



An enchanting retreat with a most cordial company of hosts – it’s no wonder the Post has its way of turning even the most casual visitor into a loyal returning guest.

## POSTCARD PERFECT – POST HOTEL & SPA

In 1942, a crew of 10 men led by guide, outfitter, and builder Jim Boyce of Banff, turned a pile of logs sourced from Revelstoke and the headwaters of the Bow River into the Lake Louise Ski Lodge. Unfortunately, the lodge experienced only one successful season before it was forced to close as the Second World War continued to intensify. In 1948, British aircraft manufacturer and avid sportsman Sir Norman Watson re-opened the hotel. Having travelled extensively in the Swiss Alps, Watson’s dream was to show people that life in the mountains was possible. (Today, the Lake Louise village is Canada’s highest community at 5,033 feet.) Watson later renamed the lodge, calling it the Post Hotel partly because a building on the site had been leased to a post office, but also aligning it with the many traditional Post Hotels in the Alps.

Current owners André and George Schwarz, brothers from Zurich, Switzerland, entered the picture in the 1970s. The two self-proclaimed “ski bums” had only planned to stay a year, but, like many before them, experienced the magnetic pull of the Rockies and returned for several consecutive years before making a permanent move. André was asked to take over the

ski school at the Lake Louise Ski Resort, and became a bit of a legend himself, revered today as the father of modern ski technique; George opened his own Swiss-Italian restaurant, Ticino, and became increasingly active in the Banff culinary scene. Meanwhile, Watson had returned to England, but visited annually; he met the Schwarz brothers on the ski hill and was eventually invited to André’s home for dinner. Watson arrived to find a trailer in place of a house, and amused by his living arrangements, coined it the “trailer deluxe”. In 1978, Watson sold the Post Hotel to the Schwarz brothers (“Swiss peasants want to buy my hotel!”) feeling confident that the Schwarzes were equally committed to building ski tourism in the area. The deal was finalized in George’s garden where the Englishman was served “the worst tea [he] ever had”.

Neither brother had experience or formal training, but they assumed their new roles as hoteliers wholeheartedly. “We had to find out how to do everything,” André says. “It was haphazard in the beginning, but we had a chance to make something.” Over the next decade, they turned a modest,



rustic chalet of 14 rooms into a Relais & Châteaux destination resort with 60 rooms, 29 suites, and five riverside cabins, three of which are originals built in 1942. “This is one of the most humane places in the world,” says André. “We are very grateful for this country. The generosity of the people—we could never have done this in Europe.”

In winter, under a thick blanket of snow, the Post Hotel is a truly magical destination, and nothing short of breathtaking. But in summer, it is vibrant, verdant, framed by towering spruce and pine trees. There’s plenty to do: the hiking in Banff National Park is spectacular, with 200 kilometres of trails in a 7,748-acre area ranging from a lovely nature walk to a challenging trek; for anglers, the Pipestone River runs alongside the property, and so do steelhead, cutthroat, rainbow, brown, and trophy brook trout; and those seeking more of a thrill can head out to nearby Kicking Horse and Kootenay Rivers for a whitewater rafting adventure.

George continued to pursue his true passion, food and wine, and immediately began and positioning the Post Hotel as a culinary destination. At present, leading the kitchen is Swiss-trained Hans Sauter, only the fourth executive chef in more than 35 years. Delectable offerings include carpaccio of Olson Ranch bison tenderloin with wasabi remoulade and

the whole roasted Northwest Territories caribou striploin with maple whiskey game sauce and spätzli. The Post is also home to one of the most comprehensive inventories of wine in the world; the cellar is stocked with over 25,000 bottles, including 2,200 unique labels, a collection George began working on over 30 years ago, hand-selecting bottles around the world.

The Post Hotel is distinguished by its impeccable service and a focus on the finer details. The Schwarz brothers are still very much involved in the day-to-day-management; André is a brilliant host, and can often be seen in the dining room, visiting with guests as they enjoy breakfast in the morning. (It’s also not unlike him to go on the occasional ski run with them, too.) André and George’s special brand of hospitality—polished, sincere, personal—means that guests feel right at home in an instant. Even staff find it hard to leave; many have been with the hotel for over 20 years, including the beloved general manager, Geoff Booth. An enchanting retreat with a most cordial company of hosts, set against the sublime mountain backdrop—it’s no wonder the Post has its way of turning even the most casual new visitor into a loyal returning guest.

---

*Reprinted with permission from Montecristo magazine, Summer 2014. Story by Amanda Jun.*