



Big White is best known for its champagne powder, variety of terrain and mild winter temperatures. PHOTOS: BIG WHITE SKI RESORT

FAMILY TRAVEL

BIG FUN AT BIG WHITE ON AND OFF SLOPES

B.C. resort features terrain for all abilities, family-friendly adventure area

MHAIRRI WOODHALL

A fresh dusting of Big White's famous champagne powder blankets "Brookie Cookie," the previously unnamed trail we're tracking our instructor Berne down. My 10-year-old daughter Brooklyn is delighted with Berne's new moniker for the route he created, piecing together the gentler sections of a few longer runs. It's our first ski day of Brooklyn's second season, and the improvement since starting our private mother-daughter lesson is staggering. More importantly, she's having fun and has finally found joy in skiing. I, a fair-weather, cruisy blues skier, also feel stronger and more confident, having implemented Berne's simple suggestions for improving my stance. After completing Brookie Cookie, we've earned our round of hot chocolates — extra whipped cream, marshmallows and caramel drizzle — from the Clocktower Coffee Co. in the Village Centre Mall.

Big White Ski Resort, an hour outside Kelowna, is a wonderland for families, and you don't have to rely on my glowing review alone. The mountain coined Canada's favourite family resort was recently named the fourth best ski resort in North America — second in Canada, after Whistler — by Condé Nast Traveler. It also ranked 10th on The Times U.K.'s 2022 Best Ski Resorts for beginners — the only mountain in North America recognized. There is a multitude of reasons for Big White's shining accolades, with terrain for every ability, consistent champagne-powder

snow coverage and an exceptional ski and snowboard school being the first three that come to mind. The mountain is also home to Canada's largest ski-in, ski-out village, so a car is unnecessary once on the hill.

I love that there's a green run off every chair, making it easy to ski as a family. My husband Curt prefers black mogul runs and deep powder in the trees, while I gravitate to the leisurely greens and blues. Brooklyn is a green girl, but I expect she'll surpass me within a couple of seasons. Of Big White's 119 designated trails, 18 per cent are beginner, 54 per cent are intermediate, 22 per cent are expert, and six per cent extreme. Night skiing is available on select evenings and accessible via the Plaza Chair, Bullet Chair, and Telus Park Chair. Anyone new to the mountain or wanting a free tour can book with a snow host to ski with a volunteer guide. Curt took advantage of the offer while Brooklyn and I were in our lesson, familiarizing himself with some of the more challenging runs.

Big White's mild average daily winter temperature of -5 C makes skiing and après-ski adventures easy to enjoy — and there are a host of family activities to experience throughout the season. The Happy Valley Adventure Area is the heart of Big White's kid-focused fun, with a Magic Carpet beginner run, tube park, free outdoor skating rink, fire pits and live music Thursdays through Saturdays, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. in the Day Lodge. It's also the location of Big White's weekly Saturday night firework display, adding a touch of celebratory magic to every ski weekend. Behind Happy

Valley are a network of picturesque snow-draped walking, snowshoeing and cross-country ski trails, and the resort's dogsled tours and horse sleigh rides depart from here as well.

Come January, Big White amps up the excitement with Moose Tube Time, including free hot chocolate and mascots Loose and Lucy Moose visiting Tube Town. Saturday evening Carnival Nights also commence, with games, treats and complimentary face painting, popcorn and cotton candy, in the Village Centre Mall.

Slopeside restaurants are plentiful, with our favourites being the

Clocktower for decadent hot chocolates and Cantina del Centro's tacos, churros and margaritas. Most of Big White's accommodation choices, including Stonebridge Lodge, where we stayed, have fully equipped kitchens, making it simple to stay in for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Stonebridge is one of the resort's higher-end properties, and our two-bedroom condo slept six comfortably, had a private hot tub on the deck, and included access to a shared outdoor heated pool. On the weekend we visited, Big White hosted a welcome winter festival with complimentary hot chocolate, candy floss, and an



Join the fun at Happy Valley with Big White mascot Loose Moose.

impressive fireworks display from the Village centre, which we easily strolled to from our ski-in/ski-out condo.

Big White is truly a locals' mountain, and because it's family-owned and operated, it strives to keep its rates affordable. Early-bird season passes, including night skiing, are only \$899 for adults and just \$349 for kids ages three to 12. Many out-of-town and international guests take advantage of the offering if they're skiing for eight days or more. If you're coming for a weekend, booking lift tickets online at bigwhite.com up to 48 hours in advance saves 25 per cent, which brings the one-day rate to \$93 for adults and \$63 for children. Big White also has a \$29 Beginner Lift Ticket for the Plaza chair and Magic Carpet, offering excellent value for kids and adults learning to ski or snowboard. Deeper savings are available by bundling accommodation, activities and lift tickets through Big White Central Reservations.

Of all the mountains I've skied, Big White is my first choice for a family vacation, as there's an authentic sense of community here. In addition to the large local draw, many regional and international guests return year after year for the snow quality and après-ski vibe. I only wish we'd discovered Big White when Brooklyn was younger, as the mountain has everything to keep children happy and engaged and instill a lifelong love for skiing.

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The Saturday night fireworks display adds a touch of celebratory magic to ski weekends at Big White.



Big White's Happy Valley Adventure Park features a skating rink, fire pits, live music and more.

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