

COLORADO
SUMMER SPECTACULAR

OUR SUMMER IN THE ROCKIES

text & photos by Valerie Tamis

“EXCELLENT!” MY TWO KIDS SAID WHEN I SUGGESTED A SUMMER VACATION IN THE ROCKIES. BUT SHE (25) WANTED A SPA, HE (23) PREFERRED RUGGED ADVENTURE. NEITHER OF THEIR WORK SCHEDULES ALLOWED MORE THAN A WEEK AND THEN, OY VEY, DIFFERENT WEEKS! THAT’S WHY COLORADO WAS PERFECT.



Val and Chris Tamis enjoy lunch on a boulder at Ouzel Lake.



Our group riding down Trail Ridge Road.

With four phone calls, I had booked airline tickets and an alpine climbing guide, arranged for a cycling trip, and reserved facials and rooms at the Broadmoor. (That was a snap compared to then finding one pair of Spandex shorts that would look terrific on a mountain bike and in spa step-classes.)

In early August, Chris and I flew to DIA. After several days in Estes Park acclimatizing to the altitude (and scuffing up our new hiking boots so we didn't look like total greenhorns), we met our guide from the Colorado Mountain School for a hike up Flattop Mountain in Rocky Mountain National Park. Jamie's instructions were pithy: "Keep a steady gait, nibble constantly on GORP and drink lots of water. Ready?" Let the games begin, I thought.

Before long, we were huffing and

puffing up a near-vertical trail fringed with columbine and towering blue spruce. As we approached the timber line, Chris gazed at the white-topped peaks surrounding us and exclaimed, "It's amazing to be even with the snow!" I pointed to a log along the path and panted, "Gotta stop."

Jamie used this break to educate us on trail markers, "topo" maps and pace. "We're not in a race," he cautioned. "The summit will be there when we get there."

I almost didn't, because the final stretch ascended a steep snowy slope that nearly sapped my resolve. But standing atop the 12,324-foot summit, slapping high-fives with Chris, was worth every rubber-legged last step, especially when he said, "Way to go, Mom." "At least we can sit down during the next endeavor," I answered.

Frigid gusts lashed our nylon wind-

breakers the next morning when we alit from the van at the peak of Trail Ridge Road, elevation 12,000 feet. Larry, who would lead us down this twisting paved road known as "the one and only," adjusted the seats of our 21-speed bikes and said, "We stop every 10 minutes at a look-out point, so you'll have plenty of opportunities to enjoy the scenery." I was more concerned with the lack of guardrails than the beautiful vistas, but Larry promised, "We haven't lost anyone yet! You'll be fine."

Ears popping all the way, we coasted around hairpin turns that showcased spectacular panoramas of the majestic Rockies. Two hours later, we pedaled into a secluded grove for a delicious brunch, then hastily departed for the airport to meet Alex. "Quality family time" consisted of only one fun weekend because Chris had

to return to New York. Then it was on to the Broadmoor for mother-daughter pampering.

Every morning, Alex and I entered the spiffy spa, donned warmed robes and settled into the "inhalation room" before treatments. Alex's favorite was the Peak Experience, which featured a slimming whirlpool bath, therapeutic skin-tingling shower, 50-minute Swedish massage and cleansing facial. I savored the peppermint energy bath, which was followed by a paraffin body wrap. (What a relief for sore leg muscles!) We were positively glowing when we drove north to the airport five days later. Alex said, "That was the best, Mom!" To me it was Colorado perfection.

Before lacing up your hiking boots, contact the Colorado Mountain School at P.O. Box 2062, Estes Park, CO 80517, (970) 586-5758.

Put the pedal to the metal with Colorado Bicycling Adventures, P.O. Box 1301, 184 East Elkhorn Ave., Estes Park, CO 80517, (970) 685-4241.

Book your facial at the Broadmoor, P.O. Box 1439, Colorado Springs, CO 80901, (800) 634-7711. ■



Getting a facial at the Broadmoor Spa.

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