

Winter Backcountry Gear P.17

Wild Isle

The Islands' Adventure Magazine

January-March 2002

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to Shames Mtn p.12***

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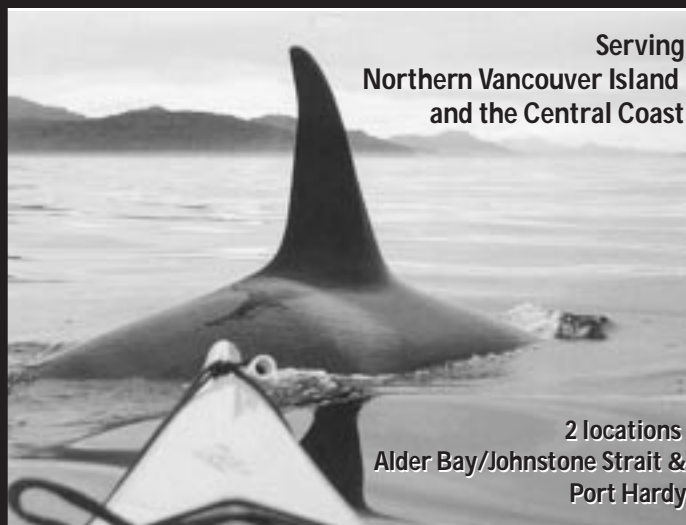
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19 Jan-Mar 2002

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**Next Deadline for
Ads & Editorial
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Issue 20 - Apr-May 2002**

EDITORIAL



It's hard to believe Wild Isle is heading in to its fifth year of publication with the printing of this latest issue. But yes here we are 19 issues under our belt and going strong.

We're pumped from the first of what we hope will be an ongoing series of trips taking Wild Isle on the road. This issue we bring a full report from Shames Mountain in North Western British Columbia.

A huge thank you to all the kind people we met in Terrace. The hospitality we received was warm and memorable. If any of our Southern B.C. readers are even the slightest bit curious about Shames then quit wondering and get moving! You will not be disappointed, the stories are all true!

Look out later this year for reports from the Olympic Peninsula, WA and other future Cascadia destinations.

Hopefully the island winter is going to cool down shortly. It can rain all it likes below 3,000 ft but alpine showers in January are simply not required. Still it's hard to complain about weather when you're in a place where you can ski one day, mountain bike the next and if your lucky enough to have the time, extend that list to the end of the week.

This issue we bring safety tips and reviews of winter backcountry gear. The sophistication of equipment seems to know no bounds making it all the more enticing to deek out of bounds. Heed the words of caution contained herein and make use of public services like the Canadian Avalanche Association who if you can believe it are on the brink of dissolution because of a lack of funding. Check their web site for details and help this excellent service if you can.

Play safe this winter and most of all have fun. We'll see you in the spring with more news and stories from the wildest of isles.

Philip Stone

Arc'Teryx Sold

Well known B.C. based manufacturer of fine packs, outdoor clothing and harnesses Arc'Teryx has been sold to Adidas-Salomon of Germany. The company was founded by B.C. climber Dave Lane as Rock Solid Manufacturing in the late 1980's.

-Vancouver Sun

Snow to Surf 2002

Round up the athletes and start training because the 20th annual Snow to Surf multi sport relay race is fast approaching. "Canada's Premier Multi-Sport Relay Race," runs on April 28th, 2002 combines seven legs covering 62 km of the Comox Valley, from the start on the snow of Mt. Washington to the finish in the surf of Georgia Strait. In between athletes downhill ski, cross country ski, run, mountain bike, road bike and canoe. Teams cover every spectrum of competitiveness and are broken down into eight categories.

To win teams will have to be fast, and to enter they have to be almost as fast. The race is so popular it fills to capacity in only a few weeks. So gather the team now, registration opens in February and will be full in first week of March.

For contact info check out the Snow to Surf website at www.snowtosurf.com

Lillooet Ice Festival

The 2002 Lillooet Ice Climbing Festival will be on the weekend of January 25- 27. The only other details available at this time are that there will be a social on the Saturday night (26th), but apparently no clinics. There may also be some sort of social on Friday night (25th). Speakers, sponsors, etc. TBA.

The organizers of the festival, Team Lillooet (Paul Malkinson) hope to have a news release sometime soon, with additional information. Information will also be posted to the ice climbing part of CASBC's website casbc.bivouac.com/ice0102.htm

E-mail to the festival organizers can go to teamlillooet@lillonet.org or melvins@lillonet.org

HAPPENINGS

| | | |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Jan. 13, 7:30pm | Slideshow 'A Jouney into Nepal' | David Lam Aud. UVic |
| Jan. 17, 7:30pm | Slideshow 'A Jouney into Nepal' | Old Church, Courtenay |
| Jan. 14 | SIMBS Annual General Meeting | www.simbs.com |
| Jan. 19 | National Ski & Snowboard Week | BC-wide Ski Areas |
| Jan. 26-27 | Avelanche Awareness Course | island.net/~hipski |
| Early Feb. | Registration begins for Snow to Surf relay race | www.snowtosurf.com |
| Feb. 24-25 | Mt Cain Winter Festival | Mt Cain |
| Jan. 25-27 | Lillooet Ice Festival | Lillooet |
| Feb. 6-10 | Vancouver Boat Show | Vancouver, BC |
| Feb. 15-17 | Outdoor Adventure Travel Show | BC Place, Vancouver |
| Feb. 16-24 | Vancouver Mountain Film Festival | Centennial Theatre, N Van |
| Mar. 1-3 | Victoria Boat & Outdoor Show | Tillicum Mall, Victoria |
| Mar. 16 | Vancouver Island Loppett Race | www.mtwashington.com |
| April 26-28 | Canadian Adventure Tourism Conference | Kamloops 250-371-5843 |
| April 28 | Snow to Surf Relay Race | www.snowtosurf.com |
| May 17-19 | Coast Kayak Symposium | Thetis Island |
| June 21-23 | Vancouver Island Paddlefest | Ladysmith |

If you want to have your event in HAPPENINGS, send us a fax at (250) 285-2236 or email at wildisle@island.net with all the dirt.

Victoria Outdoor Show

Vancouver Island's own outdoor extravaganza comes to Tillicum Mall, March 1st to 3rd when Island Events hosts the 9th Annual Victoria Boat & Outdoor Show. Stop in to meet and chat with tour operators, manufacturers and other outdoor professionals. Discover excellent deals on boats, bikes, kayaks, dive gear, maps and much more. For more info including exhibitor info visit www.victoriaboatshow.com

Look for Wild Isle's booth while you're there we'd love to meet you!

The Dirt on Victoria's Women's Bike Club

What started out as a casual ride among friends has evolved into **Dirty Girlz**, a club like none other in Victoria or anywhere else on Vancouver Island.

Members are signing up and nine local bike shops are offering their support through member discounts and involvement in programs such as the bike maintenance clinics. "The support we received when we first presented the idea of creating a women only club was greater than we ever expected. This gave us the confidence to move forward with becoming a society and creating this unique club that offers its members a full range of programs and services," said Rebecca Gardner, president of Dirty Girlz.

Some of the programs in place include regular group trail rides for all skill levels and bike maintenance clinics. Other programs and services in the works include skill specific clinics for advanced riders, weekend getaways, website with interactive features, bi-monthly "The Latest Dirt..." newsletter and special events.

