



# Exploring the Coast Mountains

# *On Skis*

A Guide to Ski Mountaineering

**John Baldwin**

Third Edition





## Exploring The Coast Mountains On Skis







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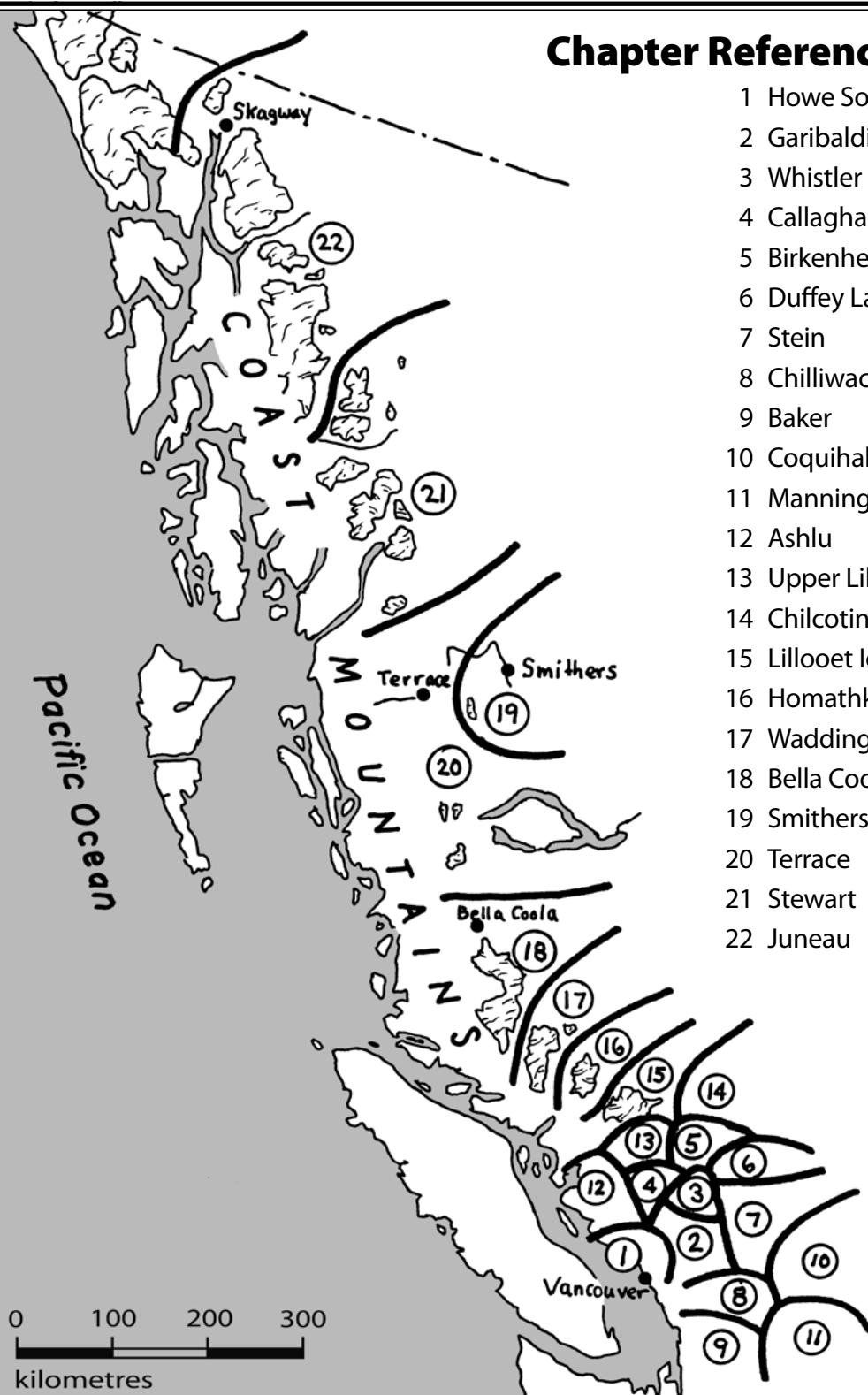
**A Guide to Ski Mountaineering**

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- 3 Whistler
- 4 Callaghan
- 5 Birkenhead
- 6 Duffey Lake
- 7 Stein
- 8 Chilliwack River
- 9 Baker
- 10 Coquihalla
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John Baldwin  
3612 Pt Grey Rd  
Vancouver, BC Canada  
V6R 1A6  
www.johnbaldwin.ca

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# Disclaimer



*Photo by Linda Bily*

**T**he activities described in this guidebook are hazardous and should only be undertaken with a full understanding of all inherent risks. This book is only a guide, and although every effort has been made to ensure that route descriptions are up-to-date and accurate, no liability whatsoever is assumed for the use of the information presented in this book or for the consequences of any mistakes or errors in content or representation. Routefinding through mountainous terrain is involved, and knowledge of avalanche hazards, glacier travel, basic mountaineering and map reading skills is assumed. It is a

guide to trips that have been done—not an indication that any are safe or in condition to ski at any particular time. Many of the routes and suggested descents are only possible in safe avalanche conditions. It is assumed that persons attempting any of these routes have the necessary skills to assess the difficulties and dangers involved. You assume all responsibility for your own safety in the backcountry.

Most of the routes are not for novices. For those new to backcountry travel, it is recommended that you accompany an experienced group or hire a mountain guide.

## Acknowledgements

Writing this book has been as much of an adventure as any of the trips described. Exploring new areas, poring over maps, reliving past trips and discovering ideas for future trips has been very rewarding. My overall impression on finishing the book is WOW—are we ever blessed with an amazing amount of good skiing!

Although I wrote this book, it really owes its existence to the whole community of ski mountaineers. I relied on numerous people to share their knowledge of the Coast Mountains. Everyone has been very supportive, and the trips described in this book are based on lifetimes of experience. Meeting and talking to backcountry skiers in all regions has been especially rewarding.

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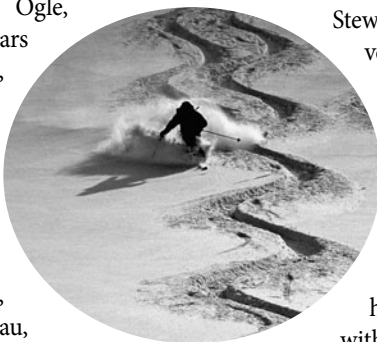
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Everyone contacted was extremely helpful with photographs. Credit is given with each photo but I would especially like to thank Linda Bily, Jos van der Burg and John Scurlock for the large number of their photographs that I have used.

I had much help in the production of the book with proofreading, editing, photographs, design, layout, and publishing. I would like to thank Paul Kubik, Lee Lau, Mark Grist and Cam Shute for checking route descriptions; Glenn Woodsworth for his help with Photoshop; Chic Scott and Matt Gunn for their advice on guidebooks; Stephen Baldwin for his help with scanning slides and Lisa Baile and Peter Pare for help scanning the maps. I am extremely grateful to Mehernosh Irani for his help with writing, proofreading and advice during the completion of the draft. I would like to thank Lucy Kenward for the final editing; Eda Kadar for drawing the maps; and Roger Handling for his crucial help with the layout and design.

Finally, enjoy this book and I hope to see you in the mountains!





# Using this Guidebook



Skiing on the divide S of Compton Neve below an unnamed summit W of Montrose Cr.

Rising up to 4000m from the shores of the Pacific Ocean, the Coast Mountains line the western edge of British Columbia. As the first barrier to winter storms sweeping off the ocean, the mountains are blessed by some of the deepest snowfalls in North America. The heavily glaciated summits and the spectacular scenery surrounding them offer some of the finest ski mountaineering in North America, ranging from easy tours through gentle alpine meadows, to long descents and difficult routes through steep mountain terrain and across large icefields.

*Exploring the Coast Mountains on Skis* is a guide to ski mountaineering in the Coast Mountains. Ski trips varying in length from one day to several weeks are described. Emphasis is placed on day and weekend ski trips to alpine areas near Vancouver. Remote ski trips to the large icefields that stretch north to Skagway are also included, as are shorter trips in the areas around Smithers, Terrace and Stewart in northern British Columbia.

As the title states, this book is about exploring. It is about traveling through the Coast Mountains, searching

for sheltered basins where the snow is deep and light, hunting for hidden couloirs, climbing to high snowy peaks, looking at patterns in the new fallen snow, staring at the chaos of a jumbled icefall or experiencing the stillness of a vast icefield. It is about the sense of discovery and the thrill of adventure that goes with ski mountaineering. The Coast Mountains are an incredible range of mountain wilderness, and the motivation for writing this guidebook is to inspire others to discover and connect with this exceptional part of our planet. It is a celebration of where we live and how wonderful it is.

This guidebook is the third edition of *Exploring the Coast Mountains on Skis*. The first edition, published in 1983, was 144 pages. Rewritten and revised in 1994, it grew to 256 pages. The third edition has now nearly doubled again. It has been completely revised and expanded with longer route descriptions and more photos. Many new trips have been added, and the area covered has been enlarged to include the entire Coast Mountains.



Skiing above the Burnie Gl in the Howson Range.

## Guidebook Organization

Trips are organized by geographical area, and the guidebook has been divided into 22 chapters, each covering a separate portion of the Coast Mountains.

The first fourteen chapters describe trips easily accessible by road from Vancouver. The focus is primarily on day and overnight trips in an area that extends north to the headwaters of the Lillooet and Bridge Rivers and east to the Chilliwack River valley, Coquihalla region and Manning Park. The Mt Baker area in Washington State is also included. Although it is not technically part of the Coast Mountains, this part of the Cascades is close to Vancouver and naturally falls into the scope of this book.

The remaining eight chapters cover the more remote portions of the Coast Mountains, which contain the highest summits and more than a dozen major icefields. Ski trips to these parts of the Coast Mountains typically require ten days to several weeks and involve more of an expeditionary undertaking to isolated wilderness areas. Separate chapters describe shorter trips near Smithers and Terrace.

Within each chapter, trips are described by alpine area or destination. Most trips are focused on summits but also include glade skiing, glacier runs, avalanche paths, alpine meadows, ridge tops and traverses. Trip descriptions explain the nature of the trip, the access and recom-

mended route and give an impression of the type of terrain to be covered, including a sense of the hazards and difficulty involved. Route descriptions are meant to be used in conjunction with a 1:50,000 NTS topographic map. Every trip is accompanied by a photograph. *Exploring the Coast Mountains on Skis* is written for experienced ski mountaineers and knowledge of and familiarity with mountain terrain, glacier travel and avalanche safety is assumed.

The following information is given for each trip:

### Length

An estimated length in days is given for all trips. This is for an average experienced party in normal conditions. Generally it allows for side trips to surrounding summits or additional ski runs. Where a range of days is given, this is meant to indicate that the objective can be reached in the shorter time listed, but that there is sufficient variety in the terrain to warrant a longer trip. This is particularly true of many shorter routes where an individual summit may be reached in a single day but where the area also offers enough skiing and exploring for a second day. In the case of longer trips, the number of days is more approximate. It generally includes a reasonable allocation for side trips and lost time due to stormy weather. The number of days can vary significantly with extended periods of either good or bad weather.



Skiing above the Meade Gl on the Juneau icefield.

### Distance and Elevation Gain

The distance and elevation gain estimates are totals for the return trip, as measured carefully from 1:50,000 maps, and are intended to give you an approximate idea of the travel time and effort required. Note that the actual time and effort required can vary significantly with factors such as snow conditions, weather, temperature, time of year, group size and experience, etc. It is essential that allowance for this variation be made. For this reason, it is up to you to

combine the distance and elevation gain with an assessment of the current conditions and your own abilities to estimate the travel time and effort required for your group. Where there is a significant elevation gain, this is the most important factor. Usually trips will require less time in spring when access and trailbreaking are easier, and temperatures and daylight are more favourable.

The table below gives some approximate travel times for typical trips.

### Travel Time and Effort for Typical Trips

Effort	Travel Time	Day Trip		Overnight Trips	
		Total Distance	Elevation Gain	Total Distance	Elevation Gain
Easy	< 4 hours	9km	500m		
Moderate	4–8 hours	16km	1300m	22km	1600m
Strenuous	8–12 hours	20km	1600m	34km	2200m



Carrying skis across Chilko Lk by kayak. Photo by Alejandro Frid





Tantalus Range from Paul Ridge.

Difficulty Ratings for Skiing

Rating	Name	Slope	Ski Terrain	Skiing Ability
1	Easy	Gentle slopes 10° to 25°	Easy angled tracks, gentle open slopes, logging roads	Ability to snowplow and make slow easy turns in a range of snow conditions
2	Intermediate	Slightly steep slopes 25° to 30°	Open or sparsely treed slopes, intermediate terrain at a ski area	Ability to sideslip sections in firm conditions and to turn in all other conditions
3	Advanced	Moderately steep slopes 30° to 35°	Long exposed open slopes, short steep steps, some obstacles in moderately steep terrain, thick forest	Ability to make quick controlled turns in any snow conditions
4	Difficult	Very steep slopes 35° to 45°	Big slopes with increasing exposure, couloirs with limited turning space, many obstacles	Very good ski technique. Jump turns and sideslipping necessary in firm conditions
5	Extremely Difficult	Extremely steep slopes up to 55°	Very exposed steep terrain with difficult obstacles	Perfect technique and good headspace

Difficulty Rating

Each trip is given a rating to indicate the skiing ability required to complete the descent safely and enjoyably in a reasonable time. Ratings are based on the well-known “S system” that has been widely used across North America and consists of a number described in the table above.

This is an approximate classification that assumes typical snow conditions. Note that confident or aggressive intermediate skiers can often manage to ski more advanced slopes safely and quickly, so there is quite a bit of flexibility in the ratings.

Ski descents with ratings of 5 or higher are not described in this book.

In some cases reference is made to the difficulty of climbing a peak or negotiating a notch. The standard ratings for mountaineering are:

Class 1—hiking

Class 2—scrambling

Class 3—easy climbing

Class 4—easy belayed climbing




Class 5—technical climbing

Terrain Rating

Each trip is given an Avalanche Terrain Rating. The rating is based on the Avalanche Terrain Exposure Scale (ATES), which has three different classes to describe the exposure of a backcountry trip to avalanche hazard: **Simple**, **Challenging** and **Complex**. The table below describes the basic characteristics of the three different classes.

The Avalanche Terrain Exposure Scale was developed by Parks Canada. The rating is an indication of the type of avalanche terrain on the rated route. As the avalanche hazard increases, you should restrict your travel choices to terrain with a lower rating. It is essential that avalanche bulletins be checked prior to a backcountry trip and that trip

**Avalanche Terrain Exposure Scale (ATES)**

Class	Terrain Criteria	Example Photograph
Simple	Exposure to low angle or primarily forested terrain. Some forest openings may involve the runout zones of infrequent avalanches. Many options to reduce or eliminate exposure. No glacier travel.	
Challenging	Exposure to well defined avalanche paths, starting zones or terrain traps; options exist to reduce or eliminate exposure with careful routefinding. Glacier travel is straightforward but crevasse hazard may exist.	
Complex	Exposure to multiple overlapping avalanche paths or large expanses of steep, open terrain; multiple avalanche starting zones or terrain traps below; minimal options to reduce exposure. Complicated glacier travel with extensive crevasse bands or icefalls. <i>Photo by Roger Fehr</i>	

selection and routefinding be adjusted to reflect the current avalanche hazard. Detailed information on the Avalanche Terrain Exposure Scale and trip-planning tools are available from the Canadian Avalanche Centre ([www.avalanche.ca](http://www.avalanche.ca)) to help you choose a destination that is appropriate for the current avalanche danger rating.

The rating given for the trip reflects the most difficult

terrain to be encountered along the route. It does not reflect possible variations or extra ski runs that are not part of the main route—these are not rated and might often involve more difficult terrain. For example, the Simple rating for the standard route along Paul Ridge in Garibaldi Park does not include the popular ski runs along the north side of Paul Ridge that venture into Challenging terrain.

## Starting Elevation

The starting elevation is specifically mentioned to help you decide if a given trip is suitable for the current snow and freezing levels. Can you drive to this elevation? Will you be able to ski up the trail? What temperatures can you expect? It also gives you an idea of the elevation gain required to reach the treeline.

## Best

The times listed indicate the most suitable months for a trip. This recommendation incorporates factors such as typical snow conditions, snow levels, weather and freezing levels. Some trips require very specific conditions and might only be skiable a few times in an average year, others are suitable throughout the winter.

## Maps and Grid References

Topographic maps are essential for all of the trips. Access and route descriptions are intended to be used in conjunction with detailed contour maps for both trip planning and route selection. The relevant 1:50,000 NTS mapsheet(s) are listed for each trip. All elevations are given in metres. A conversion table is included on the last page in the book. Grid references are based on NAD27. Note that if you are using the grid reference given with map software on a GPS, you may have to convert to NAD83.

Sketch maps giving an overview of selected areas or showing longer routes are interspersed throughout the text. See Map Legend below.

## First Record of Trip

The last line under the trip information sub-headings lists the first record of a trip and any available reference. Although it is difficult to determine and often not reported, this information is given for historical interest where known.





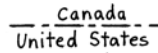






## Geographic Names

Most names used to refer to geographic features such as peaks, glaciers, creeks and lakes are taken directly from government topographic maps. In some areas, it was necessary to use unofficial names to refer to features presently unnamed. For the most part, these unofficial names are those adopted by local residents and skiers, and have been used elsewhere in the skiing and mountaineering literature. Unnamed summits are referred to by their elevation in metres, e.g. Pk 2318. No attempt is made to distinguish between official and unofficial names. For more information on official names, see [www.ilmb.gov.bc.ca/bcnames](http://www.ilmb.gov.bc.ca/bcnames) or [www.geonames.nrcan.gc.ca](http://www.geonames.nrcan.gc.ca).



Photo by Brian Finnie

## Map Legend

	ski route
	road
	ridge
	ski lift
	international border
	peak
	hut/building
	city/town
	parking
	lake/ocean
	glacier

# Trip Planning



McGillivray Pass. Photo by Pat Mulrooney

## Weather

### Websites

**[www.weatheroffice.gc.ca](http://www.weatheroffice.gc.ca)**

Environment Canada is the starting point for city forecasts, satellite images, analyses and model predictions.

**[www.whistlerblackcomb.com/weather](http://www.whistlerblackcomb.com/weather)**

Environment Canada issues a site-specific alpine recreation forecast for the Whistler alpine region, which is available from the Whistler-Blackcomb website. The forecast includes freezing levels and a synopsis for the South Coast Mountains.

**[www.mountseymour.com/today/snow](http://www.mountseymour.com/today/snow)**

A site-specific alpine recreation forecast is also available for the North Shore mountains. The forecast is issued by Environment Canada and can be viewed on the Mt Seymour website.

**[www.nwac.us](http://www.nwac.us)**

The Northwest Weather and Avalanche Center in Wash-

ington State issues detailed mountain weather forecasts for the Cascade Mountains.

**[cirrus.unbc.ca/atmos](http://cirrus.unbc.ca/atmos)**

The University of Northern BC has an excellent site for BC weather information.

**[www.atmos.washington.edu/weather](http://www.atmos.washington.edu/weather)**

The University of Washington is one of the best websites for satellite imagery. It also shows forecasts, models and freezing levels.

**[www.wxforecaster.com](http://www.wxforecaster.com)**

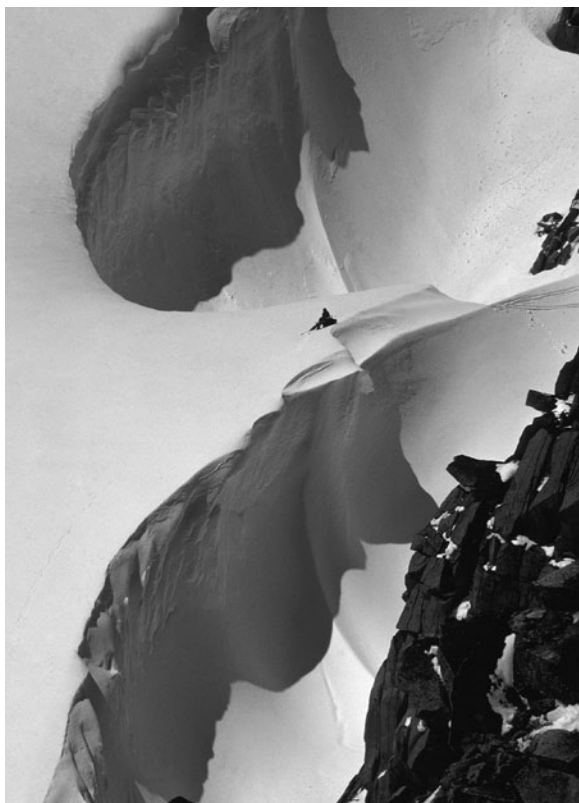
This is a great user-friendly site that allows you to view numerous weather forecasting models.

**[www.snow-forecast.com](http://www.snow-forecast.com)**

Freezing levels can be a challenging variable to forecast. Good approximations are available on this site.

**[www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov)**

The US national weather service gives a good synoptic weather discussion with area forecasts.



### Recorded Weather Forecasts

Environment Canada forecasts are also available from recorded phones message at:

Vancouver	604-664-9010
Squamish	604-664-9010
Whistler	604-664-9010
Hope	604-869-5765
Smithers	250-847-1958
Terrace	250-635-4192
Kitimat	250-632-7864

### Weather Consultations

Weather consultations with a professional meteorologist are available for a fee from Environment Canada at 1-900-565-5555. Meteorologists have immediate access to data not available to the public and can increase your level of confidence in the forecast. To make the most of your weather briefing, have the location and elevation of your intended destination ready. Also, explain when you are going and what your travel timeframe is. It's a good idea to call a few days before your trip and then again on the day of your departure to get the latest available forecast.

## Avalanche Conditions

All of the routes described involve travel in mountainous terrain with exposure to avalanches and other hazards. A current avalanche danger rating and information on snowpack stability is available from avalanche advisory bulletins and should be obtained prior to all ski-mountaineering trips. If you only have time to check one thing before your trip, it should be the avalanche forecast.



### Websites

[www.avalanche.ca](http://www.avalanche.ca)

The Canadian Avalanche Centre issues an Avalanche Information Bulletin twice a week. The bulletin gives a summary of the current snowpack stability, recent avalanche activity, weather synopsis and a forecast for the avalanche danger rating. Specific bulletins are issued for major mountainous areas in western Canada. The South Coast Bulletin covers southwestern BC. The Northwest BC Bulletin covers the area around Smithers and Terrace. Partner bulletins are issued for Whistler and the North Shore mountains. Additional local information is available on the Regional Discussion Board. Toll-free bulletins are also available by phone at 1-800-667-1105.

[www.whistlerblackcomb.com/weather](http://www.whistlerblackcomb.com/weather)

Whistler-Blackcomb avalanche forecasters issue a daily backcountry avalanche advisory for the areas surrounding the ski area. The avalanche advisory is also available by phone at 604-938-7676.

[www.nwac.us](http://www.nwac.us)

The Northwest Weather and Avalanche Center in Washington State issues mountain weather and avalanche forecasts for the Cascade Mountains. The avalanche forecast is also available by phone at 206-526-6677. Additional snowpack information is available at [www.avalanchenw.org](http://www.avalanchenw.org).

### Additional information

Additional information on snow stability can also be obtained from ski patrols at downhill ski areas or from various heliski companies, both of which monitor backcountry conditions on a regular basis.



## Current Conditions

### Snow Reports

Snowfall and current alpine temperatures in many areas are available from ski area snow reports.

North Shore Mtns	<a href="http://www.mountseymour.com">www.mountseymour.com</a> <a href="http://www.cypressmountain.com">www.cypressmountain.com</a>
Whistler	<a href="http://www.whistlerblackcomb.com">www.whistlerblackcomb.com</a>
Mt Baker	<a href="http://www.mtbaker.us">www.mtbaker.us</a>
Manning Park	<a href="http://www.manningpark.com">www.manningpark.com</a>
Smithers	<a href="http://www.skismithers.com">www.skismithers.com</a>
Terrace	<a href="http://www.shamesmountain.com">www.shamesmountain.com</a>

### Highway Weather Stations

Weather reports from automated weather stations are available on the web for several mountain passes at:

[www.th.gov.bc.ca/weather](http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/weather)  
[www.drivebc.ca](http://www.drivebc.ca)

Automated weather stations in southwestern BC are located at Coquihalla Summit on Hwy 5, Allison Pass on Hwy 3 and Cayoosh Summit on Hwy 99. Automated weather stations in northern BC are located at Endgoal near Bear Pass on Hwy 37A.

## Logging Roads

A significant number of trips start from logging roads. Logging roads are generally not plowed or maintained in winter. Road conditions can also change drastically from year to year as branch roads become deactivated, washed out or overgrown. General road conditions can be obtained from the BC Ministry of Forests at [www.gov.bc.ca/for](http://www.gov.bc.ca/for). Most of the ski trips that use logging roads lie within the Chilliwack or Squamish Forest Districts. Recent reports of snow levels and road conditions are available from road bulletins and trip reports posted on [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com). For extended trips in more remote areas, information can also be obtained from logging contractors working on specific roads.

Logging roads are not marked on most 1:50,000 NTS maps. Road locations can often be found from 1:20,000 BC TRIM maps, which can be viewed through links on [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com) or the BC Basemap viewer (see “TRIM Maps” in About the Coast Mountains). It is suggested that you mark the logging roads on your own map.

## Multi-use Considerations

A paragraph at the beginning of each chapter describes multi-use concerns in the chapter region. Areas that are



used for snowmobiling, heliskiing or cat-skiing are indicated. In some regions, the main overlapping use of an area is with heliskiers. Most heliski companies have a policy of avoiding ski mountaineers. Generally they have a wide range of terrain in their tenures and can usually plan to avoid a particular area if they know you will be ski mountaineering there. Contact the heliski operator several days in advance so that they can plan to ski other runs on the days you will be in the area. Also let them know if your plans change.

## Equipment

**Rope**—Whenever glacier travel is involved, a rope, prusiks and a rescue pulley should be carried and, if necessary, used.

**GPS**—A GPS unit is an important navigational aid that is especially useful on glaciers and other high-alpine terrain.

**Cell Phone**—Coverage can vary and should not be counted on, but cell phones are sometimes useful on trips that are close to population centres such as the North Shore mountains or the Squamish and Whistler areas.



Below Claw Pk near the Plummer Hut in the Waddington Range.

**Satellite Phone**—On longer trips to remote areas, a satellite phone is an important safety precaution and can be rented in Vancouver or from radio shops or some of the local mountaineering clubs.

**Toboggan**—In certain areas of the Coast Mountains, toboggans have been used to haul supplies on longer trips where the terrain is relatively gentle. The most adaptable setup is to wear a pack and use the toboggan to carry a portion of a heavy load. An inexpensive, lightweight toboggan can be made from the flexible plastic sheets referred to commercially as “crazy carpets.” These sheets slide easily on sidehills and can be rolled up and carried on more difficult terrain.

**Snowmobile**—None of the trips described in this book requires a snowmobile.

**4WD**—Some trips require a high-clearance four-wheel-drive vehicle to travel up logging or access roads. In most cases where 4WD is needed, this information is specifically mentioned in the text.

## Recommended Trips

Perhaps it is March. It has been cold all week and the mountains are blanketed in fresh snow. The weather is clearing up for the weekend. Just looking at your skis in the closet makes your feet restless, but where can you go? You’ve been to a few of the regular spots but want to branch out and try something different. This section highlights a selection of classic trips to help skiers become familiar with the Coast Mountains.

Winter usually starts to arrive in late October. The first skiing of the season is usually found on the coastal side of the range where snowfall is heaviest. Generally, only

areas near major highways are readily accessible in mid-winter due to snow at low elevations, heavy trailbreaking and poorer weather. This includes summits and meadows adjacent to Highway 99 between Squamish and Pemberton, as well as areas surrounding the Duffey Lake road, the Mt Baker ski area and the Coquihalla and Hope–Princeton Highways. As the days grow longer, roads at lower elevations become snow-free, so that by March and April more areas can be reached. Snow begins to leave the higher elevations in late April on the eastern side of the ranges where the snowpack is the shallowest, but lasts well into June on the more heavily glaciated areas surrounding Garibaldi Park, the Squamish River and the major icefields farther north. Determined individuals can make an effort to ski every month of the year (see [www.turns-all-year.com](http://www.turns-all-year.com)).

Trips to the Interior side of the range are best in late winter and early spring to take advantage of the drier snow there. Skiing conditions on the interior side of the range are more favourable during bad weather than on the coast with less fog and whiteout conditions.

Most longer trips venture onto steeper, more heavily glaciated terrain and are best visited in the spring (with peak conditions in May) when longer days, warmer temperatures and more stable snow conditions favour easier travel at higher elevations. This includes most of the long traverses and base camps on the large icefields.

Areas adjacent to Vancouver are visited most often, followed by summits between Squamish and Pemberton and beyond to Duffey Lake. Areas east of Vancouver surrounding the Coquihalla Highway, Manning Park and the Chilliwack River are visited less often. Areas north of Pemberton and beyond to Alaska are visited the least.

## Day Trips

**Easy Trips**—Hollyburn Mtn, Paul Ridge, Zoa Pk, Three Brothers Mtn, Mt Kelly, Herman Saddle, Marriott Basin, Nak Pk

**Early-season Outings**—Paul Ridge, Singing Pass, Heliotrope Ridge, Skyline Divide, Herman Saddle, Tricouni Pk, Shovelnose Cr

**Mid-winter Ski Ascents**—Gin Pk, Whirlwind Pk, Cassiope Mtn, Vantage Ridge, Mt Rohr, Mt Chief Pascall, Blowdown Pk, Zupjok Pk, Frosty Mtn, Flora Pk, Great Bear Pk, Mt Steele, Mt Harvey, Mt Strachan

**Mid-winter Tours**—Table Mtn Loop, Skyline Trail, Alpaca Pk, Panorama Ridge, Musical Bumps, Howe Sound Crest Trail

**Great Skiing**—Metal Dome, Phalanx Mtn, Decker Mtn,



*Photo by Pat Mulrooney*

Vantage Ridge, Heart Strings, Chute 56, Thar Pk, Two Bears, Shuksan Arm, Mt Ann, Bombtram Mtn, Trorey Gl, Mt Taylor, Cayoosh Mtn

**Longest Runs**—Shudder Gl, MacBeth Gl, Cayoosh Mtn, Mt Matier

**Couloirs/Ski Descents**—Fissile Pk, Wedge Mtn, Joffre Pk, Mt Matier, Barometer Mtn, Saxifrage Mtn

**Mid-winter Snow Days**—Hollyburn Trees, Singing Pass, Rohr Ridge, Joffre Shoulder, Coquihalla Lks Ridge, Thar Pk, Herman Saddle, Channel Ridge, Manning Park back-country

**Popular Classics**—Cloudburst Mtn, Rainbow Mtn, Mt Sproatt, Needle Pk, Knight Pk, Mt Seymour, Three Brothers

**Other Ski Ascents**—Duke Mtn, Saxifrage Mtn, Goat Mtn, Foley Pk, Knight Pk, Mt Outram, Mt Matier, Tszil Mtn, Canadian Border Pk, Mt Caspar, Thomas Pk, Tremor Mtn

**Spring Ski Ascent**—Mt Wood, Ruth Mtn, Exodus Pk, Mt Jimmy Jimmy, Goat Pk, Lady Pk, Face Mtn, Chimai Mtn

**Long Spring Ski Ascents**—Mt Baker, Mt Shuksan, Mt Garibaldi, Deserted Pk

**Spring Traverses**—Spearhead, Garibaldi Neve, Currie-Wedge, Watson

**Enchainments**—Spearhead and Neve Traverse, Joffre Ski Descents

### **Weekend Trips**

**Easy Trips**—Mt Steele, The Gargoyles, Marriott Basin, Mt Rohr

**Cabins**—Callaghan Lodge, Brew Hut, Elfin Hut, Keith's Hut, Marriott, Tetrahedron Cabins

**Alpine Basins**—Caspar Cr, Channel Cr, Saxifrage Mtn, Hurley Silver, Rhododendron Mtn, Steep Cr

**Mid-winter Ski Ascents**—Mt Matier, Ipsoot Mtn, Overlord Mtn, Powder Mtn, Tremor Mtn, Panther Pk, Snowpider Mtn

**Traverses**—Spearhead, Garibaldi Neve

**Ski Ascents**—Exodus Pk, Mt Breakenridge, Face Mtn, Birkenhead Pk, Mt Garibaldi, Mt Carr, Pykett Pk, Mt Wood

**Spring Ski Ascents**—Pelion Mtn, Mt Rahm, Mt Carr, Castle Towers, Mt Baker, Mt Spickard, South Cr, Capricorn Mtn, Mt Athelstan



Photo by Linda Bily

## Longer Trips

**Cabins**—Lizzie Cr, Phelix Cr, North Cr, Overseer, Marriott, Cerise Cr, Starr, Larsen Ridge, Happy Valley

**Lodges**—Callaghan, McGillivray, Eldorado, Burnie Gl, Nirvana Pass

**Ski Ascents**—Mamquam Mtn, Mt Sampson, Capricorn Mtn

**Alpine Basins**—Athelney Pass, South Cr, Melvin Cr, Chochiwa Gl, Warner Cr, Clayton Falls Cr

**Winter Base Camps**—Petersen Cr, Sockeye Cr, Boulder (Pebble) Cr, Slim Cr, Crazy Cr, Niut Range

**Three- to Four-day Traverses**—North Joffre Cr Horseshoe, Owl-Tenquille, Wedge-Currie, Ashlu-Elaho, Squamish-Cheakamus Divide, Spruce Lk High Trail, Exodus Traverse, Snowspider-Lizzie

**Week-long Traverses**—McBride Range, Misty Icefield, Bridge-Lillooet, Stein Divide, Gun-Slim Loop, Big Cr

**Challenging Spring Traverses**—Tantalus Range, Nooksack Traverse, Mineral Mtn High Route, Nusatsum Divide

**Road Trips**—Pemberton area, Hope area, Bella Coola, Smithers/Terrace, Stewart

## Ski Expeditions

**Spring Ski Camp**—Manatee Range, Lillooet Icefield, Franklin Gl, Monarch Icefield, Ape Lk

**Two-week Traverses**—Lillooet R Horseshoe, Franklin Gl, Salmon Gl, Garibaldi Park, Pantheon Range, Waddington Circumski

**Three-week Traverses**—Monarch Icefield, Terrace-Kemano, Juneau Icefield

**Challenging Traverses**—Waddington Divide, Slim Cr to Toba Inlet

**Remote Ski Ascents**—Waddington NW Peak, Mt Munday, Mt Gilbert, Mt Grenville, Ogre Mtn, Mt Atna

## Snowboard-friendly Trips

The routes described, though oriented for skiing, can also be used for backcountry snowboarding. Snowboard trips are best on terrain that is not flat or rolling. Some highlights are:

**Suggested Trips**—Mt Strachan, Mt Baker, Cayoosh Mtn, Cloudburst Mtn, Mt Cheam, Mt Taylor, Rohr Ridge, Chute 56, Nak Pk, Two Bears, Metal Dome, Mt Harvey, Decker Mtn, Pelion Mtn, Markhor Pk, McGillivray Pass Lodge

# About the Coast Mountains



Looking S to the Whitemantle Range from a camp on the Waddington Gl.

Stretching north for more than 1500km along the entire west coast of British Columbia and into Alaska, the Coast Mountains are the westernmost range of the Pacific Cordillera of North America. The Coast Mountains are characterized by extensive, heavily glaciated alpine areas surrounded by rugged valleys. The terrain changes dramatically across the 200km width of the range and can be described by three zones from west to east.

## Terrain

### Inlet Zone

The inlet zone lies next to the Pacific Ocean. The mountains are cut by deep glacially carved valleys and long fjords. Peaks rise to around 2000m and are steep and heavily for-

ested. The transition between valley bottom and mountain tops is very abrupt. The treeline is at about 1400m, and alpine areas are generally restricted to rounded ridge tops and horn-shaped summits.

Ski mountaineering in the inlet zone typically involves steep forested approaches to open summits high above narrow valleys and inlets. Many areas offer tremendous views of the ocean, with runs of 300–500m on smooth ridge crests and small alpine basins. The local North Shore mountains near Vancouver are typical of the terrain in this zone.

### Glacier Zone

Beyond the heads of the long fjords is the central backbone of the range. Deep valleys continue inland from the coast





Inlet zone.



Glacier zone.



Interior zone.

but alpine areas are far more extensive and the mountains are considerably higher than in the inlet zone. Summits rise to between 2500m and 3200m, with a few of the highest peaks reaching over 4000m. The mountains are draped in snow year-round. Glaciation is widespread, in some regions engulfing all but the highest peaks and forming large icefields. It is not uncommon for glaciers to span 1200m of elevation, and higher summits often have 2000m of glaciation. In some areas, the range of glaciation reaches 3600m.

The glacier zone offers some of the most spectacular ski mountaineering in the Coast Mountains. Trips in this

zone are primarily focused on the extensive alpine terrain, which offers numerous ski ascents and outstanding alpine runs from 600 to 1000m long, with some over 1200m and the longest descents up to 2100m. More than half of the trips described in the book are located in the glacier zone.

The coastal valleys contain some of the lushest temperate rainforests in the world. However, the mossy forests of hemlock, cedar and spruce with dense undergrowth are rarely traveled on ski trips. Most ski trips begin at elevations above 800m, where the lush rainforest gives way to uniform stands of mountain hemlock and amabilis fir that are typically well spaced and easy to travel through when snow covers the forest floor. The treeline is at about 1600m.

The Sea-to-Sky region between Squamish and Whistler is fairly typical of the glacier zone, although not as alpine as the terrain farther north.

### Interior Zone

The third zone lies to the east of the main divide where the Coast Mountains taper onto the Interior plateau. Alpine areas are still extensive, but the usual narrow drainages give way to wide sweeping valleys that rise gradually into the mountains. Precipitation is comparatively less than in the other two zones, as this is the leeward side of the Coast Mountains. As a result, glaciation is lighter and a greater portion of the alpine terrain is meadow instead of ice. Summits are only slightly lower than near the apex of the range. The ridges and peaks tend to be narrower and rockier and the general appearance of the mountains is more like other continental ranges with interconnected ridges. The widely spaced coastal forest gives way to smaller, denser stands of subalpine fir, spruce and pine and the treeline is at 1800m. The skiing in this zone ranges from superb high-alpine tours with lots of turns to pleasant meadow skiing at treeline or descents of long avalanche paths down into the subalpine. The Duffey Lake area, southern Chilcotin Ranges, Pantheon Range and the Smithers area are typical of the Interior zone. Many trips are best in mid-winter.

### Sub-ranges

The Coast Mountains span 11 degrees of latitude between Vancouver, BC, and Skagway, Alaska, and are divided into three sub-ranges from south to north: The Pacific, Kitimat and Boundary Ranges.

The Pacific Ranges extend north from the Fraser River to the Bella Coola valley and form the southern third of the Coast Mountains. The Pacific Ranges vary from the relatively gentle areas around Whistler to some of the most



rugged sections of the Coast Mountains around Mt Waddington. Northwest of Whistler, the terrain is less broken by valleys. Alpine areas are more extensive and the landscape is literally draped in ice and glaciers that interconnect to form sprawling icefields, which stretch between the peaks and in some regions drown all but the highest summits.

The Kitimat Ranges continue north from the Bella Coola valley to the Nass River. Although heavily glaciated, they lack the extensive icefields of the Pacific Ranges and are characterized by extensive ridge systems heavily indented with deep coastal valleys.

The Boundary Ranges are comprised of the ranges between the Nass River and the northern end of the Coast Mountains near the BC–Yukon border and include a large part of the Alaska Panhandle. North of the Nass River, there is a return to extensive glaciation. The Boundary Ranges contain the largest glaciers and icefields in the Coast Mountains, some of which flow right into the ocean and are the most southerly tidewater glaciers in the northern hemisphere.

As you move north along the length of the Coast Mountains, the scale of the mountains changes from the compactness of the Cascade Mountains in the south to the enormous grandeur of the St Elias Mountains in the north. The treeline and extent of glaciation drop to lower elevations as you move north and can be up to 600m lower than at the southern end of the range.

## Climate

by Matt MacDonald

What makes the “Wet Coast” so miserable in the late fall is the same factor that makes the ski season equally epic once the freezing levels begin to drop in November: biblical proportions of snow. The cool maritime climate of the Coast Mountains is characterized by heavy precipitation and moderate temperatures, as described below.

### Precipitation

The Coast Mountains receive some of the highest amounts of precipitation in North America. Precipitation patterns are dominated by orographic effects associated with the flow of moist air over the Coast Mountains. At the southern end of the range, lowland areas near the coast receive approximately 1.5m of precipitation annually. In contrast, on the mountain slopes, where the Pacific storms are forced to dump their moisture as they rise up, the annual precipitation is over 4m. On the interior side of the range, the effects of rainshadow reduce the average annual precipitation to 1m or less.

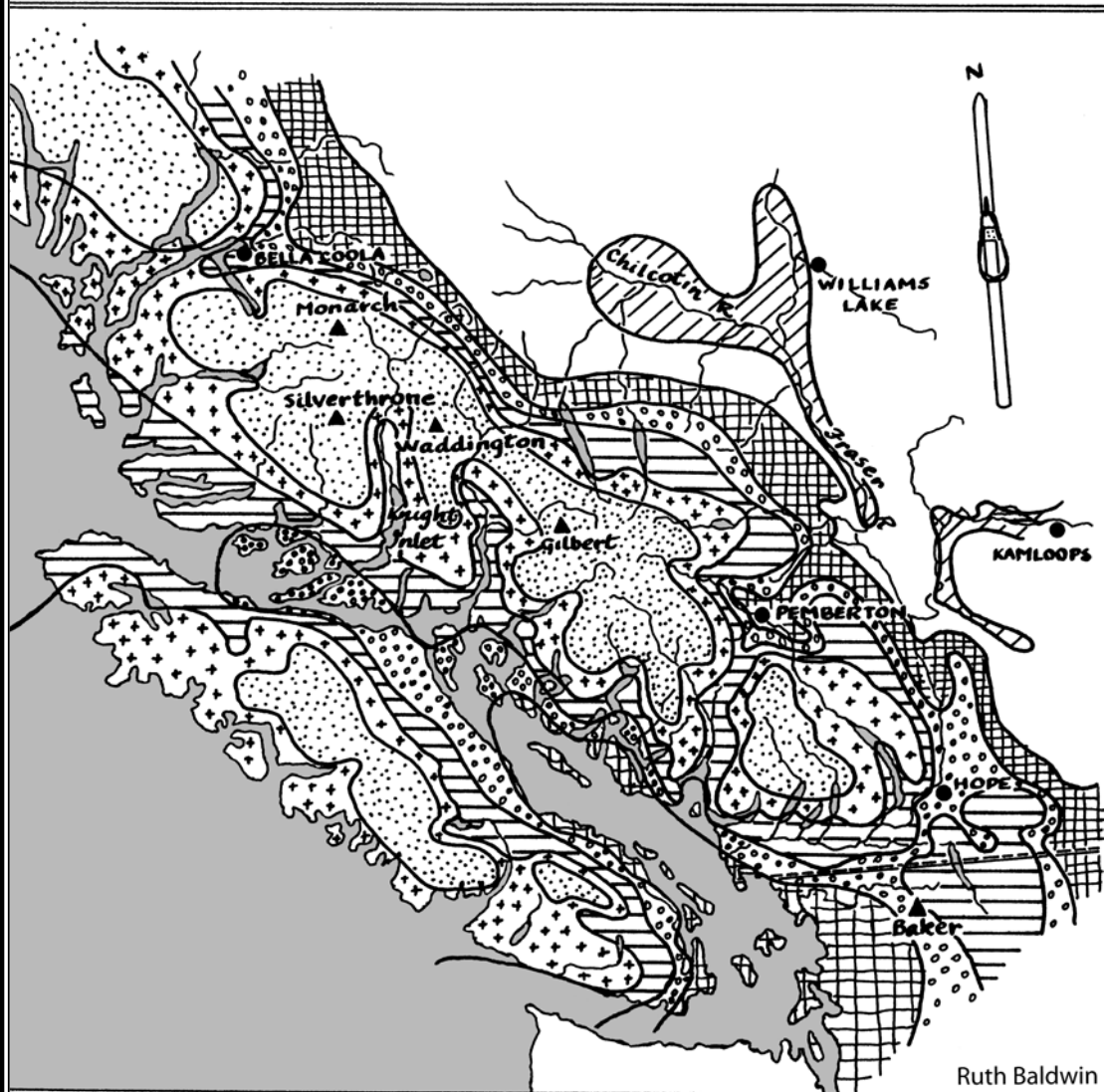
The Coast Mountain climate is characterized by a reasonably distinct rainy season: two-thirds of the precipitation falls during the 6 winter months from November to April, with November and December being the wettest months. At higher elevations, the majority of precipitation thus falls as snow. During the winter, precipitation can be expected about 4 to 5 days per week and the average wet spell lasts about 5 days. Longer wet spells of up to 20 days are not uncommon, and the record wet spell is 28 consecutive days with measurable precipitation.

### Temperature

One of the most notable features of the Coast Mountain's climate is the contrast in temperature between lowland coastal areas and adjacent alpine areas. While Vancouver and most of the populated regions along the coast of BC enjoy relatively mild winters, elevations above treeline remain below freezing for the better half of the year and thus experience long snowy winters. Average alpine temperatures are roughly  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$  during the winter months, but they vary from about  $-4^{\circ}\text{C}$  on Vancouver's North Shore mountains to about  $-16^{\circ}\text{C}$  on the interior side of the range.

The variation in temperature across the Coast Mountains is due to the moderating influence of the Pacific Ocean on the west and the cooler continental conditions on the east. The variation is further enhanced by the complex flow of winter storms over the range. Fluctuations in the freezing level are most noticeable near the coast, where storms first

# MEAN ANNUAL PRECIPITATION IN S.W. BRITISH COLUMBIA



over 350 cm



100 - 150 cm



under 30 cm



250 - 350 cm



50 - 100 cm



150 - 250 cm



30 - 50 cm



SCALE: KILOMETERS



rise up the mountain slopes. As the storms move inland, these fluctuations are often lessened by the influence of continental air masses. For example, winter temperatures on the North Shore mountains can rise above freezing once or twice per week. In the Whistler area, temperatures above freezing in the alpine are much less common, occurring only 5 to 6 times per winter. And on the Interior side of the Coast Mountains, above freezing temperatures are even rarer, occurring only a few times per winter.

Extremely cold temperatures are rare in most parts of the Coast Mountains. The thermometer seldom dips below  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Frigid temperatures occur only when a ridge of high pressure builds over the interior of northern BC and allows cold arctic air to push down from the north.

The largest differences in temperature are associated with changes in elevation. This variation is described by the lapse rate, which ranges from  $5^{\circ}\text{C}$  per 1000m for saturated air to  $10^{\circ}\text{C}$  per 1000m for dry air, though an average lapse rate of  $6^{\circ}\text{C}$  per 1000m is a standard approximation for estimating freezing levels. The snow level is typically about 200m below the freezing level due to evaporative cooling effects.

As a general rule, if it is  $6^{\circ}\text{C}$  or colder and raining in Vancouver, it will be below zero and snowing on the North Shore mountains and in Whistler village. A temperature of  $10^{\circ}\text{C}$  in Vancouver corresponds roughly to a freezing level near treeline in the Squamish–Whistler area.

## Sunshine

Sunshine is typically infrequent and short-lived during the winter months. In January, most areas receive about 20 per cent of the available sunshine. A typical sunny spell lasts about 2 days, and there are approximately 16 days per month with measurable sunshine. Spring weather is usually less stormy, and the number of days with measurable sunshine rises to approximately 27 in April, when many areas receive up to 44 per cent of available sunshine (less on the North Coast).



## Weather

by Matt MacDonald

Of all the factors to be considered before embarking on a ski-mountaineering trip in the Coast Mountains, weather is quite possibly the most decisive one, as snow conditions, avalanche hazard and visibility all depend on weather.

## Storms

The weather in the Coast Mountains is dominated by storms that sweep off the Pacific Ocean and spread moisture across North America. The storms are spawned over the Pacific Ocean and form around areas of low pressure. Storms are primarily due to cyclonic disturbances, with typical warm-front, cold-front sequences. During the winter, 10 to 15 storms reach the BC coast per month. This works out to approximately three storms per week. Each storm spreads winds and precipitation for 1 to 2 days at a time.

There are two types of winter storms that affect the Coast Mountains: Gulf of Alaska lows and Coastal lows. The majority of storms start as Gulf of Alaska lows, which usually form south of the Aleutian Islands as a frontal wave between cold northern air and warmer air to the south. These frontal waves travel eastward a considerable distance before developing into an actual low-pressure system. Once the low begins to deepen, the pressure falls rapidly and the entire system increases in size. Gulf of Alaska lows typically track northeastward and thus affect northern regions such as Kitimat, Terrace and Stewart.

Much less common are Coastal lows, which tend to track farther south, ultimately reaching Vancouver Island and the southern mainland where they encounter topography and dissipate. Coastal lows usually develop off the west side of Vancouver Island and intensify very rapidly. Southeasterly winds ahead of Coastal lows can be very strong. Northwesterly winds following the passage of these lows are also quite strong.



The low-pressure systems that generate storms often curl northward into the Gulf of Alaska and dissipate as they crash into the Coastal Mountains, while their associated frontal systems usually persist and push across the coast. What begins as a typical cold- and warm-front combination eventually occludes and detaches from the centre of the low. These occluded fronts extend southward from the low and connect to the frontal wave. Frontal waves make up the majority of winter storms that affect the Coast Mountains.

### Storm Track

The storms and frontal systems generated over the Pacific Ocean are directed by a strong upper-level flow in the atmosphere known as the jet stream. The orientation of the jet stream is the result of two semi-permanent features in the upper-level flow. During the winter, British Columbia's major weather maker is the Aleutian Low. This semi-permanent low-pressure system sways between the Aleutian Islands and the Gulf of Alaska and contributes to the development of all major storms. It is balanced by the Pacific High, which sits off the California coast all winter and nudges its way northward in spring, giving way to sunnier skies. Subtle changes in the strength and relative positions

of these two features dictate the storm track that disturbances will follow across the eastern Pacific. Upper-level flow that travels from west to east across the zones of longitude is known as zonal flow and is the most common while flow that has a strong north to south component along the lines of longitude is known as meridional flow.

The jet stream generally moves in longer cycles so that the orientation of the storm track often remains relatively unchanged for a series of storms. Persistent blocking patterns occur when the jet stream remains stationary resulting in a static weather pattern that can last several weeks.

Freezing levels, precipitation, wind direction and intensity all depend on the orientation of the storm track. What follows are the most common storm tracks affecting the BC coast.

### Westerly Flow

The most common upper-level flow is from the west. Storms embedded in a westerly flow are fast moving and are lifted rapidly along windward slopes of the Coast Mountains, causing widespread precipitation. Freezing levels are typically 800m, resulting in heavy snow at higher elevations. Winds are moderate and shift from southeast ahead of the storm to southwest behind the storm. Storms typically last



1 to 2 days and usually approach the coast in quick succession with only short-lived clearing between systems. Westerly flow is especially prevalent between October and early December when the jet stream tends to be more zonal. A southwesterly component in the flow draws warm air into the storm and leads to bigger changes in the freezing level between storms.

### **Northwesterly Flow**

When the upper-level flow is from the northwest, frontal systems tend to slide down the coast from the Gulf of Alaska, plunging freezing levels to as low as 300m. Precipitation is greatest over the north coast and decreases southward. Storms are smaller and quicker moving and precipitation is heaviest along western slopes.

### **Southwesterly Flow**

Upper-level flows from the southwest or south bring a steady stream of warmer air that floods across the Coast Mountains, resulting in wet snow sometimes mixed with rain. Southwesterly flow is perpendicular to the mountains and hence yields heavy precipitation on their upslope or coastal side while lee slopes in rainshadow areas often remain dry. This flow is fairly common with freezing levels up to 1200m. About 5–6 times per winter, southwesterly flow causes the freezing level to rise above 2000m.

### **Pineapple Express**

When a strong southerly flow sets up, air originating from the sub-tropics is drawn into what is affectionately called a Pineapple Express. Freezing levels rise to over 3000m and heavy precipitation can last for several days. Southerly flow tends to develop when the jet stream buckles and the persistent westerly flow shifts to include a significant southerly component. Pineapple Expresses are relatively rare and typically happen only once per winter. Heavy raincrusts often form following their passage and can create weak layers in the snowpack that sometimes persist through the winter.

### **Arctic Outflow**

A strong upper-level meridional flow from the north leads to the formation of a ridge of high pressure over the interior of BC that draws cold arctic air down from the north and forces any incoming storms south into Oregon and California. The weather is bitterly cold and clear over much of BC, with freezing levels at valley bottom or even sea level. Strong arctic outflow winds rush through valleys and inlets and out to the coast. Alpine winds, however, are generally light. Cold air can remain trapped in valleys for days, creating strong temperature inversions.



*Photo by Markus Kellerhals*

Meridional patterns in the upper flow become more common in mid-winter, hence arctic outflow conditions are most common in late December or early January. Arctic outflow conditions typically occur only once or twice per winter. They result from a persistent blocking pattern that often lasts for days or weeks. The pattern usually breaks down with the arrival of a strong storm from the southwest that brings heavy snowfalls at sea level and is ultimately followed by a rapid rise in freezing levels.

### **Local Effects**

As a general rule, the more perpendicular a mountain range is to the incoming storm, the more orographic lifting will occur, resulting in heavier precipitation. Also worth considering is the orientation of valleys and inlets with respect to the direction of the storms. The convergence of the flow at the ends of valleys and inlets significantly enhances precipitation.

### **Long-term Effects**

There are a number of long-term weather variations that can be directly related to cycles in the ocean. The most well-known is the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO). ENSO is associated with surface-water temperature fluctuations in the eastern Pacific Ocean off South America. El Niño episodes typically last 1 to 2 years and cycle irregularly over intervals of 2 to 7 years. El Niño episodes tend to cause warmer temperatures in the Coast Mountains, which lead to below-normal snowpacks at low elevations and normal or slightly above-normal snowpack at higher elevations. The cold phase of ENSO, known as La Niña, is associated with colder temperatures as well as above-normal snowfalls and snowpacks in the Coast Mountains. For further information, see [www.skimountaineer.com](http://www.skimountaineer.com).

Not as significant as ENSO is the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO), which contributes to inter-decadal fluctuations in weather patterns. The PDO is characterized by shifts in surface temperature in the northern Pacific Ocean



McGillivray Pass. Photo by Pat Mulrooney

that last 20 to 30 years. The cold phase of the cycle is associated with increased snow cover over much of western North America. Indications are that the PDO should be entering a cold phase in 2008, but it is possible that climate change is overpowering the shift.

The most disconcerting long-term shifts in weather are associated with climate change. The average temperature in the Coast Mountains increased approximately 0.6°C over the twentieth century. This is equivalent to a 100m rise in the freezing level. Long-term predictions of changes in snow cover due to climate change are extremely difficult to make. Some models indicate heavier winter precipitation. All models predict higher freezing levels. Hence, it is crucial that we all do our part to reduce climate change.

## Reading

*Mountain Weather* by Jeff Renner

*Mountain Meteorology* by David Whiteman

*Living With Weather along the BC Coast* by Owen S. Lange

*The BC Weather Book* by Keith C. Heidorn

[www.climate.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca](http://www.climate.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca), National Climate Archives

## Snow Conditions

Deep and lots of it! The overall snow climate of the Coast Mountains is characterized by frequent snowfalls at moderately cold temperatures. Soft snow is the norm, and snow conditions are generally good to excellent a large percentage of the time—but everything from cold smoke to mashed potatoes, wet cement, corn snow and even rain-crust is possible.

## Snowfall

The Coast Mountains receive the heaviest snowfalls of any mountain range in Canada. The annual snowfall at treeline is typically about 10m, but this amount varies from about 5m on the leeward side of the mountains to over 25m on the high icefields. Record annual snowfalls in some areas are close to 30m. During the winter months it snows an average of 4 to 5 days a week, with 10 to 20cm of snow daily at alpine temperatures of -5 to -10°C. Daily snowfalls of up to 1m are not uncommon, and the Canadian record for the maximum daily snowfall is 145cm at Tahtsa Lake in the Kitimat Ranges. The Canadian record for the greatest snowfall over a five-day period is 246cm at Kitimat. Monthly records range from 469cm of snow at Whistler in



January 2006 to 770cm of snow at Mt Baker in November 2006. Rain is also possible and, though infrequent, defines the glory and heartbreak of snow conditions in the Coast Mountains. Rain is usually associated with intense low-pressure systems that sweep up from the sub-tropics and bring heavy precipitation along with high freezing levels. This typically occurs 5 to 8 times throughout an average winter and is crucial in shaping the coastal snowpack.

### Density

New snow densities in the Coast Mountains typically vary from  $60\text{kg/m}^3$  to  $120\text{kg/m}^3$ . Snowfalls outside of this range do occur but are less common. The average density of new snowfall at treeline in the Whistler area is  $80\text{kg/m}^3$  in February and  $90\text{kg/m}^3$  over the winter. As a guideline,  $100\text{kg/m}^3$  is 10 per cent of the density of water and is the standard industry approximation for the density of new snow. Snow with a density of  $100\text{kg/m}^3$  is soft and effortless and is the definition of powder.  $60\text{kg/m}^3$  corresponds to very light powder and  $120\text{kg/m}^3$  is heavier soft snow.

Extremely light snowfalls with densities less than  $60\text{kg/m}^3$  (a.k.a. cold smoke) occur about 4 to 5 times a month in mid-winter and are more common as you move towards the interior side of the range in places like the Duffey Lake area, Chilcotin Ranges, Pantheon Range or Smithers area. Densities down to  $30\text{kg/m}^3$  have been recorded but are extremely rare.

Densities over  $120\text{kg/m}^3$  occur about a dozen times per winter and are also associated with warmer temperatures more common at lower elevations and nearer to the coast. Above  $120\text{kg/m}^3$ , new snow becomes noticeably heavier, but skiing can remain decent up to  $150\text{kg/m}^3$  or so. Densities over  $150\text{kg/m}^3$  occur only a few times per winter and correspond to heavy snow at the freezing level, or needles and graupel. Four-finger snow is usually between  $130\text{kg/m}^3$  and  $200\text{kg/m}^3$ . Wind can break down new snow crystals



and increase snow density to  $250\text{kg/m}^3$  or  $300\text{kg/m}^3$ . Densities as high as  $400\text{kg/m}^3$  are measured in cornices.

### Snowpack

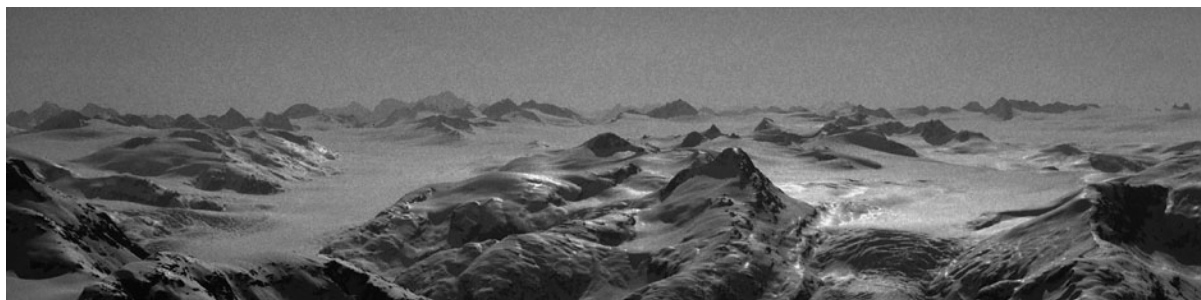
Alpine snowpacks vary from as low as 1.5m on the extreme interior side of the range to over 4m on the coastal side of the range. Typical snowpacks are about 3m in many areas, but can be over 6m and as high as 10m on many of the large icefields. One of the distinctive features of the Coast Mountains is that low elevations at the south end of the range are often snow-free for much of the winter. The lowest extent of the snowpack fluctuates greatly from year to year and throughout a typical winter but is often between 300 and 500m. The snow line is typically low relative to the treeline. In the central and northern portions of the Coast Mountains, the snowpack often extends to sea level in many areas for several months or longer.

Current and past snowpack records are available from the River Forecast Centre at [www.env.gov.bc.ca/rfc](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/rfc). See also [www.skimountaineer.com](http://www.skimountaineer.com).

The ski season in the Coast Mountains typically begins in late October or early November and lasts until the end of May, with skiing possible well into June.

### Avalanches

The Coast Mountains lie predominantly in a maritime snow climate. Frequent snowfalls with heavy precipitation, moderate temperatures and infrequent clearing typically produce a deep, well-consolidated snowpack. Avalanches in this climate are often confined to new snow layers and tend to occur during or immediately after a storm. Common weak layers include low-cohesion layers in new snow, buried surface hoar, graupel or ice crusts formed by rain, sun or rapid warming. The snow climate varies considerably as you move inland away from the ocean. Features of a transitional snow climate, such as persistent weak layers,

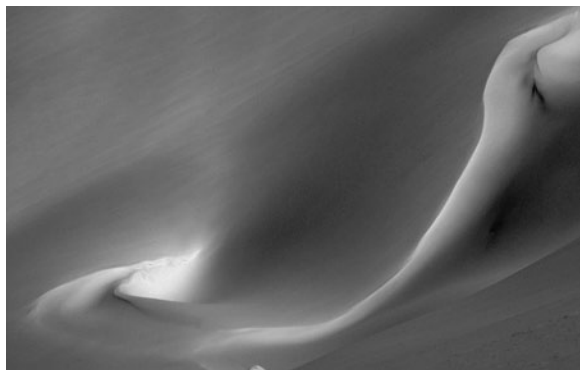


Homathko Icefield.

can occur at higher elevations in the middle of the range. On the interior side of the Coast Mountains, the snow cover can exhibit features of a continental snow climate, such as a shallower snowpack with extensive wind transportation, faceted snow and very persistent weak layers associated with colder temperatures.

The snowpack structure and avalanche conditions usually vary significantly with slope aspect. With the passage of a typical winter storm, winds shift first from easterly through southerly and around to northwesterly. Snowfall occurs predominantly with southeasterly to southwesterly winds, so that lee slopes face mostly north or northeast. Note that outflow winds occasionally reverse the trend and load south-facing slopes. Solar radiation also contributes to large differences in snowpack characteristics between north- and south-facing slopes.

Avalanches are the most dangerous aspect of ski mountaineering, and snow stability can never be assumed. All of the routes described involve some exposure to avalanche hazards, and extensive avalanche training and experience is essential for safe winter travel on any of the routes described. It is strongly recommended that all persons venturing into the backcountry in winter take an avalanche safety course and carry and know how to use an avalanche transceiver, shovel and probe.



## Glaciers and Icefields

The Coast Mountains are one of the most heavily glaciated mountain ranges in the world outside of the polar regions. Glaciation includes features ranging from small permanent snowfields to huge valley glaciers. Slope and cirque glaciers are the most common and can be expected on the north sides of most summits. These can be fairly small and very slow-moving with little crevasse formation in drier areas. Or they can be quite sizeable and form virtually continuous icefalls down the mountainside in areas near the coast where precipitation is heaviest. Slope and cirque glaciers typically terminate at about 1400 to 1500m.

In alpine areas near the summit divide, large permanent snowfields and neves sprawl from peak to peak. These icefields are a unique feature of the Coast Mountains and there are about a dozen icefields over 1000km<sup>2</sup>, with the largest over 7000km<sup>2</sup>. These huge icefields are drained by large valley glaciers up to 6km wide and 50km long. Many valley glaciers flow down to less than 1000m, with some reaching sea level in the Boundary Ranges. Valley glaciers are usually much gentler than slope or cirque glaciers, with more obvious crevasse patterns.

As glaciers and icefields provide natural routes of travel in the alpine and are especially suited to skiing, the majority of ski trips in the Coast Mountains involve some glacier travel. Next to avalanches, falling into a crevasse presents the most serious danger to ski mountaineers, and an understanding of crevasse formation is essential for safe glacier travel on skis. Crevasses (up to 30m deep) are caused by stresses in the ice as the glacier flows down the mountainside and tend to form in areas where the slope or direction changes. The hazard is highest early in the season when crevasses are innocently covered by a thin layer of snow, and generally decreases as the snowpack thickens throughout the winter. In areas with deep snowpacks, experienced parties are often able (by careful routefinding) to travel unroped while glacier skiing. However, a serious crevasse

danger exists whenever a party is skiing on a glacier. Route-finding should be judged accordingly, and a rope should be carried at all times. Each party should be prepared to rope up if necessary, and all skiers should be familiar with crevasse rescue and carry the appropriate rescue equipment.

Route-finding through rugged glaciated terrain can be particularly difficult in poor weather. GPS units are especially useful, but the seriousness of becoming lost in a whiteout or straying into a crevasse or avalanche path should not be underestimated. Even with a GPS, it is often advisable and necessary to wait out extended periods of bad weather, and appropriate food supplies should be carried for this purpose. Camping on icefields and glaciers presents no special problems. Many parties find it advantageous to build a protective wall of snow blocks around their camp.



## Wilderness

One of the most outstanding features of the Coast Mountains is their wilderness. Roads cross the range only four times along its entire length between Vancouver and Skagway. Except for a handful of trails and backcountry cabins concentrated at the southern end of the range, most of the Coast Mountains are wilderness. Outside of the most popular ski destinations, it is not likely that you will see anyone. An alternative title for this book could have been "Ski Wild."

To venture into remote, mountain wilderness requires extensive knowledge and experience. You are on your own. You must be self-sufficient and prepared to deal with everything that comes your way. Your safety is your own responsibility and you must be prepared for self-rescue.

Few other areas except Antarctica and the Far North can offer the same degree of pristine mountain wilderness as the Coast Mountains. The combination of modern facilities in close proximity to mountain wilderness is rare, and ski mountaineers come from all over the world to visit this unique landscape.

Ironically, wilderness is also perhaps the most fragile feature of the Coast Mountains. Motorized recreation and other developments are placing significant pressure on the wilderness character of the mountains in some regions. Snowmobiling has expanded into popular ski-touring areas, particularly in the Whistler and Pemberton region where large tracts of the alpine are heavily used for such purposes. Heliskiing has also grown from a few small operations in the Whistler area to some of the largest heliski tenures in the world spread up and down the Coast Mountains. Heli-snowmobiling has also been tried. For the most part, the conflicts resulting from these developments have not been addressed and are threatening to take over some of the most significant ski-mountaineering areas, such as the Duffey Lake area and the Waddington Range. Elsewhere in North America, in mountain ranges





View across the main branch of the Taku GI on the Juneau Icefield.

such as the Cascades or Rocky Mountains, these issues have mostly been resolved by setting aside wilderness areas and establishing designated motorized and non-motorized recreation areas. In the Coast Mountains, the long process of political discussions, lobbying and compromise is only just beginning. It is crucial that ski mountaineers contribute to this process if they value wilderness. Most clubs are involved in this process, so joining a mountain club is a good way to voice your concerns.

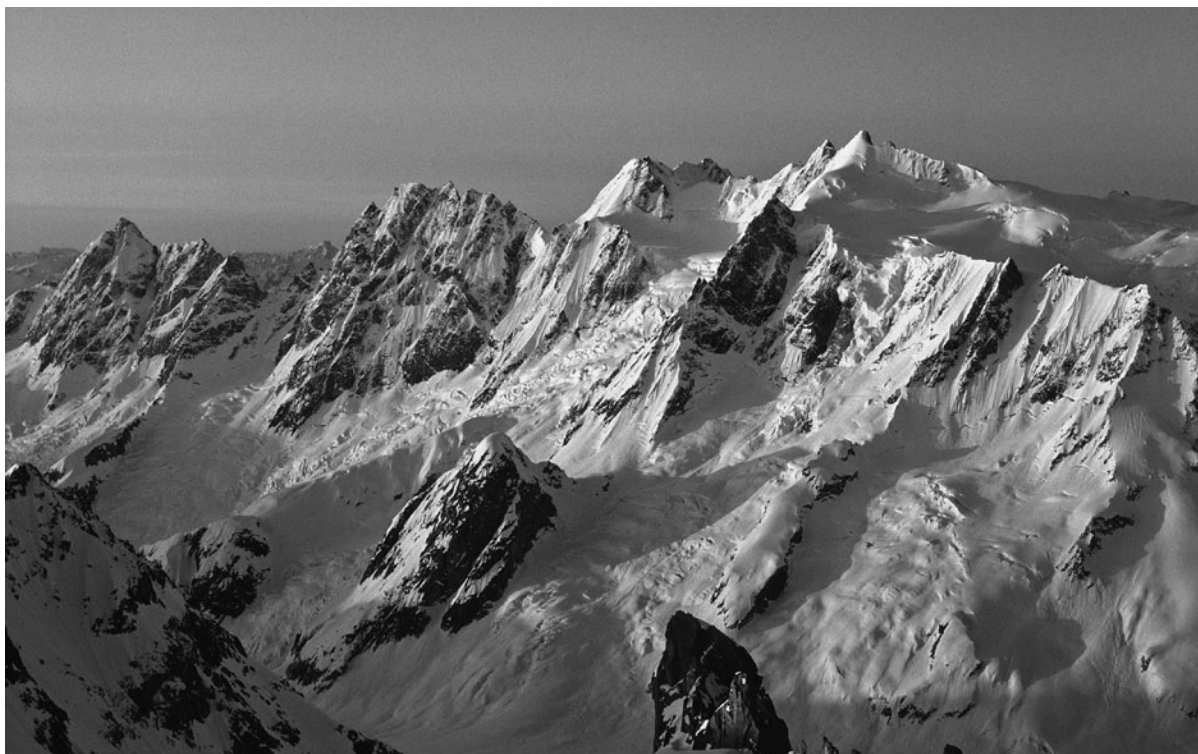
Your own use of mechanized access is also worth considering. The Coast Mountains are a huge wilderness and there are trips that require the use of a helicopter or ski plane for access or logistical support. The decision of when to use mechanized access is up to you. However, the impact of mechanized access on both the wilderness character of an area as well as on other parties that might already be there should be recognized. It is also important to remember that ski mountaineering is about moving through the mountains under your own effort, both to enjoy great skiing but also to connect with the mountains and wilderness. For the same reason, it is suggested that you use mechanized access only where absolutely necessary.

## References and Information

### Maps

The standard maps for backcountry travel in the Coast Mountains are the detailed 1:50,000 NTS maps, published by Natural Resources Canada ([www.maps.nrcan.gc.ca](http://www.maps.nrcan.gc.ca)). This series provides complete coverage of the Coast Mountains in Canada. The NTS maps use NAD27 with a contour interval of 100ft. Some sheets have been revised to NAD83 with a metric contour interval of 40m. Natural Resources Canada also publishes a second series at a scale of 1:250,000, which is useful when viewing larger areas. Maps may be viewed at the Map Division of the University of British Columbia Library. The Map Library has a large format copier.

Maps can be purchased in the Vancouver area from: Mountain Equipment Co-op at 130 W Broadway (604-872-7858, [www.mec.ca](http://www.mec.ca)); Geological Survey of Canada at 605 Robson St (604-666-0271); International Travel Maps and Books at 12300 Bridgeport Rd in Richmond (604-273-1400, [www.itmb.com](http://www.itmb.com)); or Nixon's Maps Charts and Books in Surrey (604-574-5066).



Looking SE from the Plummer Hut to summits above the Tiedemann Gl.

Maps can be ordered online from: [www.maptown.com](http://www.maptown.com) or [www.mytopo.com](http://www.mytopo.com).

Digital copies of NTS maps can be downloaded for free from Natural Resources Canada at [www.geogratis.ca](http://www.geogratis.ca). Map packages on CD are available from: ETopo ([www.maptown.com](http://www.maptown.com)), Softmap ([www.softmappublishing.com](http://www.softmappublishing.com)) or Spectrum Digital Imaging ([www.mapsdigital.com](http://www.mapsdigital.com)).

### TRIM Maps

The provincial government publishes detailed maps of the entire province at a scale of 1:20,000. These are not widely used for ski mountaineering except in the more popular areas. Maps can be viewed online using the BC basemap viewer or iMapBC currently at [maps.gov.bc.ca](http://maps.gov.bc.ca) (see also [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com)). Paper maps are available online from [www.canadamapstore.com](http://www.canadamapstore.com) or [www.basemaps.gov.bc.ca](http://www.basemaps.gov.bc.ca) (see also [www.maplace.ca](http://www.maplace.ca)).

### US Maps

For areas in the US, you will need topographic maps published by the US Geological Survey. Maps of Washington State are available at scales of 1:24,000 and 1:62,500. Maps of Alaska are available at 1:62,500. Maps covering

recreation areas are published by Green Trails at a scale of 1:70,000 and generally include more information on hiking trails and side roads ([www.greentrailsmaps.com](http://www.greentrailsmaps.com)). US maps are available in Vancouver from International Travel Maps and Books in Richmond (604-273-1400, [www.itmb.com](http://www.itmb.com)) or can be ordered online from many sources including [www.maptown.com](http://www.maptown.com) or [www.metskers.com](http://www.metskers.com).

### Specialty Maps

In some areas, specialty maps offer excellent coverage and are mentioned under each chapter where they exist. Recommended maps include:

*North Shore* 1:30,000, TerraPro  
*Backcountry Whistler* 1:25,000, John Baldwin  
*Garibaldi Park* 1:50,000, Clark Geomatics  
*Callaghan* 1:50,000, Clark Geomatics  
*Southern Chilcotin Mountains* 1:75,000, Trail Ventures  
*Waddington* 1:25,000, Timberline

### Guidebooks

*103 Hikes in Southwestern British Columbia*, Jack Bryceland and Mary & David Macaree

*A Guide to Climbing and Hiking in Southwestern BC*,  
Bruce Fairley

*Scrambles in Southwestern British Columbia*, Matt  
Gunn

*A Climber's Guide to the Coastal Ranges of BC*, Dick  
Culbert (out of print)

*Stein Valley Wilderness Guidebook*, Gordon White (out  
of print)

*Alpine Select*, Kevin McLane

*Cascade Alpine Guide: Climbing and High Routes—Vol.*  
3: *Rainy Pass to Fraser River*, Fred Beckey

*100 Classic Backcountry Ski and Snowboard Routes in*  
*Washington*, Rainer Burgdorfer

*100 Hikes in Washington's North Cascades Region*, Ira  
Spring and Harvey Manning

*The Waddington Guide*, Don Serl

*Bella Coola Valley & Vicinity: Hiking Trails and Routes*,  
Scott Whittemore

*Hikes in Tweedsmuir South Provincial Park*, Scott  
Whittemore

*Trails to Timberline in West Central British Columbia*,  
Einar Blix

*Hot Springs of Western Canada*, Glenn Woodsworth

*Island Turns and Tours*, Philip Stone

### Satellite and Aerial Photographs

Satellite imagery and air photographs are a useful aid to route planning and selection. Information that is difficult to discern from topographic maps is sometimes readily apparent. This can include forest cover, cliff bands, crevasse patterns, glacier recession and even the lay of the land.

**www.earth.google.com**

Google Earth offers high resolution satellite photographs of many areas that can be viewed in three dimensions.

**www.pbase.com/nolock/**

John Scurlock has compiled an incredibly useful database of oblique photographs of the Coast Mountains and Cascade Mountains taken from a small plane. Most photographs are taken in winter or spring.

### Journals

The following journals frequently contain descriptions of ski mountaineering trips to the Coast Mountains. They are available at libraries in Vancouver. References are given to relevant articles within the text.

*Canadian Alpine Journal (CAJ)*, Alpine Club of Canada

*B.C. Mountaineer (BCM)*, B.C. Mountaineering Club

*Varsity Outdoor Club Journal (VOCJ)*, Varsity Outdoor Club, University of BC

### Websites

**www.bivouac.com**

The *Canadian Mountaineering Encyclopedia* is an excellent online guidebook that contains route descriptions, photos, detailed road information and updates and trip reports.

**www.clubtread.com**

Online forum and trip reports.

**www.turns-all-year.com**

Online forum and trip reports focused on Washington.

**www.alpenglow.org**

History of ski mountaineering in the Pacific Northwest.

**www.skimountaineer.com**

Cascade ski mountaineering.

**www.mountaineers.org/nwmj**

*Northwest Mountaineering Journal*.

**www.avalanche.ca**

Check out the regional discussion board.

**www.acmg.ca**

Association of Canadian Mountain Guides.

### Reading

*Round Mystery Mountain*, Sir Norman Watson and E.J.  
King, 1935

*The Unknown Mountain*, Don Munday, 1948

*Glacier Ice*, Austin Post and Edward LaChapelle, 1971

*Ice Runway*, Roy Mason, 1984

*Towards the Unknown Mountains*, Rob Wood, 1991

*The Great Bear Rainforest*, Ian & Karen McAllister,  
1997

*Wild Snow*, Louis Dawson, 1997

*Mountains of the Coast*, John Baldwin, 1999

*Pushing the Limits*, Chic Scott, 2000

### Clubs

More than a dozen clubs run organized ski-mountaineering trips to the areas covered by this guide. A club directory and contact information is available through the Federation of Mountain Clubs of British Columbia at [www.mountain-clubs.org](http://www.mountain-clubs.org). In addition to trips, clubs provide instruction and an organized voice to address important issues affecting ski-mountaineering.



# Howe Sound

1



Skiing runs on the N side of Mt Strachan above Howe Sound.

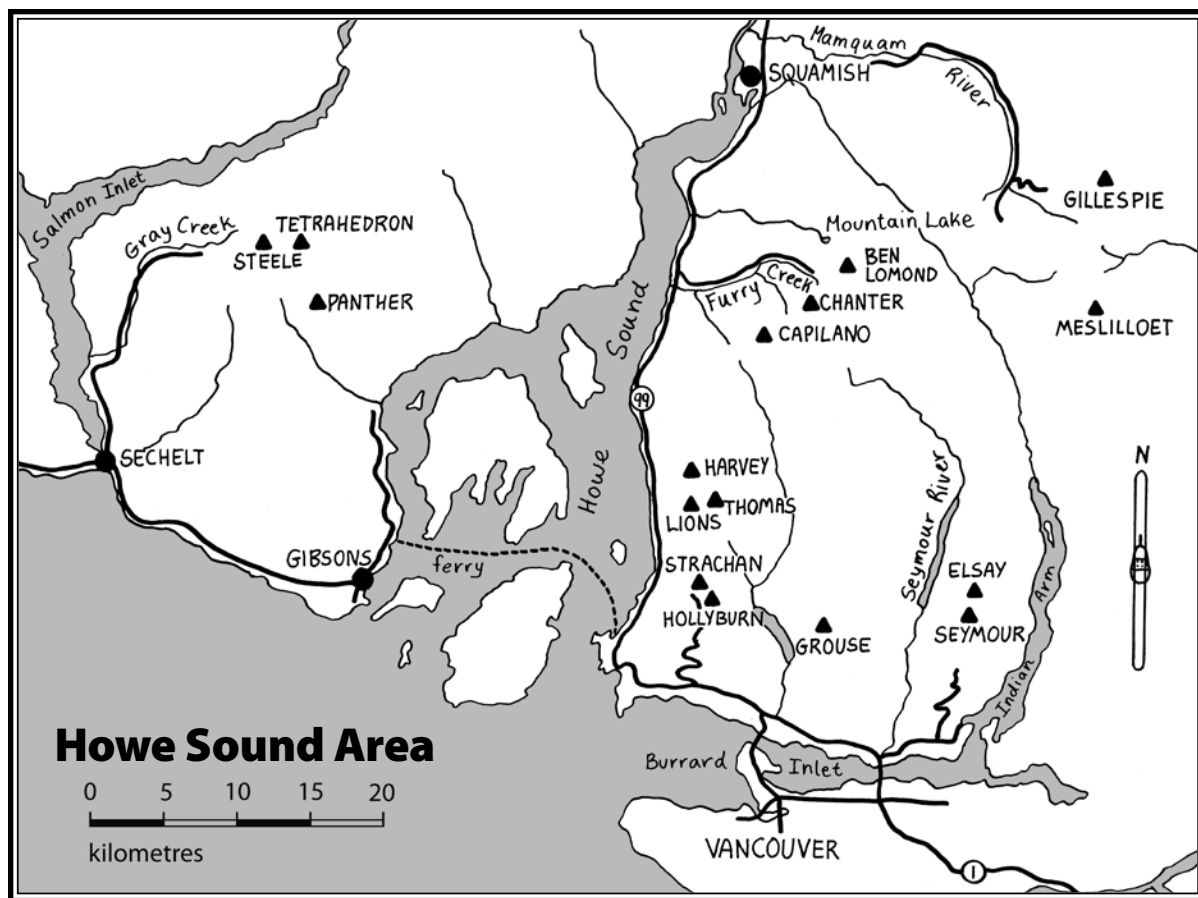
Rising 1500m above the ocean, the mountains around Howe Sound offer the closest backcountry ski trips to Vancouver. This is not classic ski terrain, as the mountains are steep sided and heavily forested, but the rounded peaks are alpine near their summits and receive huge snowfalls. There are some great trips here to open ridges and subalpine bowls, with tremendous views of the ocean below and runs of 100–400m. Almost all trips are day trips.

The most popular trips are ski ascents of Hollyburn Mountain and Mt Seymour in the North Shore mountains above Vancouver, which offer quick wintry escapes from the city. Beyond the North Shore, ski trips can be made to the peaks above Howe Sound. These are off the beaten path for most skiers, but ski ascents of peaks such as Mt Harvey and Thomas Peak are highly recommended trips.

## **Snow Conditions**

The mountains surrounding Howe Sound are lashed with copious amounts of moisture from major storms that sweep

off the Pacific Ocean. Local ski resorts on the North Shore mountains record annual snowfalls of 7–10m, and typical snowpacks reach 3m at an elevation of 1100m. At higher elevations, snowfall is closer to a whopping 15m and snowpacks of 4–5m are common, with record years approaching 10m. Snow conditions fluctuate greatly due to the lower elevations of the summits around Howe Sound and their proximity to the coast. There can be excellent snow one day and rain the next. Typically the snowline is between 600 and 800m. In winter, fresh snow can be expected 3 or 4 days a week. Typical amounts are 10cm overnight, but record storms have dumped over 60cm in 24 hours. Snow quality varies from drier snow to classic mashed potatoes. Rain can be expected 1 or 2 days a week. To ensure you have good snow conditions, check the weather forecast and freezing level before you go. As a general rule, a temperature of 6°C in Vancouver corresponds to a freezing level at 1000m on the North Shore mountains. The maritime influence generally builds a deep, well-consolidated snowpack



that can be considerably different from inland areas such as Whistler, Duffey Lk or the Coquihalla. Note that fog is common in bad weather.

### Access

Access to the North Shore mountains is from the Trans Canada Highway running through North and West Vancouver.

Areas along the E side of Howe Sound are reached from Hwy 99, which runs north to Squamish. Several trips farther inland are reached from an extensive network of logging roads along the Mamquam River. These roads branch E from Hwy 99 1km south of Squamish, directly below the Stawamus Chief. Check the Squamish Forest District website at [www.for.gov.bc.ca/dsq](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/dsq) or [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com) for updates on road and snow conditions and for recent trip reports.

Summits on the W side of Howe Sound lie above what is known as the Sunshine Coast. Access is via a 45-minute ferry ride from Horseshoe Bay.

### Maps

*North Shore* 1:30,000 by TerraPro.

Open forest on the SW ridge of Hollyburn Mtn.





Looking SW across the Strait of Georgia from the summit of Hollyburn Mtn.

## Hollyburn Mountain

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 5km  
Elevation Gain: 430m  
Start: 900m

**1326m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Simple  
Map: 92G/6  
Best: Nov–Apr

Perhaps the most popular trip in this book, Hollyburn Mtn is a pleasant subalpine summit in Cypress Provincial Park with excellent views of the Strait of Georgia. It is great for a quick wintry break from the city and offers a few 100–200m runs through glades. It is the easiest ski trip on the North Shore mountains and is feasible in all but the worst weather.

From Hwy 1 in West Vancouver, take exit 8 for Cypress Mountain and follow the all-weather highway 13km to the cross-country parking lot at 900m. It is approximately a 30-minute drive from downtown Vancouver. Cypress Mountain also runs a shuttle bus from the city (see [www.cypressmountain.com](http://www.cypressmountain.com)).

The main winter route to Hollyburn Mtn starts from the cross-country parking area, directly under a large powerline. The trailhead is well marked, and a sign here displays the current avalanche danger rating. Note that the winter trail is shared with snowshoers and hikers and is separate from the adjacent groomed cross-country trails, which require a ticket. The winter trail climbs NE for several hun-

dred metres beneath the powerline before turning N along Hollyburn Ridge. About halfway up, the trail passes the top of the groomed cross country runs. Above this, the forest starts to become open and a wide swath provides an open ski route to the summit. The descent is a pleasant ski run in good conditions. There is also some enjoyable skiing N and E of the summit, with 100–200m runs.

A more secluded (and off-trail) route to Hollyburn Mtn ascends the indistinct SW ridge through mostly open forest to join the above route on subalpine benches S of the summit. Park on the Cypress Bowl Rd approximately 0.6km before the parking lot for the downhill ski area, just S of the obvious bend in the road at the central branch of Cypress Cr (signed as overnight parking). Stay right as you climb to avoid steeper terrain. This route is best with at least a metre of snow in the forest. The descent through the trees is a decent 300m run in good conditions. Another recommended descent route for this variation, if avalanche conditions are acceptable, is to drop NW off the summit and veer left down steep W-facing slopes, emerging from glades into a flat clearing beside the downhill runs on the S side of Mt Strachan at about 1120m. Ski out the downhill runs and walk the 0.6km back to your car.



## Mt Strachan

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 7km  
Elevation Gain: 800m  
Start: 900m

**1440m**

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/6  
Best: Dec–May

The highest summit in southern Cypress Provincial Park. Despite having a ski lift all the way to the top, Mt Strachan makes for a great outing and gives access to excellent advanced terrain with 400m runs on its NW flanks.

From Hwy 1 in West Vancouver, take exit 8 for Cypress Mountain and follow the all-weather highway 15km to the downhill parking lot at 900m in Cypress Bowl. Park in the overflow parking lot approximately 0.6km before the downhill ski area, just S of the obvious bend in the road at the central branch of Cypress Cr.



Descending runs on the N side of Mt Strachan.

The best way to get a good day on Mt Strachan is to climb up and over Hollyburn Mtn. Ascend Hollyburn's indistinct SW ridge through mostly open forest to gain the peak via subalpine benches S of the summit (see above). From the peak of Hollyburn drop NW off the summit and veer left down steep W-facing slopes, emerging from glades into a flat clearing beside the Collins downhill run at about 1120m, immediately W of Hollyburn.

The edge of the Collins run can also be reached directly without going over Hollyburn by cutting across the Baden-Powell Trail through open forest E of Cypress Cr.

To continue to Mt Strachan, put your skins back on and skirt the edge of Collins Run around the head of a steep gully. Ascend parallel to the runs through open subalpine forest E of Sky Chair, which leads naturally to the broad SW peak of Mt Strachan and its stunning views over Howe Sound. In good conditions, the steep avalanche slopes on the NW flanks of the mountain offer some amazing 340m runs. A recommended line starts a little E of Sky Chair and

angles W towards the ocean into an indistinct bowl that runs down the 35–40° face. Use extreme care to avoid bluffs here and assess the avalanche conditions carefully. Though outside of the ski area, downhill skiers and snowboarders hiking beyond the lifts also frequent this run, and there are many avalanche accidents here. Remember, if there is any doubt about the conditions you can always ski down one of the downhill runs. The higher NE peak is separated by a 40m notch. The obvious 35° gully that descends NW from between the two summits also makes an excellent ski run in good conditions.

At the bottom of the NW face, return to the ski area via the Howe Sound Crest Trail, which contours SW around the side of Mt Strachan. The route is marked. It is about 1km back to the ski area. Skins are not needed, but you will have to sidestep a little. Do not go too low, as this leads nowhere. Many people get lost here! From the bottom of the ski area it is a short walk back to your car. Note that backcountry skiers are officially required to show a backcountry access pass to travel through the ski area. This pass is free and can be obtained from Cypress Mountain ski resort.

Cypress Mountain ski area typically closes in April, yet the snow on Mt Strachan often lasts well into May. During this period it is a pleasant outing to ski up the runs to the summit of Mt Strachan.

## Mt Seymour

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 6km  
Elevation Gain: 500m  
Start: 1040m

**1455m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/7  
Best: Nov–May

The easternmost of Vancouver's North Shore mountains, Mt Seymour offers the fastest approach to alpine terrain from Vancouver. This is a very popular area with excellent

Crossing the basin between First and Second Pks on Mt Seymour.







Skiing off the E shoulder of Mt Seymour's main summit.

views and a pleasant mix of dome-shaped ridge crests and short ski runs on steep convex slopes. The area is a provincial park and is accessible by bus (see [www.mountseymour.com](http://www.mountseymour.com)).

Cross the Second Narrows Bridge on Hwy 1 and take the third exit after the bridge to Mt Seymour Parkway (exit 22). After about 3km, turn left on Mt Seymour Rd and climb 11km to a downhill ski area at the 1000m level. Park at the N end of the parking lot, where an information sign and map mark the winter trailhead.

The main ski run and chairlift run N from the end of the parking lot. The winter trail starts on the W side of the ski run opposite the bottom of the chairlift and climbs through open subalpine forest to an area known as Brockton Point, which is adjacent to the top of the ski area. A sign here displays the current avalanche danger rating. The main trail continues beyond the ski area and leads back across open undulating ridges over two subsidiary peaks to the summit of Mt Seymour. Pump Pk is the first peak visible from Brockton Point and has steep slopes on its S side. The marked winter route contours N from Brockton Point to bypass the steep slopes by ascending Pump Pk from the E. There are many route variations here, and skiers often

take a more direct route that follows the divide back across undulating ridges straight towards Pump Pk before swinging W to ascend the final steeper slopes from the SW. A pleasant bowl leads to the Second Pk. To reach the final summit, a steep slope must be traversed around the W side of Second Pk. Only intermediate and advanced skiers should attempt this.

Despite the ease of access and proximity to Vancouver, Mt Seymour is complex mountain terrain with numerous potential avalanche slopes and many bluffs and cliffs. The terrain is considerably more hazardous than Hollyburn Mtn, and good routefinding skills are necessary. Mt Seymour can be very confusing in bad weather, and a trip to the summit is only recommended in good visibility. Ski routes tend to follow the ridge crests so that the general rule is GO UP if lost.

In good conditions Mt Seymour offers lots of skiing. There are many open slopes near Pump and Second Pks and the main summit. Most are 35–40° convex slopes, which offer 100–200m runs from the dome shaped summits. Check carefully for cliffs and avalanche hazard. Other runs can be found dropping down open gullies off the main ridge crests. Slopes leading down to De Pencier Lk from N

of Brockton Point give a decent 200m run. Some of the best runs are between Second Pk and the main summit down the obvious narrow gully that faces W. Typical snow conditions usually permit an enjoyable 200m run down into the gully from the summit, but with a good snowpack and low avalanche hazard it can be a superb 500m run (followed by a long climb back out of the gully). Glades 100m N of the gully are also recommended.

For trips off the beaten track, there is additional skiing and exploring in the open basin W of Brockton Point. This area lies below cliffs known as Suicide Bluffs on the N side of the shoulder leading out to Dog Mtn. From the 920m level it is possible to climb N through open forest and gullies to cross the 1200m shoulder W of Second Pk and gain the final notch before the true summit.



Mt Elsay from the summit of Mt Seymour.

## Mt Elsay

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 11km  
Elevation Gain: 1280m  
Start: 1000m

**1422m**

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/7  
Best: Feb–Apr

Mt Elsay is the second summit north of Mt Seymour on the long divide west of Indian Arm and, in good conditions, is a worthwhile ski trip in late winter and early spring. Much of the route travels rugged terrain.

The recommended route follows the flagged winter route from Brockton Point to the 1240m shoulder SE of Pump Pk (see above) at the junction of the Mt Seymour and Elsay Lk trails (GR047704). Drop slightly and traverse N below a cliff band across steep partially treed slopes W of Theta Lk. This is the crux of the trip and is only recommended in safe avalanche conditions. The traverse is about 200m long and leads to open slopes beyond an indistinct ridge. Descend NE into the open basin E of Mt Seymour. Make an ascending traverse of rockslides W of Gopher Lk

to cross the wooded shoulder beyond (Canadian Pass) into the next open basin S of Mt Elsay. There is good skiing here, and Mt Elsay is a pleasant ascent over its steep SW slopes.

Mt Bishop to the N of Elsay Lk has also been climbed on skis. It is a more ambitious trip and is only recommended in a year when there is reasonable snow cover down to the 600m level.

## Howe Sound Crest Trail 1540m

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 18km  
Elevation Gain: 900m  
Start: 900m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/6  
Best: Jan–Mar

The Howe Sound Crest Trail is the classic ridge hike running N from Cypress Mountain ski area to The Lions. Long stretches of forest are rewarded with tremendous views of Howe Sound and The Lions. This is more of a ski tour than an ascent but it is a scenic trip and, if done as a traverse to Lions Bay as described here, gives a good run down to Harvey Cr.



Traversing the Howe Sound Crest Trail near Unnecessary Mtn.  
Photo by Jos van der Burg

The trail lies within Cypress Provincial Park and starts at Cypress Mountain downhill ski area. Before driving to Cypress, shuttle a car to Lions Bay (see Mt Harvey for directions). There is a BC Parks information kiosk located at the N end of the parking lot in the ski area. BC Parks marks a backcountry access corridor through the ski area. A free backcountry access pass is required and can be obtained from Cypress Mountain ski resort. The access corridor passes Yew Lk meadows and is marked to Bowen Lookout (1040m) on the W flank of Mt Strachan, just N of Top Gun ski run.

Beyond Bowen Lookout, follow the trail across the W slopes of Mt Strachan through widely spaced old-growth



View of The Lions from near Unnecessary Mtn on the Howe Sound Crest Trail. *Photo by Jos van der Burg*

forest to a meadow in the low col between Montizambert and Lembke Crs below the N side of Mt Strachan. Climb NW to gain the narrow forested divide between Howe Sound and the tributaries of the Capilano R and Sisters Cr. Follow the rounded divide N over a wooded bump known as St Marks Summit (1360m). In winter the trail is usually difficult to follow along this section, but the forest is open and easy to ski through and natural clearings along the ridge crest give great views. There is a 160m descent after St Marks Summit. The climb to Unnecessary Mtn begins in large timber and after a short ascent follows a narrow open ridge with a few cornices on the left. Bypass the summit of Unnecessary Mtn (1520m) by making a descending traverse across a small E-facing bowl to the low point on the ridge with the West Lion. Ascend the rounded ridge crest beyond to a minor shoulder at 1500m (GR864778), about 500m SW of the West Lion. This is the end of the ridge traverse and from here the route drops W into a big open bowl, which gives a scenic 500m run above Howe Sound. The bowl funnels into steep avalanche gullies, and the only feasible route aims NW for the wooded shoulder above

Harvey Cr. Descend the edge of the trees on the S side of the shoulder to about 1000m and traverse sharply into the forest to the N to pick up the Lions Trail. The Lions Trail angles down to cross Harvey Cr at about 800m and joins old logging roads on the N side of the creek that lead down to Lions Bay.

A recommended variation to the above route is to ski up Mt Strachan first and descend the Christmas Gully to the low pass between Montizambert and Lembke Crs. This variation adds an additional 340m of elevation gain that is rewarded with good views and additional skiing.

## Mt Harvey

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 17km  
Elevation Gain: 1380m  
Start: 240m

**1620m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92G/6  
Best: Dec–Mar

Rising directly from Howe Sound, Mt Harvey is the first summit immediately north of the Lions. Though much of the trip is on old logging roads, this is a recommended mid-winter ski ascent with great views of the Lions and an



The N side of The Lions from Mt Harvey.

excellent 600m run. The first few turns from the summit drop straight towards Howe Sound. The idea behind this trip is that you will reach snow in the same amount of time as if you drove somewhere farther—except the traveling time is spent walking instead of driving.

Heading N on Hwy 99, take the Lions Bay exit 11km N of Horseshoe Bay. Head uphill and turn left to cross Harvey Cr, then right onto Centre Rd, followed by a left onto Bayview Rd. Follow this uphill for about 1km, then turn left on Mountain Dr for a short distance and finally left again onto Sunset Dr to a gated logging road at an elevation of 240m.

Walk and ski up the logging road, taking right forks, into Harvey Cr. It is about an hour's walk or less before you can put skis on, usually by 800m or before the turnoff for the Lions Trail. Beyond the Lions Trail, the old logging road has been brushed out and is easy to ascend on skis. It climbs into a large cutblock and old burn on the N side of the upper Harvey Cr basin. This was logged in the 1960s,

Skiing off the summit of Mt Harvey above Howe Sound.



but trees have not regenerated here and the slopes are open above 1000m. The road ends near 1350m, immediately S of Mt Harvey. To reach the summit, angle up and across steeper S-facing slopes to gain the rounded SW ridge, which leads easily to the top. There is a tremendous view of Howe Sound from the summit. With a good snowpack there is some great skiing in the upper Harvey Cr basin with runs up to 600m.

An approach from Magnesia Cr has also been used. There is an emergency shelter located near the head of Magnesia Cr at GR863803.

## Thomas Peak

**1540m**

Length: 1 day

Total Distance: 15km

Elevation Gain: 1300m

Start: 240m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92G/6

Best: Feb–Mar

This is the official name for the rounded bump that lies directly between the East and West Lions. If you have ever stared up from Vancouver at the slopes beneath the West Lion and imagined skiing them, this trip is for you! It makes a fascinating outing from Lions Bay in safe avalanche conditions.

The access and approach are the same as for Mt Harvey above. Ski up the logging road into the upper basin of Harvey Cr under the dark N face of the West Lion. Leave the road at about 980m just before the first switchback and drop 100m to the valley bottom beside Harvey Cr. This is a huge basin swept by large avalanches from the Lions on one side and James Pk on the other. Consider the avalanche conditions carefully before proceeding. The route continues E up the “Northwest Passage,” the obvious steep gully to Enchantment Pass above Enchantment Lake. With newer trails, the Northwest Passage has long been forgotten but was listed as the most popular route to the Lions in the 1972 FMCBC *Mountain Trail Guide*. From Enchantment Pass, swing around the E side of the divide and continue up and across open slopes to the summit of Thomas Pk, framed by the Lions on each side. This is a great spot for lunch! While you are here, you might want to drop into the col with the W Lion and put some tracks on the open S-facing slopes visible from Vancouver. It's a 200m run but worth the effort of climbing back over the shoulder of Thomas Pk. The descent back to Harvey Cr is all on open slopes and the run down the Northwest Passage can be excellent in good conditions.



Looking S at the route to Thomas Pk between the E and W Lions.

## Sky Pilot Area

Sky Pilot is the highest summit E of Howe Sound. South of the summit, surrounding Mountain Lk, is an interesting area of subalpine lakes, rolling basins and horn-shaped summits rising steeply from the surrounding valleys. Though relatively small, this alpine plateau offers pleasant ski touring, with views of Howe Sound and the backside of the North Shore mountains, and is worth a mid-winter visit. Skiing in the alpine is limited to short runs. There is a cabin at Mountain Lk.

Access has changed considerably over the years. Britannia Cr was used when the Britannia Mine was operating until the 1970s. As these roads became impassable after the mine closed, access shifted to logging roads on the E in the Stawamus R. These too are now thoroughly overgrown, and in recent years access has developed from reactivated roads in Furry Cr.

Drive N on Hwy 99 from Horseshoe Bay for 26km to Furry Cr. Access is from a logging road that turns off the highway approximately 2km N of Furry Cr, just past the

top of the big hill. The logging road is gated at the highway. See [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com) for up-to-date information on access. The BCMC has a key to access its Mountain Lk cabin. After a few switchbacks, take the right fork, which contours S and runs up the N side of Furry Cr. The road is in good shape and is 2WD and is not plowed. This trip is best when you can drive to around 700m, which in heavy snow years might not be possible until April. This should put you somewhere near Downing Cr, about 7km from the highway. The road continues climbing gradually into the pass at the head of Furry Cr. It is a 3–4km ski to Cyrtina Cr at 800m, from which there is a choice of three destinations: Mountain Lk Plateau, Ben Lomond or Chanter Pk.

### Mountain Lake Plateau

Length: 1–2days  
Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 910m  
Start: 700m

### 1620m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/11  
Best: Feb–Mar

The Mountain Lk Plateau is the main destination at the head of Furry Cr, and a flagged route branches left from the Furry Cr road, half a kilometre before Cyrtina Cr. The



View of Howe Sound from the Mountain Lk plateau at the head of Furry Cr.

route climbs through regenerated old logging to gain the open logged basin above 1100m, where it rejoins a spur of the logging road.

If the snowpack is low, stay on the logging road instead of following the flagged route. The road makes a long switch-back across Cyrtina Cr and rejoins the flagged route.

There are several possible routes to climb from this basin onto the alpine plateau to the E. The most direct route contours into the forest at the head of the basin and follows Cyrtina Cr to Wind Lk. There is a short, steep step in the woods near 1250m.

Once on the plateau there is a small BCMC Hut 200m W of Mountain Lk at GR938953 (sleeps 6, contact [www.bcmc.ca](http://www.bcmc.ca)).

The gentle 1620m peak immediately SE of Wind Lk is the highest destination on the plateau. There is some alpine skiing on the slopes SW of the summit, and the long, broad ridge S of Cyrtina Cr offers a worthwhile 600m run dropping W to Furry Cr through partially regenerated old logging. Note that the ridge curving SW from the summit has some narrow steps on it which must be avoided by traversing across the steep basin a few hundred metres below the N side of the ridge.

## Ben Lomond

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 950m  
Start: 700m

## 1650m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/11  
Best: Feb-Mar

Ben Lomond is the attractive rocky horn at the SE corner of the Mountain Lk area. It can be reached by traversing across the intervening terrain from Wind Lk (some tricky spots here) or by dropping down a gully leading to the W end of Omer Lk (1300m). The summit is a short snow climb. An ice axe is recommended. Nearby Red Mtn (1648m) can be ascended on skis via its gentle ridge SW.

Ben Lomond can also be reached more directly by skiing up the Furry Cr road to the pass with Clipper Cr. From here, an old spur road traverses E for about 0.7km above Clipper Cr and can be used to gain the broad gentle ridge SW of Ben Lomond.

The 1600m summit E of Loch Lomond (sometimes referred to as Bagpipe Pk) has been climbed on skis using this approach by crossing over the shoulder S of Ben Lomond and dropping down to Loch Lomond beyond. The summit is mostly glades on its N slopes. This is a 2 day trip.



Skiing at the head of Omer Cr with Ben Lomond behind.

## Chanter Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 15km  
Elevation Gain: 820m  
Start: 700m

**1520m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/11  
Best: Feb–Mar

Chanter Pk is an unofficial name for the high point S of Furry Cr on the divide with Downing Cr. Its N side is steep, but the peak can be approached on skis from the E via the pass at the head of Furry Cr. It's a reasonable outing with little travel in the forest, and about 500m of the descent is an enjoyable run.

Ski about 5km up the Furry Cr road to the pass with Clipper Cr at the head of the valley. Turn right onto a switchback that climbs into a cutblock S of the pass. From



Skiing up the Furry Cr road towards open slopes on Chanter Pk. Photo by Robin Tivy

the top SE corner of the cutblock, traverse E through a short stretch of trees to reach open slopes that follow a creek/gash SE to gain the E ridge of the E summit. The slightly higher main summit is half a kilometre across a short dip to the W. In general, this whole route is much more open than it appears on the map.

## Capilano Mountain

**1690m**

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1200m  
Start: 700m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/11  
Best: Mar–Apr

A broad isolated summit at the head of the Capilano R that can be climbed on skis from the Furry Cr road. This trip is a bit of an adventure but is a recommended ski ascent. It is best in a good snow year.

Drive 8.2km up the Furry Cr road from the highway to just past Downing Cr (see Sky Pilot area above). Look for markers at about GR902934, at the start of a rough trail that leads down to Furry Cr. Cross the creek on a log bridge and continue S along a flagged route that connects to old logging roads on the E side of Downing Cr. Follow the road SE up the Downing Cr valley. The road offers reasonable traveling on skis. After about 2km, take a spur that crosses Downing Cr at 740m (GR919910) and continue up the W side of Downing Cr for another 1.5km to clearcuts at the



The NE flank of Capilano Mtn from Chanter Pk. Photo by Simon Chesterton

head of the valley. There are inviting open slopes NE of the summit that end in cliffs above Downing Cr. The recommended route outflanks the cliffs by going around to the S side of the mountain. Leave the clearcuts at about 850m and ascend SW through widely spaced old-growth forest towards a pass with the Capilano R, 2km E of Capilano Mtn. Veer N of the pass and angle up steepening subalpine slopes for 500m to gain the gentle ridge top E of the summit. The summit offers great views of the backsides of the North Shore mountains. Descend your uptrack. The run back to the pass offers some enjoyable skiing. It may be possible to ski the attractive slopes NE of the summit by keeping to skier's right and connecting with old spur roads at GR921903, above the cliffs. See [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com) for more details.





Open slopes above Pinecone Lk.

## Mt Gillespie

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 18km  
Elevation Gain: 1370m  
Start: 800m

## 2020m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/10  
Best: Apr–May

Mt Gillespie is the highest summit S of Pinecone Lake on the Mamquam–Pitt Divide S of Garibaldi Park. It is a relatively gentle summit with a small glacier on its N side. The area is part of Pinecone-Burke Provincial Park.

Access is from the Mamquam R logging roads, which leave Hwy 99 1km S of Squamish under the Stawamus Chief. The main road crosses to the N side of the Mamquam R 13km from Hwy 99 and runs SE to the back end of the Mamquam valley. Continue on the mainline to a major junction at 29km (posted mile 18), where the Mamquam R splits into SW and SE branches at the bottom of the long ridge running W from Mt Gillespie. Turn left and after several hundred metres, left again onto branch E-100 at about 800m. You will need a 4WD to continue past here. E-100 switchbacks steeply up the ridge beyond. After about 2km, turn left again onto E-110 and follow this to its end near 1300m and approximately 4km W of Mt Gillespie. Note that Mamquam R roads are not plowed, so this area can

only be visited when it is possible to drive to at least 800m. In a typical winter, this will not be until early spring.

Depending on the snow level, you can expect about 4km of skiing on the logging road. The route to Mt Gillespie climbs E from the end of the logging road over a 1740m knoll, along the narrower ridge beyond and across a small pocket glacier to gain the summit by its NW ridge. N of the summit there are some good runs up to 500m long. Other summits around Pinecone Lk can also be climbed on skis.

Mt Gillespie from near treeline W of the peak. *Photo by Jos van der Burg*





Gaining the high point on ridges N of Meslilloet Cr with Meslilloet Mtn behind.

## Meslilloet Mountain

Length: 2 days  
Total Distance: 26km  
Elevation Gain: 2300m  
Start: 820m

## 2001m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/10  
Best: Apr–May

Lying beyond the head of Indian Arm, the sprawling summit of Meslilloet Mtn is visible from parts of the Lower Mainland. Being less than 40km from downtown, it is the nearest glaciated summit to Vancouver. Though rarely climbed, it makes a good spring touring and mountaineering objective.

The summit has been climbed on skis from roads in the upper Mamquam R valley. Several routes have been used over the years. The route described here traverses the divide between the upper Mamquam R and the forks of Meslilloet Cr. Though lacking in sustained downhill runs, it is pleasant throughout with only a short climb through the forest at the beginning.

As for Mt Gillespie, follow Mamquam R roads to the back end of the Mamquam valley. At the major junction 5km S of Crawford Cr at km 29, stay on the main road, which crosses the SE branch of the Mamquam R and heads SW. After 1km ignore a spur that turns left along the S side

of the Mamquam R. Continue another half a kilometre to a spur that branches left and climbs SE up onto the end of the Mamquam–Meslilloet Divide. Park at the beginning of this spur, at 820m.

Avoiding a minor left spur, ski up the road to its end near 1140m. From the end of the road, veer left to avoid bluffs and climb through steep forest. Open subalpine meadows are reached within 200m. Follow the pleasant, undulating divide E for 5km to several lakes at the head of Boise Cr (1300m). The route to Meslilloet Mtn climbs into the alpine S of “Boise Lakes” and follows the long winding ridge running S to the glacier on the N side of the mountain. The glacier is reached by a somewhat exposed traverse on the W side of this ridge, near 1700m. If avalanche conditions are a concern or if the slope is icy, the traverse can be avoided by continuing along the ridge over an 1860m subpeak. Meslilloet Mtn is climbed from the col E of the peak. Climb a steep step above the col to a shoulder on the E ridge. To avoid difficulties higher up on the ridge, make an improbable traverse across steep snow slopes to the easier S ridge. This is a class 3 climb, depending on conditions.



View SW across the subalpine plateau surrounding the Mt Steele cabin.

## Tetrahedron Provincial Park

Tetrahedron Pk (1737m) is the highest summit on the Sechelt Peninsula, visible from much of Vancouver. There is an extensive network of ski trails and cabins in the area of subalpine lakes SW of the peak, and the open summits of Mt Steele and Panther Pk are recommended ski ascents offering some pleasant ski terrain. Despite the heavily logged approaches, this is an attractive area, somewhat similar to Cypress Mountain but without the extensive development.

The Sunshine Coast is a 45-minute ferry ride from Horseshoe Bay. In winter, ferries leave Horseshoe Bay at 7:20 and 9:20am and return from Langdale at 6:30 and 8:20pm (check [www.bcf ferries.com](http://www.bcf ferries.com)).

Access is from Sechelt, 27km from Langdale. At the main lights in Sechelt, turn N on Wharf Rd and after a few blocks, right on Sechelt Inlet Rd. Follow this around the E side of Sechelt Inlet for 5km to Gray Cr. The Gray Cr logging road branches to the right approximately half a kilometre past Gray Cr and climbs 12km up Gray Cr. At the top of the first hill, turn left. The road is marked with ski signs

and is plowed infrequently to a parking area at 760m on the S side of Gray Cr. 4WD or chains are recommended. Call the Tetrahedron snowphone at 604-740-3030 for information on road conditions.

There are four cabins in the area, located near Edwards Lk, McNair Lk, Mt Steele and Bachelor Lk. These are maintained by the Tetrahedron Outdoor Club (see [www.tet.outdoor.ca](http://www.tet.outdoor.ca)).

Looking N across Edwards Lk with Mt Steele beyond.



## Access to Edwards Lake Cabin

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 280m  
Start: 800m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Simple  
Map: 92G/12  
Best: Dec–Apr

The main ski trail heads E from the parking lot on an old logging road. After about 1km, take a right fork that turns SE towards Tannis Lk (980m). Then, after several hundred metres, turn left just before Tannis Lk on a spur that contours around to the E side of the intervening hill between Tannis Lk and Gilbert Lk. The spur continues to the W side of Edwards Lk (1000m). Cross Edwards Lk and pick up the route of the hiking trail beyond that climbs gently to the Edwards Lk cabin at 1080m, approximately 500m E of Edwards Lk. From here, alpine destinations include Mt Steele or Panther Pk. Trips to the Edwards Lake and McNair cabins do not involve travel in avalanche terrain.



### Edwards Lake Cabin

Map: 92G/12  
GR: 551937 (NAD83)  
Elevation: 1080m

Cost: \$10  
Capacity: 10  
Reservations: no

**Location** 700m NE of Edwards Lk on the W side of the creek draining from Mt Steele.

**Facilities** Comfortable log cabin with a wood stove

**Built** in 1980s by Tetrahedron Outdoor Club

**Contact Information** [www.tet.outdoor.ca](http://www.tet.outdoor.ca)

## Mt Steele

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 18km  
Elevation Gain: 850m  
Start: 800m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92G/12  
Best: Dec–Apr

Mt Steele is the dome-shaped summit 2km NE of the Edwards Lk cabin. It is a short ascent on moderate slopes and is the most popular objective here. From the Edwards Lk cabin, follow the main trail E across a narrow creek. The winter route to Mt Steele branches off the trail on the E side of the creek and climbs NE up a draw through open timber.



View NE from the Mt Steele area towards the Tantalus Range. *Photo by Linda Bily*

After 200m of climbing, the route enters a small subalpine basin SW of Mt Steele. Contour across the basin to avoid steeper open slopes on the flank of Mt Steele and ascend NW through widely spaced forest to gain the flat alpine area W of the summit of Mt Steele. The Mt Steele cabin is located here at 1500m. To ascend Mt Steele, ski up a sparsely treed ridge beyond the cabin and gain the summit from the N. There are good views of Tetrahedron Pk. There is an enjoyable 150m run off the summit back towards the cabin

The N side of Mt Steele with the Strait of Georgia beyond.





Photo by Linda Bily

### Mt Steele Cabin

**1500m**

Map: 92G/12

Cost: \$10

GR: 560951 (NAD83)

Capacity: 10

Elevation: 1500m

Reservations: no

**Location** At treeline, 400m W of Mt Steele.

**Facilities** Comfortable log cabin with a wood stove

**Built** in 1980s by Tetrahedron Outdoor Club

**Contact Information** [www.tet.outdoor.ca](http://www.tet.outdoor.ca)

as well as additional skiing on slopes below the cabin to the W. The dome 1km SW of the cabin also offers some good short runs on its N side.

### Panther Peak

**1691m**

Length: 2 days

Difficulty: 3

Total Distance: 30km

Terrain: Challenging

Elevation Gain: 1340m

Map: 92G/12

Start: 800m

Best: Feb–Apr

Panther Pk is a broad summit perched on the eastern edge of the Tetrahedron area above McNair Cr. Its dark SE face is visible from parts of Vancouver. Panther Pk is a recommended ski ascent with some longer runs, but requires more advanced routefinding to avoid avalanche hazard on steeper slopes. Faster parties should be able to climb both Mt Steele and Panther Pk in a 2-day trip by spending the night in between at the McNair cabin.

Beyond the Edwards Lk cabin, follow the main trail E across a narrow creek. The trail to Chapman Lk descends S to Chapman Cr through pleasant subalpine terrain before swinging E to Chapman Lk. The McNair cabin is located at 1000m, in the pass before McNair Lk at the head of McNair Cr.

The recommended route to Panther Pk climbs SE from McNair Lk through open subalpine forest to gain the SW



### McNair Lake Cabin

**1010m**

Map: 92G/12

Cost: \$10

GR: 576919 (NAD83)

Capacity: 10

Elevation: 1010m

Reservations: no

**Location** In subalpine meadows 300m N of McNair Lk and 700m SE of Chapman Lk.

**Facilities** Comfortable log cabin with a wood stove

**Built** in 1980s by Tetrahedron Outdoor Club

**Contact Information** [www.tet.outdoor.ca](http://www.tet.outdoor.ca)

ridge S of Upper McNair Lk at 1200m. The main peak lies on the E end of the massif and involves ascending one final steeper slope to reach the summit. There are great views of Howe Sound.

It is also possible to reach Tetrahedron Pk (1737m) on skis. From Chapman Lk, ski N up Chapman Cr into the basin between Mt Steele and Tetrahedron Pk. Ascend steeper W-facing slopes at the head of the basin to gain the ridge 1km SW of the summit. Tetrahedron Pk involves a steep snow climb and an ice axe is recommended. Alternatively, a 1680m peak to the S is easily ascended on skis.



The upper SW ridge of Panther Pk.



# Garibaldi 2



South facing slopes at the head of the Bishop Gl on the Garibaldi Neve with Mamquam Mtn behind. *Photo by Peter Hudson*

Rising over 2600m from sea level directly behind Squamish, Mt Garibaldi is the namesake for Garibaldi Provincial Park. Skiing in Garibaldi Park has been popular since the 1940s. Extensive alpine areas of meadow and glacier offer excellent ski ascents, long runs, high-level traverses and rolling tours. Access is generally via park trails, and many areas are suitable for weekend trips. The classics include the well-loved ski up Paul Ridge, a ski mountaineering ascent of Mt Garibaldi or the renowned Garibaldi Neve Traverse. This chapter describes the southern half of Garibaldi Park as far north as Cheakamus Lake. The northern portion of Garibaldi Park is described in the Whistler Chapter.

## **Snow Conditions**

As you move inland beyond the influence of Howe Sound, the snow conditions become drier and more consistent at higher elevations. The Garibaldi area lies on the windward side of the Coast Mountains where it snows an impressive 12–15m annually. The Diamond Head area receives some of the heaviest snowfalls in Garibaldi Park, with typical snowpacks of 3–4m. Record snowpacks are over 7m. The

snowpack tapers off a bit as you head N to the Garibaldi Lk and Black Tusk areas. Mid-winter storms can blanket the region with huge dumps of snow that require heavy trail-breaking and cause challenging avalanche conditions.

## **Access**

Access to most of this section is from Hwy 99 as it runs N from Squamish to Pemberton. It is approximately a one-hour drive of 64km from Vancouver to Squamish. From the main traffic light in Squamish distances to important turnoffs are:

- km 0—Squamish
- km 4—Diamond Head turnoff
- km 13—Brohm Ridge turnoff
- km 33—Garibaldi Lake turnoff
- km 51—Cheakamus Lake Rd
- km 58—Whistler
- km 91—Pemberton

Several trips start from the E side of Garibaldi Park, which is reached via logging roads that run S down the Lil-loet R valley from Pemberton.



Skiing along Paul Ridge above Elfin Lk, with open slopes below Columnar Pk and Mt Garibaldi beyond.

Due to thefts, do not leave any valuables in your vehicle at trailheads.

## Maps

*Garibaldi Park Map 1:50,000*, by Clark Geomatics

## Garibaldi Provincial Park

[www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks)

Established in 1927, Garibaldi Provincial Park protects a large wilderness area within a few hours' drive of the major population centres of southwestern BC. As a wilderness destination, it is one of the most important protected areas in the province, especially as intensive motorized use of unprotected areas in southwestern BC grows. The western portion of the park is managed as an intensive recreation zone and the eastern portion of the park has been designated a wilderness conservation zone.

Garibaldi Park is a non-motorized zone. The following restrictions apply throughout the park:

- Snowmobiles are prohibited in Garibaldi Park.
- Arriving or departing from the park by aircraft is not permitted.
- Dogs are prohibited in the park.
- Fires are not permitted in the park.

Backcountry permits are not required for recreational users. All campgrounds, cabins, shelters, etc. are operated on a first-come, first-served basis. Backcountry camping fees apply year-round at Red Heather and Elfin Lakes campgrounds and from May 1 to Nov 1 at Garibaldi Lake and Taylor Meadows campgrounds. Parking fees are in effect at Diamond Head. Applicable fees are payable in cash at trailhead fee stations. Day-use cooking shelters are located at Red Heather, Garibaldi Lake and Taylor Meadows. Camping is not permitted in the day-use shelters.

The Black Tusk Forest Service Road is permanently locked at the 6km mark, and the recommended winter access to the Black Tusk area of the park is via the Garibaldi Lake Trail.



## Paul Ridge

Length: 1–3 days

Total Distance: 22km

Elevation Gain: 880m

Start: 940m

1680m

Difficulty: 2

Terrain: Simple/Challenging

Map: 92G/14, 92G/15

Best: Nov–May

Also known as the Diamond Head area, Paul Ridge is a remarkable area of rolling alpine meadows and gentle peaks at the southern end of Garibaldi Park above Squamish. Access involves an easy ski up a snow-covered jeep road. The area is very scenic, with lots of skiing on short, open slopes. Skiing in the area has been popular since the old Diamond Head Chalet was built here in the 1940s.

Access is 4km north of Squamish on Hwy 99. Follow signs for Garibaldi Park. Turn E on Mamquam Rd about half a kilometre N of the Mamquam R. Follow the road for 16km to a parking lot at 914m. The road turns to gravel beyond the golf course. The road is plowed in mid-winter but snow tires and chains or 4WD are required. Snow removal is periodic and conditions may change during your visit. Park in the parking lot, where you will not block the road for snow-clearing equipment. Day-use parking fees are payable at a fee station. Do not leave valuables in your car, as theft and vandalism are sometimes a problem here.

From the parking lot, the ski route follows a narrow road for 5km to treeline—and a warming hut—at Red Heather Meadows (approximately 1 hour). Beyond Red Heather, the winter ski route is marked along gentle Paul Ridge, past Round Mtn (1680m) and for a further 6km to the large Elfin Lakes Shelter at Elfin Lks.

Most skiers on day trips venture to Round Mtn or the Elfin Lakes shelter and back out. There are numerous practice ski slopes along the northern flanks of Paul Ridge with runs of 150m, especially in the vicinity of Round Mtn. For a longer day or an easy weekend trip, the slopes and summits of The Gargoyles and Columnar Pk (both 1830m) make enjoyable destinations, offering 350m runs on a variety of open slopes. Avalanche precautions should be exercised when heading to these peaks.

Diamond Head is the official name given to the 2070m shoulder of Atwell Pk, 2km N of The Gargoyles. It makes a good destination on skis and is reached by dropping 150m down the backside of The Gargoyles and ascending broad open slopes beyond.



Photo by Katy Chambers

### Red Heather Shelter

Map: 92G/14

GR: 973120

Elevation: 1400m

Cost: not applicable

Capacity: 15

Reservations: no

**Location** In Red Heather Meadows, 5km from the Diamond Head parking lot.

**Facilities** A comfortable day-use cooking shelter with wood stove, propane cook stove, 2 picnic tables and pit toilets. Camping is not permitted in the shelter and is allowed around the shelter only during the winter season. A \$5 camping fee, which includes parking, is payable in the parking lot by a self-registration envelope system.

**Built** by BC Provincial Parks in 1985

**Contact Information** [www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks)



Photo by Matt MacDonald

### Elfin Lakes Shelter

Map: 92G/15

GR: 010150

Elevation: 1480m

Cost: \$10

Capacity: 34

Reservations: no

**Location** At Elfin Lakes on Paul Ridge, S of Mt. Garibaldi.

**Facilities** A large mountain hut with sleeping bunks for 34 people (11 double bunks, 12 single bunks), propane heater, propane lights, 2 propane cook stoves, 4 picnic tables, 2 wash sinks and pit toilets. Bring your own sleeping pad. No reservations are available, so be prepared to camp outdoors if the shelter is full. The shelter fee includes parking and is payable in the parking lot by a self-registration envelope system. Note there is a year-round camping fee of \$5 at Elfin Lakes. Park rangers make periodic visits to the ranger station at Elfin Lakes.

**Built** by BC Provincial Parks in 1975

**Contact Information** [www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks)



Mamquam Mountain

The W side of Mamquam Mtn as viewed from Paul Ridge.

## Mamquam Mountain

## 2595m

Length: 3 days

Total Distance: 52km

Elevation Gain: 3260m

Start: 940m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92G/15, 92G/14

Best: Mar–Apr

A large sprawling summit E of the Diamond Head area, capped with a small icefield. The summit is attractive for ski mountaineering and is a recommended ski ascent.

The classic approach to Mamquam Mtn is from the Diamond Head area. Beyond the shelter at Elfin Lakes, the out-

lines of a narrow road can be picked up. This road contours N at about 1430m before dropping across avalanche slopes to the main forks in Ring Cr at 1300m. Use caution crossing these slopes. Open terrain S of Opal Cone (1740m) leads E to recommended camping at Mamquam Lk (1280m). To climb Mamquam Mtn, drop S across Eanastick Meadows (1130m) and ascend SE through open timber to gain the head of a small basin near treeline (GR069159). It is a 600m climb up broad W-facing slopes to the Mamquam Icefield from here. The recommended route makes an ascending traverse S across the E side of this basin for almost 1km to pick up an indistinct ridge that can be ascended due E to a 2100m notch leading onto the Mamquam Icefield. Skirt appropriately named Delusion Pk (2500m) on the E. Mamquam is easily climbed from the N. This is a superb 3-day trip: a combination of a tour to Mamquam Lk and a ski ascent from there with a 1500m descent to Eanastick Meadows.

Logging roads in Skookum Cr have also been used for access, and Mamquam Mtn has been climbed in 1 or 2 days in spring using this approach. These roads were deactivated in 1997 and are becoming overgrown (see [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com)).

Kicking steps up the final summit pyramid on Mamquam Mtn.





The N side of Mt Garibaldi. Photo by John Scurlock

## Mt Garibaldi

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 27km  
Elevation Gain: 1680m  
Start: 1000m

**2678m**

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/14, 92G/15  
Best: Mar–May

A prominent glaciated summit rising from sea level NE of Squamish. This is a superb spring ski ascent with tremendous views of Howe Sound and Garibaldi Park.

Access is via Brohm Ridge, running W from Mt Garibaldi. This is an attractive alpine ridge. It is also a designated snowmobile area used by the Black Tusk Snowmobile Club ([www.btsc.ca](http://www.btsc.ca)) so consider coming mid-week. Snowmobiles are not permitted in Garibaldi Park, which begins above 1900m, so you will eventually climb out of the snowmobile area.

Brohm Ridge is reached from Hwy 99. About 13km N of Squamish, a logging road branches E just before Brohm Lk (270m). The road forks 1km from the highway. Take the right fork, which switchbacks up the S spur of Brohm Ridge. Drive as high as snow conditions allow, typically

around 1000m in early spring. The snowmobile club maintains the road. Continue skiing up the road, taking the right fork near 1140m. There is a gate near 1400m, which is locked after the snow leaves. Beyond the gate, the road drops about 100m before climbing past a snowmobile club cabin near 1450m. The road ends near 1600m and the ridge

View of Howe Sound from the summit of Mt Garibaldi.



is open and scenic above. Brohm Ridge climbs gently to the E for 4km and provides easy access onto the Warren Gl near 2050m. Traverse the glacier for about 1.5km under impressive hanging ice cliffs on the N face of Mt Garibaldi and ascend an indistinct nose around crevasses on the lower N ridge to reach gentler slopes NE of the summit. A bergschrund cuts across the upper slopes near 2550m. Most years this can be crossed in spring without too much difficulty. The NE face above the bergschrund is about 100m of 40° snow and can be ascended to the summit on skis or by kicking steps with an ice axe depending on conditions. There is about 600m of fall-line skiing off the summit down to the Warren Gl.

Note that Mt Garibaldi can also be climbed from the Garibaldi Neve and is often done as part of the Garibaldi Neve Traverse.

## Garibaldi Lake Trail

Length: 1 or more days  
Total Distance: 18km  
Elevation Gain: 900m  
Start: 560m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Simple  
Map: 92G/14  
Best: Feb–Apr

Garibaldi Lake Trail provides access to the Garibaldi Lk and Black Tusk areas in the heart of Garibaldi Park. This is a beautiful area of meadows, glaciers and volcanic peaks in summer, and in winter is well suited to ski touring and ski mountaineering. The trail is used regularly and is easy to follow in winter.

The Garibaldi Lk turnoff is well marked 33km N of Squamish on Hwy 99, shortly after crossing Rubble Cr. It is 3km to a parking lot at the trailhead, at 560m. This road is not plowed, so depending on the snow level you might have to park close to the highway and ski to the parking lot. The trail climbs at a gentle gradient and switchbacks up the N side of Rubble Cr. It takes 2–3 hours to ski and walk 6km to a major trail junction near 1400m.

The right fork continues 3km to Garibaldi Lk at 1472m (9km total, 900m elevation gain), giving access to Mt Price, the mountains E of Sphinx Bay on the far side of Garibaldi Lk and the Garibaldi Neve Traverse. Depending on snow conditions, it can be faster in winter to bypass parts of the trail by skiing across Barrier and Lesser Garibaldi Lks, making sure to return to the trail above Lesser Garibaldi Lk. The left fork continues to the Black Tusk area (see below).

There is an enclosed day-use cooking shelter in the campground near Battleship Islands at the W end of Garibaldi Lk (GR962321).

The trail is heavily used by snowshoers and hikers. Deep ruts and uneven footprints can make the trail difficult to ski down in poor conditions. Steep open slopes adjacent to the large cliff known as the Barrier can be used on descent by more advanced skiers to bypass the upper portion of the trail, and with sufficient snow it is also faster to ski out the lower portion of Rubble Cr to the parking lot at the trailhead.

## Black Tusk Area

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 30km  
Elevation Gain: 1560m  
Start: 560m

## 2120m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92G/14  
Best: Nov–May

Black Tusk is probably the most distinctive summit in southwestern BC. The Black Tusk area provides a range of skiing on alpine meadows, open slopes and gentle glaciers. This is a friendly area of straightforward tours, stunning views and several good runs up to 300m. Ski mountaineering began here over 80 years ago with access by train.

*Photo by Linda Bily*





View of Garibaldi Lk from Panorama Ridge. *Photo by Katy Chambers*

Access is via Garibaldi Lake Trail. Take the left fork at the trail junction at 1400m and continue for 1.5km to a campground in alpine meadows beside Taylor Cr. There is an enclosed day-use cooking shelter in Taylor Meadows, with overnight camping outside.

Beyond Taylor Meadows, recommended destinations include the shoulder of Black Tusk, Panorama Ridge and Gentian Pk. The meadows often have skiing early in the season. Open slopes S of Black Tusk offer some good skiing, and the shoulder at the base of Black Tusk is a recommended destination. One of the best runs is on sheltered N-facing slopes immediately E of the Black Tusk, starting from the high shoulder at 2100m. Black Tusk (2316m) may be climbed in winter by following the standard summer route up S gullies. Scrambling to class 2–3 on loose snow-covered rocks is involved.

Mt Price from Panorama Ridge. *Photo by Katy Chambers*



Panorama Ridge (2120m) is perhaps the best destination on skis from Taylor Meadows, and the distance and elevation gain given above are from the parking lot to here. It can be ascended from the N and offers tremendous views with good skiing on its N slopes.

Helm Cr meadows, Helm Gl and the gentle summit of Gentian Pk (2140m) are easily reached from upper Black Tusk meadows and are also enjoyable destinations.

## Mt Price

**2040m**

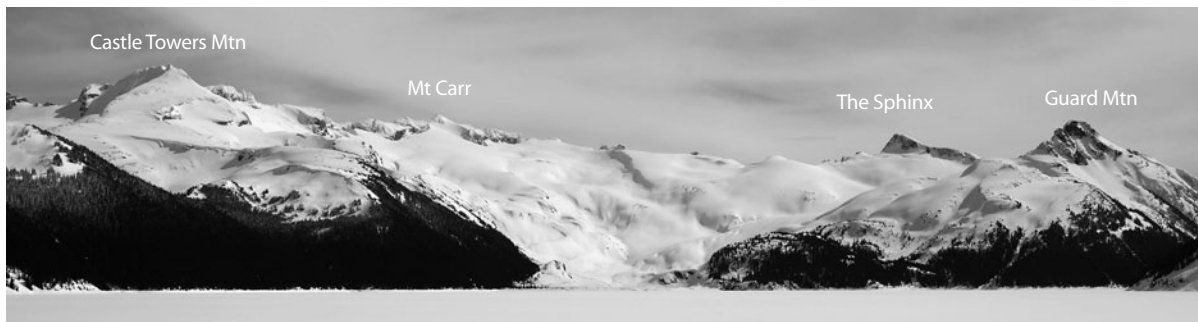
Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 27km  
Elevation Gain: 1480m  
Start: 560m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92G/14  
Best: Feb–Apr

An extinct volcano south of Garibaldi Lake, Mt Price is a recommended ski ascent. A fairly long approach via the Garibaldi Lake Trail is rewarded with great views and a 600m run.

Take Garibaldi Lake Trail to Garibaldi Lk and ski along the S side of the lake for about 2km. Mt Price can be ascended by skiing up open avalanche slopes from Price Bay. Use caution here and choose a route that is appropriate for the avalanche conditions. The recommended descent is on N-facing slopes from the col between Mt Price and Clinker Pk. This is an excellent run. Steeper slopes up to 45° immediately N of the summit have also been skied.

Mt Price can also be climbed from Burton Hut in Sphinx Bay.



Glaciated summits above Sphinx Bay as seen from Garibaldi Lk. Photo by Katy Chambers

## Sphinx Bay

Length: 2–7 days  
Total Distance: 28km  
Elevation Gain: 900m  
Start: 560m

**1460m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Simple  
Map: 92G/15  
Best: Feb–Apr

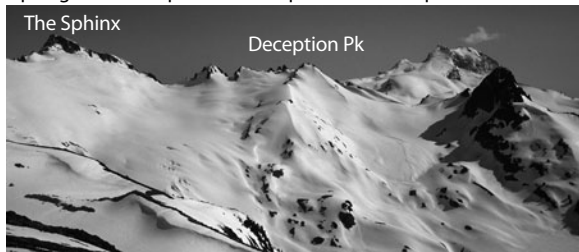
The Sphinx Gl drains a large basin above Sphinx Bay at the E end of Garibaldi Lk. This basin is a first class ski mountaineering area with half a dozen intermediate objectives and a tremendous variety of peaks and ski runs. Skiing is on open slopes with descents of 700–1200m.

Take Garibaldi Lake Trail to Garibaldi Lk and ski it to Sphinx Bay at the E end of the lake. Garibaldi Lk generally freezes around late December (though in some years not until January) and is usually safe to cross well into May. Most parties stay in Burton Hut at Sphinx Bay, which is about a 6-hour ski from the parking lot, depending on conditions. There is no avalanche hazard to reach Sphinx Bay. In bad visibility it is sometimes necessary to use a compass while crossing the lake. There is an enclosed picnic shelter near Battleship Islands at the W end of the lake.

Late in the spring when Garibaldi Lk begins to break up, the E side of the lake can be reached from the Helm Gl via Gentian Pass and the flank of Polemonium Ridge.

The summits at the E end of the lake offer a wide variety of enjoyable ski ascents on open slopes from the Burton Hut and are described below. Most involve short sections of easy scrambling (class 2–3) to reach actual summits.

Open glaciated slopes N of The Sphinx and Deception Pk.



Other destinations include Mt Price (2040m) and Glacier Pikes (2130m) as well as Mt Garibaldi (2678m), Isosceles Pk (2530m) and Parapet Pk (2470m), all of which can be day trips from Burton Hut. The Garbage Pile, the small dome above the cliff of basalt columns 1km E of the hut, is an easy ascent in poor weather.

Overnight trips to the hut will usually involve climbing one summit in the morning of the second day and then skiing out to the parking lot later in the afternoon, but there is enough in this area to keep a keen party busy for up to a week. For many years, the VOC ran a spring ski mountaineering camp here.

## Guard Mountain

Total Distance: 7km  
Elevation Gain: 700m

**2160m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging

An attractive rocky peak S of Sphinx Bay at the E end of Garibaldi Lk. Ski up the valley and glacier E of Guard Mtn to the col with Deception Pk. Guard Mtn is climbed by scrambling up the easy SE ridge. The Guard Gl is an enjoyable run.

## Deception Peak

Total Distance: 7km  
Elevation Gain: 800m

**2260m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging

An excellent ski peak E of Guard Mtn. Ascend via Guard Gl and snow slopes above Guard–Deception col or from the Sphinx Gl.

## The Sphinx

Total Distance: 11km  
Elevation Gain: 950m

**2410m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

A distinctive summit S of the Sphinx Gl. From Burton Hut, ski ESE for 2km to gain the Sphinx Gl. Near 1700m, follow the obvious glacial valley S to Sphinx Pass immediately W of the summit. From the pass, kick steps up a steep head-wall and ascend the gentle SW ridge.





Skiing below the Sphinx Gl. The Sphinx is at upper R.

## The Bookworms

Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 890m

**2350m**  
Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging

Granite pinnacles on the divide SW of Mt Carr make for an interesting destination with a long enjoyable ski run. From Burton Hut, ski ESE for 2km to gain the Sphinx Gl. An obvious route often referred to as the "Corridor" runs N of a long corniced and crevassed ridge that descends W from The Bookworms. The Corridor can be ascended to the head of the glacier. The descent is a long moderate fall-line run on W-facing slopes.

## Mt Carr

Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 1130m

**2590m**  
Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

A high ski peak due E of Sphinx Bay. Ascend the Sphinx Gl towards The Bookworms before veering N on smooth slopes towards the summit. The peak is most easily ascended on skis from the broad glacier on its N side. This can be reached by crossing the long rock ridge running N to Castle Towers Mtn via a short snow couloir N of the summit.

Below the final summit of Mt Carr with Mt Garibaldi in the distance.  
*Photo by Jos van der Burg*



## Castle Towers Mountain

Total Distance: 11km  
Elevation Gain: 1190m

**2650m**  
Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

The highest summit E of Garibaldi Lk. The E peak of Castle Towers makes a great ski ascent. From the base of the Sphinx Gl, ascend open slopes NE to the rocky divide with the Cheakamus Gl NW of Mt Carr. Cross the divide via a narrow gap immediately S of Phyllis's Engine or on the N side of Mt Carr. Traverse N across the Cheakamus Gl and ski up the E peak of Castle Towers Mtn via steeper E-facing slopes. The slightly higher central peak requires negotiating a class 4 notch and is not usually climbed by ski parties.



The SE side of Castle Towers Mtn as seen from Mt Carr. *Photo by Matt Gunn*



*Photo by Jos van der Burg*

## Burton Hut

Map: 92G/15  
GR: 006307  
Elevation: 1470m

Cost: \$5  
Capacity: 10  
Reservations: no

**Location** Below the snout of the Sphinx Glacier, near the E shore of Garibaldi Lk on the N side of the creek draining into Sphinx Bay.

**Facilities** An arch-shaped mountain hut.

**Built** by VOC in 1969

**Contact Information** [www.ubc-voc.com](http://www.ubc-voc.com)





The Garibaldi Neve and the E side of Mt Garibaldi. *Photo by John Scurlock*

## Garibaldi Neve Traverse

Length: 1–3 days

Total Distance: 40km

Elevation Gain: 1460m S to N; 1840m N to S

Start: 940m

Difficulty: 2

Terrain: Challenging

Map: 92G/14, 92G/15

Best: Feb–Apr

The Garibaldi Neve Traverse is a scenic alpine traverse across the relatively gentle icefield behind Mt Garibaldi, from the Diamond Head area to Garibaldi Lk. It is a deservedly popular route, which provides an introduction to glacier travel for many people. It was first crossed on skis in the 1940s and is THE classic glacier traverse of the Coast Mountains.

This traverse may be done in either direction. Starting at Diamond Head gives a higher start with quicker, easier access to alpine terrain. Starting at the north end means skiing out from Diamond Head, which is less difficult and more enjoyable than skiing down Garibaldi Lake Trail. The traverse is described here from S to N, beginning at Diamond Head. Access to Diamond Head and Garibaldi Lk are described separately above. Most parties prefer to shuttle cars to both ends before starting.

The route follows Paul Ridge into the Diamond Head area. Beyond the shelter at Elfin Lakes, the outlines of

a narrow road can be picked up. This road is marked on 92G/15 and contours N at 1420m before dropping across avalanche slopes to the main fork in Ring Cr at 1290m. Use caution here. Descend a short, steep slope to cross Ring Cr and continue up open terrain on the E side of the creek. Note that Ring Cr may also be reached from Elfin Lakes by climbing through the 1750m saddle between Columar Pk and The Gargoyle and then dropping NE down open slopes to reach Ring Cr near 1360m. This variation is slightly longer but gives better skiing and can offer a safer route, depending on conditions.

