodlifeinstitute.ca

winterPLAY Festival

Fort McMurray | February 14-23
winterplay.ca

Alberta Pond Hockey Championships

Lac Cardinal | February 14-16
albertapondhockey.com

Whitecourt Trailblazers Family Snowmobile Poker Rally

Whitecourt | February 15-16
whitecourtrailblazers.ca

Festival of Speed

Lac La Biche | March 1-2
laclabicheregion.com

SOUTH

It's a Wonderful Life: The Radio Play

Rosebud | November 1-December 22
www.rosebudtheatre.com

Canadian Open – Grand Slam Curling

Medicine Hat | November 13-17
worldcurl.com

Night at the Museum Shopping Event

Lethbridge | November 28
galtmuseum.com

Santa Claus Parade

Fort Macleod | November 30
fortmacleod.com

Winterfest at Aspen Crossing

Mossleigh | December 7
exploresouthwestalberta.ca

CENTRAL

Christmas Special to Big Valley

Stettler | November 7, December 7 & 14
absteamtrain.com

Festival of Trees

Camrose | November 21-24
tourismcamrose.com

Sounds of the Season

Red Deer | December 6
tourismreddeer.com

Caroline Christmas Light Up

Caroline | December 7
thecowboytrail.com

Fire and Ice Centennial Closing Ceremony and Lantern Parade

Red Deer | December 12
reddeer2013.ca

CALGARY

Light Up Okotoks

Okotoks | November 22
okotoks.ca

Once Upon a Christmas at Heritage Park

Calgary | November 23-December 22
heritagepark.ca

Zoo Lights

Calgary | November 29-January 4
*check website closer to event date to confirm
calgaryzoo.com

Spirit of Christmas Festival

Bragg Creek | December 7-8; 14-15
visitbraggcreek.com

Calgary Kiwanis Festival

Calgary | February 24-March 15
www.calgarykiwanisfestival.ca



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WinterInEdmonton.com

TRY SOMETHING NEW AND COOL



By Debbie Olsen

Standing in the still darkness near Johnson Lake in Banff National Park, a chill runs down my spine as a large grey shadow streaks past me. I can hear the sound of something big swishing through the snow, but I have no idea what it might be – only that it's moving fast. Seconds later, eight head lamps switch on almost simultaneously – just in time to see a large bull elk slip back into the shadows of the forest.

One of the most fascinating ways to experience winter in Banff is via an after-dark hiking adventure. Equipped with a headlamp and ice cleats, my two boys and I made our way through the dark forest near Johnson Lake, stopping to examine animal tracks and other signs of life along the way. We had just switched off our headlamps near a clearing to do a little stargazing when the large elk decided to make our hike more interesting. When our hearts finally quit pounding, we switched the headlamps back on and followed our guide further down the trail.

Every winter our family tries to do at least one thing we have never done before. Having an adventure together gives us something to look forward to and helps ward off cabin fever. This year, we have a new guided winter night hike on our radar. Discover Banff Tours (banfftours.com) recently began offering Johnston Canyon Night Ice Walks and we're thinking it might be the perfect outing for our family this winter.

Here are a few other activities that are new and cool and will help you make friends with Old Man Winter. Just grab your toque and try some of these winter-loving ways to spark enthusiasm about the icy season. Because as every true Albertan knows, cold can be cool.

Lazy Sledding

The hardest thing about tobogganing in the winter is getting back up the hill, but at winter tubing parks getting up the hill is half the fun with special lifts designed especially

for tubing. You can live a lazy sledder's dream at Lake Louise Ski Resort or Norquay (skibig3.com), Sunridge in Edmonton (sunridgeskiarea.com), Vista Ridge in Fort McMurray (vistaridge.ab.ca) or Canyon Ski Resort in Red Deer (canyonski.ca).

