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# TRAVEL

SATURDAY, JULY 7 | 2012 | EDITOR CARALYN CAMPBELL 604.605.2784 | CACAMPBELL@SUNPROVINCE.COM



## Seeking Serenity

### Hiking and yoga go hand in hand in B.C.'s Monashee Mountains

BY SUZANNE MORPHET

Pink heather, purple asters and red paintbrush dot the mountainside. Frilly lilies dance in the breeze. So plentiful – and defiant – are these alpine flowers, that they're everywhere in this seemingly inhospitable environment; beside patches of melting snow, growing out of rocky crevices, and carpeting meadows like exotic rugs.

BC's Monashee Mountains are best known for their dry 'champagne' snow that attracts hordes of backcountry skiers in winter. But after most of the snow melts – usually by mid-July – the mountains come alive with wild flowers, bubbling brooks and wildlife, including a healthy number of grizzly bears.

Our group of eight – seven women in our early 30s to mid-50s and my 88-year old father – have come for a long week-end of hiking and yoga (though eating and

relaxing are part of the equation too.)

Getting to our destination is just the beginning of our adventure. Soon after leaving Revelstoke, we turn up a narrow forest service road where logging trucks rule. Sabine Cooperman, one of the two yoga instructors for the weekend, is driving the lead car and regularly announces our presence by VHF radio. Occasionally she pulls over to let a truck rumble past in a big cloud of dust.

A couple hours later and 1,500 metres higher, we arrive at Sol Mountain Lodge, a three-storey timbered building in a large meadow, seemingly in the middle of nowhere. It may be completely off the grid but it's homey and comfortable with a wood-fired sauna, commercial-size kitchen, showers and enough beds to sleep 20 people.

The Monashees are so expansive and get so much snow – 16 metres (yes, 60 feet!) on average each winter – that three back-country lodges, including Sol Mountain, do business here without their clients

skiing into each other. Sol Mountain's lease alone is 30,000 acres, or about three times the terrain of Whistler-Blackcomb.

After stashing our gear and food, including a chocolate-kahlua cheesecake that someone in the group has brought to share, we strap yoga mats to our backpacks and set out to find our first outdoor 'studio'.

Before long, we come to a grassy meadow where melting snow has formed a small reflecting pool. Jagged mountains form a stunning backdrop. We roll out our mats on the soft grass, kick off our hiking boots and socks, lie down and look up into an enormous sky. Clouds dissolve and reform like a kaleidoscope over our heads as we stretch and inhale the fresh mountain air. A slight breeze keeps away the occasional mosquito.

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