

WINTER 2018

Plus

DESTINATION LADYSMITH • BC'S BEST ART GALLERIES



BRITISH COLUMBIA

M A G A Z I N E



The COOL List

BC's Top Winter Adventures

NORDIC SKIING
CROSS-GENERATIONAL FAMILY FUN

BACKCOUNTRY HUTS
SUNSHINE COAST BY SNOWSHOE

GO CAR-FREE
14 BUS-ACCESS ESCAPES

\$7.95 DISPLAY UNTIL MARCH 11, 2019

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Range and Himalayas. Up to 20 metres of snow annually makes for an earlier, deeper, drier and more stable snowpack than much of the surrounding Interior.

Around the corner from the lodge, Harvey Creek drainage is home to Mica's most diverse terrain, including favourites like wide-open Harvey Hound and thigh-burning Big Willy, a descent of 1,600 vertical metres. Plus pillows—steep stepping-stones with names like Pillow Talk, Harvey Wallbanger and, of course, Mr. Wiggles—featured in so many films that even if they aren't skiing there, guests will ask to be flown over to see it.

Mica Heli Guides offers four- and five-day packages; prices by inquiry.

micaheli.com

2

BELLA COOLA HELI SPORTS

If you followed ski movies in the new millennium, you've met Bella Coola Heli Sports, the one-of-a-kind operation in BC's Coast Mountains with a perennial starring role in skiing's history books—the fat ski was perfected on its precipitous peaks, and descents made here set a benchmark for big-mountain free-skiing. The accolades continue, as BCHS was voted "World's Best Heli-ski Operator" at the 2017 World Ski Awards.

Known for huge terrain and deep snow, more than mountains make BCHS special: there's the deep history and culture of the Nuxalk First Nations, the excellent fishing on nearby rivers, and the abundant wildlife, including eagles and grizzly bears. Even being pinned down by a Pacific storm still feels like a serious vacation—pool games and movies in the historic and impeccably renovated Tweedsmuir Park Lodge; mountain biking in the lush valley; hiking to the startling petroglyphs of Thorsen Creek; frisbee golf, archery, fishing, hot-tubbing and hilarity.

Several years ago BCHS opened a second, even more mind-blowing tenure based out of Pantheon Heli Ranch. The Pantheon Range surrounds Mount Waddington, highest peak in the Coast Range; here, vistas are so mind-boggling, glaciers so titanic, mountains so Himalayan in scale, that carving powder down their flanks warps the puny human perspective. With Hollywood films like *Seven Years in Tibet* and *K2* shot on their ramparts, the Pantheons deliver heli-skiing on a differ-



Bella Coola Heli Sports is well known in ski movie circles.

ent scale with a twist—small-group experiences based from the rustic luxury of a working cattle operation.

BCHS recently launched a second, even more exclusive Pantheon base—Mystery Mountain Lodge at Sand Creek Ranch—gateway to an enormity of unexplored terrain. With the addition of yet another new facility on the coast, Eagle Lodge, that makes four bases in four stunning locations an hour flight from Vancouver. With potential first descents on every horizon, naming runs here is part of the plot, meaning you'll not only experience ski history, you'll help write it.

Bella Coola Heli Sports' Classic Vertical program is five days and costs \$10,080 to \$11,380. (Price includes accommodation and return airfare from Vancouver.)

bellacoolaheliskiing.com

3

CMH BUGABOOS

Man has always wanted to fly, and when he invented skiing—lauded as the closest thing to flying without leaving the Earth—he came damn close. It took immigrant Swiss mountain guide Hans Gmoser's vision of soaring through a mountain wilderness on wings to experience true freedom on skis to link these ideas. In 1965, Gmoser

ran the world's first heli-skiing week in the Bugaboos, a sub-range of the Purcells an hour south of Golden whose name will forever be synonymous with an experience that participants immediately found transcendent, and which birthed an industry.

Gmoser's Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH) would go on to operate a dozen heli-ski lodges and put BC on the global ski map as a powder paradise. CMH remains in the dream-delivery business—the dream of enjoying a perfect powder day in spectacular mountains with friends—a notion that has existed since skiing's beginning. Gmoser passionately conveyed this as a mountain guide—whether evangelizing with clients, or to a crowd while touring his movies about climbing and skiing. When he eventually employed a helicopter to re-imagine skiing in the service of these ideals, it changed everything—and nothing.

The historic and spectacular Bugaboos lodge is part wilderness luxury and part paean to a sport. The best runs here drop 1,200 metres from long, lolling glacial saddles to the valley. Beginning in the eye-opening high alpine, you tip into massive glacial troughs where you can ski at any speed you dare before angling down valley walls, aprons and ridges into the kind of burns and glades BC is famous for. To cap off your day, en route back to the lodge, you might land in the magnificent amphitheatre below the iconic granite faces of Bugaboo, *Snowpatch* and ▶



Heli-skiing gives you access to terrain that is unmatched anywhere else in the world, like this line in *Bella Coola*.