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weekenders



LAKE LOUISE

the getaway

Lake Louise is right up there on almost every Albertan's must-travel-to list. The view over its turquoise-hued waters to the Rockies is the quintessential Canadian vista. Yet even the hundredth time one sees it, it's still breathtaking – and particularly so beneath the snows of winter, with the added bonus of downhill and cross-country skiing, snowboarding and snowshoeing amidst all that magical scenery. There are also fewer international tourists at this time of year. Which means locals might just snag a window table in the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise lounge.

the hideaway

The floorboards creak, the pipes bang and the small rooms don't have television. But that's the whole point at Deer Lodge. The wonderful old-world ambience of the wood-frame retreat, opened by the Crosby family in 1923 as a teahouse, makes it ideal for escaping the stresses of modern life. Many of the rooms have been lovingly restored, replete with original woodwork and lighting and cast-iron radiators. The decor is equally tasteful, with duvet-covered beds and eco-friendly bath products.

And in winter, a garland of huge icicles graces the eaves just outside the bedroom windows, right out of Dylan Thomas's *A Child's Christmas in Wales*.

Groomed cross-country ski trails are literally across the road from the lodge; loop around past nearby Chateau Lake Louise for

a specialty coffee and that million-dollar view. Then relax back in Deer Lodge's common area in anticipation of what might well be the highlight of your stay. The lodge is a member of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Resorts (CRMR) group, so the bison and elk on its Mount Fairview dinner menu are from the CRMR ranch. Executive chef Alistair Barnes specializes in Rocky Mountain cuisine (picture northern caribou medallions with blackcurrant port glaze and porcini-crusted halibut with potato-parsnip purée and leek-and-morel cream), and released his first cookbook, *Simple Treasures* (Altitude Publishing, 2007; \$29.95), last December. Afterward, float under the stars in the rooftop hot tub. Room rates start at \$115. 1-800-661-1595; www.crmr.com

the inside track

Most invigorating ski: The Fairview Trail, accessed across the road from the lodge, is an easy 8.6-km loop through snow-heavy evergreens. **Best ambient fireside reads:** *This Wild Spirit: Women in the Rocky Mountains of Canada* by Colleen Skidmore (University of Alberta Press, 2006; \$34.95); *Snowstruck: In the Grip of Avalanches* by Jill Fredston (Raincoast Books, 2007; \$17.95); *Mind over Mountains* by Jon Whyte (Red Deer Press, 2000; \$24.95). **Off-mountain highlight:** *Secret No Longer: Mary Schäffer's Jasper 1908 & 1911*, an exhibition of hand-coloured lantern slides by the turn-of-the-century Quaker explorer (Whyte Museum, Banff, until March 31; www.banfflake.louise.com). □ –Kristine Kowalchuk

