

Veggie Tour - Fernie's French Toast

Contributed by Conor Hurley
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The crackle of a cast iron skillet and the smell of French toast woke me. I rolled off the couch and followed my nose towards the kitchen, where I found Mel at the stove and Cookie hunkered down at the table shoveling French toast slathered in peanut butter and drenched in maple syrup into his mouth. In between mouthfuls all Cookie could manage to say was, "I can't wait to go skiing. I CAN'T WAIT TO GO SKIING!"

The Veggie Road

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Fernie's French Toast

11/27-12/6

Fernie, B.C.

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Who said sleeping in a car at -15 is no fun.

It was snowing outside, so there stood a remote chance that he would not have to go to work, but after a quick phone call to his boss, Cookie realized that he would have to wait until tomorrow to go skiing.

People who live in Fernie have one-track minds. If they are not skiing or snowboarding, they are thinking about skiing or snowboarding. Here, powder is king—and its loyal subjects came here seeking a better life, great snow and even better people.

I have never seen such a concentration of duct tape, bondo and primer; but more importantly, I have never seen so many happy people in one place. Walking down Fernie's streets, you will notice a certain twinkle in the eyes of the people you encounter. It is as though they have found Nirvana. They seem unconcerned with the material things and are infatuated with the good-timing lifestyle they lead.

While I was camped out off of Hartley Lake Rd., just outside of Fernie this summer, I realized that I was in dire need of some social interaction. So I broke camp and headed down to the Royal Hotel for their open mic night. As soon as I walked through the door, I bumped into a tall, shaggy-haired kid by the name of Seamus Little. Before long he introduced me to his friend Simone. The two of them welcomed me with open arms and invited me to join them in a game of pool. After we left the bar, Seamus offered his couch to me and I took him up on the offer. Over the course of the next few days, I discovered what Fernie is all about.

It is not the clothes you wear nor what you drive; in fact if you have any inhibitions or hang ups, you can leave them at the town line. In Fernie, it is all about being yourself, having a good time, and enjoying the company of new people. If you are willing to say hi, people here will take you in and show you a great time. All you have to do is ask.

The days that I spent hanging out with Seamus, his roommate Marty and Simone are days that I will never forget. Swimming in the clearest water that I have ever seen, getting thrown off of enormous rope swings, cliff diving, running and hiking, I had to forego my spot on their couch and return to the East. However, I knew that my adventures in Fernie had only just begun.

This past Tuesday I headed out from West Yellowstone with one thing on my mind—Fernie. I had to get back. The view in town is right out of the grocery store parking lot. As you sit there in your car, you are faced with one of the most spectacular sights in the world. The Three Sisters stare down over the town while the Ghost Rider approaches from the north. To the south is the alpine resort, and all that lies in between is epic line after line, after line.

After spending the night at Thadeus, Mel and Josh's place, I went over to grab some oil from Paul's house. It turned out, Paul is a die-hard backcountry skier with plans to be up in BC later on this winter. If it all works out, we'll be rendezvousing somewhere up in that neck of the woods to make some turns. With a full tank of vegetable

oil and sub-zero temperatures, I struck out from Bozeman with Fernie on my mind.

Nine hours later I arrived in Fernie, and man did it feel good to be back. I immediately set out to track down the people that took me in and treated me like family not four months ago. When I finally got a hold of Seamus, he was in the midst of installing some speakers that he picked up at a local pawn shop into his new car.

Seamus showed up to meet me in town sporting an ear-to-ear grin, a new \$500 car with a matte black primer finish, spray painted rims, a plexi-glass sunroof that was silicone caulked to the roof and two huge holes where he had tried to install the speakers. In a matter of minutes, Seamus offered me a place to stay on his couch and asked me if I wanted to join him, Simone and a bunch of others for some skiing the following day. Little did I know that he meant the whole town.

Fernie's lifts were closed, and the mountain isn't scheduled to open for more than a week. But when I arrived to skin up the area, the parking lots were full. The word on the street—there was unreal skiing to be had up on the hill—and the town listened. We quickly joined the line of skiers and boarders and started our trek up the hill in search of Fernie's legendary powder.

Fernie's die-hards lived up to their reputation, as the blue skies at the base quickly turned to blasting winds and snow. When we finally reached the top shack of the Bear lift, we joined the mass of people huddling behind the shack seeking shelter from the wind. Wasting no time, we tore hide and hit the Bear Chutes. In the words of Seamus, we got to "shred some pow." The six of us blasted down through the trees hooting and hollering the whole way in some of the deepest and lightest snow that I have ever gotten to ski in my life.

That was only the beginning. The real fun began when Seamus and I returned home to finish his sound system. The mission was to figure out a way to build a set of speaker boxes that would house the new speakers while covering up the crater sized holes. After a couple of hours of doing some kyboshed, custom carpentry in a garage climbing gym, we emerged with a pair of gargantuan speaker boxes that took up nearly the entire rear window.

I don't think that there is anywhere else in the world that you can ski deep powder, do some backyard mechanical work and then finish off the day with enormous sushi spread in a trailer park. In Fernie, however that is a normal day. Simone invited everyone who we skied with that day over for sushi at her place. Seamus and I showed up two hours late due to some complications with the wiring of the system; but fortunately for us she had just finished preparing it all when we arrived.

True to all backyard mechanical endeavors, the system worked perfectly after we finished, but in some mysterious fashion, it stopped working the instant we got in the car to drive to Simone's place. In true backyard mechanic fashion, Seamus and I returned from the diner party and began working on the car. At one o'clock in the morning, Cyprus Hill was inserted into the CD player and late night test drive on Fernie's snow packed streets ensued.

That brings me back to the French toast at seven a.m. There we were, operating on five-and-a-half hours of sleep, feasting on French toast in preparation for another unreal powder day at Fernie. Who needs money when you can have times like that on a dime?

Paul House, another skier with taste for grease.

Paul House, Bozeman, MT.

The white rabbit scampered across Montana, making way towards Fernie.

Matte black primer is a finish coat.

Lifts are closed parking lots are full; who says Fernie hasn't opened yet.

The lifts were closed and the parking lot was full. Every one was hiking for the snow.

Seamus Little and Simone Bourassa bringing it home.

Seamus Little; Shreddin' Pow.

The conception of the speaker boxes...and a garage turned climbing gym, not unusual for Fernie.

Conor Getting a little air.

Seamus Little, Looking to shred some pow.

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