Ascending Ring Cr onto Garibaldi Neve. *Photo by Julian Gonzalez*



From the head of Ring Cr, Garibaldi Gl leads directly onto the Garibaldi Neve N of the Opal Cone. Head slightly W of N to make a gradual climb across the Garibaldi Neve with outstanding views of Mamquam Mtn and the remoter parts of Garibaldi Park to the E. Cross the long ridge running NE from The Tent near 2100m. This is the highest point on the traverse and is also the halfway point. Traverse N across the North Pitt Gl to skirt below the small rock nunatak known as The Sharkfin. A minor icefall NE of The Sharkfin presents the only serious crevasse danger on the trip. In times of low snow the crevasses here require extra caution. Continue through the broad 1900m pass W of Glacier Pikes. Descend the slopes next to the Sentinel Gl and ski onto Garibaldi Lk. N of the snout of the Sentinel Gl at GR004273 there is a small hut that can be used as an emergency shelter (sleeps 4). Exit via Garibaldi Lake Trail.

The Neve Traverse is usually done as a moderate 2 day trip, though faster parties can complete the route as a strenuous 1 day trip in good conditions. An ascent of Mt Garibaldi (2678m) may be included as part of a 2 day trip. From

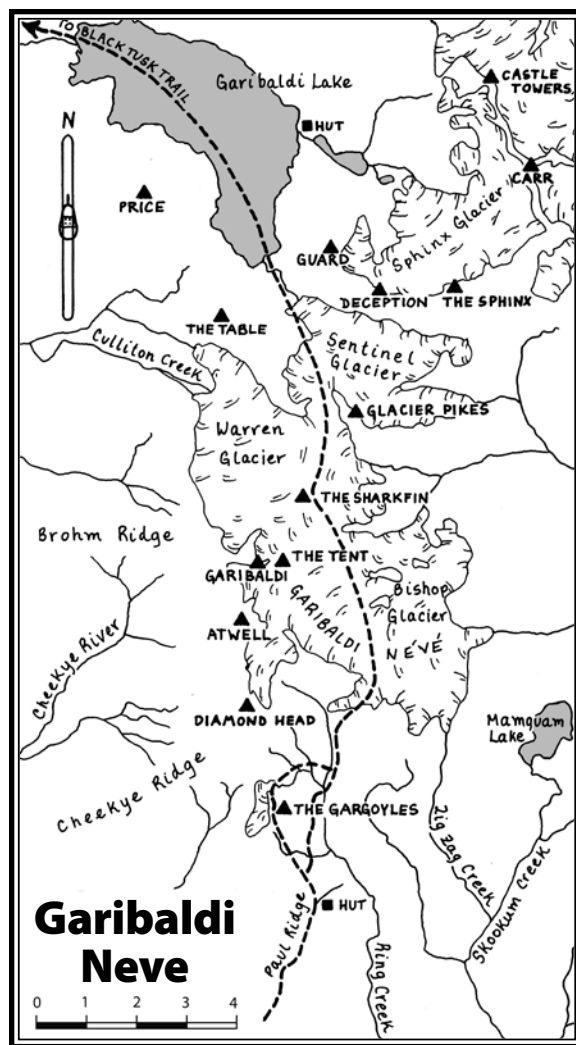


View of the SE side of Mt Garibaldi from the Bishop Gl.

the high point on the neve, ascend the upper North Pitt Gl past The Tent to reach slopes NE of Mt Garibaldi (see Mt Garibaldi for more route information). Longer trips of 3–5 days are also recommended, with possible stays at Elfin Lakes Shelter and Burton Hut in Sphinx Bay on Garibaldi Lk. There is also a small glaciology hut below the Sentinel Gl that can be used in an emergency. Ascents of Glacier Pikes (2130m) or any of the summits E of Sphinx Bay are recommended.

Note that travel on the Garibaldi Neve is difficult in poor weather and that Garibaldi Lk can normally be crossed on skis only between January and mid-May.

Variations to the Neve Traverse can involve using the Brohm Ridge or Helm Cr approaches.



Crossing the North Pitt Gl below The Sharkfin. Photo by James Hardy





Looking S on the McBride Range Traverse across glaciers E of Hour Pk, with Mamquam Mtn in the distance. *Photo by Brian Finnie*

## McBride Range Traverse

Length: 6–8 days

Total Distance: 66km

Elevation Gain: 3840m

Start: 2280m

Eckhard Buss, Brian Ellis, Peter Macek, Paul Starr, May 1969, *CAJ* 1970, p. 63

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92G/15, 92J/2

Best: Apr–May

This is a rugged traverse across Garibaldi Park, from Whistler to Garibaldi Lake, on the glaciated divide at the headwaters of the Cheakamus R. Much of the trip is quite remote, despite its proximity to the Lower Mainland, and it involves a lot of up and down on steeper slopes. One of the more popular week-long traverses it is best in April or May but still recommended in the first weeks of June.

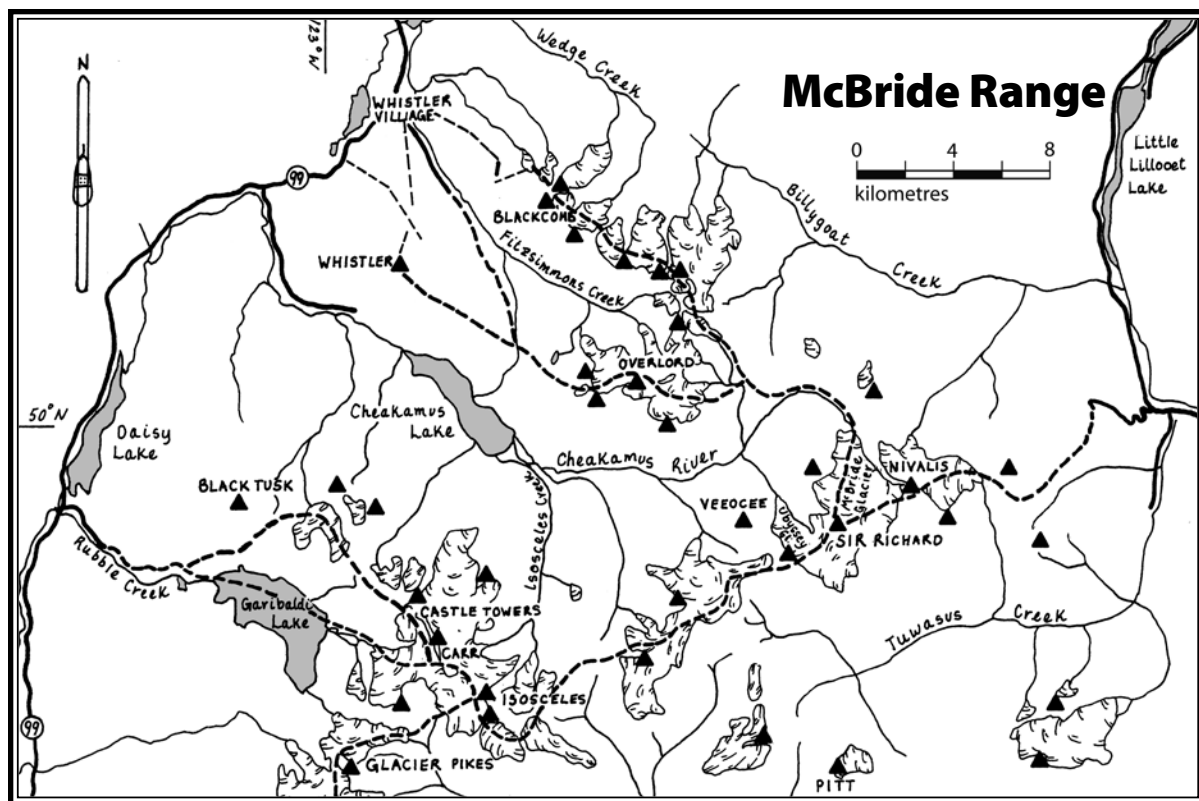
Most parties start the traverse from the Blackcomb ski lifts. Cross glaciers in the Spearhead Range and ski down the Naden Gl to Diavolo Cr to reach the head of the Cheakamus R and the E end of the McBride Range. See the Spearhead Traverse for a detailed description of this first part of the route.

Alternatively, start at Whistler and reach the head of

the Cheakamus R via the Fitzsimmons Range. From Singing Pass, climb through the Whirlwind–Fissile col and ski across the upper Overlord Gl and around the NE side of Overlord to gain the Diavolo Gl. Cross the Diavolo Gl to Detour Ridge and descend slopes NE of Detour Ridge into Diavolo Cr. An alternative route climbs over the shoulder of Mt Iago and descends the gentler Iago Gl to Diavolo Cr.

Traversing the Forger Gl.





Once in Diavolo Cr, ski SE across a wooded shoulder into the Cheakamus R and beyond to the McBride Gl. The glacier is easily ascended to a 2530m col immediately NW of Mt Sir Richard. Traverse SW across the Ubyssy Gl and around steep slopes S of The Gatekeeper (2350m) to reach Wolverine Pass (1900m) at the head of North Tuwasus Cr, 2km S of Veeocee Mtn. From Wolverine Pass traverse steep N slopes to gain the Snowbowl at the N end of the Forger Gl. Cross the shoulder SE of Forger Pk (2410m) and traverse across the N side of the Forger Gl. This is a spectacular section of the traverse on big slopes below granite pinnacles. Routefinding around crevasses is generally straightforward. Wrap around the W side of the westernmost peak above the Forger Gl to steep slopes above Drop Pass. Descend an indistinct ridge that drops directly W into the pass. Ascend steep slopes W from Drop Pass to a spur ridge above the Isosceles Gl. Bypass the southernmost high point on the ridge on the W side to reach a 1950m col NE of Hour Pk. From here it is possible to cross the N side of Parapet Pk near 2200m to Gray Pass. However, it is preferable to ascend gentler slopes around the S side of Hour

Pk, ski through a notch N of Mt Luxor and then traverse slopes W of Isosceles Pk to Gray Pass. Climb the ridge W out of Gray Pass to the head of Sphinx Gl. The usual exit route is via Garibaldi Lk. In late spring it may be necessary to avoid crossing Garibaldi Lk by traversing the SW side of Castle Towers Mtn and skiing through Gentian Pass to Black Tusk Meadows.

Headed W above Drop Pass, Parapet Pk behind.





Camp on the Stave Gl on the Misty Icefield Traverse opposite Katzie Pk.

In good weather, an exit via the Garibaldi Neve to Diamond Head is recommended and only adds half a day to the traverse. The Garibaldi Neve can be reached from the head of the Sphinx Gl via Sphinx Pass and the Sentinel Gl. This avoids descending to Garibaldi Lk.

Travel is mostly on or near high ridge crests, and many summits are only short scrambles from the main traverse route. This includes peaks in the Fitzsimmons and Spearhead Ranges, Mt Sir Richard (2710m), The Gatekeeper (2350m), Forger Gl peaks (2410m), Isosceles Pk (2530m) and its neighbours, as well as summits surrounding the Sphinx Gl cirque.

As much of the route traverses through the heart of Garibaldi Park there are few escape routes in case of bad weather. The original ascent party of Mt Sir Richard (CAJ 1936, p. 71) skied up the Cheakamus R from Cheakamus Lk, and this approach has been used as an escape route. A trail exists on the NE side of Cheakamus Lk; it is in good condition to Singing Cr but sketchy beyond that. An exit via this route would require at least 2 days and is not rec-

ommended. The W side of the creek draining N from Drop Pass has also been used and is shorter.

Depending on conditions, there are several route variations that could be useful. In good conditions, the Garibaldi Neve can be reached directly from the W end of the McBride Range by crossing slopes SE of The Sphinx. Descend an indistinct ridge SW from Parapet Pk and traverse near 1370m to reach the Phoenix Gl, which can be ascended to join the Garibaldi Neve Traverse N of Glacier Pikes.

The McBride Traverse is also often done from S to N. A route variation NE of Hour Pk descends to near 1200m on the upper Pitt R and climbs N to Drop Pass. Continue 2km N of Drop Pass and ascend SE up a side valley. Veer E above 1700m and gain the Forger Gl S of Forger Pk.

The eastern end of the McBride Range has been approached from logging roads in the Lillooet R valley on the E side of Garibaldi Park via the Nivalis Mtn area. This has been used to provide an alternative start to the traverse (see Tuwasus Cr below).



Skiing along Rollercoaster Ridge with Mt Pitt behind. *Photo by Jos van der Burg*

## Misty Icefield Traverse

Length: 8 days

Total Distance: 70km

Elevation Gain: 3900m

Start: 700m

Darlene Anderson, Loch MacDonald, Brian Waddington, Dave Williams,  
May 18–26, 1985, *VOC* 1985, p.6

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92G/10, 92G/15, 92G/16

Best: Mar–May

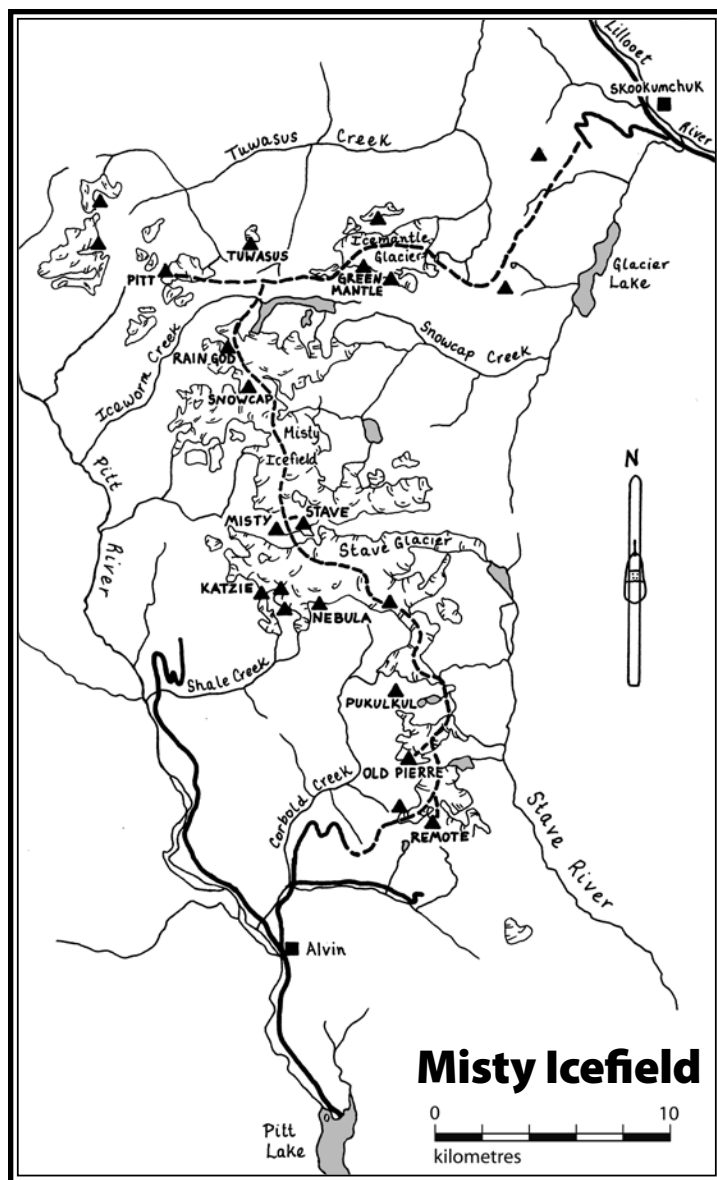
The Misty Icefield is a sprawling glaciated complex on the divide E of the Pitt R in the heart of Garibaldi Park. It is an attractive area of relatively gentle icefields readily traversed on skis, with many opportunities for short enjoyable side trips. This is a varied traverse through the wilderness on the E side of Garibaldi Park and starts or ends with a water taxi ride down Pitt Lk. Times have ranged from 5 to 9 days depending on season and weather. Though the traverse is now done fairly regularly, this is still a remote area with few visitors despite being only 70km from downtown Vancouver.

The traverse is most often done from N to S and starts on the E side of Garibaldi Park, which is reached from Pemberton via logging roads that run S down the E side of

Lillooet Lk. Turn off Duffey Lake Rd 17km E of Pemberton at the N end of Lillooet Lk. Drive down the E side of Lillooet Lk for 30km to the Tenas Narrows Bridge and cross to logging roads that continue down the W side of the Lillooet R. Follow these for another 25km to Snowcap Cr, a total distance of 73km from Pemberton.

Looking S across the Misty Icefield to Misty and Katzie Pks.





Access is from Chief Paul Cr logging roads on the NE flank of the broad divide between Tuwasus and Snowcap Crs. Turn off the main Lillooet R forestry road 500m NW of Snowcap Cr. The Chief Paul road angles NW across the hillside. After about 6km, a major spur branches left and switchbacks to near 1200m, 2km NE of the broad 1770m knoll at GR373302. The road has cross-ditches but can be driven to 800m. Leave the road where it flattens out at about 1100m. Climb S through steep timber and traverse E of a 1770m knoll to reach alpine terrain W of Glacier Lk. Continue S and W across a broad pass to reach the Ice mantle

Gl. The surrounding summits, including Greenmantle Mtn (2380m), are attractive for skiing and have been climbed in a long weekend. Snowcap Lk is reached by continuing along the divide W of Greenmantle Mtn and descending gentler slopes to the outlet of Lower Snowcap Lk. Mt Pitt (2500m) is a recommended side trip from here.

Several routes have been used to reach the Snowcap Icefield from Snowcap Lk, depending on conditions. The recommended route ascends the broad ridge between the Thunderclap and Griffin Glcs. The steeper ridge N of Rain God Mtn (2380m) avoids crossing Snowcap Lk. The Staircase Gl has also been used.

From the Snowcap Icefield, ski just E of Snowcap Pk (2410m) to descend onto the Misty Icefield. Cross the icefield and ski S through the 2160m col W of Stave Pk (2350m) to descend to the Stave Gl. A variety of summits may be climbed en route. Most are short, easy ski ascents with some scrambling to reach the final summits and include Snowcap Pk (2410m), Stave Pk (2350m), Misty Pk (2230m) and Katzie Pk (2320m).

The divide E of Corbold Cr with the Stave R can be reached by either low or high routes. The low route descends the Stave Gl to below the snout of the glacier at 1300m and turns S through a 1750m pass to reach lakes near Pukulkul Pk (2100m). The high route provides a shortcut over Corbold Pk (2130m) on the SE corner of the Stave Gl. It is worth going all the way to the summit to avoid a traverse around its S side, as this forces you onto steep slopes. Continue S from Pukulkul Lks onto small glaciers that can be followed S along the divide to Remote Pk (2103m) via the col E of Old Pierre. Old Pierre Mtn (2195m) is a recommended ascent from the N.

Exit to logging roads in the Corbold Cr valley. These are reached from the 1860m col W of Remote Pk with Piluk Pk (2073m). The long ridge running S from Piluk has been crossed directly from the col but is steep on





Descending slopes E of Mt Pitt. Greenmantle Mtn and Snowcap Lk are visible in the background. *Photo by Jos van der Burg*

its W side. Instead, descend SE from the Remote–Piluk col into the basin SW of Remote Pk and cross the lake here at 1500m to regain the ridge W of the lake and continue down the ridge to treeline. Logging roads can be picked up near 1200m on the broad shoulder below treeline (GR293996) and lead down to the Pitt R and Pitt Lk. A water taxi service is available on Pitt Lk. Contact Pitt River Lodge (604-520-7165 or [www.pittriverlodge.com](http://www.pittriverlodge.com)).

Logging roads that run well up the Pitt R might be used to provide other access or escape routes in poor weather. These include spur roads climbing high onto the ridge N of Shale Cr.

Also of possible interest are the Pitt River Hot Springs located on the W side of Pitt R in the vicinity of Shale Cr (see *Hot Springs of Western Canada* by Glenn Woodsworth).

Note that many glaciers in the area have receded dramatically from when the 1:50,000 NTS maps were made. Several now have sizeable lakes at their snouts.

## Tuwasus Creek

Length: 5–7 days  
Total Distance: 50km  
Elevation Gain: 3900m  
Start: 800m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Maps: 92J/2, 92G/15, 92G/16  
Best: Apr–May

Tuwasus Cr drains the remote eastern side of Garibaldi Park. It separates the McBride Range and the Misty Icefields. Logging roads that give access to the eastern end of the McBride Range can be used to form a horseshoe traverse around the drainage of Tuwasus Cr. This is a recommended trip that combines portions of the McBride Range Traverse and the Misty Icefield Traverse but can be done without a complicated vehicle shuttle since the start and end of the trip are close together.

Access is from the Flood Cr logging road on the W side of Tuwasus Cr, about 11km S of the bridge over the Lillooet R at Tenas Narrows. The road switchbacks up the hillside W of the mouth of Tuwasus Cr. Take the right fork after 4km and follow the road to its end in a 2006 cutblock at 1340m on the S side of Flood Cr at GR321381.

From the end of the road, ski SE to treeline and follow the ridge on the S side of Flood Cr. Continue NW around the head of Flood Cr and traverse a steep slope onto the glacier E of Nivalis Mtn (2650m). There are two routes around Nivalis. The standard route climbs through the 2100m pass immediately N of Nivalis Mtn and descends the edge of the glacier on the N side of the pass. At about



Nivalis Mtn and the glaciated basin E of the summit. *Photo by Jos van der Burg*

1840m, traverse left across the glacier and continue traversing NW along a bench and through an 1800m pass onto the McBride Gl. The alternative route around Nivalis Mtn gains the mountain's SE ridge at about 2340m and crosses steep slopes S of the summit to reach the upper branch of the McBride Gl immediately SW of the summit.

Follow the regular route of the McBride Traverse up the McBride Gl and over the NW shoulder of Mt Sir Richard. Cross the glacier SW of the summit and angle down steeper S-facing slopes to Wolverine Pass (1890m) at the head of North Tuwasus Cr.

The recommended route leaves the McBride Range at Wolverine Pass and drops across the forks of Tuwasus Cr.

Looking S into the N fork of Tuwasus Cr. The S fork is visible behind. *Photo by Jos van der Burg*



Climb up South Tuwasus Cr to Tuwasus Pass. Follow the bumpy ridge E from Tuwasus Pass and cross W of Greenmantle Mtn to gain the Iceman Gl. The route continues around the E side of Tuwasus Cr by following the divide W of Snowcap Cr to logging roads on Chief Paul Cr. This section is described under the Misty Icefield Traverse.

This is an enjoyable variation to either the McBride Range or the Misty Icefield Traverse and can be done as late as early June. Recommended side trips include Nivalis Mtn, Mt Sir Richard, Mt Pitt and Greenmantle Mtn.

## Garibaldi Park Traverse

Length: 14 days	Difficulty: 3
Total Distance: 80km	Terrain: Complex
Elevation Gain: 5500m	Maps: 92J/2, 92J/7, 92G/10, 92G/15
Start: 2280m	Best: Apr–May
Manrico Scremin, Liz Scremin, Irene Goldstone, Bob Stair, Neil Baker, May 1989	

Several of the shorter traverses in Garibaldi Park may be combined to form a rugged traverse down the entire length of the park. This is a scenic traverse following the height of land west of the Lillooet R from Pemberton S to Pitt Lk. It involves a lot of elevation gain. Much of the route is heavily glaciated and offers good skiing on steep slopes.

Many variations are possible. The most popular route traverses from Blackcomb to the Misty Icefield. For the most part, the route follows high, glaciated divides connected by occasional descents to treeline. This combines the Spearhead Traverse with portions of the McBride Range and the Misty Icefields Traverse. Each section of the route is described in detail under the separate traverses. From the Spearhead Range, descend the Naden Gl to reach the McBride Range via the head of Diavolo Cr. The Misty Icefield is reached from the McBride Range by dropping to 920m in Tuwasus Cr to avoid steep slopes NW of Mt Pitt.

A longer route traversing the full length of Garibaldi Park starts from Pemberton and follows the Wedge–Currie Traverse to join the above route in the Spearhead Range. The Spearhead Range is reached from the S end of the Wedge–Currie Traverse via Wedge Pass and the Tremor Gl. This full traverse is a strenuous undertaking of 100km with an elevation gain of 8400m. It has only been repeated a few times.

Despite its proximity to Vancouver and the Whistler corridor, this traverse travels through remote terrain and provides a unique opportunity to visit the large wilderness areas protected by Garibaldi Park. Note that airdrops are not permitted in Garibaldi Park.

# Whistler 3



View towards Mt Fitzsimmons from the summit of Mt Trolley.

**A**lthough Whistler is world-renowned for its downhill skiing, the mountains of northern Garibaldi Park adjacent to the Whistler-Blackcomb ski areas also offer some of the finest and most accessible high-alpine ski mountaineering destinations in the Coast Mountains. There are extensive alpine areas, from glaciated summits to open meadows, with a tremendous variety of ski ascents, long runs, high-level traverses and rolling tours. Most of the trips described in this chapter start from the top of the ski lifts at Whistler.

The season for backcountry skiing usually runs from November to May. Pre-season skiing in the alpine begins as early as late October and extended spring skiing continues on the glaciers of the Spearhead Range well into June.

## **Snow Conditions**

Enticing alpine powder, steep 'n' deep in the glades, spring corn and over 40 years of snow records make Whistler the benchmark for snow conditions in the Coast Mountains. The area's annual 10m snowfall builds a typical snowpack

of 2.6m at treeline. Record years delivered 17m of snowfall in 1998–99 and, in 1974, a snowpack of 5m. Snow conditions in the alpine are generally excellent. In the winter months, the average daytime alpine temperature ranges from a low of  $-12^{\circ}\text{C}$  to a high of  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$ . It snows an average of 16 days/month, and the average monthly snowfall is 230cm. The record monthly snowfall of a whopping 469cm was set in January 2006. In the alpine, there is usually consistent snow for skiing from November to well into June. At low elevations in the Whistler valley, snow typically lasts on the ground from late November into April.

## **Access**

Access to most trips in this chapter is from the top of the Whistler-Blackcomb ski lifts. Whistler is a comfortable 2-hour drive, 120km from Vancouver on Hwy 99. There are five well-marked complimentary parking lots located off Blackcomb Way in Whistler Village. Check with parking attendants for restrictions on overnight parking if you are planning a multi-day trip. Cars improperly parked may be

towed. Whistler can also be reached by bus or rail transportation.

Ski lifts climb from an elevation of 675m in the village to 2200m in the alpine. Single-ride backcountry tickets are available at a reduced fare. Purchase tickets from guest relations offices in Whistler Village. Blackcomb Guest Relations is located in Blackcomb Day Lodge at the base of the Wizard Express. Whistler Guest Relations is located at the base of the Whistler Village Gondola. All backcountry skiers must carry avalanche gear in order to purchase a backcountry ticket.

Before purchasing your ticket, check weather, snow and avalanche conditions, as these determine whether or not the upper lifts will open. Backcountry access can also be closed if the avalanche hazard is high. For most trips you will want to start as soon as the lifts open (usually at 8:30am but check with Whistler-Blackcomb, as operating hours vary between winter and spring).

Take the Wizard Express, Solar Coaster, and Seventh Heaven Express and the Horstman Glacier T-bar to reach the Blackcomb Gl entrance at the top of the Horstman Gl at 2290m.

To reach the top of Whistler at 2180m, take the Whistler Village Gondola and either The Peak Chair or Harmony Express. From the top of Harmony Express or The Peak Chair ski E along Burnt Stew Trail and traverse across the head of Symphony Bowl to the Flute-Piccolo col. Backcountry trips leave the ski area boundary here at 1900m. It is not necessary to ride the Symphony Express, though it provides a warm-up run and puts you slightly closer to the ski-area boundary.

When returning to either ski area from the backcountry, watch for possible active avalanche control and, if you are entering after operating hours, watch for winch cats and snowmobile traffic working on the ski runs.

Suggested backcountry skiing and ski mountaineering trips varying from a few hours beyond the ski lifts to full-day or multi-day tours are described below. Trips are organized with summits as their goals and highlight recommended ski features, including both ascents and descents. Generally the trips have been described as they are commonly skied, but they can be combined in a variety of ways depending on the conditions, ambitions and interests of the party.

Access to trips in the more remote northern section of Garibaldi Park N of Whistler is from Hwy 99. The E side of Garibaldi Park is reached from logging roads that run S down the E side of Lillooet Lk. These branch off Hwy 99 at Lillooet Lk, 50km N of Whistler, and run down the E side

of the Lillooet R to the main bridge crossing the river 5 km N of Billygoat Cr.

## Maps

*Backcountry Whistler* 1:25,000, by John Baldwin.

## Garibaldi Provincial Park

[www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks)

The Spearhead and Fitzsimmons Ranges adjacent to Whistler-Blackcomb lie within Garibaldi Park. Established in 1927, Garibaldi Provincial Park protects a large wilderness area within a few hours' drive of the major population centres of southwestern BC. As a wilderness destination, it is one of the most important protected areas in the province, especially as intensive motorized use of unprotected areas in southwestern BC grows. The western portion of the park is managed as an intensive recreation zone and the eastern portion of the park has been designated a wilderness conservation zone.

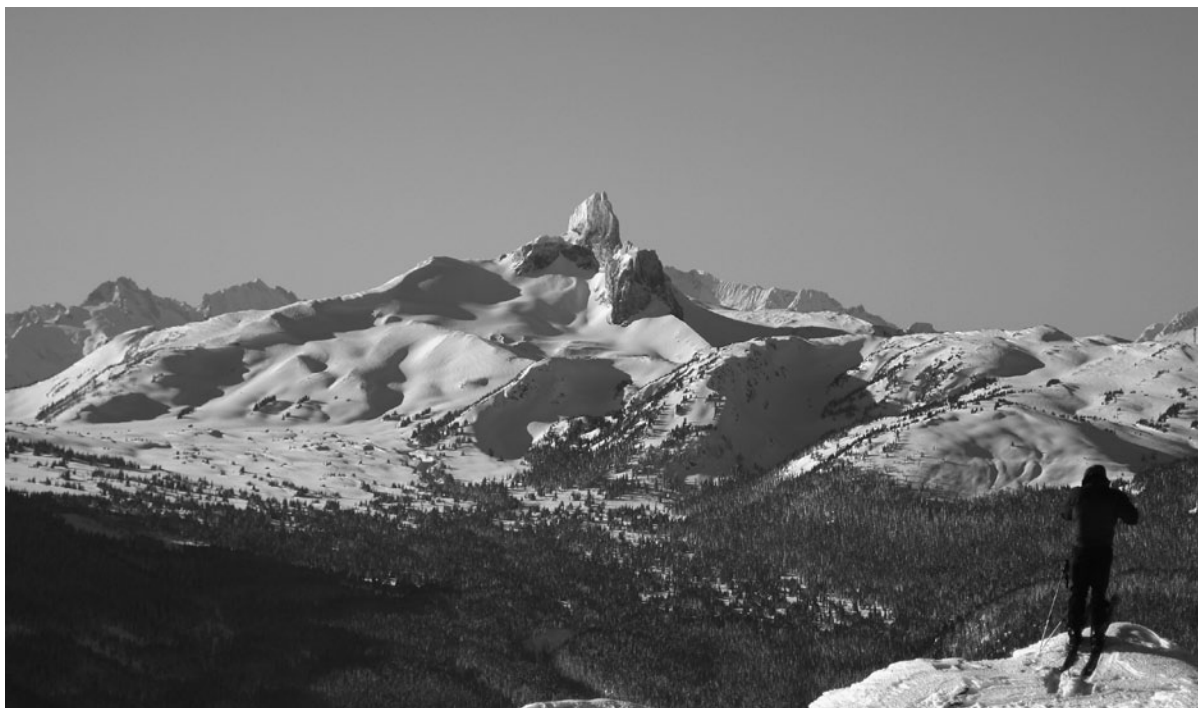
Backcountry permits are not required for recreational users. Garibaldi Park is a non-motorized zone. The following restrictions apply throughout the park:

- Snowmobiles are prohibited in Garibaldi Park.
- Arriving or departing from the park by aircraft is not permitted.
- Dogs are prohibited in the park.
- Fires are not permitted in the park.



## Whistler

Whistler is an international destination ski resort with a full range of services and accommodation, including several hostels. Ski mountaineering gear and rentals are available at Escape Route in Whistler Village (604-938-3228, [www.escaperoute.ca](http://www.escaperoute.ca)). Local guides can be hired through several sources including:



View of Black Tusk from the Whistler area. *Photo by Lee Lau*

[www.whistlerguides.com](http://www.whistlerguides.com)  
[www.whistlerskiguide.com](http://www.whistlerskiguide.com)  
[www.coastmountainguides.com](http://www.coastmountainguides.com)  
[www.westcoastmountainguides.com](http://www.westcoastmountainguides.com)  
[www.acmg.ca](http://www.acmg.ca)

### Multi-use Considerations

The western portions of the Fitzsimmons and Spearhead Ranges are some of the most heavily used backcountry ski areas in western Canada. Heliskiing is not permitted in Garibaldi Park, except in the Spearhead Range where

Looking E across the Musical Bumps from Flute Mtn. *Photo by Diedre Sun*



historical precedence allows it to continue on a grandfather clause. Whistler Heli-Skiing, in cooperation with BC Parks, has a policy of avoiding slopes that are being used by backcountry skiers. The company also avoids using runs closer to Blackcomb during periods of heavy use by backcountry skiers and will avoid areas in the central and eastern Spearhead Range if arrangements are made in advance. Contact Whistler Heli-Skiing (604-932-4105) or BC Parks (604-898-3678).

### Musical Bumps

Length: 1–3 days  
 Total Distance: 18km  
 Elevation Gain: 200m+  
 Start: 2100m

### 2000m

Difficulty: 2  
 Terrain: Challenging  
 Map: Backcountry Whistler  
 Best: Nov–May

Singing Pass is a beautiful subalpine valley flanked by alpine meadows and lightly treed slopes. It is easily reached from the top of lifts on Whistler Mtn by a scenic tour along the gentle ridges of the western Fitzsimmons Range known as the Musical Bumps and offers a great day of backcountry skiing with numerous runs of up to 300m vertical drop. Overnight trips can be made to a cabin beyond the pass.

From the ski lifts on Whistler Mtn, access to the backcountry starts at the Flute-Piccolo col. Check for ava-



lanche warnings or closures, which are posted at the ski area boundary or at the ski-patrol warming huts. The most popular route climbs SE over Flute and Oboe summits across the Musical Bumps to Singing Pass. This route is a very scenic alpine traverse but can be difficult to follow in poor visibility. It is less than a 2-hour ski from the top of Whistler to Singing Pass, where there is excellent skiing in glades and on open slopes with runs up to 300m long. There is a tremendous variety of skiing here, with excellent runs N of the pass for over 1km all along the slopes of Oboe Summit on the W and along the gentle shoulder E of Singing Pass known as Cowboy Ridge. These runs often offer good early-season skiing. Farther afield, there are more good runs off the N side of Russet Ridge just beyond Cowboy Ridge.



Glades on the W side of Singing Pass.

There is also great skiing in the basin at the head of Oboe Cr. A recommended alternative to traversing over the Musical Bumps from Flute Summit takes a 300m run NE into Oboe Cr, then climbs over Oboe Summit for a run into Singing Pass on E-facing slopes and finishes with a great run off Cowboy Ridge. This makes a fabulous day of backcountry skiing, not pleasant in a storm but doable on a day of flurries.

Most parties exit by skiing out the Singing Pass Trail (see below). A return over the Musical Bumps is also recommended. When passing Flute Summit, ski across the NW slopes of Flute and descend W of Lesser Flute to pick up ski runs that traverse from Symphony Bowl to the base of Harmony Express. Watch for grooming machines after hours.

For an overnight trip, continue from Singing Pass to Russet Lk by skiing SE over a shoulder at the S end of Cowboy Ridge to Himmelsbach Hut at the N end of Russet Lk. This is an attractive area for an overnight trip, as it has

a rare combination of both meadow and glacier skiing accessible from a mountain cabin. In poor weather, you can retreat to the excellent skiing in Singing Pass and, in good weather, the higher peaks of the Fitzsimmons Range (described below) are short day trips from the cabin.



### Himmelsbach Hut

Map: 92J/2

GR: 098414

Elevation: 1880m

Cost: none

Capacity: 8

Reservations: no

**Location** On the NE corner of Russet Lk

**Facilities** A small mountain hut with a sleeping platform and a table, it is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Bring your own sleeping pad and stove. It is recommended that drinking water from Russet Lake be boiled.

**Built** by BCMC in 1968 now maintained by BC Parks

## Singing Pass Trail

## 1740m

Length: 1-3 days

Total Distance: 22km

Elevation Gain: 1000m

Start: 700m

Difficulty: 2

Terrain: Challenging

Map: Backcountry Whistler

Best: Nov-May

Singing Pass can also be reached by skiing up the Singing Pass Trail from Whistler Village. The trail is well marked and easy to follow in winter and climbs 1000m through pleasant forest from Whistler Village. To find the start of the trail, ski under the Whistler Village Gondola to the top of the first short hill, where an old logging road branches left off the ski runs beside a large water tank at an elevation of 760m. Ski up this access road on the S side of Fitzsimmons Cr for 4 km to the start of the trail near the end of the road. The first part of the trail (route posted) follows an old mining road uphill into the trees at the end of the logging. The road climbs past an abandoned mine, and shortly beyond Harmony Cr a well-marked trail leaves the road on the left. The road continues up Harmony Cr to join ski runs 1km N of the base of Harmony Express on Whistler Mtn and can be used to access the Musical Bumps at the head of Flute Cr.



Looking across Singing Pass at Fissile and Whirlwind Pks.

The trail is wide and well graded. Depending on conditions, it takes 5–6 hours to ski the 11km from the valley to Singing Pass. Watch for skiers descending the trail, as it is a popular exit route for out-of-bounds skiers from Whistler. The trail can be a bit of a bobsled track if icy.

## Whirlwind Peak

Length: 1 day

Total Distance: 26km

Elevation Gain: 1070m

Start: 2100m

**2427m**

Difficulty: 2

Terrain: Challenging

Map: Backcountry Whistler

Best: Nov–May

A broad summit visible from Whistler, Whirlwind Pk is a highly recommended ski ascent at the end of the Fitzsimons Range. This is a fabulous alpine ski tour with great views and good skiing.

Whirlwind Pk is a straightforward ski ascent from Singing Pass. Cross over the gentle shoulder at the S end of Cowboy Ridge and continue across undulating alpine terrain SE of Russet Lk. Where the slope steepens above 2100m, switchback up the small glacier NW of the summit. This is a good ski run, though it is sometimes wind affected. There are short runs immediately N of the summit, which are well protected from the wind and often have good snow.

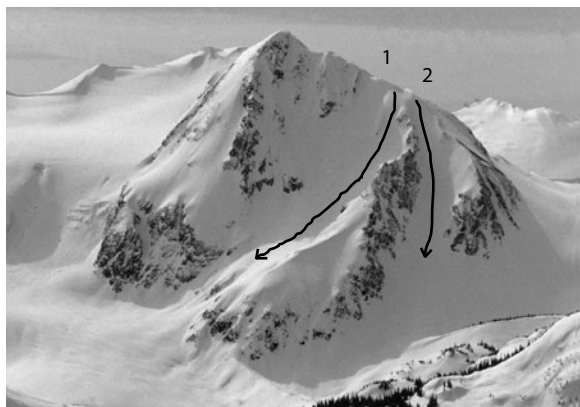
Nearby Overlord Mtn (2628m) is usually reached by spiraling around the N and E sides of the mountain, though in

spring the steep S side of Refuse Pinnacle (sometimes icy) can be traversed to gain the Benvolio Gl. A long run can be had all the way down the gentle Overlord Gl. Stay to skier's right below 2000m to avoid an icefall NE of Fissile Pk. It is a 300m climb from the bottom of the Overlord Gl back over Cowboy Ridge.

Skiing off the NW side of Whirlwind Pk. *Photo by Paul Palfreyman*







Ski descents on the N side of Fissile Pk. 1. NW Face 2. Banana Chute.

## Fissile Peak

**2439m**

Length: 1 day

Total Distance: 27km

Elevation Gain: 1400m

Start: 2164m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: Backcountry Whistler

Best: Dec–Apr

A rocky summit next to Whirlwind Pk, notable for its steep northern flank, which offers several outstanding ski descents, visible from Blackcomb ski area.

Ski descents on the N side of the mountain start from the W ridge, 120m below the summit. This shoulder is most often reached directly without going over the summit. Approach from the undulating alpine terrain SE of Russet Lk and scramble up wind-scoured gullies on the SW side of the W ridge. Fissile Pk is also an easy scramble from the Fissile–Whirlwind col: it is approached from the head of the Overlord Gl to avoid a large wind cirque at the col.

**Banana Chute** (40°, 440m)

The obvious curving chute on the W flank of the NW ridge.

**Northwest Face** (45°, 540m)

The main line in the centre of the face. Enter from 120m down the NW ridge. The descent starts with a steep roll but the bottom half of the route eases to 35°.

## The Spearhead

**2427m**

Length: 1 day

Total Distance: 3km

Elevation Gain: 250m

Start: 2270m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: Backcountry Whistler

Best: Jan–Apr

The Spearhead is a gentle summit E of Blackcomb Gl that gives access to some excellent backcountry runs. This is a short trip beyond the Blackcomb ski area boundary.

Access is from the top of Showcase T-bar at the head of

Horstman Gl. A short climb is needed to reach the entrance to the Blackcomb Gl. Check for avalanche warnings or closures at the ski area boundary. Make a slightly descending traverse across Blackcomb Gl towards a rock outcrop and climb up the bowl beyond. The Spearhead is gained by making a diagonal climb NE onto its S shoulder.

The gentle Spearhead Gl lies in a sheltered basin on the N side of the summit and can be reached by dropping down a short steep pitch off the ridge east of the summit known as Don't Swill. Don't Swill is a bit of a bottleneck and can be avoided, if desired, by crossing the ridge E of the summit. Excellent skiing is to be found in the sheltered bowl at the head of the glacier as well as on the ridge flanking the glacier's SE side. The Spearhead Gl often has the best snow in the Spearhead Range.



Skiing down the Spearhead Gl with Wedge Mtn behind. Photo by Lee Lau

There is good spring skiing on slopes SE of The Spearhead. Another route often used by guides descends onto the Circle Gl from East Col (between Blackcomb Pk and The Spearhead) and angles NE across a bench that swings around the E shoulder of The Spearhead to gain the Spearhead Gl at 2300m.

There are several alternatives for return routes to Blackcomb Cr. The shortest trips traverse across the head of Spearhead Gl to Spearhead–Phalanx col and descend either Corona Bowl or Husume (steeper) to the Blackcomb Gl (see below). Longer trips continue on to Phalanx Mtn.

**Corona Bowl** (35–40°, 250m)

An attractive bowl on the SW flank of Phalanx Mtn. Routes are steepest below the upper basin. The easiest line, She's Tight, follows the moraine on the right side lower down, descending pitches of up to 35°. This route is not recommended for beginner or intermediate skiers. Check avalanche conditions carefully. If in doubt, return to Black-



Skiing open slopes N of Phalanx Mtn. Photo by Lee Lau

comb Cr by climbing back over the E shoulder of The Spearhead.

**Husume** (40°, 250m)

Hugh Tucker, Sue Hopkins, Miguel Guerico, 1983

A popular steep couloir on the E flank of Blackcomb Gl. Enter by bootpacking to a bench just S of the Spearhead–Phalanx col. Husume is an acronym for Hugh, Sue and Miguel.

## Phalanx Mountain

**2441m**

Length: 1 day

Total Distance: 9km

Elevation Gain: 800m

Start: 2270m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: Backcountry Whistler

Best: Jan–Apr

A recommended ski trip to an outlying peak beyond the Spearhead Gl that offers excellent glacier skiing and long runs N of the summit. Kicking steps up a steep, narrow snow gully known as Stairmaster that runs SE from Phalanx Mtn gives quick access to the peak from the Spearhead Gl in good conditions. A ski route descends the Spearhead Gl to 2000m and swings around the broad NE ridge to make

an ascending traverse across steeper slopes to Phalanx Gl (check for avalanche hazard before crossing). The shortest route back to the ski area is via Poop Chutes which drop S off the NW flank of the mountain. A longer alternative takes advantage of the 600m N facing runs down the Phalanx Gl. The main run stays left and continues past the glacier to treeline. Below the glacier, stay right to avoid steeper slopes and gullies near the bottom of the run. A pleasant bench at treeline can be followed around the N flanks of Phalanx Mtn back to Blackcomb Cr. A ski out Wedge Cr is not recommended, as the terrain is complicated and bushy. There have been several rescues here.

## Decker Mountain

**2421m**

Length: 1 day

Total Distance: 9km

Elevation Gain: 550m

Start: 2270m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: Backcountry Whistler

Best: Feb–May

This great ski summit at the head of Wedge Cr is one of the best destinations for a day trip from the Blackcomb lifts. It



View of tracks on the Decker Gl with Mt Pattison in the centre and Tremor Mtn on the left.

is beyond the range of boot hikers without skins and offers a wide range of high-alpine skiing.

Decker Gl is reached from Showcase T-bar at the top of Blackcomb ski area by crossing the Blackcomb Gl, switch-backing through East Col (between Blackcomb Pk and The Spearhead) and descending slopes beyond. Take a wide berth traversing around steeper avalanche slopes on the N side of Decker Mtn and ascend glaciated slopes leading to E of the summit. There is excellent skiing on Decker Gl, with room for dozens and dozens of 300m runs. Allow time for extra runs! Watch out for open crevasses on the glacier. Longer runs can be had by dropping below the glacier into the head of Wedge Cr. Return to the Blackcomb lifts by skiing SW into Decker Cr and traversing to the base of Seventh Heaven. Ski out on the Sunset Boulevard downhill run if you've missed the last ride.

Decker Mtn can also be climbed via its SW slopes from Decker Cr, using an approach from the base of Seventh Heaven. This route, though less popular, is a recommended alternative in early spring and also gives direct access to Trorey Gl.

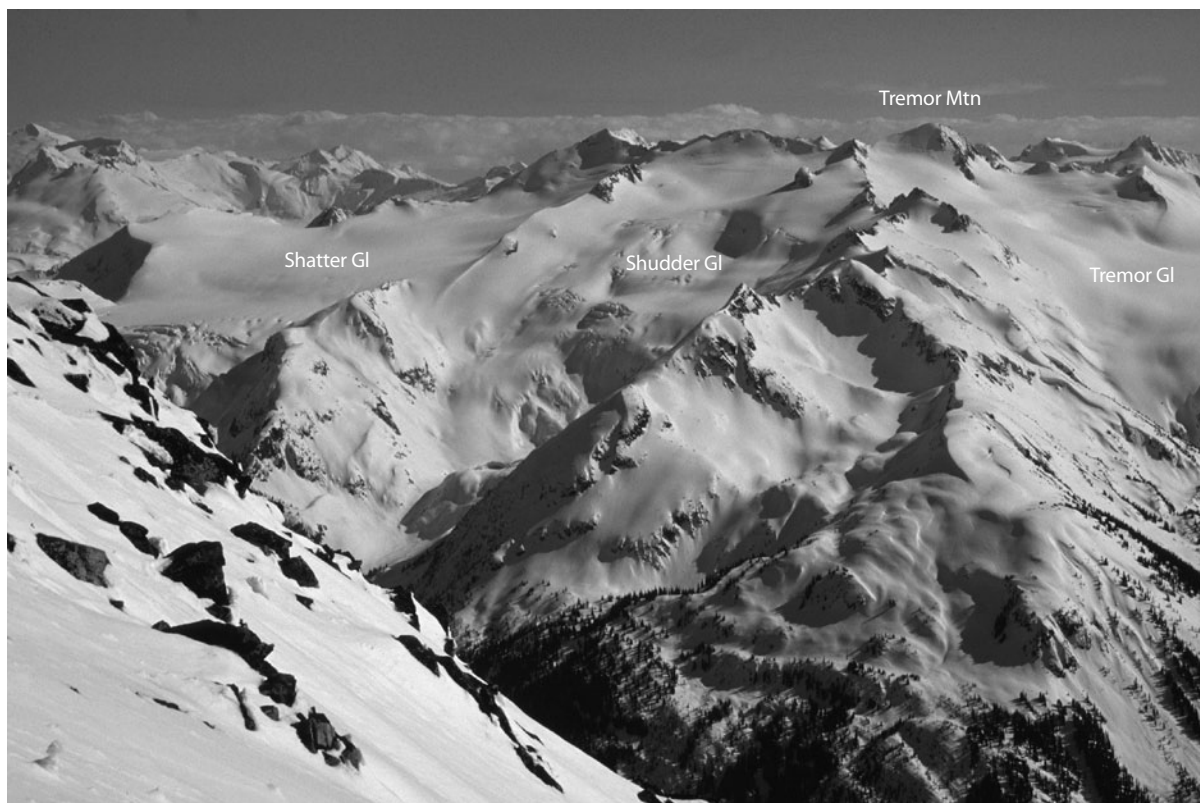
## Trorey Glacier

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1200m  
Start: 2270m

**2461m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: Backcountry Whistler  
Best: Jan–May

The Trorey Glacier, east of Decker Mtn, is a good destination for a moderate day trip with a variety of excellent options for skiing. Trorey Gl is reached either by crossing the intervening ridge with Decker Gl via a short gully, which drops through a cliffband on the SE side of the ridge from near 2200m or by climbing over the E shoulder of Decker Mtn and traversing onto the glacier from Trorey–Decker col. The latter route generally has less exposure to avalanche danger and, despite the longer climb up Decker Gl, actually involves less overall elevation gain to reach the upper Trorey Gl. Mt Trorey (2461m) and Mt Pattison (2483m) are both climbed from the head of the glacier via short bootpacks up their SE and S ridges respectively and are recommended day trips when combined with a few glacier runs or a longer descent into the head of Wedge Cr. There are spectacular views. The Trorey Gl has excellent skiing.



View of the central Spearhead Range from Wedge Mtn. Shudder Gl centre, Tremor Gl on right.

The NW face of Mt Pattison (40°, 190m) is a broad couloir, which can be skied from just N of the summit. There are several ways to return to the Blackcomb ski area. The shortest return route to the col between The Spearhead and Decker Mtn climbs back over Decker Mtn for a run on the Decker Gl. Alternatively, ski a longer run down the Trorey Gl into Wedge Cr and climb back out to the col from there. Ski out Decker Cr and traverse to Seventh Heaven.

Tracks on the Trorey Gl. Mt Pattison left of centre.



## Tremor Mountain

**2691m**

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 17km  
Elevation Gain: 1600m  
Start: 2270m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: Backcountry Whistler  
Best: Feb–May

Named for an earthquake that accompanied the first ascent party, Tremor Mtn is the highest summit in the Spearhead Range. It is usually climbed as part of the Spearhead Traverse but makes a recommended full-day trip from the Blackcomb ski area with a long run down the Tremor Gl.

Access is from Blackcomb via Decker and Trorey Gl's (see above). Tremor Gl is reached by crossing the shoulder S of Mt Pattison from the head of Trorey Gl. A more direct but steeper variation, which crosses the col N of Mt Pattison, is slightly quicker in good conditions. Tremor Mtn can be climbed from the Tremor–Shudder col by traversing to its SE slopes. From here there are great views.

The shortest way back to the Blackcomb ski area is to retrace your approach route. A recommended variation takes the gentle 900m long run down the E side of the Tremor Gl into Wedge Cr and climbs back out over the Decker Gl to Decker Cr and ski runs at Seventh Heaven.

## Shudder Glacier

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 21km  
Elevation Gain: 1640m  
Start: 2270m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: Backcountry Whistler  
Best: Apr

The longest ski run in the Spearhead Range can be done as a strenuous day trip from the Blackcomb ski area and makes a superb ski mountaineering adventure.

The route to the Tremor–Shudder col is described above. Shudder Mtn (2671m) is easily ascended from the col. From its summit there is a 1200m run down the Shudder Gl to the head of Billygoat Cr. This is a tremendous run. Check carefully for crevasses. Generally, the run stays skier's right of the centre of the glacier.



Looking back up at the 1200m run down the Shudder Gl.

The recommended return route to the Blackcomb ski area traverses the N flanks of the Spearhead Range to beyond Phalanx Mtn. From the bottom of the run at 1500m on Billygoat Cr, ski W through open forest across Wedge Pass. About 1km past the main branch of Wedge Cr, switchback up steep terrain E of Spearhead Cr to gain a bench near treeline at 1700m. This bench can be followed around the N flanks of Phalanx Mtn, with minor elevation gain, until you are able to drop down across Blackcomb Cr to Blackcomb Glacier Rd just N of Poop Chutes. Bring a headlamp, and watch for grooming machines after hours on Blackcomb ski runs.

Shorter runs on the upper Shudder Gl can also be skied. Note that when climbing back up the glacier, the final climb over the shoulder of Shudder Mtn can be avoided by crossing a notch at 2440m in the long ridge running NW from the summit. This leads to the Tremor Gl.

## Mt Macbeth

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 31km  
Elevation Gain: 1820m  
Start: 2270m

**2639m**  
Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: Backcountry Whistler  
Best: Mar–Apr

Mt Macbeth is located at the head of Fitzsimmons Cr. It is easily climbed as a short side trip from the Spearhead Traverse or it can also be done as a long day trip. The day trip is almost as strenuous as doing the Spearhead Traverse in 1 day but it provides a great way to take in the excellent 1100m run down the Curtain Gl.

Access is from the Blackcomb ski area. Follow the route of the Spearhead Traverse over the Decker, Trorey and Tremor Gl's to the Tremor–Shudder col (as described above). Traverse the Platform Gl with a slight climb past Quiver Pk. Then, gradually descend across the Ripsaw Gl to and onto the Naden Gl via an indistinct 2450m col on the ridge running E from The Ripsaw. Mt Macbeth is easily reached from the Naden Gl by skiing through the col with The Ripsaw onto the Curtain Gl. To climb the peak, ski around to its NW ridge and kick steps up the last 20m. The 1100m run into Fitzsimmons Cr descends the skier's right side of the Curtain Gl to avoid most of the crevasses. Much



View of Mt Macbeth and Curtain Gl on the left, with Overlord Mtn behind.

of the upper glacier is N facing. The bottom half of the run swings W and descends smooth slopes for another 500m below the glacier and all the way down to Fitzsimmons Cr. It feels like you're in the middle of nowhere at the bottom of the run. To exit from this silent hollow, follow Fitzsimmons Cr for about 1km to Russet Cr. Ski up the creek to Russet Lk and the Singing Pass Trail beyond. A variation here climbs past Adit Lks onto Cowboy Ridge for one last run into Singing Pass.



Crossing the summit of Decker Mtn on the Spearhead Traverse with Mt Fissile behind. Castle Towers Mtn is on the right.

## Spearhead Traverse

Length: 1–4 days

Total Distance: 34km

Elevation Gain: 1900m

Start: 2270m

Karl Ricker, Alastair MacDonald, Chris Gardner and Bert Port, May 1964, *VOC* 1964, p.45.

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: Backcountry Whistler

Best: Feb–May

A classic high-level ski traverse that crosses a dozen glaciers in the Spearhead and Fitzsimmons Ranges to form a spectacular horseshoe traverse around the drainage of Fitzsimmons Cr from the Blackcomb ski area to Whistler Mtn. Travel is generally near the head of the main glaciers. Most of the route lies above 2100m and offers excellent skiing and great views. This traverse is often hailed as one of the 50 best backcountry ski trips in North America.

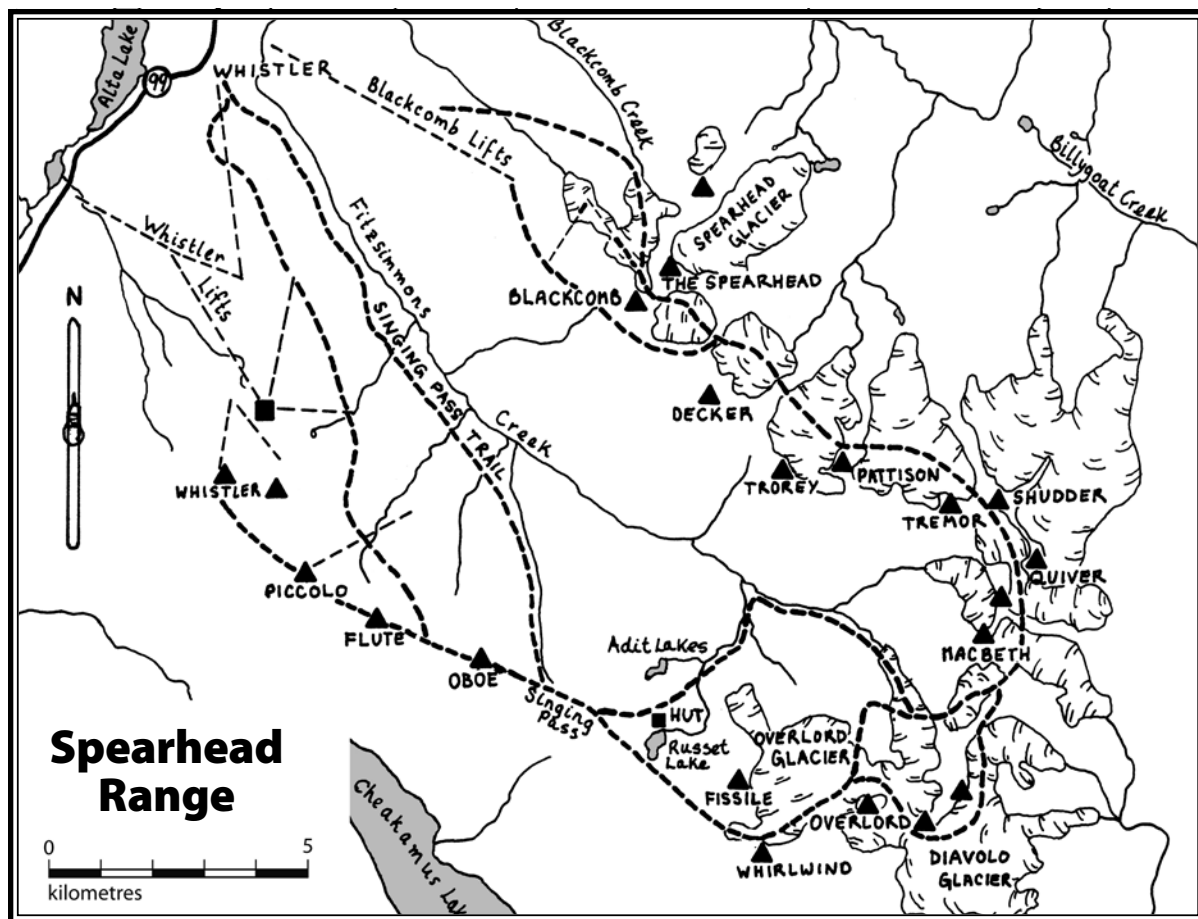
The Spearhead Range Traverse was the first extended alpine ski traverse to be completed in the Coast Mountains. It was first done in May 1964 as a 9-day trip by students from the Varsity Outdoor Club of the University of British Columbia who started from the train station at Alta Lake, because it was before ski lifts existed on either Whistler or Blackcomb. The traverse was repeated several times during

the 1970s using the ski runs on Whistler Mtn but did not become popular until the completion of ski lifts on Blackcomb Mtn made access much easier. The complete traverse was first done as a long day trip in 1984 by Brian Finnie, Brian Sheffield and Graham Underhill.

This strenuous traverse is for experienced skiers only. The entire route is alpine and is extremely difficult to follow in poor weather. The dangers of routefinding through avalanche terrain and heavily crevassed areas are compounded by bad weather. Skiers should be prepared for weather related delays.

The traverse is most often completed in a clockwise direction, starting from the top of ski lifts on Blackcomb Mtn at the head of Horstman Gl. Cross Blackcomb, Decker, Trorey and Tremor Gls to make a gradual climb to the Tremor–Shudder col. Routefinding is generally straightforward except for the ridge between Decker Gl and Trorey Gl. The ridge can be crossed using a short gully that drops onto the Trorey Gl, or avoided entirely by climbing over the E shoulder of Decker Mtn to traverse onto Trorey Gl from the Trorey–Decker col. The safest route to Tremor





GI climbs over the S shoulder of Mt Pattison. A shorter, steeper variation is to cross the col N of the peak, which is slightly faster in good conditions.

Beyond Tremor Mtn, a traverse of Platform Gl gives excellent views across the head of Fitzsimmons Cr. Gradually descend across the Ripsaw Gl, then go through a 2450m col onto Naden Gl to get the first views of the McBride Range S of Cheakamus R. The traverse continues around the headwaters of Fitzsimmons Cr via the Macbeth–Couloir col and descends SW on Macbeth Gl. The most scenic route leaves Macbeth Gl at 2240m and follows the narrow ridge (usually bootpacked) between Macbeth Gl and Iago Gl for approximately half a kilometre. This avoids the worst of the steep slopes above Iago Gl. Ascend Iago Gl to climb over the high shoulder immediately E of Mt Iago. It is necessary to drop SW onto Diavolo Gl to avoid cliffs SE of Mt Fitzsimmons. This is a good ski run but it is somewhat steep on S-facing slopes. Check the avalanche

conditions carefully. From Diavolo Gl, climb NW through Benvolio–Fitzsimmons col. A steep traverse crosses the NE side of Overlord Mtn to the head of Overlord Gl. A rock ridge running NW from the summit of Overlord Mtn can normally be crossed near 2400m using snow-filled gullies. Otherwise, drop N below a minor icefall and traverse onto

Skinning up the Diavolo Gl SE of Overlord Mtn.





Skiing down the Macbeth Gl with Overlord Mtn behind.

the main glaciated bench N of Refuse Pinnacle. Continue across Overlord Gl to Fissile–Whirlwind col and Singing Pass. The complete traverse continues over Oboe Summit and the shoulder N of Flute Summit. Drop down to treeline in Symphony Bowl and pick up ski runs on the W side of Flute Cr that traverse to the base of Harmony Express. Ski out on the N side runs on Whistler Mtn to Whistler Village.

To avoid the climb over Mt Iago, the original party in 1964 descended Iago Gl into Diavolo Cr and used Detour Ridge to climb back up to Diavolo Gl. A more common variation in poor weather descends Macbeth Gl onto Fitzsimmons Gl and climbs the steep slopes beyond to gain Overlord Gl N of Overlord Mtn. This variation is easier to follow in poor visibility, but the steep slopes W of Fitzsimmons Gl can present a high avalanche hazard.

The complete traverse around the watershed of Fitzsimmons Cr is 34km as measured from the top of Blackcomb to Whistler Village; it is 26km from Blackcomb to groomed ski runs in Symphony Bowl at the top of Whistler. With an elevation gain of 1900m, the traverse usually takes 2–4 days

with additional side trips. Faster parties often complete the traverse in 1 day in spring. Most summits are only short side trips from the main traverse route. Obvious ascents include Decker Mtn (2421m), Tremor Mtn (2691m) and Overlord Mtn (2625m). Skiers on overnight trips usually camp in the vicinity of Ripsaw or Naden Gl. Skiers on longer trips will want to spread their camps along the route. Platform Gl offers excellent views. The col between Naden Gl and the head of Macbeth Gl gets both morning and evening sun. In spring there is often meltwater from rocks on the S side of the pass between Naden and Ripsaw Gl.

The only feasible escape route descends Macbeth Gl to the main trunk of Fitzsimmons Gl and follows Fitzsimmons Cr to join Singing Pass Trail by ascending Russet Cr to Russet Lk.

The traverse is sometimes done in a counterclockwise direction. To avoid the last climb through East Col to Blackcomb Gl, drop W into Decker Cr and traverse to ski runs in Lakeside Bowl. Overnight parties approaching either ski area from the backcountry should watch for active avalanche control near ski area boundaries.



Descending slopes W of Whirlwind Pk. Photo by Lee Lau

## Wedge Mountain Area

Length: 2–4 days  
Total Distance: 24km  
Elevation Gain: 2260m  
Start: 640m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/2  
Best: Mar–May

Wedge Mtn is the highest summit in Garibaldi Park. It is the centre of an attractive area of glaciated summits and icefields in northern Garibaldi Park that offers a variety of ski mountaineering objectives ranging from easy ski ascents to more difficult ski mountaineering summits, traverses and ski descents.

Access to the Wedge area is either via the Wedgemount Lake Trail or from the top of ski lifts on Blackcomb ski area:

**Wedgemount Lake Trail** climbs to Wedgemount Lk and a



### Wedgemount Lake Hut

Map: 92J/2

GR: 131566

Elevation: 1950m

Cost: free

Capacity: 6

Reservations: no

**Location** Near the NW corner of Wedgemount Lk

**Facilities** Small basic mountain hut

**Built** by BCMC in 1970, maintained by BC Parks

scenic glaciated cirque beyond that rises to Wedge Mtn. Access to the trailhead is well marked. From 12km N of Whistler on Hwy 99, a logging road crosses to the E side of the Green R. About 150m from the highway, take the left fork, which leads to the trailhead near 800m in Wedgemount Cr. 2km from the highway. The road is usually snow covered until mid-spring. The trail angles up through an old clear-cut. After crossing Wedgemount Cr on a bridge near 900m, it climbs steeply for 960m on the N side of Wedgemount Cr to Wedgemount Lk (1860m). There is a small mountain cabin on the N side of the lake. The trail can be difficult to follow in winter, as it climbs through mostly open forest and is somewhat steep on skis. There is some exposure to avalanches on open slopes N of the cabin.

Wedge Mtn has also been approached from old logging roads that branch right after crossing the Green R. Roads switchback to near 1200m in Rethel Cr, and open forest leads beyond to alpine bowls directly W of Wedge Mtn. This approach was a much better ski route than Wedgemount Cr, but logging roads are now growing in with alder and this route is only recommended when there is enough snow to cover bush on the logging road.

**From Blackcomb** An approach from the Blackcomb ski area via Wedge Pass (1420m) has also been used for ski trips to this area. This avoids the long Wedgemount Lake Trail and gives direct access to the S side of Wedge Mtn, the Weart Gl area and Mt James Turner. The most popular route climbs through the Blackcomb–Spearhead col and descends the Decker Gl and Wedge Cr to traverse into

Wedge Pass. From Wedge Pass it is a 900m climb to the head of the Weart Gl. The safest route climbs past Berna Lk to ascend NE up a glacier to a col W of Fingerpost Ridge. It then traverses around a 2620m summit onto the upper Weart Gl. Alternatively, the W side of Wedge Mtn can be reached from just W of Wedge Pass by making an ascending traverse across large avalanche slopes on the S side of the mountain.

To return to the Blackcomb ski area from Wedge Pass a 500m climb gives access to a subalpine bench NE of Phalanx Mtn that contours around to Blackcomb Cr at treeline. From Wedge Pass, ski W through glades and open forest. About 1km after crossing the main branch of Wedge Cr, switchback up steep terrain E of Spearhead Cr to gain a bench near treeline at 1700m. With minor elevation gain this bench can be followed around the northern flanks of Phalanx Mtn until you are able to drop down across Blackcomb Cr to Blackcomb Glacier Rd just N of Poop Chutes.



Skiing down the Wedge Gl below Wedge Mtn.

### Wedge Mountain

**2904m**

Wedge Mtn is one of the highlights of the area. It is a high rocky summit, guarded by glaciated walls on the N and steep rocky slopes on the S. Though a stunning viewpoint, it is not well suited to skiing. The standard ascent route climbs the W ridge, reached from the Wedgemount Gl by dropping 100m W from the Wedge–Parkhurst col. The W ridge is usually wind-scoured in winter and cannot be skied. It is a long scramble to the summit and an ice axe is recommended. The only reason to bring skis is for a ski descent of Wedge Couloir or the S face.

#### South Face (40°, 500m)

Cliff Jennings, 1960s

A classic ski descent in Garibaldi Park. The huge sloping S face is visible from the Whistler valley and the Spearhead Range. The face is often wind-scoured, and ski descents



The S face of Wedge Mtn. Photo by Lee Lau

take one of the shallow snow filled gullies on the SW face. The recommended gully lies E of the centre of the face. It starts just W of a larger rock outcrop, below the long flat shoulder running W from the summit. The face maintains an even angle for 500m, then opens onto a broad slope that can be skied all the way to Wedge Cr for a 1600m run from the summit.

#### Wedge Couloir (40°, 340m)

This is a broad couloir on the NW side of Wedge Mtn that is readily visible from Hwy 99. The couloir is gained from the long W ridge about 160m down from the flat summit ridge.



Above: Wedge Couloir from the NW. Photo by Linda Bily

Below: Descending Wedge Couloir.



Skiing off the S side of Mt James Turner. Photo by Jos van der Burg

Enter from skier's left by traversing a steep roll (sometimes corniced). From the bottom of the couloir, climb E onto the Wedgemount Gl and ski out to Wedgemount Lk and exit via the trail. The couloir has been skied as part of a long day trip from Blackcomb via Wedge Cr and an exit to the Wedgemount Lake Trail (19km, 1500m).

#### Parkhurst Mountain

**2500m**

A minor summit N of Wedge Mtn with great views, Parkhurst Mtn is the closest objective to Wedgemount Lk. It is a straightforward ski ascent over S slopes from the upper Wedgemount Gl. There is good skiing on the Wedgemount Gl.

#### Eureka Mountain

**2530m**

A 2500m col N of Wedge Mtn gives direct access to the icefield and summits surrounding the upper Weart Gl immediately E of Wedge Mtn. From here, there is access to a ski ascent of easy Eureka Mtn. Nearby Mt James Turner (2686m) is a more striking summit that can be climbed by a scramble from the SE (class 3). These summits are a 3 day trip if the Wedgemount Lake Trail is used for access but have been climbed in a strenuous 2 day ski trip from Blackcomb.

### Wedge–Currie Traverse

Length: 4 days  
Total Distance: 44km  
Elevation Gain: 2290m  
Start: 2270m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/2, 92J/7  
Best: Mar–May

An excellent alpine ski traverse across northern Garibaldi Park, this trip is similar to the Spearhead Traverse but with more expansive icefields. This trip sees far less traffic, which is one of its attractions.

The route travels the main divide between Lillooet Lk and the Green R, from the Blackcomb ski area N to Pemberton Valley. From the Blackcomb Gl, climb through the



Looking S from the summit of Mt Currie to Wedge Mtn in the distance.

Blackcomb–Spearhead col and descend the Decker Gl and Wedge Cr to traverse into Wedge Pass. From Wedge Pass, climb up through glades and open slopes for 900m to the head of the Weart Gl. The safest route climbs past Berna Lk. Ski NE up a glacier to a col W of Fingerpost Ridge, then traverse around a 2620m summit onto the upper Weart Gl. Continue down the Weart Gl to near 2000m and ascend N to gentle terrain on the main divide S of the Mystery Gl. Cross a small pocket glacier and ski through a 2410m col at GR 166609 onto the head of the Mystery Gl. Descend 30° slopes for 200m onto the Mystery Gl and traverse through a 2200m col onto the E side of the divide. Climb to another 2410m col on Hibachi Ridge at GR173632 and cross to the small glacier on its NW side at the head of Mystery Cr. Descend the glacier for about 250m. Traverse along the W side of Hibachi Ridge and ascend N to gain the divide above Gravell Cr.

In poor weather, Hibachi Ridge can be bypassed by descending the Mystery Gl and traversing Mystery Cr at treeline.

The traverse ends by exiting to logging roads in Gravell Cr. This is the crux of the trip. From the N end of Hibachi Ridge above Gravell Cr, cross the 2350m col at GR175650 and descend a tremendous 900m run into the head of Gravell Cr. Continue down the valley. Avoid a headwall

below 1400m by crossing to the W side of the creek for 1km before crossing back to the E side. Traveling down Gravell Cr becomes difficult below the major junction at 900m. To avoid this, traverse E out of the creek at 1060m and climb NE onto the forested ridge 1km E of the creek. Descend N down the ridge through old growth forest to pick up logging roads near 1000m. These logging roads go down to the Green R and come out near the Pemberton airport.

This is an excellent trip with lots of great skiing and a variety of side trips. Decker Mtn (2410m), Eureka Mtn (2530m), Mt Neal (2530m) and Mt Currie (2596m) are recommended ski ascents, while Mt James Turner (2686m), Mt Weart (2870m) and especially Wedge Mtn (2904m) are recommended scrambles. Recommended skiing includes runs off the SW ridge of Mt James Turner, the sheltered glacier running NW from the Eureka–Oasis col, the Mystery Gl, the S face of Mt Currie and runs into Gravell Cr. Glacier travel is generally straightforward. Note that the Wedgemount Lake Trail must be used for access after the Blackcomb ski area closes at the end of the season.

Farther E from Mt Neal, the alpine divide between Chaos and Kakila Crs connects to the area surrounding Gunsight Pk (2380m). This divide can be used to cross the Wedge area from E to W instead of S to N and is recommended as a 4 day ski traverse from Lillooet Lk to Wedge-



Camp near Mt Neal on the Chaos–Kakila divide, with Gunsight Mtn in the distance. *Photo by Laurent Mingo*

mount Lk. It is best in May. The Chaos–Kakila divide is gained by a long climb from logging roads beside Little Lillooet Lk 5km SE of Gunsight Pk. This is the crux of the trip. An overgrown spur road branches from Lillooet Lake Rd 2km S of the Tenas Narrows Bridge and angles NW. From the end of this spur at 400m, climb steeply through mostly open forest. Swing over a shoulder at 1000m and into the S fork of the unnamed creek SE of Gunsight Pk. The terrain is open above 1100m and gives access to the end of the Chaos–Kakila divide 3km S of Gunsight. The divide is scenic and is fairly straightforward to traverse NW to Mt Neal and the Needles Gl.

Traversing to the Weart Gl below the N face of Mt Weart.



## Currie–Blackcomb Traverse

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 27km  
Elevation Gain: 1560m  
Start: 2560m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/2  
Best: Apr

This is the Wedge Currie Traverse done as a day trip from a helicopter drop-off on the summit of Mt Currie. This is a superb trip for experienced skiers and is similar to a 1 day Spearhead Traverse. Save it for a perfect day in April.

Access is from Whistler Municipal Heliport just past Green Lk, 8km N of Whistler. Arrange transportation with Blackcomb Helicopters in advance (604-938-1700, [www.blackcombhelicopters.com](http://www.blackcombhelicopters.com)). Flying from the Pemberton airport also works. Helicopter drop-offs are not permitted in Garibaldi Park, but the summit of Mt Currie lies outside the park boundary and is a regular heliski landing site. It is a short flight from the Whistler heliport, costing each person in the group about the same as a lift ticket at Whistler-Blackcomb. Group size will depend on the helicopter chartered. Shuttle a car to your planned exit before you start. Despite the ease of access, this is a serious trip that starts in the middle of nowhere. Assess the weather and avalanche conditions carefully before considering it.

The traverse starts from the summit of Mt Currie with a 600m run down the steep S face. This is a tremendous run



in a spectacular setting. Traverse across the head of Mystery Cr at about 2000m and ascend a small glacier leading to Hibachi Ridge. Ski through a 2410m col at GR172632 and continue S along the E side of the divide before crossing to the Mystery Gl. A col at the head of the Mystery Gl leads S onto the main divide NE of Mt Moe. From here, easy slopes lead down onto the Weart Gl. Continue 4km to the head of the Weart Gl. To reach the Blackcomb ski area descend S to Wedge Pass. From Wedge Pass, ski W through open forest and glades. About 1km after crossing the main branch of Wedge Cr, switchback up steep terrain E of Spearhead Cr to gain a bench near treeline at 1700m. This bench can be followed around the N flanks of Phalanx Mtn. The total elevation gain from Wedge Cr is 500m. Once around to the far NW side of Phalanx Mtn, drop down across Blackcomb Cr just N of Poop Chutes to Blackcomb Glacier Rd.

Several more ambitious variations are also possible. In soft snow conditions, the N ridge of Wedge Mtn is a straightforward snow climb with an ice axe for experienced parties. Under these conditions Wedge Mtn can be climbed fairly quickly from the upper Weart Gl, and either the Wedge Couloir or the S face can be skied as part of the traverse route. The complete route over Wedge, down into Wedge Cr and out to Blackcomb involves an elevation gain of 2200m. If skiing the Wedge Couloir, an exit via the Wedgemount Lake Trail can be used. This involves less elevation gain but similar effort.

## Mystery Creek

Length: 4–7 days  
Total Distance: 10km  
Elevation Gain: 1000m  
Start: 1500m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/2  
Best: Mar–Apr

An attractive basin at the head of Mystery Cr, SW of Mt Currie, has been the site of several ski camps by the ACC and others. This is a recommended location for several days of ski mountaineering.

Access via an alpine traverse from Wedgemount Lk is possible, though most parties making a ski camp have flown in by helicopter from the Whistler heliport or Pemberton airport. This is a very short flight. Note that helicopter access is not permitted in Garibaldi Park, and a drop-off must be done outside the park boundary at the head of the valley. Arrange transportation with Blackcomb Helicopters (604-938-1700, [www.blackcombhelicopters.com](http://www.blackcombhelicopters.com)) in Whistler.

The head of Mystery Cr rises into two broad glaciated cirques and offers lots of skiing. Suggested trips include the



Descending the S side of Mt Currie above Mystery Cr.

S face of Mt Currie, which offers a steep 600m run in a tremendous setting; Hibachi Ridge, with a variety of shorter runs in protected basins, and Mystery Gl, which offers N facing glacier runs. There are also tremendous 900m runs into the head of Gravell Cr. These can be reached from a 2350m col between the long ridge that runs E from Mt Currie and the N end of Hibachi Ridge at GR175650.

The Mystery Cr area has also been approached by a long ascending traverse through the forest from logging roads on the N side of Wedgemount Cr. This is a full day. Start from N of the Wedgemount Lake Trail. The crux is getting out of the logging slash N of Wedgemount Cr. This slope is visible from the highway, and a route can be found up the edge of old cutblocks to gain old-growth forest above. Once above 1100m begin traversing to the N. Much of the route follows open benches. Cross an unnamed creek near 1300m and traverse around into Mystery Cr near 1400m. This route has been combined with a return via an alpine traverse to the Weart Gl for an enjoyable 4 day trip.

# Callaghan 4



Skiing W facing slopes below Tricouni Pk.

**T**he Callaghan area lies on the west side of the Whistler highway, nestled between the Squamish and Cheakamus Rivers, the headwaters of Callaghan Creek and summits west of Whistler. It features many rounded summits well suited to backcountry skiing.

Outstanding trips include one-day ski ascents of Cloud-burst Mountain, Tricouni Peak or Rainbow Mountain near Whistler or several days of superb backcountry skiing at the upscale Callaghan Country backcountry lodge.

## **Snow Conditions**

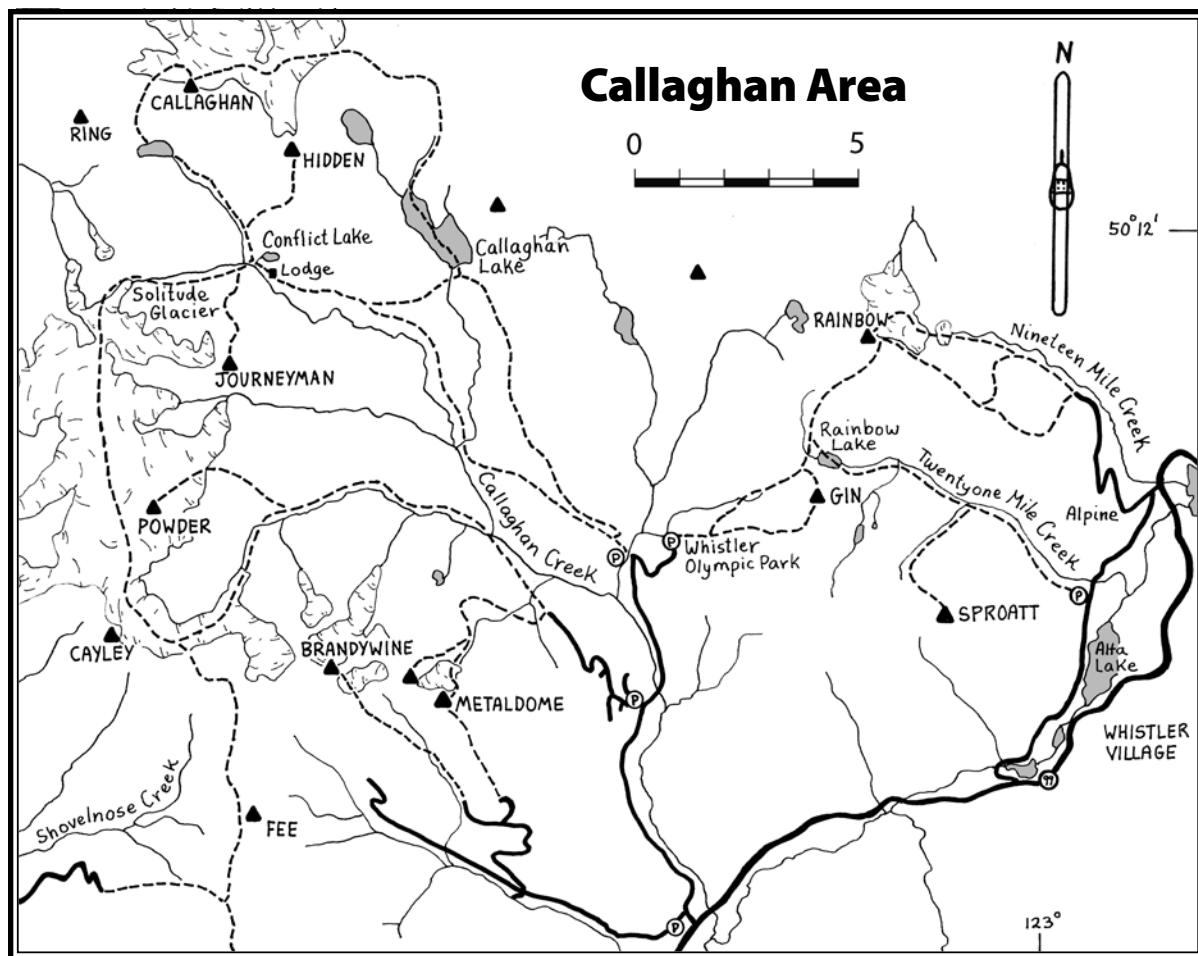
In a word: deep! Snow conditions are similar to the adjacent Whistler area but with heavier snowfalls. Measured annual snowfall in the upper Callaghan valley is about 12m, with typical snowpacks of 3.6m at treeline. Good conditions are found from late November into early June, with fresh snow the norm from January to March and excellent spring skiing in April and May.

## **Access**

Access to the E side of the Callaghan area is from Hwy 99 which runs N from Squamish to Whistler. Distances from Squamish to important turnoffs are:

- km 0 - Squamish
- km 31 - Chance Creek
- km 44 - Brandywine Creek
- km 45 - Callaghan Valley Road
- km 58 - Whistler

Access to the W side of this section is from logging roads, which extend up the Squamish R. This road system is part of a large tree-farm licence and is reached from Hwy 99. Turn W 10km N of Squamish onto the Squamish River Road. Take another left after crossing the Cheakamus R 4km from Hwy 99. It is a further 18km to the main gate at the entrance to the tree-farm licence. All distance references use the kilometre signs posted on the logging roads.



Important distances from Squamish to various spur roads are:

- km 0—Squamish
- km 32—Gate at entrance to tree-farm licence
- km 35—Br 100 to Cloudburst
- km 38—Br 200 to High Falls Cr
- km 53—Br 700 to Shovelnose Cr

There is no scheduled winter maintenance beyond the gate. The gate is generally open but check posted hours before entering. Information on roads and road conditions can be obtained from the Squamish Forest District at [www.for.gov.bc.ca/dsq](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/dsq) or 604-898-2100. See also [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com) for recent road reports.

## Maps

*Callaghan Area* 1:50,000, by Clark Geomatics

## Multi-use Considerations

Aside from Vancouver's North Shore mountains, this is probably the most heavily visited portion of the Coast Mountains. With the tremendous growth of recreational activities near Whistler, the Callaghan area has come under intense pressure for motorized recreation. Most of the region is designated as multi-use, and you will have to share the terrain with snowmobilers, heliskiers and cat skiers. Efforts to develop a sharing accord are ongoing. Details can be found at [www.backcountryforum.org](http://www.backcountryforum.org). Recreational and commercial snowmobiling areas include High Falls Cr, Tricouni Meadows and Brandywine Cr. Heliskiing covers much of the region, with the busiest areas around Brandywine and the N side of Rainbow Mtn. Non-mechanized areas have been designated at Cloudburst, Brew, Callaghan, Rainbow Lk and on the Whistler side of Sproatt

Mtn. Some of these, however, are shared with heliskiing. The heliski tenure belongs to Whistler Heli-Skiing, which has agreed to facilitate sharing with backcountry skiers by trying to avoid operating in areas where backcountry skiers are active, especially if they are contacted in advance ([www.whistlerheliskiing.com](http://www.whistlerheliskiing.com) or 604-932-4105). There is also cat-skiing at the head of Roe Cr by [www.powdermountaincatskiing.com](http://www.powdermountaincatskiing.com) and in Brandywine Cr by [www.blackcombsnowmobile.com](http://www.blackcombsnowmobile.com).

## Cloudburst Mountain 1870m

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 13km  
Elevation Gain: 1420m  
Start: 450m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/14  
Best: Jan–Mar

An isolated dome between the Squamish and Cheakamus R visible from Squamish. This is a popular trip. Several hours skiing up a logging road provides access to old-growth forest and a series of rock slides and open draws that make

Snow covered trees on the W side of Cloudburst Mtn.



this a recommended mid-winter ski trip. Access is shorter in the spring. Cloudburst can be approached either from the Squamish R or via the slightly longer Chance Cr route from the Whistler highway.

### Squamish River

The W side of Cloudburst Mtn is approached from the Squamish R road at km 35. Just past an old yard for logging equipment, branch road 100 climbs to the right. Depending on snow conditions, drive or ski up the road. Take the first right fork, then keep left. The road switchbacks up the N side of the main creek draining W from Cloudburst Mtn to near 600m before traversing S to cross the creek near



Skiing off the NW side of Cloudburst Mtn. Photo by Lee Lau

800m. This location is 2–4km from your car. Leave the road on the S side of the creek and climb E through logging and mature forest to pick up a large open rockslide higher up. Exit this at top left. Several open bowls lead past a false summit to the peak. There is decent skiing below treeline and there are no snowmobiles in the area. This route is not recommended when there is a significant avalanche hazard. In the spring, High Falls Cr provides an alternative approach once you can drive to km 7 at 650m. A bridge near km 8 crosses to the S side of the valley.

### Chance Cr

Cloudburst Mtn can also be approached from logging roads in Chance Cr on the NE side of the mountain. These leave Hwy 99 at km 31 and cross the Cheakamus R to the W. The road is usually plowed for 1km to a parking lot at a cat-skiing operation. Ski up the road from here, avoiding the Roe Cr spur that branches right after 1km. Continue up the road on the N side of Chance Cr, generally taking left forks. Near the head of the valley an older spur switchbacks to the S and ends near 1000m, approximately 5km from the



Cloudburst Mtn from Tricouni Pk. Photo by Linda Bily

parking lot. The first several kilometres of the road are used for access by the cat-skiing operation and offer easy traveling. Beyond the end of the road, ascend mature timber on the W side of Chance Cr. Cloudburst is reached via open basins that begin above 1200m. Two main routes have been used. The first climbs steeper slopes SW of the small lake at the head of Chance Cr. This involves some avalanche hazard. A safer alternative starts 1km N of the lake and veers W to ascend the W side of Cloudburst's indistinct N ridge. A steeper section above 1200m can be negotiated by climbing into a small basin at GR835324 and angling through a notch to the W. There are good views from the summit and it is an enjoyable run back down your ascent route.

## Tricouni Peak

**2130m**

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 14km  
Elevation Gain: 1330m  
Start: 800m

Difficulty: 3/4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/3, 92G/14  
Best: Dec, Apr–May

Tricouni Pk is the prominent rock pyramid on the southern end of the Squamish–Cheakamus divide. This is an enjoyable ski ascent with a short scramble to the summit, great views and good skiing. The approach climbs from logging roads above the Squamish R through an undulating alpine area dotted with lakes and meadows. Unfortunately, the meadows are heavily used by snowmobiles, so try to visit mid-week or early or late in the season.

Approximately 1km after crossing High Falls Cr on the Squamish R road, turn right at km 38 onto branch road 200. The road climbs steeply before swinging S into High Falls Cr. There is a major junction 7km up the road at 650m. Stay on the left fork, which continues up the N side of High Falls Cr. This trip is best done when the snow



The W side of Tricouni Pk.

level is high enough that you can drive at least to this junction: typically at the beginning of the season in November or December and again in April and May. Waterbars begin here. Depending on snow and road conditions, walk or ski up the road to the N fork of High Falls Cr (Belia Cr). Roads continue to near 1200m on the E side of the creek. Gentle open traveling leads up the creek to attractive alpine country W of Tricouni Pk. The peak is reached from the small lake SW of the summit at 1550m. Ski up broad slopes NE of the lake to gain a bench W of the peak. A short, steep slope leads to a small upper basin below the summit; there is some avalanche hazard. The summit is a short class 3 scramble via its S ridge. The descent back to the lake is an excellent 450m run.

## Cypress Peak

**2070m**

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 27km  
Elevation Gain: 1630m  
Start: 440m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/3  
Best: Feb–Apr

A long ski up logging roads in Roe Cr provides direct access to this attractive ski summit N of Tricouni Pk, though you will have to share it with Powder Mountain cat skiers ([www.powdermountaincatskiing.com](http://www.powdermountaincatskiing.com)). Snowmobiling is not permitted in Roe Cr.

Roe Cr logging roads are reached from Chance Cr. These leave Hwy 99 at km 31 and cross the Cheakamus R to the W. The road is usually plowed for 1km to a parking lot at a cat-skiing operation. Ski up the road from here. The Roe Cr spur branches right after 1km and continues for 8km to its end at 1100m on the E side of Roe Cr. Angle down to Roe Cr beyond the end of the road and climb to the main divide N of Cypress Pk via the attractive basin



On the Squamish–Cheakamus divide SW of Mt Fee. *Photo by Jos van der Burg*

NE of the summit. This is a huge avalanche slope so assess the avalanche hazard carefully. The safest route avoids the lower part of this basin by climbing in the woods to the N until above 1500m. Gentler terrain continues above. Cypress Pk is a short scramble from the W. There is good skiing here, with almost a 900m run down to Roe Cr from the summit.

Near the summit of Cypress Pk. *Photo by Jos van der Burg*



## Shovelnose Creek

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 14km  
Elevation Gain: 1400m  
Start: 600m

## 2000m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/3  
Best: Dec–Apr

Mt Fee is a jagged volcanic spire on the central part of the Squamish–Cheakamus divide. The base of the S tower of Mt Fee is accessible from logging roads on the Squamish R that climb up the shoulder S of Shovelnose Cr. This is a recommended day trip that avoids the surrounding popular snowmobiling areas and offers some enjoyable runs.

Access is from the main Squamish R logging road. Turn right on branch road 700 at km 53. The road switchbacks to 1100m but depending on snow conditions you might not get past 600m. From the end of the road, climb 500m through open timber to reach a broad shoulder at treeline. Options from here include continuing upwards to reach the main divide above or veering NE to head towards the base of Mt Fee. There are many attractive ski slopes in the area. The longest runs drop off the E side of the main divide into the head of Brandywine Cr.





Skiing on the E side of Brew Mtn.

## Mt Brew

Length: 2 days  
Total Distance: 26km  
Elevation Gain: 1220m  
Start: 520m

**1740m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/3  
Best: Nov–May

Mt Brew is more of a sprawling alpine plateau of bumps and meadows than a summit. It is an attractive area E of the main Squamish–Cheakamus divide. There is a large cabin near the summit, and the area offers some good ski touring with runs up to 300m. It also gives access to the Squamish–Cheakamus divide south of Mt Fee.

Access is from logging roads in Chance Cr and Roe Cr. Turn off Hwy 99 at km 31 and cross the Cheakamus R to the W. The road is usually plowed for 1km to a parking lot at a cat-skiing operation. Ski up the road from here. The Roe Cr spur branches right after 1km. The road is traveled regularly in the winter by Powder Mountain cat skiers ([www.powdermountaincatskiing.com](http://www.powdermountaincatskiing.com)) between mid-December and mid-April. The main cat-skiing area is W of the head of Roe Cr. The Mt Brew area is designated as non-motorized,

with no air access allowed. Access is sometimes shorter at the beginning and end of the season when a portion of the Roe Cr road can be driven. This is typically in November and May.

To reach Mt Brew, turn off the Roe Cr road after 5.5km. A spur road branches right here at 900m elevation on the E side of Roe Cr. About 1km up this road, at the first switch-back, a flagged winter route makes a long gradual ascent around the broad ridge to the E and angles N into meadows S of Brew Lk. The cabin lies about 1km to the NW of the lake in the 1680m col immediately S of Mt Brew, 5.6km from the logging road. (A detailed description of the winter route is available at [www.ubc-voc.com](http://www.ubc-voc.com).)

There is a wide variety of terrain accessible from the hut, including everything from gentle ridge tops to steeper N-facing bowls. The basin around Brew Lk is a good place for beginners to explore, with short easy runs on broad open slopes W of the lake and some steeper runs through sparse trees on S-facing slopes at the N end of the lake.

Mt Brew is a short enjoyable ski ascent from the cabin,

with a short run down to the lake to the E. If you continue E from this lake, there is some good tree skiing down to a subalpine bench at 1340m.

Some of the best runs lie at the head of Brandywine Cr. These are more advanced runs that venture into complex avalanche terrain, so assess the avalanche conditions carefully. There is an excellent 300m run that drops NW from the cabin door down to a small lake at 1370m, and the surrounding basin offers a number of other excellent runs. To climb back out of the basin, ascend SW from the small lake through mature timber and loop around on gentler slopes that traverse back to the hut. An alpine ridge above this basin continues NW from the Brew area to the Squamish–Cheakamus divide. This can be used to access more skiing or to loop around to Cypress Pk and exit to Roe Cr.

The ridge system to the NE of Mt Brew also offers good skiing. The closest runs are off the SE and N sides of the first high point E of Mt Brew. Farther afield, there are steep slopes and avalanche gullies above the main branch of Brandywine Cr that offer long challenging runs. The longest run is an avalanche gully that drops 700m into Brandywine Cr from GR873450. This is a major avalanche path with a 35° start zone, so check the avalanche conditions carefully. It is possible to exit to logging roads used by snowmobilers in Brandywine Cr, otherwise switchback up through steep forest W of the run.

Photo by Linda Bily



### Brew Hut

Map: 92J/3  
GR: 864429

Elevation: 1680m

Cost: \$5

Capacity: 12

Reservations: suggested

**Location** In the gentle col immediately S of Mt Brew

**Facilities** A comfortable frame hut with a sleeping loft, a wood stove, a Coleman lantern and a two-burner Coleman stove.

**Built** by VOC in 2005

**Contact Information** [www.ubc-voc.com](http://www.ubc-voc.com)

## Brandywine Mountain 2230m

Length: 1–2 days

Total Distance: 29km

Elevation Gain: 1710m

Start: 520m

Difficulty: 2/3

Terrain: Challenging

Map: 92J/3

Best: Dec–Apr

Brandywine Mtn was one of the classic backcountry ski trips in the Whistler corridor. This area is now heavily used for recreational and commercial snowmobiling. In addition, Blackcomb Snowmobile runs a cat-skiing operation in Brandywine Cr ([www.blackcombsnowmobile.com](http://www.blackcombsnowmobile.com)) and Whistler Heli-Skiing has runs on the N side of Brandywine Mtn. If you don't mind sharing with these folks, there is excellent skiing here.



View SW from the summit of Brandywine Mtn. Photo by Linda Bily

Access to Brandywine Mtn, is from the Callaghan access road. Turn off Hwy 99 at km 45. Less than a kilometre from the highway, a well-marked road branches left and leads to a large parking lot. A parking fee is charged. Follow the groomed snowmobile route up logging roads in Brandywine Cr. If you would like to avoid heavy snowmobile traffic, try to visit mid-week or late in the spring. At 800m, turn right on a spur road that switchbacks to a warming hut for snowmobilers in the uppermost logging slash at 1300m on the rounded shoulder SE of Metal Dome. It is about 7km to the hut. The main road continues W beyond the warming hut, and the meadows SE of Brandywine are easily reached. Ascend the W side of the open basin above the meadows and ski up the small glacier S of the summit to reach Brandywine. In good conditions, the entire area is heavily tracked by snowmobiles. Glaciers to the N of Brandywine offer excellent skiing with runs up to 900m. These runs are used by Whistler Heli-Skiing.

Logging roads also continue into the main W branch of Brandywine Cr from the junction at 800m. This is the main snowmobile access to the alpine area W of Brandywine Mtn and eventually to glaciers N of Mt Cayley and



Skiing a 700m run on the E side of Metal Dome.

the Pemberton Icefield. Expect convoys of sleds. By dropping through forest and crossing Brandywine Cr at about 1100m, it is possible to climb up onto ski slopes E of Mt Fee that are outside of the busiest snowmobile areas.

## Metal Dome

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 14km  
Elevation Gain: 1310m  
Start: 760m

**2070m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/3  
Best: Jan–Apr

Though attached to Brandywine Mtn and the hive of motorized activity there, Metal Dome can be approached over its seldom visited NE slopes from the Callaghan valley road. This makes an excellent trip with good skiing on big open slopes.

Access is from the road to the Whistler Olympic Park in the Callaghan valley. Turn off Hwy 99 at km 45. Park at a small plowed parking area 6km from the highway. The first portion of the route follows logging roads NW for 4km, along a bench at the base of the E slopes of Metal Dome. Take the first left several hundred metres beyond the parking lot. Veer right at the next junction. Then take the next

right branch, which heads N up a gentle grade. With one switchback, this traverses to its end near 900m on the S side of the creek draining the glacier NE of Metal Dome (GR890524). From the end of the road, climb W into the forest. Cross the S branch of the creek near 960m and continue W up and across the main creek. Ascend a broad forested ramp on the N side of the creek to treeline at 1370m. The forest is open and easy to travel through.

Looking SW from the N summit of Metal Dome.



From treeline, big open slopes lead up onto the NE side of Metal Dome. There are several recommended options. There is excellent skiing on the glacier NE of Metal Dome, and an obvious draw leads from the glacier up onto the gentle E shoulder of Metal Dome at 1900m. The summit is easily reached from here.

The longest run is from the 2070m summit 1km NW of Metal Dome. This is reached by skiing up the trough next to the moraine on the N side of the glacier. Open slopes continue to the col N of the peak. From the col, traverse a short 45° slope to gain the flat-topped summit. The descent is an excellent 700m run.

Note that there are several heliski runs on the N side of Metal Dome.

## Powder Mountain

Length: 2 days  
Total Distance: 28km  
Elevation Gain: 1700m  
Start: 760m

**2350m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/3  
Best: Feb–Apr

This is a glorified name for a broad snow dome on the “Powdercap Icefield” on the W side of Callaghan Cr. Though the icefield is heavily used by snowmobiles, Powder Mtn can be approached via a secluded route through old-growth forest and offers excellent skiing.



The N side of Powder Mtn from Journeyman Pk.

The approach starts from the same logging roads as described above for Metal Dome. Beyond the end of the road, angle down through the forest and travel along the W side of Callaghan Cr. Turn up the first side valley about 2km beyond the end of the road. Travel is best on the N side of the creek through pleasant old-growth forest. The valley becomes open above 1100m. There are several options from a camp near 1200m. For the best skiing, climb NW up a side drainage and ascend the glaciated NE slopes of

Powder Mtn. The descent is a classic 1200m run. Other options include touring up the valley and onto glaciers that swing past Mt Cayley. Note that runs on Powder Mtn are also used by Whistler Heli-Skiing.

The next valley to the N of Powder Cr can also be ascended through forest from Callaghan Cr and leads to glaciers N of Powder Mtn.

## Callaghan Lodge

Situated in a grove of old-growth forest overlooking Conflict Lk, Callaghan Lodge offers upscale backcountry accommodation in the beautiful upper Callaghan valley. The finely crafted post-and-beam lodge boasts hotel-style accommodation with private rooms, comfortable lounge areas, fireplaces and a large dining room. More important than the luxurious accommodation is the phenomenal skiing in the area. The upper Callaghan valley is ringed on three sides by glaciated summits and offers everything from high-alpine bowls and glacier skiing to glades, pillow drops and gently rolling terrain. The closest runs drop



### Callaghan Lodge

Map: 92J/3  
GR: 828599  
Elevation: 1370m

Cost: varies with package  
Capacity: 16–20  
Reservations: yes

**Location** In the upper Callaghan Cr valley S of Conflict Lk

**Facilities** A finely crafted, 5,000 sq ft, three-storey backcountry lodge with 8 private rooms, a full kitchen and dining facilities, a large comfortable lounge area, stone and propane fireplaces, a library, a gear-drying room, propane/electric lights, indoor plumbing and shower facilities.

**Built** 1998

**Host** Callaghan Country Wilderness Adventures

**Cost** Includes all meals and accommodation. Various packages are available, ranging from one to several nights with or without transportation to the lodge.

**Contact Information** [www.callaghancountry.com](http://www.callaghancountry.com)  
604-938-0616 or 1-877-938-0616 toll-free



Journeyman Pk from the NE. Callaghan Lodge is in the trees at the bottom of the photo. *Photo by Whistler Heli Skiing*

750m on N facing slopes and end less than half a kilometre from the lodge. Look beyond the weekend packages. This is a good base for skiing not just an upscale holiday. There is easily enough terrain here to keep a keen group of skiers busy for up to a week. There are also extensive cross-country trails through the meadows. Prices reflect the luxurious accommodation; but, because access does not involve an expensive helicopter flight, the rates are still competitive with other backcountry lodges. Guided trips are also available. Snowmobiling is not permitted in the area.

### Access to the Lodge

Length: 2–7 days  
Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 570m  
Start: 800m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Simple  
Map: 92J/3  
Best: Dec–Apr

Access is from cross-country ski trails in the Callaghan valley. Turn off Hwy 99 at km 45 and drive 10km to the base area parking lot for the Callaghan Country trails. It is a pleasant 3hr ski up groomed trails to Callaghan Lodge near Conflict Lk in the upper Callaghan valley. The route is well marked and there are two choices: The shortest route follows Wild Spirit trail, which winds through old-growth

forest and subalpine meadows directly to the lodge. The gentlest route follows Mainline trail, which climbs gradually to Callaghan Lk and then swings W to the lodge. Both routes are very pleasant and scenic. It takes about 1.5 hrs to ski out from the lodge. Motorized transportation to the lodge is also available.

Recommended trips from the lodge are described below. Many variations are possible depending on snow

Upper Callaghan Cr.







Skiing a 750m run on the NE side of Journeyman Pk.

and weather conditions. Everything from beginner to expert runs can be found. A network of cross-country ski trails in the meadows gives access to the base of most of the ski lines.

### **Journeyman Peak**

Total Distance: 6km  
Elevation Gain: 760m

**2130m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging

The closest summit to the lodge, “Journeyman Pk” lies on the end of the ridge 2km S of Conflict Lk and can be ascended via its N slopes from the meadows half a kilometre W of the lodge. The ascent route climbs through open sub-alpine forest and angles right around a steeper knob into a small basin above 1700m, which leads to the final open slopes. There is excellent skiing here, with dozens of 750m runs ranging from conservative lines back down the ascent route to long committing lines NE towards the lodge.

### **Les Gendarmes**

Total Distance: 8km  
Elevation Gain: 760m

**2130m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

A series of pinnacles running W from Journeyman Pk are known as “Les Gendarmes.” These are reached by travers-

ing below the NW side of Journeyman Pk at about 1900m. There is a variety of superb N facing runs here. This is complex avalanche terrain, so good routefinding is essential.

On the NE side of Journeyman Pk, with Hidden Pk on the top left.







Panorama from the summit of Journeyman Pk.

## Solitude Glacier

Total Distance: 10km  
Elevation Gain: 980m

**2350m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging

The Solitude Gl rises from the head of the valley W of the lodge and drains the N side of the "Powdercap Icefield." Minor summits at the head of the glacier can be ascended for good views of the icefield. The N facing glacier offers 900m runs.



Tree skiing in the upper Callaghan valley near Journeyman Pk.

## Hidden Peak

Total Distance: 7km  
Elevation Gain: 910m

**2280m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging

Almost directly N of the lodge, Hidden Pk is the high point at the end of the broad shoulder SE of Mt Callaghan, reached via forested and open slopes N of Conflict Lk. There are great views of the Callaghan valley and several options for runs on S facing slopes.

## Mt Callaghan

Total Distance: 13km  
Elevation Gain: 1040m

**2410m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging

The highest summit in the area. Several routes are possible. The most direct route heads up the valley towards Ring Lk

and then veers N up the obvious draw that leads to the icefield 1.5km E of the summit. Mt Callaghan is a very short scramble from the summit-area glacier and offers views of the Pemberton Icefield to the N. There are long glacier runs N of the summit.

## Powder Mountain

Total Distance: 14km  
Elevation Gain: 1500m

**2350m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

Powder Mtn is the high snow dome S of Journeyman Pk. This is a strenuous day trip from the lodge that gives 2 superb runs. A suggested route climbs up to the W end of Les Gendarmes and gains the icefield to the SW from there. Powder Mtn is easily ascended from the NW. The big attraction is the 700m run down the glacier to the N. Climb back up past the W end of Les Gendarmes for a second 700m N-facing run down to the meadows W of the lodge.

## Mt Callaghan

Length: 2 days  
Total Distance: 40km  
Elevation Gain: 1600m  
Start: 800m

**2410m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/3  
Best: Feb–May

A broad sprawling summit, Mt Callaghan is the highest peak overlooking the Callaghan valley. Access involves a long gentle ski up the road to Callaghan Lk. Beyond the lake, varied terrain leads to the glaciated summit. There is glacier skiing N of the summit, with long moderate runs.

Drive up the Callaghan valley and park at the base area for the Callaghan Country trails. The well-marked ski route to Callaghan Lk is a groomed cross country ski trail that follows an old logging road. The road begins on the N side of Madeley Cr at Alexander Falls. It is 9km to Callaghan Lk. To gain the Callaghan Massif, ski NNE up the sparsely treed drainage from the N end of Callaghan Lk. Climb past a small group of lakes at 1600m and ascend the

eastern lobe of the Callaghan Gl. Climb up a steep slope near the head of the glacier to gain the large summit area. The final summit is a very short scramble.

The approach route via Callaghan Lk lies within Callaghan Lake Provincial Park and is a non-motorized zone; however, the summit area is not contained within the park and is used by snowmobilers and sometimes heliskiers.

In spring, Mt Callaghan has also been approached from logging roads in the upper Squamish R. This is a shorter route but involves complex branches of ever-changing logging roads. Check [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com) for road status. Branch roads S500 and S900 have both been used. Branch S500 leaves the Squamish R road at km 69 and climbs to near 1300m, 2km SW of Ring Mtn, from where a pleasant meadow area, immediately S of Callaghan, may be reached. There is currently a washout at 600m. Branch S900 is also of interest. It leaves the Squamish R road at km 76 and climbs to over 1300m on slopes 3km N of Ring Mtn to provide direct access to the N side of Mt Callaghan.

The Callaghan area provides access N to the Pemberton Icefield and S to the Squamish–Cheakamus divide.



Callaghan Mtn from the NE. *Photo by Whistler Heli Skiing*

## Squamish–Cheakamus Divide Traverse

Length: 4 days  
Total Distance: 44km  
Elevation Gain: 1900m  
Start: 800m  
VOC/ 1981, p.9

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/3  
Best: Nov–May

The divide between the Squamish and Cheakamus Rivers is a classic ski traverse to a superb alpine area that is now heavily used by snowmobilers. This is a very scenic tour that offers a wide variety of excellent skiing along its route. It is one of the few ski traverses that can be done as early as late fall, since not much glacier travel is involved.

The divide is accessible at a number of points along its length and several variations to this traverse are possible. In winter, approaches from Hwy 99 are easiest and the recommended route travels the divide S from Callaghan Lk to Roe Cr. Routefinding is generally straightforward. From Callaghan Lk, ski W into a subalpine basin at 1400m. Ascend the Solitude Gl at the head of the basin to gain the small icefield N of Mt Cayley, which is easily crossed. Descend the glacier to the E of Cayley, avoiding minor ice-



Ascending the Solitude Gl onto the Squamish–Cheakamus divide.

falls, and drop across the head of Shovelnose Cr to reach alpine meadows on the W side of the Squamish–Cheakamus divide. Straightforward contouring leads S past Mt Fee. Roe Cr is the recommended exit and can be reached directly from 2km N of Cypress Pk or by following the ridge top SE to the Mt Brew area and skiing out the winter route from there.

Other variations can also be done. The natural alpine route continues past the W side of Cypress Pk to lakes and meadows at the head of High Falls Cr (see Tricouni Pk). This is an attractive area but the meadows are shared

View down the Squamish–Cheakamus divide to Mt Fee, from glaciers E of Mt Cayley. *Photo by Linda Bily*





View W across the Callaghan valley from near the summit of Gin Pk.

with snowmobilers. From Callaghan Lk it is also possible to include the summit of Mt Callaghan in the traverse. In spring, access from the upper Squamish R provides another variation. One vehicle can be left at High Falls Cr and another driven to km 69 on the Squamish R road to approach the Callaghan area from branch road S500.

Despite the heavy use of snowmobiles in the area, this can still be a worthwhile trip. Snowmobilers are most likely to be encountered on the icefield W of Powder Mtn and S to Brandywine Cr. To avoid them, plan to do this portion of the trip on an early morning, a weekday or early or late in the season (e.g., Nov or May). The Callaghan area and Roe Cr portions of the traverse are designated non-motorized.

Skiing is to be found at a number of points along the route, including slopes at the head of Callaghan Cr, as well as long runs on the N side of Powder Mtn, along the flank of the Squamish–Cheakamus divide near Mt Fee and into the head of Roe Cr. Runs vary from 400 to 700m.

## Gin Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 10km  
Elevation Gain: 900m  
Start: 900m

**1800m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/3  
Best: Jan–Apr

The Whistler Olympic Park in the Callaghan valley gives excellent access to the W side of Mt Sproatt and Rainbow Mtn. One of the shortest trips climbs through old-growth forest past Hanging Lk to Gin Pk, which is immediately S of Rainbow Lk. Though the alpine is heavily used by snowmobilers, this is still a worthwhile trip and there are some decent runs up to 300m.

Turn off Hwy 99 for the Whistler Olympic Park ([www.whistlerolympicpark.com](http://www.whistlerolympicpark.com)) at km 45 and drive 11km up the Callaghan valley to the main parking lots for the nordic trails and ski jumps. Backcountry skiers must register at the Day Lodge to obtain a free parking pass and sign a liability waiver.



Open slopes and glades on the E side of Gin Pk above Gin and Tonic Lks.

Backcountry access for Gin Pk starts at the parking lot at the base of the ski jump and does not use any of the cross-country ski trails. Follow a snowcat service road that switchbacks up through the forest on the left (N) side of the ski jumps. Where the snowcat road traverses right to the top of the ski jumps after half a kilometer, turn left on an old logging road that switchbacks through the forest into a logged area above the ski jumps. A groomed road in the cutblock is used for guided snowmobile tours. There are two options. The first ascends due E through pleasant old-growth forest above the cutblock to gain treeline at 1500m on the E flank of Gin Pk. The second option follows the logging road in the cutblock around the corner to the N and ascends the valley leading to Hanging Lk, W of Rainbow Lk. Gin Pk is the minor summit immediately S of Rainbow Lk and is easily reached by either route. It is an excellent viewpoint that offers 300m runs down N facing gullies to Rainbow Lk or into the head of the valley above Gin and Tonic Lks. The obvious S facing glades half a kilometre W of Hanging Lk also offer a recommended 300m run.

Note that although Rainbow Lk lies in the Whistler municipal watershed and is designated non-motorized, this regulation is poorly enforced and the area is heavily used by snowmobilers.

View of the W side of Gin Pk and Rainbow Mtn showing access from the Whistler Olympic Park cross-country area in Callaghan valley. The parking lots are visible below the ski jump at bottom right.





Rainbow Mtn from the SW.

## Rainbow Mountain 2330m

A sprawling ski summit immediately west of Whistler, Rainbow Mtn is a recommended ski ascent. This is a popular trip with pleasant skiing throughout. There is a choice of three routes.

Note that Rainbow Lk lies within the Whistler municipal watershed. The watershed area is designated non-motorized but this regulation is poorly enforced and the area is heavily used by snowmobilers. However, this is still a worthwhile trip.

### Via Hanging Lake

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 15km  
Elevation Gain: 1430m  
Start: 900m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/3  
Best: Dec–Apr

The shortest approach to Rainbow Mtn is via Hanging Lk from the Whistler Olympic Park in the Callaghan valley. Hanging Lk lies just W of Rainbow Lk and is a 650m climb from the Whistler Olympic Park (see Gin Pk above for access).

Rainbow Mtn can be reached from the alpine meadows N of Hanging Lk and Rainbow Lk by ascending broad W

facing slopes to gain the summit area from the S. This route provides a good 800m run back to the lake. There are also attractive runs on the Rainbow Gl N of the summit, with the potential for some long runs, as well as runs W of the summit to Beverly Lk.

### Via Twentyone Mile Creek

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 24km  
Elevation Gain: 1660m  
Start: 670m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/3, 92J/2  
Best: Dec–Apr

Rainbow Lake Trail is the classic approach via Twentyone Mile Cr and provides pleasant access to the Rainbow Mtn area.

Access is from Whistler. Turn left from Hwy 99 onto Alta Lake Rd a few kilometres before Whistler (53km from Squamish). Follow this road for 7km around the W side of Alta Lk to signs for a parking area S of Twentyone Mile Cr. The trail is well marked and soon picks up an old logging road that climbs to the 1000m level in Twentyone Mile Cr. The trail proper starts on the S side of the creek at the end of the logging slash and climbs through pleasant old-growth forest. Travel is generally straightforward when





Skiing off the S side of Rainbow Mtn. Photo by Jos van der Burg

snow smoothes out the forest floor. Ascend the valley to the lake and meadows at 1450m.

Rainbow Mtn is reached by continuing N past the lake and joining the route from Hanging Lk (above).

There is a long prominent gully that drops steeply down the S side of Rainbow from 1km E of the summit into Twentyone Mile Cr. This is exposed to avalanches but offers a challenging 850m run that is occasionally skied in good conditions.

### East Ridge and East Glacier

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 19km  
Elevation Gain: 1630m  
Start: 720m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/3, 92J/2  
Best: Mar–Apr

Rainbow Mtn offers great ski skiing from all sides. An approach from Nineteen Mile Cr gives access to the excellent runs N and E of the summit. This is a superb day trip.

Access is from Alpine Meadows in Whistler. Turn left at the lights on Alpine Way, 3km N of Whistler Village. Park at the end of Alpine Way, 1km from the highway. Ski up a logging road that climbs NW into Nineteen Mile Cr. The road is cleared in the summer as a bike trail, hence it is easy to ski. It does one big switchback and angles across the hill-

side at 1100m to a crossing of Nineteen Mile Cr. Leave the road about 1km before the creek and climb through an old cutblock into the forest. This route leads up onto the broad ridge running SE from the summit. Ski up the scenic ridge, which gradually narrows above treeline. Avoid a rock step 1km E of the summit at 2140m by dropping off the S side of the ridge and traversing W to join the regular route to the summit from Rainbow Lk.

There is excellent skiing on the Rainbow Gl N of the summit, with the potential for some longer runs. These runs are shared with Whistler Heli-Skiing. The highlight of the trip is the 1000m run down the E facing glacier into the head of Nineteen Mile Cr. Assess the avalanche conditions carefully before committing to this run. This is a long slope with a steep headwall below 1800m. The headwall is bypassed on the S side by angling down underneath an obvious rock spur. The route here is exposed to avalanches from above. The run goes all the way down to the basin at 1300m. To exit, traverse out on the S side of Nineteen Mile Cr at about 1200m for 1.5km to pick up the logging road.

A recommended variation to this route is a crossover from the Callaghan valley. Ascend via Hanging Lk, ski over the summit and down the E glacier.





Looking W from near the summit of Mt Sproatt.

## Mt Sproatt

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 15km  
Elevation Gain: 1160m  
Start: 670m

**1830m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/3, 92J/2  
Best: Dec–Apr

Mt Sproatt is the gentle summit immediately west of Whistler. Pleasant rolling subalpine and alpine terrain near the peak make this an enjoyable tour. There are great views of Whistler.

Access is from Rainbow Lake Trail (see Rainbow Mtn below). From near the 3km mark on the trail, at about 1100m, swing SW into the pleasant valley that climbs to a broad pass W of the summit. The valley starts with a short headwall then becomes open above 1350m, and the summit is climbed from the head of the valley. The ridge running NE from the summit has also been used.

The next tributary of Twentyone Mile Cr to the W also offers an attractive route that climbs past Gin and Tonic Lks at 1400m.

The alpine area W of Mt Sproatt is heavily used by snowmobilers. However, they are rarely seen on the approach from Twentyone Mile Cr and only occasionally visit the true E summit of Mt Sproatt.



# Birkenhead

# 5



Skiing on the W side of McGillivray Pass with Star Chutes in the background on the E side of McGillivray Cr.

**D**eep in the heart of the Coast Mountains, the area drained by the Birkenhead River offers superb backcountry skiing and ski mountaineering. High alpine basins, small glaciers, long avalanche paths and subalpine glades are reasons to come here. With a huge vertical rise above the surrounding valleys, these alpine areas are typically more difficult to reach than in the adjacent Duffey Lake area. Most trips require several days and are typically best in March or April.

Highlights range from a week of powder skiing at McGillivray Pass Lodge to a weekend ski ascent of Birkenhead Mountain to a delightful four or five days on the Owl-Tenquille Traverse.

## **Snow Conditions**

This is the powder belt. Snowfall amounts are less than elsewhere, but a colder climate delivers drier snow. Snowpack data from the last 50 years show a typical snowpack at treeline that varies from 1.7m at McGillivray Pass to 2.9m at Tenquille Lk. Corresponding snowfall estimates

range from 8m to 11m. Note that the road to D'Arcy and the lower elevations of the main Birkenhead R valley are much drier and have a much thinner snowpack than the surrounding alpine areas.

## **Access**

Access to this area is from Pemberton, a comfortable 2-hour drive of 156km from Vancouver. An all-weather road runs up the Pemberton valley on the S side of the Lillooet R valley to Pemberton Meadows. At km 25, the Lillooet R forest road branches to the right and after crossing the Lillooet R it continues up the N side of the Lillooet R. An important junction with the Hurley R road is well marked 9km after the turnoff from the Pemberton Meadows road. The Hurley R road climbs 14km up Railroad Cr over Railroad Pass at 1370m and continues down the Hurley R to Gold-bridge. It provides good access to several alpine areas. The Hurley R road is not maintained in winter and is typically not passable beyond the turnoff from the Lillooet R road until late March. By mid-April it is often possible to drive



to near Railroad Cr at 1000m. It is usually not possible to drive to Railroad Pass until the road is plowed in the third week of May. The road is heavily traveled by snowmobiles and snowcats in winter and is groomed regularly for that purpose.

Trips farther E are reached by continuing past Pemberton on Hwy 99 to Mt Currie. An all-weather paved road known as Pemberton Portage Rd turns off Hwy 99 and continues for 40km to D'Arcy.

### Multi-use Considerations

This area contains a mix of non-motorized and motorized designations. Non-motorized zones include Sockeye Cr, Phelix Cr and the McGillivray Pass area. Other areas are zoned for multi-use, and there are a variety of motorized activities in the region. There is heavy snowmobile traffic on the Hurley R road, and snowmobiles can be expected in many side drainages including Noel Cr, Hope Cr and Cadwallader Cr. There is also considerable heliskiing in the region. Coast Range Heliskiing ([www.coastrangelheliskiing.com](http://www.coastrangelheliskiing.com)) operates on the divide S of Tenquille Lk and around Birkenhead Pk, while areas to the N and E towards Bralorne

are used by Whistler Heli-Skiing ([www.whistlerheliskiing.com](http://www.whistlerheliskiing.com)). Backcountry Snowcats ([www.snowcats.ca](http://www.snowcats.ca)) operates a cat-skiing operation in Hope Cr, E of Railroad Pass.

## Goat Peak

Length: 2 days  
Total Distance: 27km  
Elevation Gain: 1700m  
Start: 1000m

**2470m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/10  
Best: Apr–May

Goat Pk is an excellent viewpoint SE of Railroad Pass with a long ski run on its N side. This is a recommended

Goat Pk and Tenquille Gl from the N. *Photo by Roger Ballantyne*





Sheltered basins on the NE side of Mt Barbour, on the Owl–Tenquille Traverse.

spring trip that is easiest when the Hurley R road has been plowed.

Access is from the Hurley R road and will depend on the snow line. Typically by mid April you can only drive up the road to Railroad Cr at 1000m. From here it is a 4km ski up the road to Railroad Pass. If you wait until late in May, the road is usually plowed. From Railroad Pass (1370m), climb slopes SE to a broad pass at 1800m and continue SE over rolling subalpine terrain. Goat Pk and adjacent Tenquille Mtn (2380m) can be climbed via the Tenquille Gl at the head of Hope Cr. This is an excellent 600m run. Late in the spring, Goat Pk can be done as a day trip.

The NW slopes of Goat Pk also offer a recommended 750m run into upper Mowich Cr. This route is accessible from Railroad Pass but can also be reached from the upper Tenquille Lk trail that starts from logging roads in Mowich Cr. See Owl–Tenquille Traverse.

Grouty Pk (2330m) is the highest point on the high ridges immediately E of Railroad Pass and makes a reasonable destination, with superb views and some good meadow skiing on its lower slopes. It is easily ascended

from Railroad Pass by climbing E through open forest and steeper slopes above to reach the long ridge running N to the summit. Note that during the winter (Jan–Mar) there is a cat-skiing operation based in Hope Cr ([www.snowcats.ca](http://www.snowcats.ca)). Many of their runs are on the E side of Grouty Pk.

## Owl–Tenquille Traverse

Length: 4–5 days  
Total Distance: 42km  
Elevation Gain: 3100m  
Start: 700m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/7, 92J/10, 92J/11  
Best: Mar–Apr

This a very scenic traverse from Owl Cr to Tenquille Lk along the high divide between the Birkenhead R and the main Pemberton valley. The route crosses 5 high passes and offers pleasant ski touring with enjoyable backcountry skiing and stunning views of the Pemberton valley.

The traverse is best done from S to N starting from Owl Cr and ending on the Hurley R road. Access to Owl Cr is from the road to D'Arcy. Five km past Mt Currie, take a logging road that branches left from underneath the powerlines and runs up the E side of Owl Cr. Depending on the

snow level you should be able to drive several kilometres up the road by early April and start skiing at around 700m. Take a left fork near 5km. The road narrows to an old mining track that can be followed to its end at 9km, near Lower Owl Lk (1160m). The ski route continues up the E fork of Owl Cr. After crossing the first of the Chain Lakes, gain the attractive subalpine area at the head of Fowl Cr. It is a full day's ski to Upper Fowl Lk at 1740m. The traverse is mostly alpine from here on and climbs NW through a 2040m pass to reach the gentle S side of Mt Ronayne. Gaining this pass requires switchbacking up a steeper headwall in the centre of a big bowl, so assess the avalanche conditions carefully. Beyond Mt Ronayne, drop into a narrow hanging valley that leads down across the head of Tenas Cr. Cross Ogre Lk and swing N up the broad valley beyond (look for short runs on the W side of the valley). A 2010m col leads past small lakes NE of Mt Barbour. Cross the ridge N of Mt Barbour via its gentle shoulder at 2040m. Follow the main divide W for 2km and ski down to Tenquille Lk via the open basin E of Mt McLeod.



Ascending upper Owl Cr to Mt Barbour.

There are three possible exit routes from Tenquille Lk. The recommended route climbs N from Tenquille Lk and circles around the E side of Finch Ridge to traverse the head of Headquarters Cr and Hope Cr to Railroad Pass. This option takes a day longer than the other exit routes but travels through some nice terrain and gives access to the excellent 600m run on the Tenquille Gl on the N side of Goat Pk. Once at Railroad Pass proper, it is an easy ski down the groomed Hurley R road to wherever the snow ends in the Pemberton valley. The second route follows the summer trail to Branch 12 on the Hurley R road and offers the shortest exit. This option heads W over Tenquille Pass

and down the N side of Wolverine Cr. The trail crosses the runout zones from several large avalanche paths that come off the S side of Goat Pk, so use caution here. Once down to about 1500m, traverse out of Wolverine Cr and angle NW over a forested bench to cross Mowich Cr near 1430m. The trail ends at an old logging road about 1km W of Mowich Cr near 1350m, 6km from Tenquille Lk. Ski down the logging road for 3km to a junction with the old Hurley road at 900m. Turn right at the junction. It is an additional 2km with an uphill climb of 120m to the Hurley R road. The Tenquille Trail is the third option. Though seldom used in winter it can provide an alternative exit when the Hurley R road is snow covered. The Tenquille Trail can be picked up on the SE side of Wolverine Cr at 1500m, immediately after entering tall timber. The trail makes one very long switchback all the way down to the Lillooet R at the main bridge on the Lillooet R forestry road.

Several summits along the divide are recommended side trips. Mt Ronayne (2410m) is one of the higher summits and is a straightforward ski ascent from the S and E, with possible runs E and NE of the summit. Mt Barbour (2290m) is a short snow climb and has an excellent run in the basin NE of the summit. Seven O'clock Mtn (2320m), though farther from the main traverse route, is well worth the effort, as it offers lots of good skiing in the basins N of the summit. It can be reached from the valley E of Mt Barbour. There is also excellent skiing around Tenquille Lk with 300–400m long runs. Several nearby summits are



Looking S across Tenquille Lk.

worthwhile ski ascents. These include Finch Ridge (2260m) to the N of the lake as well as Copper Mound (2160m) and Mt McLeod (2160m) S of the lake. There is an old log cabin on the NW slope of Tenquille Lk at 1680m (GR050981). It was built in 1942 and is in poor shape.





View across the main W tributary of Sockeye Cr. Photo by Michael Feller

Though there are several avalanche slopes that must be crossed, the route is reasonably straightforward overall and is pleasant for touring, with many short runs accessible along the way. No glacier travel is involved. Tenas Cr is a possible escape route in bad conditions. Logging roads that climb to 1400m can be followed down Tenas Cr and out the Birkenhead valley to the D'Arcy road (approximately 20km).

Guided trips across the Owl–Tenquille Traverse are offered by Coast Mountain Guides ([www.coastmountain-guides.com](http://www.coastmountain-guides.com)), which holds the commercial tenure for backcountry skiing in the area.

The main divide is part of Tenquille–Owl Recreation Area, which is designated as motorized for winter recreation. Snowmobilers are sometimes seen in Tenas Cr and around Tenquille Lk. There is also some heliskiing in the area by Coast Range Heliskiing ([www.coastrangeheliskiing.com](http://www.coastrangeheliskiing.com)).

The terrain N of Tenquille Lk has been traversed to Bralorne by skiing around the headwaters of Hope Cr and traveling along the divide between Noel Cr and the Hurley R (see *VOCJ* 2000–2001 and [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com)).

## Sockeye Creek

Length: 7 days  
Map: 92J/10

Terrain: Complex  
Best: Feb–Apr

The drainage of Sockeye Cr lies in Birkenhead Lake Provincial Park and is protected as a wilderness conservation zone. No motorized activities are permitted in the park and it provides a great opportunity for a wilderness backcountry ski camp.

Access is by helicopter. You must land outside the park. A recommended site for a base camp is the small lake in the main western tributary of Sockeye Cr at GR127044. The lake lies in a small alpine basin, and several summits ranging from 2300–2500m are accessible. Pk 2440m SE of the lake offers a variety of excellent skiing ranging from 400m runs on the gentle glacier NW of the summit to longer 600m runs down to treeline in the basin NE of the summit. There is good tree skiing E of the lake. The next basin to the S is also accessible and offers more good skiing on several small glaciers, including a 600m run from Pk 2410m. This area lies outside of the park and is occasionally heliskied by Whistler Heli-Skiing.

Alpine areas to the N and W at the head of Sockeye Cr and Noel Cr have also been visited on skis. The most attrac-





The N side of Birkenhead Pk from Prospector Pk. The route traverses from the L side of the photo to ascend the glacier R of centre.

tive area here is the group of small glaciers at the head of Noel Cr. Several ski camps have been based here over the years with access from logging roads that climb to beyond 1500m in the E fork of Hope Cr as well as up both forks of Noel Cr. Unfortunately, these areas are now heavily used for snowmobiling, heliskiing and cat-skiing.

Portions of the divide between Noel Cr and Sockeye Cr have also been traversed on skis from Phelix Cr to Railroad Pass.

## Birkenhead Peak

Length: 2–3 days  
Total Distance: 26km  
Elevation Gain: 2570m  
Start: 750m

**2520m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/10  
Best: Feb–Apr

An isolated summit SW of Birkenhead Lk, this is an enjoyable but strenuous ski ascent with a 1000m run down the Birken Gl.

Access is via a microwave road that climbs to treeline on the E side of the mountain. Leave Hwy 99 at Mt Currie and take the road to D'Arcy. Turn left at km 35 onto the Blackwater Cr road that leads to Birkenhead Lake Provincial Park. This road is plowed in winter. About 1km up the

road, from beneath a double powerline swath, the microwave road branches left and switchbacks W up a broad shoulder on the E side of Birkenhead Pk. At the first junction, veer right. At the second junction, stay left.

Depending on the snow level, you will likely be stopped by snow below 750m. The road is very steep beyond 800m. It is easily skied to its end at a microwave station at 1920m. Most parties camp somewhere just beyond the microwave station. There is some good skiing in the small basins to the N. To continue to Birkenhead Pk on skis it is necessary to avoid the large cliffs W of the microwave station by dropping NW to 1500m. There is considerable exposure to avalanches here, so this trip is not recommended when there is a significant avalanche hazard. The route contours around under the steep N side of the mountain through minor patches of slide alder in order to gain the Birken Gl. The glacier is a straightforward ascent, and the summit is reached from the head of the glacier by switchbacking up steeper slopes to the saddle E of the summit. The glacier provides an excellent 1000m run. From a camp near the microwave station, it is a strenuous day to climb the peak and return to your car.



Skiing off the NW side of Mt Aragorn. *Photo by Linda Bily*

## Phelix Creek

Peter Jordan, Fred Thiessen, Eric White, *VOCJ* 1972, p.51

The head of Phelix Cr at the southern end of the Cadwallader Range is an attractive area for backcountry skiing. Waddington Hut is a comfortable base from which to explore the surrounding peaks and meadows. There is excellent skiing accessible from the hut, with everything from gentle alpine meadows and moderate ski ascents to long runs down steep avalanche paths. The area is legally designated non-motorized.

### Access to Waddington Hut

Length: 3–7 days  
Total Distance: 9km  
Elevation Gain: 1010m  
Start: 700m

### 1710m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/10  
Best: Dec–Apr

The standard approach is from the S via logging roads that climb to 1280m in Phelix Cr. Leave Hwy 99 at Mt Currie and take the road to D'Arcy. Turn left at km 35 onto the Blackwater Cr road that leads to Birkenhead Lake Provincial Park. This road is plowed in winter. It is 14km to the start of the Phelix Cr logging road on the W side of Phelix

Cr, a short distance from the park entrance. In winter, start skiing from here. The road crosses to the E side of Phelix Cr at km 3. Stay left at a fork and recross to the W side at km 4. Stay right at the next fork and continue to the end of the road at 5.5km, at 1280m. Beyond the end of the road, the winter route continues up the W side of the creek through rockslides and openings in the forest and swings into the hanging valley S of Mt Shadowfax. The cabin is located at the W end of Long Lk.

There is excellent tree skiing immediately NW of the cabin, with runs up to 300m. There are also additional runs off Cabin Hill (the lowest bump on the NE ridge of Peregrine Pk immediately S of Long Lk). Several suggested day trips from the hut are described below.

Note that there is some confusion over the naming of Mt Gandalf and Mt Shadowfax and the names are often incorrectly switched on some maps. Mt Shadowfax is the E summit due N of Long Lk. The range was first approached on skis from the N by skiing up Cadwallader Cr from the old Pioneer Mine at Bralorne. This approach is no longer used.



Looking S towards slopes on the NW side of Peregrine Pk.



Ascending gentle slopes E of Mt Aragorn. Photo by Linda Bily

## Mt Aragorn

**2470m**

Total Distance: 9km  
Elevation Gain: 900m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging

The highest summit in the area is a recommended ski ascent over moderate slopes. It is a straightforward ascent from the hut. Continue up the valley behind the hut for half a kilometre before climbing N to the gentle plateau of lakes and meadows between Mt Aragorn and Mt Shadowfax. Contour around to a small glacier on the N side of Mt Aragorn and gain the summit via the shoulder NW of the peak. The NE facing glacier is an excellent 250m run. From

the plateau there are longer 600m runs N into the head of Copp Cr.

## Peregrine Peak

**2260m**

Total Distance: 5km  
Elevation Gain: 550m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

This is the unofficial name for the summit directly S of the hut. It is a complicated peak that offers a lot of challenging ski lines that are visible from the hut and gives runs up to 500m. From the hut, continue up the valley to Upper Long Lk and switchback up open slopes to gain the 2070m col W of the summit. There are excellent 400m runs in this basin reached from partway up the ridge to the summit (watch for cornices). Pk 2200m 1km W of Peregrine also offers excellent skiing, including a 400m run from W of the summit down to Upper Long Lk.

## Mt Taillefer

**2410m**

Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 1200m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex

A rocky summit E of the head of Phelix Cr. The attraction here is the 600m run on the W side of the peak. This route is reached by a long enjoyable tour across the head of Phelix Cr. From the alpine lakes N of the hut, swing NE past Mt Shadowfax and ski down and across the head of Phelix. Continue past meadows and lakes and climb through a col NE of Mt Taillefer. A second col to the S leads to the basin SE of the summit. Climb W out of this basin to the base of the S ridge of Mt Taillefer (an easy scramble). A large basin funnels into an avalanche path that drops W from here into Phelix Cr. This is an excellent run with a short 40° pitch below 1800m. It is a 200m climb back to the hut from the bottom of the run. Mt Taillefer has also been approached as a separate trip from logging roads, which climb to 1400m in the E branch of Phelix Cr.



## Waddington Hut

Map: 92J/10  
GR: 227087  
Elevation: 1720m

Cost: \$5  
Capacity: 20  
Reservations: no

**Location** At the W end of Long Lk in the hanging valley S of Mt Shadowfax at the head of Phelix Cr

**Facilities** A large post-and-beam cabin with an upstairs sleeping loft. There is a Coleman stove and Coleman lantern, kerosene heater (when working) and outhouse. Creek water is available.

**Built** by VOC in 1998. The hut is named after Brian Waddington, a past president of the club who died in an avalanche on Cerberus Mtn.

**Contact Information** [www.ubc-voc.com](http://www.ubc-voc.com)

Reservations are not required, but check the website for periods of heavy use.



Skiing open slopes on the W side of McGillivray Pass at the head of McGillivray Cr.

## McGillivray Pass

Length: 4–7 days  
Map: 92J/10

Difficulty: 2–4  
Best: Dec–Apr

Situated high in the mountains between the Bendor and Cadwallader Ranges 40km NE of Pemberton, McGillivray Pass is renowned for phenomenal ski terrain and deep powder snow. Skiing here is out of McGillivray Pass Lodge. Run by Whitecap Alpine, this is a commercial backcountry ski lodge offering a range of guided 4- to 7-day packages. The lodge is located at treeline, and the surrounding terrain is a backcountry skier's dream come true—with boundless

open slopes and high-alpine skiing. Whitecap Alpine's tenure covers 8500 hectares of high alpine peaks, glaciers, glades and trees spread over 4 major valleys with more than 60 named runs ranging from 300 to 1200m.

McGillivray Pass lies on the interior side of the Coast Mountains where the influence of cold interior air gives rise to excellent snow conditions. The region is slightly drier and colder than Whistler; it has an average annual snowfall at the lodge of 7.5m and a typical spring snowpack of 2.5m.

The area is legally designated non-motorized.



Panoramic view of the head of McGillivray Cr, from 1km S of the lodge.

*Photo by Pat Mulrooney*



## McGillivray Pass Lodge

Map: 92J/10

GR: 303139

Elevation: 1860m

Cost: varies with package

Capacity: 12

Reservations: yes

**Location** Just S of McGillivray Pass between the Bendor and Cadwallader Ranges.

**Facilities** A very comfortable, 2,000 sq ft, two-storey open plan log structure with a spacious living room heated by wood stove, full modern kitchen and separate dining room, a gear drying room, propane and electric lights, stereo, sauna and shower facilities. Sleeping arrangements are hostel style, including two bedrooms on the main floor, a split-level loft on the second floor, and two additional smaller bedrooms. Clean mattresses and pillows and freshly laundered pillowcases are provided. Composting toilets are outdoors. The lodge is equipped with a satellite phone and Internet access for emergency purposes and for weather and avalanche forecasting.

**Built** 1972

**Host and Guide** Lars Andrews

**Access** By helicopter from Pemberton and D'Arcy

**Cost** Fully guided and catered weeks are approximately \$1775 per person, including all meals, accommodation at the lodge, fully certified guiding and helicopter transportation. Exclusive bookings are also available for self-guided and self-catered groups.

**Contact Information** Whitecap Alpine

www.whitecapalpine.ca

1-888-863-9757

## Ski Trips

There is an incredible variety of skiing accessible from McGillivray Pass Lodge, with everything from laps in the meadows near the cabin to longer treks into the surrounding valleys to seek out deep powder runs, ski ascents or scenic tours. There is also excellent bad-weather skiing readily accessible from the lodge. Skiing is characterized by numerous long runs on big open slopes. Only a few trips involve glacier travel. Destinations will depend on snow and weather conditions as well as the interests and abilities of your group. Travel is generally straightforward, and recommended runs can be linked up in an endless number of ways. Some suggested trips are described below. The head guide and host, Lars Andrews, grew up skiing in the area and knows the terrain like the back of his hand. When the skiing is good, the focus is generally on long runs rather than ski ascents. Note that there is plenty of opportunity for

Relaxing by the fire in McGillivray Pass Lodge. *Photo by Lisa Baile*







Tracks in Lolita's Bowl 1km S of McGillivray Pass Lodge.

skiing along all of the routes. In most cases you are likely to take extra runs, so your total elevation gain will be considerably more than what is shown.

### Standard Ridge

Total Distance: 4km  
Elevation Gain: 300m

**2130m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging

A ski up the long meadowed ridge running NW from the lodge (known as Standard Ridge) gives access to the 300m Home Run and Full Frontal glades that descend directly to the lodge. The remains of an old telegraph line that used to run through McGillivray Pass can be seen along the ridge top. Farther from the lodge the NE slopes of Standard Ridge offer an endless number of runs, such as Minimum Standard and Telephone Gullies.

### Lolita's Bowl

Total Distance: 7km  
Elevation Gain: 900m

**2250m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

Located 2km S of the lodge, Buzz Bowl and Lolita's Bowl give access to a whole series of 300m runs that can be com-

bined in a number of ways for a great day of backcountry skiing close to the lodge. Taco, Backyard Boulders, Star Cabin Trees and Lolita's can all be skied as you work your way S for a finish on Nabokov's Nightmare or the bottom half of C.O.D.Y.

### Mt Weinhold

Total Distance: 10km  
Elevation Gain: 1300m

**2360m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

A trip into Cadwallader Cr and up the other side to Mt Weinhold 4km SW of the lodge combines a bunch of 600m runs for a superb outing. Climb through the pass W of the lodge and swing high onto the ridge to the S. Depending on avalanche conditions you can descend Tree Feller, Ruth's Run or the Avalanche Chute into Cadwallader Cr. Put in an uptrack on 45 and Down to climb up to the lake below Mt Weinhold. This is a nice run. If conditions are solid, climb S from the lake and take the excellent line down from the moraine.





Above: View N from below Prospector Pk. Mt McGillivray is on the upper right.

