

Sky HIGH

Heli-skiing opens the West's
magnificent peaks to ski enthusiasts
» By Crai S. Bower

» The Tordrillo Mountains, west of Anchorage, are a popular
heli-skiing area for guests of Chugach Powder Guides.



North Cascade Heli accesses 300,000 acres of North Cascades back-country terrain.

COURTESY: NCH

Today I play out every skier's fairy-tale dream. I join three other skiers and snowboarders in a helicopter to fly to a Selkirk Mountains peak in British Columbia that few eyes have seen, and even fewer skis have tracked. Twenty minutes after liftoff, our chopper settles on a ridge amid a rotor-induced squall of shimmering white. The crystals settle to reveal a vast mural of peaks I'd reach out and touch were I not just an ink spot upon this massive wintry landscape. The only brushstrokes we'll study today are of our own making—broad, sweeping lines admired from the chopper as we return 4,000 feet to the summit from the basin nadir.

Today, my skis may hover in the waist-deep fluff, but my adrenaline soars far above the clouds.

My initial hesitancy at being "abandoned" on a remote mountaintop disappears and, long before the day is done, I'm already plotting new backcountry adventures. No mere craving for helicopter flight can compare with the intensity of this first-time heli-skier's sudden need for the freedom to ski upon untrammelled snow without a lift line in sight.

Life as a series of ascents and descents? Count me in!

I'm certainly not alone in my enthusiasm for heli-skiing.

"In 1997, when a friend of mine asked me if I wanted to try heli-skiing, I assumed

we were heading to Canada," recalls Mike Calderon, director of the Ski School for Snowrider Outreach Society, a Seattle chapter of SOS Outreach, which introduces underprivileged kids to snow sports. "I soon learned we were heading to Valdez, Alaska, which made me a little anxious, since I knew Valdez staged the World Extreme Skiing Championships."

Calderon, a 30-year ski veteran, has organized trips with as many as 20 friends to heli-ski in Alaska. Like most avid heli-skiers, Calderon remains loyal to a single operation, Matt White's Valdez Heli-Camps, one of several operators in the Valdez area. Calderon calls White's program "heli-skiing for civilians," in which guides match suitable terrain, companions and intensity to skiers and snowboarders with abilities ranging from intermediate to extreme. The guides understand that skiing within one's comfort zone proves the critical component of the positive guest experience.

"Matt's guides will take experts to the 50-degree pitch, a midlevel group to 40 degrees and an intermediate group to 30 degrees," Calderon says. "His camp is also all-inclusive, with meals and lodging, which means all we're left to contemplate is skiing and relaxing. That makes a huge difference."

Though the most popular heli-centric locales include the European Alps, New Zealand and South America's Andes, the millions of acres available to Canadian heli-skiing operations provide the most widely used heli-habitat in the world. After all, heli-adventure got its start here, when Austrian transplant Hans Gmoser decided that British Columbia's Columbia Range was incredible terrain.

Gmoser founded Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH), an operation designed to satisfy the insatiable, hard-core skier. Gmoser soon learned that the expert skier, though thrilled with the opportunity to "go deep" into powder, rarely had very deep pockets to pay for the experience. Gmoser

decided to adapt his strategy and pursue the more affluent skiers, adding better food and accommodations to his backcountry British Columbia experience. Today, most of the 12 lodges offer talented chefs, spas with in-lodge massage therapy and many other elite amenities.

Portland resident Fred Noble first skied with CMH in 1974, and he's returned just about every year since. He's watched the evolution of the sport firsthand, from the widening diversity of skier abilities to single-room lodging rather than dorm rooms. But the single most important development in the mountains, Noble says, has been safety.

"Now we have snow science," he says. "We prepare completely.

"The guides rise early and figure out where the best conditions are," he continues. "They move in an economical way, but always find the microclimate that has the best and safest snow."

Noble, a retired structural ironworker, notes that one of the aspects he values most on his trips is the camaraderie shared among heli-skiers. He estimates he's connected with more than 800 people while skiing with CMH, and counts more than 200 of them as close friends. Intimacy develops quickly when you blend seven days of luxuriating together in wilderness lodges with the intense, spectacular nature of the sport. Noble plans his annual trip with friends from around the world, but always looks forward to meeting newcomers, first-time visitors he will soon call friends.

