

GLV

THE GOOD LIFE IN VANCOUVER

January/February 2004



Featured in this issue:

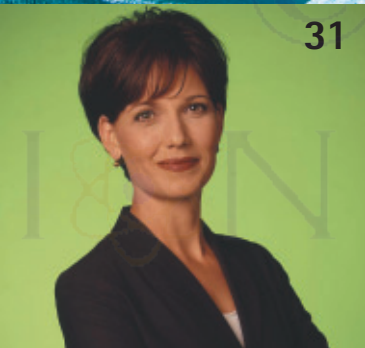
Skiing

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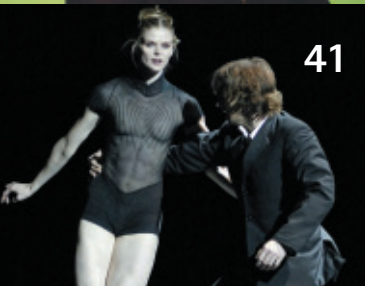
8



31



28



41



20



16

Cover Story

8 Great White Now *by Greig Bethel*

Some say we have been blessed by the best skiing conditions in nearly a decade, and so we are excited to have Greig with us for our cover story. A prolific writer on mountains and the outdoors, Greig draws on his extensive mountain knowledge to bring us a terrific guide to the skiing and snowboarding venues around BC.

Features

16 At The Edge of Heaven *by Jim West*

We are very fortunate to have the Whistler-Blackcomb ski area right in our backyard, but it can be dangerous out there. Jim has been skiing there for years; there are ways to do backcountry right, and ways to do it wrong, and the latter can make for a very expensive jaunt in the snow. Here's what you need to know before going off the beaten path.

20 Master of His Domain *by Brian Kendall*

In this issue, Brian gives us a peek into the attitude and approach of one of Canada's foremost golf course architects, Les Furber. Renowned the world over for his ability to work with the natural qualities of a course layout, the BC tourism industry can thank Furber for drawing crowds to more than thirty courses around our province.

34 Whisky *by Gael Arthur*

Ahhh... there's nothing like a really good whisky to warm the cockles of one's heart in the cold of winter; it's practically cult-like for some folks. In a delightful departure from wine, Gael goes behind the scenes into the making of one of Scotland's most famous exports. Whisky Club anyone? Sláinte!

36 DVRs *by Peter Beck*

Digital Video Recorders are bringing joy to the hearts of couch potatoes everywhere, while sending the advertising industry into apoplexy. Peter explains the technology behind the new way to watch TV, and explores how advertisers will have to change their methods to target their audiences henceforth.

In Each Issue:

27 Fashion Scene *by Peggy Schroeder*

28 Secrets of a Chef *by Scott Baechler*

31 City Lit *by Virginia Aulin*

41 The Arts *by Sarah Simpson*

43 Restaurant Review *by Jim West*

44 Astrology *by Rose Marcus*

46 Spiritual Energy *by Jonni O'Connor*

Cover photo courtesy of
Panorama Mountain Village.

Contributors



Gael Arthur



Rose Marcus

Gael Arthur writes about wine, food and travel. A perfect vacation for her combines all three. A perfect business trip contains healthy quantities of the same elements.

Virginia Aulin is a communications professional and senior editor of Room of One's Own, Canada's oldest women's literary magazine. She writes book reviews and travel and golf articles for a variety of publications.

Scott Baechler is a man intent on living his dream. From the early days in his grandmother's kitchen where he piped roses on her cakes, Scott knew that a culinary career was his calling. Today, Scott is the executive chef for Vancouver's Metropolitan Hotel and oversees all operations for its acclaimed restaurant, Diva at the Met.



Virginia Aulin



Jonni O'Connor, Ph.D.

Peter Beck is a well-known financial expert who founded Swift Trade Securities, Canada's first day trading firm, in 1998. It is now the country's leader in direct-access trading. Beck has also co-authored a book on Hedge Funds, and frequently appears on television to offer commentary on the performance of the Canadian markets.

Greig Bethel is a journalist and writer specializing in mountain culture and outdoor adventure. His freelance work has appeared in numerous publications including Ski Canada, Explore, Vancouver and Kootenay Mountain Culture magazines, Pique Newsmagazine and on CBC Radio's BC Almanac. Bethel has lived in BC mountain resort towns – including Whistler, Rossland and Golden – for the past 10 years. He currently works as an editor at the Vancouver Province and is writing a memoir based on his experiences as a ski bum.