The current focus is on mountain biking but activities related to road riding, urban riding and other areas of cycling will soon be offered. With the casual, non-competitive atmosphere combined with the support and encouragement offered by other riders and the exceptional member benefits package, many find the club a great fit and the \$40 annual fee a small price to pay for everything they get in return. Membership, "test ride" and clinic inquiries can be directed to Rebecca in Victoria at (250) 380-3054 or dirtygirlzbikeclub@hotmail.com

www.wildisle.ca

Van Isle Recreation Corridor - Out of the Closet

Vancouver Island is quickly becoming a world leader in outdoor recreation. A big part of the Island's success is the efforts of local organizations like the Vancouver Island Recreational Corridor.

Since 1994 the VIRC has worked with stakeholders and user groups to open up the Island to hikers, mountain bikers, horse riders, enduro-cycles and ATV's.

Last year the VIRC Brigade 2000 showed that it was possible for a mixed bunch of recreational users to travel from one end of the Island to the other, off road and through the bush.

The plan is to connect Sooke to Cape Scott, with a network of separate trails for each user group. The networks are linked with full service "Stations" every 30km, where users can start or stop their journey or just rest and relax for a day or two. A person could travel its full length by horseback in about a month, by mountain bike in two or three weeks, by hiking in about five hard weeks and by enduro-cycle or ATV in about a week. Or one could take a day or two just to go between any pair of stations.

There are many Island stakeholders who will be affected by the VIRC, and who can participate in its benefits. We now have a clear plan to present, and we now need to bring this plan to those stakeholders and discuss the next step. Please be part of that process. - Jerry Reed VIRC

Ski to the IMAX

Mt. Washington and the National Geographic IMAX® theatre partner to bring ski excitement to Victoria

Victoria, BC - Vancouver Island skiers are in for a double treat this year. The IMAX theatre is presenting the exhilarating feature *Ski to the Max* and Mt. Washington is now that much closer.

Ski to the Max is a lighthearted feature with daredevil athletes performing heart-stopping stunts. A Bond parody, the film is a sure way to kick off the winter with an intense adrenaline rush. And, after the film, every skier in the audience is going to be itching to hit the slopes.

Most Islanders head off to Mt Washington to get their snow fix and this year it's quicker and easier to get there. With the completion of another portion of the Island Highway, it is now just a smooth and easy three-hour drive from Victoria to the top of the hill.

It's a great combination, a film that gets you in the mood for skiing or boarding and a ski hill near by. The National Geographic Theatre and Mt Washington are making it an even better combination. Simply present your 2001/2002 lift pass to the theatre and save \$1.75 on your admission to *Ski to the Max*. And present your *Ski to the Max* ticket stub at the mountain and save a whopping \$10.00 off of the regular lift pass price. That's like going to the film for free.

With these two great ski adventures it promises to be a fun winter on Vancouver Island.

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LETTERS

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Dear Editor,

With regard to Andy Smith's article Snowmobiling Around Strathcona Park in the October-December issue of Wild Isle, let's make sure snowmobiling does just that, stay around/outside the Park and not inside. Snowmobilers have the rest of Vancouver Island with its many logging roads to pursue their sport. In his article Andy Smith appears to suggest that the decision to exclude snowmobiles from Strathcona Park is unfortunate - he uses this word several times when referring to the public process which culminated in this decision. Is he suggesting that the whole process be repeated? Unfortunately, to use his word again, snowmobiles are not compatible with other user groups such as skiers, snowshoers and those individuals simply wishing to experience the amazing silence of a winter landscape. Equally important, snowmobiles are not "terrain friendly" as far as the vegetation and wildlife are concerned, in fact they are destructive. One has only to venture into the Divers/Rossiter Lake on any winter or early spring weekend to observe these unfortunate effects - trees run over, branches cut down to form rough trails, machines running through the

shallows, not to mention the noise. On several occasions we have found litter left behind - beer cans, etc. The Mitlenatch Field Naturalists Society, a member club of the Federation of BC Naturalists already voiced their concerns, as did many other groups, during the whole public process. Considerable time and effort has been expended in writing letters, attending meetings. We find it somewhat alarming to see a senior parks employee using a public forum to question a relatively recent land use decision and, by the frequent use of "at this time" suggesting to the snowmobile enthusiasts that the decision could readily be reversed as long as they make enough noise. What message does this convey about enforcement by the Parks Branch? As a footnote, the Mt. Washington area was featured in a recent edition of "Explore Magazine" as one of the top cross country ski areas in the country. Is it economically wise to compromise this activity? Skiers do not appreciate snowmobiles crisscrossing or paralleling the trails, not the mention the noise from nearby valleys.

Yours sincerely,
Rolf and Heather Kellerhals

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your comments Heather/Rolf. I understand your point of view but feel your are trying to read something between the lines which is not there. When I used the term "unfortunately", it was directed at the snowmobilers, because in fact, it is unfortunate to them. It is "not" unfortunate to yourself or anyone who supports the present policy because the policy is in place and no snowmobilers are presently allowed in the park. If you have had a chance to read any of my previous articles in Wild Isle, it should be obvious that they attempt to be neutral, not taking sides but rather presenting multiple views, in order to illustrate to readers the complexity of park management - hence the title "View Point - the view is not always clear".

With my goal being to confirm the park "is" closed to snowmobiling, I chose to express it in an empathetic way, to soften the "not allowed" statements (plugged in "four" times throughout the article) directed at that segment of the readers who do support snowmobiling. Conflict resolution experience has taught us that it is advantageous to work with all groups, showing empathy (not sympathy) for their point of view. The article also

describes concerns expressed by both support and non-support groups.

Instead of focussing on any one word or what "could be" perceived between the lines, it may be better to look at the article as a whole and pick out the facts as presented:

- snowmobiling is not allowed;
- park users have identified that the serenity of the park must be protected and be able to enjoy the park without the noise and use of snowmobiles;
- there are many areas around the park which are perfectly suitable for snowmobiling

Having said all this, I do appreciate you taking the time to express your concerns. It helps us better understand what people are thinking and keeps us all on our toes.

As a footnote - In order to prevent BC Parks from being accused of having a hidden agenda, I should tell you that the snowmobile groups are heavily lobbying the Minister about access into Strathcona Park. We have presented the history and rationale for not allowing this use, but it is strictly up to the Minister whether she wishes to sign off the revised Master Plan with this current policy - or not.

Take care!
Andrew Smith

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Vancouver Mtn Film Festival

Come celebrate Vancouver's mountain culture! The 5th annual VIMFF will run from 16-24 February, 2002, with the main shows on Thursday 21 - Sunday 24 at Centennial Theatre in North Vancouver. Special guests will include major climbing stars such as Chris Sharma, either Lynn Hill or Conrad Anker of the North Face™ and Canadian cyclist Alison Sydor. Enjoy a spectacular range of films from around the world. Watch for posters and press releases plus check www.vimff.org for more info.

MSR Founder Passes Away

SEATTLE, WA - On Saturday, November 24, 2001, MSR founder Larry Penberthy passed away at age 85 of natural causes.

A long-time climber, Penberthy enrolled in The Mountaineers' intermediate climbing course in the spring of 1968 to become a safer climber and climb leader. As an innovative engineer with more than 33 years of climbing experience, he was recruited by the chairman of The Mountaineers to investigate why 3/8-inch twisted nylon ropes were breaking during crevasse rescue practice. Surprisingly, during Penberthy's first test, what broke was not the rope, but the carabiner. During the second test, the carabiner held - and the rope did break. Thus began his interest in the integrity of climbing equipment and methods.

Between 1968 and 1969, Penberthy worked as an unpaid volunteer with other volunteers, on research into many aspects of mountaineering and general outdoor safety.

In 1969, he formed Mountain Safety Research, Inc., to make and sell safe mountaineering equipment as a means of funding continued research and safety education.

Over the years, Penberthy continued his work and was responsible for making many advances in outdoor equipment design.