Below: Descending across Cadwallader Cr towards Mt Weinhold.



## Star Mountain

Total Distance: 11km  
Elevation Gain: 1200m

**2380m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

Star Mtn is a nondescript summit 3km E of the lodge. Though the mountain is sometimes climbed by a short scramble, the real destination here is the surrounding slopes, which offer some of the best skiing in McGillivray Pass. From the lodge it is a 2km ski through gentle meadows to the creek that drains SW from Star Mtn. There are a series of 4 avalanche paths just S of this creek that drop W to McGillivray Cr from the unnamed peak 1.5km S of Star Mtn. Under good conditions these are phenomenal runs. Toilet Bowl Glades drops 600m from the N end of the ridge crest; its lower half is just wide enough for two sets of tracks. Double Devil Horns is reached by climbing over the unnamed 2350m summit. It starts in a gully S of a prominent rock spur and widens into a broad avalanche path for an incredible 700m run.

Continuing to the col immediately E of Star Mtn gives access to the wonderful Coven run, which drops 600m down a spectacular NE facing bowl into Connel Cr. This is a big avalanche path, so assess the conditions accordingly. Return to the lodge by climbing into the valley N of Star Mtn. It can be a bit tricky climbing around a short bluffy section here and it is worth skiing out onto Connel Cr to scope out a route.



Tracks in the basin N of Prospector Pk.

## Prospector Peaks

Total Distance: 15km  
Elevation Gain: 1400m

**2500m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

A ski ascent of Prospector Pks is one of the plums in the area. This is a longer trip from the lodge, and there are several ways to get to the mountain. The easiest route is to ski several kilometres down McGillivray Cr, climb into the basin surrounding Goat Lk and cross slopes at the head of Cadwallader Cr to gain the basin N of Prospector. The W summit is a straightforward ski ascent via its N facing glacier. The higher E summit can be reached either by scrambling up its W ridge or by kicking steps up the broad NW snow gully known as Going for Gold (about 40°). Under

ideal conditions you can ski right off the summit and swing E down the phenomenal run known as Repairs of the Pros-tate, which drops 1000m down a sheltered NE facing bowl all the way to McGillivray Cr. From the bottom of the run it is about a 2-hour ski back to the lodge.

Dropping into the basin below the N side of Prospector Pk.



Touring above Goat Lk on the W side of McGillivray Cr.



A happy group of skiers at the bottom of Repairs of the Prostate, which drops 1000m into McGillivray Cr from Prospector Pk.

## Mt McGillivray

Total Distance: 6km  
Elevation Gain: 800m

**2590m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

A rocky summit immediately N of the lodge, this peak is a recommended for a nice sunny day. Ascend pleasant meadow slopes above the lodge. The upper part of the mountain is often wind blown, and the summit is a straightforward scramble via its S ridge. There are endless open SW facing slopes descending back into McGillivray Pass, including runs known as Mr McGillivray and Little McGillivray. These can be powder in mid-winter or corn in spring.

There are also additional long runs that drop 600m on N facing slopes into the head of Piebiter Cr north of the summit. McGillivray Ice is reached from W of the summit, and Apple Pie and Piebiter Ice are reached from either side of Mt Piebiter.



## Royal Peak

Total Distance: 13km  
Elevation Gain: 1200m

**2340m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

Royal Pk lies at the N edge of Whitecap Alpine's tenure and when combined with a few runs along the way makes a great ski day. Skiing along Standard Ridge gives an extra run before gaining the 600m S slopes of Royal Pk, known as the Royal Standard run.



Touring along Standard Ridge.



Skiing slopes on the N side of Standard Ridge with views across Standard Cr towards Royal Pk.

## Whitecap Mountain

Total Distance: 17km  
Elevation Gain: 2100m

**2920m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

A broad high-alpine peak, Whitecap Mtn is the highest summit in the area. It is legendary for a 1200m run on its smooth W slopes. An ascent of Whitecap is a long day trip from the lodge that requires climbing over the col SE of Mt McGillivray and descending into Connel Cr to reach the base of the huge W side of the mountain. The upper portion of the mountain is sometimes wind scoured, and skis are not always taken to the summit.

There are also other good runs at the head of Connel Cr, including the excellent N facing Ronnie's.

# Duffey Lake

# 6



**S**ome of the finest backcountry ski terrain in Southwestern BC lies east of Pemberton where Highway 99 climbs through the Cayoosh Range and runs past Duffey Lake. The highway gives easy access to numerous avalanche paths, open ridges, meadows, glaciers and attractive alpine basins that offer superb mid-winter backcountry skiing. Ski trips start at higher elevations from the paved highway and range from sleuthing for powder near the road to high-alpine ski ascents. Many descents offer long rewarding runs of up to 1200m. Most trips are 1 or 2 days.

## **Snow Conditions**

The Duffey Lake area lies E of the main bulk of the Coast Mountains. A minor rainshadow and the influence of cooler Interior winters often give excellent dry and light snow conditions. Generally the area receives about 60% of the snowfall that Whistler gets, with annual snowfalls ranging from about 8 to 13m. Typical snowpacks vary from a decent 1.4m beside the highway in Cayoosh Pass to 2.4m in the alpine. There is considerable variation as you drive E along

the Duffey Lake Rd. Areas along the W rim of Cayoosh Cr, such as Cerise Cr and Joffre Lakes, tend to have more of a Whistler snow climate whereas areas E of Blowdown Cr lie in a pronounced rainshadow that has shallower snowpacks, trickier avalanche conditions and windswept ridge tops.

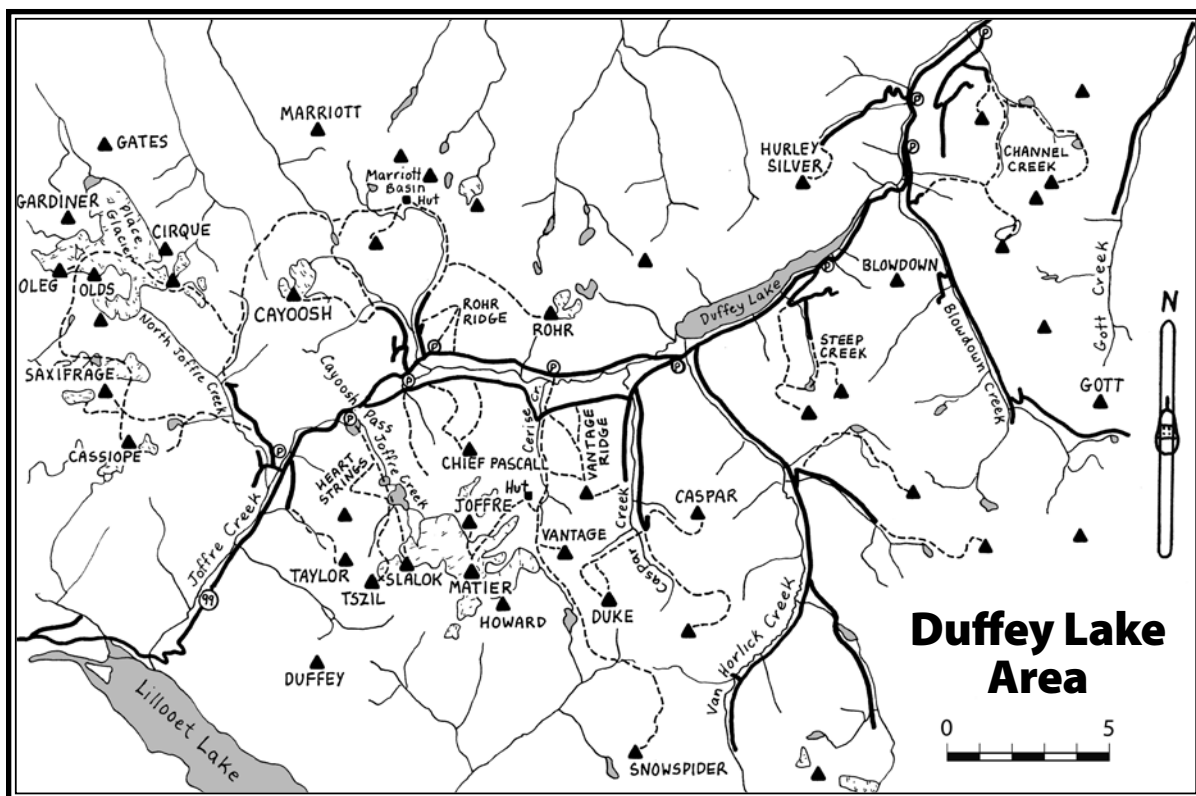
## **Access**

Access is from Pemberton via the extension of Hwy 99 known as Duffey Lake Rd. Hwy 99 runs E through Mt Currie and ascends Joffre Cr from Lillooet Lk at 200m to Cayoosh Pass at 1300m and continues past Duffey Lk and down Cayoosh Cr to Lillooet. Many of the ski trips are in the vicinity of Cayoosh Pass, 30km from Pemberton and 65km from Lillooet. Cayoosh Pass is a comfortable 2.5 to 3-hour drive of 185km from Vancouver. Distances to logging road access points along Duffey Lake Rd are given below. All distances are measured from the avalanche closure gate above Lillooet Lk, 17km E of Pemberton.

km 0—Lillooet Lk

km 10—North Joffre Cr logging road

km 13—Joffre Lakes parking



## Duffey Lake Area

- km 16—Cayoosh Mtn parking
- km 17—Marriott Basin parking
- km 21—Cerise Cr winter parking
- km 25—Caspar Cr logging road
- km 26—Van Horlick Cr logging road
- km 31—Steep Cr logging road
- km 36—Blowdown Cr logging road
- km 38—Hurley Silver Mine road
- km 42—Channel Cr logging road
- km 52—Gott Cr logging road
- km 58—Downton Cr logging road

All side roads are snow covered and it is necessary to park in plowed pullouts, especially for overnight trips.

### Multi-use Considerations

Joffre Lakes Provincial Park and Duffey Lake Provincial Park are located here. The Joffre Lakes area, Cerise Cr and Marriott Basin are non-motorized. Snowmobile traffic can be expected on other logging roads from Duffey Lk east. There is also heliskiing in the area by Coast Range Heliskiing ([www.coastrangeheliskiing.com](http://www.coastrangeheliskiing.com)). This activity is con-

centrated around the Place Gl, Saxifrage Mtn and the N side of Cayoosh Mtn, as well as across the headwaters of Van Horlick Cr.

### Huts

Two of the most popular huts in southwestern BC are located in this area, in Marriott Basin and Cerise Cr. In addition to these huts, there are more than half a dozen other huts accessible from the Duffey Lk road. The location of many of these huts is well known but they have not been included here because they lack legal status. All are on Crown land and open for anyone to use. Huts closer to the road are heavily used. As all the huts are maintained by volunteers, please help with cleaning, maintenance or donations if you stay in one of the huts.

### Accommodation

Most trips described here can be done in 1 day from the highway. However, because many areas are a long drive from Vancouver and offer more ski terrain than you can cover in one day, quite a few of the trips are done as overnight trips. Parties also stay in Pemberton for the night

and do day trips from there. A variety of accommodation is available in the Pemberton area, ranging from hostels to motels and bed and breakfasts (see [www.pemberton-chamber.com](http://www.pemberton-chamber.com)). Reasonable rates are available at a variety of places, including the Hitching Post Motel, located next to the turnoff to the Duffey Lk road in Mount Currie (604-894-6276, [www.thehitchingpostmotel.com](http://www.thehitchingpostmotel.com)). Also recommended are the rustic cabins at Lillooet Lake Lodge 10km south of the Duffey Lk road on the shore of Lillooet Lk (604-905-9246, [www.cottagelink.com](http://www.cottagelink.com)). In spring, roadside camping is possible below the snowline at the Strawberry Point and Twin One Cr recreation sites along the E side of Lillooet Lk 5–10km S of the Duffey Lk road.

## Cassiope Peak

## 2290m

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 14km  
Elevation Gain: 1220m  
Start: 1070m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/7  
Best: Jan–Apr

A broad ski peak rising 2100m above the start of the Duffey Lk road, at the N end of Lillooet Lk. It makes an enjoyable day trip, with much varied fall line skiing.

Cassiope Pk can be reached from the plowed parking area at km 10 on the N side of the Duffey Lk road. Ski up logging roads into North Joffre Cr. Take the left fork a short distance from the highway, and after crossing over to the W



The N side of Cassiope Pk. Photo by Katy Chambers

side of North Joffre Cr, turn right onto a spur road that parallels North Joffre Cr for about half a kilometre. Beyond the end of the road, ski through a short band of trees down onto the large snow-covered swamp beside the creek. Ski along the W edge of the swamp to the base of the creek, which drains the basin below Saxifrage and Cassiope. On the N side of the creek, ascend the large, open, snow-covered rockslide to about 1400m, from where you can make an ascending traverse SW through the forest to reach the lake

at 1550m in the basin E of Saxifrage. If avalanche conditions are a concern, these slopes can be avoided by ascending through forest on the S side of the creek. From the lake outlet, ascend SW over broad, open slopes. Ski over a false summit at 2150m and gain the final summit from the SE. There are tremendous views of Lillooet Lk. The descent offers 600m of fall-line skiing on N facing slopes, as well as varied pitches on open slopes below the lake.



Skiing off the summit of Cassiope Pk with Lillooet Lk behind.

## Saxifrage Mountain

## 2500m

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1430m  
Start: 1070m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/7  
Best: Jan–Apr

Saxifrage Mtn is the sharper, higher summit immediately N of Cassiope Pk. It is also an excellent ski summit and may be done as a strenuous day trip or combined with Cassiope and several ski runs in the surrounding basins to make a fulfilling overnight trip.

Saxifrage Mtn can be reached from logging roads in North Joffre Cr. Start at the plowed parking area at km 10 on the N side of the Duffey Lk road. Follow the same approach route described above for Cassiope Pk to gain the

Saxifrage Mtn from the NE.







Looking up at the E face of Saxifrage Mtn. *Photo by Cam Shute*

lake at 1550m in the basin E of Saxifrage. Beyond the lake, ascend W to the col between Saxifrage and Cassiope. There are several options from here.

For a ski ascent, head W through the col and across the head of the basin SW of the summit. Ascend steeper slopes to gain the col W of the summit and ski up the gentle SW ridge. Alternatively, the SE ridge is a short scramble from just N of the col. The E face can be skied from the summit in stable avalanche conditions (40°, 210m).

The lake in the basin E of Saxifrage is a recommended campsite for overnight trips. The alpine area has good ski terrain and there are many options for excellent runs up to 600m long. Cassiope Pk can also be climbed from the col with Saxifrage Mtn.

An alternative approach from logging roads in Spetch Cr to the W, though somewhat longer, has also been used. From Mt Currie, drive N on the highway to D'Arcy for about 13km. A few hundred metres past the bridge across Spetch Cr a logging road heads SE to switchback up Spetch Cr. Drive and ski to the end of the road near 1100m (GR236816) and angle into the S fork of Spetch Cr to a broad subalpine pass and a pleasant lake at treeline SW of the summit. The routes to the summit described above can be easily reached from here. This approach is best in the spring when much of the Spetch Cr road can be driven.

## North Joffre Creek Horseshoe

Length: 3 days

Total Distance: 25km

Elevation Gain: 2040m

Start: 1070m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92J/7

Best: Feb–Apr

Saxifrage Mtn and the peaks surrounding the Place Gl can be used to form a horseshoe ski traverse around the headwaters of North Joffre Cr. This is a highly recommended route with good side trips and excellent skiing.

Park at the plowed parking area on the N side of the Duffey Lk road at the start of logging roads in North Joffre Cr at km 10. As for Saxifrage Mtn, take a spur road onto the W side of North Joffre Cr, ski across the swamp and ascend the large, open, snow-covered rockslide beyond to traverse into the lake at treeline in the basin immediately E of Saxifrage Mtn. Beyond the lake, ascend W to the col between Saxifrage and Cassiope. Continue N through the 2300m col immediately E of Saxifrage Mtn. The slope beyond starts with a steep convex roll, so use caution for avalanches. Descend N to White Lks at the head of Spetch Cr. Traverse around the toe of a distinct ridge at 1850m and ascend the open valley beyond to the col between Mt Olds and Mt Oleg. Mt Oleg (2590m) is the obvious snow dome W of Mt Olds and is a good ski ascent with a recommended 550m run on its N side.



Descending into the NE fork of North Joffre Cr, S of Cirque Pk.

Descend E to the broad pass between the head of the Place Gl and the Joffre Gl. From this pass, a direct exit to North Joffre Cr is feasible but is not recommended because the entire valley is exposed to large avalanche slopes and there is a steep intimidating headwall near 1600m. Instead, ski SE to ascend a small pocket glacier up and over the 2400m shoulder S of Cirque Pk. From the minor summit at GR302836, descend E for several hundred metres before



Looking SW across North Joffre Cr from near Cirque Pk. Saxifrage Mtn is in the distance, right of centre.

dropping into a small basin. Cross the basin to gain an excellent 600m run that descends SE to treeline in the NE fork of North Joffre Cr. Descend through forest on the S side of the creek to pick up a logging road on the E side of North Joffre Cr at 1150m. It is a 3km ski out to the Duffey Lk road.

Recommended side trips include Saxifrage Mtn, Casiope Pk and Mt Oleg. The horseshoe has been done in 2 strenuous days but this leaves less time for extra ski runs and side trips.

It is possible to extend the traverse and continue to Marriott Basin. From the NE fork of North Joffre Cr, continue N through the 1900m pass W of Cayoosh Mtn. (There is an 800m run on the NW side of Cayoosh Mtn.) Swing around the N side of Cayoosh Mtn by climbing over the 2100m shoulder that runs N from the summit. Cross the drainage of Seven Mile Cr and climb over the ridge beyond into Marriott Basin. The ridge crest is heavily corniced and can be tricky to cross. There is usually a break in the cornice near GR358860.

There is a small hut used for glaciology, N of the snout of the Place Gl at 1860m (GR274871). In summer, the hut is approached by a steep trail that climbs to the Place Gl from near Gates Lk. This route is not recommended for skiing.

Skiing long runs on the N side of Mt Oleg.





Skiing W off the summit of Mt Taylor.

## Mt Taylor

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 9km  
Elevation Gain: 1220m  
Start: 1100m

**2320m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/7, 92J/8  
Best: Jan–Apr

A rounded summit rising above the west end of the Duffey Lk road at GR357751. This a recommended ski ascent with a long, varied fall-line run from the summit.

Park at the plowed parking area at North Joffre Cr near km 10 on the N side of the Duffey Lk road. Walk N for 500m up the highway and ski up an old logging road on the E side of the highway marked branch road 12. The road leads S across the hillside for 1.5km to the unnamed creek draining the basin NW of Mt Taylor. Ascend steep forest on the N side of the creek, and gain about 400m. Where the slope angle begins to lessen and the trees begin to thin, cross to the S side of the creek and enter the first of several open basins above 1600m. Ascend these on the E. From the head of the upper basin, gain the W ridge near 2200m and ski past rock outcrops to the summit. From here there are great views of Slalok Mtn and Joffre Pk as well as Pemberton Valley.

The descent offers some excellent skiing. Several pitches lead down through the upper bowls. Below 1600m, cut to skier's left under the toe of a steep ridge instead of following your uptrack and ski down open rockslides that offer another 200m of vertical on the S side of the creek. This route feeds naturally into the creek, which gives another 100m of open skiing. Where the creek begins to steepen below 1300m, climb out of it to the N and ski down through the short stretch of remaining forest to the logging road.

This is not a recommended early-season trip, as a fair amount of snow is needed to cover the rockslides.

Descending open basins N of Mt Taylor. *Photo by Linda Bily*





Slopes W of middle and upper Joffre Lks showing the ramp that leads across to the top of Heart Strings.

## Heart Strings

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 9km  
Elevation Gain: 1000m  
Start: 1100m

**2100m**

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Jan–Mar

Heart Strings is a sweet 700m run tucked away on slopes W of Joffre Lakes. The approach is very aesthetic, and finding the entrance to the run is half the adventure. This is an excellent mid-winter trip. The top part of Heart Strings is visible from the highway near Cayoosh Pass.

Access is from Joffre Lakes. Park at a large plowed parking area on the S side of the Duffey Lk road near km 13. Cross Lower Joffre Lk and ski S through mostly open forest up the W side of Joffre Cr. It is about 3km up the gentle valley to Upper Joffre Lk. From the W side of Upper Joffre Lk, ascend a ramp that climbs NW. Follow the edge of the trees up the ramp to the highest open basin below the NE flank of Pk 2320m. Heart Strings is reached by climbing up and over the rocky 2100m shoulder located 1km W of Middle Joffre Lk at GR357773. From the highest basin, bootpack up a narrow couloir next to an obvious gully to gain the top of the shoulder. Follow the narrow ridge crest





Heart Strings from the NE.

Skiing 400m runs on the Tszil Gl. North Joffre area visible in the distance.



along to its highpoint at the N end of the shoulder. Then, from the high point, drop E for a short distance until you are able to traverse NW above obvious cliffs to reach a wide, flat-bottomed couloir that drops NE beneath beautiful lichen-covered cliffs. This is Heart Strings. After a short 38° entrance, the run angles off into a wide basin above Joffre Cr and eventually follows open rock-slides and glades all the way to the valley bottom.

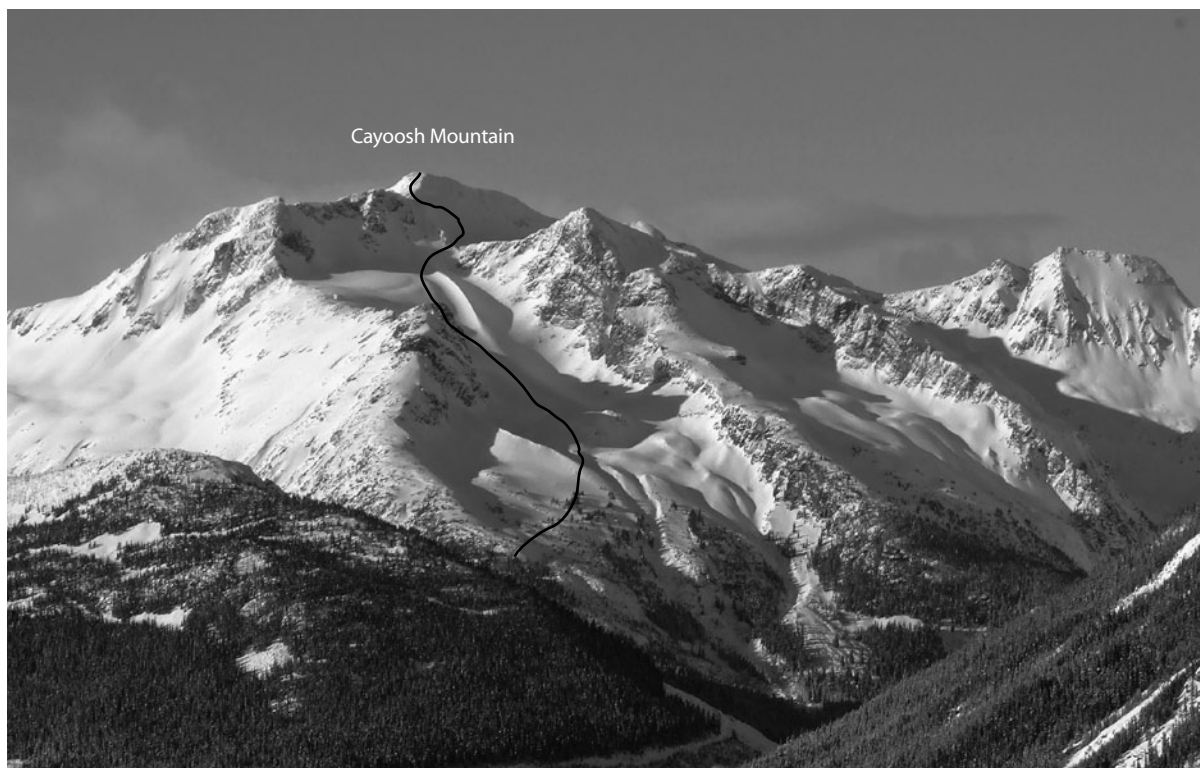
There are also a variety of excellent runs along the approach route. These include the obvious rockslides on the SW side of Middle Joffre Lk (which can be followed up to the ramp) or the adjacent avalanche path to the N. From higher up the ramp, there is also a more exposed run that descends a cross-loaded draw all the way from near the unnamed 2320m summit N of Mt Taylor.

## Tszil Mountain 2380m

Length: 1 day  
 Difficulty: 3  
 Total Distance: 13km  
 Terrain: Complex  
 Elevation Gain: 1160m  
 Map: 92J/8  
 Start: 1220m  
 Best: Dec-Apr

An outlying summit on the W side of the Joffre Group. This is a recommended trip with a gentle approach and some enjoyable skiing on the Tszil Gl.

Access is from Joffre Lakes. Park at a large plowed parking area on the S side of the Duffey Lk road near km 13. Ski S up the gentle valley of Joffre Cr. It is about 3km through mostly open forest to Upper Joffre Lk. Cross the lake and continue SW up the open valley of Tszil Cr for another 1.5km. Head S before the head of the valley and switchback up steeper slopes onto the Tszil Gl. Ascend the glacier to the col between Tszil Mtn and Slalok Mtn. Tszil Mtn is easily ascended from the col. The N Tszil Gl is sheltered and offers excellent runs up to 400m.



The SE side of Cayoosh Mtn showing the main ascent route up the Armchair Gl and the 1200m descent from the summit.

## Cayoosh Mountain

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 13km  
Elevation Gain: 1310m  
Start: 1280m

**2590m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/7, 92J/8  
Best: Dec–Apr

An attractive ski summit immediately N of Cayoosh Pass. This mountain offers one of the best ski trips from the Duffey Lk road, with a short easy approach and a long continuous 1200m descent.

Access is from the Cayoosh parking lot next to a roadside weather station on the S side of the highway at km 16. Cross the highway and ski up an old logging road that contours along the W side of upper Cayoosh Cr for 2.5km. From near the end, of the road there is a view of the slopes on the E side of the mountain rising to the Armchair Gl and the summit beyond. The lower flanks of these E facing slopes are guarded by several avalanche paths and bluffs, which can be avoided by veering far to the S on the way up. The usual ascent route switchbacks up the cutblock at the end of the road. Continue S up an open gully and a rockslide until you are able to angle through a band of trees into the attractive basin SE of the summit, at about

1600m. Ski along the open area beside the creek for several hundred metres, then climb NW through open forest to cross the E ridge near treeline at 1800m. Traverse the basin beyond, using extra caution as you swing around the end of obvious steeper slopes below a moraine. The Armchair Gl is reached higher up and is relatively crevasse free. At the head of the glacier, ski N through a narrow gap onto a bench immediately E of the summit, which can be climbed via a short, steep snow slope. The descent is an awesome ski run in good conditions. In stable avalanche conditions, the edges of the avalanche slopes below 1600m can be skied right to the valley bottom. Remember that this is complex avalanche terrain. There have been several avalanche accidents here.

In poorer weather or for shorter destinations, there are a variety of good runs near the end of the logging road. The obvious open gully and rock garden is a recommended run known as Ottoman. Runs known as Lazy Boy lie in the gentle basin SE of the summit above Ottoman. A more aggressive line, known as Swivel Rocker, drops E down the basin half a kilometre N of the Armchair Gl.





Looking NE across Marriott Basin from near Pk 2300.

## Marriott Basin

For lack of an official name, this is the pleasant alpine basin of lakes and meadows lying SE of Mt Marriott at the head of the northerly fork of Cayoosh Cr. The terrain is relatively gentle with good ski-touring qualities, and the Wendy Thompson Hut is located here.

### Wendy Thompson Hut Access

Length: 1–3 days  
Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 520m  
Start: 1310m

### 1830m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Dec–Apr

Access is from Duffey Lk road at km 17. Park at a plowed parking area on the N side of the highway, opposite a large white sand shed. An old logging road leaves the highway several hundred metres W of the parking lot. Follow this up the E side of upper Cayoosh Cr. When you reach an intersection about 1km from the highway, stay on the lower spur. Beyond the end of the road at 2km, a trail traverses into the forest and climbs up the E side of Cayoosh Cr into Marriott Basin—which becomes open above 1650m. The Wendy Thompson Hut is located near the head of the valley at 1830m on a bench about 500m past a small lake.

Suggested trips from the hut are described below. Mt Rohr and the NE side of Cayoosh Mtn can also be reached from the hut (see separate headings).

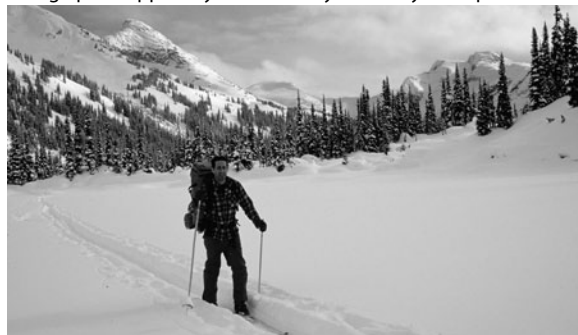
### Pk 2300m

Total Distance: 4km  
Elevation Gain: 500m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

The 2300m summit lying between the forks of Cayoosh Cr on the S side of Marriott Basin (GR365850) is the obvious ski objective from the hut and is climbed by skiing up its N slopes to the col just W of the summit. The excellent 300m

Skiing up the upper Cayoosh Cr valley to Wendy Thompson Hut.





Looking up to Pk 2300 from Marriott Basin. Photo by Zamon Kingi

run on its N slopes is known as Honey Bronzed and Very Desirable. This peak is also a recommended day trip from the highway.

### Upper Marriott Basin

Total Distance: 3km  
Elevation Gain: 600m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

The summits surrounding Marriott Basin rise about 500m above the hut and offer several destinations and a variety of ski slopes. The closest skiing is on slopes immediately NW of the hut, which offer 150–200m runs through glades. There are also attractive slopes immediately N and NE of the hut. These offer some good runs and can be skied up onto the ridge crest to the 2400m summit directly N or the 2300m summit one kilometre NE of the hut. Another possibility includes excellent E facing runs up to 400m long, 1km S of the hut off the E shoulder of Pk 2300m.

### Mt Marriott

Total Distance: 10km  
Elevation Gain: 1400m

**2750m**  
Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

Mt Marriott is the highest summit in the W Cayoosh Range and can be climbed as a day trip from the hut. Ski to the



### Wendy Thompson Hut

Map: 92J/8

GR: 374864

Elevation: 1830m

Cost: \$12

Capacity: 16

Reservations: required

**Location** Near the head of the alpine basin 6km NW of Mt Rohr.

**Facilities** A comfortable two-storey gothic-arch cabin, 8m x 5m, with some cooking equipment and utensils, a large table and a kerosene heater. Bring your own sleeping pad and stove. Sleeping is in an upstairs loft.

**Built** by Whistler section of the ACC in 2000. The hut is named after Wendy Thompson—a paramedic and resident of Whistler—who was killed in 1995 with all other occupants of an air ambulance on a mercy flight off Masset on the Queen Charlotte Islands.

**Reservations** 604-902-1772

**Information** [www.accwhistler.ca](http://www.accwhistler.ca)

head of Marriott Basin and cross the ridge on the W rim at GR358860. Head NW, dropping several hundred metres to get around the toe of a ridge. Climb into the basin beyond and begin switchbacking up the SW side of Mt Marriott. The SW slopes are wind scoured and it is necessary to scramble up the last 300–500m to the summit, from which there are great views.

### Haylmore–Spruce Creek Loop

Total Distance: 9km  
Elevation Gain: 1200m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

There is excellent skiing in the headwaters of Haylmore Cr and Spruce Cr E of the hut. Several passes on the ridge crests have been used to make an interesting loop with





View of upper Haymore Cr basin. *Photo by Laurent Mingo*

good runs. From the hut, ski down the valley towards Mt Rohr. Climb through a 2170m pass at GR403851. Drop 300m NE into a small basin in upper Haymore Cr. Climb through a 2100m pass at GR403867 for another good run into the E branch of Spruce Cr. From this basin, climb W into a 2130m pass at GR389866 and continue NW along the ridge for about 1km, until you are able to drop W into the basin immediately N of the hut.

### Cayoosh–Marriott Loop

Total Distance: 15km  
Elevation Gain: 1000m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

Marriott Basin has also been reached from the valley immediately E of Cayoosh Mtn. This makes an enjoyable day tour. Park at the Cayoosh parking lot and ski up the access road to Cayoosh Mtn. At the end of the road, continue up the main valley to the NW. Stay on the E side of the creek. Above 1700m, switchback up a steeper headwall into the pass to the N. Use caution, as much of this valley is exposed to large avalanches from the E flank of Cayoosh Mtn. The most direct route to Marriott Basin climbs over the intervening ridge. The ridge crest is often heavily corniced and

Skiing off the N side of Mt Rohr. *Photo by Katy Chambers*



Skiing up open slopes to Mt Rohr. Marriott Pk in the distance.

can be tricky to cross. There is usually a break in the cornice near GR358860. An alternative route climbs SE from the lake in the pass to gain the col immediately W of Pk 2300m at GR363851. This gives a nice ski run down to the hut. Ski out the regular trail and walk 10 minutes on the highway back to the Cayoosh parking lot.

### Mt Rohr

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 15km  
Elevation Gain: 1130m  
Start: 1310m

### 2440m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Dec–Apr

A broad summit that towers above the N side of the highway W of Duffey Lk. Mt Rohr's steep S slopes produce numerous avalanches that threaten the Duffey Lk road, while its gentler N slopes make this a good ski touring summit. This route can be done as a one-day or an easy overnight trip; it is often combined with a trip to Marriott Basin.

Access is from the Duffey Lk road at km 17. Park at a plowed parking area on the N side of the highway, opposite a large white sand shed. An old logging road leaves the highway several hundred metres W of the parking lot. Follow this up the E side of upper Cayoosh Cr. When you reach an intersection about 1km from the highway, stay on the lower spur. Beyond the end of the road at 2km, a trail traverses into the forest and climbs up the E side of Cayoosh Cr into Marriott Basin. Less than 1km up the trail, the trail forks and a branch turns E and swings up through open forest to a narrow lake at 1800m. Mt Rohr is a pleasant ski ascent over alpine slopes from the lake. Slopes are generally moderate, but precautions for avalanches are still necessary. The descent offers a decent 450m run from the summit with varied pitches and another 150m pitch below the lake.



Avalanche paths on the S side of Rohr Ridge.

## Rohr Ridge

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 4km  
Elevation Gain: 670m  
Start: 1310m

**1980m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Jan–Mar

The end of the long ridge running W from Mt Rohr is a good mid-winter destination and gives access to some excellent runs that are close to the highway.

Access is from the Marriott Basin parking area at km 17 on the Duffey Lk road. Park at a plowed parking area on the N side of the road, opposite a large white sand shed. Pick up an old logging road a short distance N of the highway and follow this E for a few hundred metres before angling up into old-growth forest. Ascend open forest NE to the ridge crest at GR391830. The last part of the ascent is in glades and gives some good views.

Rohr Ridge can also be used as an approach route to Mt Rohr by skiing along the intervening 3km ridge.

### Rocky Horror Powder Show

This is one of the best runs off the ridge. It drops WSW from the high point and connects open glades and snow-

covered rockslides for a 650m descent onto the Marriott Basin approach road. You should come out about a kilometre from the highway.

### Stellar Bowl

The basin to the N is known as Stellar Bowl. Its S rim is blocked by steep cliffs at the top. Runs can be accessed either from 200m higher up Rohr Ridge or by skiing down the edge of the basin to the NW for several hundred metres. The runs come out on the Marriott road 2km from the highway.

### Southern Comfort

There are a series of avalanche paths on the S side of Rohr Ridge. Snow conditions on these runs vary because of their S aspect, but they can be skied right down to the highway in good conditions and offer excellent runs. They are steeper and are often more wind affected near the top, so the best pitches are usually on the bottom half. The westernmost path, known as Southern Comfort, cuts a narrow swath straight down through the forest from 1700m.



View of Rohr Ridge from Joffre Shoulder.

## Joffre Shoulder

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 6km  
Elevation Gain: 880m  
Start: 1280m

**2160m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Dec–Mar

The alpine shoulder running N from the summit of Joffre Pk makes an enjoyable outing in mid-winter when the avalanche hazard is high enough to keep skiers off large open slopes.

Access is from the Cayoosh Mtn parking lot, which is next to a roadside weather station on the S side of the highway at km 16. From the parking lot, ski S across a small creek. Pick up an old logging road on the S side of the main valley, 500m from the highway. Ski W along the road until you are able to ascend the forest on the W side of the creek draining the basin between Joffre Shoulder and Mt Chief Pascall. Travel is through mostly open forest. There are a few bluffs and steeper rockslides that must be negotiated near 1500m. Check these out from the highway before you start. Above this area the forest gives way to naturally glades and leads easily up onto the long NW ridge and up to the flat part of the shoulder near 2160m. This is the natural high point for this trip, as the ridge becomes more difficult

beyond and less rewarding for skiing. The descent offers good fall line skiing down several open pitches, glades and moderate tree skiing.

If weather and avalanche conditions permit, it is also possible to drop E into the basin between Joffre Shoulder and Mt Chief Pascall. Much of the E side of the shoulder at 2160m is cliffy, but a gentle ramp can be found that drops through the bluffs and down to moderate slopes below.

Skiing open slopes on Joffre Shoulder.







View of the N face of Mt Joffre from the summit of Mt Chief Pascall.

There are some steeper runs at the head of the basin. In good conditions it is also possible to ski up Mt Chief Pascall from this side.

## Mt Chief Pascall

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 9km  
Elevation Gain: 920m  
Start: 1280m

**2200m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Dec–Mar

A lower summit beneath the N side of Joffre Pk, Mt Chief Pascall is a recommended mid-winter ski ascent with some enjoyable skiing on N facing slopes.

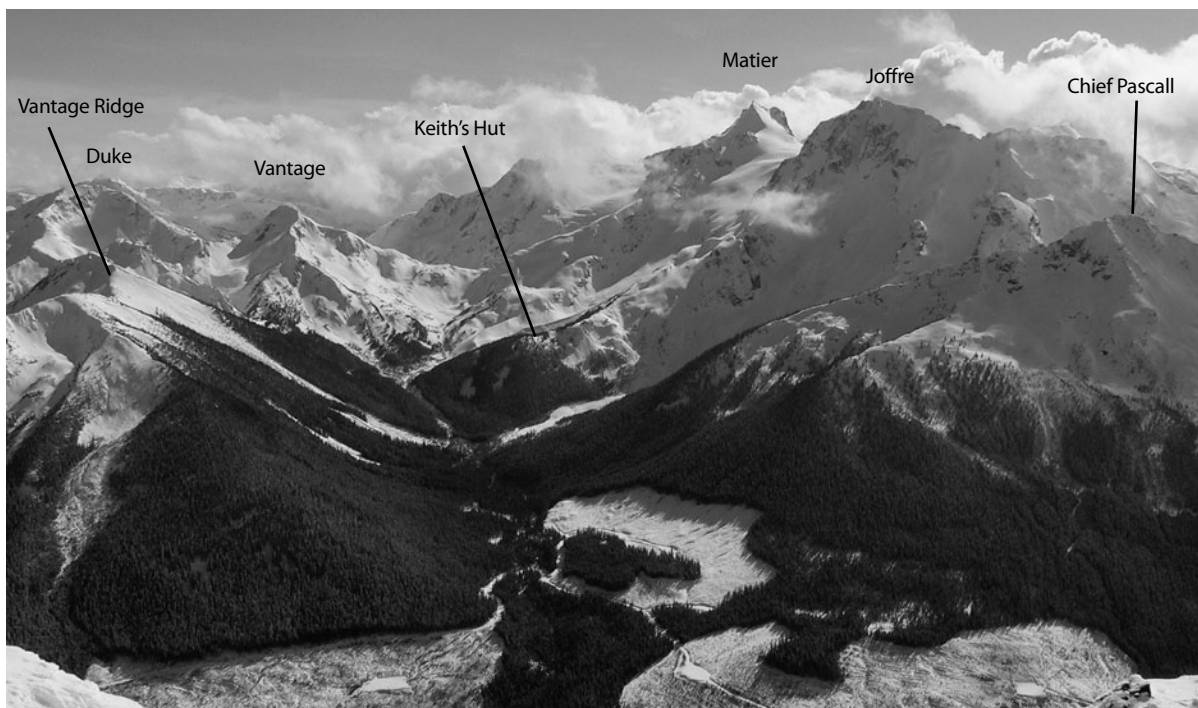
Mt Chief Pascall can be reached from several points along the Duffey Lk road. The approach described here starts from the Cayoosh Mtn parking lot, which is next to a roadside weather station on the S side of the highway at km 16. From the parking lot, ski S across a small creek. Pick up an old logging road on the S side of the main valley, about half a kilometre from the highway. Ski E along the road for several hundred metres before angling SE up through a logged area. From the far SE corner of the cutblock, continue on an ascending traverse through the forest. The idea is to pick up an indistinct ridge that climbs SW to join the

long NW ridge of Chief Pascall near treeline at 1900m. Continue on the narrowing ridge with a few steeper sections before the top. There are great views of the N side of Joffre Pk from the summit.

The descent offers some excellent skiing on slopes visible from the Duffey Lk road. Instead of skiing down the way you came up, drop into the wide NE facing basin below the summit from the flat shoulder on the NW ridge at about 2100m. There are excellent 400m runs here. From the bottom of this basin, a creek provides a skiable swath for a further 200m down into the forest. Where the creek flattens, ski NW through the forest for less than half a kilometre before breaking out into another clearcut. Angle down across this open area, to join the old logging road that traverses the S side of the main valley above Cayoosh Cr. It is about 2km back to your tracks from the Cayoosh parking lot. The entire route is visible from the Duffey Lk road, and it is worth driving a few kilometres out of your way to take a look at the route before you start.

In good conditions, Mt Chief Pascall can also be ascended over steeper slopes from the 1900m col S of the summit. The ascent has been done as a day trip from Keith's Hut via this route.





View of Cerise Cr from the summit of Mt Rohr. Photo by Claudia Schwab

## Cerise Creek

The Cerise Cr drainage is one of the best areas for back-country skiing that is accessible from the Duffey Lk road. Easy access leads to a comfortable cabin at treeline surrounded by long glacier runs, attractive ski ascents and lots of tree skiing. It is a popular area, especially on weekends. Cerise Cr is protected as a conservancy area.

### Access to Keith's Hut

Length: 1–5 days  
Total Distance: 10km  
Elevation Gain: 450m  
Start: 1220m

### 1670m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Nov–May

The Cerise Cr winter parking lot is located on the S side of the Duffey Lk road near km 21, immediately N of the junction of Cerise Cr and Cayoosh Cr. It is 3km past the highway's sand shed at the Marriott Basin parking lot. Access to the hut is from logging roads in Cerise Cr, which are on the S side of the main valley. To reach these in winter, drop down from the parking lot and cross a small bridge over Cayoosh Cr. After a short stretch of old-growth forest, the trail climbs up the W side of an old cutblock to gain logging roads on the S side of Cayoosh Cr. Ski S on this road for half a kilometre to just before it crosses Cerise

Cr. The winter route continues up the E side of Cerise Cr through mostly open forest. After about 2km it breaks out onto the open bank of the creek. Ski up the creek bed and swing W towards old moraines at the foot of Anniversary Gl. Follow the open trough on the N side of the lateral moraine to curve N up onto a partly wooded bench at 1670m. Be wary of passing underneath the moraine slope and stay close to the trees well back from the moraine to avoid any avalanche hazard. Keith's Hut is located near the E of two small lakes 1 km NE of the snout of Anniversary Gl. The trip takes about 2 hours from the Duffey Lk road.

### Day Trips

In good weather, winter ascents of Vantage Pk, Mt Matier and Vantage Ridge are all recommended and offer excellent skiing. These can be done either from Keith's Hut or as day trips from the Duffey Lk road and are described separately below. Mt Duke, Mt Chief Pascall and even Snowspider Mtn—though not often done from the hut—can also be reached as day trips from the hut. There are many excellent ski slopes in the area, both near treeline and in the alpine. The longest of these is the 750m run down Anniversary Gl. Skiing is described under each day trip.

## Tree Skiing

In poorer weather, there is much good tree skiing accessible from the hut. The closest runs are off the sparsely treed shoulder running SW from the hut up onto Joffre Pk. Climb 230m up the shoulder and ski off the SE side of the shoulder down towards the hut. Runs off the N side are some of the finest in the area and range in length from 200m just N of the hut up to 550m starting from farther up the shoulder. Despite the proximity to the hut, this whole N facing slope is complex avalanche terrain, with bluffs and terrain traps, so use extra caution here. Runs generally trend NE. Another excellent run starts from a knob near the top of this shoulder. Climb N into a notch in the NE ridge of Joffre Pk near 2050m (GR404769). The 600m run begins down a 120m 40° couloir that cuts through cliffs in the NE ridge, drops onto the sheltered glacier below and continues down open slopes to the valley bottom. Farther from the hut there is excellent tree skiing NW of Vantage Pk, with runs up to 350m, as well as runs W of Vantage col on N facing slopes.

## Mt Matier

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1550m  
Start: 1220m

**2770m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Dec–Apr

This is the highest summit S of Cayoosh Pass and perhaps one of the finest ski mountaineering trips from the Duffey Lk road. Mt Matier is most often climbed from Keith's Hut in Cerise Cr. It also makes an excellent day trip from March onwards.

Access to Mt Matier is via Anniversary Gl. There are several routes onto the glacier, depending on whether you are starting from Keith's Hut or from Cerise Cr.

Heading to the Anniversary Gl from Keith's Hut.



Photo by Katy Chambers

If coming directly from the Duffey Lk road, the glacier is most easily reached by skiing through the gap between the terminal moraines below the snout of the glacier at 1600m. Continue up the glacier to 1900m. To avoid the steeper part of the glacier above, swing right around an obvious rock outcrop and pick up a broad snow ramp higher up that angles left back onto the glacier.

From Keith's Hut a more direct route onto Anniversary Gl is to ski up the ridge W of the hut. Climb above the trees to a knob below the E side of Joffre Pk near 2000m. From the knob, descend a short distance onto a bench that crosses a gully and traverses to a broad snow ramp that angles up onto the upper part of Anniversary Gl.

The upper glacier is easily ascended to the Matier–Joffre col at the head of the glacier. Watch for crevasses early in the season. Mt Matier is a short snow climb via its N ridge



## Keith's Hut

Map: 92J/8  
GR: 415772  
Elevation: 1670m

Cost: by donation  
Capacity: 20  
Reservations: no

**Location** Near the head of Cerise Cr at treeline on a timbered knoll 1km NE of the snout of Anniversary Gl, near the E of two small lakes.

**Facilities** A large bright comfortable timber-framed cabin with a wood stove for heat, a large table, cooking area, and sleeping loft.

**Use** This hut is heavily used. Please be sure to burn your toilet paper in the wood stove and pack out all your garbage. The hut is maintained by volunteers. Donations are crucial, and money helps to defray the cost of flying in firewood and doing general maintenance. The hut wasn't intended for commercial use or large groups. Try to keep groups small; commercial users should donate at least \$20/person/night.

**Built** in 1988 by friends and family in memory of Keith Flavelle, who died on the East Ridge of Mt Logan.

**Contact Information** Donations can be inserted into a metal collection cylinder in the hut or mailed using the addressed envelopes provided in the hut.



Skiing off the side of Mt Joffre from SW of Keith's Hut. Vantage Ridge behind. *Photo by Lee Lau*

from the col. Skis can be worn partway up from the col. The route steepens higher up and follows the narrowing N ridge to the summit. An ice axe is recommended. The climb is followed by an excellent 900m run back down to the hut.

## Vantage Peak

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 13km  
Elevation Gain: 1010m  
Start: 1220m

**2230m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Dec–Apr

Vantage Pk is the broad pyramidal summit at the head of Cerise Cr. It is a popular ascent from Keith's Hut or a day trip from the Duffey Lk road.

Ski up to Vantage col (1830m) at the head of Cerise Cr—about half an hour from Keith's Hut. Vantage Pk is a straightforward ascent via its W ridge. The ridge is somewhat rocky, and depending on snow conditions it can be easier to ascend the top portion of the ridge on foot. There are good views of the E side of Joffre Pk and Mt Matier.

Depending on avalanche conditions it is possible to take advantage of good skiing in the basin NW of the summit by dropping into the basin from partway down the W ridge.

Vantage Pk is also frequently climbed via its straightforward S ridge from Caspar Cr. The return trip via Caspar Cr is 6km longer than via Cerise Cr and is usually done as part of a 2-day trip combined with Duke Mtn or Caspar Pk.

*Vantage Pk. Photo by Lee Lau*





View of NW face of Mt Matier from the top of the Aussie Couloir on Mt Joffre. Photo by Jos van der Burg

## Joffre Ski Descents

The Joffre Group holds some of the best and most popular steep ski descents in SW BC, including the NW face of Mt Matier, the Aussie Couloir on Joffre Pk and the N face of Slalok Pk. These descents involve skiing on slopes of 40–45° and should only be attempted by expert skiers confident of their abilities on steep slopes. A careful assessment of the avalanche hazard is essential before skiing any of these routes. They are best Feb–May.

The routes on Mt Matier and Joffre Pk rise directly from the upper Matier Gl. Access is normally from Cerise Cr, though an approach from Joffre Cr is feasible in good conditions via steep slopes N and E of the Matier Gl. The distance and elevation gain given are from the highway.

An ambitious linkup involves skiing the Aussie Couloir on Joffre Pk, the NW face of Mt Matier and the N face of Slalok Pk all on the same trip. This is a strenuous outing that has been done in 1 day from the Duffey Lk road in spring (18km, 2250m).

Mt Matier NW Face. Photo by Patrick Huber





Skiing down the Aussie Couloir. Photo by Jos van der Burg

## Mt Matier

Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1500m

**2770m**

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex

**Northwest Face** (45°, 250m) This is the broad smooth face at the head of the Matier Gl, visible from the Duffey Lk road. The route is normally climbed by kicking steps up the face, though it can be reached by climbing over the summit of Mt Matier. This is a classic ski descent.

## Joffre Peak

Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1490m

**2710m**

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex

**Aussie Couloir** (45°, 400m) This is the classic narrow couloir on the SW side of Joffre Pk, climbed by kicking steps up the route. The summit is easily reached from the top of the couloir. The couloir is mostly 40° with slightly steeper pitches near the top and bottom. Don't forget to consider the S aspect when assessing the avalanche conditions.



Slalok Mtn from Upper Joffre Lk. Photo by Jos van der Burg

## Slalok Mountain

Total Distance: 10km  
Elevation Gain: 1330m

**2650m**

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex

**North Face** (40°, 900m) Slalok is the broad W summit of the Joffre Group. Its N face rises directly from Upper Joffre





Cheque's in the Mail on the W side of Vantage Ridge with Anniversary Gl and Mt Matier in the right background.

Lk and is visible from the Duffey Lk road. Access is from Joffre Lakes. Park at a large plowed parking area on the S side of the Duffey Lk road near km 13. Ski S up the gentle valley of Joffre Cr. It is about 3km through mostly open forest to Upper Joffre Lk and the base of the N face. The face

is usually bootpacked. Follow a wide couloir through the lower rock bands. The upper part of the route ascends the Stonecrop Gl W of centre. Note that Slalok Mtn can also be reached from the Matier Gl via its NE ridge.

Skinning up onto the NW end of Vantage Ridge.



## Vantage Ridge

The long ridge running north from Vantage Pk and forming the divide between Cerise and Caspar Crs is loaded with excellent skiing. There are enough variations here to make this trip worth doing several times to take in all the great runs. Vantage Ridge can be climbed either as a day trip from the highway or from Keith's Hut.

### South Side

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 7km  
Elevation Gain: 730m  
Start: 1220m

### 1950m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Dec-Mar

Access is from the Cerise Cr parking lot at km 21. Start up the regular route to Cerise Cr, dropping down across





Skiing slopes on the E side of Vantage Ridge above Caspar Cr. Photo by Linda Bily

Cayoosh Cr and skiing up through a short stretch of old-growth forest followed by clearcut to rejoin the logging road on the S side of the main Cayoosh Cr valley. Where you first hit this road (approximately 1km from your car at about GR420798), cross it and head SE into the forest to ascend a broad timbered ridge. The forest thins out after 300m, and a short steep headwall leads to the first open shoulder at 1920m. There are 2 avalanche paths running N from here, which are both good ski objectives when poor visibility prevents climbing higher and the powder is good. They are visible from the Duffey Lk road and are referred to locally as South Side. The W path offers a 400m run that starts with a steep open pitch and continues through small trees to within 200m of the clearcut in the main valley. The E path is also a recommended run, though the small trees are somewhat thick at the bottom. A short couloir on the upper E side of the E avalanche path is known as the Birthday Chute.

### Cheque's in the Mail

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 9km  
Elevation Gain: 910m  
Start: 1220m

### 2130m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Dec-Mar

In decent weather, the recommended route continues to the ridge crest above and traverses the scenic N end of Vantage Ridge to the 2130m highpoint at GR433775. There are great views of the Joffre Group. From this high point there are several alternatives for superb runs. On the W side, an

avalanche path drops 700m to Cerise Cr. The skier's left side of this route is an excellent run known as Cheque's in the Mail, though a reasonable snowpack is needed to adequately cover the small trees near the bottom portion of the slide path. Cheque's in the Mail can also be ascended from Cerise Cr by switchbacking up through the forest on the S side of the run.

### Runs into Caspar Creek

### 2130m

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 910m  
Start: 1220m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Dec-Mar

On the E side of Vantage Ridge, an avalanche path drops 700m to Caspar Cr from just S of the high point and is another excellent run. It can be started right from the high point or entered via a sparsely treed ridge several hundred metres S of the high point. Once you have skied the run, you have two choices for getting out of Caspar Cr. The least strenuous exit picks up the old road on the W side of Caspar Cr near the bottom of the avalanche path and follows this out Caspar Cr to join the old S side road, from where it is 2.5km back to Cerise Cr. The roads are partially overgrown with alder but are passable. The alternative is to climb back up over Vantage Ridge and ski Cheque's in the Mail down into Cerise Cr and ski out the trail. The avalanche path that starts from the N side of the high point of Vantage Ridge is also a good run and can be skied partway down towards Caspar Cr.



View of the N side of Duke Mtn from Vantage Pk. Photo by Linda Bily

## Mt Duke

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 21km  
Elevation Gain: 1220m  
Start: 1160m

**2380m**

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Dec–Apr

A flat-topped summit near the head of Caspar Cr, Mt Duke is a recommended ski ascent with a good run on its prominent N face.

Drive up the Duffey Lk road to near the W end of Duffey Lk and park on the W side of Van Horlick Cr at km 25. The Caspar Cr logging road heads SW and runs along the S side of the main Cayoosh Cr valley opposite the highway. Ski up the road for about 2km. Turn left on a major spur that

Ascending the NW ridge of Duke Mtn. Matier and Joffre behind.



runs for another 4km up the E side of Caspar Cr. There is some alder on the road but it is still passable on skis. From near the end of the road, angle across the last cutblock and ski up the pleasant SW fork of Caspar Cr, which leads to a small lake at treeline immediately E of Vantage Pk. Mt Duke is usually climbed from the Duke–Vantage col via its NW ridge. Most of this section can be skied, but there is a class 3 rock step two-thirds of the way up the ridge that can be negotiated via an obvious snow ramp. In good conditions it is also possible to avoid the difficulties on the ridge by skiing up steep exposed slopes W of the ridge crest. There is a short dip before the final summit at the head of the N face. There are great views of Mt Matier and Snow-spider Mtn.

The N face is the recommended descent and is a great 550m run. Enter from just W of the large cornice at the top of the run. The steepest pitch is near the top of the run. Veer to skier's right to avoid rocks near 2000m. At this point you can either ski the full line down to the little lake below Vantage Pk or you can traverse right for an additional 300m pitch on steep slopes that drop right down to the SW fork of Caspar Cr.

Mt Duke can be done as a 1 day or an overnight trip. On an overnight trip you will have time for extra ski runs and an ascent of Vantage Pk or Mt Caspar.



View of upper Caspar Cr from the shoulder S of Mt Caspar.

## Mt Caspar

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 20km  
Elevation Gain: 1250m  
Start: 1160m

**2410m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Dec–Apr

Mt Caspar is the highest of several summits surrounding Caspar Cr. Though somewhat overshadowed by the higher peaks above nearby Cerise Cr, the Caspar Cr area offers worthwhile ski trips with good runs.

Drive up the Duffey Lk road to near the W end of Duffey Lk and park on the W side of Van Horlick Cr at km 25. The Caspar Cr logging road heads SW and runs along the S side of the main Cayoosh Cr valley opposite the highway. Ski up the road for about 2km. Turn left on a major spur that runs for another 4km up the E side of Caspar Cr. This road provides easy access to the ridges and summits beyond. There is some alder on the road but it is still passable on skis.

Mt Caspar is the highest summit E of Caspar Cr on the divide with Van Horlick Cr. It can be reached from the logging road near the junction of Caspar Cr and its SW fork. Ascend E through an open clearcut. Switchback up onto a narrow treed ridge and follow this route up the S rim of the obvious basin, which leads to the shoulder S of the summit

at 2300m. Mt Caspar is a straightforward ski ascent from here, though the upper ridge can be windswept and rocky. The basin is the obvious descent, a 500m run. It has a steeper pitch below 2100m. If you are unsure of the avalanche conditions, avoid this pitch and re-enter the basin a few hundred metres lower down. In good conditions, a long avalanche path dropping W from the S shoulder offers a 700m run right to the valley bottom.

Overnight trips to Caspar Cr can combine Mt Caspar with a variety of other objectives, including Vantage Pk or Mt Duke. There is also lots of good skiing at the head of Caspar Cr. The 2100m col at GR475743 is straightforward to reach on skis and gives an easy run. Pk 2320m on the S rim of the Caspar Cr basin is a recommended ascent. Start S of the small lake at 1740m and use natural terrain features to make a long switchback across its N slopes to gain the NE ridge.

The basin draining E from Caspar Pk has also been used as an approach. Ski 5km up logging roads on the E side of Van Horlick Cr. A 400m climb through old clearcuts and forest leads up to treeline in the basin. The head of the basin leads to the S shoulder described above. The basin offers a good 500m run.



The N side of Snowspider Mtn.

## Snowspider Mountain 2530m

Length: 2–3 days  
Total Distance: 30km  
Elevation Gain: 2650m  
Start: 1220m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Feb–Apr

An excellent ski summit located S of the subalpine pass between Twin One Cr and Van Horlick Cr.

Logging roads extend 16km up Van Horlick Cr to within a few kilometres of Snowspider Mtn as well as to the head of Twin One Cr. These can both be used in winter, but the most enjoyable route is to ski up Cerise Cr from the Duffey Lk road (see above) and cross through Vantage col (1830m) to descend the alpine valley beyond. Drop below the moraine and continue down the open valley over Twin One Lk. From the SE corner of the lake, ski E of a small hill and down a narrow draw to a clearcut at the head of Twin One Cr. Traverse the clearcut, or drop a little lower and follow the logging road for a short distance. Where the road turns SW, continue across the bottom of several avalanche paths, then angle into open subalpine forest in the broad pass at 1540m between Twin One Cr and Van Horlick Cr.

This route is a 5 or 6 hour ski from the Duffey Lk road.

Snowspider Mtn can be climbed from a camp in the pass via its broad NE ridge. To gain the ridge, ski S to treeline on its N flanks. At about 1900m, traverse SW to pick up a bench that angles up under the ridge. This is complex avalanche terrain. Much of the ridge is corniced and guarded by steep rolls, but with care, small benches and microterrain can be used to gain the ridge in one of several spots near 2200m. Follow the ridge up, avoiding a minor 2380m subpeak by swinging into a steeper basin on its S side. Above the subpeak, traverse a bench to an obvious gully that leads up onto the final summit ridge. Skis can be worn almost to the summit. It is a great 900m run off the summit. In good conditions, drop straight N from the ridge at 2220m for a continuous run down to the pass. There is lots of excellent skiing in the area. This is a strenuous 2 day trip.





Looking S across the two E tributaries of Van Horlick Cr.

## Van Horlick Creek

Length: 2–5 days  
Total Distance: 24km  
Elevation Gain: 1310m  
Start: 1190m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Dec–Mar

An extensive system of logging roads in Van Horlick Cr provides access to several ski trips. The most readily accessible of these is the 2500m summit on the divide between Van Horlick Cr and Blowdown Cr, 7km SE of Duffey Lk. This is a straightforward trip on gentle slopes.

Park at the start of the Van Horlick Cr logging roads at km 26 on the E side of Van Horlick Cr, near the W end of Duffey Lk. Ski up the main road on the E side of Van Horlick Cr. After 6km, branch left on a spur road that climbs SE into a side valley known as Hanging Cr. Leave this spur at the end of the first switchback and climb NE into an unnamed valley that leads to a lake at 1900m. Beyond the lake, continue SE on gentle slopes to the head of the broad basin. Pk 2500m at the head of the basin (GR536774) is a straightforward ski ascent via its NW ridge.

This approach can also be used to reach basins at the head of Blowdown Cr via the 2320m col N of Pk 2500m.

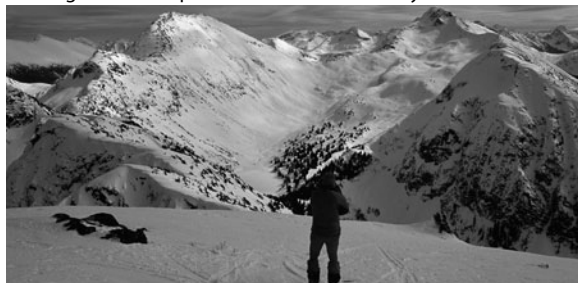
Roads extend well up Van Horlick Cr, and spurs climbing into both E tributaries of Van Horlick Cr give access to several alpine basins that offer attractive destinations for several days of skiing. These involve lengthy approaches on logging roads. (See *Stein Valley Wilderness Guide*.) The first

side valley, known as Hanging Cr, leads to attractive alpine terrain surrounding Hidden Lk, near the divide with the Stein R. The second side valley, 3km farther up Van Horlick Cr, is the main E fork of Van Horlick Cr (also known as Morris Cr). Roads run to near 1600m on the W side of Morris Cr and give access to additional ski terrain in the hanging valleys SW of Morris Cr.



Photo by Pat Mulrooney

Looking S from Steep Pk into the first E tributary of Van Horlick Cr.





Looking SW across the basins at the head of Steep Cr. Duffey Lk at R. Photo by Pat Mulrooney

## Steep Creek

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1190m  
Start: 1160m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Jan–Apr

Draining from the mountains above the S shore of Duffey Lk, Steep Cr provides easy access to some of the best ski runs close to the Duffey Lk road.

Access is from the S side of Duffey Lk at km 31. Park at the start of the Steep Cr logging road, near the E end of the lake. The logging road is 1.5km E of Steep Cr. Ski up the road, which climbs gradually across the hillside to the W. About half a kilometre after making a switchback, take the first spur on your right, which winds up the E side of Steep Cr. Where the road has been deactivated above 1600m, continue up the E side of the creek along the edges of a cut-block and across a slide path beyond to reach Darkside Lk at 1700m. The lake is about 5km from the Duffey Lk road with an elevation gain of 550m. The access is short enough that most parties visit the area on a day trip, but there are sheltered camping spots in the forest near the lake outlet. The lake lies in a steep-walled cirque hemmed in on 3 sides, and its S shore butts up against an impressive 600m face. This is complex avalanche terrain! The cirque is also known as James Bond Basin because the “LOO” in “Lillooet Land District” runs across the basin on some maps and when viewed upside down looks like the famous 007.

There is excellent backcountry skiing accessible from Steep Cr. Suggested routes include:

### Chute 56

Beyond the lake, the safest route follows the edge of the trees W to a minor 1980m col that separates a 2070m dome from the main ridge system. There is good skiing back down to the lake as well as NW from the col. One of the most outstanding runs in the area starts from the top of the 2070m dome. Chute 56 is an avalanche path that runs off the N side of the dome from GR495815. It is a committing line, so assess the avalanche conditions carefully. It gives an outstanding 750m run. The path starts in a wide basin that can be entered straight on or from down the ridge to

Skiing Chute 56 with Duffey Lk below.







Skiing off Pk 2318 on the E side of James Bond Basin at the head of Steep Cr. *Photo by Pat Mulrooney*

skier's left. The path cuts a clean swath through standing timber and narrows considerably as it drops. The bottom of the chute pops out on an overgrown road. Bash E through alders for 500m to return to the Steep Cr road. The 2070m dome can also be reached directly from near the end of the road in Steep Cr by skiing up through steep forest on its NE ridge. Tight chutes on the E side of the dome are also skied occasionally, though these are steep and have cliffs in the middle.

### Steep Peak

**2309m**

For lack of an official name, this is the highest summit directly S of James Bond Basin. The main ridge system SW of Darkside Lk can be reached by following an indistinct rib SW from the minor 1980m col described above. It is a very scenic ski along the ridge crest to its 2309m summit at GR502797. The usual descent retraces your route up from the lake. When the avalanche hazard is low, an alternative descent continues over the peak and takes one of several lines dropping 500m to the E side of the Darkside Lk. These require careful routefinding, so scope them out from the lake before you start.

### Pk 2318

Pk 2318 on the E side of James Bond Basin offers a variety of excellent runs up to 600m long on its W, NW and N aspects. See photo. Access to the N and NW slopes is from the minor basin N of the summit. The basin is reached by climbing E into the hanging valley about half a kilometre past the end of the logging road. The W facing runs down to the lake are a bit exposed.

Pk 2318 from the NW. *Photo by Katy Chambers*





Skiing off Blowdown Pk above Duffey Lk.

## Blowdown Peak

## 2320m

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 13km  
Elevation Gain: 1160m  
Start: 1160m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Feb–Apr

Blowdown Pk is an isolated summit between the E end of Duffey Lk and Blowdown Cr. It is reached from the E spur of the Steep Cr logging road and makes a very scenic day trip with some good skiing on N facing slopes.

Access is from the S side of Duffey Lk at km 31. Park at the start of the Steep Cr logging road near the E end of the lake, approximately 1.5km E of Steep Cr. Ski up the road, which climbs gradually across the hillside to the W. About 500m after making a switchback, ignore the Steep Cr spur on your right at 1360m and follow the E branch of the road past two more switchbacks to the middle of a large clearcut at about 1550m, 1km E of Steep Cr.

Head into the forest on the E side of the clearcut, and traverse through the trees for about 500m to gain the drainage immediately W of Blowdown Pk. You should pop out of the forest into a large two-pronged avalanche path that comes off the W side of Blowdown Pk (known as Path 52). Ascend through sparse trees on the lower part of the avalanche path and veer S into the gentle basin at the head of the drainage. Climb a short steep roll to gain the ridge crest and ski up the narrow ridge to the summit. There are tremendous views. There is an automated weather station on the peak. The recommended descent is down Melissa's Run, which stays on the indistinct ridge on the S side of the obvious two-pronged avalanche path. A pitch through glades at the bottom of the ridge avoids the throat of the

slide path. The run can be taken all the way down to 1550m, from which point you can traverse back to the clearcut and pick up the logging road.

This is a trip for good conditions. It travels through complicated terrain with many avalanche features. In particular, the NW slopes of Blowdown Pk feed one of the largest avalanche paths in the area (known as Path 51). As this threatens the highway, it is monitored closely and receives regular avalanche control using remote-controlled exploding devices located at the top of the avalanche path. Read the warning posted at the bottom of the road "Danger—Avalanche control using explosives may begin without warning."

## Blowdown Creek

Length: 2–5 days  
Total Distance: 22km  
Elevation Gain: 900m  
Start: 1160m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Dec–Apr

Blowdown Cr is the first major drainage east of Duffey Lk. Roads climb up the E side of this creek and over a high pass into the headwaters of the Stein R. This is pleasant ridge and meadow terrain with good skiing in the surrounding basins, though the peaks here are somewhat rockier and more windswept than those farther W.

The Blowdown Cr road leaves the Duffey Lk road at km 36 and runs up the E side of Blowdown Cr and over the 2180m pass immediately S of Gott Pk. It is 11km from the Duffey Lk road to the head of the valley.

Peaks on the Van Horlick Cr divide (see Van Horlick Cr above) are easily reached from this road, along with pleasant terrain at the heads of Gott and Cottonwood Crs. This is a recommended location for a ski camp.

Skiing at the head of Blowdown Cr. Photo by Pat Mulrooney





View of the N side of Pk 2650 at the head of the E fork of Channel Cr. *Photo by Derrick Johnstone*

## Channel Creek

Channel Cr is a small side creek E of Duffey Lk that rises to an attractive hanging valley on the S side of the Duffey Lk road. Logging roads give access to several alpine basins surrounded by rocky peaks on the N end of the divide between Blowdown and Gott Crs. There are a variety of recommended destinations here, with enjoyable runs up to 700m.

### East Channel Creek

Length: 2 days  
Total Distance: 18km  
Elevation Gain: 1620m  
Start: 1030m

### 2650m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Mar–Apr

A high summit at the head of the SE branch of Channel Cr is an excellent ski ascent. Branch off from the main route up Channel Cr and ascend E through forest for about 500m to a lower lake at 1740m. The valley becomes gentler and more open above the lower lake. An upper lake at 1980m gives access to a narrow draw that curves SW. Avoid a minor headwall in the draw at 2440m by skirting around its N side. Moderate E facing slopes above the headwall lead directly to the summit at GR579870. The descent to the upper lake is an excellent 700m run. In good conditions, a notch adjacent to the headwall at 2440m leads to an attractive N facing bowl. The 2650m summit N of the upper lake

is known as Channel Pk. It is the highest summit in the area and is a straightforward ascent by bootpacking up its rocky, windswept S slopes. It has a striking couloir on its N side.

### Channel Ridge

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 8km  
Elevation Gain: 1100m  
Start: 1030m

### 2130m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Feb–Apr

A long avalanche path and runs through glades at the N end of the high ridge on the W side of Channel Cr are a worthwhile day trip. Access is from km 42 on the Duffey Lk road, about 9km E of Duffey Lk. Park at the start of the Channel Cr logging road, about 500m E of Channel Cr. Ski

Looking down the avalanche path at the N end of Channel Ridge.





Skiing off Pk 2650 at the head of the E fork of Channel Cr. Elusive Pk behind on the E side of Gott Cr. Photo by Linda Bily

up the logging road, which angles across the hillside to the SW. There is some alder and rockfall on the road but it offers easy skiing. After crossing Channel Cr at 1200m, take the second left and ski up a spur road that swings back and recrosses the creek at 1480m. Leave the road shortly before the second crossing and switchback up an open cutblock to gain the long forested ridge that runs N from the 2130m high point of Channel Ridge. Follow the ridge to the alpine and continue to the high point. There are several choices for runs. In good conditions, the best run descends NE down a 500m 30° avalanche path. Use caution at a steep pitch halfway down. The bottom of the path has some slide alder but finishes close to the logging road. Another run known as Ridge Edge descends W through treeline glades from the NW end of the ridge (at about GR554893).

### Snow Zone

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 15km  
Elevation Gain: 1500m  
Start: 1030m

### 2500m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Jan–Apr

The attractive alpine basin S of the upper lake at the head of the main branch of Channel Cr is known as the Snow Zone.

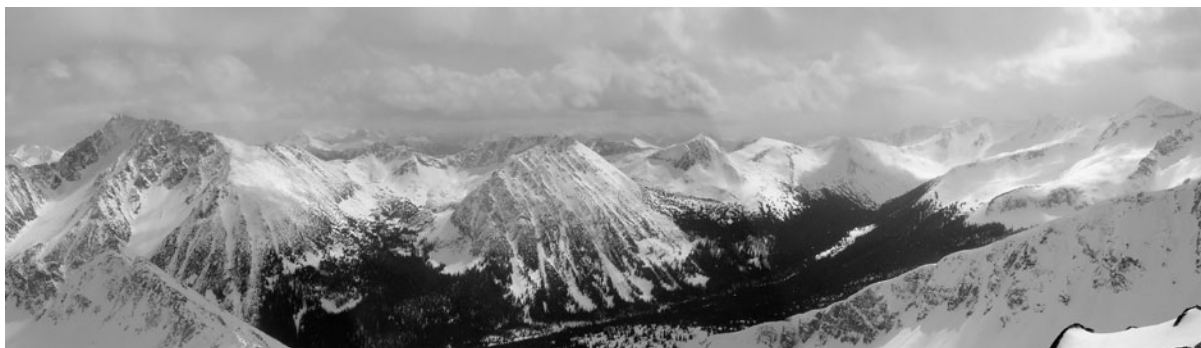
The best access to Snow Zone is from Blowdown Cr logging roads. Park on the Duffey Lk road at km 36 and ski



Looking back down upper Channel Cr from the basin known as the Snow Zone. Photo by Linda Bily

up the road for 2km to the first spur on the left. The spur switchbacks across the hillside to a landing at about 1400m on the SW side of a long thin avalanche path at GR538866. Follow a flagged route that crosses the avalanche gully and traverses through forest for 500m to reach open cutblocks near the end of old logging spurs on the Channel Cr roads. Ascend the cutblocks for 200m and ski E up a small valley that leads to the 1920m col at GR 558870, adjacent to the upper lake on Channel Cr.

Snow Zone offers a variety of excellent N facing runs up to 400m. This is complicated terrain with lots of micro fea-



View of upper Gott Cr from Pk 2650 at the head of the E fork of Channel Cr.

tures, so assess the stability carefully. The 2500m peak at the head of the basin is a recommended ski ascent. The steeper rocky 2650m peak on the E side of the basin (GR575864) can also be climbed by skiing up its steep SW slopes and bootpacking up the last short rocky stretch to the summit.

The main valley of Channel Cr has also been used as an approach for Snow Zone. Though somewhat longer, this approach is still a worthwhile route and is a good overnight trip. The route starts from the second crossing of Channel Cr at 1480m and follows a small spur up the W side of the creek for about 500m. From the end of the road, cross a small clearcut and continue up the valley. Skiing is along the bottom of avalanche paths or through stretches of forest along the valley floor. The valley climbs at a gentle grade and quickly becomes open. Above the last trees it is exposed to avalanches from both sides for a short distance. The upper lake is a recommended campsite. In good conditions Channel Ridge offers an alternative exit to skiing out Channel Cr from the upper lake.

## Gott Creek

Length: 2–5 days  
Total Distance: 34km  
Elevation Gain: 1880m  
Start: 1000m

## 2770m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Mar–Apr

E of Duffey Lk, high divides extend E to the Fraser R. These can be reached from the Duffey Lk road via logging roads that run to the head of both forks of Gott Cr. Like Blow-down Cr, this is pleasant ridge and meadow terrain with good skiing in the surrounding basins. The peaks here are somewhat rockier and more windswept than those farther W and are visited far less frequently. Despite lengthy approaches on logging roads, there are still some worthwhile trips here.

Access is via logging roads that run up Gott Cr and Boulder Cr. These roads are also popular with snowmobilers. By mid-April, when the lower portion of these roads can be driven, approaches are shorter.

The Gott Cr road starts at km 52 on the Duffey Lk road. It climbs steeply for 6km to a junction at 1500m. From there, roads continue for another 5km up both forks of Gott Cr.

## Boulder Mountain

## 2740m

Boulder Mtn, on the divide between Boulder Cr and Gott Cr at GR663927, has been ascended on skis. It is perhaps one of the most accessible ski ascents from Gott Cr. About 4km up the Gott Cr road, at about 1200m, a logging road climbs around the N side of Boulder Mtn to end near 1720m beside the creek draining the pleasant valley NW of the summit. The road is in good shape for skiing and gives access to the hanging valley. At the head of the valley, ski up to a rounded 2320m saddle to gain the gentle high-alpine slopes W of the summit. The last section can be pretty windswept and rocky for skiing, but this is a nice high summit with good views.

Skiing up the final slopes on Boulder Mtn. *Photo by Todd Ponzini*



**Elusive Peak****2770m**

The E fork of Gott Cr has been used to ski up Elusive Pk in the spring. This is the highest summit between the forks of Gott Cr at GR625869. From the end of the road in the E fork of Gott Cr, traverse E on snow-covered rockslides on the S side of the creek to gain a 2200m col that crosses into the Cottonwood Cr drainage. From the col, traverse W into an attractive basin SE of Elusive Pk. Elusive Pk is climbed via its SE ridge. Skis can typically be worn to about 2500m. Above this point, the ridge becomes rocky and windblown.

**Upper Gott Creek**

The W fork leads to a long subalpine valley surrounded by rocky peaks and alpine meadows. This valley has been the site of several ski camps and offers a variety of peaks to climb with 300–500m ski runs.

**Hurley Silver Mine Road**

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1200m  
Start: 800–1000m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8  
Best: Jan–Mar

An old mining road that climbs high onto ridges overlooking the E end of Duffey Lk gives easy access to several alpine basins N of Hwy 99.

Park at km 38 on the Duffey Lk road, several kilometres NE of Duffey Lk. Cross Cayoosh Cr and ski up a logging road that climbs steeply up the hillside W of Cayoosh Cr. At the top of a large cutblock near 1250m, take the left fork, which follows the old Hurley Silver Mine road into



Looking across Duffey Lk from ridges above Hurley Silver Mine Rd.

the drainage to the W. The road switchbacks steeply up into the alpine above 2000m. Note that the logging road bridge across Cayoosh Cr has been removed and replaced with a footbridge. The closest runs are off the ridge immediately SE of the main basin. These include an avalanche path that

drops N from a 2120m col at GR511880 for 300m to the mining road. The high ridge tops give good views of Duffey Lk. The two basins N of the end of the mining road are also a good place to ski and offer runs with about 300m of vertical. The first basin is known as K-Way. The second as Playtex. From the bottom of Playtex it is possible to traverse out on the S side of the creek to the top of the logging roads. The area was recently added to Duffey Lk Provincial Park.

**Northern Cayoosh Range**

Length: 2–7 days  
Total Distance: km  
Elevation Gain: 1200m  
Start: 800–1000m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/8, 92J/9  
Best: Feb–Mar

The Northern Cayoosh Range extends from Duffey Lake NE to Anderson Lk. This is an attractive wilderness area somewhat more alpine than areas W of Duffey Lk and with steeper valleys and more extensive meadows. The summits tend to be steep and rocky and heavily wind-scoured in the winter, but the area receives a reasonable snowfall and the surrounding alpine terrain offers good skiing. The heads of Elliot Cr, Melvin Cr, Lost Valley Cr and Downton Cr make good locations for backcountry skiing from a base camp.



Looking W across upper Haylmore Cr. Photo by Linda Bily

**Elliot Creek**

Several different access routes have been used. In the winter the most common approach is from the Duffey Lk road via the old Hurley Silver Mine road at km 38 on the Duffey Lk road (see above). From the end of the mining road at treeline, traverse N for several kilometres and ski through a 2250m pass to reach the head of Elliott Cr. There are extensive alpine meadows in Elliott Cr and these offer good ski runs, though many slopes are quite steep and avalanche prone.





Camp at the head of Melvin Cr. Photo by Linda Bily

Elliot Cr may also be reached from logging roads that ascend Haylmore Cr from the N. This is the best approach in March or April or with higher snow levels when the lower portion of the logging roads can be driven. From Mt Currie, follow the road to D'Arcy for about 34km and turn off at Devine (elevation 350m). Drive through Devine and cross Haylmore Cr. The logging road turns off at the km 3 signpost and climbs up the E side of Haylmore Cr. There is a major avalanche path at km 8 (at 800m) that often blocks the road in the winter. Ski up the road to km 16, where an old mining track leads off to the left and climbs into the narrow Barkley Valley in Elliot Cr. There is a small cabin at 1590m near the treeline on the N side of Elliot Cr at GR469929 (sleeps 4).

### Melvin Creek

There is much attractive alpine terrain at the head of Melvin Cr, which offers excellent skiing and has been proposed as a site for the development of a downhill ski area. The head of Melvin Cr offers enough skiing for several days and can be reached from upper Elliott Cr via the 2220m col adjacent to Twin Lakes. The climb out of Elliot Cr crosses big

Skiing at the head of Melvin Cr. Photo by Linda Bily



avalanche slopes, so use extra caution here. Access via Melvin Cr from the Duffey Lk road has also been used. Start near km 43 across from the mouth of Melvin Cr. Cayoosh Cr must be crossed, but this is generally not difficult in winter. A horse trail runs up the N side of the creek. The crux is climbing up through a section of small deciduous trees from Cayoosh Cr. Once into the Melvin Cr valley, the forest becomes coniferous and easier to travel. The route up the valley crosses the runout zones from multiple S-facing avalanche paths, so consider the avalanche conditions appropriately. It is 7km to a camp at treeline at the head of the valley.

### Lost Valley Creek

The head of Lost Valley Cr has also been the site of several ski camps (e.g., BCM 2002). Most have used helicopter access. The area can also be reached via a narrow pass from the head of Melvin Cr.



Pk 2650 at the head of Downton Cr. Photo by Jordan Peters

### Downton Creek

The central part of the Cayoosh Range above Downton Cr is most easily reached from roads that run well up Downton Cr from km 58 on the Duffey Lk road. Though approaches are long, roads run almost to treeline in the W branch of Downton Cr and give access to pleasant alpine basins on the divide with Lost Valley Cr. Several of the surrounding summits can be climbed, and the area has good ski touring qualities.

Steep, rocky summits S of upper Downton Cr offer some longer runs in N facing basins. Access is best in late spring when roads are driveable to above 1500m. Pk 2650 at GR543973 is a recommended day trip and is an easy ascent from the end of the road. A long gully and face on its N side offers an outstanding 750m run. This is steep at the top (about 40–45°) but quickly angles off lower down.



Skiing off Anemone Pk in the Lizzie Lk area.

**T**his chapter encompasses the environs of the Stein River and the mountains between the Lillooet and Fraser Rivers. The Stein region straddles the transition from the wetter zones of the Coast Mountains to the dry interior of BC and exhibits a huge variation in terrain. Summits in the north are similar to the adjacent Duffey Lake area and become more rugged and coastal as you move south towards Harrison Lake. Much of the region is difficult for ski mountaineering because it is either too steep or access is too difficult. However, there are some attractive alpine basins and open ridges with light glaciation, which offer excellent ski mountaineering. The region is more remote than areas surrounding Pemberton and Duffey Lake and sees fewer visitors.

### **Snow Conditions**

The Stein region receives surprisingly heavy snowfall despite lying in a minor rainshadow E of the high summits of

Garibaldi Park and despite its proximity to the dry Fraser Canyon. Snowfall is heaviest on the S and W portions of this area and varies from 8m in the NE to over 12m at the head of the Nahatlatch R and farther S. Typical snowpacks in the alpine vary from 2.5 to 3.5m.

### **Access**

Access to the W side of this region is from In-Shuck-Ch Forest Service Rd, which runs down the E side of Lillooet Lk. This road turns off from Hwy 99, 17km E of Pemberton, at the head of Lillooet Lk.

The E side of this region is approached from logging roads on the W side of the Fraser Canyon. These are reached from a bridge across the Fraser R at Boston Bar, approximately 220 km E of Vancouver on Hwy 1.

### **Guidebooks**

*Stein Valley Wilderness Guide* by Gordon White  
*Stein Valley Recreation Map* 1:66,000 by ITMB

## Multi-use Considerations

The entire Stein R watershed and the head of Mehatl Cr form a huge wilderness area protected as Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Provincial Park and Mehatl Creek Provincial Park. Mechanized access is not permitted. Outside of the parks, non-motorized areas have been designated around Lizzie Lk and Meadow Dome. There is some heliskiing near the Stein Divide at the headwaters of Twin Two Cr, Van Horlick Cr and Lizzie Cr.



View of the Meadow Dome area from the S.

## Meadow Dome Area

Length: 2–4 days  
Total Distance: 19km  
Elevation Gain: 1200m  
Start: 460m

**1660m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/1  
Best: Dec–Apr

This area is comprised of a group of gentle peaks and lakes located E of Lillooet Lk and adjacent to several higher summits overlooking the Stein R. This is a pleasant ski touring area with enough side trips to last most parties up to several days.

Access is from logging roads that climb into the unnamed drainage N of Meadow Dome. Drive S down In-Shuck-Ch Forest Service Rd on the E side of Lillooet Lk. 17km from Hwy 99, turn left onto a logging road that heads up Lizzie Cr. After about half a kilometre, take the spur road branching to the left. This spur quickly becomes 4WD and switchbacks steeply, so you will likely be walking or skiing by the time the road flattens out at 800m. Ignore a minor right spur and follow the road up the unnamed creek N of Meadow Dome. The road crosses the creek at 6km and 8km. The recommended approach leaves the logging road at about 1180m after it crosses the creek draining N from Battleship Lakes. Ski S through steep, old-growth forest to climb into the attractive subalpine valley surrounding Battleship Lakes. This is a recommended campsite. The lakes are easily visited on an overnight trip, but ski camps of up to a week have been held here (*BCM* 1990, p.

55). Plans for a cabin in the area have also been proposed over the years.

Meadow Dome and Belavista Ridge, which rise 600m above the lakes are the closest high points with good views W to Garibaldi Park. Summits E of the lakes are somewhat higher. The gentle Pk 2380 is a pleasant ski ascent, while the higher rocky peaks of Meditation Mtn (2560m) and Lindisfarne Mtn (2530m) on the main divide to the E are longer day trips that require some scrambling.

## Lizzie Creek

The head of Lizzie Cr drains an extensive alpine area of lakes, meadows and gentle peaks E of Lillooet Lk. This is an excellent area for backcountry skiing, and a rustic log cabin at treeline offers a good base for exploring the surrounding terrain. There are a variety of recommended ski touring trips from the cabin and a wide range of superb skiing with runs of 400–600m.

### Access to Lizzie Creek Cabin

Length: 4–7 days  
Total Distance: 26km  
Elevation Gain: 1360m  
Start: 320m

**1620m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/1  
Best: Dec–Apr

Access is from logging roads in Lizzie Cr. Drive S down In-Shuck-Ch Forest Service Rd on the E side of Lillooet Lk. 17km from Hwy 99, turn left onto a logging road, which



### Lizzie Creek Cabin

Map: 92J/1  
GR: 457531  
Elevation: 1620m

Cost: none  
Capacity: 6–8  
Reservations: no

**Location** Near treeline, on the N side of the creek, in a hanging valley 300m above Lizzie Lk, 1.5km SW of Anemone Pk.

**Facilities** A rustic log cabin equipped with a wood stove, a Coleman lantern, several saws and axes.

**Built** in 1968 by Tom Anderson, George Richardson, Max Juri and David Nickerson. Major repairs were done in 2001.



Skiing off the NW side of Long Pk. Photo by Linda Bily

branches E up Lizzie Cr. About a kilometre up the logging road there is a junction. The lower right fork continues up Lizzie Cr. It is blocked by a large washout a few hundred metres past the junction, so you will have to park here. In mid-winter it is recommended that you leave your car near the plowed Lillooet Lk road, in the event that it snows at lower elevations. The washout has scoured away several hundred metres of roadbed at the base of a steep sidehill. There are two options to bypass it on foot. With normal low water in the winter, the easiest way to bypass the washout is to hop across the creek on rocks, walk up the S bank of the creek and recross it to gain the road beyond the washout. If the creek is difficult to cross, a rough bypass trail can be used. This route starts several hundred metres up the left fork of the logging road above the junction and traverses the steep sidehill above the washout. The bypass trail takes about 30 minutes.

Once past the washout, continue up the road. In mid-winter it is usually possible to ski, but in the spring you might have to carry your skis for an hour before reaching

snow. There is some alder on the first few kilometres of the road but it is still easily passable. Avoid a spur road on the right at 1040m, which climbs SW into the valley below Tao Lk. Above this, the road makes a long switchback across a steep hillside and climbs to its end at Lizzie Lk, 10km from the washout. Ski across the lake, and from its S end ascend E through open forest on the N side of the small creek draining the hanging valley E of Lizzie Lk. To avoid cliffs at the narrow entrance to the hanging valley, climb above the level of the valley to a flat bench at about 1680m. Traverse E out of the forest through the narrow entrance known as the “Gates of Shangri-La” into a beautiful hanging valley. As you enter the hanging valley there are some steep snow-covered rockslides that can be an avalanche concern. The Lizzie Cr cabin is less than 1km up the valley on the N bank of the creek, at about 1620m. In average conditions it takes about 8 hours to reach the cabin.

The cabin is somewhat rustic but comfortable and sleeps 6 easily. It is not heavily used in the winter. The stovepipe is often buried and must be dug out before lighting a fire.



Climbing into meadows S of Anemone Pk.

Firewood is often in short supply, so use it sparingly. The cabin is only sporadically maintained by all who use it, so please do your part to ensure there is enough firewood for the next group. The cabin is equipped with several saws and axes, and in the winter it only takes an hour or two to cut down a dead snag and drag it back to the cabin.

### Ski Trips from the Cabin

The surrounding area is well suited to ski touring and there are nearly half a dozen summits within easy reach of the cabin. Most are less than a 700m climb. Anemone Pk (2260m) is one of the closest summits to the cabin and is an enjoyable ski ascent via its SW slopes. Its short W ridge is an easy scramble and it is an excellent 500m ski run back down to the cabin. The W summit of Long Pk (2290m), lying 2.5km SE of the cabin, is one of the highlights of the area. The recommended ascent route is via an indistinct trough and adjacent ridge on its NW slopes. This route offers a recommended descent; however, one of the most

Switchbacking up the NW side of Long Pk.



outstanding runs in the area is down the N side of Long Pk from just W of the W summit. A natural gap in the cornice gives access to a shallow, sheltered, N facing pocket. The 500m run finishes with a steeper NE facing gully at the bottom. Nearby Tynemouth Mtn (2200m) is also a recommended ski ascent. Shields Pk (2070m) located 2km SW of Lizzie Lk can be ascended on skis by heading W along the alpine ridges beyond Long Lk and switchbacking up its S slopes. Cloudraker Mtn (2380m), which lies farther W of Shields Pk, is an isolated summit perched above Lillooet Lk. It is a longer day trip from the cabin over alpine ridges and offers excellent views of Garibaldi Park. Tundra Pk (2410m) might also be considered as a longer trip from the cabin. Other suggestions for day trips from the cabin include a loop around Arrowhead Mtn.



View of Anemone Pk and the basin surrounding the Lizzie cabin.

In poor weather there is excellent tree skiing in the basin around the cabin. The longest runs are on S facing avalanche slopes off White Lupin Ridge or NW facing slopes off the shoulder S of Arrowhead Lk. More protected runs can be found in the glades E of the cabin or off the high point of the ridge immediately SW of the cabin.

There is also excellent tree skiing on glades and avalanche paths S of Lizzie Lk (near GR445517). These can be reached from Long Lk by crossing Intern Ridge just N of Tarn Pk. Descend a sparsely treed ramp W though steep bluffs to reach the centre of the large basin S of Lizzie Lk. This is complex terrain and should be scoped out ahead of time from Lizzie Lk or Intern Ridge.





Looking W across the head of Van Horlick Cr on the Snowspider–Lizzie Traverse.

## Snowspider–Lizzie Traverse

Length: 4–6 days

Total Distance: 50km

Elevation Gain: 2700m

Start: 1220m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92J/7, 92J/8

Best: Mar–Apr

John Baldwin, Doug Brown, Brian Chisholm, Helen Hamilton-Harding, Matthias Jakob, Rob McLachlan and Ann Rathbottom, *CAJ* 2002, p. 98.

This is an enjoyable traverse through the high mountains E of Lillooet Lk from the Duffey Lk road S to the Lizzie Cr area. The traverse ascends broad subalpine valleys, crosses several high passes and winds across small pocket glaciers on the high divide at the head of the North Stein R. It offers excellent opportunities for backcountry skiing and side trips to various summits along the way.

The route starts up Cerise Cr, crosses over the pass at the head of the valley and descends to the broad subalpine pass between Twin One Cr and Van Horlick Cr. This is described in more detail under the approach for Snowspider Mtn in the Duffey Lk chapter. An approach via Caspar Cr has also been used, but care must be taken in descending the steep S facing slopes from the head of Caspar Cr to the pass between Twin One Cr and Van Horlick Cr.

From the Twin One–Van Horlick, pass continue E for

about 2km to pick up an old logging road on the S side of the creek. The road can be followed down and across Van Horlick Cr to the main branch of the road on the E side of the creek. Ski S up the road. Beyond the end of the road at about 1430m, continue up the E side of Van Horlick Cr through forest and avalanche runouts for 3km to open terrain above 1640m. The head of Van Horlick Cr rises to a steep headwall. The recommended route avoids the headwall by climbing SE up a side draw and crossing a narrow corniced ridge to gain the small pocket glacier N of Storm Mtn (2500m). The ridge can be tricky to cross and may require tunneling through a cornice to drop onto its E side. Cross the small glacier N of Storm Mtn and climb through a narrow 2280m col E of the summit. Drop through the col, descend W to treeline and traverse around the W side of Brimstone Mtn (2260m) to a 2000m pass above the Stein R. Continue W up a narrowing ridge, which leads over a minor summit to the glaciated bench E of Meditation Mtn (2560m). Follow this bench S and cross through the col between Lindisfarne Mtn and Aurora Pk into the head of the E branch of Lizzie Cr. It is a great 800m descent into Lizzie Cr, staying on open rockslides on the S side of the





Skiing in the headwaters of the Stein R, NW of Storm Pk.

creek. An old logging road can be picked up on the N side of the creek shortly after entering the forest at 1500m. With a good snowpack, the road offers reasonable traveling for the first few kilometers. Lower down, the road becomes unpleasantly overgrown with alder for 2km until you reach the main Lizzie Lk branch at about 1100m. Ski and walk out to just above Lillooet Lk.

There are a number of excellent possibilities for ski ascents along the route. Highlights include Mt Matier, Snowspider Mtn and Pk 2530 immediately S of the pass between the head of Van Horlick Cr and Twin Two Cr. These options all offer long outstanding runs. Vantage Pk and Storm Mtn are also recommended shorter ascents that are close to the route.

Several variations provide alternative finishes to the traverse instead of skiing out the E branch of Lizzie Cr. The shortest options exit to logging roads that climb into the unnamed valley N of Meadow Dome. These roads extend up the valley to within 5km of Brimstone Mtn and can be reached by a direct escape route down the valley from the col N of Brimstone Mtn. A more aesthetic option is to ski

through the Meadow Dome area via the col between Lindisfarne and Meditation Mtns to exit past Battleship Lakes. Another option is to climb out of the upper E fork of Lizzie Cr to Cherry Pip Pass at the head of Rogers Cr and ski out past the Lizzie Cr cabin. The climb to Cherry Pip Pass requires switchbacking up the lower portion of a narrow draw that is exposed to large avalanches from above and is only recommended in safe avalanche conditions.

View S across the headwaters of the E fork of Lizzie Cr.





Looking S to summits at the head of Gowan Cr from the summit of Long Pk.

## Gowan Peak

Length: 3–4 days

Map: 92G/16, 92J/1

John Clarke and Sandy Briggs, May 1990

S of the Lizzie Cr area, there are a group of high summits S of the head of Gowan Cr. The broad glaciated peaks are attractive and offer the potential for runs of up to 800m. The area is fairly remote, and the only recorded ski trip ascended to the low pass between Gowan Cr and the Nahatlatch R from logging roads on Gowan Cr. The three 2440m summits at the head of Gowan Cr were climbed, and the party dropped across the forks in Livingston Cr at 1400m and climbed several glaciated 2200m summits. The best access to the area is currently from logging roads that climb to about 1400m on the hillside above the Lillooet R between Frank and Livingston Crs at GR523279 (see [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com)).

## The Nipple

Length: 1 day

Total Distance: 14km

Elevation Gain: 1700m

Start: 600m

As its name suggests, this is literally a breast-shaped summit on the high ridges above the Fraser Canyon W of Boston Bar. This is a worthwhile ski trip in an area that is seldom visited in winter.

**2460m**

Terrain: Complex

Best: Mar–May

Access is from Boston Bar in the Fraser Canyon. Cross the Fraser R and drive N on the W side of the Fraser R. At 11km, shortly before the Nahatlatch R turn left on Powder Puff Main logging road. Follow this road across logged-off benchland on the S side of the Nahatlatch R and take left forks, which switchback up through cutblocks on the slopes N of The Nipple. There are some waterbars. The second major switchback is at 800m, adjacent to the long gully that runs N from the summit (GR018373), and you will likely be stopped by snow before here. Continue up the road, which makes a few more switchbacks on the ridge W of the gully. Above 1100m, the shortest route leaves the road and ascends the ridge directly through an old burn and forest higher up to gain the long gentle NW shoulder of The Nipple at treeline. (It is also possible to stay on the road and follow it as it angles SW up onto the gentle

The NW side of The Nipple. Photo by Jos van der Burg



**2291m**

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Challenging

Map: 92H/13

Best: Mar



Looking E across Chochiwa Gl. Tachewana Pk at top right.

shoulder at 1600m.) Once above treeline, the summit is a straightforward ascent from the NW.

The run back down to your vehicle follows the ascent route and gives a long continuous descent. In favourable conditions it might be possible to ski a steep 35–40° head-wall NE of the summit, descend the open basin N of the summit and continue down the major gully, which runs all the way down to the second switchback on the road N.

## Chochiwa Glacier

Length: 4 days  
Total Distance: 32km  
Elevation Gain: 1500m  
Start: 600m

## 2100m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92I/4  
Best: Mar–Apr

This is the attractive group of small icefields and glaciers between the head of Kwoiek Cr and the Nahatlatch R on the W side of the Fraser Canyon. Logging roads provide good access. There is excellent glacier skiing as well as several recommended ski ascents.

Roads cross to the W side of the Fraser R at Boston Bar. It is approximately 15km N to the Nahatlatch R and the logging roads that extend up the N side of it. The most direct approach to the Chochiwa Gl is from roads that branch 9km up the Nahatlatch R and climb high into Log Cr. The

Log Cr road has water bars, but with a 4WD you can likely get a few kilometres up the road before being stopped by snow. Ignore side roads at km 7 and continue up the main valley. The road crosses to the N side of Log Cr near 1040m at GR911455. There is no longer a bridge here, but the road continues on the N side of Log Cr for 4km to near the 1240m level. A parallel road on the S side of Log Cr continues for 3km and can also be used but requires crossing the runout zones from several large avalanche paths. In either

View W to Kwoiek Pk from a camp on the Chochiwa Gl N of Tachewana Pk.





View of the Stein Divide. Mt Klarkarpun left of centre.

case, continue W up the valley. The S side of the creek offers open traveling beyond the end of the road. After several kilometres the valley steepens, and above 1500m it is necessary to switchback up a narrow gully. This area has some exposure to avalanches from slopes way above the gully. From the top of the gully it is another 300m to a recommended campsite on the neve of the Chochiwa Gl.

The whole complex of ice W to the Rutledge Gl is ideally suited for skiing. Tachewana Pk (2500m) is an easy ski ascent, and the obvious objective here is the high summit of Kwoiek Pk (2740m). There are lots of 300m runs on Tachewana Pk as well as on the unnamed summits on the W side of the glacier.

## Stein Divide Traverse

Length: 8–10 days  
Total Distance: 75km  
Elevation Gain: 4300m  
Start: 320m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92I/4, 92J/1  
Best: Mar–Apr

Gordon White and companions, March 1990, *Stein Valley Wilderness Guide*, p. 177

The Stein Divide Traverse is a high-level ski route from Lil-looet Lk to the Fraser R along the glaciated divide between the Stein and Nahatlatch R. From the N it appears as a tan-

talizing ski route across the S skyline of the Stein R.

The traverse starts from Lizzie Cr (see above). From the Lizzie Cr cabin, ski across the alpine meadows SE of Anemone Pk to gain the 1890m Cherry Pip Pass between the E branch of Lizzie Cr and Rogers Cr. Cross large avalanche slopes to the E of the pass and contour past Caltha Lk to Figure Eight Lk in the narrow pass S of Caltha Pk. Ski SE along the ridge between the Stein R and Rogers Cr. Ascend the glacier E of Vanguard Pk (2230m) to the gentle 2500m col S of Mt Skook Jim (2620m). The col leads to the glaciated divide that runs E between the Stein R and Mehatl Cr. The high divide is very scenic and is easily traveled by traversing glaciers on its N side. The divide narrows 5km E of Mt Klackarpun. This is the crux of the traverse and extends for 4km to near Crestline Mtn (2440m), where the route descends slopes E to the Rutledge Gl. From the head of the Rutledge Gl, traverse S of Kwoiek Pk (2780m) at about 2560m to reach the Kwoiek Gl and exit via the Chochiwa Gl (see above) to Log Cr and the Nahatlatch R.

This is a superb high-alpine route that is very scenic. Several high summits can be climbed en route, including ski ascents of Mt Klackarpun (2620m), Kwoiek Pk (2780m) and Tachewana Pk (2470m). There are numerous ski runs on N facing slopes along the way.



View of Harrison Lk from the summit of Mt Breakenridge. Photo by Jos van der Burg

## Mt Breakenridge

Length: 2 days  
Total Distance: 20km  
Elevation Gain: 2100m  
Start: 300m

## 2400m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92H/12  
Best: Mar–May

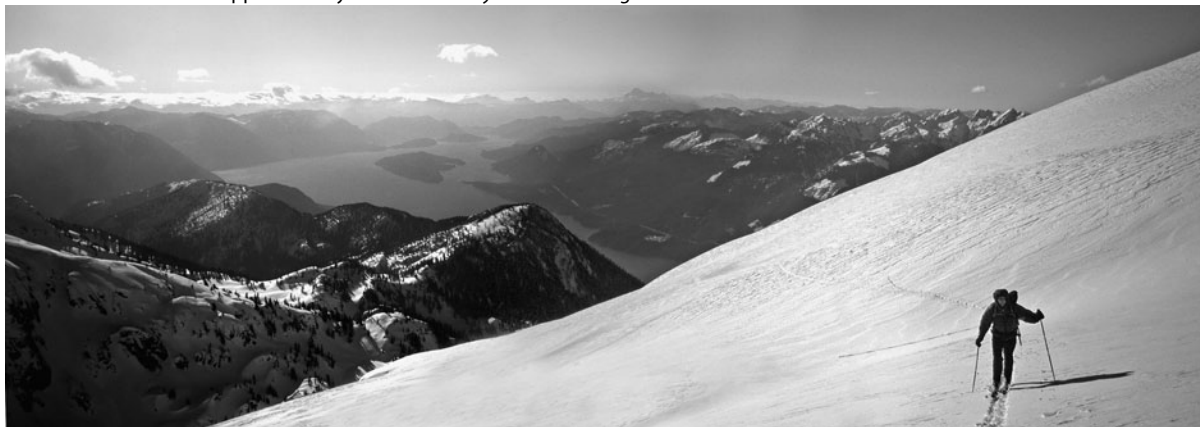
A broad glaciated summit at the N end of Harrison Lk that is well suited to skiing.

Access is from Harrison Hot Springs, which is reached from the Trans-Canada Hwy by taking exit 135 to Agassiz/Harrison Hot Springs, 110km E of Vancouver, and following Hwy 9 for 17km through Agassiz. From Harrison Hot Springs, take the main logging road up the E side of Harrison Lk. This road follows the lakeshore for approximately 40km to a year-round logging camp at the mouth of Big Silver Cr. From here, continue on the road up the E side of Big Silver Cr. At 10km, turn left on a spur, which crosses Big Silver Cr. After 1km, take the right fork, which climbs

into the valley of English Cr SE of Mt Breakenridge. This spur is deactivated, though 4WDs can go another 2km. It is about a 4 hour drive from Vancouver. Ski up the road, staying on the S side of English Cr at km 3. The road runs to near 1100m on the W branch of English Cr. The recommended route climbs through old-growth forest to gain the subalpine area of small lakes directly S of the summit. From the lakes, continue N into a narrow valley and ascend open slopes beyond to reach the glacier SW of the peak. The summit is a knife-edged ridge and can be reached by kicking steps up the final NW slope for stunning views of Harrison Lk. The descent is an enjoyable 600m run. There are also attractive slopes S of Pk 2260 that literally put Harrison Lk under your ski tips.

Traverse Pk (2460m), located 4km N of Mt Breakenridge, is also a recommended ski ascent that can be reached by traversing the glacier at the head of Snowshoe Cr.

View of Harrison Lk from approximately 2100m. Photo by Jos van der Burg





# Chilliwack River

# 8



Skiing off the summit of Mt Rahm.

**T**he Chilliwack River drains the mountains south of the Fraser Valley. These ranges are part of the Cascade Mountains but their proximity to Vancouver demands their inclusion. This is stunning terrain with impressive rocky spires and steep, rugged mountains. Summits rise from deep forested valleys up to as high as 2700m. Most of the trips are classic ski ascents of individual summits with steep climbs of 1300–1600m and incredible views of well-known rugged peaks such as Mt Slesse, Welch Pk and Mt Baker. Descents are often long rewarding runs in a spectacular setting. Most trips are only feasible in good weather and stable avalanche conditions. Highlights include ski ascents of Foley Pk and Mt Rahm, both for advanced skiers.

## **Snow Conditions**

Though still fairly coastal in nature, the mountains in the Chilliwack R area lie in the rainshadow of Mt Baker, 60–80km to the SW, so snow conditions are generally similar but snowfall is less than at the Mt Baker ski area. Typical

alpine snowpacks are 2.5m in the W end of this region and taper off to around 2m as you head E. Snowfall is in the 8–10m range. Peaks E of Chilliwack Lk are almost halfway between Mt Baker and Manning Park and exhibit some Interior influence in their snow climate.

## **Access**

The main access road to this region is the Chilliwack Lk road, which is reached from the Trans-Canada Hwy near Chilliwack by taking the Vedder Rd exit 119, 90km E of Vancouver. Drive S to the Chilliwack R at Vedder Crossing. The Chilliwack Lk road turns left and runs up the N side of the Chilliwack R. Vedder Crossing is approximately a 1.5 hour drive from Vancouver. Distances along the Chilliwack Lk road from there are:

km 0—Vedder Crossing

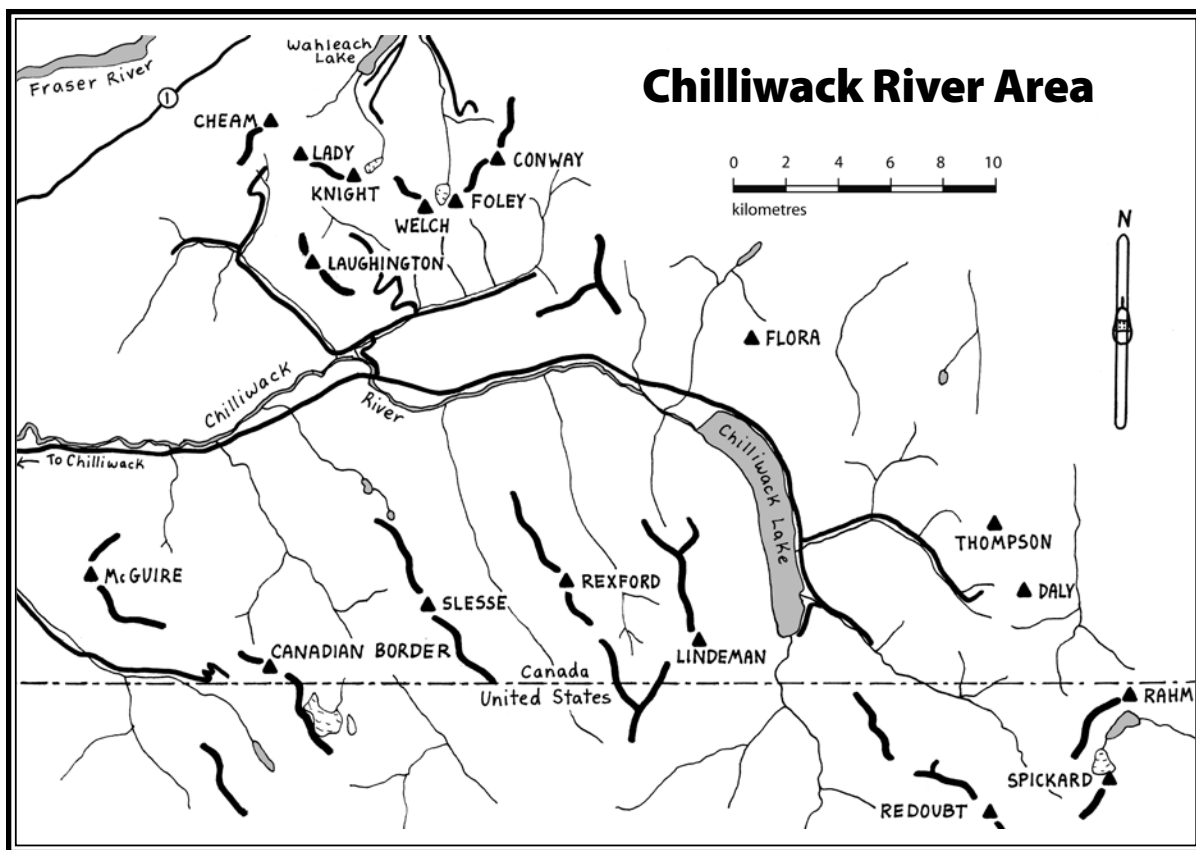
km 10—Road crosses to S side of Chilliwack R

km 27—Road returns to N side of Chilliwack R

km 27—Foley Cr road to Cheam Range

km 42—Chilliwack Lk





km 48—Paleface Cr

km 51—Depot Cr

The main road to Chilliwack Lk is plowed in the winter but it is generally not possible to drive farther down the E side of Chilliwack Lk until April. Most of the trips in this section start from logging roads. In the winter it is only necessary to drive up far enough to reach snow, and for most of the trips this is often possible without a 4WD truck. Current road conditions and maps of the logging roads are available at [www.for.gov.bc.ca/dck](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/dck). Detailed road bulletins and trip reports are available at [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com).

### Multi-use Considerations

Snowmobiling is popular in the region, but few of the trips described here are in snowmobiling areas. An exception is the approach to Mt Cheam, where logging roads in Chipmunk Cr are used regularly by snowmobilers who mostly go up onto the extensive network of roads on Mt Mercer. Mt McGuire was once a popular ski trip but is now widely

used for snowmobiling by the Cheam Whiskey Jacks snowmobile club of Chilliwack.

Descending the snow gully on the SW side of Canadian Border Pk.





Canadian Border Pk from the SW. Photo by John Scurlock

## Canadian Border Peak 2291m

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 1420m  
Start: 700m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92H/4  
Best: Mar

Despite the somewhat tricky access, the rock spire of Canadian Border Pk is a spectacular setting for a recommended ski trip with excellent skiing.

Access is from logging roads in Tamihi Cr. Turn right from the Chilliwack Lk road at km 10, immediately after crossing the Chilliwack R. After a short distance turn left up the Tamihi Cr logging road, which runs SE up Tamihi Cr. The road is gated at the second bridge, which crosses to the N side of Tamihi Cr at km 9 at an elevation of 540m. Check the link for forest service roads at [www.for.gov.bc.ca/dck](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/dck). A key can be obtained from Tamihi Logging. This trip is best done when it is possible to drive several kilometres past the gate to 700m or higher and then hit enough snow to be able

to ski up the rest of the road. In a typical year, this will likely be sometime around March.

The logging road climbs high onto slopes S of the summit. Take the left fork at 1000m and then the right fork at 1100m. Above 1300m, spurs run E into a large, open, logged area below the huge cliffs on the S side of Canadian Border Pk. There is plenty of skiing here. The recommended route angles up across the cutblock and ascends a broad snow tongue that curves around the E side of the cliffs and funnels into a shallow snow gully that runs all the way up to a narrow col on the S shoulder of Canadian Border Pk, about 170m below the summit. This col is a suitable destination as technical climbing is required to reach the actual summit. There are spectacular views of the adjacent American Border Pk and nearby Mt Tomyhoi. The gully and slopes below are an excellent 650m run. This slope faces SW, so consider the effects of the sun on the avalanche hazard carefully.



View S from near treeline on Cheam Pk. Photo by Jos van der Burg

## Cheam Peak

**2112m**

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 13km  
Elevation Gain: 1310m  
Start: 800m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92H/4  
Best: Mar–Apr

Cheam Pk is a well known Fraser Valley landmark that makes a reasonable ski trip from logging roads on its S side and offers great views.

A side road branches N from the Chilliwack Lk road at km 27. Follow this road and after 2km at Foley Cr, take the left fork heading W down the N side of the Chilliwack R. Chipmunk Cr is the first major side valley. Logging roads begin on the W side of the creek, then cross to the N fork near 900m and climb to near treeline immediately S of Cheam Pk, 11km from the Chilliwack R. The road has some waterbars but otherwise is in good condition. Logging roads in Chipmunk Cr are used regularly by snowmobilers, who mostly go up onto the extensive network of roads and cutblocks on Mt Mercer.

Depending on the snow line, you may only be able to drive a few kilometres up Chipmunk Cr, and will have to ski the remaining 5 or 6km on the road. The upper part of the mountain is attractive, with good views and open S facing slopes. From the end of the road, traverse into the flat basin immediately S of Cheam then swing E under

Cheam Pk from the W. Photo by John Scurlock



Lady Pk to make a switchback to reach the Cheam–Lady col. Open slopes on the SE ridge lead to the summit and incredible views of the Fraser Valley.

The descent is usually via the same route and is an enjoyable 600m ski run. In good conditions, there are also steeper S facing runs directly off the summit.

Nearby Lady Pk (2189m) can also be ascended from the Cheam–Lady col by skiing up its broad W facing slopes to the shoulder N of the summit and scrambling up the last 100m to the top.



Open ridges on Mt Laughington.

## Mt Laughington

**1800m**

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1360m  
Start: 440m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Simple  
Map: 92H/4  
Best: Dec–Mar

A ski up logging roads provides easy access to this gentle, open summit adjacent to the Cheam Range. It is a destination for mid-winter when the avalanche hazard is high.

Access is from the Foley Cr road. At km 27 the Chilliwack R road crosses to the N side of the Chilliwack R. A major side road branches left here. Follow this branch, and after 2km take the right fork up Foley Cr. After another 2km, a logging road branches left across Foley Cr and ascends broad slopes W of Airplane Cr. This road is gated, and it is necessary to park here at 440m unless you arrange to borrow a key. For information on obtaining a key, check the link for forest service roads at [www.for.gov.bc.ca/dck](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/dck). The road climbs quickly (with several switchbacks) before swinging N into Airplane Cr valley. Take the left fork at 1000m and again near 1400m, and then climb into the pleasant meadows lying SE of the long, gentle summit ridge. Mt Laughington is easily climbed from here.



Skiing off the summit of Knight Pk, with Welch Pk, Baby Munday and Stewart Pk behind.

## Knight Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 15km  
Elevation Gain: 1800m  
Start: 440m

**2237m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92H/4  
Best: Feb–Mar

A long steep climb from Foley Cr gives access to a spectacular ski ascent in the rugged Cheam Range, with some good skiing on S facing slopes. This trip is recommended only when the avalanche hazard is low.

Access is from the Foley Cr road. Turn left from the Chilliwack Lk road at km 27, just after crossing to the N side of the Chilliwack R. After 2km, take the right fork up Foley Cr. After another 2km, the Airplane Cr logging road branches left across Foley Cr and ascends broad slopes W of Airplane Cr. This road is gated, and it is necessary to park here at 440m unless you arrange to borrow a key. For information on obtaining a key, check the link for forest service roads at [www.for.gov.bc.ca/dck](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/dck).

Walk and ski up logging roads that switchback steeply up slopes W of Airplane Cr. At the second switchback at 1000m, take a decommissioned spur road that branches right and traverses into the Airplane Cr valley. After

approximately 1.5km, drop from the road and cross Airplane Cr to gain an indistinct ridge W of a long avalanche gully that descends S from Baby Munday Pk. The toe of this ridge is steep and somewhat bushy to gain (though a trail exists here). Above this short section, timber and open slopes adjacent to the gully can be used to gain the gentle shoulder SW of Baby Munday Pk. Knight Pk is straightforward from here, and skis can be worn to the summit, from which there are superb views.

## Foley Ski Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 11km  
Elevation Gain: 1650m  
Start: 600m

**2250m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92H/4  
Best: Feb–Mar

Foley Pk is an impressive rock pyramid at the E end of the rugged Cheam Range. Its gentler SW summit provides a classic 1-day ski ascent in a spectacular setting. Skiing is on steep S facing slopes, and except for a short section of forest, the entire route is open. This is a superb ski trip when the avalanche hazard is low.



The SE side of Foley Pk. *Photo by John Scurlock*

Access is from the Foley Cr road. Turn left from the Chilliwack Lk road at km 27, just after crossing to the N side of the Chilliwack R. After 2km, take the right fork up Foley Cr. Continue for 6km. Just past Foley Lk a spur road branches left and switchbacks up the steep hillside E of Williamson Cr. Drive as high as possible on this spur, though in mid-winter the road will likely be snow covered and you will have to start skiing by 600–800m. There is a gate at 600m, which is sometimes locked.

Ski up the road, taking the right branch at 800m. After a switchback at 920m, take the right branch at 1080m, which traverses E across the hillside. Where the road ends, traverse a 500m section of steeper forest to enter the long, open gully SE of Foley Pk. The entire route is open from here and climbs a system of steep avalanche slopes, which could be very dangerous: consider the conditions carefully before climbing higher. This trip is best in mid-winter, when daytime warming is less likely to trigger avalanches than later in the spring. Traveling in the gully is also easier with a decent snowpack down to 1000m. Above 1200m,

Skiing slopes below Foley Pk.



ascend the E side of the gully by switchbacking up safer microterrain. The gully can be followed all the way up to just under Foley Pk before swinging W to its SW peak. The SW peak is skiable right to its summit at 2250m. It is an airy spot in a spectacular setting across from the snow-covered rock spire of Welch Pk with great views of Mt Slesse and other summits. The upper 1200m of the mountain offer a great descent on steep S facing slopes.

## Conway Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 13km  
Elevation Gain: 1320m  
Start: 680m

**2000m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92H/4  
Best: Feb–Apr

A broad ski summit on the E end of the Cheam Range above Wahleach Lk. The summit is not impressive, but the setting gives great views of the rugged Cheam Range and there is 600–800m of skiing on N facing slopes. Wahleach Lk is also referred to as Jones Lk.

Access is from Laidlaw, 125km E of Vancouver. Take Exit 153 on Hwy 1, about 20 km E of Chilliwack. A gravel road climbs S for 9.5km to Wahleach Lk at 642m. The road

Open slopes N of Conway Pk. *Photo by Nico Lhomme*





View of the NE side of the Cheam Range from Wahleach Lk. Photo by Jos van der Burg

is sometimes plowed to cabins at the N end of the lake. A 2WD road continues down the E side of the lake. At 3.5km, take the major fork going up Flat Cr, which drains the N sides of Welch, Foley and Conway. The Flat Cr spur can only be driven 2km up the E side of Flat Cr to a major washout. This section of road also has waterbars, which may be impassable for some cars. The route is best when there is little or no snow at the lake (so that the road can be driven to Flat Cr) and then ample snow above 900m to make the most of the skiing above. The snow level will depend greatly on the winter but these conditions will typically occur in February or March, or sometimes later.

In a good snow year it is possible to leave the road at the bottom of the first switchback, 1.5km S of the major washout at 930m (GR033493), and ski SE through a short stretch of thick second growth to gain mostly open slopes that can be followed SE and S to Mt Conway. If there is not enough snow at the first switchback, continue up the road, which switchbacks up the N side of the creek draining from N of Mt Conway. Leave the road at the end of the second switchback at 1100m. (In the summer a trail leaves the end of the fourth switchback at 1200m.) Approach the final peak from the SW. There is reasonable skiing from the summit and excellent views of the Cheam Range.

## Lady Ski Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 25km  
Elevation Gain: 1850m  
Start: 640m

Jos van der Burg, Francis St-Pierre, April 2008

The unnamed summit halfway between Lady and Knight Pks is a challenging spring ski ascent with spectacular views of the rugged Cheam Range and a long run on N facing slopes.

Road access is from Wahleach Lk, as described above for Mt Conway. Depending on conditions, ski or drive down the E side of Wahleach Lk. About half a kilometre past Flat Cr, ski up a branch road that makes a long ascending traverse to past the S end of Wahleach Lk and swings into the valley N of Stewart Pk. The road ends at about 1000m at GR003491. Drop down from the end of the road and cross the exposed valley bottom. The crux of the trip is ascending steep snow gullies that climb SW to gentler alpine terrain N of Knight Pk. Once in the alpine, ski up open slopes to gain Pk 2080 from the N. The descent off the summit offers a tremendous 700m run back to treeline.

In heavy snow years it is also possible to ski down Wahleach Lk to reach the S fork of Wahleach Cr.

## 2080m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92H/4  
Best: Apr





View of Chilliwack Lk from Flora Pk. Photo by Jos van der Burg



Skinning up Mt Daly with Mt Redoubt behind.

## Flora Peak

**1950m**

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 9km  
Elevation Gain: 1310m  
Start: 640m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92H/3  
Best: Jan–Mar

For lack of an official name, this is the gentle summit immediately W of Flora Lk at the N end of Chilliwack Lk. It is an enjoyable ski trip on S facing slopes with good views.

Access is via Flora Lake Trail. Park on the Chilliwack Lk road at km 40, just E of Post Cr and shortly before the campground at Chilliwack Lake Provincial Park.

To find the start of the trail, follow an old gated road parallel to Post Cr. About 250m from the gate, the trail branches to the right following old roads at first. The trail angles E to switchback up timbered slopes adjacent to the gully draining S from Flora Pk. The trail does not go to Flora Pk but provides easy access to treeline before it veers E to Flora Lk via the saddle S of Flora Pk. Leave the trail as the trees thin out near 1200m, and follow the pleasant shoulder above NE to the summit with excellent views of Chilliwack Lk.

The descent offers 700–800m of alpine skiing in an attractive setting.

## Mt Daly

**2130m**

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 20km  
Elevation Gain: 1370m  
Start: 760m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92H/3  
Best: Mar–Apr

Mt Daly lies on Custer Divide E of Chilliwack Lk. Though most of this trip is spent approaching the summit on extensive logging roads in Paleface Cr, the gentle summit is a pleasant ascent with great views. Slopes near the peak and in the upper cutblocks offer up to 500m of turns.

Access is from Chilliwack Lk. Park beside the Chilliwack Lk road on the N side of Paleface Cr at km 48. The Paleface Cr road has been deactivated and is not driveable. It heads up the N side of Paleface Cr. In early spring you will likely need to carry skis for up to an hour to reach snow. Near 1000m, stay on the main road, which runs up the SE fork of Paleface Cr. There are quite a few waterbars but otherwise the road is in good shape for skiing. The road stays on the N side of the creek and continues to near 1600m. From a large clearcut here, angle SE through the forest and climb past the small lake at 1750m at the head of Paleface Cr. Mt Daly is easily reached by crossing over the col and ascending over SW slopes. The summit is a great viewpoint, and you can see peaks all the way from Mt Rahm to Mt Slesse and the Cheam Range.

On the way down, a variation dropping NW from the 1950m col W of the summit offers a more enjoyable descent route back to the logging road.

Nearby Thompson Pk (2202m) can be reached from the 1680m pass immediately NW of Mt Daly by skiing up its S ridge.

## Mt Rahm

**2584m**

Length: 2 days  
Total Distance: 34km  
Elevation Gain: 3080m  
Start: 670m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92H/3, Mt Spickard  
Best: April

Richard Suddaby, Lorne Stevens, 1992

The most northerly of a high group of steep impressive summits SE of Chilliwack Lk, Mt Rahm is one of the finest classic weekend ski ascents from Vancouver. A steep narrow glacier on its N side offers a tremendous 1200m descent.



Aerial view of Mt Rahm from the NE. Photo by John Scurlock

The summit lies just S of the Canada–US border at the head of Maselpanik Cr. Logging roads in Maselpanik Cr provided the best access for many years and remain the quickest approach, but as these have become overgrown with alder, this route can only be recommended to the bravest souls. The alternative is to ski up and over Custer Ridge from Chilliwack Lk via logging roads in Paleface Cr. This makes for a fairly strenuous 2-day trip but is enjoyable throughout and there is time for a side trip to Mt Daly at the end of the first day.

Access is from Chilliwack Lk. Park beside the Chilliwack Lk road on the N side of Paleface Cr at km 48. The Paleface Cr road has been deactivated and is not driveable. It heads up the N side of Paleface Cr. In early spring you will likely need to carry skis for up to an hour to reach snow. Near 1000m, stay on the main road, which runs up the SE fork of Paleface Cr. There are quite a few waterbars but otherwise the road is in good shape for skiing. The road stays on the N side of the creek and continues to near 1600m. From a large clearcut here, angle SE through the forest to the small lake at 1750m at the head of Paleface Cr.

View of the narrow glacier of the N side of Mt Rahm.



Near the top of the 1200m descent off summit of Mt Rahm.

The recommended campsite is in the col above with great views. There should be enough time for a quick ascent of nearby Mt Daly, 1.5km to the NE, from which the route up Mt Rahm is visible.

On the second day, continue to Mt Rahm by dropping 550m into the Maselpanik Cr valley, sticking to glades on the S side of the valley running E from camp. Below 1500m, a road can be followed for about 1km. Leave the road where it turns sharply N and continue dropping to Maselpanik Cr, passing briefly through the forest while crossing the creek to end up in the logged area on the E side of the creek near 1300m. The route from here is open and continues up Maselpanik Cr. Where the valley steepens above 1600m, veer right and ski up a box canyon that opens onto broad slopes above. An ascending traverse then leads E to the bottom of the distinctive walled glacier ascending the N side of Mt Rahm. This whole side of Mt Rahm is big avalanche terrain, so assess the conditions carefully. The glacier steepens to about 40°, and a rib on its W side provides a bit of psychological microterrain. The final summit is a narrow pyramid just big enough to ski onto and offers stupendous views of nearby Mt Spickard and the Picket Range.



Mt Spickard from Mt Rahm.

## Mt Spickard

Length: 2–3 days  
Total Distance: 28km  
Elevation Gain: 1950m  
Start: 790m

**2737m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: Mt Spickard  
Best: April

After you've skied off Mt Rahm you'll want to ski Mt Spickard too. Located in North Cascades National Park in Washington State on the rugged divide between the Chilliwack R and Ross Lk, this mountain has everything: logging road, old-growth forest, steep headwall, S facing slopes, N facing slopes, glacier skiing and a short backpack to the summit. The peak is an outstanding spring ski ascent, with 1100m of fall-line skiing. It is the 13th highest summit in Washington, only slightly lower than Mt Shuksan.

Access is from Chilliwack Lk. Near the S end of the lake, a branch road runs SE up Depot Cr from km 51 on the Chilliwack Lk road. This can be driven for about 1.5km to a major washout. Continue on foot, carrying skis and taking the left fork about 1.5km past the washout. (The junction is a bit hard to find. If you come to the bridge across Depot Cr, you've gone too far.) This fork is bushy but continues for another 2 km to the Canada-US border. A trail can

be picked up beyond the edge of the logging slash at the border, and after a short stretch of blowdowns ascends the N side of Depot Cr through pleasant old-growth forest. Depot Cr has a major headwall near 1400m. Despite a number of cliff bands, this section can generally be skied with a few sections of kicking steps. Watch for possible avalanche hazard. The hanging valley above the headwall is an amazing place, and open skiing continues above to steeper slopes that climb NE to the col between Silver Cr and Depot Cr at 2200m. Mt Spickard is climbed from here by skiing up the E side of the glacier N of the peak. Use caution for crevasses. The glacier is excellent skiing. The final summit is a short snow climb/scramble above the bergschrund via its W ridge and gives stunning views S into the Picket Range. Most people leave skis at the bergschrund, but the final slope has been skied from the summit (about 50°). This is a strenuous 2 day trip.

Mt Rahm, only 3km to the N across Silver Lk, has been ascended on skis from Silver Lk via a narrow couloir on its SW side.

Permits are required for overnight camping in North Cascades National Park—see [www.nps.gov/noca](http://www.nps.gov/noca).



Skiing on the Coleman Gl on the NW side of Mt Baker. Photo by Pat Mulrooney

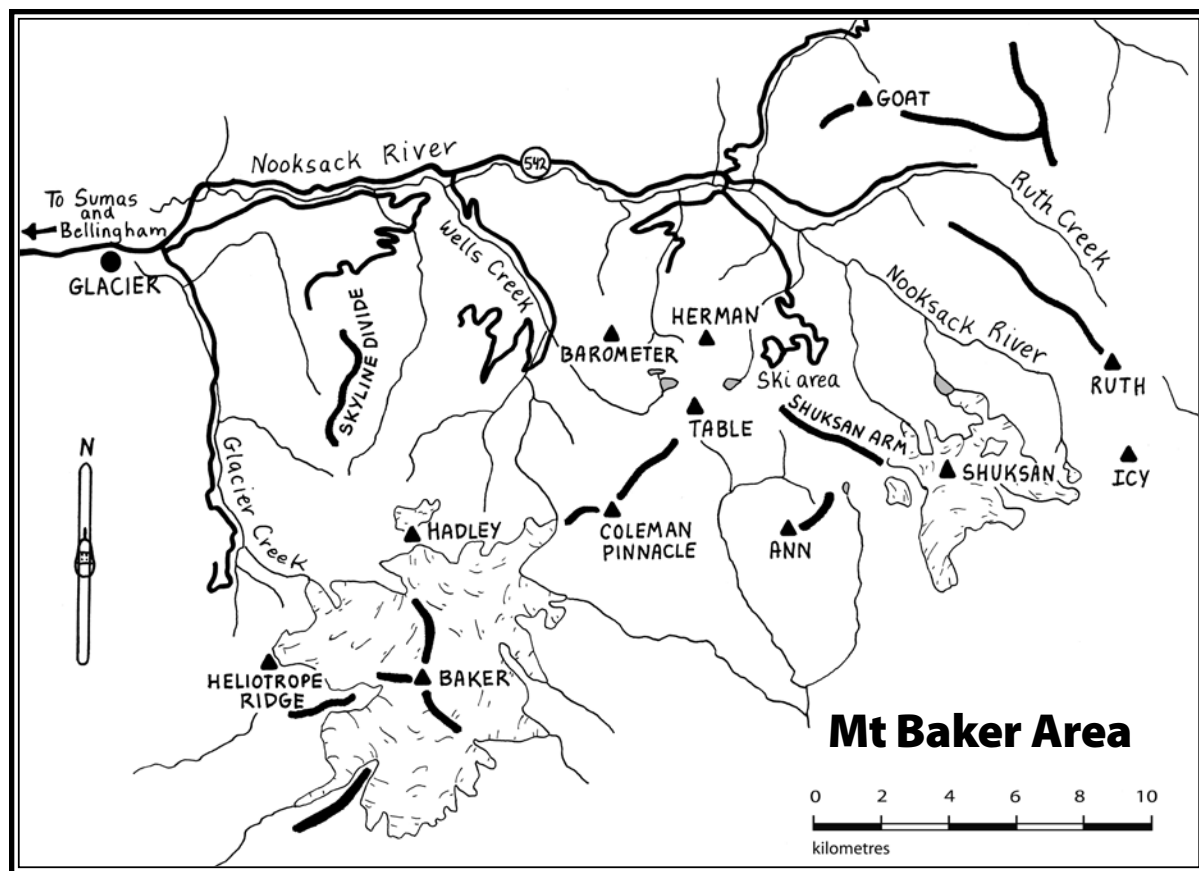
**M**t Baker (3286m) is the highest summit readily accessible from Vancouver. On a clear day the huge volcano and surrounding summits are visible from the city. Located in Washington State, these ranges are technically part of the Cascade Mountains but their proximity and ease of access from Vancouver demand their inclusion. Much of the area is typical of the North Cascades—with peaks rising to 2100m from deep, forested valleys—but the entire region is dominated by Mt Baker and to a lesser extent Mt Shuksan, which tower above the surrounding summits and offer a stunning backdrop for most trips.

There is a tremendous variety of skiing here, with trips ranging from stormy powder days near treeline or mid-winter ski ascents of lower peaks to long, challenging, spring ski-mountaineering adventures. Most ski trips here are one day. Descents range from glades and open slopes at treeline to long runs on high-alpine glaciers.

Steep ski descents have not been included in this book, but a summary of descents in the area can be found at [www.nwmj.org](http://www.nwmj.org). See also [www.cascadeclassics.org](http://www.cascadeclassics.org) and [www.alpenglow.org](http://www.alpenglow.org).

## **Snow Conditions**

Mt Baker is famous for its huge snowfall. It is the first mountain barrier to storms sweeping off the Strait of Georgia and snowfall is further enhanced by local weather patterns around the massive peak. The average annual snowfall at the Mt Baker ski area is 16m at an elevation of 1280m. This gives a typical spring snowpack of 4.4m. The record winter of 1998–99 saw 29m of snowfall, which built a snowpack of over 8m. Other records include 240cm of snow over a 5-day period in November 2006 and a maximum monthly snowfall of 770cm. The abundant snowfall gives some of the best early-season skiing: the season often begins in early November. The area generally has a deep snowpack, and



good skiing is to be found throughout the backcountry season, which lasts well into June on the glaciers of Mt Baker (and even July if you are determined enough). Note that trailbreaking is generally reasonable but can be extremely difficult after a huge snowfall. Snow settlement is generally fairly rapid after a major storm.

### Access

The main access road is Mt Baker Hwy 542. From Vancouver, take the Trans-Canada Hwy E for 62km to the Abbotsford/Sumas exit 92 and head S to cross into the US at Sumas. Don't forget your passport. From Sumas, turn left on Hwy 547, following signs for the Mt Baker Ski area until you join Hwy 542. Hwy 542 follows the Nooksack R drainage E through the town of Glacier to the Mt Baker ski area. Glacier is 36km from the border and approximately a 1.5 hour drive from Vancouver. Important distances from Glacier are:

- km 0—Glacier
- km 1—Glacier Creek Road 39

km 21—Twin Lakes Road 3065

km 22—Hannegan Road 32

km 37—Mt Baker ski area

Many of the trips in this section start from the Mt Baker ski area. Depending on border line-ups and road conditions, the ski area is approximately a 2.3 hour drive from Vancouver, 1.3 hours from Bellingham or 2.5 hours from Seattle.

All of the trips described in this chapter lie within Mt Baker Wilderness, which is part of the Mt Baker–Snoqualmie National Forest ([www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs)), or North Cascades National Park ([www.nps.gov/noca/](http://www.nps.gov/noca/)). Additional information is available from the Glacier Public Service Center 360-599-2714, whose office hours vary in the winter.

Note that most side roads are not plowed and are typically snow covered at lower elevations until mid-April. Detailed information on road and trail conditions is available at the Mt Baker–Snoqualmie National Forest website

([www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs)). Conditions are referenced by the road and trail numbers, given above.

## Maps

Detailed maps of the US are produced by the US Geological Survey. For each trip, reference is given to the 1:24,000 quadrangle covering the area of the trip. USGS maps at 1:62,500 are also useful. Green Trails publishes a version of the USGS maps that includes up-to-date road and trail information—see [www.greentrailsmaps.com](http://www.greentrailsmaps.com).

## References

*100 Classic Backcountry Ski and Snowboard Routes in Washington*, by Rainer Burgdorfer  
*Cascade Alpine Guide: Climbing and High Routes—Vol. 3: Rainy Pass to Fraser River*, by Fred Beckey  
[www.turnsallyear.com](http://www.turnsallyear.com)

## Multi-use Considerations

The use of motorized vehicles within Mt Baker Wilderness and North Cascades National Park is strictly controlled and all trips described here are in designated non-motorized areas, with the exception of the Glacier Cr road.

## Accommodation

Aside from a cafeteria, there are no facilities at the Mt Baker ski area. Accommodation is available at hotels and bed and breakfasts in the Glacier area. See links on [www.mtbaker.us](http://www.mtbaker.us).

## Skyline Divide

Length: 1 day  
 Total Distance: 14km  
 Elevation Gain: 800m  
 Start: 1340m

## 2000m

Difficulty: 2–3  
 Terrain: Challenging  
 Map: Mt Baker  
 Best: Oct–Nov

The Skyline Divide is a scenic alpine ridge running N from Mt Baker. In the summer it is a stunning meadow hike with tremendous views of the icy N wall of Mt Baker. In late fall, the trail gives quick access to a fabulous ski tour along the divide and good early-season skiing on alpine meadows.

Turn right 1.5km E of Glacier on Glacier Creek Rd 39. After 50m, turn left on Deadhorse Creek Rd 37. The road starts off flat as it follows the S side of the Nooksack R for 8km, then switchbacks uphill for 13km to a parking lot and trailhead at 1280m. The road is not plowed in the winter, and this trip is only recommended early in the season when the snowline is hovering around 1200m and you can still drive to the parking lot or at least close to it. Once the snowline moves lower, access requires a long ski up the road. The trick is to catch the conditions when there is just



View of Mt Baker from the Skyline Divide.

enough snow to ski up high but not so much that you're forced to park a long way down from the parking lot.

From the parking lot, walk or ski up Skyline Divide Trail 678. The trail climbs steadily through pleasant forest. Snow is usually reached quickly, and it takes about an hour to the first meadows at the N end of Skyline Divide. It is a pleasant ski tour S along the crest of the divide for 3km to its high point with stunning views from Puget Sound to Mt Shuksan and the Cheam Range. At several points along the ridge crest there are excellent opportunities for ski runs on the meadowed slopes that drop off the E side of the divide. Runs are up to 250m. Note that while touring along the ridge is mostly in challenging avalanche terrain, some of the steeper runs venture onto complex avalanche slopes.

## Heliotrope Ridge

Length: 1 day  
 Total Distance: 10km  
 Elevation Gain: 1280m  
 Start: 920m

## 2180m

Difficulty: 3  
 Terrain: Complex  
 Map: Mt Baker  
 Best: Oct–Nov

A broad shoulder on the W side of Mt Baker that offers excellent early-season skiing on open slopes and the edge of the Coleman Gl.

Turn right 1.5km E of Glacier on Glacier Creek Rd 39. The road climbs gradually for 13km to a parking lot and trailhead at 1120m. The road is not plowed in the winter, and this trip is only recommended early in the season, when you can drive to at least 900m so that you are within a few kilometres of the parking lot. The trick is to time your visit for when there is just enough snow to ski up high but not so much that you're forced to park a long way down the road.

## Heliotrope Ridge Trail

The most popular route follows Heliotrope Ridge Trail. From the parking lot, ski or walk up Heliotrope Ridge Trail



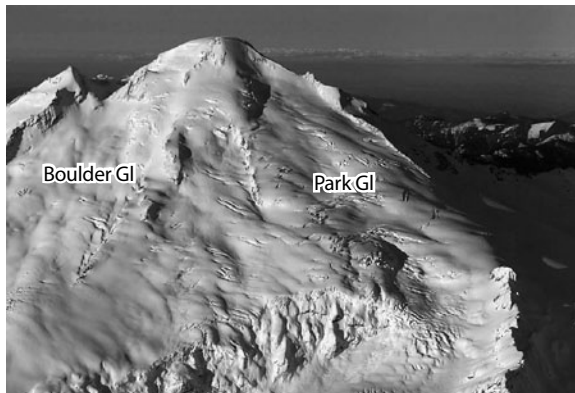


Early season skiing below Heliotrope Ridge on the edge of the Coleman Gl. *Photo by Laurent Mingo*

677, which angles E through the forest for 3km onto a sub-alpine bench at 1400m on the E side of Kulshan Cr. Reach treeline shortly beyond and ascend steeper open slopes S to a bench below the Coleman Gl. Travel on the main part of Coleman Gl is not recommend early in the winter, as the crevasses are poorly covered. Instead, veer W below the glacier snout and angle across to the W margin of the glacier. The edge of the glacier has many fewer crevasses and can be ascended to the 2180m high point at the W end of Heliotrope Ridge. There is excellent skiing here, with runs up to 500m and great views of Mt Baker and the main Coleman Gl.

