

# A love affair with ski town Revelstoke, British Columbia



BRIAN SCHOTT FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

**The author sent a new friend to ski off a 20-foot ice fall to dramatize the beauty of Revelstoke resort.**

**By Brian Schott** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT NOVEMBER 08, 2014

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REVELSTOKE, British Columbia — I am writhing under the sheets in the early morning at Revelstoke Mountain Resort, deep in the heart of British Columbia. My toes point to the sky. In the middle of the night I have been awakened alone in my large bed at the Sutton Place Hotel by the most extreme muscle cramps I have ever experienced.

I am in agony with the blissful memories of sliding into deep powder snow, the fluff billowing

over my head.

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My right quad muscle feels like it is trying to roll up and peel away from the ligaments and bone. I rip the covers off and frantically massage my muscle until I am able to fall back into a slumber of deep white dreams.

I have tested my 41-year-old legs to the limits after three days of skiing a deep storm cycle that dropped 4 feet of snow. My ears have popped each day as I've descended 5,621 vertical feet from the summit. It's like dropping a quick mile in an airplane.

My legs hurt like hell. But my spirit is soaring.

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## If you go Revelstoke Mountain Resort

Revelstoke Mountain Resort is a four-season destination resort located in the Columbia Mountains of British Columbia just minutes from the town of Revelstoke.

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Revelstoke Mountain Resort, now entering its eighth year, is one of the most ambitious ski resort projects in recent history, with the largest vertical drop anywhere. The resort master plan is impressive — with plans for 20 ski lifts and more than 100 ski runs. The three lifts that now offer access to 3,100 acres are laid out smartly and efficiently. There's also a cat-ski and heli-ski operation based out of the village that opens up hundreds of thousands of acres of exploration.

When I arrived here in “Revy” on an early January morning, I had just driven eight hours from my home in Whitefish, Mont., and finally tipped over the high-mountain Rogers Pass — where I skidded past cars littered in snow banks on the side of the Selkirk Range.

Pulling off the highway, I was in love at first sight. I slid past small houses in the downtown, past people walking along snowy sidewalks with skis over their shoulders. There was so much snow it looked as if the plow drivers took Sundays off — big snow was piled everywhere.

For the slow beginnings of an epic resort, it feels well done. Up at the first phase of the mountain village where I stayed are a condo/hotel, a couple of retail shops, a coffee shop, a wine bar, and a fancy-to-good restaurant where ski-bros still chug beers at the Rockford. Kawakubo restaurant downtown for sushi is heartfelt and delicious.

The character of a town is measured in its people, and I meet the good ones here without searching. Random samples, yes. But I don’t find a jerk.

I load the gondola on the first morning and meet Donnie McFarlane and Sam Argue — locals who immediately offer to show me around. The terrain here is wide open for anyone, but it takes local knowledge to find the best turns.

My new friends’ generosity yields some of the deepest turns of my life. We track down snow that blows into my smile on Gracias Ridge after several short hikes. Later we tackle Sweet Spot, Meet the Neighbours, and on into the Powder Monkey Glades, then down to the Ripper Chair.

The famous “Kill the Banker” run under the gondola has opened and I send another new-met-friend, Miles Clark, off the 20-foot ice fall so I can shoot some photos and try to show beyond words the beautiful danger of this wild place. Legend has it that the original mountain manager sent the financier down this run to experience the grandeur of this place.



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**Fresh snow covered the picturesque town in British Columbia.**

A novice skier here can savor it all, no problem. But this is really a place of epic proportions for experts, snow gluttons, and an argument that size does matter.

As I dodge through the trees on the Rollercoaster, I think that this just might be one of the most playful resorts I have ever had the luck of skiing. I feel the pinpricks of this growing love as I speed past trees covered in rime and rock faces with colorful lichen. We ski North Bowl, over and over and over, and over again.

Because I live in a ski town I love, I often feel guilty when I fall in love with another great place. Revelstoke has got me in the excitement phase, and the terrain rockets me into plateau as my heart skips a beat..

I fall into another night of deep sleep as my muscles relax, my blood pressure drops, and I resolve that I can take one more day of climax as the clouds outside my window part to reveal the stars.

In the morning, the storm cycle has ended and I'm grateful that the sun is out. I want to finally greet these mountains face-to-face rather than under the cover of clouds on a three-night stand. A cold, dry, high-pressure system has set in and the mountains stand stark beneath a layer of fog.

I load the gondola for first chair just after sunrise and ascend up through the mist, breaking into the blue azure sky as pink rays of light shatter the peaks. From the top of the Stoke chair, I ski above the rising sea of clouds. Shimmering sun-dogs of frozen ice crystals dance in sun on the cotton vapor carpet still hanging in the valley.

The light bounces on the vapor, rises and falls, spilling into the bowl in wisps below me. The mountains in front of me cast deep shadows on the sheer white face behind me. This beautiful day could change in an instant. But I am here now, in the art of carving snow.

I skip lunch, too eager to stop. As the clouds roll up higher from the valley and the sun sinks deeper toward the cloud blanket, the mountain face disappears into white. I muster enough strength to set off on one last run, a mile to drop through the snow before I must leave my new love.

Halfway down I have to stop. I sit in the snow as my muscles contract, complaining. But my mind continues to expand. I am leaving at dawn tomorrow for the long drive home, but I know my heart will stay in Revelstoke.

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