

TUCKED SNUGLY INTO BRITISH COLUMBIA'S SOUTH-CENTRAL INTERIOR IS A REGION PROFUSE with rugged natural beauty. It whispers to the adventurous, the thrill-seeking and fun-loving: "Come, play." • This is B.C. Ski Country, a compendium of four award-winning ski resorts in the Thompson-Okanagan, a region wedged between the Coastal Mountains to the west and the Selkirk and Monashee Mountain Ranges to the east. It comprises striking plateaus, highlands, mountains, rivers and lakes.

The close geographical proximity of the four resorts – Apex, Big White, Silver Star and Sun Peaks – creates a unique winter touring opportunity. They're well within easy driving distance of one another, and approximately a half day's drive from Vancouver and Seattle. Regional air service and international flights via Kelowna and Kamloops bring visitors from all corners.

Those yearning for exceptional conditions amidst a winter wonderland find it in B.C. Ski Country. The area's dry mild climate produces fluffy powder for nearly half the year, from late November to mid-April.

All four resorts are world-class, with pristine glades and glens to quicken the pulse, picturesque villages that are fairy-tale-perfect and the ultimate in convenience and access

– with ski-in/ski-out accommodations.

Truly a winter playground, B.C. Ski Country caters to all ages and interests. From dawn till après ski and beyond, the thrills, chills and spills are endless. Groomed runs, tubing, tobogganing, sled rides and snowmobiling give families unlimited choice, while heli-skiing, gulleys and serious pipe action give fearless skiers and boarders the rides of their lives.

Besides fully serviced mountainside villages, all four resorts neighbour major towns, offering visitors a multitude of diversions. Recreational opportunities abound, as do arts and culture. Culinary offerings, boutique shopping and nightlife are abundant, while accommodations are plentiful, suiting all budgets.

Come, play. B.C. Ski Country awaits.



Sun Peaks Resort and Kamloops

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S FOUR MAJOR HIGHWAYS and two of its rivers converge at the hub of B.C.'s Adventure Destination – Kamloops. This lively city is home to 82,000 residents and attracts visitors from every corner of the globe. A mere 53 kilometres from the city centre, Sun Peaks Resort soars nearly 3,000 vertical feet from the ski-in/ski-out village. The award-winning resort has the second largest skiable area in B.C. and is rated as one of Canada's finest, boasting award-winning trail and village design, abundant sunshine and lots of the dry fluffy white stuff.

The mountain's terrain is enviable, with three distinct mountain faces to conquer. The newest addition, Morrisey Mountain, offers mostly intermediate runs while Tod Mountain's open bowls are close to heaven; groomed cruising runs appease novices and intermediates on Sundance Mountain. Visitors can even try to keep pace with Canada's

past Olympic gold medallist Nancy Greene Raine (Sun Peak's ski director).

And Sun Peaks is crazy for kids. For starters, they ski free if they're five or younger. Tots and teens alike will enjoy the Kids Adventure Park, featuring kid-sized snowmobiles, a toboggan course and tube hill.

Adults and families can have non-stop fun, too. Mush your own team of huskies on a dogsled expedition, tour the backcountry by snowcat, snowshoes or snowmobile. Slide along 40 km of groomed cross-country ski tracks. Ice skate on a full-sized arena; swim, soak or exercise at the Sports Centre. And if you're feeling a bit rusty on the slopes, brush up on boarding, telemarking or skiing techniques at the Snow Sport School.

Après ski, the adventures continue. Tuck into international cuisine at any one of the 18 restaurants, pubs and cafés, followed by a leisurely stroll through the intimate slope-side village in search of souvenirs, clothing, gear upgrades or the basics like groceries and spirits.

Ski-in/ski-out accommodations in the village are palatable for all budgets. Choose from hotels, condos, chalets, B&Bs and RV facilities.

Craving an urban experience? Head back into Kamloops, a first-class city with plentiful offerings. Here, the arts scene is thriving: The culturally inclined can take in stage performances, orchestral evenings, dinner-theatre revues, galleries and museums. Or check out "Wildlights" – the largest winter light display in B.C.'s interior at the Kamloops Wildlife Park December 5 to January 4 (except Christmas Day).

