

INTERIOR BRITISH COLUMBIA SKIING: THE PATH LESSER TRACKED

By Brad Bowins

December, 2018



The view from
Revelstoke summit is
unsurpassed

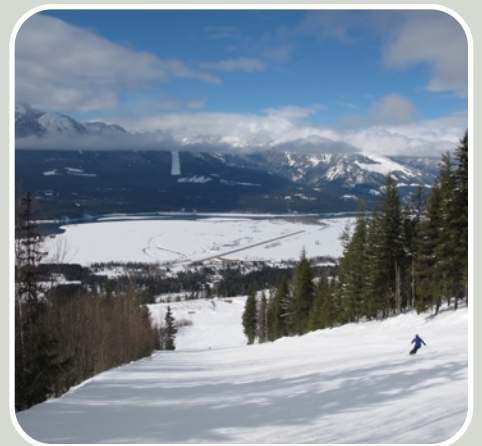
MIX AND MATCH SKI RESORT OPTIONS

Combining interior British Columbia ski resorts is easy with the first and second tier options provided here!

Are you considering an expensive trendy destination for your upcoming ski trip? Okay with prices as high as the mountains, and the necessity of bringing an extra suitcase to store all those stylish clothes you will require to fit in with the chic crowd? The necessity of booking your accommodation months ahead to get something good that does not require a bank loan? A limousine or luxury bus ride from Vancouver? Add wet snow, cloudy misty days, and crowds—lots of them! If this is

your idea of the ideal ski vacation then this article is not for you.

Interested in roughing it, only slightly, and exploring more than one ski hill with virtually no crowds even on weekends? Does driving a rental car through scenic mountain terrain listening to your favorite tunes on route to explore unique, but definitely not chic, British Columbia ski resorts peak your interest? If so then read on because through experience over several years skiing the interior of British



Revelstoke groomer run

Light dry snow, even 10 meters or more, characterizes interior British Columbia ski resorts.

TREE LOVING



Panorama Mountain Resort

Trees provide stunning scenery when conditions are sunny and clear, and much needed definition on low visibility days. Panorama is one of the best resorts for trees, even on the bowl areas.

With the low elevation there is no risk of Acute Mountain Sickness or fatigue making for an enjoyable and healthy ski trip.

Columbia, including resorts and backcountry sites, I have come up with an exciting mix and match option for the more adventurous ski traveler. In contrast to the wet west coast of British Columbia, the interior is blessed with light snow and typically lots of it, even 10 meters or more per season in some locations.

This article is a general guide to interior British Columbia ski resorts with some coverage of snow-cat and heli-skiing options near to the given resort. For each destination, the advantages and disadvantages are listed, based on what I have

observed and also reports from local skiers. A major advantage of interior British Columbia skiing is that you can mix and match destinations, easily combining two in a week, and three for a longer trip. Combined destination ski trips are recommended as they increase the range of ski experiences, help reduce the impact of poor conditions at one resort, and are easy given how several of the resorts are close to one another. Deciding on which combinations work best can be challenging. Hence, after describing the advantages and disadvantages of each resort I will provide first tier and second tier mix and match options. Hopefully, this will help guide and optimize your interior British Columbia ski trip adventure.



