



These exhilarating outdoor holidays will send your spirits soaring as you climb high and dip into nature

INSPIRING LAKES & MOUNTAIN BREAKS

Canoe across the azure-blue waters of Lake Louise in Banff National Park

ALBERTA AND THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

Why go? Trekking through the awe-inspiring Rockies in the Canadian state of Alberta is the ultimate journey into the great outdoors. This invigorating trip will give you a huge vitality boost as you breathe in crisp, fresh mountain air and gaze up at clear blue skies.

Rocky Mountain scenery, with its vast forests, gleaming lakes and frosted peaks, is so perfect it's hard to believe it's real and yours to explore. Striding along, you won't see another soul for hours.

When you do encounter them, Alberta folk are friendly and walk with an extra beat to their step. Absorb their energy and feel ten years younger on an enriching holiday in a breathtaking location.

What to do Explore the Rockies on foot. There are hiking trails to suit all levels, but one of the most spectacular takes

in Spray Lake and Watridge Lake, with their vast white blankets of water. Or hike around Lake Louise to wonder at its mesmerising azure shimmer.

■ Get your bearings cowgirl-style by riding horseback on a magical guided trail through meadows, woods and mountains. Rafter Six Ranch Resort has half-day packages, overnight trips and Sunset Super Rides (www.raftersix.com).

■ For the ultimate view of the Rockies, take a thrilling helihike, which combines a helicopter ride above lakes, glaciers and alpine forests with a gentle walk and an easy yoga session on landing (www.marthashelihikes.com).

■ After a day in the open air, relax in the hot springs in rustic Banff, Canada's highest town, then shop for souvenirs along Buffalo Street and Grizzly Street.

Treat yourself at the Red Earth Spa at the Banff Caribou Lodge. The Smooth Earth Signature Pedicure includes a mud mask and aromatic massage, and there's a hot tub and steam room. Spend an afternoon in the Willow Springs at Fairmont Banff Springs, a Scottish baronial-style castle. Begin with a Banff Mineral Scrub, then unwind in the waterfall pools area and mineral pool, or lie in the outdoor tub encircled by mountain glory (www.fairmont.com).

Where to eat Fuze Finer Dining in Banff serves delicious local produce, at around £18 a head.

■ Choose from fresh lobster, buffalo and game at the Sleeping Buffalo Dining Room in the Buffalo Mountain Lodge, overlooking Rundle Mountain and Bow Valley.



ABOVE: Your transport awaits you
BELOW: Give free rein to your inner cowgirl at the Rafter Six Ranch Resort



The facts Stay at Mount Engadine Lodge in the heart of the Rockies, where cosy rooms have wonderful views. Wake to see moose ambling in the stream outside your window while breakfast smells waft from the kitchen. With no televisions or telephones, this eco-friendly lodge is pure peace.

Double rooms cost from £196, which includes breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner, and unlimited tea and coffee. Visit www.mountengadine.com or call 001 403 678 4080. For more on the region, visit www.travelalberta.com.

PRIMA READERS staying at the Mount Engadine during 2009 will receive a ten per cent discount. Quote Prima when booking.

BA Holidays offers a seven-night fly-drive to Calgary from £611 per person based on June 2009 departures including return BA flights from Heathrow and car hire. For reservations, visit www.britishairways.com or call 0844 493 0758.

THE LAKES AND ALPS OF SLOVENIA

Why go? Small but perfectly formed, Slovenia combines lakes and mountains in one compact, beguiling country. It's easy to get around, so you can be hiking in the spectacular Julian Alps in the morning and sailing on stunning Lake Bled in the afternoon. Slovenia also has a sunny Adriatic coastline, lush vineyards, medieval castles and excellent, affordable food and wine.

What to do Amble around Lake Bled or hire a rowing boat (£9) to cross the lake to a tiny island with an exquisite 17th-century church where it's traditional to ring the bell to honour the Blessed Virgin and make a wish.

■ Visit Blejski Grad, the imposing medieval Bled Castle perched on the cliff top above the lake for a spectacular view of the Julian Alps.

■ Lake Bohinj was once a haunt of Agatha Christie but today is best known for its watersports. You can kayak and canoe, or fish from the banks. Around the lake you'll find ski slopes and trails for cross-country skiers and mountain bikers.

■ Drive up into the Julian Alps and Slovenia's awesome Triglav National Park, with Mount Triglav at its heart. Enter a world of deep river gorges and grassy highlands, home to eagles, grouse and amiable alpine dairy farmers.

■ Take the underground train through Postonjna Cave to marvel at grottoes and a maze of tunnels three million years old, with striking stalagmites and stalactites. It's 8°C in the cave, so wrap up well (£18 adult, £11 child).



■ Explore the baroque Old Town of Ljubljana with its colourful food markets and Sunday flea market. Cross the famous Tromostovje (Triple Bridge) and head towards the 16th-century Ljubljanski Grad (Ljubljana Castle) for a wonderful city view.

Where to eat Dine by candlelight beside the river in the Old Town at the Zlata Ribica (Golden Fish) restaurant. Try homemade struklji (dumpling platter) with mushroom sauce, baked fillet of sea bass and gibanica, a traditional dessert of apple, poppy seeds, nuts and soft cheese. A meal for two with wine costs around £60.

The facts Four miles from the centre of Ljubljana, by the River Sava, Eurocamp offers very comfortable accommodation in tents and mobile homes, plus the superb Laguna Beach Club pool with three heated pools, waterfalls, whirlpools, Jacuzzis and two poolside bars.

A mobile home sleeping five costs £1225 for a week in August, less in low season. Visit www.eurocamp.co.uk or call 0844 406 0402. Easyjet flies from London to Ljubljana for around £150 return (www.easyjet.com). For more on Slovenia, visit www.slovenia.info.

ABOVE: The tiny island in Lake Bled is just a short boat trip from the shore
BELOW LEFT: Sample the fresh produce at the market in Vodnik Square, Ljubljana