

Buffalo Mountain Lodge offers break from Banff's action

The resort features relaxing, cabin-like look surrounded by beautiful forests



ROCHELLE LASH
Hotel Intel

Warm and woodsy, with a fireplace in every room and innovative Rocky Mountain cuisine, Buffalo Mountain Lodge is a cosy getaway atop the exciting town of Banff.

It's a lofty retreat after a day of sensational alpine adventures in Banff National Park, including 1,000-plus kilometres of hiking and cycling trails and the Banff Gondola, which glides to an entertaining summit playground.

The hotel is also a short drive from transcendent skiing and snowboarding in bountiful powder at SkiBig3 — the monumental trio of Banff Sunshine, Mount Norquay and Lake Louise Ski Resort. The Rockies already had their first big snow dump of the season — 24 centimetres — and lifts may be spinning in early November.

Buffalo Mountain Lodge marks 40 years in 2023, and is still a hospitality leader in a community that welcomes about four million visitors a year from around the world.

Accommodations: The lodge is a peaceful escape, surrounded by forests of spruce, fir and pine and within sight of deer and elk that graze on the outskirts of the property. With post-and-beam buildings and interiors of knotty pine and stone, Buffalo has a rustic cabin look, but it also has lots of comforts.

The guest rooms and suites are loaded with frills. Each has a wood-burning fireplace — a great amenity in an outdoorsy destination — as well as a flat-screen TV, in-room pod coffee, bathrobes and comfortable beds layered with feather duvets and pillows.

About half of the accommodations have been renovated recently, featuring new bathrooms with heated floors, and new carpets and linens.

Some suites have patios or balconies, vaulted ceilings, claw-foot tubs, mini-fridges and microwaves.

When you are luxuriating in the outdoor hot tub, enjoying mountain views from your balcony or simply strolling through the grounds, the only sound you'll hear is the wind whispering through the trees.

Buffalo Mountain Lodge is



Buffalo Mountain Lodge is a short drive from highly regarded skiing and snowboarding resorts. It's been operating for 40 years and is a hospitality leader in the community. PHOTOS: CANADIAN ROCKY MOUNTAIN RESORTS



The 108 rooms and suites at Buffalo Mountain Lodge all have fireplaces.

actually a village of 108 rooms and suites in separate cottages, located up and down a hillside and connected by stone paths, rock gardens and wooden stairways. At the centre of the domain is the main pavilion, which houses the reception desk, the Prow restaurant and a warm and welcoming après-sports fireplace lounge.

Dining: The Prow is an engaging new restaurant where chef Lance Monteiro fashions food that is hyper-local and highly distinctive. How local? CRMR, the owner of Buffalo Mountain Lodge, has its own elk and bison ranch that supplies game meats.

The Prow's country-cool look also is appetizing. It's all open-concept, cute and casual, with a space for every mood. Amanda Hamilton Interior Design of Calgary started with an existing barn shape with a soaring ceiling and then added recycled western-inspired accessories like a buffalo trophy, an antler chandelier and wooden beams.

To add colour and character, she used mid-century furniture in leather and tweed.

The bar and high-top tables are perfect perches, and there is a long list of regional brews and 30 signature cocktails. The

lounge beckons with a fireplace, a large-screen TV and platters of tapas with Rocky Mountain ingredients and shareables like charcuterie and cheese.

The Prow focuses on game meats and other hearty dishes. Lunch and dinner are known for bison tartare, tacos or rib-eye, plus meatballs, wild boar ribs, homemade pasta and veggie dishes like squash and lentil soup or fried artichokes.

Breakfast features farm-fresh eggs, homemade jams, granola, ketchup, as well as specialties such as elk chili, wild boar sausage and maple whiskey bacon.

Banff Gondola: The gondola is a thrilling, must-do experience. The four-person cable car whisks visitors to the 2,281-metre summit of Sulphur Mountain, where a lookout yields epic views of six mountain ranges and the Bow River winding through valleys far below.

Sky Bistro is an exceptional culinary experience, serving a changing menu of Canadian cuisine like seafood chowder or elk Bolognese.

The Banff Gondola's newest feature is Nightrise, a magical after-dark spectacle of lights, video and music orchestrated by Pursuit, which creates elaborate attractions around the world.

