

SundayTravel

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CHRISTOPHER MUTHER/GLOBE STAFF

A view of Osorno Volcano, which towers over the Lakes Region of Chile.



CHRISTOPHER MUTHER

Welcome to Patagonia's sparkling overlooked jewel

PUERTO VARAS, Chile — “Well, this sounds fun,” I thought as I leafed through the list of activities offered by my hotel. What caught my eye was a hike on a dormant volcano. I had visions of a leisurely stroll on rugged terrain. Fun! I was ready to sign a waiver and slip into my hiking boots.

That dormant volcano was a constant presence in my trip to the Lakes Region of Chile. Looming 8,701 feet over the landscape,

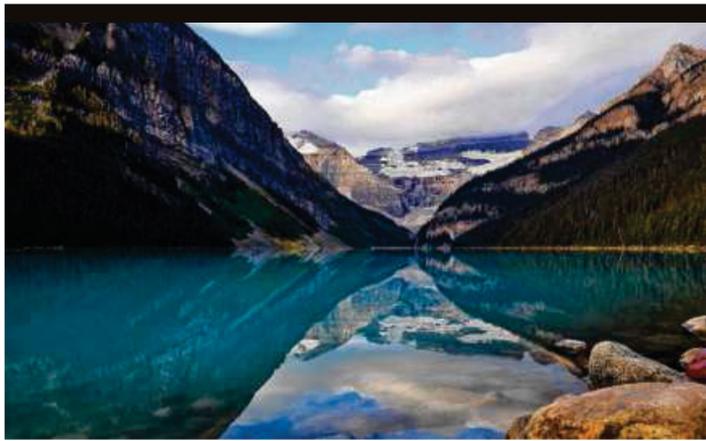
Puerto Varas and the Lakes Region of Chile offer a stunning, volcano-filled escape

the snow-capped Osorno Volcano looks a lot like Mount Fuji in Japan. Although here they like to say that Mount Fuji looks a lot like Osorno. No matter the perspective, it's one of the largest volcanoes ringing the crystalline rivers and lakes in this stretch of Patagonia.

How could I come all this way and *not* take a stroll on the volcano? I was a long way from Boston — about three flights and 15

hours. Puerto Varas is two hours south of Santiago by air, or two hours north of Punta Arenas. I set my alarm, and at 6 a.m. on my first full day in Chile, I showed up at the appointed meeting spot wearing the swanky, very impractical new hiking ensemble I'd purchased for just such an occasion.

I had neglected to look at the mundane details of the hike, **CHILE, Page N14**



KARI BODNARCHUK

BASIN Glacial Waters, the new thermal wellness spa at the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise in Alberta, Canada, is a 19,000-square-foot oasis overlooking emerald-green Lake Louise and the Canadian Rockies.

It's a new era of wellness in Banff National Park

By Kari Bodnarchuk
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

LAKE LOUISE, Alberta — Sitting on a lakeside in the shadow of the grand Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise lies a grass-roofed structure that was built atop an old foundation. The strikingly unobtrusive building blends with the landscape, but what makes it unique: It's the first new structure built on this

property — located within Banff National Park — in about 40 years.

Welcome to BASIN Glacial Waters, the chateau's new thermal wellness spa, a 19,000-square-foot oasis overlooking emerald-green Lake Louise and the glacier-dotted Canadian Rockies that blends luxury and simplicity and offers space for individual contemplation and **SPA, Page N13**

It's a great year to go play in the snow

By Diane Bair and Pamela Wright
GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

Every winter, we endure the mockery of our out-West friends, who are quick to compare their winter conditions to ours. They have bluebird skies, fluffy champagne powder, and massive accumulations of the white stuff that they measure in feet. We, they taunt, have dense hardpack snow and ice, and comparatively flimsy amounts of snow measured in inches. Well, we don't mean to thumb our noses — nana, na-na — but we got the fluffy snow, and you don't — at least early this winter season in the north. Did we take pleasure when the 2025/26 FIS Freestyle Skiing World Cup, originally scheduled at Deer Valley, Utah, was **SNOW, Page N13**



SADDLEBACK MOUNTAIN

There's skiing and snowboarding at Saddleback Mountain in Rangeley, with 68 trails spread across more than 600 acres.

