

# GO

{ WHERE TO GO. WHY TO GO. WHAT TO DO. }

## Whitewater, BC

NEW ADVENTURES—OF THE DEEP-POWDER AND CULINARY KIND—ARE ON TAP THIS SEASON IN THE BC ROCKIES. *By Susan Reifer Ryan*

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▼  
INCHES OF SNOW  
REQUIRED FOR  
LOCALS TO PLAY  
HOOKY FROM WORK

11

DOLLARS IN POUTINE  
SERVED IN A SEASON  
AT THE FRESH TRACKS  
CAFÉ

40,000

NUMBER OF CHAIRS  
ON THE NEW  
GLORY RIDGE TRIPLE

146

The three-chairlift ski area with a cultish and far-flung following rises from a fold of southeastern British Columbia's snowy Selkirk Mountains some 30 minutes from the nearest town. A destination resort it is not. The closest approximation to slopeside lodging is a miniature gothic-arch cabin mounted on a pickup truck often parked in the rutted day lot. A hefty rack of antlers is affixed near the peak of the mobile cabin's roof. A sign on the door reads, "Please Don't Feed the Hippies."

But feeding well—on excellent food, superb skiing, beautiful views, and easygoing company—is exactly what this hidden gem called Whitewater is all about. Known beyond the ski world for bestselling cookbooks based on its fresh and delicious day-lodge food (the *Whitewater Cooks* series, by Shelley Adams, former ski-area co-owner and head chef), Whitewater has long been renowned among skiing diehards for its abundance of great powder and tree skiing, its varied fall-line terrain, and its easy access to superb backcountry. It's the kind of place where day-lodge decor is all about picnic tables (under which everyone stuffs boot bags and backpacks) and where eight-year-olds and 80-year-olds alike stop in their ski tracks to admire a line a backcountry skier is slicing down majestic 7,867-foot Ymir Peak. Now, with new, well-financed owners slowly but steadily rolling out an approved master plan (a rollout



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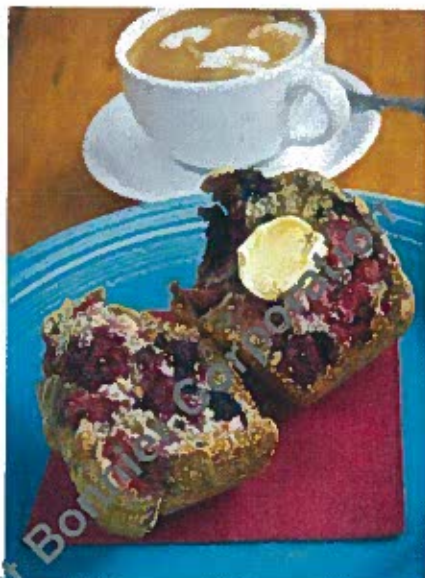
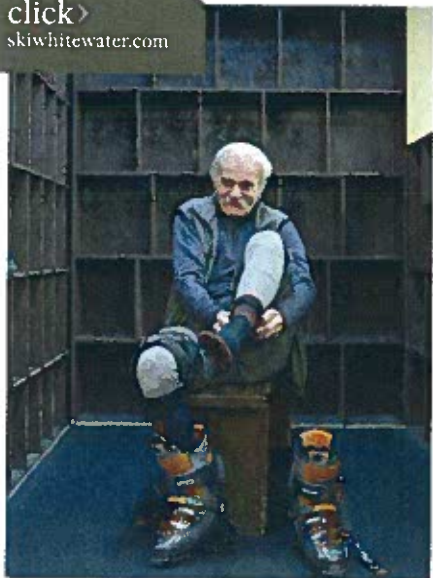


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that has already delivered a new chair and substantial new acreage), Whitewater is expanding its amenities without abandoning its appeal.

High-speed lifts? Definitely not. Cell service on the slopes? None whatsoever. More powder skiing, trees, dynamic terrain—and more of that yummy ketchup (and every other

gully and then weave through woods of lodgepole, fir, spruce, and larch that roll, in places, steeper than 40 degrees. Snow hasn't fallen in a week—a rare dearth here, where it often snows four to six inches a night. But Jensen and Sproul still find pockets of crystal-light, untouched snow. “Everyone has their secret stashes at Whitewater,” Sproul says.