A dedicated outdoors man, Penberthy believed that everyone should have an opportunity to experience the outdoors, so that they could appreciate it and be informed enough to make good, sound environmental protection decisions.

Penberthy's tireless interest in inventing new things fueled MSR's legacy of innovation and widespread consumer acceptance for products that meet the needs of climbers, backpackers, bicyclists, campers and other outdoor enthusiasts.

Correction

In the article, Comox Valley Profile, in issue 18, October-December, we mistakenly quoted Al Dunnett of Ski Tak Hut. We quoted him as saying skiers headed to Mt. Washington won't stop in Courtenay. In fact Dunnett is hopeful skiers will head into town for services and he notes the detour only takes 10 minutes. We regret the error.

Arc'teryx Signs Morgan Lafonte

Vancouver, B.C. based ARC'TERYX Equipment Inc. announced today that they signed Morgan Lafonte to join the Snowsports Sponsored Athletes Team. Morgan is well known for stompin' big mountain lines that separate the boys from the women. Her contagious positive attitude, combined with her superb riding talent makes Morgan an excellent ambassador for Arc'Teryx.

Paddlefest 2002

Vancouver Island Paddlefest in Ladysmith June 21-23, 2002. One of the themes most likely will be "Paddling Holidays - from tenting to luxury resorts". We would highlight outfitted trips, motherships and lodge based holidays plus destination paddling for self-guided trips. This will be our 4th Annual Paddlefest in Ladysmith.

Another local event that started in 2001, is the Yellow Point Pant & Paddle. It's a seven member team relay race; run, 2 person canoe, road bike, sea kayak, mountain bike, run. It's held in September. The first one had 28 teams. You can find out more by contacting John Surtees of Seaward Kayaks 245-2242



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A British Columbia Eco-Tourism Success Story with a Mongolian Twist

In an area famous for epic snowfall, bluebird winter days and rich mountain culture, an eco-tourism evolution is taking place.

Tucked away in Southwestern B.C.'s Selkirk Mountains, an area that boasts an average annual snowfall of 1200 cm (40 ft) and average winter temperature of -10°C (14°F), a truly unique backcountry experience awaits adventurous skiers and snowboarders.

Starting this winter The Kootenay Experience, based in Nelson, B.C. will be offering touring enthusiasts an opportunity to experience interior British Columbia's renowned snowfall and terrain, from accommodation unlike anything you've seen before.

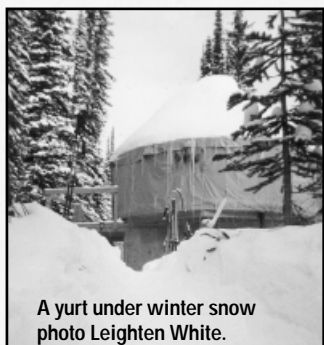
The Kootenay Experience calls its novel program of untracked powder and unmatched living conditions the Ymir Yurts. The operation is run in the heart of isolated, high country terrain, in the mountains south of Nelson. The area offers incredible, limitless tree skiing, over 20 alpine bowls and peaks offering 2,800 foot descents to valley bottom.

What exactly is a yurt you ask? Originally designed in ancient Mongolia used by the likes of Genghis Khan, yurts are large circular tents. They are made up of wooden lattice walls, supported by a network of rafters that join in a central hub.

A snowcat is used to access the area, from the colourful rural community of Ymir, located 20 minutes south of Nelson. Guests are shuttled to the top of Wild Horse Pass, where an incredible ski touring experience awaits. Trips range from four to eight days all are catered, and can be either guided or unguided. Prices range from \$495 for four days unguided to \$1195 for eight days catered and guided. For more info call 1-888-488-4327 or visit www.KootenayExperience.com



Dropping into typical Ymir Yurt terrain, photo by Joe Schwartz.



A yurt under winter snow photo Leighton White.

Logging Camp Opens Way to Mt Waddington

Adventurers & Loggers Rub Shoulders In The Heart of the Coast Range



of Bute Inlet as accommodation for tourists and adventurers. Rob and Laurie Wood, old friends of Alsager have stepped in to be some of the first commercial guides to take advantage of the facilities using the camp as a base for their well established *Mt Waddington spring ski tour*.

Reaching the comfort and warm hospitality of the Homathko Camp by jet boat up Bute Inlet the Woods along with Comox Valley guide Jan Nuspiel fly by helicopter with their groups to the head of Scar Creek at the edge of the Waddington 'Inner Sanctuary'.

Traditionally climbers and ski tourers have gained access to the highest peak entirely in British Columbia, Mt Waddington, via Bluff Lake in the interior. But true adventure awaits those journeying from the coast via Campbell River, Vancouver Island and one of the world's grandest fjords, Bute Inlet.

The route from the coast to Mt Waddington is laced with logistical difficulties. But now a meeting of minds between Maurelle Island based guides Rob & Laurie Wood and Homathko Logging Camp operator Andy Alsager has made this ocean to alpine adventure a much easier proposition.

Alsager has opened his camp located on the breathtaking Homathko River delta at the head

A 10 day expedition follows exploring the dramatic terrain surrounding BC's mountain monarch including the possibilities of 3,000 ft descents and climbing the historically significant Mt Munday. The Mt Waddington tour is ideal for intermediate skiers and snowboarders on split boards with a hankering for a true wilderness adventure in the heart of one of the world's greatest mountain ranges. The return trip includes a night back at the Homathko Camp and a soak in a monster hot tub with a million dollar view before jet boating back down Bute Inlet.

For more information including booking details call toll free 1-866-285-2724 or visit www.wildisle.ca/adventures for more details and great pictures.



Big country with big turns and high adventure around Mt Waddington photos: Philip Stone



Leon May looking good in yet another Canada Cup leader jersey at Fernie BC. Photo: Josie Boulding

By Ryan Stuart

I pulled up beside Johnathan Bonk. Our tires hovered over a drop that led into a long section of wet and slimy bedrock rolling ever steeper out of sight. My mouth went dry.

"Where you or I would hit the brakes and hesitate before going down that," he said leaning over the edge trying to spot the bottom, "Leon would pedal down it." "You mean, where I walk down it," I thought to myself. By now I knew enough about Leon May's mountain biking ability to believe it. I had seen him fly off the jumps in a dual slalom, race off the lip of the half pipe and fly into the woods at the Canada Cup in Fernie, and had heard how he placed 20th at the World Cup Downhill Finals at Mt. St. Anne, Quebec. In his eight year of racing the 30 year-old rider continues to improve. With his 30th birthday last year he became eligible for the veterans circuit, yet his results suggest he has just started to come into his own.

The 2001 season was his best ever, victory at the Mt. Washington downhill race, 3rd in the overall Canada Cup standings, four out of five yellow leader jersey and 10th at the Canadian Nationals. Not only is he one of the top riders in Canada but this year he hit the world stage hard with a 30th at the World Cup race in Vancouver, 20th at Mt. St. Anne

Leon "Mayday" May

and 43rd at the World Championships in Vail, Colorado.

"It was my best year ever," says Leon, with a smile. "Every Canadian race I placed in the top 10 and I had the best Canadian finish at the World Cup." Leon's rise to the top of Canada's downhill scene began only four years ago. He began racing competitively eight years ago. "It was different back then," says Leon. "I raced in all three events, (downhill, cross country and dual slalom) most people did. But now the courses and demands of the events on the riders are so different you have to specialise."

Eight years ago the downhills were just for fun. Leon focused on the cross-country until the training got to be too much.

But Leon quickly points out that he is not lazy. During the 16 to 17 week racing season it's hard to train, so preparation is key. His training regime begins at the end of one season. For two months he casually trains, going to the gym three times a week training his core, explosive strength. The work out is full body, "I build every fiber and muscle," he says. "Keep strong, stay strong."

