

Destination Ski Trips

northwest

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5 SNOW AD



The enthusiastic sled dogs of Base Camp Bigfork

VENTURES

**NO
EXPERIENCE
NEEDED**

by Todd Elsworth



Some of us wish for snow. Snow provides a unique way of traveling over our landscape that invigorates both the mind and body. As an adventurer myself, I am always looking for new places, exciting experiences and great people to guide me on my journeys. These five no-experience-needed snow adventures (each an alternative to skiing) span the Northwest and offer fun, accessible opportunities to get you and the whole family out on the snow this winter.

Guide: "Dangerous" Dave Dierck
of The Inn of the White Salmon

Eat & Drink: Everybody's Brewing, a brewpub in White Salmon, serves affordable, large portions of highest quality local ingredients.

Plan: Visit the Inn of the White Salmon's website at innofthewitesalmon.com and Columbia River Gorge Visitors Association at crgva.org.

Guided Snowshoeing at Mt. Hood, OR

A walk in the woods is an excellent introduction to snow-bound travel—it's simply walking with bigger shoes on your feet. Snowshoes these days are not the overblown wooden "tennis racquets" that you see hanging on rustic cabin walls for decoration; they are lightweight and compact, making it much easier for beginners to strap on and get out there. To help you with your introduction to the equipment and experience is Dave Dierck of The Inn of the White Salmon.

Dierck has created "Stay and Play Packages", providing you with a relaxing way to get outside from your own private base camp. Inside their eco-friendly boutique hotel you're afforded both luxury and hostel-type rooms on the Columbia River Gorge in the inviting town of White Salmon, Washington, located 65 miles east of Portland, Oregon, and 10 minutes from Hood River.

I recommend the Bed+Ride+Trek package designed with economy and entry-level skills in mind. Dierck, a former fire fighter, will set you up with gear, take you to the trailhead and guide you on a walk in the timber-lined trails around the Mt. Hood National Forest. As you wander between

snow-covered old growth trees, you'll gain experience and knowledge of the sport and the natural setting around you.

Avalanche Training, American Alpine Institute

According to American Alpine Institute (AAI), based in Bellingham, Washington, an average of 37 people are killed each year by avalanches in the United States alone, and the majority of avalanches are started by the people caught in them. AAI is out to change that by offering courses essential for all types of snow-bound recreationists.

AAI offers Avalanche Training courses all over Washington: Bellingham/Mt. Baker, Seattle/Olympia/Mt. Rainier, Leavenworth/Blewett Pass and Spokane/Mt. Spokane. The courses take place between December and March and last for 3 days (2 evenings and 2 field days).

In their basic course, you will gain an understanding of avalanches with insight into their types, characteristics, terrain and how they form and release. You will learn what to look for in the snow pack and how to test stability and read terrain to avoid danger zones. You will practice how to rescue yourself and partners if caught in an avalanche. This foundational knowledge is essential for all of us who enjoy getting out there in the snow.

Guides:
American
Alpine Institute
Plan: Visit AAI at
alpineinstitute.com.



breed and using them as work dogs as they have been used for thousands of years.

Schurke describes the experience as “organized chaos—a true team building experience—from the moment you unhook the sled, they’re off and running as you soak in the silence.”

Snow Limo, Sun Peaks Resort, B.C.

My parents have never seen their granddaughter ski. Sure, they’ve seen photos and even some shaky video, but being next to her on the slopes just hasn’t been possible. Like many active Baby Boomers, my folks like to get outside and have fun with the grandkids, but they aren’t skiers. Now, non-skiers have the opportunity to be able to glide downslope alongside skiers as they schuss the slopes. The solution is found in a Snow Limo.

The Snow Limo is a combination of a sit-ski and a dogsled. This gravity-fed, environmentally-friendly ride provides the flexibility to lean into the turns and simulate a skiing-like experience with the comfort and security of a dog sled for the passengers.

Robert Lueftner of Snow Limo Tours (founded in 2012 and operating in ski resorts across British Columbia) explains, “Snow Limo makes the on-mountain snow gliding experience accessible to everyone. It’s the best way for non-skiers/boarders to glide along snow-covered mountain trails, enjoy breathtaking vistas and actually join their group, friends or family on the slopes.”



Guide: Mark Schurke of Base Camp Bigfork

Eat & Drink: The Raven in Bigfork offers lakeside dining where you can watch the sunset on Flathead Lake.

Plan: Contact Base Camp Bigfork at basecampbigfork.com; Bigfork Area Chamber of Commerce at bigfork.org.

Dog Sledding, Bigfork, MT

Whether or not we have it written down, we all have a bucket list somewhere in the back of our minds. As a dog lover and snow-adventure junkie, dog sledding—aka mushing—is now in my top five. Talking with Mark Schurke, owner of Base Camp Bigfork, gave me the push (or should I say pull) needed to move mushing up on the list. Unlike most dog-sledding outfits across the country, Base Camp Bigfork provides a hands-on approach, allowing you the opportunity to drive your own team of friendly, hard-working Inuit sled dogs.

