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**TRAVEL**

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## An escape hatch for the grounded traveler: Books

BY MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

The open road calls, and I reply with silence.

After all, what's a road trip without ordering the local favorite at a restaurant, breaking bread with faraway friends, flirting with strangers in a saloon? Alas, in the time of corona, even touching a gas nozzle seems fraught.

Antsy for adventure, I consider other ways to transport myself. I settle on a tried-and-true escape hatch, accessible to anyone with an armchair: reading.

Last week, I spoke with Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden. "Try to catch up on the books you've been meaning to read," she said. "You can take a spring break, travel overseas, have empathy for people in other places, travel through time. Good writers can place you right there."

Reading about history, she said, can provide context and perspective during this time of uncertainty and fear: "When this nation started, they didn't know if it was going to work or not," she said. And mysteries are fun, she noted, because they take us to a world in which problems are always solved.

SEE BOOKS ON F5

## A world transformed

After a week at a remote ski lodge, coming home to a frightening new normal

BY DINA MISHEV

Five years ago, I spent the second week of March undergoing my third round of chemotherapy — the 11th week since a cancer diagnosis changed everything in an instant. My red blood cell counts were so low that I couldn't walk up the stairs in my house without resting halfway up. ¶ This year I spent the second week of March with my boyfriend at a backcountry ski lodge in the Canadian Rockies, acutely aware of how fortunate I was to again have the physical health and strength to take a vacation that required climbing mountains. ¶ The skiing was phenomenal and the scenery stunning. For seven days straight, I had to do nothing but eat, ski and sleep. Icefall Lodge was magical. ¶ Our third day at the lodge, the World Health Organization declared covid-19 a global pandemic. But I didn't know this at the time. After a helicopter deposited Derek, me, and 13 other skiers and snowboarders from the United States, Canada and Australia at the lodge — in winter, a 20-minute helicopter flight is the only way to get to Icefall — I was completely disconnected. ¶ Icefall Lodge has access to about 10 times the amount of terrain as Whistler Blackcomb Resort, the largest ski resort in North America, but it does not have cellphone service. (Neither does it have flush toilets or hot running water.)

SEE UNPLUGGED ON F4

ILLUSTRATION BY JOSÉ L. SOTO/THE WASHINGTON POST BASED ON ISTOCK IMAGES

## Keep exploring by learning a foreign language

BY ANDREA SACHS

*Je suis un chat.*

Clearly, I am not a cat, but to fill my self-quarantined time, I have been repeating this French phrase over and over again. With the encouragement of Duolingo, a foreign language app, I have also been Paul and *un chien* (a dog). To learn another country's language in these circumstances, I had to accept the new reality.

At this point in time, we have no idea when we will be able to travel abroad again. But we don't need to be idle. We can keep our travel muscles limber with foreign language classes. Then, once we can roam the globe again, we can gleefully jump right into conversations with locals — and their pets.

Linguist experts and educators say the best way to learn a new language is to converse directly with the instructor or native speaker, ideally in the same physical space. However, with schools and foreign language centers closed, we have to take our lessons indoors, online and in isolation. In response, a few organizations, such as the International

SEE LANGUAGES ON F2

### NAVIGATOR

How to recognize the warning signs that your travel company is about to go out of business. **F2**

### PHOTO ESSAY

On a flight from Newark to Tel Aviv, a photographer records the changed landscape of air. **F3**

### WELLNESS

If you're thinking about driving out to the country to go for a hike, think again. **F6**

The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted travel domestically and around the world. You will find the latest developments on The Post's live blog at [www.washingtonpost.com/coronavirus/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/coronavirus/)



# Sloping toward a harsh reality

UNPLUGGED FROM F1

My main concern there was over what kind of sandwich I should make and bring with me for lunch. Looking back, having the bandwidth to fret over something as silly as whether I'd want ham and cheese or peanut butter when lunch rolled around was among the lodge's ultimate luxuries.

When I received a cancer diagnosis, my life immediately and completely changed, but the world stayed the same. While I was at Icefall Lodge, this reversed itself. When we emerged, I was the same and it was the world that was suffering catastrophic changes.

We spent about eight hours each day outside. We climbed and skied 10,206-foot tall Kemmel Mountain, where the views from the summit included the Columbia Icefield, a mass of ice between 330 and 1,200 feet deep and about twice the size of the city of Washington. We gratefully followed the routes set by ski guides between crevasses and holes and around seracs. We skied up active glaciers and through old growth cedar forests. We descended a 3,000-foot-long natural halfpipe and explored ice caves. We made lots and lots of turns in untracked powder and a few turns on sun- and wind-cruised snow.