While Noble values the camaraderie he has experienced over the past three decades, it's the snow that brings him back each season.

"I get to travel to the most beautiful and pristine places on earth," he says. "You see things that you would never see any other way. You have a thousand miles of skiable terrain; you can look across a mountain range and see a peak where you laid tracks a couple of days before."

CMH serves 12 distinct areas, encom-

passing nearly 6,000 square miles, within the Columbia Mountains just west of the Canadian Rockies. Skiers can stay in Bugaboo Lodge, one of the world's great remote lodges, with access to the same Bugaboo Spires that established CMH as the world's premier heli-operation more than four decades ago.

Opt for skiing Revelstoke and you'll likely end up near Mount Fidelity, home to Canada's snowiest weather station, which has recorded as much as 48 feet of annual snowfall and 144 days of snow. The Revelstoke operation is based in the historical namesake railroad town itself, also home to the two-year-old Revelstoke Mountain Resort, a lift-accessed mountain that boasts the longest vertical run in North

America. The resort also offers cat skiing, and many guests take on a bit of all three, as the ski resort offers the rarest of terrain, which complements the cat and heli experience.

CMH is no stranger to multifaceted itineraries, and guests can choose the new Multi-Lodge Nomads Trips and settle atop majestic peaks across the Monashee and Selkirk ranges, carving figure eights along 4,500-foot descents.

My first heli-skiing trip took place one winter several years ago in the Selkirk Mountains with friend and fellow Seattleite Ray Johnston. The chopper carried us past Kicking Horse Ski Resort in Golden, B.C., to Purcell Mountain Lodge and Bald



Canadian Mountain Holidays serves 12 remote areas, each with its own backcountry lodge.

Mountain, site of the largest alpine meadow in Canada. We'd flown in for a few days of backcountry bliss with a twist: We'd "earn our turns" by skinning up each peak, traversing the slopes we'd soon descend.

Each run began above a vast snowfield, where we'd parallel our guide's line, a mesmerizing 360-degree vista our sole obstacle, cutting long, lazy semicircles in waist-high powder. Sir Donald, the area's largest peak at 10,816 feet, rose above the cloud line; 8,556-foot Copperstain Mountain stood sentry to the east. We soon departed the pillows and slipped into the trees, where we whooped like a pair of snowy owls. Novice heli-skiers often forget the glades when they imagine purling down a mountain, yet sluicing through the boreal forests often headlines the stories once the voyager returns to sea level.

Johnston, principal founder of Seattle's Johnston Architects, splits his time on either side of the Cascades, logging long hours in the Methow Valley as a board member with the Twisp Public Development Authority. After tasting the backcountry in British Columbia, it was inevitable that he'd hook up with North Cascade Heli, a 20-year-old, Mazama-based operation in the heart of the Methow.

"You're skiing untracked snow, landing between spires with a couloir below you," describes Johnston. "The helicopter stomps down the snow around you above steep pitches with no people or structures surrounding you. Then you drop into a 100-foot-wide couloir where the topography gives way to rolling, fairly steep hillocks, and you can come off one and be drifting almost elevatorlike into deep snow."

NCH makes use of 300,000 acres, from Rainy Pass to Harts Pass, in the North Cascades of Washington. A typical day includes Kangaroo Ridge, Liberty Bowl Mountain and the Early Winter Spires, among other features, each covered with some of the heaviest snowfalls on earth.

"You see the entire North Cascades

from Mount Baker to Glacier Peak on these trips," says Johnston, a Seattle native who packs five decades of Northwest experience when he points his planks downhill. "I think of the North Cascades as a smaller-scale Rocky Mountains, with tighter canyons and denser features. The difference is that this terrain invites you to ski all the way to the bottom, which makes for simply huge runs."

"North Cascade Heli is totally underrated," says adventure photographer Chase Jarvis, who, like Ray Johnston, grew up skiing in Western Washington. "Last time I went out to shoot with [owner] Paul Butler, we enjoyed 25 inches of fresh snow over two days. The North Cascades are like a mini-Alaska."

Jarvis would know. He spends part of each year photographing extreme skiers for outfitting and ski companies around the globe. Photo shoots have taken him to Chile and New Zealand, though his destination of choice remains Alaska.

"I think Alaska is, simply put, epic, an amazing combination of geography, conditions and energy," Jarvis says. "The snowfall is massive, and the coastal snow pack enables you to ski the extreme steeps. You can actually still find somewhere that has never been skied before. It's where the big boys and girls go and play every spring."