MacDonald Island Park

State of the art recreational facilities and world class events combine to make Canada's largest community recreational, leisure and social centre in Fort McMurray a fun place to be. Whether you are attending a concert or using the aquatic centre, curling rinks, ice rinks, rock climbing wall, fitness centre, dance studios, indoor playgrounds, two fieldhouses, squash and racquetball courts, or the library, you're sure to be impressed (macdonaldisland.ca).

Cross-Country Skiing (sort of)

Cypress Hills Provincial Park is magical in winter and there are a myriad of activities

for winter visitors to enjoy, but the most unique of the bunch is something called kicksledding. A kicksled is an alternative to cross-country skiing that offers more stability. At the visitor centre, you can rent a kicksled, snowshoes, cross-country skis and a GPS unit for geocaching. A backcountry hut that sleeps 10 is also available to rent (albertaparks.ca).

Alberta's Newest Indoor Zipline

You might feel a little dizzy when you look down, but riding the world's largest permanent indoor zipline at West Edmonton Mall is sure to be a thrill – and a great way to get out of the cold. Positioned 18 metres above the world's largest indoor wave pool, riders reach speeds of up to 40 km/h on the 138 metre long zipline (wem.ca).

A Big Birthday

Heritage Park will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2014 and the festivities begin in February. A new temporary exhibit in

Gasoline Alley Museum called "Cars of the Big and Small Screen" will run from February to April. Watch for special programming to accompany the exhibit. A new Historic Dining Series in the Selkirk Grille Restaurant will also be running this winter and feature historic menus with wine or beer pairings (heritagepark.ca).

Waterton's Winter Wonderland

You can hear the snow crunching beneath your snowshoes and feel your heart pounding as you travel along a trail surrounded by snowy mountain peaks, but that's not the best part. Though you will likely see wildlife, you'll be hard pressed to see many other people. With only a few hotels and stores open during the winter months, Waterton is a picture perfect winter wonderland. Snowshoes, backcountry skis, cross-country skis and split skis are available to rent at the Waterton Lakes Lodge Resort (watertonlakeslodge.com) (pc.gc.ca).

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DOWNHILL SKIING, SNOWBOARDING AND CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

By Mike Fisher

I peer over the tips of my skis at the top of Nakiska Mountain Resort's Mapmaker run, where fresh Alberta dry powder sparkles. Olympic and World Cup skiers use the resort and this run as a pre-season training ground. So I've already got bragging rights when I meet my friends for an early lunch at the lodge.

It's one of six major resorts in Alberta nestled in the Canadian Rockies, along with Sunshine Village, Mt. Norquay and Lake Louise Ski Area in Banff National Park

(a UNESCO World Heritage site), Marmot Basin in Jasper National Park and Castle Mountain in the south.

With a ski and snowboarding season that typically runs from November to April, Alberta gives us a lot of runs for our money. Sunshine Village has the longest non-glacial ski season in North America, finishing with the annual Slush Cup party at the end of May.

While Alberta boasts superb Rockies skiing, it is also home to a variety of family friendly regional hills.

Scout Regional Hills

Regional and city hills are easy to reach. In Edmonton, Rabbit Hill Snow Resort, Sunridge Ski Area and Snow Valley all offer a family-style alpine experience, as does

Canada Olympic Park in Calgary. Canyon Ski Resort is a draw in the Red Deer region between the two larger cities.

Hidden Valley in Cypress Hills Provincial Park near Elkwater provides skiing in a friendly, rural environment. In Alberta's North, Vista Ridge in Fort McMurray provides a tube park and ski school. Also in the North, the Fairview Ski Hill in Peace Country offers all-natural snow and 15 runs. There is also Misery Mountain Ski Area in Peace River. And Nighthawk Recreation Area outside of Grande Prairie offers nine runs for skiers and snowboarders, along with a terrain park. Kinsoo Ridge near Cold Lake has a great community feel and it's great for beginners who want to get their ski legs.

