



(ADVANCE)
SPECIAL SECTION:
HEARTBEAT OF
THE CITY —
REMEMBERING
DR. DEBAKEY



(INDULGE)
HOME COOKING
GETS A GOURMET
TWIST AT SOUL
FRY CASA IN
MUMBAI



(EXPLORE)
CRUISING
THE AMAZON
ABOARD THE
M/V AQUA NEAR
LIMA



Continental

NOVEMBER 2008



DOWNHILL DREAMING

Fast, slow, or hot shot?
Go for it at these 9 resorts

SNOWDAYS

Don't be content with one perfect storm — anticipate a season of flawless powder. Log as many runs as you can at these nine ski resorts in British Columbia, Colorado, Quebec, and Utah



BY STEPHEN JERMANÖK

MOTHER NATURE dropped the mother lode last winter as fresh-powder addicts got their highs atop summits across North America. In the East, a record-breaking December finally had folks believing in a White Christmas. Then, in early January, three blasts off the Pacific blanketed ski resorts from British Columbia to California. The Rockies received their fair share of whiteness, reaching their January average of nearly 4 feet of fluff early in the month.

So what was a responsible father of two supposed to do with all that good news zipping into my e-mail? I split, promising my family I'd be back in time to take them to Park City over February break. "This is the storm of the century," I explained to my wife as I packed my Capilene long johns. "Perhaps," she responded, "but this century is only eight years young!"



First Stop: Whistler

In 2010, the Winter Olympic Games head to British Columbia, and Whistler hosts many of the events. But why wait until the crowds arrive and hotel rates go through the roof to enjoy the yearly average of 396 inches of snow?

Whistler has come a long way since the ski resort opened in 1966 with one four-person gondola, one chairlift, and two T-bars. Today, Whistler and neighboring Blackcomb Mountain combine for a whopping 8,171 acres of skiing terrain, tops in North America, as is Blackcomb's mile-high vertical drop. With the 2006 addition of Whistler Heli-Skiing, you can add another half-million acres of out-of-bounds skiing, including some remote glaciers.

Don't expect to find a podunk town when you arrive here. Sure, there are bears hibernating in those backwoods. At the base of Whistler, however, in the village, high-end boutiques share the cobblestone walkways with upscale restaurants. Top-level hoteliers like the Fairmont, Westin, and Four Seasons have all found their way to the slippery slopes and will do almost anything to make sure your stay is a comfortable one.

My first run was on Blackcomb, known for its long, blue cruisers that snake from top to bottom. I did a nice

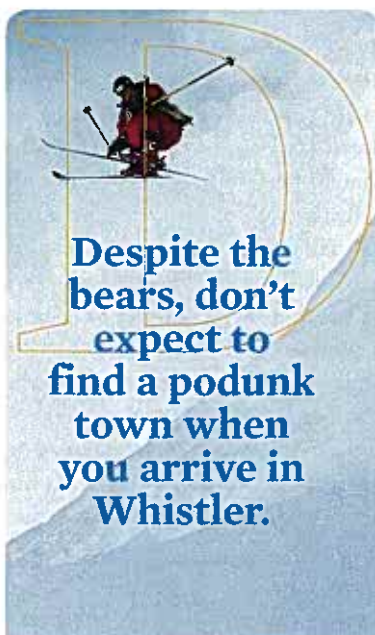
Above: a skier on the brink of a downhill run in Park City; below: catching some air in Whistler. Facing page: the moon rises over Telluride.

little warm-up from the Crystal Hut down to Ridge Runner, and then headed for the heights on one of the express lifts to the appropriately named Cruiser. At the base, skies were overcast, but at the 7,500-foot summit, the sun was pouring out. That's a fairly typical day's skiing in the Pacific Northwest, where rains are prevalent in villages but the mountains might very well be sublimely sunny.

On Whistler, don't miss out on one of the continent's longest trails, the 3.4-mile Peak to Creek. To avoid the crowds, try the Fresh Tracks Breakfast where, for a measly \$17 (Canadian), you're allowed to take the lift up the mountain, have breakfast at the summit lodge, and then make a few runs down the slope before the rest of the skiers arrive. Later in the day, if you can hold off on lunch until after 1 p.m., you can grab an hour of less crowded skiing while the other skiers eat.