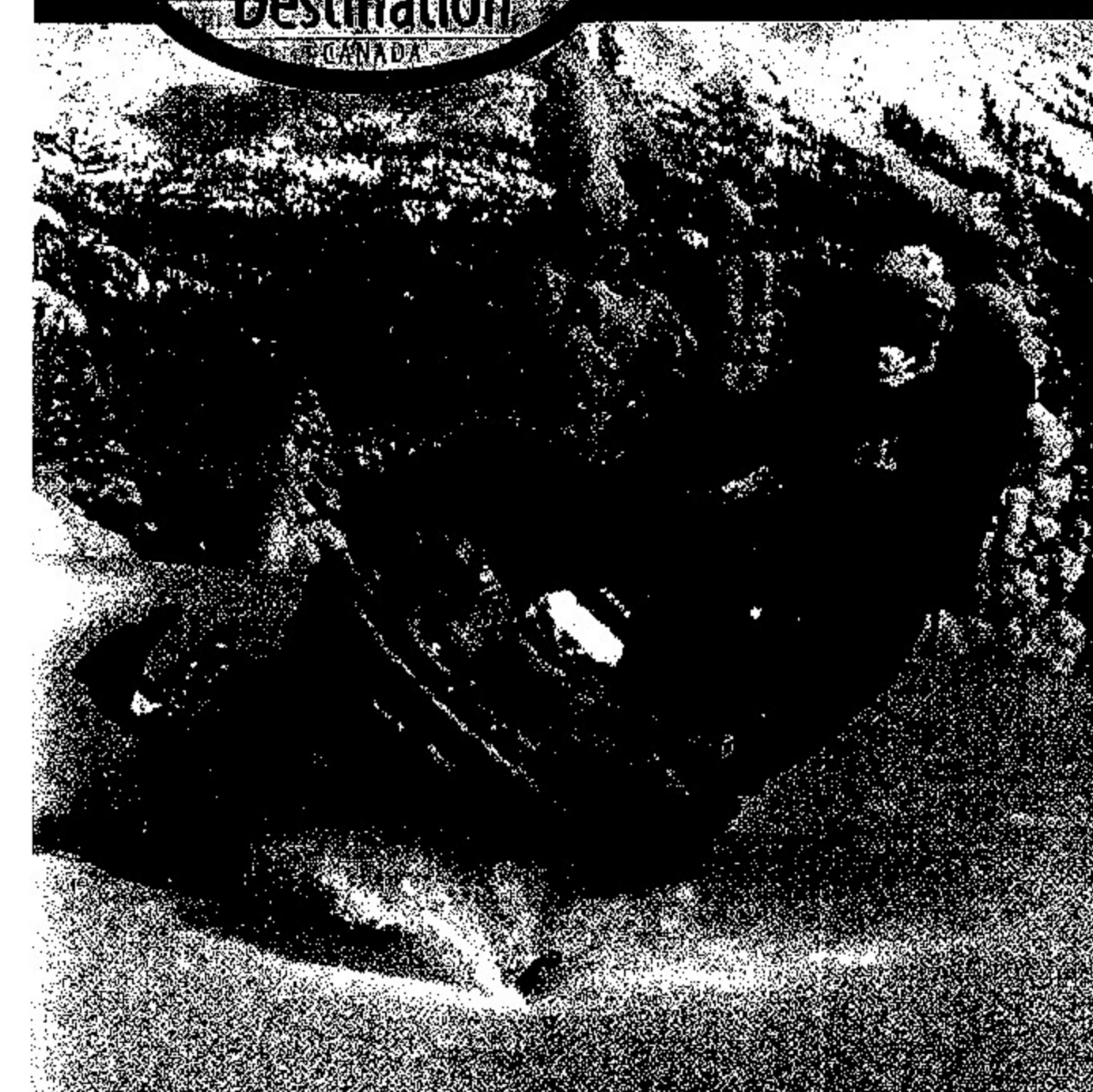
Recognized as the Tournament Capital of Canada, Kamloops hosts sporting events every weekend, from hockey games to swim

Sun Peaks Fast Facts

• 18 restaurants, pubs and cafés	• 40 km of groomed cross-country ski tracks	• 3,000 vertical feet from the ski-in/ski-out village
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meets. January 6 through 11, 2004, will see the Canada Cup of Curling in Kamloops. The hills around Kamloops are ideal for wintertime pursuits. Snowmobiling, cross-country and backcountry skiing, and so much more – your adventure is as close as the nearest snowflake.



