



Canada in white

Powder hounds, ski bunnies and day trippers all relish the elevation and exhilaration in Canada's ski-loving states, British Columbia and Alberta.

Skiing in Canada is divided into east and west. The east coast is home to resorts such as Blue Mountain, Pembroke, Mont Sainte-Anne and Tremblant – perfect if you're city holidaying in Montreal or Toronto and fancy a day's skiing but it's the mighty mountain ranges of the west coast that draw the international crowds for dedicated ski vacations.

Western state British Columbia

(BC) is hosting the Winter Olympics in 2010 with much of the program being held at Whistler Blackcomb Resort, a two-hour drive north of Vancouver. The state of Alberta boasts over 14 ski resorts including the big guns of Lake Louise and Sunshine Village in Banff.

It may take longer to get to Canada but the elevation is not extreme which means little chance of

altitude sickness. Resorts are either ski-in ski-out or located inside national parks which means beauty by the bucketload. Shuttle services are provided by the resorts so transport is never an issue from the village to the snow.

Whether it's the champagne snow of the purpose-built Kicking Horse Mountain Resort or the legendary powder of Fernie Alpine Resort, or



Story by Rachael Oakes-Ash

Main: Big White Ski Resort in British Columbia. Courtesy Klaus Gretzmacher
Above: Whistler is very pretty on the eye

the Vancouver island resort of Mount Washington, Canada has both snow conditions, terrain and ski villages to suit all types of ski holidays.

With relaxed hospitality, jaw-dropping scenery, dog sledding and snow mobiling, as well as a hearty nightlife after sunset, Canada makes total ski and boarding sense.

British Columbia

Powder hounds

Fernie Alpine Resort is located in the south-east corner of the British Columbia Rockies, and is built on

Indian legends involving chiefs and ghosts still seen today. The Griz legend sees a fur-clad hunter with a Muscat rifle who shoots into the clouds to encourage snowfalls, and lots of it. Griz must be doing his job as the average snowfall each season is close to nine metres from November to April, covering Fernie's five alpine bowls, glade runs, ridges and chutes.

For more information, visit www.skifernie.com or phone +250 423 4655.

Powder princes wanting to complete the infamous 'powder triangle' can take in the nearby

resorts of Red Mountain (tel: +250 362-7384; www.redresort.com) and Whitewater Ski & Winter Resort (tel: +250 354 4944; www.skiwhitewater.com) with a side trip to the new purpose-built resort of Kicking Horse Mountain Resort (tel: +250.439.5424; www.kickinghorseresort.com).

Family

Big White in Kelowna is a ski-in ski-out snow village. The main street is classified a ski run which means you can ski off-piste into the plethora of shops, restaurants and accommodation.

This is a dedicated family resort and apart from 1200 hectares of skiable terrain, kids will love the outdoor skating rink and sleigh rides.

Helmets are complimentary to protect junior's noggin, and there's an onsite kitchen with a rotating daily menu, so little miss gets her nutrients disguised in yummy kid-friendly food.

Beginner runs are accessible from every chairlift so the whole mountain is available to everyone. With accommodation, there's everything from self-contained units to five-star ski-in ski-out hotels.

For more information, visit www.bigwhite.com or phone +250 765 3101.

Glamour

A two-and-a-half hour drive from Vancouver is Whistler Blackcomb, the largest ski resort in North America. Its ski season lasts from November to June with summer glacial skiing on offer.

If fine wining-and-dining is your idea of après, then Whistler will keep you happy. Restaurants at The Fairmont, Westin, Four Seasons and Hilton are renowned.

The singer Seal proposed to supermodel Heidi Klum on the Whistler piste so don't be surprised

to find yourself on a chairlift with the rich and famous who are attracted to the laid-back atmosphere of these Canadian ski fields.

For more information, visit www.whistlerblackcomb.com or phone +604.932.3434.