Tawatinaw Valley Alpine & Nordic Centre in Westlock is also a wonderful place to take the family, with runs suited to all skill levels. Try Pass Powderkeg Ski Resort in the heart of the Crownsnest Pass in southern Alberta. It features 1,200 feet of vertical, along with a terrain park and night skiing. Silver Summit in Edson and Whispering Pines Ski Area in Worsely provide even more family options.



Explore Olympic Culture

For a quick bite of Olympic culture, we've taken in Canada's Sports Hall of Fame at WinSport's Canada Olympic Park (COP). While we were there, my snowboarder friend tried the half pipe, one of the largest in the world and the first of its size in Canada, so now he has a story to take home as well.

Enjoy Light and Fluffy Alberta Powder

We've got to admit, Alberta powder is unlike any other snow. It's light and fluffy, and because Alberta is pretty much landlocked, the snow gains extra fluffiness.

One of the features of having ski resorts in national park areas is that development is limited and wilderness is protected, giving us a different "out-there" experience than other areas. And there are great restaurants, nightlife, shopping, java shops and spas for when the going gets tough.

Discover Untamed Banff National Park

Mt. Norquay is an accessible gem that locals love. It's got night skiing, hourly passes, a killer snow tubing section, a robust snow making system and a terrain park where my snowboarder friend likes to play.

Sunshine Village has natural snow (up to 30 feet per season) with a massive diversification of runs, serviced by one of the longest switchback gondolas in the world. The ski area sits right on the Continental Divide in Banff National Park.

We'll end the day in Sunshine's hot tub, one of the largest in Canada. Sunshine has the only ski-in, ski-out accommodation in Banff National Park, so we like to stay in one of the high-end West Wing Loft Rooms at the Sunshine Mountain Lodge.

See the Winterstart World Cup

The Lake Louise Ski Area is listed regularly among the most scenic ski resorts on the

planet and it is Canada's largest single ski area with 4,200 skiable acres. Here is where the ski season really kicks off in Alberta, as it's home to the world's first World Alpine Cup speed event of the year – the Lake Louise Winterstart World Cup running this year from November 30-December 8.

I can't resist getting ready for a tuck position at the top of the Men's World Cup Downhill run #1. Hey, it's more bragging rights.

Go Higher at Marmot and Castle

I can't wait to drive the Icefields Parkway again to Jasper. Marmot Basin in Jasper National Park is celebrating its 50th anniversary this season and it has the highest base elevation of all Canadian ski areas. We'll do our best to explore the 86 trails and 1,675 acres of skiing and snowboarding. Later, I'm going for the Malevolent Meatloaf at Evil Dave's Grill in Jasper.

Continued on next page

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Castle Mountain, a three-hour drive south of Calgary, offers 3,500 skiable acres on two mountains and 78 trails. We love Powder Stagecoach Cat Skiing as a way to explore virgin powder in the resort's backcountry.

Try Cross-Country Skiing

With some 70 Nordic ski areas in Alberta, cross-country skiing just may be the sport for everyone. The Canadian Birkebeiner Festival, just east of Edmonton, attracts more than 2,000 entrants each year. It's held in Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area, which has more than 80 km of groomed trails.

You can ski the more than 2 km of groomed trails at Canada Olympic Park in Calgary, then jump over to the Shaganappi Point Golf Course maintained by the Calgary Ski Club for a gentler outing. There's great cross-country skiing out of the cities too. Check out Fort McMurray's 24 km trail system in northern Alberta, and in the province's south, the city of Medicine Hat's Police Point Park.



This winter, Jasper has a lot to celebrate.

For starters, it's Marmot Basin's 50th anniversary and our Jasper in January Festival turns 25 years young. It's like one big birthday celebration all season long! This is one party you won't want to miss. Join us at jaspercelebrates.com



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OUR HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

ALBERTA'S FAVOURITE FESTIVE ACTIVITIES

By Heather Egger

We have many holiday traditions at our house – our overburdened tree, new pyjamas on Christmas Eve, my scratch-made cranberry sauce – but we're always up for trying something new. Here are some fresh things for you to try this year. Who knows – one of them might become your new favourite tradition.

