



PHOTOS BY KARI BODNARCHUK FOR THE BOSTON GLOB

BRITISH COLUMBIA

'At home' on a family ski vacation

BY KARI BODNARCHUK | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

SUN PEAKS — Our daughter, Grace, shuffled away from the top of the beginner Platter Lift, pointed her skis downhill, and took off. The sun had set and the dark path was only partially lighted by houses along one side. After several ski lessons here, Grace knew the way and swooshed along, unfazed by the darkness, the pitch, or the sharp turn partway down the hill.

"Aren't you supposed to do the pizza wedge?" I said, accelerating to keep up, and referring to a maneuver that keeps the skis moving more slowly and controlled.

"Oh, Mom, pizza is for stopping, not for skiing," said Grace, 4½.

I watched her zip along, confidently steering around a fallen skier, balancing on the sharp turn, and coming to a controlled stop at the bottom using her pizza wedge.

"I want to stay here forever," she said, heading back to

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A view from the top of Tod Mountain (above). The village architecture at Sun Peaks Ski Resort is in the style of the southern Alps.

All things snowplow to family happiness

▶SUN PEAKS Continued from Page M1

Grace had been on skis, and snow, only about a half a dozen times in her life, but after just three hours of one-on-one lessons (the norm here for her age group) with a fun Australian instructor, she had nailed skiing and, more important, was having fun. So many aspects of Sun Peaks Resort made it a great place to learn to ski, and a fun family experience.

The village of Sun Peaks sits at 4,000 feet above sea level in British Columbia's interior, a 45-minute drive from Kamloops, where the wild west meets the great outdoors, and just 4½ hours from Vancouver.

The purpose-built, ski-in skiout resort is known for its light and fluffy snow (it averages less than two days of rain a year), moderate temperatures (in a five-month ski season, it may drop below zero degrees on as few as 10 days), and logical, easy-access layout (it takes about five minutes to walk the

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(781) 438-2224 (800) 234-9959 length of the village).

The resort lies in a valley surrounded by three ski mountains - Tod Mountain, Sundance Mountain, and Mount Morrissey — and virtually all trails lead back down to the cozy southern Alps-style village. Families with different levels of skiers appreciate it because every chairlift offers green (beginner), blue (intermediate), and black (expert) runs, so groups can split up and meet a few

minutes later at the bottom. Sun Peaks ranks as the province's second-largest ski resort, based on terrain, with 3,678 skiable acres and 124 runs served by 12 lifts. You'll have more elbow room than you can imagine. My husband and I skied more than a dozen runs without seeing another soul.

'We have a saying that if you see a bunch of people, just stop and wait a minute for the group to pass," said the resort's director of skiing (and a Canadian ski icon), Nancy Greene Raine, who has lived at Sun Peaks with her husband, Al Raine, now the mayor of Sun Peaks, since 1992.

The resort's terrain can handle 14,000 skiers a day, yet its record is about 6,200 people. When we skied here just before Christmas, we shared the slopes with about 3,000 to 4,000 people and never had to wait for a chairlift. We rode the lifts with skiers from nearby Kamloops, weekend warriors from Vancouver, Australians who had come for the season, and local elementary schoolchildren.



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Visitors to Sun Peaks can rain, and bumps.

We enrolled Grace in the Sun Tots program, which blends child care with one to two hours of ski or snowboard lessons for potty-trained children ages 3 to 6 (or 3 to 7 for snowboarders). She got to hang out and play at the Sundance Kids Centre for part of the day, and then take a one-hour private lesson each afternoon. The center also offers child care for children 18 months to 5 years, meaning our son, Sam, 21/2,

could go there, too. can still go outside and stomp

While our kids enjoyed those experiences, we got a great mountain tour and some ski tips from Greene Raine, 70, one of Canada's best-ever skiers. This charismatic and accomplished athlete won gold and silver medals in the 1968 Olympics in Grenoble, France, and 13 World Cup races, and was named Canada's Female Athlete of the Century. She now spends her weekdays in the capital, Ottawa, working as a senator for British Columbia, and her weekends and holidays at her Sun Peaks home, giving mountain tours and enjoying

"I love to ski hard now and

sign their 6- to 12-year-olds up for the half- or full-day Sun Kids program. A two-day Family Fun Race Camp for intermediate and advanced skiers launched this year, and includes video analysis, gate training, and entry to the Friday race series. Or try the new three-day Off-Piste Camp, where you can learn to tackle powder, glades, steep ter-

The center has plenty of toys and activities: dress-up clothes, a slide, tumbling mats, trucks, a mini play kitchen and reading nook, and kid-size tables where children had lunch and snacks, or made hats, holiday ornaments, drawings, and other crafts to take home. Those who are too young to ski or who aren't taking ski lessons, like Sam,

around in the snow. the trails.



Top, Laurie White (left), owner of Ski Sisters, advises a skier on her stance and positioning. Above, the author's daughter, Grace, and her instructor, **Bridie Kippin of** Australia, at the end of a Sun Tots lesson at Sun Peaks Ski Resort.

then, and go around and help people out," she said.

We followed her lead for a couple of hours, covering 20 miles in several inches of fresh champagne powder.

"We call this toe-dancing snow." Greene Raine said.

Partway down one run, she stopped and said, "In skiing, it's all about being perfectly balanced all the time. You must shift your weight onto the ball of your foot," she said, showing me how to relax and angle my skis. "If you find the first metatarsal joint [on the bottom of your foot], tilt your ski and roll onto that, you'll be great."