As the off season progresses Leon begins a short intense routine. "The first time I did it I almost died." And he gets on his bike, riding 3 or 4 hours on road bikes. As summer approaches he rides more and more, building his endurance. "You need endurance even in a four minute race." His program has worked. The results prove it and his muscular frame shows it. He stands over 6 ft, his shoulders are wide almost making his thin frame look stocky. His head is topped with almost shaved light coloured hair. His intense stare hides a soft spoken, calm person. His muscular jaw and cheek bones hide his gentle and friendly nature. Behind it all lies a man who loves speed. "I'm a bit of a speed freak," he grins. "I like to go fast no matter what sport." Whether riding on dirt or snow, Leon charges fast and furiously down the hill. Leon doesn't think his love of speed is dangerous. On the contrary, he almost always feels in control and sees the challenges of moving quickly in the woods and around rocks as a good mental challenge that keeps him ready for race day.

In the last two seasons his race readiness has improved considerably. "Three years ago I was riding a relic," he says. In 2000 he rode for Giant and this year jumped on board with Montreal frame manufacturer Balfa. Balfa along with his other sponsors, Forbidden

Cycles in Courtenay, Smith Optics, Sombrio and Airwalk have helped Leon mature. He has developed a winning formula at races, a combination of training, walking the course and mental preparation. And he says the world class riding in the Comox Valley helps as well. He says the Valley and the long ups and downs of original home of Powell River helped his fitness and riding ability. Sponsorship and race winnings allow Leon to take the summer off work to concentrate on riding. He works at a Courtenay café during the winter and has picked up work as a Balfa rep for the West Coast this year. His focus this winter is to prepare for next season. "I want to be number one in Canada," he said. "The Canadian Nationals are the one race I have wanted to win forever."

If his record from last season is any indication Leon May is headed towards the world stage not the veteran's circuit. Johnathan and I push off above the rock drop. Me on my feet, Johnathan easing his bike down the steep, slippery humps. As I almost fall on my butt I think to myself, "maybe by the time I am 30 I will be able to ride down this pedaling." I take one look up the cliff and say, "Nope, I'll just leave that one for Leon." **WI**

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CANADIAN OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP TRAINING

by Philip Stone



Learning the ropes of glacier travel on Mt Rousseau, Strathcona Park



Paddling the exposed west coast is a highlight for many COLTies.

A cold November mist is hanging over the grey lake water while in the comfort of the timber crafted lodge, laughter, wholesome food and singing warms the air and hearts. It's departure day at Strathcona Park Lodge for twenty new C.O.L.T. graduates. After one hundred close knit days - fifty on the water and fifty in the mountains - life has never felt so good!

From the heat of the late coastal summer through to the cold rains of fall these women and men have experienced an intense skills and leadership training course delivered by world leaders in the field. So its no surprise that they are stoked!

The lure of adventure and the lifestyle that accompanies it has spawned an entire industry dedicated to teaching leadership and adventure sports skills. The Canadian Outdoor Leadership Training program based at Strathcona Park Lodge on Vancouver Island BC is the ultimate of the semester courses. C.O.L.T. is a 100 day immersion in a wide variety of disciplines from alpine to ocean and for its participants a life experience.

The program has developed at Strathcona Park Lodge over 26 years initially with a prime focus to train leaders for the Lodge's own outdoor education programs. In that time over 700 COLTies have participated in the program many of whom have been and continue to be the backbone of British Columbia's adventure recreation industry as leaders, guides, instructors, business owners and other professionals. It is difficult to move within the adventure field especially on the west coast without meeting someone who bunked in the 'Annex' at some point.

What is the secret of the C.O.L.T. experience that has kept it not only at the forefront of outdoor leadership training but the topic

of many a fireside (or campstove-side) yarn? To find out and report back I retraced a path back up the twisting Gold River highway that I had driven many times during my own time at Strathcona Park Lodge as an outdoor leader and C.O.L.T. Instructor in the early nineties.

One thing that is immediately apparent that sets C.O.L.T. apart is the location of Strathcona Park Lodge itself. Within two hours drive of the lodge there are world class environments for rock climbing, whitewater kayaking, alpine backpacking, paddling in tidal rapids, sea kayak touring, caving and more.

As I continued my drive westwards from Campbell River the mountains swung into view. With them they brought back many memorable trips with C.O.L.T. and the high energy characters and experiences that happened along the way. Once again I found myself marvelling at the diversity and splendour of Strathcona Park and the rest of Vancouver Island. There is no classroom like it and the recent graduates I had come to meet will be the first to tell you!

"C.O.L.T. was in the sun, in the rain on mountains and on water, through happiness, through anger, through nervousness and excitement. All of this with people you love and who you didn't even know two months before" Niki Cochren from Milgrove, Ontario told me.

For Niki two highlights of her C.O.L.T. experience were the thrill of whitewater kayaking and the philosophical insights of veteran C.O.L.T. mentor Rob Wood. *"The self reliance trip was the most incredible experience, self reaching, looking inside myself and finding not only what was there but also how much the mountain environment really has to offer you,"* Niki described her experience under Rob's tutelage.

For aspiring outdoor leaders the expertise of the many C.O.L.T.

Vancouver Island is not only home to some of the greatest outdoor experiences in the world but home to one of the best training programs around.

instructors, such as Rob Wood, who deliver this highly diverse program is one of the key ingredients to its success. Certified and acknowledged experts in their fields the men and women who teach, guide, encourage and mentor, together bring this world class outdoor leadership program to life. Harmony Zielger from Nelson BC explained *"the instructors are experienced and knowledgeable, each*

"All leadership courses offer great instruction, what makes the lodge special is the environment it takes place in"

offered something different in their style of leading, teaching and being with people. I felt I could learn a lot and take a little of each style to develop my own".

It takes a wide range of skilled instructors to complete a C.O.L.T. semester and a look at the program's itinerary shows why. In one hundred days students will embark six separate backcountry trips including: an introductory mountaineering trip, a snow and

glacier skills trip, a mountain journey, a west coast sea kayak tour, tidal rapids trip, canoe circuit along road trips to surf kayak, whitewater kayak and rock climb.

In addition time is spent in class learning navigation, river dynamics and rescue, wilderness first aid, radio operators, canoe instructors the latter three offering the opportunity to secure an industry recognized certification.

All this adds up to an action packed 100 days. Gerald Pollack from New York summed it up *"simply the most learning and fun packed into 100 days I've ever had".*

Amongst these high energy trips and courses a strong vein of leadership development prevails preparing those that intend to pursue a career in the outdoors for the complexities and subtleties of group dynamics and leadership.

While in the field participants take turns leading the whole group to develop their own leadership skills and style. With students coming from all walks of life with wide ranging goals and interests a typical C.O.L.T. group is a mixed bag. So the insight into the dynamics of their own group

of ten provides a perfect example of how groups start, evolve and take their final form in an outdoor, often wilderness, setting.

C.O.L.T.ies have come from every corner of the globe to participate in the program including, Australia, Japan, USA, United Kingdom, Europe and New Zealand and have left to continue into equally varied paths. Some have a clear plan to embark on a career in outdoor education as leaders, others may extend that path to professional guiding while for some C.O.L.T. is a chance to gain new experiences, stretch their limits and meet new people.

Naoki Usui came to Canada looking for a radical change in lifestyle after working a stressful job as an engineer in Japan. When he heard about C.O.L.T. while climbing in Squamish he knew he had found the way to bring about a change. *"This is what I wanted to do I just knew I found it!"* he told me. *"Vancouver Island mountains are very like mountains in Japan, just with less people. I felt quite at home"* he said.

