

Mountain Hop with SkiBig3

Written by By Allison Young
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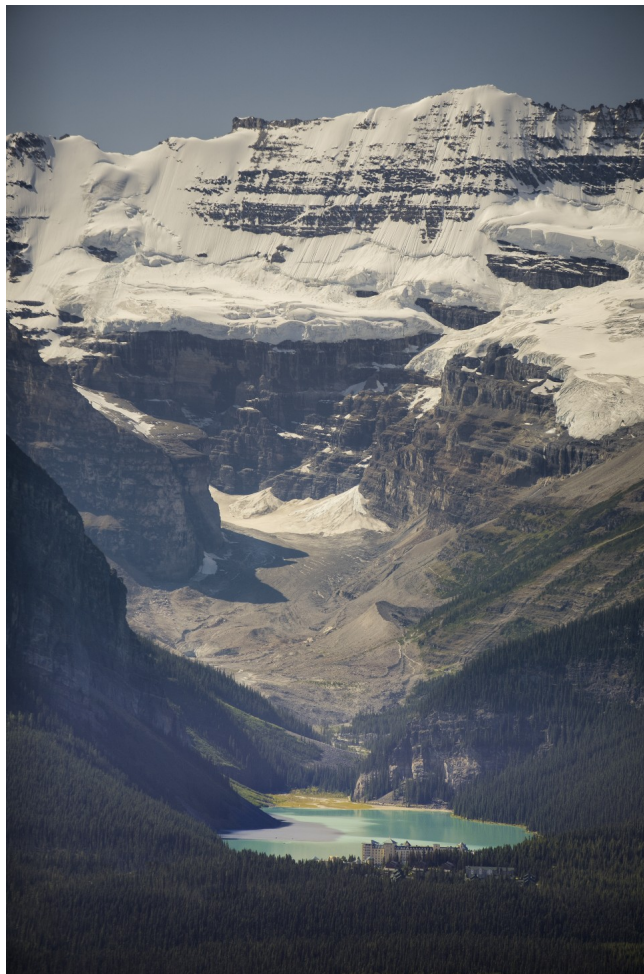


Paul Zizka Photography

Whoever said bad things come in threes obviously didn't take into account the Three Stooges or the Three Musketeers or The Three Amigos (look it up if you haven't seen it). But the threesome that ultimately elevates the trio to awesome status is the [SkiBig3](#), a triple threat lift pass that lets you ski the best of Banff. That's 8,000-plus acres of world-class skiing spread over three resorts—[Lake Louise](#), [Norquay](#) and [Banff Sunshine](#)—you can tame with just one ticket. Tame might be an overstatement. Yes, SkiBig3 makes mountain hopping a breeze, and you'll get to experience the best of Alberta's rugged beauty and lofty ski terrain, a ski season that goes all the way until May 20—that's seven months of picturesque powder. But ultimately the beauty of Banff's glacier-sawed mountainsides, from the mesmerizing peaks to the mesmerizing eats, will conquer you.

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Banff & Lake Louise Tourism / Paul Zizka

A ski resort with a view Let's start with Lake Louise, the most sprawling and scenic of the three. A 45-minute drive from the town of Banff, this stretch of snowcapped Canadian Rockies is epic on every level, with 4,200 skiable acres, four peaks, 145 trails plus backside bowls blanketed in powder and a vertical drop of 3,250 feet. No wonder it's the first stop on the Alpine World Cup tour, and Lindsey Vonn's fave (there's a run named after her). But the stats mean nothing when you see the views. Ah, the views, pinch-me panoramas you won't think twice about sacrificing cold hands to snap pics—of the mountain vistas, the glaciers, the frozen lakes and the iconic Chateau Lake Louise in the distance. It might just be the most gorgeous place to ski on the planet.

Insider tip: The resort can be vast. Hop on a complimentary mountain tour with Lake Louise's [Ski Friends](#) daily at 10 a.m. and 1:15 p.m. Lunch at [Whitehorn Bistro](#) for insane views and fondue for two.

Apres ski at Kokanee Kabin at the base of the Glacier lift. Chill on the fire-pitted patio with a local pint.

Bragging rights: Stay at the swanky [Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise](#), Canada's "Castle in the Rockies."

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Reuben Krabbe

Ski with the locals Full disclosure: Mount Norquay doesn't get the ski glory of Lake Louise or Sunshine, but it has its fair share of fist pumps. This is Banff's closest ski resort, only a seven-minute drive, the perfect place when it's frigid or visibility is poor (thank you lower elevation) and a long-time local's fave where homegrown kids learn to ski the 74 runs spread over 190 acres. The perfect place to hone your skills, Norquay's Snow School is top notch and you'll also find Banff's only night skiing.

Bragging rights: Ride up Canada's second oldest chairlift (circa 1948) to ski down Lone Pine, a black diamond thigh-burner.

Après ski: Go tubing at Norquay's [Snow Tube Park](#), the longest tube ride in Western Canada.

Insider tip: Twice a year, the iconic Cliffhouse Bistro hosts the Starlight Dinner, an unforgettable five-course dinner with wine pairing at 7,000 feet.



Banff & Lake Louise Tourism / Noel Hendrickson

Stretch the season at Sunshine Some would say we saved with best for last with Banff Sunshine. This behemoth, which straddles the Continental Divide, starts with a 20-minute gondola ride from the parking lot and caps with three peaks and more than 3,300 acres of skiable terrain. A higher elevation than its two sister resorts and arguably the fluffiest and most plentiful snow—the snowmaking purely runs on Mother Nature's glory—this is the place to test your mettle, with fierce steepes, tight tree lines that looks more Alps than Canada and both on- and off-piste runs (you'll need avalanche gear for the latter).

Insider tip: When it's time to crack those hand warmers, take the Teepee Town LX lift on Lookout Mountain, a heated bubble quad with seat-warmers and wind protection.

Lunch and après ski at [the Chimney Corner](#) at the Sunshine Mountain Lodge for elevated comfort food (think short rib poutine) and elevated sips in front of the fire (you can't go wrong with a Sunshine Caesar).

Bragging rights: After all that skiing, hit up [Banff Hot Springs](#) for a mineral soak like no other.