

FERNIE

ALPINE VILLAGE IN THE HEART OF THE ROCKIES

BY LOUISE BOURBONNAIS

Far from the noise and crowds, the southern B.C. town of Fernie radiates with a style and atmosphere that are truly unique. This historic village is home to a treasure trove of architectural delights inspired by gothic and Victorian styles. No sooner had I set foot in this small community than my eye was drawn to the historic CP railway station. Its design recalling a bygone era so captivated my imagination that I just had to peek inside. And, to my great surprise, I found that the station, rechristened the Fernie Arts Station, had been transformed into a gem of an art gallery. Virtually every kind of work of art dating from the early 1900s is on display. Period sculptures, paintings and photographs retrace the rich history of Fernie, a town marked by its share of misfortune, including tragic fires. Also housed within the art gallery are a café and a theatre offering concerts of classical music. Lovers of architecture and photography, who prefer their own picture taking to contemplating the work of others in a gallery, are sure to be delighted by the courthouse in the historic part of town. Built in 1911, the Victorian-style building is now the official emblem of Fernie. Reminiscent of a European castle, the courthouse is considered to be the most beautiful in British Columbia.

Despite a rich cultural heritage, this village with its delightful old-fashioned charm seems a tad dull to ski enthusiasts in comparison to the glittering new ski village risen in its backyard. Nestled in the heart of the Canadian Rockies, Fernie Alpine Resort offers every kind of modern hotel accommodation to please the visitor, along with an array of outdoor activities.

SPRING SKIING

Ski lovers can rejoice in the fact that the area seems blessed from on high, with annual snowfalls that easily guarantee good skiing conditions into early April. Each year, **Fernie Alpine Resort** receives some 9 metres of light, dry powder snow. The consistency and quality are so good that this blanket of white manna has been dubbed "The Champagne of Powder."

If Fernie is still an unknown quantity to most tourists and ski enthusiasts, the town is a favourite with professional downhill skiers. Olympic gold medallist Kerrin Lee-Gartner, who represented Canada from 1984 to 1994, most memorably at the Lillehammer and Albertville winter games, calls Fernie home. To Kerrin, it is the best place on earth to ski.



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Courthouse



©Steve Short



©Steve Short, Spring skiing above Fernie Alpine Resort

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The quality of skiing attracts athletes and ski pros from around the world. This past January, Fernie Alpine Resort hosted the World Cup Freestyle Skiing Event. And the accolades just keep pouring in: Fernie was recognized by a top ski magazine as one of the five best places in North America for powder skiing, and the historic village recently won the British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association Award for "best little town in British Columbia." Last, but definitely not least, Fernie has been selected as the best place to live in British Columbia for the third consecutive year.

RADIANT SPRING COLOURS

It is not surprising that the quality of life in Fernie is the envy of every town. All the seasons of the year are beautiful in this part of the country. In the spring, the valley forest awakens and dons a verdant cloak of lush vegetation. Thousands of wildflowers carpet the fields in a symphony of dazzling colour while mountain peaks, still covered with snow, add a glistening backdrop to the eye-catching scene.

In summer, the mountains, forests, rivers and lakes around Fernie become a mecca for outdoor sports enthusiasts. Nearby peaks abound with an impressive number of hiking and mountain biking trails. To the delight of those who love fishing, the area's many rivers and streams virtually teem with trout.

From early spring to late summer, Fernie also becomes home to whitewater kayaking enthusiasts. The churning rapids of the Elk River are a favourite destination for those avid thrill-seekers looking for the ultimate challenge. Kayakers who prefer to take it a little easier can find smooth going in the famous turquoise waters of the Kootenay River.

...ENJOY THE MAGNIFICENT SCENERY AND BASK IN THE SERENE ATMOSPHERE OF PEACE AND HARMONY.

No list of summertime activities would be complete without mentioning two of the area's prized attractions: the Fernie Golf and Country Club's premier golf course, which draws thousands of players to the area each year, and the Fernie ski resort's chairlifts, which operate throughout the season, ferrying mountain bikers to the summit of the mountain, along with visitors simply looking to enjoy the magnificent scenery and bask in the serene atmosphere of peace and harmony.



NEED TO KNOW

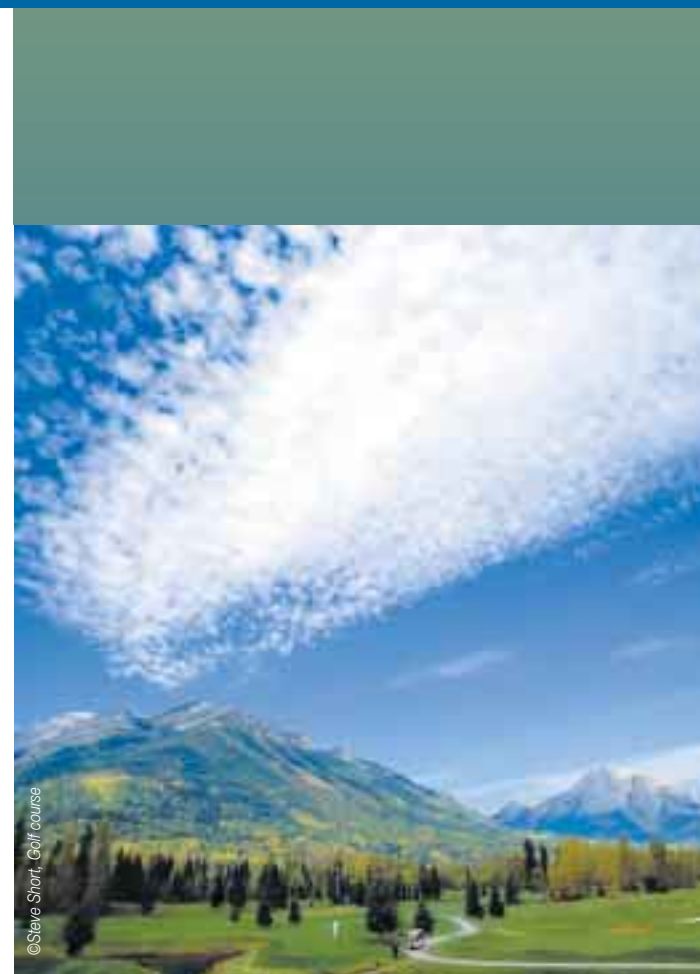
TERRAIN: 2,504 acres, 102 ski trails
30% novice, 40% intermediate and 30% expert
TOP ELEVATION: 1,925 m, 857 m vertical drop
ONE-DAY SKI PASS: \$56
UPHILL CAPACITY: 13,716 skiers per hour

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For information and reservations:
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Reservation of packages: Tel.: 1 800 333-2339



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