

GONE MISSING

THE WOMAN WHO VANISHED
FROM AN ONTARIO PARK

TO KILL A BEAR
J.B. MACKINNON STRUGGLES
WITH A FATEFUL DECISION

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WINTER 2007
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Getaways

LOST IN THE S... KE

You can't beat Battle Abbey for backcountry escape

In the mid 1970s, Chic Scott—the well-known Canadian Rockies guide and author—suggested that the Alpine Club of Canada build a hut in the Battle Range of B.C.'s Selkirk Mountains. The Alpine Club didn't go for his idea, but Bill Putnam, a former American Alpine Club president and an unabashed lover of Western Canada's mountains, hauled out his hammer and teamed up with helicopter skiing pioneer Hans Gmoser to build a small lodge they called Battle Abbey. Gmoser's Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH) ran the ski-touring lodge for more than 25 years alongside its dozen heliskiing lodges, but never promoted it much. In 2006, ownership of the touring lodge was passed on to Gmoser's son, Y Robson, also a guide, and long-time CMH guide Roger Laurilla, who helped construct the original cabin. But Battle Abbey remains one of the best-kept touring secrets in the country.

The lodge itself reflects the sensibilities of 1970s backcountry skiers. It's grown with five additions over the years (most recently this past

summer) but doesn't have a hot water heater heated by wood. It has a solar-generators and a second-floor shower.

As for the skiing, it remains as spectacular as it was when the lodge first opened in 1979, with several 5,000-foot descents from soaring granite summits, expansive glaciers and 2,000-foot extreme tree runs for cloudy days.

Three decades after he suggested building a hut here, Chic Scott says that Battle Abbey ranks among his favourite backcountry lodges. "The terrain is really good, there's great tree skiing, high glaciers and ski mountaineering," he says. "And the lodge is just funky. It's got wind systems and water systems, and a sound system with a thousand tapes. It's a super place."

—Lynn Martel

Battle Abbey's season runs February through mid-May. Cost per week is \$2,000, including all meals and guiding services. Access via helicopter from Golden, B.C. For info: battleabbey.ca

SECRET STASH: Silent Lake, Ontario

Not many people visit Ontario's Silent Lake Provincial Park, dwarfed as it is by nearby Algonquin. But in winter, Silent Lake boasts 40 kilometres of groomed cross-country trails, including a tough 19-kilometre loop. And the best part is you can stay in one of the park's three ski-in yurts. If he'd skied, Genghis would have approved. ontarioparks.com

—IM

TELEMARK CENTRAL

For the last 27 years, the owners of Bellevue Valley Lodge have been creating a little piece of telemarking paradise in the woods just north of Sault Ste. Marie,

Ontario. They have lovingly carved 15 runs in the 440-foot hills here, and the resulting skiing is the most fun you can have east of the Rockies. The pinnacle of the season at Bellevue—which receives about 12 feet of snow a year—is the Snowflea Telemarkfest (February 22 to 24), when low-knee skiers come from as far as Colorado. bellevuevalleylodge.ca

—IM



THE DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND

"We like to think of ourselves as a private provincial park," boasts Jeremy Fontana, co-owner of Au Diabre Vert in Quebec's Eastern Townships. The numbers show he's not far off. The lodge sits on 200 acres and offers up 14 kilometres of maintained cross-country trails. (Only a few of the trails are track-set.) The lodge's trails also link up with the near-endless Sentier de L'Estrie (the Canadian continuation of the Appalachian Trail) and the 80 kilometres of trails maintained by the Parc d'Environnement Naturel de Sutton. audiablevert.qc.ca

—IM



WORTH THE SKI

There's a simple reason why Jasper National Park's Tonquin Amethyst Lake Lodge is relatively undiscovered—the only way to get there is to ski in and the shortest route runs 22 kilometres over 7,250-foot Maccarib Pass. But the schlep is worth it. With the sheer black wall of the Ramparts as a backdrop, the lodge's seven cabins sit like an enchanted collection of miniature log buildings. Skiing options from the lodge are plentiful, from a tour over Moat Pass to alpine adventures on the Mastodon, Ermitte and Fraser glaciers. tonquinadventures.com

—LM