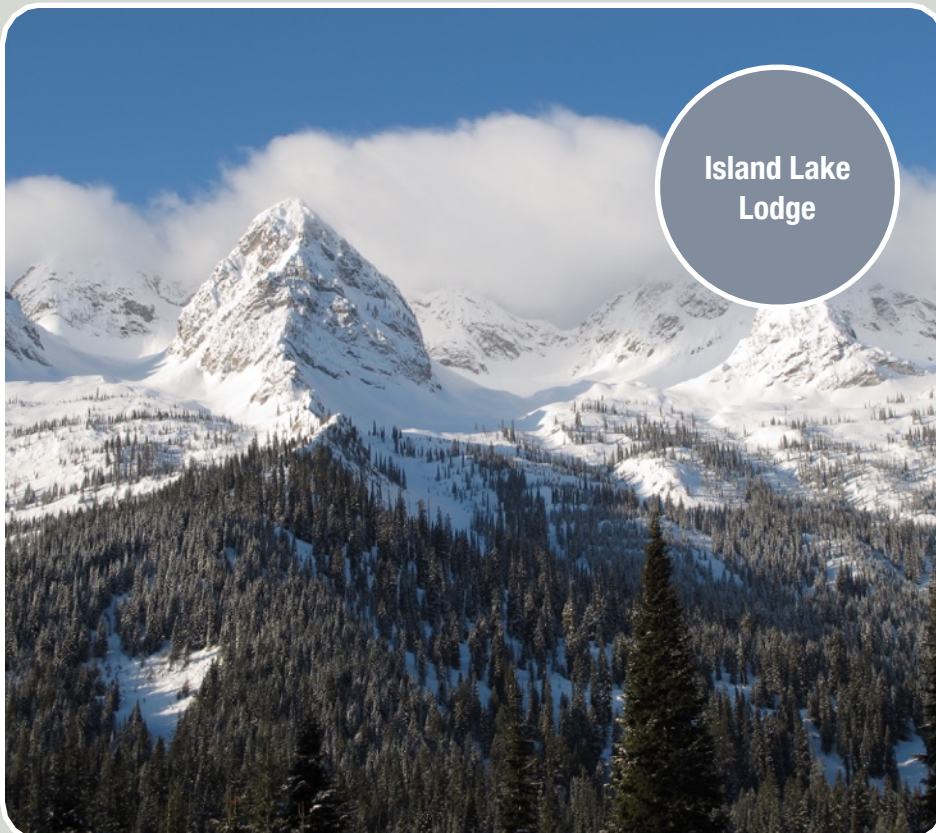
Mountain scenery at Panorama

NOW FOR THE RESORTS

A plus of all British Columbia resorts, whether interior or coastal, is the lower elevation. Resorts with the base at 8,000 feet (2,438 m) or above are a risk for Acute Mountain Sickness (ACS) with symptoms including shortness of breath, lightheadedness, nausea, headaches, and fatigue. Years ago, I discovered I am prone to this when skiing in Colorado, all the resorts 8,000 feet and above at the base. This definitely does not make for a good ski vacation, although there is medication that can speed up one's respiration rate I have used successfully since then. Even if you do not get actual ACS, milder symptoms can occur, such as feeling intoxicated on one alcohol beverage, fatigue, and less stamina

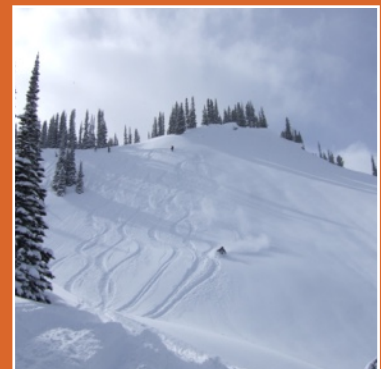
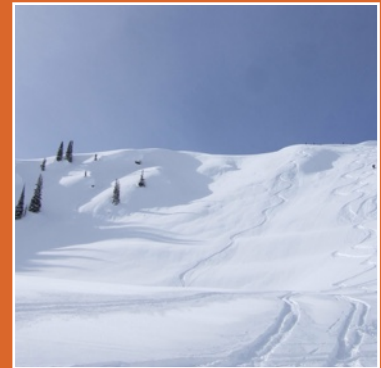
on the slopes. Thankfully British Columbia resorts are at lower elevation eliminating the ACS risk!

There are quite a few ski resorts in the scenic interior of British Columbia, each with its pluses and minuses. To avoid biasing the results based on presentation order, I will cover them alphabetically. Appreciate firstly, that this is an overview and your given experience can vary depending on the conditions and timing, and secondly that resorts do change and hence some of the limitations mentioned here might be addressed and redressed by the given resort by the time you read this article.



Island Lake
Lodge

POWDER SNOW



Dry and light

Although these three photographs were taken at Selkirk Snowcat Skiing by Meadow Creek, I have experienced dry and light powder at most of the ski resorts covered here, and at a fraction of the cost of snow-cat or heli-skiing.

BIG WHITE SKI RESORT:

Advantages:

- Located an hour south of Kelowna and so it easy to access from this city.
- Good snow conditions quite routinely; locals joke that “big white” should be “big whiteout” for the clouds that often sit over the resort, but these clouds can and do bring snow.
- A great family resort with a range of terrain.
- Nice pedestrian village with good restaurants.

Disadvantages:

- The best access is via Kelowna and the airport can be terrible for delayed luggage, and even on one trip I made, a cancelled flight and rerouting to Vancouver. Most skiers

travel with one suitcase and a ski bag; if so then expect one not to arrive with you! The problem seems to be that as flights become more crammed the planes often cannot take all the luggage carried by skiers.

