

He Said, She Said: Face Off on Ideal Snow Getaways

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The Globe asked two of the country's most prolific ski writers, Lori Knowles and Iain MacMillan, about the makings of a great ski trip and found old friends don't always agree when it comes to planning a holiday on the slopes.

Lori: This year I'm going to plan my ski trips even better. I've made a spreadsheet listing some of the more important aspects of a ski vacation. Instead of ending the day at the spa, I think one should start at the spa (after dropping the kids off at ski school). On my list: the new ScandinaVe Spa Whistler—wood-burning Finish saunas, thermal waterfalls, hot stone and Thai yoga massages. And the hotel should be the ski-to-the-door variety, with heated floors, 600-threadcount sheets... perhaps even a butler, like the one at the new Four Seasons in Vail, Colorado, handing out warmed bathrobes by the outdoor pool.

Iain: Your spreadsheet has 600 what count? My spreadsheet (if I knew how to make one) would start with organising the level of skiers on the trip. If my buddies can't all ski trees and steep chutes, or don't mind hiking a little to find powder, there's no point waiting for them at the bottom after the first run. We can all meet up for après ski when we crash your condo's hot-tub. Or better yet, I'm thinking more about piling the gang into the back of snowcat at in the B.C. Interior, ripping huge lines through the untracked all day and grinning about it all night, then repeating the scenario the next day. And the next.

Lori: Oh sure, nothing like "roughing it" at a cat or heli-ski operation! I'm all for powder, but I prefer lift-served luxury. I hear there's a new program for gals like me at Sun Peaks, B.C. The Ski Sisters are taking the backcountry back to basics—teaching women how to ski steep chutes or deep snow without scaring the stink out of them. (Or having their male partners breathing down their necks "encouraging" them to keep up with the group.) There's a new lift at B.C.'s Whitewater, too, opening up 303 new hectares of off-piste. Is that "rough" enough for you and the boys?

Iain: Now we're talking! Nelson, Rossland, Fernie, Golden, Revelstoke...this is starting to sound like a ruthless roadtrip. Arrive for a late evening meal, ski hard the next day or two and then pile everything and everyone back into the rental or buddy from Calgary's truck and move on to the next adventure. We can do our laundry and yoga when we get back to the city. (Except for the yoga part.)

Lori: Hold up, there. No road trips for me. Where's the luxury? I'll stay-put on this dream vacation. I'm thinking Banff's Post Hotel. Their Gourmet Package includes a six-course dinner with wine pairings, a welcome wine and fruit package, plus a king-size bed and one of those fireplaces they're so famous for. Travelling from Lake Louise to Sunshine and Norquay is about as much "road tripping" as I'm up for.

Iain: Mmmmm...pairings...like a pair of fat skis and skins—or an overnight storm and a cold, bluebird mid-week day to follow, or the Coast Mountains and the Rockies, the Alps and the Andes. Where were we again? Oh yeah, just how valid is a ski trip without some sweat and challenge, plenty of embarrassing moments and a few sphincter-tightening scary anecdotes?

Lori: Somehow, scary, sphincter-tightening anecdotes don't fit anywhere into my relaxing luxury ski vacation. And your roadtrip plans seem a little unspecific to me... are you planning to just wing it? And with all this dreaming we've both forgotten about the kids. Now adding to my spreadsheet: family-friendly ski fun. How about Vermont's Smuggler's Notch? It's got ski-in/ski-out condos, an indoor fun zone, snow tubing, dog sledding, and yes, even skiing... Three mountains of skiing, including one with some decent steps. They've even got a Snow Sport

University... judging by the way you ski, you could use a little schoolin'.

Iain: I'm the first to admit it's getting bloody hard to find a ski area nowadays that will let you on the lift with a kid in your backpack let alone the family dog for last run but we're talking apples and oranges here with a boys' week west vs. Family Day Weekend. I'm going to do both. But where's the romance of travel if all the details are planned in advance? It's simply what guys do best. Head out onto the road with at least one vague plan, get lost and not ask for directions, lose stuff and spend hours looking for it until their girlfriends and wives point out it's right in front of their noses.... As exciting as Vermont's Von Trapp Family Lodge sounds, I'm going to tell the guys to fly into Cranbrook or Kelowna this winter and we'll take it from there.

Lori: Okay, but just make sure that wherever you end up, your cell's got service. Oops, forgot... you don't have a cell. As for me, I'll be by the pool in some swanky spot like Aspen or Park City. Relaxed and rested. Kids with that cute South American ski pro. Me sipping a mojito. Wait, let me add 'mojitos' to that spreadsheet...

Lori Knowles and Iain MacMillan don't agree on much... except how much fun it is write about skiing.

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