

# Our Adventure on the Goat Creek Trail

By Hannah Slomp



*Sky and Hannah on either side of Jamie Jack, AWA Board Member. Jamie's wardrobe appears to be channeling her inner Edith Prickley.*

It was Sunday, March 15th at 8:00 am. We – Hannah, Sky and Jamie – were packing our cross-country skis into the back of Jamie's Mazda in Calgary and heading to Banff. Little did we know that we were on the eve of a public health emergency and life would change dramatically. No, for us, that morning promised great things. The sun was shining and the temperature would rise from -24 degrees to a balmy -9. Our AWA Adventure for Wilderness, to ski from Canmore to Banff along the Goat Creek Trail, was about to begin.

My 1990s Peltanons were freshly waxed. I went with multiple Swix™ layers. Purple, then blue, then green, made perfect sense given how the day promised to unfold. Coffees were poured into thermoses and Jamie tossed "Aussie Bites" into a trail pack while Sky donned a hand-made bear toque. Animal prints was the theme of the day and the trunk was full of leopard prints, sequined bunny sweatshirts, satin zebra print scarves, and other Value Village treasures.

We made it to the Banff Springs Hotel in

good time. We needed to park our car, find a bus that would take us to Canmore, where we would then get a taxi to drop us off at the trailhead. The brisk mountain morning and the details of our itinerary seemed daunting. But we schlepped our gear along the Bow Falls trail into town and ended up taking a taxi all the way back to Canmore. Our driver blasted the heat and cranked kooky tunes while we fueled up for our impending expedition.

Our trailhead lay in the shadow of Ha Ling Peak. We got out and stared down a freshly groomed trail to where it bent in the undergrowth. After a potty break, zipping up, clipping in, and hair toss, the animal-print-clad trio set their skis in the tracks and set out for Banff.

The sky above was strikingly cloudless, the ambient temperature felt refreshing and encouraging. We were on our way. A few metres past the trailhead the trail turns south and takes a somewhat dramatic descent into the Spray Lakes valley. This is the beginning of the 150-metre elevation fluctuation along this trail. The downhill leads to a scenic bridge where



*A glorious late winter day along the Goat Creek Trail.*

you may admire the pristine surroundings.

We left society behind on that trail. In fact, for most of the 19.3 kms, we saw few people. I remember posting a video on Instagram later that day with the hashtag #NoCoronaVirusOutHere. Looking back to that day now, almost exactly two months later, it was a very different world. Since then we've had two months of social distancing, two months of working from home, and two months of zoom calls. In this new normal facemasks are the latest, essential fashion accessory. Looking back on that bluebird day, it was the last hurrah before the new COVID-19 reality.

The rest of the day unfolded just as we had imagined it: with laughter and stories, with hard work and photo ops, with pit stops. All the while our animal prints were transforming us into our inner safari animal out on the savanna, free and wild.

After about four hours, the trail became more populated. We sensed we were near the end of our journey. After 900 more metres, the Banff Springs Hotel emerged on the escarpment above the Bow River. We unclipped our boots from our skis, and eventually found the Waldhaus Pub. It had been our vision to end up at the pub. There we reminisced over ample steins of fine German ale. It was the last social establishment any of us would patronize for quite some time.

We had skied the Goat Creek Trail. It had been exciting to plan, thrilling to do, and was one of the first long point-to-point skis I had ever done. The Adventures for Wilderness was the trip's catalyst. We had all the things we'd miss for the months to come: friends nearby, the wondrous beauty of our special mountains, adventure, and laughter over a pint. 🍷