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SPA 901, Fernie, BC / Photo by Jen Twyman

## Chasing chill in Fernie, BC

Toque & Canoe land the ultimate girls' getaway

**Editor's note:** Welcome to the next instalment of our mini-series on Fernie, B.C. Last fall, we featured [Emma's Fernie](#) — an interview with a feisty, Irish-born, community-loving librarian who happens to have a major crush on her southeastern B.C. home. Next up was this year's "[Winter Awesomeness](#)" post — a full-on exploration of the historic town's rep as one seriously fun Canadian winter playground. This time around? Calgary, Alberta-based Toque & Canoe co-founders Jen Twyman and Kim Gray rally their teenage daughters and hit the highway in search of some R&R. What they experience is a refreshing alternative to the stereotypical girls' getaway.



Upper Elk River / Fernie, BC / Photo by Jen Twyman

I'll be honest. When I think of epic girls' weekends, small-town Canada isn't immediately what comes to mind. You know the drill. When the ladies finally get a chance to carve out some time for themselves, they often go big or go home. (For example, my last two serious girls' trips took me to New York City

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and Las Vegas.)

So when Jen and I and our daughters were invited to Fernie for a much-needed girls' getaway, I was curious. I mean, we're already huge fans of what Rolling Stone magazine once dubbed the "coolest town in North America." Jen's even what they call a "Californian" — a Calgarian so fond of this corner of Canada, she owns vacation property in town.

Still, I had a hard time imagining what our getaway would look like.

Turns out, Fernie's small-town charm, unique location and surprising sophistication made for a girls' getaway far beyond what we expected. Here's what we discovered:

**Road Trips are Awesome:** One of the coolest things about heading to Fernie with a gang of girls, for us anyway, was the fact that there was a road trip involved. A couple of strong coffees-to-go, good tunes and an easy, three-hour drive from Calgary along the picturesque Cowboy Trail (Highway 22) turned out to be the perfect way to tee up a little girl time. No travel stress or airports (or the accompanying costs) — just a nice slow build to our weekend away. Sure, you and your friends could be blowing bucks in Vegas but, frankly, keeping it local and on Canadian soil just feels good.

**You Want to Sleep Here:** Our home for the weekend was a spacious [townhouse](#) rental property featuring a clean, modern feel, several well-appointed bedrooms (with ensuite bathrooms) and ceilings so high we felt like we were camping out in a trendy, New York City warehouse apartment. Located in a complex called 901 Fernie (part of a rebuilt school house circa 1908) and a short walk from the town centre, the property also boasts a large kitchen and private patio where Jen and I were happy to chill upon arrival, nursing a few cold beers and soaking up a brilliant mountain vista along with the late-afternoon sun while our girls skipped off to the local [candy store](#). Pretty sweet all around.

**You Will Love SPA 901:** I don't know about you, but I'm generally wary about hitting up spas on the road. Let's just say that during my travels through small-town Canada, I've had a few unforgettable pedicures, memorable for all the wrong reasons. (Let's just say there was blood involved.) You can put all those fears to rest with [SPA 901](#). From its design (a high-end, high-style oasis) to staff (tuned-in and professional) to a wide range of treatments (fireside massage, anyone?), SPA 901 has it going on. We weren't the only ones who felt this way. The handful of other women — a few of them over-worked oilpatch execs from Alberta — who were enjoying the spa's services alongside us, agreed that the overall experience was exemplary. Of course, the fact that this heavenly spa is located in the same complex as our accommodations was hugely convenient — especially when we had to walk those few, rubber-kneed steps back to our townhouse.

**You Won't Go Hungry:** Looking for breakfast? [Loaf Bakery & Restaurant](#) is where you want to go, but be prepared for crowds as this fresh, bright and beautiful eatery is popular with locals and visitors alike. For lunch, I wholly recommend [Lunch Box Fresh Market and Smoothie Bar](#). This operation catered an excellent midday meal at SPA 901 for us, proving that nutritious food can be seriously yummy too — even more so when you're swaddled in a housecoat and stretched out in the women's lounge post-pedi. As for dinner, book into [Yamagoya](#) (get there early!). Ask for a private booth, slip off your shoes, order some wine and enjoy some of the most delicious sushi Western Canada has on offer. Do yourself a favour and order the chocolate mousse for dessert. If you want to experience something entirely different, check out the rootsy, friendly, quirky likes of [Infinitea T-Bar and Boutique](#), with original home-style cooking and a unique culture all its own. Our girls especially enjoyed Infinitea's "Laugh Tea" — as much for its hibiscus flower, lavender and lemongrass flavour as for its name. Sadly, when we finally made it to [Beanpod](#), the artisan chocolate shop was closed. Next time!



## ? Question of the Week

Contest update: Congrats to Judy Burgschmidt for winning our latest mini-contest here at T&C. Winter camping, wolves and snowshoeing canoe routes in Prince Albert National...

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## Photo of the Week



Le Baluchon Eco-Village, Quebec / Photo by Jennifer Twyman

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Loaf / Fernie BC / Photo by Jen Twyman

**Health & Wellness, Everywhere:** When it comes to girls' getaways, sometimes what we think we want isn't necessarily what we need. Is maxing out those credit cards on a hard-core shopping trip really your healthiest option? Who knew that what our souls needed more than anything was a little water therapy, a breezy float down the Upper Elk with river rat Blair Craig of [Canyon Raft Company](#). With big smiles pasted on our faces, we happily drifted past beaver-chewed trees and great blue herons, which were perched along the river's edge — all the while surrounded by the soaring mountain peaks. (Fernie, we're told, is the only town in B.C. completely surrounded by the Canadian Rockies.) We also loved our early-morning yoga session with Francesca Ter Pooten at [Essential Yoga Studio](#). (Isn't getting bendy always a good thing?) And if we'd been able to swing it, we would have set up a hike with Lee-Anne Walker of [Wild Nature Tours](#). (I went snowshoeing with her during the winter and her guiding style is pile a fun.) Heck, there's even a [golf](#) option in Fernie, if golf's your game.

In all, the simple, kick-back sensibility of life on the ground in Fernie — with nothing but pampering ourselves on the menu — won me over big time. Bonus? As we were packing up, we knew our girl fest wasn't quite over. We still had one more luxury ahead — the road trip home.

**Note to reader:** Our writer and photographer were guests of [Tourism Fernie](#). This story was not approved or reviewed before publication. 

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