Justin Farquhar from Toronto, Ontario came to C.O.L.T. after working seven years as an educational assistant. He had a broad background in many of the outdoor activities covered by C.O.L.T. but was seeking some additional skills and leadership training to enable him to work in a school outdoor program and prepare to tackle some more ambitious mountaineering challenges.

Simone Merkel and Jessica Doerner were travelling together from Germany in the summer of 1999 when a chance encounter in a Campbell River grocery store brought them up to Strathcona Park Lodge for a visit and they both became enchanted with the Lodge, the surroundings and the C.O.L.T. program. They continued their global travels but both were enchanted by the intense experiences C.O.L.T. promised and planned to return. And they did.

The warm welcomes and spectacular setting of Strathcona



Strathcona Park Lodge is nestled in the forest on the shores of Upper Campbell Lake at the edge of Strathcona Park

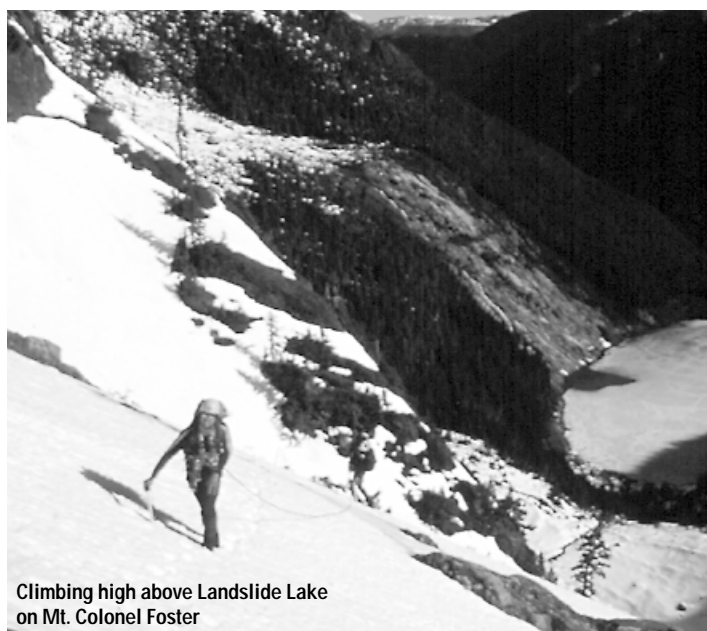
Park Lodge were a big part of the lure of C.O.L.T. for Simone and Jessica. They knew that not only would their time be spent with the thrills and spills of the river and the serene beauty of the mountains but also amongst the company of good friends in a small working community by the side of a sparkling lake ringed with snow topped peaks. That is what separates C.O.L.T. from other leadership semesters says Strathcona Park Lodge's Executive Director Jamie Boulding.

"All leadership courses offer great instruction, what makes the lodge special is the environment it takes place in," he said. "Not only is Vancouver Island a special place, but so is the lodge. It is a small community that attracts people with similar interests with diverse backgrounds and brings them together."

A successful C.O.L.T. graduate may be asked to return after the course to take part in a six week practicum and then join the close knit working community. For many this is the icing on the cake as few other leadership programs can lead so smoothly into employment in the outdoor field.

So the lilting refrains sung during the farewell lunch will for some be one of their last memories of a life experience at C.O.L.T. and for others the draw that will carry them through the winter until the sound of cheer returns to the picturesque lodge nestled by the side of a lake in the heart of Vancouver Island.

For more information about C.O.L.T. and other programs at Strathcona Park Lodge call 250 286-3122 or check it out on the web at: www.strathcona.bc.ca



Climbing high above Landslide Lake on Mt. Colonel Foster

POWDER PASSAGE

The taste of powder filled my lungs. It stung my cheeks and flew around in front

of me. Plunging in again, my world became white, coming out of the turn trees, mountains and the snow slope reappeared. I stopped, and as the snow settled around me Phil appeared.

"Those were, by far the sickest turns of my life," I gasped. Smiling, Phil, turned downhill and disappeared in a rooster tail of cold smoke.

His hat bobbing through the trees. Snow was everywhere, in the air, on the trees, filling my mouth and down my back. This is what we had journeyed to the North West corner of British Columbia for.

While planning a trip to the North Coast powder enigma of Shames Mountain, Terrace, B.C. I never imagined it would be this good. But what a superb adventure this turned out to be.

Beginning with a ferry voyage up the historic Inside Passage, of the North Pacific, through Northern BC, dark under winter

skies and covered in a deep blanket of snow, and on to Shames itself, a ski hill buried under legendary dumps of bottomless powder.

From Vancouver Island the easiest way to Shames is aboard BC Ferries weekly run on the Queen of Prince Rupert from Port Hardy up the Inside Passage to Prince Rupert, followed by a two hour drive along the mighty Skeena River to the town of Terrace.

And so to Port Hardy we drove beginning a journey north. Huddled in a secluded harbour the ferry yawned. Its bow flung wide open like the mouth of a huge tyee waiting for another feed of cars, trucks, containers and passengers bound for Prince Rupert and the isolated communities en route. Inside the bowels of the vessel cars and trucks were jammed together in tight rows. The bigger vehicles chained to the deck to keep them there in the rough seas ahead.

A maze of hallways and staircases tunnel their way up through the hull of the Queen of Prince Rupert from the car deck to passenger decks. There are

by Ryan Stuart

Above: Daryl Person ripping some out of bounds powder on 'Burnt Trees'.

Here: Two snowboarders savour the view before taking a run through Shames legendary powder.

Stashed away in the stunning Skeena Valley is an often talked about but little known ski hill boasting N. America's highest average annual snowfall. Wild Isle hit the roadways and waterways of the BC North Coast to discover the truth behind the myth of Shames Mountain...

sitting areas, a cafeteria, TV room, berths and even a saloon, which is home to some colourful characters and a dance floor.

The 1960's era decor harkens back to a scene out of *Murder on the Orient Express*. The clean, compact cabin comes complete with glazed hardwood bunk beds, antique bedspreads, 60s style cushioned seats, a table and a surprisingly spacious head, complete with a full size shower, toilet and sink.

The beds are comfortable and warm providing hour upon hour of slumber relief as the ship slipped and rocked through the grey North Coast drizzle.

Pulling out of Port Hardy the ferry immediately passes through the roughest water of the trip, Queen Charlotte Sound. Here sea sickness sent many a passenger to an early sleep and filled the bar with patrons hoping to numb the senses.

With nausea subsiding as the ferry enters calmer water moments of distraction are provided by an occasional call to one of the small communities dotted along the coast.

Bella Bella slipped by during the dead of night, but early the next day the ferry came sliding into the tiny port of Klemtu.

On board passengers stared out the window trying to fathom what life is like in a community accessible only by water, 200 kilometres from the nearest town. Outside the rain poured down on the villagers engrossed in the weekly frenzy of activity sparked by the arrival of the ferry. Cars and trucks busily shuttled people from one end of town to the dock. People picked up parcels and dogs roamed the street. With the last Klemtu passengers on board the ferry slowly pulled out, steaming north.

All that day clouds, rain and snow dominated. Life on board became a rotating schedule of staring out the window catching an occasional glimpse of porpoise or dolphins, reading, watching the snow line drop, walking around the boat and dreaming of the powder that awaited.

Finally the ferry pulled in to Prince Rupert. It was pouring. A background sense of seasickness lingered in my stomach as we made the 150 kilometre drive to Terrace through the continually stormy evening.

Rain, snow, slush, sometimes all three, covered the road and filled the air. We crawled into town two hours later and quickly checked into the Coast Inn of the West on the high street in downtown Terrace. After a monster feed at the Gourmet House Japanese

Restaurant it was at last time to crash.

