



Policeman's Creek wooden boardwalk, just steps from downtown Canmore, offers spectacular mountain views and lots of benches where families can take snack breaks.

CANMORE IN SPRING OFFERS OFF-SEASON BENEFITS

Less congestion, good deals await visitors, writes *Mhairri Woodhall*.

With ski season winding down, and summer's throng of tourists still weeks away, I booked a last-minute family getaway to Canmore to take advantage of fewer crowds and hotel savings.

Whether you go for the day, a night or book a weekend away, there's plenty of inexpensive — or free — spring activities to entertain the kids in this quaint mountain town.

Playing outside is a must in Canmore, and you'll discover a host of trails that accommodate young adventures. For biking, our top choice is Legacy Trail — the 22-km paved scenic stunner that links Canmore and Banff. Bring your own ride or rent bikes and Chariot trailers from Rebound Cycle in town.

If you'd rather get your steps in, Policeman's Creek Boardwalk is the simplest option. Located just steps from downtown's Main Street, this gentle, picturesque trail boasts big mountain views and ample benches for snack breaks.

We usually grab coffees and steamed milk from RAVE and stroll the wooden boardwalk in the morning; although I've heard from friends that it's magical at sunset as well.

For a family hike that will help raise your heart rate, explore the Grassi Lakes Trail to see its beautiful shimmering ponds, or Troll Falls in Kananaskis for a pretty cool waterfall.

Window shopping in downtown is another favourite pastime. Timothy's Popcorn & Candy, Hi Jinx toy store and Glacier's Edge kids clothing are always the highlight for our daughter, while picking up some Jacek chocolate at Stonewaters, and Field Kit soap at Project A — a boutique dedicated to handmade Canadian products — are a must for me.

If the spring weather foils your outdoor plans, head to Elevation Place for indoor water play.

Family swim passes are just \$18 and offer full access to the centre's lap and leisure pools, hot tub, children's splash zone, lazy river and water slide. Elevation's climbing gym is another way to exhaust excess energy.

The wall's 1,000 metres of varied terrain will challenge both new and experienced

IF YOU GO

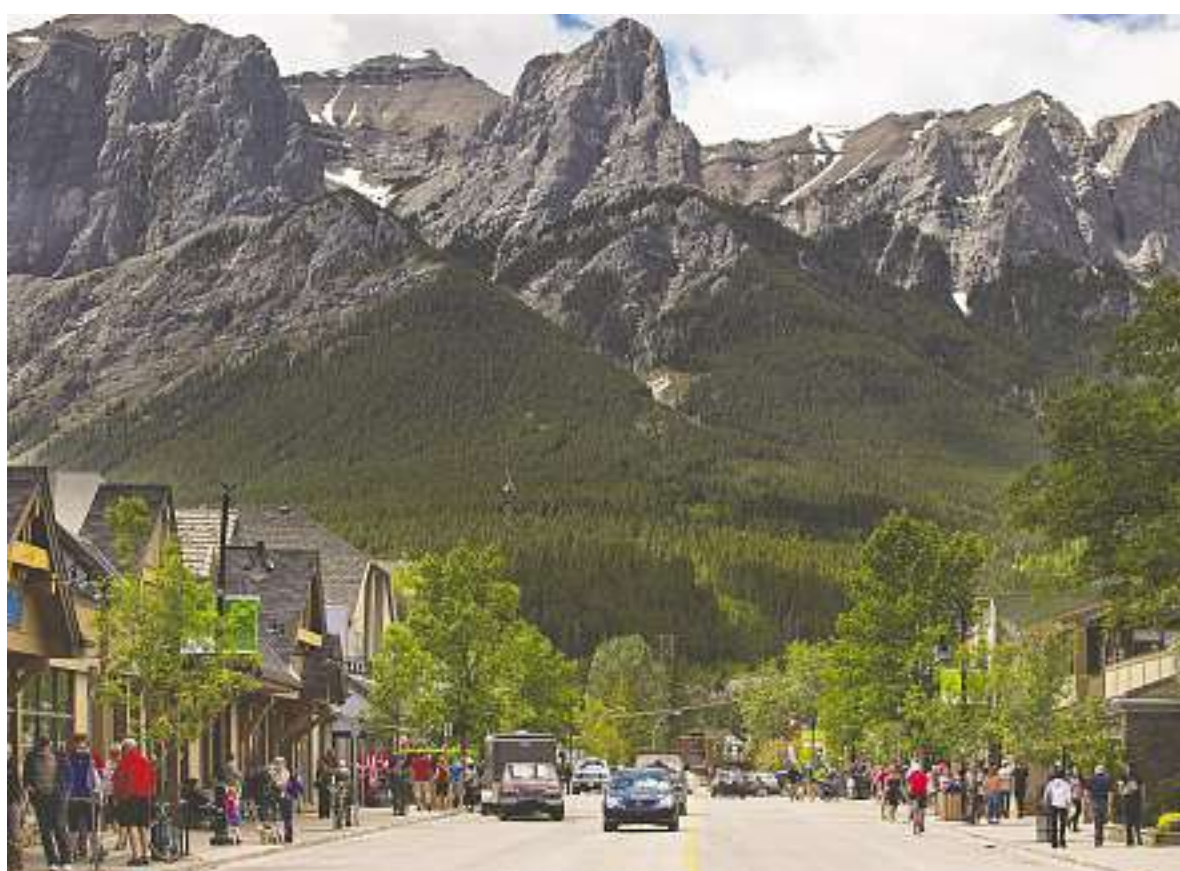
We stayed at the Blackstone Mountain Lodge, which is within walking distance of Elevation Place, Policeman's Creek and downtown Canmore's shops and restaurants. With its fully equipped one- and two-bedroom suites, communal barbecues and outdoor heated pool and hot tubs, the property is ideal for family travel. Even with the inclement weather, our daughter was thrilled to swim while we barbecued or soaked in the hot tub. The Blackstone is offering a spring special of up to 30 per cent off rack-room rates if you book and stay before May 31, 2019.