After 2,000 vertical feet, they drop onto a cat track and glide to the base of the Glory Ridge chair, a fixed-grip triple that had a previous life as Vail's Chair 5. We see perhaps three other skiers on the entire lap.

Near Glory Ridge's base stands Whitewater's food truck—the Fresh Tracks Café

Express—parked in its winter shelter, a lean-to with bar stools, picnic tables, and a fire pit. Here, as at the day lodge's Fresh Tracks Café, hearty ski food is crafted daily with fresh, whole ingredients, a focus on flavor, and fine culinary techniques. “Even if it's being served on a compostable bowl, we wipe the edge and garnish it,” says head chef Amanda Skidmore. A house-smoked pulled-pork sandwich comes with candied garlic aioli and chai barbecue sauce. A fresh baguette is spread with horseradish aioli and piled with house-roasted beef sautéed with caramelized onions and peppers and topped with melted cheddar.

‘It's hard to find this ski experience anywhere anymore,’ Jensen says. ‘There's always a powder turn to be had here, and you don't even have to look that hard.’

cafeteria item, from curry bowls to chocolate truffles) made from scratch? You bet.

Kirk Jensen, a pioneering professional freeskiier who is now Whitewater's general manager of outdoor operations, likens the on-slope experience at Whitewater to cat and heli skiing, but with a “relaxed feeling” that's a “refreshing step back” in time. “It's hard to find this ski experience anywhere anymore,” Jensen says. “There's always a powder turn to be had here, and you don't even have to look that hard.”

On Glory Ridge, the mountain's newest lift-served sector, Jensen and longtime local Bill Sproul slither through a meandering

The local devotees both herald and dread Whitewater's impending stardom. Luckily, a cautious limited-growth plan promises enough pow to go around.

These are signature experiences Whitewater's new owners, a trio of longtime Whitewater skiers from Calgary, intend to maintain, explains Jensen. The master plan hinges on “very low-density powder skiing” and a “less-is-more” approach. Even at build-out (at least a decade away)—eight chairlifts and 2,750 skiable acres—slopeside beds will number just 694.

Down the winding access road, the small city of Nelson tucks into a slender arm of Kootenay Lake. The city first boomed in the late 1800s and is now known primarily for its lifestyle appeal. (Think athletes, artisans, pot growers, and, yes, hippies.) With a cool historic hotel, an exceptional coffee roaster, a strong culinary scene, some lively nightlife, and nearby cat- and heli-ski ops, it has just the right mix of amenities to fill the time away from Whitewater. Not that you'll need much of that. “It's not the easiest place to get to,” says Jensen, “but it's worth it.” ●

SKIABLE ACRES

1,184

VERTICAL FEET

2,044

SUMMIT ELEVATION

6,570

YMIR PEAK

7,867



**APRÈS »** At Coal Oil Johnny's, in Whitewater's day lodge, Nelson Brewing Company's Faceplant Winter Ale, Paddywhack IPA, and other organic craft beers flow as freely as deep-powder tales. In Nelson, NBC's craft brews also flow at Mike's Place Pub—a sprawling, lively, big-screen-and-pool-table scene in the Hume Hotel. For clubbing, descend to the surprisingly sleek Spiritbar for great music.



**EAT & DRINK »** In the morning, head to Nelson's Oso Negro for fresh-roasted coffee and baked treats. For dinner, Itza dishes out Nelson's best pizza. For something more refined, tuck into Bibo, in a cozy brick heritage building downtown, for Shane and June McEwan's French and Mediterranean bistro fare crafted from British Columbia ingredients. Our favorite: duck-leg confit on citrus and roasted-beet risotto.



**SLEEP »** Built in 1898, the family-run Hume Hotel anchors downtown Nelson. The newly renovated top floor is the region's best place to stay; humehotel.com. The Prestige Lakeside Resort Nelson (not the Prestige Inn) stretches along the waterfront a few blocks from downtown and has clean, spacious rooms, some with kitchenettes and lakeside balconies; prestigehotelsandresorts.com.