

## Rocky Mountain Highs

by Belinda Weber

**'Content,' 'calm' and 'tranquil' were just a few of the words our group used to describe how we felt about our yoga experience. Hardly surprising you might think, but we'd just been dropped off in a remote meadow in the Rockies by helicopter and were completely alone - until our ride returned in about four hours**

I admit it, my first thought was bears. Everyone warned us we were in bear country - grizzlies and black bears are fairly common - and although I was assured they wouldn't attack a group of six or more (we were eight), I did wonder if our downward dogs might upset their counting.

Luckily no such furry friend appeared and we were soon engrossed in our poses, the only distraction being the ants that crawled over our feet!



Martha McCallum, who runs the **heli-yoga tours**, believes strongly in getting back to nature and learning to listen to your body. She quickly realised we were all novices and tailored our session to suit our ability, and I can honestly say I've never enjoyed an exercise session as much as that one. With a gentle breeze rustling the trees, and the sound of a river flowing in the background, it really was a magical way to enjoy the spectacular scenery and wonderful fresh air.

### **Awesome beauty**

Nothing quite prepares you for the beauty of the Rockies. Everything you read tells of their majesty, and it was quite a relief to discover that they more than lived up to expectations. Their awesomely jagged peaks were still snow-covered when I visited in June, and although daytime temperatures were warm and pleasant, there was still a chill in the air at night.

So if you crave wide open spaces and awesome scenery, head to the Rockies, and rediscover the great outdoors. Vast areas of wilderness peppered with turquoise lakes should satisfy your wanderlust and there are plenty of opportunities to get active.

### **Scary fun**

In Calgary itself, head to the **Canada Olympic Park**. In no time at all, you could find yourself dangling from a zipline about to hurtle down the very ski-jump that Eddie the Eagle jumped off in the Winter Olympics of 1988. It's scary at the top, but once you're snugly in your harness, there's only one way to go! It's truly exhilarating and, although I did have a bit of a scream, it's a very more-ish rush.





Once in the Rockies proper, there are great walks to be had from just about anywhere, that can be tailored to ability and time available. Everywhere you look, you'll be rewarded by stunning views and fantastic scenery. Remember you are in bear country, so don't go chasing shadows into the bush to find out what they are, and take sensible precautions, like making lots of noise and carrying bear spray.

For a low-key adventure, hire canoes and paddle gently through the calm waters of the Vermillion Lakes, spotting goslings, ospreys, muskrat, and even elk along the shores of the Bow River. Canoes can be rented from **Blue Canoe Rentals**.

If you're confident around horses, or are a rider, you might enjoy a morning's horse ride in Banff National Park. I'm not and I didn't! We saddled up with **Rafter Six**, but as a totally inexperienced rider, I found the ride terrifying. Plonked on a horse and told it would follow the ones in front, our wrangler headed off. This sounded simple enough, but no one had warned us that the horses would jostle and bite each other to get, and keep, the position in line they wanted.

With just one wrangler for our group of seven, she was way ahead and blissfully unaware of the commotion behind her. Be warned also that you may not stick to marked trails, so be prepared for close encounters with branches!