

## Veggie Tour - Intrepid Travelers and Life-Long Ski Bums

Contributed by Conor Hurley  
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The Veggie Road

Sponsored by:

Intrepid Travelers and

Life-Long Ski Bums

12/7-12/13

Part III SOL Mountain Touring.

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sport for more than 25 years.

Monashee tree skiing...Oh was it ever deep.

The two self-proclaimed "life-stylers" are foresters in the summer time and ski bums in the winter. Every year they finish up work in late November and set off for their next adventure. Some years it's Central America, others it's Southeast Asia. No matter where they choose to go, it's always one more trip of a lifetime.

After finishing her degree in Nelson, Veronica moved to the Fernie Ski Area parking lot in '94 in their 1969 van—with three-on-the-tree shifting. Over the course of the next two winters, she lived in the van and skied the little known ski area. They have since bought a house in Fernie and made it their home.

Peter has left his mark on many backcountry lodges throughout BC. The son of a carpenter, Peter learned the trade at a young age. Throughout his backcountry tenure, Peter has made his way from lodge-to-lodge, applying the finishing touches as he goes. I never did get a final number out of him, but it seems as though Peter had a hand in building just about every lodge in BC.

Peter and Veronica arrived just after a great stint of clear weather and even deeper powder. Along with gourmet food they brought snow and wind. In terms of skiing, that ruled out the northern aspects and much of the alpine. That meant we'd be forced to ski the trees for which the Monashees are known best. Sub-alpine Fir and Spruce intermingle on the steep, lower elevation slopes. Combine those open-spaced trees with nearly three meters of snow on the ground, and you get some of the most amazing tree skiing you could possibly imagine.

Tuesday morning, Peter, Veronica, Ealu and I set out for a day of ski touring. The visibility was poor, and we'd have to be on our toes with our navigation. Several kilometers later we arrived at the knob that is our destination. Steep southwest-facing slopes covered in snow-laden trees dropped 400-plus meters below us. That was our playground for the day.

At the top of our third run, we were faced with some hair-raising decisions. The wind had increased, thus causing wind loading and slabs on the upper slopes of the knob. After examining some of the smaller features and how they reacted, we decided it was a good idea to fade right and stick to some of the lower-angle, more heavily-treed slopes to stay out of harm's way. After a safe descent, we put the skins on our skis one last time and headed home in the fading December daylight.

It is Thursday morning. Aaron and I left the lodge yesterday and made our way back to Revelstoke. I've learned that setting up a backcountry ski lodge in the early season can be a logistical nightmare at times. Skiffs loaded with materials,

trucks that have to go back and forth between here and there, people coming and going—all contributing to the early season buzz and anticipation.

As I sit in this coffee shop writing, I look out the window at the paved street. The grey skies coupled with warmer temperatures make it hard to believe that sitting only a couple of hours away is a winter wonderland, full of trees straight out of Narnia, patiently awaiting my return.

That is right—I get to go back! There is still a ton of work to be completed at the lodge, so I am going to head back help out. I spent the night in the car, however this time I chose a quieter part of Revelstoke. I’ve got a couple of hours to pick up a few groceries and other supplies and then I’ll head up to Rogers Pass to get a few turns in. From there I’ll head back down to Cherryville and join the first guests of the season aboard a helicopter destined for the Sol Mountain Lodge.

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