

ADVENTURE & TRAVEL

All-In Outdoors

'All-inclusive' vacations might conjure poolside cocktails, but some resorts now fold a different amenity into their rates: adventure

BY EMILY PENNINGTON

CHRIS LEVINSON was skeptical when she stepped off a tiny bush plane and into the vast, Canadian backcountry that surrounds Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge, an all-inclusive resort. She'd been burned before. The Los Angeles-based television writer, who travels frequently with her family of four, had recently experienced an "astronomical disappointment" at an all-inclusive ranch in Montana. She half-expected to suffer through another week of lackluster group excursions and awkward small talk.

But something clicked on the third day as she sat, a steaming mug of coffee in hand, on a small whale-watching boat motoring across the foggy Clayoquot Sound. With her next meal already planned by the lodge's chef and exciting excursions pre-booked by its concierge, Levinson saw the virtues of this resort's low-stress approach to outdoor adventure. "I remember being in that fog and [thinking] that I don't have to ap-

proach everything at the same pace or with the same anxiety level," she said.

During their week at Clayoquot, Levinson and her family relaxed into an experience that allowed them to try out new activities at will. The foursome bonded over a frigid river plunge on a canyoneering excursion and munched on homemade "bliss balls," a snack made from oats, honey and dates. They also enjoyed mountain biking and hiking along the fjords of Vancouver Island.

For many people, "all-inclusive" connotes sugary cocktails, forced socializing and buffet-style dining. But fully inclusive adventure resorts are on the rise across the globe, too. Instead of all-you-can-drink wristbands, they offer adrenaline-stoking activities like fly fishing, canyoneering, snorkeling and rafting in between multi-course meals and happy hours. Levinson liked that after paying the lodge's all-inclusive rate—Rainforest Deluxe Tents start at around \$2,527 a night for double occupancy—her family didn't have to make any more should-we-or-



PREPAID PADDLE Guests at Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge on a kayak trip.

shouldn't-we financial decisions.

Jim Manley, owner of the Ranch at Rock Creek in Montana, says he wanted to create a place where adults could feel like kids again. After a lifelong obsession with cowboy movies and Wild West culture, he spent 20 years looking for a property where he might help others tap in to that same wonder.

Back in 2010 when the ranch opened, no "luxury all-inclusive" category existed, he recalls. He figured he could attract guests with the sheer volume of things to do. "How do you get adults to play? Well, if it's fully inclusive, and they've paid for everything, and there's 40 activities, they go nuts," he said. "The amount of women and men in their 50s and 60s that go nuts over paintball is unbelievable." For rates starting at \$2,300 a night, guests also get access to

guided fly fishing, cycling, trap shooting and naturalist-led walks.

Remote, all-inclusive retreats have experienced a surge in popularity since the Covid-19 pandemic reignited many travelers' passion for the outdoors. "We took some trips to Sequoia and Yosemite and enjoyed it immensely, but were looking for more of a blend of 'vacation' and 'outdoors,'" said Lonnier Giamela, an attorney in California. His ideal trip would be cushier than those national park tours and combine active outdoor excursions with relaxed cabin time.

Colorado's C Lazy U Ranch, an all-inclusive setup on an 8,500-acre expanse of Rocky Mountain foothills, fit the bill. Giamela loved that he and his kids could try out mountain biking and horseback riding, and not be concerned about wasting money if a child didn't



The dining deck at Sal Salis Ningaloo Reef in Western Australia.

like a particular activity.

In remote locations, lodges often offer all-inclusive packages because of the lack of other restaurants or amenities nearby. At Western Australia's Sal Salis Ningaloo Reef, set beside the Indian Ocean's aquamarine waters, the nightly rate starts at around \$520 per person. But that also covers snorkeling expeditions, kayaking excursions along the reef and guided stargazing quests.

Costa Rica's Pacuare Lodge is so remote that visitors must arrive via white-water raft, by air or on a

JEREMY KORESKA/BAUER LODGES (CLAYOQUOT WILDERNESS LODGE), THE RANCH AT ROCK CREEK, LUXURY LODGES OF AUSTRALIA (SAL SALIS)



A horseback-riding excursion at the Ranch at Rock Creek in Montana.

After paying the lodge's all-inclusive rate, the family didn't have to make any more difficult financial decisions.

rutted 4WD-only road. Once on the protected 840-acre property though, travelers spend their days bird-watching, ziplining and hiking through the rainforest.

To get to Denali Backcountry Lodge in Alaska, guests take a helicopter. Long days under the midnight sun (the lodge closes outside of the summer months) can be spent on rugged off-trail treks and mountain-bike trails. Among the many included amenities? Bear spray.

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