At the end of the week, the helicopter returned. As incoming guests and their gear were offloaded and outgoing guests loaded in groups of four or five, the helicopter perched on a school bus-sized landing pad of packed snow 30 feet from the lodge's front door. Through a window of a bedroom on the third floor of the main lodge, I watched the first group take off. The helicopter quickly disappeared in a cloud of spindrift snow.

Derek and I were in the second group to leave. Because visibility had been poor on the flight in, I spent the outbound trip taking photos and marveling at the amount and complexity of the terrain below.

Back at the staging area tucked off the Trans-Canada Highway about 20 miles north of Golden, B.C., we reunited with our van, stowed our ski touring gear and began the 70-mile drive to Revelstoke, where we'd treat ourselves to lift-served skiing at Revelstoke Mountain Resort.

Also, we started reengaging with the world. Struggling against spotty cell service, I read New York Mayor Bill de Blasio was under pressure to close schools and many U.S. ski resorts had announced they were closing for the season.

Arriving in downtown Revelstoke, the virus felt very distant, though. Stores were open, and at Modern Bakeshop & Cafe, local families and tourists filled every seat. Because I hadn't yet read about "flattening the curve," I didn't think about social distancing but rather the contents of the glass-fronted pastry counters.

Checking into a hotel at the base of Revelstoke Mountain Resort, I saw a covid-19 alert for the first time: A sheet of paper explained that the hotel was doing enhanced cleaning, hand sanitizer was available in the lobby and the evening's happy hour for new guests would not include its usual cheese platter. I headed to our room thinking I'd be back for a free glass of local wine. (About an hour west of Revelstoke is the Shuswap, one of the most northerly grape growing regions in North America; just south of the Shuswap, the Okanagan Valley is home to about 185 wineries.)

In our room, I planned to head straight for the shower — I hadn't taken one in a week — but first checked in with the world on my laptop. Three hours later, I still hadn't showered and had no desire to go to happy hour. The extent of the events and news I had missed was starting to sink in.

Dinner that night was at a restaurant just as crowded as the Modern Bakeshop. We hid at a corner table and discussed our plans between Revelstoke and home. I wasn't totally sure what to think or do. Hole up here? Keep to the itinerary we had planned weeks before? Revelstoke Mountain Resort and RED Mountain Resort, where we had reservations the following night, were both still open. We thought ski slopes would allow us to follow the social distancing protocols about which I



PHOTOS BY DINA MISHEV FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Icefall Lodge in Canada is only accessible during the winter by helicopter — and doesn't have cell service. The Modern Bakeshop and Cafe in Revelstoke, B.C., was bustling one day before the restaurant and nearby Revelstoke Mountain Resort, left, were closed to slow the spread of the virus.**

had spent much of the afternoon reading.

Halcyon Hot Springs, mineral hot pools above the Eastern Shore of Upper Arrow Lake, was out — too many people too close to each other.

A couple of hours south of Hal-

cyon is Castlegar, a town of about 8,000 at the confluence of the Columbia and Kutenai rivers with a rich history that includes Doukhobors, a sect of Russian dissenters known for radical pacifism, its style of communal living and for being the largest mass migration

in Canada's history. Instead of visiting the Doukhobor Discovery Centre though, we popped into two grocery stores to buy toilet paper, only to find Castlegar's stock the same as reported at home: nonexistent.

Social distancing at RED Moun-

tain, about 1,000 feet above the former gold mining town of Rossland, was easy. The resort, the third oldest on the continent and spanning three mountains, gets fewer than 200,000 skiers a season. The ski-in/ski-out boutique hotel at its base, the Josie Hotel, only had a handful of guests and was happy to provide in-room dining.

It dawned sunny and clear at RED and around 10 a.m. the resort announced it would be the last day of this season. As word of the closing spread among locals, slopes got a little more crowded, but still the longest line we waited in was three chairs deep. With everyone wearing skis (or a snowboard), it was easy to keep six feet of distance.

We skied until the lifts closed at 3:30. That evening, the hotel's front desk called to confirm we were leaving the next morning and to tell us that its restaurant was closing. For breakfast we could order anything from the menu, but we'd have to eat it in our room.

Yes, the world was catastrophically changing. We needed to get home.

Grabbing coffee in Rossland on

our way out of town was our first taste of the new normal. The cafe offered only takeout, and as Derek handed the barista his personal travel mug, she directed his attention to a sheet of paper freshly taped to the counter: "Due to covid-19, we regret we cannot make drinks in personal mugs. Disposable cups only."

The next day, we crossed the border 24 hours before it closed to nonessential traffic. A mandate from the county's public health officer closing restaurants, bars and other nonessential businesses went into effect four hours before we got home. Five minutes after we walked through our front door, we got a text message from the local NIXLE alert system: The first case of covid-19 in the county had been verified.

Everything looked exactly the same as we had left it two weeks before, except the lemon tree a neighbor had been watering while we were away. It was in full bloom.

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