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Spring 2015



Prestige Rocky Mountain Resort

Always Creating Fresh Experiences

by *Chris McBeath*

Nestled amongst the Purcell and Rocky Mountain landscapes of the East Kootenays, the influence of Cranbrook belies its actual size. As the commercial and government hub in the region, the city pulsates with activity and enjoys a flow of visitors who visit on business, or to experience the great outdoors. With seven championship golf courses within a 20-minute drive, often it's both.

Creating a Corporate Destination

"Most people arrive by car and in many cases there is a set of golf clubs in the trunk," notes David Kroeker, General Manager of the Prestige Rocky Mountain Resort, Cranbrook's only 4.5-star, full service resort and convention centre, which was opened in 1998. "Although the resort

was a new build, we were intent on always creating a fresh experience; within 9 months we were already into our first renovations," he says. "Admittedly, that upgrade was a rotating outer door, but still, I like to think that we've never stopped refurbishing and renewing. The rooms have been overhauled from top to bottom at least twice in the 15 years we've been open."

The result is stunning. Each of the 112 rooms is superbly appointed, and resort amenities include a state-of-the-art conference centre, café, restaurant, lounge, pool, and an extensive fitness centre. "We are primarily a corporate and meetings property," David continues. "Cranbrook is a thriving centre to health and government sectors as well as to the retail, commercial, rail, and resource industries."

That said, the resort does host a number of leisure travellers, most frequently booked through online travel agencies such as Expedia, booking.com, and Travelocity. They come for a variety of outdoor activities, including hunting, fishing, hiking, and skiing at nearby Kimberley. Summer festivals such as Sam Steele Days, minor league hockey tournaments, and the Pro Rodeo are also big draws.

“Although the region is a prime destination for hunting, those folks usually head straight into the outback for days at a time so they are more of a market for outfitters, not for hoteliers,” describes David. “We do work with BC Golf Guide, and partner with a fishing outfitter for fly-fishing packages - as those activities fit our corporate guest profile.”



David Kroeker,
General Manager

The Cranbrook Lifestyle

For David, it was Cranbrook’s proximity to the mountains, valley wilderness, and rural city living that lured him from Kelowna. “I came to hospitality with a lumber mill background. I knew very little about tourism, but hotels were obviously in my blood. I was immediately set to work helping to open a hotel in Kelowna before opening more properties in Golden, Cranbrook, and Radium,” he recalls. “Then came this resort and I’ve stayed here ever since. I just love the lifestyle in this part of the world. It’s uncomplicated with a very strong sense of community. Besides, Cranbrook gets more sunshine that any other part of BC.”

Thinking Outside of the Box

The biggest joy for David has been tracking the growth of the resort, which he credits, in part, to the team’s entrepreneurial spirit. “We’re always trying something new. For example, **we have just finished a lounge conversion to a Don Cherry franchise. This is a BIG hockey town and the room’s new hockey atmosphere has been an immediate success. We’re talking 150% increase in revenues!**”

“Then there’s our fitness centre that we have always run as much for local members as for our resort guests,” David continues. “In September, we acquired the services of Laurie Dickson, a very high-profile and award-winning fitness trainer whose programs and expertise has doubled the membership in only six months! It’s an amazing story.”

“We’ve also been fortunate in having Marc Rathpoller join the property. As a Red Seal Executive Chef, he is giving us the opportunity to restyle our restaurant and menus with an even more contemporary flair,” David enthuses, “especially in view of the fact that acquiring quality staff is a constant challenge.”

“Although Cranbrook doesn’t have the staff resources of a large city, it is starting to attract people to its lifestyle,” David explains. “As the city’s premier property, we resonate with those staff who have been trained aboard Disney Cruise Ships and other iconic guest-oriented enterprises.” The result is a palpable “can-do” team attitude throughout the resort.

“I must credit the Prestige Corporate Team for giving us the freedom to try new things, and supporting us all the way,” David emphasizes. “It’s exciting to be a part of the creative and operational process, and it’s so rewarding when it delivers success. Business is brisk. Forecasts are good. It really is a joy to come to work.”