Although he's worked with Emmy-



➤ Serving three mountain ranges, Sun Valley Heli Ski can easily match terrain to the skill levels of its guests.

Heli-skiing Outfitters

Alaska Heliskiing (Haines, AK):

877-754-4246; www.alaskaheliskiing.com

Canadian Mountain Holidays (Banff, AB):

800-661-0252; www.canadianmountainholidays.com

Chugach Powder Guides (Girdwood, AK):

907-783-4354; www.chugachpowderguides.com

H2O Guides (Valdez, AK):

800-578-4354; www.alaskahelicopterskiing.com

North Cascade Heli (Mazama, WA):

800-494-4354; www.heli-ski.com

Points North Heli-Adventures (Cordova, AK):

877-787-6784; www.alaskaheliski.com

Purcell Mountain Lodge (BC):

250-344-2639; www.purcellmountainlodge.com

Ruby Mountains Heli-Experience (Lamoille, NV):

775-753-6867; www.helicopterskiing.com

Sun Valley Heli Ski (Sun Valley, ID):

888-983-3742; www.sunvalleyheliski.com

Telluride Helitrax (Telluride, CO):

866-435-4754; www.helitrax.com

Valdez Heli-Camps (Valdez, AK):

907-783-3243; www.valdeزالaskaheliskiing.com

Valdez Heli-Ski Guides (Valdez, AK):

907-835-4528; www.valdezheliskiguides.com

Whistler Heli-Skiing (Whistler, BC):

888-435-4754; www.whistlerheliskiing.com

nominated Matchstick Productions shooting some of the craziest skiing stunts ever attempted, Jarvis is quick to note that you don't have to be the best and bravest to ski in Alaska. "Having skied and filmed the best all over the world, I feel great when I can ski on some moderate Alaskan slope and put together a few thousand turns. I'm really able to enjoy myself instead of white-knuckling the whole way."

Jarvis works mostly with Cordova's Points North Heli Adventures, where his subjects traverse the spine of the Chugach Range with Prince William Sound as a backdrop. "There's a reason so many of us shoot our work here, and there are lots of great operations, as well as a range of prices and accommodations," he says.

Legendary ski filmmaker Warren Miller showcases the Chugach Range in the 2009 film *Dynasty*, a celebration of his 60 years of filmmaking. Miller began his film career in a Sun Valley, Idaho, parking lot, living in a teardrop trailer.

A decade later, Sun Valley Heli Ski became the first permitted heli-guide service in the United States. The outfit uses some of that same Central Idaho terrain today (also featured in Miller's *Dynasty*), though it tries to open new areas each year.

"We work with 750 square miles in the Sawtooth Recreation Area," says Mark Baumgardner, senior guide and former owner of Sun Valley Heli Ski. "We ski within the Smoky, Pioneer and Boulder mountains, which means we can match terrain for any intermediate to expert skier, of almost any age. A couple of years ago, we took a family consisting of grandparents, parents and children out; it was like a river float for them."

Like his colleagues throughout the Northwest, where North American heli-skiing began and remains the devoted skier's holy grail, Baumgardner understands that his industry must evolve to survive. To expand its luxury offerings, Sun Valley Heli Ski includes cat-skiing at Sun Valley Resort for "weathered out" days, offers heli-ski lesson packages and opened a backcountry lodge that's set on an old mining claim.

Sun Valley Heli Ski has expanded its offerings in other exciting ways as well, merging in 2008 with another pioneer in the industry, Alaska's Chugach Powder Guides, under the umbrella of EpicQuest. It's impossible to imagine covering all of Alaska's terrain, but CPG makes a valiant effort, covering 1,500 square miles (700,000 acres) in the western Chugach Range, outside Girdwood and the Alyeska Resort, just 40 miles from Anchorage. Experienced heli-skiers can also sample a little of CPG's pioneer spirit and head to its Alaska Range Tordrillo area between Cook Inlet and Mount McKinley, at 20,320 feet the highest peak in North America.

Whether you venture out on a heli-skiing odyssey in Alaska, slip into B.C.'s interior mountains or discover snowy solace among the peaks of Washington or Idaho, you must seize the big snow day at least once. Though I've got a hunch that, once you taste that snow, you'll start planning your next excursion before you even get home. Going up? ▲

Freelance writer Crai S. Bower lives in Seattle.