A MERE 110 KM SOUTH OF KAMLOOPS, AND sitting halfway between Calgary and Vancouver, is a city aplomb with genuine hospitality, a striking landscape and activities galore. Lovely parks, well-maintained trails and beaches appeal to nature lovers year-round, while on the outskirts of Vernon, Silver Star Mountain Resort is the city's pinnacle attraction – recently named Best Small Resort in North America (U.K.'s 2003 Golden Awards).

Basking within a microclimate of abundant sunshine, this world-class ski mountain churns

out some of the country's deepest powder. Skiers can explore well-groomed terrain over two faces. Vance Creek: friendly and fun for families and novices. And Putnam Creek bowl: fast and formidable. Approximately half the resort's runs are intermediate, and riders can hit the half pipe and terrain park for some serious air. Whether expert or beginner, the professionally guided Ski and Snowboard School provides classes and programs for all levels and ages. Nordic

trail systems meander 55 km through thick forest – often a training site for Olympic teams – and have trackside day lodges and warming huts.

Besides skiing and boarding, Silver Star offers a multitude of wintertime fun. Take a professionally guided snowmobile tour, or hit maximum velocity at Tube Town, Western Canada's steepest tube park. Join an impromptu hockey game or practice figure eights on the skating pond. Strap on snowshoes in search of animal tracks, or take a guided excursion.



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Silver Star Fast Facts

Getting There	Silver Star Stats	For More Info
Silver Star is 22 km north of Vernon on Highway 97, just 45 minutes from Vancouver.	Season opening: Dec. 1, 2003	For more info, visit www.silverstar.com
130 km from Big White Resort	210 km ² of groomed trails	2003/2004 season: 200 days
Kelowna International Airport is served by Air Canada, WestJet and Horizon Air.	Summit elevation: 1,811 metres	Vertical drop: 750 metres
Shuttle service to Silver Star is available. Call 800-663-4431.	Ski lift area: 100 hectares	Vertical drop: 750 metres
	Average annual snowfall: 70 cm	Vertical drop: 750 metres
	21 km ² of groomed trails	Vertical drop: 750 metres
	2 chairlifts, 2 gondolas, 2 tube runs	Vertical drop: 750 metres

Indoors, pamper body and soul at the Day Spa, get a grip at the indoor rock-climbing facility or hit the gym.

The Victorian-inspired village charms visitors with its ornate architecture, vibrantly painted houses and warm atmosphere. By night, it's a twinkling wintry wonderland. Bundle up aboard a horse-drawn sleigh tour for a jingle round town. Then hunker down with some great grub and brewskies at any number of establishments. Visitors can choose from over 3,200 beds on-mountain, at eight hotels and more than 100 vacation homes.

The City of Vernon also embraces the frosty season with an annual Light Up festival in November. The entire downtown is transformed into a wintry fairy tale, complete with hot goodies, horse-drawn carriage rides, children's carousel and more holiday fun. And the highlight of seasonal celebrations is Vernon's annual Winter Carnival. This 10-day extravaganza hosts events like the 48-hour B.C. Snow Sculpture Competition (hosted at Silver Star Resort), Hot Air Balloon Fiesta, parade, musical attractions, sporting events and more. This carnival is the largest of its kind in Western Canada (February 6-15, 2004).

Vernon prides itself on artistic and cultural endeavours. Larger-than-life historic murals around town add colour, and chronicle Vernon's past. Theatres, arts centre and a multiplex host first-rate concerts and hockey tournaments. Other indoor venues keep kids and families hopping. Hit the Science Centre, Nature Centre or recreation complex. The historic O'Keefe Ranch hosts a very special Victorian Christmas. And what of golf? With Vernon's mild climate, you can ski by morning, and be on the greens mid-afternoon. And what greens... Predator Ridge has been ranked in the top three golf resorts in the country.

Accommodations in town range from cozy B&Bs to chalets, hotels and lodges. Shopping opportunities cater to all tastes and needs – from eclectic to urban and outdoors.