Gone to Telluride

If Butch Cassidy returned to Telluride today to rob a bank, like he did here in 1889, he'd find that this former mining town has changed little. Sure, there





PREVIOUS SPREAD, LEFT: RANDY LYNCKS/GETTY IMAGES; RIGHT: MASTERFILE; THIS SPREAD, TOP: MASTERFILE; INSET: GETTY IMAGES; OPPOSITE PAGE: MIKE POWELL/GETTY IMAGES

might be more of a California surfer element — a popular breakfast joint is called Baked in Telluride — but much of the eight-block main stretch retains the flavor of the Wild West. Take the free gondola from the historic town to Mountain Village, 9,500 feet up, and you'll find a modern development of hotels and multimillion-dollar log cabin estates owned by the likes of Tom Cruise and Oprah Winfrey.

It's not just the sense of the familiar that keeps skiers coming back, but also the spellbinding vistas encompassing the 14,000-foot peaks that surround the ski resort. It's like being sucked into a Japanese silkscreen, with wave after wave of snowy peaks undulating before you.

At first glance, staring anxiously at the steep trails that run from the face of the mountain back to town, you might think Telluride was created solely for hot-dogging extreme skiers. And, yes, steep runs like Bushwhacker and Plunge reward expert skiers with great rips, hopefully on fresh powder. But take the lift up to Prospect Bowl and you'll soon realize that Telluride caters to beginners and intermediate skiers as well as experts. Over four miles long, the double-green Galloping Goose Trail will get you warmed up for blue cruisers like Polar Queen or the narrow, double-green Bridges run, which snakes over and under seven bridges. Save time for See Forever, an aptly named trail that follows the top of a ridge and

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offers spectacular views. Best of all, lift lines to reach these trails are short or nonexistent. Located in the remote southwestern corner of the state, Telluride puts you a good six-hour drive from the crowds that frequent Colorado ski areas closer to Denver. But let's keep that our own little secret.

Family Fun in Park City

It's not just the legendary, feathery-white "champagne" powder that keeps my family of four coming back to Park City. Nor the direct flight to Salt Lake City that brings you within a 45-minute drive to the slopes of Park City, Deer Valley, or the Canyons. No, it's the fact that Park City is an authentic community that rose up around the nearby silver mines in the 1860s, not a prefab resort area built with skiers in mind.

The Town Lift escorts you from Main Street in the heart of the historic Old Town district straight up to the slopes of Park City Mountain Resort. Two- and four-story buildings line Main Street, including some wooden structures with second-floor verandas that evoke the town's frontier history.

By the 1930s, after the town's silver boom died off, Park City began to set its sights on the next form of currency, skiing. The first local ski area, Snow Park, made its debut in 1946 with one lift. Today, it is home to the far more expansive Deer Valley Resort. While Park City Mountain Resort seems



This page: children enjoy the slopes in Park City. Facing page: after a day on the slopes, Mont-Tremblant looks perfectly serene at dusk.

like to be at the games, I needed to visit Utah Olympic Park. It was here where the most intrepid Olympians flew off the ski jump and sped close to 90 miles per hour around the bobsled track. Now everyone gets a chance to be brave (or a wee bit insane), since both sites are open to the public. My guide informed me that an 84-year-old man once attempted the K120 jump and made a solid landing. Wonderful, I think to myself. That gives me another four decades to consider flying for a distance of a football field and a half. In the meantime, I'm heading back to the slopes to take it a bit easier.

to cater to the snowboarding contingent (it was the venue for boarding events in the 2002 Winter Olympics), and the Canyons has grown to become the fifth largest ski resort in the United States, attracting more advanced skiers, Deer Valley is ideal for novice to intermediate skiers. It's one of the few remaining ski areas that doesn't allow snowboarding, and the number of skiers is limited to 6,500 a day.