Ski Resorts of the West

Alaska Airlines (alaskaair.com; 800-ALASKAAIR) and **Horizon Air** (horizonair.com; 800-547-9308) offer access to ski resorts throughout the western United States and western Canada. Following is a list of options for your winter travels. For a complete Alaska Airlines Vacations package to Whistler, visit the Web or call 800-468-2248.

WESTERN UNITED STATES

ALASKA

Alyeska Resort Lifts: 10. Skiable terrain: 1,400 acres—20% beginner; 50% intermediate; 30% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,500 feet. Trails: 68. 907-754-7669; www.alyeskaresort.com.

Eaglecrest Lifts: 3. Skiable terrain: 640 acres—20% beginner; 40% intermediate; 40% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 1,400 feet. Trails: 31. 907-790-2000; www.ski-juneau.com.

ARIZONA

Arizona Snowbowl Lifts: 4. Skiable terrain: 777 acres—21% beginner; 41% intermediate; 38% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,300 feet. Trails: 32. 928-779-1951; www.arizonasnowbowl.com.

CALIFORNIA/NEVADA

Alpine Meadows Lifts: 14. Skiable terrain: 2,400+ acres—25% beginner; 40% intermediate; 35% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 1,802 feet. Trails: 100+. 530-583-4232; www.skialpine.com.

Heavenly Mountain Resort Lifts: 19. Skiable terrain: 4,800 acres—20% beginner; 45% intermediate; 35% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 3,500 feet. Trails: 95. 775-586-7000; www.skiheavenly.com.

Kirkwood Mountain Resort Lifts: 10. Skiable terrain: 2,300 acres—15% beginner; 50% intermediate; 35% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,000 feet. Trails: 65+. 877-547-5966; www.kirkwood.com.

Mammoth Mountain Lifts: 28. Skiable terrain: 3,500 acres—25% beginner; 40% intermediate; 35% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 3,100 feet. Trails: 150. 800-626-6684; www.mammothmountain.com.

Northstar-at-Tahoe Lifts: 12. Skiable terrain: 3,000 acres—13% beginner; 60% intermediate; 27% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,280 feet. Trails: 91. 800-466-6784; www.northstaratahое.com.

Sierra-at-Tahoe Lifts: 12. Skiable terrain: 2,000

acres—25% beginner; 50% intermediate; 25% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,212 feet. Trails: 46. 530-659-7453; www.sierraattahoe.com.

Squaw Valley USA Lifts: 33. Skiable terrain: 4,000 acres—25% beginner; 45% intermediate; 30% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,850 feet. Trails: 170+. 866-366-7261; www.squaw.com.

Yosemite's Badger Pass Ski Area Lifts: 4. Skiable terrain: 88 acres—35% beginner; 50% intermediate; 15% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 800 feet. Trails: 10. 209-372-8430; www.badgerpass.com.

COLORADO

Beaver Creek Resort Lifts: 17. Skiable terrain: 1,815 acres—19% beginner; 43% intermediate; 38% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 4,040 feet. Trails: 149. 970-845-9090; www.beavercreek.com.

Breckenridge Ski Resort Lifts: 17. Skiable terrain: 2,358 acres—14% beginner; 31% intermediate; 55% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 3,398 feet. Trails: 155. 970-453-5000; www.breckenridge.com.

Copper Mountain Lifts: 22. Skiable terrain: 2,450 acres—21% beginner; 25% intermediate; 54% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,601 feet. Trails: 126. 866-841-2481; www.coppercolorado.com.

Keystone Resort Lifts: 16. Skiable terrain: 3,148 acres—19% beginner; 32% intermediate; 49% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 3,128 feet. Trails: 135. 877-753-9786; www.kestoneresort.com.

Steamboat Lifts: 18. Skiable terrain: 2,965 acres—14% beginner; 42% intermediate; 44% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 3,668 feet. Trails: 165. 800-922-2722; www.steamboat.com.

Vail Lifts: 31. Skiable terrain: 5,289 acres—18% beginner; 29% intermediate; 53% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 3,450 feet. Trails: 193. 970-754-8245; www.vail.com.

Winter Park Resort Lifts: 21. Skiable terrain: 3,078 acres—8% beginner; 18% intermediate; 74% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 3,060 feet. Trails: 142. 970-726-1564; www.winterparkresort.com.