Inside

THE VI LOUNGE
JASON LADANYE

The expert card handler discusses his craft, Richard Branson's island, and \$800 boxers **N12**

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It's a new era of wellness in Banff National Park

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areas to connect with others. The simple, minimalist building boasts earthy tones and textures — incorporating wood, stones, and marble throughout — arched doorways and windows, and soothing features where water flows, trickles, and plunges.

A curved hallway with tall ceilings, arched windows, and a water feature at ankle level — running along one wall like a rocky riverbed — leads visitors into the main spa area. Here, you'll find relaxation areas, a salt room, a stone room, wading pools, a sauna, and access to the expansive indoor/outdoor pool. Slip into the indoor pool and swim outside to an area with in-water seating and water jets.

Then head for the European-style Aufguss sauna where trained sauna masters lead 15-minute sessions that blend intense heat, aromatherapy oils, music, and a bit of performance art. Put on a pointy gnome-like woolen hat and sweat it out to Phil Collins tunes and incense while the sauna master fans guests with towels — a unique experience and never the same one twice.

The outdoor area also offers multiple cold plunges, firepits, and seating areas overlooking one of the most iconic and photographed views in Canada, a view so spectacular that on a summer day, it can draw up to 20,000 visitors who come for a quick snapshot or selfie or a paddle on the lake in an old-school canoe. The views from the spa's



CHRIS AMAT

peaceful pools and seating areas transcend the bustle on the paved shoreline trail below (thanks, in part, to the glass walls and clusters of small trees along the pathway), but this popular spot has drawn visitors for more than 100 years.

The Lake Louise property opened as a small chalet in 1890, welcoming first-class passengers riding on the new Canada Pacific Railway and serving as a base camp for mountaineers, climbers, and other outdoor enthusiasts who came to explore this section of the Canadian Rockies (many drawn to the dozens of

unclimbed peaks). After two fires and numerous expansions, the property evolved into a 400-room Italian villa-style chateau. The seasonal hotel grew into a year-round property in 1982 after being winterized, and then added restaurants, 100 new guestrooms, and a grand lobby in the late 1980s.

Canada altered its National Parks Act around this time to ensure the protection of fragile ecosystems within the parks. This meant that any changes to the Lake Louise chateau could not have an ecological impact, the hotel could not expand its foot-

print, and all unused land would revert to park property.

Today, the new BASIN Glacial Waters spa sits on the foundation of the property's original open-air pool, a 110-by-40-foot pool (Canada's second largest at the time) that was built in 1926 and had arched windows that framed the glaciers and peaks, just as the new spa does. The pool closed in 1980, and the foundation sat unused until the spa emerged, a concept two decades in the making.

BASIN was created by award-winning Italian architect Matteo Thun, known for his sustainable

The new Vitality Pool is among the many amenities at BASIN Glacial Waters, the new thermal wellness spa at the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise in Alberta, Canada.

designs. The building incorporates sustainably sourced lumber from Canadian forests and locally sourced rocks, for instance, and its water system is designed to tap the naturally cold waters of the glacier-fed lake for better efficiency.

You can explore the spa's offerings on your own or choose from one of five wellness experiences — called "trails" — that guide you through a sequence of offerings. The Deep Waters Trail, for instance, guides you to the vitality and hydro pools, waterfall shower, salt relaxation room, aromatic steam room, and cold plunge, and aims to offer deep muscle relief and an emotional reset.

All treatments end at the Herbal Tea Room where you can enjoy complimentary herbal teas and water. Visit the spa's Glacier Lounge for a sweet or savory treat, such as the comforting and restorative bone broth or the lobster roll with lemongrass dipping sauce (both highlights), or to enjoy one of the healthy elixirs or a glass of Ruinart Blanc de Blancs from the world's oldest champagne house (in Reims, France).