Scott Baechler



Sarah Simpson

Brian Kendall has explored the booming Canadian golf scene from coast-to-coast. The author of six books, Kendall's latest is Northern Links: Canada From Tee to Tee, published June by Anchor Canada.

Rose Marcus specializes in evolutionary astrology. She has written for numerous national and international publications, and has been a popular TV and radio guest. She also teaches classes, presents lectures and maintains a busy private consultation practice.

Jonni O'Connor, PhD, maintains a private practice in transpersonal psychology, writes and records, and gives workshops. She has also released a new book, published in April of this year, called "Living the Energy: Essentials for Expanded Awareness."



Peter Beck



Peggy Schroeder

Sarah Simpson is a publicist and freelance writer who holds a BFA in Theatre from UBC and an MBA in Arts, Media and Marketing from York. When time permits, she loves a good road trip. She is inexplicably obsessed with Little House on the Prairie, but is careful not to tell, for fear she will be horribly judged.

Peggy Schroeder is the Travelling Tailor, a maverick woman with corporate image sense combined with 2 generations of textile manufacturing, who now focuses on individuals. Building personalized wardrobes for people that demand only the best at a proper price is what the travelling tailor is all about, keeping you current by tailoring your image to suit your needs, and fine-tuning your corporate wardrobe.



Brian Kendall



Jim West

Jim West is a public relations and marketing professional who writes on subjects ranging from finance to food. Over the span of a career that has encompassed everything from chef to bricklayer, he has travelled extensively throughout Vancouver in search of God Only Knows What.

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From the publisher

Welcome to our first issue in 2004. It's a good time to express appreciation for the support we've received as GLV has grown through the past year. So to our readers, writers and of course advertisers: many thanks.

We managed to kick off the New Year with a great bash at the Sheraton Wall Centre. The centre of the magazine shows lots of smiling faces bringing in 2004. These smiling faces also raised over \$7,000 in our silent auction, for Make-A-Wish Foundation of BC. An all around win-win and a great way to start the year!

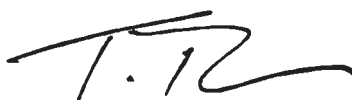
We've done many events now. Each one is bigger and better than the last. Again I want to thank the many volunteers and sponsors who make these so successful by providing their time, prizes and donations. GLV seems to be developing a following, we have barely finished this event and we are getting calls about the next one! That being so we must be doing something right.

As I'm writing this to my amazement snow is actually falling here in Vancouver and people are staying home to wait out the deluge. So I guess the cover story is particularly appropriate. And again I have to say how much I enjoy Vancouver. Where else in the world can you access such great skiing so easily?

However, if you're going to hit the slopes after over indulging in the festive season it would be a good idea to make sure you are in shape. Therefore a "Fit Tip" from the experts at Le Physique Personal Training Centre, one of our repeating event sponsors.

"To get in shape before you hit the slopes, learn to activate your deep abdominal and low back muscles. Good core strength and well conditioned legs will make you stronger, faster, and less likely to get injured. Squats are a great choice for building strength and endurance in the legs and glutes. Try adding an exercise ball into your ab routine to enhance all-around core conditioning and balance."

We at GLV are certainly looking forward to a great 2004 and wish everyone the same. Next GOOD LIFE Social is the "Leap Year Party", with great new original bands. This is a warm up fundraiser for the big event of the year for Make-A-Wish. Check out page 26 for details.



Terry Tremaine
Publisher

We welcome letters from readers at: terry@investment.com



GREAT WHITE NOW

BY GREIG BETHEL

With what have been described as the best early season conditions in nearly a decade, this is the year to get out skiing and snowboarding

Mining for White Gold

More than 100 years ago, in the late 1880s, a miner who was working a claim in the Selkirk Mountains near Revelstoke used a pair of wooden, home-made skis to schuss from peak to valley – and thus gave birth to skiing in BC. A decade later, another miner decided it would be a good idea to have a race down a mountainside into downtown Rossland. These miners were onto something.

Moisture-laden clouds scudding inland from the Pacific Ocean dump an unbelievable amount of the white stuff on BC's sea of mountains each winter. A unique combination – lots of precipitation and high peaks that scrape it out – make BC the El Dorado of skiing and snowboarding.