Girl's Day at the Craft Sale

Every year I especially look forward to Egger-ladies' day at the Butterdome Craft Sale (Dec 5-8, butterdome.ca). My mom, sister and I go early, stock up on soap, buy for the hard-to-buy-fors

and pick out some new ornaments – hence the overstuffed tree. And we make the boys happy with really big cinnamon buns – if they make it home without accidentally getting eaten.

Artisans come from all over to show at these large craft sales, but this is also the place to find local treasures. In Lethbridge, look for ammolite jewellery; in Peace Country, pick up some clover honey; and at Medalta's annual Heritage Craft Market (Dec 6-7, medalta.org), you'll find lots of locally made crockery.



Continued on next page

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Of course, community craft sales in church basements and local halls are the places to go for home-baked goodies, Baba-knitted wearables and handmade ornaments – like teeny mice made out of walnuts. And many Alberta farmers' markets (albertamarkets.com) hold a special Christmas event, where you can stock up on locally made cheeses, find your perfect turkey and stuff those stockings with yummy-smelling fripperies, like Canmore's Rocky Mountain Soap Company body butters (rockymountainsoap.com).

Sing-Along Your Heart Out

We sing a lot in our house – we also kitchen dance, but that's not important now – and one of my favourite parts of the holidays is the music. To be among kindred souls, I attend Edmonton's annual Singing Christmas Tree (edmontonsingingchristmastree.com) where I sing my heart out and it's ok – well, maybe not for the person sitting directly in front of me. In Calgary, CPO puts on a Sing-Along Messiah (cpo-live.com).

Catching a Christmas-Themed Show

If your kids let you sing in the car or you're just the quiet type, check out Rosebud Theatre's holiday performance of *It's a Wonderful Life* from Nov 1-Dec 22. Or catch Alberta Ballet's magical *Nutcracker* in Edmonton, Dec 12-15, and Calgary, Dec 19-24. Bring your little sugar plum fairies and gingerbread soldiers to a Sugar

Plum Party before the show, where they can dress up, make arts and crafts, and listen to the story.

Strolling Candy Cane Lane

As we pull our tots all bundled up in the sled, the colourful lights sparkle off the Christmas card snow along Candy Cane Lane, one of Edmonton's holiday staples (candycanelane.ca). Almost all of the houses along this eight-block stretch are lit up with glittering light displays – some of the real go-getters cover every single centimetre and then set the whole thing to music. Holiday light-ups are a big tradition here in Alberta and practically every town has one.

Dashing Through the Snow

A few years back, we booked a family hayride and it became one big holiday hootenanny that we still remember. We had snowball fights, made snow angels and then rode around a wide snowy field and cuddled under blankets surrounded by the fresh smell of hay. Just as we began to feel the cold, it was time to go inside for the hot turkey dinner. Now that's what the holidays are all about.

Brewster's horses actually wear jingly bells while guiding sleighs around Lake Louise, just like in the song (brewsteradventures.com). So when you are all tucked under comfy blankets and surrounded by soaring snow-covered mountains, everyone will

understand if you break into song. Or take a ride through fluffy snow with Clydesdales Rosie and Sadie at Rocking R in Strathmore followed by hot chocolate and cookies (rockingrguest ranch.com).