### Grouse Creek

If there is enough snow to ski from the parking lot, then a direct route up Grouse Cr offers a quicker and more open alternative for skiing than the trail. The ski route leaves the trail shortly after crossing Grouse Cr, a few hundred metres from the parking lot, and ascends the E side of Grouse Cr. After minor bush, the terrain quickly becomes open above 1200m. There are several routes onto Heliotrope Ridge from here. All involve careful routefinding through complex avalanche terrain and are only recommended for experienced parties in safe avalanche conditions. The first route ascends the obvious gully that heads SE onto Heliotrope Ridge (direct but also a major avalanche trap), while a slightly safer route follows the indistinct rib just S of the gully. Both routes converge at a flatter bench above 1600m. From the bench, either swing NE across steeper slopes onto the 1720m shoulder of Heliotrope Ridge or traverse S and ascend an indistinct rib and more microterrain to gain the ridge higher up. Once on Heliotrope Ridge, ascend gentler open slopes and the less crevassed edge of the Coleman Gl on the E side of the ridge to the high point at 2180m.



Mt Baker from the E. *Photo by John Scurlock*

## Mt Baker

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 20km  
Elevation Gain: 2160m  
Start: 1130m

First Ski Ascent: Edwin Loners and Robert Sperlin 1930  
First Ski Descent: Don Fraser and Hans Otto Giese, 1933

**3286m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: Mt Baker  
Best: May–June

A heavily glaciated volcano visible from Vancouver, Mt Baker is the highest summit easily accessible from the Lower Mainland. It was first climbed on skis in the 1930s and is a superb spring ski ascent via the Coleman and Deming Gl.

Turn right 1.5km E of Glacier on Glacier Creek Rd 39. The road climbs gradually for 13 km to a parking lot at 1120m. It is not plowed in winter, and this trip is generally done in late spring from mid-April or May onwards when you can drive to within a few kilometres or less of the parking lot.

Ski or walk up Heliotrope Ridge Trail 677, which traverses E onto a subalpine bench at 1400m and after crossing Kulshan Cr, climb S onto open slopes below the Coleman Gl. Mt Baker is climbed by skiing up the SW side of the Coleman Gl to the 2740m Colfax col SW of the summit. Continue up the steeper ridge and snow slopes beyond, to ascend the upper Deming Gl SE of the Roman Wall. From the head of the Deming Gl, the true summit lies 500m across the summit plateau to the NE. The best part is the 1900m run down.

Despite the easy access, the Coleman and Deming Gl are large active glaciers with many heavily crevassed areas. It is essential that you be familiar with glacier travel and crevasse rescue and use caution in crevassed areas.

The ascent of Mt Baker is a moderately strenuous overnight trip but is often done as a day trip on skis by faster



Skiing below the Roman Headwall above the Coleman Gl on Mt Baker. *Photo by Pat Mulrooney*

parties. In good conditions, the ascent from the parking lot takes most people 6–8 hours, though record times are less than 3 hours.

The Grouse Cr route described for Heliotrope Ridge also offers access to the Coleman Gl in suitable conditions in the spring.

## Watson Traverse of Mt Baker

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 26km  
Elevation Gain: 2160m  
Start: 1130m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: Mt Baker, Shuksan Arm  
Best: May–June

Andy Hennig, Erick Larson, Dwight Watson, May 13, 1939, [www.alpenglow.org](http://www.alpenglow.org)

This is a challenging ski-mountaineering traverse up and over the summit of Mt Baker from Coleman Gl to the Mt Baker ski area 12km NE of the summit. It is a great classic route, worth repeating.

This trip combines an ascent of the standard Coleman–Deming route with a descent down the Park Gl on the opposite side of the mountain and a traverse of Ptarmigan Ridge past Table Mtn. Access is from the Glacier Cr road

but the finish is at the Mt Baker ski area, so you will want to shuttle a second car to the ski area before you start.

Ski up the Coleman–Deming route to the summit of Mt Baker as described above. From the summit you can peer down on the Park Gl. This view provides a good opportunity to pick out a route that avoids the major crevassed areas. It is also a good idea to reassess your time. The descent to the ski area will take at least 4–5 hours in good conditions, while the shortest descent is back down the Coleman–Deming route.

To reach the Park Gl from the summit, drop SE for about 200m towards the summit crater until it is possible to swing NE across the upper Boulder Gl and traverse below the Park Headwall onto the Park Gl at around 2960m. Some parties have stayed close to the cliffs above the Boulder Gl until around under the headwall. The headwall itself has also been skied (300m, 45°)—early in the season it is often capped by a cornice, so take skiers right to avoid the large bergschrund. Once on the Park Gl, stay high and traverse well across the glacier before descending. The Park Gl is N facing and offers a tremendous 1000m run down to the flat

saddle between the Rainbow and Mazama Gls. Traverse across the Rainbow Gl below The Portals and follow the divide running NE from the Sholes Gl to Ptarmigan Ridge, the S side of Table Mtn and the ski area beyond. There is a lot of traversing with uphill only near the Portals and Table Mtn. Depending on conditions, some parties are able to ski all the way to the ski area without putting skins on.



Crossing the Park Gl on the Mt Baker Orbit. *Photo by Matt Peters*

## Mt Baker High Level Orbit

Length: 3 days  
Total Distance: 28km  
Elevation Gain: 2700m  
Start: 1130m  
Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: Mt Baker, Shuksan Arm  
Best: May–June  
Jim Cronan, Matt Peters, Josh Stern, June 16, 2003

A very creative ski-mountaineering traverse around the upper levels of Mt Baker. This fine route provides an unusual way to explore this familiar volcano. It offers several enjoyable descents and requires extensive glacier travel.

The orbit is best done as a long day trip from a camp on the Coleman Gl below Heliotrope Ridge. Completing the orbit in a counterclockwise direction allows you to cross the S facing portion of the route early in the morning. Ski up the Coleman Gl and cross through Colfax Saddle (2750m) just E of Colfax Pk. Descend approximately 60m onto the Deming Gl and make a nearly level traverse across the Deming and Easton Gls. Ski down and across the Squak Gl to round the rock ridge separating the Squak and Talum Gls at 2340m. Continue descending across the Talum Gl to 2200m to pass below another rock ridge. Cross the Talum–Boulder Cleaver at the easiest looking spot, a little below 2200m. Cross the first half of the Boulder Gl with an ascending traverse and then ski down and across to the bottom of the Boulder–Park Cleaver at approximately 2100m. Most of the travel up to this point is pretty straightforward with relatively little crevasse hazard.

The route across the Park Gl will vary depending on crevasse patterns. The general idea is to make a gently

ascending traverse from the Boulder–Park Cleaver, gaining approximately 200m, followed by a slightly descending traverse over to where the Park Gl begins to face NE above the Rainbow Gl, instead of E above Park Cliffs. A fine 400m run drops NW from here to the flats of the Mazama Gl at 1900m. Skin over the ridge between the Mazama and Roosevelt Gls and make a long descending traverse across the Roosevelt and Coleman Gls back to camp. The orbit is 16km with 1800m of elevation gain and great views. The Roosevelt and Coleman Gls require the most careful route-finding for crevasses on the circumnavigation.

Note that the orbit could also be done from a camp at other points along the route, such as at the head of the Rainbow Gl with an approach from the Mt Baker ski area.

## Goat Mountain

## 2050m

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 20km  
Elevation Gain: 1430m  
Start: 620m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: Mt Larrabee  
Best: Feb–Mar

A long climb from the Nooksack R to this isolated summit N of the Mt Baker ski area is rewarded with great views and a tremendous ski run down an 800m gully on its N side.

Access is from Twin Lakes Rd 3065, which starts beside a highway maintenance yard 21km past Glacier. Park here well off the highway at 620m. Twin Lakes Rd climbs a few switchbacks and continues N and E up Swamp Cr towards Twin Lks. Ski up the road for 4.5km to where an old logging road branches to the E at 950m (GR968200). This road crosses Swamp Cr and switchbacks up 200m through an old cutblock on the lower W slopes of Goat Mtn. The cutblock is somewhat overgrown. From the top of the logged cutblock, make an ascending traverse SE through open forest to gain the long SE ridge at around 1400m. Avoid

Ascending the S side of Goat Mtn. Mt Sefrit behind.





Skiing off the summit of Ruth Mtn, with the N face of Mt Shuksan behind and Mt Baker visible in the distance.

cliffs on the S side of the ridge until above 1800m. You can ski right to the summit with great views of Mt Baker and Mt Shuksan. The recommended descent is down the long N facing gully, which drops 800m to the head of Swamp Cr from just E of the summit. This is a superb run but lies in a deep cleft with big avalanche slopes above it, so assess the avalanche hazard carefully. If in doubt about the stability, it is still an enjoyable run back down the SE side of the mountain. Twin Lakes Rd can be picked up at the bottom of the gully and skied back out to your car.

Goat Mtn can also be approached from trail 673, which climbs from Hannegan Rd up the S side of the mountain.

Near the top of the long N facing gully on Goat Mtn.



## Ruth Mountain

**2169m**

Length: 1 day

Total Distance: 17km

Elevation Gain: 1220m

Start: 950m

Sigurd Hall, Dwight Watson and partner, June 19, 1938, [www.alpenglow.org](http://www.alpenglow.org)

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: Mt Shuksan, Mt Sefrit

Best: May

A glaciated summit NE of Mt Shuksan, Ruth Mtn was first climbed on skis in the 1930s and makes a superb spring ski trip with a tremendous 800m run.

Access is from Hannegan Rd 32, which branches E up the N side of the Nooksack R 22km past Glacier. After 2km take the left fork, which continues for a further 6km up Ruth Cr to a parking area at 950m and the start of Hannegan Pass Trail 674. The scenic trail traverses open slopes above Ruth Cr, with views of the steep avalanche-swept slopes of Mt Sefrit and Nooksack Ridge. Depending on snow conditions, stay on the trail for up to 3km until there is sufficient snow in the valley bottom to warrant dropping to Ruth Cr. With a reasonable snowpack it is straightforward to ski up the S side of the creek above 1100m. The steep sided basin at the head of the valley is completely open above 1300m. Consider the avalanche conditions carefully. In safe condi-



View of the N side of Ruth Mtn from Hannegan Pass Trail.

tions, the most direct route switchbacks up the SE side of the basin and ascends the broad open slopes above to the summit. From the top there are spectacular views of Nooksack Cirque and Mt Shuksan.

It is possible to avoid some of the exposure to avalanches by climbing to Hannegan Pass and skiing S along the ridge crest to Ruth Mtn.

Sheltered ski slopes W of Herman Saddle.



## BAKER BACKCOUNTRY

The Mt Baker ski area lies 12km NE of Mt Baker on a subalpine plateau that sprawls between Mt Baker and Mt Shuksan. It provides excellent access to a beautiful area of rounded ridges, friendly summits, lakes and attractive alpine basins that offer a wide variety of superb backcountry skiing and ski-mountaineering trips with tremendous views. There is lots of good skiing here, with numerous runs up to 400m.

The Mt Baker Hwy was completed to Heather Meadows in 1927, and many of the tours described here have been popular since the 1930s. The first ski lifts were installed in 1936. (See [www.alpenglow.org](http://www.alpenglow.org).)



The ski area is located 37km E of Glacier, at the end of Mt Baker Hwy 542. The highway passes the lower parking lot at 1110m first, and continues to an upper parking lot in Heather Meadows at 1310m. Most trips begin from the upper parking lot. If you are planning an extended trip, check with parking attendants for overnight parking. Note that although overnight parking is allowed in the lower parking lot, the lot is usually gated at night.

The area receives abundant snowfall, and good skiing is to be found from November to June. As there are many serious avalanche slopes within a short distance of the ski area, all parties venturing into the backcountry here should be familiar with safe travel and rescue in avalanche terrain and carry the necessary avalanche safety gear. Check the avalanche forecast before venturing into the backcountry (206-526-6677 or [www.nwac.us](http://www.nwac.us)).

Most backcountry trips begin from the SW corner of the upper parking lot in Heather Meadows at 1310m and do not require use of the ski lifts. Ski S along Blueberry Cat Track, which climbs to Austin Pass.

The terrain is open and there are many possibilities and combinations for turns and tours. The most popular are described below.



View of Table Mtn and Mt Baker. Herman Saddle is on the right. *Photo by Lee Lau*

## Herman Saddle

Length: 1 days  
Total Distance: 6km  
Elevation Gain: 300+m  
Start: 1310m

## 1610m

Difficulty: 2/3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: Shuksan Arm  
Best: Nov–May

Less than a kilometre from the ski area, the gentle Bagley Cr valley turns W into a beautiful alpine basin bounded on three sides by excellent ski slopes. Herman Saddle lies at the head of the basin between Table Mtn and Mazama Dome, and the shortest and most popular backcountry ski trips from the ski area venture onto these slopes.

From the upper parking lot at Heather Meadows, follow the gentle Bagley Cr valley SW for less than 1km to the alpine basin surrounding upper Bagley Lk. Before diving onto one of the surrounding ski slopes, assess the avalanche conditions carefully. If you are confident the snowpack is reasonably stable, the steeper N facing slopes underneath Table Mtn offer excellent skiing with 250m runs. S facing slopes rising to Mt Herman, on the N side of the basin, are more susceptible to sun and wind but with good snow offer some of the best runs in the area, with up to 400m runs.

The most popular route ascends moderate slopes that

head W to Herman Saddle. There is good skiing here beyond the saddle on sheltered slopes descending to Iceberg Lk. In good weather, Mazama Dome can be climbed by skiing up its E ridge, from which there are great views of Mt Baker and Ptarmigan Ridge. There is additional skiing to the N above the lake at the head of Anderson Cr. These slopes are reached from the col E of Mazama Dome.

## Table Mountain Circuit 1615m

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 10km  
Elevation Gain: 600+m  
Start: 1310m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: Shuksan Arm  
Best: Dec–Apr

This is a highly recommended trip that combines a tour of the area with some good skiing and many opportunities for additional runs. The crux of the trip is a big avalanche slope on the S side of Table Mtn. As it is best to cross this avalanche slope at the beginning of the trip, the circuit is usually done in a clockwise direction.

From the ski area parking lot, take the Blueberry Cat Track S to Austin Pass. Leave the groomed run here and climb SW onto the broad shoulder known as Kulshan





Skiing along the S side of Ptarmigan Ridge below Coleman Pinnacle.

Ridge. The S side of Table Mtn is reached from Kulshan Ridge by dropping across steep S facing slopes to a bench SE of the summit. This is a big avalanche slope, so assess the avalanche hazard carefully before crossing. Follow the bench across the bottom of the S flank of Table Mtn and gain the 1600m shoulder on the SW side of the summit. The circuit continues around Table Mtn, passing over Iceberg Lk before climbing through Herman Saddle and down past Bagley Lks to the ski area (see above).

There are many possible variations and additions to this pleasant circuit: (i) Take advantage of some of the great runs around Herman Saddle. (ii) Instead of traversing all the way around to Herman Saddle, shorten the circuit by switchbacking up steeper slopes to the summit of Table Mtn (1750m) from just W of the summit, about half a kilometre before Mazama Lk. From the summit, there is an excellent 450m ski run NE down steep slopes to Bagley Lks. (iii) Head out onto Ptarmigan Ridge from the col S of Table Mtn and take advantage of some of the attractive runs there before continuing past Mazama Lk.

## Ptarmigan Ridge

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1100m  
Start: 1310m

## 1952m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: Shuksan Arm  
Best: Mar–Jun

Ptarmigan Ridge, which runs SW from Table Mtn to Coleman Pinnacle, has many excellent ski slopes and is a recommended alpine tour with stunning views.

Follow the Table Mtn Circuit to gain the col S of Table Mtn. The glistening slopes of Ptarmigan Ridge are very inviting from here. Drop W less than 100m and make an ascending traverse SW for 1km to the broad col on Ptarmigan Ridge at 1610m. Skiers focusing on turns can enjoy the excellent 300m runs here on moderate N facing slopes. There are two ways to return to the ski area. Either retrace your route around the S side of Table Mtn or head towards Mazama Lk from the bottom of one of your runs and follow the Table Mtn circuit over Herman Saddle and down past Bagley Lks to the ski area. The latter alternative is recommended if it has been a sunny day and you are concerned about avalanches on the steep slopes on the S side of Table Mtn.

For longer tours and overnight trips, continue to Coleman Pinnacle or beyond by traversing open slopes along either side of Ptarmigan Ridge for another 2km. Coleman Pinnacle (1952m) is a short scramble via its W ridge and offers great views. There is an excellent N facing run dropping 400m into Wells Cr from the minor col just W of Coleman Pinnacle.

Beyond Camp Kiser, the ridge continues SW to The Portals (2118m) and the E side of Mt Baker. This is a good destination for overnight trips. There is excellent spring skiing on the Sholes and Rainbow Gl's and beyond. Diehards can be seen carrying their skis along the Ptarmigan Ridge trail well into July and even August. Note that arrangements must be made for overnight parking at the ski area.

Other possibilities include a traverse to Hadley Pk and



Skiing slopes on the N side of Shuksan Arm, with Mt Shuksan behind.

Chowder Divide (see *100 Classic Backcountry Ski and Snowboard Routes in Washington* by Rainer Burgdorfer). Note that the Wells Cr road 33 is gated in the winter. An ascent of Mt Baker from this side is also feasible on skis via the Park and upper Boulder Glaciers. As this route is considerably longer than the standard Coleman–Deming route on the W side of the mountain, it is mostly used for a descent route as part of the Watson Traverse.

## Shuksan Arm

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 7km  
Elevation Gain: 500m  
Start: 1310m

**1707m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: Shuksan Arm  
Best: Dec–May

Shuksan Arm is the bumpy alpine ridge running SE from Heather Meadows to Mt Shuksan. The ski area lies on its N slopes. It makes a very scenic tour on skis, and in good conditions you can finish with a great run down to the ski area.

Though Shuksan Arm lies outside of the ski area boundary, much of the ridge is close to the ski area and you can expect to see out-of-bounds skiers and boarders on the more accessible parts of the ridge above Chair 8. The route described here traverses the full length of Shuksan Arm from the upper parking lot and does not rely on the chairlifts. The trip ends at the lower parking lot, so it is necessary to shuttle cars before you start or to hitchhike from the lower parking lot. Note that the lower parking lot gate closes at night.

From the ski area upper parking lot, take the Blueberry Cat Track S to Austin Pass. Follow the cat track E across the side of Panorama Dome until you can drop a short distance to the 1475m col S of Pan Dome at the head of Razor Hone Cr. This is the ski area boundary. Respect posted avalanche closures and carry avalanche gear—this tour is not recommended when there is a significant avalanche hazard. Though much of the ridge crest is gentle, there are numerous short, steep steps along the top of the ridge as well as potential avalanche slopes on both sides. Large stretches of the ridge are also heavily corniced.

The route begins with a 200m ascent of the 1690m dome known as Hemispheres, and continues for 2.5km over half a dozen small, rounded summits before reaching cliffs on the lower flanks of Mt Shuksan. The ridge is very scenic. It is possible to turn around anywhere, and the safest return retraces the route back along Shuksan Arm. In safe conditions, the most popular route takes a great 500m run off the N side of the ridge down to the ski area at the bottom of Chair 8. There are big slopes here with many terrain traps and complex features, so treat them appropriately. Fracture lines up to 4m deep have been measured, and there have been several fatalities on these slopes. The best place to start this run is from an indistinct 1650m col about 1km SE of Hemispheres (GR988105). The safest route descends an indistinct, sparsely treed ridge W of an unnamed creek and follows this down to cross Rumble Gully near 1230m. Most of the route is visible from above, so it can be assessed beforehand. The ski runs can be picked up on the N side of



Broad open slopes on the N side of Mt Ann as seen from Shuksan Arm.

Rumble Gully. From the bottom of Chair 8, follow a gentle access road down to the base of the ski area and the lower parking lot.

Other variations include descending to Lk Ann (1430m) from the end of Shuksan Arm. This is relatively straightforward, but don't try to descend before reaching the E end of Shuksan Arm or you will be blocked by cliffs.

## Mt Ann

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 15km  
Elevation Gain: 1300m  
Start: 1310m

## 1780m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: Shuksan Arm  
Best: Feb–May

Mt Ann lies under the huge W flanks of Mt Shuksan. It can be climbed as part of an advanced tour from the Mt Baker ski area and offers outstanding views and several attractive runs on N facing slopes.

There are different ways to do this trip. It is described here as a loop that starts from the upper parking lot and finishes at the lower parking lot by climbing over Shuksan Arm. Details of access and parking are described under Shuksan Arm.

Lake Ann can be reached from Austin Pass (1440m) by descending SE into Swift Cr and skiing down the gentle valley bottom underneath Shuksan Arm. This is a pleasant ski through open timber and mostly follows the route

of Lake Ann Trail 600 (not visible in winter), dropping to a low point at 1200m. Mt Ann (1780m) is the rounded summit 2km SW of Lk Ann. From where the route starts to climb toward Lk Ann, veer S towards the broad, open slopes on the N side of Mt Ann. Work your way up an indistinct ridge and microterrain in the middle of the slope to swing SW to a 1650m col E of the summit. Ski up the peak from its SE side. The summit gives tremendous views. The descent is an excellent 500m run on N facing slopes. If avalanche conditions are a concern, Lake Ann is a good alternative destination.

From the bottom of the run it is possible to retrace your tracks to Austin Pass. But the loop recommended here climbs 420m onto Shuksan Arm and takes in another superb 500m descent down the N side of Shuksan Arm to the ski area and the lower parking lot. Switchback E up onto the rounded ridge running N from Lake Ann and ascend this easily up onto the E end of Shuksan Arm. Ski NW along the crest of the arm over several bumps for about 1km. The descent to the ski area starts from just W of one of the higher bumps (1700m) in an indistinct 1650m col at GR988105. The descent route is visible from above and descends an indistinct, sparsely treed ridge down across Rumble Gully to the bottom of the main ski run under Chair 8. See Shuksan Arm above for more details.



Barometer Mtn and Sweet, Sweet Death couloir.

## Barometer Mountain 1760m

Length: 1 day

Total Distance: 12km

Elevation Gain: 1400m

Start: 1310m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: Shuksan Arm, Mt Larabee

Best: Feb–Mar

Anderson Cr lies NW of the Mt Baker ski area on the opposite side of Mt Herman and Slate Mtn. In years when there is a reasonable snowpack down to the bridge across the Nooksack R at 600m, it provides the opportunity for one-way trips from the ski area. One of the most creative trips here crosses Herman Saddle to take in Barometer Mtn as well as great skiing on two 600m couloirs. Highly recommended but seldom visited, this trip requires good routefinding skills. Pick a day with fresh snow down low and good avalanche conditions.

The route described is a one-way trip from the ski area to Mt Baker Hwy 542 where it crosses the Nooksack R. It is necessary to park at the Salmon Ridge Sno-Park on the S side of the Nooksack R about 22.5km from Glacier and either shuttle a second car or hitchhike to the ski area upper parking lot. Sno-Park permits are available in Glacier from the Mt Baker Snowboard Shop (360-599-2008). There is also parking at the start of the Hannegan Pass road on the N side of the Nooksack R.

From the upper parking lot at the ski area, ski up the regular route to Herman Saddle and drop W from the saddle down to Hayes Lk. Traverse the head of Anderson Cr and gain the S ridge of Barometer Mtn (1760m), which can be skied to the summit. Take a 200m run down the basin to the N and regain the ridge 1km N of Barometer Mtn just N of the 5735ft survey point on the USGS 1:24,000 Shuksan Arm Quadrangle. This puts you at the top of Sweet, Sweet, Death Couloir. The narrow couloir averages about 40° and drops 600m into Anderson Cr. It is a superb run. From the



Skiing Sweet, Sweet Death couloir. Photo by Jos van der Burg

bottom of the gully it is less than 1km to an old logging road in Anderson Cr. It is possible to bail out of the trip by taking this logging road (some alder in low-snow years) or by heading back to the ski area. The grand tour takes in one more couloir, which is reached by making a gradually ascending traverse to the N across the W side of Slate Mtn through beautiful old-growth forest. You will want to take a look at this slope ahead of time from Barometer Mtn. You are aiming for open rockslides at 1400m, next to a prominent rock buttress that sticks out of the forest at GR951155. From the rockslide next to the rock buttress, ski N around the bottom of the buttress and cross another open rockslide. The couloir known as Clean Slate starts in the forest beyond the rockslide at 1300m and descends N towards the Nooksack R. The couloir and the rock buttress above it are visible from the highway just W of the maintenance yard 21km past Glacier. Depending on snow conditions, you might have to walk down the bottom portion of the run. It ends in the forest at 730m, from where it is a short bushwack down to the valley floor, followed by 1km of flat road to the highway. This is a great adventure with 1700m of skiing!

Clean Slate couloir.





Mt Shuksan from the NW in early season. Photo by John Scurlock

## Mt Shuksan

**2783m**

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 2110m  
Start: 1130m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: Mt Shuksan  
Best: Apr–May

Henry Reasoner, Otto Trott, March 29, 1941

Mt Shuksan is a beautiful glaciated summit E of the Mt Baker ski area, with many possibilities for climbing and mountaineering. The mountain also makes a tremendous ski-mountaineering trip, and two routes have been used. The route described here climbs the White Salmon Gl on the NW side of the mountain. This route is a challenging spring ski ascent involving long steep slopes, significant routefinding and exposure to avalanche hazard. The standard route climbs the Sulphide Gl on the S side of the mountain but is not included here, as it is well beyond the range of this guidebook (see *100 Classic Backcountry Ski and Snowboard Routes in Washington* by Rainer Burgdorfer).

Access is from the lower parking lot at the Mt Baker ski area. This parking lot is gated at night, so check with attendants if you plan to finish late or stay overnight. From just E of the White Salmon Day Lodge, skin up a gentle access road that leads to the bottom of Chair 8, then make a descending traverse into White Salmon Cr, losing about 100m of elevation—this traverse can get a bit bushy late in the spring. Gain the lower White Salmon Gl at 1250m on its W side. The route up the glacier is generally straightforward with a few crevasses, but it is reasonably steep and is exposed to large avalanches from above, so assess the avalanche conditions carefully. The recommended route ascends the W side of the glacier. It is a 900m climb to a shoulder at the head of the glacier at 2150m. From the shoulder, swing E up an indistinct rib to gain a bench on



Descending the Upper Curtis Gl on Mt Shuksan. Photo by Todd Anthony

the Upper Curtis Gl near 2300m. Ski S across the bench above the large icefall dropping to the W. Slopes known as Hell's Highway (somewhat steep but not difficult) lead to the upper Sulphide Gl S of the summit. It is a short ski to the base of the summit pyramid. Most parties leave skis at the base and kick steps up snow gullies on the SW side. An ice axe recommended. From the top, there are excellent views of Mt Baker. The descent is a great run offering 1500m of mostly fall-line skiing! Save a bit of energy for the end, as there is a 150m climb back up to Chair 8 from the bottom of White Salmon Cr.

Note that the run on the White Salmon Gl is a recommended trip by itself, just to the head of the glacier at 2150m. This trip requires good conditions and is best in March. Also, the summit pyramid has been skied (about 45°).



View of the impressive Nooksack Cirque from just below the summit of Ruth Mtn. *Photo by Lowell Skoog*

## Nooksack Traverse

Length: 3 days

Total Distance: 30km

Elevation Gain: 3500m

Start: 1130m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Maps: Mt Shuksan, Mt Sefrit

Best: early Apr

Sam Avaiusini, Jason and Josh Hummel, Lowell Skoog and Sky Sjue, April 2-4, 2004

[www.nwmj.org](http://www.nwmj.org) (2004)

A brilliant high-alpine ski traverse around the headwaters of the Nooksack R from Mt Shuksan to Ruth Mtn, this is a very challenging route with difficult routefinding and demanding skiing. It is likely to become a classic.

Access is from the lower parking lot at the Mt Baker ski area. Ask parking attendants about parking overnight, since this lot is usually locked at night. Ideally, you will want leave a second car on Hannegan rd for the end of the trip. For more detailed access information, see separate headings for Mt Shuksan and Ruth Mtn.

The first day ascends the White Salmon Gl route to a high camp on the Sulphide Gl below the summit pyramid of Mt Shuksan (see Mt Shuksan). The crux of the trip involves descending the Nooksack Headwall from the upper Cry-

stal Gl onto the E Nooksack Gl. The original party found a skiable entrance on the S side of the headwall between the main ice cliff and huge cornices. This feature will likely vary from year to year and could require rappelling. Once in the awe-inspiring Nooksack Cirque, traverse the upper margin of the E Nooksack Gl. The glacier is riddled with crevasses later in the season but can be reasonably straightforward in early April. Beyond the end of Jagged Ridge, follow the divide N to Icy Pk (2152m), which can be ascended on skis to within a few metres of the summit via the prominent notch E of the peak. The original party skied down the steep Spillway Gl to a camp in Ruth-Icy col, but an easier variation crosses over the W shoulder of Icy Pk to traverse open slopes beyond into the Ruth-Icy col. Climb Ruth Mtn via the obvious 250m gully SSW of the summit for the final 800m descent down the N side of Ruth Mtn. Ski out Ruth Cr and down Hannegan rd to your car.

See also:

[www.alpenglow.org](http://www.alpenglow.org)

[www.alpineslider.com](http://www.alpineslider.com)

[www.cascadecrusades.org](http://www.cascadecrusades.org).





Mt Challenger and the heart of the Picket Range in North Cascades National Park.

## North Cascades National Park

[www.nps.gov/noca](http://www.nps.gov/noca)

North Cascades National Park has protected some of the finest mountain wilderness areas of the North Cascades. Ski ascents of Mt Shuksan and Ruth Mtn on the W edge of the park are described above. The core of the park, which is centred around the rugged Picket Range, is exceptionally spectacular. It is also very difficult to access for ski mountaineering. Despite these challenges, the heavily glaciated N slopes of Mt Challenger (2502m) and its spectacular scenery have drawn several ski-mountaineering trips into the area. The first ski-mountaineering trips were in the 1980s. John Dittli, Scott Croll and others, working as backcountry rangers, began doing early-season patrols on skis. They used trails in the Big Beaver and Chilliwack Rs to reach Whatcom Pass and make ski ascents of Red Face Mtn and other peaks. In subsequent years, several high level ski traverses were worked out. In May 1985, Jens Kieler, Lowell and Carl Skoog skied an inspiring traverse from Whatcom Pass S through the Picket Range (see [www.alpenglow.org](http://www.alpenglow.org)). In May 1989, John Dittli and Scott Croll completed a high-alpine ski traverse from Mt Watson to Whatcom Pass, skiing Mt Challenger and Whatcom Pk on the way. High-level routes to Whatcom Pass from the N and W in the area covered by this book followed. John Dittli and Scott Croll returned in May 1991 to complete a high level route to Whatcom Pass from Mt Redoubt at the Canadian border. Their plans to continue to Hannegan Pass via the Mineral Mtn high route were thwarted by bad weather, but the route was eventually skied in 2003 by Ben Manfredi and Jason Hummel.

These two challenging high-level ski traverses to the Mt Challenger area are described here. There are no roads. Access and escape routes are via well-developed trails and alpine ridges. Climbing and high routes are described in *Cascade Alpine Guide: Volume 3: Rainy Pass to Fraser River* by Fred Beckey, and additional trail information is given in *100 Hikes in Washington's North Cascades National Park Region* by Ira Spring and Harvey Manning. Permits are required for all overnight trips.

The Picket Range is outside of the area covered by this guidebook, but readers are referred to [www.alpenglow.org](http://www.alpenglow.org) for a description of the stunning Picket Range Traverse and to [www.nwmj.org](http://www.nwmj.org) for an article describing some of the spectacular ski descents there. It is also worth mentioning the idea of combining the two traverses described here with each other or with the Nooksack Traverse and Watson Traverse. Continuous high-level ski routes have also been worked out S along the Cascade Crest. In 2007, Lowell Skoog skied the last sections of a complete alpine ski route from Mt Baker to Mt Rainier, a total distance of 580km (see [www.alpenglow.org](http://www.alpenglow.org)).

Skiing on the Challenger Gl. Photo by Ben Manfredi





Looking S to the rugged Picket Range from slopes S of Mt Redoubt. Photo by John Dittli

## Mt Redoubt High Route

Length: 4+ days

Total Distance: 46km

Elevation Gain: 2800m

Start: 790m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: 93H/3, Mt Redoubt, Mt Challenger

Best: early June

John Dittli, Scott Croll and Mark Long, June 5–8, 1991

A high-level spring ski traverse down the narrow alpine divides between the Chilliwack R and Ross Lk from Mt Redoubt S to Whatcom Pass and the Mt Challenger area. This is a demanding wilderness route that requires excellent spring conditions.

The route starts in Canada at Chilliwack Lk and follows the approach up Depot Cr described under Mt Spickard. From upper Depot Cr, gain the Redoubt Gl and ski SW across it to the obvious pass just SE of Mt Redoubt. Stay high above Bear Lk and traverse to the Bear–Indian divide. Ski 550m down into upper Indian Cr then climb S to gain the Pass Cr–Indian Cr divide near its low point at 1750m. Ski S along the snowy arête until you are able to traverse to the divide between East Lks and Indian Cr. Ski to the summit of Mt Taps (2160m), then enjoy turns to Middle Lk and a straightforward traverse to Whatcom Pass. The key to making this a better ski route is to stay in the upper

Indian Cr drainage rather than crossing over into the lake at the head of Pass Cr as the summer route is sometimes described.

There are several options for finishing the traverse. The Dittli party had hoped to continue on the Mineral Mtn High Route described below, but bad weather forced them to exit via trails on the Chilliwack R back to Chilliwack Lk, a distance of 25km.

Most of the route stays high on the main divides and is very scenic and can be skied the entire way. There are many opportunities for superb ski ascents in a spectacular setting. Recommended ascents include Mt Spickard, a ski run from the base of the chockstone in the S gully on Mt Redoubt, Red Face Mtn, Mt Challenger and Whatcom Pk.

A crossover from Ross Lk to Depot Cr was also completed by the Dittli party in 1991 as a separate trip and was intended as a logical extension to this traverse. Their route followed Galene Lakes Trail. Just E of Devil's Tongue they were forced to drop 600m into Silver Cr and ascend steep forest, brush and rockbands to gain the spectacular cirque of Silver Lk, below the beautiful N glacier on Mt Spickard. The head of Depot Cr is easily reached by skiing through the Silver–Depot col.



Skiing along Easy Ridge towards Mt Challenger in the distance. *Photo by Ben Manfredi*

## Mineral Mountain High Route

Length: 4–5 days  
Total Distance: 48km

Start: 950m  
Elevation Gain: 5200m

Map: Mt Challenger, Mt Blum, Mt Shuksan, Mt Sefrit

Ben Manfredi and Jason Hummel, June 5–8, 2003

[www.nwmj.org](http://www.nwmj.org) and [www.cascadeclassics.org](http://www.cascadeclassics.org)

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Best: early June

A great adventure into the heart of the Picket Range in North Cascades National Park, this is a challenging spring ski traverse from Ruth Mtn to Mt Challenger that requires perfect conditions. It has been described by Jason Hummel as one of his best backcountry trips.

The route traverses the narrow alpine divide between the headwaters of the Chilliwack R and Baker R. From the N shoulder of Ruth Mtn above Hannegan Pass, traverse N facing slopes and descend into Chilliwack Pass (1270m). The crux of the route is gaining a knob W of Mineral Mtn from Chilliwack Pass. Traverse around the Chilliwack R side of the knob through bush and cliffs to gain the N ridge of the knob. Continue over Mineral Mtn (2067m), descend a small E facing glacier to Easy Pass (1430m) and climb to a camp on Easy Ridge (2016m), a spot described by Fred

Beckey as “one of the finest viewpoints in the North Cascades.” The ski along Easy Ridge is straightforward except for an eroded gully SW of Whatcom Pk. Descend on the Baker R side to avoid difficulties and then climb to Perfect Pass beyond.

Ski ascents of Whatcom Pk (2309m) and Mt Challenger (2502m) can be made from a camp in Perfect Pass. Whatcom Pk is a great ski over SE slopes. Mt Challenger gives a good run on the Challenger Gl but also involves a short class 5 rock pitch to reach the summit with its incredible views of Mt Fury.

Difficulties W of Mineral Mtn, above Chilliwack Pass, are avoided on the return by descending N from Easy Pass to pick up the Easy Ridge trail. This route can also be reached by following the ridge N from Easy Pk. Follow the Easy Ridge trail down to a ford of the Chilliwack R at 780m. The 15km hike back to the Hannegan trailhead requires a 760m climb over Hannegan Pass.

It appears possible that difficulties gaining Mineral Mtn from Chilliwack Pass could be avoided by skiing S from Chilliwack Pass for 2km to swing into a basin below the broad W slopes of Mineral Mtn.

# Coquihalla 10



Skiing off the summit of Thar Pk.

**T**he Coquihalla Highway offers some of the easiest access to alpine summits and turnable terrain from Vancouver. The surrounding summits are granite domes with open ridges and inviting alpine basins, which together with the drier snow here provide excellent backcountry skiing and ski mountaineering. Most trips are easy day trips that climb 600–900m above the highway with ample time for extra runs of 300–600m or exploring the ridge tops. This area is best in mid-winter. Needle Peak is perhaps the most popular trip, but others are equally enjoyable and there are many opportunities for turns not described here.

## **Snow Conditions**

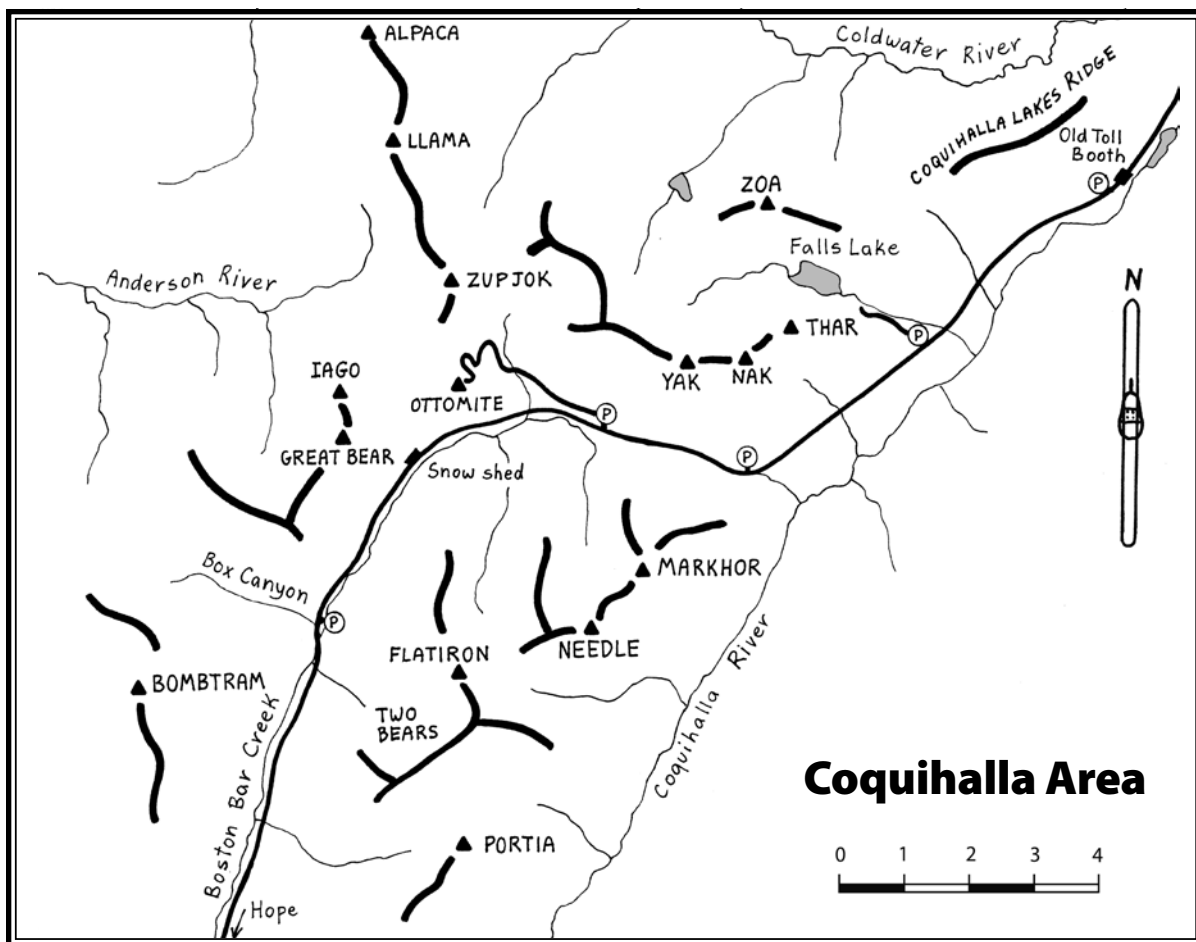
Much of the skiing in the area surrounding Coquihalla Summit lies in a snowbelt where snow conditions benefit from the influence of both the wet coastal climate of Hope and the much drier continental climate of Merritt. The influence of cooler Interior winters typically gives this area drier snow while a significant coastal influence maintains

deep snowpacks. The annual snowfall is 7m at the highway near Coquihalla Summit (1200m), giving a typical snowpack of 2m. However, snowfall is much heavier at higher elevations to the W, where weather stations on Ottomite Mtn and Great Bear Pk typically have snowpacks of 3m and reach over 4m in heavy years. Snow conditions are best in mid-winter, as the snowpack starts to melt back from the highway as early as mid-April.

## **Access**

Access is from Hwy 5, which ascends the Coquihalla R and Boston Bar Cr from Hope NE to Merritt. The trips described are in the vicinity of Coquihalla Summit (1244m), a comfortable 2.5hr drive of 200km from Vancouver. Take Hwy 1 E from Vancouver for 150km to Hope. Distances from Hope on Hwy 5 are:

- km 41—Box Canyon
- km 44—Great Bear Snowshed
- km 47—exit 217, Zopkios Ridge Lookout
- km 53—exit 221, Falls Lake Road



km 59—exit 228, Coquihalla Lakes

Hwy 5 is a limited-access highway. Parking is only allowed at plowed exits. For years, tolls were collected at a toll booth located E of Coquihalla Summit. The toll booth was removed in October 2008.

### Multi-use Considerations

Most summits described here lie within the Coquihalla Summit Provincial Recreation Area. This is a designated non-motorized area. Snowmobiles are widely used in areas E of Falls Lake Rd as well as SE of the highway on Mt Henning and Coquihalla Mtn.

### Avalanche Warnings

During the winter there is regular avalanche control above the highway. Due to the danger of avalanches and the unannounced use of helicopter bombing to control avalanche hazard, skiers are urged to use caution and common sense before venturing onto slopes above the highway during pe-

riods of high avalanche hazard or immediately after large storms. Much of the avalanche control is carried out along the SE face of Zopkios Ridge, including the S side of Yak, Nak and Thar Pks above the Zopkios Ridge Lookout exit, as well as in the Two Bears avalanche path.

Smooth granite slabs such as those visible on the S side of Yak Pk are common in the area. Be especially wary of snow slides beneath these slopes, as the bonding between the snowpack and the rock can be poor even with an otherwise stable snowpack.

### Facilities

There is a rest area on the N side of the highway at the Zopkios Ridge Lookout exit that has heated washrooms, a sitting room and a phone.

Accommodation is available in Hope or Merritt as well as at Coquihalla Lakes Lodge, which is located 5km E of Falls Lk ([www.coquihallalakeslodge.com](http://www.coquihallalakeslodge.com)).



View E to Needle Pk across open slopes at the head of Needle Cr.

## Needle Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 9km  
Elevation Gain: 880m  
Start: 1220m

**2100m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92H/11  
Best: Dec–Apr

A rocky horn S of the Coquihalla Hwy, Needle Pk is perhaps the most popular ski trip here. A gentle ridge with scenic views gives quick access to excellent back bowls and an enjoyable scramble to the summit.

Take the Zopkios Ridge Lookout exit 217 at the top of the hill after the snowshed. Parking is through the underpass next to the washrooms on the N side of the highway. The ridge lying W of the main creek running N from Needle Pk can be picked up beyond a highway maintenance yard on the S side of the highway and gives direct access to the alpine immediately W of Needle Pk. This is an attractive area, and there is much skiing in the basin at the head of Needle Cr on the E slopes of Flatiron Mtn (1890m) with

runs to 300m. To reach Needle Pk, ski along its W ridge, avoiding difficulties to the S. The final summit is a short class 2–3 scramble.

The best route back to your car is to return along the approach ridge, but a variation drops E off the ridge from

Dropping into the head of Needle Cr. *Photo by Linda Bily*







View of Yak Pk from the approach to Markhor Pk.

1800m into the valley running parallel to the ridge. There is a steep headwall near 1500m, which must be avoided by swinging N onto steep forested slopes. It is about 2km back to the highway through open forest on the W side of the creek.

## Markhor Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 4km  
Elevation Gain: 760m  
Start: 1220m

**1980m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92H/11  
Best: Feb–Mar

Markhor Pk is a minor rocky summit 1km NE of Needle Pk. It makes for an enjoyable ski-mountaineering trip that switchbacks up a scenic narrow ridge and offers runs on both N and S aspects. The terrain is steeper and more exposed than on Needle Pk, so good avalanche conditions are needed.

As for Needle Pk, take the Zopkios Ridge Lookout exit 217 at the top of the hill after the snowshed. Start skiing at the highway maintenance yard on the S side of the highway. Head due S through mostly open forest to gain the lower NW portion of the ridge running N from Markhor

Pk. Above 1400m, veer SE through steeper forest to gain the narrow open section of the ridge above 1550m. Avoiding minor difficulties on the W, switchback up the narrow ridge onto the main divide at 1900m, immediately N of Markhor Pk. There are great views of the sweeping rock face on Yak Pk. The summit is an easy scramble with a short class 3 step. An attractive basin on the S side of the divide

Markhor Pk from the NW.





Skiing S facing slopes NE of Portia Pk.

offers enjoyable 260m runs down to a bench at 1630m, E of Markhor Pk.

The recommended descent back to the highway starts by retracing the ascent route down the N ridge. At 1710m, leave the ridge and follow a ramp that cuts E into the narrow basin next to the ridge. The basin is walled in by a steep headwall and granite slabs on the sides. A smooth avalanche path in the middle of the basin makes a good run. Ski down the avalanche path to where it starts to peter out in forest (about 250m), then cut left to an open area next to a steep slab. The edge of the open area and the creek below provide a continuation of the run for the rest of the way down to the highway maintenance yard.

## Portia Peak

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 17km  
Elevation Gain: 1400m  
Start: 1220m

**1860m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92H/11  
Best: Dec–Apr

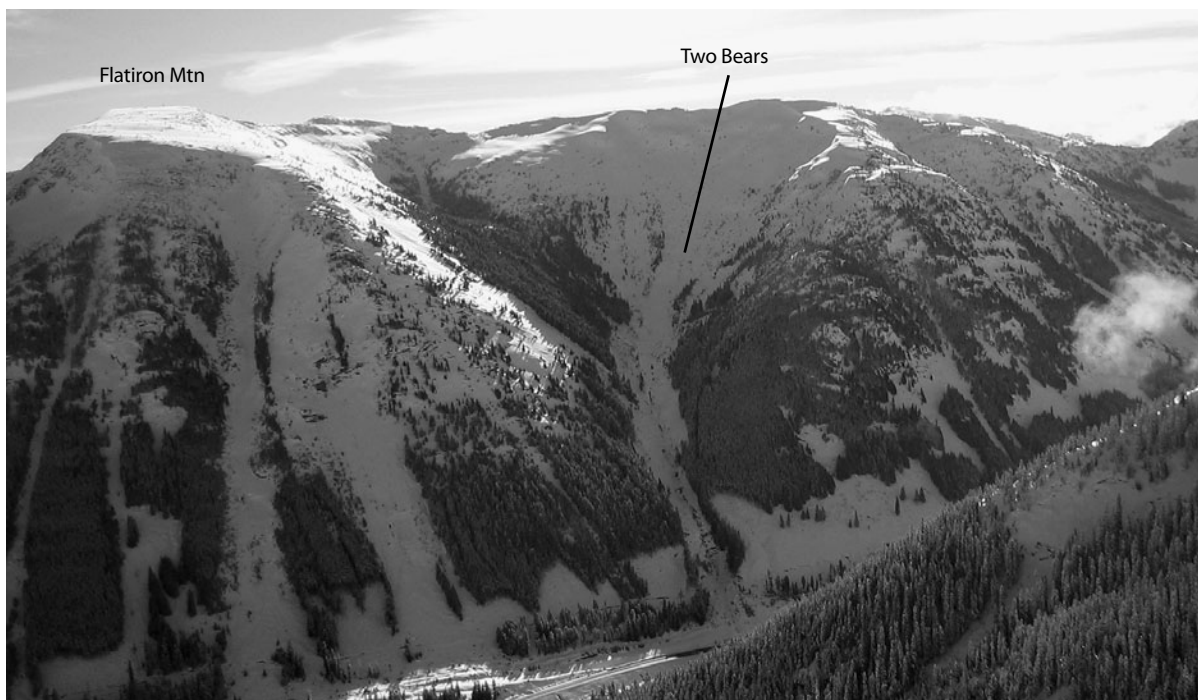
A rocky dome on the high ridge system SW of Needle Pk. Access is from the Needle Pk area over the intervening alpine ridges. This is a nice tour for a sunny day, especially

when the snow conditions aren't good enough for runs in the bowls behind Needle Pk.

As for Needle Pk, take the Zopkios Ridge Lookout exit 217 at the top of the hill after the snowshed. Parking is through the underpass next to the washrooms on the N side of the highway. From beyond the highway maintenance yard on the S side of the highway, follow the approach ridge to Needle Pk. From the alpine shoulder immediately W of Needle Pk, drop W into the col and traverse the basin at the head of Needle Cr, making an ascending traverse up onto

Traversing ridge tops to Portia Pk.





Aerial view of Two Bears avalanche path. Photo by Kirk Illingworth

Flatiron Mtn. Continue along ridges SW to the sparsely treed col N of Portia Pk. Mostly rounded with great views, the ridge tops are generally easy to ski. Portia Pk can be climbed on skis over snow-covered slabs on its NW ridge. There is a large cairn on the summit that was built by a railroad survey party between 1910 and 1920.

An ascent of Portia Pk is a fairly full day. There is lots of great ski terrain along the route, especially W of Flatiron Mtn, and an overnight trip is also recommended.

## Two Bears

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 9km  
Elevation Gain: 670m  
Start: 1220m

## 1890m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92H/11  
Best: Feb–Mar

Two Bears is the name of the huge avalanche path 3km W of Needle Pk. It offers an exceptional 1000m run from the ridge top down to the highway.

This trip is best done as a crossover from Needle Pk. Park at the pullout opposite Box Canyon, 41km from Hope or 3km before the Great Bear Snowshed. Portions of the Two Bears avalanche path are visible from here. Have a look at the route before you hitchhike or shuttle a car to the Zopkios Ridge Lookout exit 6km up the highway. Follow the approach route for Needle Pk and angle across the head

of Needle Cr onto the broad ridge S of Flatiron Mtn. There is a good view of Two Bears from here. The upper basin is more than 1km wide.

This is a serious avalanche path—it has buried the highway 7m deep in debris. Don't attempt this trip unless you are confident the avalanche conditions are safe. If you are unsure of the conditions, it is very easy to turn around and climb back up over Flatiron Mtn and exit via the Needle Pk approach.

A recommended descent route starts from the first 1830m peak SW of Flatiron Mtn (GR334904) and angles down to skier's left. This is a fantastic run and despite the imposing nature of the terrain doesn't get above 35°. Below 1300m the huge basin squeezes into the narrow throat of the avalanche path. The path has made a wide swath through the forest and is good skiing. Exit left from the slide path into an adjacent cutblock about 150m above the valley bottom to avoid a steep cliff and waterfall in the main gully. Ski about half a kilometre beside the highway back to your car.

The approach to the head of Two Bears generally leaves time for an extra ski run. Possibilities include a lap on the upper basin, a 450m run into the basin N of Portia Pk or a run at the head of Needle Cr.



Skiing into Box Canyon from Bombtram Mtn.

## Bombtram Mountain

**1830m**

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 7km  
Elevation Gain: 1000m  
Start: 840m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92H/11  
Best: Feb–Mar

Rising steeply on the W side of the highway, Bombtram Mtn is an unofficial name for the flat-topped summit SE of Box Canyon. A forested ridge gives access to a huge back bowl and a long run all the way down into Box Canyon. This is a recommended day trip with great skiing. Some tricky routefinding is involved.

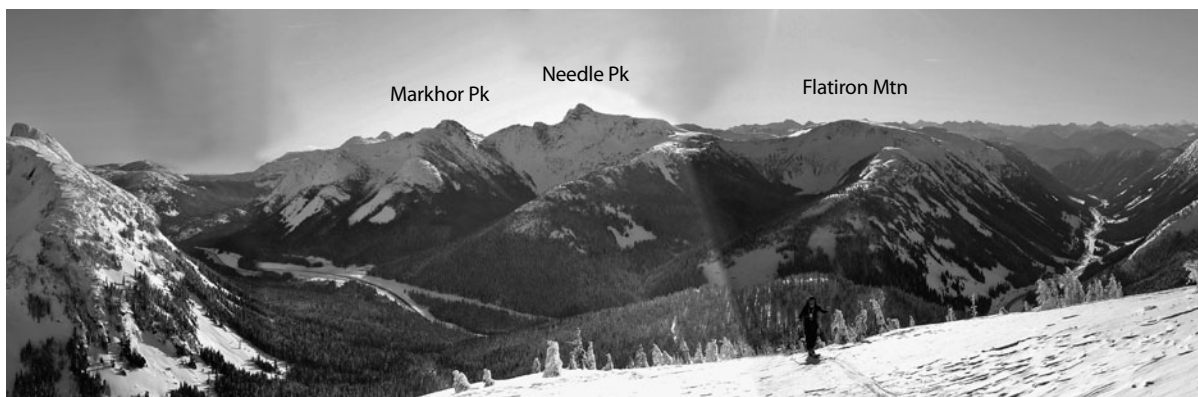
Park at the pullout on the W side of the Coquihalla Hwy at Box Canyon, 41km from Hope. Box Canyon is visible from the highway and is located 3km S of the Great Bear Snowshed. If you are coming from Hope, use the Zopkios Ridge Lookout exit to do a U-turn and backtrack 6km to Box Canyon.

Access is via the forested ridge running SE from the entrance to Box Canyon. Ski around the bottom of an old quarry on the S side of Box Canyon. Switchback up through a small cutblock and angle back through open forest to gain the ridge. The ridge climbs through the forest at a constant angle with only one short narrow section. Once above treeline, angle across broad N slopes to skirt below minor

cliffs above 1700m and ascend smooth slopes beyond to the summit. Great views of upper Boston Bar Cr and the peaks surrounding Coquihalla Summit.

The highlight of this trip is the excellent skiing in the basin NE of the summit. In good conditions, it is possible to ski down the broad avalanche slopes that run NE into Box Canyon. This is an 800m run known as Boxtop. It makes an adventurous loop but requires careful routefinding. Don't attempt to ski into Box Canyon unless you are confident the avalanche conditions are safe. If you are unsure of the conditions, it is very easy to retrace your approach route. After an initial 160m pitch off the summit, the run into Box Canyon heads NE down the centre of the basin. There is a steeper pitch near 1300m, which lands on a broad bench at 1100m (GR298926), a short distance above the canyon. The final 80m drop into Box Canyon is a cliff. This can be avoided by contouring several hundred metres across the bench to the E and descending a narrow gully that leads through the cliff and down into the canyon. The bottom of the canyon is open. Watch for the possibility of avalanches from the canyon sidewalls. It is a short ski back to your car at the canyon entrance.

Also of interest for more adventurous skiers is a narrow E facing avalanche chute, known as Sentors, that drops



Panoramic view of the Needle Pk area from the summit of Zupjok Pk.

500m towards the highway from the approach ridge. This is the closest chute to Box Canyon and is visible from the highway. The top of the chute can be found just where the trees start to thin out, at about 1400m.

## Zupjok Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 8km  
Elevation Gain: 610m  
Start: 1220m

**1830m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92H/11  
Best: Dec–Apr

A ski summit N of the highway and E of Zopkios Ridge. Access is via an old mining road, and there are several 200–300m runs from the summit.

Take the Zopkios Ridge Lookout exit 217 at the top of the hill after the snowshed. Parking is through the underpass next to the washrooms on the N side of the highway. Just W of the washrooms, an old mining road angles off the highway into the forest. The road traverses into the basin 1.5km W of the parking area and after crossing the creek it switchbacks towards the broad forested pass beyond, before angling back to the summit of Ottomite Mtn (1470m). Leave the road at the second switchback and head towards the SW ridge of Zupjok Pk. This is forest lower down but



Skiing off the SW side of Zupjok Pk.

becomes glades higher up and open on the E as you near the summit. You may have already spotted some of the options for runs on the E facing slopes on your approach. Use caution on some of the steep snow-covered slabs here. There are also excellent runs of up to 400m dropping both SW and NE from the summit.

There are great views of Needle Pk and other summits, but there are also enough small trees all the way to the summit to make this a reasonable ascent in poorer weather.

The E side of Zupjok Pk from the Coquihalla Hwy.



## Alpaca Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1220m  
Start: 1220m

**2040m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92H/11  
Best: Dec–Apr

Lying 4km north of Zupjok Pk on the long alpine ridge connecting the two summits, Alpaca Pk is situated above the Anderson R and the stunning granite domes there. This is a great ridge tour, so save it for a sunny day when the snow is better suited to touring than turns.



Looking NW to Alpaca Pk from the summit of Zupjok Pk.

As for Zupjok Pk, take the Zopkios Ridge Lookout exit 217 at the top of the hill after the snowshed. Parking is through the underpass next to the washrooms on the N side of the highway. Climb Zupjok Pk as described above, and from the summit ski N along the ridge crest. The ridge initially descends 100m before making a long gradual 300m ascent over Llama Pk (1900m) to the summit. The ridge crest rises 600m from the surrounding valleys on both sides but is wide on top and easy to travel with great views.

## Great Bear Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 10km  
Elevation Gain: 520m  
Start: 1220m

**1740m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92H/11  
Best: Dec–Mar

This is a minor unnamed summit 2.5km SW of Zupjok Pk, that rises steeply above the Great Bear Snowshed on the Coquihalla Hwy. The approach is the same as for Zupjok Pk, and Great Bear also boasts several 200–300m runs.

As for Zupjok Pk, take the Zopkios Ridge Lookout exit 217 at the top of the hill after the snowshed. Parking is through the underpass next to the washrooms on the N side of the highway. Just W of the washrooms, an old mining road angles off the highway into the forest. The road traverses into the basin 1.5km W of the parking area, and after crossing the creek it switchbacks towards the broad forested pass beyond before angling back to the summit of Ottomite Mtn (1470m). Leave the road where it climbs into the forested pass N of Ottomite Mtn and continue W through glades to ascend Iago Pk (1740m) via its open NE slopes. There are good N facing runs all the way to the bottom. It is also possible to continue 1km S along the rounded ridge crest to Great Bear Pk.



View of Great Bear Pk from Zupjok Pk.

Depending on how much time you spend skiing, it is feasible to climb both Great Bear and Zupjok Pks in the same day.

## Nak Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 4km  
Elevation Gain: 800m  
Start: 1220m

**2010m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92H/11  
Best: Dec–Apr

A broad summit E of Yak Pk, Nak Pk makes an enjoyable ski ascent over moderate glades and open slopes. The descent is mostly fall-line skiing on S facing slopes and the peak offers great views.

Access is from an unmarked exit 1.7km E of the Zopkios Ridge Lookout exit. This is just past the big slabs under Yak Pk. There is no access under the highway here, so to park on the N side of the highway you will have to drive 4km E and do a U-turn via the Falls Lake exit 221. Watch carefully for the unmarked exit on your way back. It is a short distance after the Coquihalla Summit.

Ski E beside the highway to pick up a pipeline right of way that angles up and away from the highway. After skiing up the right-of-way for a short distance, head up into the forest and begin climbing straight N. Most of the ascent climbs through glades and is very pleasant. Stay W of the long indistinct ridge running SE from Nak Pk. The summit is open with good views.

There is some great skiing N of the summit. This is reached from the col between Yak and Nak. Use caution, as the entrance can be wind loaded. There are excellent 300m runs in the N facing basin below. Rather than climb back up to the Yak–Nak col, you can ski through the col W of Thar Pk and descend to the pipeline right-of-way from there. Watch for steeper slopes near 1500m.





Above: Ascending Nak Pk with the summit of Yak Pk behind. Below: Skiing down the backside of Thar Pk.

## Thar Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 7km  
Elevation Gain: 750m  
Start: 1170m

**1920m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92H/11  
Best: Dec–Apr

In my opinion, this is the best trip in the area. Thar Pk lies at the E end of Zopkios Ridge and has great ski runs up to 600m front and back. There is a nice view of the peak from the Falls Lake exit. Note that the terrain on Thar Pk is considerably more exposed to avalanches than on nearby Zoa Pk and good routefinding and avalanche assessment skills are necessary.

Take the Falls Lake turnoff, exit 221, and park on the N side of the highway. Ski up the Falls Lake Rd. There are two right-of-ways that contour W across the hillside and give access to the base of Thar Pk. Either one can be used. The first, for a fibre-optic cable, branches left about 500m from the highway. The second, for a gas pipeline, is about 1km from the highway. The first leads to the base of the longest run on the S side. A few hundred metres past a deep dip in the right-of-way an avalanche path leads uphill to the





Skiing in the open basin N of Nak and Thar Pks with Yak Pk behind.

indistinct SE ridge of Thar Pk. This is sparsely treed, and with care, microterrain can be used to work out a fairly safe route up this ridge to the summit. An alternative is to cross the ridge near 1600m and swing W into the narrow basin between Nak and Thar Pks. Open slopes lead directly to the col above, and it is a short ski over to the summit of Thar Pk. In good snow conditions, the 600m run down the SE ridge is superb and there is room here for lots of turns.

Open bowls and avalanche slopes on the backside also offer lots of skiing. These are reached by heading W through the col between Nak and Thar Pks. After an initial 100m of turns, the runs open up into a N facing bowl for another 200m. The slope steepens considerably below this point, but from skier's right a narrow gully continues for another 200m all the way to the bottom of the valley. The gully is just wide enough for two sets of tracks. From the bottom it is usually worth the effort to break trail back up to the Nak–Thar col to ski the runs on the S side of Thar Pk but it is also pleasant to ski out the valley past Falls Lk.

## Zoa Peak

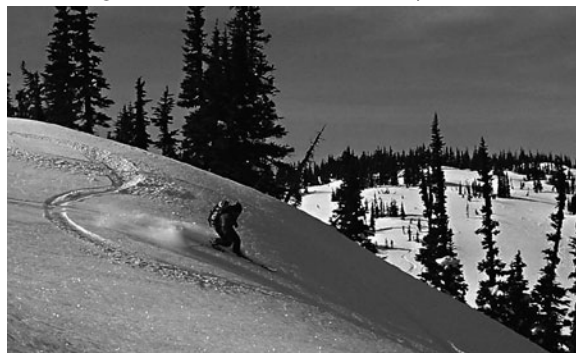
Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 9km  
Elevation Gain: 640m  
Start: 1220m

**1860m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92H/11  
Best: Dec–Mar

A dome-shaped summit N of the Coquihalla Hwy with an easy approach along a gentle ridge and short runs on open slopes N of the summit, Zoa Pk is a popular trip.

Glade skiing near the summit of Zoa Pk. *Photo by Lee Lau*





Glade skiing off Coquihalla Lakes Ridge. The old toll booth site is visible at top left.

Take the Falls Lake turnoff, exit 221, and park on the N side of the highway. Ski up the Falls Lake Rd for 1km to where a pipeline maintenance road leads to the NE. These roads are heavily used by snowmobilers. Beyond the pipeline maintenance road, follow the pipeline right-of-way up onto the shoulder of Zoa Pk at about 1500m. It is a pleasant ski W along the subalpine ridge to the summit with good views of the N side of Zopkios Ridge. There is a 60m dip before the main peak. There are open slopes along the N side of the long shoulder leading up to the summit, with runs to 150m.

## Coquihalla Lakes Ridge 1580m

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 4km  
Elevation Gain: 450m  
Start: 1130m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92H/11  
Best: Jan–Feb

The broad forested ridge, W of Coquihalla Lks, between the headwaters of the Coquihalla and Coldwater Rs, is a good destination for quick access to turns above the high-

way in poor weather or for a short mid-winter ski. Glades on the SE side of the ridge offer enjoyable runs up to 400m long.

Access is from the site of the toll booth, 58km from Hope. The toll booth was removed in October 2008. Park near the washrooms on the N side of the highway. If coming from the W, exit 228, 1km E of the toll booth site, offers a U-turn route to reach the N side of the highway. Climb over a fence behind the washrooms and head W to angle up the broad slopes here. The slopes are sparsely treed and mostly open forest with rock outcrops and grassy clearings. Check it out from the highway before you start. As you angle up the hillside you will quickly discover where to ski. Some of the best runs start just E of the high point and drop SE towards the highway. These are nice slopes and in good conditions there is enjoyable skiing here with enough variety for three or more good runs. Note that in low snow years or early in the season this slope might not hold enough snow for good skiing.

# Manning Park

11



Skiing S facing slopes E of the Gibson Pass ski area.

**E**stablished in 1941, Manning Provincial Park lies on the eastern side of the Cascades, where the mountains become less rugged and less alpine as they fade off into the Interior. Most summits are gentle and few rise significantly above treeline. The terrain tends to be more suited to ski touring than ski mountaineering, with some opportunities for short runs of 200–300m. Most trips are day trips that generally start from higher elevations on paved highways. The area is best in mid-winter. Highlights include an ascent of Three Brothers Mtn, which is one of the most popular trips, or Skyline Trail, which gives access to enjoyable terrain for backcountry skiing. The higher summits of Frosty Mtn and Mt Outram offer destinations for ski-mountaineering trips.

## **Snow Conditions**

Manning Park typically has a shallow, yet still adequate,

snowpack. The climate is colder and drier than near the coast, so snow conditions are often better and travel is less restrictive in poor weather. Mid-winter snow conditions are generally excellent, with a season that extends from December to early April. The average annual snowfall recorded at 1400m at the Gibson Pass Downhill ski area is 5.4m. This gives a typical snowpack that varies from about 90cm at Lightning Lk to over 2m at higher elevations on Black-wall Pk. Heavy years have seen over 3m in the alpine.

## **Access**

Access is from Hwy 3, the Hope–Princeton Hwy, which runs E through Manning Park from Hope. Many of the trips are in the vicinity of the Manning Park Resort (1200m), approximately a 2.5 hour, 217km drive from Vancouver and a 45 minute drive E of Hope. Hope is 150km E of Vancouver on Hwy 1. Distances from Hope to the main exits are:



View S from near the summit of Mt Outram.

km 0—Hope

km 23—Park entrance, Mt Outram Trail

km 42—Cayuse Flats, Silverdaisy Mtn

km 60—Allison Pass (1341m)

km 62—Cambie Creek recreation area

km 67—Manning Park Resort

Several trips also start from the Gibson Pass road, which runs W from the Manning Park Resort for 10km to the downhill ski area at Gibson Pass.

### Multi-use Considerations

There is no snowmobiling or heliskiing permitted in Manning Park. Wilderness permits are not required.

### Accommodation

Accommodation is available at Manning Park Resort ([www.manningpark.com](http://www.manningpark.com)), where there is an extensive network of groomed cross-country ski trails in addition to the small downhill ski area at Gibson Pass. Winter camping is possible at the Lone Duck winter camping area near Lightning Lks.

## Mt Outram

Length: 1 day

Total Distance: 18km

Elevation Gain: 1770m

Start: 670m

**2438m**

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Challenging

Map: 92H/6

Best: Feb–Mar

A long climb through steep forest gives access to a rounded summit visible from Hope. With 1800m of elevation gain, this peak is neither a typical Manning Park trip nor does it offer quick access to turns, but in its own way it is a rewarding trip with a long challenging vertical descent.

The Mt Outram Trail starts at the W entrance to Manning Park, which is marked by a huge wooden marmot, 23km E of Hope on Hwy 3. There is a parking area on the N side of the highway. The trail makes a few short switchbacks from the parking lot and then follows the old Engineers' Rd (built in 1860) E across the hillside for 1km. The trail proper starts here. It is well graded with many low-angled switchbacks and ascends the E side of a steep bluff to 1000m. Near 1500m it crosses the E fork of Seventeen Mile Cr, at which point it is usually easier to ski up the creek into the subalpine basin immediately S of Mt Outram. Mt





Descending the 600m run into the head of the N fork of Seventeen Mile Cr on the SW side of Mt Outram. *Photo by Jos van der Burg*

Outram is climbed on skis from the head of this basin with a short scramble to the final summit.

Intermediate skiers will want to ski back down the trail. Depending on avalanche conditions, advanced skiers can descend steeper slopes in the basin SW of the peak. These slopes are reached by dropping off the S shoulder of the

summit about 200m below the peak. In good conditions they provide an excellent 600m ski run and offer an alternative to skiing back down the upper part of the trail. To regain the trail, ski out the N fork of Seventeen Mile Cr (staying on the W side to avoid bush), cross the creek near the junction at 1400m and pick up the trail shortly beyond. In good snow years it is possible to ski all the way down to the highway through the forest—making sure not to drop too close to the steep forks of Seventeen Mile Cr.

Skiing to Mt Forddred. *Photo by Simon Chesterton*



## Mt Forddred

**2170m**

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 19km  
Elevation Gain: 1440m  
Start: 730m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92H/3  
Best: Feb–Mar

Mt Forddred is the only ski trip to the rugged Silvertip Mtn area S of Hwy 3. It is a decent ski ascent via a logging road and steeper slopes to the summit.

Turn off Hwy 3 at Sunshine Village, 4km past the Hope Slide. Drive up the Sumallo R to the end of the plowed road 1.5km from the highway. Ski up the Sumallo R road



for about 1km and turn right on the first branch road that climbs W into the valley S of Mt Potter. The bridge across the Sumallo R has been removed, but the river can be forded on carefully placed rocks. Ski up the road for another 5km. The road crosses to the SE side of the valley at about 1000m and ends at 1300m in the basin NW of Mt Fordred. From the end of the road, swing SE up an unlogged valley. The valley bottom is mostly open rockslides and leads to the col W of Mt Fordred. Ascend the narrow W ridge to the summit. There are a couple of short steep spots that can be bootpacked. The summit offers great views of Mt Rideout and Silvertip Mtn.

## Silverdaisy Mountain 2042m

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 18km  
Elevation Gain: 1250m  
Start: 790m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92H/3  
Best: Jan–Mar

A gentle subalpine summit S of Hwy 3, Silverdaisy Mtn offers an enjoyable outing on skis via a long logging and mining road.



Skiing up Silverdaisy Mtn. Photo by Jos van der Burg

Immediately W of where Hwy 3 crosses the Skaist R, approximately 42km from Hope, a mining and logging road crosses the Skagit R and ascends Cayuse Cr E of Silverdaisy Mtn. This road climbs to the 1800m col at the head of Silverdaisy Cr. There is a plowed area for parking in the pullout beside the highway at the start of the road. The road is gated at the bottom, but in mid-winter this makes no difference as you will be skiing anyway.

The main road is generally easy to follow as it swings around and climbs into the Cayuse Cr valley. Avoid spur roads at about 1.5 and 3km from the highway. Future logging is planned in this area. Follow the main road up the E

side of Cayuse Cr to the back of the valley where the road switchbacks at 1300m, about 5km from the highway. About 1km past the switchback, the road makes a long traverse en route to the col. There is a choice between following the road to the col or taking a more direct route, which leaves the road on this traverse at around 1400m and ascends steeper forest and rockslides immediately S of the creek draining SE from near the summit to gain the SE ridge above the col. The gentle SE ridge is a pleasant ski NW to the summit. The bowl SE of the summit offers the best skiing in good conditions, with a 400m descent. From the bottom of the bowl it is possible to continue down through the trees to avoid several gentle switchbacks on the road.

Hatchethead East, to the S of this col, has also been climbed on skis.

## Mt Andrews 2010m

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1470m  
Start: 550m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92H/3  
Best: Mar–Apr

Tucked in behind Silverdaisy Mtn, Mt Andrews is one of several peaks here that, like Silverdaisy, has gentle rounded ridge tops and steep N aspects. Access can be difficult, so this is not a popular trip; but when you feel like something a little different, this is a worthwhile trip with some good skiing on alpine ridges and through an old burn.

View of Shawatum Pk from Mt Andrews. Photo by Paul Kubik



Mt Andrews is only 6km SW of Silverdaisy Mtn but access is from the Silver–Skagit road, which leaves the Trans-Canada Hwy 3km W of Hope at exit 168 and runs up the deep valley formed by Silverhope Cr, the Klesilkwa R and the Skagit R to Ross Lk. Not usually plowed in winter, much of this gravel road lies above 500m elevation. As Paul Kubik puts it, “Timing is everything for this ski trip.” A snowline of 800–900m is ideal so that you can drive the long distance down the Silver–Skagit road to the start of the trip yet still have decent skiing conditions for the approach. In a normal year, start looking for these conditions around the end of March, earlier if it is a warm winter.

Access is from old logging roads in Shawatum Cr that branch off the Silver–Skagit road at km 46. These are blocked at the bottom and the approach will likely involve carrying skis up Shawatum Cr roads for at least an hour to Antimony Cr at 900m. Note that cold air drainage preserves the snowpack on the main Silver Skagit rd with the result that there is often less snow for a couple of kilometres as you climb away from the valley bottom. There is a slump in the road near Pyrrhotite Cr and though there are a few bushy sections beyond this point the road generally provides easy traveling. Follow the main road, bypassing spurs on the right and left, for about another kilometre. From near 1200m, climb through an old clearcut that hasn’t grown back to gain a burned area higher up that offers pleasant open travel onto the SE ridge of Mt Andrews. The summit is a straightforward ascent on skis. The descent back into Shawatum Cr is an excellent 700m run.

Mt Brice (2164m), 2km to the NE, is also attractive for skiing, as is the intervening basin at the head of Twentyeight Mile Cr. Also of interest is the steep 800m avalanche gully on the N side of Shawatum Mtn (see [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com)).

## Mt Kelly

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 5km  
Elevation Gain: 580m  
Start: 1340m

## 1920m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Simple  
Map: 92H/2  
Best: Jan–Mar

Mt Kelly is the first summit on the Similkameen–Skagit Divide N of Allison Pass on Hwy 3. An old service road and open forest make this summit a pleasant ski tour. A steep gully on its NE side offers a 450m run.

Access is from Allison Pass (1341m), 60km E of Hope on Hwy 3. Park in the highway service yard on the S side of the pass.

The route follows an old service road up timbered slopes on the N side of the pass. The road starts 300m E of



Ascending through glades on Mt Kelly.

the highway service yard on the N side of the highway and climbs to the W parallel to the highway. Ski up the road to a TV antenna on a broad shoulder at 1680m. Continue N on the shoulder to ascend forest and glades to the summit. There are pleasant views of the nearby Three Brothers area as well as of Mt Hozomeen to the S. Several minor summits farther NW along the divide are more open and are easily reached. On the ski down there are some short open slopes below the TV antenna that drop onto the road. As an alternative to skiing down the road, an obvious open gully here provides a steeper 200m descent to the highway, but check avalanche conditions carefully.

Of particular interest for turns is the Big Ben Gully (35°+), immediately NE of the summit. This can be difficult to find from the top but drops 450m to an old fire road (Big Ben Trail) on the W side of the Similkameen R. It is a flat 4km ski out to the highway and another easy 1.5km ski along the side of the highway back to Allison Pass.



Three Brothers Mtn, near the head of Fat Dog Cr.

## Three Brothers Mtn

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 18km  
Elevation Gain: 930m  
Start: 1340m

**2270m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Simple  
Map: 92H/2  
Best: Dec–Mar

Three Brothers Mtn sits in a high, gentle area of extensive meadows located NE of Allison Pass that offers excellent ski touring.

The shortest approach to this area is from old roads in Fat Dog Cr. These leave Hwy 3 approximately 1.5km E of Allison Pass on the W side of the Similkameen R. There is a plowed parking area and a short cross-country ski loop here; called Cambie Cr recreation area on highway signs.

The route to Three Brothers Mtn crosses the Similkameen R after 1km and follows an old road up Fat Dog Cr, draining W from Big Buck Mtn. Ski up the road to its end near 1800m on the broad ridge SW of Three Brothers Mtn. Continue through open timber and an old burn to the meadows beyond. This is an attractive route, and the summit is a straightforward ascent on skis after passing a short dip in the ridge. There is some skiing in the area on gentle open slopes but don't expect to be able to make many turns.

The entire divide running NW from the summit is pleasant ski-touring terrain and can be followed NW to beyond Fourth Brother Mtn. An alternative approach to this divide from farther up the Similkameen R can be used to make a pleasant 20km loop. Ski up the old fire road on the W side of the Similkameen R, known as Big Ben Trail, which is reached by taking left forks from the Cambie Cr ski trail. About 5km from the highway, drop down to the Similkameen R. Ski up the river for another couple of kilometres before swinging E onto the broad ridge running W from Three Brothers Mtn. An old trail is marked on 92H/2

Looking SW down Fat Dog Cr. *Photo by Linda Bily*





This classic view of Mt Hozomeen dominates the southern skyline from most places in Manning Park.

here. The forest is reasonably open and an old burn higher up makes for pleasant traveling. Once in the alpine it is straightforward to traverse open slopes W of Three Brothers and exit via Fat Dog Cr.

## Manning Park Backcountry

The downhill ski area at Gibson Pass in Manning Park gives access to a pleasant subalpine ridge offering a variety of backcountry skiing options from easy touring to short powder stashes. The area provides tremendous views of Mt Hozomeen.

Access is from the main Orange chairlift. A one-ride ticket is available for backcountry skiers. The chairlift provides access to a broad, sparsely treed ridge, which runs for several kilometres to the E and W.

### West

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 8km  
Elevation Gain: 200m  
Start: 1790m

### 1888m

Difficulty: 1–2  
Terrain: Simple  
Map: 92H/2  
Best: Dec–Mar

The classic trip from the top of the lifts is the easy ski tour to Poland Lk (1750m). This is a great trip for beginners.



Easy touring on the way to Poland Lk.

From the top of the chairlift, follow Horseshoe ski run W along the flat ridge crest. The well-marked Poland Lk trail branches off Horseshoe where it makes a sharp turn at the top of the first steep pitch, about 500m W of the chairlift. The trail follows an old fire-access road up onto the side of Grassy Mtn (1888m) and continues for 4km through forest and glades along its S side to Poland Lk. Natural clearings on S facing slopes W of Grassy Mtn offer 100m runs. From Poland Lk, a trail continues down the N side of Memaloose Cr to Allison Pass on the Hope–Princeton Hwy.



Peaks on the Skyline Trail.

## East

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 5km  
Elevation Gain: 200m+  
Start: 1790m

## 1830m

Difficulty: 2–3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92H/2  
Best: Dec–Mar

If you are looking for turns, the best skiing is E of the lifts on the ridge running to Perdue Cr. The obvious destination is the rounded 1830m high point 1.5km E of the ski lifts.

N facing glades E of the ski area.



Access is from Apple Bowl Hike, which heads E from the ski area onto the first ridge top. Avalanche conditions and closures are posted at the ski area boundary. Out-of-bounds skiers and boarders usually hike a short distance past here and drop S through natural glades before returning to the bottom of the lifts. With the use of skins and a bit of effort, there are more runs farther along the ridge. The E side of the first N facing bowl offers some opportunities for good 140m runs through glades on N facing slopes. Most other skiing is on S facing slopes, with 200–400m runs through natural meadows and glades. Use common sense here, as some of the runs drop into narrow gullies that are natural terrain traps.

## Skyline Trail

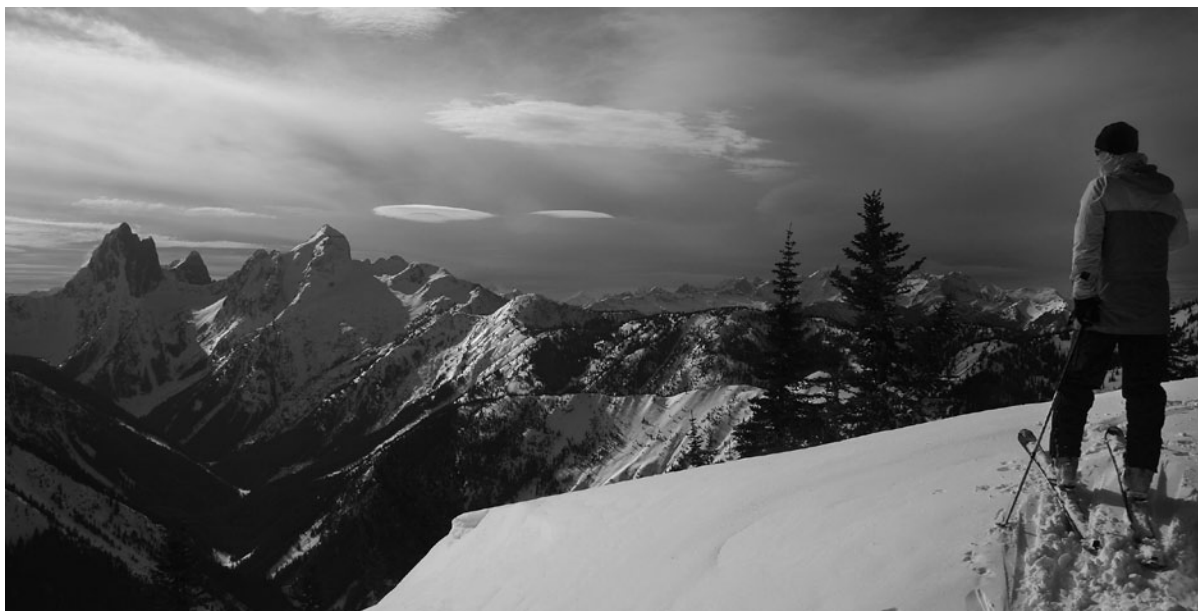
Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 15km  
Elevation Gain: 1070m  
Start: 1370m

## 2000m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92H/2  
Best: Dec–Mar

Skyline Trail provides an enjoyable 1 or 2 day circle tour through steep timber and open subalpine bowls to the summits SW of Gibson Pass in Manning Park.

Access is from the downhill ski area at Gibson Pass, 10km W of Manning Park Lodge. If you are planning a 2 day trip, ask about overnight parking. Skyline Trail climbs S from Strawberry Flats to the ridge overlooking the Light-



View of Mt Hozomeen from the Skyline Trail. *Photo by Jos van der Burg*

ning Lk chain. This portion of the trail can be difficult to find in the winter and is not recommended. Instead, start from the bottom of the rope tow at the downhill ski area. Ascend S from Shadow Lk past an open burn S of the ski area and follow this back either over or around a 1939m summit to join Skyline Trail at Despair Pass. It is possible to ski W over Snow Camp Mtn (1980m) and skirt just S of Lone Goat Mtn (2004m) to the head of Mowich Cr in stable snow conditions, but be aware of potential avalanche hazards.

Several route variations are possible here. The most enjoyable is to ski N over Red Mtn (2022m) and drop E from the summit to circle back to Gibson Pass through mostly open forest. There are also good 200m runs near Lone Goat Mtn and Red Mtn.

## Frosty Mountain

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 24km  
Elevation Gain: 1160m  
Start: 1250m

## 2410m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92H/2  
Best: Dec–Mar

Located S of Lightning Lakes, Frosty Mtn is the highest and most alpine summit in Manning Park. A long pleasant ski up a park trail through spruce and subalpine fir leads to 300m of open slopes near the peak.

The usual ski route follows a well-marked hiking trail

up the N side of the mountain from Lightning Lakes. The lakes are reached from a turnoff 3km W of Manning Park Lodge on the road to the downhill ski area at Gibson Pass. The trail starts at the E end of the Lightning Lakes chain across the dam from the day-use parking area. The trail is well graded with many low angled switchbacks. It is often difficult to follow after 2km in mid-winter. From a lookout at 1500m, follow a broad ridge through open timber to a gentle shoulder at 1850m and continue on gently rolling terrain toward the peak. Ancient larch trees growing here are up to 2000 years old and are some of the oldest trees in Canada. There is a rustic log shelter near the trail at 1910m (GR587330). Treeline is reached beyond the next rise at

Near treeline N of Frosty Mtn. *Photo by Jos van der Burg*







E and W summits of Frosty Mtn from the NW. *Photo by Paul Kubik*

2000m, about 8km from Lightning Lk. Above 2200m you reach an attractive basin below the peak. Watch for avalanche hazard at the head of the basin.

There are two routes to the summit. The least exposed route ascends the E side of the basin and climbs along the windblown E ridge to the top. A more direct route cuts across the basin and switchbacks up the N ridge. The ridge steepens near the top and can be bootpacked to the summit. Under good conditions, there is an excellent 300m run right off the summit.

### Frosty Creek

Frosty Cr lies W of the trail in the valley that drains the N side of Frosty Mtn. With a reasonable snowpack, skiing out this valley offers an alternative to skiing back down the trail to Lightning Lk and gives a much longer run on open slopes. Ski the upper basin below the summit. At the bottom of the basin, drop NW from the trail at 2150m (at about GR586312) and ski two pitches down to Frosty Cr. The first pitch is 35° and opens into the main bowl lower down. Frosty Cr is a wide-open trough that is good for skiing until about 200m above Lightning Lk where it starts to get narrow and criss-crossed with deadfall. Climb out of the creek and ski through a section of thick trees down to Lightning Lk. It is a 3km ski back along the lake to the parking lot. If the lake is not well frozen, there is a trail on the S side of Lightning Lk.

### West Summit

The summit 1km W of Frosty Mtn is slightly higher than the E peak and is a separate ski trip. Park at the camp-

### 2423m



Runs through Larch trees on the descent to Lightning Cr from the W summit of Frosty Mtn. *Photo by Paul Kubik*

ground just past the Lightning Lakes day-use area. Beyond the campground, ski to the SW end of Lightning Lk, either on the lake itself or on the trail along the N side of the lake. Cross Lightning Cr on a bridge just beyond the end of the lake and climb S to gain the ridge W of Frosty Cr. The forest is fairly thick for the first 300m but improves higher up. Above 1900m there are beautiful larch trees. The ridge flattens out to a gentle shoulder above 2100m, which is often wind scoured. Walk and scramble along the easy ridge for about 1km to the main summit. The descent starts 200m to the W of the ridge above Frosty Cr and follows a long avalanche path to Flash Lk. This is an enjoyable 750m run. At the bottom of the avalanche path, go left and descend the remaining 150m to Flash Lk through reasonable open old-growth forest.

# Ashlu 12



Skiing steep E facing slopes on Mt Tantalus. Alpha Mtn behind. *Photo by Andre Ike*

**T**he Squamish River and its tributaries of Ashlu Creek and the Elaho River drain an area of deep coastal valleys surrounded by heavily glaciated summits. This region is characterized by extensive alpine terrain, including some of the most easily accessible icefields in southwestern BC. It offers excellent spring ski-mountaineering trips with everything from long outstanding descents to traverses across icefields. Most trips involve significant elevation gain.

## **Snow Conditions**

The mountains surrounding the Ashlu R lie in a major snowbelt. They are close enough to the coast to bear the full brunt of winter storms but high enough that most precipitation is snow. Though not well recorded, typical alpine snowfalls are in the 16m range and snowpacks of 4m are common. Some years you will need at least a 6m avalanche probe if you want to measure the snow depth. The huge snowfall feeds the extensive glaciation that drapes the ridge

crests and higher summits. The snowfall also extends to surprisingly low elevations. In many years, snow in the Ashlu valley at 500m lasts well into April.

## **Access**

Access is from an extensive system of logging roads. This road system is part of a large tree-farm licence and is reached from Hwy 99 by turning W 10km N of Squamish. Take a second left after crossing the Cheakamus R 4km from Hwy 99. It is a further 22km to the main gate at the entrance to the gravel logging roads. The gate is generally open, but check posted hours before entering. When roads are in active use, access is sometimes restricted to weekends and evenings. Beyond the gate, the logging roads extend over 70km up the Squamish R with major side roads up Ashlu Cr and the Elaho R. Important distances from Squamish are:

km 0—Squamish

km 10—turnoff from Hwy 99

km 32—main gate

km 33—junction with Ashlu Main

km 59—junction with Elaho Main

Ashlu Main extends to the back end of the Ashlu Cr valley giving access to a number of excellent ski trips. After crossing the Squamish R, it climbs steeply up the S side of Ashlu Canyon. There is a bridge across Ashlu Cr at the top of the canyon 7km from the Squamish R, and the road continues up the broad U-shaped valley beyond with major branch roads on both the N and S sides of the creek. Roads extend to km 15 at Marten Cr on the S side and to beyond km 25 on the N side with spurs to the S side at km 18 to Tatlow Cr and km 24 to Endall Cr. Ashlu Main is not being maintained, and though it is currently still driveable it is becoming bushy. Distances to relevant branch roads from the Squamish R bridge are:

km 0—Squamish R

km 2—Sigurd Creek Trail

km 6—A600 to Pokosha Cr

km 7—A730 to Mt Wood

km 18—A1100 to Tatlow Cr

km 24—A1300 to Chimai Mtn

km 25—A1400 to Porterhouse Pk

The Elaho Main crosses the Squamish R and runs up the E side of the Elaho R to past Clendinning Cr near km 100. At km 69 a major spur known as G Main crosses the Elaho R and extends to km 90 at Sims Cr.

The main logging roads are generally in good condition and can be driven by an ordinary car. Branch roads typically climb steeply into side valleys. They are often poorly marked and, depending on when they were last maintained, can require 4WD. None of the logging roads is plowed on a regular basis. The Squamish Main is often driveable in mid-winter, but roads up Ashlu Cr and the Elaho R are typically not snow free until April or May except in low snow years. In spring, Ashlu Cr roads are often blocked just beyond km 7 by large avalanches that descend Rob Cr from high on the S slopes of Buck Mtn. Roads in upper Ashlu Cr beyond km 8 are not being maintained and are becoming difficult to drive. Information on roads and road conditions can be obtained from the Squamish Forest District at [www.for.gov.bc.ca/dsq](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/dsq) or 604-898-2100. See also recent road reports at [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com).

## Trip Planning

Trips to the Lake Lovely Water area or Mt Sedgwick in the S Tantalus Range require a water taxi or helicopter for access:

### Water Taxi

[www.squamishriverjet.com](http://www.squamishriverjet.com) or 1-866-466-BOAT

### Squamish Visitor Centre

[www.squamishchamber.com](http://www.squamishchamber.com) or 1-866-333-2010

### Helicopters

[www.blacktuskhelicopter.com](http://www.blacktuskhelicopter.com) or 604-898-4800

[www.omegaaviation.ca](http://www.omegaaviation.ca) or 604-898-1067

## Multi-use Considerations

Multi-use is not a major concern in most of this area. The Tantalus Range is protected as Tantalus Provincial Park. Flights to the park are regulated and can only land at designated sites. Air access is permitted to Lake Lovely Water. Mt Jimmy Jimmy is one of the few designated non-motorized areas where air access is not permitted. The Ashlu-Elaho divide and glaciers surrounding Mt Tinniswood are designated as non-motorized (with air access allowed), and the Clendinning area has been protected as Clendinning Provincial Park. Approaches to many areas are also very rugged and prevent snowmobilers from reaching the alpine. The exception is the Exodus area at the head of the Squamish R, which is designated for shared use.

## Mt Sedgwick

Length: 2 days

Total Distance: 31km

Elevation Gain: 2230m

Start: 0m

## 2077m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92G/11

Best: Feb-Apr

Mt Sedgwick is the prominent snow peak on the W side of Howe Sound visible from near Britannia Beach on Hwy 99. Although the access starts from sea level, this is a recommended trip if you're looking for something a little different. The alpine area is well suited to ski touring and the summit is an enjoyable ski ascent.

For years, a pulp mill operated at Woodfibre at the mouth of Mill Cr underneath Mt Sedgwick. A regular ferry service provided access. With the closing of the pulp mill

Mt Sedgwick from Britannia Beach.



and the ferry service, it is necessary to take a water taxi from Squamish. This can be arranged through [www.squamishriverjet.com](http://www.squamishriverjet.com) at 1-866-466-BOAT.

From the dock at the old mill site, follow a logging road that switchbacks uphill to the W. The road climbs for 5km to the 600m level on Woodfibre Cr. Biking up the road is worth considering. Beyond the end of the road, a foot-bridge crosses the creek and a trail leads up to Henriette Lk (860m) through old-growth forest. There is an old cabin at Henriette Lk. From the lake outlet, follow the forested ridge N to gain open subalpine ridges near Sylvia Lk (1310m). It is a pleasant ski over the minor summit of Mt Roderick (1460m) and along open ridges from here to the summit of Mt Sedgwick (2077m).

The big E face of Mt Sedgwick, which appears to be a tantalizing ski run from Britannia Beach, is not quite as attractive up close. The face is undulating, and below 1400m it turns into a series of bluffs and gullies that drop 600m into the head of Mill Cr. However, the top part of the face, though not skied often, offers a decent 600m run on 30–35° slopes. From the bottom of the run at about 1400m, it is possible to switchback up to the S ridge and avoid climbing all the way back over the summit.



Looking N to Mt Sedgwick. Photo by Steve Grant

An approach from Mill Cr has also been used. From N of the old mill site, a logging road runs 9km up the E side of Mill Cr to near 1100m in the basin immediately SW of Mt Conybeare (1830m). Ascend through open forest to the 1280m pass between Mt Sedgwick and Mt Conybeare. The E face of Mt Sedgwick is easily reached from here.

Sechelt Ridge (1620m) to the W of Sylvia Lk also makes a reasonable ski objective. Access the ridge from the W end of the lake and then up the broad S ridge.

The ridges SW of Woodfibre have been traversed on skis on a 5 day trip from Port Mellon (3500m, 50km). See Howe Sound West Ski Traverse on [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com).

## Mt Pelops

Length: 2–3 days  
Total Distance: 14km  
Elevation Gain: 1960m  
Start: 20m

## 1980m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/14  
Best: Apr–May

The Lake Lovely Water cirque at the S end of the Tantalus Range is a rugged area surrounded by sharp, rocky summits and hanging glaciers. Access is difficult, much of the terrain accessible from the lake is steep and avalanche prone and most summits involve roped climbing. In general, the area is not well suited to ski mountaineering. Mt Pelops is one exception and is occasionally visited on skis. In good conditions it is a rewarding spring trip that offers some enjoyable skiing in a spectacular setting.

Access requires carrying skis up a steep trail that climbs 1100m from sea level to Lk Lovely Water. From the Squamish R road, 2km past the bridge over the Cheakamus R, turn left on a narrow dirt road that heads W across private Squamish First Nation land to the Squamish R. The trail starts on the W side of the river, which can be crossed by canoe, by a tyrolean traverse of the supporting cable for a locked cable car or by water taxi from Brackendale. A water taxi can be arranged through [www.squamishriverjet.com](http://www.squamishriverjet.com)



Photo by Jos van der Burg

## Tantalus Hut

Map: 92G/14  
GR: 820146  
Elevation: 1160m

Cost: \$25  
Capacity: 20  
Reservations: yes

**Location** At the E (outlet) end of Lake Lovely Water

**Facilities** A large two-storey frame hut with a kitchen/dining area on the main floor and a sleeping loft with foam mattresses for 20. It is also equipped with a propane stove and cooking and eating utensils. Reservations are required and the hut is kept locked.

**Built** by ACC in 1961

**Contact Information** Ron Royston 604-687-2711  
[www.accvancouver.ca](http://www.accvancouver.ca)



Mt Niobe and Pelops on the S side of Lake Lovely Water. Photo by Andre Ike

at 1-866-466-BOAT. Lk Lovely Water lies within Tantalus Provincial Park ([www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks)).

The trail to Lk Lovely Water can be picked up slightly upstream from the crossing and ascends steep forest on the S side of Lk Lovely Water Cr. Depending on the snow line it will be necessary to carry skis most of the way to Lk Lovely Water (1150m). The trail can be difficult to follow when it is covered by snow. The ACC Tantalus Hut is located at the E end of the lake.

Mt Pelops is reached by skiing S across the edge of Lake Lovely Water. A narrow draw leads into the open basin NE of the summit. Ascend a small glacier and steep snow slopes to the col SE of the summit. From the col, Mt Pelops is a short scramble. The skiing back to the lake is a worthwhile 700m run. An alternative route climbs the steep snow slope to the Pelops–Niobe col from where both Mt Pelops and Mt Niobe are easily ascended. An ice axe is recommended.

Access by helicopter from the Squamish airport is also possible. Contact Black Tusk Helicopters (604-898-4800) or Omega Aviation (604-898-1067). If flying in by helicopter, be prepared for delays due to weather and have backup plans for getting out if you are unable to be picked up. Note that flights to Tantalus Park are regulated and can only land at designated sites.

## Jim Haberl Hut

Length: 2–3 days  
Best: Mar–May

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex

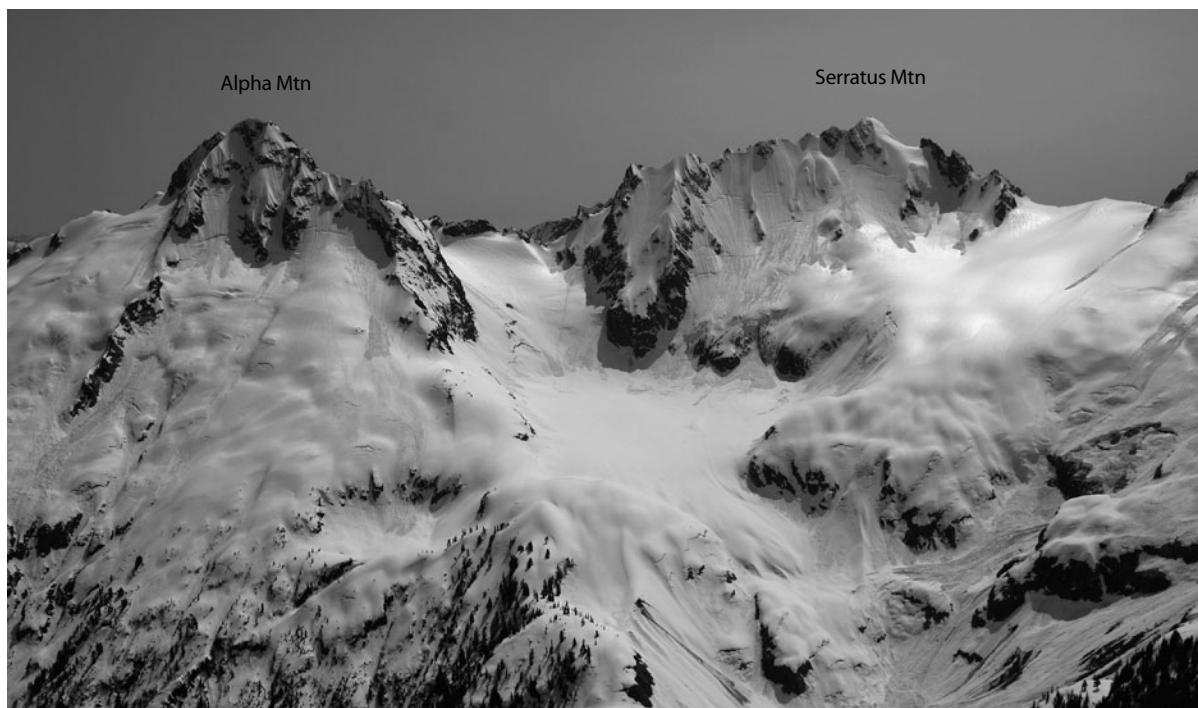
Jim Haberl Hut is located high in the Tantalus Range above Lk Lovely Water on the W side of Serratus Mtn. It was built for summer mountaineering but is occasionally visited in the winter as well, and though the terrain is somewhat limited in scope for skiing it does offer some excellent runs in a spectacular setting. As much of the skiing is on steep slopes, good conditions are essential.

Skiing around the hut ranges from several long moder-

Aerial view of the Jim Haberl Hut. Photo by Andre Ike







The N sides of Alpha and Serratus Mtns. *Photo by John Scurlock*

ate runs to a few steeper descents. Big open slopes W of the hut offer decent 400m runs that can be stretched to 800m by starting from high up on the Dione Gl. Angling N from the hut onto the E facing Serratus Gl gives access to some steeper runs that descend from the ridge above and can be pushed 600m down to the flats below the glacier at 1520m. One of the plums in the area is a ski descent of the NW face of Serratus Mtn. This is a challenging descent on slopes up to 45°.

Access is a difficult 2 day trip that involves travel in steep avalanche terrain, so ski parties often fly in by helicopter. Approaches to Lake Lovely Water are described above for Mt Pelops. Routes from there to Jim Haberl Hut climb around the steep S side of Serratus Mtn and are described under the Tantalus Range Traverse below. Lk Lovely Water has also been reached from the Haberl hut by descending the Serratus Gl. Below the centre of the glacier, continue E down an indistinct ridge to gain a flat snowfield at 1520m. Turn S and climb up open slopes to the Alpha–Serratus col from where it is straightforward to drop down to join the regular route to Lake Lovely Water. The route to the Alpha–Serratus col involves ascending a 40° slope on the N side of the col but avoids the traverse above cliffs on the route around the S side of Serratus Mtn.



### Jim Haberl Hut

Map: 92G/14  
GR: 776159  
Elevation: 2040m

Cost: \$25  
Capacity: 12  
Reservations: yes

**Location** On the W side of the Serratus–Dione col, just outside the boundary of Tantalus Park.

**Facilities** A comfortable one-storey frame hut with a large kitchen and sitting room and two sleeping rooms with bunks for 12. The hut is equipped with a propane stove, cooking and eating utensils and a propane heater. The hut is locked but there is an unlocked vestibule for emergency use.

**Built** by ACC in 2005. Named in memory of Jim Haberl, a prominent local climber and mountain guide.

**Contact Information** Ron Royston 604-687-2711  
[www.accvancouver.ca](http://www.accvancouver.ca)





Scouting a route across the Rumbling Gl, the crux of the Tantalus Range Traverse.

## Tantalus Range Traverse

Length: 5–7 days

Total Distance: 40km

Elevation Gain: 4100m

Start: 80m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92G/11, 92G/14

Best: May

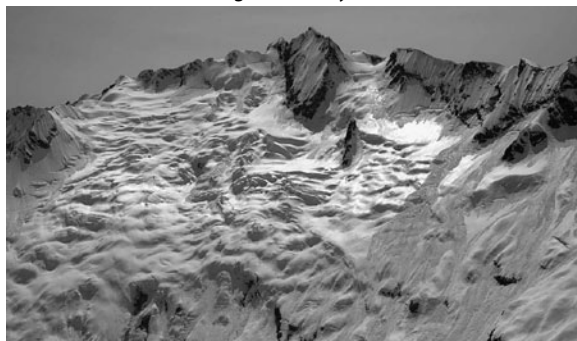
Jos Van Der Burg, Gerry Egan, Paul Kubik, Blair Mitten, Ian Smith, June 1997, *BCM* 1998, p. 51.

The Tantalus Range is the wild collection of steep summits W of the Squamish R. This is a rugged area with heavily glaciated peaks rising up to 2500m from the surrounding valleys. If you have ever stared at the tremendous views of the Rumbling and Serratus Gl's from Hwy 99 and wondered about skiing through the range, then this trip is for you. It is a brilliant and very challenging ski traverse down the entire spine of the Tantalus Range. It is also a great wilderness adventure close to Vancouver. If there was a terrain rating higher than complex, this trip would be it. It can only be completed in good conditions.

The complete route starts from Pelion Mtn at the N end of the Tantalus Range and traverses S to Mt Sedgewick. Access is via the Sigurd Cr trail as described for Pelion Mtn.

From a camp near treeline in Sigurd Cr, ascend the long NW ridge of Pelion Mtn to gain the obvious 2160m col in the NE ridge. Beyond the col, the route crosses the E face of Pelion Mtn. This is a big slope that traverses above cliffs. To avoid the steepest part of the face, drop 150m until you are able to angle down and traverse across 30° slopes to the S ridge of Pelion. Follow the ridge SE. There is a short step that must be downclimbed just before the col at the head of Mawby Cr. A camp on the ridge 1km SW of Zenith Mtn

Aerial view of the Rumbling Gl. Photo by John Scurlock





Descending slopes SE of Serratus Mtn, with Lake Lovely Water and Mt Niobe behind.

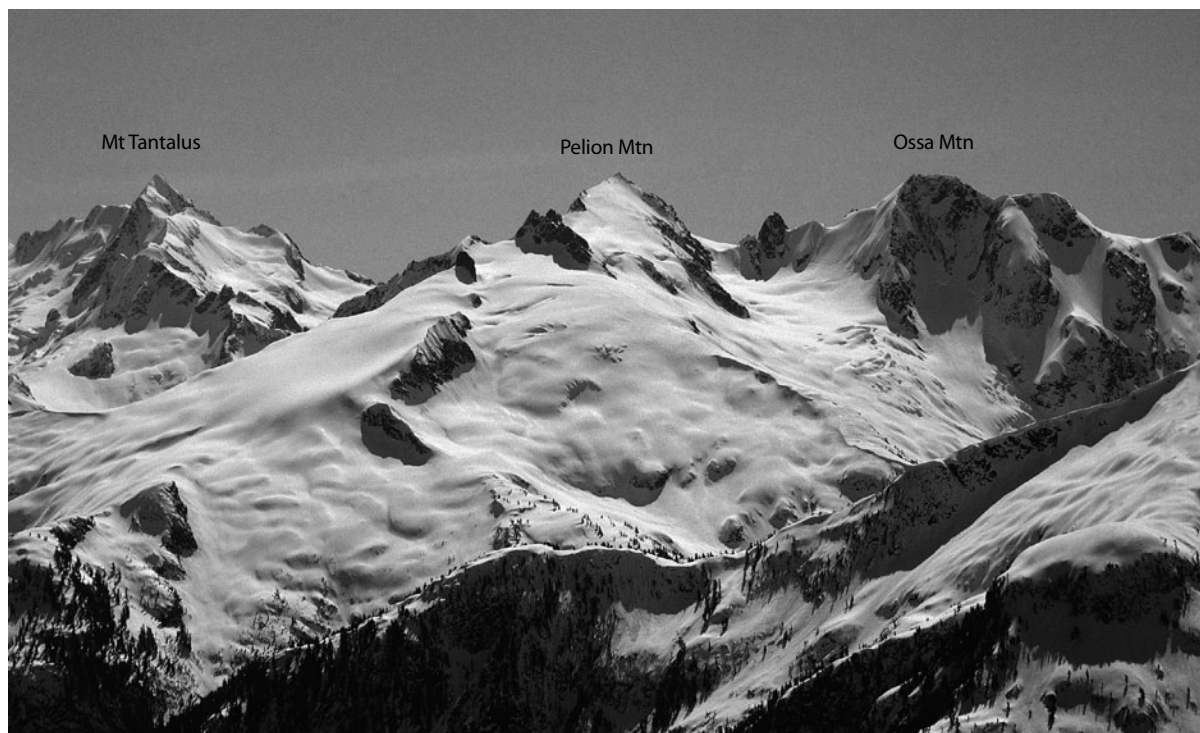
near Zenith col is recommended. Zenith Mtn is a worthwhile side trip and gives a good view of the Rumbling Gl.

From Zenith col, the route makes a long ascending traverse across the entire Rumbling Gl. This is the spectacular tumbling icefall visible from Hwy 99. From Zenith col, drop below a few rock outcrops to about 1700m and traverse S on very exposed slopes above Tantalus Cr for about 1km. Once onto the N part of the glacier, switchback up to gain a relatively crevasse-free bench that runs along the bottom of the steep E facing cliffs above the top edge of the glacier. This bench leads across to the prominent nunatak at 2100m, 1km NE of Mt Tantalus. Cross above the nunatak and descend slightly through crevasses to the glaciated basin below the E face of Mt Tantalus. Switchback up the basin to approximately 2350m, then traverse the glacier to the ridge that marks the S edge of Rumbling Gl. The top corner of the glacier leads to an obvious notch in the S ridge of Mt Dione at GR771174. Downclimb a W facing snow gully onto the Dione Gl. The Dione Gl is an enjoyable schuss with distant views of the ocean to the S. Jim Haberl Hut is located just S of the Dione–Serratus col.

From Jim Haberl Hut, two routes have been used to reach the head of the Lk Lovely Water cirque. The route used by most ski parties drops low around the W side of Serratus Mtn, climbs through the Ionia–Serratus col and crosses the S slopes of Serratus Mtn, at about 1840m. Use extreme care S of Serratus Mtn as the route traverses 40° slopes above a 200m cliff. It is necessary to traverse almost 1km across the slope until S of the Alpha–Serratus col before descending a gentler nose SE to 1500m (GR799146). The second route descends around the N side of Serratus Mtn (see Jim Haberl Hut for details) and climbs through the Alpha–Serratus col.

From the 1500m elevation S of the Alpha–Serratus col, a ramp leads W down to a small lake at 1400m in a flat area known as the Russian Army Camp. Continue around the head of the lake and ascend the obvious draw to the Niobe–Lydia col. An exit via the Lake Lovely Water trail is possible from here.

The complete traverse continues to Mt Sedgwick. Ski S from the Niobe–Lydia col. A steep step in the W ridge of Mt Pelops can be crossed at 1460m, and open slopes



Pelion Mtn from the N.

beyond can be followed around the N side of Mt Conybeare to the Conybeare–Sedgwick col at 1280m. The classic E face of Mt Sedgwick is a recommended side trip from here (see above). To exit, drop S from the col and pick up logging roads immediately S of the col at the head of Mill Cr near 1100m. It is about 9km to the abandoned mill site at Woodfibre. A water taxi can be arranged through [www.squamishriverjet.com](http://www.squamishriverjet.com) at 1-866-466-BOAT.

## Pelion Mountain

Length: 2 days  
Total Distance: 21km  
Elevation Gain: 2200m  
Start: 80m

**2280m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/14  
Best: Mar–May

A sharp snow pyramid lying at the N end of the Tantalus Range, Pelion Mtn is an outstanding spring ski ascent with long challenging ski runs and good views of the rugged Tantalus Range.

Cross the Squamish R at km 33 and follow the Ashlu Main for 2km to where it crosses Ashlu Cr. Shortly after Ashlu Cr, a spur road branches left. About 150m up the road, a trail can be picked up that climbs S and W into the attractive subalpine basin at the head of Sigurd Cr. Note the

starting elevation. You will have to carry your skis at first.

The trail is initially steep but is suitable for skiing above 600m. Above 900m, the valley becomes reasonably open. Ascend the N side of Sigurd Cr to above 1040m and swing S into the basin N of Ossa Mtn. Pelion Mtn is climbed by switchbacking up its long indistinct NW ridge that drops all the way into Sigurd Cr. The toe of this ridge is steep, and the ridge can be gained by climbing into the basin on its W side and skiing up a ramp that leads onto the ridge near 1500m. Continue up open snow slopes and the glacier beyond. A steep section near 2100m is avoided on the E by skiing up through an obvious col in the NE ridge and crossing back through a notch onto steeper NW slopes below the peak. The final summit is a class 2–3 scramble via its N ridge and offers excellent views of Mt Tantalus. The descent into Sigurd Cr offers a long continuous 1200m run. In good conditions it is possible to veer right off the lower portion of the NW ridge below 2000m and descend straight into Sigurd Cr. Most parties will take 2 days, but Pelion Mtn has been done as a strenuous day trip in the spring.

The upper Sigurd Cr basin has also been approached from logging roads in Pokosha Cr instead of the Sigurd Cr



Looking E across Pokosha Lk to Sigurd Pk.

trail. This approach is longer but requires less walking. Drive up Ashlu Cr and ski up old logging roads in Pokosha Cr (see Sigurd Pk for details). From the end of the road, climb only slightly to contour into subalpine meadows at 950m in Pokosha Cr. Open terrain leads to the pass beyond, from where it is possible to swing into the head of Sigurd Cr. The upper Sigurd Cr basin is an attractive area of meadows and lakes with good views of Pelion and Ossa Mtns.

## Sigurd Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 15km  
Elevation Gain: 1500m  
Start: 450m

## 1940m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/14  
Best: Mar–May

Sigurd Pk is a broad isolated summit N of Sigurd Cr above the entrance to the Ashlu valley. This is a recommended trip, approached through steep subalpine forest, with good skiing and good views. The recommended route climbs from Pokosha Cr. It crosses many avalanche slopes and requires careful routefinding.

Take logging roads up Ashlu Cr and stay on the S side to beyond Pokosha Cr. The route follows an old overgrown spur road that starts 1.2km W of Pokosha Cr. Walk up the overgrown spur for a bit less than 1km and take an even older road that branches to the right and continues up the W side of Pokosha Cr for almost 2km. This road is very overgrown but is brushed out by skiers and climbers every few years and provides easy access to the snow line. Beyond the end of the road, drop down to Pokosha Cr and cross it at the first chance. The shortest route ascends the first

steep side valley to Sigurd Lk at 1560m. This is mostly open above 820m but involves crossing several avalanche slopes and steep pitches beside two waterfalls to reach the lake. The next side valley to the S can also be used. It climbs directly to the W side of Sigurd Lk and is not quite as steep and confined as the first side valley. It offers good skiing back to Pokosha Cr.

Sigurd Lk may also be approached from the pass at the head of Pokosha Cr by climbing over the intervening 1650m dome. This route is slightly longer than either of the steep side valleys described above but is by far a safer and gentler approach. Pokosha Cr is open above 900m.

The summit is a straightforward ascent from Sigurd Lk, with good views of the Tantalus Range. Sigurd Pk may also be climbed on skis from a camp in upper Sigurd Cr.

## Mt Jimmy Jimmy

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 18km  
Elevation Gain: 1750m  
Start: 450m

## 2204m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/14  
Best: Mar–May

A sprawling summit S of Ashlu Cr, approached over a steep glacier on its NE side. The route is mostly open and there is good alpine skiing. This is an excellent spring ski-mountain-eering trip with a long, continuous descent.

The recommended route climbs from Pokosha Cr. Take logging roads up Ashlu Cr and stay on the S side to beyond Pokosha Cr. The route follows an old overgrown spur road that starts 1.2km W of Pokosha Cr. Walk up the overgrown spur for a bit less than 1km and take an even older road that branches to the right and continues up the W side of



Skiing off the summit of Mt Jimmy Jimmy, with Mt Tantalus (R) and Pelion Mtn (L) behind.

Pokosha Cr for almost 2km. This road is very overgrown but is brushed out by skiers and climbers every few years and provides easy access to the snow line. Beyond the end of the road, cross a major avalanche gully and ascend diagonally to the W to a lake at 1400m.

Two routes have been used to ski to the summit from the lake. The first is reached from beyond the lake by climbing S onto a 2000m shoulder and traversing W across an exposed glaciated bench to the broad neve E of the peak. This route crosses mostly N facing slopes. The summit lies another kilometre across the neve and is easily climbed from the SE.

Depending on conditions, an alternative route ascends an indistinct ridge N of the lower glacier and switchbacks W up onto the upper neve E of the summit. This route avoids

Descending from the glaciated cirque at the head of Coin Cr.



the exposed traverse across the glacier on the first route but because of its SE aspect is more affected by the sun in the spring and also has some exposure to falling seracs.

In early spring, Mt Jimmy Jimmy is sometimes done as a 2 day trip. The lake at 1400m is an excellent campsite, and the 1860m summit just N of the lake on the divide between Pokosha and Coin Crs is a recommended viewpoint. It is referred to as Pokosha Pk and is a short ski ascent from the lake.

## Tzoonie Mountain

**2070m**

Length: 4 days  
Total Distance: 40km  
Elevation Gain: 2600m  
Start: 450m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/13, 92G/14  
Best: Mar–Apr

Klaus Haring and Robin Tivy, 1994

Tzoonie Mtn is a seldom-visited ski summit on the divide between Narrows Inlet and Ashlu Cr. It is reached by traversing over Mt Jimmy Jimmy and offers interesting ski mountaineering in a remote area with descents up to 700m. Some routefinding and avalanche hazard are involved. The area gets huge snowpacks, and the terrain is often subalpine above 900m.

The most direct approach is from the glaciated bench S of Mt Jimmy Jimmy at the head of the Clowhom R. This bench has been reached from the pass at the head of Pokosha Cr by climbing steep slopes W to the 1860m col at the



View SW to Tzoonie Pk from Mt Jimmy Jimmy.

E end of the bench (though an approach from the col E of Mt Jimmy Jimmy also appears feasible). The recorded party skied down the Clowhom R to open timber at the head of Tatlow Cr and climbed into the basin S of Tatlow Lk. Steep slopes on the W side of this basin give access to Tzoonie Mtn. Several 2070m summits to the SE also appear attractive and might be reached from this basin as well. As an alternative to skiing back over Mt Jimmy Jimmy, an exit down the W side of Tatlow Cr has also been used. This route offers reasonable traveling with an adequate snow-pack (though a canyon at the junction of Falk Cr must be avoided by crossing briefly to the E side of Tatlow Cr on snowbridges). Branch road A1100 can be picked up N of Falk Cr.

It appears possible to avoid the lower portion of Tatlow Cr by climbing from the head of Tatlow Cr over ridges E of Tzoonie Lk to reach lakes in the Falk Cr drainage. The 1980m summit on the W side of Tatlow Cr here has been climbed on skis from Falk Cr. Access is via branch road A1100, which leaves Ashlu Main at km 18, crosses to the W

side of Tatlow Cr and climbs to near 1000m on the N side of Falk Cr. The Falk Cr drainage is heavily scoured by avalanches and rockslides. With adequate snow cover, it offers relatively open and straightforward travel. From the end of the road, descend into Falk Cr and ascend the W side of the first tributary to the S to reach a long unnamed lake N of Tzoonie Lk. Pk 1980m to the E of this lake is reached over open slopes from the S end of the lake. It offers a 600m descent on smooth slopes.

## Chimai Mountain 2301m

Chimai Mtn is the highest glaciated summit between upper Ashlu Cr and Jervis Inlet. More of a long ridge than a well-defined peak, it is a recommended spring ski trip with nice views and good glacier skiing on its N slopes. Two approaches have been used and both are recommended. The E ridge is often easier to access, as it is closer and the branch road starts lower, while the NW ridge offers more skiing on open slopes. Though often not accessible until May, Chimai Mtn can sometimes be done much earlier in a low snow year or if you are willing to ski partway up the Ashlu Cr logging roads.

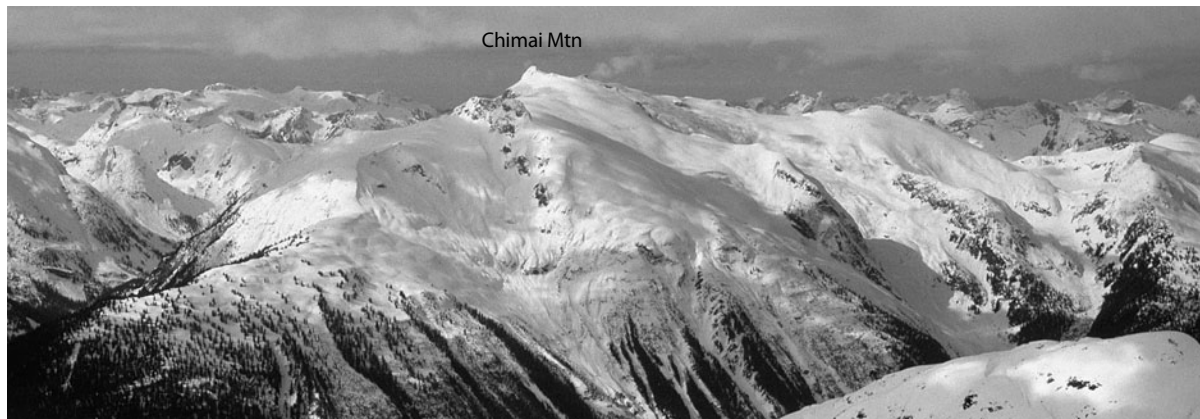
### East Ridge

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1800m  
Start: 500m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/13, 92G/14  
Best: Apr–May

Access is via branch road A1100, which leaves Ashlu Main at km 18, crosses to the W side of Tatlow Cr and climbs to near 1000m on the N side of Falk Cr. The bridge across Ashlu Cr is in poor repair and it is necessary to walk or ski from there. From near the end of the road, climb N through

Chimai Mtn from the NE.







Ascending the NW ridge of Chimai Mtn.

steep forest to reach the long rounded E ridge. The treeline is near 1500m and the minor 2140m summit E of Chimai Mtn is easily bypassed on the S.

### Northwest Ridge

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 18km  
Elevation Gain: 1800m  
Start: 700m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/13, 92J/4  
Best: Apr–May

Chimai Mtn is accessible from near km 24 on the Ashlu Main via branch road A1300, which crosses Ashlu Cr and climbs to approximately 1100m on the N side of Endall Cr, 4 km N of the summit. From near the end of the road, ski W through subalpine forest to gain the alpine shoulder E of a 1900m summit. To bypass the summit, make a short traverse SW across steep slopes at 1800m to drop into the basin W of the unnamed lake at the head of Endall Cr. Ascend the W side of a 2070m dome beyond and ski SE across glaciers to the broad summit ridge.

### Mt Wood

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 23km  
Elevation Gain: 1830m  
Start: 460m

### 2290m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92G/14  
Best: Feb–May

Also known as Storey Pk, Mt Wood is the highest summit on the SE end of the Ashlu–Squamish divide. It is a broad, heavily glaciated peak visible from Squamish and is a recommended ascent with superb views of the rugged Tantalus Range and the deep trench of the Squamish R.

Access is from logging roads that climb high into Pykett Cr SW of the summit. The main road in Ashlu Cr crosses to the N side at km 7, and 500m beyond this, branch road A700/730 forks to the right. After an initial steep hill, this road crosses Rob Cr and makes a long ascending traverse W into Pykett Cr. The road is washed out at Rob Cr, which



Mt Wood from the SW.

is also a major avalanche path. Walk or ski from here. The road is in reasonable shape for skiing. It is about 7km to Pykett Cr at 1070m. Just before Pykett Cr, use an old spur that heads S for half a kilometre to gain the forested ridge SE of Pykett Cr. This route offers pleasant traveling. Ascend the ridge E to a shoulder at treeline. Mt Wood is reached by heading NE across glaciers, crossing the divide N of Zig Zag Pk and ascending the summit from the SE. There is a 2100m drop to the Squamish R from the summit. The descent is a long run on moderate slopes.

### Pykett Peak

Length: 2 days  
Total Distance: 28km  
Elevation Gain: 2010m  
Start: 460m

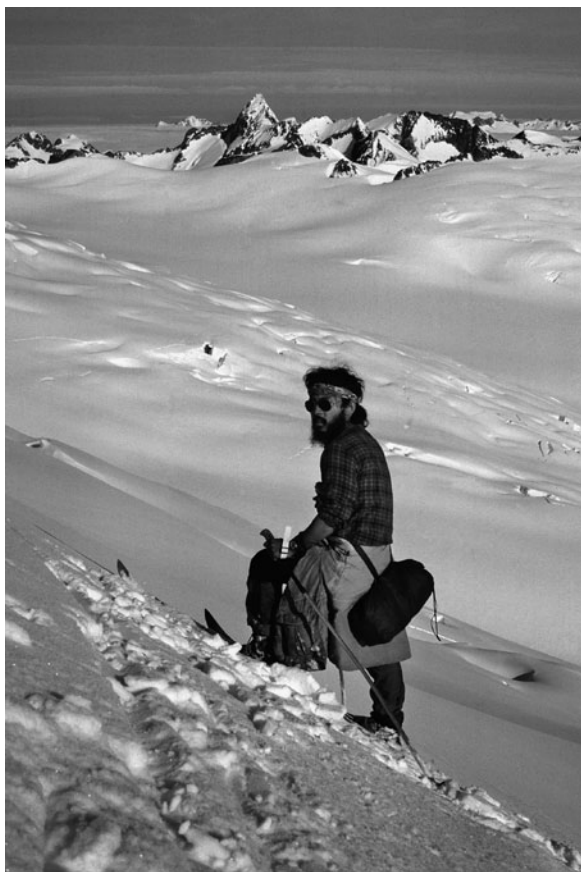
### 2470m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/3, 92G/14  
Best: Feb–May

Pykett Pk is the top of a long ridge that just manages to poke out of the broad icefield that straddles the Ashlu–Elaho divide. It is surrounded by the deep valleys of the Squamish R and Ashlu Cr and offers a mini icefield experience on a weekend trip.

On the summit of Pykett Pk.





Ascending Amicus Mtn. Ashlu Mtn in the distance.

Access is from logging roads that climb high into Pykett Cr. The main road in Ashlu Cr crosses to the N side at km 7. Half a kilometre beyond, turn right onto branch road A700/730. After an initial steep hill, this road crosses Rob Cr and makes a long ascending traverse W into Pykett Cr. The road is washed out at Rob Cr, which is also a major avalanche path. Walk or ski from here. The road is in reasonable shape for skiing. It is about 7km to Pykett Cr at 1070m. After crossing Pykett Cr, the road swings W for about 1km and ends near 1200m on a steep S facing slope. Switchback up through the cutblock (possible avalanche danger in spring) and open timber beyond to access an alpine ridge leading onto glaciers S of Mt Charlie Charlie (2410m). A camp somewhere above treeline is recommended. Pykett Pk lies farther N over intervening glaciers and can be reached by skiing up the SE ridge of easy Mt Charlie Charlie and crossing the icefield beyond. Pykett Pk can be ascended on skis by circling around the N side of the long summit ridge to approach the final peak from the N.

## Amicus Mountain

**2530m**

Length: 2 days  
Total Distance: 19km  
Elevation Gain: 2300m  
Start: 230m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/3  
Best: Mar–May

Amicus Mtn is an attractive glaciated summit rising almost 2400m above the junction of the Squamish and Elaho Rs. It is usually climbed as part of a ski traverse along the Ashlu–Elaho divide but is also a classic Coast Mountain ski ascent offering a 2100m descent in early spring.

Access is from logging roads on the Elaho R. At km 64, cross the Elaho R on branch road E200. Take the left fork after the bridge. This road heads SE across Shadow Cr and Carol Cr. The bridge across Shadow Cr is washed out and you will have to walk from here. Carol Cr is a long narrow gorge that descends N from Icecap Pk. Just after crossing Carol Cr, turn right on spur E220. Follow this steeply up to a crossing of Carol Cr at 400m.

Ascend Carol Cr, staying high on the W side to avoid slide alder in the valley bottom. The valley bottom is open above 700m. A steep headwall above 900m poses an avalanche hazard. Large side chutes below the headwall add to this hazard, so use extreme caution here. This trip is only recommended when avalanche conditions are safe. The glacier begins above 1500m and offers straightforward travel to the head of the valley. Amicus Mtn may be climbed from the 1900m level on the glacier in upper Carol Cr by skiing up smooth slopes to the N ridge. Amicus Mtn was once a reasonably popular trip until the bridge across the Elaho R washed out in 1982. A new bridge was built in the 1990s and some of the roads here were reactivated, making this a worthwhile trip again. In early spring it offers one of the longest descents in the southern Coast Mountains.

View of Amicus Mtn from a lunch stop on the S side of Icecap Pk.  
*Photo by Jos van der Burg*





Skiing on the Ashlu–Elaho Divide N of Porterhouse Pk.

## Ashlu–Elaho Traverse

Length: 3–4 days

Total Distance: 30km

Elevation Gain: 2700m

Start: 750m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92G/14, 92G/13, 92J/3, 92J/4

Best: May

Asger Bentz, Jim Byers, John Halliday, Jane Kelly, Marilyn Rode, May 1–6, 1972, *VOCJ* 1972, p. 25

An outstanding spring ski traverse down the broad glaciated divide between Ashlu Cr and the Elaho R. The terrain is similar to many of the large icefields farther N and is ideally suited to ski mountaineering. There are lots of short side trips and 200–300m ski runs.

The divide is most easily gained on its W side from the main creek draining the glacier S of Porterhouse Pk. It is reached from the back end of roads running up the N side of Ashlu Cr, which are not usually passable until late April or early May. A deactivated spur road climbs a short distance from near km 25 to a cutblock that straddles the creek draining from the glacier S of Porterhouse Pk. Beyond overgrown logging slashes, pleasant forest on either side of the creek gives way to open skiing. The glacier is reached higher up. An icefall above 1800m is avoided by following the ridge on the E side of the glacier to reach the

shoulder immediately E of Porterhouse Pk. Use a ramp to bypass a subpeak on the ridge.

From Porterhouse Pk, the traverse runs SE along glaciers that straddle the main divide. It is entirely alpine and very scenic with tremendous views of the Tantalus Range, and for the most part routefinding is straightforward. Drop N from Porterhouse Pk and ski E to angle up onto the glaciated N slopes of Pk 2522. Routefinding through crevasses is straightforward in good visibility but could be challenging in poor visibility. Pass S of Amicus Mtn (2530m) and ski up the E ridge of Icecap Pk (2470m) until you are able

Descending SE from Mt Wood towards Buck Mtn.



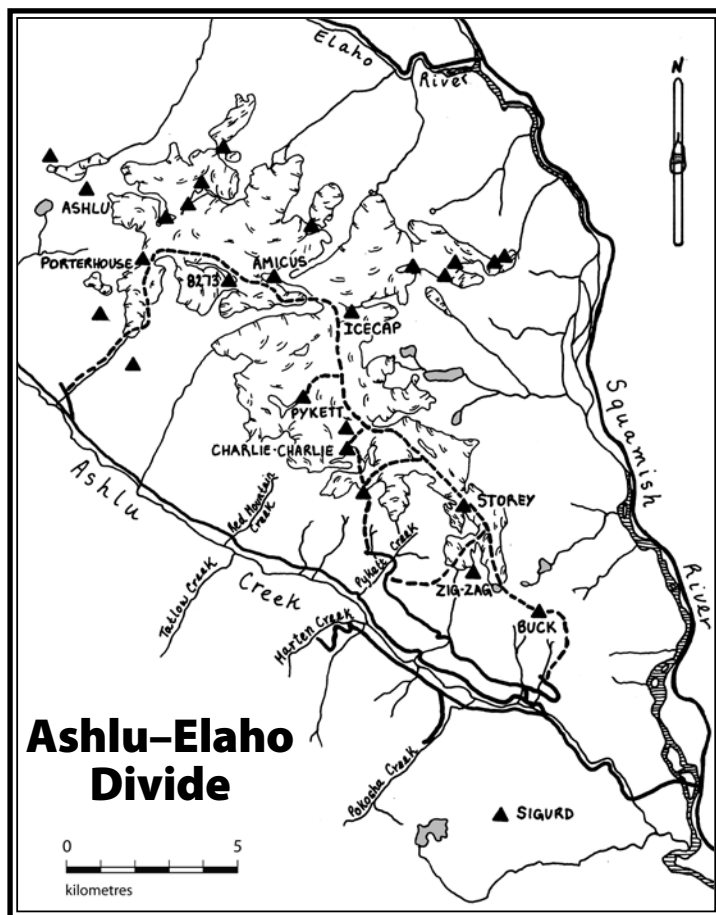
to traverse S. Gentle terrain leads S past Pykett Pk and onto the N shoulder of Mt Charlie Charlie (2410m). A steep drop E of Mt Charlie Charlie can be negotiated on its N side before the next climb to the superb viewpoint of Mt Wood (2290m). Bypass Zig Zag Pk (2100m) to the E and continue along the narrowing divide to exit via Buck Mtn (1980m). Ski directly over the summit of Buck Mtn, bypassing the summit cornice to the S. Continue skiing down the E ridge to about 1600m. The descent to Ashlu Cr from here is steep and somewhat bushy but only takes a few hours. Head due S, angling slightly W at first to pick up an indistinct timbered ridge E of Mowitch Cr that can be followed down to the overgrown spur of branch road A720 near 700m. This is about 1km from the main Ashlu bridge at km 7.

Most summits on the divide are straightforward and offer short enjoyable side trips. These include Amicus Mtn, Pykett Pk, Mt Charlie Charlie and Mt Wood, which may all be done as separate 2 day trips and have been described above.

The traverse is usually done with a start from Porterhouse Pk. However, gaining access to the W end of the divide at Porterhouse Pk has its difficulties. Roads on upper Ashlu Cr are typically not driveable until well into May and are sometimes blocked even longer by large avalanches. Ashlu Main is also becoming somewhat overgrown and difficult to drive. These problems can be avoided, and the trip can be done in April or earlier, if you are willing to ski 18km up Ashlu Main. This approach typically adds a day to the trip. Some parties have done the trip in reverse to make the ski down the Ashlu Main easier (about 4 hours). In this case, an approach via Mt Wood is recommended instead of climbing up steep slopes to Buck Mtn with a heavy pack. The traverse was first done with an approach to Amicus Mtn via Carol Cr from the Elaho R. Though there is considerable exposure to avalanches in Carol Cr, this route still has much to offer. In addition, roads in the Elaho R are often



View S from Icecap Pk across the Ashlu–Elaho Divide to Mt Tantalus.





Deserter Pk. Photo by Jos van der Burg

driveable in April, making this approach feasible much earlier in the season than access from Ashlu Cr. An approach from Limelight Cr N of Ashlu Mtn has also been used. Steep slopes lead out of Limelight Cr to the divide N of Shadow Cr.

## Deserter Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 1860m  
Start: 300m

Paul Kubik, Jos van der Burg, April 2002

**2160m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/4  
Best: Apr

The Elaho R is a classic coastal valley with steep walls rising over 2000m directly from the river. Deserter Pk is one of the few summits on the W side of the river that can be climbed on skis. Avalanche debris in the narrow side canyon of Bierman Cr gives access to a huge avalanche slope that is ideal for a challenging spring ski ascent.

Access is from Bierman Cr. Drive up the Elaho R road and take the bridge across the river at km 69 to G Main on the W side of the river. Bierman Cr is at km 77 and drains E from two small lakes at 1160m. An old logging spur on the N side of the creek can be followed for half a kilometre. Cross the creek and work your way up the S side of the

creek. Despite the imposing nature of the terrain, Bierman Cr offers reasonable travel. The route crosses several major avalanche paths. Conditions are best in early spring, when avalanche debris covers bush below 600m and the first part of the route can be skied. The valley becomes less steep above 760m. Above 1100m, a huge snow slope about 1km wide rises on the S of the valley. The slope averages 30° and is a committing ascent that requires stable avalanche conditions. The obvious ski destination is the rounded N summit of Deserter Pk (2160m). The main summit of Deserter Pk is the sharp blade 1km to the S at GR562572. The descent offers a continuous 1100m run on smooth slopes back down into Bierman Cr.

N side of Deserter Pk above Bierman Cr. Photo by Paul Kubik





Looking W from Sun Pk to Mt Albert and ridges above Princess Louisa Inlet. Photo by Paul Kubik

## Sun Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 10km  
Elevation Gain: 2000m  
Start: 400m

Paul Kubik, Josef Sadowski, Apr 2000

**2290m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/4, 92J/15  
Best: May

Sun Pk is a horn-shaped summit on the rugged divide between the Elaho R and Princess Louisa Inlet. A steep trail to treeline leads to rounded alpine ridges that provide pleasant but strenuous access to this seldom-visited area.

Access is from Sims Cr. Drive up the Elaho R road and take the bridge across the river at km 69 to G Main on the W side of the river. Follow this road all the way to a bridge across Sims Cr at km 90— the last 10km may be 4WD. There is a small parking area before the bridge, and Bug Lake Trail heads into the forest across from the parking lot. The trail is well marked and ascends quickly through steep forest to Bug Lk at 1250m (GR538661) on the long NE shoulder of Sun Pk. The rounded shoulder can be followed all the way to the summit (GR508643). There is a short, steep pitch above the lake, and near 2060m it is necessary to lose about 60m of elevation. The summit offers excellent views. It is an enjoyable 800m run back down to Bug Lk.

Depending on snow coverage, a logging road 1km E

of Bug Lake Trail can also be used for access. Branch road G800 climbs about 180m above Sims Cr.

This trip is best done in a day because of the steep approach. The drive up the Squamish and Elaho Rs to Sims Cr makes this a very long day trip from Vancouver. It is recommended to drive up the night before. There is excellent camping on sandbars beside the road near the confluence of Sims Cr and the Elaho R at km 85.

Nearby Outrigger Pk might prove to be a worthwhile ski trip from logging roads that climb to near 900m NE of the summit.

Descending from Sun Pk. Photo by Paul Kubik







Heavily glaciated slopes N of Torah Pk. Photo by Linda Bily

## Exodus Peak

Length: 1–2 days

Difficulty: 3

Total Distance: 24km

Elevation Gain: 1810m

Start: 600m

**2410m**

Terrain: Challenging

Map: 92J/6

Best: Apr–May

A gentle glaciated dome on the SW corner of the Pemberton Icefield. Suitable for a spring ski trip.

Exodus Pk is easily approached from the upper Squamish R. From km 69 on the Squamish Main on the E side of the upper Squamish R, turn W onto branch S400. After crossing the Squamish R, take the left fork, which climbs uphill onto a bench and swings gradually into Dipper Cr. Depending on snow conditions, drive or ski up the road from here. The road crosses Carnival Cr, the main N tributary of Dipper Cr, at 900m and switchbacks up the ridge between Dipper Cr and Carnival Cr to about 1100m. Beyond the top of the clearcut, ascend the broad ridge that climbs NW towards the Exodus Pk area. The ridge offers pleasant traveling on skis and gives access to the main ice-

field near 1800m. Exodus Pk is a straightforward ascent on skis from the S and offers excellent views across the Elaho R.

Exodus Pk may be climbed as a long day trip later in the spring.

Exodus Pk from the S.





Skiing towards Ring Mtn on the Exodus Traverse. *Photo by Linda Bily*

## Exodus Traverse

Length: 4 days  
Total Distance: 66km  
Elevation Gain: 3200m  
Start: 600m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/3, 92J/6  
Best: Apr–May

High sprawling glaciated terrain leads NE from Exodus Pk to the Squamish Gl on the Pemberton Icefield. This corner of the Pemberton Icefield is less visited by snowmobilers and offers a recommended high-alpine horseshoe traverse of the upper Squamish R.

Approach from Dipper Cr as described for Exodus Pk. From the glaciated bench E of Exodus, ski NE over glaciers and cross the 2300m shoulder N of Torah Pk (2500m) to descend onto the Squamish Gl. Ski down the Squamish Gl to 1450m and veer S and E through a narrow pass and across the head of the Soo R. Climb S out of this basin to reach the 2000m pass N of Mt Callaghan. Continue over the summit plateau of Mt Callaghan and ski SW past Ring Lk. Descend S of Ring Mtn on the S side of Rendell Cr to exit to

branch road S500, which climbs to near 1400m, 2km SW of Ring Mtn. S500 cannot be driven due to a washout near 600m but provides a reasonable exit route on foot. Branch road S500 joins Squamish Main close to S400, making it fairly easy to retrieve your vehicle from the start of the trip. Instead of climbing over Mt Callaghan, some parties have used the 1700m col E of Little Ring Pk and traversed W of Mt Callaghan at treeline. Climb through the 1920m col E of Ring Mtn and swing around into Rendell Cr and exit to S500. Branch road S910, which climbs to 1200m 3km S of Little Ring Pk, has also been used as an exit route. It, too, is not driveable but it is skiable.

