



HIGH ADVENTURE: The grandeur of the Bugaboos makes for an awe-inspired hike through natural beauty. BEVERLY MANN



RELAXATION: A pristine mountain environment is the perfect setting for nurturing the body and soul. BEVERLY MANN

# From Banff to the Bugaboos

## Nurturing in nature in Alberta, Canada

By BEVERLY MANN

Imagine meditating on a glorious 8,000-foot glacier with verdant valleys and meadows below steeped in bright pink Indian paintbrushes and yellow daisies. Envision luxuriating in a warm mineral bath while looking out toward snow-capped majestic peaks jutting into a powder-blue sky, backed by dense forested greenery.

I experienced all that during a week of peace, pampering, and rejuvenation in Alberta, Canada. I immersed myself in healing spa treatments, mineral baths, yoga classes, and hikes atop the grand Canadian Rockies and Columbia Mountain Ranges.

### GETTING ROYAL SPA TREATMENT

Located on the edge of the Bow River and Rockies, Banff was an ideal beginning. Blanketed by jade firs and spruce trees, cascading waterfalls, dramatic glaciers and lakesides, this paradise setting was almost an instant sedative.

I arrived after a two-hour bus ride from Calgary Airport to the castle-style Fairmont Banff Springs. It isn't any wonder that the 3,500-square-foot Willow Stream Spa was rated the number one spa in Canada for several years: with three different mineral pools draped with waterfalls and a central pool with soothing underwater music for a further calming effect.

The signature Tranquillity, a 90-minute facial and back treatment, was a hypnotic experience. After being drizzled with lavender oil along my spine, my back was exfoliated and cleansed. While relaxing with a face mask of herbs, my hands and feet were oiled and massaged.

Several hours later, I took a twenty-minute stroll along a path from the hotel to downtown, passing over a bridge surrounded by the grandeur of mountains and greenery on both

sides.

A narrower trail extends from the Fairmont to the Rimrock Hotel & Spa. Independently owned and operated, The Rimrock sits perched 750 feet into the side of Sulphur Mountain and is close to the gondola lift. You can also take a two-hour hike from the hotel to the mountaintop. The Rimrock is also located five minutes from the original Sulphur Hot Springs, open to the public for a small fee.

I dined at the Rimrock's Primrose Restaurant, savouring a buttery Atlantic Salmon and Bay Scallops with a Chocolate Banana Molten Cake created by award-winning Executive Chef Ralf Wollmann and Pastry Chef Guy Vaugeois, whose sugar art adorns the entrance ways of both the Primrose and the Eden Restaurant (one of only two five-star restaurants) in Alberta.

The hotel's spa offers some relaxing treatments, such as the Tropical Escape Fraiche Body Wrap, which drenches and nourishes the body with papaya and pineapple enriched with natural butter, calcium, vitamins, and anti-aging collagen.

One morning, a friend who was a resident of the town, hiked with me and her dog on Tunnel Mountain Trail, which starts from the parking lot at Buffalo Street in downtown. From there, we observed stunning views of both the Fairmont and Rimrock Hotels and beyond—well worth the climb.

### EMBRACING THE HEIGHTS

However, my three-day side trip with CMH for heli-hiking and yoga in the Columbia Mountains brought me to even greater heights.

A Brewster bus from the Banff depot drove two and a half hours to the helipad for a quick flight to the Bugaboo Lodge, named after the soaring, granite peaks which are difficult to reach except by helicopter.

Each morning we would start with a half-hour yoga stretch, with instructor Anne Douglas, as we peered out at the glaciered, green vista, 8,200 feet above sea level. After a healthful breakfast, we were fully equipped for our hike and also the lecture on the safety of the helicopter, which would be taking us up two to four times a day.

We were divided into three groups of around ten hikers. The most challenging part of the ride was huddling together on the ground to wait for the helicopter's gust of wind to pass over us before we embarked into an untouched world of cobalt blue skies and towering mountain ridges, deep valleys, and wildflower-laden meadows below.

We walked along broken pieces of shale rock, spongy earth, and crisp lakesides (where several brave hikers took a dive to cool off from the hot sun). Paul and Kevin, our knowledgeable hike leaders, reviewed the history and geology of the terrain. For lunch we found a gulch to sit in, while our yoga teacher, Anne, read a passage about earth, wind, and air to mediate on. We then continued our walk in silence, tediously navigating each step up the mountain.

