

Top of the World

FERNIE-BASED SKIER VISITS 78 OF ALBERTA AND BC'S SMALLEST SKI HILLS

By DOC POW,
founder of SnowSeekers.ca

Life-long pals Greg Scott from Alpine Canada and one of this country's most passionate skiers, Ted Allsopp, were on a chairlift comparing notes about who had skied more places.

Scott had been part of the ski race scene for nearly 30 years, while Allsopp — aka Ted Shred — made his livelihood elsewhere in the industry, founding Downhill Riders, a ski and snowboard adventure travel company almost 40 years ago, and Northern Escape Heli-Skiing in Terrace, BC, 10 years ago.

The conversation evolved into a dare. Scott laid down the challenge to Allsopp — ski every resort big and small in Alberta and BC.

Allsopp was stoked and began pulling out maps and plotting his quest.

"The spreadsheet grew right away as there were lots of little spots that needed to be added," Allsopp tells me.

"Lots of investigation," went into his plan, and a passion for adventure drove Allsopp to ski all 78 ski destinations over the next six years — 35 in Alberta and 43 in BC.

Throughout the challenge, Allsopp kept learning about ski hills he had never heard of before, like Mount Cain on northern Vancouver Island. He kept racking up the little rippers.

"By the end of the 2014 winter ski season, my buddy Trevor Suer and I got to Grande Prairie, Dawson Creek and Northern Alberta, discovering a few more hard-to-find ski hills."

Ted Allsopp makes his final stop at Tweedsmuir Ski Club in Bella Coola, becoming the first in the world to ski every lift-serviced ski spot in Alberta and BC.



The criteria for ski hill classification was any hill with a lift, whether it was a chairlift, T-bar, or — in Allsopp and my case for the 78th — a diesel-powered engine with a metal towrope attached.

"People would be amazed at how many great little ski hills there are out there," says Allsopp.

To ensure accuracy, Allsopp developed a spreadsheet and a map, and used the Canada West Ski Areas Association list. His enthusiasm for the project was non-stop.

Allsopp's buddy Scott was impressed with his tenacity.

"I thought I had a leg up on Ted after working with ski resorts, Alberta Alpine and Alpine Canada, but Ted was like a dog with a bone to get to every one," he says. "Skiing them all is really an amazing feat and now I owe him a beer that I definitely thought was going to be coming my way."

In the meantime, Allsopp himself became impressed during his quest.

"Over the course of six years in really working to reach this goal, I found a new respect for small little ski spots, and how many awesome little places with great terrain there are if you time your visit right."

I got to experience that first-hand when Allsopp and I went to scratch the last ski venue off his list — No. 78 at the Tweedsmuir Ski Club in Bella Coola.

This ski adventure started with a quote I won't forget: "We don't have lineups," said Tweedsmuir Ski Club president David Flegel.

No surprise, this place is literally in the

middle of British Columbia's wilds.

An hour's drive east of Bella Coola and a 20-minute snowshoe in, it's places like the Tweedsmuir that can re-ignite your passion for snow sports. At Tweedsmuir, you have to call ahead to be sure the single towrope is even going to be working. By calling ahead you "book time" at the ski hill. If you go, be sure and reserve the Skookum backcountry cabin for your stay.

It was fitting that Allsopp's quest finished in such a cool and remote location.

"Starting from sea level, as opposed to Fernie where you start at 2,500 feet, the mountains look bigger," says Allsopp.

We hit "Scott's Run," tucked to the left of this single towrope operation. It hadn't been skied in a week and was about a football field long, a cruiser strip of snow with a nice pitch at the top to keep it interesting. It overlooked the Chilcotin Mountain range. Allsopp and I took to the run, giggling with joy at the heli-ski-like powder all around us.

"For skiers and snowboarders, BC is home to a ton of really incredible spots that have some stellar terrain. They can be the perfect combination for an epic road trip," says Allsopp.

Looking for off-the-beaten-path powder? Visit www.SnowSeekers.ca and participate in the SnowSeekers' Challenge to discover a variety of ski and snowboard terrain across Alberta and BC. You could win a chance to fly into some of the remotest parts of the province for your own powder adventure with Pacific Coastal Airlines. 