I followed her advice and it worked. I started making better turns while maintaining better balance and form.

Another morning, while the kids went to ski school and my snowboarding husband headed for the long wide cruisers off the Sunburst Express chairlift, I took a lesson and tour with Laurie White, owner of Ski Sisters. White welcomes intermediate and advanced skiers and teaches them how to improve and have fun.

"It's like skiing with your sister and best friend who happens to know her way around," said White.

White gave me a few tips to help with balance and turning, and then reintroduced me to the fun of skiing the "whoopdedos" (little bumps, jumps, and rollers) along the sides of runs.

"Skiing becomes easier if you breathe," she reminded me. "If I catch you holding your

breath, I'll make you sing." In the afternoons, my husband and I explored the mountains, enjoying the open bowls off the Tod Mountain summit, the long playful runs that were perfect for carving, and the narrow Lone Fir Center run that

reminded us of New England

trails. One of our favorite runs,

the OSV, short for Österreichis-

cher Skiverband, was built in

partnership with the Austria National Ski Team, which trained here for World Cup races and the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

"They loved the rollers here,"

Greene Raine said. When our legs grew tired, we wandered around the oneof-a-kind shops and galleries (vou won't find chain stores or glitzy shops here), headed to the mid-mountain Sunburst Lodge for the ridiculously yummy cinnamon buns, or went to Bolacco Café, where Konrad and Elizabeth Glowczynski and their three kids make the most mouthwatering dishes with a Polish twist.

The village has more than 20 family-friendly places to eat, from the quick-and-easy Mountain High Pizza and Masa's Bar and Grill, which offers pub-like fare in a casual atmosphere at the foot of the slopes, to Mantles Restaurant in the Delta Sun Peaks Resort, which has wonderful buffets and top cuisine in a classy but totally kid-friendly atmosphere. The restaurant's food and beverage manager, Didier Toutain, spent ages entertaining Grace with magic tricks while giving us wine recommendations on the side.

The resort also offers dog sled tours, lift-accessed tubing, Saturday night campfires with s'mores, and ice skating at an outdoor rink. Teenagers can chill out at the Mascon Hangout in the village's sports center, where they can play Wii and other games, and watch mov-

Our kids loved the nightly sleigh rides, getting pulled around the village and through the woods by two strong horses named Kitty Cat and Sable. Snowshoeing became our favorite family activity. Discover Sun Peaks Adventures runs regular alpine and backcountry snowshoe tours, but with such young kids we opted for a private tour so we could go at our own pace.

The fun and enthusiastic owner, Colin Cannon, and his son James took us on a short tour through a little forest, where we spotted squirrel tracks and learned how to distinguish these from Arctic hare prints. Then we marched up a small hill on Mount Morrissey, where we had clear views of Tod Mountain and found a perfect spot to have hot chocolate (cooled to the perfect temperature with snow) and oatmeal

IF YOU GO ...

Getting there

WestJet just launched a new Vancouver-Kamloops flight, so you can fly Boston to Vancouver, hop a 40-minute flight to Kamloops, then take a shuttle to the mountain. Or fly Boston to Kelowna by way of Toronto and take a 21/2-hour shuttle to Sun Peaks.

Where to stay

800-807-3257, reservations www.sunpeaksresort.com Choose from a bunk bed-style hostel (starting at \$25.50 per person, per night) to the higherend Delta Sun Peaks Resort (from \$140) and condos (from \$259) in the heart of the village.

Where to eat

Bolacco Café Coast Sundance Lodge 250-578-7588 Sandwiches from \$6.25. **Mountain High Pizza** Hearthstone Lodge 250-578-7272 Pizzas from \$16. Masa's Bar and Grill Village Day Lodge 250-578-5434 Fish and chips (\$15), burgers (\$11.30-\$14), kids menu \$7.50. **Mantles Restaurant** Delta Sun Peaks Resort 250-578-6000 Breakfast buffet \$21.40, dinner

entrees from \$26; kids 6 and un-

der free for breakfast buffet and

What to do

from kids menu.

Lift tickets: adults \$74, 13-18 \$59, 6-12 \$37.60, under 6 free. Family Fun Race Camp (two days): adults \$281, kids 6-12 \$244. Off-Piste Camp (3 days): adults \$375, kids 6-12 \$338. Sundance Kids Centre: Offers day care starting at \$36 (half day), ski lessons with child care starting at \$73.40, and half-day (three-hour) lessons at \$90. Free tours: Nancy Greene Raine generally offers weekend tours at 1 p.m. from the top of the Sunburst Express chairlift, while Sun Guides lead free mountain tours for all ages and abilities, 9:15 a.m. and 1 p.m., meeting at the base of the mountain. Adventure Centre: Village Day Lodge, 250-578-5542, can book sleigh rides, snowshoe tours, snowshoe golf, and more. Inter Resort Shuttle: 800-807-3257. Explore other British Columbia resorts by hopping on one of these regular shuttles to Whistler Blackcomb, Silver Star, Big White, or Revelstoke Mountain Re-

chocolate chip cookies.

sort; rates vary.

On Christmas Eve day, after three days of snowy adventures in this cozy village tucked in the mountains, it was time to go home. Despite Santa's impending visit, Gracie's parting words as we drove out of the village resonated with us all: "I just wish this was home."

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