Deer Valley also hosted several events at the 2002 Olympics, like the slalom. But to truly get a sense of what it was

French Skiing Without the European Price Tag

Not nearly as large as the other big boys on this list, Mont-Tremblant, in Quebec's Laurentian Mountains, makes up for its smaller size with a good dose of French ambience. Grab crepes with chocolate, seafood, or the signature *sucre à la crème* sauce at Crêperie Catherine, and fondue at La Savoie, and you'll feel like you just arrived at Val-d'Isère. Yet, once you've tasted maple taffy on snow, or beaver tail — fried dough topped with cinnamon sugar — you'll realize you're in Canada.

Where to Stay

In Whistler, check out the **Four Seasons Resort's** Ski Lite package. Upon your arrival, they'll outfit you with the latest ski wear, and your waxed skis and pre-warmed boots will be waiting at the hotel's Ski Concierge Shop at the base of Blackcomb. Double rooms start at \$320 a night. 888.935.2460; fourseasons.com/whistler

It's hard to top the ski-in/ski-out suites at **Camel's Garden Resort Hotel**, mere steps from Telluride's town gondola. Or the 25-foot-long outdoor hot tub that will

help soothe those tired calves while you savor the mountainous vista. Rates in winter range from \$275 for a standard room to \$1,900 for a four-bedroom condo. 888.772.2635; camelsgarden.com

For ideal ski-in/ski-out lodging at the base of Park City Mountain Resort, book a studio or one-bedroom condo at the **Lodge at the Mountain Village**. Studios start at \$200 a night during the winter. 888.PARK.CITY; davidhollands.com

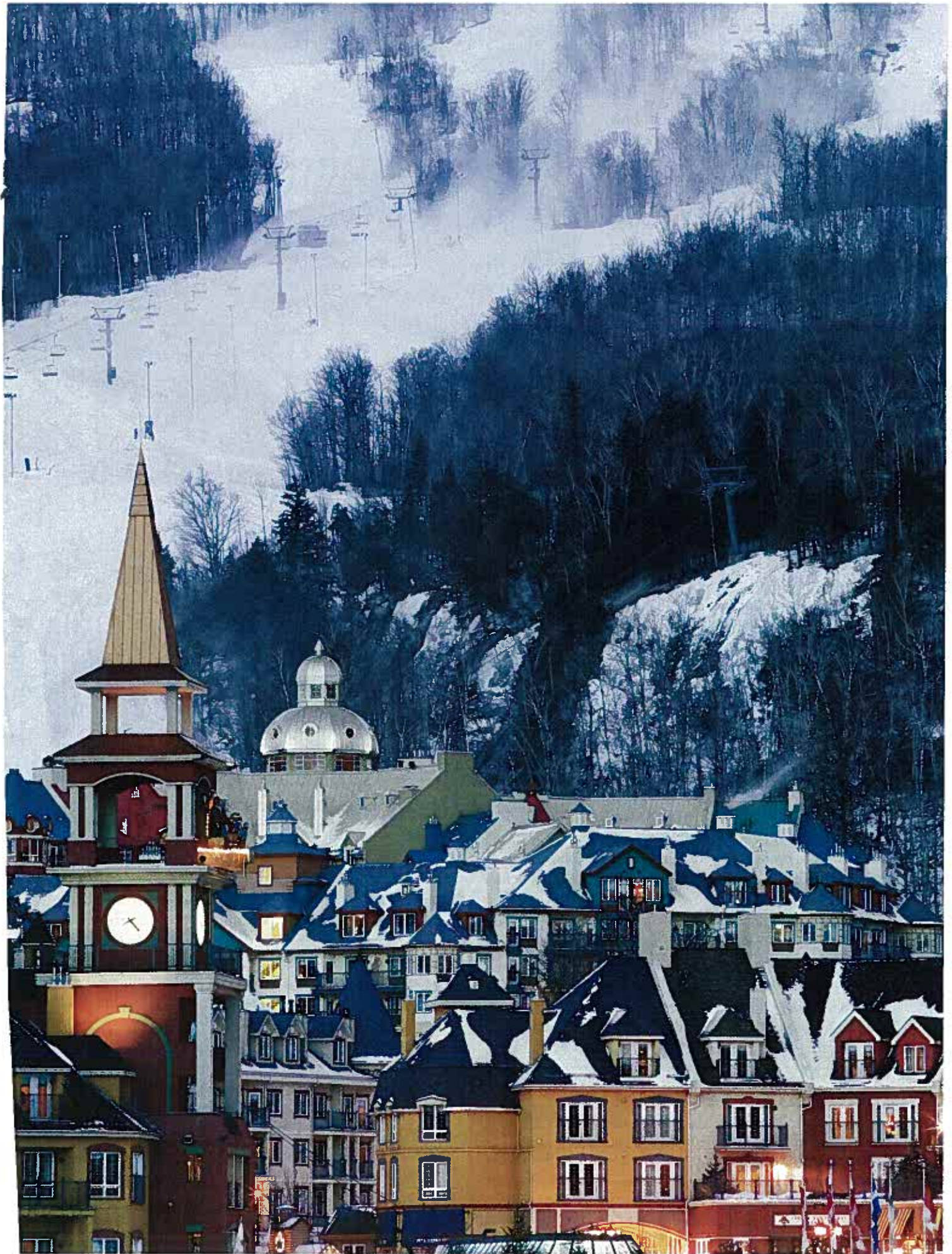
Close to the main lift and featuring a year-round

