

IN SEARCH OF  
POWDER

# High JEOPARDY

With the snow-dumping La Niña phenomenon forecasted to sweep through North America for the third winter running, now is the time to plan that pow-hunting road trip. **Matt Carr** did just that in British Columbia last season...

Matt and Pete  
sample cold smoke  
at Stellar Heli

The premise was straightforward enough – we would chase the snow and gorge ourselves on the finest skiing Interior BC had to offer. No agenda, no itinerary, just the eight of us for a week on the road, guided solely by whatever looked most exciting on the weather charts. Simple. We'd been cooped up for what felt like decades, since Covid had arrived on the scene two years prior and prevented us from having even seen a snowflake, let alone slide on it. We'd saved up and saved up and now we were here to reap the bounty of our patience and frugality. We would splurge, if necessary, because – well – we deserved it!

The planning gods did not, it would seem, get our carefully crafted memo. Certainly neither the Great CO2 Canister Snafu (apparently nobody at Vancouver Airport had even seen an ABS pack) nor the heart attack-inducing re-routing of our ski bags from Vancouver to our starting point in Revelstoke, via a different domestic airport and

eventual (miraculous) 600km courier, exactly fitted the brief of pure, unadulterated, cathartic powder-piggery.

All's well that ends well however, and it was with great joy that we eventually took delivery of our kit at around half-past midnight on the Sunday night with at least a foot of fresh white fluff on the ground in town.

Suffice to say, between the drama, the excitement and the jetlag, not much sleep was had, and we arrived at the lift almost farcically early. I say almost, because we were not alone. Revelstoke, with the biggest lift-served vertical drop in North America, is – we soon learned – absolutely brimming with powderhounds of every persuasion. In most resorts in the Alps, arriving on the scene at 8.30am is normally plenty eager enough to score first lifts. Not so here.

No matter – the line moved swiftly and with all that vert, the crowds dispersed quickly. In ski guide Chipie Windross – an old friend of mine from Tignes – we had a secret weapon with local knowledge aplenty. ➤

## A SPANNER IN THE WORKS

Many of our number had not strapped on a pair of skis since 2020 or even 2019. Regardless, straight off the bat, while the crowd zigged right off the top of Revelation Gondola, we would zag left, straight into the very deep and very steep slackcountry adjacent to the quintessentially Revelstoke-nomenclatured 'Conifers of Gnarnia'. No warm-up, we chuckled, as the hooting and hollering began as we free-fell through the trees – in equal parts delight and pain as chronically underused thighs began to scream.

After a few laps harvesting lower-hanging fruit within the ski area boundary, we wolfed some lunch, and some of the team (photographer Kene included) peeled off – legs cooked – and headed back to town. Those who remained were in for a treat. When we were sure that nobody was looking, we nipped into some nondescript trees off the side of a trail. Little did I know that, combining his own experience with a plethora of excellent mapping apps, Chipie had spirited us into a closely guarded and rarely in-condition route, that would plunge through steep, untracked forest, all the way down to the road over 1,000m vertical below. On and on and on it went, until we popped out on the road, in the nick of time too: it felt like I was seconds away from spontaneous combustion of the lower limbs. We thumbed a lift back to town, elated.



Deeeep!

Matt and Pete eye up Revelstoke's 'Conifers of Gnarnia'

The rest of the crew did not share our elation. Having put his early bath down to fatigue, Kene's condition had, it seemed, deteriorated rapidly. He didn't need the result of the lateral flow test to tell him that he'd gotten Omicron, and would be spending the next fortnight in quarantine.

After the usual flapping in an attempt to figure out what could be done for him (nothing), I quickly realised that I was the real victim here. Notwithstanding this article, for which I was on the hook to produce and illustrate with proper images (the kind that neither I nor anyone remaining in the group was capable of taking), there was the small matter of the fact that we were about to go heliskiing in all-time conditions, and now we had nobody to photograph it...