SIX BIG ALBERTA CRAFT SALES

Spruce Meadows

International Christmas Market

Calgary | Nov 15-17, 22-24,
Nov 29-Dec 1
sprucemeadows.com

Christmas Artisans' Market

Canmore | Nov 23-24
tourismcanmore.com

Christmas Show

Grande Prairie | Nov 28-30
gpfarmersmarket.ca

Westerner Park Christmas Bazaar

Red Deer | Nov 30-Dec 30
westernerpark.ca

Butterdome Craft Sale

Edmonton | Dec 5-8
butterdome.ca

Medalta Heritage Craft Market

Medicine Hat | Dec 6-7
medalta.org

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 | Skate on Mitford Pond | Cross country ski on 30 km of trails | Blast your way through a winter paintball game at Capture the Flag | Take an archery lesson | Take a snowshoeing tour, ice walk tour, or some wilderness survival training at Inside Out Experience | Enjoy a concert presented by the Cochrane Valley Folk Club | Bowl and have snacks at Cochrane Lanes | Have a swim at Big Hill Leisure Pool | Visit our unique galleries and stores, all with free parking | Try something new at one of our many restaurants | Or simply rest & relax



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By Jane Marshall

It's that perfect calm that comes when the pine sap stills in the trees, when snow filters through the bows and winter's crust blankets the earth.

For me, winter's a great time to hike in Alberta. And no, I'm not crazy! Think about this: the mountains' craggy lines are softened by snow and there are far less people trailside. Bears sleep in their hollows, and the air is crisp like a sheet from the laundry.

Here's my list of can't-miss winter hikes. Now grab your down and head outdoors.

Bow Lake Meadows, Icefields Parkway

From historic Num Ti Jah Lodge on the banks of Bow Lake, it's off into winter wilderness with this 8 km hike. Head north into frosty meadows and expect deep snow – all the better for quad muscle building. Crowfoot Glacier hangs down from its craggy cradle between peaks.

Grotto Canyon, Canmore

Back in my rock climbing heydays I clung to the walls of Grotto Canyon while clipping my rope into dangling quickdraws. Now, with kids, it's great to see the slabs from a fresh perspective.

Hiking the canyon floor you'll see native pictographs. They're very faint, but so they should be – you're looking at images over 1,500 years old. The canyon dead-ends at an impressive waterfall that looks like a layered skirt. Red-nosed in the crisp air, be sure to take a moment to absorb this ancient space that visiting Hopi Indians from the far south admired long ago.

Galatea, Kananaskis

Looking for elegant peaks and sharp grey shale? Hike past frozen waterfalls and deep canyons, and enjoy unbroken views of grandfatherly mountains. About 450 m of

elevation gain is enough to lift you into a whole new world – a fresh perspective on winter adventures.

Wapiti Campground, Jasper

Grab the kids, the dog, and a thermos of hot chocolate. It feels great to get outside, especially with views of the icy Athabasca River. Sleep over if you like – Wapiti is Jasper's winter campground. Wake to a white world, then head the short distance into town for fresh baking and espresso.

Power of the North

In Fort McMurray check out the Birchwood trail system, which spans over 130 km. You can hike, cross-county ski, or snowshoe. Keep your head up for spectacular views and a good chance of seeing some local wildlife.

For more winter hiking trails check out albertaparks.ca and travelalberta.com

cochrane-tourism.ca





THE BEST SMALL TOWN BAKERIES

By Adrienne Beattie

This prairie province prides itself on a smorgasbord of bakeries, cafés and delis to take away holiday treats, cuddle up with a good book and coffee, or share hot homemade soup with friends.

Cowboys, Coffee and Cookies

I've chosen some of my favourite bakeries and cafés that represent the province's cowboy culture.

Cochrane Coffee Traders is nestled in the Bow River valley. The log cabin atmosphere is inviting with generous seating upstairs and down. I choose a coveted seat by the fire,

and although they roast and brew all their own coffees, in winter I often choose a warm cup of hot chocolate steamed with real chocolate milk topped with chocolate whipped cream.

A drive along Cowboy Trail brings me to the family-run Black Diamond Bakery & Coffee Shop, a destination on the town's main street since 1960. The sweet aroma of homestyle baking entices visitors in for breads, donuts, pastries, pies, melt-in-your-mouth sweets as well as country food like the aptly named "Rancher" breakfast, big enough to satisfy any cowboy.

