



The soaring angles of the Peaks Hotel and Suites reflect the shape of the majestic mountains that surround Banff, Alta. PHOTOS: PEAKS HOTEL AND SUITES

BANFF'S PEAKS OFFERS ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH

Steps from the excitement of downtown, this new hotel balances comfort with style



ROCHELLE LASH

With its soaring, angular architecture and deluxe interiors, the new Peaks Hotel and Suites brings panache and polish to the picturesque and sporty community of Banff, Alta.

Banff's lively streets — almost all named after wild animals — pop with restaurants, bars, shops and galleries. Blessed with a pivotal downtown location, the Peaks is one block from newly gentrified Bear Street, where holiday celebrations will sparkle in December and the annual SnowDays celebration will sizzle from Jan. 18 to 29.

For a more pastoral experience, the Peaks is also near the enchanting Bow River Trail, where walkers, joggers and wheelchair riders enjoy waterfront picnic stops and park benches in the company of geese and ducks.

The town is at the heart of the great Rocky Mountain paradise of Banff National Park, which is cherished for its awesome landscape of jagged, snow-capped mountains, high-altitude forests and pristine lakes.

This picturesque UNESCO World Heritage Site is home to astounding experiences and world-class sports. Among the best-known attractions are the Big3 — the monumental trio of Banff Sunshine, Mt. Norquay and Lake Louise resorts. The ski/snowboard mountains each

IF YOU GO

Peaks Hotel and Suites: 800-661-1021, 403-762-4471, peaksbanff.com; 218 Lynx St., Banff, Alta. Accessible. Dining, spa at Banff Park Lodge. **Price:** Starting at \$209 Sunday-Thursday during October and November, weekends and holidays can be higher. Some advance bookings save on three nights or more. Underground self-parking, \$18. **Banff and Lake Louise tourism:** 877-762-8421, banfflakelouise.com (which has a handy online trip planner). **Alberta tourism:** travelalberta.com. **SkiBig3:** 844-754-2443, skibig3.com. Ikon Pass, Mountain Collective Pass and SkiBig3 pass all valid. **Discover Banff Tours:** 877-565-9372, 403-760-5007, banfftours.com. Sightseeing tour, \$72 for adults, \$42 for age six to 12. Other tours available.

have their own giant character and soaring summit. **Lodging:** “The Peaks represents a rare balance of quiet comfort and a vibrant lifestyle,” said Christy Massey, senior sales manager. “It is only steps from downtown Banff and it also has



The Peaks Hotel and Suites offers deluxe accommodations and breathtaking views of the Rockies.

easy access to the many adventures of Banff National Park, plus the shuttle heading to the Big3 stops across the street.”

The hotel highlights its splendid surroundings with large windows opening onto the mountains and a stunning collection of photography, much of it by Paul Zizka of Banff.

The Peaks has several types of accommodations, all contemporary, and some with soaking tubs, private balconies or kitchenettes. The spacious two-level Loft Suites have vaulted ceilings, king and sofa beds and two televisions. The lines are lean and uncluttered, warmed by natural colours and textures of grasscloth, leather and linen.

Guests can chill in the Aurora Borealis living room, which has a small library, a fireplace and a cappuccino machine. In the afternoon, visitors often gravitate to the patio to capture the sun.

While the Peaks concentrates on dishy accommodations, its sister property across the street, Banff Park Lodge, orchestrates a lively drinks scene and fine dining at La Terrazza, as well as spa life (at no charge) with an indoor

pool, hot tub and sauna. **Dining:** Food and beverage director Chris Bolt oversees three spirited venues at Banff Park Lodge.

La Terrazza offers white tablecloths and Andrea Bocelli songs. You can go all-Italian with wines from Sicily, Piedmont and Sardinia, and dishes like rosellini, La Terrazza's signature pasta with ham, mozzarella and a rosé sauce.