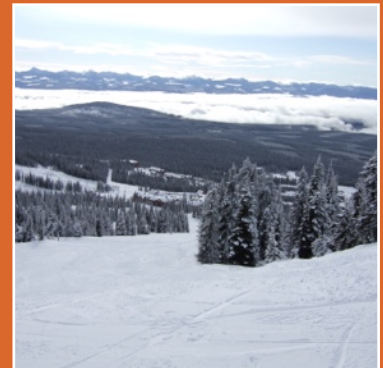
- The cloudy conditions can make visibility challenging at times, particularly at the top and on the bowls, although Gem Lake area is great when such conditions apply.
- Limited challenging runs, that can be an issue if the tops and bowls have flat light.
- The condos seem to dominate with the resort in the middle.

I have visited Big White on two occasions with one slightly sunny and the other constant snow, providing a range of experiences. The snow conditions were solid on



Snow-covered moguls

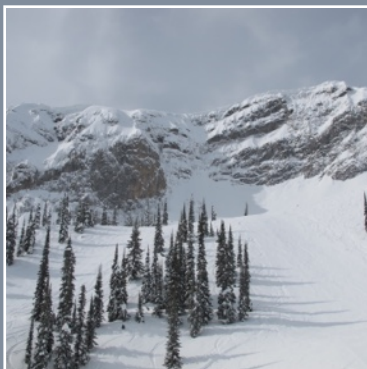
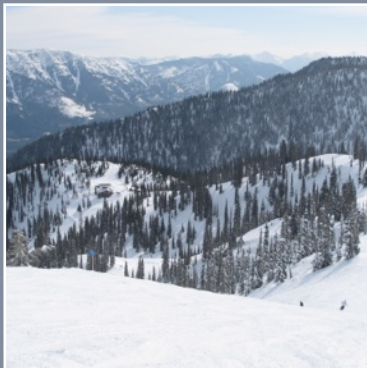
BIG WHITE



Big “whiteout” to locals

Locals joke that “big white” should be “big whiteout” for the clouds that often sit over the resort, but these clouds can and do bring snow. The 2018 season brought seemingly endless supplies of this special gift from the skies!

FERNIE



More Wet Than Most

The unique weather system that provides massive snowfall at times can also bring very wet conditions, atypical of most interior British Columbia ski resorts. I have experienced this on two of my three visits, including full on rain!

both trips but visibility an issue on the snowy trip, compensated by the trees on the Gem Lake side.

FERNIE ALPINE RESORT:

Advantages:

- When the snow is good it can be really amazing.
- Extensive and varied terrain accessed by several lifts, ideal when those in your travel group have a range of abilities.
- A substantial number of treed runs even from the top, a major plus in flat light.
- Two of the most unique stops if driving south from Calgary: Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, showcasing traditional Plains Blackfoot aboriginal buffalo

hunting using cliffs. It is built out of a cliff face and rises in levels to the top, the amazing architecture worth a visit in itself. The site is only a short drive from the highway and provides a unique educational experience plus stunning views! Also in Alberta, closer to Fernie and right on the highway, is the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre depicting the tragic 1903 slide of a massive section of Turtle Mountain on the town of Frank killing 90 people. Both of these sites are definitely worth a stop.

- The town of Fernie is appealing if you are staying there or visiting from the ski resort.
- Very close to the resort is Island Lake Lodge offering snow-cat skiing. I first visited in 1995 in its early days and returned in 2009 to a much larger operation, both times



Fernie bowl
skiing

experiencing good powder with short snow-cat rides.

Disadvantages:

- The unique weather system that provides massive snowfall at times can also bring very wet conditions, atypical of most interior British Columbia ski resorts. I have experienced this on two out of my three visits, including full on rain!
- The long drive from Calgary, although the two sites mentioned under advantages compensates.
- Very little to do if you get skunked by rain.

From my three-visit experience and speaking to locals it appears that the ideal time to visit is February, with January cold as is typical of the entire region and March more likely to bring rain. On our last visit, we went on March school break and guess what? Yes, rain that was not at all present at the second destination—Panorama. A February trip involved good snow, sunny conditions, and moderate temperatures, although my first visit in 1995 in February did see some rain.

KICKING HORSE MOUNTAIN RESORT:

Advantages:

- A reasonably short and very scenic drive from Calgary airport, that I have went through many times without a single luggage problem.
- Very challenging bowl runs accessed from the top, with Bowl Over and Crystal Bowl regions.

-Golden Eagle Express gondola provides fast and warm access to the summit.

-Incredible panoramic views from the top on sunny clear days.

-Eagle Eye Restaurant is one of the nicest mountain top stops to be found.

