

SHORT TURNS

↑ RACY PHOTOS

↑ SCORES

↑ EVENTS

↑ GOSSIP

↑ NEWS

NEW AND IMPROVED

What's a ski resort these days without a fat list of new and improved projects completed over the summer? Sometimes it's just PR-department fodder used to fill space on websites, but many ski areas are truly hard at work and spending big bucks in the off-season to entice you to their neck of the woods. Here's a quick update on five in the west worth investigating further.

Red Mountain

As of June 2, 2004, Red Mountain at Rossland, B.C., is under new ownership. Having skied Red for the first time in 2000, Californian Howard Katkov purchased the ski area in the spring for an undisclosed amount. It's not difficult to sense Red's potential and the resort is already slated for some major work.

Over the next 15 years, Katkov is planning 1,300 "dwelling units" or high-income housing, as some like to call them, plus, 6,500 square metres of commercial space. Initial improvements to the hill include the installation of a magic carpet conveyor system (to ensure kids don't have to learn to ride a T-bar until they're heavy enough to keep both skis on the ground), development of a terrain park (for successful magic carpet riders) and remodelling Paradise Lodge (respite after revelling in Red's famous tree-skiing).

High on Katkov's priority list is broadening the novice and intermediate terrain offered at Red. "Red is a magical place with an unquestionably promising future," said Katkov. Well, we all know that! We just want to see what kind of magic we'll get with his 15-year development plan. www.ski-red.com

Sun Peaks

After its 12th consecutive year of growth, Sun Peaks has announced the launch of Phase Two of its master development agreement. And what does that mean to us? Well, for starters, a 100 per cent increase in lift capacity on the Mt. Morrisey Express Chairlift—it's hard to beat 100 per cent. The construction of the Back in Time Skier Bridge will link Mt. Morrisey to the Burfield Base Area, and the Mt. Morrisey ski bridge underpass will eliminate the skier road crossing. For all those who live for a good time in the Tube Time tube park, you'll be happy to hear that it'll have a new lift this season. Sun Peaks will also be increasing its snowmaking capacity by 25 per cent, and will have two new grooming machines to keep all cruisers happy on Sun Peaks' smooth, silky corduroys. Phase Two also involves some exciting new real estate—so many projects, in fact, we can't list them all. www.sunpeaksresort.com

Marmot Basin

Marmot Basin announced proudly in the spring that it will be adding more terrain for the 2004-2005 season. Sounds exciting!

Where, you might ask? Well, we're not being told yet. All we know is that tough is sexy these days and the new terrain is going to be tough. So how does one find all this new terrain? Well, Marmot has decided to install more than 65 new signs and five panoramic maps of the area to help guide directionally challenged skiers to the new stuff. With 65 new signs, we wonder how much new terrain there will be. Nevertheless, you'll at least be pointed in the right direction. If not, just follow the ski bums; the ones that smell like stale beer and are renowned for saying "Dude, check this out!" www.skimarmot.com

Big White

Big White has some massive construction projects scheduled for completion prior to the 2004-2005 season—almost \$130 million worth! A new terrain park will centralize the ski and snowboard park, rail garden, halfpipes, skier/boardercross and the fun family race area. Overlooking the park will be an on-mountain lodge with all the necessities: food and beverage, a large outdoor deck and washroom facilities. Sounds like a perfect spot to sit back, enjoy

Skier: Karla Rizzuto; photo: DOUG LEPAGE, Red Mountain, B.C.

the sun and watch all the crashing and burning in the terrain park.

A long-anticipated addition to the Queen of the Okanagan is the installation of the million-dollar Cliff Chair. The new double will finally allow quicker access to the expert Cliff Area and is the impetus to extend the area boundary to include the East Peak. Also, to the west of Blue Ribbon off the Gem Lake Express, six new intermediate runs have been cut, expanding this giant of an area so far you'll feel as if you could ski right into Kelowna. Big White just might be the place to be this season. www.bigwhite.com

KICKING HORSE

Kicking Horse is taking a break from its regular new-season offerings of upgrading lifts, adding terrain or building new lodges. This season it's all about real estate at the Golden, B.C., ski area. "Interest in property at Kicking Horse is

extremely strong, with over \$100 million invested at the resort in the last four years," said Gord Vizzutti, marketing manager of Kicking Horse. There are three new developments to choose from: Mountaineer Lodge, Dogtooth Properties and Selkirk Resort Homes.