This is a high-alpine traverse best suited to spring conditions. Recommended ascents include Exodus Pk, Torah Pk and Mt Callaghan. There are good runs of up to 600m on the glaciers N of Torah Pk.



View S up the Clendinning Gl. Photo by Peter Rowat



Mt Tinniswood from the S. Photo by Peter Rowat

## Clendinning Traverse

Length: 15–18 days

Total Distance: 110km

Elevation Gain: 7800m

Start: 400m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92J/4, 92J/5, 92J/11, 92J/12

Best: May–Jun

Peter Rowat, 1986, *BCM* 1988, p. 8

The heavily glaciated mountains W of the Elaho R can be traversed from Meager Cr S to Princess Louisa Inlet. This is a scenic traverse, the main feature of which is the long Clendinning Gl at the head of Clendinning Cr. The area is very rugged and there are some routefinding challenges at the S end of the range.

The recommended route traverses alpine ridges from Mt Meager and climbs through the Manatee Range to the head of the Toba R. Start at the junction of Meager Cr and the Lillooet R. Ascend through the Meager Group past Capricorn Mtn. Continue W over ridges above the Job Gl to the head of Manatee Cr. Cross the Manatee Range just E of Dugong Pk, or descend S from the upper Remora Gl and traverse an indistinct bench across the lower W slopes of Manatee Pk at 1800m to reach the small lakes at the head of the Toba R. (For more detailed route descriptions, see Capricorn Mtn, Manatee Range and Elaho Mtn.)

From the head of the Toba R, ascend the Elaho Gl. Avoid the main icefall above 1900m on the N to gain the icefield NW of Elaho Mtn. A ridge descending SW from Raccoon Mtn (2470m) gives access to Raccoon Pass, and the S bank of Clendinning Cr can be followed to Clendinning Lk. Clendinning Lk has also been reached directly from Elaho Mtn via the Havoc Gl, but Clendinning Cr can be very difficult to cross unless there are large snowbridges

from avalanche debris. The ascent of the Clendinning Gl is straightforward, and a 1950m pass at the head of the glacier leads to the Glomach Gl, which is descended past a waterfall near its snout, to the Tinniswood Gl. The neve SW of Mt Tinniswood is reached via steep snow slopes on the rounded nose running N from Mt George Edwards (2260m). The descent route S of Mt Tinniswood is hard to see from above. It is best to veer E to avoid difficulties. Drop until you are below the glacier snout and traverse into Casement Pass (1400m). Continue SE along ridges over Bon Bon Pk (2090m) towards the head of Loquilts Cr, avoiding cliffs SE of Bon Bon Pk on their W side. A steep notch in the broad pass between Loquilts Cr and Sims Cr must be crossed to reach Contact Lks (1520m) immediately W of Sun Pk.

There are two options for finishing the traverse. The most scenic route descends the ridge S to the outlet of Sun Lk, (1330m) from where a trail runs SW to the marine park at the head of Princess Louisa Inlet. A short float-plane flight to Sechelt can be arranged ahead of time. There is also regular boat traffic here in the spring. The second option climbs E across the N side of Sun Pk (see above) and drops NE to Bug Lk at 1250m, from where a trail descends to logging roads on Sims Cr. A car can be left here, making this option much simpler logistically.

Possibilities for side trips include the high summits of Capricorn Mtn, Manatee Pk and Elaho Mtn as well as more rugged summits in the Clendinning Range, such as Mt Doolittle (2660m), Mt Whiting (2590m) and Mt Tinniswood (2590m). See *CAJ* 1973, p. 59.

# Upper Lillooet 13



Skiing at the head of Boulder Cr with Pebble Pk behind.

The deep trench of the Lillooet River runs northwest from Pemberton. It penetrates far into an area of high, glaciated summits that contains the biggest concentration of 2700m peaks accessible from Vancouver. The terrain is excellent for ski mountaineering, with superb ski ascents, ideal locations for extended ski camps and several popular traverses. There are also backcountry cabins at Overseer Mountain and North Creek. This chapter describes a large number of excellent trips, most of which are several days to a week. Much of the terrain is steep and glaciated and better suited to spring conditions.

The headwaters of the Lillooet River are protected as part of Upper Lillooet Provincial Park.

## **Snow Conditions**

Lying just W of the Lillooet Icefield, the peaks of the Upper Lillooet R are significantly snowier than the Pemberton area that one passes through to reach them. Typical snow-packs range from around 3m N of Pemberton to over 4m in the Meager Cr area, with corresponding snowfalls in the

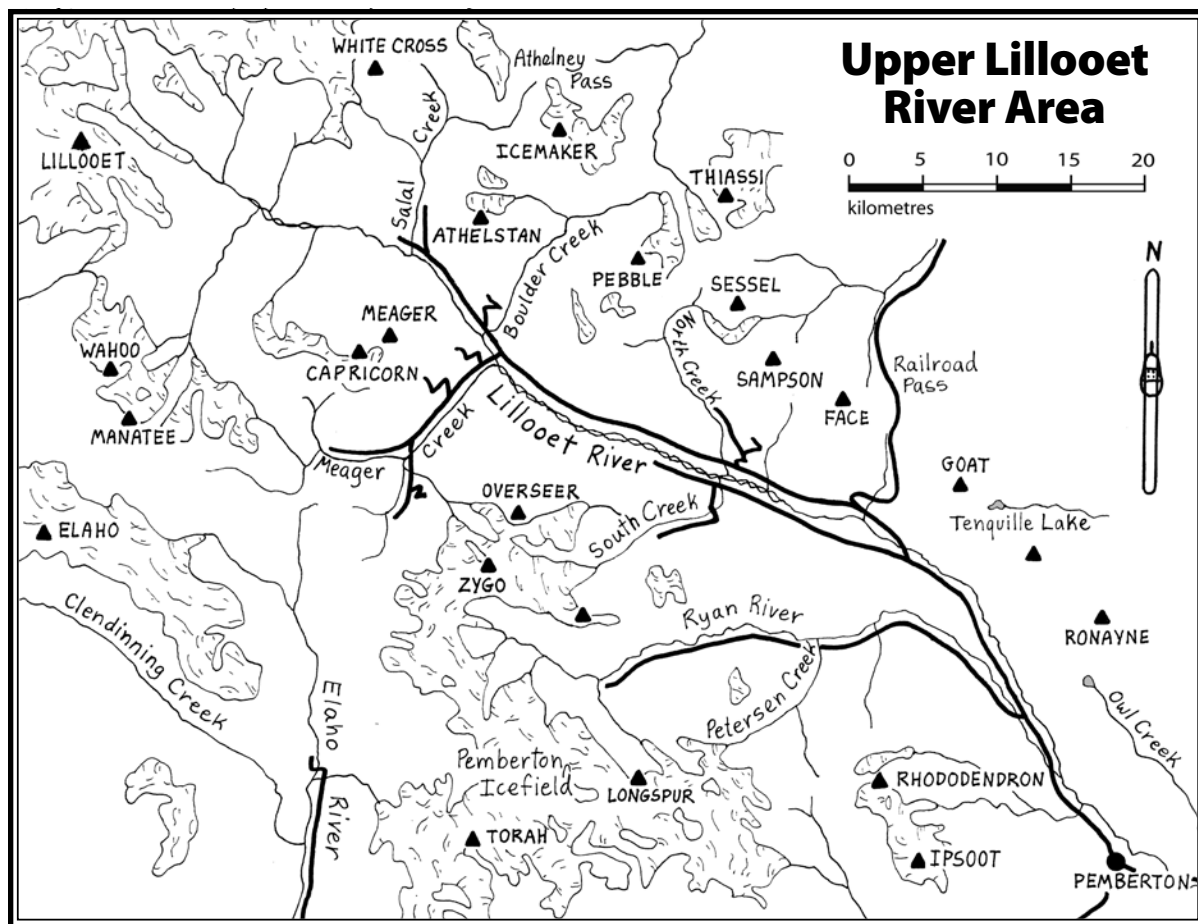
12–15m range. The snow climate over much of the region is similar to Whistler but with heavier snowfalls. The area is far enough inland that powder skiing can be expected at higher elevations well into April. In the W parts of the region spring skiing lasts well into June.

## **Access**

Access is via Pemberton, a 156km drive of about 2 hours from Vancouver. An all-weather road runs up the Pemberton Valley on the S side of the Lillooet R for 25km to Pemberton Meadows. A logging road continues to past South Cr at 43km. Note that the Pemberton Valley is often snow covered into spring.

The Lillooet R Forestry Rd branches to the right at km 25 from the Pemberton Valley road, and after crossing the Lillooet R it continues up the N side of the Lillooet R to beyond Salal Cr. Relevant distances from Pemberton Valley road are:

- km 0—turnoff from Pemberton Valley road
- km 9—Hurley R Forest Service Road



km 17—Branch 1 road to E side of North Cr

km 37—Meager Cr road

km 40—Mt Athelstan roads

km 48—Salal Cr roads

The Lillooet R forest rd is not plowed in mid-winter. Due to avalanche hazard, it is gated just past the junction with the Hurley R road. The gate is often locked until well into April. As the Upper Lillooet R valley receives considerably more snow than Pemberton, the Lillooet R road is often not driveable to Meager Cr until early May.

The Hurley R road leaves the Lillooet R forest rd 9km after the turnoff from the Pemberton Valley road. The Hurley R road is well marked and climbs 14km up Railroad Cr to Railroad Pass at 1370m. It then runs down the S side of the Hurley R, crossing to the N side beyond Lone Goat Cr, and continues to Gold Bridge, 57km from Pemberton Meadows. The Hurley R road is not maintained in winter and is typically not passable beyond the turnoff from the

Lillooet R road until late March. By mid-April it is often possible to drive to Railroad Cr at 1000m, but it is usually not possible to drive to Railroad Pass until after the road is plowed in late May. The road is heavily traveled by snowmobiles and snowcats in winter.

Information on logging roads in the Upper Lillooet R valley can be obtained from the Squamish Forest District website at [www.for.gov.bc.ca/dsq](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/dsq). See also [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com) for recent road bulletins and trip reports.

## Aircraft Charter

### Helicopter

[www.blackcombhelicopters.com](http://www.blackcombhelicopters.com)

Whistler and Pemberton 604-938-1700

### Ski Plane

[www.tyaxair.com](http://www.tyaxair.com)

888-892-9288 (in Canada)

250-238-0177



Nearing the summit of Ipsoot Mtn. *Photo by Tom Furst*

### Multi-use Considerations

Most of this area lies within the Squamish Land and Resource Management Plan and was part of the Sea to Sky Backcountry Sharing Accord. Three portions of the region were set aside as non-motorized zones. The closest non-motorized zone to Pemberton surrounds Ipsoot and Rhododendron Mtn. The second non-motorized zone lies on the S side of the upper Lillooet R and extends through South Cr and across the Overseer area. The third non-motorized zone lies on the N side of the Upper Lillooet R comprising North Cr, Boulder Cr and Athelney Pass. Note that air access is allowed in the non-motorized zones and includes heliskiing. Heliskiing is busiest in areas closest to Whistler and Pemberton and less so in the more remote portions of the non-motorized zones.

Shared-use areas have been designated near Railroad Pass and onto Face Mtn while the rest of the region is designated as motorized, including the entire Pemberton Icefield S of the Overseer area.

### Ipsoot Mountain

Length: 2 days  
Total Distance: 35km  
Elevation Gain: 2350m  
Start: 240m

**2590m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/7, 92J/6  
Best: Feb–Mar

A large glaciated massif due W of Pemberton, Ipsoot Mtn is a classic weekend ski ascent. A long approach from the Pemberton valley gives access to the upper mountain, which offers superb glacier skiing with runs of up to 1200m.

Access is from 6km N of Pemberton. Turn left on Arn Rd immediately after crossing Miller Cr. The road leads to a micro-hydro project and is gated about 1km from the highway. Motorized traffic is not permitted and is blocked by a fence across the bridge over Miller Cr. It is possible to climb around the fence. Ski up the hydro-access road, which climbs to near 1200m in South Miller Cr. Continue W for 3km to camp near open terrain above 1300m. Ipsoot Mtn is easily climbed on skis via the Ipsoot Gl NW of the peak. There is excellent glacier skiing here, which you will have to share with Whistler Heli-Skiing, if they are in the area. There are several options for descending, depending on avalanche conditions. The gentlest route is back down





Skiing on the Ipsoot Gl. Photo by Tom Furst

the Ipsoot Gl, but one of the best ski lines drops straight N from the summit down the North Gl for a 1200m run to South Miller Cr.

Ipsoot Mtn has also been approached on skis from Rutherford Cr logging roads, 24km N of Whistler. In late spring, when roads in Rutherford Cr can be driven, this approach is somewhat shorter than via Miller Cr, and Ipsoot Mtn is possible as a strenuous day trip. The most direct route leaves the Rutherford Cr road 8km from the highway and ascends the W side of the creek draining the glacier SE of the summit. This area is open above 900m and offers reasonable fall-line skiing, despite some avalanche hazard.

Nearby Rhododendron Mtn may also be climbed on skis from South Miller Cr via glaciers on its S side.

## Rhododendron Mtn

Length: 2–4 days  
Total Distance: 40km  
Elevation Gain: 2100m  
Start: 400m

**2500m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/6, 92J/7  
Best: Mar–May

Lying immediately N of Ipsoot Mtn, Rhododendron Mtn is another classic ski ascent with a long approach from the Pemberton Valley. In addition to the long gentle glacier run from the summit, there are a variety of other minor summits and excellent runs in the area. Expect some snowmobile traffic and heliskiing in the area.

Rhododendron Mtn is reached from subalpine meadows in upper Miller Cr. These are reached via the Old Ryan R road, which turns off the main Pemberton Valley road 7km N of Pemberton on the S side of the Ryan R. The logging road runs along the W side of the Ryan R for several kilometres before switchbacking up the side of the Pemberton Valley. The road switchbacks to over 1300m, though you may not be able to drive too high above the Pemberton Valley before being stopped by snow. From the end of the



Miller Gl and Rhododendron Mtn. Photo by Whistler Heli Skiing

road, it is straightforward to gain a low forested pass at 1450m on the long ridge that runs above the NE side of Miller Cr. From this pass, drop 200m to the S into Miller Cr. It is not far to meadows beginning at 1300m. Beyond this, glaciers give access to good skiing on Rhododendron Mtn and other summits.

Rhododendron Mtn can be climbed by ascending the main glacier at the head of Miller Cr. Avoid major crevassed areas by ascending along the N margin of the glacier. The top is easily reached from the col just W of the summit. The glacier offers a long gentle 1100m run from the summit back to the meadows. The steeper Miller Gl dropping E from the summit is also skied. The glacier has a major icefall near 2000m, which can be avoided on its N side.

Mt Miller (2160m) is the minor peak 4km E of Rhododendron Mtn. The small glaciated cirque immediately W of the summit offers an excellent 800m run on N facing slopes. The gentle ramp NE of the summit is another recommended run. There are also steep 600m runs dropping NE from the end of the ridge E of Mt Miller. These connect up glades and rockslides all the way down to the meadows in the valley bottom.

Minor summits NW of Miller Cr also offer excellent skiing. Sugarloaf Mtn (2440m) is the highest summit. It can be ascended via its E ridge, either by climbing steep slopes from the meadows or by skiing along the entire ridge above Miller Cr from the end of the logging road. Sugarloaf has an excellent run on its N side. Pk 2220m immediately SW of Sugarloaf Mtn is a ski ascent from the lake below the snout of the glacier. There is good skiing off this summit as well as the opportunity for longer runs into the head of Wasp Cr. Ski camps have been operated out of the head of Wasp Cr for up to a week.



Skiing at the head of Petersen Cr. Photo by John Irvine

## Petersen Creek

Length: 7 days  
Map: 92J/6

Terrain: Complex  
Best: Feb–Apr

Draining a large glaciated cirque on the N side of the Pemberton Icefield, Petersen Cr is a recommended location for a fly-in ski camp with excellent backcountry skiing ranging from runs in the glades near treeline to long alpine descents on glaciers. This is big alpine terrain with 600–900m runs on 30° slopes.

Access is generally by a short helicopter flight up the Ryan R from Pemberton. The best skiing is concentrated at the head of the W branch of Petersen Cr. A base on the S fork of the creek gives good access to a wide variety of terrain. A recommended camp location is near treeline on the N side of the long narrow pass with Rutherford Cr at GR896816.

The most obvious day trips are to the broad glaciated summits at the head of the Petersen Gl. Petersen Pk (2440m) and the surrounding high ridge tops offer excellent runs of up to 900m down both the W and E lobes of the Petersen Gl.

There is a small, unnamed lake at the snout of the W

lobe of the Petersen Gl, and the narrow basin W of the lake has some excellent lines. The gentlest follows the mellow trough of the basin. Steeper SE facing runs descend 700m from the E shoulder of Pk 2500m and from the 2170m shoulder 2km N of the lake. The narrow glacier N of Pk 2500m is also a good run.

The steep 2020m feature, known as the Teton, that divides the forks of the W branch of Petersen Cr offers superb runs of up to 600m on both its E and W sides. These runs are good if poor visibility prevents you from going higher.

Farther afield, Pk 2290m at the head of the E lobe of the Petersen Gl offers 900m runs to the E down into the head of Rutherford Cr. From the bottom of the run, the upper fork of Rutherford Cr offers a shortcut with only a 250m climb back to the Petersen Cr drainage.

Petersen Cr lies in the heart of a multi-use area that is shared with Whistler Heli-Skiing, so don't expect to have the slopes to yourself every day. The glaciers S of Petersen Pk are heavily used by snowmobilers, and occasionally a few come over the steep ridge tops and roam around the head of Petersen Cr.



View across the main glacier at the head of South Cr to unnamed 2500m summits.

## South Creek

Length: 2–5 days  
Total Distance: 33km  
Elevation Gain: 2000m  
Start: 600m

BCM 1984, p. 31

## 2620m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/11, 92J/6  
Best: Mar–May

South Cr is a major drainage on the S side of the upper Lillooet R valley directly opposite North Cr. Its W branches drain the major glaciers on the E side of the Overseer Mtn area. A pleasant ski up a relatively open subalpine valley gives access to this excellent ski-mountaineering area that has the feel of a large icefield.

From Pemberton Meadows, drive N up the S side of the Lillooet R valley to South Cr at km 43. The South Cr logging road branches off on the W side of the creek at an elevation of 320m. The road climbs steeply for several switchbacks before making a gradual traverse into the South Cr valley. Drive as high as the snowline allows, though the road is often blocked by rockfall near where it crosses to the S side of South Cr at 700m. You will likely have to ski or walk from here even in the spring. Beyond the bridge, avoid a minor uphill spur after the first switchback and continue up the road to a second bridge at 980m. Cross South Cr on the bridge here and ski up the mostly open N side of the creek, crossing the runout zones from several avalanche paths. The valley leads to the wide glacier at the head of the major SW branch of South Cr.

From a camp below the glacier, there are a variety of

excellent ski mountaineering objectives. Most can be reached on a 2 day trip, but the area is well worth a longer visit. The obvious objective is Zygo Pk (2620m) at the head of the glacier—also referred to as Snow Maiden by the 1983 BCMC party. This is a straightforward ascent up the gentle glacier from the E, with good views of the Pemberton Icefield and the nearby Harrison Hut area. There are also a group of attractive 2530m summits immediately SE of the glacier snout that offer excellent runs up to 800m.

The W branch of South Cr can also be reached from the bridge across South Cr at 980m. Several kilometres of forest travel give access to the broad open valley and glacier on the E side of Overseer Mtn. This valley also has good ski-mountaineering objectives, ranging from Overseer Mtn to long moderate glacier runs on Madhorse Pk and the lower summits between the two branches of South Cr.

Skiing off the E side of Zygo Pk.





View across the Roller Coaster Gl to the Magic Carpet Gl and the Three Stooges. Photo by Linda Billy

## Overseer Area

The Overseer Mtn area at the N end of the Pemberton Icefield is a popular ski-mountaineering destination. Harrison Hut provides a comfortable base, and the surrounding terrain is excellent for moderate ski ascents and long glacier runs. Tree skiing is somewhat limited. Because of this and the fact that many trips involve glacier travel, the area is best visited in the spring. This area also provides access S to the Pemberton Icefield.

Note that although the main portion of the Pemberton Icefield is a popular destination for snowmobilers, the area specifically surrounding Harrison Hut has been designated as non-motorized. However, this is not well enforced, and snowmobilers can still be expected. Note that air access is permitted and there is also occasional heliskiing N and E of Overseer Mtn and at the head of the Ryan R.

## Winter Access

In the winter when logging roads to approach routes from the Lillooet R are snow covered, all access is by helicopter from Pemberton.

## Access from Meager Creek

Length: 3–7 days  
Total Distance: 37km  
Elevation Gain: 1400m  
Start: 430m

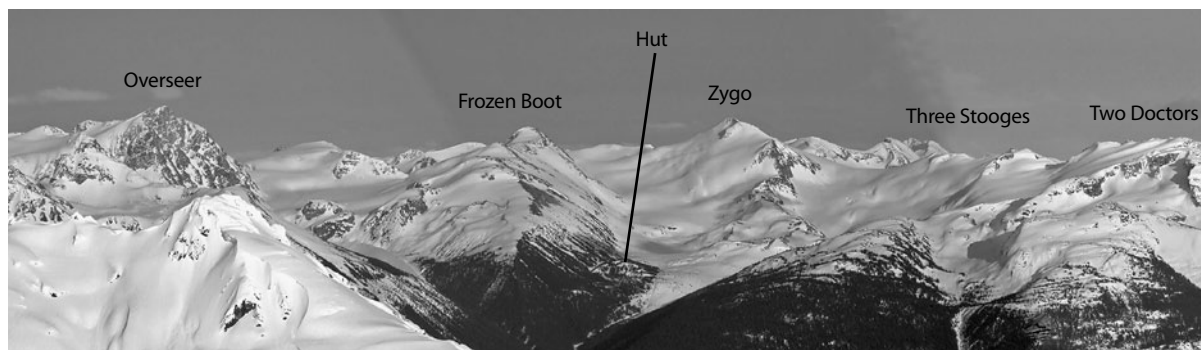
## 1720m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/11, 92J/6  
Best: May

The traditional ski access to Harrison Hut is from Meager Cr. For many years this approach was not possible because

the bridge across Meager Cr had been washed out. The bridge was rebuilt in 2007. Note that access could change in the future as the Meager Cr valley is prone to an unusual number of landslides and debris flows. Check the Squamish Forest District website at [www.for.gov.bc.ca/dsq](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/dsq) or [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com) for recent road reports. This approach has the added bonus of a soak in the Meager Cr hot springs, located next to the road on the S side of Meager Cr. As logging roads in the upper Lillooet R and Meager Cr valleys are not plowed in the winter, this route is generally not practical until late April or early May in most years.

Drive up the Lillooet R logging road to km 37. Take the Meager Cr branch left across the Lillooet R - this is usually gated at the Lillooet R bridge during winter and spring and it will be necessary to ski or walk from here. Follow the Meager Cr road SE for 6km to a bridge across Meager Cr. The Meager Cr hot springs are on the S side of the creek. Continue 3km to the S and take spur roads that climb E to near 1150m on the broad ridge S of the main creek draining W from Overseer (known as Barr or Madhorse Cr). Ascend the ridge through open timber to 1700m and contour across Madhorse Cr towards a small lake at 1800m, 3km SW of Overseer. The Harrison Hut lies a bit less than 1km to the NW at 1720m on the S side of the creek draining from this lake.



## Access from South Creek

Length: 4–7 days  
Total Distance: 42km  
Elevation Gain: 1750m  
Start: 600m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 92J/11, 92J/6  
Best: Mar–May

Harrison Hut can be approached from glaciers at the head of South Cr. This is a recommended alternative to the Meager Cr route because it is simpler to reach and is accessible much earlier in spring. The only drawback is that the route is slightly longer and climbs over a high, glaciated pass, which can be difficult to cross in poor weather. See the South Cr heading above for a detailed access description. The route to Harrison Hut ascends the wide glacier at the head of the S fork of South Cr. Climb NW through the gentle three-way pass at 2350m between Frozen Boot Pk and Madhorse Pk. Swing W around the S side of Frozen Boot Pk and descend the Roller Coaster Gl to the hut.

## Trips from Harrison Hut

There are nearly a dozen summits within easy reach of Harrison Hut. The terrain accessible from the hut is generally high alpine and can be difficult to travel in poor weather. Routefinding is otherwise generally straightforward. Considerable glacier travel is involved, and though most

glaciers here are relatively gentle, care should be taken to avoid crevasses, especially in poor visibility. Skiing in the area lasts well into June.

The area is worth a stay of several days or up to a week. Suggested day trips from Harrison Hut are described below. As most are shorter trips, there is often time for additional ski runs or to ascend more than one summit. Other possibilities include skiing up one glacier and down another to turn the trips into interesting loops. Choices for tree skiing are somewhat limited but include runs off the ridge NE of the hut as well as runs off the so-called Pine Bump (2040m) 1.5km W of the hut. Except for Overseer Mtn, names are unofficial.



Headed S from Harrison Hut. *Photo by Linda Bily*



## Harrison Hut

Map: 92J/11  
GR: 694964  
Elevation: 1720m

Cost: \$5  
Capacity: 10  
Reservations: no

**Location** 4km SW of Overseer Mtn on the S side of Madhorse Cr, 1km NW of an unnamed lake.

**Facilities** A large gothic-arch mountain cabin, with a sleeping loft, a wood stove, Coleman stove and a Coleman lantern. There is an outhouse. Water is from a nearby creek, but firewood is limited.

**Built** by VOC in 1983. Named in honour of past club president Julian Harrison, who died in an avalanche.

**Contact Information** [www.ubc-voc.com](http://www.ubc-voc.com)

Reservations are not required but check the website for periods of heavy use.



Skiing off the summit of Zygo Pk, with views S across the head of the Ryan R to the Pemberton Icefield.

### Overseer Mountain

Total Distance: 9km  
Elevation Gain: 1300m

**2740m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

The highest summit accessible from Harrison Hut, Overseer Mtn is a superb ski ascent. The shortest route to Overseer Mtn from the hut angles N through the trees across the long ridge running N from Frozen Boot Pk. Traverse down onto the Madhorse Gl and ascend to the summit via the col with Spidery Pk and the hanging glacier that descends NE from the summit. From the top, there are excellent views and a 900m descent off the summit.

### Frozen Boot Peak

Total Distance: 8km  
Elevation Gain: 300m

**2590m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging

The long ridge running SE from the hut, Frozen Boot Pk is a straightforward ascent via its NW ridge and offers several ski runs up to 500m long on its N and NW slopes.

### Madhorse Peak

Total Distance: 11km  
Elevation Gain: 1000m

**2530m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging

A broad glaciated summit S of Overseer Mtn, Madhorse Pk is an easy ski ascent. From the hut, head SE and ski up the Roller Coaster Gl. Swing around the S side of Frozen Boot

Pk and across the neve beyond to ascend the summit from the N via smooth, glaciated slopes.

### Zygo Peak

Total Distance: 9km  
Elevation Gain: 900m

**2620m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging

Named for the major facial muscles used to laugh, Zygo Pk is the highest summit S of Harrison Hut. It is a recommended ski ascent via its NE ridge from the head of the Roller Coaster Gl. The summit pyramid can also be ascended from the SW via the Magic Carpet Gl.

### The Three Stooges

Total Distance: 7km  
Elevation Gain: 750m

**2440m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging

A group of indistinct peaks at the head of the Magic Carpet Gl, the high point makes a good destination for taking in the 600m glacier runs N of the summit.

### Two Doctors Peak

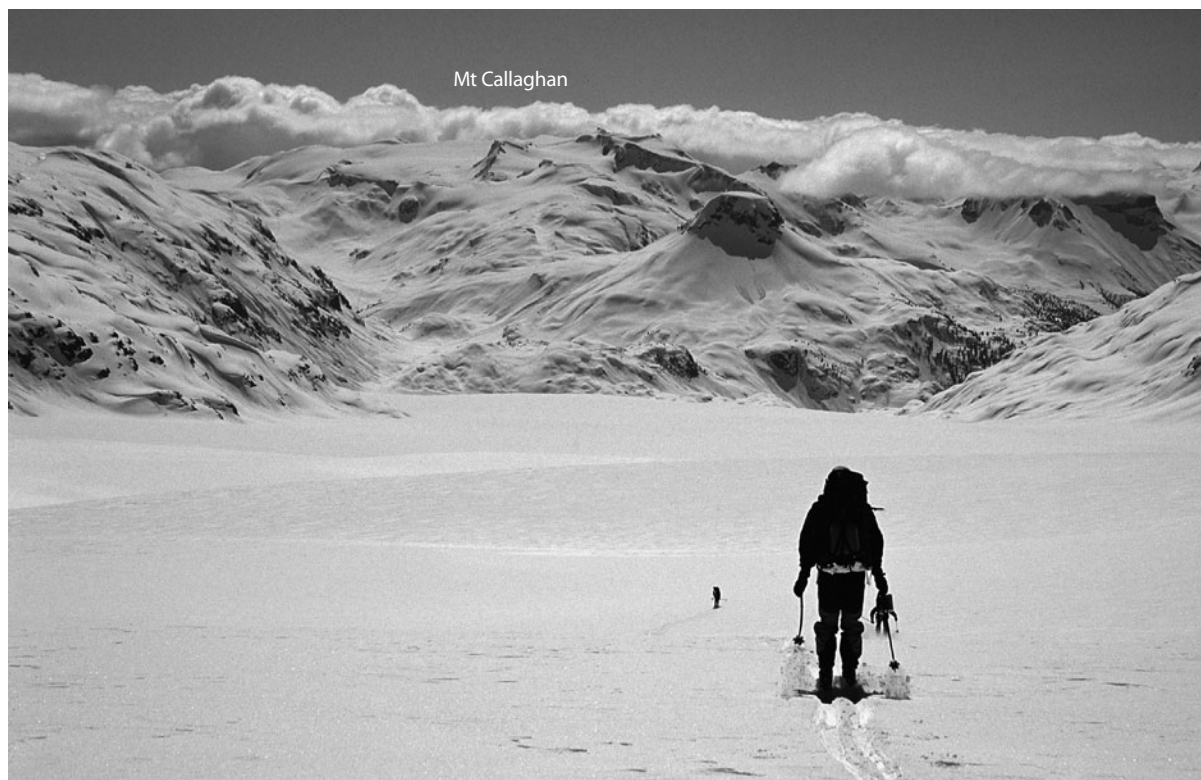
Total Distance: 7km  
Elevation Gain: 700m

**2380mm**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging

One of the closest summits to the hut, Two Doctors Pk is a short ski ascent via its NE ridge, with very little glacier travel and some longer runs N of the summit. Also of interest is the Meager Obelisk, a 40m granite spire located in the cirque just N of the summit.





Descending the Squamish Gl on the main part of the Pemberton Icefield. *Photo by Linda Bily*

## Pemberton Icefield Traverse

Length: 5–7 days

Total Distance: 60km

Elevation Gain: 3350m

Start: 580m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Challenging

Map: 92J/11, 92J/6, 92J/3

Best: May

Jack Bryceland, Alice Culbert, Joyce Davies, Max Lustenberger, Jurg Reiss, Ritchie Thompson, May 1969, *CAJ* 1970, p.63.

An enjoyable traverse of the relatively gentle icefield lying between the tributaries of the Squamish and Lillooet Rs, this trip is well suited to skis and offers many easy ski ascents.

The Pemberton Icefield is a popular destination with snowmobilers. Skiers can expect to see them at all elevations in early the spring or whenever conditions permit. Try and plan your trip for mid-week or later in the spring if you would like to avoid the busiest times for snowmobiles. The main snowmobile access is from Brandywine Cr, Rutherford Cr and the Squamish R.

The traverse is most often done starting at the N end from the Overseer Mtn area. The original traverse party exited via Exodus Pk to the upper Squamish R. This is a recommended route but makes it difficult to place cars at

the start and finish of the trip, and the most popular route now is to exit via Mt Callaghan to Hwy 99 near Whistler.

Access is from South Cr or Meager Cr, as described for the Overseer area and Harrison Hut above. In spring, an approach from South Cr is the most direct.

The main traverse route starts at Harrison Hut. From S of the hut, ascend the westerly of three glaciers to gain the broad glaciated divide at the head of the Ryan R. If you are coming directly from South Cr, this divide may be reached by climbing through the 2350m col S of Zygo Pk and traversing the head of the Magic Carpet Gl to the col E of the Three Stooges.

Follow the broad glaciated divide at the head of the Ryan R generally S for 10km to the head of the Squamish Gl. Descend this very gentle ski run to 1450m and ski E through a narrow pass and across the head of the Soo R. Climb S out of this basin to reach the 2000m pass N of Mt Callaghan. Ski up and across glaciers N of Mt Callaghan to descend E past a group of small alpine lakes, then S to Callaghan Lk.

Most peaks on the icefield are straightforward. Long-

spur Mtn (2560m) is the highest summit on the eastern Pemberton Icefield and is easily climbed from the W by skiing up its S slopes. Other recommended ski ascents include Overeer Mtn, Pk 2550m at the head of the Squamish Gl, Torah Pk (2500m) W of the Squamish Gl and Mt Callaghan. Most offer glacier runs of 300–400m.

A natural extension to this trip is to continue S down the Squamish–Cheakamus divide from Mt Callaghan (see above). This makes a recommended 7–10 day trip. Other variations are also possible, including the original exit to the Squamish R via Exodus Pk and Dipper Cr. An approach from Ipsoot Mtn has also been used.

There are a number of possible escape routes in case of bad weather. Logging roads extend far up Rutherford Cr, and a snowmobile trail provides direct access to the lake at 1400m below the snout of the Appa Gl, 10 km SE of Longspur Mtn. There is an emergency cabin maintained by the Pemberton Valley Snowmobile Club 2km E of the lake, at GR925739. The quickest exit from the S edge of the icefield is to roads in the upper Squamish R W of Mt Callaghan (see above).

## Face Mountain

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 17km  
Elevation Gain: 1700m  
Start: 800m

## 2470m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/11  
Best: Apr–May

Face Mtn is an excellent ski summit W of Railroad Pass, approached over pleasant subalpine and glaciated terrain and with opportunities for excellent runs on the Train and Freight Gl.

The recommended route runs up Donelly Cr from 2km N of Railroad Pass to reach the Train Gl S of the summit. The crux of the trip is a steep roll below the glacier snout at 1800m. This is best negotiated in the middle of the roll via snow slopes between rock bluffs. The glacier is relatively

View SW across the Train Gl from the summit of Face Mtn.



crevasse free. Faceless Mtn (2440m) at the head of the glacier is a straightforward ski ascent with outstanding views of the Pemberton valley. Face Mtn to the NE is slightly higher and is a short scramble from the SW. The Train Gl is a recommended run from the summit of Faceless Mtn, but if conditions are favourable the most outstanding run is N down the steeper Freight Gl. This is an excellent 600m run exited by skiing out Freight Cr.

The S ridge of Locomotive Mtn (2320m) is also a recommended spring ski ascent with good views.

Face Mtn is most easily accessible in spring when the Hurley R road is driveable to at least the crossing of Railroad Cr at 1000m. If the road is snow covered through Railroad Pass, a more direct route to upper Donelly Cr leaves the road just S of Railroad Pass and ascends Railroad Cr past Semaphore Lk.

Note that the Face Mtn area and Donelly Cr are popular with snowmobilers.

## Mt Sampson

Length: 3 days  
Total Distance: 28km  
Elevation Gain: 3000m  
Start: 800m

## 2804m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/11  
Best: Apr–May

Mt Sampson is a high isolated summit with a steep glaciated N face and broad rocky slopes on its S side. The peak is approached by a pleasant ski through the Face Mtn area and is a worthwhile spring ski-mountaineering objective. It is the highest summit between the Hurley and Lillooet Rs.



Switchbacking to Mt Sampson above the Upper Lillooet R.

Mt Sampson is usually climbed from a camp in Glacier Pass. This is reached from the Train Gl (see Face Mtn above) by skirting S of Faceless Mtn (2440m) and traversing into the broad col between Faceless Mtn and Handcar Pk. From the often corniced col, descend W down the Siding Gl and



View of Mt Sampson from the steep S slopes of Sessel Mtn. *Photo by Jos van der Burg*

the narrow valley beyond to open meadows in Glacier Pass. The col between Faceless Mtn and Handcar Pk can also be reached from the head of Donelly Cr by the so-called back-door route, which traverses around the S side of Locomotive and Tender Mtns on a bench near treeline.

Mt Sampson can be climbed via its S slopes from just W of the 2260m col directly S of the summit. This is a straightforward class 2–3 ascent on foot with an ice axe. In good conditions the S slopes have also been skied directly from the summit for a challenging 550m descent (40–45°). Routes farther W have also been skied.

Roads on the Lillooet R have been used for a direct approach to the S side of Mt Sampson in the spring. Drive to km 17 on the Lillooet R road and take branch 1, which switchbacks onto the broad forested slopes between North Cr and Sampson Cr. Take the right fork at 3km; a 4WD is recommended. This road climbs to near 1200m on the broad shoulder running S from Mt Sampson. A fire break on the W side of a large burn here extends to treeline and provides access to the alpine 3km S of Mt Sampson. Best in May.

## North Creek Area

*CAJ 1977, p.18*

The mountains lying between the headwaters of North Cr, the Hurley R, Boulder Cr and McParlon Cr offer superb ski mountaineering with attractive summits and excellent ski runs. Loosely speaking, this is the area extending from Mt Sampson to Icemaker Mtn on the central part of the divide between the Bridge and Lillooet Rs. There are many possibilities for ski trips in this area. There are several popular sites for week-long ski camps, as well as excellent traverses either around the headwaters of the Hurley R or along the Bridge–Lillooet divide from Railroad Pass to Salal Cr. Traverses are described under separate headings.

The head of North Cr or Ash Pass between Boulder and McParlon Crs are recommended sites for a ski mountaineering camp. There is a BC MC cabin at 1230m in North Cr. As the terrain immediately around the cabin is somewhat avalanche prone and there is limited tree skiing, North Cr is generally best visited in the spring. Sites in Ash Pass and elsewhere have a somewhat larger variety of terrain better suited to a wider range of weather and avalanche conditions and are often visited in February and March.



Skiing above the McParlon Gl. Photo by Linda Bily

There is much skiing in the area, ranging from glades and open slopes to long glacier runs with a vertical drop of up to 1200m. Various excellent ski-mountaineering summits are accessible as day trips from several possible ski camp locations, with most summits offering long continuous descents of up to 1500m back to camp. Some of the recommended ski-mountaineering highlights in the area are described as day trips below. Mt Sampson has been described as a separate trip but is also accessible as a day trip from various ski camp locations.

Note that the name Pebble Cr shown on some maps has been rescinded in favour of the new official name of Boulder Cr.

### Access in Winter

In winter most ski camps in the area are accessed by helicopter from Pemberton. And rather than flying out, many parties ski out to logging roads on the Hurley R. Logging roads leave the Hurley R road approximately 2 km S of the junction of the Hurley R with Donelly Cr and swing N to run several kilometres up to the junction of the main branches of the Hurley R. Both branches have been traveled on skis. The valley bottoms generally offer straightfor-

ward travel, though the runout zones from many avalanche paths must be crossed. There is a rough trail on the N side of the main branch leading to the head of North Cr. In winter, travel is generally on the creek or open avalanche paths. The S branch of the Hurley R is reached from the North Cr area by skiing over the Boomerang Gl. A logging road runs several kilometres up the S side of the S branch of the Hurley. In winter, the main Hurley R road is not plowed, though it is groomed and well traveled by snowmobiles), and it is necessary to ski through Railroad Pass and down to the Pemberton Valley. Most parties take 1.5 to 2 days to ski out.

### Access in Spring

Length: 4–9 days  
Total Distance: 14km  
Elevation Gain: 750m  
Start: 600m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/11  
Best: Mar–May

In spring, when it becomes possible to drive up logging roads on the Lillooet R, a direct approach up North Cr provides the quickest access. Drive to km 17 on the Lillooet R road and take branch 1, which switchbacks onto the broad forested slopes between North Cr and Sampson Cr. Take



Skiing S facing slopes on Sessel Mtn.

the left fork at 3km. Depending on the snow line, you will most likely have to start skiing 1 or 2km up this spur. The road continues up the E side of North Cr for 6km. It ends approximately 2.5km beyond Delilah Cr. From the end of the road, drop about 100m down a steep clearcut to North Cr. The route up North Cr from here is generally open and straightforward and offers pleasant access to the general area. For the first 1.5km, follow an open bench on the W side of the creek. Use extreme caution here, as the entire valley bottom is swept by large avalanches from the high slopes on the W side of North Cr. For this reason, this route is only recommended in the spring. After 1.5km, cross to the E side of the creek and continue up the valley through open forest or along the creek, depending on conditions. The North Cr cabin is located in the forest near 1230m on the W side of North Cr, adjacent to a large avalanche path. To continue beyond into the drainage of the Hurley R, use a narrow band of timber to skirt avalanche paths in the E fork of North Cr and ascend the open valley W of Sessel Mtn. The head of Boulder Cr is easily reached by skiing across the gentle Pebble Gl.

## Sugus Mountain

Total Distance: 10km  
Elevation Gain: 1250m

**2470m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

The highest glaciated summit W of North Cr, Sugus Mtn is a recommended ski trip with good glacier skiing and an enjoyable descent right to the door of the cabin. Access is via the narrow draw that climbs W from the North Cr cabin. This is initially exposed to large avalanches and then levels off into an open valley that leads through an 1860m pass onto the glacier NE of the summit. It is a straightforward ascent to the head of the glacier from where the summit is a short scramble via its SE ridge.

## Hemionus Mountain

Total Distance: 11km  
Elevation Gain: 1200m

**2260m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

Located on the high ridge between North Cr and the Lil-loet R 4km SE of Sugus, Hemionus Mtn is also a worthwhile ski trip. Ski down North Cr and climb steeper slopes into the attractive basin E of the mountain. The final summit is climbed via its non-technical S ridge.

## Sessel Mountain

Total Distance: 10km  
Elevation Gain: 1500m

**2710m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

A broad summit rising immediately above the Boomerang Gl, Sessel Mtn is a tremendous ski ascent. Use a narrow band of timber to skirt avalanche paths in the E fork of North Cr and gain the gentle Boomerang Gl. Sessel Mtn is climbed from the pass at the head of the glacier via its steep S slopes. This is a classic 750m ski descent on 35° slopes with stunning views of the nearby N faces of Mt Delilah and Mt Sampson.

In good conditions, there is also a bold 1000m run down the N side of Sessel. A break in the cornice several hundred metres E of the summit can be used to reach a ramp that angles down towards the glaciated 2320m col on the long ridge running N from the summit. Watch for a large bergschrund. From the col the run cuts W and descends all the way down the glacier to the head of the Hurley R.



## North Creek Cabin

Map: 92J/11  
GR: 833102  
Elevation: 1230m

Cost: \$10  
Capacity: 12  
Reservations: yes

**Location** At the head of North Cr on the N side of the major junction between the E and W forks. The cabin is located in the forest on the N edge of a large avalanche path on the W side of North Cr.

**Facilities** A large arch-style mountain hut that is 5m x 6m with a sleeping loft, table, wood stove, Coleman stove, and lantern. The cabin is locked.

**Built** by BCMC in 1986 (see BCM 1988, p. 2)

**Contact** [www.bcmc.ca](http://www.bcmc.ca)



Skiing open slopes SW of Mt Thiassi. Boulder Cr is visible on the R. Photo by Linda Bily

### Gunsight Peak

Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 1060m

**2290m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

The narrow draw leading onto the Pebble Gl from the head of North Cr is known as Gunsight Gap. Gunsight Pk is an unofficial name for the flat-topped summit immediately NE of the gap. From the head of North Cr, swing up the open valley W of Sessel Mtn and up onto the pass above the Pebble Gl. To ascend Gunsight Pk, curve S and ascend near the narrow ridge that leads onto the gentle summit plateau. There are good views and a variety of excellent ski lines ranging from shorter N facing pitches to a bold 700m line down 35° avalanche slopes on the SE side of the mountain.

### Pebble Peak

Total Distance: 18km  
Elevation Gain: 1500m

**2620m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

Pebble Pk is an unofficial name for the highest summit on the divide between North Cr and Boulder Cr at the head of the Pebble Gl. It is accessible from either North Cr or Ash Pass and is one of the most outstanding ski ascents in the area with a classic 1200m glacier run on its N side. The

final summit is climbed from its NW side. Pebble Pk is also known as Pk 8600 for its elevation in feet.

The glaciated basin S of the summit offers additional high-alpine runs. In case of poor weather there is excellent tree skiing off the N end of the long ridge W of the Pebble Gl, with runs up to 600m long dropping into the head of Boulder Cr.

### Mt Thiassi

Total Distance: 10km  
Elevation Gain: 1200m

**2740m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

One of the highest summits in the area, Mt Thiassi is a highly recommended ski-mountaineering trip. It is most

Looking SE to Sessel Mtn from the summit of Mt Thiassi.







Skiing onto the summit of Icemaker Mtn with views to Mt Athelstan on the L and the Manatee Range in the distance on the R.

often climbed from Ash Pass via the lower McParlon Gl and the unnamed W facing pocket glacier that rises to the S summit under the beautiful granite walls on the W side of the mountain. The true summit lies along a knife-edged ridge to the N. It is only slightly higher but requires a short class 4 climb. The W facing pocket glacier offers a superb 1000m run.

Lower summits at the head of the McParlon Gl are also worthwhile destinations. In poor weather there is good tree skiing on the S side of McParlon Cr off the N end of the ridge that separates the Pebble and McParlon Gl.

Mt Thiassi can also be approached from the steep N facing pocket glacier that drains the small cirque E of the summit.

### Icemaker Mountain

Total Distance: 17km  
Elevation Gain: 1700m

**2710m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

Icemaker Mtn is a high, glaciated summit W of McParlon Cr. It is most often ascended from Ash Pass as an enjoyable but full day trip that climbs from treeline up S facing slopes, through a 2280m col SW of FASP Mtn (2486m) and across the glacier beyond to reach the glaciated NE side of

the mountain. Climb steeper slopes and cross the glaciated bench N of the summit to ascend the final summit pyramid on skis by circling around to the W. There are tremendous views from the top. Icemaker Mtn is also a recommended ski ascent from Athelney Pass.

### Hurley River Horseshoe

Length: 5–7 days  
Total Distance: 76km  
Elevation Gain: 4500m  
Start: 1070m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/10, 92J/11  
Best: Mar–Apr

John Baldwin, Derek & Kathy Bonin, Irene Ronalds, April 1990

The glaciers and summits surrounding the headwaters of the Hurley R form an alpine horseshoe that makes an enjoyable ski traverse with excellent skiing. Note that both ends of the traverse travel through popular snowmobile areas.

The recommended route circles the entire W branch of the Hurley R from Lone Goat Cr to upper Donnelly Cr and Railroad Pass. The route may be done in either direction but is described here in a counterclockwise direction.

Access to both ends of the trip is from the Hurley R road; but as this is not usually plowed, logistics may require



Headed W from Lone Goat Cr on the Hurley River Horseshoe Traverse.

skiing along the unplowed portion of the road to complete the horseshoe. The shortest vehicle approach is from the Lillooet R road in the Pemberton Valley. Depending on the elevation of the snow line, it is about a 5–8km ski up the Hurley R road to Railroad Pass. In the winter, the Hurley R road is groomed and heavily traveled by snowmobilers. To reach the N end of the horseshoe, continue skiing through Railroad Pass and down the road for 14km to where the road crosses to the N side of the Hurley R just past Waterfalls Cr. An elevation loss of 460m from Railroad Pass helps to cover the distance. After the bridge, turn left on logging roads that climb to approximately 1400m on the N side of Lone Goat Cr. Note that in spring, snow melts off the E end of the Hurley R road much earlier than further W, and by late April portions of the road may not hold enough snow for skiing.

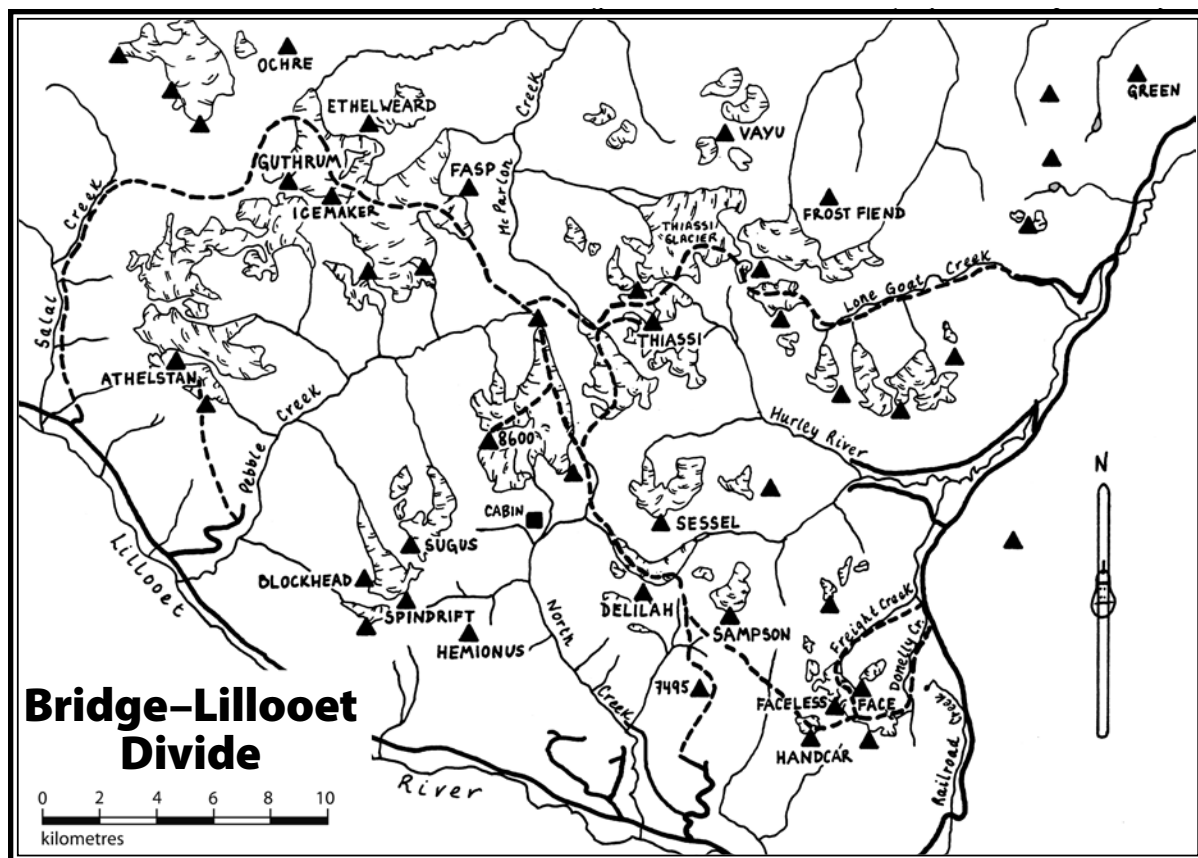
Access from Gold Bridge might also be considered in May, as it is sometimes possible to drive to Lone Goat Cr (17km W of Gold Bridge) while Railroad Pass is still buried deep in snow. Gold Bridge is approximately a 220km drive from Pemberton via Lillooet.

A snowmobile trail in Lone Goat Cr continues from the end of the road through open forest and meadow to the

head of the creek. This is an attractive basin, which gives easy access to several glaciers and gentle summits overlooking the Hurley R. There is a warming hut built by the Bridge River Valley Snowmobile Association near the head of Lone Goat Cr at 1830m (GR946175). The surrounding slopes W to the Thiassi Gl are regularly used for snowmobiling.

From the head of Lone Goat Cr, traverse NW at about 2380m across the S side of the divide with the Surfusion Gl to reach the broad Thiassi Gl. The route crosses the glacier and continues to McParlon Gl by climbing SW through the 2500m col immediately N of Mt Thiassi. From the head of the McParlon Gl, drop to the edge of the Pebble Gl and cross the forks of North Cr to the Boomerang Gl. Ascend this and cross S of Mt Sampson to reach the open meadows surrounding Glacier Pass. Continue SE up the narrow valley N of Handcar Pk (2326m) and traverse S of gentle Faceless Mtn (2440m), 1 km SW of Face Mtn, to reach the Train Gl. See Face Mtn and Mt Sampson for more details. Descend Donnelly Cr to the Hurley R road.

This is a very enjoyable trip with many options for side trips and ski runs. Recommended ascents include Mt Thiassi, Pk 2620m W of the Pebble Gl, Sessel Mtn, Mt Samp-



son and one of the peaks in the Face Mtn group. These are described separately.

There are several options for escape routes to the Hurley R road. The route can also be done in a clockwise direction. A variation on the S side of Lone Goat Cr climbs through the col SW of a 2410m summit and descends a steep burn directly to the Hurley R to cut off some of the road skiing for the return to Railroad Pass.

## Mt Athelstan

Length: 2 days  
Total Distance: 19km  
Elevation Gain: 2200m  
Start: 610m

## 2770m

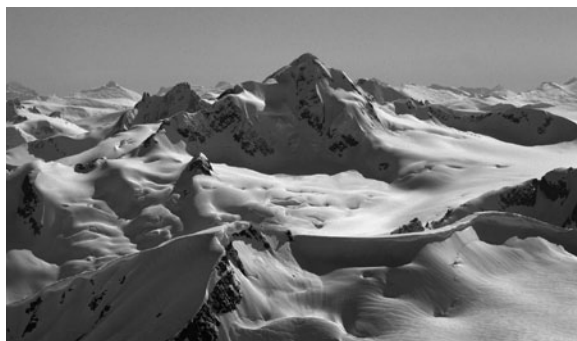
Difficulty: 3/4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/11  
Best: May

A high summit overlooking the upper Lillooet R, with great views and a long descent on S facing slopes.

Access is from the Lillooet R road beyond Meager Cr. At km 40, shortly after crossing Boulder Cr, turn right on logging roads that switchback up the broad slopes NW of Boulder Cr. Avoid the first left fork and take either of the

next two spurs, which switchback up to about 1100m on the long ridge that runs S from the summit of Mt Athelstan. It is a short climb of about 500m to treeline. Once in the alpine, continue following the broad open ridge above over a false summit to glaciers SE of Mt Athelstan. The final summit is a short scramble via its S or E ridges and offers great views of Mt Meager and the Manatee Range. On a clear day it is possible to see Mt Waddington far to the NW.

Mt Athelstan from the N.





Camp in Athelney Pass.

## Athelney Pass

Length: 4 days  
Total Distance: 26km  
Elevation Gain: 700m  
Start: 1140m

**1840m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/11, 92J/14  
Best: May

Surrounded by alpine meadows and high glaciated summits, Athelney Pass lies at the head of the broad valley of Salal Cr on the W end of the divide between the Bridge and Lillooet R. This is an attractive area with good glacier

Skiing W from Athelney Pass down upper Salal Cr.



skiing and long runs, reached by a full day of skiing up the gentle valley of Salal Cr.

Access is from the upper Lillooet R valley. Logging roads leading up Salal Cr branch off the Lillooet R mainline at km 40 (approximately 8km after crossing Boulder Cr). The main Salal Cr branch road makes two gradual switchbacks up from the mainline before making a long traverse into Salal Cr where it ends 6.5km from the Lillooet R mainline at an elevation of about 1140m, just N of the second tributary on the E side of Salal Cr (take right forks near the end of the road). The upper Lillooet valley often has snow at lower elevations well into May, and depending on the snow level, you will most likely have to ski up all or part of the Salal Cr branch road from the Lillooet mainline. This will add several kilometres and up to 350m of additional elevation gain to the distances shown.

From the end of the road, traverse forested benches along the E side of Salal Cr for several kilometres until you are able to ski directly up the snow-covered creek above 1160m. At 1300m, turn up the E fork of Salal Cr. This route quickly becomes open with high slopes on both sides and



View W from the summit of White Cross Mtn to the Bridge Gl and the Lillooet Icefield.

leads to scenic camping beside a small lake in Athelney Pass at 1840m.

The obvious ski ascent here is Icemaker Mtn (2710m), which offers excellent views and a 900m ski run down the glacier on its N side—see North Cr area for a description of routes from the E. Nearby Mt Guthrum is also a straightforward ascent. Farther S, Mt Athelstan has been approached from the Guthrum–Icemaker col by skiing S over glaciated ridges (CAJ 1973, p. 59). On the N side of Athelney Pass, a 300m climb up steep slopes gives access to the gentler summits of Ochre Mtn (2540m) and Salal Pk (2530m).

There is some heliskiing in the area.

## White Cross Mountain 2440m

Length: 3–5 days

Total Distance: 24km

Elevation Gain: 1300m

Start: 1140m

Difficulty: 2

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92J/11, 12, 13, 14

Best: May

White Cross Mtn is the highest summit on the sprawling ridges W of Salal Cr and overlooks the Bridge Gl. It also provides the shortest route to the Lillooet Icefield.

Access is from logging roads in Salal Cr, as described above for Athelney Pass. From the end of the road, ski up

open forest on the E side of Salal Cr. At 1200m, head up the first W tributary of Salal Cr; you will need to wade the main branch of Salal Cr above its confluence with the W branch. In early May this crossing is usually straightforward, but it can be difficult later in the month or in hot weather. Ski up the N side of the creek. The valley becomes open above 1400m and can be followed to glaciated ridges W of White Cross Mtn. The peak is easily reached on skis, and the final summit is a short scramble, with good views of the Bridge Gl.

White Cross Mtn has also been approached from the most northerly fork of Salal Cr. This route climbs gently to attractive meadows surrounding a 1600m pass that give access to the N side of White Cross Mtn or beyond to the snout of the Bridge Gl.

Salal Cr provides the easiest access to the immense Lillooet Icefield. The Bridge Gl may be reached by traversing 5km W from White Cross Mtn to join its main trunk near 1900m. Bridge Pk (2940m), near the head of the glacier, can be climbed from the NW and is a recommended 4 day trip.

As an exit route, some parties have skied along the main ridge that runs down the W side of Salal Cr. The scenic



Climbing W from Boulder–McParlon Pass towards Icemaker Mtn. Pebble Gl behind.

ridge top is gentle and can be followed down to logging roads on the W side of Salal Cr near its confluence with the Lillooet R.

Note that Salal Cr has been used, on occasion, by snow-mobilers to reach the Bridge Gl.

## Bridge–Lillooet Divide

Length: 5–7 days

Total Distance: 60km

Elevation Gain: 3500m

Start: 1250m

FASP, April 1975, *CAJ* 1977, p. 20

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92J/10, 92J/11, 92J/14

Best: Apr–May

W of the Hurley R, the divide between the Bridge and Lillooet Rs narrows to a single range of mountains cut by three successive subalpine passes. These can be connected via the intervening glaciers to form an outstanding traverse. Much of the route winds through high mountain valleys and offers excellent skiing on side trips to spectacular ski ascents.

The recommended route traverses the full length of the main divide along the N side of the upper Lillooet R from Railroad Pass to Athelney Pass and out Salal Cr to the Lillooet R. Ascend Donelly Cr and the Train Gl (see Face

Mtn) and cross to the col N of Handcar Pk. Descend W through Glacier Pass and cross S of Mt Sampson to reach the Boomerang Gl and the head of North Cr. Cross the Pebble Gl to the subalpine Ash Pass at the head of Boulder and McParlon Crs. Climb NW from here through a 2280m col SW of FASP Mtn (2486m) and cross the glacier beyond to reach the 2500m pass NE of Icemaker Mtn. Descend N on glaciers to Athelney Pass and ski out Salal Cr to roads on the Lillooet R.

Camp at the head of the Pebble Gl. Mt Delilah behind.







Skiing off Capricorn Mtn with views down the Upper Lillooet R.

The trip can be completed in as little as 5 days but there are so many options for superb side trips and ski runs that a week or more is suggested. Recommended ascents include Face Mtn, Mt Sampson, Sessel Mtn, Pebble Pk, Mt Thiassi, Icemaker Mtn and White Cross Mtn. These are described separately elsewhere in this chapter.

Note that access to Salal Cr is often not possible until early May due to snow in the upper Lillooet R valley. The traverse has been done earlier in the season by flying into Athelney Pass by helicopter and skiing E along the divide to Railroad Pass.

Many variations are possible, including shorter approaches such as North Cr. Mountains to the N of the Hurley R can also be used—a BCMC party traversed from Athelney Pass to beyond Lone Goat Cr (*BCM* 1994, p. 51). It is also possible to combine this route with the Owl–Tenquille Traverse to travel the entire N side of the Lillooet R valley from Athelney Pass down to Pemberton.

## Capricorn Mountain

**2569m**

Length: 2–3 days  
Total Distance: 30km  
Elevation Gain: 2900m  
Start: 410m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/11, 92J/12  
Best: May

The Meager Group and its sharp volcanic peaks W of Meager Cr offer a superb area for spring ski mountaineering. Capricorn Mtn is the only peak in the group that can be ascended on skis and is a classic spring ski ascent, with excellent skiing in a stunning setting and outstanding views from the summit.

Access is from Meager Cr logging roads, which turn off the upper Lillooet R road at km 37. The Meager Cr road is gated at the bridge across the Lillooet R and you will have to walk or ski from here.

Two approach routes have been used. The first route ascends the long ridge N of Capricorn Cr that drops E from Mt Meager to the junction of Meager Cr and the Lillooet R. The second route ascends the ridge on the S side of Capricorn Cr that divides the Capricorn and Devastation Gls.

### Access via Mt Meager

Walking S from the Lillooet R on the Meager Cr road, the Mt Meager route is reached first. A spur road branches to the W 1.5km after the Lillooet R bridge and switchbacks up the ridge rising W to Mt Meager. Ski up the road, ignoring the first branch on the left. At the next three-way junction at 550m, take the middle fork, which veers left up the hill. Then at 680m, take the left branch, which continues switchbacking up the ridge to a clearcut on the N side of the ridge at about 1200m. The recommended route angles up through open forest to the ridge crest, which can be followed to above treeline. Ski up the ridge to a gentle shoulder at 2000m. This is a good campsite with tremendous views down the Lillooet R. The ridge steepens above and it is necessary to traverse to the N to gain a pocket glacier N of the summit (descend slightly to stay clear of avalanche hazard from the steep NE face). Ascend the pocket glacier to the 2320m col between Mt Meager and Plinth Pk. To reach Capricorn Mtn, drop S through a narrow pass and traverse the Capricorn Gl to the col with Pylon Pk.

### Access via Devastation Glacier

The ridge S of Capricorn Cr requires a slightly longer walk on the Meager Cr logging road but overall provides a more direct approach to Capricorn Mtn. Shortly after km 3 on the S side of Capricorn Cr, turn right on the branch road marked M4. The road initially parallels the creek. Turn left at the first junction, then right higher up and follow the switchbacks to the end of the road near 1200m. Ascend through forest for about an hour to reach the treeline and scenic views W to Capricorn Mtn and Mt Meager. The ridge S of Capricorn Cr narrows above treeline and is best avoided by making a long traverse around the N side of the ridge. Leave the ridge at about 1600m and follow a ramp that descends slightly and traverses below the steep N side of the ridge for about 2km to reach the Capricorn Gl.

### Capricorn Mountain

The S summit of Capricorn Mtn is a straightforward ski ascent via its S ridge and offers a superb 500m ski run on S facing slopes. The true summit, half a kilometre to the N, is only slightly higher and can be reached by skiing along the intervening ridge. In good conditions, there is a 900m run off the main summit that drops down SW facing slopes. The route starts from the shoulder just S of the summit and runs just E of an indistinct ridge that rises from the SW. Most of the route is down moderate open snow slopes, except for a shallow 40° gully near 2400m that leads through a steeper rocky section just below the top.



Skiing off Polychrome Ridge towards the Manatee Gl. Photo by Paul Palfreyman

## Manatee Range

Length: 4–9 days

Map: 92J/11, 92J/12

BCMC Ski Camp 1967, CAJ 1968, p.162

Terrain: Complex

Best: Mar–Jun

The Manatee Range is an expansive area of high glaciated summits and large meadows at the head of Manatee Cr, S of the upper Lillooet R. This is an attractive area ideally suited to spring ski mountaineering and is a superb location for a ski-mountaineering base camp or shorter ski traverses. It also provides the main access route to the S end of the Lillooet Icefield.

Access to ski-mountaineering base camps at the head of Manatee Cr is usually by helicopter from Pemberton. Ski access is also popular and recommended, though this requires several days. All approaches start from Meager Cr logging roads. As logging roads in the upper Lillooet R and Meager Cr valleys are not plowed in winter, access on skis is generally not practical until late April or early May in most years. The Meager Cr road is usually gated at the Lillooet R bridge during the winter and spring, and it will be necessary to ski or walk from here. Two main access routes are recommended.

### Access via Devastator Creek

Total Distance: 53km

Elevation Gain: 1400m

Start: 410m

VOCJ 1979, p. 24, CAJ 1981, p. 38

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Best: Mar–Jun

The most direct approach into the Manatee Range is from upper Meager Cr via Devastator Cr. The main logging road in Meager Cr extends approximately 14km from the Lillooet R to near 820m, 4km SW of Pylon Pk. Continue beyond the end of the road for 500m to Devastator Cr. This creek was flattened by a large landslide, which created a wide, open area in the valley bottom at 900m. Crossing Devastator Cr



Approaching the Manatee Range by skiing over Mt Job.



Access via Devastator Cr and meadows at the head of Meager Cr.

is the crux of the route. This is usually straightforward until mid-May but becomes difficult later in the spring with hot weather or extensive rain. The creek can sometimes be crossed on avalanche debris where it narrows. From the W side of the creek, ascend 300m through steep forest before angling S to 1400m and traversing into the open tributary of Meager Cr draining SE from the Manatee Gl. Follow this tributary to meadows E of the Manatee Gl. An obvious snow gully that climbs W from the Devastator Cr landslide has also been used. Gentle terrain leads across the toe of the Manatee Gl to a variety of recommended campsite locations at the head of Manatee Cr.

It takes 2 days to reach meadows at the head of upper Manatee Cr. This approach requires skiing 14km of logging road and is most often used as an exit route. It provides the added bonus of access to the Meager Cr hot springs (if there is a bridge in place across Meager Cr).

### Access via Capricorn Mountain

Total Distance: 60km  
Elevation Gain: 2640m  
Start: 410m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Best: Mar–Jun

The alternative is a high-level route across the Job and Mosaic Gl's from Capricorn Mtn. This approach generally takes 1–2 days longer, depending on conditions, but is very scenic and offers many opportunities for ski runs and also an ascent of Capricorn Mtn. An excellent 7–9 day trip combines the high-level approach with several days of side trips in the Manatee Range and an exit via Devastator Cr.

The high-level route starts from the Meager–Lillooet junction and climbs into the Meager Group via one of the approaches described above for Capricorn Mtn. It traverses slopes SW of Capricorn Mtn to the glacier S of Mt Job. Ascend the glacier and ski over gentle summits at the head of the Job Gl. Ski W down the upper Mosaic Gl and diagonal SW to the Manatee Gl.



Skiing on the Remora Gl below Manatee Pk.

## Ski Camps

There are many possibilities for ski trips here. The entire area is relatively easy to travel and there are many open slopes and glaciers offering long ski runs. Most summits are short class 3 climbs with excellent glacier skiing and long descents of up to 1200m.

A camp in meadows E of the Manatee Gl gives access to extensive open terrain and several summits, including those at the head of the Manatee Gl, Dugong Pk and Polychrome Ridge. Summits farther W are best reached from either the Remora or Sirenia Gl's. A favourite loca-

tion for fly-in ski-mountaineering camps is on a treed knoll between the Manatee and Remora Gl's, around 1600m.

Recommended day trips in the area include the following:

### Manatee Glacier Peaks

**2400m**

Total Distance: 10km

Difficulty: 3

Elevation Gain: 700m

Terrain: Challenging

The rounded snow peaks at the head of the Manatee Gl (E of Dugong Pk) offer excellent short ski ascents with long cruiser runs on the glacier.

### Polychrome Ridge

**2506m**

Total Distance: 10km

Difficulty: 3

Elevation Gain: 800m

Terrain: Complex

Polychrome Ridge and the broad snow dome E of the Mosaic Gl are recommended viewpoints with easy skiing on S facing slopes.

### Dugong Peak

**2775m**

Total Distance: 18km

Difficulty: 3

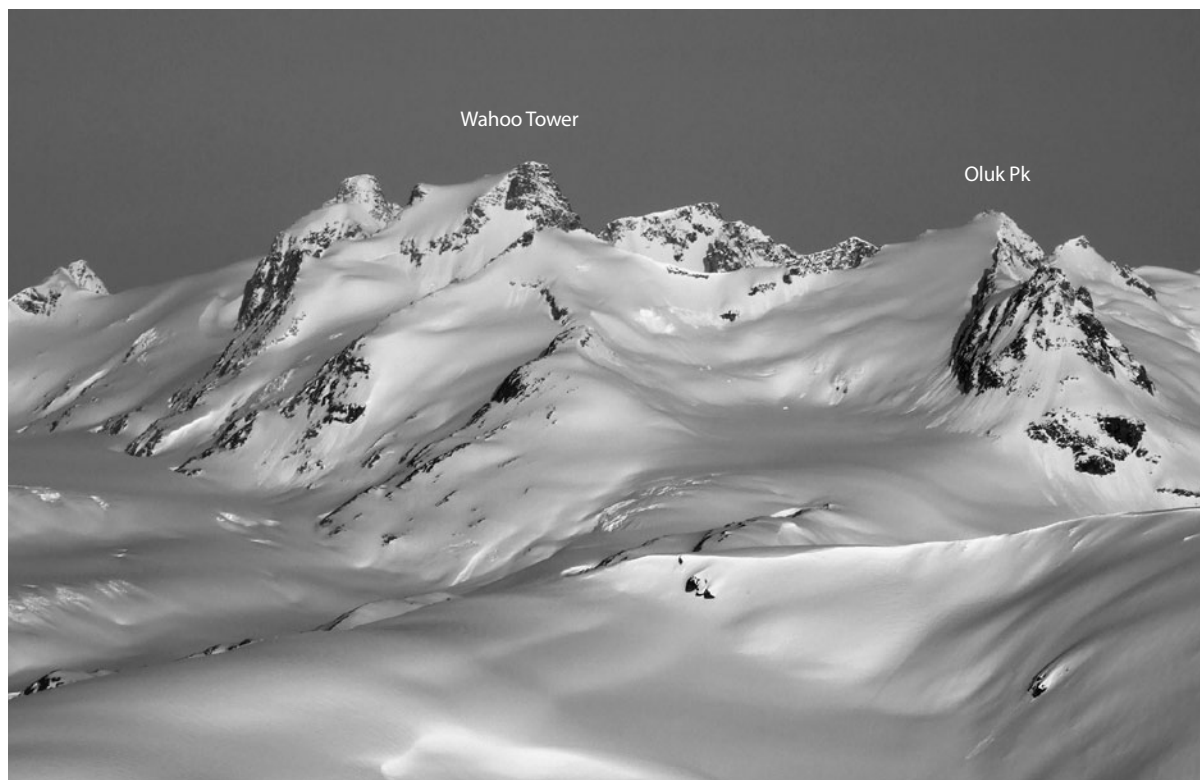
Elevation Gain: 1100m

Terrain: Complex

A high glaciated summit W of the Manatee Gl, Dugong Pk is a recommended ski ascent via the W branch of the Manatee Gl. Skirt crevasses near 1800m on the E edge of

Skiing E down the Remora Gl. Photo by Paul Palfreyman





Looking W to the high summits between the Remora and Sirenia Glaciers.

the glacier and cross the 2140m shoulder NE of the summit to the E lobe of the Remora Gl. Ascend the icefall N of Dugong Pk on its NW side. The final summit block is a short scramble. The peak can also be ascended directly from the Remora Gl.

### Manatee Peak

Total Distance: 15km  
Elevation Gain: 1400m

**2860m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

The highest summit in the area, Manatee Pk is a recommended ascent via the Remora Gl. Gain the snout of the Remora Gl on its W side from the newly formed lake below the glacier. Swing wide around a few crevasses at the sharp bend near 1800m and continue up the main branch of the glacier. Avoid a heavily crevassed area at 2100m on the N and ascend sheltered slopes to the 2500m col immediately E of the summit. The final summit pyramid is easily climbed by traversing to its S ridge. The run back down the Remora Gl is a long enjoyable descent. Nearby Remora Pk (2710m) is a straightforward ascent from the Manatee-Remora col, with a nice 300m pitch back onto the flats of the upper Remora Gl.

### Wahoo Tower

Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 1300m

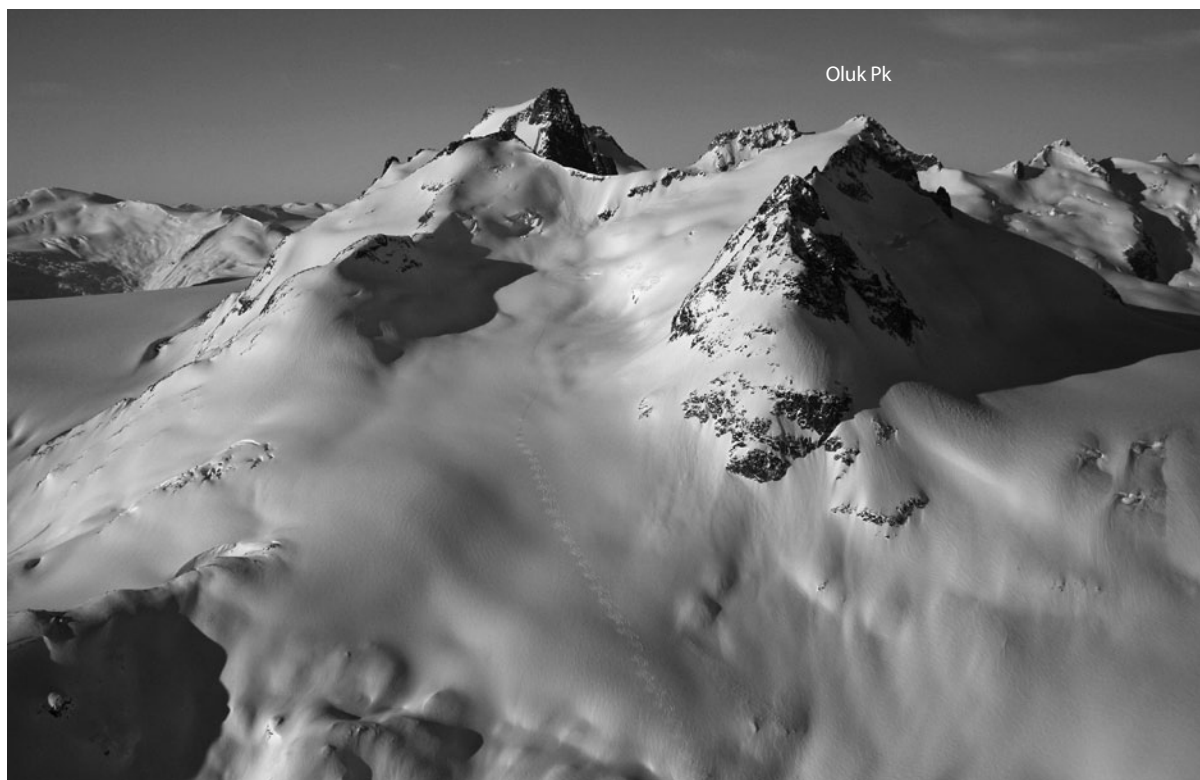
**2850m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

Wahoo Tower is one of the most striking summits in the Manatee Range and is a highly recommended ascent via steep snow slopes on its SE face. Access is from the upper Remora Gl.

View S from the summit of Wahoo Tower.





Aerial view of Oluk Pk from the NE. Photo by John Scurlock

### Oluk Peak

Total Distance: 8km  
Elevation Gain: 1200m

With long glaciated slopes rising almost to its summit, Oluk Pk is a superb ski ascent. The mountain is easily climbed by switchbacking up its E side and gaining the final summit rocks via its S ridge.

### Obelia Peak

Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 1240m

Set back to the N of the main group of summits surrounding Wahoo Tower, Obelia Pk is an enjoyable ascent over S facing glaciers with tremendous views of the Sirenia Gl cirque. The long E ridge can be gained from the glacier immediately S of the summit by diagonalizing up S facing snow slopes. The main summit is a short class 3 scramble along its narrow SE ridge. The long ridge running N from Obelia Pk gives access to the Lillooet Icefield.

### 2700m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

### Elaho Mountain

Length: 5–9 days  
Total Distance: 84km  
Elevation Gain: 3500m  
Start: 410m

John Clarke, CAJ 1973, p. 59

Elaho Mtn is the highest summit in the heavily glaciated ranges W of the Elaho R and N of Clendinning Cr. It is an elegant summit in an attractive area of rounded ridge tops and sprawling glaciers well suited to spring ski mountaineering.

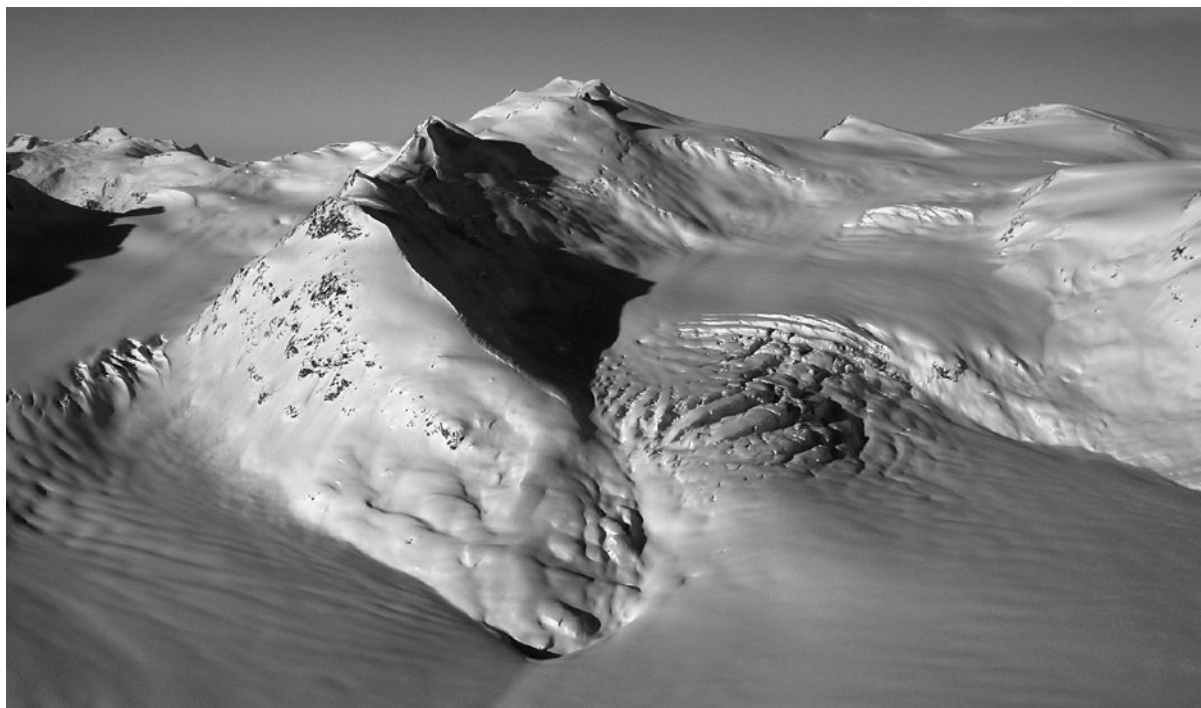
A ski ascent of this remote summit is an enjoyable wilderness adventure that can be undertaken in many different ways. Approaches have ranged from a direct ski route up the surrounding valleys to longer alpine approaches through the Manatee Range or access by helicopter. Elaho Mtn has also been climbed as part of a ski traverse through the Clendinning Range (see Ashlu chapter).

The most direct approach is from logging roads in the S fork of Meager Cr. This is only possible if the bridge across Meager Cr to the hot springs is in place. Logging roads continue beyond the hot springs up the S branch of Meager

### 2820m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/12,  
Best: Apr–Jun





Elaho Mtn from the NE. *Photo by John Scurlock*

Cr to within 2 km of Fish Lk (1080m). Either Fish Lk or the subalpine benches to the N can be traversed to reach the broad 1080m pass between the main branch of Meager Cr and the head of the wide upper Elaho R valley. The most open route continues W up Meager Cr, and it is a full day's ski from the end of the road to a camp near the snout of the Meager Gl. (On occasion, snowmobilers have ascended this valley after crossing from the Pemberton Icefield.) To reach the Elaho Gl, continue W through the 1900m pass on the Meager Gl and use a ramp SW of the small lakes beyond to drop into the head of the Toba R.

Elaho Mtn is a long day trip from a camp on the Meager Gl or near lakes at the head of the Toba R. Ascend the W branch of the Elaho Gl, avoiding the main icefall above 1900m on the N. At 2300m, veer W around an icefall on the S side of the glacier to approach the summit from the N. The summit pyramid has been ascended on skis via either the N or W ridges. Other recommended objectives from a camp on the Meager Gl include a ski ascent of Beluga Pk (2380m)—the high point on the ridge between the Meager and Elaho Gl—as well as Manatee Pk, which can be climbed by skiing up its long S slopes to its short SW ridge.

The adjacent Manatee Range offers alternative approach

routes. Elaho Mtn can be reached from the Manatee Range, either by crossing the 2290m pass at the head of the Manatee Gl immediately E of Dugong Pk or by descending S from the upper Remora Gl and traversing an indistinct bench across the lower W slopes of Manatee Pk at 1800m to reach the small lakes at the head of the Toba R. A highly recommended approach route to Elaho Mtn traverses alpine ridges from Mt Meager and climbs through the Manatee Range to the head of the Toba R. This approach could be combined with an exit to the S fork of Meager Cr to make an interesting loop offering a phenomenal number of superb ski ascents as side trips. Extending the loop through the Overseer area by passing S of Fish Lk is also recommended and could be used to exit via South Cr.

The third option for access to Elaho Mtn is an approach from the upper Elaho R in late spring. Logging roads extend to km 90 on the upper Elaho R beyond Clendinning Cr on the E side of the river. A spur road crosses the Elaho R 4km N of Clendinning Cr at 440m and climbs to about 600m on the W side of the river. This spur has been used to climb Elaho Mtn on skis. The approach route ascends broad forested slopes NW to treeline and follows the high glaciated divide beyond. An ascent of Elaho Mtn using this approach takes 4–5 days return.

# Chilcotin Ranges

# 14



Skiing above meadows at the head of Slim Cr in the W Dickson Range.

As the last mountains before the Interior, the southern Chilcotin Ranges lie in a transition zone between heavily glaciated summits and the high forested Chilcotin Plateau. Broad subalpine valleys lead into extensive alpine areas, which define a huge wilderness region that offers excellent backcountry skiing with great powder runs on alpine meadows and small glaciers. The terrain varies from rocky peaks in the west to broad rounded ridge crests east of Gun Creek. Trips range from backcountry ski holidays in a comfortable cabin or base camp, to classic Rockies-style ski-touring trips following well-developed horse trails over high-alpine passes. Much of the region is very remote, and most ski trips require several days to a week or more.

An outstanding feature of the region is the huge expanse of alpine meadows at the head of Gun Creek and Slim Creek. Chilcotin is an Aboriginal name that means “People of the Blue Water” referring to the turquoise colour of many of the alpine lakes in the area.

Large parts of the region have been protected as Big Creek Provincial Park and the Spruce Lake Protected Area.

## **Snow Conditions**

Situated on the lee side of the Coast Mountains, the climate in the S Chilcotin Ranges is much colder and drier than on the coast, and consistently offers excellent snow conditions. Also, storms are much less hostile than nearer the coast, making travel in bad weather less difficult. Skiing is best in the winter months with the deepest snow typically occurring in January. Trailbreaking is easier in March. Typical snowpacks are approximately 2.5m, and estimates of snowfall are in the 7–10m range. Periods of very cold weather (below  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) can be expected occasionally in mid-winter, and the snowpack can exhibit characteristics of a more Interior snow climate. In the NE portion of the region beyond Tyaughton Cr, ridge crests tend to be more windswept and the snowpack thins out dramatically.



### Access

Access is from Lillooet. In the winter, the easiest route to Lillooet is to take Hwy 1 through Hope to Lytton in the Fraser Canyon. At Lytton, take Hwy 12B N up the Fraser R to Lillooet. Lillooet is approximately a 4 hour drive of 325km from Vancouver. Hwy 99 provides an alternative route through Pemberton and the Duffey Lk road. In good conditions, this is a slightly shorter 3.5 hour drive of 260km. From Lillooet, follow Hwy 40, which leads W along the N side of Carpenter Lk (650m). This is a winding mountain road, about one-third of which is gravel. Distances from Lillooet are:

- km 0—Lillooet
- km 30—Yalakom R
- km 65—Marshall Cr
- km 90—Tyaughton Lake Road
- km 100—Gold Bridge
- km 101—Gun Lake Road

Gold Bridge is approximately a 1.5 hour drive from Lillooet.

The surrounding valley bottoms are typically snow covered from the end of November to the beginning of April. Approaches to some of the more remote areas are long, and

for base camp trips a helicopter is sometimes used. Contact:

C C Helicopters, Lillooet, BC  
[www.cc-heli.ca](http://www.cc-heli.ca)  
 250-256-4888

Access from the N requires a long drive to Taseko Lks on the Chilcotin Plateau. Drive to Williams Lake (540km from Vancouver). Hwy 20 heads W to Hanceville (90km). Turn onto an all-weather gravel road that runs SW to the Nemiah Valley on Chilko Lk. The road to Taseko Lks branches off at km 76, just before the bridge across the Taseko R, and runs S for 25km to Taseko Lks (1310m). A recommended starting point for winter access is Taseko Lake Lodge, located at the head of the lake next to Beece Cr. Contact:

Taseko Lake Lodge  
[www.tasekolake.com](http://www.tasekolake.com)  
 250-305-6368

### Maps

*Southern Chilcotin Mountains Trail Map 1:75,000* by Trail Ventures



View across Eldorado Basin. Photo by Kirsten McFarlane

## Accommodation

A variety of accommodation is available in the Gold Bridge area, ranging from hotels to bed and breakfasts and rustic guest ranches—see [www.bridgerivervalley.ca](http://www.bridgerivervalley.ca).

## Multi-use Considerations

Most of this region lies within the tenure of Tyax Lodge Heliskiing ([www.tlheliskiing.com](http://www.tlheliskiing.com)). Heliskiing is concentrated around the valleys of Slim, Leckie and Gun Cr. Parts of the region are used by snowmobilers, including the local Bridge River Valley Snowmobile Club (see [www.bcsf.org](http://www.bcsf.org)). Slim Cr is one of the most popular snowmobile areas, and a snowmobile trail extends from the end of the logging road up the N branch of Slim Cr. Taylor Cr is also used by snowmobilers.

## Eldorado Basin

Length: 3–7 days  
Map: 92J/15, 92O/2

Difficulty: 2–3  
Best: Dec–Mar

Eldorado Cr drains an isolated group of friendly rounded summits immediately NW of Tyaughton Lk. Old mining and logging roads provide relatively easy access to this attractive area, which offers excellent moderate backcountry skiing with runs up to 500m. Eldorado Cabin is located in a subalpine basin at the head of Eldorado Cr and provides a comfortable base to explore the area.

## Access to Eldorado Cabin

Total Distance: 20km  
Elevation Gain: 1000m  
Start: 1040m

## 1920m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Best: Dec–Mar

Access to Eldorado Basin is via Spruce Lake High Trail, which starts at Tyaughton Lk (990m). Turn off Hwy 40 onto the Tyaughton Lk road about 90km from Lillooet and follow this road for 8km to Tyaughton Lk. Just before the S end of the lake, an old mining road climbs NW onto the divide with N Cinnabar Cr. Park at the bottom and ski up the narrow road to near 1840m. Leave the road at a switchback, and traverse W into the alpine basin at the head of Pearson Cr. Continue W through a 2050m pass and descend into the S fork of Eldorado Cr (also known as Little Eldorado). The Eldorado Cabin is located in the subalpine basin at 1920m. Groups can arrange with Spruce Lake Tours for a snowmobile ride up the access road to 1800m.

Eldorado Basin is a beautiful area of meadows and gentle summits. The terrain is well suited to a mid-winter trip. There is lots of tree skiing as well as some climbing on nice alpine and easy peaks in the area. There are also a variety of more challenging backside runs. Most trips from the cabin are relatively short and can generally be completed by staying in Challenging avalanche terrain; but, use appropriate caution, as it is easy to wander onto cross-loaded slopes and steeper Complex terrain. Suggested day trips include:



View across Eldorado basin to Pk 2260 (R) and Harris Ridge (L). Photo by Rob McLachlan

### Pk 2260

The attractive summit immediately S of the cabin (marked on maps as Pk 7415ft) is the closest objective and gives an excellent 300m run back down past the cabin. There are some additional runs on S facing slopes into the head of B & F, Lick and Pearson Crs. Pk 2220m 1.5km to the SW is also a recommended objective, with good views of Dickson Pk across Gun Cr.

### Harris Ridge

**2300m**

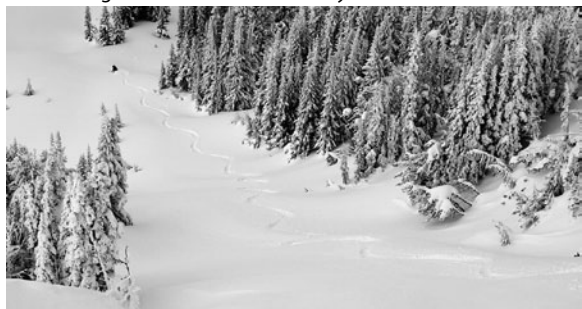
Harris Ridge is the sprawling complex that divides the forks of Eldorado Cr. Its summit lies due N of the cabin, and one of the best runs in the area descends straight towards the cabin and veers into Eldorado Cr. The ridge crest is often windswept and corniced on its N aspect but provides access to a number of other recommended runs on the W, N and NE aspects of Harris Ridge. It is also an interesting tour to ski up the N fork of Eldorado Cr and circle all the way around Harris Ridge via Camel Pass at the head of Taylor Cr.

### Windy Peak

**2380m**

Windy Pk is the high point of Eldorado Ridge NW of the cabin. It can be reached from the open N fork of Eldorado Cr. The draw SE of the summit is a worthwhile run down into Eldorado Cr. There is additional skiing N through Windy Pass at the head of Bonanza and Nea Cr.

Glade skiing in Eldorado Basin. Photo by Kirsten McFarlane



### Taylor Peak

**2260m**

Lying on the S side of upper Taylor Cr, Taylor Pk is a longer trip from the cabin across the head of Pearson Cr. It offers more challenging runs on various aspects, including a steeper 600m descent on its N side. The S rim of the Taylor Cr basin surrounding Camel Pass is often heavily corniced and can be difficult to cross. Other objectives from the head of Taylor Cr include Eldorado Mtn (2447m) and Pk 2487m (the highest in the area). There is an old mining cabin in Taylor Cr at 1875m (GR099482). Taylor Cr is visited by snowmobilers.



Photo by Kirsten McFarlane

### Eldorado Basin Cabin

Map: 92J/15

GR: 087449

Elevation: 1920m

Cost: inquire

Capacity: 10

Reservations: yes

**Location** NW of Tyaughton Lk in a subalpine basin at the head of the S fork of Eldorado Cr on the Spruce Lake High Trail.

**Facilities** A comfortable, fully equipped commercial backcountry cabin with wood heat, propane cook stove and a great sauna. It is available with or without a guide and is kept locked.

**Built** 1985

#### Contact Information

Spruce Lake Wilderness Adventures

250-238-2375

[www.sprucelaketours.ca](http://www.sprucelaketours.ca)





View W across Spruce Lk.

## Spruce Lake High Trail

Length: 4 days

Total Distance: 43km

Elevation Gain: 1500m

Start: 1040m

VOC/ 1978, p. 9.

Difficulty: 2

Terrain: Challenging

Map: 92J/15, 92O/2

Best: Jan–Mar

The high trail is an enjoyable traverse through the mountains SE of Spruce Lk. This is pleasant ski-touring country, with rolling alpine valleys, gentle slopes and scattered clumps of trees. Can be done as a hut to hut trip.

Spruce Lake High Trail starts at Tyaughton Lk and follows the approach route described above for Eldorado Basin. Beyond Eldorado Cabin, descend the S fork of Eldorado Cr to 1740m where a narrow notch leads into the attractive open basin on the N fork of Eldorado Cr. From here, ski NW through Windy Pass (2200m) and drop into the creek flowing W until you are able to swing N at about 1600m to reach Spruce Lk at 1560m. There is a campground at the N end of the lake. Spruce Lake High Trail can also be done as a hut-to-hut tour, staying in cabins at Eldorado Basin and Spruce Lk. Note that all cabins on Spruce Lk are private. For accommodation at Spruce Lk, contact Spruce Lake Wilderness Adventures, [www.sprucelaketours.ca](http://www.sprucelaketours.ca),

250-238-2375 or Chilcotin Holidays, [www.chilcotinholidays.com](http://www.chilcotinholidays.com), 250-238-2274.

There is pleasant skiing in Eldorado Basin en route, and several gentle summits may be climbed along the way. At Spruce Lk, you can ice fish or switchback up through sub-alpine meadows to fossil bluffs 3km NW of the lake. Alpine ridges extending to Mt Sheba can also be explored, though these are often windswept.

This trip can be made into a recommended loop by skiing out the Gun Cr trail. The trail descends S from Spruce Lk and angles down through groves of aspen and open grassland to Gun Cr. It is slightly downhill for much of the way and is an enjoyable exit route that takes 1 day. It briefly crosses to the W side of the creek about 4km N of Leckie Cr, and the last few kilometres to the summer parking lot at Jewel Bridge are on an old narrow mining road. As the logging road access to Jewel Bridge is not plowed in winter, the easiest way to return to your vehicle at Tyaughton Lk is to continue skiing out the old Gun Cr Trail on the E side of Gun Cr. This route follows an old narrow road for 8km from Jewel Bridge to the Gun Cr road, which is plowed to near Lick Cr. From there it is approximately 6km to Tyaughton Lk.





Skiing on glaciers W of Scherle Pk in the Dickson Range.

## Slim Creek

Length: 7–10 days

Total Distance: 76km

Elevation Gain: 1200m

Start: 900m

Difficulty: 2–3

Terrain: Challenging–Complex

Map: 92J/14

Best: Dec–Apr

Logging roads in Slim Cr give access to superb backcountry skiing on the extensive meadows and gentle peaks in the W portion of the Dickson Range.

In the winter, access is from the E end of Gun Lk. From Gold Bridge, drive W on Hwy 40. Take the Gun Lk W road past Downton Lk. Veer left after passing Lajoie Lk and drive around the W side of Gun Lk. The road is plowed to the NE end of the lake, where there is parking near Lajoie Cr at the start of the Slim Cr logging road. The Slim Cr logging road is not plowed. After an initial flat stretch for about 1km, the road veers W and climbs 250m over an indistinct saddle, descends 150m into Gun Cr and continues up the W side of the valley. At 8km it passes a large parking lot at the Jewel Cr bridge, which is the start of the Gun Cr trail to Spruce Lk. The Slim Cr road continues up the W side of Gun Cr and climbs into the broad Slim Cr valley. The main road crosses to the N side of Slim Cr near 1520m and continues to its end at 1580m, 26km from Gun Lk. The road is trav-

eled extensively by snowmobilers and is groomed by the Bridge River Valley Snowmobile Association.

As mid-winter access via the Slim Cr road is very long, many parties often fly in by helicopter. The ski out to Gun Lk can be done in 1 day from most locations in Slim Cr.

From the end of the road, a snowmobile trail runs up the N side of Slim Cr to an open swampy area and continues to extensive meadows at the head of the N branch of Slim Cr. This is a magnificent area and has been the site of

Skiing on the S side of Slim Pk.





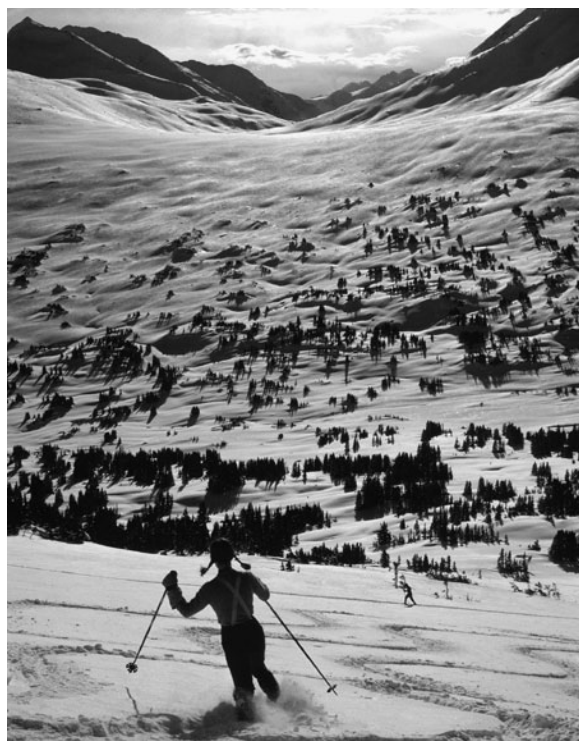
Above and below: Views over extensive alpine meadows at the head of Slim Cr.

several ski camps. Any number of locations are suitable.

Most summits are short scrambles and offer excellent skiing on N facing pocket glaciers with tremendous views of the Lillooet Icefield. The longest runs (700m) descend the N slopes of Slim Mtn (2500m) and Sorcerer (2590m), S of the main branch of Slim Cr, and similar terrain extends W and N through Griswold Pass. Gentle summits surrounding the extensive meadows S of Slim Mtn also offer enjoyable touring and moderate 400m runs. These can be reached by skiing up the major S branch of Slim Cr or by crossing the col E of Sorcerer.

The entire area is used for heliskiing and snowmobiling. The heliski guides generally make an effort to avoid ski-mountaineering parties, as they have lots of alternative runs if the weather is good. In poor weather they have less choice, as their tree skiing is limited to only a few areas. Their main tree skiing is concentrated along the S side of the main Slim Cr valley in the area N of Tillworth Mtn and Scherle Pk. Snowmobilers favour the N branch of Slim Cr as it leads to more extensive terrain and is easier to access.

The adjacent Leckie Range is easily reached from the main branch of Slim Cr, and the alpine basins SW of Leckie Lk offer good backcountry skiing.





Looking up Gun Cr from W of Spruce Lk. Photo by Laurent Mingo

## Gun Creek to Slim Creek Circuit

Length: 6–10 days

Total Distance: 80km

Elevation Gain: 1700m

Start: 900m

Difficulty: 2

Terrain: Challenging

Maps: 92J/14, 92J/15, 92O/3

Best: Feb–Mar

A well-used horse trail runs through pine forest, aspen groves and open grassland up the east side of Gun Cr. This is pleasant traveling in mid-winter and provides the main access to the Spruce Lake Protected Area. From the head of Gun Cr it is possible to circle around through high-alpine passes into the head of Slim Cr and complete a horseshoe traverse through the entire W portion of the Spruce Lk Protected Area. This is a superb ski touring trip that combines extended wilderness travel with opportunities for backcountry skiing on attractive side trips.

In the winter, access to the Gun Cr trail is from the E end of Gun Lk as described for Slim Cr. Ski up the Slim Cr logging road for 8km to the Jewel Cr bridge, which is the start of the Gun Cr trail to Spruce Lk. The trail is well marked on the 1:75,000 *Southern Chilcotin Mountains Trail Map* by Trail Ventures. It starts on the E side of Gun Cr and follows an old jeep road for its first 2km. Beyond this, the route narrows to a well-maintained horse trail. N of Eldorado Cr, it crosses briefly to the W side of Gun Cr. Below Spruce Lk, the trail winds through aspen groves and open grassland. Beyond this, it continues past Hummingbird Lk to Trigger Lk (1580m), approximately 20km from the Jewel Cr trailhead. There is a log cabin at 1590m, approximately 1 km NW of Trigger Lk at GR913524 (contact Spruce Lake Wilderness Adventures, 250-238-2375 or [www.sprucelake-tours.ca](http://www.sprucelake-tours.ca); the cabin is locked).

From Trigger Lk, an abandoned horse trail runs several kilometres up the N side of Gun Cr, and beyond this it is easy to follow the creek to attractive terrain at its headwaters. The shortest circuit climbs S through Wolverine Pass (2200m) and descends W of Leckie Lk into the upper Slim



Descending W towards Griswold Pass. Photo by Laurent Mingo

Cr valley. A snowmobile trail can be picked up at the SE end of a large swampy area. The trail traverses through open forest and meadows on the N side of Slim Cr for about 6km to the end of the logging road at 1580m. The logging road is used regularly by snowmobilers and offers easy traveling. It takes 1 day to ski out to Gun Lk from a camp in the vicinity of Leckie Lk.

Longer variations head W through a 2360m pass at the head of Gun Cr onto a magnificent alpine area of expansive meadows and gentle summits that extends W through Griswold Pass. It is straightforward to drop into upper Slim Cr from here or climb S through a 2290m pass E of Sorcerer (2590m) into the S branch of Slim Cr and exit from there.

This is a recommended trip. Travel through the gentle subalpine valleys of Gun Cr is pleasant on excellent trails with little bushwacking and there are many choices for enjoyable side trips with excellent skiing. Spruce Lk is a short side trip. Trigger Lk is a good stopover point, where ski ascents can be made of Mt Solomon (2590m) above Deer Pass Trail; Mt Warner (2830m), one of the summits at the head of Warner Cr; or Trigger Pk (2590m), SW of Trigger Lk. There are also a number of good ski ascents at the head of Gun Cr, including Gun Mtn (2602m) or Pk 2635m

Traveling down upper Slim Cr.





Heading W into upper Warner Cr. Photo by Markus Kellerhals

immediately W of Taylor Pass, with runs up to 700m. And finally as you move into upper Slim Cr, the unnamed summits SE of Leckie Lk, Slim Mtn (2500m) or Sorcerer (2590m) all offer superb runs of up to 700m.

## Warner Creek

Length: 5–7 days

Map: 920/3

BCM 1996, p. 65

Difficulty: 2–3

Best: Feb–Mar

Warner Cr is a tributary of Gun Cr that lies N of Trigger Lk. It drains a picturesque subalpine valley that rises to a large glaciated cirque at the head of the valley, is well suited to skiing and has been the site of several ski camps.

Aside from helicopter access, upper Warner Cr can also be reached via the Gun Cr trail to Trigger Lk and the Warner Pass trail, which climbs past Warner Lk and through Warner Pass. A recommended location for a ski camp is near 2000m on the N side of Warner Cr.

The most attractive side trips here are at the head of Warner Cr to the summits of Wilson Ridge, with skiing on the Warner Gl and the surrounding slopes. The entire basin offers excellent skiing on smooth slopes with long runs of up to 700m. Porteau Mtn (2740m) is the highest summit and can be ascended via the relatively crevasse-free Warner Gl on its N side. One of the most outstanding runs is down

the NE side of Pk 2680m 2.5km E of Porteau Mtn. The 700m run is down a narrow glacier bounded by rock ridges and extends all the way to the valley bottom. There is also good skiing N of Porteau Col.

In the vicinity of Warner Pass (2380m), Pk 2620m just W of the pass can be ascended as part of a circuit through Porteau col and across the head of Denain Cr. On the E side of the pass, Mt Warner (2830m) is a stunning viewpoint ascended from S of Warner Pass by traversing a minor shoulder and gaining the col SE of the summit. The final peak is a short scramble from the col or can be gained by following glaciers around to the N side of the mountain. There are long gentle glacier runs N of the summit into the headwaters of Big Cr. Lorna Lk might also be considered for a base-camp location.

The Trigger Lk cabin, located at the junction of Warner Cr and Gun Cr (see Gun Cr above), has also been used as a base for backcountry skiing. It has the advantage of relative comfort but does require more time to get above treeline. In addition to any of the trips from Warner Cr, the trail to Deer Pass leads to stunning alpine meadows and a possible ski ascent of gentle Mt Solomon (2590m). Though seldom visited by ski mountaineering parties, Trigger Pk (2590m) SW of Trigger Lk is a recommended destination with some long runs that are occasionally used by heliskiers.

## Chilcotin Ranges Traverse

Length: 8–10 days  
Total Distance: 100km  
Elevation Gain: 1900m  
Start: 1310m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/14,15, 92O/2,3,5,6  
Best: Mar

The heart of the Chilcotin Ranges is a large wilderness area of rocky peaks, broad valleys and alpine meadows between the head of Big Cr and the upper Taseko R. Though seldom visited on skis, it also offers great potential for old-style Rockies ski-touring trips, with grand tours up scenic valleys and over high mountain passes. There is also some potential for ski mountaineering and backcountry skiing. Much of the area is protected as Big Cr Provincial Park, which lies N of the Spruce Lk Protected Area at the head of Big Cr.

The entire area, including the beautiful high alpine valleys surrounding Powell Pass and Iron Pass, can be traversed from N to S by starting at Beece Cr near Taseko Lk and exiting via the Gun Cr trail.

Access to the start of this trip at the N end of Taseko Lk is from the Chilcotin Plateau, which is reached via Williams Lake, a 550km drive from Vancouver. Take Hwy 20 W from Williams Lake for 90km. Turn off Hwy 20 onto the Taseko Lk road at Hanceville. This is an all-weather gravel road that runs SW to the Nemiah Valley on Chilko Lk. The road to Taseko Lks branches off at km 76, just before the bridge across the Taseko R, and runs down the E side of the Taseko R for 25km to Taseko Lks. A recommended starting point for winter access is Taseko Lake Lodge, located at the head of the lake next to Beece Cr ([www.tasekolake.com](http://www.tasekolake.com), 250-305-6368).

From Taseko Lake Lodge, ski up Beece Cr. Follow a mining road for the first 10km, beyond which gravel bars and natural openings offer relatively pleasant travel. It is about a 2 day ski to the head of the valley W of Mt Vic. Climb through a 2300m pass at the head of Beece Cr and drop into the attractive alpine basin in upper Powell Cr. Ascend the broad valley of Powell Cr E over Powell Pass and traverse alpine meadows S to Iron Pass. Climb S out of the head of Battlement Cr to cross Feo Spur at about 2530m and descend into Feo Cr. Skirt around the toe of Denain Spur at about 2000m and angle SE to Warner Pass (2380m). Descend into the head of Warner Cr (see Warner Cr above for a description of recommended side trips). Below Warner Lk, pick up a horse trail on the N side of the creek. Follow the trail down past Trigger Lk and out Gun Cr (see Gun Cr to Slim Cr Circuit above).

This is a high dry region that lies in an Interior snow climate with a snowpack somewhat similar to the Rocky Mountains. High ridges are typically windswept and very rocky but valley bottoms and pocket glaciers usually have adequate snow cover. Lower elevations can have significant depth hoar and unconsolidated snow, depending on the winter. Some of the best skiing is on small N facing glaciers in the vicinity of Powell Pass, N of Warner Ridge and at the head of Warner Cr. Most runs are about 300–500m. Mt Vic (2990m) is one of the highest summits along the route and has been reached by skiing down a rock-strewn glacier to Vic Lk and scrambling up its windblown S ridge for a tremendous view.

Other possible variations to the traverse include approaches across the head of Big Cr from the headwaters of either Tyaughton Cr or Relay Cr, though the snowpack thins out dramatically as you move NE from Warner Ridge. The main valleys are laced with horse trails, which provide access to upper Tyaughton Cr either from Trigger Lk via Deer Pass (2320m) or from Spruce Lk via Tyaughton Cr. Trails are well marked on the 1:75,000 *Southern Chilcotin Mountains Trail Map* by Trail Ventures. There is occasional snowmobile traffic on Relay Cr.

There are several log cabins in the area that could be used for ski touring, including a cabin beside upper Tyaughton Cr at 1770m, on Graveyard Cr near the junction with Dash Cr at 1760m and on Relay Cr near the junction with Little Paradise Cr at 1590m. The cabins all have wood stoves. Contact Spruce Lake Wilderness Adventures ([www.sprucelaketours.ca](http://www.sprucelaketours.ca), 250-238-2375).

View across the head of Beece Cr. Photo by Markus Kellerhals



# Lillooet Icefield

# 15



Looking S to Lillooet Mtn and Mt Tisiphone from W of Stanley Pk.

**T**he glaciers at the head of the Lillooet, Bridge, Taseko and Southgate Rivers form a large glaciated complex known as the Lillooet Icefield. The region extends from the headwaters of the Lillooet and Bridge Rivers northwest to Taseko and Chilko Lakes, and includes the mountains north and west of the Toba River. It spans the entire width of the Coast Mountains from Toba Inlet through to the Chilcotin Plateau in the Interior.

Summits are generally higher and the terrain is noticeably more alpine than that closer to Vancouver. It is also much more heavily glaciated, so much so that the skiing is almost exclusively on glaciers. As a result, most ski trips here are done in the spring. Despite being less than 200km from Vancouver, this is a large remote area and all trips are serious undertakings requiring a week or more. Trips range from a variety of excellent ski camps to a number of classic traverses.

## Access

The Lillooet Icefield is the closest of the large icefields to Vancouver, and access to the S end of the icefield is an ex-

tension of shorter trips that penetrate the edges of the surrounding alpine area.

The main access is from logging roads that extend 60km up the Lillooet R from Pemberton. The S end of the icefield may be reached from branch roads in Meager Cr via the Manatee Range, while the E side of the icefield can be reached from branch roads in Salal Cr via the shoulder of White Cross Mtn. Access to the NE corner of the icefield is possible from the head of Slim Cr. For more detailed descriptions of these access routes, see the Upper Lillooet and Chilcotin Ranges chapters. Note that the access roads are only passable from late April onwards.

Access to the Interior side of this region is via the Chilcotin Plateau. This is reached via Williams Lake, which is a 550km drive from Vancouver. Hwy 20 heads W from Williams Lake across the Chilcotin Plateau and gives access to the N side of the Lillooet Icefield region.

Access from the coast is relatively difficult. The only useful access is from the head of Toba Inlet and follows the rugged divide E of the Tahumming R. The divide has been used as an exit route from the glaciated ranges S of Mt



Gilbert. Abandoned logging roads that run almost the full length of the Toba R were used in the past to provide access to the S end of the Lillooet Icefield but are now impassable. Portions of this road are being reactivated for construction of power projects by Plutonic Power Corporation ([www.plutonic.ca](http://www.plutonic.ca)).

## Aircraft Charter

### Helicopter

[www.blackcombhelicopters.com](http://www.blackcombhelicopters.com)

Whistler and Pemberton 604-938-1700

### Ski Plane

[www.tyaxair.com](http://www.tyaxair.com)

888-892-9288 (in Canada)

250-238-0177

## Lillooet Icefield Ski Camps

Length: 10–14 days

Map: 92J/13

Difficulty: 2

Best: Apr–May

BCMC Ski Camp: Irene Wingate, Marilyn Rode, Duncan Etches, John Clarke, Rob Apps, Don Avis, Frank & Wendy Baumann, Martin & Esther Kafer, May 1973, BCM Oct 1973

The Lillooet Icefield is a sprawling mass of interconnected glaciers lying on the main divide of the Coast Mountains. Located less than 200km N of Vancouver, it is the closest major icefield to Vancouver. It is one of the highest and driest of the large icefields in the Coast Mountains. At its maximum extent, it is up to 30km wide, with glaciers radiating out into five major drainages. The crest of the icefield rises to 2600m, where expanses of ice up to 10km wide are interrupted by small rocky summits that rise 300–800m above the icefield. It is an amazing place to explore on skis.

Travel on the icefield is generally straightforward. There are large crevassed areas on the lower portions of the main glaciers and on steeper sections off some of the summits. For the most part, these are all easily avoided. The main glaciers offer long gentle descents, but opportunities for turns on steeper terrain are typically limited to shorter runs near the peaks. Most summits are short enjoyable ascents from the main glaciers. The terrain rating for most ski ascents in the area is typically challenging, with only some sections of complex terrain.

### Lord Glacier

The Lillooet Icefield has been the site of regular ski camps. The largest conglomeration of peaks surround the head of the Frank Smith and Lord Glcs and this is a popular location for a ski camp. Campsites have ranged from the sheltered bench near treeline at 1800m at the head of the Lord



Lord Gl from the N. Photo by John Scurlock

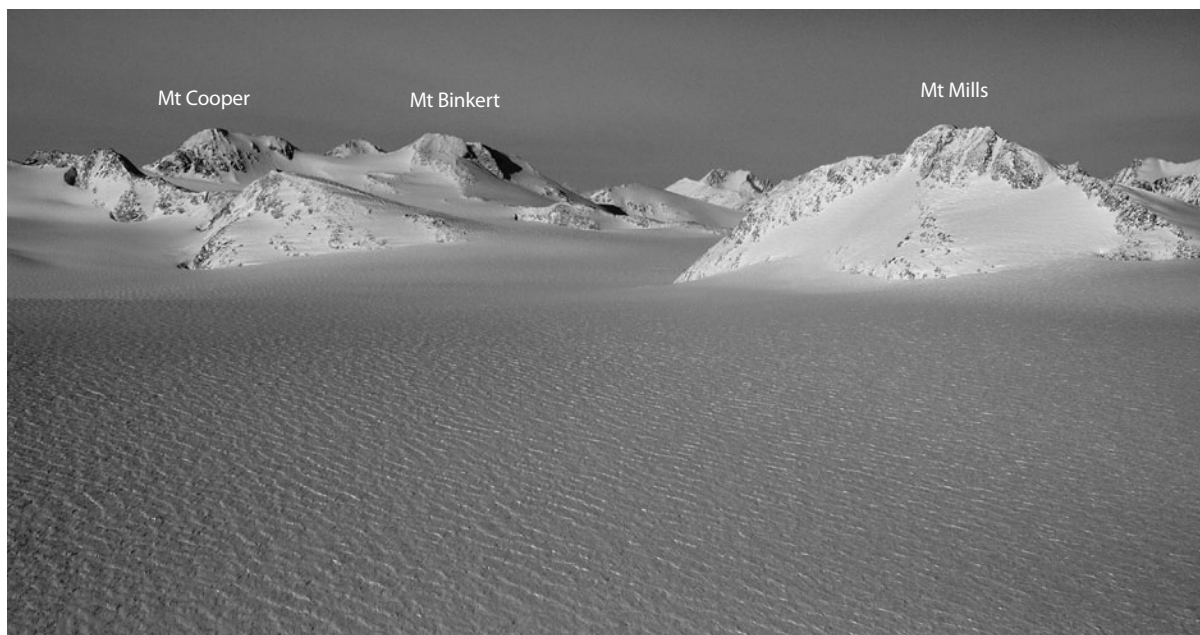
R near GR530430 to more alpine sites at 2000m or higher on the E side of the Lord Gl. A wide variety of day trips is available to the surrounding summits on the main part of the icefield. Many peaks are just short of 3000m: most are not technically difficult and are generally short enjoyable ascents from the main glaciers that involve minor scrambling. Mt Mills, Porter, Henderson, Dodds and Tait form a horseshoe around the head of the Lord Gl and are all recommended ascents. Several of these peaks can easily be climbed in a single day. The highest summit in the area is Mt Fulgora at the head of the Frank Smith Gl. Mt Donar and Mt Binkert on the W side of the Frank Smith Gl are also worthwhile ascents, as is Transition Pk, which lies NW of the lower Frank Smith Gl.

### Stalham Glacier

A variety of other locations have also been used for ski camps. A camp near 2000m on the Stalham Gl W of Mt Fowler lies on the N side of a huge glaciated basin and is ringed by high gentle summits that offer enjoyable ski ascents. Prominent summits include Mt Binkert, Mt Sawt (2870m, overlooking the Stanley Smith Gl) and Pk 2890m (a pyramidal summit off to the W high above Edmond Cr).

Stalham Gl area. Photo by John Scurlock





View NW to peaks on the central Lillooet Icefield. *Photo by John Scurlock*

### Stanley Smith Glacier

Some of the summits at the head of the Stalhalem Gl have also been reached from a base camp on the Stanley Smith Gl just E of its junction with the Donar Gl. Mt Daphnis is a recommended ascent from this camp. The summit pyramid is climbed via its class 3 NW ridge, and the broad crevassed slopes NE of the summit offer a 700m run.

### Bridge Glacier

Ski camps have also been placed at similar elevations on the main branch of the Bridge Gl and the unnamed North Bridge Gl. These give access to several high summits and broad snowy ridges on the S and E parts of the icefield. Stanley Pk is a good viewpoint near the centre of the icefield and is a straightforward ski ascent. Bridge Pk lies on the S rim of the icefield and gives tremendous views over the Lillooet Gl. It is a short snow climb from just W of the summit.

### Access

Access to most ski camps on the icefield is by helicopter from Pemberton. Flying onto the icefield is only possible in good weather, which can typically mean waiting for 1 or more days. Rather than flying out, many parties ski out after spending a week on the icefield. This is highly recommended and is an excellent way to see more of the icefield. It also avoids the difficulty of waiting for decent flying

weather. The most common exit route is to ski down the Bridge Gl and out past White Cross Mtn to Salal Cr. This is an enjoyable route taking 2–3 days. Longer exits to North Cr or the Manatee Range have also been used. Routes are described in more detail under the Lillooet Icefield Traverse below.

Many of the peak names on the Lillooet Icefield honour mountaineering pioneers who explored the Coast Mountains near Vancouver in the early 1900s (see *BCM* Oct 1973).

See also *BCM* 1986, p. 55, *BCM* 1988, p. 44, *BCM* 1998, p. 77, *BCM* 2000, p. 86, *BCM* 2004, p. 96.

Skiing off Mt Alecto, Mt Tisiphone behind. *Photo by John Clarke*





View up the Tchaikazan R valley.

## Tchaikazan River

Length: 7–10 days

Map: 92O/4

Difficulty: 2

Best: Apr–May

The Tchaikazan R drains a broad U-shaped valley SW of Taseko Lks on the leeward side of the Coast Mountains. The Tchaikazan Gl at its head provides the main access route to the Lillooet Icefield but is also a worthwhile destination on its own, with spectacular rocky summits rising 1200m above the main valley.

Access is from the Chilcotin Plateau. Turn off Hwy 20 onto the Taseko Lk road at Hanceville, 90km W of Williams Lake. This is an all-weather gravel road that runs SW to the Nemiah Valley on Chilko Lk. Continue past the Taseko R. At km 90, near Elkin Cr, the Lord R road runs down the W side of the Taseko R and follows the Fishem Lk chain to the Tchaikazan R at km 44. Except for muddy sections, the road is generally in good shape. It is not plowed, and access is easiest after mid-April.

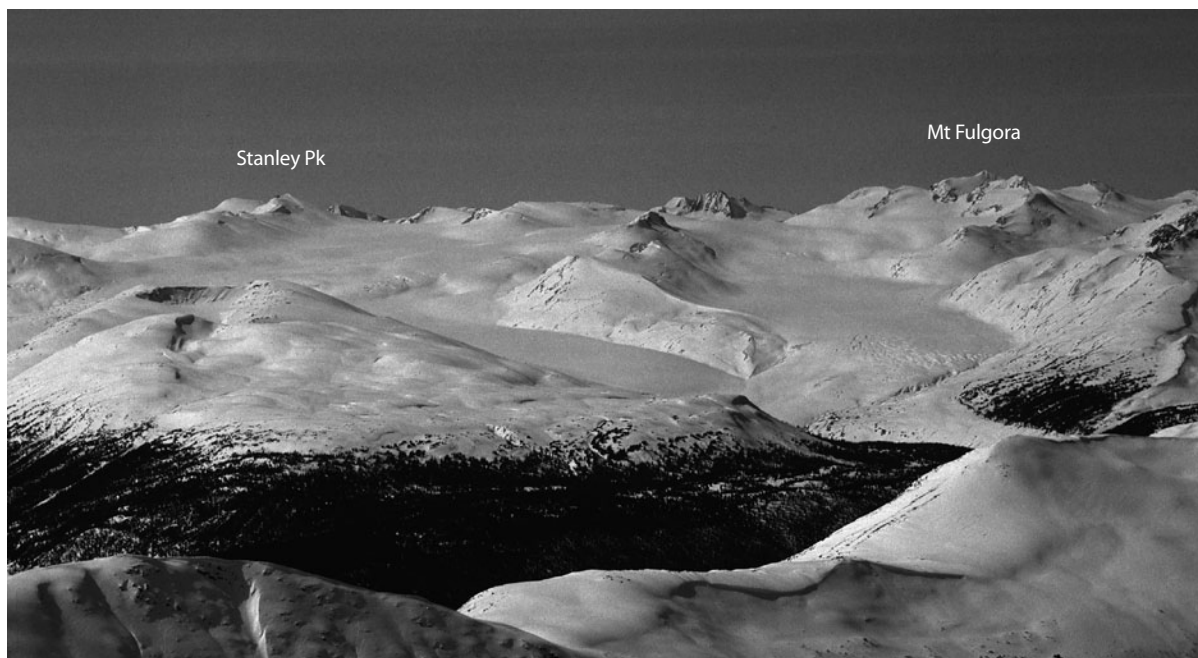
Earlier in the season the road to Taseko Lks on the E side of the Taseko R can be used. This road is plowed in winter and branches off at km 76, just before the bridge across the Taseko R, and runs S for 25km to Taseko Lks (1310m). A recommended starting point for winter access is Taseko Lake Lodge, located at the head of the lake next to Beece Cr. Contact: Taseko Lake Lodge, [www.tasekolake.com](http://www.tasekolake.com).

250-305-6368. Cross Taseko Lks to gain the Lord R road at the N end of the lake on the W side of the Taseko R.

Beyond the S end of Fishem Lk, ski up a jeep road that continues down the W side of the Tchaikazan R and turns the corner into the main Tchaikazan R valley. A horse trail can be picked up beyond. Higher up, the valley becomes quite open for skiing. It is approximately 2 days' skiing from Fishem Lk to a camp on the Tchaikazan Gl.

The ski up the main valley and most of the surrounding glaciers, though somewhat limited for runs, is particularly scenic. Summits in the area are generally steep, rocky, windswept and not well suited to ski ascents. Many peaks, however, are only short scrambles on mixed snow and rock. Monmouth Mtn (3200m) is the highest summit in the area, climbed via its class 3 SE ridge. Fluted Mtn (3080m) is an easy scramble via its SW slopes. Corner Pk (2990m) can be climbed via its E ridge and gives spectacular views of Mt Monmouth and the Falls R valley. Rim Mtn (2650m), above the Friendly Gl, is one of the few ski ascents. Spectrum Pass (2260m) is a recommended side trip and Pk 2870m, 3km S of the pass, is a tremendous viewpoint reached via the glacier and gentle basin on its N side.

Access to the Lillooet Icefield is via the col E of Fluted Mtn.



View of the Lillooet Icefield from the E.

## Lillooet Icefield Traverse

Length: 15–20 days  
Total Distance: 110km  
Elevation Gain: 4200m  
Start: 1650m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/12, 92J/13, 92O/4  
Best: April–May

Joan Avis, John Baldwin, Steve Grant, Steve Ludwig, Wayne Nagata, Helen Sovdat, Graham Underhill, May 1980, *CAJ* 1981, p. 65

This is a classic ski traverse across a large sprawling icefield. It is a recommended route, now repeated regularly, that crosses the Lillooet Icefield from the Tchaikazan R to Meager Cr. Routefinding is generally straightforward and there are many opportunities for enjoyable side trips. Much of the traverse is at elevations above 2300m. It is a good introduction to a ski traverse in the Coast Mountains.

### Route

The traverse is most often completed in a N to S direction. Skiing in this direction provides a gentler approach to the more rugged parts of the range. It takes best advantage of the shallower snowpack on the Interior side of the range before the snow melts off in late spring. And it allows the most difficult sections of glacier travel to be viewed prior to skiing, as it tends to give the best views of the heavily glaciated N aspects of the mountains.

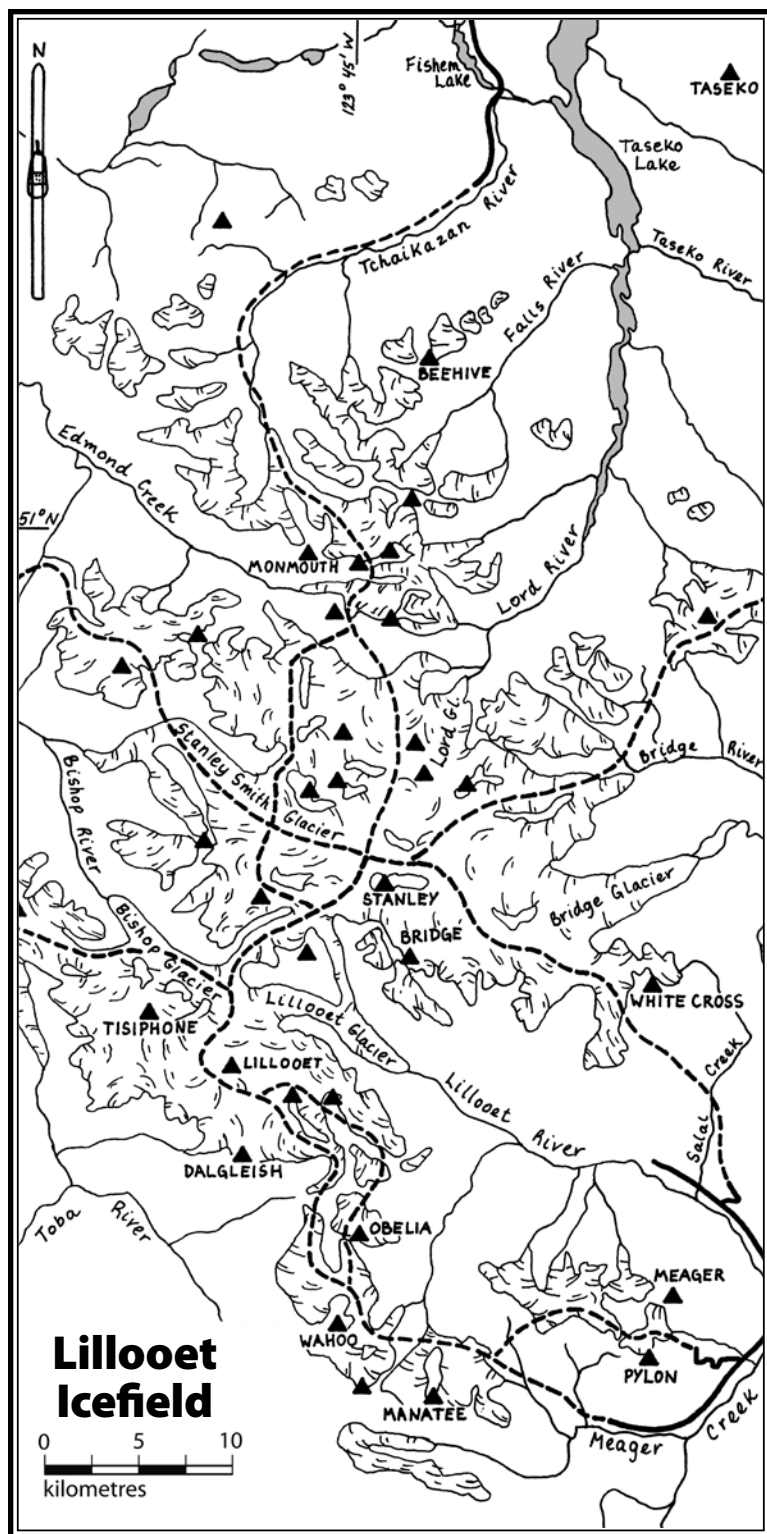
The most common approach starts from the Tchaikazan R valley. It is possible to approach on skis from the Chil-



Skiing up the Tchaikazan Gl below Fluted Mtn.

Headed S to the Frank Smith Gl. *Photo by Liz Scremin*





cotin Plateau (see Tchaikazan R above for a more detailed description). As an access route it is very pleasant, scenic and recommended but because of the extra logistics of retrieving a vehicle from the Chilcotin at the end of the trip, many parties start by flying in to the upper Tchaikazan R valley.

The Tchaikazan Gl is easily gained at the head of the Tchaikazan R valley. The route continues up the main branch of the Tchaikazan Gl. Ski through a 2700m col immediately E of Fluted Mtn to cross the head of the Chapman Gl. This route gives access to the Edmond Gl, where there have been several reports of grizzly bears crossing from Edmond Cr to the Lord R in early May. On the S side of Edmond Gl, a 2700m pass 2 km NW of Transition Pk leads S to lakes N of Mt Fowler. From here, ascend the Frank Smith Gl to reach the main crest of the icefield at the head of the large Stanley Smith Gl. This is a stupendous, wide, open expanse of ice with distant peaks on the horizon.

The main route continues S from the head of the Stanley Smith Gl. Descend the unnamed glacier running SW from Stanley Pk in a wide curve, swinging first to the E to avoid an icefall 1.5km W of Mt Stanley at about 2470m. Then, veer back to the W to avoid crevasses near 2200m. A gentle climb leads to the crest of the Ring Gl, which is an enjoyable coast down to the junction of the Bishop and Lillooet Gl's with the stupendous N faces of Lillooet Mt and Mt Tisiphone in view. Ascend the main trunk of the Lillooet Gl to the broad plateau of ice SE of Lillooet Mtn. The high divide between the Toba and Lillooet Rs SW of Silt Lk provides an incredibly scenic route to the Manatee Range. The divide is reached by climbing over the SW shoulder of Mu Pk (2890m) at 2780m. Drop down a short distance and traverse E under the S face of Mu Pk on steep snow. Skirt under rocky cliffs until you are able to gain the ridge beyond.



View S from the summit of Monmouth Mtn.

The ridge is easily followed (except in poor weather) up over the 2540m shoulder W of Obelia Pk. Descend S from Obelia Pk into the head of Manatee Cr. The recommended route continues past the toe of the Manatee Gl and climbs across the head of the Mosaic and Job Gl's to the Capricorn Mtn area and an exit to Meager Cr. Several options exist and are discussed in more detail under Capricorn Mtn and the Manatee Range in the Upper Lillooet chapter.

Routefinding is generally straightforward. Except for challenges at a few high cols and traversing to the Mana-

tee Range from near Lillooet Mtn, much of the route is on large gentle glaciers. There are large crevassed areas on the lower trunks of the main glaciers—all of which can be avoided. The terrain is well suited to the use of crazy-carpet toboggans.

See also CAJ 1993, p. 85.

### Side Trips

There is a tremendous variety of excellent side trips along the route, and though the traverse from the Tchaikazan R to Meager Cr can be done in 14 days, it is well worth allowing a few extra days so that you have ample time for side trips.

More detailed descriptions of side trips are given under the Tchaikazan R valley, the Lillooet Icefield and the Manatee Range. Recommended ascents include Monmouth Mtn and Transition Pk, at the N end of the traverse.

On the main part of the icefield, most summits are short, easy ascents with minor scrambling, and as many as 4 or 5 can easily be climbed as an enjoyable day trip. Mt Fulgora is the highest summit and nearby Mt Mills, Porter, Henderson and Dodds are also recommended. Stanley Pk is a good viewpoint near the centre of the icefield and is a

View S from the summit of Bridge Pk.







Crossing the broad plateau of ice between the Stanley Smith and Bridge Glaciers on the central Lillooet Icefield.

short side trip. On the S rim of the icefield, Bridge Pk is a longer side trip that requires a short snow climb from just W of the summit.

Mt Alecto is somewhat overshadowed by higher summits but is a pleasant ski ascent from the Ring Gl and involves some minor scrambling to negotiate a cliff band below the summit. It offers an outstanding view of icefalls S of the Lillooet Gl. Mt Tisiphone is a bulky summit rising almost 1500m from the Bishop Gl. Skis can be used to near 2880m, and the summit is an enjoyable climb over snow and rock from the SE (class 3). Lillooet Mtn is a challenging and worthwhile ski ascent from the E. Mt Dagleish, though a gentle mound from the N, gives outstanding views of the Toba R and Manatee Range.

There are other recommended ascents in the Manatee Range at the S end of the traverse, including Wahoo Tower, Manatee Pk and Capricorn Mtn.

### Variations and Extensions

The icefield generally offers straightforward traveling, and other variations to the route described above are possible. One variation travels W of Mt Fowler to cross a 2600m pass that descends to the Donar Gl. It continues S across

the main trunk of the Stanley Smith Gl and uses a second 2600m pass SE of Mt Daphnis to reach the Ring Gl.

An approach from Slim Cr can be used to reach the N end of the icefield instead of the Tchaikazan valley. From the head of Slim Cr (see the Chilcotin Ranges chapter), cross the head of Nichols Cr and climb over the broad, glaciated double summit W of Lepton Mtn (2500m) to traverse SW from the low pass beyond to reach the North Bridge Gl. This is a pleasant route taking about 5 days to reach the centre of the icefield.

Other access routes from the E offer alternative exits. An exit to logging roads on the Lillooet R is possible via Mt Tisiphone from near Lillooet Mtn.





The route of the Lillooet Icefield Traverse S from Stanley Pk to the Ring Gl. *Photo by John Scurlock*

Descending the Ring Gl to the junction of the Lillooet and Bishop Glaciers.





Looking S from near Mu Pk on the plateau of ice surrounding Lillooet Mtn to the Manatee Range. *Photo by Brian Finnie*

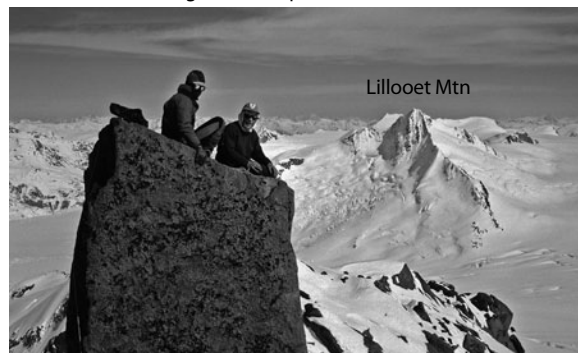
the Bridge Gl and Salal Cr (see White Cross Mtn). This exit takes several days and has been combined with an approach from Slim Cr to turn the traverse of the Lillooet Icefield into a horseshoe around the headwaters of the Bridge R. The Lillooet Gl has also been used as an exit route by skiing out Silt Lk and following the N side of the upper Lillooet R valley to roads near Salal Cr (CAJ 1985, p. 49). This option is somewhat bushy after the snow melts and is only recommended as an escape route.

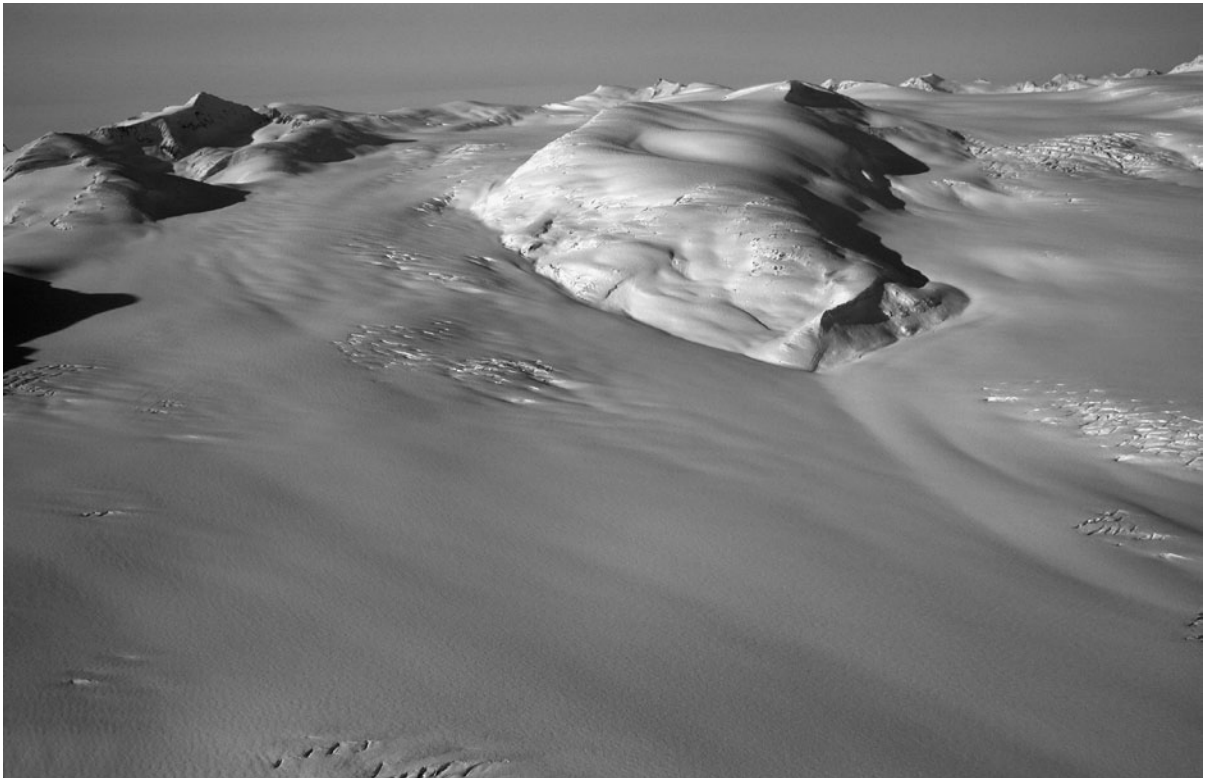
View N to Mu Pk from the Sirenia Gl. *Photo by Paul Palfreyman*



A logical extension to this traverse continues down the Elaho and Clendinning Ranges to Princess Louisa Inlet. This is highly recommended and turns the traverse into a complete crossing of the Coast Mountains (BCM 1988, p. 8). The extension is described under the Clendinning Range Traverse and is reached either by traversing below steep slopes W of Manatee Pk or by descending gentler slopes SE of Manatee and Dugong Pks.

Pinnacle on the E ridge of Mt Tisiphone.





Looking NW across the Bridge Gl. Photo by John Scurlock

## Lillooet River Horseshoe

Length: 14 days	Difficulty: 3
Total Distance: 110km	Terrain: Complex
Elevation Gain: 5500m	Map: 92J/11, 12, 13, 14
Start: 1140m	Best: May

Darlene Anderson, Peter Celliers, Betsy Fletcher, Pierre Friele, Brian Waddington, Tony Webb, *VOCJ* 1984, p. 8

Essentially a variation to the Lillooet Icefield Traverse described above, this is a highly recommended route that circles the headwaters of the Lillooet R. Access is entirely from the Lillooet R valley, greatly simplifying logistics.