Bear's Paw Bakery by Different Angle Photography

Let Pincher Creek's chinook winds blow you right into Celestial Sweets. I love this little bakery mostly for its blueberry scones, with huge, juicy blueberries. There's a pleasing selection of homemade goodies and sandwiches, and the bakery is comfortable enough to spend a solid afternoon.

The fresh-out-of-the-oven combread with chili always warms me up on a cold day at Cinnamon Bear Bakery & Café in Coleman. This Crowsnest Pass bakery is famous for its soft, fresh-baked cinnamon buns, so take a few home.

I like to enjoy a hearty breakfast or soup made fresh daily at the family-operated Stone's Throw Café in Blairmore. This is another place where you'll want to leave with a little something – like a big slice of the Death-by-Chocolate cake, recipe in side-bar. Another great grab is the rhubarb and date crumble – yum.

Bear's Paw Bakery in Jasper specializes in European-style specialty pastries, tortes and cakes. A spicy jalapeno pizza pretzel will keep winter's chill away, and ordering a cake for that special occasion will impress your holiday guests.

Central Sweets

When I'm passing through the foothills or near Edmonton, I make sure to put these bakeries on my list of places to stop in at.

Locals choose spinach and feta biscuits, cinnamon buns, homemade perogies and soups that owner Vivian Savory creates at Mundare Bakery, open since 1926 in Mundare. She makes everything just like mom would, without preservatives or chemicals. This is as small town as it gets with a history wall showcasing antique bakery machines, Ukrainian décor and a chessboard table.

The Rocky Bakery & Deli in Rocky Mountain House specializes in Dutch baking. This family bakery has been honing their baking skills for more than 30 years. I take treats to go from this small town bakery.

Camrose's Lefse House is a quaint bakery and coffee shop specializing in Scandinavian lunches and desserts. If heritage giftware and baked goods are on my holiday list, this is where I come.

Northern Delights

Northern Alberta houses some bakery gems. Grains Bakery in Grande Prairie is the one place in town I can find bread handmade fresh each day. Homemade soups, paninis and moist brownies are some of the other treasures at this little café with seating for 40.

Specialty coffees, smoothies, homemade soup, slow roasted meat and a full line of baking means that my family and friends in northern Alberta never go without during the holidays. Lac La Biche's Snickerdoodles is a lovely café and bakery where you can stay for all-day breakfast and lunch or take away baked goods.

So wherever your winter travels take you, plan to stop for a sweet treat along the way.



DEATH-BY-CHOCOLATE CAKE

(Can be used for cupcakes and layer cakes as well.)

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ cups all purpose flour
- 1½ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp baking powder
- Dash of salt, optional cinnamon and chili powder
- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1¼ cups vegetable oil
- 1½ cups fresh-brewed Bushtown Blend from Crowsnest Coffee Company
- 1¼ cups sifted Dutch process high quality cocoa

DIRECTIONS

Sift together flour, baking soda and powder, salt and optional cinnamon and chili powder. Set aside. In large mixing bowl or in the bowl of your stand mixer, combine eggs and sugar. Mix on medium speed until light in colour. Add oil and mix to combine. With mixer on slow, add hot coffee, then cocoa. Scrape down sides of mixer with a spatula and mix another minute. Add sifted remaining dry ingredients and mix until combined. Pour into a 9" springform pan or two 9" layer cake pans. I always line my baking pans with parchment paper so I know they will come out nicely. Bake until done at 325°. Layer cake pans will take around 25 minutes and the springform pan about 55 minutes.

This cake is divine on its own, with a scoop of ice cream or a dollop of real whipped cream.

Locally roasted Bushtown Blend can be purchased at Stone's Throw Cafe as well as several other retailers in the Crowsnest Pass or online at crowsnestcoffeecompany.com





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