Each visit to the spa, which is currently only open to hotel guests, gives you three hours to explore and relax (prebook a time in case it's busy). The hotel also offers other outdoor-based

wellness options, such as a guided silent meditation walk, forest bathing followed by a rejuvenating plunge in glacial Lake Louise, or even a relaxing yoga and sound bath experience on the grassy terrace above the spa.

If you've come to this region of Alberta, make sure you visit the chateau's sister property, the Fairmont Banff Springs, another grand and historic railway hotel that was built to showcase the area's natural hot springs, which were originally piped into the property. Its spa is known for its waterfall plunge pools, indoor mineral pool, and outdoor heated pool (float out here at night with clear views of the starry skies — there's little light pollution here — and the sounds of the Bow River in a valley down below).

The spa offers a selection of traditional treatments, from massages to facials and pedicures, with a unique twist: It uses products created by a local Indigenous woman, Carrie Armstrong, based on plant medicine knowledge passed down by her grandmother. The 90-minute Mother Earth Signature body treatment, for instance, incorporates a sage and pink salt scrub, a massage using wild rose and cranberry oils, and a facial treatment with berry seed oil.

If you want to take your thermal pampering to another level, get outside and enjoy the natural (and more rustic) hot springs around the Banff and Lake Louise area.

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A great winter to go play in the snow

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moved to the Northeast, due to their lack of snow? Yes, a little.

Things can change quickly, but New England is off to an early, snowy winter season, especially in some northern resort areas. By the end of 2025, Jay Peak Resort in Jay, Vt., had already recorded 230 inches, the highest early-season tally in its 70-year history. Smugglers' Notch, Vt., had surpassed 100 inches by mid-December. Mount Mansfield, Vt., set a record for its earliest 50-inch snow depth. Waterville Valley, N.H., has enough to host the World Cup Moguls competitions in mid-January (when Deer Valley couldn't). This could be a great year to plan a New England winter getaway to play in our fluffy, champagne powder. Here are three fun options.

Rangeley, Maine

This small town in western Maine is a mecca for outdoor enthusiasts, drawn to its lofty mountains, pristine lakes and streams, and dense forests. Whatever you can do in the snow, you can do here.

There's skiing and snowboarding at Saddleback Mountain, with 68 trails spread across more than 600 acres. The resort boasts the most natural snowfall



in Maine, and some of the toughest terrain in the East.

You'll find lots of action at the Rangeley Lakes Trail Center, set at the base of Saddleback Mountain, with more than 50 kilometers of trails, including groomed Nordic skiing, fat tire biking, and snowshoeing trails. Trails for all abilities lead through scenic woods, some to the shoreline of Saddleback Lake. There's also a heated yurt with equipment rentals, hot drinks, and snacks.

There's free public skating and a warming hut on Haley Pond, behind Rangeley Adventure Co. The store also offers a selection of skates you can borrow for free, and snowshoe rentals.

The area is well-known for its snowmobiling terrain — snowmobiles often outnumber cars in the parking areas of local lodgings and restaurants! The Rangeley Lakes Snowmobile Club maintains more than 170 miles of groomed trails, connecting further to the statewide Maine Interconnected Trail System. Mountain View Adventures has machines and gear for rent and offers custom guided tours.

Tip: Invest in a pair of L.L. Bean Boots and a buffalo plaid

Top: A cross-country skier enjoys the backwoods trails at Prospect Mountain.

Above: Scenic Manchester, Vt., is filled with small shops and restaurants.

flannel shirt, and you'll feel right at home. Then, grab a table at Furbish Brew House & Eats for burgers and brews — pizza, too.

Manchester, Vt.

Think of a Currier & Ives painting, and you get a good image of Manchester Village in winter. This historic village was once an important stop for Revolutionary War soldiers, and later a luxurious summer resort town for wealthy vacationers. Today, it exudes throw-back charm with marble sidewalks, stately homes, a towering white steepled church, and refined inns and resorts. Surrounded by rural farmlands, backroads, and the Green and Taconic Mountain ranges, it's especially beautiful in winter after a fresh snowfall.

