



Well Traveled – Holiday Options North-of-the-Border

By **Pamela Irving**

The holidays fill most of us with a mixture of joy and dread—all those relatives, feasts, gifts and parties are not everyone's cup of fa-la-la. If you prefer to slip away to somewhere fresh, exciting or soothing filled with holiday splendor without all the fuss and in-laws, read on for a few ideas from some of my favorite people and places.

Bellstar Resorts in Canmore

I grew up in Calgary, Alberta, just 50 minutes from Canmore in the heart of the Rockies. The Rockies are still the home I carry in my heart. I even wrote a song about it, but will not sing it to you now. Rather, I will sing the praises of my favorite resorts in a town that was once a coal mining, one-motel pit stop and now has over 16,000 residents and is considered a world-class destination. The Canadian Rockies have hit the top spot on Lonely Planet's Blue List.

Bellstar Resorts has two fabulous locations in Canmore: **The Blackstone Mountain Lodge** and **Solara Resort & Spa**—both with exquisite sun-filled views of the Three Sisters Mountains. My mother Elaine Fleming is a well-known local artist and even her amazing water color and oil paintings of the mountains cannot compete with the reach-out and touch me real thing from your balcony, but her paintings do make great gifts to take home.

Our family will be staying at Blackstone Mountain Lodge in December for our second visit because we love the views and top end finishings in the two-bedroom suites – granite, slate floors, lush bedding and all our needs are taken care of in the kitchen. No need to pack cutlery to make kibbles to nibble on the balcony post-swim and hot tub. The paved trail system out the front door leads to the town's services and shopping. We may nosh at the Trough again, a one-time winner of Air Canada's *enRoute* magazine's top new restaurants in Canada. The duck confits from Brome Lake Quebec is my number one choice while Ken likes the Fairwinds Farm artisan goat cheese plate.

Add holiday cheer to your stay at Bellstar's Canmore Resorts with a made-to-order holiday feast with all the trimmings. Up until December 26th, start a new tradition and add a Christmas tree with all the decorations to make your visit truly festive for \$60 CDN!

Other highly recommended activities in Canmore: Grassi Lakes Day Hike – twin emerald-colored lakes, Alpine Helicopters Ride of a lifetime to Mount Assiniboine, followed by a hot stone massage at Satori Day Spa.