-Short, challenging, and fun mogul runs on either side of Redemption Ridge accessed by the Stairway to Heaven lift.

Disadvantages:

-Kicking Horse is really a bowl-based ski resort, with the bowls above the tree line for the most part, meaning that visibility is a major challenge when there is flat light.

Even my teenage children with 20/20 vision had enormous difficulty seeing where they were going when it was snowing.

-T1 North and South Ridges have good bowl runs but require a substantial hike, mostly suited to the age group that often relies on parents to purchase their lift ticket.

-Unless you stick to the one side of Redemption Ridge providing access to the Stairway to Heaven lift, you have to return to the bottom for more runs.

-Located in Golden, which is not so Golden, being described to me by several people as a “gas station.”

Even though I have seen some improvements in the town itself, town planners need to spruce it up for tourists.

-Food and shopping options at the resort base are limited if you opt to stay there.

From my two visits to Kicking Horse, one with very clear and sunny conditions, and the other snowy, I see it as being a bipolar resort: when sunny visibility is fine and the views amazing, although the snow conditions might not be ideal, but when it is snowing visibility is a major issue limiting the experience, although snow conditions are great. If you get the ideal mix of enough sun for good visibility and recent snow it can be awesome, but do expect to this combination. Compared to many other resorts I find the design to be limited, and they need more lifts.

KIMBERLEY ALPINE RESORT:

Advantages:

- A peaceful small resort.
- Reasonable prices for on-slope accommodation.
- The town of Kimberley is cute.
- A solid family option for beginner to moderate level skiers given the variety of runs for less advanced skiers.
- Quite a few sunny days.
- If you are lucky it can have dry powder snow with few skiers.

Disadvantages:

- Difficult to access as it is a long way from Calgary if going via Fernie or Panorama.
- The closest airport—Cranbrook—is small and only receives frequent flights from Vancouver, with the possibility of delayed luggage as happened to my wife.
- The ski terrain is limited for advanced skiers.

THE SIGHTS



Mountains & Towns

Interior British Columbia offers very diverse experiences, both in regards to mountains and towns, despite the contained area.

Top: Kicking Horse bowl
Middle: Kimberley
Bottom: Nice gradual run at Kimberly Alpine Resort

- When wetter weather prevails in the region, it can have very poor conditions.
- Limited number and speed of lifts.

I have been to Kimberley twice, the second time only for a day when it started to rain and we left. My first visit was for 3 days and radically different—On the start day it was classic spring skiing with sun and warmth, the next day bringing colder temperatures and light powder snow, that amazingly lasted for 2 days given the absence of skiers during the work week.

PANORAMA MOUNTAIN RESORT:

Advantages:

- Excellent variety of terrain for all ski and snowboard levels.

- Taynton Bowl has many challenging runs with the range recently expanded, only requiring a short and easy hike from the Summit Hut. This area used to be RK Heliski terrain, indicating the quality.
- Extreme Dream Zone, also from the Summit Hut, has some very challenging and nicely designed runs.
- Treed runs from the summit to the base, meaning that visibility is not an issue.
- Good glade runs, some with moguls.
- Appealing food and drink stops at mid and top level, although they are small.
- The mountain village is inviting with upper and lower sections connected by the Village Gondola.
- Good range of restaurants.



Kicking
Horse kick-ass
moguls

-Outdoor heated pool available to all guest.

-RK Heliski is right in the lower village with hotel pickup and drop-off.

-A very reasonable and scenic drive from Calgary.

-A pleasant access town—Invermere—with some nice restaurants.

Disadvantages:

-The Kootenay Highway 93, the shortest way from Calgary, can have rough driving conditions, encountered on about a third of my several excursions.

-Taynton Bowl is often closed after heavy snowfall, but they do open it as soon as deemed safe.

-The lifts connect to each other with 3 lifts required to get to the top,

making for a long and sometimes cold initial journey.

-Several of the runs including those on Taynton Bowl necessitate a return to the base.

I have visited Panorama 5 times and each time was at least good. A common narrative that I hear is, “Panorama is really just a family resort and good skiers will be bored.” As so often happens with these narratives, the reality can be very different. As mentioned, Taynton Bowl and Extreme Dream Zone offer several advanced to expert options, and then there is RK Heliski. A couple of excursions with RK has provided some of the best backcountry skiing I have encountered, with light powder and a variety of open and treed runs. They are used to single day skiers



The author at
RK Heliski

RK HELISKI



Awesome single day trips

My outings with this Panorama based operation have provided some of the best backcountry ski experiences imaginable, the first featured here on a remote glacier with open runs at the top finishing with nicely spaced trees. RK is accustomed to day skiers and has the process streamlined to maximize enjoyment and minimize aggravation.

and have the process streamlined to maximize enjoyment and minimize aggravation. Hence, Panorama is not at all boring for advanced to expert skiers and snow-boarders. Furthermore, the resort has an upbeat and warm feel to it, exciting for both younger and older guests. As you might tell, it is definitely one of my favorites for sure.

