

Mountain high

Having visited Lake Louise back in 2003, and experienced the fabulous dry powder snow of the Canadian Rockies, we decided to head back to Canada in 2007, this time to the quieter picturesque resort of Jasper, situated right in the middle of the National Park.

Our long journey to Edmonton was rewarded when we awoke the first morning to find ourselves surrounded by magnificent snow-capped mountains. At an altitude of over 8570 feet, the highest peaks had the group speechless, as they took their first breath of pure mountain air and looked up at the jagged Rockies of the Marmot basin.

With an excellent snow base topped up by continuous snowfall on our first day, students soon relaxed into the swing of things, skiing and riding hard throughout the day and chilling out in the evening. As ever, the hotel's pool and hot tub proved popular as students discussed the highlights of the day on the piste, including the latest wipe-out! Mr Reynolds, new to snowboarding, had a few falls, but this was short-lived as he abandoned his snowboard in favour of his trusty skis. Meanwhile, Jamie Kedge pondered the photos of his latest jump and Liam Foglietta considered whether he could justify yet another new set of skis! All students enjoyed the presence of a group of Canadian students in our hotel, in particular Charlotte Scott, Danielle Collier, Fiona Tawse and Izzi Allies, but in the end Karl Jones was the undoubted Romeo of the ski trip, having to be prised away from his Canadian girlfriend a few minutes before our departure!

Breakfasts were a highlight of the trip as we fuelled up for the day with delicious Canadian bacon, sausages, pancakes and maple syrup. After a brief 25 minute transfer to the base lodge (with occasional impersonations of staff courtesy of Nick Crane!), we met up with our instructors who looked after us throughout the stay. While the majority were keen to get onto the mountain as soon as possible, the leader of Miss McKenna's post beginners ski group insisted on several warm up exercises, and a regular morning spectacle was to see the group members lined up along a makeshift gym rail stretching their initially reluctant muscles. It all paid off, though, and perhaps contributed to our second ever trip with zero injuries.

On our final day in Jasper we headed into town to be kitted out for an ice walk in Maligne Canyon. Once decked out with special boots and spikes, we trekked along the edge of the ravine before descending into the canyon and walking along the frozen riverbed for an hour. The thick ice which had seemed so impressive from above took on a whole new dimension as we marvelled at its purity and listened to the sound of the flowing river water several feet below.

All in all it was a most successful trip with no injuries and a wonderful group of students who were a credit to St Bede's. Our return visit to Canada was a great experience and Jasper lived up to its reputation as a world class resort.

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