

A Golden ski holiday

Nestled in the Canadian Rockies, Kicking Horse Mountain Resort and the nearby town of Golden BC have plenty of wild and mild activities for families, writes Brian Thacker.

At Kicking Horse, you can have a private ski lesson or a 'private-private' ski lesson. My nine-year-old daughter Rosalie had the latter, although it's not officially a thing. It's because her lesson came with her very own ski run. Kicking Horse is famed for its hard-core steep terrain, so that makes it perfect for beginners and small children – while the experts are riding big mountain lines up high, the beginner and intermediate runs, which make up about 40 per cent of the resort collectively, are virtually empty. Rosalie and her Aussie ski instructor, Sean, had the Jelly Bean magic carpet and bunny hill entirely to themselves all day. By the second day, Rosalie was riding the Catamount chairlift and rocking out pizza turns on the six long green runs.

Like its name, Kicking Horse is untamed, and it can be quite intimidating looking at the resort map glittering with all those black diamonds. But if you and your kids prefer it steep and deep, there are 85 inbound chutes that are true butt-kicking stuff.

Long lunch and long runs
At the tippy top of the mountain, where the Golden Eagle Express Gondola ends its 12-minute ride, is the Eagle's Eye Restaurant, Canada's most elevated dining experience. Elk burgers or bison tenderloin and a panorama await with great table service and a good excuse to linger at lunch. You can then ski off all those fries on 'It's a Ten', a 10km-long gentle ride down with views over five national parks.

Bear necessities
Tucked inside the Wiley Coyote blue ski run is an 8ha mountain refuge that is home to Boo, one of Canada's most beloved orphaned grizzly bears. Safe, enclosed and designed for all ages, in the summer you can visit the refuge for an interpretive tour and learn about Boo, natural history and the bears who call these mountains home. If you are lucky, in late March you might even catch Boo waking from his winter slumber. We spotted him on his back in the snow, basking in the sunshine from the Golden Eagle Express Gondola. There are also very elusive wolves in



Lift tickets
The international Epic Pass includes up to seven days of skiing and riding at Kicking Horse, or a single-day adult weekday lift ticket purchased 72 hours in advance costs about \$165.

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Kicking Horse Mountain
Resort

the area, but you can see them safely at the Northern Lights Wolf Centre, just outside of Golden. Set up by Shelley Black, who has dedicated her life to caring for the handful of wolves who live at the centre, you can join an interpretive tour to learn about wolf conservation, identify animal tracks, and for those 16 plus, book in advance for a walk with a wolf in the wild.

Tubing and hot tubbing
Our last day was filled with more thrills and spills. After a morning of tubing off the Jelly Bean lift, we headed to the

Dawn Mountain Nordic Centre, only a few minutes from Kicking Horse base lodge. My wife took Rosalie out on one of 35km of pristine cross-country trails (another first for her), while my 11-year-old son Luca and I headed out snowshoeing through the forest looking for wildlife.

We ended our day in the hot tub on the large deck of our chalet at Cedar House Chalets looking up at the jagged Dogtooth Range. A hot soak was the perfect antidote for sore, but very happy kids. And for Mum and Dad – with glass of wine in hand. ●

Report card
Info tourismgolden.com/ski-kickinghorseresort.com
Getting there and around Fly into Calgary. It's then a three-hour drive to Golden, which is 15 minutes from Kicking Horse. Take the Golden Shuttle if you want to skip the driving.
Where to stay tourismgolden.com/accommodations