Big White and Kelowna

FROM VERNON, TRAVEL 46 KM SOUTH ON Highway 97, following the 132-km-long stretch of sparkling Lake Okanagan to halfway down her eastern shores. Here, she laps against the booming metropolis of Kelowna, population 100,000. This haven

for year-round adventure is resplendent with pristine lakes, mountain scenery and endless family attractions. Lush orchards and vineyards bask in tropical-like temperatures in summer, while winter produces a healthy supply of champagne powder snow. The conditions and setting inspired the development of British Columbia's second-largest ski resort: Big White. Set amidst the spectacular Monashee Mountains, and a 45-minute drive from Kelowna, Big White recently received the distinction of Best Family Resort in North America, as rated in the *Good Ski Guide*. The resort encompasses 2,800 hectares and receives a generous 7.2 metres of snow annually. Numerous powder bowls and treed glades keep the adrenaline going for weeks. At the base of the resort's gondola, the Happy Valley Adventure Centre is the catch-all for tube-ride action, world-renowned snowmobiling, ice skating,



Photographs: (both pages) Don Weir/Silver Star

www.bcskicountry.com

Big White Fast Facts

dogsledding, Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, heli-skiing, night skiing and special after-dark events.

Big White knows what kids want. The resort is home to the award-winning Big White Kids Centre. Younger ones adore the Tot Town Daycare facility, while older kids can take private day or half-day lessons.

Boarders take note: Ample pipes and parks have been constructed for riding and freestyle. The World Class Super Pipe is amongst the largest Super Pipe in Canada. And two terrain parks keep the novice and upper intermediate rider hopping with mini shredders, step-up jumps and large hips.

Appetites tend to run a little wild at Big White after a full day on the hills. Culinary

choices in the village range from pub-style and steak-house to fine dining and cafes. Snowshoe Sam's is a must – it's Canada's number one award-winning restaurant and Best Après Ski Venue in North America. After dinner, night skiing caters to the diehards Tuesdays through Saturdays (free with multi-day lift tickets), and there are shows, dancing, torchlight parades and fireworks. Several venues also have open fire pits with complimentary mallows and hot chocolate.

Bedtime eventually beckons: Over 11,000 beds are spread across hotels, luxury condos, ski chalets, cabins and even budget-priced youth hostels, all providing ski to-and-from

access to the slopes. Or if you prefer to stay closer to the bright lights, Kelowna has still more choices.

The city mirrors the depth of Big White's offerings. You can spend weeks in the region and never have a yawn to stifle. Kelowna is rich with culture. Artisans, musicians, stage productions, symphonies and multicultural events entertain at the city's first-class venues, while fine dining, unique boutiques and shopping ranks alongside bigger city equivalents. Kelowna also boasts award-winning local wines at vineyards

Photograph: Klaus Greitzmacher/Big White



open for tastings and tours year-round.

Craft shows, the Christmas Light-Up Festival November 30 and other winter-themed events occur throughout the season.

Great outdoor locales include lakeside promenades, beaches, parks, hiking and biking trails to get you cheek-to-cheek with mother nature. And for those who cannot part with the clubs, golf courses open in March.

Ski Big White one day, Silver Star the next, and save! Get a discounted multi-day pass good for both mountains.



Apex and Pentiction

FARTHER SOUTH, 68 KM FROM KELOWNA, is one of Canada's best-loved vacation spots. Pentiction sits between the southern shores of Lake Okanagan and the north end of Skaha Lake along Highway 97. With a semi-arid desert-like climate, sandy beaches, and tree-trimmed mountain slopes, Pentiction provides unending opportunities in the great outdoors. As long sizzling summers give way to mild winters, the fun shifts from vineyards to the spectacular terrain of Apex Resort.

High atop Mount Beaconsfield, Apex delivers an amazing mountain experience. From the smoothest of cruisers to the steepest of chutes and even a World Cup aerial site, Apex lays out the red carpet for all levels. Take a slide on the Wildside, a newly developed area featuring the mountain's finest powdered glades. The Snow School can help you prepare, with private or group lessons.



Apex Fast Facts

Being there, it's all about the experience. The resort is a true mountain escape, offering a wide range of activities for all ages. From the smoothest of cruisers to the steepest of chutes and even a World Cup aerial site, Apex lays out the red carpet for all levels. Take a slide on the Wildside, a newly developed area featuring the mountain's finest powdered glades. The Snow School can help you prepare, with private or group lessons.

Photograph: Apex Alpine Resort

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