



MATTIAS FREDRIKSSON

THE ROOM

A GLIMPSE OF A SKIER'S LIFE, FROM THEIR SECOND HOME

Put the key to the door, push it open, fumble for the light switch. This isn't home. It's a 300-square-foot box with paisley curtains and indestructible furniture that you've never seen before...and will probably never see again. It's just a hotel room. Yet as the storm cycle gathers on the western flank of the range and, later that night, local news channels begin ticking off road and school closures, this second home becomes the base camp from which you birddog the best ski run of your life.

Snowy goggles go on the towel hooks. Beer goes on ice in the sink. Gloves and socks on the heater. The beds become couches as you swap stories that night of nipple-deep powder runs, boots still on. You heave empty beer cans at the TV when the Warren Miller movies come on, then sleep like the dead until the morning. Then you pack up and ship out. Off to hunt perfection once again. And find another room in which to hang your hat.

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GLACIER PARK LODGE, EAST GLACIER, MONTANA

Most of the ski parties checked out when the avie danger spiked, leaving the hallway racks empty and a case of TNT malt liquor half-buried in the parking lot. We stayed one tour too long as the roads closed and the eerie quiet made staff stories that the hotel was haunted with souls of avalanche victims seem almost plausible. Just one night before, the Grizzly Bar had been a raging U.N. of A.T. with über-serious Germans, 12 loudmouth Spaniards and keen-but-bloodied Canadians still looking for their friends.

Each delegation was toasting big vertical days with Tall Timbers on tap. Volume increased with each round, and our stereotypically loud American crew started trying to speak the euphoric language of deepness with the Spaniards. The intersection of jobsite Spanglish and phrasebook English left some gaps in the stories, so we supplemented with touring maps drawn on bar napkins and hand signals indicating sweet backcountry and friendly hippies to the south. They gave us an animated report of their home mountains and it was this shared fervor—for the next line in the next place—that signaled we were all on the same quest.

An angry tourist trying to sleep threatened to shut down the party, but it only moved to the gift shop. A Spanish woman browsed the shelves for a souvenir as the stories rolled on. Turning to the crowd, she modeled a beaver hat pulled from the top shelf.

"How does it look?" she offered in her best English.

"Perfect," I replied.

— DAN KOSTRZEWSKI

