

FAMILY TRAVEL

RELAX WITH THE KIDS AT KANANASKIS RESORT

Mountain retreat offers gorgeous views of the Rockies with a little extra luxury

MHAIRRI WOODHALL

My husband is terrified of bears. It's a crippling paranoia that prevents us from camping, hiking and most other backcountry adventures. Given my strong aversion to roughing it, his fear actually works to my advantage. We do, however, want to expose our daughter to Alberta's immense beauty and foster her love and appreciation of the outdoors. Luckily, I've discovered a place where fulfilling this dream is possible. Better yet, there's an al fresco alpine spa and free (yes free!) programming that connects kids and families with nature. Yes, Santa, unicorns really do exist.

The Pomeroy Kananaskis Mountain Lodge is perfecting family travel in the Canadian Rockies. From the special children's check-in and welcome kit, to the Creative Kids Centre and reimagined Rocky Mountain inspired leisure pool, the Pomeroy is pushing for excellence in this category.

Daniella Bettoni, the Lodge's family activities manager, is a mother of two girls and the driving force behind the Mountain Explorers camp.

Her passion for sharing Kananaskis Country's natural amenities with guests of all ages shines through in every aspect of the program.

"We want to encourage children and families to get out and explore the spectacular landscape that surrounds the resort," she says. "By offering a mix of family-focused fun and fully-supervised children's programming, parents can spend quality time with their kids, as well as enjoy a quiet adult-only meal or afternoon at the spa."

The camp's summer lineup includes everything from building forts and learning survival skills to making woodland mud pies and roasting marshmallows around the campfire. Although most of the fun happens outside, the lodge does offer a few indoor activities, like family movie nights, arts and crafts and a Chef for a Day pizza making class, which was our child's favourite. Camp times vary per day and are available to children ages four and up. Pre-registration is required.

Knowing that our mini-me was happy at camp afforded my husband and I a guilt-free afternoon to soak in the on-property Kananaskis Nordic Spa. Picturesque stone pools, saunas and steam cabins nestled amid a pine grove, with Mount Kidd towering above — now that's my perfect version of the great outdoors. Starting with a Finnish sauna, I braved the traditional Scandinavian circuit: hot, warm, cold, rest, repeat. I then slowly transitioned to the warm pools where I lost track of time. The

IF YOU GO

A recent refresh has transformed the Pomeroy Kananaskis Mountain Lodge (formally Delta Hotels Kananaskis Lodge) into an elegant mountain retreat with five unique dining concepts. Kids six-and-under eat free from the children's menu at most of the restaurants, however, if you have adventurous diners, order a bunch of dishes to share. Highlights for our family are Fortes chargrilled calamari and the scallops with kale risotto, and the Cedar Room's crab cakes and millionaire's cut Wagyu rib-eye. Other resort updates, which are planned for the coming year, include a large, year-round outdoor patio with fire pits and a new children's activity centre.

same cannot be said about my dip in the shockingly cool plunge pool. Resting at the spa, however, is easy.

Find a spot by the campfire, snuggle into one of the heated hammocks, or pop up to the Two Trees Bistro for charcuterie and a glass of wine.

I tried all of the above, and almost forgot to repeat the circuit. Bring a book and there's a good chance you'll be here all day.

Resort guests spa at a discount, and the entry fee is waived for anyone booking a massage.

Of course, hanging out and making memories with your kids is the most important part of any family vacation; and we found plenty of opportunities to do so in Kananaskis.

A find-and-see picture game is one of our top ways to keep our child engaged on long walks. We had a blast tromping around the forested property in search of items on the Pomeroy's scavenger hunt.

Buzzing along the Village Rim Trail is another easy outdoor adventure for little legs. The dramatic views of Mount Kidd and the Kananaskis Valley are staggering, and as bear encounters are near impossible on the Lodge's paved pathway, it's an idyllic place for my shutterbug husband. Next time we'll pack binoculars for a closer look at the elk that graze in the valley below.



Spectacular mountain views surround the resort. Mount Kidd is a particularly stunning sight. CURT WOODHALL

Pomeroy's highly anticipated indoor leisure pool is open and will receive its waterslide installation in early summer.

Between the sprayers, cannons and play table, I figure there's absolutely no chance of escaping this water wonderland in a dry state.

Additional summer activities, including bike rentals (with trailers for kids), horseback riding excursions, rafting trips and guided hikes can be booked through Kananaskis Outfitters — the third party guiding company in the Village Centre.

Mhairri Woodhall's family adventures can be found at www.arrivalstravel.com



The Nordic spa is a great way to de-stress and connect with nature while the kids are enjoying the free programming at the hotel. MIKE SEEHAGEL

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