This year, the province's mountain resorts are offering a myriad of experiences to suit every ability level – from beginner to expert – and enough variety – from groomed cruisers to the steep and deep – that will keep snow riders coming back for more. A number of resorts have also made significant improvements, including faster lifts, new terrain and more après-ski choices.

So gear up and head out. Life always seems to make more sense from a snow-covered mountaintop. And where better to stake a claim and mine some white gold than at home in BC?

Skiing Above the City

Seen anything strange downtown lately? How about people dressed in winter clothing – complete with toques and goggles – carrying their skis and snowboards through the concrete canyons on their way to the North Shore Mountains.

Think you'd see this in any other major city in North America? Not likely.

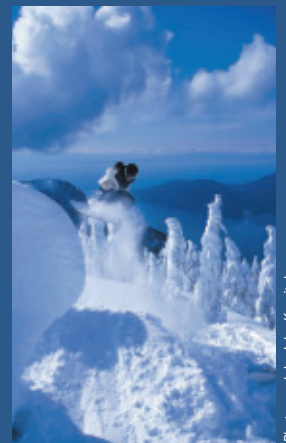
• Cypress Mountain

The North Shore's biggest and best ski area with more than 1,700 vertical feet and a variety of terrain, which means more fresh tracks. Also, there's nothing quite like the view from the top of the aptly named Sky Chair – 360 degrees of the city, ocean, Vancouver Island, Sunshine Coast, Howe Sound, the Lions and the Coast Mountains, as far as the eye can see.

www.cypressmountain.com

• Grouse Mountain

A new \$-million detachable quad chair – named after Vancouver's upcoming party in 2010, the Olympics – opened in December and cut a slow 20-minute, two-chair ride to a scant three minutes. Grouse is also the best place to ski or snowboard



Photograph by John Kamitaken

Left page photos supplied by Big White Ski Resort. Top Boarder photo by Klaus Gretzmacher. Bottom aerial photo of Big White Ski Resort by Don Wiexl.

on a date – if the conditions aren't your cup of tea, you can always head inside to the bar for a stronger drink.

www.grousemountain.com

Courtesy of Mount Seymour



• Mount Seymour

Home to Vancouver's urban snowboard and jib-skiing scene, Seymour has a vibe similar to the Deep Cove mountain bike crowd – hardcore sums it up nicely. There's also a smidgen of accessible backcountry for touring types. Seymour is usually not as crowded as either Cypress or Grouse, and therein lies its lure.

www.mountseymour.com

The Mega-über-Resort

North America's No.1 ski resort is just an hour and a half from Vancouver. How lucky are we?

The resort's stats speak for themselves: two mountains, more than 5,000 vertical feet, 7,000-plus acres, 12 alpine bowls, three glaciers, over 200 runs, 33 lifts and nine metres of snow per year.

• Whistler-Blackcomb

There's nothing quite like a powder day on one of the continent's finest skiing and snowboarding mountains. Boom is the sound from a stick of dynamite during the ski patrol's avalanche control work. Ring, ring is the lift starting up. Buzz is the crowd getting amped. Silence is the sound of gliding through bottomless powder.

Get there early though, or all you'll hear is the sound of your foot kicking yourself. New

improvements this year at the big W-B include expanded grooming and snowmaking, and the continued evolution of terrain parks and pipes. Also, redevelopment at the Creekside base area – the original Whistler – gives you more choices for après.

www.whistler-blackcomb.com

The Cascade Triangle

Snow – metres and metres of it – deep, dark forests and a hairy creature known as the Sasquatch are what characterize the

Cascade Mountains, located east of Vancouver where the Fraser Valley narrows, the mountains close in and the clouds drop their load. The Cascade ski areas are a good alternative to the North Shore and Whistler-Blackcomb. Give them a try, you won't be disappointed. And you might even make a new furry friend.