Collapsing on the bed waves still rolled my body from side to side, my stomach still heaved and sighed along with the swells now many miles away. Slipping into a deep sleep dreams of the snow that lurked above filled my head.

Terrace, B.C.

Morning arrived and with it a chance to indulge in another BC legend, the White Spot breakfast, here conveniently attached to the Coast Inn. Fueling complete it was powder time. Pulling out of the hotel onto Lakelse Ave we discovered we were within walking distance of the liquor store, the grocery store, a couple of snowboard stores and the local Valhalla Pure outlet. What more does anyone need.

Twenty five kilometres, 15 minutes, west, back toward Prince Rupert, the Shames Ski Area access road turns up the valley of the same name. The runs perched above the valley, rise up toward a rounded ridge. Veterans of the Mt. Cain and old Mt. Washington roads will be envious of the quick 15 minute drive and minimal climb on a wide MOH maintained road from the highway to Shames' parking lot.

The empty Monday morning lot was covered in a six inch dusting from the previous night. Shames' two lifts don't run on Monday and Tuesday but a quick skin up the triple chair and T-bar accesses enough backcountry terrain to provide ample distractions



Shames Mountain Facts:

Elevation: Base Area 700m (2297ft)

Summit 1197m (3927ft)

Vertical: 497m (1630ft)

Lifts: 3, 1 T-Bar, 1 triple chair, 1 handletow.

Trails: 21 covering 43 Ha (133 Acres)

15 Ha (50 Acres) of natural glades

21% Beginner,

60% Intermediate

19% Advanced

Season: end of November/early December to Easter or 1st weekend in April

Annual snowfall: 1200cm, 40ft

Where to find out more:

www.shamesmountain.com

Annual Highlights: Dummy Downhill Race, Snowmobile Hill Climb (sanctioned event on western circuit) 2nd weekend in March, Mr Mikes Corporate Challenge triple slalom 52 teams in 2000. Mr Mikes BBQ, live band, sunny days.

Onhill Transport: McDonalds Ski Express leaves Terrace 8am Saturdays & Sundays and holidays for Shames Mtn, departs Shames at 4pm, fare \$3 p.p. each way. A trial bus service will run from Kitimat & Prince Rupert in 2001/02.

Above: Judd Rouse dropping in to the gully on 'Burnt Trees'.

Left: You're assured of a warm welcome from the friendly locals at Shames Mountain.

The journey on BC Ferries from Port Hardy to Prince Rupert can have a few wild moments too.



for a couple of days.

After a few quick pointers from a friendly liftee we hoofed up the quiet runs and found the boot path and skin track that rises up the ridge above the T-bar enticing riders towards a snowy Shangri-La.

The paths wandered through the forest shuffling along the ridgeline. Thigh deep snow met each errant step. And big flakes kept falling. Despite the snow the clouds began to break up revealing huge mountains, plastered in snow, rising up in every direction.

A maze of interconnecting ridges winds around every valley creating a ski touring paradise.

Countless skiable lines fall from the ridge tops into high bowls and hanging valleys. Everywhere chutes, bowls and glades beckon with untouched lines of deep light snow. Avalanche chutes break up the forest that clings precariously to the steep sides of the domed granite summits. More ridges roll away leading towards more stashes, more chutes, more trees and more open bowls. If this terrain and snow was anywhere else in North America it would house a mega resort with lifts running up every hill. But this is Northern BC, we were alone.

Here and there tracks disappeared off the ridge.

Shampagne Powder

Dropping off the right is the open glades of Burnt Tree, to the left North Bowl and Deliverance. All of the runs fall steeply before picking up traverse lines back to the lifts.

We wandered up the ridge, dug a pit through Shames's 200 plus centimetre early season base, and then skied a long, treed, face shot filled line to the base of the ski area.

The next day we explored the North Bowl side of the ridge. Through waist deep snow we rode down into the basin. But it isn't all play! Skinning and snowshoeing back to the ridge top took ages with each step forward coming at the cost of sinking two feet into the unconsolidated snow. With a track set two more runs on the same run left us returning down the ski hill in the dark. But the velvety snow on the hill made a blind cruise effortless.

Wednesday the lifts opened. We pulled into the parking lot with 30 other vehicles and jumped on the lift ready to tear up the runs.

With "only" 200 centimetres on the ground early season conditions prevailed. At Shames that means stump and log jumping down the black diamond runs. The deep snow, now settled to thigh deep, made the pillow drop easy. Powder was everywhere, including a light dusting on some of the groomed runs. Gordon Russel, general manger of the ski hill, says grooming is done on all beginner and intermediate runs, except Kermode, a nice fall line run. "I don't groom Kermode so people have an easier bump run to learn on.

After the freshies had been tracked up many locals began

bootpacking their way under the rope. We on the other hand followed local rider Peter Nickerson into the in bounds trees. Between almost every run the trees seem perfectly spaced for turning.

Nickerson says that he has seen it snow everyday for three weeks straight, "20 centimetres every night." When it snows that much he says nothing is ever really tracked up. Even after two days without snow we found untouched stashes on every run.

The only drawback to getting lots of snow, 40 feet of snow a season is the norm, is usually avalanche danger. That much snow usually mean avalanche control headaches, not at Shames. Gordon says there is almost no avalanche terrain inside the boundary rope. Under the rope is a different story. With an open bounds policy of "it's your responsibility," don't expect a rescue from the ski hill if something goes wrong.

"We call the RCMP," Russel said. "We don't have the staff to deal with it."

Russel says the Shames snowpack is usually stable, especially compared to the Canadian Rockies.

"This is an ideal backcountry skiing area," says Russel. "We gets lots of snow and almost no wind." The big mountains around Shames block all but the strongest winds from buffeting the mountain.

Just a few hours up the highway is another little area with monstrous backcountry.

Above the town of Smithers sits Ski Smithers. The proximity of another hill opens up the possibility of a deep powder tour, beginning in Shames and continuing to Smithers and on



Downtown Terrace.

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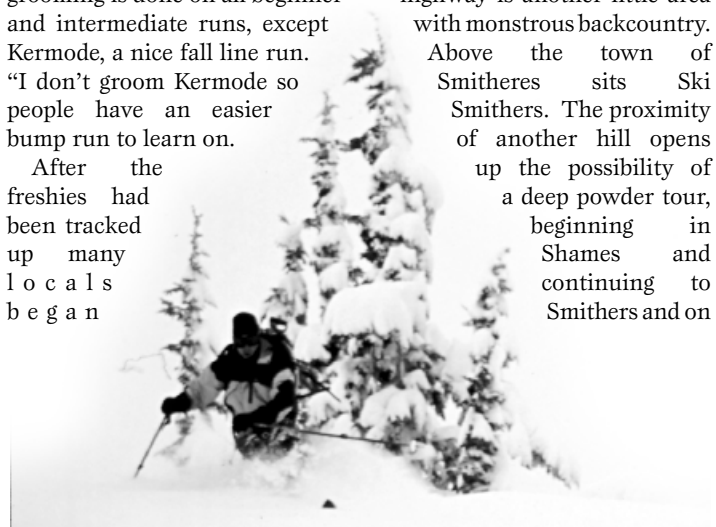


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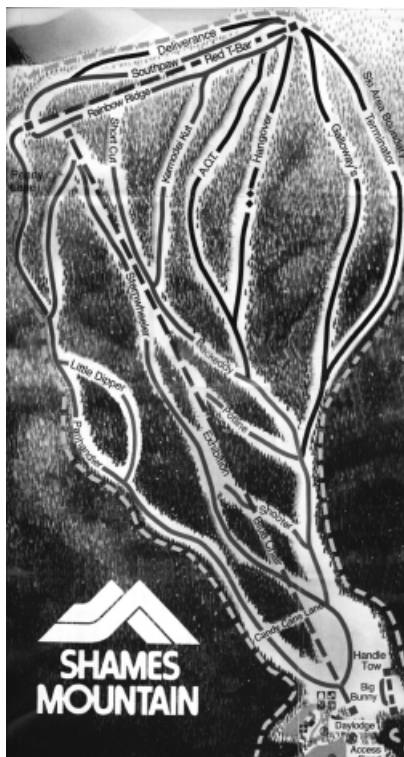


to the famous dry powder of the Interior of BC eventually looping back to Vancouver and the Island. But with time running short we spent our last day at Shames.

