

Adventure



BE HERE NOW

Bella Coola, British Columbia

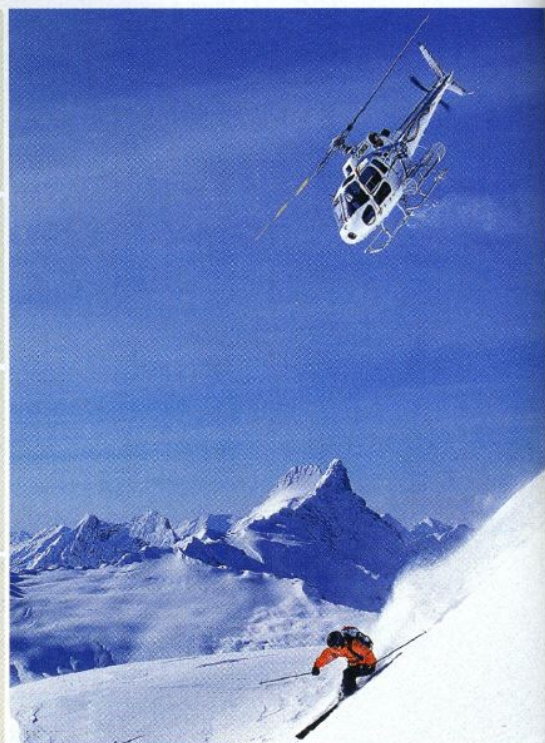
SKIERS C.R. JOHNSON, Jai Condon, and Murray Wais (from left) prepare for a monstrous first descent in B.C.'s Coast Mountains, where this season Bella Coola Heli Sports plans to christen more than 100 new runs accessible only by chopper in its exclusive 1.5 million acres of backcountry terrain. Break out your big-mountain sticks: The Canadian outfitter's heli-skiing tours run until the end of April (*seven-day packages from \$5,760; bellacoolahelisports.com, 604-932-3000*). Turn the page for more heli adventures around North America. >>

Photograph by Blake Jorgenson

Heli-lujah! Skiers, Rejoice.

It's a big year for heli-skiing, with at least a million acres opening in Alaska alone *By Logan Kugler*

OUTFITTER	THE GOODS	WHAT'S NEW	PRICE
Telluride Helitrax, San Juan Mountains, Colorado	PERFECT POWDER: The San Juans have the greatest concentration of peaks higher than 13,000 feet south of the Yukon, and Helitrax has the only heli access to them. Surrounded by desert, the moisture content is lower in this range, which makes for fluffy "champagne" powder.	The Ultimate San Juan Package — a four-day sampler tour that includes a day of heli-skiing, a day of Sno-Cat skiing, and a day each of guided backcountry skiing at Telluride and the expert-only Silverton Mountain resort.	From \$1,795/person; 866-435-4754, helitrax.net , guides through first week of April.
Canadian Mountain Holidays, Columbia Mountains, Canada	ALL-MOUNTAIN TEST: With 12 different lodges dotting four ranges (an area almost half the size of Switzerland), CMH can chopper you to any type of run you desire — from steep alpine tree runs to powder-filled 9,000-foot bowls.	At Powder and Poker week — from April 22 to 29 — you can ski 5,000-foot runs by day and play Texas Hold 'Em in a nightly tournament (with lessons) hosted by World Poker Tour champion Phil Gordon.	From \$4,629/person; 800-661-0252, cmhski.com , guides through May 6.
Pantheon Heliports, Waddington, Niut, and Pantheon Ranges, Canada	HIGH ALPINE: Pantheon, the only outfitter servicing these ranges halfway between Whistler and Bella Coola, has exclusive access to 500,000 acres of the highest ski elevations (13,000-plus feet) in northeast British Columbia. And the elevation means lighter, drier powder.	The HeliAssist program — a week of half heli-skiing, half alpine touring — allows you to call in the helicopter for as many lifts (and 5,000-foot descents) as you'd like, but you can also tour a bit for a tranquil backcountry experience.	From \$4,235/person; 866-404-4354, pantheonheli.com , guides through April 15.
Chugach Powder Guides, Western Chugach and Alaska Ranges, Alaska	BIG AND STEEP: Runs in the glacial Chugach and Alaska ranges can be 5,000 feet long (up to 50-degree gradients), and couloirs are often larger than entire ski resorts. Big, wet storms spackle the mountains, then frigid fronts from the north dump dry and deep powder.	This winter, CPG is flying to one million untapped acres (read: first descents) in the Alaska Range. Add to that the 150,000 acres of virgin terrain they received access to last year in the Chugach, which gets up to 100 feet of snow per year.	From \$3,200/person; 907-783-4354, chugachpowder-guides.com , guides through April 15.



New Orleans Needs You

Help the Crescent City get its swing back

Rebounding from Hurricane Katrina will take cash and sweat, and runners can contribute both during the Mardi Gras Marathon on February 5. Temperatures should be in the low 50s for the race, and net proceeds will go to relief efforts. Register and get hotel information at mardigrasmarathon.com. Mardi Gras itself peaks three weeks later. This year's festivities are compressed into fewer days, so expect more intense parades, music, and high jinks. Don't worry, Pat O'Brien's Hurricanes will be just as strong. See bestofneworleans.com for concert listings and neworleansonline.com for hotels. If you want to participate in rebuilding the city, check with Habitat for Humanity (habitat.org) or volunteermatch.org. Locals say there are perks to the anticipated decline in visitors: fewer college kids, more real flavor.

—AARON KURILOFF



WHERE I'LL BE...



"Surfing Snapper Rock at Kirra Beach on Australia's Gold Coast. The water's warm and you can ride the wave for a full three minutes. Kirra has it all: killer casinos, clubs, and chicks."

—BRUCE IRONS, CHAMPION SURFER

+ OPENINGS

NATIONAL PARKS ~ Hover over the Grand Canyon on the new Skywalk, a glass balcony 4,000 feet above the Colorado River (\$69; destinationgrandcanyon.com).

NEW TRIPS ~ Multisport itineraries (think adventure-travel tasting menus) are the new rage: This month, summit a 14,000-foot volcano and kayak remote lakes in Oaxaca, Mexico (\$2,390; mtsobek.com) ... Or raft whitewater, kayak, and horseback ride in Patagonia's Lake District (\$2,600; adventure-life.com) ... Or book now for summer trips biking and hiking in Colorado's Fourteener Country and rafting Utah's Green River (\$2,898; backroads.com).

TRAVEL TOOLS ~ Kayak.com combs more than 100 travel sites for the lowest airfares and hotel rates. The new Kayak Buzz section lists deals to ski, beach, and golf destinations.

HOT SCENE ~ Lights shine on the rails and jumps, and DJs spin until 9 PM, at Heavenly's new High Roller Nightlife Terrain Park (skiheavenly.com) in South Lake Tahoe, California. —SARAH TUFF