



BIG WHITE SKI EXCURSION

By Lisa Kadane

» It's a scenic 35-mile drive from the city of Kelowna into the Okanagan Highlands, an elevated plateau located between the Okanagan Valley to the west and the jagged peaks of the Monashee Mountains to the east. The landscape transitions from grassy ranchlands into a wintry realm of conical, snow-encrusted spruce trees as you steadily gain elevation until you're close to a mile high at the base of Big White Ski Resort.

This popular British Columbia ski area has a compact village center flanked by hotels, condos and chalets that are connected by ski-in/ski-out trails and a network of chairlifts. The mountain is often shrouded in low-lying clouds that settle a white eider blanket over the resort's 2,765 acres of open bowls, shaded glades and rolling fall-line trails with names such as Powder Bowl, Powder Gulch and Snowy. More than 70 percent of the 119 runs are marked beginner or intermediate, making the ski area a good choice for families.

Get your bearings by skiing with a Snow Host on a free morning tour that tackles some of the best runs. If you'd rather explore on

your own, start with a warm-up on Serwa's, a beginner cruiser that sweeps down the resort's front face and passes intermediate and advanced options you might veer onto once the quad muscles are firing.

If it's snowing, head to the east side of the mountain and do laps using the Black Forest Express lift. Gentle glades punctuated by perfectly spaced evergreen trees separate the cut runs here and provide welcome visual contrast, not to mention a cache of powder stashes.

When the sun breaks through, ride the Alpine T-Bar to see the "snow ghosts" that haunt the mountain's upper reaches. These trees covered by ice accretions (called rime) have been twisted into whimsical shapes by the wind. They make an easygoing obstacle course as you slalom down Sun Run, an otherwise open green route. Families can seek out the Ogopogo Adventure Trail, a rollicking tree run where kids ski through the "mouth" of a car-



» *Big White Ski Resort, near Kelowna, is known for runs past "snow ghosts," top, as well as for terrific family skiing.*

toon likeness of Okanagan Lake's mythical serpent, Ogopogo. Advanced skiers enjoy more-challenging terrain, such as the black runs that surround the Cliff Chair to the summit.

After a day of cruising groomers or jump-turning down the steeps in Parachute Bowl, warm up with a bowl of lamb-cheek stew paired with a glass of B.C. red wine at The Woods, right in the heart of the village. Or reward the kids with an order of Tabletop S'mores at the Globe Cafe and Tapas Bar. It doesn't get cozier than roasting marshmallows at your own tabletop fire pit while fluffy flakes swirl in the snow-globe scene just outside. ❄️