The wind was calm and the clouds high when we hooked up with local riders, Daryl Person, Judd Rouse and visiting kiwi Ben Taylor, for a run down Burnt Tree. We hiked along the ridge to the second hump and dropped into perfectly spaced trees. The hero snow blew around each of us and hung in the air. Between the face falls, I aimed my boards through the trees and into line beside the others above a ravine. Below, pillow drops fell steeply into the basin. The others dropped off two small cliffs and disappeared in clouds of snow before sliding out into the gully.

I rode off three consecutive pillows. The light snow left me in the white room and made me feel weightless. I landed in the gully outrunning the sluffs before pulling up next to Phil. Through deep breaths I gasped, "THOSE were the sweetest turns of my life."

WI



Can you say "fall line"? Shames Mtn packs some sweet runs into a compact lift area. But the hill is the tip of the iceberg of the descents possible in the surrounding terrain.



Acknowledgements

Wild Isle thanks BC Ferry Corporation, The Coast Inn of the West and Shames Mountain for their support and hospitality.



Invert Your Eyes

For a visual introduction to Shames Mtn and the immense surrounding backcountry - along with other some spots in BC check into "Inversion". A ski-centric video from Wasp Films, "Inversion" is well shot with a motivating soundtrack but could have had a tighter trim in the editing.

The Shames crew of Cam Eby, Dean Wagner, Tim Dopko, Laura Sager not only produced but also are among the many talented skiers featured. South Coasters will drool at the light powder and Islanders envious of the amount of backcountry terrain. For copies and cool stuff hit www.waspfilms.8m.com

Making It Happen

Getting to Terrace:

Passage on B.C. Ferries from Port Hardy Vancouver Island to Prince Rupert on the North Coast. Check out www.bcferrries.com for schedule & booking info. Drive Highway 16 150 km East to Terrace.

Getting to Shames Ski Area:

Drive west on highway 16, towards Prince Rupert, for 20 minutes. A well marked turnoff climbs the Shames River valley for 13 km(15 min.) to an elevation 700m. The hill has rental facilities and a day lodge. The lifts run Wednesday to Sunday 9 am to 3:30 pm. Lift tickets cost \$32 a day. \$8 for one ride lift ticket.

Where to Stay In Terrace:

Take your pick, Terrace has numerous motels, hotels B&Bs to choose from. Some that caught our eye:
Coast Inn of the West - 1-800-633-1144
Northern Motor Inn - 1-800-663-3390
New Remo B&B - 1-250-635-5061
Best Western Terrace - 1-800-488-1898
Eagle Lodge - 1-250-5504
Complete listings - www.terracetourism.bc.ca

Where to Eat In Terrace:

Don Diegos - Mexican, Evergreen - Pub fare, pool
Gourmet House - Japanese cuisine
Blackstones - Fine dining, make a reservation.
Back Eddy - Pub fare

Where to Get Gear:

The ski hill rents skiing and snowboarding gear. Valhalla Pure has a decent selection of spare parts and touring gear. Ruins and Anzad have a good selection of snowboard gear.

What to do Apres ski In Terrace:

The Terrace Community Centre's pool, hot tub and sauna are open to the public. There is a movie theatre, lots of nice restaurants and two night clubs. One in the Coast Inn of the West and one in the Best Western. Evergreen Pub is a great spot for an apres beverage.

Other Winter Attractions & Activities:

Cross country ski trails at Onion Lakes complete with adjacent hot springs. Snowmobiling everywhere.

Terrace Trivia:

Population: 20,000 **Employers:** Government, Forestry, Service Industries **Climate:** Despite its snowy neighbour Terrace enjoys a mild near coastal climate due to its low elevation and proximity to the Skeena River.



Annual Highlights in Terrace:

River Boat Days - August long weekend, Kermode Christmas Parade - 1st weekend in December.

Winter Terrain

Planning to duck the ropes now and then at your favourite ski hill or head out for a multi day ski tour? Start with the basics and learn to read mountain terrain in winter.

Terrain is one of the most important elements in the “staying safe in avalanche terrain” game. It is one factor in the avalanche awareness equation that year after year remains roughly the same. Snowpack conditions may fluctuate from day to day let alone from year to year and it takes training and experience to unlock the secrets of snow stability. But looking at the terrain you regularly ski or ride and learning how to pick a safe line is the first step in playing it safe out of bounds.

Any snow slope worth turning on can slide. Slopes of 30 to 45 degrees are in fact some of the most likely to cause dangerous avalanches and the most likely to attract skiers and snowboarders.

For trees to effectively anchor a snow slope and prevent avalanches they would have to be so close together that skiing or riding would be next to impossible. But trees can indicate the relative frequency of avalanches on a slope. Large mature trees lining chutes or running down ridges may

indicate low levels of avalanche activity. On the other hand small twisted leaning trees in the middle of bowls and chutes show areas of high avalanche activity and thus places to avoid. Benches, ridge lines, slopes with no snow, dense stands of trees and low angle slopes are all safe terrain features as long as no hazard exists from above.

Look Up!

Always watch for dangerous avalanche terrain above where you are traveling. Below cornices, rock outcrops and stands of trees are all high avalanche trigger points.

Avoid Terrain Traps

Passing through narrow gullies, creeks, steep walled valleys or depressions on slopes are all examples of terrain traps. In these features the hazards of a slide are multiplied: firstly an avalanche funneled into a narrowing feature will increase in intensity and secondly in such places even small slides can have serious consequences if for example a skier is pushed into a creek or off a cliff.



Be Prepared

Being prepared is the best way to stay safe. Know where you're going and how you're going to get there. Get beta, avalanche and weather forecasts and local knowledge. Take an avalanche course.

Practice with avalanche beacons a few times a winter, especially the first few times out. Get to know their range, how they work and how to work with them. A great exercise is to turn one transceiver to receive and have one member of your party walk away from you. Watch how far they go before having to turn the range down, and how far the beacon transmits. Change the orientation

of the transceivers one at a time to demonstrate how that can affect their range.

Remember no matter how cool that transceiver looks strapped outside your jacket as you strut the lift line it's going to look pretty stupid sitting on top of the snow while you're buried below after being ripped off by the power of an avalanche. Wear transceivers under your jacket!

