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World's Fare

World's Fare combines the topic of travel with culinary traditions around the globe. Globetrotting food and travel writers introduce readers to a broad range of destinations and food. The monthly package includes two destination features and three regular columns — Best Addresses, the Intrepid Gastronome and Snapshots. Moves with art.

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WORLD'S FARE-BEST-ADDRESSES

For release 11/01/07

(ATTENTION EDITORS: This column ends with the words "...information, go to www.siwashlakeranch.com." If the column you see below concludes any other way, you have received an incomplete version. Please contact TMS customer service at 800-346-8798 for a retransmission.)

(PHOTOS: Three color photos accompany this story. PHOTO 1. CAPTION: Buckling up for snowshoeing, Siwash Lake Ranch. CREDIT: Steve Haggerty, ColorWorld Images. FILENAME: 20071101mswdf-p.jpg. PHOTO 2. CAPTION: The upstairs family suite sleeps two adults and three children, Siwash Lake Ranch. CREDIT: Steve Haggerty, ColorWorld Images. FILENAME: 20071101mswdf-q.jpg. PHOTO 3. CAPTION: Relaxing in the Great Room, Siwash Lake Ranch. CREDIT: Steve Haggerty, ColorWorld Images. FILENAME: 20071101mswdf-r.jpg.)

WINTER GLOW AT SIWASH LAKE RANCH, BRITISH COLUMBIA

By Anne Z. Cooke

Tribune Media Services

KAMLOOPS, CANADA - Are you ready for Siwash Lake Ranch located in the foothills of the Cariboo Mountains? Before you say "yes," read on.

The main lodge, perched on a knoll overlooking Siwash Lake, is miles from restaurants and highways; shopping is not an option in this

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80,000-acre wilderness. Phone lines straggle down the nearest dirt road and this 7,000-square-foot ponderosa pine chalet has no city water or utilities. Recreation is outdoors, amidst forest and meadow. Evenings drift by the old-fashioned way - on the front porch or beside the fireplace, talking, listening to music, reading or playing checkers.

Most nearby neighbors are the four-legged sort: deer, moose, bear, badger, coyotes, horses, three dogs and a couple of pet cows. Guiding the enterprise with both hands on the reins is Siwash Lake Ranch's owner and 21st-century pioneer, Allyson Rogers. Equally handy with chainsaw or bread maker, this former city girl is hardly your typical hotelier.

Still, if you're ready to fly to Vancouver, Canada, catch a 55-minute commuter flight to Kamloops, drive two and one-half more hours on paved and dirt roads and abandon your cell phone, a few off-grid days at Siwash Lake Ranch is a glorious experience.

Until recently, Rogers took guests only in summer. But last year she added her first winter season with enticements we couldn't resist. Tempted by visions of frosty snowball fights, the northern lights, sled-dog treks, icicles on the eaves and cozy hours beside a crackling fire - we booked four days at the ranch at the end of a trip to Whistler Blackcomb Ski Resort, north of Vancouver.

You can ski or snowshoe right from the front door, across the frozen lake or follow logging and service roads in the forest. Rogers supplies the equipment or you can bring your own. Longer snowmobiling treks and ice fishing can be arranged through a nearby outfitter. But the highlight of our stay was the two days we spent learning to dogsled. Local trainer and musher Laurie Niedemayer supplied the dogs and the sleds. Niedemayer, owner of Nakitsilik Outdoors Adventures, trains her dogs for racing and for the movies.

In summer, Rogers hires a chef, but in winter she wears the toque, serving three meals daily. The cuisine, best described as healthy American, mixes salmon, steaks and chicken with rice, vegetable dishes and salads. A tray with coffee and muffins appears at your room early each morning and appetizers and wine are served before dinner. Rogers' computer provides e-mail access for making reservations and contacting home.

In summer, the horseback-riding program is paramount. Rogers' wranglers guide long and short rides, give individual lessons and offer horse-care how-tos in the barn and on the trail. Non-riders can hike, canoe on the lake, swim off the dock, play horseshoes and fish in the Bonaparte River. With the lake in front and binoculars next to the window, the birding is extraordinary.

"June is like a symphony," said Rogers. "The wildflowers are blooming and migrating birds arrive every day. Some days we see sand hill cranes and ospreys; other days it's eagles and songbirds. We've seen Steller's jays, tanagers and ducks of all kinds." When the moon is on the wane and the night sky is black, the stars look like holes punched in heaven.

The lodge is off the grid but entirely self-sufficient with solar panels and generators powering water heaters, lights, washing machine, refrigerator, computer, CD player and assorted appliances. The well and filtration system supplies water and a specially designed, 30-foot-tall river stone fireplace warms (more than adequately!) the interior. Six cozy guest bedrooms have down quilts and comfortable furniture. The largest rooms



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are big enough to accommodate a family. A children's program is offered in summer, but not in winter, when parents (or a nanny) must provide supervision. In fact, most ranch activities are most suitable for older children.

In fact, Rogers's two children - now 10 and 12 - look forward to meeting kids from around the world. "We're so isolated here we look forward to having people come to us," she says. "This is my dream house. Sharing it means everything."

Report Card:

BIGGEST WOW: The lodge's interior soaring ponderosa log architecture.

MOST MEMORABLE: Bonding with Kit-Kat, the lead sled dog.

PRIMITIVE PLEASURE: Catching a trout through the ice on the first try.

DON'T MISS: Eating a fresh-caught, pan-fried trout.

BIGGEST SURPRISE: Gorgeous views on the drive from Kamloops.

FORGETTABLE: The 20-mile snowmobile ride past a logging site.

INCIDENTAL INTELLIGENCE:

The ranch has room for 12 guests, two or three families or a small executive group. All meals, box lunches and onsite activities are included. In winter, an all-inclusive package includes dog sledding. In summer, most outfitter-arranged activities cost extra. Rates for a double room start at \$350 (Canadian dollars) per person, per night. (Rates may change, however, depending on exchange rate and other factors.)

Contact Siwash Lake Ranch at info@siwashlakeranch.com, call 250-395-6541 or write to Box 39, 70 Mile House, British Columbia, Canada V0K 2K0. For more information, go to www.siwashlakeranch.com.

Anne Z. Cooke and Steve Haggerty explore the world from Venice, Calif. They can be reached at TravelsWithAnne@cs.com.

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