Boasting rights

A 30-minute drive from Whistler sits Powder Mountain, a private cat skiing mountain filled with glade runs, bowls and chutes for those wanting a heli-ski experience without the financial outlay. Caterpillar mobiles transport a small group of skiers and boarders to previously inaccessible terrain to experience virgin powder. As many runs as you can fit in one day, no added costs or extras, no lift lines, no crowds, just you and the wilderness with experienced guides to take you to level appropriate terrain.

For more information, visit www.powdermountaincatskiing.com or phone +604 932 0169.

Alberta

Powder hounds

To picture Sunshine Village in Banff, think 1400 hectares of skiable terrain, three mountains and breathtaking views. Famous for its

dry powder and blue sky days, this resort boasts an extreme terrain for serious skiers as well as extensive areas for intermediate and beginner skiers.

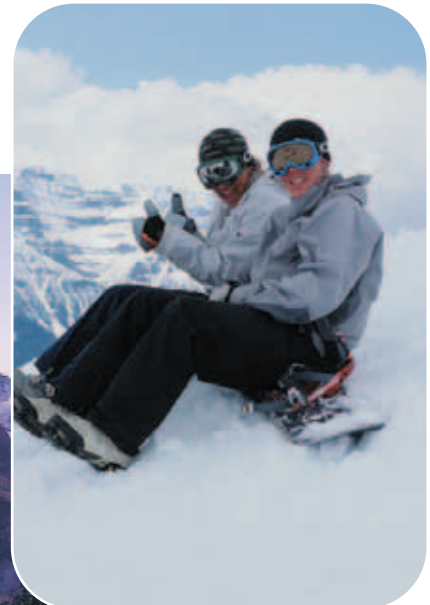
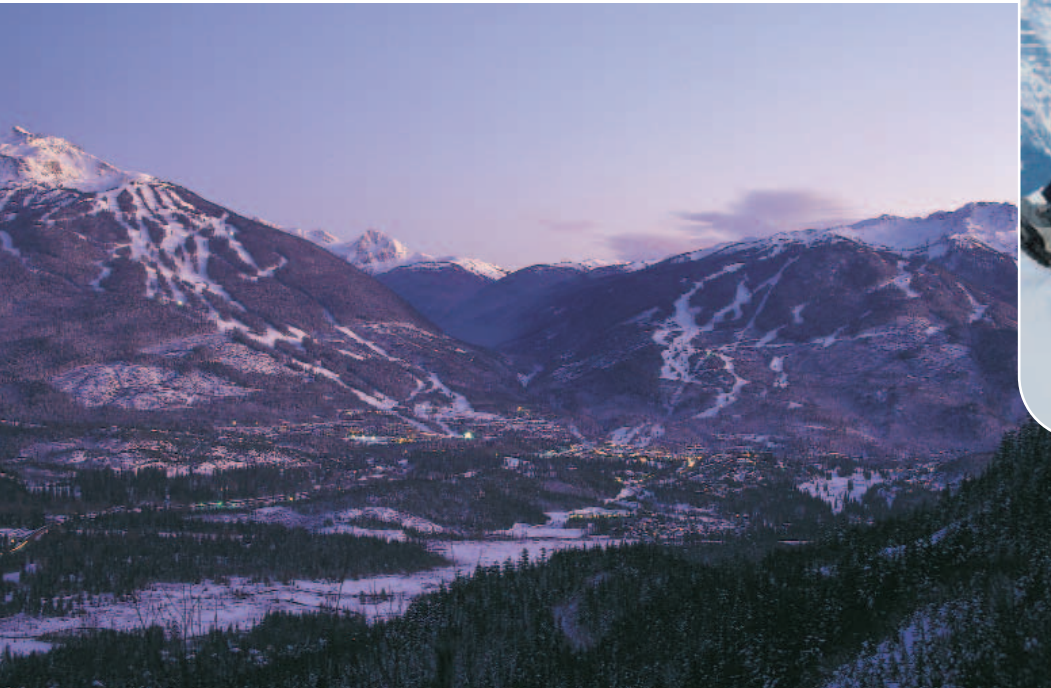
Visit www.skibanff.com or phone +877 542 2633 for more information.