outdoor pool and Jacuzzi overlooking the slopes is the **Fairmont Tremblant**. Though not nearly as historic as that other Fairmont property, Le Château Frontenac in Quebec City, the resort is still an impressive site. Nightly rates start at \$199 (Canadian). 819.681.7000; fairmont.com

At the foot of the Silver Bullet Gondola, the **Sheraton Steamboat Resort** has a location that can't be beat for skiers. It also features a good cross-country course and a rooftop deck with outdoor

hot tubs. Rooms start at \$360 a night during peak season. 800.848.8878; sheraton.com/steamboat

Beaver Creek's ultra-posh **Ritz-Carlton Bachelor Gulch** resort is located near the base of the mountain, next to the Bachelor Gulch Express high-speed quad. Amenities include a 21,000-square-foot spa and fitness area, a spacious Ritz Kids center, and, of course, ski-in/ski-out access. Rates start around \$800. 800.542.8680; ritzcarlton.com — S.J.



The big knock against Tremblant has always been the 90-minute drive from the Montreal airport to the ski area. Thankfully, Continental introduced non-stop flights from Newark to Mont-Tremblant last year, so now you can make your line through the trees on the Edge area by mid-morning. The trick to skiing Tremblant is to follow the sun, from the north side in the early hours to the south side in the afternoon. As at Whistler, you can purchase a First Tracks ticket, have breakfast, and get in a couple of warm-up runs on a cruiser like Beauvallon before the crowds show up.

Tremblant's owner, Intrawest, is in the process of expanding the ski area from 625 acres to 1,000. Some of the newest trails, like Les Bouleaux and Bon-Vieux-Temps in the Versant Soleil section of the resort, are good afternoon runs. A new gondola, scheduled to open next summer, will carry passengers from the slopes of Versant Soleil to the village below. Also planned for next summer is the Casino Mont-Tremblant, a bar, lounge, restaurant, and yes, casino. So you can try to win back the cost of that lift ticket.

