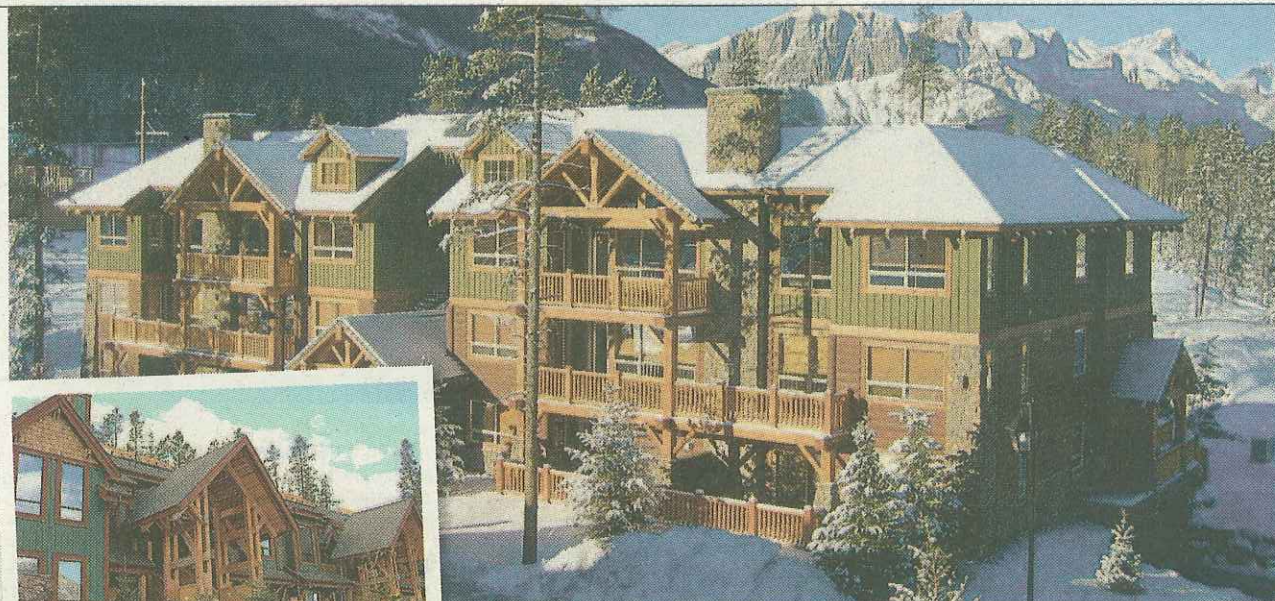




# One stop haven for tee and ski

Developers in Alberta have spotted a lucrative market as Brits flee UK shores, says **Rosalind Russell**



**Snow business:** Houses and apartments nestle among the Rockies at the Three Sisters Mountain Village, above and inset, where 20 per cent of buyers are British

THERE are two seasons in Alberta, golf and ski. From May until the snow starts closing in in October, golfers play on courses framed by the spectacular backdrop of the Canadian Rocky Mountains.

For the rest of the year, everyone goes snowboarding and skiing. Massive state and national funding has been poured into the Calgary Olympic Ski programme to ensure it will be the world's major winter sports centre within the next three years. A high proportion of Canada's winter Olympic medallists live in the Calgary area.

Popular family pastimes are hiking (beware of the bears), kayaking, fishing, mountain biking, white water rafting and horse riding. Alberta, then, is no

place for slugs or retirees looking for a comfortable couch.

The vast areas of unspoiled country and an open-air lifestyle is what attracts many British to Alberta. Canada is the fourth most favoured destination – after Australia, Spain and the US – for people clamouring to leave the UK. And they are leaving in droves. In 2005 alone, 198,000 people left Britain to begin a new life abroad. Five and a half million Brits live abroad permanently, with an estimated further 500,000 living overseas for part of the year, in second homes.

Not surprising then, that Canadian developers target the British when they are selling the dream: an affordable home in the Rockies, with a lifestyle you

can hardly imagine back in the concrete canyons of Birmingham. Almost 20 per cent of the buyers at the Three Sisters Mountain Village, at Canmore, 45 minutes' drive from Calgary, are British.

We are the biggest ethnic group buying in the area, after the locals and the Americans. Prices have risen sharply in Canmore, but from a lower base and not as dramatically as they have in the UK. The average detached house with three bedrooms, hot tub, deck and a heated garage (your car needs it in winter, believe me) costs around £280,000. The land has been sensitively developed and there is a limit on what will be permitted. Already, nearby Banff restricts property sales to locals to avoid over-development and stop the area

turning into a second-home hotspot. Says a spokesman for the Three Sisters development, "The British have the greatest appetite for overseas property. We do not go for the hard sell but our closing rate is 100 per cent." That means, everyone who comes, buys. A two-bed apartment costs from £200,000, a three-storey alpine townhouse, £450,000. A new three-bed house in the Calgary suburbs costs around £330,000.

**Contact** Call Newfound Property International, 020 8605 9520, [newfoundproperty.com](http://newfoundproperty.com) for details of Three Sisters Mountain Village. Other agents: Eric Watson Rockies Realtor, [rockiesrealtor.com](http://rockiesrealtor.com), and Remax Alpine Realty, [alpinerealty.ca](http://alpinerealty.ca)

## OVERVIEW



### PROS

- Alberta has one of the lowest costs of living in Canada
- If you stay for less than six months at a time, you are classed a non-resident. For more than six months, you must apply for immigrant status. However, a day trip to the States, or a holiday back in the UK, puts the counter back to zero
- High standard schools, and hospitals, and a healthy outdoor lifestyle

### CONS

- Expensive to reach from the UK
- There is an annual property tax, calculated on the value of the property
- The temperature can change dramatically

**INVEST? 9/10**