



{ THE BOUTIQUE }

Mica Heliskiing

SMALL GROUPS AND BIG FLEXIBILITY MAKE MICA THE QUINTESSENTIAL BOUTIQUE OP. PICK A LINE—ANY LINE. *By Kelley McMillan*



LAST SPRING, I LANDED in the center of the ski universe. I stepped out of the chopper and into interior British Columbia, hundreds of miles from civilization, surrounded by the craggy peaks of the Canadian Rockies and some of the world's biggest ski-

lebrities: Lynsey Dyer, J.P. Auclair and Kye Petersen. In skiing, that's akin to Scarlett Johansson, Brad Pitt and Justin Bieber sauntering into your hotel lobby—minus the paparazzi frenzy. They were here for the same reason I was: to plunder Mica Heliskiing's legendary deep, dry powder and prime terrain, although they were filming a movie about it. Me? I was just a guest.

Tucked onto the side of a mountain overlooking the Kinbasket River, Mica Heli-

skiing serves up 200,000 acres of high-alpine bowls, steep faces, and some of the best tree skiing on the planet, all slathered in superlight B.C. blower. What truly sets Mica apart, though, is its boutique business model: four skiers per group, one guide, and one sexy A-Star chopper, combined with top-of-the-line accommodations and amenities.

And other companies, including industry pioneers, are following suit. Why? For

one, small groups allow for maximum flexibility, a highly customizable program and more skiing. Point to a line, and most likely Mica will take you there. Clocking in 20,000-plus-vert days is the norm. Down days? Next to none, thanks to the resident snowcat. Sign up for one of the private heli programs, and pick off first descents that you normally only dream of—which is exactly what I did on my second day there.

After a morning warming up with high-speed GS turns on mellow bowls (no farming tracks here) and hopping down 50-degree pitches loaded



Clockwise from top left: the guest LZ, overlooking Kinbasket Lake; Mica's luxurious pillowtops; freeskier Mike Douglas mixes colors; the author, on the left, dressed inexplicably in a dirndl, with Dyer, Auclair and Petersen. Opposite: putting Photoshop out of business.



COST PER DAY
\$1,500–\$1,800
INFO
micaheli.com

1
SNOWCAT
means virtually zero down days—a huge benefit of a small op.

16
MAXIMUM OCCUPANCY
at the lodge. Two groups of four per A-Star.

CONVENIENCE METER
Fly into Kelowna, B.C.; drive 3.5 hours.

{ TASTING BRITISH COLUMBIA }



DESPITE ITS REPUTATION FOR hardcore skiing, Mica also boasts one of the heli world's most sophisticated wine collections. The expertly edited list features 23 wines produced solely in British Columbia. "You're in B.C., you're skiing B.C., surrounded by the big B.C.

mountains, so we want our guests to taste B.C.," says Barbara Rose, Mica's operations manager. Each spring Rose travels to the region's top vineyards to handpick the wines Mica will serve for the upcoming season. "We have the top two percent of wines produced in B.C.," Rose says. "There is not a wine our guests don't like." Pinot noirs, merlots, and Bordeaux blends are some of the region's specialties. The pinot noir from Le Vieux Pin is a guest favorite. "It's a big, bold, masculine wine—I don't know a guest who hasn't been shocked by how good it is," she says. "We're an exclusive, boutique operation serving the top skiing, and we want to deliver the top wine." Mission accomplished.

tip Book early in the season for deep tree skiing; later for high-alpine, big-vertical lines and long days.

MARK PICHE

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: GREG EPSTEIN; DAMIAN CROMWELL; ISTOCKPHOTO; MIKE MCPHEE; WILLOW SHEWCHUK