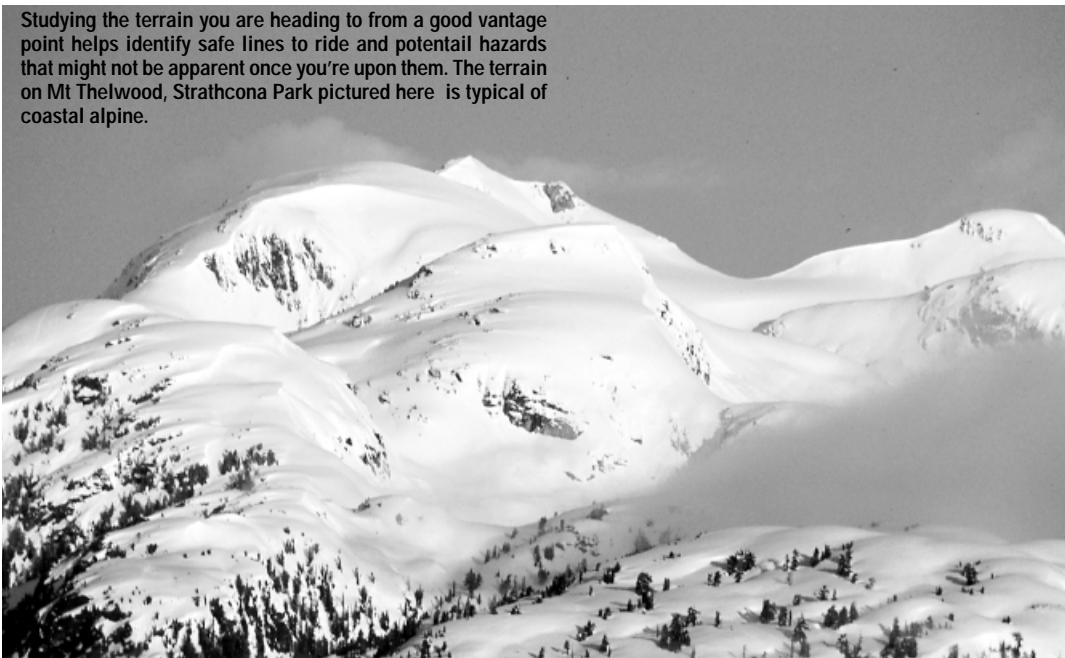
Always carry a shovel and probe in avalanche terrain. Avalanche debris hardens after a slide into an almost impenetrable mass of snow and ice. Digging someone out will be impossible without a shovel. Probes provide a perfect tool for speeding up searches and digs. Even in small avalanches beacon signals only narrow searches down to a general area, probes help pinpoint the spot.

Learn and more importantly understand a few snow pit stability tests. Rutschblock and shovel tests can give a good idea of slope stability.

You're out there to have fun, but remember to play safe, play conservative and survive.



Studying the terrain you are heading to from a good vantage point helps identify safe lines to ride and potential hazards that might not be apparent once you're upon them. The terrain on Mt Thelwood, Strathcona Park pictured here is typical of coastal alpine.



SMART RISK

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www.snowsmart.ca
SNOWSMART
a winter safety program for teens



Survival On Snow F1-ND Beacons

A new product from SOS for winter 2001. This solid unit boasts a 90m range, 300 hour minimum transmission time, 7 range settings, a directional light bar indicator, a battery check, automatic range indicator and a generous 5 year warranty. It also comes with an owners manual full of useful information.

In the field the F1-ND performs. The range was huge in beacon trials, and accurately pinpointed targets.

With seven lights that light up the closer the unit gets, the F1-ND helps cut down on search times. Direction can be pinpointed with the lights as well. We would like to see a progression of coloured lights to help differentiate how powerful the signal was, say two green, two amber and two red.

To switch from transmit to search required an easy flick of a button. We liked this feature but it would be better with some kind of eye catching colour on the slide switch that would identify it is in or out.

We really like the unit and with practice and familiarity would find it easy to work with.

Tube Insulator and Bite Valve Cover

An insulator for the tube and mouth piece solved the freezing tube problem Wild Isle encountered when we first reviewed the Platypus™ hydration system in our April-May 2001 issue. These two little products do the trick in slowing down the freezing of liquids destined for your metabolism.

There is a little trade off between function over form as the once enclosed tube and bite valve become somewhat bulky.

The Platypus™ reservoir has seen a few welcome improvements too. The plastic it is made from is more supple and thus durable in colder conditions and two grommets help for setting up in shower mode. Handy if your buddies won't let you in the snow cave until you wash!

A simple trick if you do encounter ice building up in hydration system tubes or valve is to blow gently to push the ice back into the reservoir and away from the valve.



MSR Denali Ascent Modular Snowshoes

MSR's Denali Ascent are the world's only modular snowshoes. In spite of their rather ungainly appearance the Denali Ascents prove to be a magic carpet ride in the backcountry.

The binding system quickly and easily locked feet to snowshoe with a simple pull. The high quality, ice resistant strap used a simple, but effective single tooth catch to secure each of the three straps in the front and on the heel.

The ease and speed of strapping onto boots is notable as is the innovative Televator™. A simple steel wire heel lifter, the Televator™ is a snap to employ and deploy with a ski pole. The heel lifter works as well as any on a touring ski relieving tension on calves on steep ground. A little loss of traction may be encountered as with the Televator™ employed the crampon teeth under the instep of the boot no longer comes into contact with the snow but overall it is a welcome addition to an otherwise superb product.

An additional flotation tail can be snapped on to the back of the Denali for better float in deep snow. The modular tails come in a 8" and 4" length and are sold separately.



MSR Denali Poles

Monster baskets made for a solid and dependable platform in powder with these three part adjustable poles.

Telescopic lengthening, tightened with twisting each section, made adjustment smooth and easy. The locking mechanism held well, even enduring skiing stress, until repeated open and locking in snowy conditions. Then the lock tended to slip.

One really nice feature are the baskets which come off with an easy flick. It makes storing, replacing and removing baskets simple and convenient. The grips were anatomically curved with sticky rubber. Even wet gloves or hands didn't slide, and they fit the curve of the hand well for hiking and skiing. We found it hard to micro adjust the pole straps. Overall we are impressed with the Denali poles performance for skiing and hiking.

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Thorlo Ski Light Silk/Wool sock

They're comfy and warm and padded for from. The Thorlo ski light wool/silk sock made my brand new ski boots feel, surprising, less painful.

The explanation may lie in any of the innovations. Extra padding in the ball, shin and heel of the foot, right in skiing's impact zones reduced chaffing of the shin and pounding on the foot and heel. Thinner material under the arch ensured contact with the liner and footbed. But probably the most important feature is the form fitting comfort. No bulges, ripples or folds in the socks. No sore spots, pinches or chaffing.

The combination of all those features results in an extremely

comfortable and warm ski sock.

As is customary with ski socks they wear high on the calf, held in place by an unnoticeable section of stretch nylon. The hold is great. Even a plunge up to knee deep in snow with the sock exposed couldn't pull the socks down.

The ingredients in the sock, silk and wool, made for quick drying time. They dried in a 30 minute drive from the hill to town. And they stayed surprisingly warm even when wet. Despite snow right into the boot the socks kept the toes warm. Which is a nice touch for skiing on the Island where every body part is guaranteed to get wet.

Prior Snowboards - Split Touring Boards



as the range of split boards to choose from grows steadily. This year Burton are offering two models the S Series and Cascade S to line up with the well established Voile Split Decision. Hot on their heels are two offerings from Whistler based Prior Snowboards the Splitboard and Swallowtail Splitboard.

The Prior Splitboard comes in 161 165 168 172 176cm lengths with the Swallowtail at 172cm and both models employ the tried and tested Voile binding system.

Little doubt about it, this winter sees the split touring snowboard coming of age. While the principle has been around for many years split boards have been slow to catch on, primarily we'd imagine because of the expense. If you are going to shell out for a new ride are you going to favour a one piece for riding the lifts and carry it on the odd backcountry foray or pony up a lot of valuable gas tokens and opt for the out of bounds luxury of a dual tool? Tough call and it's getting tougher

While we unfortunately were unable to get demos of any of these gems prior to press time (sorry!) a quick once over on the shelf and chatting with retailers and riders gave the following insights. The Burton boards are slick, precision engineering makes for a hot unit but in the field apparently the binding is somewhat prone to freezing. The Prior boards on the other hand with the Voile binding seem to have the edge, and they're local too.

For more info log on to www.priorsnowboards.com www.burton.com www.voile-usa.com

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