RED MOUNTAIN:

Advantages:

- Very extensive ski terrain— Red Mountain, Granite Mountain, and Grey Mountain.
- Challenging runs ideal for advanced to expert skiers, particularly on Granite Mountain, offering as tough and varied as it comes.

- Good terrain for beginner to moderate level skiers.
- Treed runs from the top.
- So much variety that crowded runs are virtually unheard of.
- A unique snow-cat option of pay per run for Grey Mountain patrolled terrain not accessible off the ski lift.
- Recent upgrades including an improved mid mountain eatery and new boutique hotel.
- Reasonably affordable accommodations, and certainly in the towns of Rossland and Trail.
- Proximity to Nelson and Whitewater Ski Resort.

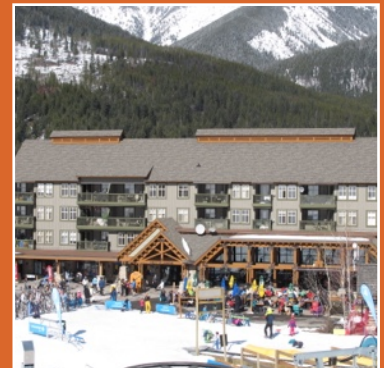
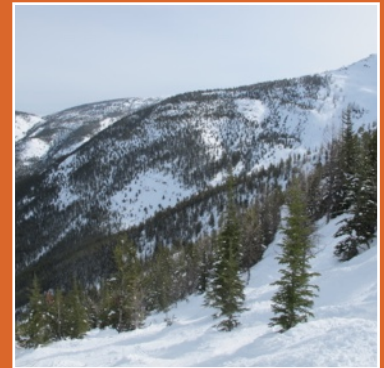
Disadvantages:

- Very difficult to access unless coming from the US, in which case flying to Spokane and renting a car makes it a relatively comfortable two and one half hour drive plus



Upper village
Panorama

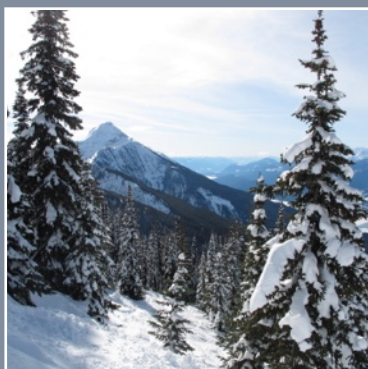
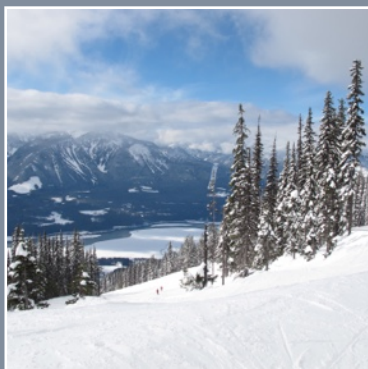
PANORAMA



Narratives and reality

A common narrative that I hear is, "Panorama is really just a family resort and good skiers will be bored." As so often happens with these narratives, the reality can be very different. Taynton Bowl and Extreme Dream Zone offer several advanced to expert options, and then there is RK Heliski.

REVELSTOKE



Unsurpassed mountain views

Over 4 trips to the resort, the first in 2008 when it opened, I have encountered a range of conditions providing a good overview. With sunny skies and good snow, the experience is difficult to compete with. Take a camera, or at least your phone, on these special days!

border stop. If coming from most points in Canada the closest access is Castlegar West Kootenay Regional Airport, affectionately known as CANCELGAR for the very high percentage of you guessed it, cancelled flights. Castlegar also requires a transfer flight from Calgary or Vancouver. Prepare for a delay, one person I spoke with waited 2-3 days before she gave up and booked a flight to Kelowna providing access, but the travel time is about 4 hours from this city, and then there are the problems associated with that airport (see Big White).

-Very slow lifts, although this can help restore energy after some of the more challenging runs.

-Unlike Nelson, the local towns are not all that appealing.