And what could be more scene-setting than a horse-drawn sleigh ride through

snowy fields and forests? You'll find that at nearby Taylor Farms, including a stop at a bonfire to enjoy hot cider.

We think winter is the best time to visit Hildene, the Lincoln Family Home, built in 1905 by President Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln's son, Robert, as a summer residence. The former family estate sits on 412 acres with more than 12 miles of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing trails. The Georgian-style home is open year-round for guided and self-guided tours.

The Viking Nordic Center, set on more than 200 acres, is also a popular place for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing with trails through old-growth forests, around a beaver pond, and along the West River. There are 26 kilometers of groomed cross-country trails and four kilometers of snowshoe trails. Warm up and fuel up at their café; equipment rentals and lessons are also available.

Downhill skiers have lots of choices, too. Stratton Mountain Resort, Bromley Mountain Ski Resort, and Magic Mountain Ski Area are all within a 30-minute drive or so. Stratton is the largest, with 99 trails spread across 670 acres. It's a bustling resort with a ton of activities, including Nordic skiing, snow tubing, sno-go bike tours, fat-tire biking, snowmobile tours, indoor rock climbing, and ice skating. For a unique experience, book their nighttime snowcat ride with a six-course dinner at the Mid-Mountain Lodge. Bromley Mountain, with 47 trails, is a local favorite for its sunny orientation and friendly vibe. Magic Mountain, with 39 trails and 11 glades, is known for its challenging terrain, steep, narrow trails, and 200 acres of off-the-map tree skiing.

Tip: For a full resort experience, consider the historic Equinox Golf Resort & Spa. The sprawling inn commands centerstage in the Village, offering a variety of accommodations, including rooms and suites in two main buildings and separate townhouses. We also like the cool and cozy vibe of the 86-room Kimpton Taconic, with a library and large living room with a stone-faced, wood-burning fireplace and original pieces from local artists and the Southern Vermont Arts Center.

Williamstown

Home to Williams College and the Clark Art Institute, Williamstown may be best known for its art and culture, but it also has gorgeous scenery and a slew of outdoor activities. The small town is tucked into the northwest corner of Massachusetts and surrounded by forests, na-

ture preserves, rolling farmlands, and the Berkshire Mountains.

Start at The Clark, where you can borrow (free) a pair of snowshoes to explore the 140-acre campus. Follow trails through the woods to the top of Stone Hill, for panoramic mountain and valley views. While you're snowshoeing, look for six large-scale sculptures, comprising the university's new Ground/work 2025 outdoor exhibition, on view until October 2026.

There is also snowshoeing and winter hiking at the Mountain Meadow Preserve, a 240-acre protected parcel of forests and meadows, managed by the Trustees of Reservations. Field Farm, also managed by the Trustees, has four miles of trails through fields and uplands, and a group of modern outdoor sculptures that are part of Williams College Museum of Art's collection.

Cross-country skiers can head just over the border to Prospect Mountain in Vermont, about a 30-minute drive, to find more than 30 kilometers of

groomed trails. The former downhill ski area has a rustic base lodge, rentals, lessons, and plenty of pretty views. Backcountry Nordic skiing is also popular at the Taconic Trail State Park, with a network of trails for all abilities.

If downhill skiing or snowboarding is more your thing, head to family-friendly Jiminy Peak Mountain Resort, with 45 trails spread across 167 acres. Open since 1948, this long-loved resort, with its easy-does-it vibe, has a separate area for beginners with its own lift, and a small village with a base lodge, restaurants, and children's center. We like that it was one of the first ski resorts in North America to get 100 percent of its electrical power from renewable sources.

Tip: Tunnel City Coffee is a Williamstown institution, and a popular stop for fresh, sustainably sourced, and hand-roasted coffee, cookies, cakes, and pastries.

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