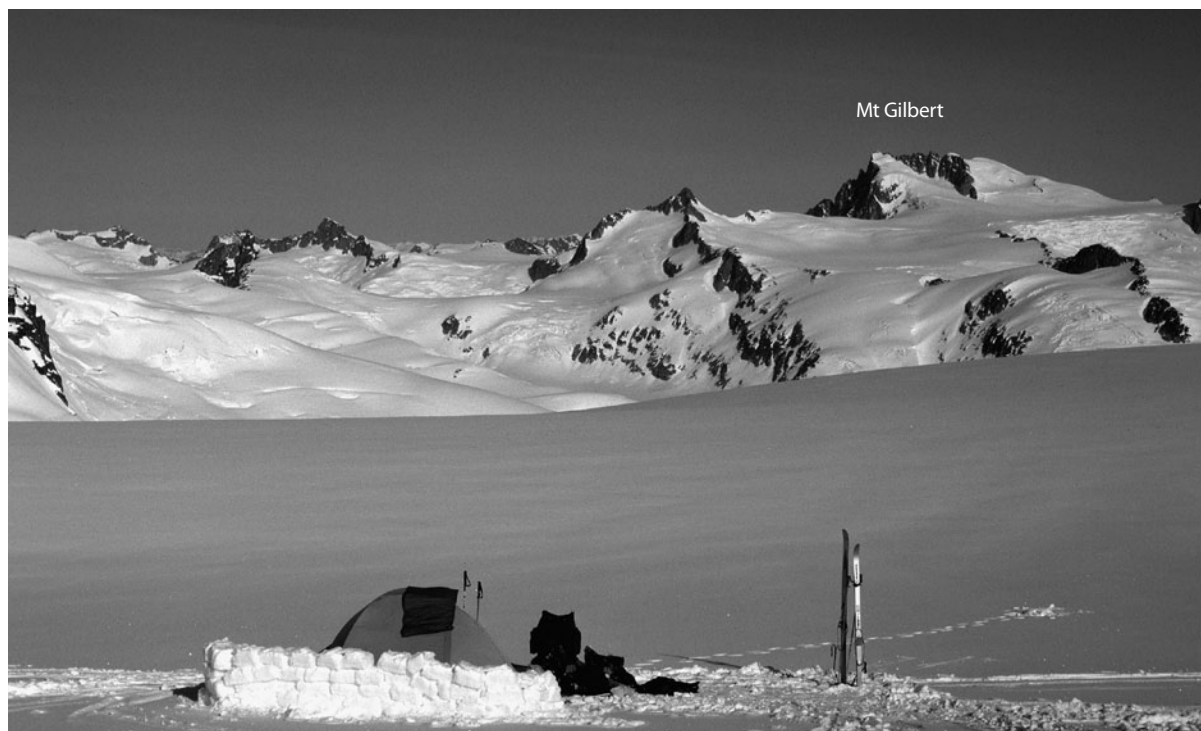
The route ascends Salal Cr to reach the Bridge Gl via the glaciated shoulder of White Cross Mtn (see Upper Lillooet chapter), then circles W to the junction of the Lillooet and Bishop Gl's via the Ring Gl. The main trunk of the Lillooet Gl is ascended to the broad plateau of ice SE of Lillooet Mtn. Follow the high divide between the Toba and Lillooet Rs SW of Silt Lk to the Manatee Range, as described above for the main Lillooet Icefield Traverse. An exit to Meager Cr via the Capricorn Mtn area is recommended. This route brings you literally back to within walking distance of the start of your traverse.



Descending from Obelia Mtn into the Manatee Range.

The approach via Salal Cr is relatively gentle, and it is likely this traverse could be done without an airdrop by a strong party using lightweight toboggans.

See also *CAJ* 1994, p. 83.



Looking W from a camp on the Compton Neve at the head of the Toba Gl.

## Compton Neve Traverse

Length: 21 days

Total Distance: 140km

Elevation Gain: 7800m

Start: 800m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92J/12, 13, 92K/9, 16

Best: May

Jim Craig, Dennis & Ann Holden, Byron & Jane Olsen, Don Poole, June 27–July 7, 1965, *CAJ* 1966, p. 63

The Compton Neve lies on the heavily glaciated divide at the head of the Toba R, though the term is also used loosely to refer to the entire region of glaciated summits and ridges on the divide between the Southgate and Toba Rs. The system of interconnecting glaciers on the divide is sometimes considered part of the Lillooet Icefield, as it connects with glaciers at the head of the Lillooet R.

This is a spectacular area of snow-laden ridge crests, icefalls and deep coastal valleys. It is characterized by huge vertical relief, with summits rising up to 3000m from the surrounding river valleys. The area lacks any large icefields, and ski routes are predominantly restricted to neves located near the crest of the main divide, as most glaciers here descend into deep side valleys. Most ski trips to this area have been in the form of traverses.

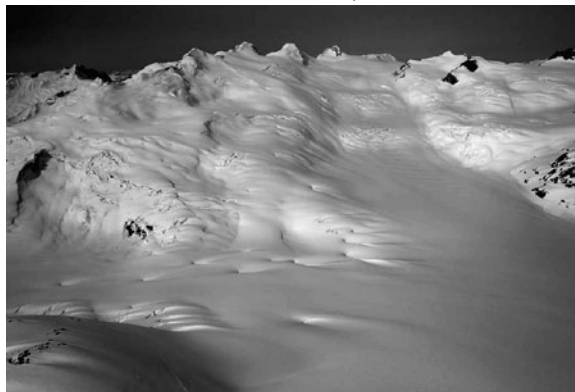
The Compton Neve Traverse is a classic skyline traverse

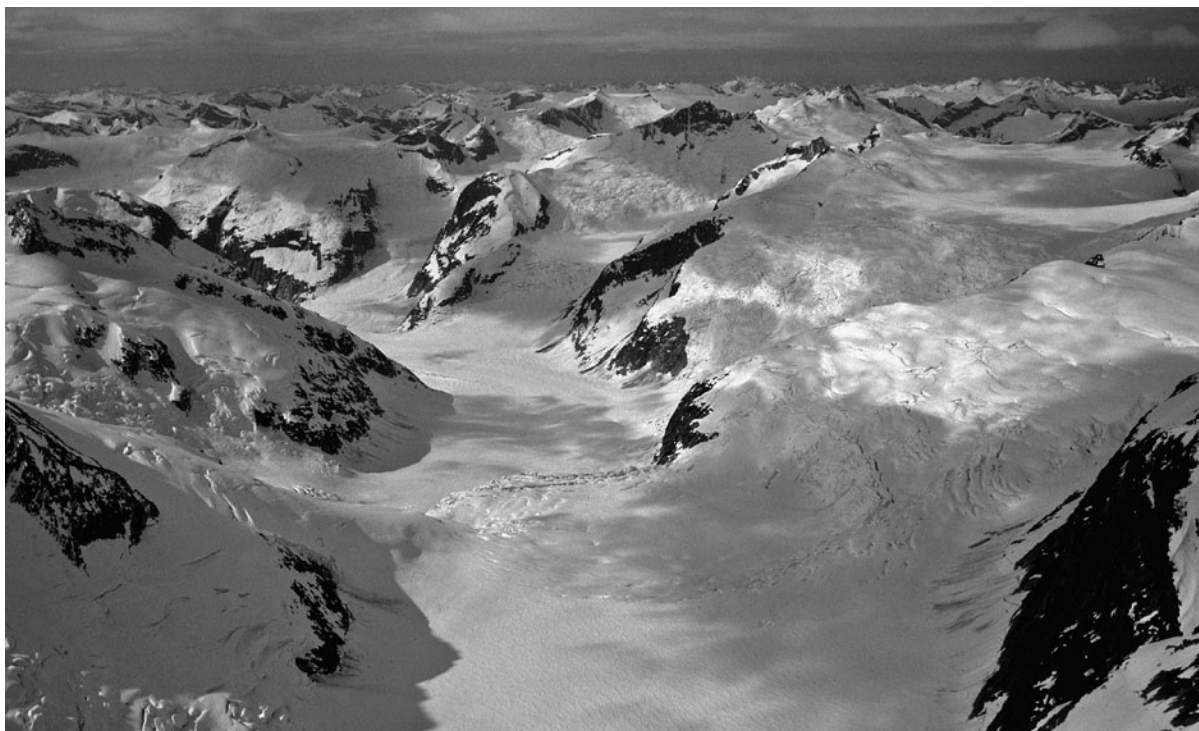
that travels the full length of the divide between the Southgate and Toba Rs. This is a challenging ski-mountaineering route that requires careful routefinding. Much of the route is difficult to follow in poor weather, and there are no escape routes. It is one of the more spectacular high-alpine routes in the Coast Mountains and is a recommended trip.

### Route

The broad system of glaciers that sprawl along the ridge crests between the Southgate and Toba Rs ends abruptly at

Peaks at the head of the Toba Gl. *Photo by John Scurlock*





View S from the summit of Mt Gilbert.

the head of the Tahumming R. The first ski traverses across the Compton Neve used air access to avoid an approach from Toba Inlet. In 1989, a route was worked out along the narrow ridges on the E side of the Tahumming R that provides an exit from the glaciated ranges S of Mt Gilbert to Toba Inlet. The traverse of the Compton Neve region is described here from E to W using this exit route.

The Compton Neve region connects directly with the head of the Lillooet Gl and runs more or less W from there. Access is therefore the same as for the S end of the Lillooet Icefield, and approaches from the upper Lillooet R via either Salal Cr or the Manatee Range are recommended. The route from Salal Cr is the shortest and starts the trip off on the gentle SE corner of the Lillooet Icefield. Travel up the Bridge Gl, around the N side of Stanley Pk and down the Ring Gl to the Bishop Gl. Ski W down the Bishop Gl to 1500m and climb SW to the head of the E branch of the Toba Gl, SE of Toba Pk. It is at least 4 days' travel to the Toba Gl from Salal Cr.

An alternative approach via the Manatee Range, though slightly longer and more challenging, is especially scenic and rewarding. The recommended route climbs through the Meager Group to reach the Manatee Range and then

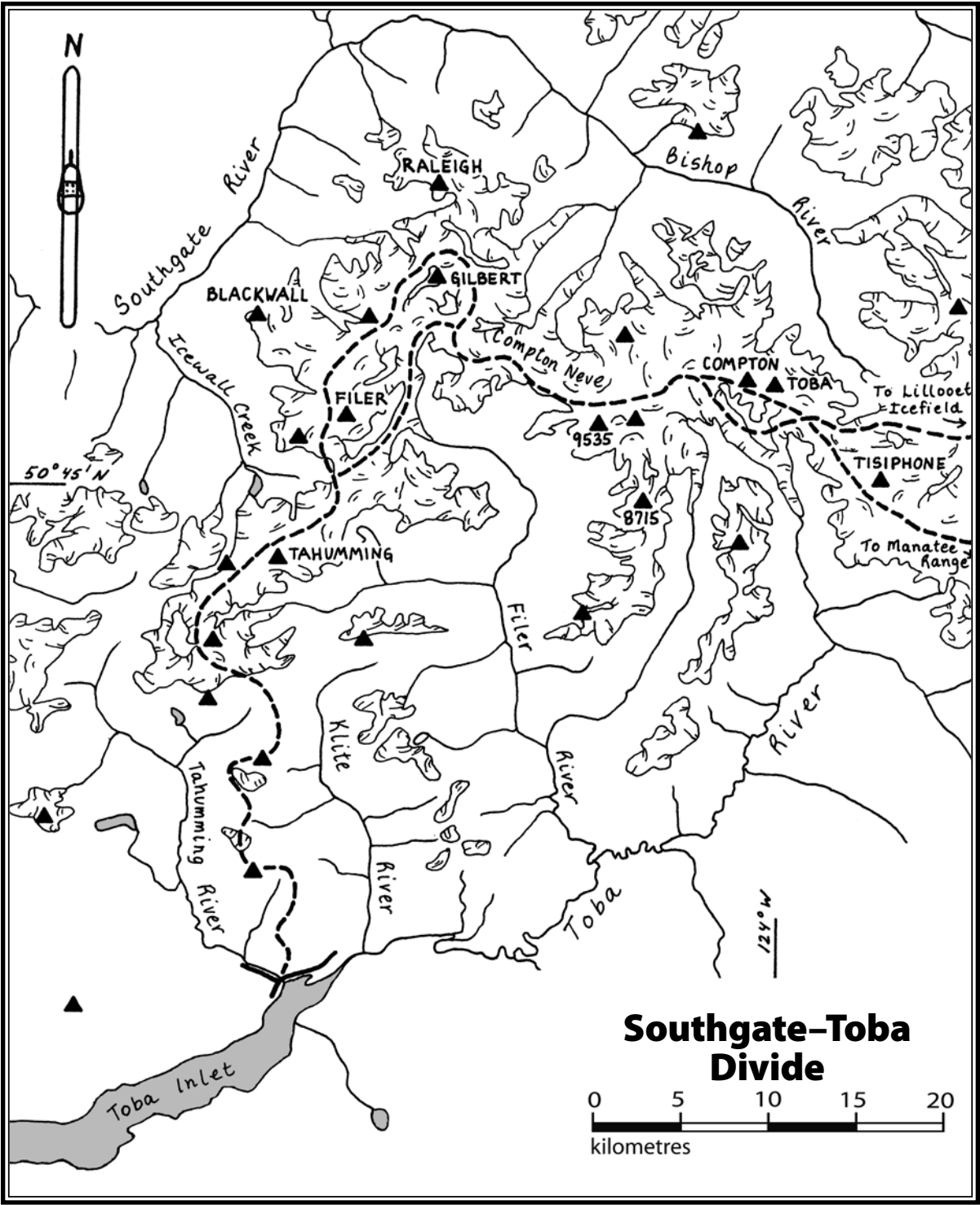
follows the scenic alpine divide N of Obelia Mtn to reach the high plateau of ice surrounding Lillooet Mtn. Continue across the shoulder W of Mt Tisiphone to reach the head of the E branch of the Toba Gl.

The main route crosses the ridge S of Toba Pk at 1900m to descend W to the main trunk of the Toba Gl at 1440m. The route continues W with a 1200m climb to the head of Toba Gl. Ski N of summits marked by spot elevations of 9535 and 9475 on map 92K/16.

Traveling W from the head of the Toba Gl, the lobes of the Falcon Gl have been used, but ridges to the S are more scenic and involve only one steep section W of Pk 2486. From the pass S of Falcon Mtn, the most scenic route circles N of Mt Gilbert to climb steeper slopes through a 2700m notch in its long NW ridge. Continue SW across glaciers and skirt SE of Pk 2748 (marked as 9017ft on the map) to the Tavistock Gl. A col W of Mt Filer leads across the basin E of the Three Chieftains (2775m), and the ridge beyond descends to the 2070m col 4 km E of Icewall Lk.

An alternative to the high route around Mt Gilbert descends W from the pass S of Falcon Mtn. An icefall at 2100m is avoided on the N side of the glacier. Ski S down the main trunk of the Filer Gl to 1180m and swing SW.







Toba Pk from the SE. Photo by John Scurlock

Ascend the N side of the glacier and a steep headwall to join the high route from Mt Gilbert at the 2070m col 4km E of Icewall Lk.

From the col, a steep climb to the SE gives access to the narrow ridge between Icewall Cr and Headwall Cr. This route leads SW (with incredible views) to the high neves surrounding Tahumming Mtn. Continue SW to the Tahumming Gl and ascend its S fork. The main icefall 2km S of Mamook Pk is avoided via a ramp on its E side. At the head of the glacier, ski S through a 2200m col and veer SE to the top of an unnamed glacier at the head of Headwall Cr.

The surrounding valleys are particularly rugged, and the only feasible route to the head of Toba Inlet follows the long sinuous ridge system between the Tahumming and Klite Rs. Though somewhat narrow, this is generally straightforward and especially scenic. Except where obvious, the route runs along the ridge crest. It is difficult to follow in poor weather. Also, there are minor difficulties N of Pk 2085 and N of Pk 2187. At the S end of the ridge, follow the narrow divide down onto a forested shoulder at 1000m. To descend the rest of the way to the valley bottom, drop SW off the shoulder from GR020960 through steep forest to the mouth of the Tahumming R. There are some bluffy sections lower down that can be avoided. A bridge across the Tahumming R leads to a dock W of the mouth of the Tahumming R on the N side of the inlet. Floatplanes and boats can land here. It is approximately 3 days' travel from the main divide to the head of Toba Inlet.

### Side Trips

Summits are relatively spread out along the Southgate-Toba divide. The largest concentration of summits lies between the Compton Neve and the head of the Toba Gl. Most peaks here are short snow climbs from the ridge-top glaciers. The highest of these is Pk 2906, which rises 2500m



Peaks on the divide between the Compton and Falcon Glaciers.

from the Filer R in less than 5km and offers superb views. Pk 2800 and other minor summits to the N are also enjoyable side trips as well as several of the peaks on the first part of the divide between Filer Cr and Montrose Cr. These peaks were first climbed from a ski camp here in 1982 (CAJ 1983, p. 48).

Farther to the E, Toba Pk (2790m) is a recommended ascent over steep snow slopes from the SE. One of the highest summits in the area is Mt Gilbert (3098m), which is an outstanding ski ascent via the snow ramp E of the peak. Summits N and SW of Mt Gilbert tend to be more difficult. An exception is Blackwall Pk (2797m), W of the Tavistock Gl, which offers a long ski run and exceptional views. The higher N summit is reached via the gentle connecting ridge running N from the S summit.

S of Icewall Cr, both Tahumming Mtn (2536m) and Perseverance Pk (2543m) are recommended ski ascents, as well as Pk 2405 at the head of the S branch of the Tahumming Gl.

### Variations

The trip described above takes approximately 3 weeks. Two variations are described below. These either avoid the exit to Toba Inlet by using a helicopter or connect with alternative routes across the Lillooet Icefield.

## Compton Neve to Lillooet River

Length: 14–17 days  
Total Distance: 100km  
Elevation Gain: 4600m  
Start: 800m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/12, 13, 92K/9, 16  
Best: May

Steve Ludwig, Helen Sovdat, Alf Skrastins, May 1985, CAJ 1986, p. 54

In order to avoid difficult approaches from Toba Inlet, the first ski traverses in the area used air access to reach glaciers on the W end of the divide between the Southgate and Toba Rs and traverse E across the Compton Neve and Lil-



View SW from the Filer Gl to the rugged section of the Southgate–Toba Divide between Headwall Cr and Icewall Lk. *Photo by John Scurlock*

looet Icefield to logging roads on the upper Lillooet R. This approach was used in 1985 with a ski plane drop-off on the broad neve beside Tahumming Mtn and is still a recommended way to do a shorter traverse. The traverse follows the route described above from W to E. Shorter variations could start near Mt Gilbert or at the head of the Toba Gl. Out of historical interest, it is worth mentioning that the 1965 party exited down the Lillooet Gl and after abandoning their skis, bushwacked for 3 days to reach roads near South Cr. The recommended route now is to exit to logging roads in Salal Cr.

## Slim Creek to Toba Inlet

Length: 24 days

Total Distance: 190km

Elevation Gain: 9000m

Start: 1000m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92J/13, 14, 92K/9, 16

Best: May

John Baldwin, John Clarke, May 1989, *CAJ* 1990, p. 20

The longest variation of the Compton Neve Traverse crosses the full width of the Coast Mountains from Slim Cr to Toba Inlet. This is an especially varied and spectacular route that traverses the Lillooet Icefield and Compton Neve regions.

The route begins on logging roads in Slim Cr in the S

Chilcotin Ranges and climbs through the broad valleys and extensive meadows in the W end of the Dickson Range. It crosses the gentle glaciers W of Nichols Cr to reach the snout of the North Bridge Gl on the NE corner of the Lillooet Icefield. The Lillooet Icefield is crossed near its high point, and the Ring Gl and the Bishop Gl are used to gain access to the narrow Southgate–Toba divide, which is followed SW to the head of Toba Inlet. Portions of the route and recommended side trips are described separately under the Lillooet Icefield and the Compton Neve Traverse above.

Camp above Headwall Cr after a storm.



# Homathko Icefield

# 16



View NW from the summit of Mt Grenville across the Homathko Icefield to Mt Waddington in the distance.

**T**he Homathko Icefield lies hidden deep in the Pacific Ranges, beyond the head of Bute Inlet and south of Tatlayoko Lake. This chapter describes trips to the region comprised of the icefield and the surrounding areas between the Homathko and Southgate Rivers. It spans the entire width of the range from Bute Inlet through to Chilko Lake in the Interior, and is dominated by the Homathko Icefield. The character of the region varies dramatically from the wet coastal environment at the head of Bute Inlet to the dry rainshadow on the edges of the Chilcotin Plateau, where the mountains fade out into the Interior.

The mountains are generally remote and access is difficult. As a result, ski trips to the Homathko Icefield tend to be more of an expeditionary undertaking requiring a week or more.

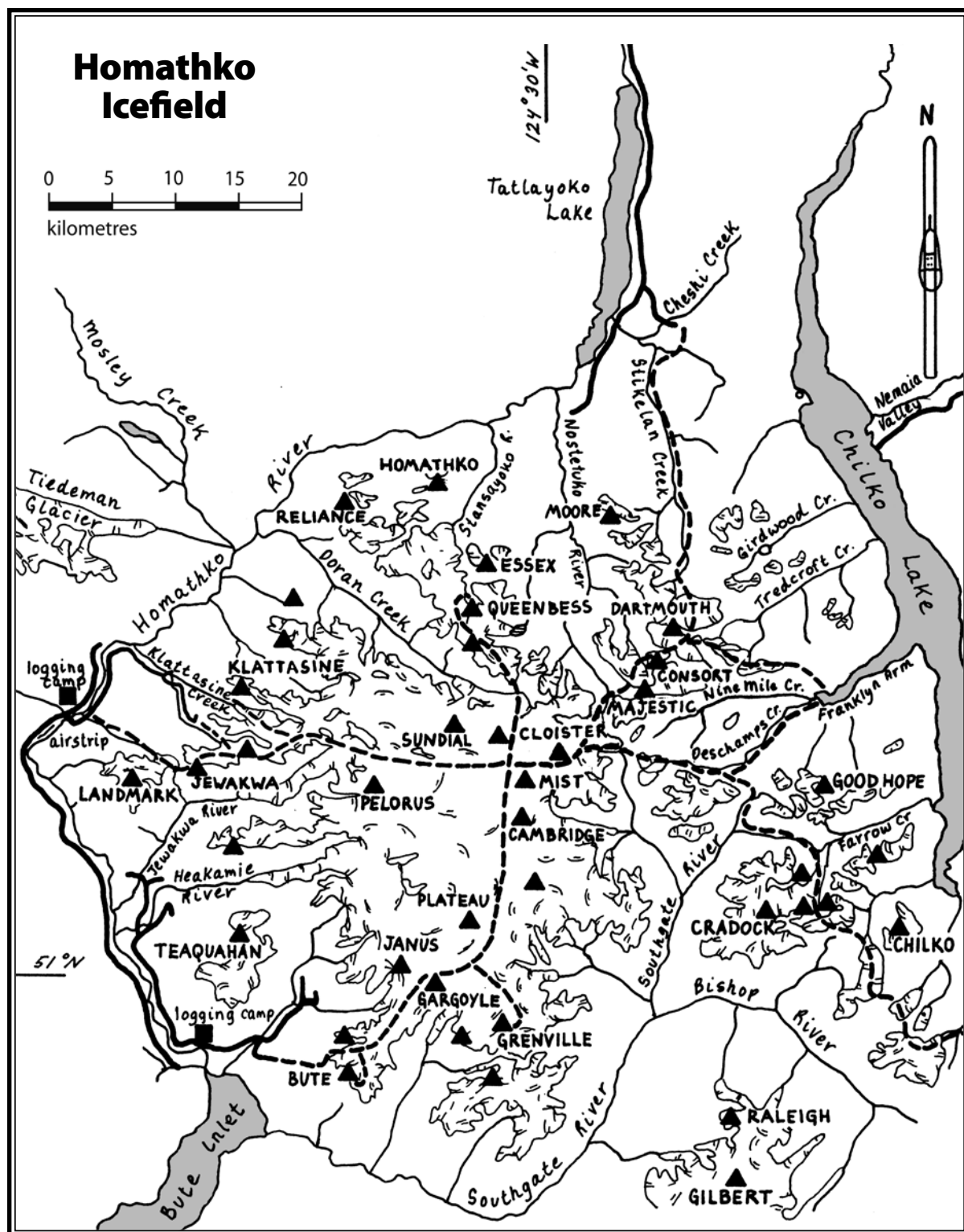
Most trips are either a fly-in base camp or an alpine ski traverse. A combination of a fly-in base camp and an exit on skis is also popular and gives some of the advantages of both kinds of trips. The central part of the Homathko

Icefield is very gentle, and lightweight toboggans are recommended for moving gear and food.

Much of the area around Chilko Lake is part of Tsylós Provincial Park ([www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks)).

## Access

Despite being less than 250km from Vancouver, access to the Homathko Icefield is difficult. Approaches start from either the Interior or the coast. The Interior side of this region is reached from the Chilcotin Plateau via Williams Lake. Williams Lake is a 6–7hr drive of 550km from Vancouver. From Williams Lake, Hwy 20 runs W across the plateau to Bella Coola. Side roads extend to Chilko, Tatlayoko and Taseko Lks. These are spectacular freshwater fjords that penetrate into the mountains and provide several points of access. Approaches from the Interior start at higher elevations than those from the coast, are not as rugged and can be reached by road. Because of this, most traverses start in the Interior and finish on the coast.



To drive to Chilko Lk, turn off Hwy 20 onto the Taseko Lk road at Hanceville, 90km W of Williams Lake. This is an all-weather gravel road that runs SW for approximately 100km to the Nemiah Valley on Chilko Lk. Nemiah is an 8–10 hour drive from Vancouver. There is a forest service campground on the lakeshore near Duff Island. The valley is home to the Xeni Gwet'in First Nations community ([www.xenigwetin.com](http://www.xenigwetin.com)). Access to glaciated high summits is from the W side of Chilko Lk using approaches from Tredcroft Cr, Franklyn Arm and Farrow Cr. Chilko Lk (1172m), because of its size, does not often freeze over completely. Water taxi service is available from:

Chilko Lake Water Taxi  
Roland Class  
[chilkotours@gmail.com](mailto:chilkotours@gmail.com)  
250-394-7444

Kayaks have also been used in spring. Mountains at the S end of Chilko Lk have been approached by overland ski routes from the Tchaikazan R and Lillooet Icefield (described under the Lillooet Icefield).

To reach Tatlayoko Lk (827m), turn off Hwy 20 at Tatla Lk, 220km W of Williams Lake. An all-weather gravel road runs S for 40km to the N end of the lake. A narrow unplowed road continues 15km down the E side of Tatlayoko Lk, with a side road that climbs to a lodge beside Cheshi Cr. Contact:

Bracewell's Alpine Wilderness Adventures  
[www.bracewell.com](http://www.bracewell.com)  
250-476-1169

A horse trail that runs from Cheshi Lk to the head of Stikelan Cr provides an attractive route into the mountains, and the Homathko Icefield can be reached by traversing through the intervening alpine terrain.

The adjacent Nostetuko R valley to the W of Stikelan Cr has also been used. There is no trail. Glacial outburst floods have created extensive gravel bars, which offer reasonable travel. But there are several gorges, which require tricky scrambling to bypass. The mouth of the Nostetuko R is also difficult to reach, as the bridge across Cheshi Cr on the road down the E side of Tatlayoko Lk is washed out. Nostetuko R is probably best considered as an exit route only. Snow leaves the lower valley by mid-April.

On the coast there are several access routes that start from logging roads in the Homathko R valley at the head of Bute Inlet. These roads are only accessible by chartered plane or boat. All access is through Homathko Camp, which is located on the E side of the river, 3km from the

river mouth. There is a gravel airstrip, and fixed-wing flights can be arranged from Campbell R on Vancouver Island or from White Saddle Air at Bluff Lk in the Chilcotin. Bluff Lk is SW of Tatla Lk and is a 10 hour drive of 800km from Vancouver. If you left a car at Tatlayoko Lk, a fixed-wing flight back to Bluff Lk with White Saddle Air is recommended. Floatplanes can also land on the river near the camp. Water taxi service is available from Heriot Bay on Quadra Island. Lodging and transportation services are available at Homathko Camp. Contact:

Chuck and Sheron Burchill  
Homathko Camp  
250-286-0962 or 604-288-7747  
[www.discoverywestaviation.com](http://www.discoverywestaviation.com)

Logging roads on the E side of the Homathko R extend to beyond the Jewakwa R. The most important access route to the Homathko Icefield is from a spur road that branches off the main logging road on the Teaquahan R and runs a short distance up Galleon Cr. A rough trail runs to the head of Galleon Cr and a route climbs onto the icefield near Bute Mtn. This is the main access route to the S end of the icefield. It is steep and is mainly used as an exit.

There is a separate system of roads on the W side of the Homathko R. These are not connected to roads on the E side of the river. The logging camp and gravel airstrip at Scar Cr (37km up the valley) have been decommissioned and there is currently no active logging. Road maintenance is likely to continue, as several micro hydro projects are proposed in the area (see [www.plutonic.ca](http://www.plutonic.ca)). Access to roads on the W side of the river is best arranged from the folks at Homathko Camp. For a fee, they can ferry you across the river and drive you up the road on the W side of the river. Roads on the W side of the Homathko R run past Scar Cr. An important branch road crosses the Homathko R just upstream of Scar Cr. It continues up the E side of the river with a spur that climbs to near treeline in Klattasine Cr. The valley provides a relatively gentle and direct approach to the W side of the icefield.

### **Aircraft Charter**

Helicopter and fixed-wing charters from Bluff Lk:

White Saddle Air  
[www.whitesaddleair.com](http://www.whitesaddleair.com)  
250-476-1182

Fixed-wing charters to Bute Inlet from Campbell R:

[www.discoverywestaviation.com](http://www.discoverywestaviation.com)  
250-923-6233  
888-923-6233





Using kayaks to approach mountains above Franklin Arm on Chilko Lk. *Photo by George Sharrett*

Floatplane charters to Bute Inlet from Campbell R:

Vancouver Island Air  
[www.vancouverislandair.com](http://www.vancouverislandair.com)  
 250-287-2433

Helicopter charters from Campbell R:

West Coast Helicopters  
[www.westcoasthelicopters.com](http://www.westcoasthelicopters.com)  
 250-286-8863  
 Vancouver Island Helicopters  
[www.vih.com](http://www.vih.com)  
 250-923-3133

Ski plane from Pemberton

[www.tyaxair.com](http://www.tyaxair.com)  
 888-892-9288 (in Canada)  
 250-238-0177

## Reference

[www.pbace.com/nolock](http://www.pbace.com/nolock)—The aerial photographs of the Homathko Icefield by John Scurlock are an excellent reference on the area

## Chilko Lake

Length: 7–14 days  
 Map: 92N/1, 92N/8

Difficulty: 3  
 Best: Apr–May

Alejandro Frid, Pierre Friele, George Sharrett, April 1988, *CAJ* 1989, p. 14

Chilko Lk (1172m) is the largest of several long lakes that penetrate into the Coast Mountains from the Interior. It is a stupendous freshwater fjord with aquamarine water and sharp glaciated summits rising from its W shores. Boats, kayaks and even rafts have been used to provide a novel and enjoyable approach to the mountains on the W side of the lake. This is a particularly scenic area, and summits as far back as the Homathko Icefield may be reached from the lakeshore.

Access to the lake is from a campground in the Nemiah Valley near Duff Island. Kayaks can be launched here. The water is especially cold in the spring, and the lake can be very rough and difficult to cross for long periods of time. A water taxi is also available.

Crossing the lake provides access to the remote areas on the W shore of the lake. Approaches have started from

Girdwood Cr, Franklyn Arm and Farrow Cr. Treeline is about 550m above the lake.

### Liberated Group

The W shore is a 3km crossing from Duff Island, and slopes near Girdwood Cr have been used to reach the Liberated Group (CAJ 1988, p. 62). The lower slopes of the Liberated Group are covered in closely spaced lodgepole pines, which makes for difficult travel with skis. Summits on the W side



Skiing in the Liberated Group. Photo by Alejandro Frid

of the lake are steep and rocky and generally require some scrambling, but there is decent skiing in the surrounding glaciated cirques with tremendous views of Chilko Lk. At the head of Girdwood Cr, the W shoulder of Mt Derick was descended to reach the Tredcroft Gl and the head of Stikelan Cr.

### Franklyn Arm

It is a day's paddle to the head of Franklyn Arm and three routes have been used to reach summits on the Homathko Icefield.

Nine Mile Cr is probably the most bush-free access route from Chilko Lk and has also been used in spring (CAJ 1958, CAJ 1997 p. 74). From the head of Franklyn Arm, ski up the braided bed of Nine Mile Cr for a bit less than 2km. Avoid a gorge on the N side for 3km. Then, cross the creek and work up meadows on the S side of the valley. From the head of the valley, ascend steep slopes to cross the ridge W to Alph Gl and the Homathko Icefield beyond.

A second route was first used in 1988 (CAJ 1989, p. 14). It starts from the head of Franklyn Arm and climbs N through dense second-growth pine in an old burn to reach the 2100m col W of the Capital Group. Traverse glaciers at the head of Tredcroft Cr to the Hamilton Gl to join a route running SW from Stikelan Cr (see below), over the W shoulder of Majestic Pk to the head of the Nostetuko R. The main icefield beyond is approximately 3 days' travel from Franklyn Arm. The recorded party returned to Frank-

lyn Arm via the Alph Gl and Deschamps Cr in 2–3 days. Deschamps Cr is bushy and not recommended. There is a cabin S of the Deschamps Cr delta.

### Farrow Creek

Located halfway down the W side of Chilko Lk, Farrow Cr has been used by several parties for access to the Goddard Gl and other areas S of Mt Good Hope (CAJ 2001, p. 122). Start from a small bay 1.5km N of Farrow Cr. Pass by a small, unnamed lake and follow trails and beaver ponds towards Farrow Cr. A huge glacial outburst flood has washed down Farrow Cr. Travel on the creek varies from easy gravel bars to difficult sections of logjams and debris. Allow about 1.5 days to reach the Goddard Gl.



Upper Stikelan Cr.

### Stikelan Creek

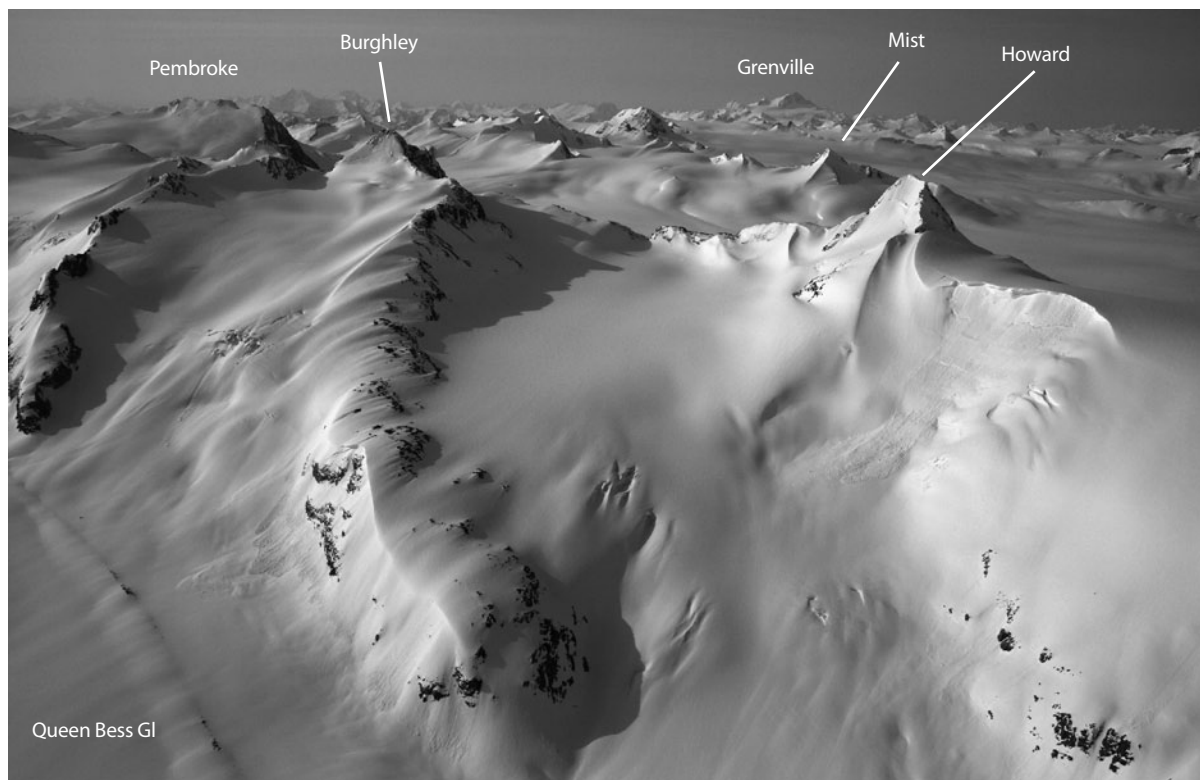
Length: 5–7 days  
Total Distance: 50km  
Elevation Gain: 700m  
Start: 1280m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92N/8  
Best: Apr–May

Stikelan Cr drains a broad U-shaped valley on the interior side of the Coast Mountains S of Tatlayoko Lk. The head of the valley is surrounded by glaciated cirques and high rocky summits that offer some worthwhile ski mountain-

Stikelan Gl.





View of peaks at the N end of the Homathko Icefield. *Photo by John Scurlock*

earing. Stikelan Cr also provides the most direct overland access to the Homathko Icefield.

Access is from the S end of Tatlayoko Lk. A side road climbs to Bracewell's Alpine Wilderness Adventures lodge at 1280m beside Cheshi Cr and extends to Cheshi Lk beyond. A horse trail can be picked up from beyond the E side of Cheshi Lk. This runs S through open pine forest before swinging W to run up the E side of Stikelan Cr. It is possible to ski on the creek itself higher up, and the main valley becomes quite open above 1800m.

Upper Stikelan Cr is a wide alpine basin with glaciated peaks rising 1000m above the meadows. Skis can be taken high on most summits, including the broad summit of Mt Dartmouth at the head of the Stikelan and Tredcroft Gl, but there are few ski ascents, as most of the peaks require scrambling to class 3. The terrain is stark and windswept in places, but there is some good skiing to be found, with long glacier runs. One of the easiest summits is Pk 2900 on the W side of Stikelan Cr, 6km NW of Mt Dartmouth.

## Homathko Icefield Ski Camp

Length: 10–14 days

Map: 92N/1, 92N/2

Difficulty: 3

Best: Apr–May

The Homathko Icefield is a classic plateau of ice up to 30km in diameter with glaciers radiating out in all directions. The main glaciers lie at about 2200m and much of the icefield is flat. In some areas, summits are all but drowned by ice, and rocky nunataks rise less than 300m from the main glaciers. Views are dominated by the huge expanse of the icefield rimmed by the distant summits of Mt Queen Bess and Mt Grenville as well as the dramatic Waddington Range to the W.

This is a spectacular setting for a ski camp and has been visited by groups from around the world. It is a good choice for those who like to range far and wide. Though runs are not long, most summits are enjoyable ascents with tremendous views and offer very worthwhile ski mountaineering.

The highest concentration of suitable ski summits lies on the N edge of the icefield at the head of the Queen Bess Gl. Sasquatch Pass is the most popular location for ski camps. There are enough side trips and skiing here to keep



View S across the Homathko Icefield from Burghley Pk.

most parties busy for up to a week.

Recommended ascents include St John Pk, Pembroke Pk, Cloister Pk, Walsingham Pk, Burghley Pk, Howard Pk and Sundial Pk (3km W of Howard Pk) as well as Mist Pk and Frobisher Pk. These all give great skiing and easy mountaineering. More than one summit can be climbed in a day. Several nunataks farther W have also been visited on skis. One of the longer descents in the area is a 600m run down the glacier N of Burghley Pk. There have also been reports of attractive lines on the E face of Howard Pk and the N face of Burghley Pk.

Mt Queen Bess is the highest summit in the area, and to reach the peak requires placing a camp closer to the summit. It is reached from the Queen Bess Gl by skiing over the intervening glaciers. The summit is climbed via a steep snow gully in the W face, known as the Munday Couloir, that leads to the upper N ridge. The couloir was recently skied.

Helicopter access to the Homathko Icefield can be organized with White Saddle Air from Bluff Lk. Parties occasionally fly in from Vancouver Island but this is generally

quite a bit more expensive. Because the summits on the icefield are so spread out, many parties that fly in to a base camp find it enjoyable to exit via a partial traverse across the icefield. This allows Mt Grenville or other summits to be climbed. Exits to Galleon or Klattasine Crs have been used. See the Homathko Icefield Traverse below for route descriptions.

See CAJ 1970, p. 63, CAJ 1989, p. 14, BCM 1992, p. 79.

View N to Mt Queen Bess. Photo by Brian Finnie





Crossing a tributary of the Heakamie Gl S of Mist Pk.

## Homathko Icefield Traverse

Length: 14–20 days  
Total Distance: 100km  
Elevation Gain: 3700m  
Start: 1280m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92K/15, 92N/1, 2, 8  
Best: May

John Baldwin, John Clarke, May 1985, *CAJ* 1986, p. 21

This is a wonderful trip through a primeval glacial landscape. It combines wide expanses of ice with a variety of fun side trips, gorgeous views and opportunities for several outstanding ski ascents. It is a classic route that is repeated regularly and also offers one of the shortest traverses across the width of the Coast Mountains. The main icefield is very gentle and easy to travel. Except for a few tricky sections at either end of the traverse, routefinding is generally straightforward.

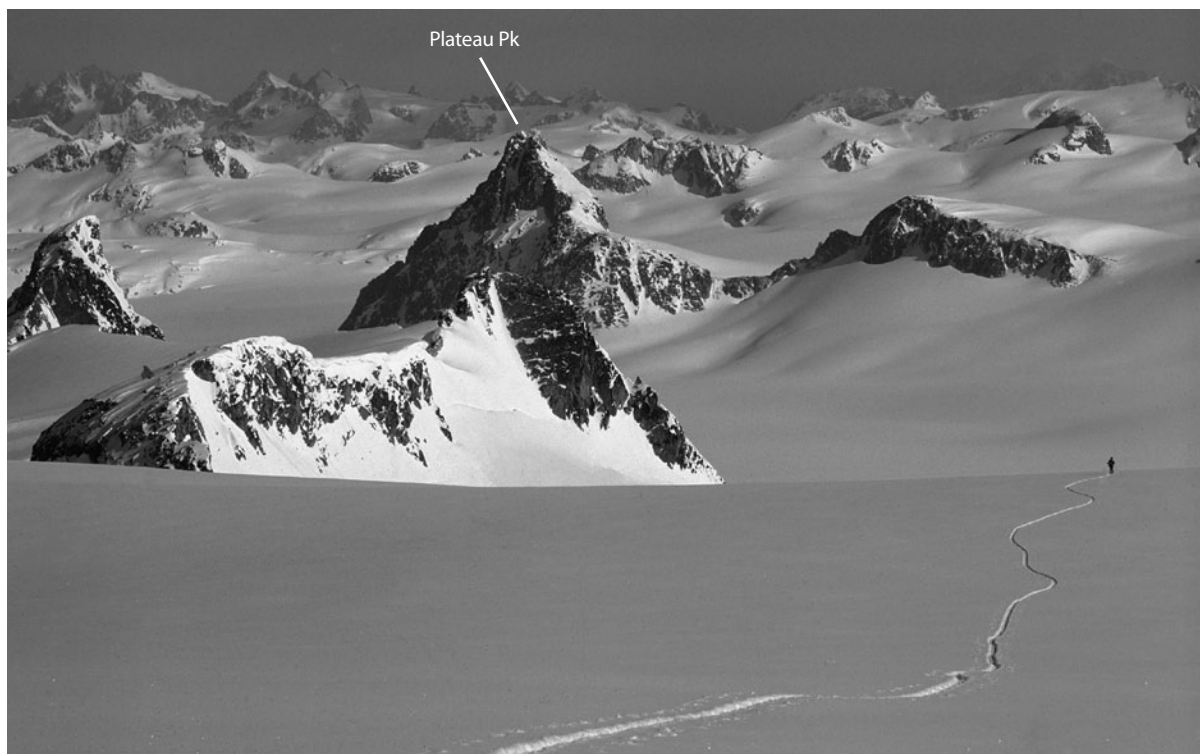
### Route

Several variations have been followed. The most popular route is a N to S traverse of the icefield from Tatlayoko Lk to Bute Inlet. The recommended approach starts from the S end of Tatlayoko Lk. Follow a horse trail that runs up Stikelan Cr from Cheshi Lk. From the head of the valley, glaciated cirques can be traversed SW to reach the NE

corner of the main icefield. First cross the Tredcroft Gl and the shoulder E of Mt Dartmouth to the Hamilton Gl. From the SW side of the Hamilton Gl, cross through a 2600m col and descend a steep gully into the basin N of Consort Pk. Drop farther W to an unnamed glacier and ascend S to the 2470m shoulder W of Majestic Pk. Descend steep scree and snow slopes due S to the Cumberland Gl. Turn W and continue descending to Nostetuko Lks on the N edge of the glacier to avoid a steep icefall below 2000m. Gain the main icefield via glaciers on either side of Cloister Pk. It is approximately 4 days' travel from Cheshi Cr to the Queen Bess Gl.

From Sasquatch Pass, the main route continues S across the broad plateau of ice at the head of the Jewakwa and Heakamie Gl. Pass W of Mist and Cambridge Pks and E of Plateau Pk. This is a beautiful section of the traverse, which one group described as more akin to polar travel than ski mountaineering. Wandering about on the huge flat neves with distant views of the Waddington Range serves to reinforce the enormous scale of this glacial wilderness. There is a striking rock pinnacle 2.5km E of Plateau Pk.

At the S end of the icefield, pass W of Gargoyle and



View N across the Homathko Icefield from glaciers below Mt Grenville.

Incisor Pks to follow the icy divide between the Teaquahan R and Elliot Cr SW to the Bute Gl. The surrounding valleys are exceptionally rugged and the only feasible exit route is to a logging road in Galleon Cr. To reach upper Galleon Cr, descend open slopes on the N side of the Bute Gl, adjacent to a very broken icefall. Where the slope steepens below the icefall, traverse S on a natural ramp to avoid cliffy sections. Once down in the flat basin at 700m in Galleon Cr, ski along the S side of the creek for about 1km. Cross to the N side of the creek to pick up a very rough trail at the edge of the forest (approximately GR770451). The trail stays high on the N side of the creek, just underneath the base of the big rock walls on the N side of Galleon Cr. It is about 3km to the end of the logging road at 330m. This is an old spur that was reopened in 1996 and is starting to grow in again with alder. It curves N to join the main road on the Teaquahan R, which runs W for 5km to the logging camp and airstrip on the E bank of the Homathko R.

### Side Trips

This traverse offers many excellent side trips, ranging from drowned nunataks on the main icefield to outstanding ski ascents at the edges of the icefield. The largest concentra-

tion of recommended ski ascents lies on the N portion of the icefield. There are more than half a dozen peaks rising up to 500m out of the ice around Sasquatch Pass. These are enjoyable side trips described above under ski camps.

Two of the most outstanding ski ascents are at the S end of the icefield. Mt Grenville (3080m) is the highest. Though rising only 800m above the icefield, its S side plummets over 3000m to the Southgate R. Skis can be worn almost to its summit via the E ridge. From glaciers on the N side

Bute Mtn from the E. Photo by John Scurlock





of the mountain, ski into the head of the basin NE of the summit and gain the E ridge via the 2870m col. In some years, a bergschrund can make it difficult to reach the col. The summit offers an extraordinary view of the Homathko Icefield and Waddington Range beyond.

Nearby Bute Mtn (2804m) lies at the S end of the icy divide between Elliot Cr and the Teaquahan R. It rises directly from the head of Bute Inlet, and despite the huge rock walls on its N and W aspects it is easily ascended on skis. From the Bute Gl, ski SE through the 2230m col E of the summit and cross the basin beyond to ascend broad glaciated slopes from the SE. The summit is a superb viewpoint, and the SE slopes offer an enjoyable 600m run in a spectacular setting.

Also at the S end of the icefield, Janus Pk (2543m) is a short side trip with good ski slopes and a remarkable view that contrasts the flat icefield on one side with the deep trench of Gargoyles Cr on the other.

Jewakwa Mtn (2508 m), on the W side of the icefield, is a bit more out of the way but also gives tremendous views of both the entire icefield and the Homathko R valley. The summit is a full-day return from the Klattasine Gl and involves a short snow climb via its E ridge.

## Variations

Alternative approaches have been used to provide several variations to the route described above. One of the most popular variations approaches the icefield from the W via logging roads in Klattasine Cr. Access is via Homathko Camp described above. The logging road climbs up the S side of Klattasine Cr. It is washed out lower down but can be easily walked. There is a decommissioned bridge at 700m, and the road continues up the N side of the creek to about 800m. Beyond the road, ski through a short stretch of forest and then open terrain to the Klattasine Gl, 5km from the end of the road. The Jewakwa Gl and the main icefield are easily reached from the head of the Klattasine Gl. Klattasine Cr has been used as an alternative to Stiklan Cr for N to S traverses to Galleon Cr (see for example CAJ 2005, p. 96). This crossing of the icefield is much shorter and has been done several times using lightweight toboggans instead of an airdrop.

The icefield has also been crossed in a W to E direction using approaches to the E side of the icefield from Chilko Lk (see above). Still longer overland approaches have traversed through the mountains S of Chilko Lk to gain the icefield via the Chilko–Southgate divide (described below).

## Chilko–Southgate Divide

Length: 20 days

Total Distance: 200km

Elevation Gain: 10,000m

Start: 900m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92K/16, 92N/1

Best: Apr–May

John Baldwin, Steve Ludwig, Helen Sovdat, May 1987, CAJ 1988, p. 18

The mountains between Chilko Lk and the Bishop and Southgate Rs are one of the few sections of the Coast Mountains to actually form a height of land between interior and coastal drainages. It is an area of lower, relatively gentle summits squeezed between the Homathko Icefield and the Lillooet Icefield and has been used to form a long scenic traverse from the Lillooet R to the Homathko R. This is one of the main sections of an extended traverse of the Coast Mountains.

## Route

The recommended route travels the full length of the high divide around the S and W side of Chilko Lk to connect traverses across both the Lillooet and Homathko Icefields. A complete traverse of the height of land between interior and coastal drainages starts at Railroad Pass N of Pemberton and traverses the Bridge–Lillooet divide W to gain the Lillooet Icefield. Follow the standard route across the Lillooet Icefield to the Stanley Smith Gl.



Descending onto the Goddard Gl.

There are two routes onto the Chilko–Southgate divide. The most direct route descends the Stanley Smith Gl to 1640m and ascends an unnamed creek NW to gain a broad glacier on the divide between the Bishop R and Edmond Cr. An alternative route ascends the Donar Gl and travels along the high scenic glaciated ridges N of the Stanley Smith Gl to join the low route W of the prominent pyramidal summit Pk 2890.

Travel on the divide is generally straightforward and links together routes across gentle glaciers. The Ramose Gl



Mt Cradock and the Goddard Gl from the NE. *Photo by John Scurlock*

is reached either by circling around the head of Ramose Cr or by dropping low to cross the creek near 1340m. A narrow valley leads to the W of the two glaciers at the head of Cyr Cr, and a short drop across the basin beyond leads to the Norrrington Gl. Ski W from the snout of the Norrrington Gl and angle across the head of Durham Cr. Swing N and climb through the narrow pass between Wednesday Mtn and Dresden Mtn onto the Goddard Gl. Descend the E side of the glacier until below 1900m. Veer W from the lower stretches of the glacier to pass S of the lake at the head of Boulanger Cr.

In its short length, Boulanger Cr changes from open pine forest to lichen-draped mountain hemlock forest and leads to open terrain at the head of the Southgate R. The shortest route continues through a low pass and drops N to ascend the upper portion of Deschamps Cr. A high route over the shoulder of Pk 2650 might also be used here. Cross the Stilly Gl and angle down across steep slopes to reach the Alph Gl. Climb W through Sasquatch Pass onto the Homathko Icefield. Descend the gentle Jewakwa Gl W across the icefield. At 1600m, climb NW up a narrow gla-

cier to the head of the Klattasine Gl. Another long gradual descent leads down into upper Klattasine Cr. Stay on the N side of the creek, and after a short stretch of forest, pick up the end of the road at about 800m. Lower down at 700m, the road crosses to the S side of the creek at the site of a decommissioned bridge. Crossing the creek is usually not difficult up to late May. Routes on the Lillooet Icefield and Homathko Icefield are discussed further in their respective headings. See also Stikelan Cr and Chilko Lk.

### **Ski Ascents**

Several of the higher summits along the divide are easily climbed en route. These include the prominent Pk 2890, S of Edmond Cr, or its neighbour Pk 2700 to the SW. Ramose Pk (2507m) at the head of the Ramose Gl is a short side trip with excellent views across the Bishop R into the Raleigh–Gilbert area. Mt Cradock, at the head of the Goddard Gl, is the highest summit along the divide. It is a superb ski ascent with stunning views of the Homathko Icefield and Mt Good Hope. From the Goddard Gl, climb through a notch onto the upper Canopus Gl and ascend the summit from the N. There is a nice 300m N facing run off the sum-



Gaining the Chilko–Southgate Divide from the Stanley Smith Gl.

mit. The Goddard Gl has been the site of a ski camp as well. The unnamed Pk 2650 S of the head of Deschamps Cr is an isolated summit that might also be considered as a worthwhile side trip. There are numerous other possible side trips on the Lillooet Icefield or the Homathko Icefield, including summits around Sasquatch Pass or Jewakwa Mtn.

### Variations

Salal Cr is also a logical starting point, though logging roads in the upper Lillooet R are often snow covered until the end of April (see Upper Lillooet chapter).

### Salal Creek to Farrow Creek

Length: 14 days  
Total Distance: 90km  
Elevation Gain: 5000m  
Start: 800m  
Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92K/16, 92N/1  
Best: Apr–May  
John Croockewit, Fern Hietkamp, Erika Kellerhals, Chris Rolfe, Nicole Rycroft, April 2000, CAJ 2001, p. 122

Shorter versions of the full traverse described above are possible. One such variation starts from Salal Cr and traverses the Lillooet Icefield and Chilko–Southgate divide and exits to Chilko Lk via Farrow Cr. A water taxi can be arranged for pickup on the lake (see Chilko Lk above).

### Chilko Lake Horseshoe

Length: 18 days  
Total Distance: 115km  
Elevation Gain: 6000m  
Start: 1170m  
Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92J/13, 92K/16, 92N/1, 92O/4  
Best: Apr–May  
Dave Sarkany, Tom Wolfe, May 2002, www.bivouac.com

Another trip to use an approach via Farrow Cr, completed a horseshoe traverse around the high summits at the S end of Chilko Lk. From Farrow Cr, ski around the Chilko–Southgate divide to the Lillooet Icefield, then N to the Tchaikazan R, through Spectrum Pass and finally W along Rainbow Cr back to Chilko Lk.

### Taseko Lake to Bute Inlet

Length: 19 days  
Total Distance: 190km  
Elevation Gain: 6500m  
Start: 1320m  
Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92K/15, 92K/16, 92N/1, 92N/3, 92O/4  
Best: Apr–May  
Tim Blair, Scott Nelson, Sandra Nicol, Sebastian Oppel, April 2006, www.bivouac.com

An overland approach to the divide from the Tchaikazan R can be used to complete a long traverse that circles around the S end of Chilko Lk and crosses the Homathko Icefield to Galleon Cr at the head of Bute Inlet.

# Waddington

# 17



The summit tower of Mt Waddington from the NW peak.

**M**t Waddington (4019m) is the highest peak in the Coast Mountains. It lies at the apex of a long group of ranges between the deep trenches of the Klinaklini and Homathko Rivers.

The Waddington region contains a complete cross-section of the Coast Mountains, from the ocean through rugged coastal valleys and ridges, across large glaciers and icefields near the centre of the range and out through high rocky peaks and broad valleys onto the Chilcotin Plateau. The whole region is generally more rugged than anywhere else in the Coast Mountains. Summits typically involve some climbing; a significant number are class 4 and 5, especially those concentrated around Mt Waddington. However, the area is also heavily glaciated and offers some of the best ski mountaineering to be found anywhere. Ironically, it is also the birthplace of ski mountaineering in the Coast Mountains, as skis were first used on the Franklin Glacier in 1930!

## Access

The nearest community to the Waddington Region is Tatla Lake on the interior side of the Coast Mountains. Most trips into the Waddington region start here. Tatla Lake is reached by driving 220km W across the Chilcotin Plateau from Williams Lake on Hwy 20 and is about a 10 hour drive of 800km from Vancouver. Tatla Lake is about 1100km from Calgary or Edmonton.

From just before Tatla Lake, a side road branches S and runs down the Mosley Cr valley to Bluff Lk. Mosley Cr is known locally as West Branch. The majority of trips into the Waddington region use some form of air support, either for access or for placing food caches. Situated at Bluff Lk, White Saddle Air is the main base for helicopter flights in and out of the region. Currently, groups of 4 are the most cost effective. Handheld VHF radios are also available for rent. White Saddle Air also offer fixed-wing charters for





View of Mt Waddington and peaks at the head of the Tiedemann Gl from near the summit of Grenelle Mtn.

groups wanting to be picked up from a gravel airstrip on the Homathko R at the end of a traverse.

The Mosley Cr valley provides access to approaches on foot or skis and is a common starting point for traverses into the Waddington region. Beyond Bluff Lk, the road runs down the Mosley Cr valley. The road is gated shortly before Middle Lk. It continues on private property around the N side of Middle Lk and down to the Sand Creek Ranch near Twist Lk. For permission to use the road, contact the Foster family ([www.waddingtonenterprises.com](http://www.waddingtonenterprises.com), 250-476-1289). The Mosley Cr valley is quite dry and never collects more than a metre of snow, even in winter. The lakes are generally frozen well into April. Hell Raving Cr and Sand Cr are the main access routes.

On the coast, there are several access routes that start from remote logging roads on the Homathko, Klinaklini and Stafford Rs at the head of Bute, Knight and Loughborough Inlets respectively. These are accessible only by chartered plane or boat.

At the head of Bute Inlet, all access is through Homathko Camp, which is located on the E side of the river 3km from the river mouth. There is a gravel airstrip here, and fixed-

wing flights can be arranged from Campbell R on Vancouver Island or from White Saddle Air at Bluff Lk in the Chilcotin. Floatplanes can also land on the river near the camp. Water-taxi service is available from Heriot Bay on Quadra Island. Lodging and transportation services are available at Homathko Camp. Contact:

Chuck and Sheron Burchill

Homathko Camp

250-286-0962 or 604-288-7747

[www.discoverywestaviation.com](http://www.discoverywestaviation.com)

Approaches to the Waddington region start from a system of logging roads on the W side of the Homathko R. These roads are not connected to roads on the E side of the river. A logging camp and gravel airstrip on the W side of the river at Scar Cr have been decommissioned and there is currently no active logging. Road maintenance is likely to continue on the W side, as several microhydro projects are proposed in the area (see [www.plutonic.ca](http://www.plutonic.ca)). Access to roads on the W side of the river can be arranged from the folks at Homathko Camp on the E side of the river. For a fee, they can ferry you across the river and drive you up the road on the W side of the river.



The main road on the W side of the Homathko R runs from the head of Bute Inlet to Waddington Canyon. It is currently driveable to beyond Scar Cr at km 38. The most important side road branches off at km 41 and runs up the S side of Coola Cr. The road in Coola Cr climbs to within 2km of the Waddington Gl at 900m, and a route from here over Scar Mtn is the main approach for ski access into the range.

An extensive road on the N side of Scar Cr runs to almost opposite the Jambeau Gl at 800m. This has been used for direct access to the Franklin Gl in the past, and though the road can still be walked, it is badly overgrown and recommended only as an escape route. An old bridge crossed Scar Cr at about 300m, and spurs climbing S from there provided direct access to the alpine ridge N of the Whitemantle Gl. This bridge is currently washed out but is likely to be replaced.



Skiing on the Waddington Gl S of Irresistible Mtn.

Logging roads also run up Brew Cr. These are not recommended as an access or exit route, as the roads are badly overgrown and the head of Brew Cr is very difficult to descend. However, Brew Cr has been used as an escape route (CAJ 1998, p. 89).

At the head of Knight Inlet, the main logging camp is located on the E side of a slough 1.5km W of Village Cone. Floatplanes can land on the slough here. Logging roads run up the E side of the Klinaklini R past Devereux, Laura and Canyon Lks to Hoodoo Cr. The most useful spur climbs up the E side of the valley from near Devereux Lk, and gives direct access to Jubilee Mtn and the upper Franklin Gl beyond. Floatplanes can fly directly into Devereux Lk. Logging roads also run around Dutchman Head and up the W side of the Franklin R to beyond Crevice Cr. The

classic approach to the S side of Mt Waddington is via the Franklin Gl, but this approach is not recommended on skis. A spur road crosses the Franklin R near Stanton Cr and runs up the E side to Crevice Cr. This road has been used to reach the Whitemantle Range via Crevice Cr but is no longer a recommended access route, as the road is now overgrown and it is not known if the main bridges are still in place.

At the head of Loughborough Inlet, active logging roads (Western Forest Products) run up the Stafford R and can be used as an exit route from the S end of the Whitemantle Range. In addition to the head of the inlet, floatplanes can also land on Stafford Lk and pick up passengers at the S end of the lake. Roads continue N from the lake and climb into side valleys on the E side of the Stafford R. Logging roads on the Apple R are overgrown and no longer recommended as an exit route.

### Aircraft Charter

Helicopter and fixed-wing charters from Bluff Lk:

White Saddle Air 250-476-1182  
[www.whitesaddleair.com](http://www.whitesaddleair.com)

Fixed-wing charters from Campbell River:

Discovery West Aviation 250-923-6233  
[www.discoverywestaviation.com](http://www.discoverywestaviation.com)

Floatplane charters from Campbell River:

Vancouver Island Air 250-287-2433  
[www.vancouverislandair.com](http://www.vancouverislandair.com)

Floatplane charters from Nimpo Lake:

Tweedsmuir Air 800-668-4335  
[www.tweedsmuirair.com](http://www.tweedsmuirair.com)

Helicopter charter from Campbell River:

West Coast Helicopters 250-286-8863  
[www.westcoasthelicopters.com](http://www.westcoasthelicopters.com)  
 Vancouver Island Helicopters 250-923-3133  
[www.vih.com](http://www.vih.com)

### Accommodation

For trips into the Pantheon and Waddington Ranges, meals and accommodation are available from the highly recommended White Saddle Ranch Country Inn at Bluff Lk ([www.whitesaddleair.com](http://www.whitesaddleair.com), 250-476-1285). Food and accommodation are also available in nearby Tatla Lk at the Graham Inn (250-476-1112). For parties approaching the range on skis or on foot, accommodation and meals can also be arranged at Sand Creek Ranch, the home base of Waddington Enterprises ([www.waddingtonenterprises.com](http://www.waddingtonenterprises.com), 250-476-1289).

At the head of Bute Inlet, meals and accommodation—



Skiing on the Siva Gl.

and a soak in the world's largest hot tub—can be arranged with Chuck and Sheron Burchill at Homathko Camp (see above).

### Multi-use Considerations

Mt Waddington is widely recognized as one of the world's great peaks, situated in a truly incredible wilderness setting. Sadly, however, it lacks any kind of formal protection. Almost the entire region covered by this chapter has been allocated as heliskiing tenure. Tenure in the Waddington and Whitemantle Ranges is held by Knight Inlet Helisports ([www.knightinletheliskiing.com](http://www.knightinletheliskiing.com)), which operates from a boat in Knight Inlet. Tenure in the Pantheon, Niut and northern Waddington Ranges is held by Pantheon Heli Sports ([www.pantheonheli.com](http://www.pantheonheli.com)), which operates from Bluff Lk. The area surrounding Nirvana Pass in the Pantheon Range is not included in the heliskiing tenure areas.

### References

*The Waddington Guide: Alpine Climbs in One of the World's Great Ranges* by Don Serl  
*Waddington Map 1:25,000* by Timberline  
[www.pbase.com/nolock](http://www.pbase.com/nolock) Aerial photographs of the Waddington Range by John Scurlock

## Nirvana Pass

Length: 7–10 days  
 Map: 92N/11

Difficulty: 3–4  
 Best: Mar–Apr

Situated in the Pantheon Range, Nirvana Pass is described by many groups as “one of the best ski-mountaineering areas we have ever been to.” The Pantheon Range is characterized by groups of sharp, rocky peaks cut by broad subalpine valleys. It is a rugged area with summits rising to 3000m and offers spectacular wilderness ski-mountaineering in a stunning setting. There are a wide range of day trips that include extensive tours up into the spectacular surrounding valleys, long glacier runs, challenging loops through high-alpine passes, scrambling to steep summits and bad-weather skiing near treeline. Descents are up to 1100m.

Long established as a superb base for ski-mountaineering camps, Nirvana Pass will soon be the site of the Nirvana Pass Chalet. The chalet will be located at treeline on the W side of the pass. Run by Ryan Foster of Waddington Enterprises Ltd, this is a commercial backcountry ski lodge offering a range of guided and self-guided weeks. Ryan grew up on the nearby Sand Creek Ranch on the shores of Twist Lk at the foot of the Pantheon Range and knows the area intimately.



Skiing on the SW side of Byamee Mtn. Mt Zeus (L) and Septentrion Spire (R).

The Pantheon Range is located on the lee side of the Coast Mountains in a transition zone between the heavy precipitation of the Waddington Range and the dry cold winters of the Chilcotin Plateau. The area receives ample dry powder, and snow conditions are generally excellent. Typical snowpacks are 2–3m at treeline.

### Access

Nirvana Pass is a 20 minute helicopter flight from Bluff Lk with White Saddle Air. Most parties fly in and out. Skiing out is worth considering and is a recommended trip in the spring. The exit route climbs through the 2200m pass N of Osiris Pk, crosses the head of Hell Raving Cr and exits via the S side of Sand Cr. The 20km trip involves 1000m of elevation gain and takes 1–2 days (see Pantheon Range Traverse below for more details).

### Ski Tours

Uniquely situated at the head of two long gentle valleys with steep summits rising to almost 3000m on both sides, Nirvana Pass (1720m) offers an unmatched number of excellent day trips from a single location. Recommended

trips are described below. There is easily enough variety that each day can be spent exploring a new destination. As much of the terrain is relatively steep, most trips require some travel in complex avalanche terrain. Some trips involve glacier travel. Most glaciers in the area are small and generally straightforward to travel on.

Several steep descents in the Pantheon Range were described in *CAJ* 2003, p. 113.

### Mt Astarte

Total Distance: 6km

Elevation Gain: 1240m

### 2960m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Mt Astarte is the steep prominent rocky peak on the W side of Nirvana Pass. Its smooth open slopes offer the closest skiing to the pass. One of the shortest outings climbs to the 2500m shoulder immediately E of the summit. This gives great views and an enjoyable 800m run back to Nirvana Pass. The actual summit of Mt Astarte requires quite a bit of scrambling and is not climbed by many ski parties. For those interested, the closest routes are the class 3–4 SE ridge or a steep E facing snow gully (which has been skied).

The easiest route is to scramble up S slopes, but as the Juno Astarte col is blocked by cliffs on its W side, it must be reached by a long circuitous route over the N shoulder of Mt Juno.

Mt Pan (2560m), immediately NE of Mt Astarte, offers some of the best tree skiing in the area on its lower slopes at the head of Colwell Cr, with a variety of 300–500m runs.

### Mt Juno

**2640m**

Total Distance: 6km  
Elevation Gain: 1100m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

Mt Juno is an excellent shorter trip with some great skiing on steeper slopes. From Nirvana Pass, traverse S across steep avalanche slopes to swing into the basin E of Mt Juno at a little over 1800m. Ascend 30° slopes to the glacier and switchback up a rib in the centre of the glacier to gain the flat shoulder N of the summit. The summit pyramid is a short scramble from its NW side. The descent offers a 900m run into the head of Twist Cr.

### Siva Mountain

**2840m**

Total Distance: 13km  
Elevation Gain: 1300m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

The Siva Gl is the largest glacier accessible from Nirvana Pass, and an ascent of Siva Mtn is a great day of ski mountaineering. From Nirvana Pass, ski N along Colwell Cr to gain the open area below the snout of the Siva Gl. The glacier has receded considerably from what is shown on most maps, and a lake has formed at the snout of the glacier. Ski around the N side of the lake and gain a shallow bench above the moraine on the N side of the glacier. The bench can be followed to near 2200m. It avoids the main icefall and provides an excellent route onto the upper Siva Gl. Siva Mtn is climbed from the head of the glacier and involves kicking steps up a steep 100m headwall and a short scramble. There is lots of great skiing on the Siva Gl. The 2680m false summit 1km NW of Siva is a popular ski ascent.

### Byamee Mountain Loop

Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 1300m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

A loop around the impressive summit of Byamee Mtn is one of the most fantastic trips from Nirvana Pass. It starts with a ski up to the Byamee–Vishnu col, which passes under the stupendous faces of two of the highest summits in the area and circles around the summit in a clockwise direction. The S side of the Byamee–Vishnu col is blocked by 50m cliffs, but a gully tucked way over on the W side of the col provides a route down the S side. The top part of the gully must be downclimbed and, depending on snow con-



Climbing into the basin below Mt Vishnu. Mt Astarte behind.

ditions, might require a rope and ice axe to scramble over a few rocks. Continue S across the glacier under the huge E face of Byamee Mtn, with a tremendous view of the Waddington Range in the distance. Cross a minor spur ridge at 2360m and circle around to the edge of the large basin SW of the summit. The basin offers an excellent 900m run down into Twist Cr. Ski 3km up Twist Cr to complete the loop back to Nirvana Pass.

### Mt Vishnu Loop

Total Distance: 13km  
Elevation Gain: 1300m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex

The Mt Vishnu Loop is another stunning tour, which circles below the huge walls that plummet from all sides of the spectacular summit of Mt Vishnu on the E side of Nirvana Pass. The loop crosses three high cols, all of which are steep but doable. This is a fairly committing circuit that requires good conditions. Climb up onto the Siva Gl and after a few runs, ski over to the head of the Siva Gl and

### Nirvana Pass Chalet

Map: 92N/11  
GR: 484227  
Elevation: 1720m

Cost: enquire  
Capacity: 10  
Reservations: yes

**Location** On the W side of Nirvana Pass in the Pantheon Range.

**Facilities** A comfortable, fully equipped commercial backcountry cabin that is a 5m x 7m A-frame with wood heat, a sauna and an outhouse. A mix of guided and self-guided weeks are available. The chalet is kept locked.

**Built** Scheduled for construction. Enquire for current details.

**Contact** Ryan Foster, Waddington Enterprises

[www.waddingtonenterprises.com](http://www.waddingtonenterprises.com)

877-476-1289 or 250-476-1289



View of the Waddington Range from the pocket glacier E of Byamee Mtn.

ascend a short steep headwall to the Siva–Vishnu col. Descend a short steep slope on the S side of the col. The loop circles around to the Vishnu–Byamee col. Cross the spur ridge on the SE side of Mt Vishnu by kicking steps up to its only weakness near 2440m. Cross the next pocket glacier below the cliffs on the S side of the Vishnu–Byamee col to pick out a snow gully that climbs to the W side of the col. Depending on snow conditions, a rope and ice axe might be required to scramble over a short rocky section near the top of the gully. The descent to Nirvana Pass is an enjoyable 800m run down the narrow valley between the towering faces of Byamee and Vishnu.

### Septentrion Peak

Total Distance: 15km  
Elevation Gain: 1300m

**2640m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

For lack of an official name, this is the pyramidal snow summit 1km S of Septentrion Spires. It is a recommended ski ascent from Nirvana Pass. Ski S down the mostly open valley bottom of Twist Cr. After about 2km, turn W up the first major tributary. A short stretch of forest on the N side

of the creek leads up into the open basin E of Septentrion Spires. Gain the S rim at the head of the basin, at about 2000m, and continue up across the glacier above. The summit can be ascended by crossing over to its steep S slopes and gives tremendous views of Zeus Mtn. It can also be reached by climbing through the col with Septentrion Spires. There is an additional 600m run that drops W from the col.

Skiing into the basin E of Septentrion Pk.





Runs on the SW side of Byamee Mtn.

## Hermes Basin

Total Distance: 17km  
Elevation Gain: 1600m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

The huge basin between Mt Astarte and Hermes Pk is a longer day trip but makes a great tour with some nice runs. Follow Colwell Cr N for about 3km before veering NW through forest to ascend into Hermes Basin. The valley opens up above 1700m, and a pleasant route leads along the edge of the moraine on the N side of the Astarte Gl with

Climbing into Hermes Basin.



tremendous views of the great 700m wall on the N side of Mt Astarte. There are several alternative destinations.

Hermes Pk (2920m) is the highest summit and can be reached by skiing NW up the gentle valley to the col S of the summit and scrambling over wind-blown snow and rocks to the peak. The summit is a great viewpoint set back from the heart of the Pantheon Range.

The other recommended destination is Pk 2640, 1.5km N of Mt Astarte (GR444246). It can be reached by continuing W up a narrowing basin to the ridge crest just N of the peak. The summit is a stunning viewpoint (CAJ 1990, cover photo) and gives an enjoyable 600m descent. When skiing down from the summit, it is also possible to veer right after about 100m and descend a steeper couloir SE onto the glacier below Mt Astarte.

In very safe avalanche conditions, a steep climb from the glacier up to the col between Mt Astarte and Mt Pan offers a shorter route back to Nirvana Pass. Skiing below overhanging cornices presents some objective hazard on this route, but the reward is a pleasant 600m run down to Nirvana Pass.





Spring ski ascent of Mt Zeus, with Frontier Mtn behind.

## Pantheon Range Traverse

Length: 12 days

Total Distance: 55km

Elevation Gain: 5000m

Start: 400m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92N/10, 11, 12

Best: Apr–May

John Baldwin, Gordon Ferguson, Dave Sarkany, May 1998, CAJ 1999, p. 101

This is a short rugged traverse that provides a great way to explore the spectacular Pantheon Range. The traverse crosses the width of the range in a W to E direction from the wild Klinaklini R valley to Mosley Cr and hits all of the highlights, including Nirvana Pass and Mt Zeus as well as the rugged summits in the seldom-visited W Pantheon Range. The route climbs through half a dozen steep, high-alpine passes as it winds its way over meadows and pocket glaciers at the headwaters of the major drainages. It can be done as a sort of roving base camp, making day trips and moving camp on alternate days.

### Route

The traverse was first done starting from Trophy Lk (410m), which lies deep in the Klinaklini R valley on the W side of

the Pantheon Range. Starting from the site of an old hunting cabin halfway along the E side of the lake, angle N and ascend a large gully to a 1280m notch in the long ridge NE of Trophy Lk. Beyond the notch, diagonal up across steep N facing avalanche slopes to gain the glacier NW of Gilgamesh Mtn (2600m). Use a snow gully at GR310192 to cross a narrow rock rib running W from Gilgamesh Mtn. Ski around the S side of the mountain and descend NE down a small hanging glacier. Where the slope rolls away into huge cliffs below the glacier, veer left to find a route

Camp in the W Pantheon Range near Mt Gilgamesh.





Climbing Mt Fenris.

dropping down to the valley floor. With the rugged spires of Nemesis Mtn and The Furies towering 1400m above, continue SE up the narrow valley. Above 1300m, veer E and ascend to the Thor–Fenris col at 2250m, skirting a major icefall at 2100m on its S side.

Descend to the Ragnarok Gl underneath the impressive ramparts of the huge cirque between Mt Thor and Mt Zeus. Cross the glacier and head NE towards the W shoulder of Pegasus Pk. Avoid the icefall spilling off Mt Zeus at 2100m on its N side and continue up the glacier above to the col between Mt Zeus and Pegasus Pk. From just N of the col, a gully drops E for 200m through a band of cliffs. Before dropping all the way to the Zeus Gl, make an ascending traverse to a 2400m notch in the ridge beyond that leads to the basin SE of Septentrion Spires. Ski NE down the basin and up the head of Twist Cr to Nirvana Pass.

Ski N across the pass and down Colwell Cr for 2km. Gain the flats below the Siva Gl and traverse N at treeline around the W shoulder of Osiris Pk to reach a small, unnamed lake NW of the summit. Ski E up the pleasant valley above the lake and over a 2200m pass into the Hell

Raving Cr drainage. Drop E down the open valley beyond. At treeline, turn SE and traverse across a large steep avalanche slope to reach a small lake in the attractive alpine basin NE of Siva Mtn. Continue past a second lake and ascend a gentle valley to a 2150m col above Sand Cr. Drop across the head of Sand Cr at about 1600m and traverse out onto N facing slopes on the S side of the creek. Stay high for a good kilometre or more before angling down the S side of Sand Cr. This is a relatively easy exit route, as it only involves 3km of walking through the forest. Travel on the S side of the creek is generally reasonable, though there are lots of branches and deadfalls in places. Once down in the Mosley Cr valley bottom, cross Sand Cr and pick up a narrow dirt road that leads to the Sand Creek Ranch and the main gravel road to Tatla Lake. It takes 2 days to ski out from Nirvana Pass.

### Access and Variations

The original party flew into Trophy Lk by floatplane from Nimpo Lk. This is usually not possible until May, when higher flows on the Klinaklini R raise the water levels in



Mt Zeus and the spectacular cirque at the head of the Ragnarok Gl.

Trophy Lk sufficiently, and floatplane operations in Nimpo Lk get going after spring break-up. Most parties will find it more convenient to fly in by helicopter with White Saddle Air.

The rare, wild, pristine valley of the Klinaklini R is worth a visit. The scenery around Trophy Lk in springtime is tremendous, with snow-capped peaks towering up to 2600m above the green lakeshore. However, starting from Trophy Lk will not be for everyone, as it requires a strenuous climb up from the lake through an old burn.

It is possible to start the traverse anywhere. Suggested starting points include the Gilgamesh Mtn area (if you'd like to do the whole traverse) or the Ragnarok Gl (if you want to allow more time for side trips along the route).

A N to S traverse through the Pantheon Range travels up Hell Raving Cr and down the upper branch of Twist Cr and is part of the Waddington Divide Traverse described below.

### Side Trips

This traverse offers some tremendous side trips. Those surrounding Nirvana Pass are described above. Several additional excellent ski-mountaineering trips are accessible from the Ragnarok Gl area and include:

#### Fenris Mountain

**2860m**

Fenris Mtn is an attractive pyramidal peak on the W side of the Ragnarok Gl. It can be climbed from a camp on the Ragnarok Gl or from the Thor–Fenris col. Ski up the glacier on its SE flank to about 2500m. Kick steps up steep S snowslopes, followed by a few short sections of scrambling to reach the summit. Fenris Mtn is set back from the main divide of the W Pantheon Range above Frontier Cr. It gives tremendous views of the spectacular cirque at the head of the Ragnarok Gl and the rugged spires of the W Pantheon



Skiing off the summit of Mt Zeus. Photo by Gordon Ferguson

Range. The area N of Fenris Mtn consists of similar rugged rocky peaks that generally require considerable scrambling but offer glacier runs of up to 800m.

#### Mt Zeus

**2980m**

Mt Zeus is one of the highest summits in the Pantheon Range. It is a tremendous ski ascent, with stunning views across the head of Frontier Cr into the Waddington Range, and a beautiful descent in a spectacular setting. It is usually climbed from a camp closer to the mountain than Nirvana Pass. Like many summits in the area, it boasts a steep, impressive N flank. Its S side is relatively gentle and is the key to a ski ascent. From the Zeus Gl, kick steps up 45° slopes to the Zeus–Manitou col. Stay left of centre to avoid a rock band near the bottom. These slopes are steep enough that most parties will downclimb them but they have been skied in good conditions. Cross the col and descend 200m down a small glacier leading into the head of Frontier Cr. Swing W around the base of minor cliffs and begin a long ascending traverse up onto the small pocket glacier SE of the summit. Broad slopes above lead directly to the summit rocks.

### Crazy Creek

Length: 7 days

Map: 92N/6, 92N/11

Difficulty: 3–4

Best: Mar–Apr

Crazy Cr is the first drainage S of Twist Cr on the N fringe of the Waddington Range. It is a short drainage on the W side of Mosley Cr that is surrounded by a perfect horseshoe of peaks. Though less well known than Nirvana Pass in the nearby Pantheon Range, this is an excellent area for a ski-mountaineering camp that offers fabulous skiing and unbelievable views of the adjacent Waddington Range.

Access is by helicopter. Crazy Cr is about a 20 minute



Crazy Cr drainage from the E. Photo by John Scurlock

helicopter flight from Bluff Lk with White Saddle Air. Most parties have operated out of a base camp near treeline at the head of the valley, though a camp several kilometres down the valley is also worth considering, as it gives shorter access to different destinations and more possibilities for tree skiing.

The Crazy Cr valley is more compact than the terrain at Nirvana Pass. Peaks surrounding the drainage offer a range of destinations. Many of the summits are difficult enough not to be attempted by most ski parties, but there are numerous options for trips to high ridgelines and the return runs are tremendous descents of up to 1200m. Most of the Crazy Cr drainage is complex avalanche terrain. The area is used for heliskiing, so it is recommended that you discuss your plans with Pantheon Heli Sports before setting out.

There are a number of recommended trips from a base camp at the head of the valley. The obvious destination is the glacial basin SE of Delusion Pk, and a loop can be made here with the side valley NW of Pollex Mtn. The views of the Waddington Range from the S rim of the Crazy Cr basin W of Pollex Mtn are exceptional.

On the N side of the valley, Pk 2520 2km NE of Delusion Pk is a good ski destination with a 900m descent. Leda Pk, farther E, is not easily climbed from the SE but its S slopes offer a 1200m descent from the col just W of the summit.

Despite the treeline shown on the map, the main valley is virtually open above 1160m and it is straightforward to travel down the valley to a number of other objectives. Use caution when traveling down upper Crazy Cr, as the valley is well swept by avalanche paths. Summits E of Pollex Mtn generally involve technical climbing, but the side drainages are worth exploring and offer some excellent runs.

On the N side of Crazy Cr, the southernmost West Branch Pk (2450m), at GR546122, is an excellent ski ascent. Gain the hanging valley W of the summit using a combination of avalanche paths, forest and the open creek bottom. Climb to the summit via its broad W snowslopes. These offer an excellent 800m run that is part of a 1200m descent back down to Crazy Cr. It is a longer day trip from a camp in the upper valley (15km, 1300m).



Five Fingers Cr from the S. Photo by John Scurlock

## Niut Range

Length: 7–10 days  
Map: 92N/6

Difficulty: 2–4  
Best: Mar–Apr

The Niut Range is a compact region of steep rocky summits immediately W of Tatlayoko Lk. It is similar to the nearby Pantheon Range, but the valleys here are narrower and the mountains tend to be bigger and steeper. The range has never really caught on as a ski-mountaineering destination the way the Pantheon Range has. There are some excellent runs and recommended ascents but these tend to be spread out between more difficult rocky summits and huge N faces. Much of the terrain is either too steep or too gentle for skiing. Also, snow conditions in the Niut Range can be less favourable than in the Pantheon Range. The snowpack is generally shallower and sometimes unconsolidated, especially in the NE part of the range. Ridges are typically more windswept as well.

Despite these factors, there have been regular ski camps here over the years. The weather is typically better than farther W in the Pantheon and Waddington Ranges and makes the area a good choice for poorer weather. The drier climate also gives the range its own attraction.

Access to most ski camps is by helicopter from Bluff Lk. As the Niut Range is very close to Bluff Lk, most flights are very short. It is often possible to fly into the Niut Range when areas W of Mosley Cr are socked in. The Niut Range

is a recommended alternative if you are waiting to fly into the Pantheon or Waddington Ranges and are forced to alter your plans.

Though no one valley has become overly popular as a base camp for ski mountaineering, some of the most attractive spots are at the head of Five Finger Cr and Nude Cr. There is usually more snow here and there is a greater variety of skiing and touring. Gentle glaciated summits N of the impressive Pagoda Pk are accessible from either drainage, and a variety of open slopes offer a fair range of ski-mountaineering terrain at the head of both valleys.

The upper part of Five Finger Cr is a wide-open valley flanked by rugged Rusty Pk on the E and the broad flank of Camel Mtn on the W, which offers 1200m runs. The only thing lacking is much tree skiing. Some groups have skied out via the N side of Quartz Cr, an exit route that offers reasonable travel and takes 1 day.

Nude Cr, though somewhat narrower and steeper, is usually less wind affected than Five Fingers Cr. The main valley is easy to move around in, starts to open up above 1200m and offers a range of ski-mountaineering objectives, from long ski ascents to sheltered basins. The valley also offers some tree skiing, and the forest is more coastal and better for skiing, as it includes some fir and hemlock. Areas to explore include several glaciated side drainages. On the W side of the valley, the 2630m summit 3km SE of

Rusty Pk is a recommended ski ascent, with a 1400m run back to Nude Cr. On the E side of Nude Cr, Early Riser Pk (2530m) at GR800040 on the S side of Moose Pass (1770m) is a long ski ascent from the W, with a 1400m run on NW facing slopes. Farther N, the N side of Ottarasko Mtn can be reached via a 2380m col, and it is possible to cross the glacier on the N side of the mountain and ski off the high shoulder E of the summit. At the N end of the valley, Mt Mullen and Mt Nicholson are long ski-mountaineering trips involving some scrambling to reach their summits. Mt Mullen (2990m) lies 2km E of the pass into Razor Cr and is a challenging ascent via steep snow and glaciers on its S side (ice axe recommended). There is a small prospectors' cabin in the basin SW of Mt Mullen at 1890m (GR768104). Mt Nicholson (2865m), 1km NW of the pass, can be climbed by skiing up to its S ridge, which is a 200m class 3 scramble.

Moose Pass and some of the side drainages of Ottarasko Cr are worth exploring and have also been used for ski camps (e.g., CAJ 1998, p. 95). Another possibility is a short traverse that takes in upper Ottarasko Cr, Nude Cr, Five Fingers Cr and Quartz Cr.



Pagoda Pk and glaciers between Nude and Five Fingers Cr. Photo by John Scurlock

Several ski camps have operated out of Blackhorn Lk at the head of Razor Cr. There are some great long runs and spectacular peaks here, but the terrain is quite aggressive. Most summits require considerable scrambling, and the steep-sided valley only offers a few decent ski-mountaineering trips. Also, the snow conditions are usually wind affected and the snowpack is often shallow and faceted. The obvious ski-mountaineering objective is Pk 2740, 4km E of Blackhorn Lk. It is an easier ascent that gives a long run back down to the lake. One of the best runs is the gentle glacier at the head of the valley underneath the huge 1200m N face of Mt Mullen (2990m). The col at the head

of the glacier gives access to Mt Mullen and Mt Nicholson (see above). To reach the S side of Mt Mullen, drop down 35° slopes SE of the col and traverse into the basin SW of the summit. There is also recommended skiing in the basin S of Blackhorn Mtn, and for those interested in a longer scramble, the summit can be reached via its S slopes (class 3).

The far NE side of the Niut Range is very dry and wind-swept but has occasionally been visited on skis. Areas at the heads of Valteau Cr and Jamison Cr and N of Niut Mtn offer the gentlest terrain and allow for more casual ski touring. There is a well-used cattle trail that runs up the E side of Valteau Cr that can be used for access. Butler Cr also provides access. Note that by May there is usually little snow NE of Razorback Mtn.

The Niut Range also offers good spring mountaineering that can be accessed with skis (e.g. CAJ 1998, p. 95; CAJ 1999, p. 105; CAJ 2001, p. 119; CAJ 2003, p. 120; CAJ 2005, p. 100).



Moose Pass and slopes on the W side of Early Riser Pk. Photo by Paul Berntsen

The highest summit in the Niut Range is Razorback Mtn. One of the most outstanding features of the range is the sweeping ice face on the N side of Razorback Mtn at the head of the E branch of Razor Cr. The stunning 1000m 55° face was first climbed in 1980 and was subsequently skied by different routes in 1990 and 2000 (see CAJ 2001, p. 125).

The Niut Range is used for heliskiing by Pantheon Heli Sports ([www.pantheonheli.com](http://www.pantheonheli.com)).





View across the lobes of the Franklin Gl from the upper Dais Gl.

## Franklin Glacier

Length: 7–14 days

Map: 92N/6

Don and Phyllis Munday, July 1930, *CAJ* 1930, p. 101

Difficulty: 2–4

Best: Apr–May

Located immediately S of Mt Waddington, the Franklin Gl is the largest glacier in the Waddington Range. It flows more than 30km to the coast at Knight Inlet and spans a phenomenal 3300m in elevation, with its terminus less than 300m above sea level. The upper lobes of the Franklin Gl branch out to form a large icefield, which covers an area of about 200km<sup>2</sup>. In contrast to the very rugged summits N of Mt Waddington, the Franklin Gl area is relatively gentle and offers superb glacier touring. Much of the icefield lies at an elevation of about 2200m. Sprawling summits draped in ice rise 400–800m above the main glaciers and though overshadowed by Mt Waddington, whose summit rises 1800m from the main glaciers, these summits offer enjoyable destinations.

The upper Franklin Gl is a superb area for a ski-mountaineering base camp. With its stunning setting, great variety of tours and easy access, it is one of the most popular base camp locations on the large icefields of the Pacific

Ranges S of Bella Coola. Several parties visit the area each spring. The most popular base-camp location is near the centre of the icefield on the Dais Gl. Virtually all the surrounding summits can be climbed as day trips, and there are good ski slopes close by. Recommended campsites are located at the toe of the ridge that divides the Regal and Dais Gl's or on the flats of the Dais Gl N of Cavalier Mtn.

For trip reports see *BCM* 1990, p. 34, *CAJ* 1991, p. 71, *CAJ* 1997, p. 28, *CAJ* 2003, p. 132.

### Access

The most common access to the Franklin Gl is by helicopter with White Saddle Air from Bluff Lk. The Franklin Gl is about a 30 minute helicopter flight from Bluff Lk with White Saddle Air. As flying in to the Franklin Gl is only possible in good weather, delays of 1 or 2 days are not uncommon. Some parties fly in from Campbell River on Vancouver Island. Campbell River is easier to reach from Vancouver than Bluff Lk but the flying distance is considerably longer and the helicopter cost correspondingly higher. Another option used by some parties is to fly in and ski out. This option gives access to more terrain, allows you to develop a deeper sense of the scale of this glacial wilder-

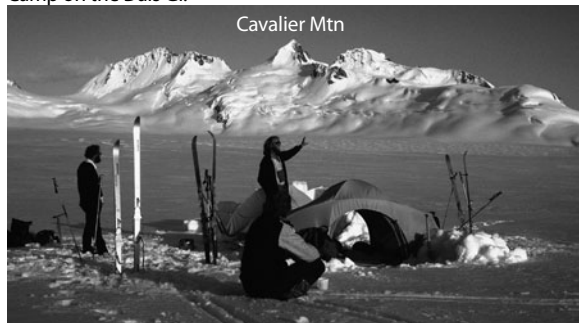


Tracks underneath the S face of Mt Waddington.

ness and also costs less than flying out. Several routes are available for skiing out. These are described under various traverses below. The most common exit is to ski SE past Mt Munday to the Homathko R. This is an enjoyable 2 to 3 day trip.

Another approach used by some parties is a sort of roving base camp. This is essentially a hybrid between a base camp type of trip and a traverse. It is a convenient way to avoid repeating the long neve crossings to some of the peaks. The area can be nicely covered from a combination of base camps on the Finality Gl, Dais Gl and Mystery Pass

Camp on the Dais Gl.



Skiing on the N side of Cavalier Mtn below Mt Waddington.

at the head of Ice Valley. Travel between camps is relatively short, so that most of the time is spent on day trips, and access to all the main peaks is shorter than from a single base camp.

### Ski Trips

A base camp on the Dais Gl offers a wide variety of outstanding tours and ski ascents. Travel on the upper Franklin Gl is generally straightforward. Skiing varies from easy flat touring to steep glacier travel. The main neves are relatively crevasse free and are not difficult to navigate except in poor visibility. Recommended trips include:

### Finality Mountain

Total Distance: 22km  
Elevation Gain: 800m

**2833m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging

Finality Mtn is a sprawling summit on the W edge of the upper Franklin Gl basin, reached by touring across the ice-field from the Dais Gl. It is easily ascended on skis from the Finality Gl and offers a commanding view of the entire region. This trip can be combined with an ascent of nearby Bezel Pk or one of the unnamed summits at the N end of the Portal Gl.



View of Mt Waddington and the Franklin Gl area from the summit of Finality Mtn.

### Bezel Peak

Total Distance: 19km  
Elevation Gain: 700m

**2679m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging

A minor summit at the head of the Shelf Gl, the higher N peak of Bezel is an enjoyable side trip. It is easily ascended from either the Finality or Shelf Gl's and offers some shorter ski slopes.

### Regal Dome

Total Distance: 7km  
Elevation Gain: 700m

**2817m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging

Regal Dome is the formal-sounding name for a minor subsidiary point about halfway up the ridge dividing the Regal and Dais Gl's. This is a recommended ski ascent via W facing slopes that gives an enjoyable 600m run.

### Mt Chris Spencer

Total Distance: 13km  
Elevation Gain: 900m

**3009m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

Though higher than most other Franklin Gl peaks, Mt Chris Spencer still only lies at the foot of Mt Waddington's long NW ridge. From a camp on the Dais Gl, ascend the Fury Gl N towards Fury Gap by avoiding a shattered icefall at 2300m on its E side. The summit pyramid is a short snow climb from the head of the Fury Gl via a snow gully adjacent to its SE ridge. The summit gives a stupendous view of the Scimitar Gl. The lower summit of Mt Brokenhead (2759m), 3km SW of Mt Chris Spencer, is also sometimes climbed by ski parties.

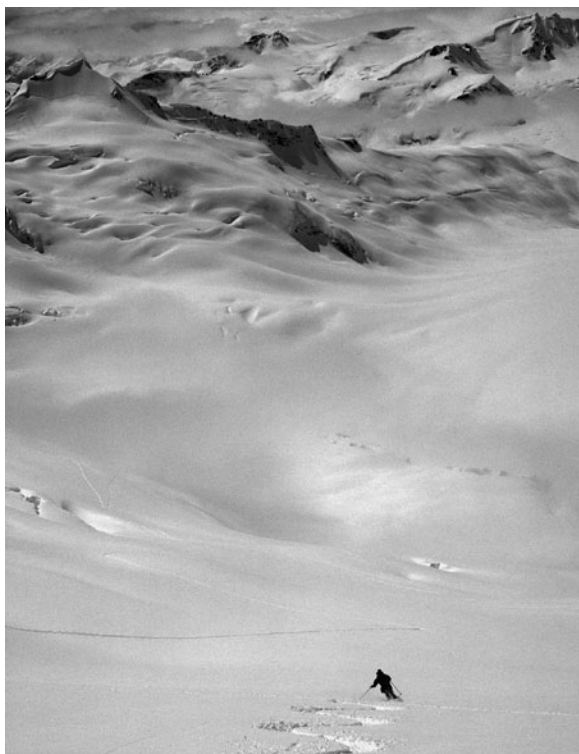
### Cavalier Mountain

Total Distance: 4km  
Elevation Gain: 700m

**2646m**

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex

Though completely overshadowed by Mt Waddington, Cavalier Mtn is an attractive summit on the S side of the Dais Gl. It is a fun ascent and has particularly fine ski slopes on its N side. The recommended route ascends to the col with Jester Mtn. To reach the summit on skis, circle around to its S side and ascend a short 40° slope. Alternatively, its E ridge is a quick snow climb from the col. The summit can also be approached by skiing up its long gentle W ridge.



1000m run down the Dais Gl from the base of Mt Waddington.

### Base of Mt Waddington

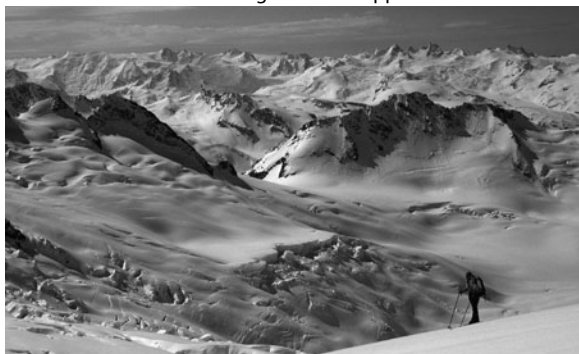
Total Distance: 7km  
Elevation Gain: 1100m

**3200m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

An ascent of the right-hand side of the Dias Gl to the base of the S face of Mt Waddington is a tremendous trip. Though lacking an actual summit, the final destination is higher than most peaks in the Coast Mountains and offers a stunning panoramic view of Franklin Gl and the Whitemantle Range as well as a close-up look at the huge S face of Mt Waddington. It also offers a superb 1000m run.

View of the Whitemantle Range from the upper Dais Gl.



Mt Waddington and Angel Gl from the NW.

### Mt Waddington NW Peak

**4000m**

Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 2100m

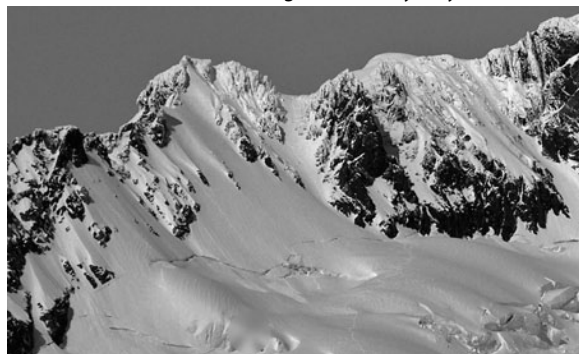
Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex

Steve Smaridge, Trevor Petersen, Beat Steiner and Peter Chrzanowski skied from near the summit down the Angel Glacier in 1985. Eric Pehota skied from the NW summit in 1990.

Only 19m lower than the main summit tower of Mt Waddington, the snowy NW peak is easily the most spectacular ski ascent in this book. The presence of a ski route in the midst of such incredibly rugged and dramatic terrain is amazing.

The route avoids almost all climbing difficulties by ascending to the head of the Dais Gl on the SW side of the Waddington massif, crossing to the N side of the mountain and then ascending the long slanting Angel Gl, which plummets down the N flank of the NW peak. From a camp on the Dais Gl, ski up the far W side of the Dais Gl and traverse NE up into the basin at the head of the glacier. The key to the whole route is the Dais Couloir, which is the obvious W snow gully that climbs N from the head of the glacier at GR406942. Kick steps up the 40° gully for 200m to join the long NW ridge of Mt Waddington immediately E of Councillor Pk at 3320m. Continue E up the snowy section of the

The Dais Couloir route to the Angel Gl. *Photo by Tony Hoare*





View of the Angel Gl route to the NW Peak of Mt Waddington.

ridge on skis for about half a kilometre to a flat shoulder immediately W of the next steep section of the NW ridge. Skirt around the N side of the shoulder at about 3400m and cross a bergschrund to descend about 100m into the slanting basin of the Angel Gl. Switchback for 700m up the 30° glacier to the base of the NW peak, staying well back from the huge ice cliffs that plummet from the N margin of the glacier. Cross the large bergschrund at the head of the glacier and climb easy snow slopes to the col immediately W of the NW peak. The final snow pyramid is a short snow climb.

This is a bold, challenging ski ascent that can only be attempted in good weather with stable avalanche conditions. It requires solid mountaineering and routefinding skills. Difficulties are few in good conditions but depend on snow conditions in the couloir, the condition of the bergschrund that must be crossed to access the Angel Gl, snowbridges on the final bergschrund at the top of the Angel Gl and snow conditions on the summit knob. Experienced parties have completed the ascent in 10 hours return from

Descending the Dais Couloir.



a camp on the Dais Gl in good conditions, but some parties have taken twice as much time.

See also CAJ 1997, p. 28. *Beautiful BC Magazine*, Winter 1990, p. 12.

### Mt Munday

Total Distance: 25km

Elevation Gain: 1820m

Don and Phyllis Munday, July 22, 1930, CAJ 1930, p. 101

**3367m**

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Challenging

One of the most outstanding ski trips from the Franklin Gl, Mt Munday is THE classic ski ascent in the Coast Mountains. From a camp on the Dais Gl, cross Jester Pass NE of Jester Mtn to reach the Corridor Gl. Slopes on the E side of Jester Pass are steep enough to be a concern for avalanches, especially when they have been baked in the sun. Ski up the long Ice Valley Gl to Mystery Pass (2760m) at the head of the Waddington Gl. Ascend N over broad glaciated slopes and climb a short steep pitch out of the basin S of the E and central peaks to reach the summit plateau. Ski W across the plateau and ascend the higher W summit on skis to a rounded false summit. The true summit lies across a short airy notch. It is only a metre higher but usually requires a rope to reach. The peak offers great views of Mt Waddington and the Tiedemann Group, as well as S over the entire Franklin Gl area.

### Mt Agur

Total Distance: 19km

Elevation Gain: 1500m

**3090m**

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Though overshadowed by Mt Munday, Mt Agur is a recommended ski ascent that provides a very striking view of Mt Waddington. Most often climbed by parties on a ski traverse from a camp in Mystery Pass, the summit is a straightforward ascent and offers some decent N facing ski slopes.

Skiing onto the summit of Mt Agur.





View of Mt Waddington from the summit of Mt Munday.

### Grenelle Mountain

Total Distance: 10km  
Elevation Gain: 600m

**3048m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Complex

In addition to its incredible height above the surrounding summits, Mt Waddington is the apex of a huge massif that forms a long narrow uplift that is continuously above 2800m for over 15km. The massif runs in a SE direction and stretches from just above Fury Gap all the way to Grenelle Mtn. Grenelle Mtn is usually climbed from a camp in Mystery Pass. Ski across the head of the Waddington Gl and through a col immediately N of Irresistible Mtn to reach the W ridge of Grenelle Mtn, which is a short easy snow climb. The summit is situated on the S rim of the huge trench of the Tiedemann Gl and offers a stunning view of the entire basin of the upper Tiedemann Gl as well as superb views across the Waddington Gl to the Whitemantle Range. Irresistible Mtn is also easily climbed en route.

### Jubilee Mountain

Total Distance: 25km  
Elevation Gain: 2200m

**2740m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Complex

Lying on the far SW side of the Franklin Gl area, Jubilee Mtn is a superb ascent that can be reached in a long day

from a camp on the Finality Gl. The Confederation Gl leads to the N ridge of the peak, which can be climbed on skis until it becomes knife edged. Difficulties from there are few in good snow conditions, but a rope will likely be required. Jubilee Mtn has a stunning location at the head of Knight Inlet and gives extraordinary views of the entire S side of Mt Waddington. This peak is most often climbed by parties completing a ski traverse.

Jubilee Mtn from Finality Mtn.







Ascending the Waddington Gl on the Franklin Gl Traverse.

## Franklin Glacier Traverse

Length: 12–14 days  
Total Distance: 70km  
Elevation Gain: 5000m  
Start: 100m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 92N/3, 4, 5, 6  
Best: May

John Baldwin, Steve Ludwig, Helen Sovdat, Stan Sovdat, May 1992, *CAJ* 1993, p. 79

A crossing of the upper lobes of the Franklin Gl from the Homathko R to the Klinaklini R is one of the most popular ski traverses N of the Lillooet Icefield. This is a highly recommended trip that travels through stunning terrain and offers excellent side trips. Routefinding is generally straightforward, and overall the traverse is a bit less committing than some of the longer traverses.

### Access

The traverse starts from the Homathko R at the head of Bute Inlet and finishes in the Klinaklini R valley at the head of Knight Inlet. Access is most often by fixed-wing flights from Campbell River. Logistics can be arranged with Homathko Camp. Fit and energetic parties have used lightweight crazy-carpet toboggans to complete the traverse without an airdrop. This is an excellent way to do the

trip except that it requires a very strenuous effort to carry heavy loads over Scar Mtn.

### Route

The recommended route climbs from roads on the S side of Coola Cr. Vehicle access to Coola Cr is currently washed out but the roads can be easily walked or skied to their end at 900m, approximately 1km E of Scar Mtn (and above the snout of the Waddington Gl). From the end of the road at about GR566753, angle SE to gain the forested E ridge of Scar Mtn. Follow the ridge up and over the mostly open summit. The descent into the pass beyond is forested but the terrain quickly becomes subalpine as you move W. The lower Waddington Gl is fairly heavily crevassed, and the recommended route climbs open slopes S and W of Pivot Dome to gain the broad ridge S of the Waddington Gl. Continue up the ridge, bypassing Martello Mtn on its S side. Cross the Bert Gl and regain the ridge crest at the broad 2600m shoulder SE of Mt Agur. Head N out onto the Waddington Gl and ascend to Mystery Pass (2760m) between Mt Agur and Mt Munday. There are several superb side trips from Mystery Pass.

Descend the gentle Ice Valley Gl past the striking SE



View SE to the Whitemantle Range from below Finality Mtn.

side of Mt Waddington. Cross the col NE of Jester Mtn and descend broad slopes onto the flats of the Dais Gl. This is a recommended location for a camp, as there are many excellent side trips here. From the Dais Gl, ski across the main trunk of the Franklin Gl to the divide at the head of the Finality Gl overlooking the Hoodoo Gl. Swing S across the Hoodoo Gl and traverse onto the slopes S of the Baracuda Pks to descend onto the Confederation Gl. Coast down the Confederation Gl to its major junction at 1550m. Ascend the S branch of the Confederation Gl to the glaciated shoulder E of Jubilee Mtn. The exit to the Klinaklini R valley climbs over the shoulder of Jubilee Mtn. This section requires reasonable visibility and is the crux of the traverse. Cross the N ridge of Jubilee Mtn via a 2480m notch in the ridge. From the flat shoulder N of the summit, descend the N margin of a steep icefall onto the upper Lemolo Gl. Turn S across the flats of the Lemolo Gl and ski through the 2300m pass that leads to the head of the Chasm Gl. From the southern rim of the Chasm Gl, swing around to an unnamed W facing glacier. Descend this glacier for 400m. To avoid being drawn into the narrow basin below, traverse SW across a minor ridge at 1710m and drop SW

to pick up old logging roads below 1200m. These spurs are deactivated and growing in with alder but can be walked 5km down to Devereaux Lk. In the days before satellite phones, most parties made the 12km tramp to the logging camp near the head of Knight Inlet. Recent parties walk a short distance to an old road that accesses the SE corner of Devereaux Lk at GR196772 and arrange to be picked up by floatplane here.

See also *CAJ* 1995, p. 67, *CAJ* 1996, p. 99, *CAJ* 1998, p. 91.

### Side Trips

This traverse is a tremendous way to explore the Franklin Gl region. The route passes very close to all of the outstanding side trips accessible from a base camp on the Franklin Gl, as described above. As the traverse only takes about 7 traveling days in good conditions, there are generally ample opportunities for side trips if 12–14 days are allowed for the whole trip.

### Variations

Other variations are possible, including flying into the Finality Gl by helicopter and following the route described



Skiing below Plummer Hut with Mt Waddington and the rugged peaks at the head of Tiedemann Gl behind. *Photo by John Irvine*

above E to exit via logging roads on Coola Cr to the Homathko R valley.

Logging roads in Scar Cr provide an escape route from many points on the upper Franklin Gl. When traveling down the Franklin Gl, there are 2 main icefalls. A route can be found through the middle of the upper icefall at 1900m. The lower icefall at 1600m is a wall of seracs that extends across the complete width of the glacier. It can be bypassed using the glacier moat on the E side. If skiing down the Corridor Gl towards the lower Franklin Gl, it is best to swing S across the Agur Gl to reach the lower Franklin Gl. From the lower Franklin Gl, ascend the S fork of the Repose Gl to reach the 1870m pass at the head of Scar Cr. Steep slopes on the E side of the pass can be avoided by swinging S onto the glacier. Descend into the open valley bottom at the head of Scar Cr and pick up an old logging road on the N side of the creek opposite the Jambeau Gl. The road runs down the N side of Scar Cr for 16km to the Homathko R valley. It has been used as a reasonably direct access and exit route by various parties over the years. Though the road can still be walked, it has become fairly overgrown with alder and is only recommended as an escape route.

## Tellot Glacier

Length: 7–10 days

Map: 92N/6

CAJ 1987, p. 41

Difficulty: 2–4

Best: Apr–May

In contrast to the relatively gentle glaciers on the S side of Mt Waddington, those on the N side plummet thousands of metres into the deep trenches of the Scimitar and Tiedemann Gl. These form a sort of moat around the Tellot Gl, which rises to a high plateau immediately E of some of the most impressive summits in the Coast Mountains.

There is a BCMC hut located immediately W of Claw Pk on the S side of the Tellot Gl at 2680m and it makes a good base for a week of ski mountaineering. Most parties fly in by helicopter with White Saddle Air, though some combine a visit to the hut with time spent elsewhere in the range or on a traverse.

The upper Tellot Gl rises gradually for 800m behind the hut to the base of the sharp spires of the Serra Pks. The glacier itself is relatively gentle and offers a variety of moderate ski-mountaineering destinations in a particularly stunning setting.

The highest ski destination is the 3400m col between Serra III and Tellot Dome, which gives outstanding views

of the Radiant Gl cirque. Tellot Dome is a short snow climb and there is an excellent 200m run in the sheltered basin N of Serra I.

Eaglehead Pk rises from the middle of the upper Tellot Gl and is a recommended ascent via gentle snow slopes from the E. The glacial trough to the N between Eaglehead Pk and Mt Argewicz is an enjoyable run, accessed by circling around the S side of Eaglehead Pk.

On the N side of the Tellot Gl, Mt Shand and Heartstone Pk are also enjoyable destinations requiring some class 3 scrambling. The steep NW couloir on Mt Shand has been skied (CAJ 2003, p. 116). Depending on crevasses, some parties have found excellent skiing N of Cataract col on the upper Cataract Gl.

The main summits surrounding the upper Tellot Gl require significant class 4–5 climbing. Some parties are attracted to the area with the idea of combining climbing and ski mountaineering. See *The Waddington Guide* for detailed route descriptions and a discussion of the extensive technical climbing in the area. Recent parties have also been attracted to the area for its very challenging ski descents (see below).

Another recommended side trip from the hut is to ski down onto the Tiedemann Gl. This route gives an excellent 800–1000m run in a spectacular setting. The best fall-line skiing is SE from the hut and descends the E side of the Claw Gl due S to the Tiedemann Gl on 35° slopes. The standard summer route can also be used. Drop S from the hut and veer W across a rock ridge below 2600m. Traverse a small glaciated basin to a 2500m shoulder at GR491930 and descend 35° glaciated slopes SW for 600m to the Tiedemann Gl, directly across from Rainy Knob.

Ski parties have camped on the Tiedemann Gl. This is an exceptional setting with peaks on an Alaskan scale. However, unless you have come for the prolific climbing opportunities or steep ski descents, the options for general ski mountaineering are somewhat limited. The NW summit of Mt Waddington has been climbed in a long day from Rainy Knob by fast, experienced parties. The route ascends the very crevassed N arm of the Tiedemann Gl to the Waddington–Combatant col, traverses across the head of the Scimitar Gl and ascends the Angel Gl. This is not a recommended route as it involves considerable objective danger. The entire upper Tiedemann Gl is swept by avalanches that come off the N side of Mt Waddington, and reaching the Angel Gl from the Waddington–Combatant col requires traversing under an active ice cliff.



View across the upper Tellot Gl.



Skiing on the upper Tellot Gl below Serra III.



### Plummer Hut

Map: 92N/6

GR: 494934

Elevation: 2680m

Cost: \$10

Capacity: 6

Reservations: no

**Location** S of the upper Tellot Gl on an exposed ridge immediately W of Claw Pk.

**Facilities** An arch-style mountain hut that is 3m x 5m with a sleeping loft and a table.

**Built** by the BCMC in 1969. The hut is named after Paul Plummer, a BCMC member who died in 1968.

**Contact** [www.bcmc.ca](http://www.bcmc.ca)



The 1600m N face of Mt Hickson. *Photo by John Scurlock*

## Waddington Steep Descents

The spectacular terrain of the Waddington Range has become one of the most outstanding regions for difficult alpine climbing in Canada. Exploration of the range in recent years has discovered a similar potential for ski descents of steep alpine faces and long couloirs. Some of the most incredible descents in North America have been done here on stupendous lines of up to 1500 vertical metres on slopes ranging from 45–60°.

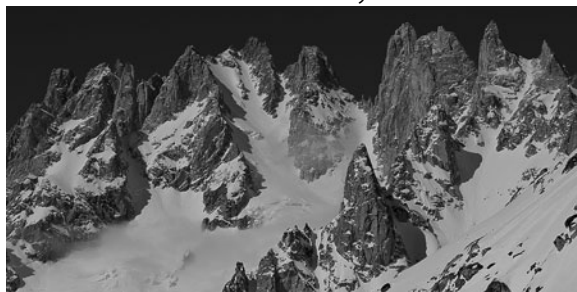
Route descriptions of such extremely challenging descents are outside the scope of this guide. However, a brief mention of some of the routes and references are given for those who are interested. These are far more difficult than anything else described in this book and involve very steep slopes where a fall would almost certainly be fatal.

The alpine faces at the head of the Tiedemann Gl have yielded several striking routes. These huge faces rise up to 1600m above the glacier and are reminiscent of the Cham-onix area in the French Alps where extreme skiing first developed. Descents have included stunning couloirs on the SE face of Serra II, Carl's Couloir on Asperity Mtn and the Dogleg Couloir on Bravo Pk (CAJ 2003, p. 54). One of

the most remarkable routes is the classic Great Couloir that splits the rock buttresses on the S face of Mt Combatant (CAJ 2000, p. 48).

The N sides of the Tiedemann Group rise up to 2000m above the Scimitar Gl. Two of the longest and most challenging extreme descents in North America have been done on the 1100m N face of Mt Tellot and the 1600m N Face Couloir on Mt Hickson (CAJ 2003, p. 126). In *The Waddington Guide*, Don Serl describes the N Face Couloir on Mt Hickson as “one of the western world's longest alpine ice climbs.” Ski descents of the N face of Mt Roovers and other summits are also reported in CAJ 2003, p. 113.

Couloirs on the SE side of Serra II. *Photo by John Irvine*







Traversing across the Cataract Gl on the Waddington Circumski.

## Waddington Circumski

Length: 14 days

Total Distance: 80km

Elevation Gain: 5000m

Start: 1000m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92N/3, 92N/6, 92N/7

Best: May

John Baldwin, Gord Ferguson, Brian Sheffield, May 1995, CAJ 1996, p.78

The summit massif of Mt Waddington is surrounded by massive glaciers, which radiate out from the mountain like the spokes of a wheel. The Waddington Circumski is a traverse that crosses the huge uplifts of spectacular summits that rise in between each of the glacier spokes as it works its way around this exceptional mountain. The traverse crosses the massive Tiedemann, Scimitar, Franklin and Waddington Gl's and is a highly recommended way to spend a few weeks in the Waddington Range and see all sides of Mt Waddington. Though parts of the route are along the gentle trunks of the main glaciers, this is a challenging traverse that travels through rugged terrain and involves a number of difficult obstacles.

### Route

The traverse was first completed starting from a helicopter drop-off on the lower Tiedemann Gl and is described

in that format here, though any number of other starting points are also possible. In its descent from the summit of Mt Waddington, the Tiedemann Gl spans an elevation range of 3300m and is over 24km long. Starting on the lower glacier near 1000m is recommended, just to get a feel for the size of this glacial wilderness. Ski up the gentle main trunk of the Tiedemann Gl. The glacier lies in a spectacular trench with the huge N faces of Merlon Mtn and Grenelle Mtn rising 1600m above the ice. Travel is generally straightforward. Once onto the upper Tiedemann Gl, switchback up 35° slopes to gain the E side of the Claw Gl. It is a 1000m climb from the Tiedemann Gl to Plummer Hut just W of Claw Pk.

From the hut, angle up onto the Upper Tellot Gl, traverse just E of Dragonback Pk and descend E to Cataract col. The main branch of the Cataract Gl has a large icefall near 2000m, and the easiest ski route continues E across the Guardsman and Sunrise Gl's to the col between Mt Schultz and Despair Pk. Drop N from the col and ski W down the E branch of the Cataract Gl. There is a major icefall at 1900m where the glacier pours over a roll before joining the S and W branches. It can be avoided by skiing down the N or S





Crossing upper Tellot Gl with the N face of Mt Munday behind.

margins of the glacier. Traverse the huge glaciated basin N of Mt Shand and climb W to a 2240m col 2km N of Unicorn Mtn. Descend 900m to the Scimitar Gl. This is an absolutely stunning location with tremendous views of the shattered icefalls on the Radiant Gl and the summit of Mt Tiedemann towering over 2500m above the Scimitar Gl.

Ski up the Scimitar Gl, passing underneath the stupendous 1600m N face of Mt Hickson. The gentle trunk of the Scimitar Gl ends abruptly just around the corner, where it rises into a steep wall of seracs that rise for thousands of metres above the entire basin. To reach the Franklin Gl, climb the 600m N facing snow slopes to Fury Gap. The recommended route stays W of centre and involves kicking steps up the steepest section, which reaches 45° near the top. It is an obvious intimidating avalanche slope, so consider the conditions carefully and be prepared to wait at the bottom for several days if necessary. This is the crux of the traverse.

From Fury Gap, avoid a shattered icefall at 2300m on the Fury Gl on its E side to descend onto the broad neve of the Dais and Finality Gl. Ski E over Jester Pass NE of Jester Mtn onto the Corridor Gl. Continue E up Ice Valley to Mystery Pass (2760m) between Mt Agur and Mt Munday.

The traverse finishes with an exit to the Homathko R valley via Coola Cr. From Mystery Pass, ski S along the edge of the Waddington Gl for a couple of kilometres. Climb a short distance to cross over the divide onto the Bert Gl. Pass around the SW side of Martello Mtn and ski down the divide above the Waddington Gl towards Pivot Dome. Swing around the S side of Pivot Dome and continue past small lakes over Scar Mtn. At about 1120m on the ridge E of Scar Mtn, turn NW and angle down to pick up the end of a logging road at 900m, approximately 1km E of Scar Mtn (GR566753). Ski or walk down the road to the mainline in the Homathko R valley. Arrange logistics for the end of your trip with Homathko Camp.



Descending to the Scimitar Gl from N of Unicorn Mtn.

Lightweight crazy-carpet toboggans have been used to great advantage on this traverse.

### Side Trips

The traverse passes through some of the most popular locations in the Waddington Range for ski-mountaineering base camps and any number of recommended side trips are possible. Plummer Hut is a great place to spend several days. There are excellent trips available from the Franklin Gl, including a ski ascent of the NW peak of Mt Waddington—a fitting addition to skiing around the massif. And from Mystery Pass, a classic ascent of Mt Munday is a relatively short ascent that is not to be missed.

### Variations

The circumski can be started anywhere, and portions of the route can be used to move around to different parts of the range. The complete closure of the route from the Waddington Gl to the Tiedemann Gl has not been done. In summer, a mountaineering party crossed from the Waddington Gl to the Smoking Canyon Gl, traversed S of Mt Marcus to Desperation Pass (2200m) and descended N down the Welcome Gl to the Tiedemann Gl. The descent from Echo col to the Smoking Canyon Gl was described as the “most difficult part of this phase of our trip” (CAJ 1951, p. 4) and it is not clear what this would involve in spring conditions. It is possible that a bench at 1800m S of Fascination Mtn could be used to traverse the Smoking Canyon Gl to Desperation Pass and avoid the descent from Echo col.

The snout of the Tiedemann Gl has been approached from roads along the Homathko R by continuing up the main Homathko R valley past Rasmussen Cr and Murderers Bar. As the road is washed out beyond Scar Cr, this approach will likely not be used by most parties. It is mentioned here as a possible escape route. See *The Waddington Guide*, p. 37.



Skiing up the Scimitar Gl underneath the N face of Mt Hickson.

## Waddington Divide Traverse

Length: 28 days

Total Distance: 170km

Elevation Gain: 9500m

Start: 800m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92N/3, 6, 11, 92K/14

Best: May

John Baldwin, Brian Finnie, Chris McNeil, Brian Sheffield, May 1983, *CAJ* 1984, p. 28

The entire length of the divide between the Homathko and Klinaklini Rs has been traversed to form a spectacular high-alpine route through the heart of the Pantheon, Waddington and Whitemantle Ranges. This is one of the most outstanding ski traverses in the Coast Mountains and involves traveling across the full width of the range from the Chilcotin to the Loughborough Inlet on the coast. It is a rugged and challenging trip that involves considerable routefinding.

### Route

The traverse starts from Mosley Cr on the interior side of the Coast Mountains and ascends broad subalpine valleys into the Pantheon Range. Two access routes have been used. Both lead to the alpine lakes at the head of Hell Raving Cr. The first route is via Hell Raving Cr. Avoid a canyon on lower Hell Raving Cr by starting from Middle Lk. From just before the gate at the E end of Middle Lk, logging roads

angle W for about 4km onto slopes above Middle Lk. (This point can also be reached by walking uphill from halfway down Middle Lk.) From near the end of the road, traverse N of a 1440m knoll (easy going) and cross a swampy pass into the Hell Raving Cr valley. When crossing the N branch of Hell Raving Cr, stay about 1km above the forks to avoid the worst of a canyon on lower Hell Raving Cr. Travel in the Hell Raving Cr valley is hindered more by branches and windfall than actual bush and is generally not too difficult. The snow begins to leave the lower elevations in Mosley Cr in April but lasts well into May near treeline. At higher elevations you can ski up the creek. It takes about 1.5 days to reach the alpine lakes at the head of Hell Raving Cr.

The second access route is Sand Cr. Though this approach is slightly steeper and the route involves climbing over a high pass, this option is likely the preferred route as the alpine is gained quickly and the approach involves much less travel in the forest. Sand Cr drains E from the Pantheon Range and enters Mosley Cr just N of Twist Lk. The recommended route climbs up the S side of Sand Cr. From the alpine basin in upper Sand Cr, climb N through a 2150m pass to reach the alpine lakes at the head of Hell Raving Cr.

From the head of Hell Raving Cr, two alternative routes



Traversing S in the Whitemantle Range at the head of Stanton Cr.

have been used to Nirvana Pass. The most direct, but steeper, route climbs W from the small lake (1680m) at the head of Hell Raving Cr to gain the Osiris Gl. Once on the upper neve of the glacier, travel S along steepening, exposed E facing slopes to access a small gap across the shoulder at 2520m just N of the Siva–Osiris col and angle down onto the Siva Gl. Stay to skier's right to avoid the main icefall on the Siva Gl on its N side as you descend to the head of Colwell Cr. The route down the Siva Gl involves a fine 800m ski descent. Alternatively, a more gentle route swings W through the 2200m pass N of Osiris Pk. It is about 2–3 days' travel to Nirvana Pass from Mosley Cr.

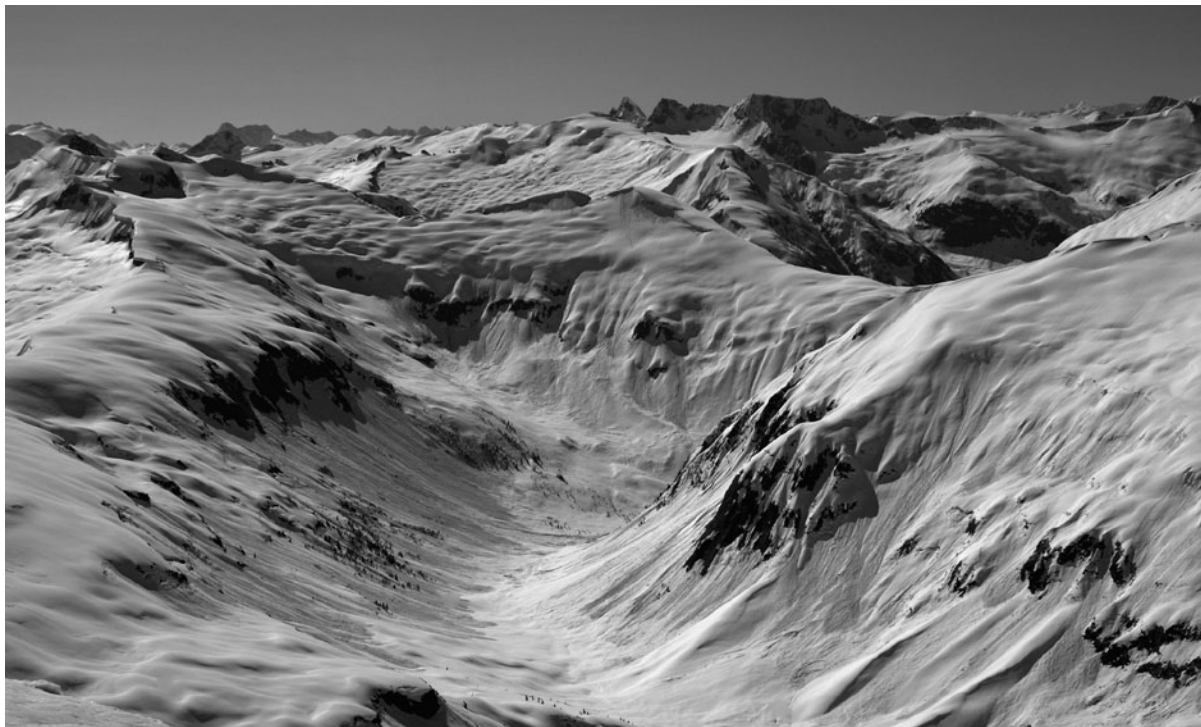
From Nirvana Pass, ski S down Twist Cr and turn up its S fork at 1240m to ski into the Waddington Range. This section of the route drops below treeline. Travel is mostly on the snow-covered creek, with some stretches through the forest. From near 1640m on the S fork of Twist Cr, follow a moraine that climbs up the E side of the valley onto a bench glacier 1.5km N of Delusion Pk. Ski through 2280m Granite Pass at the head of the glacier. Traverse high to stay above icefalls, and drop W of Delusion Pk to reach Bifrost Pass. It is an easy ski down through Pocket Valley (which is horrible slide alder in the summer) to the Scimi-

tar Gl. Ski up the deep trench of the Scimitar Gl to the base of the huge glaciated cirque underneath Mt Chris Spencer and Fury Gap.

The crux of the traverse is ascending to Fury Gap. This section involves kicking steps up the upper half of a 600m snow slope. The recommended route stays W of centre and presents no special problems other than being steep (near 45° at the top). It is an obvious, intimidating avalanche slope, so consider the conditions carefully and be prepared

View of Fury Gap from the Scimitar Gl.





Looking S into the headwaters of the Bear R. *Photo by Tony Hoare*

to wait at the bottom for several days if necessary. It was first climbed in 1934 as part of a ski traverse up the Scimitar Gl and down the Franklin Gl.

From Fury Gap, avoid a shattered icefall at 2300m on the Fury Gl on its E side to descend onto the broad neve of the Dais and Finality Gl. Most parties allow time for 1 or 2 side trips in this area. Travel on the Franklin Gl is relatively straightforward. It is possible to ski straight down the centre of the Franklin Gl, but most parties ski E over

Kicking steps up to Fury Gap from the Scimitar Gl.



Jester Pass NE of Jester Mtn onto the Corridor Gl. A side trip to Mt Munday is recommended from a camp on the Corridor Gl.

The route continues down the Corridor Gl towards the lower Franklin Gl. Stick to skier's left, close to the W base of Sockeye Pk and swing across the S side of the Agur Gl to end up on the E margin of the Franklin Gl. There is a major icefall at 1600m on the Franklin Gl. Broken seracs extend across the entire width of the glacier. The icefall is easily bypassed by skiing down the glacier moat on the E side. Continue SW across the Repose Gl and cross the low shoulder beyond onto the Dauntless Gl. A recommended variation climbs up the Repose Gl and then traverses S to reach the Dauntless Gl at about 1900m.

The Dauntless Gl is the main route into the N end of the Whitemantle Range. Ascend the gentle glacier to the Dauntless-Vigilant col, avoiding the large icefall at 2200m on the E. Downclimb a snow gully on the S side of the col. (The gully can be avoided by circling around the W side of Vigilant Mtn). Head SE across the head of the Jambeau Gl for several kilometres until you are able to climb S through a 2440m col at GR387742 into the basin W of Barb Mtn.

An obvious high glaciated divide runs S through the



Traveling up Scimitar Gl below the Chaos Gl, which rises 2300m to the summit of Mt Tiedemann behind.

Whitemantle Range and the route travels along the W side of the divide. The section from Cornette Pk to Mt Stanton is quite narrow and presents several obstacles. The first tricky section is near Cornette Pk (misabeled as Comrade Peaks on 92N/3). Cross the 2480m col W of the summit and descend into the glaciated basin to the S. The recommended route sticks close to the SW side of the ridge crest to avoid major crevassed areas. The second tricky section is near Cornette Pk 2km NW of Mt Stanton. Travel along the ridge crest is blocked by a rock buttress on Pk 2556, which can be bypassed on the W. Drop down to 2160m around the toe of the buttress and kick steps back up the 35° slope beyond to gain the neve W of Mt Stanton. Continue SW across glaciated slopes S of Pk 2526 to the icefield at the head of the Brew Gl.

The S end of the Whitemantle Range is reached by skiing S across the icefield at the head of the Brew Gl and ascending the easy NW slopes of Wahkash Pk (2685m). Cross the high plateau N of the summit pyramid to a 2440m col immediately NE of the peak. Turn S and angle down across glaciated benches beneath E facing cliffs on Wahkash Pk to reach the head of the main glacier E of Wahkash Pk.

In poor weather, a low route that avoids climbing over the summit plateau on Wahkash Pk can be used. Leave the

main Brew Gl at 1640m and ski E down a creek to the snout of the glacier E of Wahkash Pk. Turn S and ascend the glacier avoiding icefalls at 1300m and 1600m on the E and W sides respectively. Continue to the narrow 1980m col at the head of the glacier, overlooking the upper Stafford R where the low route joins the high route over Wahkash Pk. From the col, switchback E up the rounded ridge crest and the edge of the glacier to the summit of Pk 2410. This point marks the end of the heavily glaciated section of the traverse.

The last portion of the route to the head of Loughborough Inlet traverses the rugged headwaters of the Bear and Stafford Rs. Drop off the SW corner of Pk 2410 and use an indistinct ridge to descend steep slopes SE into the upper Bear R. Continue down the narrow snow-choked valley to its first western tributary at 1070m.

The traverse was first completed with an exit to the Apple R. As logging roads on the Apple R are long overgrown, recent parties have exited to active logging roads on the Stafford R.

The shortest route to the Stafford R climbs W to the 1525m col between the Bear R and the Stafford R (GR430410). The E side of this col is heavily corniced and can be avoided if necessary by a circuitous route up onto the divide S of the col. Start from the major fork in the Bear R at 1070m and climb SW up a rounded ridge. Ski along the ridge top for about 2km. The ridge peaks out and cliffs prevent further travel W or S. From the vicinity of Pk 2060, descend N into the narrow trough at the very head of the eastern tributary of the Stafford R, immediately W of the 1525m col between the Bear R and the Stafford R.

Ski W down the trough to the valley floor. The narrow valley is steep-sided and is swept by avalanches from both sides. Below 900m, stay on the N side of the creek, as it quickly becomes impossible to cross lower down. It is about 10km out the valley to the end of the logging road at 320m (GR320362). With a normal spring snowpack, the first several kilometres in the upper valley offer reasonable travel on open slide paths and stretches of old-growth forest. Lower down, a few stretches of slide alder are unavoidable.

Walk down the logging road to the main Stafford R valley. Turn left on the mainline, which crosses to the W side of the Stafford R after about 4km. It is a 15km walk to a boat launch at the S end of Stafford Lk, where a floatplane pickup can be arranged.

For additional trip reports, see *VOCJ* 1990, p. 23, *CAJ* 2008.



Skiing off the summit of Whitemantle Mtn with views S across Whitemantle Cr.

### Side Trips

The Waddington Divide Traverse travels through superb ski-mountaineering terrain and there are a wide range of excellent side trips all along the route. A detailed description of recommended side trips is given separately under the Pantheon Range, Franklin Gl and Whitemantle Range headings. Recommended ascents that are close to the route include Siva Mtn, Mt Chris Spencer, Cavalier Mtn, NW Pk of Mt Waddington, Mt Munday, Whitemantle Mtn, Mt Stanton and Wahkash Pk.

### Logistics

Food caches will be required and are best placed by helicopter using White Saddle Air. Most parties have placed 3 food caches. These have been spread out along the route at the head of the Scimitar Gl below Fury Gap, at the head of the Repose Gl and S of Mt Stanton. Floatplane pickup from Stafford Lk at the end of the trip can be arranged from Campbell River on Vancouver Island. Transportation can be complicated to arrange. Most parties have had a friend pick up their vehicle from Bluff Lk.

### Variations

Access to the Franklin Gl offers possible escape routes near the middle of the trip, and several parties have used

these to complete shorter variations of the traverse from the Pantheon Range to Coola Cr or Scar Cr. See Franklin Gl Traverse.

## Whitemantle Range

The Whitemantle Range is the main portion of the divide between the Klinaklini and Homathko Rs S of the Waddington Range. The area lacks any large icefields and is characterized by heavily glaciated ridge tops and summits surrounded by deep coastal valleys penetrating far into the heart of the range. The region offers a spectacular setting for spring ski mountaineering, with good glacier skiing and tremendous scenery. Summits are lower than in the Waddington Range, and generally routefinding is more challenging than in the adjacent Franklin Gl area.

### Peaks

Length: 7–14 days

Map: 92N/6

BCMC Ski Camp, June 1971, CAJ 1972, p. 36

Difficulty: 2–4

Best: Apr–May

An obvious high glaciated divide runs S through the Whitemantle Range. Summits tend to lie adjacent to, and rise only a short distance from, glaciers along this main divide. Most are straightforward, usually with only minor





Wahkash Pk and the small icefield at the head of Brew Cr.

scrambling to class 3 (some are incorrectly marked on map sheet 92N/3 and are referred to here by their correct elevation).

A BCMC ski camp was held on the upper Whitecap Gl in 1971. The camp was situated close to the main divide, and ski ascents were made of all the surrounding peaks. Surprisingly, all subsequent trips to the Whitemantle Range have been traverses of one form or another.

There are a number of recommended ski ascents from the Whitecap Gl. Whitemantle Mtn (2992m) is the highest summit in the Whitemantle Range, and its broad summit is a straightforward ski ascent from the W. Nearby Comrade Pk (2968m) is a recommended ski ascent from the SE, with some good skiing NE of the summit.

Other summits in the Whitemantle Range include Vigilant Mtn, which is a short scramble from the SW. Dauntless Mtn is a class 3 climb from the col with Vigilant. Farther S, Pk 2760, 4km N of Mt Stanton, is a recommended side trip on skis. Mt Stanton is the striking summit S of Whitemantle Cr and is a short snow climb and scramble from the neve to the W. The minor Pk 2520, 5km W of Mt Stanton, rises between the broad neve at the head of the Brew Gl and the deep gorge of Stanton Cr and is a short enjoyable ski ascent from the S. The massive snow peak S of the Brew Gl is known as Wahkash Pk (2685m) and involves only a short scramble from the neve below the final summit block.

## Whitemantle Range Traverse

Length: 14 days

Total Distance: 90km

Elevation Gain: 6700m

Start: 150m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92K/14, 92N/3, 92N/6

Best: May

John Baldwin, Gordon Ferguson, Steve Ludwig, May 1997, *CAJ* 1998, p. 89

The main spine of the Whitemantle Range is a high, glaciated divide that makes a tremendous route for a ski traverse. It was first traveled on skis as part of the Waddington

Divide Traverse (see above) but is a spectacular route in its own right that can be done as a shorter traverse. The traverse is very challenging, with extensive glacier travel and many steeper slopes.

The most direct access to the Whitemantle Range is from Scar Cr in the Homathko R valley. An old bridge crossed Scar Cr at about 300m. (This bridge is currently washed out but is likely to be replaced.) Less than half a kilometre from the bridge, a spur road branches left and switchbacks up the logged hillside on the S side of Scar Cr. The road climbs to near 1000m on the W side of the minor drainage S of the bridge at GR525733 and gives easy access to open slopes beyond, which lead up onto the alpine ridge N of the Whitemantle Gl. Continue W along the ridge top for 3km to a step in the ridge just E of Pk 2112. The original party was forced to drop down steep slopes onto the Whitemantle Gl but it might be possible to climb over the step. Either way, continue up the Whitemantle Gl and turn SW to ski through the 2800m col immediately E of the real Whitemantle Mtn (2992m). Downclimb the steep 120m snow slope on the S side of the col to reach glaciers above Whitemantle Cr. Whitemantle Mtn is easily climbed by skiing up its S slopes. To reach the main divide, traverse SW for about 5km and cross through a minor 2440m col S of Cornette Pk to glaciers at the head of Stanton Cr. The rest of the main route S through the Whitemantle Range to Stafford Lk is described under the Waddington Divide Traverse. Side trips are described above.

Other variations are possible and include slightly longer approaches through the Franklin Gl region via Coola Cr, or Mt Jubilee. At the S end of the range an approach along ridges S of Brew Cr has been used. The route traverses from House Mt over Cumsack Mtn (see [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com) or *VOCJ* 2008-09). Brew Cr was used as an exit route in 1997. This option is not recommended except as an escape route. The main glacier descending to the head of Brew Cr has an impassable icefall at 1200m, which might be avoided in the trees to the N. Access to the S side of the valley is only possible by descending the side valley 4km E of the snout of the Brew Gl. Roads can be picked up on the S side of Brew Cr 6km E of the glacier snout but these are very overgrown, and the main bridge across Brew Cr is gone. It is another several kilometres on bear trails to a separate system of roads on the S side of Brew Cr lower down.

A helicopter drop off at the S or N end of the range has also been used to start the traverse.

# Bella Coola 18



Skiing off Ogre Mtn on the W side of the Monarch Icefield. Mt Geryon (L) and Cerberus Mtn (R) in the background.

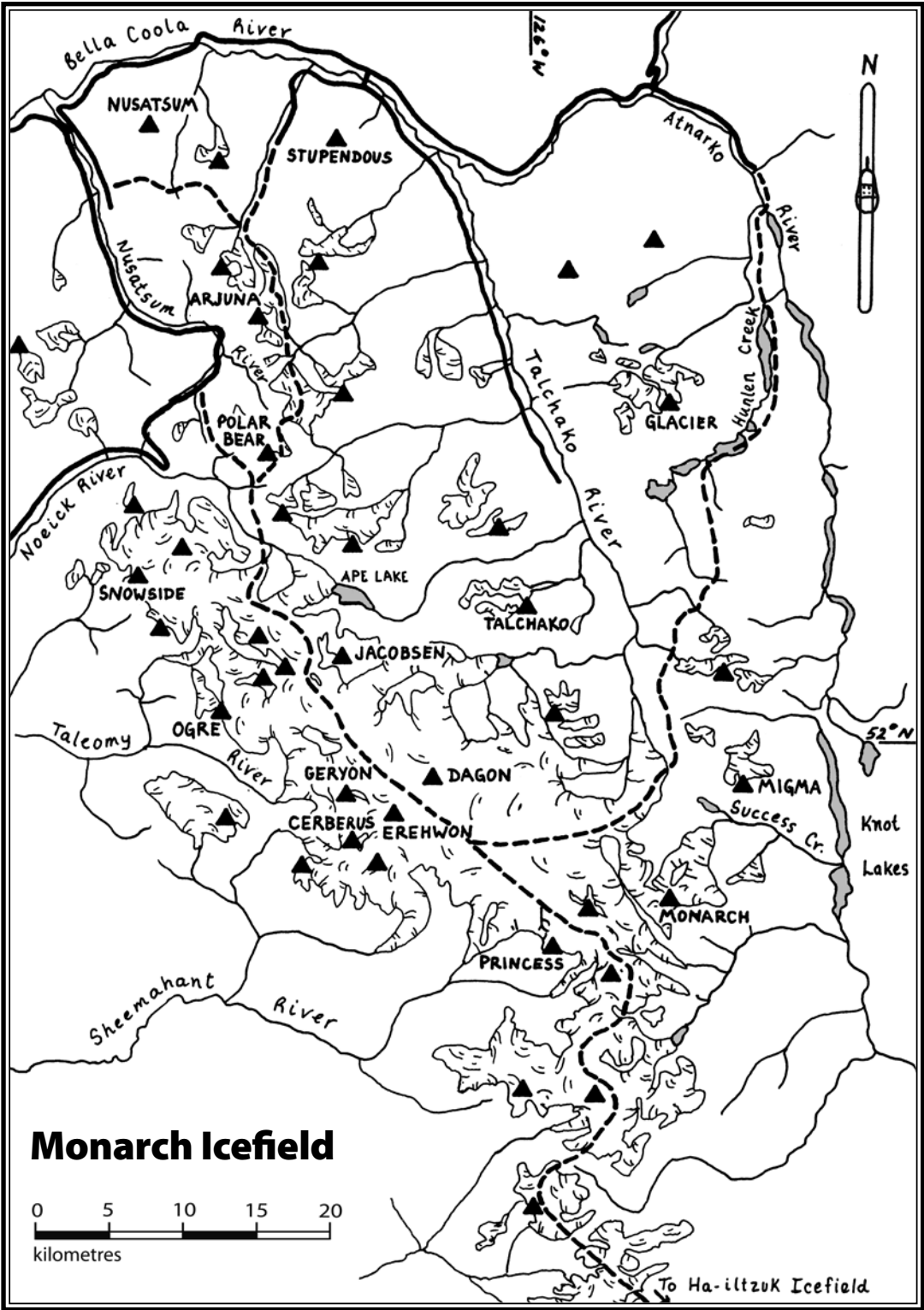
**B**ella Coola lies halfway up the coast of British Columbia. Situated in a stunning coastal valley, deep in the heart of the mountains at the head of a long fjord, it is accessible by the only road to cross the Coast Mountains between Squamish and Kitimat. This chapter covers the large remote area lying south of the Bella Coola valley and west of the Klinaklini River to the Pacific Ocean.

