

KOOKIE By Doug Wallace KOOTENAYS

RED Mountain is that under-the-radar yet top-level ski resort you didn't know about—but need to



An unofficial slogan—"a drinking town with a skiing problem"—could really apply to most ski resorts. But here at RED Mountain and the tiny community of Rossland, tucked away in the Kootenays in southeastern British Columbia, it's firmly tongue in cheek, befitting a quaint, almost hippie-era vibe. Digging deeper, I discover that this uncrowded, unpretentious town—which began life as a gold mining outpost—has a real reputation: Voted #1 Ski Town by USA Today for the past two years, Rossland is a hidden gem, just two-and-a-half hours north of Spokane, Washington, or four hours southeast of Kelowna.

Part of the Ikon Pass, RED Mountain Resort has been quietly wowing visitors since 1947. And now, even with cast-off chair lifts from several other Western Canada resorts, it is a treasured favourite, with 4,000 acres of terrain across four mountains and 300 inches of snow per year. The 119 runs run the gamut, and everybody has something to love—even the fussy ones: advanced skiers love this place, thanks to generous off-piste terrain and one of the largest cat-skiing operations in the world.

I check into the Autograph Collection-designated Josie Hotel and find a



Washington Street shops



The Josie



Rafters

chair at the Velvet Restaurant and Lounge while I wait for my room to be ready. The sun is shining low and après-ski is kicking off. To my left, the ski concierge is receiving the skis and boots of those who have called it a day. The place couldn't be more charming... oh, yes, it can—I've just spotted the outdoor saunas.

In addition to The Josie, RED has one of the country's few ski-in-only overnight stays, the eco-friendly, six-cabin Constella collection, nestled on the back of Granite Mountain, accessible via the chairlift. Sleep in and ski out.

I happen to visit on what was a complete powder day, the perfect snowfall, and practically the entire town took the day off. Who could pass this up? I revel in the fresh powder with my new best friend Vic, who is part of a volunteer snow-host group. Vic invites me to "No Shower Happy Hour" at Rafters, an après-ski attic where he and his band are part of the entertainment lineup. I hang up my jacket on a hook and pull up a pint. Perfect. ■

WHEN YOU GO >>

Extra-curricular RED Mountain Resort activities set you up for off-mountain Rossland fun.

- **THE JOSIE HOTEL** is a ski-themed four-star haven at the base of the hill. The Velvet Restaurant and Lounge does a fun après-ski and an excellent dinner, and the ski concierge will keep your gear warm and dry until you're ready to boot up.
>> THEJOSIE.COM
- **ROSSLAND BEER COMPANY** is where you'll find locals and tourists alike gathering for a pint downtown, clustered on wooden benches around the beer vats, sipping on award-winning craft beer. A hyper-local, no-fuss experience.
>> ROSSLANDBEER.COM
- **GABRIELLA'S** is a town icon where chef Gabriella Pelli Lapointe and her team churn out large portions of Italian comfort food in a family-friendly setting. A burger and pizza menu draws hungry skiers to an adjacent lounge.
>> GABRIELLASPASTA.COM
- **THE ROSSLAND RANGE RECREATION SITES AND TRAILS** offers a network of winter hiking routes for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Little day-use cabins offer shelter and a wood stove—the perfect spot for a picnic.
>> ROSSLANDRANGE.ORG