

Sussex ski special Canada 2009

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Monday, 30 June 2008

A highlight of our next seasons programme is our first trip to the very special Canadian resort of Red Mountain. Little known in the UK but very highly thought of in North America, and building on the experience of Ben Bailey, who, as a level 3 CSIA qualified ski instructor, has spent 2 seasons skiing, living and teaching there.

I also spent 10 days with him at Red Mountain in Rossland BC, Canada's oldest ski resort on the site of legendary gold mines that established the region, researching the possible ways we could provide an exciting alternative to all the routine packages already available from tour operators to other parts of Canada.

So, here's the plan for our unique trip catering for a maximum of 24 people, how Jan and I can operate it, and what it can offer that makes it different!

We have chosen a time that offers the best chance of superb Kootenay Powder Snow by leaving Gatwick on Saturday 17th January 2009, getting back there on Sunday 1st February 2009. Please do bear in mind that nothing guarantees perfect powder snow and the precise detail of our plans and journeys are of course subject to change if the weather dictates. Whatever happens we will get the best out of every situation as it arises. The features of the Kootenay mountains, of which Red is part, and which distinguish it from the rockies and other Canadian mountain areas, is the high snowfall and dry atmosphere that typically account for a high percentage of "powder days" and the relatively mild winter climate probably no colder in January than we experience sometimes on our French Alpine trips.

The direct flight to Calgary takes 8 hours from where we drive in 4 7 seat people carriers to another rapidly developing resort midway to Rossland - Revelstoke - where we will ski on Sunday 18th, with the included lift pass. We will drive for about 4 hours, not too much after the flight, getting there in time for dinner at an outstanding restaurant and a good nights sleep in our hotel before a thrilling days skiing at North Americas newest & biggest resort (for its vertical drop and recorded snowfall). Canadian ski slopes tend to close quite early compared to European ones, so after skiing we will be able to move on to our Rossland chalets arriving in time for a buffet dinner.

These 3 4 bedroomed chalets are at the mountain base of Red rather than in the town of Rossland. Our vehicles will be very useful for getting around, making expeditions yet to be planned and visiting local entertainments and facilities.

Having seen the luxury chalets with their spacious bedrooms, bathrooms and living areas, their hot tubs and stylish décor, the emphasis is definitely on comfort after the adventures of the days on the snow.

Throughout the 10 days here, we will provide substantial breakfasts and 3 course dinners as usual.

"Ski in" makes it easy to get back at lunchtime, or make picnics, the latter especially useful on days when we plan an introduction to off piste touring, Red mountain does possess a really good value mountain restaurant as well as an atmospheric bar at the bottom of the slopes for "apres ski" and live music.

So what can we offer in this amazing area, quite different from the alpine regions with which we are more familiar?

From a surprisingly small number of chairlifts there is a huge network of on and off piste skiing of ALL standards, mostly tree clad and also fairly deserted! There are superbly prepared pistes including steep blacks, gentle blues, as well as open powder fields, endless glades and steep routes down through the trees and yet every run on this conical forested mountain ends on a track which encircles the mountain and leads back to base. The area is used by some of the most outstanding young skiers in Canada for dare devil runs as well as by local families for beginner classes taken from the excellent ski school. Red Resort really does have something for everyone and will bring out the best in you!

With Bens close connections with the resort and its personalities, we expect to spend some time exploring new friendships with like minded skiers on and off the slopes! Canadians are quite incredibly friendly.

With Red offering such easy back country access we will offer an introduction to ski touring to all advanced and intermediate skiers on at least one day, in groups of not more than 6 led by Ben, with avalanche awareness and touring equipment training built in. We could well spend one or more days again in smaller groups at the other nearby resort of White Water. Anyone with lots of cash to spare COULD even go cat or heli skiing to areas not easily accessible otherwise BUT this is definitely NOT required to still experience lots of skiing in very quiet surroundings and yet have lots of fun both on and off the prepared areas and in challenging terrain.

Although the 14 day trip is inclusive of accommodation, transport, nearly every meal and most importantly the full lift pass on every day we plan to ski, along with lots of group guidance, we really hope to get a good response to one extra we plan.