The region is heavily glaciated and holds the largest glaciers and icefields in the Pacific Ranges. This includes the Monarch and Ha-iltzuk Icefields, both of which are well suited to ski mountaineering. The northern portions of the region, particularly on the northern and western sides of the Monarch Icefield, contain some of the highest and most rugged summits in the Coast Mountains outside of the Waddington Range. The southern portion of the region surrounding the Ha-iltzuk Icefield is heavily glaciated with large glaciers and relatively gentle summits. Ski trips range

from high-alpine base camps and traverses that are reasonably accessible from Bella Coola, to crossings of the more remote Ha-iltzuk Icefield. Most trips require a week or more.

## **Access**

Most trips to the Monarch and Ha-iltzuk Icefields start from Bella Coola, which is reached via Hwy 20 from Williams Lake. Drive W on Hwy 20 across the Chilcotin Plateau and through Heckman Pass at 1520m to descend to the Bella Coola valley on the coast. Bella Coola is 460km from Williams Lake and is about a 14 hour drive of 1000km from Vancouver. Bella Coola is also accessible by air. Pacific Coastal Airlines offers daily flights from Vancouver and Vancouver Island (250-982-2225 or 1-800-663-2872). A range of accommodation and services is available in the Bella Coola valley ([www.bellacoola.ca](http://www.bellacoola.ca)). The valley has a population of about 2500 people and includes a handful of





View W across the Monarch Icefield to Cerberus Mtn. Photo by John Scurlock

local ski mountaineers. A rope tow and cross-country ski trails are located in Tweedsmuir South Provincial Park.

Most access to this region is from the Bella Coola valley. The two main approaches are from roads that extend up the Nusatsum R and the Atnarko R. The Nusatsum R logging roads provide access to overland routes to Ape Lk and the N end of Monarch Icefield. A narrow jeep road up the Atnarko R provides access to Tweedsmuir South Provincial Park and the E side of the Monarch Icefield.

The S side of the region is accessible from logging roads at the head of Knight Inlet, which can be reached by floatplane from Campbell River on Vancouver Island. The main logging camp is located on the E side of the Klinaklini R, 3km from the head of Knight Inlet. Floatplanes land on a slough beside the camp. Logging roads cross the main Klinaklini R 4km N of the camp and run up the W side of the river to near Tumult Cr. A second bridge crosses the W Klinaklini R 2km downstream from Tumult Cr, and roads continue up the W side of the main Klinaklini R to opposite Hoodoo Cr. For information on road conditions, contact International Forest Products in Campbell River (250-286-1881).

Access to the E side of this region is barred by the Klinaklini R. A few trips have approached from the W via logging roads on the Machmell R. The main road crosses the Machmell R approximately 10km from Owikeno Lk and extends up the S side of the Machmell R beyond a major bridge across the Pashleth R. The main logging camp that used to be at the mouth of the Machmell R on Owikeno Lk is no longer there. Approaches from the Machmell R are no longer practical.

### Multi-use Considerations

A large portion of this region is used for heliskiing. The entire Monarch Icefield and the mountains S of the Bella Coola valley lie within the tenure of Bella Coola Heli Sports ([www.bellacoolahelisports.com](http://www.bellacoolahelisports.com)). The E half of the Ha-ilt-

zuk Icefield and the area S to Knight Inlet lie within the tenure of Knight Inlet Helisports ([www.knightsinletheliskiing.com](http://www.knightsinletheliskiing.com)). The heliski season is typically from January to late April.

### References

*Bella Coola Valley & Vicinity: Hiking Trails & Routes* by Scott Whittemore

*Hikes in Tweedsmuir South Provincial Park* by Scott Whittemore

### Aircraft Charter

The majority of longer trips into the Monarch and Ha-iltzuk Icefields use some form of air support, either for access or for placing food caches for a traverse. The closest helicopters to the N end of the Monarch Icefield are located at the Bella Coola airport, 16km E of Bella Coola at Hagensborg. The closest helicopter to the Ha-iltzuk Icefield is White Saddle Air, at Bluff Lk.

Helicopter charters from Bella Coola:

West Coast Helicopters	250-982-2181
<a href="http://www.westcoasthelicopters.com">www.westcoasthelicopters.com</a>	

Rainbow West Helicopters	250-982-2322
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Helicopter charters from Bluff Lk:

White Saddle Air	250-476-1182
<a href="http://www.whitesaddleair.com">www.whitesaddleair.com</a>	

Helicopter charter from Campbell River:

West Coast Helicopters	250-286-8863
<a href="http://www.westcoasthelicopters.com">www.westcoasthelicopters.com</a>	

Vancouver Island Helicopters	250-923-3133
<a href="http://www.vih.com">www.vih.com</a>	

Floatplane charters from Bella Coola:

Bella Coola Air	250-982-2545
<a href="http://www.bellacoolair.com">www.bellacoolair.com</a>	

Floatplane charters to Knight Inlet from Campbell River:

Vancouver Island Air	250-287-2433
<a href="http://www.vancouverislandair.com">www.vancouverislandair.com</a>	



Peaks on the SW side of Clayton Falls Cr, W of Howe Lk. *Photo by Steve Hodgson*

## Clayton Falls Creek

Length: 1–4 days

Total Distance: 20–30km

Elevation Gain: 1700m

Start: approximately 400m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 93D/2, 93D/7

Best: Mar–May

A forestry road runs up Clayton Falls Cr SE of Bella Coola and gives access to a large alpine area lying E of South Bentinck Arm. This is a tremendous area of ridges, meadows and lakes surrounded by 2100m summits that offer exceptional ski mountaineering. There is some snowmobiling and heliskiing in the area.

The main road in Bella Coola extends W to the government dock on North Bentinck Arm. Approximately 1km beyond, a logging road climbs S up the E side of Clayton Falls Cr. The road crosses Clayton Falls Cr after 11km at 700m and climbs SW over a 1250m pass at 17km before descending to South Bentinck Arm. The road has been deactivated, and a 4WD is recommended for clearance on the waterbars. The road provides access to the extensive alpine terrain surrounding the head of Clayton Falls Cr and there are two choices for leaving the road.

### Pk 2200

The best access to the terrain on the W side of Clayton Falls Cr is from where the road crosses the 1250m pass at GR439944. There are excellent views of Burke Channel. Ski S along the open ridge crest to access a variety of terrain. The first shoulder at 1600m offers good tree skiing and a number of short steep chutes on its NE side. Continue farther along the ridge to reach longer alpine runs. From a 1530m col below the first major step in the ridge, drop slightly to the E to gain the main glacier on the SW side of Clayton Falls Cr. Pk 2200, at the head of the glacier, is the highest summit W of Howe Lk. It is a straightforward



Pk 2200 on the W side of Howe Lk. *Photo by Steve Hodgson*

ascent via its W ridge. The glacier is a recommended 700m run from the first notch W of the summit and there are lots of other options as well.

### Howe Lake

To reach the more extensive terrain at the head of Clayton Falls Cr, leave the road near 700m and continue S up the

Looking SW across Howe Lk. *Photo by Steve Hodgson*





Skiing on glaciers SE of Howe Lk. *Photo by Steve Hodgson*

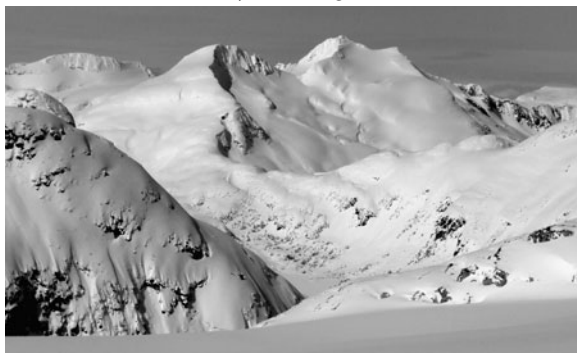
main fork of Clayton Falls Cr to the meadows and lakes beyond. It is about 7km up the valley to Howe Lk. The lake is surrounded by big open slopes with many obvious runs. The 1860m summit immediately E of Howe Lk, as well as glaciers and peaks to the SE, offer some excellent 600m descents. Peaks SW of the lake offer a number of steeper N facing lines.

### **Pk 2100**

**2100m**

The 2100m summit 3km E of Mt Fougner is a recommend-

Pk 2100 from the S. *Photo by Steve Hodgson*



ed ski ascent from the valley to the SW, with a great 900m descent.

### **Big Snow Mountain**

**2350m**

Lying across the head of Brynildsen Cr, Big Snow Mtn (misabeled on 93D/2) is one of the most outstanding ski ascents. This is the highest summit in the area and offers a 1200m run on its glaciated NW side. The head of Brynildsen Cr is best reached from the 1550m pass 3km SE of Mt Fougner.

Big Snow Mtn from the W. *Photo by Steve Hodgson*







Panoramic view of the Ape Lk area from near Throwback Mtn. *Photo by Steve Hodgson*

## Ape Lake

Length: 4–10 days  
Total Distance: 40km  
Elevation Gain: 2000m  
Start: 780m

**1400m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 93D/1, 93D/8  
Best: Apr–May

Ape Lk is an alpine lake at the NW corner of the Monarch Icefield. The surrounding area is unique for its combination of extensive meadows and large glaciers in close proximity, and is well suited to ski mountaineering. Summits tend to be quite rugged with significant vertical relief and most require some scrambling and easy climbing. The area is readily accessible from Bella Coola by a pleasant overland ski that is mostly alpine and involves only a short stretch of forest.

## Access

Access is from the Nusatsum forest service road, approximately 6 km E of Hagensborg. The main road runs up the W side of the Nusatsum R and after several crossings it runs through the S side of a 1040m pass and descends into the Noeick R valley. The road is passable in a rugged 2WD vehicle. It is about 25km to a viewpoint below Odegaard Falls at 780m. Beyond this, the upper portions of the road are usually buried in snow well into spring and you will likely have to ski the last few kilometres along the road. The winter route to Ape Lk follows Ape Lake Trail. Leave the road

Traversing across the head of the Noeick R to Ape Lk.



at km 28, at about 980m, and climb S through gentle forest on the E side of a creek to a subalpine meadow surrounding a broad 1220m pass. Avoid a large avalanche slope S of the pass by climbing SE onto the shoulder W of Polar Bear Pk (2470m). The safest route climbs above the avalanche slope, crosses the shoulder at 1950m and then descends to meadows 1km W of Polar Bear Lk. (In stable conditions, a shorter route traverses the steep sidehill at 1710m.) A pleasant bench beyond, at 1550m, can be followed SE to the head of the Noeick R. There are tremendous views of the Purgatory Gl and the 2200m N side of Iroquois Ridge. It is approximately a 2 day ski in to Ape Lk and 1 day out.

Ape Lk has undergone extensive changes over the years as a result of glacial outburst floods (CAJ 1985, p. 41 and CAJ 1986, p. 45). In recent years, the Fyles Gl has receded so that Ape Lk now drains to the NW into the Noeick R and is considerably smaller than shown on most maps. The outlet flowing NW from the lake into the upper Noeick R is usually crossed on snowbridges but can be difficult to cross in warmer weather in late spring.

Ref: CAJ 1985, p. 52; CAJ 1992, p. 36.

## Peaks

There are many options for ski mountaineering in the area. In general, summits are quite spread out and cannot all be reached from a single base camp. A camp near Ape Lk gives access to most friendly peaks near the Borealis Gl, while a camp near the Noeick Gl gives access to heavily glaciated ski ascents surrounding the War Drum Gl. It is also popular to venture out onto the Monarch Icefield for several days (see below). Summits surrounding the upper Fyles Gl are quite rugged and not usually climbed by ski parties.

## Polar Bear Peak

**2470m**

Located 2km N of the pass between Noeick R and Gyllenspetz Cr, Polar Bear Pk is a straightforward ascent by skiing up its SW slopes to a high shoulder and then scrambling up



Looking SE across the War Drum Gl from Iroquois Ridge.

its S ridge. It is a recommended side trip that is easily accessible from the route to Ape Lk and gives excellent views across the Noeick R.

### **Atavist Mountain**

**2350m**

The Borealis Gl is easily reached from a base camp in the valley containing Ape Lk. The surrounding summits are not as heavily glaciated as those to the S and W of Ape Lk and are easier to reach. Atavist Mtn is the most straightforward and is a recommended ski ascent with good views of the dramatic summits and glaciers S of the Noeick R. Other summits are also worthwhile but require short scrambles.

### **The Griffin**

**2530m**

Some of the most attractive ski terrain in the area surrounds the War Drum Gl, which is easily reached via the gentle Noeick Gl. The Griffin is the high point of the broad glaciated ridge, 4km SE of Snowside Mtn. It is a recommended ski ascent via its glaciated NE slopes and gives a 600m run.

### **Iroquois Ridge**

**2810m**

Iroquois Ridge is one of the higher summits in the area and can be climbed with skis from the glaciated basin SE of the summit. Ascend the glacier in the centre of the basin for about 600m. Avoid the main icefall SE of the summit by

making an ascending traverse below rocks on the N side of the basin. Climb the final summit pyramid via its class 3 SE ridge for tremendous views and an 800m descent. Pearl Pk, 3km E of Iroquois Ridge, has also been climbed with skis by ascending the small pocket glacier E of the summit.

### **Snowside Mountain**

**2960m**

Snowside Mtn is an impressive summit on the W side of the War Drum Gl. It is a recommended snow climb. Ski through a 2320m col onto the Purgatory Gl and ascend the summit from the NW. The lower portion of the glacier running NW from the peak is heavily crevassed and must be bypassed on foot via the adjacent ridge to the E.

On the summit of Snowside Mtn.





Lunch stop at the head of Noomst Cr underneath Mt Arjuna.

## Nusatsum Divide

Length: 4–7 days

Total Distance: 47km

Elevation Gain: 3800m

Start: 780m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: 93D/1, 93D/8

Best: Apr–May

John Baldwin, Steve Ludwig, Helen Sovdat, May 1987, CAJ 1988, p. 72

The divide immediately E of the Nusatsum R contains one of the wildest collection of spires and towers in the Coast Mountains. It offers a rugged and particularly scenic traverse across glaciers on its E side. The route is sort of like the Spearhead Traverse on steroids.

The divide was originally traversed as part of a longer traverse around the Talchako R drainage and runs N from Ape Lk to the head of Noomst Cr. It is described here as a separate trip from S to N, though several variations are possible and it is most often combined with a longer trip on the Monarch Icefield.

The S end of the divide may be reached from routes to Ape Lk (see above). Leave the Ape Lk route W of Polar Bear Lk on the W side of the pass between Gyllenspetz Cr and the Noeick R. Climb NE up a broad ridge to cross over the high shoulder immediately S of Polar Bear Pk (2470m) and descend beyond to 1400m in the upper Nusatsum R, just SE of a lake at 1200m. This lake can also be reached directly from the Nusatsum forest service road via a short trail that leaves the road on the S side of a bridge at km 25 and climbs E to a viewpoint adjacent to Odegaard Falls at 900m.

From the upper Nusatsum R valley, ascend E along the S side of a steep icefall to reach the neve at the head of Nordschow Cr. A smooth ski run leads down the Itasca Gl to 1400m in Nordschow Cr with views of the large rock faces of Mt Arjuna. Continue N with a long climb through the pass E of Mt Arjuna and descend the glacier beyond (avoiding the major icefall at 1750m on the E) to a lake at

1000m at the head of Noomst Cr.

The original traverse party exited to roads that climb to 500m in Noomst Cr. This route is particularly scenic but crosses some of the biggest slide alder in the world, and the logging roads are now overgrown. The recommended route climbs the steep slope W of the lake at the head of Noomst Cr and skirts through the two 1860m passes E and N of Happy Meadow Dome, and across the head of Cacoohtin Cr to reach Mosquito Pass. Descend the slopes W of Mosquito Pass to a logging road on the E side of the Nusatsum R. A flagged route known as Cook's Trail descends through steep timber on the S side of the main creek draining W from Mosquito Pass.

A rugged variation to this traverse was done in 2006 by James Floyer and Chris Michalak. They traveled N to S and rather than climbing over Polar Bear Pk, they descended steep avalanche slopes into the head of Gyllenspetz Cr, climbed SE to the Borealis Gl and eventually ended up at the E end of Ape Lk.

Logging roads run 30km up the W side of the Talchako R to just N of Ape Cr. The main road is at a low elevation and might provide access to the SE end of the Nusatsum Divide.

See also *VOCJ* 1995–96, p. 25

Descending the Itasca Gl with Mt Arjuna beyond.



## Defiance Glacier

Length: 1 day

Total Distance: 15km

Elevation Gain: 1700m

Start: 300m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: 93D/8

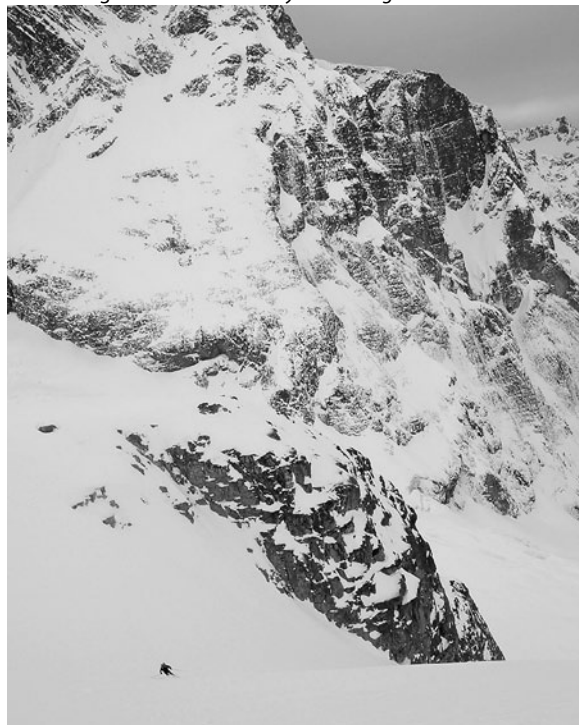
Best: Mar–May

Defiance Mtn is a tremendous spire that rises 2500m from the Bella Coola valley. Logging roads in Cacohtin Cr provide access to a spectacular day trip to glaciers on the N side of Defiance Mtn.

Cacohtin Cr lies 10km E of the Nusatsum R. Logging roads climb from the Bella Coola valley up the W side of the creek. The road crosses the creek at about 500m and climbs into the SE branch of Cacohtin Cr. Beyond the end of the road at 800m, ski up the creek and open avalanche slopes higher up to gain the Defiance Gl above 1500m. Ascend the E side of the glacier to the 2000m shoulder NE of the Defiance Mtn. This is an excellent day trip with spectacular views of the N face of Defiance Mtn and peaks at the head of Noomst Cr. The glacier offers a tremendous 1200m run down to the logging road.

It is possible that the shoulder N of Defiance Mtn could be reached from Noomst Cr so that Cacohtin Cr could be used as a spectacular, relatively bush-free exit from the Nusatsum Divide.

Descending Defiance Gl. *Photo by Steve Hodgson*



View of rugged peaks at the head of Tsini Tsini Cr, S of Stupendous Mtn. *Photo by Steve Hodgson*

## Stupendous Mountain 2700m

Length: 2 days

Total Distance: 21km

Elevation Gain: 2500m

Start: 200m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: 93D/8

Best: Mar

Stupendous Mtn is a broad summit that rises 2600m above the Bella Coola valley. The name describes it accurately. It requires a bit of effort to reach gentler slopes on the S side of the mountain but these offer long runs in a spectacular setting.

Turn off Hwy 20 a few kilometres E of Burnt Bridge Cr and cross the Bella Coola R. Turn left at the T-junction and follow the Talchako forest road for about 8km to Tsini Tsini Cr. The best route starts right off the Talchako forest road at a firewood-cutting area on the W side of the creek. Gain about 200m of elevation through old-growth forest to reach an overgrown cutblock. The second growth in the cutblock is very thick, so aim carefully to pick up an old logging road. Continue up the valley and eventually return to old-growth beyond the cutblock. From here the route is fairly natural. The valley bottom is very narrow and is crossed by several large avalanche paths. Travel is best with a decent mid-winter snowpack. Mostly open terrain above 1000m leads to the broad southern slopes of Stupendous Mtn. This is a spectacular area with tremendous views of the N face of Mt Nyland across Tsini Tsini Cr and descents of over 1600m. The main runs off Stupendous Mtn are used regularly by Bella Coola Heli Sports, so you will want to discuss your plans with them ahead of time.



Descending SE from the Mongol–Jacobsen col onto the Monarch Icefield.

## Monarch Icefield

Length: 10–14 days

Best: Apr–May

Terrain: Complex

Map: 93D/1, 92M/16, 92N/13

The Monarch Icefield is the first large conglomeration of glaciers SE of Bella Coola. It is comprised mainly of the sprawling Jacobsen and Talchako Gl's that drain E and is bounded on the S and W by a series of glaciers that plunge from its perimeter into the deep coastal valleys of the Sheemahant and Taleomy Rs. Summits are generally quite high and rugged and offer some of the most spectacular scenery in the Coast Mountains outside of the Waddington Range.

The icefield is about 50km long and 10–20km wide. The W side of the icefield offers fabulous ski mountaineering. Summits tend to be a bit spread out for a true base camp but are well suited to a roving style of base camp with stays of several days in a few different locations.

Traverses across the icefield are also popular and are described separately below.

The Monarch Icefield is named for Mt Monarch (3550m) on the SE corner of the icefield. The huge steep pyramid is

the highest summit in the Coast Mountains outside of the Waddington Range. Skis were first used on the icefield in 1953 by a party of climbers who skied across the icefield from Ape Lk to make the second ascent of Mt Monarch via its W face (CAJ 1954, p. 7). The 1000m 50° face was skied in 2003 by Ptor Spricenieks and Chris Kettles ([www.biglines.com](http://www.biglines.com)).

### Access

Because of its proximity to Bella Coola, access to the Monarch Icefield is relatively straightforward. Overland routes are popular, and many trips do not rely on air support. The most direct approach to the Monarch Icefield is via the Ape Lk area (see above). Follow Ape Lake Trail and alpine benches above the Noeick R to reach alpine terrain surrounding Ape Lk. The usual route to the Monarch Icefield crosses the upper Noeick R on snowbridges about 5km NW of Ape Lk. Ascend the gentle Noeick Gl and traverse E across a glaciated bench at 1850m to reach the upper Fyles Gl. Avoid an icefall on the Fyles Gl at about 2100m by swinging over to the E side of the glacier. Continue to the head of the glacier and ski through the 2350m pass E of

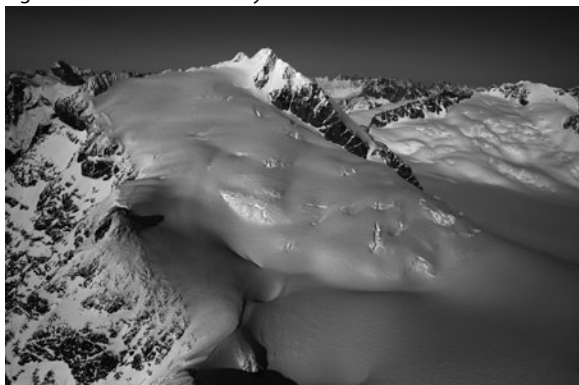


The N side of Cerberus Mtn from the base of Mt Geryon.

Mongol Mtn to a tremendous view of the Monarch Icefield. Descend 250m onto the main branch of the Jacobsen Gl.

This is an enjoyable approach that takes approximately 3 days to ski to the Jacobsen Gl from the Nusatsum forest service road. The route is straightforward—with only a short stretch of forest travel—and is very scenic. This approach is also suitable for lightweight toboggans. The main part of the icefield is only about 50km from the Bella Coola valley,

Ogre Mtn from the S. *Photo by John Scurlock*



and a helicopter drop-off or airdrop is also common, especially for longer trips.

Approaches from Ape Lk have also been used. There is an icefall on the lower Fyles Gl at 1660m, which can be avoided on the W. If ascending directly from Ape Lk, unglaciated terrain W of the Ape Gl provides the best route onto the upper Fyles Gl. An alternative route travels SE from Ape Lk to reach the Jacobsen Gl directly. This avoids ascending the Fyles Gl but requires negotiating some major crevassed areas on the Jacobsen Gl at about 1700 and 2000m.

Ref: CAJ 1992, p. 36

## Peaks

Most summits suitable for skiing lie along the corridor surrounding the main divide between the Talchako and Sheemahant drainages. Mountains on the W edge of the Monarch Icefield are particularly spectacular and several are outstanding ski ascents with incredible views of large glaciers spilling off the icefield into the deep coastal drainages of the Taleomy and Sheemahant Rs. Most peaks typically rise 500–800m above the main glaciers and often involve short snow climbs to ascend the final summit.





Above: Skiing off Ogre Mtn.

### **Ogre Mountain 2930m**

Ogre Mtn is a tremendous ski ascent. The recommended route ascends the glacier S of the summit by avoiding crevasses on the W. The final peak is a short scramble. The descent is a 600m run. Skiing on the upper portion of the route is especially scenic, with stunning views of the Monarch Icefield and the icy N face of Cerberus Mtn.

### **Mongol Mountain 2840m**

The 2840m summit 1km SW of Mongol Mtn rises 800m above the neve at the head of the Taleomy Gl and is a recommended ski ascent. It is slightly higher than the labeled E peak of Mongol Mtn. Ascend the glacier S of the summit by swinging W of the main crevassed area at 2300m.

### **Mt Jacobsen 3030m**

The beautiful twin summits of Mt Jacobsen lie at the N edge of the icefield above Ape Lk and are visible from most parts of the region. The main E summit of Mt Jacobsen is a class 3 scramble from the col between the two peaks and is not often climbed by ski parties. The slightly lower W peak has a prominent glaciated couloir/face on its SE side that is a striking 600m ski descent. Ascend the couloir by kicking steps up to the ridge crest. The couloir is mostly 35° with a steep section up to 45° in the middle. Crevasses and exposed ice near the narrowest part of the couloir halfway up can be avoided by sticking to climber's right. Mt Satan,

Below: Ascending the SW peak of Mongol Mtn.





Mt Jacobsen W Pk from the SE. Photo by John Scurlock

4km S of Mt Jacobsen, is also a short worthwhile ascent. Approach via the W ridge.

### **Mt Dagon 2870m**

Mt Dagon and Erewhon Mtn lie near the crest of the main icefield and are popular ascents. Mt Dagon is a short scramble via its N ridge, which can be reached from the SW by crossing a bergschrund. Erewhon Mtn is a ski ascent from the N.

### **Mt Geryon 2960m**

Mt Geryon is a striking summit on the SW side of the main icefield. It is reached from the head of the Jacobsen Gl by skiing through the col immediately W of Chili Tower. The upper W ridge is an easy scramble, and in good conditions, skis can be taken to its base up steep slopes S of the summit. From the top there are fabulous views of the Taleomy Gl and Cerberus Mtn.

### **Cerberus Mountain 3140m**

Cerberus Mtn is the highest summit on the icefield and is a spectacular peak with huge dollops of ice hanging off its

Camp below Mt Satan.



Cerberus Mtn from the NW. Photo by John Scurlock

N side. It is a complicated summit and is best reached from a camp on the upper Jacobsen Gl by spiraling around the E and S sides of the mountain. Drop S across the head of the Sumquolt Gl and ski through the pass with Basin Pk to climb into the cirque immediately W of Cerberus. A steep snow slope can be followed to the summit (possibly with skis in good conditions). Be especially cautious here, as the upper slope lies above a large ice cliff. A gully next to the rock can be used to avoid the most exposed section.

### **Princess Mountain 2920m**

Princess Mtn is an attractive summit on the SE corner of the icefield. Approach the summit via the glacier on the NW side of the mountain. The glacier can offer an excellent 500m ski run but is becoming badly crevassed in recent years and is not always passable. The summit is a snow climb from the head of the glacier via the W ridge, with a difficult gap just before the true N summit. A 2840m summit 4km to the NE of Princess Mtn can be climbed on skis via a long glacier from the N.

View NW from Mt Dagon.





View SE to Princess Mtn from a camp on the Monarch Icefield.

## Monarch Icefield Traverse

Length: 16 days

Total Distance: 120km

Elevation Gain: 3800m

Start: 400m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 93C/5, 93C/4, 92N/13, 92M/16, 93D/1

Best: Apr–May

John Baldwin, Steve Ludwig, Helen Sovdat, May 1987, *CAJ* 1988, p. 72

This is an incredibly scenic and varied traverse that is repeated regularly. The route forms a horseshoe around the drainage of the Talchako R. It combines an approach on subalpine lakes in Tweedsmuir Park with a crossing of the Monarch Icefield and either an exit past Ape Lk or a rugged finish along the glaciers of the Nusatsum Divide. It does not involve any complicated logistics and is the most popular traverse across the Monarch Icefield. Routefinding is generally straightforward.

### Route

The traverse starts by approaching the E side of the icefield via the chain of lakes on Hunlen Cr in Tweedsmuir South Provincial Park. This is an attractive section of the traverse requiring approximately 4–5 days to reach the Talchako Gl. Begin where the main highway drops to the Bella Coola valley. A jeep road runs 12km up the E side of the Atnarko

R. The rough 2WD road is not maintained in winter and is susceptible to spring flooding in late May and early June. A trail continues beyond crossing the Atnarko R at the outlet of Stillwater Lk and climbing up the ridge W of Hunlen Cr to reach Turner Lk (1100m) after 16km. The spectacular Hunlen Falls, just N of the lake outlet, plunge over a 260m cliff and are a must-see.

It is a pleasant ski down the Turner Lk chain. Junker Lk and Widgeon Lk are especially scenic. There are cabins 3/4 of the way down the W side of Turner Lk. (To use the cabins contact Hunlen Wilderness Camp through [www.tweedsmuirair.com](http://www.tweedsmuirair.com) or at PO Box 308, Bella Coola, V0T 1C0). Ice begins to leave Turner Lk after mid to late April, and a trail on the E side of the lake can be used to reach Junker Lk later in the spring.

From the E end of Widgeon Lk, climb S to reach meadows near treeline. Traverse S on scenic benches at treeline above Sunshine Valley and the Talchako R and continue S through Pandemonium Pass to reach the edge of the Monarch Icefield on the Talchako Gl near 1430m.

Once on the Talchako Gl, ski W across the Monarch Icefield on the huge upper branches of the Talchako and



Skiing across the Monarch Icefield.

Jacobsen Gl is by crossing through the 2500m pass between Mt Dagon and Erehwon Mtn. The icefield is generally straightforward to travel on and is relatively crevasse free.

From the Jacobsen Gl at the N end of the icefield, ascend N through a 2350m pass E of Mongol Mtn to gain the head of the Fyles Gl S of Ape Lk (see above). The route finishes with a sidehill traverse past Polar Bear Lk and an exit to the Nusatsum forest service road via Ape Lake Trail.

Detailed descriptions of portions of the route, recommended side trips and access are given under the separate headings for Ape Lk and the Monarch Icefield above.

For trip reports see: *VOCJ* 1995–96, p. 25; *VOCJ* 2002–03, p. 63; [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com)

### Logistics

Airdrops can be staged from Bella Coola or with White Saddle Air from Bluff Lk. The traverse has also been done without the aid of air support. With no airdrop, it is recommended that you do the trip in reverse, as the approach to Ape Lk is much better suited to heavy loads than the approach to Tweedsmuir Park. Lightweight toboggans have been used to carry supplies to Ape Lk and across the Monarch Icefield.

### Variations

The route described above exits from Polar Bear Lk to the head of the Nusatsum R. This is the shortest and least technical version of the traverse and has been done in as little as 12 days in good conditions. The traverse is often extended by skiing N along the Nusatsum Divide (see above). Leave the above route SW of Polar Bear Pk and follow the Nusatsum Divide traverse across the Itasca Gl and past Mt Arjuna to the head of Noomst Cr. This variation has been repeated several times and forms a complete horseshoe around the Talchako R. It adds 30km to the distance and 2900m to the elevation gain given above and takes an extra 3 days in good conditions.

A side trail climbs W from Turner Lk to Panorama Ridge, and a few parties have included this area in their traverse. Glacier Mtn (2600m) S of the attractive Echo Lk is the obvious objective here and gives tremendous views of the Monarch Icefield and the mountains surrounding the Talchako R.



View SW across the Ha-iltzuk Icefield towards Silverthrone Mtn from Pk 2710.

## Ha-iltzuk Icefield

Length: 10–14 days

Best: Apr–May

John Clarke, July 1973, *CAJ* 1974, p. 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92N/4,5,12, 92M/8,9

The Ha-iltzuk Icefield is the huge region of ice W of the Klinaklini R. With an area of approximately 1200km<sup>2</sup>, this is the largest icefield in the Coast Mountains S of the Boundary Ranges and contains some of the most remote areas of wilderness S of Bella Coola. One of the main features of the icefield is the Klinaklini Gl. Its main trunk is over 40km long and terminates at an elevation of 150m above sea level.

Summits are heavily glaciated and the entire region is relatively gentle and generally not difficult to travel on skis, though experience in glacier travel is essential. The nearest air support is White Saddle Air at Bluff Lk, approximately 90km E of Silverthrone Mtn.

Ha-iltzuk is an unofficial name first used in the 1936 *Canadian Alpine Journal* by Don Munday, and the origins of the name and various spellings are given in an article on the first ascent of Silverthrone Mtn (*CAJ* 1936, p. 26).

### Traverses

Almost all trips to the Ha-iltzuk Icefield have been on skis

and most have been in the form of traverses. Approaches are possible from the Monarch Icefield, Knight Inlet and Owikeno Lk, and a variety of traverses have crossed the icefield in different directions. The most popular traverse is a long alpine route from Bella Coola to Knight Inlet across both the Monarch and Ha-iltzuk Icefields. The icefield has also been crossed from Owikeno Lk to Knight Inlet and has been included in a horseshoe traverse around the drainage of the Machmell R. These traverses are described separately below.

### Peaks

As the icefield is more than 30km wide, the higher summits tend to be spread out between the various branches of the main glaciers. As a result, ski ascents are best made from several camp locations rather than a single, fixed base camp. Summits are typically draped in ice and rise anywhere from 300 to 1200m above the main glaciers. Most are straightforward and well suited to ski ascents.

### Silverthrone Mountain

**2870m**

Silverthrone Mtn is the highest summit on the icefield and is a recommended ascent. It is a broad snowy peak, and glaciers to the E are easily ascended to reach the NE ridge near 2750m. It was first climbed in 1936 (*CAJ* 1936, p. 26)



View S from the summit of Mt Somolenko.

and then not again until 1982! It has also been climbed via the NW ridge by skiing into the basin W of the peak from the Pashleth Gl.

### **Triplex Mountain 2620m**

Summits NE of Silverthrone Mtn, including Triplex Mtn and peaks at the head of the Kilippi Gl are enjoyable ski ascents (with some minor scrambling, CAJ 1974, p. 4). Most rise less than 300m above the icefield and several can be climbed in an afternoon. There is some skiing on Mt Fitzgerald, and it is a pleasant run over to Mt Huth with good views of Silverthrone Mtn (CAJ 1985, p. 4).

### **Pk 2710**

The next highest peaks on the icefield are unnamed and lie between the two N branches of the Klinaklini Gl (CAJ 1985, p. 4). Pk 2710 is a bulky summit rising approximately 1200m above the main trunk of the glacier. It is heavily glaciated and is a recommended ascent on skis from the W, giving excellent views. Nearby Pk 2650, 4 km to the NW, is a short snow climb from the E via the upper NE ridge. The area E of the Klinaklini Gl is known as Middle Ground. Summits here are lower but more abrupt (CAJ 1987, p. 37).

Skiing off the W side of Mt Somolenko.





**Mt Somolenko****2650m**

Mt Somolenko is the highest and most attractive summit on the icefield S of Silverthorne Mtn. Though rising 1000m above the Silverthorne Gl, it is easily climbed from the W, where it is less than 400m above the crest of the icefield. It is an enjoyable snow climb via its N ridge. Wolverine tracks have been reported near the summit. Most summits S of Mt Somolenko are gentle snow domes. Those, such as Mt Ardern, that lie above the deep valleys on the edge of the icefield tend to give the best views (CAJ 1989, p. 95–96; CAJ 1992, p. 46). For a glimpse of the rugged trench of the Sat-salla Gl, an ascent of the 2320m summit at GR031920 is recommended.

**Klinaklini Peak****2620m**

Peaks surrounding the Tumult Gl are decidedly more rugged than on the main Ha-iltzuk Icefield (CAJ 1974, p. 4). Kolos Mtn, at the head of the Tumult Gl (GR910853), is a recommended side trip with incredible views of the Sat-salla R. One of the finest summits in the area is Klinaklini Pk, located on the divide between Tumult Cr and the head of the Sim R (GR060762). Skis can be taken to the base of

Ascending Klinaklini Pk with Klinaklini Gl visible behind.



the final 45° snow slope on the N side of the mountain, from which the summit is a 200m snow climb. It provides tremendous views of the main trunk of the Klinaklini Gl and the Ha-iltzuk Icefield.

Ref: CAJ 1936, p. 26; CAJ 1974, p. 4; CAJ 1983, p. 10; CAJ 1983, p. 29; CAJ 1985, p. 4; CAJ 1987, p. 37; CAJ 1989, p. 95; CAJ 1992, p. 46; CAJ 1995, p. 66.

**Monarch–Ha-iltzuk Traverse**

Length: 20–30 days

Difficulty: 4

Total Distance: 160km

Terrain: Complex

Elevation Gain: 8400m

Map: 92N/4,5,12,13, 92M/8,16, 93D/1

Start: 400m

Best: Apr–May

John Baldwin, Steve Ludwig, Helen Sovdat, Brian Sheffield and Graham Underhill, May 1982, CAJ 1983, p. 10

The entire range of mountains W of the Klinaklini R has been traversed from Bella Coola to Knight Inlet. This a wild traverse through some of the most remote and heavily glaciated terrain in the southern Coast Mountains. It crosses both the Monarch and Ha-iltzuk Icefields, and virtually the entire route is on glaciers. Though there are several difficult sections, much of the route is on large gentle glaciers and routefinding is generally straightforward. There are no escape routes. The traverse is repeated every few years.

**Route**

The traverse starts from the Bella Coola valley. Drive up the Nusatsum R road and follow Ape Lake Trail across the headwaters of the Noeick R to the Ape Lk area (see above). Cross the upper Noeick R on snowbridges, ascend the Noeick and Fyles Gl, ski through the 2350m col E of Mongol Mtn and descend 250m onto the Jacobsen Gl and the Monarch Icefield.

Ski SW across the Monarch Icefield, following the gentle Jacobsen Gl through the broad 2500m pass between Mt Dagon and Erewhon Mtn. Continue SW across the huge upper branch of the Talchako Gl to the SW corner of the icefield immediately NE of Princess Mtn. The icefield is generally straightforward to travel on and is relatively crevasse free.

From Princess Mtn, make an ascending traverse E around the head of the Sheemahant Gl to reach a high shoulder 3km SW of Page Mtn. The first crux of the trip is descending a 37° slope S from GR977506 to reach the narrow 2260m pass E of the Sheemahant Gl. Follow gentle ridge-top glaciers S along the divide between the Klinaklini R and the headwaters of the Sheemahant and Machmell Rs. Where the divide narrows at the head of the Machmell R, ski SW on ridges to gain the broad 2350m saddle E of Mt



Looking S from a camp near the head of the Machmell R at the N end of the Ha-iltzuk Icefield.

Swordy. Turn SE and follow a series of narrow glaciers and passes that run across the head of Syme Cr in a straight line for 10km onto the main Ha-iltzuk Icefield. In poor weather, the climb over Mt Swordy has been avoided by dropping into the deep valley to the E (CAJ 1983, p. 10).

Many variations across the main icefield are possible, as the terrain is relatively gentle and easy to travel. Most parties have crossed the upper lobes of the Klinaklini Gl and reached the Silverthrone Gl either via the 2040m pass 5km SE of Mt Fitzgerald (at the corner of 4 map sheets) or by crossing over the shoulder of Triplex Mtn (one short steep section) to ski through the pass immediately E of Silverthrone Mtn. The Silverthrone Gl is easily followed to the S rim of the main icefield.

At the head of the Satsalla Gl, ski E down the Hamatsa Gl, avoiding the worst of a major icefall at 1360m by sneaking along the S side of the glacier. Most parties have roped up on this section. From a junction at 1200m, the S branch of the Hamatsa Gl offers easy traveling to the head of the Tumult Gl. Descend the Tumult Gl for about 5km to 1650m and ski up the S branch of the glacier to gain the glaciated divide between the Satsalla R and Tumult Cr. Follow the divide SE to the first of two steep, heavily glaciated cirques that drain N to Tumult Cr. The second crux of the trip is

traversing these two drainages. Follow a ramp and descend 30° slopes at GR010769 to cross a flat glacier below a steep icefall and climb to the 1900m shoulder beyond. The second cirque can be crossed by angling down through crevasses to the centre of the basin at 1680m and making an ascending traverse out of the basin to gain the ridge N of Klinaklini Pk at 2000m.

Descending slopes near the head of the Machmell R at the N end of the Ha-iltzuk Icefield. This photo was on the cover of the 1985 Canadian Alpine Journal. Photo by John Clarke





Crossing ridges E of the Satsalla Gl.

To exit to Knight Inlet, traverse the basin NE of Klinaklini Pk to reach the ridge descending to the E (directly opposite Devereux Lk). Partially overgrown spur roads can be picked up near 600m and followed down to the main logging road at the base of the hillside.

Ref: CAJ 1983, p. 10; CAJ 1994, p. 74; BCM 1996, p. 68; CAJ 1997, p. 86; CAJ 2002, p. 4; CAJ 2002, p. 100.

### Side Trips

This traverse offers a wide variety of excellent side trips along the route. Those on the Monarch and Ha-iltzuk Icefield are described separately above. Recommended ski ascents include Polar Bear Pk, Ogre Mtn, Erewhon Mtn, Pk 2710 on the Ha-iltzuk Icefield, Silverthrone Mtn, Mt Somolenko, the 2440m dome adjacent to Mt Kinch, Kolos Mtn and Klinaklini Pk.

### Variations

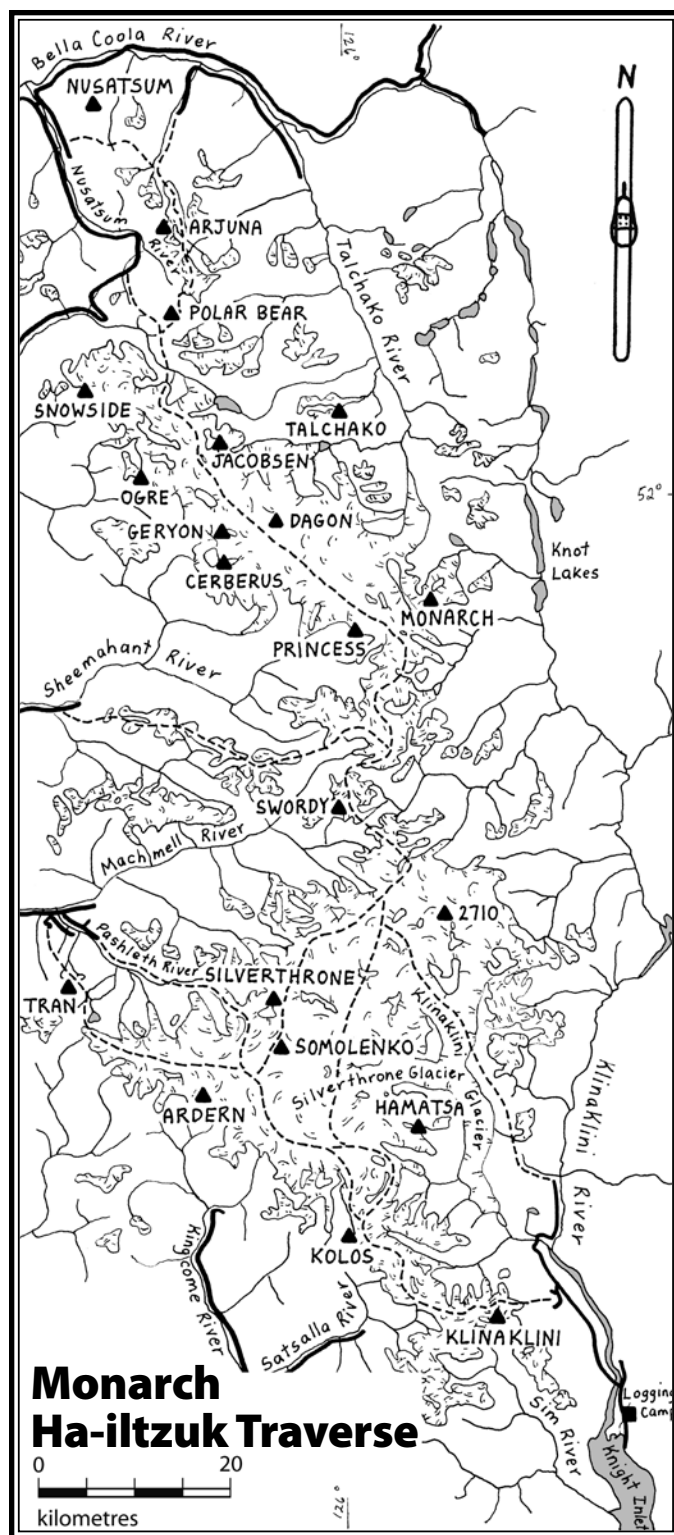
In good conditions, the head of the Tumult Gl has also been reached from the S end of the Ha-iltzuk Icefield by a high route across the rugged divide E of the Satsalla Gl. This variation requires careful routefinding to cross several

steep snow slopes but is especially spectacular. Cross the ridge W of Pk 2296 near 2200m, and after dropping down 35° slopes into the basin beyond, climb through a 2130m col to descend SE onto the main trunk of the S branch of the Hamatsa Gl immediately E of Pk 2440 (also a recommended side trip).

The Tumult Gl has been used as an exit route. The

After a three-day storm.





Crossing the glaciated cirque W of Klinaklini Pk.

lower Tumult Gl is heavily crevassed but can be descended on its S margin. Descending Tumult Cr involves some steep sidehilling. Pick up logging roads less than 2km SE of where Tumult Cr joins the W Klinaklini R (CAJ 1983, p. 29 and CAJ 1994, p. 74).

The shortest route to the Ha-iltzuk Icefield is from more recent logging roads on the main Klinaklini R. The roads cross the W Klinaklini R approximately 2km downstream from Tumult Cr at GR092849 and run up the W side of the main Klinaklini R for 12km to opposite Hoodoo Cr and beyond. They provide quick access to the S end of the alpine ridges E of the Klinaklini Gl known as Middle Ground (CAJ 2002, p. 100).

The main trunk of the Klinaklini Gl has also been used as an exit route (CAJ 1987, p. 37) but is not recommended as it involves substantial travel on bare ice at lower elevations on the snout of the Klinaklini Gl, and Tumult Cr is only fordable early in the spring when the water is low.



Descending the upper Silverthrone Gl S of Mt Somolenko.

## Ha-iltzuk Icefield Traverse

Length: 15–20 days

Total Distance: 95km

Elevation Gain: 5200m

Start: 100m

Difficulty: 4

Terrain: Complex

Map: 92N/4,5,12, 92M/8,9

Best: Apr–May

John Clarke and Emily Butler, May 1988, *CAJ* 1989, p. 95

The S rim of the Ha-iltzuk Icefield forms a gentle divide, overlooking the headwaters of the Kingcome and Wake-man Rs. The snowy divide has been traversed from Owike-no Lk to Knight Inlet and mixes alternating views of the wide expanse of the icefield with glimpses of the deep coastal drainages to the S.

Several access routes from logging roads on the Machmell R have been used to approach the Ha-iltzuk Icefield from the W. However, roads in the Machmell R have recently been deactivated and the logging camp at Owikenno Lk has been removed. As a result, approaches from the W are now far less practical, and traverses from Owikenno Lk will likely see very little traffic. The routes are mentioned briefly, as road conditions may change and helicopter access is also possible.

Logging roads extend about 20km up the Machmell R to Pashleth Cr. Two approaches have been used from this junction. The most popular route leaves logging roads on the Machmell R near the junction with Pashleth Cr and climbs S across the shoulder of Mt Tran to reach the

attractive meadows and lakes in upper Selman Cr. The main divide is reached beyond Selman Lk and can be followed SE across the icefield. It also appears feasible to reach Selman Lk via the long divide N of Cheetwoot Cr and logging roads on the Neechanz R. The second route starts from logging roads that extend several kilometres up the N side of Pashleth Cr and follows game trails along the rim of a canyon on Pashleth Cr to the Pashleth Gl (*CAJ* 1992, p. 46). Both routes traverse S of Mt Somolenko and cross the head of the Satsalla Gl to follow the exit routes to Knight Inlet described above. Except for access, the terrain is suitable for lightweight toboggans, and the traverse has been done without an airdrop by carrying 14 days food up Pashleth Cr to the Pashleth Gl (*CAJ* 1995, p. 66).

On the N side of the Machmell R, the long isolated divide between the Machmell and Sheemahant Rs has been traversed on skis to reach the Ha-iltzuk Icefield and form a horseshoe route around the drainage of the Machmell R (*CAJ* 1985, p. 4). This is a relatively enjoyable and scenic route with summits between 2100m and 2500m. There are good ski slopes and most peaks are only short ascents from the main divide. The Machmell–Sheemahant divide may also be combined with routes to the Monarch Icefield to form a horseshoe traverse of the Sheemahant R with an exit to Ape Lk.





Skiing on the Solitaire GI in the Howson Range. *Photo by Linda Bily*

**H**udson Bay Mountain rises 2000m above Smithers, marking the abrupt transition from the broad Bulkley River valley to the rugged Hazelton and Coast Mountains. The terrain is characteristic of the Interior side of the range, with steep rocky summits rising to 2500m from broad subalpine valleys. Glaciation is generally light, and the region offers excellent skiing in attractive alpine basins, meadows and long avalanche paths.

This chapter gives an introduction to backcountry skiing and ski mountaineering in the Smithers area. It describes the most popular trips as well as giving a few ideas for other areas to explore. Ski trips range from the all-time spectacular 1700m descent of Kathlyn Face on Hudson Bay Mountain to a growing number of day and overnight trips in the Babine Mountains and the Rocher Déboulé Range. There are several backcountry cabins in the area. One of the highlights of the region is a week of outstanding ski mountaineering at Burnie Glacier Chalet in the spectacular Howson Range, with powder runs up to 1500m long.

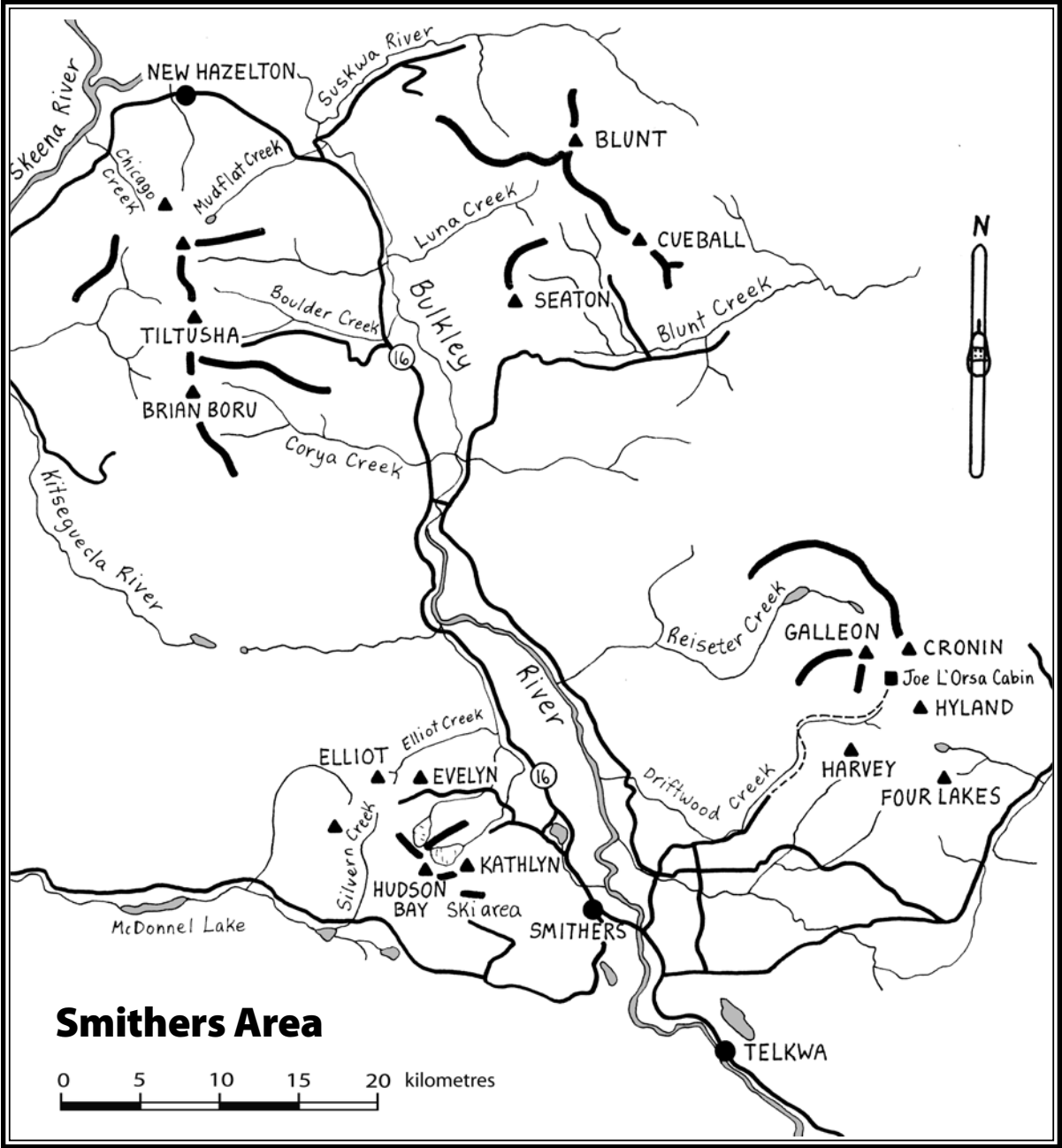
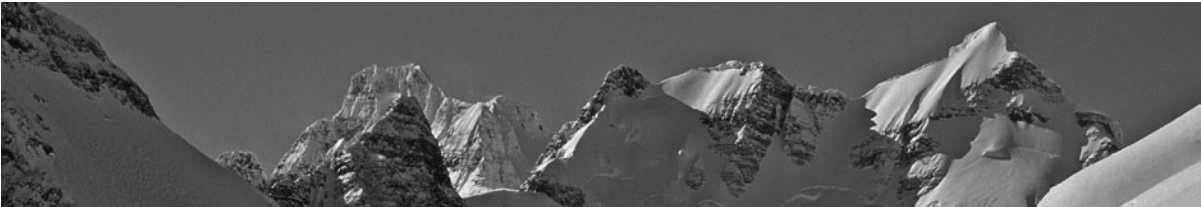
## Smithers

Smithers is located halfway between the major northern centres of Prince George and Prince Rupert and has a population of about 11,000 people. By road, it is a 12 hour drive of 1160km from Vancouver. Distances from Calgary and Edmonton are similar. Smithers is served by direct 1.5 hour flights from Vancouver daily ([www.aircanada.com](http://www.aircanada.com) or [www.hawkair.ca](http://www.hawkair.ca)). Bus or rail transportation is also available.

Smithers lies in the Bulkley Valley at an elevation of 540m. There are downhill and cross-country ski facilities a 20 minute drive from town on the shoulder of nearby Hudson Bay Mtn (see [www.skismithers.com](http://www.skismithers.com) and [www.bvnordic.ca](http://www.bvnordic.ca)). The area boasts an active community of backcountry skiers, which includes the local Bulkley-Skeena chapter of the Prince George ACC (see [www.vts.bc.ca/acc-pg](http://www.vts.bc.ca/acc-pg)). A Valhalla Pure outdoor store sells and rents ski-mountaineering gear (250-847-0200 or [www.valhalla-smithers.com](http://www.valhalla-smithers.com)).

A wide range of affordable accommodation is available







Hudson Bay Mtn, rising behind Smithers, offers a wide range of ski mountaineering trips.

in Smithers ([www.tourismsmithers.com](http://www.tourismsmithers.com)). The Stork Nest Inn ([www.storknestinn.com](http://www.storknestinn.com)) is run by local backcountry skiers and is recommended.

### Access

Most trips are only a short drive from Smithers. Access is from Hwy 16, which follows the Bulkley R NW to the Skeena R. Important distances heading N from Smithers are:

- km 4—Lake Kathlyn Road
- km 15—Evelyn Station
- km 32—Morisetown Falls, Blunt Creek Road
- km 43—Boulder Creek
- km 60—Mudflat Creek
- km 68—New Hazelton

Important distances heading S from Smithers are:

- km 3—Old Babine Lake Road
- km 6—Babine Lake Road
- km 11—Telkwa

### Snow Conditions

The region lies in a transition zone between the heavy Kitimat snowbelt on the W and drier, colder, continental conditions on the E. Snowfall ranges from 5m at the ski area on Hudson Bay Mtn to more than 11m in the Howson Range. Typical snowpacks range from 1.8m to 5m across the region. Snow conditions are usually excellent. At low elevations, Smithers and the surrounding valleys typically have snow on the ground for 4 months a year, and most side roads cannot be driven unless plowed. On the E side of the region, the Babine Ranges tend to be more windswept and experience a shallower more continental snowpack.

### Trip Planning

#### Weather

[www.weatheroffice.gc.ca](http://www.weatheroffice.gc.ca) 250-847-1958

#### Snow Report

[www.skismithers.com](http://www.skismithers.com) 250-847-2550

### Avalanche Information

[www.avalanche.ca](http://www.avalanche.ca) 1-800-667-1105

See the current bulletin for Northwest BC and check the latest postings on the Skeena/Babine Regional Discussion Board.

### Maps

NTS 1:250,000 sheets 93L, 93M

### Trails

[www.BCNorth.ca](http://www.BCNorth.ca)

*Trails to Timberline* by Einar Blix

### Helicopters

Canadian Helicopters 250-847-9444

[www.canadianhelicopters.ca](http://www.canadianhelicopters.ca)

Highland Helicopters 250-847-3859

Trans North Helicopters 250-847-1808

### Ski Plane

Alpine Lakes Air 250-846-9488

[www.alpinelakesair.com](http://www.alpinelakesair.com)

### Logging Roads

Skeena Stikine Forest District

[www.for.gov.bc.ca/dss](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/dss)

### Multi-use Considerations

Both non-motorized and designated snowmobiling areas have been established across the region to accommodate a wide range of winter recreation. Many of the most popular trips described lie within non-motorized areas established in Babine Mountains Provincial Park, Hudson Bay Mtn, the Howson Range and the Telkwa Range. Snowmobiling is very popular in the Smithers region. There is a designated snowmobiling area at Big Onion in the Babine Mountains Provincial Park. Snowmobiles can be expected on roads in Toboggan Cr, Boulder Cr and Blunt Cr. Snowmobiles are not used in most of the Rocher Déboulé Range because of difficult access.



Setting off from the Praire towards the S summit of Hudson Bay Mtn. Photo by Brian Hall

## Hudson Bay Mountain 2590m

Rising 2000m above Smithers, Hudson Bay Mtn is a prominent Bulkley Valley landmark that offers a variety of excellent ski-mountaineering trips.

### South Summit

**2530m**

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 11km  
Elevation Gain: 1030m  
Start: 1500m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 93L/14  
Best: Dec–Apr

The S summit of Hudson Bay Mountain is easily accessible from the downhill ski area on the S side of the mountain, and offers a straightforward ski trip over gentle high-alpine terrain with great views. This is a recommended ski ascent.

Access is from Ski Smithers. From the S end of town, turn W off Hwy 16 onto King St. Go to Railway Ave and turn left (S). Cross the railroad tracks and follow the ski-hill signs up Hudson Bay Mtn road for 24km. Drive to the last parking lot.



Kicking steps along the final corniced ridge to the S summit of Hudson Bay Mtn. Photo by Christoph Dietzfelbinger

Skin up the W edge of the ski runs to the alpine. Above the ski area, cross the alpine plateau known as “The Prairie” and gain the long gentle SE ridge of Hudson Bay Mtn above Crater Lk. Continue up the narrowing ridge to the divide above the Kathlyn Gl and reach the easy winter summit in a short scramble. Be especially cautious of large poorly visible cornices that hang over the huge cliffs above the glacier (it’s a long ride to the glacier!). The S facing descent, though often wind affected, is a long enjoyable run on high-alpine slopes. A recommended variation is to descend SW into Henderson Cr for a steeper run (of up to 1100m) and then traverse back to The Prairie.

### Kathlyn Face

**2330m**

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 1780m  
Start: 550m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 93L/14  
Best: Mar

The Kathlyn face is the big continuous slope of Hudson Bay Mtn rising above Smithers due W of Kathlyn Lk. This is the cream of the Bulkley Valley ski trips: very steep and



High alpine ski slopes SW of the S summit of Hudson Bay Mtn. Photo by Brian Hall

sustained, enormous vertical, terrific terrain and no bush-whacking. This is a big, serious ski trip, which is sometimes referred to as the 5000 (for its vertical drop in feet).

From Smithers, drive NW on Hwy 16 for about 4km and turn left onto Lk Kathlyn road. Follow the signs to Glacier Gulch. Park at the end of winter maintenance, about 2km W of Kathlyn Lk.

Ski up the road towards Glacier Gulch. After about 500m, the Blue Pearl mine road branches off to the left and leads to the Davidson molybdenum deposit. Follow it for about 300 vertical metres until it intersects a large avalanche chute. This is clearly visible from town. Follow this chute to the last krummholz trees, where it starts to widen. Traverse steeply towards the S for approximately 300m onto the large triangular slope that is obvious from the valley. Ski up this slope until it becomes possible to trend farther S into the large bowl below Kathlyn Pk, above the cliffs into which it rolls over (the snowpack is typically shallow on this part of the traverse). The peak (at GR093743) can be reached by skiing directly up to its N ridge or by traversing the bowl

and reaching the ridge that extends SE from the peak. The descent is a classic 1500m run on 30–35° slopes.

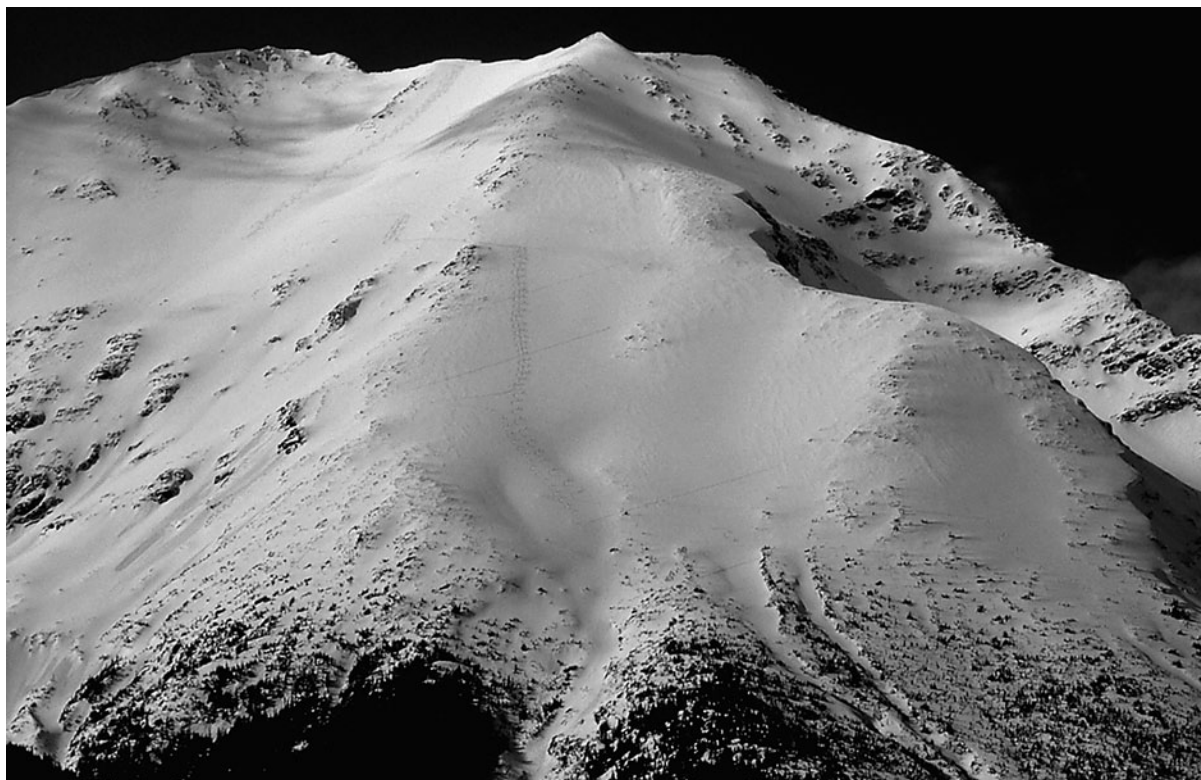
Very stable conditions are required for this route, as it is highly exposed to avalanches from above in the first chute. There are few safe areas, and avalanche involvements anywhere would lead to long rides and burial in nasty terrain traps.

### 7000

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 14km  
Elevation Gain: 1400m  
Start: 1500m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 93L/14  
Best: Mar

This is the classic combination of climbing up the S flank of Hudson Bay Mtn and skiing down the Kathlyn face. It makes a great outing and is the most popular way to ski the Kathlyn face. This is a challenging trip that requires good routefinding skills. From the ski hill, ski up the S ridge of Hudson Bay Mtn. Stay well back from cornices above Simpson Gulch. Continue to the last flat portion of the ridge at about 2350m until you can see an obvious way



Kathlyn Face on the E side of Kathlyn Pk. Photo by Aaron Trowbridge

down a ramp into Simpson Cr. This involves a short, steep, traverse. Ski down Simpson Cr about 500m, then head up towards the N into the col between Kathlyn Pk and the next peak W of it. You will likely have to bootpack over a rocky section near a chokepoint in the slope. Cross over the summit of Kathlyn Pk and enjoy the 1700m descent to the Glacier Gulch road. A car shuttle is recommended before you start.

Note that it is possible to escape to the ski area from the head of Simpson Cr if you decide the conditions are not suitable to ski the Kathlyn face.

Hudson Bay Mtn and Kathlyn Gl from the NE.



## Kathlyn Couloir

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 14km  
Elevation Gain: 1400m  
Start: 1500m

## 2530m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 93L/14  
Best: Mar–Apr

This is a steep prominent 300m couloir at the head of the Kathlyn Gl. The couloir rises just S of the main summit and is visible from Hwy 16 near the airport. This is a very challenging outing. The route to reach the couloir is complex and involves quite a bit of mountaineering, and the couloir itself is a difficult ski descent. It requires excellent conditions and is usually only skied every few winters. It is usually skied as part of a variation to the 7000 route described above. After dropping into the head of Simpson Gulch, climb to the 2300m col immediately E of the winter summit of Hudson Bay Mtn (GR082739). From this col, an exposed ramp angles left down a steep headwall onto the Kathlyn Gl. The first 20m are over 50°, and some parties use a belay to set steps and assess snow conditions. Traverse the ramp to skiers left (beware of cliffs below the fall line) until it is possible to descend to the flats. It is about 1km across the glacier to the base of the couloir. Most par-



Kathlyn Couloir. Photos by Aaron Trowbridge (L) & Greg Brown (R)

ties belay across the bergschrund on the way up and use an ice axe while bootpacking up the couloir. The couloir is approximately 20m wide and 45° overall (with a slightly steeper section at the entrance). After skiing the couloir, descend the Kathlyn Gl to the Glacier Gulch road. This is an excellent 1200m run. Watch for a heavily crevassed area just S of the middle of the glacier at 1850m. Below 1200m, veer to skier's right to avoid the steep cliffs at Twin Falls. This route requires traversing under some steep slopes that are exposed to rockfall and avalanches from above. Consider the avalanche conditions carefully before choosing this route.

This trip is worthwhile even if you get to the base of the couloir and find that conditions are not suitable for a ski descent of the couloir. Note that the officially named Hudson Bay Gl is referred to by locals as the Kathlyn Gl.

## Toboggan Glacier

## 2280m

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 20km  
Elevation Gain: 1730m  
Start: 550m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 93L/14  
Best: Mar–Apr

The Toboggan Gl flows off the N side of Hudson Bay Mtn. Though not skied often, the glacier offers an excellent 1400m descent.

Access is from the Glacier Gulch road, as for the Kathlyn face. Instead of skiing up the Glacier Gulch road, turn right on the Toboggan Cr road shortly beyond the end of the plowed road. The road is flat for its first 3km as it skirts the base of the mountain to a crossing of Toboggan Cr. After that, the road climbs steeply up the N side of the creek into the narrow valley N of the glacier. The road is sometimes used by snowmobilers but crosses steep sidehills that are difficult for sleds to negotiate. Ski up the road for about

5km. To reach the Toboggan Gl, leave the road just after entering the hanging valley at about 960m and angle down into the creek at 860m. It is an easy ski up the creek and past the moraines onto the glacier. The bottom half of the glacier is relatively gentle and generally straightforward to ascend. There are a few crevasses. Also, the route can be threatened by large avalanches on climber's right when the hazard is high. A wide icefall extends across the glacier at about 1900m. Watch for serac and icefall hazard. The icefall is likely best negotiated on its far E side, though it has been crossed in more than one location. Roping up is necessary through the icefall. The obvious destination is the 2280m col between the Kathlyn and Toboggan Gl's. Use caution near the top of the glacier, as there is considerable avalanche hazard due to the steep N facing slopes above.

Depending on conditions, some parties might not feel it is worth taking the time to negotiate the icefall. Turning around below the icefall at 1900m still gives an excellent 1000m run down the glacier and into Toboggan Cr.

Toboggan Gl. Photo by Christoph Dietzfelbinger





The head of the Toboggan Gl can also be reached from the upper Kathlyn Gl by kicking steps for about 70m to reach the intervening col. This makes a good loop trip and a superb enchainment when linked with a traverse in from the ski area or a descent of the Kathlyn Couloir.

## Silvern Lakes

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 20km  
Elevation Gain: 1730m  
Start: 550m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 93L/14  
Best: Jan–Mar

The head of Toboggan Cr rises to a gentle pass above the attractive subalpine basin at the head of Silvern Cr. The meadows and summits around Silvern Lks are attractive for ski touring and offer enjoyable runs.



Looking W across the head of Silvern Cr. Photo by Leigh Purvis

Access is from the Toboggan Cr road described above. It is approximately a 10km ski to the 1600m pass at the head of Toboggan Cr (about 3 hrs). Cross over the pass to gain the attractive alpine basin surrounding Silvern Lks. There are decent 300–500m runs off several 2000m summits as well as good tree skiing at the head of Passby Cr.

Note that there is often some snowmobile traffic on the Toboggan Cr road. The ski down the road can be nasty, as the road is narrow and steep and snowmobile tracks make it difficult to dump speed.

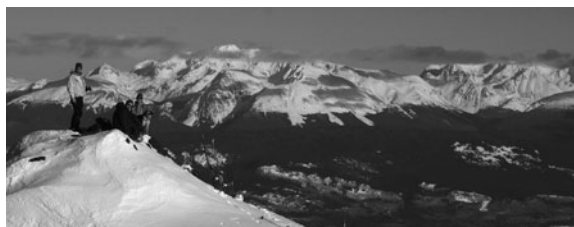
## Mt Evelyn

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 1370m  
Start: 550m

**1920m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 93L/14  
Best: Feb–Mar

Mt Evelyn is a pyramidal summit on the W side of the Bulkley Valley N of Hudson Bay Mtn. The main attraction here is a long avalanche path on the NE side of the mountain that descends towards the railway stop at Evelyn.



View from Mt Evelyn. Photo by Will MacKenzie

There are two different ways to approach Mt Evelyn. The first route ascends the NE side of the mountain. Turn off Hwy 16 at Evelyn Station, 15km N of Smithers. After crossing the railroad tracks, bear right, then turn left on Pope Rd. Follow Pope Rd past a right-angle corner, and turn right on Raufer Rd. Bear left at a T-junction and park at the end of winter maintenance. Follow an old logging road across Elliot Cr and up to its end at about 850m. The road has been brushed out and gives good access straight up to the first large avalanche path on the NE flank of Mt Evelyn. Ascend to treeline and diagonal across open slopes to gain Mt Evelyn via its SE ridge. The descent is a long 1000m run on slopes up to 37°. The only downside is that the bottom portions of the avalanche path can be alder choked unless there is a good snowpack at lower elevations. Also, the upper slopes are typically more wind scoured than the same aspect on Hudson Bay Mtn.

The second access route approaches the S side of Mt Evelyn from the Toboggan Cr road (described above). Ski up the road for about 8km. Ascend Mt Evelyn via its SW slopes. Leave the road at about 1300m and ski up an indistinct ridge between gullies SW of the summit. This trip can be done as a crossover, skiing up from Toboggan Cr and then down the NE flank to exit at Evelyn Station with a car shuttle.

Mountain goats are frequently encountered on Mt Evelyn and in Elliot Cr; please respect their space.

## Elliot Peak

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1460m  
Start: 550m

**2010m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 93L/14  
Best: Feb–Mar

Elliot Pk is located at the head of Elliot Cr, immediately W of Mt Evelyn. This is a recommended mid-winter ski trip, with opportunities for good skiing in the attractive basins surrounding the summit.

Access is the same as for Mt Evelyn. Turn off Hwy 16 at Evelyn Station, 15km N of Smithers. After crossing the rail-



Looking across the head of Elliot Cr. *Photo by Will MacKenzie*

road tracks, bear right, then turn left on Pope Rd. Follow Pope Rd past a right-angle corner, and turn right on Raufer Rd. Bear left at a T-junction and park at the end of winter maintenance. An old logging road has been cut out near a gate on the road, which leads W to a gravel pit. Follow the road through the gravel pit and uphill for another 2km to the point where it flattens out at about 840m and heads N. Pick up a well-used trail that ascends the broad shoulder N of Elliot Cr. (The start of the trail is hard to find but can be picked up at the edge of the steep slope into Elliot Cr.) At about 1050m, the terrain flattens out in an open hemlock forest. Follow blazes to the SW and traverse down steep open slopes below a rock cliff into Elliot Cr. Ski up the S side of the creek across several open avalanche paths and follow the creek to alpine terrain in a large basin at the head of the valley. Elliot Pk is on the W side of the basin (GR038799). Depending on conditions, there are a variety of options for good skiing in any of the surrounding cirques or in glades near treeline with runs up to 600m.

When exiting down Elliot Cr, it is possible, with a good snowpack, to ski all the way down Elliot Cr to near the gravel pit at 620m and climb back out to the N to pick up

the road. This is generally the recommended route but it can be bushy with some blowdowns early in the season, and there is a canyon section in the creek. The alternative is to follow your ascent route out of the creek at about 1000m and descend the trail through tight trees.

Instead of traversing into Elliot Cr on the way up, another possibility is to follow the trail to treeline at 1500m on the N side of Elliot Cr and continue along the broad ridges beyond. There are runs on open slopes in the basin to the N or down avalanche paths into Elliot Cr.

Near treeline in Elliot Cr basin. *Photo by Will MacKenzie*





Looking across Silver King Basin in the South Babine Range. *Photo by Derek Willmott*

## South Babine Range

The Babine Range lies between the Bulkley Valley and Babine Lk, E of Smithers. It is a sprawling range with extensive alpine terrain and relatively gentle summits. This is a popular area for ski mountaineering. It is close to Smithers and offers easy access to the alpine with great views. Skiing ranges from pleasant touring through attractive alpine basins to longer N facing runs.

The Babine Range experiences a shallower more continental snowpack than areas farther W and this should be taken into consideration when evaluating the avalanche hazard. Snow in the high alpine is often wind affected. There is little glaciation, and treeline is about 1500m. In general, the best skiing is in the alpine, as the forest in many areas below treeline is often too thick for good skiing.

The area lies within Babine Mountains Provincial Park. It offers the only backcountry ski cabin in the Smithers area that is accessible in a weekend.

### Access

In the winter, the most common access to the park for skiing is from old mining roads in Driftwood Cr. From

Smithers, drive E for 3km on Hwy 16 and turn left onto Old Babine Lake Rd just past the Bulkley R bridge. Follow the signs for Driftwood Canyon Provincial Park. Beyond Canyon Cr, the main road turns E away from the Bulkley R. At Telkwa High Rd, turn left, follow this road for 2km and then turn right onto Driftwood Rd. Continue on Driftwood Rd to a plowed parking area at the end of winter maintenance about 20km from Smithers, at 840m (GR280795). A mining road continues all the way up Driftwood Cr. It is about a 6km ski up this road to a bridge and junction known as Sunny Point (GR298836). From there a variety of options are possible including day trips to some of the closer summits or multi-day trips to Joe L'Orsa cabin and the summits surrounding the Silver King Basin. These are described below.

Motorized vehicles (including snowmobiles) are not permitted in the park except in a designated snowmobiling area at the S end of the park surrounding Little Onion and Astlais Mtns.



Skiing off Mt Harvey. Photo by Chris McCrum

## Mt Harvey

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 21km  
Elevation Gain: 1260m  
Start: 840m

**1800m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Simple  
Map: 93L/15  
Best: Mar–Apr

Visible from Smithers, Mt Harvey is a low gentle summit on the W side of the Babine Range. It is a short popular trip with great views of the Bulkley Valley.

Access is from Driftwood Cr. Beyond the end of winter maintenance, ski up the mining road beside Driftwood Cr for about 4km. The well-marked Mt Harvey Trail follows an old mining road that switchbacks up the N side of the main creek on the W side of Mt Harvey. It is about 600m to treeline. Continue up broad open slopes to the summit.

Lyon Creek Trail can also be used. This starts about 2km past the end of winter maintenance. Ski E up the well-marked trail onto the S shoulder of Mt Harvey. At treeline, angle up the broad SW ridge onto the summit plateau and ski across to the gentle summit. The recommended descent is to ski down Mt Harvey Trail to Driftwood Cr. Pick up the trail about 1km W of the summit at about 1500m, near treeline (GR319830).

A suggested variation is to ski over the summit and ski out McCabe Trail on Driftwood Cr to make a pleasant loop trip. Descend N down the first draw E of the summit and pick up the trail near treeline. The trail is straightforward to find in winter and has a consistent downhill grade.

## The Galleon

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 28km  
Elevation Gain: 1520m  
Start: 840m

**2380m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 93L/15  
Best: Feb–Apr

Named for its resemblance to a sailing ship, The Galleon is the second-highest peak in Babine Mountains Provincial Park. It can be climbed on skis to the top. This long, gentle



Approaching The Galleon. Photo by Derek Willmott

trip provides great views of the Bulkley Valley and all the ranges to the W, as well as N to the Blunt Range.

Access is from Driftwood Cr. Ski up the road for 7km to the first bridge past Sunny Pt. Just past the bridge, follow Danny Moore Cr north. Depending on snow conditions, the creek may be crossed several times once it flattens out. Past the last trees, keep to the E side of the basin, and using the old moraine ridges gain a small lake at 1620m and eventually follow the valley up onto the broad ramp NW of The Galleon. The highest point is to the SE.

The level section of Danny Moore Basin is exposed to large avalanches from both Lagopus Mtn and Mt Elmsted. Avoid this area after large snowfalls and during rapid warming. The rest of the trip is safe under most conditions. In whiteout conditions, the steep drops off the summit plateau can be hazardous.

In very good and stable conditions, a steep route may be found onto the glacier NE of the summit. The route starts directly from the summit and involves a steep 80m snow slope. The entrance is not corniced and is straightforward to find. The slope is easily bootpacked but has also been skied. Watch for a potential bergshroud at the bottom of

Skiing up Galleon Cr. Photo by Derek Willmott



the slope. Ski S through the 2200m col immediately E of The Galleon and down open slopes into the head of Silver King Basin. It is a 13km ski back out the Silver King Basin trail, making this a great but strenuous loop trip (29km, approximately 13 hours). This route can also be used to ascend The Galleon from Joe L'Orsa Cabin in Silver King Basin.

## Silver King Basin

This is an attractive alpine basin in the centre of Babine Mountains Provincial Park. The comfortable Joe L'Orsa Cabin is located here and makes an excellent base for two or more days of skiing in the surrounding alpine basins.

There are many great ski trips around the basin that link up high-alpine features. Mt Cronin, Reiserer Gl, Mt Hyland and The Galleon are all recommended destinations from the cabin. There are also pleasant touring trips from Silver King Basin to Little Joe Lks or through Hyland Pass, with the longest possibility being a circle tour around Mt Hyland via Eagle Pass. In poor weather, there is tree skiing around the basin below Mt Hyland.

Ascending the W gully of Mt Cronin. *Photo by Aaron Trowbridge*



## Access to Joe L'Orsa Cabin

Length: 2–5 days  
Total Distance: 26km  
Elevation Gain: 600m  
Start: 840m

**1460m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Simple  
Map: 93L/15  
Best: Jan–Apr

Access is from Driftwood Cr; it is a 13km ski up an old mining road to Joe L'Orsa cabin at treeline in Silver King Basin. The trip takes approximately 4 hours.



*Photo by Katy Chambers*

## Joe L'Orsa Cabin

Map: 93L/15  
Cost: \$5  
GR: 355865  
Elevation: 1460m

Capacity: 15–20  
Reservations: no

**Location** Near treeline in Silver King Basin at the head of Driftwood Cr, 3km SW of Mt Cronin in Babine Mountains Provincial Park. It is 23km NE of Smithers.

**Facilities** A large log cabin with a woodstove, firewood, and outhouse, but bring a stove for cooking. No dogs are allowed in the cabin.

**Built** by BC Parks in 1999. Named after Joe L'Orsa a local resident and long time advocate for protection of the Babine Mtns as parkland.

**Contact Information** Reservations are not required, but call BC Parks (3726 Alfred Ave, Smithers, 250-847-7320) before using the cabin.

## Mt Cronin

Total Distance: 6km  
Elevation Gain: 930m

**2384m**

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex

Mt Cronin is the highest summit in Babine Mountains Provincial Park. The W gully of Mt Cronin is a steep spring ski route through some of the most rugged high basins of the Babine Range.

From Silver King Basin, ski E to Hyland Pass (1800m) and then up the broad S ridge of Mt Cronin. Beyond a false summit at 2300m, go to the base of the last headwall. The peak of Mt Cronin can be reached by scrambling up the SE ridge (class 3). Panoramic views range from the Bait Range and Shelagyote Pk to the N and W as far as the Cambria Icefield on the coast.

The recommended descent is down the gully to the W, starting from near the base of the final headwall below the



Skiing on the Reiseter Gl. *Photo by Derek Willmott*

summit. The gully is an obvious avalanche path, and stable snow conditions are required. It descends past a rock tooth and gives a 900m run down to Silver King Basin. The gully is mostly 30° but has one narrow section that is about 38°.

### Reiseter Glacier

Total Distance: 8km  
Elevation Gain: 1200m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging

Some of the best skiing from Joe L'Orsa Cabin is on glaciers at the head of Reiseter Cr. To reach the Reiseter Cr drainage and its two main glaciers, follow Driftwood Cr N from the cabin to a point below a rock ridge at 1850m. Turn NW and follow a ramp through steep rocky terrain to gain a small upper basin. Cross a rocky 2110m pass at the head of the basin to gain the main glacier at the head of Reiseter Cr. The glacier has very few crevasses and offers an excellent 500m run. The snow is often good, as the glacier is sheltered, but be aware of a high start zone immediately W of the main col, which can run a considerable distance down the glacier.

The next glacier to the W can be reached by heading NW from the upper basin in Driftwood Cr to gain the 2200m col immediately E of The Galleon. The W glacier

also offers good skiing and gives a 300m run. Use caution below the cornices on the NE side of The Galleon. The glacier steepens and is crevassed in the centre below 1920m. Most people stop here. If you want to ski lower, stick to skier's right and follow the lateral moraine on the E side down to the bench at 1500m. Be especially wary of crevasses with the typically thin snowpack.

The Galleon can be ascended from the head of the glacier by kicking steps up a steep 80m snow slope that leads to a break in the cornices NE of the summit.

Skiing at the head of Silver King Basin. *Photo by Derek Willmott*







Descending the NW gully on the W Pk of Cronin. Photo by Derek Willmott

### West Peak of Mt Cronin

**2315m**

Total Distance: 6km  
Elevation Gain: 930m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex

The unnamed peak a little over 1km W of Mt Cronin is a steep blocky summit whose prominent feature is a number of couloirs on different aspects. Follow the Reiserter Gl ascent route to the small upper basin and skin or kick steps up the broad S face of the peak to the summit ridge and ski along the top to the desired gully. The main gully on the SE side starts from a low point in the summit ridge and follows the obvious V in the SE face for 200m before spilling out onto open slopes in the basin SE of the summit. A narrow chute on the NW side is a classic rock-walled couloir. It starts from the N end of the summit ridge at about GR357891 and is about 350m long. There is also a classic chute on the NE side of the mountain. The couloirs are all about 40° but have gentle runouts and no cliffs.

Mt Hyland from the NW. Photo by Aaron Trowbridge



### Mt Hyland

**2272m**

Total Distance: 5km  
Elevation Gain: 930m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

A broad summit SE of Silver King Basin, Mt Hyland offers a good run on its NW glacier. From the cabin, ski E towards Hyland Pass to 1750m and then trend SE up the glaciated basin to 2100m. The last step to the summit of Mt Hyland is steep and rocky.

### Four Lakes Peak

**1920m**

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 8km  
Elevation Gain: 880m  
Start: 1040m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 93L/15  
Best: Jan-Apr

Four Lakes Pk is the unofficial name given to the large ridge that bounds the S side of the Four Lakes basin at the S end of Babine Mountains Provincial Park. This is a popular ski trip, on moderate slopes, that offers the shortest approach to alpine terrain in the Babine Range.

Access is from Babine Lake Rd. From Smithers, drive S on Hwy 16 for 6km and turn E on Babine Lake Rd. The road follows McKendrick Cr around the S side of the provincial park. The approach starts from a large clearcut on the NW side of McKendrick Cr, SE of Four Lakes. There is usually a plowed pullout at km 29 (GR431789), about 1km past a bridge W of Mt McKendrick. Ski NW up and across a large cutblock to a point about 400m from its NW corner. It is also possible to park at a pullout at the bridge. Starting here means you can follow the logging road across the clearcut, but a long flat section on the road means you will not be able to coast all the way back down.

From the top edge of the clearcut, ascend NW through the forest to reach the bottom of a large SE facing basin. Above treeline, much of the route ascends S facing slopes that are often wind affected and generally have a shallow faceted snowpack. The avalanche hazard is typically fairly low, but the steep SE facing bowl does produce large avalanches with big snowfalls or when reverse-loaded by outflow winds. Smaller cross-loading of terrain features should also be taken into account. The recommended route ascends ridges on either side of the basin. Avoid a bushy area at the bottom of the main avalanche path in the SE facing basin. The peak (GR403802) appears dominating from below but is just an extension of the large ridge that bounds the S side of the Four Lakes basin. To ascend the peak from the S, cross to the broad ridges bounding the W side of the bowl and head to the flat shoulder above the basin. To gain the peak from the E, stick more to the fall



View across Little Joe Cr. Photo by Aaron Trowbridge

line when climbing through the forest and aim for the toe of the SE ridge, which can be followed up and around the E side of the basin and up the broad E ridge to the summit. The top provides great views across the Bulkley Valley to the Howson Range and the Nechako Plateau. The peak can be reached by snowmobilers, but the routes described are too steep for them.

## Little Joe Creek

Length: 1–2 days

Total Distance: 14km

Elevation Gain: 1000m+

Start: 1000m

Difficulty: 2

Terrain: Challenging

Map: 93L/15

Best: Jan–Apr

A pleasant ski up Little Joe Lakes Trail gives access to good skiing at the head of Higgins Cr via Eagle Pass.

From Smithers, drive S on Hwy 16 for 6km and turn E on Babine Lake Rd. The road follows McKendrick Cr around the S side of the Babine Range. Park at km 32 on the N side of Little Joe Cr. Ski NW up a logging road for about 1km. Little Joe Lakes Trail runs up the E side of Little Joe Cr. The trail is straightforward to follow in winter (though with a good snowpack it can be easier to ski up the creek). About 3km up the trail, veer N and climb through Eagle Pass (1680m) into the head of Higgins Cr. There is good skiing here with lots of options for 300m runs. It is also done as an overnight trip. There is an old mining cabin near treeline at GR411848.

From Higgins Cr, it is possible to continue N into open terrain at the head of Cronin Cr and climb W through Hyland Pass to Silver King Basin (it is 13km one way to Joe L'Orsa Cabin from Babine Lake Rd).

The broad alpine valley surrounding Little Joe Lks can also be reached on skis but is often windswept and doesn't offer much in the way of skiing.



Avalanche Chutes on the S side of Mt Seaton. Photo by Will MacKenzie

## Seaton Range

Map: 93M/3

Best: Dec–Apr

The summits in the N Babine Range rise above the head of Blunt Cr on the E side of the Bulkley Valley. Blunt Creek Forest Service Rd gives access to a number of excellent destinations S of Blunt Mtn. The most popular trips are in the area around Mt Seaton.

Access is from Moricetown, 32km N of Smithers. Cross the Bulkley R on Telkwa High Rd and turn N on Blunt Creek Forest Service Rd. Keep left about 2.5km after Causqua Cr. The road climbs gradually over a broad forested pass at 1100m and into the head of Blunt Cr. There are several branch roads that provide access to various sides of Mt Seaton. The end of winter maintenance is usually at km 2. In some years, portions of the road are plowed for winter logging. Snowmobile traffic can be expected on the road and into Seaton Basin.

## Mt Seaton

Length: 1 day

**2000m**

Terrain: Complex

At 10km the first branch road crosses Kwun Cr, and spurs run up the N side of the creek to almost 1100m due S of Mt

Chutes on the N side of Mt Seaton. Photo by Will MacKenzie





Skiing slopes above Luno Cr on the W side of the Seaton Range. *Photo by Christoph Dietzfelbinger*

Seaton. This approach gives access to the summit via its SW ridge as well as good skiing on several avalanche paths and glades on the S side of the mountain. Cutblocks on the N side of Kwun Cr can also be reached by skiing across Kwun Cr from km 15 (GR123074) on the main Blunt Creek Forest Service Rd on the S side of the creek.

### **Mt Seaton Back Bowls**

Length: 1–2 days

Terrain: Challenging

At 18km, at 1100m (GR152069), another important spur branches left and heads N across the head of Blunt Cr. Keep left at a Y-junction and follow the road for 3km to a clearcut. There are two options to gain the basin N of Mt Seaton from this point.

The traditional low route follows an old mine road that departs from the NE corner of the clearcut and leads N to gentle meadows. Work your way along the base of the valley W to reach the upper basin.

Alternatively, follow the logging road W for about 900m and take the right-hand spur to its end at about 1150m in a



View S across Seaton basin. *Photo by Aaron Trowbridge*

cutblock 3km SE of Mt Seaton. From the NW corner of the clearcut (GR142102 at about 1260m), pick up blazes for the Seaton Ridge trail, which links up several natural meadows and ascends generally NW to the lowest alpine point on the ridge above (approximately 45 minutes to alpine from the clearcut).

Crossing the ridge to the N gives access to the attractive basin on the N side of Mt Seaton (known as Maternity



Seaton Basin and Blunt Ridge from Mt Seaton. *Photo by Christoph Dietzfelbinger*

Basin, after an early labour interrupted a ski trip). There are a variety of gentle meadows and bowls with steeper pitches near ridges. Many variations are possible.

### Blunt Ridge

**2100m**

Length: 1–2 days

Terrain: Challenging

Logging roads that run up the E side of Blunt Cr have also been used to reach the alpine ridges E of Blunt Cr. Spurs climb to about 1300m and give access to Cueball Summit (2100m) at GR195139, Comeback Bowl and a variety of other interesting features with runs of about 200–500m

### Seaton Ridge Traverse

Length: 3–4 days

Total Distance: 25km+

Terrain: Challenging

Best: Mar–Apr

Attractive alpine basins N of Mt Seaton can be crossed to complete a recommended traverse of Seaton Ridge N to logging roads on the Suskwa R. This is an excellent 3–4 day trip in March or April, with lots of ski terrain along the route. Several variations are possible. Briefly, the route runs from the back basins behind Mt Seaton around into the head of Blunt Cr and through a 1500m pass into the head of Luno Cr. Angle NW across the head of Luno Cr, dipping through open Hemlock forest, over an 1860m col into the

Seaton Basin. *Photo by Derek Willmott*



head of Skilokis Cr and then NW over ridges and small basins to logging roads that climb to 1200m at GR060230 above the Suskwa R. It is an easy ski out on the logging road. Not counting logging road access, the traverse covers a distance of about 25km.

## Boulder Ridge

Length: 1–2 days

Total Distance: 16km

Elevation Gain: 1240m

Start: 460m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Challenging/Complex

Map: 93M/3

Best: Jan–Apr

Logging roads provide good quick access to an area of attractive basins and ridges on the divide between Boulder Cr and Corya Cr in the Rocher Déboulé Range W of Moricetown. There is good skiing in N facing bowls with runs to 450m. This is a recommended mid-winter trip.

The Boulder Cr logging road turns off Hwy 16 several hundred metres S of Boulder Cr, 43km N of Smithers. Ski up the road for about 4km. The road makes several long switchbacks up the broad slope between Atrill Cr and Boulder Cr. Leave the road at the beginning of a flat section at about 880m (GR013063) and head SW up an indistinct ridge on the S side of a small creek.

Short trips can ascend the ridge to above treeline and its first high point at 1700m. Longer trips can leave the ridge about 200m above the road and veer WSW to head into one of the basins on the N side of the divide or ascend one of several 2000m summits farther W. The best skiing is on N facing aspects on a variety of open bowls and glades. Most runs are about 300m, and it is easy to traverse back to the ascent route. Tree skiing is through balsam and hemlock forest and is pretty good by Bulkley Valley standards. There are small lakes near GR995055 (not marked on the 1:50,000 map), which are a good campsite for an overnight trip.

Boulder Ridge. *Photo by Leigh Purvis*





Ski slopes off Boulder Ridge. Photo by Leigh Purvis

Boulder Ridge would make a good high-elevation access route to the central part of the Rocher Déboulé Range (see below).

The divide S of Corya Cr has also been visited on skis. Access is from Moricetown. Logging roads climb 10km up the S side of Corya Cr to cutblocks at 1100m, which give access to the main ridge crest that runs W towards Brian Boru Pk. There is good skiing potential in a variety of bowls, glades and couloirs.

## Rocher Déboulé Range

The Rocher Déboulé Range is the rugged spine of mountains between the Bulkley and Skeena Rs. It extends between Smithers and Hazelton, with Hwy 16 wrapping around its E and N sides. In addition to several shorter ski trips to the edges of the Rocher Déboulé Range (described separately), the more remote central part of the range surrounding the highest summits of Brian Boru Pk and Tiltusha Pk is occasionally visited on skis. Access is more difficult and involves traveling up long, steep-sided valleys or traversing high-alpine ridges. The main summits are steep and rocky, while the surrounding alpine basins are attractive and offer good ski mountaineering.

### Access

Brian Boru Pk, Tiltusha Pk and the surrounding areas are most often approached from Moricetown via an old mining road along Boulder Cr. Turn off Hwy 16 several hundred metres S of Boulder Cr, 43km N of Smithers. The Boulder Cr road runs 13km up the S side of Boulder Cr. The road is marked on 93M/4 and runs mostly through old-growth hemlock forest except for a large avalanche path near the head of the valley, 4km E of Tiltusha Pk. Though somewhat overgrown, the road is brushed out every so often and gives good access to the open basin at the head of the S fork



View of the head of Boulder Cr. Photo by Will MacKenzie

of Boulder Cr, directly underneath Tiltusha Pk. Much of Boulder Cr is part of Boulder Creek Provincial Park.

The head of Boulder Cr can also be approached by a high level route across basins and ridges on the divide between Boulder and Corya Crs (see Boulder Ridge above).

Access is also possible, late in the spring, from logging roads on the Kitsequecla R. Turn off Hwy 16 at Skeena Crossing, just N of the Kitsequecla R. Follow the logging road up the E side of the river. Take the left branch of the road at a major junction 10km from the highway and follow this up the SE fork of the Kitsequecla R (known as Laura Cr). At about 700m, turn left on a spur road, which switchbacks NE up a broad ridge to recent cutblocks at the end of the road at 1080m (GR856994), about 7km SW of Brian Boru Pk. To reach the peak, ascend NE through a 1600m col, cross the ridge 1km beyond and traverse into the alpine basin W of the summit.

### Brian Boru Peak

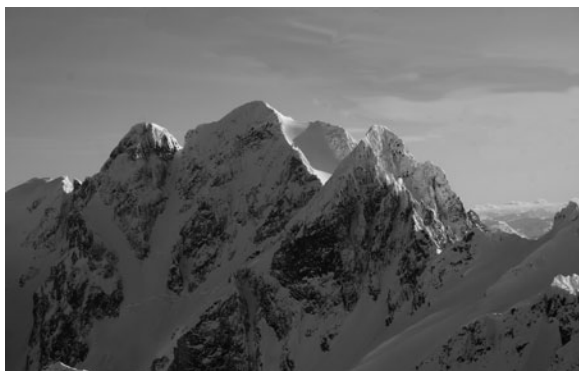
Length: 3–4 days  
Total Distance: 46km  
Elevation Gain: 3200m  
Start: 460m

### 2500m

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 93M/4  
Best: Mar–May

An impressive mountain when seen from Smithers, Brian Boru Pk is the highest summit in the Rocher Déboulé Range. It is a remote peak that is difficult to reach and not climbed very frequently, but is a very worthwhile trip.

Brian Boru Pk is usually approached from Moricetown via Boulder Cr. The E side of the peak is very steep, so the mountain is usually climbed from the W. To reach the W side of the summit, climb through the 1950m col immediately S of Tiltusha Pk and traverse 4km across the head of Brian Boru Cr to the basin W of the summit. The summit is a 700m snow climb via a 40–45° snow slope on the NW side of the mountain. The snow slope cliffs out at the bottom and is reached by angling in from climber's right.



Brian Boru Pk from the NE. Photo by Will MacKenzie

In summer, the peak is often climbed via long class 3 gullies in the W face.

### Tiltusha Peak

**2380m**

Length: 3–4 days  
Total Distance: 38km  
Elevation Gain: 2700m  
Start: 460m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 93M/4  
Best: Mar–Apr

Tiltusha Pk is a steep rock pyramid 5km N of Brian Boru Pk. It is a challenging spring trip with a mix of skiing and mountaineering.

Access is from the head of Boulder Cr. Ski up to the 1950m col immediately S of the summit. Tiltusha Pk can be climbed via its narrow S ridge, which is a class 3 scramble. Several lesser summits between the head of the S fork of Boulder Cr and Corya Cr offer some good ski runs on N facing slopes.

### Rocher Déboulé Range Traverse

Length: 3–5 days  
Total Distance: 30–40km  
Elevation Gain: approx. 3000m  
Start: 350m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 93M/3, 93M/4  
Best: Apr–May

The Rocher Déboulé Range has been traversed on foot in the summer and would make an excellent high-alpine spring ski traverse. Attractive basins line both sides of the range and, over the years, many people have been enticed with the idea of a ski traverse of the range. It appears not to have been done yet. Several variations would be possible using a number of different access routes. The most obvious route is a N to S traverse starting from Chicago Cr and exiting via Boulder Cr or the Boulder–Corya divide or possibly to logging roads in the Kitseguecla R. Ridge crests are generally rocky and narrow but most of the surrounding basins are well suited to skiing, and a number of peaks could be climbed along the way. Challenges along the route include steep sections and some cornice issues at cols.

## Mudflat Creek

The well-maintained Blue Lakes Trail ascends Mudflat Cr at the N end of the Rocher Déboulé Range S of New Hazelton. The trail gives access to several runs on avalanche paths as well as to extensive alpine terrain at the head of the valley and high glaciated summits above the Silvertip Gl.

Turn off Hwy 16 just N of Mudflat Cr, 60km N of Smithers or 8km S of New Hazelton. In the winter you will usually have to ski from the highway, but in the spring it may be possible to drive higher. The Mudflat Cr road climbs 3km up Mudflat Cr. Ignore the first road on your left. The road has been deactivated, and most cars will have to park within 1km of the highway. Depending on the snow level, 4WD vehicles can make it a few kilometres farther in the spring to about 650m.

The road crosses the creek twice before reaching an old clearcut at 900m on the N side of Mudflat Cr. The trail starts on the far side of the clearcut. Ski along the sidehill through pleasant open hemlock and cedar forest to Blue Lk.

View up Mudflat Cr. Photo by Christoph Dietzfelbinger





## Avalanche Paths

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1340m  
Start: 400m

**1740m**  
Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 93M/4  
Best: Feb–Apr

The shortest ski destination up Mudflat Cr is a pair of avalanche paths on the N side of the creek before Blue Lk. These make a decent mid-winter day trip. The first path starts about 700m before Blue Lk. Ascend the forest on the NE side of the path to the ridge and veer N onto the ridge leading W to a col at GR916165 at the top of the path. The avalanche path is a good 650 run.

## Silvertip Peak

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 20km  
Elevation Gain: 1800m  
Start: 400m

**2200m**  
Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 93M/4  
Best: Apr–May

Continuing up Mudflat Cr above Blue Lk leads to an attractive alpine basin surrounded by several high, glaciated summits. Silvertip Pk above the Silvertip Gl is a recommended ski ascent.

Above Blue Lk, the valley rises in a short 30° headwall. Switchback up the headwall on the N side of the creek. The terrain becomes open above the headwall. Ski up the valley past the upper lake and continue up steeper slopes on the E side of the glacier to the triangular summit at the head of the glacier at GR899131—known as Silvertip Pk. This peak is really just the N end of a ridge but it makes a good ski objective.

Silvertip Pk is a big climb from the highway but the rewards are spectacular views and a 1000m descent in the alpine. The route travels through considerable steep alpine terrain with sizeable avalanche exposure, so this trip is best suited to spring conditions when the stability is good.

## Chicago Creek

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 12km  
Elevation Gain: 1850m  
Start: 350m

**2200m**  
Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 93M/4  
Best: Mar–May

The Chicago Cr trail provides good access to the attractive alpine basin SW of Hagwilget Pk above Hazelton. A big climb is rewarded with great views of the Rocher Déboulé Range and a 1200m descent on alpine slopes. This is a recommended alpine trip.

Access is from Hwy 16, 3.5km W of South Hazelton. Turn left on Richmond Frontage Rd. The road immediately turns left and parallels the highway. Park at the second



Chicago Cr. Photo by Will MacKenzie

driveway. Access to the trailhead is through private property, so ask permission. The trailhead is reached by following a cat road that starts behind the driveway and heads S up Chicago Cr. Walk up the cat road for about 5 minutes to a forest service sign at the trailhead.

After crossing Chicago Cr, the trail ascends a narrow ridge on the E side of the creek. The trail is well marked and climbs quickly, reaching open country at 1000m after 3km (about 2 hours). The steep-sided valley is narrow at first but quickly widens into an attractive basin. Continue up the valley to the 1980m col at the head of the valley. The climb is gradual, with only one short, steeper slope up the last 150m to the col. A good objective is the rounded 2200m summit E of the col. This is a great alpine trip.

Variations include a crossover to Blue Lakes Trail. From the 2200m summit, descend its SE ridge for about 100 vertical metres to gain open slopes W of the upper lake in Mudflat Cr (see above). This is a long strenuous day but is well worth the effort for the interesting route.

There is also attractive ski terrain surrounding the Sawmill Gl, immediately E of Chicago Cr at the head of Station Cr. It is occasionally visited on skis via Station Creek Trail. However, Station Cr is not as popular as Chicago Cr, as the



Headed W towards Eagle Pk at the head of Starr Cr in the Telkwa Range. *Photo by Francois Depey*

approach involves more flat at the bottom of the trail, more time in the forest and more exposure to avalanches where the route climbs above treeline.

## Telkwa Range

Length: 4–5 days  
Map: 93L/5, 93L/6

Difficulty: 2–3  
Best: Dec–Mar

The Telkwa Range is a friendly region of alpine meadows and relatively gentle peaks on the interior side of the Coast Mountains, 30km SW of Smithers. Skiing here is out of Starr Cabin at the head of Starr Cr. Summits rise up to 700m above the cabin, offering enjoyable backcountry skiing and runs up to 500m.

Access is usually by helicopter. Starr Cabin is about a 20 minute helicopter flight from Smithers. It is also possible to access the cabin via ridge traverses from the N, leaving logging roads in the Telkwa R drainage.

The cabin makes a comfortable base for mid-winter skiing, and there is enough exploring and skiing in the area for four or five days or more. Numerous tree runs and short alpine excursions exist immediately around the cabin. Longer alpine trips and circle routes are also available.

Eagle Pk (1980m) is the closest summit to the cabin and can be reached from the head of Starr Cr. Mt Leacock (2072m) 4km to the W, is the highest summit in the area and provides excellent views of the spectacular Howson

Range to the W. It is also possible to ski to Burnie Glacier Chalet in 1 day.

The area is designated as non-motorized and will soon be part of a new provincial park.



*Photo by Francois Depey*

## Starr Cabin

Map: 93L/5  
GR: 956355  
Elevation: 1390m

Cost: \$12  
Capacity: 8  
Reservations: yes

**Location** Near treeline at the head of Starr Cr, 3km SE of Eagle Pk in the Telkwa Range, 30km SW of Smithers.

**Facilities** A comfortable arch-shaped cabin, with a woodstove, propane cooking stove, pots, plates and utensils, Coleman lantern, and foam mattresses. See [www.bvnordic.ca/programs/backcountry-huts](http://www.bvnordic.ca/programs/backcountry-huts)

**Built** by Bulkley Valley Cross Country Ski Club in 1991

**Contact Information** Reservations through Valhalla Pure Outfitters, 1122 Main St, Smithers, 250-847-0200.



View of the Howson Range from Solitaire Gl.

## Howson Range

Length: 7 days

Map: 93L/5

CAJ 1963, p 49

Difficulty: 3–4

Best: Feb–Apr

The Howson Range is a wild, rugged, glaciated range 50km SW of Smithers. Spectacular peaks rise up to 1700m above the surrounding valleys, and a wide array of glaciers, open slopes and couloirs offer everything from 700m tree runs to 1500m of deep powder in the high alpine. This is superb terrain for intermediate and advanced skiers.

Skiing here is out of the deluxe Burnie Glacier Chalet, and a ski week here is easily comparable to a week at the famous Fairy Meadow Hut in the Selkirks, which has been described by Chic Scott as “one of the great backcountry ski destinations in Canada.”

Access is usually by helicopter, though some parties ski in via the Hidden Valley Traverse across the Howson Range from the W (see Nilah Cr below).

The snow conditions here are excellent. The Howson Range is on the interior side of the northern Coast Mountains, on the edge of the Kitimat snowbelt. The annual

snowfall is approximately 11m, with a typical March snow-pack of 2m at the chalet and over 5m on the upper glaciers. Don't be fooled by the low elevation of the chalet compared to areas in southern BC. This is rugged alpine terrain—the chalet is less than 500m from the snout of the Burnie Gl.

Also known as Tazdli Wiyez Bin, the place of rushing waters, the Howson Range was recently made a class A provincial park. The area is legally designated as non-motorized.

There is a tremendous variety of skiing around Burnie Glacier Chalet, with everything from turns to tours in good or bad weather. This is serious high-alpine terrain; and, if you take a self-guided week, you should be very confident traveling in complex avalanche terrain and be familiar with glacier travel and crevasse rescue. Some of the recommended trips are:

### Solitaire Ski Peak

Total Distance: 7km

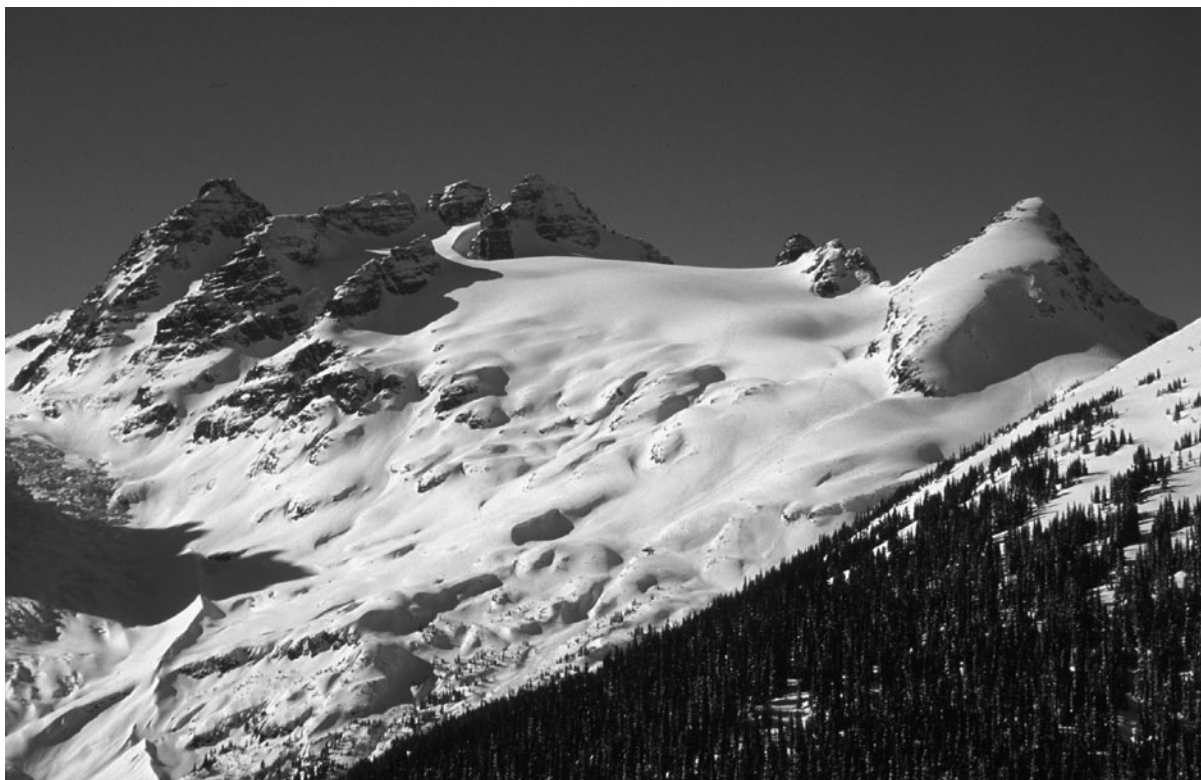
Elevation Gain: 1200m

**2200m**

Difficulty: 2

Terrain: Challenging

The easiest of the Solitaire Pks above the Outer Solitaire Gl is a very scenic ski ascent directly above the lodge, with a



View of the Solitaire Gl from the SE. The Burnie Gl Chalet is just out of the photo on bottom left.

superb 1200m run on S facing slopes. The last 20m to the summit (GR842357) are an easy scramble. An ascent of this peak can be combined with a trip up Tom George Mtn.

### Tom George Mountain

**1740m**

Total Distance: 6km  
Elevation Gain: 730m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging

A broad triangular summit behind the cabin, Tom George Mtn is where all the tree skiing is—with 500–700m runs right out the back door. Behind the cabin, a trail angles NE

Tom George Mtn from the W.



to gain the plateau S of Tom George Mtn. From here, the summit (GR869351) is a straightforward ski up its SE ridge. Alternatively, head NW from the cabin to follow open terrain up onto the W ridge of Tom George Mtn. There is lots of open skiing off the W ridge. My favourite run descends the SW side of the mountain along the edges of an avalanche path that runs right to the valley bottom from just SE of the summit. There are additional runs off the N and E sides of the mountains as well.

### Polemic Pass

**2165m**

Total Distance: 13km  
Elevation Gain: 1154m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

A trip through Polemic Pass (GR833320) makes a spectacular loop that is one of the highlights of a week at Burnie Glacier Chalet. From the lodge head NW to ascend the N side of the Burnie Gl by following benches above the moraine. Near 1600m, steep slopes E of the Middle Solitaire Gl pinch off the moraine and it is necessary to traverse these to get above a major icefall on the glacier. This section is exposed to avalanches from above, so consider the avalanche conditions carefully. Once above 1800m, it is possible to





### Burnie Glacier Chalet

Map: 93L/5

GR: 870334

Elevation: 1010m

Cost: weekly packages

Capacity: 11

Reservations: yes

A deluxe backcountry ski lodge offering unparalleled ski mountaineering in the spectacular Howson Range.

**Location** On the E side of the Howson Range, approximately 50km SW of Smithers. It is situated about 3km N of Burnie Lake, just E of the toe of the Burnie Gl.

**Facilities** A three-storey, hand-crafted 7m x 7m post-and-beam structure built in 2001. This is a very comfortable backcountry ski lodge with sleeping space for 11 guests in four separate rooms—two bedrooms with two beds, one bedroom with four beds, and one bedroom with three beds. Bedding and down comforters are provided, so a sleeping bag is not required. The main floor has a fully equipped kitchen with wood heat and a large dining and sitting area. Lighting is provided by a hybrid solar/battery/generator system. Water is carried from a nearby creek. There is an outstanding cedar sauna. A large entry room on the main floor provides storage for boots and packs. Additional storage is available in the basement, which also has a workbench for ski waxing, maintenance or repairs. There is a guide's room on the main floor, and two staff rooms in the basement. Composting toilets are outdoors. The lodge is equipped with a radio telephone and Internet access.

**Contact Information** Bear Mountaineering, 250-847-3351, [www.bearmountaineering.ca](http://www.bearmountaineering.ca)

**Host and Guide** Christoph Dietzfelbinger

**Cost** Guided and catered weeks are \$1750 per person including all meals and accommodation at the lodge, guiding and helicopter transportation. Self-guided and self-catered weeks are available at \$950 per person for a group of 10 taking the entire lodge (includes helicopter transportation).

**Environment** Bear Mountaineering purchases carbon credits to offset your flight to Smithers and your flight to the lodge, so that each guest's trip is carbon neutral. Bear Mountaineering is a member of ONE PERCENT FOR THE PLANET.



Skiing towards the E face of Howson Pk.

swing out onto the glacier, though there are still a few crevasses just above the icefall. The climb through Polemic Pass is straightforward, though the pass is often windy. Descend onto the glacier beyond the pass. Continue the loop to the chalet by returning as described below for Loft Pk. Note that a higher 2345m col 1km to the W can also be used. This col is especially scenic but is a little trickier to gain and is only recommended in good conditions.

### Loft Peak

**2130m**

Total Distance: 11km

Elevation Gain: 1200m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

One of the few high-alpine peaks that is an easy ski ascent, Loft Pk offers stunning views of Howson Peak (2745m) and the best ski run in the area. The summit is easily included in a loop through Polemic Pass or can be climbed directly from the chalet. A ski trail traverses through the forest from the lodge into the open basin in Loft Cr. From the basin ascend the indistinct ridge NE of Lakehead Pk up onto a shoulder at 1450m before using microterrain to traverse open slopes to the broad glacier leading up to the





Descending the Solitaire Gl. *Photo by Linda Bily*

summit (GR844306). The whole area N of Lakehead Pk is exposed to avalanches. Use caution here. The run off the summit is fabulous, and by veering right off the shoulder at 1400m you can join the lower part of Ptarmigan (see Lakehead Pk) and ski all the way to the Burnie R for a 1200m descent.

### Lakehead Peak

Total Distance: 9km  
Elevation Gain: 1110m

**2010m**

Difficulty: 4  
Terrain: Complex

The steep E side of Lakehead Pk (GR848301) is a run called Ptarmigan. The top is difficult and committing and is only suitable for good conditions, but the 800m run from the small moraine bench at 1700m to Burnie Lk is on the upper limit of classic.

### Telkwa Peak

Total Distance: 18km  
Elevation Gain: 1680m

**2440m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex

Also called Outcast Pk, this summit is a good high-alpine tour across the S Telkwa Gl, reached from the upper Burnie Gl by crossing N through a 2050m col. Telkwa Pk (GR

Tracks on Loft Pk.







792357) lies 3km to the NW and is a straightforward ascent from the SE, not necessarily taking skis to the summit.

The 2350m peak at the head of the South Telkwa Gl (GR 806334) is also a recommended ski ascent and offers a closer alternative. The summit is reached by crossing over its S shoulder and ascending the peak from the SW.

### Kitnayakwa Peak

**2620m**

Total Distance: 13km

Difficulty: 4

Elevation Gain: 1610m

Terrain: Complex

Also called Mt Felber, this striking pyramid is 1.5km N of Howson Pk on the main divide at the head of the Burnie Gl (GR816319). It is a more ambitious ascent for good conditions. From the head of the Burnie Gl, cross the bergschrund and kick steps up 45° snow slopes on the E face for about 150m to gain the col just S of the summit. The final peak is a further 100m via its SE ridge and offers spectacular views. This is the highest summit easily ascended from the chalet.

### Grand Corner Peak

**2500m**

Total Distance: 13km

Difficulty: 4

Elevation Gain: 1500m

Terrain: Complex

As Kitnayakwa Pk is not a very feasible ski mountain most of the time, nearby Grand Corner Pk is ascended more often—though again, only in the right conditions. Grand Corner Pk is the summit at the junction of the ridge extending W from Polemic Pass to the main divide (GR 818317). Access is from the neve of the Loft Gl. Ascend steep snow slopes to the col N of Howson Pk to gain the broad, heavily corniced summit ridge for tremendous views. In good conditions, it can be skied from the summit (about 45°). Stay away from the fall line of the cornices.

### Couloirs

For those interested in steeper lines there are several couloirs in the vicinity of Polemic Pass. Porque No Couloir and Four Fingers Couloir are just W of the pass. They are classic, N facing chutes, with rock walls on both sides, about 200m long and up to 45°. There are also a few S facing couloirs on the ridge running E from Polemic Pk. The most obvious is the classic Yammering Old Dogs, which climbs to a snow col from the Loft Gl and is up to 45°.

(a) Lakehead Pk from near the chalet. *Photo by Linda Bily*

(b) Near the head of the Burnie Gl. *Photo by Steve Ogle*

(c) Bypassing the icefall on the Burnie Gl.

(d) View from near the chalet, heading towards Burnie Gl.



Skiing on the icefield E of Telkwa Pk in the N Howson Range. Photo by Derek Willmott

## Nilah Creek

Logging roads on Zymoetz (Copper) R offer ski access to the W side of the Howson Range from Nilah Cr. This approach can be used for a 2 to 3 day trip to Telkwa Pk or as access for a traverse over to the Burnie Glacier Chalet. This route is only possible when roads in the Kitnayakwa R are snow free at lower elevations, which is often not until late April.

Access is from Terrace. From Hwy 16, turn S onto the Zymoetz R FSR by a paving plant about 5km E of Terrace, on the S side of the bridge. Follow the Zymoetz R road for 42km, then turn S onto the Kitnayakwa R FSR at an elevation of 300m. After 3km, turn up the Nilah Cr road (GR719360), which runs up the S side of the valley for about 3km. Beyond the end of the road, continue skiing up the valley (mostly open). At 900m, turn S into a narrow valley known locally as Hidden Valley. Continue up the glacier beyond.

## Telkwa Peak

Length: 2–3 days  
Total Distance: 25km  
Elevation Gain: 2140m  
Start: 300m

**2440m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 93L/5  
Best: Apr–May

In the spring, Telkwa Pk (GR792356) can be climbed on a 2 to 3 day trip using this access. From the glacier in the so called Hidden Valley, ascend broad, glaciated slopes E to gain the main neve of the Telkwa Glacier N of Telkwa Pk.

Telkwa Pk from the N. Photo by Derek Willmott



Telkwa Pk is climbed from its S ridge. There is an excellent 800m run back down into Hidden Valley. A couloir on the NW side of Telkwa Pk, known as Red Necks Rage has been skied. The 45° couloir lies in a deep cleft and drops 250m towards Hidden Valley. Access to the peak is by a short bootpack from the icefield N of Telkwa Pk.

### Hidden Valley Traverse

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 17km  
Elevation Gain: 2200m  
Start: 450m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 93L/5  
Best: Apr–May

The Hidden Valley Traverse is a stunning high-level route across the Howson Range to the Burnie Gl. It is typically used as a challenging access route to Burnie Glacier Chalet from the W. From Hidden Valley, ski S across the narrow 1900m col at its head and descend S to a small lake at 1570m. Gain the glacier E of the lake and ascend SW to the head of the glacier. Cross the 2280m shoulder E of the head of the glacier to reach the Burnie Gl, which can be descended to Burnie Glacier Chalet. With light packs, the traverse from Nilah Cr to Burnie Glacier Chalet can be done in 1 day.

### Milk, Serb and Tsai Creeks

Length: 2–7 days  
Map: 93L/5, 93L/6

Terrain: Complex  
Best: Mar–May

Lying between the Telkwa R and the Zymoetz R about 40km SW of Smithers, the mountains N of Telkwa Pass consist of a large group of glaciated summits at the head of Milk and Serb Crs. This seldom-visited area is well suited to spring ski mountaineering and is a recommended location for several days of touring or a ski camp.

Mid-winter access would likely require a helicopter. In the spring, the area is accessible from logging roads on the Telkwa R. These are partially plowed in the winter but don't usually provide access until early May. The closest access is from Tsai Cr, approximately 38km from Hwy 16 at Telkwa. A spur road runs up the E side of Tsai Cr to approximately 1100m, and either Tsai Cr or the gentle ridges to the N can be used for access to the ridges W of Tsai Cr.

Milk Cr, though narrower and more exposed to avalanches, probably provides the most direct access into the heart of the area. Just before Milk Cr, a road runs a short distance up the E side of Milk Cr and crosses to continue W along the powerline right-of-way. About 1km W of Milk Cr, this route gives good access to a swamp and mostly open terrain that continues up the Milk Cr valley.

Access from the road through Telkwa Pass is also recommended. It is only 3km from Top Lk NW to alpine terrain S of the head of Milk Cr. Telkwa Pass is usually not accessible until roads on the Telkwa R can be driven past Milk Cr at 800m. Telkwa Pass is about a 5km ski from there.

The highest summit in the area (2320m) lies at the head of the SW branch of Serb Cr on the divide with Milk Cr. Glaciers and summits to the W and S across the head of Milk Cr offer good ski mountaineering with excellent scenery. The head of Serb Cr is a recommended location for a ski camp. The area has also been traversed around the head of Milk Cr from Top Cr to Tsai Cr via several high passes.

Though snowmobiling is popular in the area surrounding Sinclair Cr and the gentle ridges E of Tsai Cr, snowmobilers are only occasionally seen in Tsai Cr and rarely venture into the more rugged terrain W of there.

Top: View across Milk Cr. Middle: Looking up Tsai Cr. Bottom: View across Tsai Cr to N Howson Range. *Photos by Derek Willmott*



# Terrace 20



View of the Shames backcountry from Super Bowl Summit. *Photo by Rod Gee*

**T**he Kitimat Ranges extend from Bella Coola north to the Nass River and comprise the middle third of the Coast Mountains. Terrace lies at the centre of the region on the banks of the Skeena River and is the hub of backcountry skiing and ski mountaineering in the region. The Kitimat Ranges are characterized by extensive ridge systems indented by rugged valleys with broad summits and glaciers rising to 2000m. The area receives huge snowfalls and offers some fabulous backcountry skiing and ski mountaineering.

This chapter describes ski mountaineering in the Kitimat Ranges. Ski trips range from a variety of easily accessible mid-winter trips around Terrace to half a dozen longer spring traverses on the more remote alpine ridge systems. Trips near Terrace are described first and vary from easily accessible big alpine bowls and glades behind Shames Mountain ski area, to skiing powder with comfortable overnight stays at the Larsen Ridge and Anderson Cabins, or high-alpine ascents and shorter traverses in the spring. Runs are often up to 1000m.

Longer traverses in the Kitimat Ranges are by their very nature wilderness adventures. The Kitimat Ranges are heavily glaciated, though they lack the large icefields of the neighbouring Pacific and Boundary Ranges. Most of the traverses follow glaciated high-alpine ridge systems above wild valleys. In general, the Kitimat Ranges are very remote and there are very few escape routes. Plan your trip carefully.

## **Snow Conditions**

The Shames Mountain ski area, just W of Terrace, regularly gets glowing reports in ski magazines because it has one of the deepest most consistent snowpacks of any ski area in North America. The average annual snowfall is about 12m at an elevation of 1000m. At higher elevations, average snowfalls of 15–20m are common, with a typical snowpack in the alpine of 4–6m.

Snow levels on the North Coast are considerably lower than on the South Coast, and most valley bottoms are snow covered at low elevations for several months a year. Terrace, at an elevation of 210m, has snow on the ground for about

4 months a year. Most logging roads cannot be driven in mid-winter unless they are plowed. Kitimat (at sea level) holds the Canadian record for the greatest snowfall over a 5-day period at 246cm.

### Access

The main access to the region is the Yellowhead Hwy 16, which follows the Skeena R through the mountains from Smithers to Prince Rupert and is the only major highway to cross the Coast Mountains over the entire length of the range between Vancouver and Skagway. Terrace is 200km W of Smithers and is a 15-hour drive of 1360km from Vancouver. Terrace is served daily by direct 1.5 hour flights from Vancouver. Bus or rail transportation is also available.

### Terrace

Terrace is a small town of about 18,000 people. There are downhill ski facilities just W of town at Shames Mountain ski area ([www.shamesmountain.com](http://www.shamesmountain.com)). The Snow Valley Nordic ski club operates cross-country ski facilities just S of town. The area boasts an active community of backcountry skiers, partially organized under the Mt Remo Backcountry Society ([www.mtremo.ca](http://www.mtremo.ca)), which runs two backcountry ski cabins. The local outdoor store is Azad Adventures ([www.azadadventures.com](http://www.azadadventures.com), 250-635-6815), which sells and rents ski-mountaineering gear.

A wide range of affordable accommodation is available in Terrace ([www.terracetourism.bc.ca](http://www.terracetourism.bc.ca)).

### Trip Planning

#### Weather

[www.weatheroffice.gc.ca](http://www.weatheroffice.gc.ca)

Terrace 250-635-4192

Kitimat 250-632-7864

#### Snow and Avalanche Conditions

[www.avalanche.ca](http://www.avalanche.ca)

Check the avalanche forecast for Northwest BC. The Skeena/Babine regional discussion board also reports observations of current conditions.

Snow reports are available from:

[www.shamesmountain.com](http://www.shamesmountain.com)

[www.northernescapeheliskiing.ca](http://www.northernescapeheliskiing.ca)

Road conditions are available at [www.drivebc.ca](http://www.drivebc.ca).

#### Maps

NTS 1:250,000 sheets 93E, 93L, 103H, 103I

#### Reference

*Trails to Timberline* by Einar Blix

[www.mtremo.ca](http://www.mtremo.ca) Mt Remo Backcountry Society

### Logging Roads

Contact the Kalum Forest District at:

[www.for.gov.bc.ca/dkm](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/dkm)

### Helicopters

Quantum Helicopters, Terrace 250-615-0168

[www.quantumhelicopters.ca](http://www.quantumhelicopters.ca)

Canadian Helicopters, Terrace 250-635-2430

[www.canadianhelicopters.ca](http://www.canadianhelicopters.ca)

### Floatplane

Lakes District Air, Burns Lake 250-692-3229

[www.lakesdistrictair.com](http://www.lakesdistrictair.com)

Inland Air Charters, Prince Rupert 250-624-2577

### Multi-use Considerations

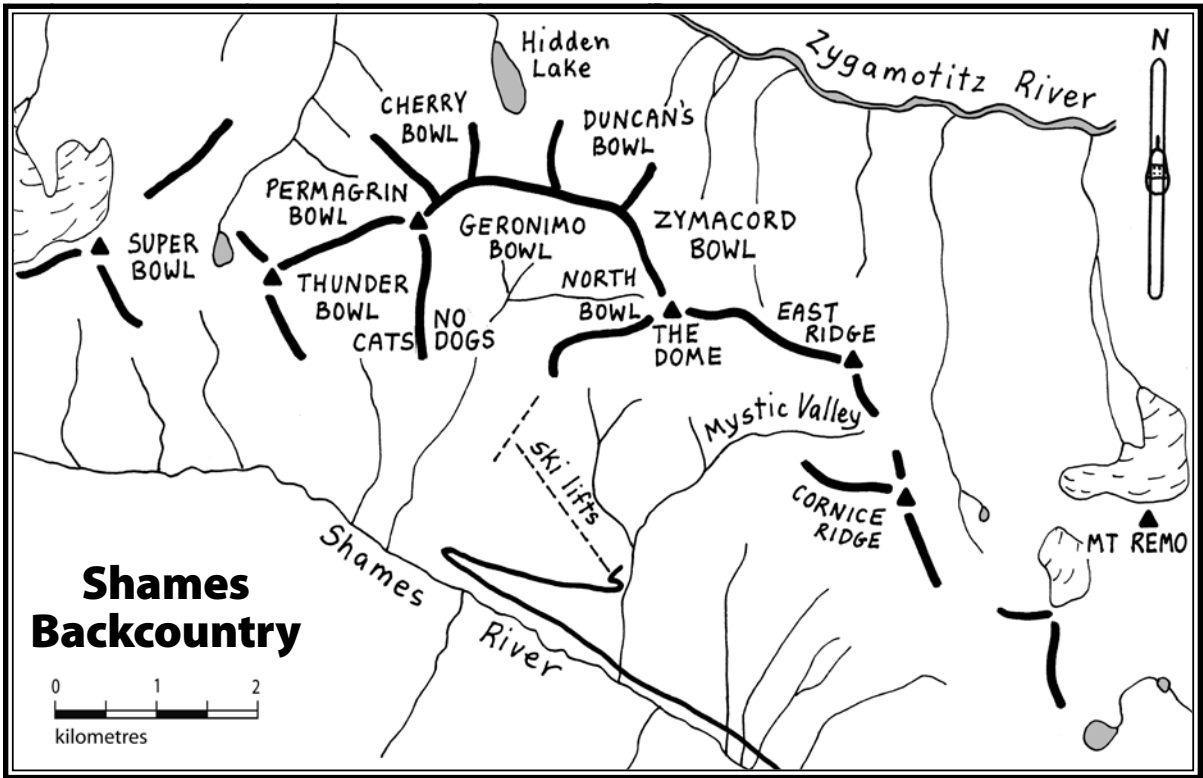
There are two non-motorized areas in the Terrace region. One is in the vicinity of Anderson Cabin W of town and the other is in the vicinity of Als' Memorial Cabin in the Larsen Ridge area SW of Terrace. Both the snowmobile club and the local heliski company honour the non-motorized designation.

Snowmobiling is popular in the area, and the Skeena Valley Snowmobile Association (see [www.bcsf.org](http://www.bcsf.org)) maintains cabins in the Sterling Mtn area. There is also a snowmobile club in Kitimat that maintains cabins on Robinson Ridge, S of Hirsch Cr and Mt Clague.

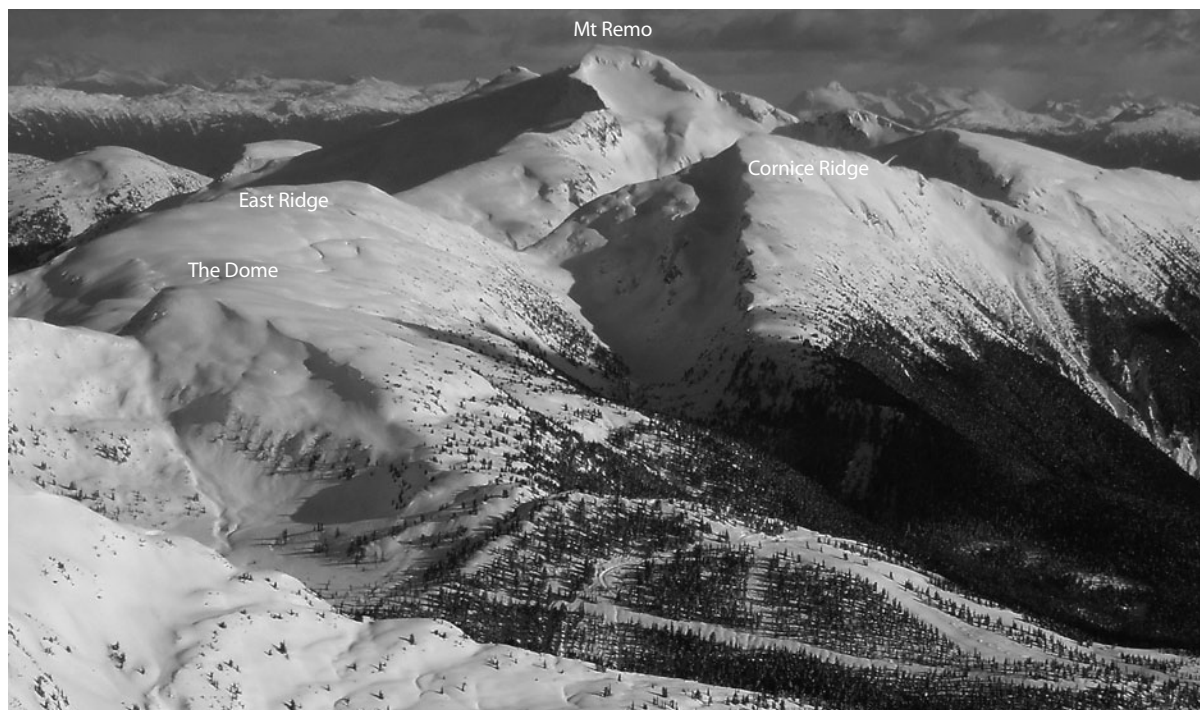
Portions of the region around Terrace are used by Northern Escape Heli-Skiing in the winter months ([www.northernescapeheliskiing.ca](http://www.northernescapeheliskiing.ca)). This includes areas around the Exstew R and S of the Skeena R. At the S end of the region, there is also heliskiing above Dean Channel ([www.dreamcatcherheliskiing.ca](http://www.dreamcatcherheliskiing.ca)).



Photo by Pat Mulrooney







The Dome and ridges close to the Shames ski area, which is visible on the right. *Photo by Roger Fehr*

## Shames Mountain Backcountry

Shames Mountain is the downhill ski area just W of Terrace. As a downhill ski area it is a great local resort that has been in operation since 1990, but what puts it on the map for this guide is its “unrivalled backcountry access” (Powder magazine). From the top of the lifts, almost a dozen alpine bowls can be reached in a day of touring, offering everything from moderate glades to open basins or narrow chutes. Most runs are 600–800m with a few up to 1000m.

Access to Shames Mountain is 35km W of Terrace on Hwy 16. The mountain base is 13km up the Shames access road at 700m. Backcountry access is from the top of the Red T-bar at 1190m. A one-ride ticket is available. There are short bootpacks accessing nearby glades (see [www.shames-mountain.com](http://www.shames-mountain.com)), but the real plums are longer backcountry ski trips to the nearby ridge crests and surrounding alpine basins. A detailed online guide to the Shames backcountry with names and photographs of ski lines is available at [www.mtremo.ca](http://www.mtremo.ca) (see also links from [www.azadadventures.com](http://www.azadadventures.com)). Many variations exist, but some of the more popular routes are described below.

Note that the Shames Mountain backcountry is expert terrain, and avalanches can be triggered anywhere outside

the ski area boundary. All persons venturing beyond the lifts here should be familiar with travel in complex avalanche terrain, carry avalanche rescue gear and know how to use it. There is no cell phone coverage.

### The Dome

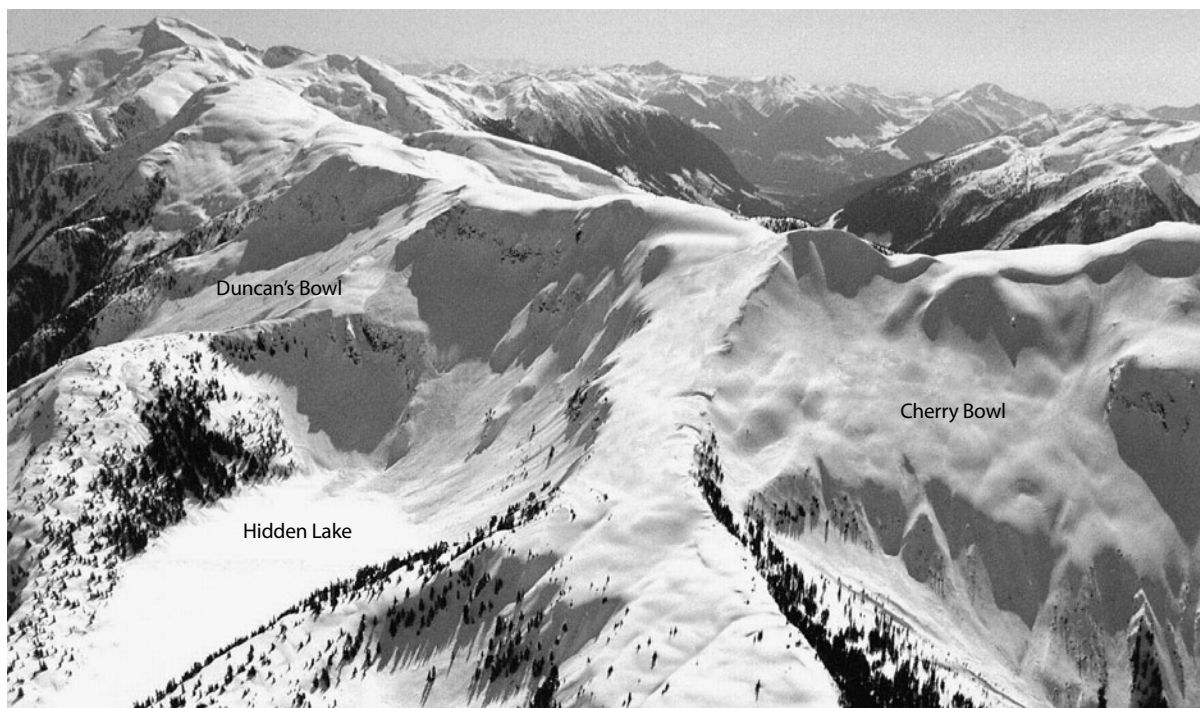
Length: 2–3 hours  
Total Distance: 5km  
Elevation Gain: 400m  
Start: 1190m

**1430m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 1031/7, 1031/10  
Best: Dec–Apr

The Dome is the first high point on the ridge N of the ski area. Aside from bootpacks, it is the shortest backcountry outing beyond the lifts and gives access to the main divide and the closest alpine basins. This is an easy trip, which offers a good introduction to backcountry skiing at Shames Mountain.