climbers. Purchase a \$30 family pass to access both the aquatic centre and climbing gym, which is suitable for kids ages four and up. Equipment rental packages — including shoes, harness and belay — are \$8 for youth and \$10 for adults.

The Canmore Public Library is also housed in Elevation Place, so be sure to check the calendar of events to take advantage of complimentary story and play times, or pop by to cosy up with a book in the kids' area.

If you're visiting Canmore on a Sunday, check out one of the free, family drop-in workshops at artsPlace community arts centre. In-person preregistration for the hugely popular 45-minute guided class (offered at both 10:15 and 11:15 a.m.) begins at 9:45 a.m.

Canmore's robust dining scene is a huge draw for our family as well. I was introduced to some of the town's culinary gems during Alberta Food Tours' Tasting Trail last year. While the three-and-a-half hour walking tour isn't suitable for kids,



Shopping opportunities in downtown Canmore include local boutiques, toy stores and restaurants.



Kids will have a blast scaling the climbing wall at Elevation Place, where there is also an aquatic centre.

I highly recommend it for families with teens (ages 14 and up) and foodies looking to explore Canmore's history, culture and cuisine. It was on this tour that I first learned about Communita Cafe — a vibrant healthy eatery and tea house in the heart of downtown.

I've since brought my daughter, who adores the play area, kids-grilled cheese sandwich and house-made flavoured popcorn.

Another top spot I discovered for all-natural grab and go fare

— including curries, stews, pasta dishes, soups, salads and snacks — is Edible Life. I love picking up a few ready-made meals to have in our hotel suite, or to bring home after the trip.

If you're looking for a sit-down treat, our go-to is Crazyweed for calamari, ahi tuna tartare, wood-fired pizzas and creative cocktails. Kids can order from a special menu and are given pencil crayons and colouring sheets to keep them occupied.

The restaurant offers happy

hour savings between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. To further indulge in the town's eclectic culinary scene, plan your trip around Canmore Uncorked, a nine-day festival in late April that celebrates food, wine, craft beer, whiskey and spirits.

For families, the Grande Big Brunch at the Grande Rockies Resort on May 5 is an excellent and easy way to sample specialties from a host of local restaurants. To follow in Mhairri's adventures visit arrivalstravel.com