But the greatest joy was seeing everyone's face filled with awe every time the helicopter lifted off the mountain and returned us to the lodge. Before one such descent, as we flew between two towering mountain peaks, I held my breath hoping we'd make it through the narrow space surrounded only by endless sky.

Each evening ended with a scrumptious, wholesome dinner brilliantly prepared by Executive Chef David Weslowsky and Pastry Chef Paul Bodner. All the meals are approved by an on board nutritionist to meet the needs of the active guests.

### RELAXING AT JOURNEY'S END

On my return to Banff, I wondered

what experience could possibly top 12 helicopter rides and the grandeur and peacefulness of the Columbias. My stay at the picturesque Post Hotel in the nearby hamlet of Lake Louise, however, created that perfect finish.

Bordered by the rushing Pipestone River with a series of bridges, this Swiss-chalet style resort, with red roofs and colourful flower boxes, provided an unforgettable spa and dining experience.

My Thai Stem Massage, designed to stimulate the lymphatic fluids and release toxins, involved two large, steamed herbal stems (similar to enormous mushrooms) rolled along the body as in ancient times. My masseuse, Christine, also performed traditional Thai moves on my body and later wrapped up the stems for me to

reuse at home. She then prepared a pot of filtered tea leaves of my choice to enjoy on a sinking leather lounge chair near a running waterfall and fireplace.

The final morning, I awoke to the sounds of gurgling water outside my window and deck. As I began my sunrise salutation, I stretched toward the pristine peaks, with the cool pine air brushing across my skin. I gazed at the magnificent mountain side, knowing I had recently traversed across similar terrain overcoming the unknown, and being grateful for the peace and strength gained from nature's soaring sculptures.

Beverly Mann has been a feature, arts, and travel writer in the San Francisco Bay Area for the past 28 years. She has

received numerous accolades in the fields of travel writing, education, and international public relations, including a Bay Area Travel Writers Award of Excellence in Newspaper Travel Writing.

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## Sudoku

			6				3	9
	6	1			4			
4				7	2			
	9	5		6				
	3	2		9		1	6	
				5		9	2	
			7	2				3
			1			5	8	
3	8				6			

Fill in the boxes using numbers between 1 and 9 so that each column, each row, and each 3x3 square contain all nine numbers only once.

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Exclusive Epoch Times puzzle by Sudoku Works. Sudoku puzzles and software at: www.SudokuWorks.com.

3	8	9	6	5	4	2	7	1
6	9	5	3	1	7	8	4	2
5	1	4	7	2	8	3	6	9
1	4	6	8	5	3	9	2	7
8	3	2	4	6	9	7	1	5
5	6	1	7	1	7	7	1	6
7	8	4	3	6	2	2	6	1
4	5	3	9	7	2	2	8	1
6	6	1	3	8	4	4	7	5
2	7	8	6	1	5	4	3	9

This week's solution

### White Dew Oolong

A 100% natural high mountain spring oolong (gao shan chia), from the Bei Shan Mountain in Taiwan. This tea is hand picked, and hand crafted. A lightly oxidized oolong with a fragrant fresh scent. Produces a clear golden brew with an awakening quality and smooth refreshing taste.

To learn more visit:  
www.fiveelementstea.com

### Aged Oolong Tea

This award winning rare aged oolong (lao chia), from Taiwan is carefully aged in bamboo baskets for 8 years. The tea is then re-fired, naturally making it low in caffeine. A traditional tea regarded for medicinal properties for being light on the stomach. Produces a clear amber brew with a crisp clean taste.

To learn more visit:  
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The Epoch Times  
**Geography Guru™**  
"Growing your geography knowledge"

Quiz #269

**LONGITUDINAL:** Starting from the west and moving east, place the following countries in order:

Saudi Arabia	Slovakia
Senegal	Solomon Islands
Singapore	Spain
	Sudan

.....  
Read The Epoch Times next week for the answer!  
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Answer for Quiz #268

**FRYING PAN STATES:** Eastern panhandle states/provinces' largest cities: Edmundston, NEW BRUNSWICK; Frederick, MARYLAND; Martinsburg & Wheeling, WEST VIRGINIA; Stamford, CONNECTICUT; Tallahassee, FLORIDA

Western panhandle states/provinces' largest cities: Amarillo, TEXAS; Coeur d'Alene, IDAHO; Guymon, OKLAHOMA; Juneau, ALASKA; Scottsbluff, NEBRASKA