Delectable Canadian specialties include Alberta bison carpaccio or rib-eye steak, Atlantic lobster risotto and B.C. salmon. The finale may be caramellata (dreamy Italian-style crème brûlée with chocolate), with creative coffees like the Bellissimo with Frangelico and Galliano.

The Crave Mountain Grill is famous for its alpine views and robust fare including Rocky Mountain game ragout, burgers (beef, chicken, portobello or bison), pork ribs, braised beef short ribs and the Friday/Saturday special, traditional prime rib with whipped potatoes and Yorkshire pudding.

Après-sport at the Terrace Lobby Lounge buzzes with craft beer like the robust Banff Avenue Black Pilsner and local spirits by

Park Distillery, as well as casual fare including fish and chips, chicken Parmesan, burgers and charcuterie. **Banff:** The area welcomes up to four million people a year from around the world, so multilingual guides are available for most activities and all the signs at major sites are in English and French.

Sightseeing by bus with Discover Banff Tours is the perfect introduction because the drivers double as expert guides, narrating fascinating tales of history and flora and fauna through several alpine climate zones.

The breathtaking selfie ops include the glacier-fed Bow Falls and the quirky rock pillars at the Hoodoos Viewpoint. You'll pass wildlife habitats where you might glimpse elk, bears, bighorn sheep, bald eagles or wolves.

More active tours around Banff include wildlife safaris, Via Ferrata climbing, helicopter rides, horseback riding, rafting, guided hiking or cycling, and winter excursions such as dogsledding, Nordic skiing and sleigh rides. *rochelle@rochellelash.com*

TRAVEL BRIEFS

Erosion threatens 'King Arthur' castle

The reputed birthplace of King Arthur is facing a challenge to its crown from furious storms whipped up by climate change. Tintagel Castle, on the northwest coast of Cornwall in southwestern England, is under siege from rising ocean levels that are causing coastal erosion along England's shoreline, experts say. English Heritage, which looks after the site, said raging winter storms fuelled by climate change are laying waste to the popular tourist destination. While the castle itself is safe for now, the visitor centre

and surrounding estate need at least \$100,000 of work simply to repair damage from wild weather last winter, the conservation group said. Rob Woodside, the charity's estates director, told London Daily Telegraph the scale of destruction threatens historic landmarks up and down Britain's seaside. He said: “Erosion along England's coastline is nothing new, but the rate of land loss that we have seen over the past few years is alarming.” It has released a list of six sites most at risk and is facing the possibility of abandoning some properties if an urgent fundraising call to save them is not heeded.

'Sneakers' day gives aircrew needed lift

Hard-working German airline crews who spend hours on their feet in often uncomfortable dress shoes will soon get sole-soothing relief. Budget carrier Eurowings has announced it is ditching high heels and brogues for one day of the week — dubbed Sneaker Flydays. Staff at the discounter, part of the Lufthansa Group, will be urged to slip on comfy runners on the first Friday of each month. The shoes have been specially designed by sportswear brand Puma and will carry the Eurowings logo.

\$5 million up for grabs in airships race

With echoes of the Hollywood film Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines, a European monarch has announced a \$5-million round-the-world race — using airships. Prince Albert of Monaco said the World Sky Race will pit aviators against each other in a dash around the globe using only blimps, dirigibles and zeppelins. Once thought the future of the skies, rigid airship technology was effectively ended after the 1937 Hindenburg disaster that killed 35 people. But advocates as disparate as Iron Maiden

frontman Bruce Dickinson and Google co-founder Sergey Brin now see it as the way forward in combating global warming. Prince Albert said the race will focus attention on the potential of airships — which require significantly less fuel than conventional aircraft — to curb carbon emissions. Sponsored by the World Air League, the event will comprise 16 stages beginning in London in September 2024 and ending in Paris. Each team will represent a different nation and then race to circle the Earth for a chance at the \$5-million prize, organizers said. *Andre Ramshaw, for Postmedia News*