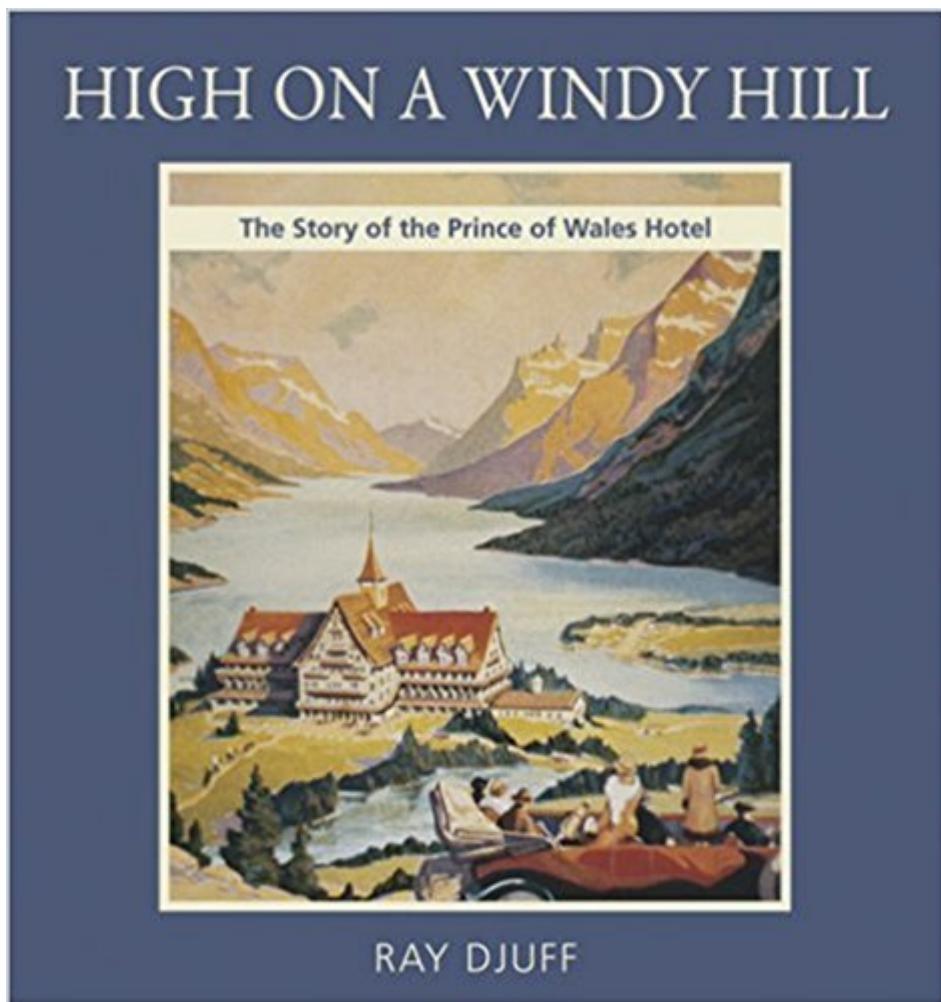


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# High On A Windy Hill: The Story Of The Prince Of Wales Hotel



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## Synopsis

Opened in 1927 for the Minnesota-based Great Northern Railway, the Prince of Wales Hotel provided an oasis during Prohibition for thirsty Americans. Since these boozy beginnings, the hotel, which overlooks the beautiful Waterton Lake, has survived floods, fire, high winds and even closure. Now a national historic site, the Prince of Wales Hotel receives rightful tribute in *High on a Windy Hill*. Vivid historic photographs bring to life this grand survivor of the golden age of railway resort development.

## Book Information

Paperback: 180 pages

Publisher: Rocky Mountain Books (February 25, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0921102712

ISBN-13: 978-0921102717

Product Dimensions: 0.5 x 8 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,418,087 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #42 in Books > Travel > Canada > Provinces > Alberta #82 in Books > Travel > Canada > National Parks #119 in Books > Travel > Europe > Great Britain > Wales

## Customer Reviews

sorry, didn't buy this on but got it at the hotel. Look; for anyone who stays at the Prince of Wales or is thinking of staying there, this is just brilliant and essential. It is a perfect description of everything about this hotel. Buy it before you go. Buy it when you get back (because, then you'll want to go again. Djuff is a great writer.

Ray Djuff's continuing efforts on the history of the Waterton Lakes area have hit pay dirt with his newest book, *High On A Windy Hill*. The book details how the Prince of Wales Hotel, a majestic wooden structure modelled on Swiss alpine architecture, came to sit atop a promontory above the scenic lakes area straddling the Alberta-Montana border. Djuff, a Calgary, AB newspaper editor, describes in great detail how Louis Warren Hill, head of the Minnesota-based Great Northern Railway, needed a Canadian hotel in the early century to match his significant tourism accommodations in Montana's Glacier National Park. Because Prohibition was still in effect, Hill

envisioned well-to-do eastern Americans travelling by train west to his Montana hotels taking a short trip north to imbibe in a drink while on vacation. Hill's power of persuasion, coupled with a subtle but determined continent-wide public relations effort on Canadian authorities, a nearby Mormon teetotalling community and American tourists, eventually made his dream a reality. Djuff's meticulous research captures the drama in the rushed construction of the 90-room, \$370,000 Prince of Wales, locally referred to as the POW. Devastating weather and countless design revisions vexed the local contractors prior to the July 1927 opening and the book is chockfull of period photos and anecdotes describing the ordeal. Ironically, the halcyon days Hill foresaw lasted only until America's 1933 repeal of Prohibition and the onslaught of the Depression. Twice in the ensuing decade, Great Northern closed the hotel due to lack of visitors. By the 1960s and 70s, rail traffic had given way to vacationers in cars and the company finally sold the hotel. The Prince of Wales is now owned by Viad Corporation of Phoenix, AZ and is open through the summer months. Djuff draws on his experience as a waiter and bartender at the POW in the 1970s to chronicle the hotel staff's dedication to service, regardless of the business's financial straits. He ably describes the culture of the community both outside and inside the resort. Perhaps most importantly, *High On a Windy Hill* is a story of how the *raison d'etre* behind such a grand edifice evolves over time through the visions of those who built and staffed it. For that alone, Djuff's book is worth the read.

Ray Djuff's initial description of the lobby of the Prince of Wales Hotel is superb, and his collection of photos is second to none. Yet while he manages to capture the initial impression of one entering the hotel lobby, the rest of this book is a disappointing visit, sort of like entering a great hotel and finding the rooms small and unimaginative. You will always tell how you visited there once, but you never go back again, at least as a hotel guest. Maybe you visit every few years or so - just in the lobby - just to remind yourself that you were really there. This hotel presents a stunning view of a seven-mile long lake straddling the Canada-US border and the fact that it was even built is one of those stories that gets better as time goes on. Buffeted by fierce winter winds and a National Park administered from thousands of miles away, the Prince has managed to maintain its dignity and its importance both as a landmark and a monument to civilization in the midst of an overwhelming wilderness.

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