Nightrise is a partnership with Montreal-based global multimedia impresarios Moment Factory and the Stoney Nakoda First Nation.

rochelle@rochellelash.com

IF YOU GO

Buffalo Mountain Lodge: 800-661-1367, crmr.com; 700 Tunnel Mountain Rd., Banff, Alta. Partially accessible. Pets, \$25/day. CRMR also owns Emerald Lake Lodge, Deer Lodge and the Post Hotel, a Relais & Châteaux. **Price for two people:** Lodge, two queens, from \$159; Lodge, one king, from \$189; Buffalo Suites, from \$279, all including hot tub, fireplace lounge, Wi-Fi.

The Prow restaurant: 403-760-4484; breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free. Children's menu.

Banff Gondola: 866-606-6700, banffjaspercollection.com. Approximately \$50-\$63 for adults; children age five and under ride free. Accessible. Nightrise runs Nov.-April. **SkiBig3:** 844-754-2443, skibig3.com. Ikon, Mountain Collective and SkiBig3 passes valid.

Banff and Lake Louise tourism: 877-762-8421, banfflakelouise.com (which has a handy online trip planner). **Alberta tourism:** travelalberta.com.

TRAVEL BRIEFS

Robot falcons take flight to fight birds off the runways

Avian threats to aviation are being tackled with a new bird of prey — one made of fibreglass and computer chips. Engineers at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands say their RobotFalcon is cheaper and more ethical than using real birds to scare flocks away from jets. The robotic falcons are designed to look and act like a peregrine falcon and chase away birds that gather near air terminals, endangering aircraft by potentially fouling engines. They are operated using propellers on each wing and a camera mounted to the head and can travel at more than 50 km/h, the Daily Telegraph reported. The lightweight devices were shown effective in testing on farm fields, where they cleared flocks of birds in less than five minutes. Real falcons, on the other hand, can be expensive to breed and train. "Falcons cannot be flown often and guiding their attacks is problematic," noted Dr. Rolf Storms, writing in the Journal of the Royal Society Interface, a scientific publication. "Models that mimic predators visually and behaviourally may be a promising way to deter birds, retaining the advantages



Real falcons could be replaced by RobotFalcons to help clear flocks of birds away from airports and airplanes. NICK PROCAVLO

of a live predator, but with fewer practical limitations."

Australia goes back to the barbie campaign

Australia's first global travel campaign since 2016 is going retro by channelling the legendary "throw another shrimp on the barbie" campaigns of the 1980s. But critics are already skewering the \$125-million push — which includes the resurrected "Come

and say g'day" tagline — calling it "embarrassing," "lame" and like a high-school class project. The centrepiece of the campaign is a small computer-generated kangaroo known as Ruby, voiced by Australian actress Rose Byrne. Australia's tourism minister, Don Farrell, has already dubbed Ruby "the new Paul Hogan," according to the Sydney Morning Herald. Hogan famously fronted the shrimp-on-the-barbie ads of the 1980s and 1990s, driving massive

increases in tourism to the country. Margy Osmond, a tourism executive in Australia, thinks the criticism is misguided. She said: "If you're going to cut through in the international market now it has to say immediately this is about Australia — and there's no doubt Ruby the 'roo does exactly that. They need something that reminds everybody what a gorgeous, friendly place this is to come to." John O'Sullivan, a former Tourism Australia director, told the paper it was unfair to compare Hogan and Byrne. "I think they've really purposely gone back to those iconic images of Australia that the rest of the world knows us for," he said. The country welcomed 9.5 million visitors annually — spending \$45 billion — in the years before the pandemic.

Museum celebrates seven centuries of art

Art lovers are salivating at the reopening in Belgium of one of the world's premier collections of fine art. After a huge restoration project a decade in the making, the doors to The Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp have finally opened with a festi-

val celebrating seven centuries of art in what is described as a "radically expanded setting." The KMSKA — as it's known — has been in the works since 2011 when the original 19th century neoclassical building was closed to the public. The new space, which is 40 per cent larger, is described as white-cubed gallery rising as an "autonomous entity" hidden within four carefully restored courtyards in the heart of the refurbished building. Comprising 8,400 objects in total, the museum contains 650 significant works from the 14th to the 20th century, which were all moved — frame by frame and pedestal by pedestal — into the new gallery halls. Restoration experts revamped the museum with sympathy to its heritage, retaining the scale and weight of past centuries — warts and all. "At a certain point I had to explain to the plasterer not to make the walls too smooth, the parquet installers not to close the gaps," said project leader Walter Hoogerwerf. "Beautiful but not perfect, matching the monument." Two of the gallery spaces will be devoted to Antwerp's most renowned painters — Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony van Dyck. A total of 4,000 masterpieces were loaned to galleries around the world during construction, viewed by an estimated 6.7 million people.

Andre Ramshaw,
for Postmedia News