I have only visited once many years ago, before expansions and when the conditions were very poor, so have based most of this presentation on reports from those much more familiar with it. One reason why I have not visited again, despite what appears to be great skiing on incredible terrain, is the difficulty accessing it.

REVELSTOKE MOUNTAIN RESORT:

Advantages:

-Excellent advanced to expert runs including moguls and glades.

-Very, very long groomer runs.

-A treed area around The Ripper lift which is great when there is flat light.

-Revelation Gondola gets you to the mid-section quickly and then the



Revelstoke
moguls

Stoke Chair provides access to the summit of South Bowl.

- Some of the best mountain scenery there is; take a camera, or at least your phone, on clear and sunny days!
- Nice eating stops at the base and mid-level, although the latter is too small when there are weekend crowds.
- The town of Revelstoke is very nice with restaurants and bars, plus a very interesting railway museum.
- Very affordable and good quality accommodation options in the town.

Disadvantages:

- With flat light visibility is an issue on South Bowl and North Bowl before the latter connects to the Ripper area, although treed runs start just down from the top of The Stoke lift on South Bowl.
- To achieve the longest vertical in North America, the lower section is too low for good snow all season long, and conditions can be sketchy.
- No food and drink option at The Ripper lift.
- No food and drink option at the top of The Stoke lift.
- Given the above 2 limitations, the small mid-level Mackenzie Outpost can be crazy busy particularly if it is too cold to eat outside.
- Weekend crowds, and certainly at the start of the day when it has snowed.
- Poorly designed lift connection at the top of Revelation Gondola, that should have a direct connection to The Ripper area, important when visibility is limited at the top and for moderate level skiers, and

possible if the Revelation Gondola had been extended higher.

- Very, very expensive accommodation at the Sutton Place at the base, although excellent rooms.
- Poorly maintained parking area, not reliably ploughed resulting in our rental car becoming stuck at 9:30 AM!
- Not ideal backcountry options, given that snow-cat skiing is now at Great Northern Snowcat Skiing, which although excellent (I have been there 7 times) is located too far away for a single day excursion, and the initial snow-cat ride is 90-120 minutes. The heli-skiing option, Selkirk Tangiers Heli Skiing was a disappointment, and certainly compared to RK at Panorama, as the time from leaving the resort building to actually getting up in the helicopter was 2+ hours standing outside, and our group was the first to takeoff! This duration is ridiculous and aggravating.

Over 4 trips to the resort, the first in 2008 when it opened, I have encountered a range of conditions providing a good overview. With clear and sunny skies and good snow, the experience is difficult to compete with, but diminished when snow conditions are limited, particularly on the lower runs. Visibility is an issue when it is snowing at the top of both bowls and access to the treed Ripper area is not ideal. For moderate skiers and more advanced when there is flat light, I believe that adding access from the top of Revelation Gondola to The Ripper area could

make a major difference. The lack of food and drink options at the summit and The Ripper area is another limitation. More affordable slope-side accommodations are needed as well, but the town of Revelstoke is very nice with good and affordable accommodation options.

SILVER STAR MOUNTAIN RESORT:

Advantages:

- Super cute and family oriented ski village.
- Reasonably priced accommodation and food options at the resort, and only a short drive from Vernon offering many other options.
- Varied terrain good for all ski (and snowboard) levels.
- Very challenging mogul chutes in the Putnam Creek area off both sides of Powder Gulch Express.
- Long and fun groomer runs.
- Cross-country skiing right at the resort with Nordic and Alpine trails crossing; ideal if you also like Nordic skiing or are travelling with someone who does.

Disadvantages:

- Best access from Kelowna (see my Kelowna airport gripe under Big White Ski Resort).
- The layout of the various areas is confusing; take time to study the trail map or ask those who know.
- The many mogul chutes in the Putnam Creek area are very dependent on good snow, and can be characterized by grass, mud, and rocks when snow conditions are poor.

SILVER STAR



Groomers to mogul chutes

Diversity of runs and experiences characterize Silver Star, with some of the best groomers around to narrow and steep mogul chutes in the Putnam Creek area. Nordic ski trails crossing alpine trails add to the options.

-The Putnam Creek mogul chutes can also suffer from heavy and wet snow, so called “elephant snot,” due to sun exposure, hence it is important to look at where the sun is shining.

-Numerous skiers and snowboarders on weekends from Vernon and Kelowna, mostly a problem in terms of collision risk on narrow groomers.