## RECORD FOR 'MOST FUN ACHIEVED IN ONE DAY'

Using a potent blend of resourcefulness and narcissism, I forewent the following day's skiing to frenetically truffle around Revelstoke in search of a photographer available to join a week's trip with a bunch of strangers, at zero notice, for next to nothing in payment. Local paper *The Revelstoke Mountaineer* came up trumps, and after a blind coffee date later with lensman Olly Hogan, we were back on. It turns out "do you want to come heliskiing for free tomorrow?" is a reasonable opening gambit in Revelstoke. ➤

“The hooting and hollering began as we free-fell through the trees”

“A day in the chopper here is not completely beyond the reach of many skiers”

And so, abandoning Kene in his almost windowless hotel room, we hit the scenic road South, with *The Ride Of The Valkyries* blaring from our preposterously large truck.

Unlike most BC heli lodges, Stellar – located as it is in the quaint lakeside town of Kaslo (three hours’ drive south of Revelstoke) – offers single-day heli packages, along with multiple accommodation options. We went for the dirtbag choice – the perfectly comfortable Kaslo Motel, at \$30 each for the night. And so, while it’s still far from cheap, a day in the chopper here is not completely beyond the reach of many skiers; our seven-drop day cost CA\$1,750 per person – around £1,000. Our Quebecoise guide Jess seemed determined to score a Guinness World Record for Widest Grin, an outlook she balanced with our collective levels of froth and a potentially very tricky snowpack.

Picking out a highlight isn’t easy when the entire day’s a blur of blower powder, but we agreed that a mellow sector called Gladerunner, full of totem pole-looking trees, whose branches had been stripped by wildfires, was a rare treat. The remaining trunks served to sharpen visibility by adding definition, but presented almost no physical barrier to high-speed shredding. This was a true tree-skiing utopia.

At day’s end, an increasingly pale Olly announced that he was feeling rough and would have to repair back to Revelstoke. It would transpire that he too had Covid. Or maybe he reckoned that one day with us was plenty. Either way, back to square one. After a flurry of Instagram messages, I unearthed another handy (and available) Nelson-based photographer with whom we would RDV at Red Mountain – home of Fall Line Ski School (no relation) – for a fun day blasting groomers and watching local kids shred a freeski comp in conditions that bordered on lunacy.

### ALL ABOUT THE SYNERGY

The Fall Line-flavoured vibe would follow us to Whitewater, an epic under-the-radar, denim-jacket-type outpost of shred, above the equally vibey town of Nelson. Zipping about the small-but-perfectly-formed mountain in pursuit of local ripper Kerr McEwan, we bumped into (everyone here seems to be on first name terms)

Whitewater’s quintessential local, Stuart Malcolmson, beneath one of Whitewater’s three rickety old chairs.

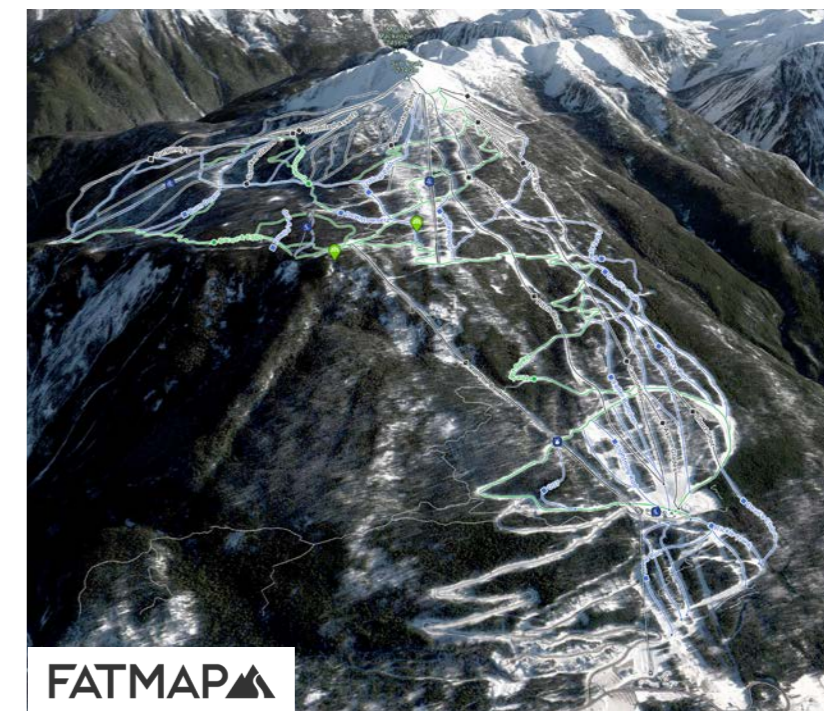
He was surprised to hear the Queen’s English in this neck of the woods. I explained I was there for Fall Line Skiing – a British ski mag. “NO SHIT” he yelled in delight: “My forest firefighting company is called Fall Line Forestry!” Not missing a beat, another local leaned down from the chair and informed us that he was a freelance marketing consultant, and that “in marketing, we call that synergy!”