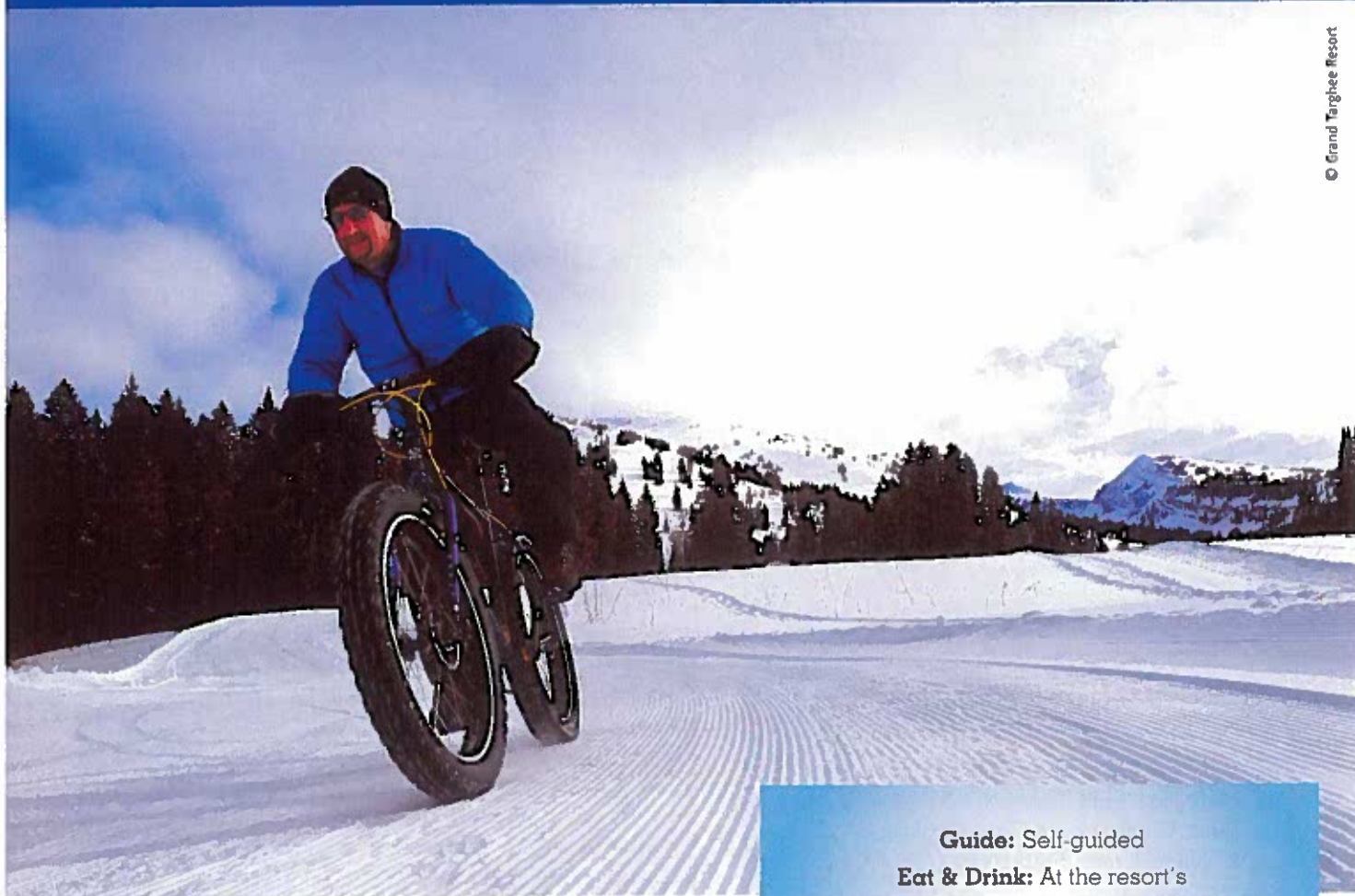
Schurke has plenty of routes to choose from in the postcard Montana terrain of the Flathead National Forest—a part of the state where the big mountains and thick forests provide for narrow trails. The terrain varies from old growth pines to newer aspen groves with beaver ponds and marshes. In the snow, you can expect to see elk, wolf and bear tracks.

Custom-built experiences range from physically limited to active, providing you the opportunity to do as much of the work as you’d like with the dogs, including harnessing and caring for your team. A deeper part of the experience is learning about this rare, primitive Inuit dog breed. Schurke is intent on maintaining the legacy of the

Guides: Robert Lueftner’s Snow Limo Tours

Eat & Drink: Masa’s Bar & Grill is centrally located in the Sun Peaks Village Day Lodge and a great place to stop for a quick lunch or a family dinner.

Plan: Visit Sun Peaks Resort’s website at sunpeaksresort.com; Snow Limo Tours at snow-limotours.com; Tourism British Columbia at hellobc.com.



Fat Bikes, Grand Targhee Resort, ID

When it comes to fat bikes, “fad or function?” seems to be the question. Go find out for yourself at Grand Targhee Resort, where you can rent your own fat bike. The bikes are essentially mountain bike frames with wide knobby tires. Four inches of surface area will provide the pleasure

Guide: Self-guided

Eat & Drink: At the resort’s Branding Iron Grill, enjoy mountainside dining on authentic Rocky Mountain fare. Stay through Sunday to try the Durham Ranch House Smoked Prime Rib.

Plan: Visit Grand Targhee Resort’s website at grandtarghee.com; Teton Valley Chamber of Commerce at tetonvalleychamber.com.



of cruising on the 15 kilometers of groomed cross-country trails within Grand Targhee Resort. The neighboring communities of Victor, Driggs and Alta have also allowed this new and unique way to ride bikes year round.

The Grand Targhee Nordic Trail System offers varying degrees of difficulty on the trails. For beginners, the green trails include the Hampster Loop Trail (1.3 km) and the Snowdrift Loop Trail (2 km). Difficulty levels ramp up from there on other trails.

When you look around the resort it seems like a little Disneyland in the mountains, with the assortment of ways people are choosing to propel themselves across the blanketed landscape. The Activity Center is your one-stop adventure concierge for everything available throughout Grand Targhee Resort—fat bikes, naturalist snowshoe tours, tubing, sleigh rides and more. 🐾