

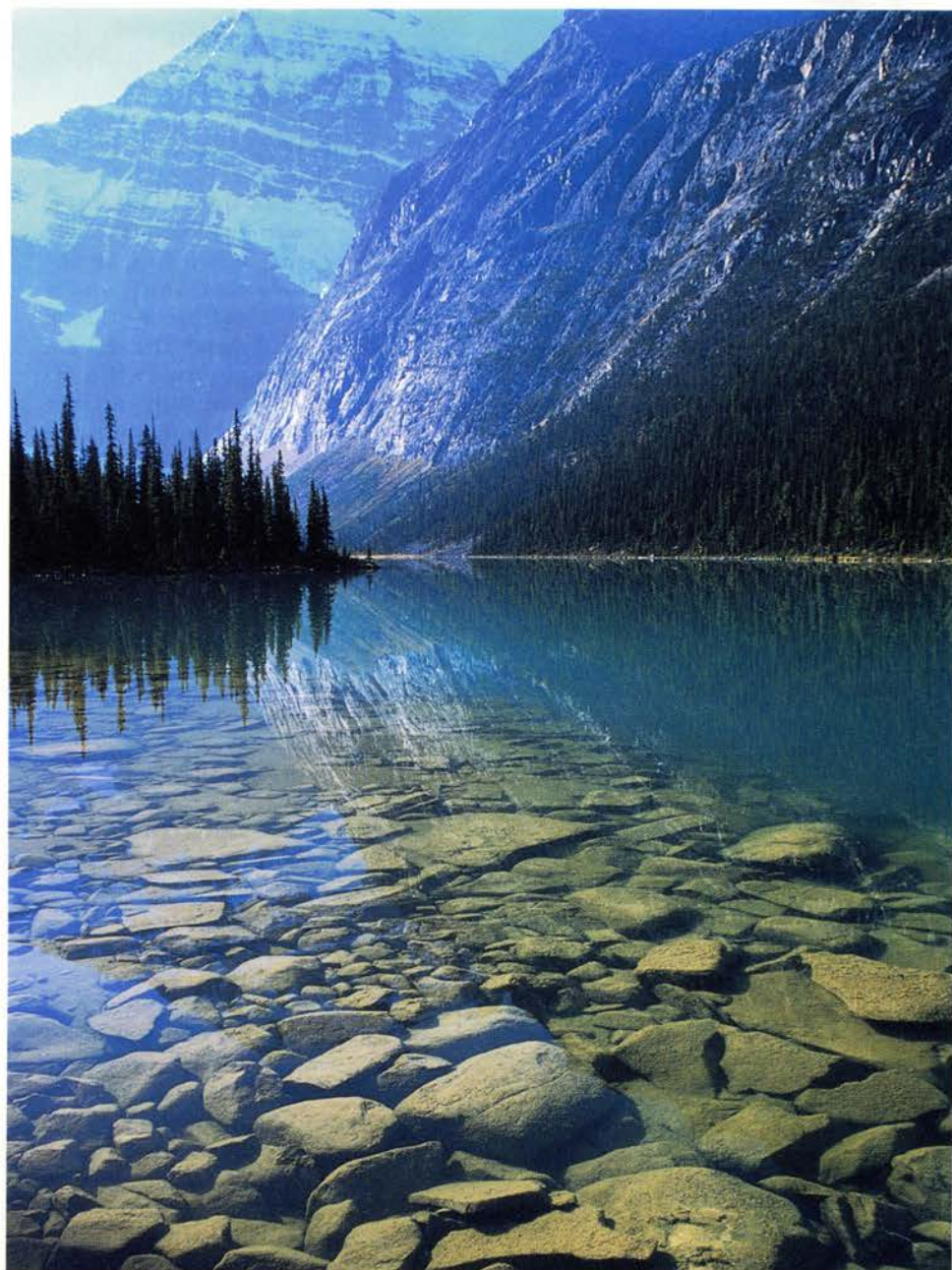
### Alberta, Canada I Survived Adrenaline Week

**H**iking steadily up the near-vertical slopes of Mount Luscar in Alberta, Canada, we arrived at the cave entrance, elevation: 6,600 feet. I plopped down to catch my breath, informing Andrew, Ultimate Adventures' head guide, that although I walk 3 miles a day, I'm 54 and feeling every year. "You're doing great," he said, handing me blue coveralls, white gloves, and a hard hat with a halogen light. After slipping them on, I entered the 20-foot-high opening and switched on my hat light.

Through cramped crevices and over chunky limestone boulders, I slid, crept, and duck-walked deeper into the darkness, hearing only the squish of my hiking boots on the muddy floor. Despite the 55-degree temperature in this alien world, my turtleneck was soaked, and sweat trickled down my cheeks. Twenty minutes later and 250 feet inside the mountain, we reached a vaulted cavern called the Mess Hall. Andrew turned around and said, "Welcome to Adrenaline Week, Val."

This unusual introduction to Jasper National Park, where most visitors come to climb up or ski down mountains, not trek inside them, confirmed the program's challenge. Over the next seven days, our group of six would backpack 17 miles into the wilderness, canoe 35 miles along the Athabasca River, rappel and climb 100-foot-high limestone cliffs above the roaring Athabasca, and mountain-bike the 10-mile Overlander Trail. "This allows people to sample and learn the fundamentals of sports they're interested in," Andrew said. But I discovered that Adrenaline Week provided not only a physical but mental rush stimulated by the natural beauty of the rugged Canadian Rockies.

Little luxuries eased the pace, from stir-fry chicken dinners and Eggs Bene-



**Jasper National Park provides a peaceful backdrop for high-energy action including caving, mountain biking, rock climbing, canoeing, and, of course, hiking.**

dict breakfasts around the campfire to luxuriating in hot tubs at week's end. My perspective also changed. The tiny two-person Kelty tent I shared with a 27-year-old personal trainer from Vancouver seemed to grow larger during the week; personal vanities, like combed hair and daily showers, yielded to the reality of camping miles from civilization and plumbing.

Ultimate Adventures' eco-conscious motto is, "Leave only footprints, take only photos." I took far more. I have the memory of hearing the fire crackling at night, Canada geese honking plaintively

overhead, a gray jay's wings fluttering near a copse of lodgepole pine, and Andrew's words at week's end: "Well done!"

—Valerie Tamis

**Information:** Seven-day, six-night Adrenaline Week in Jasper National Park costs \$725 (U.S.) per person and includes airport pick-up in Edmonton; transportation to and from adventure sites; all meals, equipment for caving, climbing, canoeing, biking, tent, and sleeping bags. Customized trips can be arranged. For more information, call Ultimate Adventures at (800) 581-2769 or fax (403) 413-0165.