Mountaineer Lodge boasts luxury condominiums in the heart of Gondola Plaza with ski-in/ski-out convenience via the Golden Eagle Express. Dogtooth Properties offers estate-sized lots for building your "weekend home." These lots have great mountain views in a natural forest setting. Selkirk Resort Homes, just steps away from the village, is the newest town home development—in a truly "love thy neighbour" situation.

The complete build-out of Kicking Horse is expected by 2010, so pack up the family and grab your chequebook, these early on-hill properties will sell quickly. www.kickinghorseresort.com

—Liz Wilcox

THE WINNERS' CIRCLE

SKI CANADA AWARD

Alberta's share of the *Ski Canada* pie is split this year between two talented junior racers, Andrea Bliss of Edmonton and Sean Alexander of Calgary. Each received a cheque for \$500 to help offset some of the costs athletes incur each year trying to make it to the bottom fastest.

A student at Vimy Ridge School, Andrea is part of a sports program that allows her to attend classes until midday, then ski in the afternoon with the Edmonton Ski Club where she started at age two or train with the Alpine Sports Academy. Andrea began Nancy Greene at age eight.

Sean also started doing laps early in life, trading time on skis with naps in his dad's backpack. Sean was in Nancy Greene by age six and now, at 15, racing both K1 and K2 out of Calgary Alpine, formerly Mount Norquay Racing Club. Following French Immersion, Sean is now attending grade nine at Calgary's National Sports School.

Funds generated by the *Ski Canada* affinity MasterCard from BMO are distributed to promising young racers and other non-profit ski organizations. For more information, contact your provincial ski association. For a skiers' MasterCard (so much cooler credit than any other plastic), call 800/263-2263.



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Sky's the limit With fingers crossed, the world's highest ski lift at a major ski area will be finally completed by October at the Gulmarg ski area in Kashmir, India. The Poma-built gondola reaches 4,000 metres and will be one of the world's longest at five km. It also wins the distinction of being the slowest-built. Started in 1987 when heli-skiing was booming, it was soon mothballed for a decade because of war. But political tensions between India and Pakistan over the disputed state of Kashmir have calmed enough to show a renewed tourism interest in the area that has a long history dating back to British Colonial times.

And for the stats-wieners in the crowd, yes, China did build a higher gondola but it doesn't serve a ski area. And higher "lifts" in Venezuela and Bolivia are no longer operational. The current world's highest, a high-speed quad in Loveland, Colorado, reaches 3,871 metres. Other dizzying heights can be skied on summer-only surface lifts at Zermatt, Switzerland (3,899 metres), and Elbrus, Russia (3,875 metres).

So to plan your Indian road trip, try <http://tourism-of-india.com/gulmarg.html> or www.jkgda.com/gondola.htm.

—with file from Patrick Thorne



Chateau Lake Louise: your bags are here in 24 hours.

Hands-free travel What's the biggest drag in a ski holiday? Hoofing all your gear—and that of your family. Imagine having your bags collected from the front hall in your home and having it waiting for you when you arrive in your hotel room at the mountain. SportsExpress will ship your stuff to any mountain with next-day delivery—for a cost—but Fairmont guests receive discounts up to 20 per cent. A double ski bag going from Ontario to the Chateau Lake Louise or Whistler, for instance, will ring in

around \$140, but just think how refreshed your arms will feel! www.fairmont.com/fpc/SportsExpress, 877/579-2849

Save on skiing Deals and discounts, that's what skiers want to hear when they're researching an upcoming holiday. And a good place to start is powderpatrol.com where nearly every major North American ski area (and a few in France) is represented and willing to offer price cuts on lifts, accommodation and packages. The Powder Patrol Discount Card Program began two years ago with its official supplier Ultimate Travel and already has more than 17,000 card holders taking advantage of deals that often pay for the \$15 membership with the first booking. Both day-trippers and destination skiers can take advantage of the Powder Patrol loyalty card as well as non-members who want access (not simply links) to a database of facts and figures on 3,000 resorts around the world from Scotland to Korea.

Photo: KEN GALLARD