

“Destination Snow: Silver Star/Big White, British Columbia” by Chryss Cada

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British Columbia’s Silver Star Resort and Big White sister resorts couldn’t be more different -- which makes them the perfect compliment to each other.

Silver Star was created to be so quaint that walking, or skiing, down Main Street feels like being in the middle of a movie set. Meanwhile over at Big White, big snow and off-trail skiing make you feel like you’re out in the middle of nowhere (in the best possible way).

At Silver Star, the base village has been built to reflect a Western theme, complete with a saloon, train depot, and even a candy store. Strict building codes require not only that the resort buildings be Victorian in style, but also that they be painted in a minimum of three colors. It seems the unwritten rule is that all those colors be bright. Yellows, purples, greens; all the brightest hues of the rainbow reflect off the snow in Silver Star.

A self-contained resort, visitors can park their car and never get in it again until it’s time to leave. From breakfast bistros, to après-ski, to fine dining, everything is within walking distance in the small resort.

The area’s main attraction, the ski mountain itself, is also supremely easy to access. Snap on your skis on Main Street in the village and you’ll be headed up the mountain minutes later on the Summit Chair of the Comet Six-Pack Express. The Vance Creek side of the mountain is covered with groomed cruisers. The intermediate skier will love the wide-open spaces and uncrowded slopes to be found on this mountain, which is also home to the main base area/town.

Putnam Creek is the wild side of Silver Star. With more than 60 runs, Putnam Creek is renowned for its diversity and vast terrain. From blue cruisers to many single black runs that get regular winch grooming to double diamonds like the Head Wall, there is much to be explored on this side of the mountain.

For even more terrain to explore, hop on a helicopter shuttle and head over to Big White. Open bowls, gladed chutes and gullies make for a wilderness experience at this resort. Of course the main attraction is the dry inland powder, with more than seven meters (24 feet) of the white stuff falling every year. Big White has a gentle side, too, with a beginner run available off of every lift. Thanks to recent lift improvements, you never have to wait long to get at the area’s abundance of snow.

At the end of the day, skiers can ski home, as all accommodations are ski-in/ski-out because they are located mid-mountain. Within the modern ski village is everything you need for a great vacation, all in walking distance. There are decent eateries, shopping, rental and repair shops, and a Kids’ Center.

The ski season usually opens between late October and mid-November at Big White and closes at the end of April—not because the snow is gone, but because the skiers have moved on to warm weather pursuits.