

Great Divide, Cascade Trail Trip
February 2 – 4, 2018

Snow, snow and more snow was the theme of our trip to Lake Louise. The forecast was for cold in Central Alberta but warmer in the mountains and maybe a bit of sunshine on Sunday. Ha! Mother Nature, as she so frequently does, decided to change things up a bit. Friday was a bit snowy but everyone of our group of eight arrived safe and sound at the Lake Louise Hostel.

Waking up Saturday morning to a winter wonderland of beautiful powder snow and lots of it. It was colder than we had anticipated; about -16 degrees (plus a wind chill) but that did not bother our group of dedicated skiers. We were all very excited to hit the trail and we arrived at the trailhead at about 10:00 am.

The Great Divide Trail is about 7.5 km one-way. It is double track set with a skating lane. A dogsled operation runs on its own track for the first 2 km. This trail follows the old 1A Highway and it is fairly flat with some gently rolling stretches. It ends at the Great Divide exhibit and picnic area on the Banff – Yoho National Park boundary.

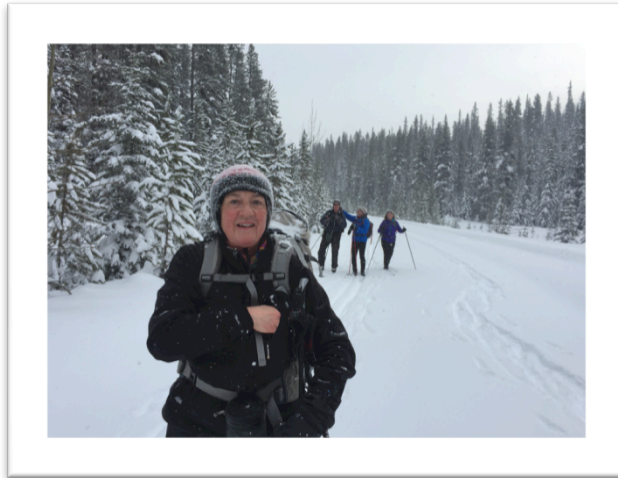
While the track had been groomed the previous day we did have to do a fair bit of trail breaking through all of the fresh snow. We had hoped our later start might have allowed for a few other skiers before us but we were the first to get out. Everyone took turns at this and that made the work a lot

easier.



There were very few skiers on the trail on Saturday but we did meet up with a few. And we saw the dog sleds going as well. That looks like a bit of fun too.

The trip to the Great Divide signpost marker took about two hours. We did stop briefly for a snack and warm drinks. Thanks to our trip leader Linda and co-leader Lisa for checking on everyone and ensuring we were all doing OK with the weather and trail conditions.



At the halfway mark, we had lunch and a brief rest before turning back.



The return trip was easier in that the trail was a bit better packed and the glide was much improved. At about thirteen km we met a group of skiers coming out of one of the side trails. After chatting with them we decided to take a little detour to explore the trail through the woods. That was a ton of fun. A few really nice hills to glide down, still pretty wide so lots of room to manoeuvre if needed. The shelter from the trees provided a nice break from the wind. After this delightful detour we got back on the main trail and finished up at exactly 16 km from start to finish in four hours.

To refresh ourselves and replenish our energy reserves we decided a stop at Laggan's for a warm drink and a snack was a great idea. Delicious!

Back at the hostel, a number of folks decided the sauna was a definite must; a few others thought just a rest in the lounge area would suffice. The sauna at the hostel is great. It really helped warm up and loosen muscles.

A tradition on the ski trips is to share a meal together. A wonderful array of appetizers before supper served in the lounge and then supper. What a feast - lasagne, spanakopita, salad, tabouli, a beautiful variety of dessert treats and excellent wines made for a wonderful meal. After the meal we "retired" to the lounge area, got a beautiful fire going and thoroughly enjoyed the company and conversation. Not too much later the good food and the activity of the day caught up to most of us and off to bed.



Sunday morning was clear but COLD -20 plus a wind chill. The group, ever optimistic, decided to get to the Cascade Trail and hope the weather was warmer. Unfortunately, it remained at -20, so the decision was to drive to Canmore in search of warmer temperatures and possibly ski at the Nordic Centre. After a coffee break at Beamers, the decision was to go for a walk and then head back to Red Deer. And that is what we did. A nice walk along the river allowed us to chat a bit more and get to know how trip partners even more. Lovely!



Thanks to Linda D. and Lisa M-L for leading us. Thanks to Nancy B., John D., Tatiana T. and Jochen T. and Neil K. for the super fun weekend. And thanks to Tatiana for providing many of the great pictures.