A short drive from the resort town of Banff with its swanky restaurants, spas and The Fairmont Banff Springs hotel (tel: +403 762 2211; www.fairmont.com), Sunshine Village has joined with both Lake Louise and Banff Norquay resorts for a 'tri-ticket' so you can ski these three spectacular ski areas. Visit www.skibig3.com

Beauty

The town of Jasper is renowned for its natural beauty deep in the heart of the Canadian Rockies. Jasper sits on the banks of the Athabasca River which attracts moose, deer and elk to complement nature's breathtaking backdrop.

Like Lake Louise, the ski resort sits in a national park, so accommodation is off-mountain in the village. Marmot Basin is the ski field of choice in the rugged Jasper National



Left: Whistler is extremely popular with Australian skiers
Above: Happy snowboarders at Sunshine, Lake Louise

Bottom: Skiing at Marmot Peak near Jasper
 Below: Go for a sleigh ride at Whistler
 Right: The Lodge of Ten Peaks at Lake Louise in Canada



Park, a 15-minute shuttle from most hotels and accommodation from the Jasper township.

There's a good mix of terrain to cruise or challenge with the 800-hectare resort divided into a third novice, a third intermediate, and the remaining third split between advanced and expert.

Visit www.skimarmot.com or phone +780 852 3816.

Family

At Lake Louise Mountain Resort, you can lose yourself for days in the 1700 skiable hectares with groomed runs on one side and mogul heaven on the other. Trek out to experienced powder bowls, or sneak off-piste through glades before heading back on trail.

Here, the resort's Minute Maid



Wilderness Adventure Park keeps grommets happy while Ma and Pa tackle the big slopes. Kids' ski programs are first class and the gentle ski program introduces beginners to the snow.

For more information on Lake Louise Mountain Resort, visit www.skilouise.com or phone +403 209 3321.

For extra action, you can strap on the skates after a hard day of skiing the World Heritage site of Lake Louise ski field, then warm up with lakeside hot chocolate at The Fairmont Chateau (tel: 403 522 3511; www.fairmont.com).

Boasting rights

You don't have to be extreme ski legend Seth Morrison to experience heli-skiing. If you can get down a blue groomed run in one piece, you can step into the chopper. CMH Heli runs three-, four- and seven-night trips with even longer packages available. Their guides are qualified, lodging is comfortable and the bragging rights last a lifetime.

Phone +403 762 7100 or visit www.canadianmountainholidays.com •

travelfacts gettingthere

Air Canada flies from Sydney direct to Vancouver via Hawaii, with connecting flights to Calgary for Alberta destinations. Visit www.aircanada.com or phone 1300 655 767.

gettingaround

A number of ski holiday specialists offer package deals to Canada from all major Australian capital cities, including:
 Alpine World. Phone: 1300 138 311; www.alpineworld.com.au
 Ski Tours Canada: Phone 1800 446 302 ; www.skitourscanada.com
 Travelplan. Phone: 1300 130 754; www.travelplan.com.au
 Value Tours. Phone: 1300 361 322; www.valuetours.com.au
 Ski Max. Phone: 1300 136 997; www.skimax.com.au
 Phone Mogul Ski World on 1800 335 724 or www.mogulski.com.au

wheretostay

Other ski resorts in BC and Alberta include:
 Silver Star, BC – a family-friendly resort. Phone: +250 542 0224; www.skisilverstar.com
 Kimberley, BC – a Bavarian-style town with consistent snow conditions. Phone: +403 209 3321; www.skikimberley.com
 Cypress Mountain, just 30 minutes from downtown Vancouver, is snow boarding heaven. Visit www.cypressmountain.com
 Apex Mountain Resort in Penticton, BC, is a hidden gem. Phone: +250 292 8222; www.apexresort.com
 Banff Mount Norquay, Alberta – perfect for day trips. Phone: +403 762 4421; www.banffnorquay.com

furtherinfo

For more info on skiing in British Columbia and Alberta, visit www.skicanada.org, www.bcskiing.com and www.skialberta.com
 Fairmont Hotels - www.fairmont.com