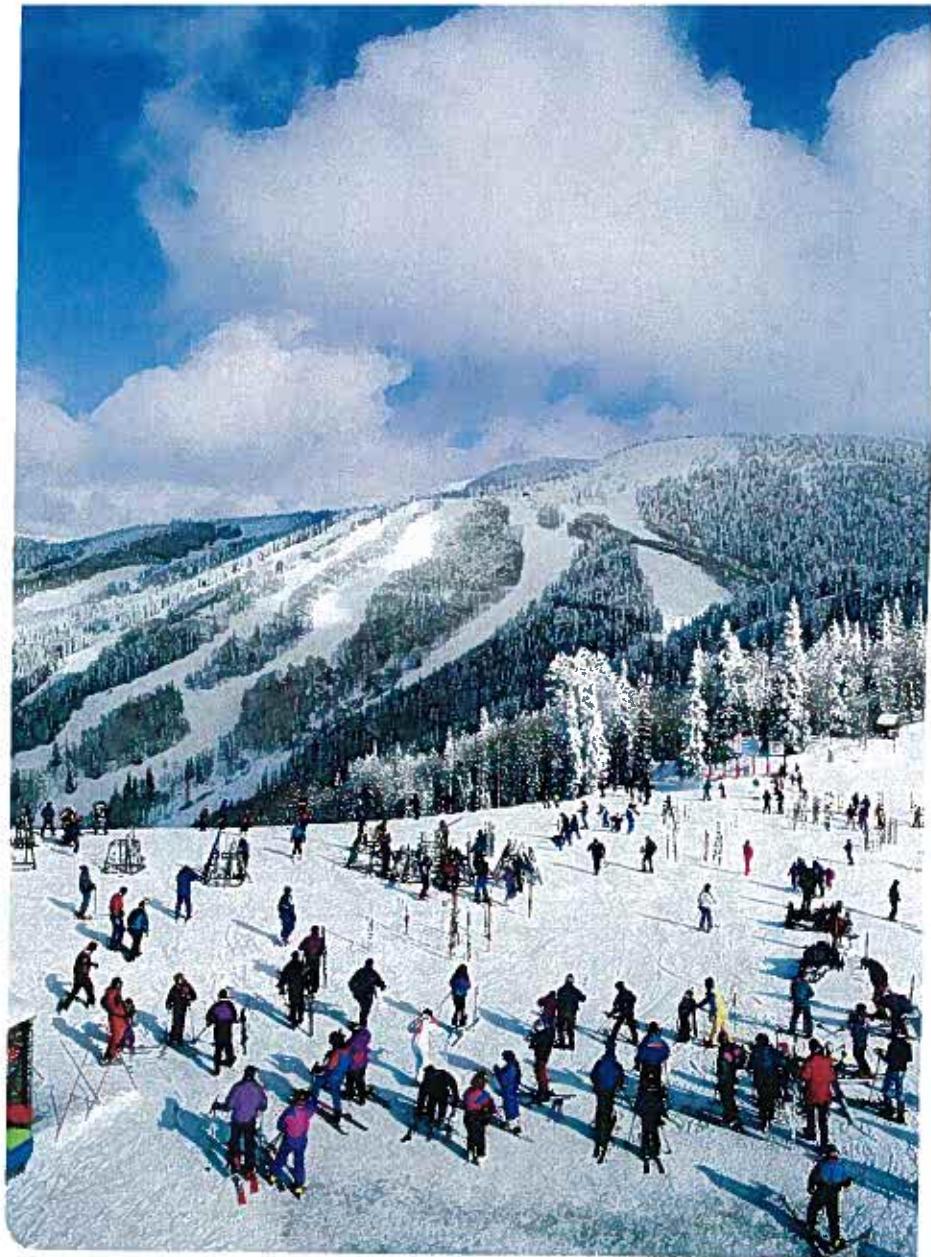
Rocky Mountain High

They say you should always end at a place that leaves you wanting more. By the time I headed for Colorado's Beaver Creek, I'd skied far more of North America in one season than any person deserves, at least according to my patient wife. Yet, I still craved more, making two additional stops at Steamboat Springs and Vail before arriving at Beaver Creek.

Steamboat is one of those mountains that always makes you feel good about your skiing ability, whether or not you really improved over last year. It doesn't have the gnarly steeps of Telluride or the bruising back bowls of Vail. But you'll find some of the finest tree skiing in the country as you glide along serpentine trails, down quick dips, and through

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Want to share your own ski photos? Visit us online at continental.com/magazine and add to our virtual photo album.



Skiers get ready for their first run of the day at Steamboat.