My first visit to the resort was back in the early 90’s and the ski options seemed limited, but with the addition of extra terrain the resort has improved a great deal. The second trip with my family yielded a great experience although conditions on the mogul runs were very poor. My third visit was only for a day and awesome with sun, moderate temperatures, and good

snow on the Putnam Creek mogul runs providing for a very fun and challenging day of skiing.

SUN PEAKS SKI RESORT:

Advantages:

- Close proximity to Kamloops with regular flights from Vancouver.
- Picturesque Alps style ski village.
- Very good for families.
- Three mountains to explore—Mt. Tod, Mt. Morrisey, and Sundance.
- A good variety of terrain, but mostly geared for beginner to moderate level skiers.
- Treed runs even from the top, ideal when light is flat.
- Some challenging runs from the top of Mt. Tod to satisfy more advanced skiers (and snowboarders).



Disadvantages:

- Limited terrain for advanced to expert skiers.
- It typically requires an extra flight from Vancouver adding cost, time, and connection hassles.
- No longer any snow-cat option: around 2005 a snow-cat provided access to the backcountry from Mt. Tod, yielding an incredible day of backcountry skiing with about 13 fairly short runs and great powder snow; unfortunately, it did not persist but maybe needs to be revisited!

My one and only visit to this resort involved a variety of conditions and experiences with a fantastic sunny day of backcountry skiing, and then snowy conditions producing flat light compensated for by all the treed runs. Without the snow-cat

operation I believe that this resort is best suited for beginner to moderate level skiers.

WHITEWATER SKI RESORT:

Advantages:

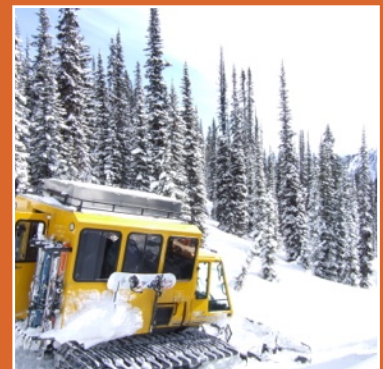
- Very close to Nelson, one of the funkiest towns in the interior of British Columbia.
- Excellent glade runs.
- Slightly higher base elevation helping to ensure good snow, often consisting of dry powder.
- Addition of Glory Ridge chairlift and terrain.

Disadvantages:

- Still a small resort that I would not recommend basing a trip on.
- No accommodation on the slope itself, although Nelson is very close and so nice.



POWDER +



Selkirk Snowcat Skiing

Located at Meadow Creek close to Nelson, the very first snow-cat operation makes a good combination with Whitewater Ski Resort. Although the facilities are quite basic, cat rides are short including at the start of the day, maximizing the powder experience.

- Limited challenging terrain with the notable exception of some tight trees on certain glade runs.
- Food and drink options limited, although apparently, they have improved the chalet that at least previously reminded me of something from a run-down Ontario ski hill.
- Nelson is not easy to access given that the closest airport is the Castlegar West Kootenay Regional Airport (see Red Mountain). Kelowna provides access but the travel time is over 4 hours and road conditions can be rough (not to mention Kelowna airport hassles covered under Big White).

My one visit was for a fun day of glades after Selkirk Wilderness Skiing (now Selkirk Snowcat Skiing) by Meadow Creek. This

operation was the first to introduce snow-cat skiing, and the main advantage is very short snow-cat rides at the start of the day, compared to Great Northern Snowcat Skiing, the second operation of its kind, covered under Revelstoke. The accommodations are quite basic, and certainly compared to the awesome rooms at Island Lake Lodge by Fernie. The ideal scenario for Whitewater is visiting if you are at Red Mountain or at Selkirk Snowcat Skiing, and a stop at Nelson is always pleasant.



POWDER ++



Great Northern Snowcat

Backcountry skiing adds greatly to interior British Columbia options, and for cat-skiing Great Northern is one of the first and best. Of seven visits six have yielded soft powder on both bowls and tree runs! Located at remote Trout Lake it is best accessed from Revelstoke, requiring over an hour excursion.

MIX AND MATCH OPTIONS

First and second tier mix and match ski resort options are listed, the distinction based on proximity and how sensibly they connect, and also on the notion that most people take a week vacation, as with longer time frames additional and longer connections become more reasonable. For example, even though Panorama and Revelstoke is listed as a Tier 2 connection, with more than a week Panorama-Kicking Horse-Revelstoke link very well, and the Panorama to Revelstoke drive provides a nice break from skiing. Connections not listed should be avoided, at least on a week-long trip. Note that driving times are for reasonable conditions, so be sure to add extra time if road conditions are poor.