IDAHO

Bogus Basin Mountain Lifts: 7. Skiable terrain: 2,600 acres—22% beginner; 45% intermediate; 33% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 1,800 feet. Trails: 53. 800-367-4397; www.bogusbasin.org.

Brundage Mountain Resort Lifts: 5. Skiable terrain: 1,500 acres—20% beginner; 50% intermediate; 30% advanced/expert.

Vertical rise: 1,800 feet. Trails: 46. 800-888-7544; www.brundage.com.

Schweitzer Mountain Resort Lifts: 7. Skiable terrain: 2,900 acres—20% beginner; 40% intermediate; 40% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,400 feet. Trails: 92. 800-831-8810; www.schweitzer.com.

Silver Mountain Resort Lifts: 7. Skiable terrain: 1,600 acres—20% beginner; 40% intermediate; 40% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,200 feet. Trails: 73. 800-204-6428; www.silvermt.com.

Sun Valley Resort Lifts: 20. Skiable terrain: 2,054 acres—36% beginner; 42% intermediate; 22% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 3,400 feet. Trails: 76. 800-786-8259; www.sunvalley.com.

Tamarack Resort (reopening pending) Lifts: 7. Skiable terrain: 1,100 acres—15% beginner; 44% intermediate; 41% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,800 feet. Trails: 41. 877-826-7376; www.tamarackidaho.com.

MONTANA

Big Sky Resort Lifts: 16. Skiable terrain: 3,812 acres—14% beginner; 26% intermediate; 60% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 4,350 feet. Trails: 150. 800-548-4486; www.bigskyresort.com.

Bridger Bowl Lifts: 8. Skiable terrain: 2,000 acres—25% beginner; 35% intermediate; 40% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,600 feet. Trails: 71. 800-223-9609; www.bridgerbowl.com.

Moonlight Basin Lifts: 6. Skiable terrain: 1,900 acres—22% beginner; 19% intermediate; 59% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 4,150 feet. Trails: 97. 877-822-0432; www.moonlightbasin.com.

Whitefish Mountain Resort Lifts: 8. Skiable terrain: 3,000 acres—20% beginner; 50% intermediate; 30% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,353 feet. Trails: 94. 877-754-3474; www.skiwhitefish.com.

OREGON

Hoodoo Mountain Resort Lifts: 5. Skiable terrain: 806 acres—30% beginner; 30% intermediate; 40% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 1,035. Trails: 30. 541-822-3799; www.hoodoo.com.

Mt. Bachelor Lifts: 10. Skiable terrain: 3,683 acres—15% beginner; 25% intermediate; 60% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 3,365 feet. Trails: 71. 800-829-2442; www.mtbachelor.com.

Mt. Hood Meadows Ski Resort Lifts: 11. Skiable terrain: 2,150 acres—15% beginner; 50% intermediate; 35% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,777 feet. Trails: 75+. 800-754-4663; www.skihood.com.

Mt. Hood Skibowl Lifts: 9. Skiable terrain: 960 acres—20% beginner; *CONTINUED ON PAGE 116*

FROM PAGE 77 40% intermediate;
40% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 1,500 feet.
Trails: 65. 503-222-2695; www.skibowl.com.

Timberline Lodge Lifts: 7. Skiable terrain: 1,650 acres—25% beginner; 50% intermediate; 25% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 3,690 feet. Trails: 41. 503-272-3311; www.timberlinelodge.com.

WASHINGTON

Crystal Mountain Lifts: 11. Skiable terrain: 2,600 acres—11% beginner; 54% intermediate; 35% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 3,100 feet. Trails: 57. 360-663-2265; www.skicrystal.com.

Mission Ridge Ski and Board Resort Lifts: 4. Skiable terrain: 1,200 acres—10% beginner; 60% intermediate; 30% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,250 feet. Trails: 37. 509-663-6543; www.missionridge.com.

Mt. Baker Ski Area Lifts: 8. Skiable terrain: 1,000 acres—24% beginner; 45% intermediate; 31% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 1,500 feet. Trails: 32. 360-734-6771; www.mtbaker.us.

Mt. Spokane Ski & Snowboard Park Lifts: 5. Skiable terrain: 1,425 acres—23% beginner; 45% intermediate; 32% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,000 feet. Trails: 45. 509-238-2220; www.mtspokane.com.