• Mount Baker

During the winter of 1998-99, Mount Baker set a world record for snowfall with a whopping total of 1,140 inches. That's 95 feet (or almost 29 metres). Already this year, Baker's base is well over two and a half metres and growing. At one point, it had the most snow of any ski area in North America. A trip south of the border is definitely worthwhile – besides, it's just about the same distance from Vancouver as is Whistler. www.mtbaker.us

• Hemlock Valley

The Hemlock ski area is a bowl-like amphitheatre that offers skiing and riding on open terrain. It's also a great place for families where the kids can be let loose without any major worries. As of mid-December, Hemlock was vying with Baker for the biggest base in the Pacific Northwest, with a snowpack of 250 centimetres.

www.hemlockvalleyresort.com

• Manning Park

Manning Park's ski area – known as Gibson Pass – is beyond Hope but, in this case, that's a good thing. This is perhaps one of BC's least-known ski areas, which means no crowds, no hurries and no worries. A vertical drop of more than 1,400 feet and dry snow (the ski area is located just on the other side of the Coast-Interior divide) make this well worth the trip.

www.manningparkresort.com

Snow on the Spine

Central Vancouver Island's mountainous terrain forms a spine that, in winter, gets hit with snowstorm after snowstorm as clouds loaded with moisture ride in from the Pacific. These peaks wring out massive amounts of precipitation and are the first line in BC's sea of mountains to be painted white.

• Mount Washington Alpine Resort

Mount Washington, near Courtenay-Comox, celebrates its 25th year of operation this season, which opened in grand style after a mid-December storm dumped a metre of the white stuff on the resort in 36 hours. The resort has eight lifts – including a high-speed, six-passenger chair – that serve its 1,600 vertical feet and 50 runs. www.mtwashington.bc.ca

• Mount Cain

Further up the Inland Island Highway, just north of Campbell

Photo by Eric Berger



Photo courtesy of Mount Washington Alpine Resort

River, lies Mount Cain, a community-owned and -operated resort with a keepin'-it-real, down-home feel. Cain is only open weekends but has an impressive vertical drop of 1,500 feet, which is serviced by two T-bars. No cushy chairlifts here. The runs off the upper T-bar are almost exclusively expert. Cain also has a good stash of off piste, out-of-bounds riding.

www.island.net/~cain

The Other Side of the Mountains

Looking for fewer clouds and more UV rays? Then head up the Coquihalla to the Interior, where the snow-to-sun ratio increases dramatically. The Thompson-Okanagan region offers dry snow and plenty of sunshine. Plus, the four ski areas are perhaps the best bang for your buck when it comes to overall vacation value. Remember Whistler before it became a crowded, international mega-resort? That's the lure on the other side of the mountains.

• Sun Peaks

Olympic gold medallist Nancy Greene and her husband Al Raine left Whistler for this resort for a reason: no crowds and great cruising. If you like to ski on corduroy boulevards, then this is the place for you. There are more than 100 runs – most of them groomed to perfection – on three different mountains. Add in a vertical drop of 2,800-plus feet and you could say this north-of-Kamloops resort is, well, groom-ilicious. Besides, would Nancy steer you wrong?

www.sunpeaksresort.com

• Silver Star

Fifty percent of Silver Star's terrain is rated as intermediate, which is perfect for skiers who are looking to maximize their fun quotient while on vacation. Added bonus: the snow is 100 percent natural (no snow making) and is groomed to perfection into what is known as "hero snow." Silver Star (near Vernon) also has one of BC's premier cross-country ski areas with 55 kilometres of trails.

www.skisilverstar.com



Photo by Blair Ireland, courtesy of Big White.

• Big White

Kelowna's Big White receives the most snow of the Okanagan resorts with an average of 750 centimetres, and is the region's highest, with a base elevation of 5,700 feet and a top elevation of 7,600 feet. The resort also has a high-speed, eight-passenger gondola (the only one in the Okanagan) and four high-speed quad chairs. In total, the lift system runs at 20 million vertical feet

per hour. Big White's village has enough room for 13,000 guests in four hotels, 25 condo complexes and two hostels. It also has 17 restaurants and even its own walk-in medical clinic.

www.bigwhite.com

• Apex Mountain Resort

Apex, near Penticton, is the Okanagan's least-crowded ski area and offers a good mix of terrain for skiers and snowboarders of all abilities: 18 percent beginner, 47 intermediate, 18 advanced and 18 expert. Apex's Gunbarrel Saloon is consistently rated as the No.1 ski bar in Canada. Try the legendary Gunbarrel coffee, a flaming shot of Grand Marnier poured down a double barrel shotgun into an assortment of other liqueurs.

www.apexresort.com

Skiing's Shangri-La

The Kootenays are talked about by skiers and 'boarders from around the world in hushed tones. The reason: big dumps of snow and the steep mountains. What else could you ask for?