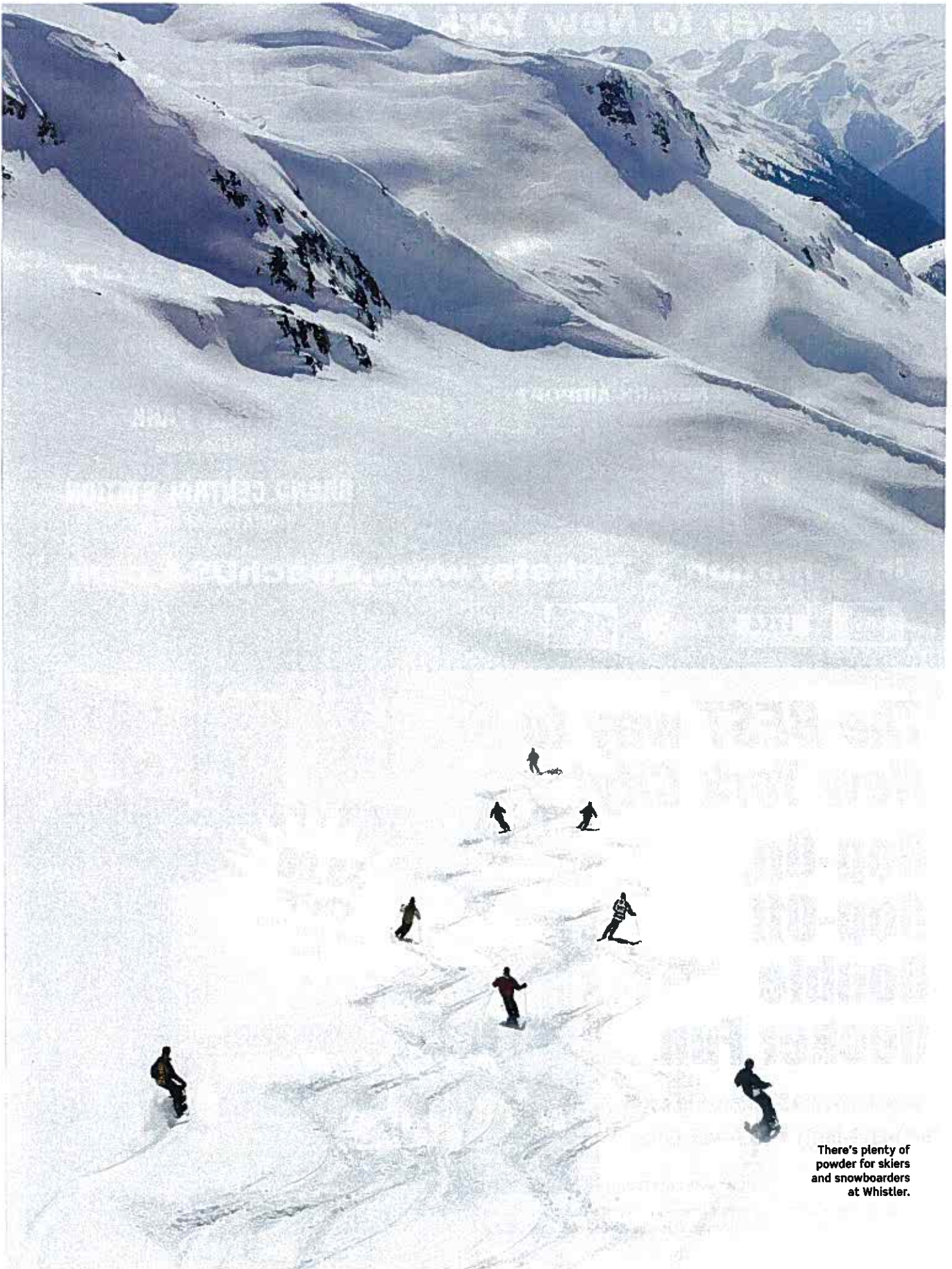
tight slots, always in the company of aspens. The predominately intermediate terrain also includes wonderfully groomed blue-rated trails like Buddy's Run.

Then there's the town, a genuine Western settlement where the folks wearing Stetsons and chaps really are ranchers. (You can find cowboy garb at clothing shops like F. M. Light & Sons.) Those expansive fields visible from the mountain are honest-to-goodness ranches manned by the men in spurs.

Two hours away, Vail continues to expand with skiers and snowboarders in mind. It's always been a special place for me, ever since I visited my buddy Pierre at the resort more than 20 years ago when he was coaching the Mexican ski team. Get lost in the back bowls, a winter wonderland devoid of trees, and you'll feel like you just entered a *Star Trek* episode where

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TOP: MARC MUEINCH/GETTY IMAGES; BOTTOM: AGENCY ZOOM/GETTY IMAGES



There's plenty of powder for skiers and snowboarders at Whistler.