Stevens Pass Winter Resort Lifts: 10. Skiable terrain: 1,125 acres—11% beginner; 54% intermediate; 35% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 1,800 feet. Trails: 37. 206-812-4510; www.stevenspass.com.

The Summit at Snoqualmie Lifts: 19. Skiable terrain: 1,916 acres—14% beginner; 45% intermediate; 41% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,280 feet. Trails: 96. 425-434-7669; www.summitsnoqualmie.com.

White Pass Ski Resort Lifts: 4. Skiable terrain: 635 acres—33% beginner; 43% intermediate; 24% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 1,500 feet. Trails: 32. 509-672-3100; www.skiwhitepass.com.

WESTERN CANADA

ALBERTA

The Lake Louise Ski Area Lifts: 9. Skiable terrain: 4,200 acres—25% beginner; 45% intermediate; 30% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 3,250 feet. Trails: 139. 877-956-8473; www.skilouise.com.

Marmot Basin Lifts: 8. Skiable terrain: 1,675 acres—30% beginner; 30% intermediate; 40% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 3,000 feet. Trails: 86. 866-952-3816; www.skimarmot.com.

Resorts of the Canadian Rockies (Fernie, Kimberley, Nakiska). Varying lifts, terrain and skill levels. 800-258-7669; www.skircr.com.

Ski Norquay Lifts: 5. Skiable terrain: 190 acres—20% beginner; 36% intermediate; 44% advanced/

expert. Vertical rise: 1,650 feet. Trails: 28. 403-762-4421; www.banffnorquay.com.

Sunshine Village Ski and Snowboard Resort Lifts: 12. Skiable terrain: 3,358 acres—20% beginner; 55% intermediate; 25% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 3,514 feet. Trails: 107. 877-542-2633; www.skibanff.com.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Apex Mountain Resort Lifts: 4. Skiable terrain: 1,112 acres—16% beginner; 48% intermediate; 36% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,000 feet. Trails: 67. 877-777-2739; www.apexresort.com.

Big White Ski Resort Lifts: 16. Skiable terrain: 2,765 acres—18% beginner; 54% intermediate; 28% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,550 feet. Trails: 118. 800-663-2772; www.bigwhite.com.

Kootenay Rockies Resorts/Operators

(Baldface Lodge, Big Red Cats, Canadian Mountain Holidays, Chatter Creek Snowcat, Eagle Pass Heliskiing, Fairmont Hot Springs Resort, Fernie Alpine Resort, Fernie Wilderness Adventures, Great Canadian Heli-Skiing, Highland Powder Skiing, Island Lake Lodge Catskiing, Kicking Horse Mountain Resort, Kimberley Alpine Resort, Mica Heliskiing, Monashee Powder Snowcats, Mustang Powder Lodge, Panorama Mountain Village, Powder Cowboy Catskiing, Purcell Helicopter Skiing, Red Mountain Resort, Retallack Resort and Alpine Adventures, Revelstoke Catskiing, Revelstoke Mountain Resort, RK Heliski, Selkirk Tangiers Heli-Skiing, Selkirk Wilderness Skiing, Snowwater Heli & Cat Skiing, Stellar Heli Skiing, Valhalla Powdercats, White Grizzly Adventures, Whitewater Winter Resort). Varying lifts, terrain and skill levels. 800-661-6603; www.powderhighway.com.

Red Mountain Resort Lifts: 4. Skiable terrain: 1,685 acres—15% beginner; 40% intermediate; 45% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,919 feet. Trails: 88. 800-663-0105; www.redresort.com.

Silver Star Mountain Resort Lifts: 8. Skiable terrain: 3,065 acres—20% beginner; 50% intermediate; 30% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,500 feet. Trails: 112. 800-663-4431; www.skisilverstar.com.

Sun Peaks Resort Lifts: 11. Skiable terrain: 3,678 acres—10% beginner; 58% intermediate; 32% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 2,891 feet. Trails: 122. 800-807-3257; www.sunpeaksresort.com.

Whistler Blackcomb Lifts: 38. Skiable terrain: 8,171 acres—18% beginner; 55% intermediate; 27% advanced/expert. Vertical rise: 5,280 feet. Trails: 200+. 800-766-0449; www.whistlerblackcomb.com. ▲