FIRST TIER:

PANORAMA & KICKING HORSE:

Only a 119-kilometer drive (less than an hour and a half) along the 95 Highway connects Invermere and Golden, and in contrast to Kootenay Highway 93 that frequently has rough driving conditions in winter, the 95 is very flat and well cleared. Add at least an extra half-hour to get from one ski resort to the other.

PANORAMA & LAKE LOUISE/BANFF:

Although this article is about interior British Columbia resorts, these west Alberta resorts off TransCanada 1 Highway connect

very well with Panorama; Lake Louise northwest of where Kootenay Highway 93 turns west from TransCanada 1 Highway, and Banff just southeast. Invermere is about 150 kilometers from Banff requiring under a 2-hour drive, but is dependent on road conditions. Most visitors will be returning to Calgary along Kootenay Highway 93 anyways.

KICKING HORSE & LAKE LOUISE/BANFF:

Kicking Horse is only 85 kilometers west of Lake Louise with Banff further southeast on TransCanada 1 Highway.

KICKING HORSE & REVELSTOKE:

Golden and the town of Revelstoke are one and a half hours apart (148 kilometers) along TransCanada 1 Highway.

PANORAMA & KIMBERLEY: Invermere and Kimberley are 122 kilometers apart with Kimberley south on the 93/95 Highway, requiring an hour and a half drive.

KIMBERLEY & FERNIE:

Almost exactly the same distance as between Invermere and Kimberley with Cranbrook on the way if you need major supplies. Access via Calgary can be from the south or west across Kootenay Highway 93.

RED MOUNTAIN & WHITEWATER:

Nelson is about an hour (75 kilometers) from Rossland, and Whitewater is slightly less.

BIG WHITE & SILVER STAR: Big White is about an hour drive southeast of Kelowna (63 kilometers) and Silver Star about the same northeast (74 kilometers).

SILVER STAR & REVELSTOKE: Even though the distance is 165 kilometers requiring a drive of about 2 hours, the time passes fast with the scenery.

SECOND TIER:

SUN PEAKS & SILVER STAR: The 97 Highway connects these areas 188 kilometers apart, with a two and one half hour scenic drive.

SUN PEAKS & REVELSTOKE: A drive of about 3 hours (267 kilometers) is required along TransCanada Highway 1.

PANORAMA & REVELSTOKE: These ski resorts are about 3 plus hours apart but with good road conditions the drive seems much easier, particularly because it does not involve the Kootenay Highway 93. Also note that if taking more than a week Panorama-Kicking Horse-Revelstoke link very well!

PANORAMA & FERNIE:

This connection also requires a drive of about 3 hours bypassing Kimberley.

KIMBERLEY & KICKING HORSE:

Passing Invermere providing access to Panorama, this drive takes about 3 hours.

MIX AND MATCH SKIING

Interior British Columbia is ideal for combined destination ski trips

KIMBERLEY & WHITEWATER:

This 260-kilometer connection requires a 3-hour drive. Given that Whitewater is somewhat limited compared to Panorama and Fernie, and also further, the latter two connections are more desirable.

BIG WHITE & REVELSTOKE:

This connection will require a 4-hour drive and so is debatable, but stops in Kelowna and/or Vernon make the drive quite enjoyable.

BIG WHITE & RED MOUNTAIN:

This connection is debatable as with Big White and Revelstoke, but is feasible at under 4 hours, although without the appealing stops of Kelowna and Vernon.

A QUICK WRAP UP

I have provided advantages and disadvantages of interior British Columbia ski resorts worth visiting it you are coming from outside the province, with primary and secondary connections options. Smaller ski resorts, such as Apex, have not been included, due to limited terrain and/or ease of access. The recommended connections are based on a week-long trip, but combinations of three resorts are very feasible for



What a day!

a trip of two-weeks duration or even slightly less. Part of the fun of these mix and match ski vacations is touring the path lesser tracked and seeing what interior British Columbia offers from both scenery and ski perspectives.

Accessing the skiing

For most visitors the best way to access interior British Columbia ski resorts is via Calgary with low risk of flights being cancelled and /or delayed luggage, and the option of adding Banff area ski resorts.

The resorts:

- Big White
- Fernie
- Kicking Horse
- Kimberley
- Panorama
- Red Mountain
- Revelstoke
- Silver Star
- Sun Peaks
- Whitewater

THE AUTHOR

Brad Bowins is a psychiatrist with a passion for outdoor activities

See docbowins.com for more travel articles and photography