Rossland and Nelson are ranked as two of Canada's top ski towns and Fernie is not far behind. Hardcore skiing mixed with turn-of-the-century Victorian architecture. It's no wonder that the Kootenays are considered to be skiing's Shangri-La.

• Red Mountain

Home of Canada's first ski race in 1896, Red Mountain near Rossland has produced more national team skiers than any other mountain in the country. Red is also the site of Western Canada's first chairlift, which was built in the 1940s. But there's more to Red than racing and history: there's trees and bottomless powder. Last year, the north side of Red Mountain (the resort is actually two mountains, Red and Granite) was gladed, adding acres of tree-skiing. Red also offers good backcountry skiing on the adjacent ridges and peaks. Careful though, this is avalanche country.

www.ski-red.com

• Fernie Alpine Resort

Fernie is about as far away from the Coast as you can get in BC (it's in the Rocky Mountains close to the Alberta border), yet it gets about the same snowfall as Whistler-Blackcomb – close to 900 centimetres. Add in the terrain – five bowls, countless glades and steep chutes – and it's enough to make you want to quit your job and live in the parking lot. The city of Fernie, with its downtown streets lined by stately brick buildings, is becoming more gentrified each year and offers a variety of eateries, pubs, lounges and bars.

www.skifernie.com



Photo courtesy of Fernie Alpine Resort



• Whitewater

Nelson's Whitewater is a small, down-home ski area that attracts an international clientele. Why? Because of three magic words: steep, deep and cheap. Plus, it's hardly ever crowded. Whitewater is one of those ski areas that everyone dreams about but few ever find. Nelson, meanwhile, goes off the funk-o-metre in terms of culture – there's nowhere else like it in North America, with its eclectic mix of residents. www.skiwhitewater.com

Prime Purcell Powder

The Purcell Mountains are where BC's heli-skiing industry took off from more than 30 years ago. Now, a trio of ski resorts – each one distinct in its own way – are picking up on the range's prime position in the powder belt. The region is also the gateway to BC's vast backcountry and is home to more heli-skiing and ski-touring operations than anywhere else in North America.



• Kicking Horse Mountain Resort

Golden's Kicking Horse is home to BC's best adventure skiing – think of it as heli-skiing for the price of a lift ticket. Recently rated by a US ski magazine as North America's best powder (locally known as "champagne powder"), this ski area is more like a bucking bronco than a pedigreed filly. Whoa Nelly! Kicking Horse has added another alpine bowl to its stable this season and also has Canada's second-biggest vertical at 4,100 feet. There are acres and acres of accessible backcountry too. Enjoy, but be careful.

www.kickinghorseresort.com

• Panorama Mountain Village

Think of Panorama near Invermere as Whistler's little brother – it's owned by the same company, Vancouver-based Intrawest Corp. Perhaps the biggest news in BC ski country this year comes from Panorama: two new quad chairlifts have been installed,



vastly improving lap times to the former heli-skiing terrain of Taynton Bowl and the rest of the resort's 4,000 vertical feet. If you want long cruisers, this is the place; if you want powder, you might want to try elsewhere. Panorama receives a scant 480 centimetres per year. www.skipanorama.com



• Kimberley Alpine Resort

The former mining town of Kimberley is reinventing itself as a ski resort after trying to attract tourists with a faux-Bavarian theme that was cooked up in the mid-70s. The ski area was expanded a couple of years ago and now has a vertical drop of 2,500 vertical feet and 1,800 acres. Kimberley is home to BC's best night skiing – 2,100 vertical feet are lit up and accessed by a high-speed quad, which takes only takes seven minutes per ride. That's enough to make anyone yodel. www.skikimberley.com

Little Gems

These small ski areas might be a little bit rough around the edges but they are true gems where it's all about the sliding, not the après-ski scene or the shopping.