We would like to run a Canadian Ski Instructors Alliance level 1 course during the stay, coached by an accredited Canadian course director from the highly acclaimed "Canadian Ski Quest" organisation. As every other aspect of being in

the right place is already covered by the cost of the trip, this will be charged at the basic CSIA course fee only, which will make it tremendous value for money.

It is not possible to undertake a higher level course without completing this initial level but make no mistake, it will involve lots of personal development for even the most advanced skier, will alter your way of thinking about skiing as well as requiring some concentrated effort! Most of all it will be great FUN as well as challenging because the CSIA concept reflects the Canadian attitude that if anything fails to provide enjoyment it just is not worth doing anyway! It doesn't matter if you never intend to teach formally, it will be hugely rewarding.

Subject to conditions and progress with the short touring sessions, using hired equipment in the main, (available locally quite inexpensively), Ben, with a wealth of knowledge and experience already, may be able to take a group on a more extensive tour involving an overnight cabin stop after a longer climb on touring skis than can be built into the one day sessions.

We will be running an evening of Curling for the whole group at the ice rink in Rossland and taking in the atmosphere and history of this lovely mountain town. Other visits, including to Trail, the nearest big town just 20 minutes away, with ice hockey, swimming pool and shopping centre, are all possible with our own transport on hand, particularly as Canadian slopes close around 3.30 in the afternoon, leaving a bit more time after skiing than we usually experience in Europe. We plan to leave Rossland on Friday 29th after breakfast and drive back probably by a different route, staying midway to Calgary but this time enjoying a relaxing visit to one of the wonderful hot springs en route, followed by a farewell dinner before a last nights sleep, breakfast and the drive back to the city.

With the return flight around 4pm on the Saturday afternoon we'll have plenty of time to get to the airport after handing back our people carriers.

The flights and accommodation are reserved for a week or so from now so quick decisions are necessary if we are to go ahead with the trip. With such a high cost venture the ONLY way we can possibly proceed is with the commitment of deposits having been paid. At the moment actual names are not required for flights so it will be possible to make changes over the next few months.

Inevitably the cost is much higher than our usual visits to the French Alps BUT the major expense of getting there cannot be avoided - and we think we have come up with the most economic, simple and versatile way of doing it after a lot of research. We are using a direct flight from Gatwick to Calgary followed by short journeys in well equipped and comfortable late model people carriers equipped with ski racks.

Nevertheless you will appreciate that transport to and around Canada inevitably accounts for a substantial part of the cost of this trip. Canadian lift passes WHICH ARE INCLUDED FOR 12 DAYS are also relatively more expensive than their European counterparts because of the comparatively few skiers who provide the revenue for the lift companies. We are including AS WELL as the 12 nights in Red Mountain, 2 other nights twin accommodation with breakfast and 2 dinners to celebrate both our arrival and our departure!

We don't think you will need to spend much more unless you undertake the level 1 course, (cost still under review but expected to be around £250 for up to 5 days and all the course material), but we do recommend really serious consideration about this opportunity.

So our total is £1495

To reserve a place a deposit of £345 MUST BE PAID but will of course be refunded immediately if we can't get the trip together in time and until names are required during November, they will be transferable (but not refundable) where you find a replacement or we have someone waiting for a place. That has got to be a fair deal bearing in mind that WE have to pay substantial deposits by the end of June to secure the flights and chalets!

PLEASE PLEASE call either of us to discuss any queries you have, particularly if it will help in making a positive decision!

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SUSSEX SKI SPECIAL Canada 2009

Please return your deposit of £345 to Jan. cheques should be made payable to Sussex Ski Special. Call her for bank details if you prefer to make an electronic transfer.

NAME(s) _____
ADDRESS _____

POST CODE _____ TELL _____ MB _____ E_MAIL _____

PLEASE ENROL ME ON THE CANADA 2009 TRIP.

I AM/AM NOT INTERESTED IN THE LEVEL 1 CSIA COURSE OPTION (please delete as necessary)