From the top of the Red T-bar, gain the first knoll on the ridge about 100m above the lift. The ridge crest flattens out above this and can be followed NE for about 1km up onto the broad rounded high point known as The Dome (GR036396). Once above the first knoll, you are above treeline and it is easy to become disoriented in flat light or white-out conditions. There is usually a bootpack trail along the ridge.



N side bowls on Zymacord Ridge. Photo by Rod Gee

From the top of The Dome, there are several options depending on avalanche hazard, weather and length of trip desired. The shortest and safest outing is to retrace your ascent route back to the ski area.

In good conditions, the main attraction is the excellent 200m run in North and Powder Eights Bowls immediately NW of The Dome. From the bottom of these you can return to the ski area by dropping W down the valley to 1100m and skinning up to the Deliverance downhill run either by the Viagra-Boys up track (yep-straight up!) or via the Grateful Dead route, which meanders gently through low-angle terrain to gain the Cat track.

If conditions aren't quite right to try the back bowls, another popular option is to ski SW from The Dome and drop down chutes known as The Fay-zurs that lead back to the main ski runs. An indistinct ridge run 500m farther E is known as Waterfall Trees. It drops about 600m back to the base of the ski area.

## Zymacord Ridge

Once at The Dome, you are on Zymacord Ridge, which runs to the W and forms the main divide between the Shames and Zymagotitz Rs. (Note that locally the Zymagotitz R is

called the Zymacord R.) This rounded, undulating ridge gives access to more than half a dozen N and S facing alpine basins that offer some of best runs in the area.

The standard route is to leave from the top of the T-bar and go along the ridge towards The Dome. Traverse North Bowl on the N side of The Dome to gain Zymacord Ridge or ski up The Dome and ski down upper North Bowl. Ski along the ridge to the top of the desired basin.

### South Bowls

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 7km  
Elevation Gain: 600–800m  
Start: 1190m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 1031/7, 1031/10  
Best: Feb–Apr

The alpine basins on the S side of Zymacord Ridge are visible from the top of the ski area and offer the most accessible runs. Most trips involve one or more runs.

**Fish Bowl** is the SW facing bowl that starts from the first high point 1km N of The Dome. It offers 250m runs on slopes up to 30°. From the bottom of the run at 1100m it is a short skin back up to the ski area.

**Geronimo Bowl** is the prominent S facing bowl directly across from the top of the T-bar. This is a big terrain feature with runs that vary from the central 30° Men-Who-

Pause to the main Geronimo run that drops 500m from the 1530m high point at the head of the W side of the basin.

**Thunder Bowl** is the large basin W of Geronimo Bowl. It offers classic 500m runs down 3 different aspects into the narrow creek that drains its S side. To return to the ski area from the bottom of Thunder Bowl, skin up to the partially treed ridge between Cats and No Dogs on the E side of the bowl. You can either ski No Dogs or a line in Geronimo Bowl down to the valley bottom at 1100m on the N side of the ski area.

### North Bowls

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 7–9km  
Elevation Gain: 1100m  
Start: 1190m

Difficulty: 3/4  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 103I/7, 103I/10  
Best: Feb–Apr

These are the plums. Long runs drop down a variety of terrain features ranging from sparsely treed glades to big open slopes. These are intimidating runs on big avalanche features with many terrain traps and a range of cross-loaded and gully features. They are not always in condition and can only be skied in good stability. If you are not sure about the stability, pick a safer line. It is a steep climb back out of most of the basins. Depending on which basin you ski, you can return to the ski area by skiing one of the runs on the S side of Zymacord Ridge down to the valley bottom on the N side of the ski area. From E to W the bowls are:

**No Name Bowl** Continue E along the ridge top from The Dome for about 1.5km. No Name Bowl drops NW from the broad high point known as East Ridge. It starts as a smooth, wide bowl at the top and rolls over into a long narrow 600m run.

**Zymacord Bowl** is directly N of The Dome. It offers long runs on big slopes and is probably the most popular bowl. Zymacord Bowl (aka Zymbuk-one) and Zymbuktu are the classic lines accessed from W of The Dome, while the glades known as Zymacord Trees are reached from the E

shoulder of The Dome. The runs are up to 700m. Switch-back up Zymacord Trees to regain the ridge.

**Duncan's Bowl** is the basin W of Zymacord Bowl. It offers steep open slopes up to 45°, but it is not often skied because of committing access.

**Hidden Lake** offers a popular low-angle run of about 400m on its W side down the ridge with Cherry Bowl or some short steep gullies on the headwall above Hidden Lk.

**Cherry Bowl** offers more complicated terrain features with cornices, cross loading, gullies and rolls. The runs are up to 600m on slopes of 30–40°. It is one of the favourite N side bowls.

**Permagrin Bowl** is the wide basin N of Thunder Bowl. It offers classic powder runs of up to 800m on N facing slopes of about 30°.

## Cats and No Dogs

## 1520m

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 5km  
Elevation Gain: 700m  
Start: 1190m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 103I/7, 103I/10  
Best: Jan–Apr

Cats and No Dogs are the lower treed areas on the ridge between Thunder and Geronimo Bowls. Though Thunder and Geronimo Bowls are usually best approached via Zymacord Ridge, Cats and No Dogs can also be accessed directly from the ski area without climbing over Zymacord Ridge and offer some safer terrain than the big open bowls. They are frequently used when alpine visibility is poor.

Access is from the basin NW of the ski area, which can be reached from the top of the Red T-bar by skiing to the bottom of the Deliverance downhill run. Ski W across the basin at 980m to gain the rounded ridge that separates Geronimo and Thunder Bowls. The ridge divides what is called No Dogs on the E from Cats on the W and rises to a 1520m high point at GR010405. The lower portion of both sides of the ridge offers excellent 300–400m runs. The runs

Zymacord Bowl. Zymbuktu on R. Photo by Rod Gee



W from the ski area to No Dogs. Photo by Rod Gee





Thunder Bowl and Super Bowl from Zymacord Ridge. Photo by Roger Fehr

are through glades and the approach route is mostly forested, so that it is possible to avoid the Complex avalanche terrain in the big open bowls and make an enjoyable trip that stays mostly in Challenging terrain. Iron Curtain is the obvious small avalanche path on the No Dogs side.

## Super Bowl Summit

**1860m**

Length: 1 day

Difficulty: 3

Total Distance: 15km

Terrain: Complex

Elevation Gain: 1600m

Map: 103I/7, 103I/10, 103I/11

Start: 1190m

Best: Feb–May

This is the first higher summit on the main divide 5km NW of the ski area. It lies at the top of the fabulous Super Bowl and is an excellent day of backcountry skiing.

The standard route is to leave from the top of the T-bar and go along the ridge towards the Dome. Traverse North Bowl on the N side of The Dome, then W along Zymacord Ridge past Hidden Lake, Cherry Bowl and Permagrin Bowl to the top of Thunder Bowl. Once at the top of Thunder Bowl, the skins come off for a 300m descent to Wolverine Lk. From here, the route ascends the large Super Bowl. The most commonly used route up the Super Bowl is to follow the minor rounded ridge features more or less

up the centre of the bowl and then make a right-trending uphill traverse to reach the right-hand end of the top ridge three-quarters of the way up, and then follow the ridge to the summit (stay back from the cornice edge!).

The descent is an excellent 600m run on 30° slopes back down to Wolverine Lk. The common route back is to ski Thunder Bowl and then either No Dogs or Geronimo Bowl.

## Cornice Ridge

**1680m**

Length: 1 day

Difficulty: 3

Total Distance: 6km

Terrain: Complex

Elevation Gain: 980m

Map: 103I/7, 103I/10

Start: 700m

Best: Feb–Apr

Cornice Ridge, the high point on the main divide 4km E of the ski area, is named for its long corniced W ridge. It is an extension of the ridges running E from The Dome and is a recommended ski ascent. It provides great views of the ski area and the Skeena R valley. Cornice Ridge also provides access to Mt Remo.

From the bottom of the bunny hill, ski E past the rope tow and down into and across the small creek that drains the ski runs. Continue in a northerly direction to the main



Mt Remo from Cornice Ridge. Photo by Roger Fehr

creek that drains Mystic Valley and the basin NW of Cornice Ridge. Ski up the creek for approximately 1km. The goal is to gain the treed ridge on your right, which leads up Cornice Ridge. Once you reach treeline, exercise caution as the cornices on the N side of the ridge can get quite large. The summit is a good viewpoint and offers a 900m ridge run back to the ski area base. In good conditions, it is possible to find a way off the NW side of the summit for a 500m run down into Mystic Valley and ski out the creek back to the base of the ski area.

View W from the summit of Cornice Ridge. Photo by Roger Fehr



## Mt Remo

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 17km  
Elevation Gain: 1680m  
Start: 700m

**1930m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 1031/7, 1031/10  
Best: Feb–Apr

Lying 6km E of the Shames ski area, Mt Remo is the highest summit on the divide between the Shames and Zymagotitz (Zymacord) Rs. This highly recommended ski ascent offers a great mix of scenic ridge-crest touring and several long runs.

The route starts by gaining Cornice Ridge from the Shames Mountain ski area. Once on top of the small summit of Cornice Ridge, descend the S ridge. Depending on conditions, the ridge may be skied but usually requires a short bit of non-technical downclimbing at about 1800m. The rest of the ridge can be skied to the broad 1370m col between Cornice Ridge and Mt Remo. Mt Remo is best gained by gradually working up through and around the bowl features, which dominate its W aspect. The final 75m to the summit requires bootpacking due to its steepness. The S ridge can also be ascended by gaining access through an obvious notch in the long ridge at 1680m. The descent down the W bowl is an excellent 600m run.



Rounded ridges and glades near the Anderson Cabin. *Photo by Roger Fehr*

## Anderson Cabin

Situated near treeline 5km NE of Mt Remo, Anderson Cabin makes a great base for several days of backcountry skiing. This is a recommended area with a mix of scenic ridge-crest touring and lots of skiing in the surrounding basins, with runs up to 400m.

### Access

Length: 2–4 days  
Total Distance: 16km  
Elevation Gain: 1080m  
Start: 150m

### 1230m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 1031/7, 1031/10  
Best: Feb–Apr

The cabin is located 15km NW of the Terrace airport and is commonly accessed by a short helicopter flight. The area can also be reached by skiing in from Hwy 16. Drive W on Hwy 16 for approximately 15km from Terrace. Take the first gated logging road 1km W of the Zymagotitz R or approximately halfway up the hill on the highway. Parking can be problematic. Arrangements can be made with Northern Escape Heli-Skiing to park at their lodge below the highway. Ski 4km up the logging road and take the left fork. Continue up the left fork for an additional kilometre. Leave the road at about 600m and ski NW through open timber to gain the subalpine at approximately 1100m. This

can be tricky, as there is no defined route. The cabin lies approximately 1.8km to the W on the N side of the 1220m col at the head of the N fork of Amsbury Cr. It can be difficult to locate as it is in a non-descript area in a grove of hemlock. Note that numerous parties have become disoriented trying to ski out of the cabin especially after flying in.

### Skiing

The cabin lies in an area that is best known for its fabulous tree skiing and natural glades. Ski runs are up to 400m in length with most treed runs being approximately 250m. Because many slopes have a northerly aspect and are sheltered from the wind, powder can persist in this area for quite sometime. Christmas Ridge, located just N of the cabin, offers the longest treed runs in the area. No Name Ridge lies to the E and shelters the area from outflow winds. It offers gentle runs back to the cabin and great views of Terrace. From the ridge crest, one can also get an idea of the descent route back to the highway. Continuing N along No Name Ridge provides access to the Bowling Alley. This NW bowl and various chutes offer several skiing options depending on stability, with runs up to 300m in length.

The area W of the cabin offers more alpine skiing.



Access is gained by climbing the dome-shaped mountain at GR126382 (marked with a spot elevation of 4811ft on 1031/7) and continuing along the ridge crest to Mt Amsbury (1615m). Once on top, there are several options for skiing longer runs on N and W aspects down to a small subalpine lake.



*Photo by Roger Fehr*

### Anderson Cabin

Map: 1031/7

GR: 135390

Elevation: 1230m

Cost: \$25

Capacity: 6

Reservations: yes

**Location** On the divide above the Skeena R, approximately 5km NE of Mt Remo, just N of the head of Amsbury Cr.

**Facilities** A rustic but comfortable 4m x 6m frame cabin, with a wood stove and sleeping loft for six. Note: This cabin is scheduled to be replaced in the next five years.

**Built** by the Anderson family of Terrace in 1975. It is now maintained by the Mt Remo Backcountry Society.

**Contact Information** Mt Remo Backcountry Society  
www.mtremo.ca

## Shames Traverse

This traverse is a spectacular trip along the peaks and ridges above the Skeena R E and W of the Shames Mountain ski area. The traverse involves a complete assortment of terrain: narrow ridges, high-alpine slopes, phenomenal ski runs and glacier travel, with several peaks offering various mountaineering objectives. The traverse passes through the Shames Mountain ski area and is most often done in two sections, which are named for Al Evenchick and Al Munro, both avalanche technicians in Terrace who were killed by an avalanche at Ningunsaw Pass in 1999.

### Shames to Terrace

Length: 2 days

Total Distance: 20km

Elevation Gain: 1900m

Start: 700m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 1031/7

Best: Feb–Apr

Steve Brushey, John Kelson, Tania Millen, Duncan Stewart, Feb 1996, *CAJ* 1999, p. 111

The section of the traverse from the Shames Mountain ski area to Terrace is the most popular and travels the high-alpine ridge crests E of the ski area over Mt Remo to Anderson Cabin. This is a spectacular route with great scenery and excellent skiing. Most of the difficulties can be completed in the first day.

The route can be done in either direction and is described here starting from the Shames Mountain ski area. From the base of the ski area, climb up and over Cornice Ridge (see above) and descend to the base of the bowl on the W side of Mt Remo.

The traverse climbs up and over Mt Remo to gain the rounded ridges beyond the summit, which can be followed E to the Anderson Cabin. There are two alternative routes. The standard route travels around the S side of Mt Remo. From the 1710m shoulder 1km SW of the summit, descend 200m down the ridge to the S and traverse the double-headed basin S of the summit to regain the ridge crest 2km SE of Mt Remo. It is possible to stay higher in good stability.



*Super Bowl on the Shames to Exstew section. Photo by Rod Gee*

An alternative route travels around the N side of Mt Remo. Ascend the bowl on the W side of Mt Remo. At about 1740m, wrap around the ridge NW of the summit and make an ascending traverse across the N face (straight-forward but exposed) onto the ridge E of the peak at 1830m. Descend E down the rounded ridge crest to join the S side route.

Once past Mt Remo, continue E along the ridge tops for 4km to reach Anderson Cabin. Difficulties from there are few, as the rest of the route follows the standard exit from Anderson Cabin to Hwy 16 west of Terrace.

This is a tremendous alpine traverse with great views and good skiing. Challenges include narrow ridges and

steep exposed slopes. The narrow ridge sections are only possible in good weather, so save this trip for a bluebird day with good stability. Most parties traverse the entire way to the Anderson cabin on the first day. This avoids carrying a tent but makes the first day long, as all of the elevation gain must be done in 1 day. The trip is easily extended with a longer stay at Anderson Cabin

### Shames to Exstew

Length: 2–3 days

Total Distance: 22km

Elevation Gain: 1300m

Start: 1190m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 1031/6&7, 1031/10&11

Best: Apr

Steve Brushey, John Trewitt, April 1998, CAJ 1999, p.111

Continuing W from the Shames Mountain ski area gives access to high-alpine glaciated terrain suitable for multi-day trips, including the traverse to the Exstew R. Though not as popular as the traverse over Mt Remo to Anderson Cabin, this is a recommended route.

The E end of the traverse starts from the Shames Mountain ski area. Access to the W end of the traverse is from the Exstew R, 10km W of the Shames R on Hwy 16. Drive 7km up logging roads on the E side of the river. Branch roads climb to about 700m on the E side of the valley. The valley bottom is at an elevation of 60m and is usually snow covered until spring.

The traverse can be done in either direction and is described here starting from Shames. From the ski area, climb up over The Dome, ski along Zymacord Ridge and ascend Super Bowl to gain the glaciers NW of Super Bowl summit. From the top of Super Bowl, make a long traverse across N facing glaciers for about 4km to the 1740m col immediately S of Mt Morris. Crevasses are not generally

difficult, but portions of this section of the traverse cross below large cornices that hang off the ridges W of Super Bowl summit and require caution. Beyond Mt Morris, turn SW through a 1710m pass that leads onto a small pocket glacier at the very head of the Shames R. Cross the pocket glacier and scramble over the 1550m low point on the ridge beyond to gain a SW facing basin above the Exstew R. Descend to the bottom of the basin and continue skiing down the creek. Pick up the logging road at about 640m on the SE side of the creek and follow it down to the Exstew R.

There are lots of good ski slopes along the route and several summits can be climbed along the way. Pk 2170m, 2km SW of Mt Morris, is one of the highest summits in the area. It lies close to the traverse route and is a recommended ski ascent.

The top of the Super Bowl marks the W end of the non-motorized area around Shames and it is not uncommon to see heliski tracks on the back side.

### Zola and Monkey Bowls

Length: 1 day

Total Distance: 9km

Elevation Gain: 14400m

Start: 330m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 1031/6, 1031/7

Best: Feb–Mar

Zola and Monkey Bowls lie due S of the Shames Mountain ski area on the SW side of the Shames R. This side of the valley has a much bigger feel to it, and the Zola and Monkey Bowl areas offer great long N facing runs from the ridge top to the Shames R. This area is best with a reasonable snowpack at lower elevations.

Both bowls are accessed by climbing into the basin surrounding a small, unnamed lake at 1130m at GR024340. Park at the last bridge on the Shames access road, about 9km from the highway. Drop down and cross the Shames R. Ski up the edge of an avalanche path to an old logging road. Follow the road SW for about half a kilometre to end up on the SE side of the creek that drains from the small, unnamed lake. Switchback up through an old heli-block (logged 1993) to gain access to standing timber. Continue climbing in a SW direction to gain open terrain above 800m and the lake at 1130m.

#### Zola Bowl

Zola Bowl lies immediately E of the lake. To reach the top of Zola Bowl, ascend SE from the lake to gain a rounded 1340m knob at GR031335. The knob lies 1km SE of the lake at the E end of the alpine on the S side of the Shames R. Zola Bowl offers a 750m run that drops N from the knob.

Looking W from Super Bowl summit. Photo by Rod Gee



The run is a mix of true alpine, widely spaced trees and pillows and open glades.

The unnamed basin surrounding the small lake at 1130m also offers excellent runs. To gain the ridge crest S of the lake, ski up a sparsely treed ridge on the E side of the basin to the E end of the ridge crest at 1580m (GR024331—also marked with a spot elevation of 5190ft on 103I/7). You can either ski 500m runs back to the lake from here or continue W along the ridge crest to the main 1700m high point at GR013334 (surveyed as 5589ft on 103I/7). The high point can also be reached by ascending an indistinct ridge on the W side of the lake and switchbacking SW up slopes above. The W side of the basin gives an excellent 600m run to the lake.

There are several options for exiting from the lake. Zola Bowl is on skier's right. The main draw in the centre is open down to 750m, with an avalanche path on the E side of the creek for the remaining 300m to the old logging road. Skier's left of the creek is a run known as OB1ski no b.

### Monkey Bowl

Monkey Bowl is the long basin that drops NW from the 1700m summit at GR013334 (surveyed as 5589ft on 103I/7). Follow one of the ascent routes from the lake described above. The entrance to the top of the bowl is via a notch at 1620m just NE of the peak. A steep pitch at the top makes a bold start to a tremendous 1100m run on slopes that are mostly about 30°. From the bottom of the run, ski out the E side of the creek to the main Shames R valley. Turn upstream for a few hundred metres to cross the Shames R and follow an old logging road up to the Shames access road about 1km W of your vehicle.

Monkey Bowl from the E. Photo by Rod Gee



## Happy Valley

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 11km  
Elevation Gain: 1200m  
Start: 400m

**1600m**

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 103I/6, 103I/7  
Best: Feb–Mar

Happy Valley is a side valley on the S side of the Shames R, 4km W of the Shames Mountain ski area. This is big avalanche terrain, but with good conditions a relatively safe route on the E side of the valley can be climbed to the ridge tops for a phenomenal 1100m run.

Park near the major switchback 11km up the Shames access road. Drop down to the Shames R and ski up the riverbanks for about 3km to the mouth of Happy Valley. The route up the upper Shames R crosses the runout zones from many large avalanche paths and is known as the Valley of Certain Doom. Assess the avalanche conditions carefully before planning this trip. Head S up Happy Valley for about half a kilometre. From near 600m, a broad tongue of forest can be ascended SE to gain moderate slopes above treeline. The forest becomes gladed above 900m. Once in the alpine, continue climbing in a SE direction to reach the main ridge crest at 1600m (GR990357), which offers great views. The descent back down the ascent route is an excellent fall-line run on mostly moderate slopes that steepen to about 35° near treeline. When you reach the bottom of the glades cut to skier's left to finish the run on the edge of an avalanche path.

## Valley of Certain Doom 1530m

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 17km  
Elevation Gain: 1030m  
Start: 500m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 103I/6, 103I/7  
Best: Feb–Mar

The headwaters of the Shames R are known as the Valley of Certain Doom. Skiing up this imposing valley to a col at its very end is an interesting trip with a 700m run.

Park near the major switchback, 11km up the Shames access road. Drop down to the Shames R and ski up the gentle valley bottom. The upper Shames R is a deep, narrow valley with huge avalanche slopes rising up to 1200m on both sides. The route up the valley crosses the runout zones from many large avalanche paths. Assess the avalanche conditions carefully before planning this trip. Stability is clearly an issue, as it's not called the Valley of Certain Doom for nothing! The route follows the valley bottom W and then S as it curves to its end at a 1530m col above Happy Valley at GR963357.

There are two choices for descent. Skiing back down



Happy Valley on the S side of the Shames R. Photo by Rod Gee

the main valley offers 600m of skiing spread over several pitches. The alternative is to cross the col and ski NE down into Happy Valley. This is known as the Happy Doom Traverse. The run into Happy Valley gives 700m of fall-line skiing in a narrow draw on 30–35° slopes. A steeper step below 1100m can be avoided on skier's left of the drainage centre.

Heading up the Valley of Certain Doom. Photo by Roger Fehr



## Larsen Ridge

Length: 3–5 days

Start: 1200m

Map: 1031/7

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Best: Feb–Apr

Larsen Ridge is a broad ridge on the edge of the mountains SW of Terrace on the divide between the Wedeene R and Coldwater Cr. This is a recommended area with a mix of scenic ridge-crest touring and lots of skiing in the surrounding basins, with runs up to 500m. The Larsen Ridge or Als' Memorial Cabin is located here, and the cabin makes a comfortable base for several days of backcountry skiing.

In the winter, all access is by helicopter. The very keen and fit can ski in, provided the logging roads are snow free. Given the short helicopter flight, most people opt to fly in.

There are enough runs to keep an active group going for 4 days. The closest run is outside the doors of the outhouse N into Simon Cr (this is the creek W of Chris Cr). Outhouse Run is approximately 300m and begins in a small open-terrain feature before ending in a natural glades for



Larsen Ridge area from the N. Photo by Tony Walker

the last 200m. Mt Gordon immediately E of the cabin, offers several ski runs, including Canada Day, the longest run down into Simon Cr. The N ridge, which divides Chris Cr from Simon Cr, offers several more runs down both W and E aspects.

The area to the S of the cabin was the site of a large forest fire in 2004. The terrain in this area is very low angle; however, the skiing is surreal due to the nature of the burnt timber.

To the W of the cabin is Mt Hipp. Skiing over to Mt Hipp gives several options for ski runs of up to 450m down the S aspects of the Hipp Shoulder. The N aspect also has some good runs with year-round snow. Use caution here, as there is unskiable terrain in a few areas. Hip Hop Lk is visible at the bottom. Mt Slam lies just E of Hip Hop Lk. The prominent Quantum Couloir lies on the SE side of Mt Slam and is visible from the cabin doorsteps. To reach the couloir, cross the NE side of a subpeak of Mt Hipp and ascend the S ridge of Mt Slam above Hip Hop Lk.

The summit of Mt Hipp marks the W boundary of the non-motorized area.

Photo by Steve Ogle







Essence of the Burn S of the cabin. Photo by Roger Fehr

### Als' Memorial Cabin

Map: 103I/7

Cost: \$25

GR: 168147

Capacity: 6

Elevation: 1200m

Reservations: yes

**Location** In the small pass just W of Mt Gordon, at the S end of Larsen Ridge on the divide between the Wedeene R and Coldwater Cr, approximately 25km SW of the Terrace airport.

**Facilities** A comfortable 3.6m x 5m log cabin with a wood stove for heat, propane stove for cooking, and a sleeping loft for six.

**Built** by Mt Remo Backcountry Society in 2002. Named for Al Evenchick and Al Munro, both BC Ministry of Transportation and Highways avalanche technicians who were killed in an avalanche in Ningunsaw Pass on January 7, 1999.

**Contact Information** Mt Remo Backcountry Society [www.mtremo.ca](http://www.mtremo.ca)



Photo by Roger Fehr

## Terrace–Kemano Traverse

Length: 18 days

Difficulty: 3

Total Distance: 135km

Terrain: Complex

Elevation Gain: 6500m

Map: 93E/12,13, 93L/4, 103H/16, 103I/1

Start: 600m

Best: May

Vance Culbert, Guy Edwards, Kari Medig, John Millar, April 2001, *CAJ* 2002, p. 4

This is a tremendous route that traverses the narrow spine of the Kitimat Ranges from near Terrace, S to Tahtsa Lk above Kemano. It is a rugged traverse but without too many difficulties. The terrain is well suited to ski mountaineering and offers incredible ski runs and lots of possible ski ascents, including the spectacular summit of Mt Atna. Much of the route is glaciated but the area lacks any sizeable icefields.

Logistics are best organized from Terrace. Food caches should be placed ahead of time with a helicopter.

### Route

The traverse starts from logging roads in the upper Clore R, which are reached via the Copper (or Zymoetz) R from Hwy 16 E of Terrace. Roads run down the W side of the

Fresh Grizzly tracks in a tributary of the Clore R, S of Nimbus Mtn.







Skiing over Peak Such a Long Journey S of Mt Atna on the Terrace–Kemano Traverse.

Clore R. The route begins on a spur road in the valley that drains the S side of Andesite Pk. Follow the spur road up the S side of the creek for a few kilometres. At about 800m, leave the road and ascend S up a clearcut and steep forest above to treeline. The recommended route heads S and follows the narrow divide between the Clore R and the tributaries of the Kitimat R. Ski S through a 1900m col immediately E of the two attractive summits SE of Nimbus Mtn and descend the narrow valley beyond. Swing W up a flat-bottomed valley and ascend an unnamed glacier to

Skimming towards Nimbus Mtn at the N end of the traverse.



cross onto the glacier N of Dogs Ear Pks. Descend the glacier E and continue down the open valley beyond to curve around to an attractive subalpine lake SE of Dogs Ear Pks at 1160m.

Beyond the lake, ascend SW and angle across the shoulder of Pass Pk and drop into the head of the Clore R immediately S of Icy Pass. Continue W to a narrow 1400m pass. Climb the broad nose up the S side of the pass and make a long traverse to the SW at about 1740m. Cross the W ridge of Pk 2259m at a gap in the rocks near 1840m and angle up onto the neve S of the peak. Continue S around the E side of a 2350m summit to gain the long NW ridge of Mt Atna. Cross the ridge at about 2230m to a basin W of the summit and make a long descending traverse around the SW ridge of Mt Atna.

S of Mt Atna, the route follows small icefields along the narrow divide between the headwaters of the various branches of the Kemano R and the interior lakes of Morice, Nanika and Tahtsa. This half of the traverse is very scenic, with tremendous views of the interior lakes on one side, and rugged coastal peaks rising above the glacial carved trench of the Kemano R on the other side. The crux of the traverse is a narrow stretch of the divide 10km W of Morice



Mt Atna from E.



Skiing off E Jaw Pk with Tahtsa Lk in the distance.

Lk. From the southernmost end of a section of broad glaciated ridges, ski S over a 2290m summit (GR684654, affectionately called Peak Such a Long Journey in 2001), down a narrow ridge and past a 2200m peak. Routefinding is straightforward but good visibility is necessary. Massive cornices hang off the E side of the 2200m peak. There is a steep drop into the 1340m pass SW of Morice Lk. A high route continues S across glaciers just E of the main summits on the divide. At the end of this section, ski through

a narrow 1520m pass. Cross an area of small lakes. After dropping briefly to 980m past the head of Nanika Lk, continue S over undulating summits to Siffleur Lk in Penteuch Pass.

The simplest end to the traverse is to ski E down a small drainage to the shore of Tahtsa Lk at the water intake for the Kemano powerhouse. It is generally possible to ski right to the lakeshore up to the end of May. Tahtsa Lk, because of its size, doesn't usually freeze over in the winter. A float-plane pickup on the lake is recommended. Contact Lakes District Air in Burns Lake: [www.lakesdistrictair.com](http://www.lakesdistrictair.com), 250-692-3229.

A gravel road down Horetzky Cr also provides an easy exit route to Kemano.

The whole traverse is very remote and there are no escape routes. However, there are several portions of the traverse where easier alternative routes exist at treeline on the E side of the divide. In particular, the main crux of the route along the high divide W of Morice Lk can be avoided in poor weather by descending to 900m W of the head of the lake and traveling SE on creeks that parallel the high route.



A sheltered basin N of Mt Atna.

## Ski Ascents

CAJ 2007, p.136

This is a very enjoyable traverse with many excellent ski ascents along the route. In the northern section, Pk 2200m SE of Nimbus Mtn, Cumulus Mtn and the western Dogs Ear Pk (from the S) are recommended ski ascents.

In the centre of the trip, Mt Atna (2745m) is a stupendous ski ascent. The huge pyramid is one of the most prominent summits in the area. The recommended ascent route drops over the mountain's NE shoulder into the glaciated basin E of the summit. Angle up out of the basin and ski up the narrowing E ridge until you are forced to your leave skis 100m from the summit. Finish with an easy snow climb along a knife-edged ridge. The run back down is a gorgeous 700m descent in a spectacular setting.

S of Mt Atna, there is a collection of dome-shaped summits on the main divide 10km W of Mt Mortella, which are tremendous side trips with spectacular views to the W and everything from mellow glacier runs to steep N facing slopes.

The terrain around Siffleur Lk is another wonderful area to spend a few days doing side trips. The 1945m

summit 2km N of the lake is a great viewpoint that is easily ascended by skiing up its W shoulder. The E summit of Tahtsa Pk (2080m) is a superb ski ascent from the N with some fabulous skiing on 35° slopes. The easternmost Jaw Pk (1923m) is a more challenging ascent via its N face, which offers an excellent 200m run on 40° slopes. These summits give a rare combination of views to a sliver of the ocean in Gardner Canal on the W and to the long lakes of the Interior plateau on the E.

## Extensions

S of Tahtsa Lk, similar terrain extends SE into the N end of Tweedsmuir Park. Continuing the traverse to a finish at a number of other lakes is also feasible.

The complete extension of this route south to Bella Coola has been skied as part of a traverse from Bella Coola to Terrace (CAJ 2002, p. 4). It is not likely to be repeated often, as it requires a considerable amount of subalpine travel and a crossing of the Dean R.

Several summits on the W boundary of northern Tweedsmuir Park were climbed from a ski base camp on the divide between Chatsquot Cr and Smaby Cr (CAJ 1992, p. 33).

Access from Kemano has also been used. A party headed by John Clarke visited an attractive group of summits at the head of the Tsaytis R (CAJ 1994, p. 78). They approached the area via the road up S Seekwyakin Cr, immediately S of Sandifer Pk.

## Exstew Region

The dominant feature of the Kitimat Ranges N of the Skeena R is the deep trench of the Exstew R, which penetrates into the heart of a large and heavily glaciated region between Prince Rupert and Terrace. This is a spectacular area of rugged coastal valleys and rounded, horn-shaped summits. Don't be fooled by the low peak elevations. The character of the area is extremely alpine. The entire region has huge spring snowpacks with extensive snow at low elevations.

The system of glaciers N and E of the Exstew R has been used to traverse the region in both S to N, and E to W directions. The routes are described below and offer spectacular, challenging traverses. Various combinations of the routes are also possible. For example, an approach from the ski area could be combined with the exit route to the Kitsumkalum R to complete a horseshoe traverse around the Zymagotitz R. Shorter fly-in, ski-out traverses are also recommended. Careful planning is essential, as the region is very remote and the weather can be relentless.

Portions of this region are used by Northern Escape Heli-Skiing in the winter months ([www.northernescape-heliskiing.ca](http://www.northernescape-heliskiing.ca)).

### Shames to Nass River

Length: 14 days  
Total Distance: 90km  
Elevation Gain: approx. 5000m  
Start: 1190m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 1031/10,11,14  
Best: Apr–May

Vance Culbert, Guy Edwards, John Millar and Lena Rowat, May 2001, CAJ 2002, p. 4

This area was first crossed on skis in 2001 as part of the Complete Coast Mountains Ski Traverse. The route traversed the area from S to N, starting at the Shames Mountain ski area, which provides the best access into the region. The recommended route heads W from the ski area over Super Bowl Summit. Traverse glaciated slopes on the N side of the ridge between the head of the Shames R and the Zymagotitz R to gain the main divide between the Exstew and Zymagotitz Rs. Follow the divide N over Mt Morris. There are some tricky sections surrounding a narrow 1520m col a few kilometres N of the summit. Beyond the col, gain the long gentle glacier that runs N past the W side of Mt Wil-



Descending to the head of Kitsumkalum R. Photo by Nelson Rocha

liam Brown. The glacier has receded somewhat from what is shown on the map and has a steep icefall into the head of Bohler Cr, which can be bypassed on the E. Swing left up another glacier to the W and then NW to follow an obvious glacier route through a 1480m pass and down past the E side of Morton Pk into the head of the Kitsumkalum R. More rugged terrain leads N past Mt Zbura to an exit on older logging roads that extend well up the Ishkheenickh R and run N to the mouth of the Nass R. Portions of this traverse were nicknamed the wicked valleys because of the difficult spring avalanche conditions encountered.

### Prince Rupert to Terrace

Length: 20 days  
Total Distance: 140km  
Elevation Gain: 7000m  
Start: 0m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 1031/10,11,12  
Best: April

Steve Ogle, Nelson Rocha, Dean Wagner, April 2004, CAJ 2005, p. 113

The Exstew region has also been crossed from W to E; it was done as a traverse from Prince Rupert to Terrace in 2004. This is perhaps the only crossing of the Kitimat Ranges possible and was completed as a challenging wilderness adventure that began with 3 days of kayaking from Prince Rupert to the head of Khutzymateen Inlet.

Access from the head of the inlet required another 3 days of bushwacking to reach treeline on the W end of the divide between the Kateen R and Carm Cr. This was very strenuous but traveled through the incredibly pristine valley of the Khutzymateen R. The entire watershed is protected as the Khutzymateen Grizzly Bear Sanctuary ([www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks)). The purpose of the sanctuary is to protect grizzly bears by preserving a part of the ecosystem in which they live, and visitor use is not encouraged. Special permission may be required to use this approach. If you travel in early spring, the bears will still be in hibernation. For



Descending glaciers E of Cordierite Crag above the head of the Exstew R. *Photo by Nelson Rocha*

transportation and other arrangements in the park, contact Palmerville Adventures ([www.palmerville.bc.ca](http://www.palmerville.bc.ca)).

The traverse heads E along the rounded ridge between the Kateen R and Carm Cr to reach an 820m pass NE of Carm Pk above the upper Exchamsiks R. Descend into the Exchamsiks R valley and ski E up the glacier to a 1280m col SE of Mt Hodgkinson. From the col, traverse up and across a large glaciated basin E of the prominent twin summits of Cordierite Crag (known locally as the Bat Ears) to gain the narrow divide between the headwaters of the Kateen R and the Exstew R. The divide is straightforward to travel along and offers some of the best scenery of the entire traverse, with spectacular views down the Exstew R. Follow the divide NE to a 1440m pass 2km S of Pk 2230m. Continue NE across a large S facing bowl below Pk 2230m. The crux of the traverse ascends the far side of the basin via steep S facing slopes with some broken ice to gain a 1600m col at the head of the long glacier draining N into the head of Kitsumkalum R.

Routefinding is generally easier in the middle third of the traverse. Descend the glacier NE around the N side of

Morton Pk to 560m and head SE up another glacier. Where the glacier forks, follow the E branch up to a col at 1480m. Ski through the col and follow the obvious glacier route SE down into the head of Bohler Cr. Gain the large glacier that descends N from Mt William Brown by ascending short, steep slopes E of the glacier snout. Ski all the way to the head of the glacier S of Mt William Brown at 1760m (GR920467). Swing N to descend a narrow glacier into the headwaters of the Nelson R. Turn SE and climb through a 1240m pass between the Nelson and Zymagotitz Rs. The route continues SE along the divide towards Mt Kenney. Avoid rugged terrain at the head of Star Cr by crossing the two N tributaries of the Zymagotitz R and regaining the divide SW of Mt Treston. Follow the divide E towards a 2020m peak, then S towards Mt Kenney (2100m). The first party to complete this traverse finished by skiing out Erlandsen Cr to logging roads that climb to about 500m near the major fork on the creek. Continuing S past Mt Kenney to Sleeping Beauty Mtn and exiting via Molybdenum Cr also appears feasible.



Traversing ridge above the Kitlope R. Photo by Alejandro Frid

## Kitlope Region

The Kitlope R drains a vast region on the W slope of the Kitimat Ranges halfway between Bella Coola and Kitimat. It lies at the head of Gardner Canal, one of the longest fjords extending into the Coast Mountains. Giant U-shaped valleys run back into the surrounding mountains, which are characterized by endless ridges of round-topped, dome-like summits. Elevations are modest, mostly between 2000 and 2300m. The heavily glaciated ridge systems offer long alpine routes through this huge wilderness. They are well suited to summer trips and several have been traversed on skis. The emphasis of these trips has been on exploration rather than on long runs. Travel on skis is generally pleasant and there are some opportunities for skiing. Access has been from either Bella Coola or Kitimat.

The entire region encompasses the world's largest intact coastal temperate rainforest and is part of the Kitlope Heritage Conservancy Protected Area. The protected area is adjoined by Fiordland Recreation Area on the coast and N Tweedsmuir Provincial Park on the interior.

## Kitlope–Tezwa Divide

Length: 21 days

Total Distance: 100km

Terrain: Complex

Map: 93D/11, 93D/13, 93E/4

Alejandro Frid, Pierre Friele, Ken Legg, May 1991, CAJ 1992, p. 73

The longest ski traverse in the Kitlope area travels along the entire divide between the Kitlope and Tezwa Rs. The route starts on Dean Channel at Carlson Inlet. It quickly gains the alpine between the Nascall and Skowquiltz Rs and winds N along snowy, rounded ridge crests with stunning views of the surrounding pristine valleys. The crux of the route is a narrow section of ridge crest E of the upper Tezwa R, which travels along the top of a vertical granite wall. Short sections must be walked. The route climbs over the Kitlope Range and descends to the N end of Kitlope Lk. This trip was conceived as a great unsupported wilderness adventure by the first party to do the traverse and finished by rafting down the Kitlope R to the head of Gardner Canal.





Above Kitlope Lk. *Photo by Alejandro Frid*

## Kitlope–Kimsquit Divide

Length: 20 days

Terrain: Complex

Total Distance: 70km

Map: 93D/11, 93D/14

John Clarke, Dave Lammers, Shirley Rempel, May 1992, *CAJ* 1993, p. 75

Another traverse is possible long the ridges E of the Kitlope R. Start from Dean Channel, then gain the alpine E of the Skowquiltz R and follow the ridges N and along the divide between the Kitlope and the Sutslem Rs. A highlight is a side trip to the 2300m peak between the two forks of the upper Kitlope R. Exit via Cornice Cr to logging roads on the Kimsquit R.

## Kowesas Divide

Length: 20 days

Terrain: Complex

Total Distance: 80km

Map: 103A/16, 103H/1, 103H/8

John Clarke, Brian Evans, Dave Lammers, Jessica Shintani, Randy Stoltmann, May 1994, *CAJ* 1995, p. 73

The long snowy ridges W of the Kowesas R can be traversed. The route starts at the head of Mussel Inlet and follows glaciated ridge systems N to Europa Lk. Marmor Pk (2040m) is the highest summit between the Kitlope R and the ocean and can be climbed along the way. It offers stunning views of the Pacific Ocean. A 1994 trip along this divide ended in tragedy when Randy Stoltmann was swept over a cliff to his death by a small avalanche.

Descending to the Kitlope R. *Photo by Alejandro Frid*





Skiing above the Knipple Gl on the Salmon Gl to Ningunsaw Pass Traverse.

Stewart lies at the head of the long Portland Canal, which places it deep in the heart of the Boundary Ranges despite its location on the ocean. The Boundary Ranges make up the northern third of the Coast Mountains. This chapter covers the region centred around Stewart. It extends more than 300km from the Nass R north to the Stikine River.

Most of the region is raw mountain wilderness. Access to skiing is typically not easy, and most ski trips are serious undertakings. Do your homework before you go, as you are truly on your own. The Boundary Ranges are home to many large glaciers and icefields that get bigger as you move north. Most trips venture onto one of the icefields and require several weeks or more.

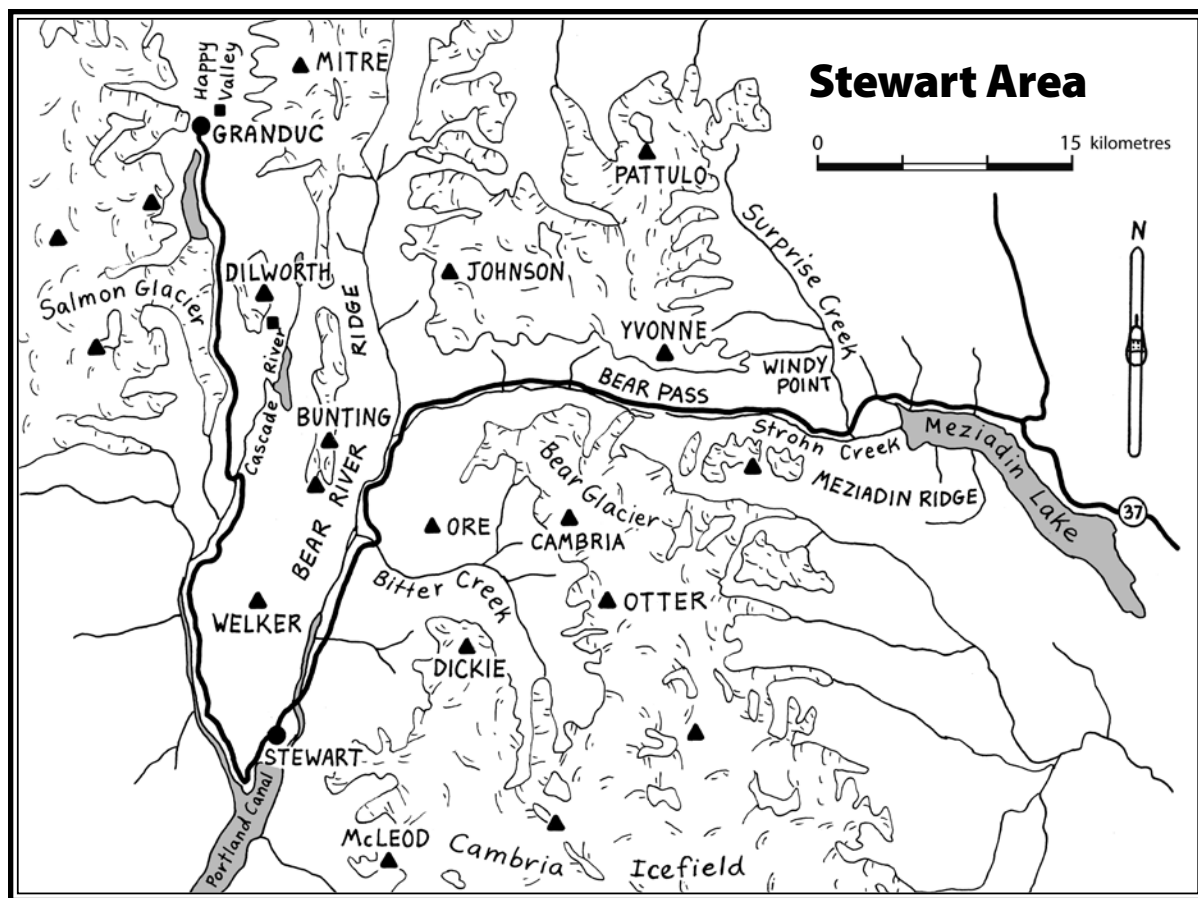
The exception is ski trips around Stewart and Ningunsaw Pass, which are easily accessible from the highway corridor. Trips here include day skiing in treed areas and shorter alpine ascents. There is also excellent access to two icefields near Stewart. The Bear and Salmon Glaciers are

directly accessible from roads and offer some of the easiest access to glaciers in the Coast Mountains.

## **Snow Conditions**

The Boundary Ranges, and Stewart, in particular are famous for huge snowfalls. Located at sea level, Stewart has an annual snowfall of 5.7m. The record daily snowfall, set in 1989, is 106cm in 24 hours. It is not uncommon to have over 2m in town alone at sea level. While it can be raining in Stewart, at higher elevations it is likely snowing. The annual snowfall in the alpine is typically 19–25m, with a spring snowpack of 4m at treeline and up to 8m on the glaciers.

Inland, in areas surrounding Ningunsaw Pass and N to Mt Edziza, snow conditions are generally drier and more consistent than areas nearer the coast. Typical snowpacks beside the highway are 1–2m, while areas at treeline usually have a 3–4m snowpack. The N end of Ningunsaw Pass receives significantly less snow than the S end, with typical snowpacks of less than 2m at treeline.



## Access

Hwy 37 to Cassiar is the main access to the southern Boundary Ranges. It turns off Hwy 16 at Kitwanga, halfway between Smithers and Terrace, and runs up the interior side of the Coast Mountains to join the Alaska Hwy.

Distances on Hwy 37 from Kitwanga are:

- km 0—Junction with Hwy 16
- km 156—Meziadin Junction
- km 250—Bell 2
- km 262—Ningunsaw Pass (Redflat Cr)
- km 354—Willow Cr
- km 365—Kinaskan Lk
- km 406—Iskut
- km 488—Dease Lake

Gas and services are available in Bell 2 ([www.bell2lodge.com](http://www.bell2lodge.com)), Iskut and Dease Lake (see [www.deaselake.net](http://www.deaselake.net)). For tourist information on the Stewart Cassiar region, see [www.stewartcassiar.com](http://www.stewartcassiar.com). If you are heading N to the Yu-

kon, there is good skiing accessible from Cassiar.

To reach Stewart, turn off Hwy 37 at Meziadin Junction and follow Hwy 37A W through Bear Pass. Distances from Meziadin Junction are:

- km 0—Meziadin Junction
- km 12—Surprise Cr
- km 23—Bear Gl
- km 61—Stewart

In the winter, Stewart is a 3.5 hour drive from Terrace or Smithers. Note that Hwy 37A can be closed for extended periods in winter due to high avalanche hazard.

## Stewart

Stewart is the most northerly ice-free harbour in Canada. With a population of approximately 500, the town of Stewart is steeped in mining history and owes its existence to half a dozen major mines that have operated in the area over the past century.

Stewart is served by regular bus service from Terrace



Ascending the Bear Gl. Photo by Scott Garvin

(Seaport Limousines—see below). There are no scheduled airline flights in and out of Stewart, though floatplane flights are available from Ketchikan ([www.taquanair.com](http://www.taquanair.com)). In addition, there are no shops where you can purchase ski or mountaineering equipment. Arrive prepared! The town offers several places to stay and dine (see [www.stewart-hyder.com](http://www.stewart-hyder.com)).

## Trip Planning

### Weather and Snow Conditions

[www.weatheroffice.gc.ca](http://www.weatheroffice.gc.ca)

[www.lastfrontierheli.com](http://www.lastfrontierheli.com)

### Avalanche Information

[www.avalanche.ca](http://www.avalanche.ca) 1-800-667-1105

See the current bulletin for Northwest BC and check the postings on the Skeena/Babine Regional Discussion Board **Maps**

NTS 1:250,000 sheets 103P, 104A, B, G

### Helicopters

Prism Helicopters, Stewart 250-636-2442

Pacific Western Helicopters, Dease Lake 250-771-5911

Last Frontier Heliskiing [www.lastfrontierheli.com](http://www.lastfrontierheli.com)

### Ground Transportation

Seaport Limousines, Stewart 250-636-2622

[www.seaportnorthwest.com](http://www.seaportnorthwest.com)

### Stikine River Jetboat

Telegraph Creek

250-235-3196

[www.stikineriversong.com](http://www.stikineriversong.com)

## Multi-use Considerations

Most areas are very seldom visited. There are no designated non-motorized areas in the region.

Stewart is a destination snowmobile area, as access to high-alpine and glaciated terrain is generally not very difficult. Popular snowmobile areas include Long Lk, Bear River Ridge, Mt Dilworth and up to the old Granduc Mine site, though the actual number of snowmobilers is low compared to areas in southern BC. Snowmobiles will not likely be encountered for most of the trips described in this chapter.

A large portion of the region is used by Last Frontier Heliskiing in the winter months ([www.lastfrontierheli.com](http://www.lastfrontierheli.com)). With lodges in Stewart and Bell 2, their tenure is almost one quarter the size of Switzerland and includes parts of the Cambria Icefield, Bear Pass and areas N from the Salmon Gl to Hwy 37, including Ningunsaw Pass. Generally, the heliskiers will do their best to avoid you if they know where you are skiing. Keep in mind that their bad-weather skiing is in ski-touring terrain, so you may encounter them there.

## Bear Pass

On its way into Stewart, Hwy 37A follows a spectacular narrow valley through Bear Pass at 460m. When visibility allows, the drive through Bear Pass is second to none, as the highway weaves through numerous avalanche paths with mountains soaring over 1500m above the valley on both sides. Bear Pass is recognized as one of the most vulnerable stretches of highway to avalanches in North America. The area receives massive snowfalls and has been the subject of numerous magazine articles. Three avalanche technicians work full-time to keep the highway open in the winter. Though most of the terrain through the pass is very steep and avalanche prone, the highway does give access to a select number of ski-mountaineering trips, dependent on avalanche conditions.



Meziadin Ridge from the NE. Photo by Scott Garvin

## Meziadin Ridge

Length: 1 day  
Total Distance: 17km  
Elevation Gain: 1250m  
Start: 270m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 104A/3, 104A/4  
Best: Feb–Apr

Meziadin Ridge is the long ridge that rises above the W side of Meziadin Lk and S of Strohn Cr. It offers excellent glade skiing and views into the Cambria Icefield.

Park at the chain-up area 500m W of Surprise Cr about 12km from Meziadin Junction. There is a shorter approach to Meziadin Ridge but it requires skiing across Meziadin Lk, which may or may not be possible. Ask locals about the ice conditions before considering skiing across the lake. Either way, your goal is the treed ridge on the S side of Meziadin Lk. From the parking lot, ski in a SE direction towards the S shore of the lake. The first few kilometres are flat. Crossing Strohn Cr and alder may both be a problem in low snow years. The slopes visible from the highway with numerous openings among the coniferous trees are where

you are headed. The gentlest approach route starts from the small bay at the SW corner of the lake and heads SE before swinging back to the SW. Once you reach the alpine plateau, it is possible to continue farther up the ridge to the W. A 1520m dome is the obvious high point. Well-spaced large hemlock and balsam interlaced with natural openings offer good glade skiing with runs up to 1100m. Be careful not to get drawn into one of the narrow avalanche gullies farther W. This area is sometimes used for heliskiing.

## Windy Point

Length: 1–3 days  
Total Distance: 10km  
Elevation Gain: 1200m  
Start: 270m

## 1500m

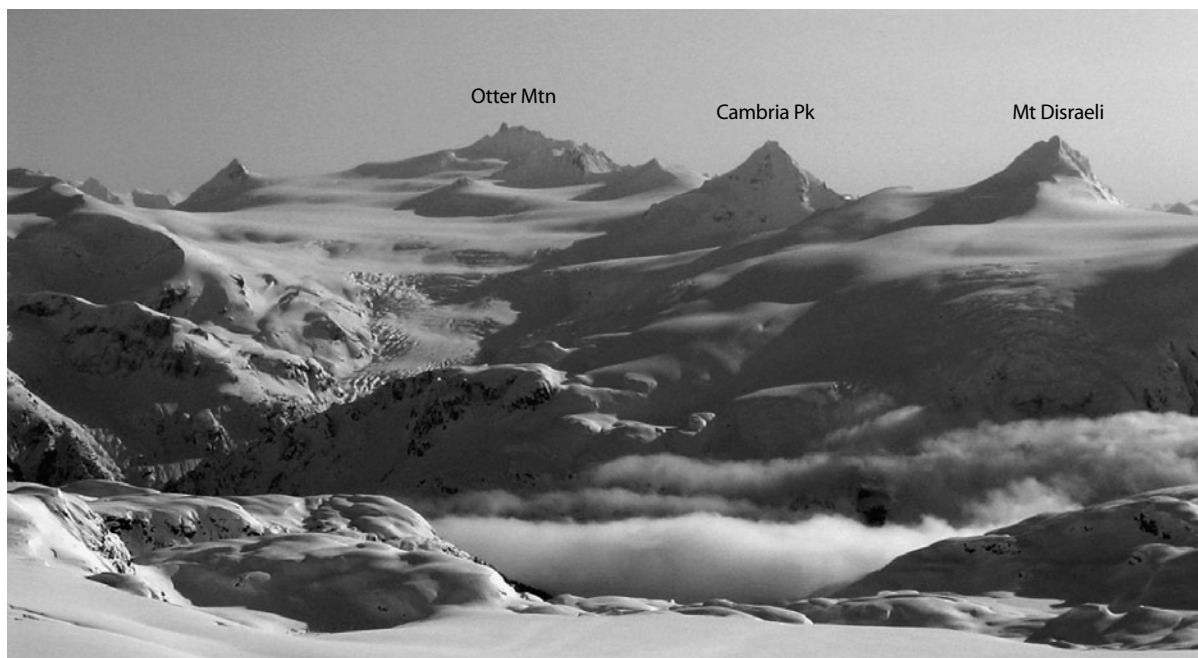
Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 104A/3, 104A/4  
Best: Feb–Apr

Windy Pt is the ridge between Strohn and Surprise Crs on the N side of the highway at the E entrance to Bear Pass. It offers a variety of skiing, with the possibility of doing laps for multiple runs or climbing higher for a longer trip.

Park at the chain-up area 500m W of Surprise Cr, about 12km from Meziadin Junction. Ski NW across a swamp and pick up an old mining road. Follow the road N across the base of the hillside for 1–2km. To gain Windy Pt Ridge, ascend the broad open slopes on the E side of the ridge. These present some avalanche exposure. A relatively safe route switchbacks up the obvious treed rib in the middle

Glades on the E side of Windy Point. Photo by Johann Slam





View of the Bear Gl area from the N. Photo by Andre Ike

of the slope to gain the ridge top at the forested shoulder at 1000m known as Windy Low. There is a Ministry of Transportation emergency shelter here at 1050m at GR682184. The shelter is unlocked and has 2 bunks and a propane stove.

A wide variety of skiing is accessible, and generally something can be found in any stability. There are good short runs on the extensive open slopes on the E side of the ridge. A large, steep, slabby area just S of the treed rib is known as Wolverine. Use caution here, as the slope often has deep glide cracks. In poor stability, the ridge above the cabin offers some skiing in glades on rolling terrain from 1400m down.

In good conditions, some of the best skiing is from the ridge top at 1500m. N facing slopes offer 500m runs into the narrow glaciated valley on the N side of the ridge.

Longer trips can continue W along the crest of the ridge to the first glaciated summits E of Yvonne Pk. The long narrow glacier running E from the 2040m summit is an excellent lower-angle run known as Promises. The occasional party has also continued W onto the Todd Gl and into the Mt Johnson area. A traverse to American Cr is also possible.

It is not uncommon to see Last Frontier Heliskiing using this area.

## Bear Glacier

Length: 2–4 days  
Total Distance: 20km  
Elevation Gain: 2000m  
Start: 420m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Complex  
Map: 104A/4  
Best: Feb–Apr

As you drive W through Bear Pass, you pass the snout of the Bear Gl. The Bear Gl is a 12km-long valley glacier that drains from the Cambria Icefield and ends at the highway. With the highway less than 1km from the snout of the glacier, the Bear Gl has the distinction of being the most accessible glacier in the Coast Mountains and provides one of the most direct routes onto an icefield anywhere in the Coast Mountains.

Park at the glacier pullout 23km from Meziadin Jct. It is a short ski across Strohn Lk to the bottom of the glacier. If the lake is not well frozen, cross the Bear R on snowbridges or by wading, and ski along the S shore of Strohn Lk. Gain the toe of the glacier on its W side.

The route up the glacier travels through three icefalls. The second and third icefalls—at about 1200m and 1600m—are the most difficult, with some tricky routefinding through seracs. Some of the difficulties can be avoided by following the moat on the W margin of the glacier. Be very mindful of avalanche conditions, as numerous start zones hang far above you. This is not the place to be after





Skiing above Bitter Cr near Ore Mtn. Photo by Christoph Dietzfelbinger

a storm event! It is a good idea to wand or GPS the route through the icefalls if you are coming back the same way several days later.

The glacier flattens out onto the N end of the Cambria Icefield above 1700m, and several of the surrounding summits are recommend ski-mountaineering objectives. Most summits are short straightforward climbs on steep snow and easy rock. Cambria Pk is the closest objective, with some good skiing on the N facing headwall below the summit and excellent views back down the Bear Gl and across Bitter Cr. The unnamed Pk 2440, 7km E of Cambria Pk, is also a recommended ascent with good views E down Nelson Cr. Otter Mtn (2650m) is the highest summit on the Cambria Icefield but is more difficult to climb.

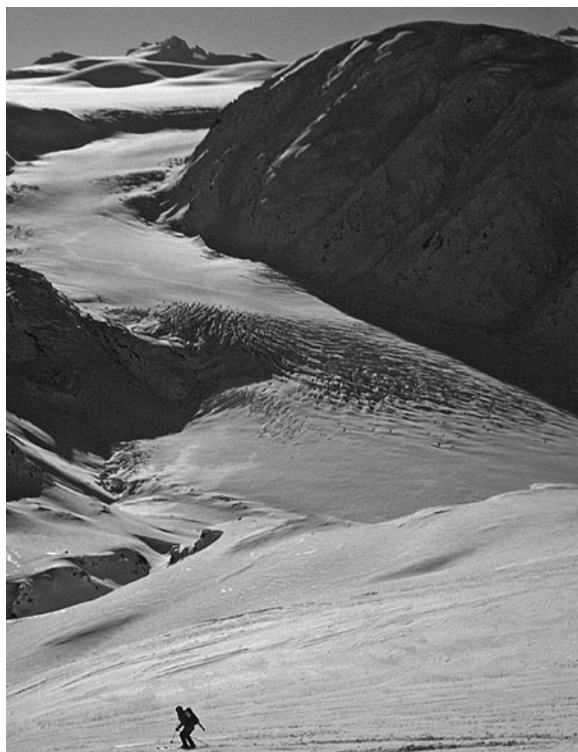
## Mt Dickie

Length: 2 days  
Total Distance: 20km  
Elevation Gain: 2050m  
Start: 50m

**2100m**

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 104A/4, 103P/13  
Best: Feb–May

Mt Dickie is a gentle, glaciated summit on the W side of the Cambria Icefield above Stewart. It is a straightforward ski



Skiing on Red Mtn above Bromley Gl. Photo by Christoph Dietzfelbinger

ascent and offers the least technical route onto the Cambria Icefield.

Access is via the Silver Princess Mine road in Dunwell Cr. The road starts on the E side of Glacier Cr, 5km E of Stewart, and switchbacks to about 375m on the W side of Dunwell Cr. The road is usually snow covered for most of the season; sometimes it is gated and locked. If a key is needed, ask at the gas station. Beyond the end of the road, ski NE up Dunwell Cr to gain an area of subalpine lakes at 800m. Continue SE up the long broad shoulder that leads to the glacier NW of Mt Dickie. The terrain is mostly open above 1000m. Mt Dickie is a straightforward ascent. Wrap around the S side of Mt Dickie to reach the Maude Gl and the Cambria Icefield beyond.

Barney Gulch has also been used to access the W side of the Cambria Icefield near Mt Magee but is very exposed to avalanches and requires good conditions. Start from Barney Gulch Trail directly across the Bear R from Stewart.

Ore Mtn, on the N side of Bitter Cr across from Mt Dickie, can also be climbed on skis from the Stewart valley. Access is via the rough Ore Mountain Trail, which starts from Clements Lk. The forest is reasonably open, and sub-



Descending the Bear Gl. *Photo by Scott Garvin*

alpine benches begin above 900m. The rounded summit is a 1500m climb from the valley. It gives excellent views over Stewart and across Bitter Cr onto the Cambria Icefield.

## Cambria Icefield

Length: 2–7 days

Map: 103P/13, 104A/4

Difficulty: 3

Best: Mar–May

The Cambria Icefield lies E of Stewart beyond the head of the Bear Gl. Covering an area about 30km by 40km, it is a large expanse of sprawling glaciers, punctuated by attractive summits up to 2600m. Being similar in size to the famous Columbia Icefield, the Cambria Icefield is the coastal equivalent of its Rocky Mountain counterpart, with highway access and over 2000m of glaciation. It offers a range of excellent ski mountaineering, with everything from day trips out of a base camp to short traverses.

The icefield has two lobes that wrap around Bitter Cr and the Bromley Gl. The N end of the icefield is most often approached from the Bear Gl. Access and side trips in that area are described above.

The main part of the icefield S of Otter Mtn can be

reached by skiing S from the head of the Bear Gl or directly from the W lobe of the Cambria Gl. The W margin of the Cambria Gl is less than 10km from Stewart and can be approached by climbing over Mt Dickie (see above). A helicopter drop-off is also used when there is a machine stationed in Stewart. The edge of the icefield between Treble Mtn and Mt McLeod is a very short flight from Stewart,

There are numerous summits on the main part of the icefield that are worthwhile ascents. Lying S of the main trunk of the Bromley Gl, Mt Trevor (2410m) is an excellent ski peak that is surrounded by glaciers and lies at the centre of the icefield. Mt Andres Vogt (2500m), 10km NE of Mt Trevor, is the second-highest summit on the icefield. Skis can be used to ascend glaciers on its S or W flank, and the final summit is a short snow climb. Red Mtn, a few kilometres S of Otter Mtn, was the site of extensive mineral exploration and is also a good ski peak. Other peaks include Treble Mtn and Mt McLeod on the W side of the icefield. Most summits rise 300–600m above the icefield.

Any number of base camp locations are possible. Other ideas include a short traverse from the Bear Gl to Mt Dickie (60km, 2300m).



Crossing the Cambria Icefield. *Photo by Matthias Jakob*

## Cambria Icefield Traverse

Length: 14 days

Total Distance: 120km

Elevation Gain: 5000m

Start: 425m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 103P/11,12,13, 104A/4

Best: Apr–May

Joe Fillipone, Matthias Jakob, Markus Kellerhals, Dave Williams, May 1997, *CAJ* 1998, p. 97

Glaciated terrain extends S of the Cambria Icefield, and the entire area can be traversed from the Bear Gl S to the Nass R. This is a recommended traverse with lots of enjoyable side trips. Portions of the route are visible from Hwy 37.

The traverse starts by ascending the Bear Gl from Hwy 37A (see above). From the head of the glacier, ski SE across a broad 2040m pass to descend a wide glacier around the E side of Otter Mtn. Continue S for about 15km down the 3km wide tributary of the Cambria Gl onto the Cambria Icefield proper. At the S end of the icefield, descend E along the Cambria Gl to 840m. Leave the glacier and veer SE through subalpine terrain across Kitsault Lk and the head of Trout Cr to reach open terrain around Kinskuch Lk. Follow a glaciated divide S past Tchitin Pk. Drop across

the head of the Illiance R to reach the subalpine Shishilabet Lks. Continue SE across rolling alpine terrain to reach the final descent to logging spurs above the Kitsault road (see [www.kitsault.com](http://www.kitsault.com)) on the Kwinatahl R (now officially Ksi Gwinhat'al R). For information on logging roads, contact the Kalum Forest District in Terrace at [www.for.gov.bc.ca/dkm](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/dkm).

Crevassed section of the Cambria Gl. *Photo by Matthias Jakob*





Above the Nass R. Photo by Dave Williams

Most peaks rise 300–600m above the main glaciers and are straightforward climbs on steep snow and easy rock. Lavender Pk is especially recommended for the uninterrupted 1200m ski run on the NNW side of the mountain.

With road access to the start of the traverse and relatively gentle travel on the main glaciers, this traverse is well suited to the use of lightweight toboggans for hauling food and gear. The traverse has been done without a food cache.

## Nass Icefield Traverse

Length: 14 days

Total Distance: 76km

Elevation Gain: 5500m

Start: 200m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 103P/3, 4, 5, 6

Best: May

John Clarke, Matthias Jakob, Markus Kellerhals, Betsy Waddington, Brian Waddington and David Williams, May 1995, *CAJ* 1996, p. 88, and [www.bivouac.com](http://www.bivouac.com).

Tucked between the Nass R and Alice Arm at the head of Observatory Inlet lies a small, unnamed icefield. This is the southernmost icefield in the Boundary Ranges and is re-

ferred to here as the Nass Icefield. It is approximately 10km across with ridges radiating out towards the coast and the interior. Rounded summits rise to 2100m, and glaciation extends to as low as 600m. Though the icefield is not as spectacular as some of the more rugged and expansive parts of the Coast Mountains to the N or S, it has been traversed and offers a pleasant trip with contrasting views

Glaciers on the Nass Icefield. Photo by Matthias Jakob





Bear River Ridge from near Long Lk. Mt Shorty Stevenson on R. Photo by Johann Slam

between the snow-laden ridge crests and the surrounding green valleys.

The traverse starts at the NE corner of the icefield on logging roads above Kwinamuck Lk. Climb through steep old-growth forest to gain the rounded divide S of Hoan Cr. Follow the divide SW to gain the main icefield above Shumal Cr. The main icefield offers numerous enjoyable ski ascents. The peaks become more rugged as you move towards the centre part of the range. Summits on the NW corner of the icefield give tremendous views of Observatory Inlet. From the SW corner of the icefield, continue SW along the narrow divide between the Iknouk and Kincolith Rivers (now officially Xnukw and Ksi Gingolx). The divide is narrow with steep slopes dropping off both sides into the surrounding valleys. It appears rugged from a distance but is largely skiable and most steep sections can be bypassed. This is one of the most scenic sections of the traverse. Follow the ridge SW to near its end above the mouth of the Nass R. Drop down steep slopes to the Iknouk R and bushwack out to Nass Bay. Make arrangements ahead of time for a boat pickup from Greenville.

## Bear River Ridge

Length: 2–4 days  
Total Distance: 38km  
Elevation Gain: 2200m  
Start: 200m

## 1980m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 104A/4, 104B/1  
Best: Feb–May

Bear River Ridge is the long divide that runs N from Stewart between the Bear and Salmon Rs. Rounded glaciated

summits along the ridge give excellent skiing, and there is pleasant terrain surrounding several subalpine lakes on the W side of the divide.

Access to the S end of Bear River Ridge is via Titan Trail. This is an old mule trail that serviced the Titan Mine. It starts 10km N of Stewart on the Salmon R road and runs 8km up the E side of Fish Cr to the old Titan Mine site near 1200m just W of the summit of Mt Welker (1570m). Mt Welker is a straightforward ascent and it is a scenic tour to continue N along the crest of Bear River Ridge. Mt Bunting and Mt Shorty Stevenson are the highest summits at 1980m and offer excellent skiing on their W sides, with runs up to 900m.

Bear River Ridge can also be reached via a mining road that runs up the Cascade R. From Stewart, drive N through Hyder and continue up the Salmon R road. After climbing past the abandoned Premier Mine, the mining road branches off and ascends the Cascade R to just W of the outlet of Long Lk. Bear River Ridge is easily reached by skiing across Long Lk.

The area is popular with snowmobilers. The local snowmobile club ([www.bordertownsnowbombers.com](http://www.bordertownsnowbombers.com)) maintains Silvertip Cabin 2km SE of Mt Dilworth on Silver Cr at GR374205. This is an old mine cabin that is equipped with a diesel burner, bunks and a propane stove. Skiers are welcome, but expect cigarette smoke and beer cans. In the winter, the access road up the Cascade R and Silver Cr to the cabin is maintained as a groomed snowmobile trail. The road is sometimes plowed to Premier. Though snow-



View across icefields in the Salmon Gl area. Taken from a summit W of the Knipple Gl.

mobiling is popular in the area, there is a lot of terrain and it is not overwhelmed by sleds. Most of the good skiing is not in snowmobile terrain.

There are many possibilities for trips in this area. A suggested loop ascends Titan Trail to Mt Welker, continues along Bear River Ridge past Mt Bunting and descends to Long Lk and exits via the snowmobile trail on the Cascade R. If you are traveling S along Bear River Ridge, the Titan Trail is the easiest exit but it is also possible to descend an avalanche path down Daly Cr to the Salmon R road.

## Salmon Glacier

Length: 4–7 days  
Total Distance: 60km  
Elevation Gain: 2100m  
Start: 300m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 104B/1  
Best: Apr–May

The Salmon Gl is a large valley glacier draining a sprawling complex of ice NW of Stewart. The 2km-wide glacier extends over 20km into a heavily glaciated region of attractive 2400m summits and broad neves that offers excellent ski mountaineering. The area is known for the Granduc Mine,

which lies N of the glacier at an elevation of 800m and operated for about 20 years from the 1960s to the 1980s. An access road was built to the mine and runs next to the Salmon Gl, making it one of the largest glaciers accessible by road in North America. The mine tunnels run underneath the Berendon Gl. A weather station at the mine recorded average annual snowfalls of 20m and a record annual snowfall of 28m.

Access is from Stewart. Drive N through Hyder. The Granduc Mine road runs N up the Salmon R. After climbing past the abandoned Premier Mine, the road crosses the Cascade R and traverses a steep hillside above the lower stretches of the Salmon Gl to Summit Lk. The road is not plowed. Access is shortest in the spring when the road can be driven past the Cascade R. Depending on mining exploration activities, it is sometimes partially plowed in the spring. Most of the sidehill above the glacier is very steep. The best access to the glacier is from W of Mt Dilworth, about 30km from Hyder. A gentle ramp (known as the knob) that starts at GR344213 angles down from the road and provides good access to the glacier at about 770m.





Salmon Gl.

The main trunk of the Salmon Gl is straightforward to travel, and it is about 16km to the broad 1550m pass at the head of the glacier. There are a few crevassed areas on the lower glacier—most can be avoided by skiing up the E side of the lower glacier and continuing halfway across the glacier to Summit Lk before turning W and heading up the trunk of the main glacier.

There is excellent ski-mountaineering terrain surrounding the upper Salmon Gl, with enough side trips for several days or more. Objectives include Mt Jefferson Coolidge, Mt White Fraser and an unnamed summit 5km S of Mt Pearson as well as several summits E of Mt White Fraser. Most summits rise 600–900m above the main glaciers and offer good skiing. One of the longest runs is down the glaciated E shoulder that comes off the 2500m summit 1km S of Mt Frank Mackie.

Most parties ski back down the Salmon Gl but other options include skiing down the Berendon Gl to Happy

Near the head of the Salmon Gl, S of Mt White Fraser.



Valley, either from the S fork of the Frank Mackie Gl or via a narrow pass E of Mt White Fraser. An exit down the Texas Gl has also been used. Avoid an icefall at 900m by sticking to the S side of the glacier.

Snowmobilers are sometimes seen on the main glaciers in the area.

## Happy Valley

Length: 4–7 days  
Map: 104A/4, 5, 104B/1, 8

Terrain: Complex  
Best: Mar–May

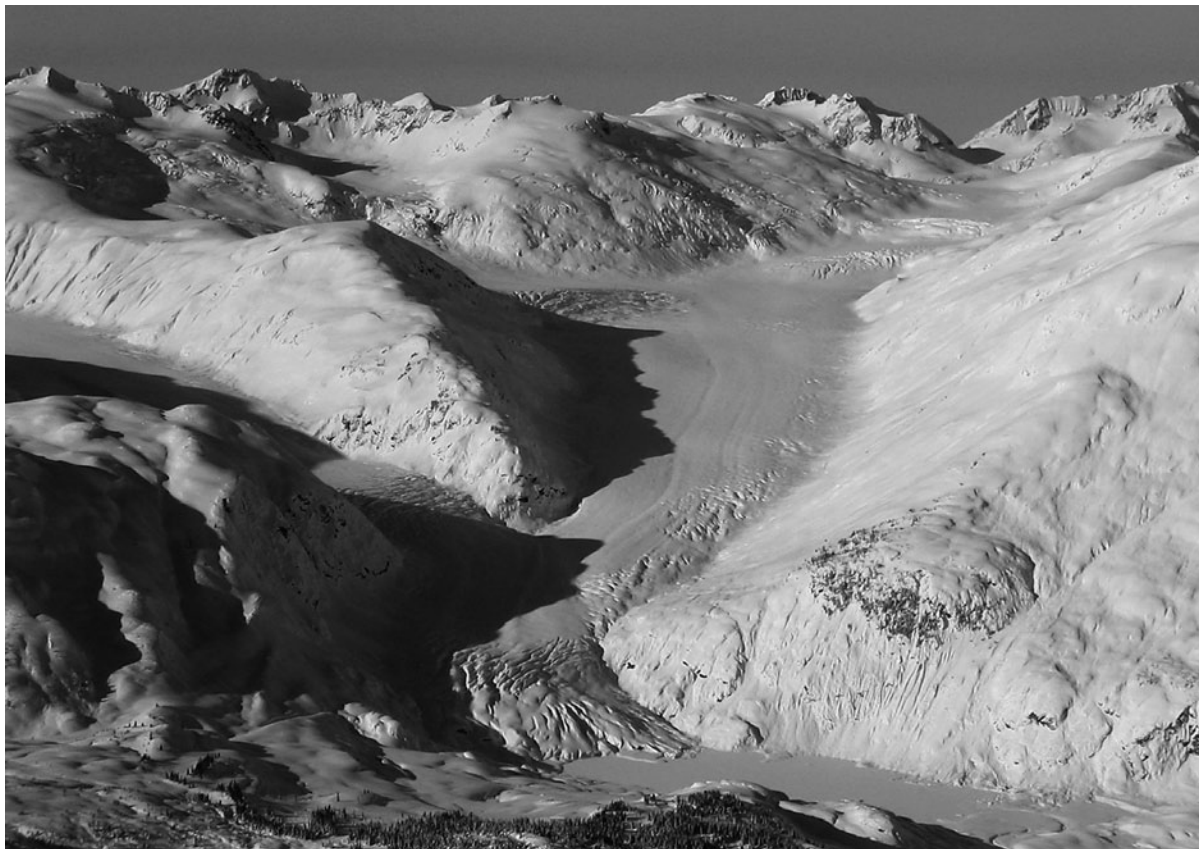
Happy Valley is a nickname for the upper Bowser R valley near the site of the old Granduc Mine. It is a wide valley surrounded by heavily glaciated summits and is a spectacular location for ski mountaineering, with descents of up to 1500m. It was called Happy Valley because the families and women were housed here and all the single miners (male) were housed at the mine-site camp.

The Smirthwaite Cabin is located in Happy Valley just NE of Granduc at 700m at GR349346. It is an old trapper's cabin maintained by Johann Slam of Stewart. The 4m x 8m cabin sleeps 4 and has a wood stove, propane stove, lantern, pots and pans, utensils and an outhouse. Typical snow-packs are over 3m, so expect to have to dig out the cabin. The cabin has an upper access door. Donations for use can be left at the gas station in Stewart.

Access options include flying in by helicopter or skiing in via various overland routes. The most direct route is the Granduc Mine road past the Salmon Gl (see above). Granduc is about 40km from Hyder. As much of the road cuts across steep sidehills, with some avalanche hazard, several alternative routes are also used. A route from Long Lk follows a gentle alpine valley past Divide Lk, across the toe of the Betty Gl and down Betty Cr to Happy Valley. This

Smirthwaite Cabin in Happy Valley. *Photo by Johann Slam*





View W up the Berendon Gl. Happy Valley is at the bottom of the photo. *Photo by Andre Ike*

is a pleasant route but travels below some large avalanche slopes in Betty Cr. A high route along the ridge N of Mt Dilworth is less exposed. Other options include longer routes up onto the Salmon Gl and down the S branch of the Berendon Gl. If you are flying in, the ski out is an enjoyable 2–3 day trip. The shortest route out is past Mt Dilworth and out the snowmobile trail on the Cascade R. A high route over the shoulder N of Mt Dilworth and out along the crest of Bear River Ridge is recommended as a longer alternative.

There are a variety of side trips from Happy Valley. Chicago Pk (2120m), immediately E of the cabin and 3.5km SW of Mitre Mtn, is a long climb on open slopes. A small glacier SW of the summit offers an excellent 1400m run on W facing slopes.

Nearby Mitre Mtn is a granite tower that is difficult to climb (CAJ 1978, p. 15) but the long glacier on its W side is one of the highlights with a 1500m run that starts from the 2250m shoulder just S of the summit.

A few kilometres N of the cabin beyond the old airstrip, the second glacier N of the Mitre run can be ascended to a snow peak and gives an excellent 1700m run known as So Good.

Summit Mtn (2130m), on the W side of Summit Lk, is a recommended ascent via a straightforward ski route up its long rounded NE ridge, which is gained from just S of the toe of the Berendon Gl. There is good skiing down W facing slopes onto the Berendon Gl from several points along the ridge. Longer touring trips can be made to some of the rounded summits above the Berendon Gl, including Mt Berendon. The glacier can be gained by avoiding the heavily crevassed area at its snout on the S side. Other options include skiing SE towards ridges N of Mt Dilworth.

The main valley is completely alpine but there is some good tree skiing all along the sidehill E of the cabin, with 300–600m runs. There is even an abandoned ski hill here.



Skiing up a tributary of the Knipple Gl.

## Salmon Gl to Ningunsaw Pass

Length: 14 days

Total Distance: 110km

Elevation Gain: 4600m

Start: 600m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 104B/1,8,9, 104A/12

Best: Apr–May

Alejandro Frid and Pierre Friele, May 1988, *CAJ* 1989, p. 83

The large complex of glaciers between the head of the Bowser and Unuk Rs forms a continuous icefield that can be traversed N from the Salmon Gl to subalpine lakes at the head of Teigen Cr with an exit to Ningunsaw Pass on Hwy 37. This is an enjoyable and varied traverse that is repeated regularly.

Access is from the Salmon Gl (see above). From the broad 1550m pass at the head of the glacier, swing N for 5km past Mt White Fraser to a wide 1710m pass at the head of the Frank Mackie Gl. Continue straight N for 25km on the long corridor formed by the N and S branches of the Frank Mackie Gl. This route passes under the impressive 1200m E face of Mt Frank Mackie. From the narrow 1840m pass at the head of the N branch of the Frank Mackie Gl, turn E and cross over a small glaciated plateau at 2200m to descend NE onto the Knipple Gl. Ascend the main N

branch of the Knipple Gl to a 1950m pass (GR333660). Ski N down the W edge of an unnamed glacier. At 1740m, cross to the adjoining parallel glacier to the W and descend to the head of Treaty Cr.

Climb N through mostly open terrain to the 1100m pass between Treaty Cr and the Unuk R. Traverse NW across the hillside on the N side of the Unuk R and descend below treeline past the W end of a small, unnamed lake at

Looking S across the head of Treaty Cr.





Camp on the shore of Hodkin Lk.

the head of a tributary of Teigen Cr. This is the only section of the traverse that is below treeline. Once past the lake, ascend 200m in a NW direction through open forest to regain the alpine. Continue traversing above the Unuk R until you are able to swing around the W end of a wide ridge onto the broad plateau of subalpine lakes between the head of the Unuk R and Teigen Cr. There is excellent camping near Hodkin Lk, and the intervening creeks offer a decent ski route to Teigen Lk.

From Teigen Lk, ascend the N side of Teigen Cr E through a 1440m pass into Redflat Cr, which descends E to Hwy 37. Depending on snow conditions, either ski out the creek or traverse steeper slopes at treeline along the S side of Redflat Cr to the Snowbank area above Hwy 37. A short descent through the forest leads down to the highway.

Weather permitting, the traverse offers many opportunities for enjoyable side trips. Travel on the main glaciers is generally straightforward. With road access to the start of the traverse, the route is well suited to the use of lightweight toboggans for hauling food and gear, and the traverse has been done without a food cache. For additional references, see *CAJ* 2006, p. 133.

Other variations are also possible. The traverse is sometimes done from N to S. A few adventurous parties have used a canoe to cross the Bell Irving R and then skied up the Treaty R. Other groups have chartered a helicopter from Bell 2 and have been dropped off at the N end of the traverse. The head of the Salmon Gl has also been reached by an approach from Portland Canal, and a variation of the traverse heads W to the mouth of Kluane R off of Bradfield Canal (*CAJ* 1999, p. 102).

Traversing between Hodkin and Teigen Lakes.





*Photo by Scott Garvin*

## Ningunsaw Pass

As Hwy 37 continues N from the Bell Irving R it climbs through a long, flat-bottomed valley at 640m known as Ningunsaw Pass, which separates the Coast Mountains from the Skeena Mountains. The highway travels in a northerly direction through the pass, with ski access off both sides of the road. There is lots of excellent skiing on everything from open glades and avalanche paths to high-alpine slopes with runs up to 800m. An active group will easily find enough to do for 3 or 4 days. Only the most popular areas are mentioned here.

Ningunsaw Pass is a comfortable 4 hour drive of about 360km from Smithers or Terrace. The road is paved the entire way. Parking is very difficult to find. The most popular trips start from a parking area at Redflat Cr at the S end of Ningunsaw Pass, 11km N of Bell 2 Lodge. This is the first pullout after the lodge. There is a rest area immediately S of Redflat Cr but it is not plowed in the winter months. As soon as you cross the creek, there is a large plowed pullout on the right. Park off to the side, as this area is used as a refueling area for Last Frontier Heliskiing.

The nearest services to the pass are located at Bell 2 Lodge ([www.bell2lodge.com](http://www.bell2lodge.com)). Gas and diesel are available, but vehicle repair work is not. There is a small restaurant that caters to the traveler. The lodge is the home of Last Frontier Heliskiing. Accommodation is available, though the lodge can be full during peak times. Some parties camp at Redflat Cr. The best campsites are in the woods on the W side of the highway.

Ningunsaw Pass is used for heliskiing, but the guides will do their best to avoid you if they know where you are skiing. Keep in mind that their bad-weather skiing is in ski-touring terrain, so you may encounter them. Information on skiing and avalanche conditions is available from the

heliski guides—just ask at the front desk at the lodge. Helicopter charter is sometimes available after hours.

Despite the coastal influence through Ningunsaw Pass, outbreaks of cold arctic air are not uncommon in the winter months. Touring is best here from mid-February on, when temperatures are warmer and deeper snowpacks cover bush at lower elevations.

The highway through Ningunsaw Pass crosses 5 avalanche areas and is kept open in the winter by avalanche technicians based in Terrace. The highway is typically closed due to avalanches for several days each winter. Record avalanche cycles have buried 300m long sections of the road up to 21m deep in debris and closed the highway for 10 days.

There is no snowmobiling in the area, as the terrain is not favourable for their use.



*View up Snowbank Mtn. Photo by Guido Schnelzer*

## Snowbank Mountain 1800m

The broad summit on the W side of Ningunsaw Pass above Snowbank Cr is known as Snowbank Mtn. Its entire E side produces large avalanches, which regularly threaten the highway. A broad timbered ridge on the N side of the mountain offers a safe ascent route, and there are several options for excellent runs on N facing slopes.

### Snowbank Weather Station

Length: 1/2 day  
Total Distance: 4km  
Elevation Gain: 600m  
Start: 610m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Simple  
Map: 104A/11  
Best: Feb–Apr

From the parking lot at Redflat Cr, cross the highway and ski W up the S side of the creek. Follow the creek for approximately 1km. The Ministry of Transportation has cut a ski route through the alder to allow access to their mid-mountain weather station. This route can be difficult to find, but look for orange ribbon just above the creek. The

route up follows a series of natural openings for the first 200m in elevation and then continues up through mixed hemlock and balsam forest. The goal is a large bench feature at approximately 1100m (GR406926). The Ministry of Transportation weather station is located here. Natural openings and tighter glades can be skied either E back down to the highway or N down to Redflat Cr.

### Mucho Gusto

Length: 1 day	Difficulty: 3
Total Distance: 7km	Terrain: Challenging
Elevation Gain: 1200m	Map: 104A/11
Start: 600m	Best: Feb–Apr

Climbing higher from the Snowbank weather station gives access to Snowbank Mtn and several excellent runs. At approximately 1400m, a large bench area is reached about 300m above the weather station. This is the site of a memorial to two Ministry of Transportation avalanche technicians who died in an avalanche in January 1999. Two steeper runs (Borderline Left or Right) can be skied N to Redflat Cr from here in good stability and offer excellent 700m runs. Otherwise, continue following the obvious ridge up to a large flat area at 1700m just N of the summit. From here, you can ski a run known as Mucho Gusto that drops 900m to Redflat Cr. Mucho Gusto is fairly low-angle, safe skiing in open terrain. It drops NW from the summit and then turns NE at treeline to follow the W side of a small creek down to Redflat Cr.

Several other much longer objectives are possible in the Redflat Cr area. Traversing W at treeline gives access to glaciated basins on the S side of Redflat Cr. Note that although the valley bottom in Redflat Cr offers a mostly open route to the head of the valley it is a major terrain trap, as it is exposed to large avalanches from above and is only recommended when you are confident the stability is good.

### Roadside Attraction

### 1400m

Length: 1 day	Difficulty: 3
Total Distance: 5km	Terrain: Challenging
Elevation Gain: 800m	Map: 104A/11
Start: 600m	Best: Feb–Apr

Roadside Attraction is a big avalanche path on the W side of the highway about 1km N of Redflat Cr. From the parking area at Redflat Cr, skin up the ridge that runs NW to the high point on the N side of Redflat Cr. Roadside Attraction drops due E from just S of the high point. This is a classic avalanche path that steepens to about 37° halfway down. In good conditions, it is an excellent 800m run. Check out the run from the highway before you start.



Roadside Attraction from Shagadelic Baby. Photo by Guido Schnelzer

### Eagle Ridge

The entire ridge complex on the E side of the highway above Snowbank Cr is referred to as Eagle Ridge.

#### Silver Fox

Length: 1 day	Difficulty: 3
Total Distance: 3km	Terrain: Challenging
Elevation Gain: 600m	Map: 104A/11
Start: 600m	Best: Feb–Apr

Runs on W facing avalanche paths and glades that descend towards Redflat Cr are known as Silver Fox. This area is accessed by following Redflat Cr E from the parking area. Your objective is the glades that face the highway. The base of the slope is reached within half a kilometre from the highway.

Eagle Ridge from the W. Photo by Guido Schnelzer







Crossing the Edziza Plateau. Photo by Steve Ogle

The crux is finding a way across the creek. The first pitch off the creek is fairly steep but short. Once climbed, the terrain kicks back to very low angle through either open glades or treed terrain, depending on your route. Your objective is a large bench feature at approximately 1200m. The descent route is through either forest or more open and sparsely treed avalanche paths, depending on conditions.

### Eagle Ridge

Length: 1–2 days  
Total Distance: 11km  
Elevation Gain: 1300m  
Start: 600m

### 1900m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 104A/11  
Best: Mar–Apr

The high point of Eagle Ridge at GR471923 is a recommended ski ascent with many options for longer runs on small N facing glaciers.

Start as for Silver Fox but once up the first pitch on the E side of Snowbank Cr, veer SE to gain the rounded W shoulder of Eagle Ridge. Continue up the shoulder onto the long crest of Eagle Ridge. The first high point at 1790m is a good objective, with 700m runs on its N side. Alterna-

tively, ski along the ridge for 2km to the main summit. The NE slopes offer a long moderate run that can be skied all the way down to the valley bottom.

## Mt Edziza

Length: 5–7 days  
Total Distance: 55km  
Elevation Gain: 1500m  
Start: 1500m

## 2710m

Difficulty: 2  
Terrain: Challenging  
Map: 104G/9, 10, 15  
Best: Mar–Apr

Mt Edziza is a large extinct volcano on the interior side of the Coast Mountains S of the Stikine R. It lies at the centre of an extensive alpine plateau formed by volcanic eruptions. The area is popular for hiking in the summer. It is relatively dry and the plateau doesn't get much snow as it is quite windswept. However, the landscape is spectacular in its own way, offering a very unique ski trip with volcanic cones to explore, plenty of caribou and tremendous views of rugged peaks W of Mess Cr. The area lies within Mt Edziza Provincial Park ([www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks) or contact the parks office in Smithers, 250-847-7320).



Looking across the Edziza Plateau to rugged summits in the Stikine–Iskut area W of Mess Cr. *Photo by Steve Ogle*

The summit of Mt Edziza is glaciated, and a recommended trip starts on the plateau N of the summit, traverses over the peak and follows lakes and rivers out to a logging road that crosses the Iskut R back to Hwy 37.

Access to the N end of the plateau is by helicopter from Dease Lake (with staging from Iskut). Only permitted air-charter companies are authorized to fly into Mt Edziza Provincial Park. Contact Pacific Western Helicopters in Dease Lake (250-771-5911).

Ski S across the plateau to gain Mt Edziza proper. There is plenty of snow coverage as you climb to higher elevations, and the summit icecap offers about 20km of glacier skiing up and over the top. The actual summit is a gnarly series of rimed pinnacles that require technical climbing and is easily bypassed. The S side of the plateau offers more cones to explore. Snow cover also increases as you head S, as do opportunities to extend a ski traverse.

There are several options for exit routes. The shortest route is to ski out the Chakima Cr valley to Mowdade Lk. There is some avalanche exposure here. From the S end of

Mowdade Lk, follow the Little Iskut R SE for about 4km to pick up the Willow Cr forest service road. The road runs down the S side of the Little Iskut R and, after crossing the Iskut R, joins Hwy 37 approximately 10km S of Kinaskan Lk. It is 17km from the Little Iskut bridge to the highway. Longer routes continue S to Raspberry Pass and exit via Bourgeaux Cr to the Little Iskut R.

Attractive alpine terrain continues S into the Spectrum Range. S of Arctic Lk, the plateau can be used to reach more rugged glaciated terrain at the head of Mess Cr.

Mt Edziza. *Photo by Steve Ogle*





Unnamed summits near the Andrei Icefield. Photo by Linda Bily

## Stikine Iskut

Length: 19 days

Total Distance: 150km

Elevation Gain: 6400m

Start: 200m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Map: 104B/14, 104G/3, 6, 11

Best: Apr–May

Markus Kellerhals, Steve Sheffield, Peter Stone, Brian and Betsy Waddington, Dave Williams, May 1994, *CAJ* 1995, p. 12

A vast area of rugged summits and glaciers lies on the E side of the Stikine R, directly across from the Stikine Icefield and N of the Iskut R. The area extends over 100km to Telegraph Cr and is bounded on the E by Mess Cr and the Mt Edziza plateau. The N portion of the region consists mostly of sharp, heavily glaciated summits surrounding the Scud R while the S half consists of more gentle peaks rising out of the Andrei Icefield. It is a spectacular area that has been traversed by several ski parties.

The longest traverse crossed the entire area from N to S. Access is from Telegraph Cr on the banks of the Stikine R, 115km W of Dease Lake. The N end of the region can be approached by taking a jetboat 30km down the Stikine R to Arrival Cr (contact [www.stikineriversong.com](http://www.stikineriversong.com)). A trail leads from the homestead of Bill and Ruth Sampson 20km to Yehiniko Lk. From halfway down the W side of the lake, follow a long snowy tributary valley SW over an 1800m glaciated col onto the Scud Gl. Descend the main trunk of the Scud Gl for about 10km to 980m. Climb E to

cross a 1770m pass and descend a narrow glacier S onto the main valley glacier draining the W side of Mt Hickman. Ski S up the glacier and through a 2170m pass to reach the unnamed icefield 10km S of Mt Hickman. The route drops briefly to treeline at the 1200m pass between Sphaler and More Crs before climbing S onto the Andrei Icefield. Cross the Andrei Icefield to Hoodoo Mtn and descend the straightforward W side of the W Twin Gl. Once off the glacier, the last 4km stretch of alder, Devil's club and mature forest leads to the banks of the Iskut R. Arrangements can be made for pickup by jetboat or helicopter.

This is an outstanding traverse that offers tremendous scenery and a large number of ski ascents. The most spectacular summits lie in the area around the Scud Gl and Mt Hickman and tend to be more difficult. Many peaks on the Andrei Icefield are easy ski ascents. Several on the SW side of the icefield offer incredible views of the Stikine valley and 3000m of relief rising behind to the summit of Kates Needle. Mt Hoodoo is an extinct volcano that is a recommended ski ascent.

Variations have included several E to W traverses from the Arctic Lk and Mt Edziza region across to the Porcupine R, Twin Gl or Choquette Gl. The Choquette Gl involves bypassing a difficult icefall.

# Juneau 22



Looking S from a minor summit near Mt Ogilvie at the head of the Gilkey Gl on the Juneau Icefield.

**T**his chapter covers the northernmost portion of the Coast Mountains between the Stikine River and Skagway. The region straddles the Alaska panhandle and is loosely centred around the city of Juneau. It is heavily glaciated and is dominated by the Stikine and Juneau Icefields. This is a magical landscape on a huge scale. It contains the biggest and most expansive icefields in the Coast Mountains, which feed large valley glaciers, some of which are 40–50km long and flow into the ocean. Summits are generally quite rugged, and the icefields are especially scenic. Skis were first used on the Juneau and Stikine Icefields in the 1940s.

This chapter is intended as a basic guide to the Stikine and Juneau Icefields. It describes only the main traverse routes across the icefields and does not include the many shorter ski-mountaineering trips available in the areas surrounding Juneau, Skagway and Atlin.

The trips described are almost entirely on glaciers. Though some of the surrounding valley glaciers can be

quite heavily crevassed and difficult, travel on the main icefields is generally straightforward. The most notable feature of the icefields is the enormous distances. Trips to the Stikine and Juneau Icefields are serious wilderness undertakings that require careful planning. Virtually all trips require extended icefield travel and usually involve helicopter support, either for access or placing for food caches.

## **Snow and Weather Conditions**

In a mountain range already known for bad weather, the Boundary Ranges stand out as having some of the most challenging weather in the Coast Mountains, with storms sweeping almost constantly off the Gulf of Alaska. It is worth checking the climate statistics for Juneau before venturing onto the icefields here!

Typically, the best weather conditions for ski mountaineering are in April and May. Though there is still measurable precipitation 17 days a month, April and May are somewhat drier than the winter months, and Juneau receives up to 40% of possible sunshine. March offers colder tem-

peratures and drier snow but often stormier weather, while June offers more spring like snow conditions and longer days but less snow at lower elevations. Weather forecasts are available online from the US National Weather Service at [weather.noaa.gov](http://weather.noaa.gov). In the interior, Atlin experiences a dry continental climate with long, cold winters.

The annual snowfall in the Juneau region is impressive. At sea level, the city of Juneau receives about 2.5m of snowfall and spends much of the winter under a blanket of snow. At an elevation of about 800m, the Eaglecrest ski area near Juneau gets about 5–7m of snow, while at higher elevations on the Juneau and Stikine Icefields the annual snowfall often exceeds a staggering 30m. Snowpack data for SE Alaska is available online at [www.ambscs.org](http://www.ambscs.org).

### Access

Most trips to the Juneau and Stikine Icefields start or finish in Juneau, which is accessible by air from Seattle with regular flights by Alaska Airlines ([www.alaskaair.com](http://www.alaskaair.com)). Juneau can also be reached on Alaska's Marine Highway System, which offers regular ferry service to Juneau from Bellingham, Prince Rupert and Skagway ([www.dot.state.ak.us/amhs](http://www.dot.state.ak.us/amhs)). Local flights between towns around SE Alaska are available from [www.wingsofalaska.com](http://www.wingsofalaska.com) and [www.labflying.com](http://www.labflying.com). With a population of 30,000, Juneau is the capital city of Alaska and offers a wide range of services. See [www.juneau.org](http://www.juneau.org) or [www.juneau.com](http://www.juneau.com). Recommended accommodation includes the historic Silver Bow Inn ([www.silverbowinn.com](http://www.silverbowinn.com)) and the Juneau hostel ([www.juneauhostel.org](http://www.juneauhostel.org)). There is an active local ski-mountaineering community ([www.juneaualpineclub.org](http://www.juneaualpineclub.org)) served by the knowledgeable folks at Foggy Mountain Shop ([www.foggymountainshop.com](http://www.foggymountainshop.com)). The Eaglecrest ski area operates on Douglas Island across from the city ([www.skijuneau.com](http://www.skijuneau.com)). Mt Ben Stewart and Mt Troy are popular out-of-bounds ski trips.

The region is also accessible from Whitehorse in the Yukon. Whitehorse is served by regular flights from Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton (see [www.aircanada.ca](http://www.aircanada.ca) or [www.flyairnorth.com](http://www.flyairnorth.com)) or is a 2500km drive from Vancouver. The NW end of the Juneau Icefield is accessible from Skagway, 175km S of Whitehorse. Skagway is a small town that offers motels, restaurants, bed and breakfasts, a food store and an outdoor store. There is also backcountry skiing on the road to Whitehorse. See [www.skagway.com](http://www.skagway.com) or [www.skagway.org](http://www.skagway.org) for information on Skagway, including local trails.

The NE side of the Juneau Icefield is accessible from the small town of Atlin ([www.atlin.net](http://www.atlin.net)), which is a comfortable

3 hour drive of 180km from Whitehorse.

Most of the Alaska side of the Juneau and Stikine Icefields lies within Tongass National Forest and there is much information about visitor centres, trails, natural history, webcams etc., on the website at [www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass](http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass). The Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center in Juneau is well worth a visit before or after your trip. On the BC side, the NE portion of the Juneau Icefield and Atlin Lake are part of Atlin Provincial Park ([www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks)).

Note that both the Juneau and Stikine Icefields straddle the Canada–US border. Check with pilots for restrictions on flying across the border when placing food caches or getting dropped off on the icefields. If your trip crosses the border, it may also be necessary to notify customs before your trip and carry passports.

### Maps

As the international border runs down the middle of the entire region, a mixture of US and Canadian maps is required. At the 1:250,000 scale, USGS maps for Juneau, Skagway, Atlin and Petersburg together with the Canadian 1:250,000 NTS sheets 104K, 104F and 103P provide a good overview of the Juneau and Stikine Icefields. Detailed large-scale maps will be necessary for navigation. These are a combination of 1:63,360 USGS quadrangles and 1:50,000 Canadian NTS mapsheets. In areas near the jagged path of the international border, the combination of maps can be very awkward to use, as neither the US nor Canadian maps extend across the border and both sets of maps are at different scales. A suggested way to make the maps easier to use is to use a photocopy machine and enlarge the US maps that are adjacent to the border to the same scale as the Canadian maps (1:50,000) and glue the two together along the border.

### Multi-use Considerations

The Juneau Icefield is close enough to major population centres that it is possible to see other people. In spring, Out of Bounds Inc in Juneau offers heliskiing in areas N of the Mendenhall Gl. Starting in May, cruise ships supply a steady stream of helicopter sightseeing flights over the W parts of the icefield. Tours include dogsledding on the icefield and a host of other activities.

On the BC side of the icefield, snowmobiling is popular in the Atlin area. However, within Atlin Provincial Park it is only allowed on Atlin Lk. Klondike Heliskiing ([www.atlinheliski.com](http://www.atlinheliski.com)) operates in areas surrounding Atlin Provincial Park. Also of interest is a 75 km cross-country ski



Atlin Lk and the NE side of the Juneau Icefield.

race that circles Teresa Island in Atlin Lk (see [www.atlin-skiclub.org](http://www.atlin-skiclub.org)).

The Stikine Icefield, Wright Gl and Whiting R areas get far fewer sightseers.

## Trip Planning

### Weather, Avalanches and Snowpack Information

US National Weather Service	<a href="http://weather.noaa.gov">weather.noaa.gov</a>
SE Alaska Avalanche Center	<a href="http://www.avalanche.org">www.avalanche.org</a>
Snowpack data	<a href="http://www.ambcs.org">www.ambcs.org</a>

### Helicopters

Coastal Helicopters	<a href="http://www.coastalhelicopters.com">www.coastalhelicopters.com</a> Juneau 907-789-5600
Temsco Helicopters	<a href="http://www.temscoair.com">www.temscoair.com</a> Juneau 907-789-9501 Skagway 907-983-2900 Wrangell 907-874-2010 Petersburg 907-772-4780
North Star	Juneau 907-790-4530
Discovery Helicopters	<a href="http://www.atlin.net">www.atlin.net</a> Atlin 250-651-7569

### Ski Planes

Atlin Air Charters	<a href="http://www.atlin.net">www.atlin.net</a> Atlin 250-651-0025
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Alaska Mountain Flying	<a href="http://www.flyglacierbay.com">www.flyglacierbay.com</a> Skagway 907-766-3007
Earth Center Adventures	<a href="http://www.flydrake.com">www.flydrake.com</a> Haines 907-723-9475
L.A.B Flying Service	<a href="http://www.labflying.com">www.labflying.com</a> Juneau 907-789-9160

### Floatplane

Wings of Alaska	<a href="http://www.wingsofalaska.com">www.wingsofalaska.com</a> Juneau 907-789-0790
Air Excursions	<a href="http://www.airexcursions.com">www.airexcursions.com</a> Juneau 907-789-5591
Pacific Wing	<a href="http://www.pacificwing.com">www.pacificwing.com</a> Petersburg 907-772-4258

### Jet-boat

Breakaway Adventures	Wrangell 907-874-2488 <a href="http://www.breakawayadventures.com">www.breakawayadventures.com</a>
Stikine R Jetboat Assoc.	Wrangell 907-874-2300 <a href="http://www.jetboatataskatours.com">www.jetboatataskatours.com</a>
Alaska Island Charters	Petersburg 907-772-3696 <a href="http://www.alaskaislandcharters.com">www.alaskaislandcharters.com</a>
Stikine River Song	Telegraph Cr 250-235-3196 <a href="http://www.stikineriversong.com">www.stikineriversong.com</a>





Looking across the Taku GI on the Juneau Icefield.

## Juneau Icefield

The Juneau Icefield straddles the Coast Mountains between Juneau and the S end of Atlin Lake. Covering an area of approximately 4000km<sup>2</sup>, the icefield is up to 70km wide and extends 140km along the main divide of the Coast Mountains. It is the fifth-largest icefield in the W hemisphere, with glaciers up to 5km wide and 50km long. The crest of the icefield rises to 1800m, where huge expanses of ice are surrounded by rocky nunataks and spectacular spires that jut 400–800m above the icefield.

A ski traverse of the Juneau Icefield is a classic trip in a spectacular setting, and the icefield is regularly crossed from Atlin to Juneau or from Juneau to Skagway. Skis were first used on the icefield in the 1940s, and one of the first ski traverses was in July 1949 when Fred Beckey, William Putnam, Harry King, Andrew Griscom and David Michael skied across the icefield from Twin Glacier Lk to the Mendenhall GI (AAJ 1950, p. 441).

The main icefield is relatively gentle and offers straightforward traveling. There are large crevassed areas on the

lower sections of many glaciers and on steeper sections off some of the summits. For the most part, these are all easily avoided. Generally the most rugged terrain lies on the W side of the icefield, while the terrain on E side is typically gentler and more expansive. There are excellent ski ascents throughout the icefield offering many enjoyable side trips. Descents are typically 400–800m. The icefield is well suited to the use of lightweight toboggans for carrying gear and food.

The icefield is home to the Juneau Icefield Research Program (see [www.jirp.org](http://www.jirp.org) or [www.juneauicefield.org](http://www.juneauicefield.org)), which has been studying the glaciology of the entire region since 1946. The annual snowfall on the main icefield often exceeds 30m, which builds glaciers that are up to 1400m thick and feeds 38 outflowing glaciers. Ice takes approximately 250 years to flow from the crest of the icefield down to the glacier snouts in the surrounding valleys. The annual research program takes place in July and August when research teams cross the icefield on skis and on foot from Juneau to Atlin Lk.



Skiing below an unnamed summit E of the Lace R.

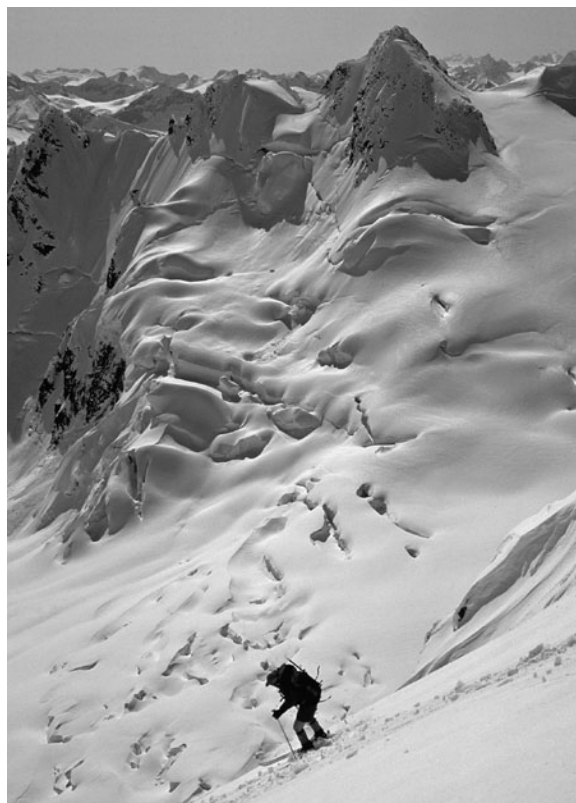
Skiing is possible well into the summer on the higher parts of the icefield.

There are a large numbers of photographs of the Juneau Icefield that can found on the Internet.

### Routes onto the Icefield

The Juneau Icefield is a huge wilderness area that, paradoxically, has relatively easy access because of its proximity to the city of Juneau. There are three ski access routes onto the icefield from the Juneau area.

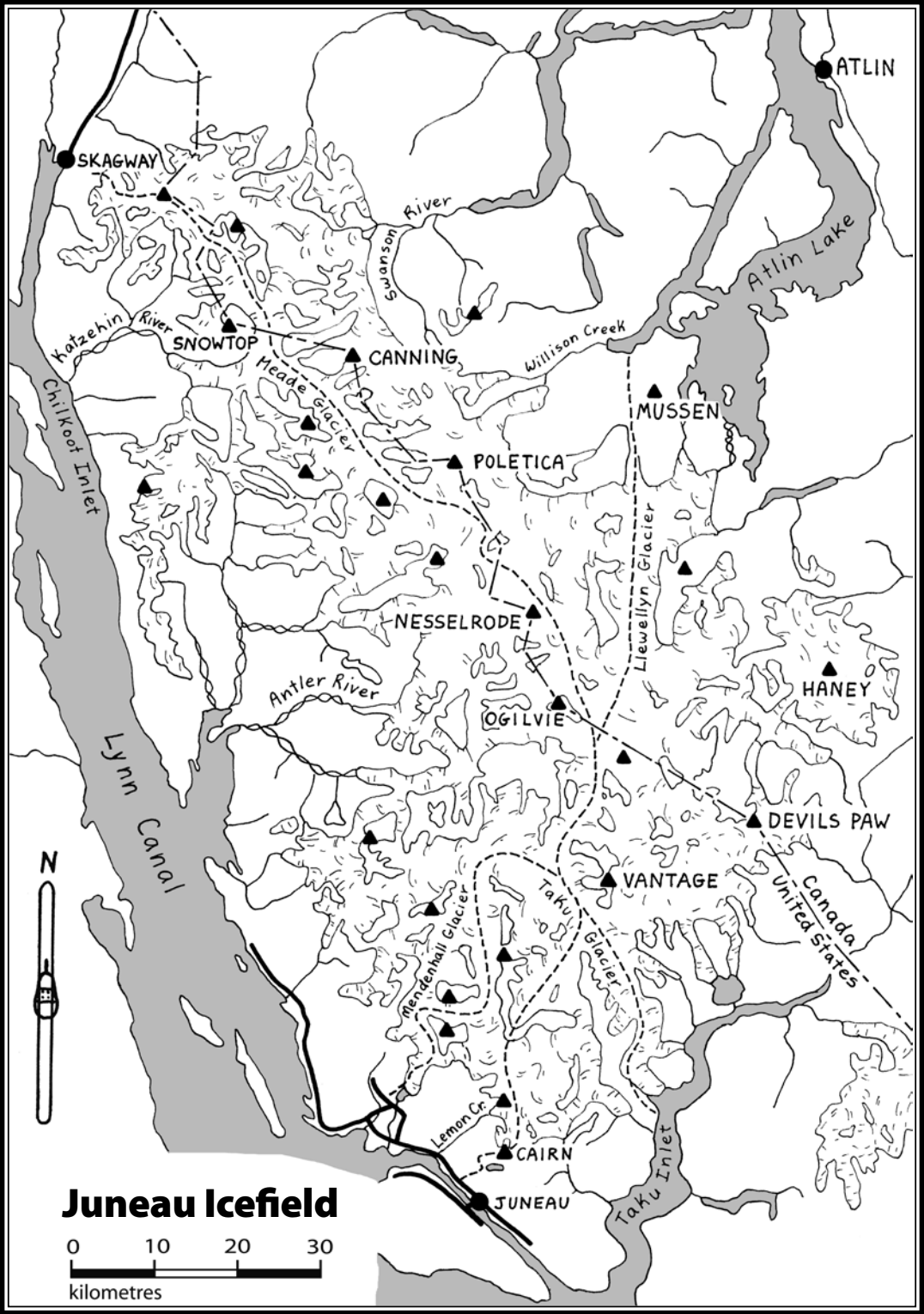
**Mendenhall Glacier** The Mendenhall Gl drains the W side of the Juneau Icefield and is the classic approach to the icefield. It is a large gentle glacier, about 2km wide, that flows down a narrow valley, surrounded on both sides by steep summits that rise up to 1200m above the ice. The approach requires about 8km of travel on the lower portion of the Mendenhall Gl. Though many parties have used this route, assess its condition carefully before taking it. Travel is not difficult in good conditions, but in poor conditions solid mountaineering and glacier travel experience are necessary.



On rugged peaks W of the head of the Meade Gl.

Access to the glacier is from Mendenhall Glacier Trail, which starts beyond the Mendenhall Campground on the W side of Mendenhall Lk (see Tongass National Forest website for more trail information and a webcam). The trail runs 6km up the W side of the glacier to a lookout on a promontory at 400m and avoids the lower portion of the glacier.

Travel on the ice varies considerably from year to year. In the spring you will likely be on bare glacier ice beyond the end of the trail and will climb past the snow line. Crampons will probably be required. When crossing the snow line, use extra caution as crevasses may be poorly covered. The glacier has many heavily crevassed areas that must be avoided. About 1 or 2km beyond the end of the trail, the recommended route crosses the glacier to its far E margin and continues up the E edge of the glacier below Mt Wrather for 5km. When turning the corner NW of Mt Wrather, avoid a major icefall by skiing up the glacier moat next to the rock. Above the corner, the major E tributary glacier between Mt Wrather and the Mendenhall Towers gives relatively straightforward access onto the icefield,





View of summits at the head of the Gilkey Gl.

either through Echo Pass or N along the W side of the Taku Range. Though times vary greatly with conditions, most parties take about 3 days to reach the main icefield.

**Blackerby Ridge** The most popular approach from Juneau is via Blackerby Ridge. This route does not involve any difficult glacier travel. From the end of Wire St on the N side of Salmon Cr, a steep unmaintained trail gives direct access to the alpine at the W end of Blackerby Ridge. Ski along the ridge and over Cairn Pk to reach the Lemon Creek Gl. Note that several steep slopes must be crossed, so stable avalanche conditions are required. A variation in spring is to ski up the Salmon Cr road to the Salmon Cr reservoir and ascend open slopes N of the dam to Blackerby Ridge. The reservoir is reached by a short trail from the end of the road, which has a very steep section of stairs below the dam.

The Lemon Cr Gl can also be reached from the end of a rough, swampy trail up Lemon Cr by climbing SE from a gauging station to the Ptarmigan Gl and crossing the ridge N of Cairn Pk.

**Taku Glacier** Though not directly accessible from Juneau, the Taku Gl provides a recommended, though less popular, ski route onto the Juneau Icefield. The Taku Gl drains

most of the S part of the icefield and ends at sea level at the head of Taku Inlet, about 25km E of Juneau. Access to the toe of the glacier is usually by helicopter. Start from Grizzly Bar on the SW side of the glacier snout, which is a huge wall of ice next to the ocean. The lowest 5km of the glacier are a fractured jumble of crevasses and seracs but a narrow corridor along the extreme W margin of the glacier offers good traveling. About 7km up the glacier, ski up open slopes next to the glacier to avoid a heavily crevassed area formed where the ice drops around a promontory. Above the promontory, the glacier offers good traveling and the recommended route is up the middle of the glacier.

### Upper Taku Glacier Loop

Length: 10–14 days

Total Distance: 100km

Elevation Gain: 2600m

Maps: USGS Juneau B1, B2, C1, C2

Difficulty: 2–3

Terrain: Complex

Best: Apr–May

The upper Taku Gl is a fairytale landscape of rugged spires rising from huge flat expanses of ice. At 53km, the Taku is the longest glacier in the Coast Mountains. One of the simplest ways to explore the Juneau Icefield is to ski several different branches of the Taku to form a loop. This is a superb trip that is easily organized from Juneau.



Headed S up the Llewellyn Gl on a traverse from Atlin to Juneau. *Photo by Michelle Christensen*

Access onto the icefield is via the Mendenhall Gl, though a helicopter drop-off is also popular. Ski up the first E tributary of the Mendenhall Gl between the Mendenhall Towers and Mt Wrather. From the upper basin at the head of the glacier, turn N and climb onto the huge neve W of the Taku Range, bypassing an icefall at 1600m on its W side. The suggested loop swings around the N end of the Taku Range onto the main branch of the Taku Gl. Follow this SE to turn up the Southwest Branch, cross Echo Pass to Death Valley and climb S over the shoulder of Nugget Mtn. Cross onto the Lemon Cr Gl and exit via Blackerby Ridge.

There are many excellent side trips (see below). Longer variations of the loop can venture up the Matthes Gl. For a shorter trip, the Spencer Pk area is recommended.

### Atlin to Juneau

Length: 14 days

Total Distance: 120km

Elevation Gain: 2100m

Maps: USGS Juneau B1, B2, C1, C2, D1; NTS 104L/16, 104M/1, 104N/4

Difficulty: 2–3

Terrain: Complex

Best: Apr–May

One of the most popular trips to the Juneau Icefield is a traverse from Atlin to Juneau. This is a great trip across the full width of the Coast Mountains. The route travels through a wide variety of terrain that ranges from the dry continental climate of Atlin to the snowy heart of the icefield and out

through rugged glaciers and rainforest to Juneau. Much of this traverse is relatively straightforward, with most difficulties located near the Juneau end.

The trip starts in Atlin on the shore of beautiful Atlin Lk. The lake is frozen solid until late April and typically breaks up in early May. Helicopter, ski plane, snowmobile, skis or boat can be used to cross to the SW side of the lake. Most parties start from Willison Bay or Llewellyn Inlet and ski S onto the Llewellyn Gl. The lower Llewellyn Gl is relatively stagnant so that crevasses are generally not difficult.

The route across most of the icefield is straightforward, with few navigational difficulties or hazards. Ski up the Llewellyn Gl, down the Matthes and Taku Gl, then up the Southwest Branch, through Echo Pass, across Death Valley and over the shoulder of Nugget Mtn to the Lemon Cr Gl. These are all large, gentle glaciers that involve travel across huge expanses of ice with straight-line distances of 5–10km. As one skier put it, “It should be emphasized how BIG the terrain is.”

The final few days, exiting out to Juneau, travel through more challenging terrain, with increased risk of crevasses and avalanches as well as more demanding routefinding. The most popular exit is over Cairn Pk and out Blackerby Ridge. The Mendenhall Gl route has also been used.

The route has been kite-skied in the reverse direction to take advantage of the prevailing winds.

## Juneau to Skagway

Length: 20 days

Total Distance: 180km

Elevation Gain: 4500m

Maps: USGS Juneau B1, B2, C1, C2, D1; Atlin A7, A8; Skagway B1; NTS

104L/16, 104M/1, 104M/7

David Robertson, Walt Gore, Loren Adkins, Harry Waldrop, June 1969, *Alaska Magazine*, January 1980

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Best: Apr–May

A traverse from Juneau to Skagway is an excellent adventure that offers the most scenic and challenging route across the Juneau Icefield. Literally starting and finishing in the towns of Juneau and Skagway, the route travels the main trunks of half a dozen large valley glaciers through the huge wilderness region of the Juneau Icefield. It is a magical traverse that combines relatively easy traveling on the main glaciers with incredible views of rugged terrain along the W side of the icefield. There are routefinding challenges while approaching and leaving the icefield at either end of the traverse.

Several variations have been followed. The most popular direction of travel is from S to N, starting from either the Mendenhall Gl, Blackerby Ridge or Taku Gl approaches (see above). A helicopter drop-off is also a popular option. Once on the main Taku Gl, ski N across the vast expanses of the main branch of the glacier. Ascend the gentle Matthes Gl to the huge neve at the head of the Llewellyn Gl. Swing W past Mt Ogilvie and climb through a gentle pass E of Mt Nesselrode. Ski W of Mt London and Mt Service and traverse W onto the head of the Meade Gl. It is a long gentle ski down the Meade Gl to its major forks at 760m. This is generally straightforward, though there are some crevassed areas near the junction, which can require caution depending on the snow depth. Ski up the long N branch of the Mead Gl onto the Denver Gl.

Traverse the Denver Gl to the 1800m pass W of Boundary Pk 109. Head W from the pass for 2km and descend around the S side of the long SW ridge of Pk 6615ft. Swing around the W shoulder of the ridge at 1600m onto the head of the glacier W of Pk 6615ft. Ski NW across the glacier and climb to a minor ridge crest immediately N of Pk 5330ft (GR871885). The ridge crest is easily gained from the SE. Crossing the ridge crest into the head of the basin above Upper Dewey Lk is the crux of the trip. Its NW side is corniced. Look for a weakness in the cornice, drop onto a steep slope underneath the cornice and downclimb for about a rope length. Once out from underneath the cor-

nice, it is an enjoyable ski down to Upper Dewey Lk. There is an A-frame cabin at the lake that can be used for shelter (see [www.skagway.org](http://www.skagway.org)).

Pick up Upper Dewey Lake Trail on the N side of the creek draining the lake. Follow the trail down past Lower Dewey Lk. The trail is well marked and leads down to the valley bottom, from where it is a short walk into Skagway at the end of the traverse.

The traverse typically takes about 10–15 days though it is highly recommended to allow an extra week for side trips and ski ascents.

For a variety of trip reports, see *CAJ* 1982, p. 27; *CAJ* 1999, p. 116; *AAJ* 2003, p. 237.

## Peaks and Ski Ascents

This is big terrain surrounded by amazing mountains and rock spires. Factor in time for exploration if you want to



## JIRP Field Stations

The Juneau Icefield Research Program (JIRP) maintains 11 permanent field stations on the Juneau Icefield. Most ski-mountaineering parties will be self-sufficient and not need to rely on these but they are available for emergency use.

**Facilities** Each field station consists of one or more wood-frame buildings sheathed in metal siding. At most field stations at least 1 building is left unlocked.

**Location** Some of the field stations are located near the most popular ski routes along the Taku and Llewellyn Gl:

- Camp 17 is located on the Juneau side of the icefield N of Cairn Pk at 1280m on the ridge between the Ptarmigan and Lemon Gl.
- Camp 10 is the main research camp located beside the main trunk of the Taku Gl at 1200m on a low shoulder 3km SW of Vantage Pk.
- Camp 9 is located 8km N of Camp 10 on a rock outcrop at 1530m, 3km NE of Exploration Pk.
- Camp 8 lies at 2200m on a high shoulder on the SW side of Mt Moore.
- Camp 26 is located in Atlin Provincial Park at 1480m on the W side of the main branch of the Llewellyn Gl, 10km NE of Mt Nesselrode.

**Built** JIRP established its first permanent research station on the icefield in 1949.

**Contact** [www.jirp.org](http://www.jirp.org)





View up the Wright Gl. Photo by Dave Williams

really check it out. There are many excellent ski ascents, though they do not necessarily involve taking skis right to the summit. Because of the scale of the icefield, it is easiest to make side trips that are close to your traverse route.

The highest summit on the icefield is Devil's Paw (2616m), located S of the Tulsequah Gl. An impressive rock tower rising more than 1000m above the surrounding glaciers, it is visible from many parts of the icefield.

Summits on the SW side of the icefield also tend to be huge spires and spectacular rock towers but there are a number of fine ski ascents around the Taku Range, including Spencer Pk, Emperor Pk, Snowdrift Pk, Cathedral Pk and Nugget Mtn.

The central part of the icefield adjacent to the main Taku corridor and up the Matthes Gl has a number of fine ski-mountaineering peaks that offer tremendous views of the huge expanse of the icefield. Several, such as Vantage Pk and Exploration Pk, are short ski ascents.

The most rugged scenery is on the W side of the icefield where the glaciers spill into deep coastal valleys. There are some spectacular ski ascents here, such as Mt Ogilvie

and its minor subpeaks, whose W slopes drop 1200m into Gilkey Trench. Peaks SW of the head of the main branch of the Meade Gl are similarly situated and offer glimpses of the ocean beyond the rugged coastal terrain.

Summits on the interior side of the icefield surrounding the Llewellyn Gl are generally more gentle and lack the relief of those on the W. Relatively short enjoyable ascents include Mt Moore, Mt Nesselrode and Mt London.

## Wright Glacier

Length: 10–20 days

Terrain: Complex

Map: 104K

Best: May

Dave Williams, Markus Kellerhals, Steve Sheffield, Jan Palaty, May 1996, CAJ 1997, p. 77

This large glacier forms the heart of the glaciated complex between the Taku and Whiting Rivers. Though seldom visited, it is an attractive area that has been traversed on skis several times.

The longest trip here started from the Taku R. From a floatplane landing at the confluence of the Taku and Wright Rs, the party ascended onto the Wright Gl. After making



View of Tracy Arm and the spectacular S Sawyer Gl draining from the N end of the Stikine Icefield.

several ski ascents around the head of the glacier, the party traversed SE through the Chechilda Range to a now-abandoned airstrip at Bearskin Lk.

In 2001, a more direct crossing was made from the Whiting R as part of the Complete Coast Mountains Traverse.

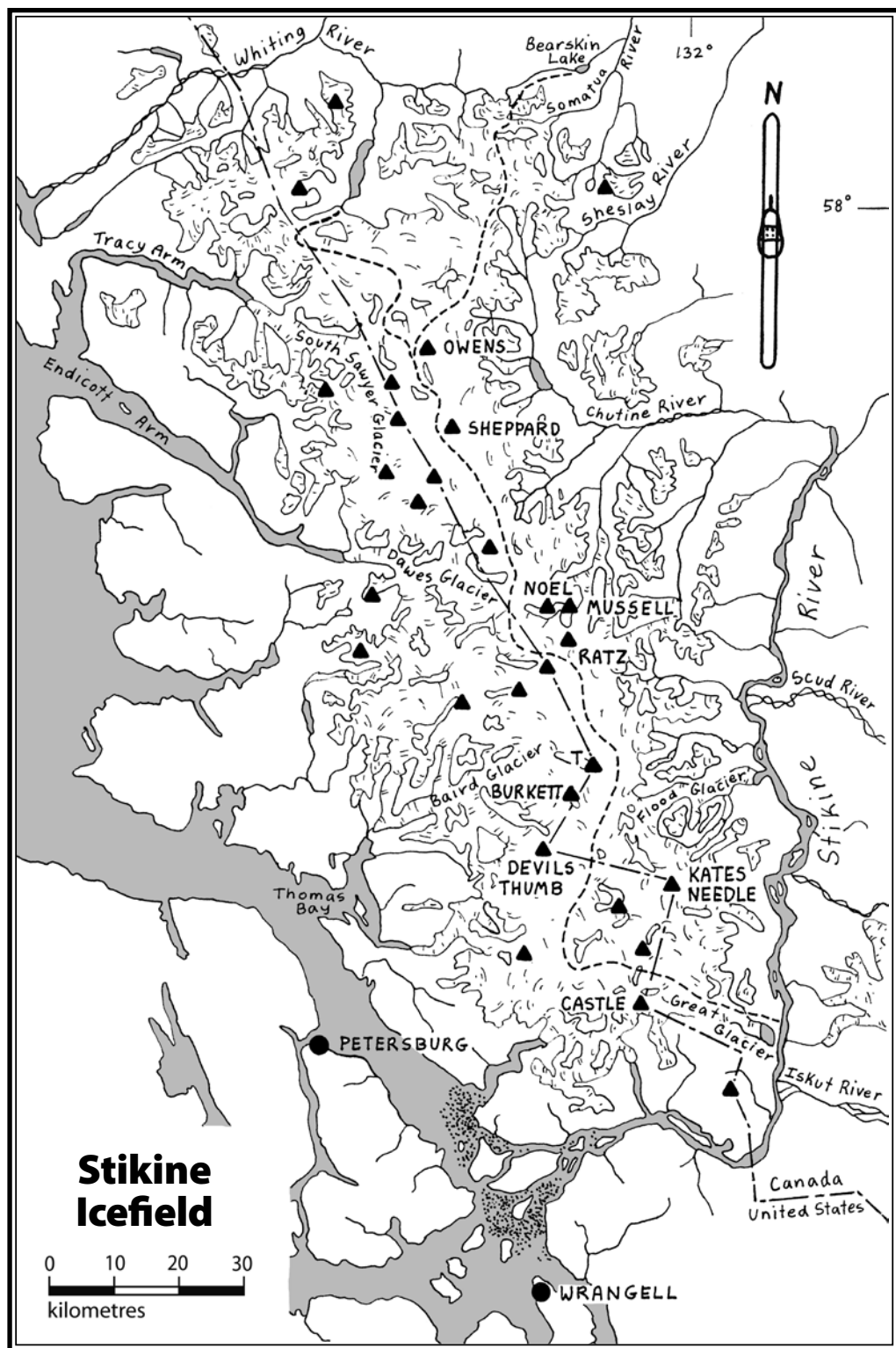
Summits at the head of the Wright Gl. *Photo by Dave Williams*



## Stikine Icefield

The Stikine Icefield is the largest icefield in the Coast Mountains. It lies N of the Stikine R and straddles the border between BC and Alaska. Extending for over 190km along the spine of the Coast Mountains, the icefield covers an area of approximately 7400km<sup>2</sup>, and feeds some of the largest glaciers in the Coast Mountains. Eight glaciers are over 20km long and 4 reach tidewater. The Baird and South Sawyer are the longest at 48km. The Le Conte Gl is the southernmost active tidewater glacier in the N hemisphere. The Stikine Icefield is also home to some of the most impressive summits in the entire Coast Mountains. The spectacular Devil's Thumb, Cat's Ears and Burkett Needle tower up to 1600m above the main glaciers. Mt Ratz (3090m) is the highest summit on the icefield.

The icefield forms a large wilderness area that is difficult to access and requires extensive planning and effort to visit. The purpose of this short guidebook entry is to highlight how magnificent and vast the area is and to provide a basic outline of a few possibilities for visiting the area on skis.





Crossing the head of the Baird Gl below Mt Burkett and Devils Thumb.

You will likely need to do additional homework and plan your trip very carefully.

The scale of the terrain is enormous. Many of the large glaciers are up to 5km wide and flat, uninterrupted stretches of up to 10km are common at higher elevations. Travel on the main icefield is generally relatively straightforward, though some of the surrounding valley glaciers can be quite heavily crevassed and very difficult to travel. The icefield is well suited to the use of lightweight toboggans for carrying gear and food.

### Stikine Icefield Traverse

Length: 20–30 days  
Total Distance: 185km  
Elevation Gain: 6500m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Best: Apr–May

Maps: NTS 104F/1, 8, 9, 10, 15, 104B/13; USGS Petersb D1, Sumdum A1  
J. Knight, J. Hernero, 1984, *CAJ* 1986, p. 58

One of the most popular trips to the Stikine Icefield is a N to S traverse. This is a spectacular route across the largest icefield and wilderness area in the Coast Mountains. Much of the traverse involves easy traveling on large glaciers but the route also involves some challenging sections.

The N end of the icefield is bounded by the Whiting R. As the logistics of any access to the N end of the icefield from the Whiting R are very difficult, the traverse is most often started with a helicopter drop-off on the Sawyer Gl, SW of Whiting Lk. The flight over Tracy Arm is truly spectacular, and food caches can be placed along your route as needed.

The main route roughly follows the broad crest of the icefield just E of the international border. From the Sawyer Gl, ski SE across the various branches of the S Sawyer Gl, passing W of Owens Pk and Sheppard Pk. Continue across the head of the Dawes Gl and climb through a high pass SW of Mt Ratz to reach the Baird Gl with its tremendous views of Mt Burkett. From the Baird Gl, ski S across the high neves E of Mt Burkett to reach the head of the Le Conte Gl. Ski down the Le Conte Gl for about 20km to turn E towards Mt Pratt and the head of the Great Gl.

Gaining the Great Gl is the crux of the trip. The head of the glacier rises to a steep 600m heavily crevassed headwall that makes access from the Le Conte Gl difficult. Cross the divide 3km S of Mt Pratt and descend the headwall via an



Ridge walking above a tributary of the Dawes Gl. *Photo by Dave Williams*

Skating S down the Le Conte Gl with the S face of Devils Thumb behind.





View across a branch of the S Sawyer Gl from an unnamed summit S of Mt Sheppard.

Skiing S across the huge neve of the S Sawyer Gl.







Camp on the edge of the Great Gl. Photo by Dave Williams

indistinct nose SE onto the upper Great Gl. The headwall is skiable but involves some crevasse and avalanche hazard.

Ski down the Great Gl, avoiding a large icefall below 800m by skiing in the moat on the N edge of the glacier. Below 300m, the glacier becomes impassable where it turns and empties into a large lake next to the Stikine R. Start looking for a way off the ice below 400m and gain the obvious bay on the N side of the glacier. To bypass the lower portion of the glacier, climb 600m up a draw to cross the narrow ridge that separates the lower glacier from the main Stikine valley. The ridge top gives a stunning view of the green ribbon of the Stikine R valley. Descend steep forest to the main valley bottom and bushwack several kilometres to the banks of the Stikine R.

Arrange for pickup by jetboat from Wrangell. The Chief Shakes Hot Springs near Shakes Slough are well worth a stop on the way down the river. Some parties have arranged to kayak down the river at the end of their trip.

### Variations

Other variations are also possible. The Flood Gl has been used for access, and the route has been skied from the Flood Gl N to an exit via Chutine Lk (CAJ 1989, p. 89).

For several years, an airstrip was located at Bearskin Lk, NE of Whiting Lk, and a party completed a S to N traverse of the icefield from the Great Gl to Bearskin Lk in 1993 (CAJ 1994, p. 79). The airstrip is no longer in use.

Other alternative approaches include the Baird Gl, which can be reached by boat or helicopter from Petersburg via Thomas Bay. On shorter trips, parties have skied up the Baird Gl and explored the area N of Mt Burkett and Devil's Thumb.

More recently, a traverse was done on the W side of the icefield by skiing up the N Baird Gl (see CAJ 2008).

Note that access via the Le Conte, Dawes and S Sawyer Gl's is not recommended.

For other references, see CAJ 2004, p. 80.

# Extended Traverses 23



Traversing glaciers between the Monarch and Ha-iltzuk Icefields S of Bella Coola.

**N**ot described elsewhere is the possibility of combining routes from more than one chapter to complete extended traverses. The Coast Mountains are cut through by major river valleys at regular intervals, such that the longest fully alpine traverse that is possible is about 4 weeks. However, the idea of linking more than one traverse has given rise to the possibility of very long routes. These are described briefly below. Detailed route descriptions are given elsewhere in the guide. These traverses are not repeated often but they illustrate the range of trips that are possible.

## Pacific Ranges Haute Route

Length: 60 days

Total Distance: 700km

Elevation Gain: 33,000m

In sections by John Baldwin, Steve Ludwig and Helen Sovdat, *CAJ* 1993, p. 79

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Best: Apr–May

The idea that several traverses would connect to form a longer route surfaced in the 1980s after ski traverses had been

completed across many of the major icefields in the Pacific Ranges (*CAJ* 1988, p. 18). Though doing this required descending into the major river valleys of the Klinaklini, Homathko and Lillooet Rs, it gave rise to the possibility of an extremely long traverse. The longest such route that anyone thought of combined the Monarch–Ha-iltzuk Traverse, the Franklin Gl Traverse, the Chilko–Southgate Divide, the Bridge–Lillooet Divide, the Birkenhead Divide and the Garibaldi Park Traverse to travel the full length of the Pacific Ranges from Bella Coola to Pitt Lk. The route was initially completed in sections by John Baldwin, together with Steve Ludwig and Helen Sovdat on most sections (*CAJ* 1993, p. 79). In 1993, a large portion of the route from Bella Coola to the Lillooet R was traversed by Kennan Harvey and two sets of partners (*CAJ* 1994, p. 74). The trip was repeated several years later. The entire route was not done in a single push until 2001, when it was skied twice: first by Guy Edwards, John Millar and Vance Culbert as part of the Complete Coast Mountains Traverse (see below) and then a second time by Lena and Ruby Rowat, who skied from Pitt Lk to Bella Coola in 52 days (*CAJ* 2002, p. 100).



Crossing the Ha-iltzuk Icefield S of Bella Coola.

## Boundary Ranges Traverse

Length: 120 days

Total Distance: 900km

Elevation Gain: 40,000m

Difficulty: 3

Terrain: Complex

Best: Apr–Jun

In sections by Dave Williams and Markus Kellerhals (on all but 1 section)  
CAJ 2000, p. 116

A group of friends consisting of Dave Williams, Markus Kellerhals and others did a series of ski traverses to the major icefields in the Boundary Ranges during the 1990s. The idea that the individual ski traverses would connect to form a longer route had occurred to Dave Williams. The

completion of a ski traverse across the Juneau Icefield in 1999 marked the last section of a series of ski traverses that essentially connect to form a continuous ski route through the Boundary Ranges from the Nass R N to Skagway. The route crosses the Nass Icefield, Cambria Icefield, Salmon Gl complex, the Stikine–Iskut region, the Stikine Icefield, Wright Gl area and the Juneau Icefield. The entire route was skied in a single push in 2001 by Vance Culbert, Guy Edwards, John Millar and Lena Rowat as part of the Complete Coast Mountains Traverse (see below).

Getting going after a rest stop in the Kitimat Ranges. *Photo by Kari Medig*



In the Boundary Ranges above Unuk Inlet. *Photo by Matthias Jakob*





Crossing the Monarch Icefield. *Photo by Kari Medig*

## Complete Coast Mountains Traverse

Length: 6 months  
Total Distance: 2000km  
Elevation Gain: 80,000m

Difficulty: 3  
Terrain: Complex  
Best: In a good year

Vance Culbert, Guy Edwards, John Millar, Feb–July 2001, *CAJ* 2002, p. 4

The entire area covered by this guidebook was traversed in 2001. This is likely “one of the longest alpine ski traverses ever completed, along one of the wildest mountain ranges in the world.” This traverse was a phenomenal undertaking by a strong, fit, motivated and well-organized party.

Half-way at Kemano. *Photo by Kari Medig*



The group also included Dan Clark and Lena Rowat on sections as well as several accompanying friends. Their route took 6 months and involved complete traverses of the Pacific Ranges, Kitimat Ranges and Boundary Ranges. Although the route is cut through by 12 large river valleys, it is almost continuously in the alpine and crosses 15 major icefields. Because of the length of the trip, much travel is required outside of the prime traverse season. Aside from the physical effort required to complete the trip, organizing food caches, gear, maps and river crossings for 6 months is a major logistical undertaking.

Chief Shakes Hot Springs near the lower Stikine R.





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## Metres to Feet

metres	feet	metres	feet	metres	feet	metres	feet
0	0	1000	3,281	2000	6,562	3000	9,843
25	82	1025	3,363	2025	6,644	3025	9,925
50	164	1050	3,445	2050	6,726	3050	10,007
75	246	1075	3,527	2075	6,808	3075	10,089
100	328	1100	3,609	2100	6,890	3100	10,171
125	410	1125	3,691	2125	6,972	3125	10,253
150	492	1150	3,773	2150	7,054	3150	10,335
175	574	1175	3,855	2175	7,136	3175	10,417
200	656	1200	3,937	2200	7,218	3200	10,499
225	738	1225	4,019	2225	7,300	3225	10,581
250	820	1250	4,101	2250	7,382	3250	10,663
275	902	1275	4,183	2275	7,464	3275	10,745
300	984	1300	4,265	2300	7,546	3300	10,827
325	1,066	1325	4,347	2325	7,628	3325	10,909
350	1,148	1350	4,429	2350	7,710	3350	10,991
375	1,230	1375	4,511	2375	7,792	3375	11,073
400	1,312	1400	4,593	2400	7,874	3400	11,155
425	1,394	1425	4,675	2425	7,956	3425	11,237
450	1,476	1450	4,757	2450	8,038	3450	11,319
475	1,558	1475	4,839	2475	8,120	3475	11,401
500	1,640	1500	4,921	2500	8,202	3500	11,483
525	1,722	1525	5,003	2525	8,284	3525	11,565
550	1,804	1550	5,085	2550	8,366	3550	11,647
575	1,886	1575	5,167	2575	8,448	3575	11,729
600	1,969	1600	5,249	2600	8,530	3600	11,811
625	2,051	1625	5,331	2625	8,612	3625	11,893
650	2,133	1650	5,413	2650	8,694	3650	11,975
675	2,215	1675	5,495	2675	8,776	3675	12,057
700	2,297	1700	5,577	2700	8,858	3700	12,139
725	2,379	1725	5,659	2725	8,940	3725	12,221
750	2,461	1750	5,741	2750	9,022	3750	12,303
775	2,543	1775	5,823	2775	9,104	3775	12,385
800	2,625	1800	5,906	2800	9,186	3800	12,467
825	2,707	1825	5,988	2825	9,268	3825	12,549
850	2,789	1850	6,070	2850	9,350	3850	12,631
875	2,871	1875	6,152	2875	9,432	3875	12,713
900	2,953	1900	6,234	2900	9,514	3900	12,795
925	3,035	1925	6,316	2925	9,596	3925	12,877
950	3,117	1950	6,398	2950	9,678	3950	12,959
975	3,199	1975	6,480	2975	9,760	3975	13,041



## Exploring the Coast Mountains on Skis

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