• Mount Baldy

Mount Baldy, located in the South Okanagan between Oliver and Osoyoos, is the last of the undeveloped mountains in the region. With 1,500 vertical feet, Baldy is surprisingly free of crowds, especially considering that most of the locals can play golf right through the winter and that the ski area is only open Thursday to Sunday. There is some rustic on-mountain accommodation that adds to Baldy's charm but don't forget any supplies – especially bottles of Okanagan wine – because the nearest store is 45 minutes away. www.skibaldy.com

• Powder Springs

Revelstoke is about more than killer avalanches and deadly high-way accidents – it's the birthplace of skiing in BC. The town itself sees 400 centimetres of snow each winter, while the nearby Powder Springs ski area gets hammered with 10 metres of snow per year. This ski area is probably the best 1,000 feet of vertical in Canada and its creaky, old double chair has the quirkiest name – the Powder Slug Express. It's cheap too – a one night ski-and-stay package is less than \$30 per person. And if that's not enough enticement, try this: there's a cat-skiing operation that starts above the ski area. www.catpowder.com

Northern Exposure

Think that BC's ski resorts are all located south of the Trans-Canada Highway? Think again.

Some of the province's best skiing is located in its northern half. Sure, it's a bit of a trek but it's worth every kilometre: no one on the slopes, fresh tracks every run, lots of elbow room and clean air.

• Shames Mountain

Terrace's Shames Mountain packs a punch and gets whacked with 1,200 centimetres of snow each year – 300 centimetres more than either Whistler-Blackcomb or Fernie. One double chair takes skiers up the mountain 1,600 vertical feet (only Wednesday through Sunday) but the skiing and riding doesn't end there:

Shames leasehold area is 7,800 acres, only 225 of which are patrolled. Five-minute hikes can lead to out-of-bounds runs that are 3,000 vertical feet, almost twice that found inside the ski area.

www.shamesmountain.com

• Ski Smithers

Located near Smithers (about halfway between Prince Rupert and Prince George) is a small ski area with one chairlift that services 1,700-plus vertical feet. A staple on the ski-bum circuit, Smithers is located on the Interior side of the Coast Mountains – which means lots



of dry snow. There's been talk of developing and expanding the ski area on the slopes of majestic Hudson Bay Mountain into a four-season resort. www.skismithers.com

• Powder King

Pack up the mackinaw jacket and the work boots and head 200 kilometres north of Prince George to the Powder King ski area. Powder King (2,100 vertical feet) is aptly named – nestled in Pine Pass in BC's Northern Rockies, it gets hit with 1,250 centimetres of snow each winter. www.powderking.com ■

Best Resorts for Families

- Hemlock
- Silver Star
- Kimberley
- Mount Baldy

Best Ski Schools

- Cypress
- Whistler
- Sun Peaks
- Panorama

Best Adventure Skiing

- Whistler-Blackcomb
- Red Mountain
- Kicking Horse
- Shames Mountain



Photo by Ian Tomlinson, Kicking Horse

Best Events

- January 7-11, 2004 – Big Mountain Experience, Whistler-Blackcomb: Includes the Canadian Freeskiing Championships, Randonee Rally, backcountry clinics and tours, avalanche awareness seminars and more.
- February 6-8, 2004 – Legendary Banked Slalom Race, Mount Baker: The 20th annual running of snowboarding's original, old-school race down a gully called "The Chute."
- February 15, 2004 – Telemark Race, Whittewater: The 24th annual edition of Whittewater's climb-and-descend contest.
- March 5-7, 2004 – Griz Days, Fernie Alpine Resort: Winter carnival honouring Fernie's legendary "Griz" mountain man.

Heli-Skiing

Two of the world's biggest heli-skiing operators run their businesses in BC – Blue River-based Mike Wiegele (www.wiegele.com), which has been operating in the Cariboo and Monashee mountains for 33 years, and Banff, Alberta-based Canadian Mountain Holiday (www.cmhski.com), which has been running for 35 years and has a dozen lodges located throughout British Columbia, in the Monashee, Selkirk, Purcell and Rocky mountains. There are several other heli-skiing operations based in Whistler, Bella Coola, Revelstoke and Golden. More information can be found at www.tourism.bc.ca

Cat-Skiing

B.C. was the first to offer the cat-skiing experience, which appeals to skiers and snowboarders who want to savour the scenery and enjoy good powder skiing. Island Lake Lodge in Fernie (www.islandlakelodge.com), Baldface Snowcat Skiing in Nelson (www.baldface.net), and Monashee Powder Adventures in Chase (www.monasheepowder.com) are just some of the many operators. Check out www.kootenayrockies.com for additional information.