To wrap up, we joined up with local ACMG guide David Lussier from Summit Mountain Guides, to sample some of Whitewater’s famed tour-access sidecountry, which we found to be very tasty indeed. By now we were indeed without a photographer, but whether anyone was there to see or photograph our efforts or not, we could not have been happier little piggies. *Fall Line*

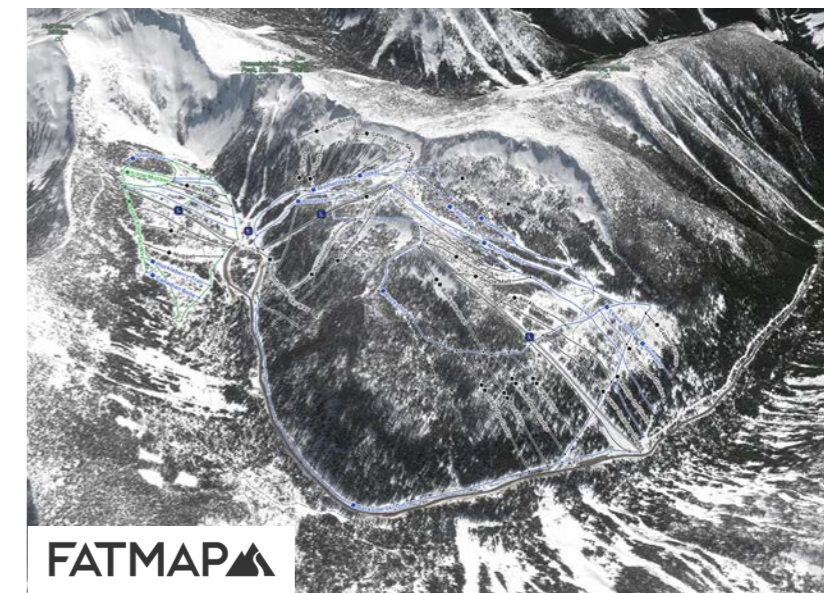


PHOTO DESTINATION BC/STEVE OGILVIE

### RESORT MAPPING BY FATMAP: REVELSTOKE



### RESORT MAPPING BY FATMAP: WHITEWATER



## ESSENTIALS

### ✈ TRAVEL

From the UK fly to Castlegar – via Vancouver – with Air Canada ([aircanada.com](http://aircanada.com)); you may need to overnight in Vancouver on the way out. Whitewater is located a hour’s drive from Castlegar, Revelstoke three-and-a-half hours. For car hire, we used Practicar ([practicar.ca](http://practicar.ca)), whose owner, charmingly, met us at the airport to hand over our trucks.

### 🏂 SKI & STAY

▪ Stellar Heliskiing ([stellarheliskiing.com](http://stellarheliskiing.com)) offers single-day and multi-day trips.  
▪ For more on Revelstoke and Whitewater, visit [revelstokemountainresort.com](http://revelstokemountainresort.com) and [skiwhitewater.com](http://skiwhitewater.com).  
▪ For more on skiing in British Columbia visit [HelloBC.com](http://HelloBC.com). Check out Mabey Ski ([mabeyski.com](http://mabeyski.com)), the BC specialists, for tailor-made trips.