

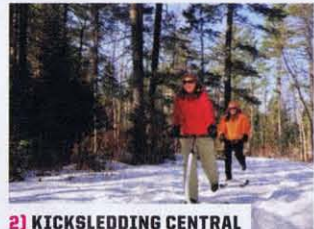
BEST OF THE SEASON

Twenty ideas for making the most of the big chill

BY RYAN STUART

1) SKIING INTO A GLACIER

Icefall Lodge is not only noteworthy for being B.C.'s newest backcountry lodge—with the largest area in the province—but also because guests have the chance to ski right inside glaciers. Skiers here regularly log 5,000-foot runs, ski across massive icefields and reach multiple summits in the heavily glaciated **Rockies north of Golden**, but, if conditions allow, the highlight for most is skiing through a crevasse. (ICEFALL.CA)



2) KICKSLEDDING CENTRAL

Nature's Harmony Ecologie, a new adventure resort near **Mattawa, Ontario**, is offering a popular Scandinavian sport that is new to most Canadians—kicksledding. A kick sled is like a sidewalk scooter, but with skis instead of wheels. You stand on the sled with one leg and push yourself forward with the other. Nature's Harmony also has snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and a natural luge track. (NATURESHARMONY.CA)

3) SNOW-KITING IN GROS MORNE

In the summer, the **Tablelands area in Newfoundland's Gros Morne National Park** is one of the best places in the world to see an exposed section of the Earth's

mantle. In the winter, when the area is covered by up to 50 feet of snow and constantly buffeted by winds, it's one of the best places in the world to go snow-kiting. My Newfoundland Adventures offers a two-day kiting trip, which includes instruction and a night at the park's Southwest Gulch Cabin. ([\\$550; MYNEWFOUNDLAND.CA](http://$550; MYNEWFOUNDLAND.CA))

4) 24 HOURS OF SKIING

The main event of the first annual Canmore Ski Fest is the 24-hour cross-country ski marathon. Canmore's own Kamila Borutova holds the female record of 333 kilometres, which she is hoping to beat. Solo competitors and teams racing in the 24-hour and 12-hour marathons ski a three-kilometre loop at the **Canmore Nordic Centre**. ([MARCH 26 AND 27; FROM \\$100; CANMORESKIFEST.COM](http://MARCH 26 AND 27; FROM $100; CANMORESKIFEST.COM))

5) OLYMPIC SLIDING

You watched the world's best skeleton and bobsled drivers competing in the 2010 Olympics, and now you can give the two speed

sports a try at the **Whistler Sliding Centre**. After a lesson on the basics, skeleton riders bomb down the track solo, while bobsledders climb in behind a professional driver for the speedy descent to Thunderbird Corner. ([FROM \\$130; WHISTLERSLIDINGCENTRE.COM](http://FROM $130; WHISTLERSLIDINGCENTRE.COM))



6) THE BIGGER MASSIF

Quebec's **Le Massif** is getting more massive thanks to an expansion of its backcountry area. The mountain's backcountry—on the adjacent Mont à Liguori—has doubled in size to 66 acres, and skiers can now enjoy nearly 2,500 feet of perfectly glazed vertical, from the summit of Liguori to the ski area's base. (LEMASSIF.COM)



7) SNOWSHOEING AT NIGHT

Not everyone would like to head into the woods at night by themselves, which is where the folks at Earth Rhythms come in. They offer nighttime snowshoeing trips in **Manitoba's Riding Mountain National Park**. Participants look for constellations and also get to take part in a wolf howl, complete with iPod recordings for instruction. ([\\$95; EARTHRYTHMS.CA](http://$95; EARTHRYTHMS.CA))

8) A WINTER MAN-CATION

Voyageur Quest's new Stew and Brew weekend has all the ingredients for a perfect getaway for men: adventure, food and beer. Based from a cabin in **Ontario's Algonquin Provincial Park**, each day of the long weekend includes snowshoeing, skiing or ice fishing, followed by a feast—wild game gumbo, black beer Irish stew—and beer from around the world. Evening poker sessions are optional. ([JANUARY 28 TO 30; \\$460; VOYAGEURQUEST.COM](http://JANUARY 28 TO 30; $460; VOYAGEURQUEST.COM))

9) KOUCHIBOUGUAC CABINS

New Brunswick's **Kouchibouguac National Park** now has two remote cabins where cross-country skiers or snowshoers can hunker down for the night. Both wood-heated, six-person shelters sit 10 kilometres from the start of the

Pijeboogwek Trail, which follows the Kouchibouguac River through the forest. Bring sleeping pad, sleeping bag, food and stove. ([FROM \\$50 PER NIGHT FOR THREE PEOPLE; PARKSCANADA.GC.CA](http://FROM $50 PER NIGHT FOR THREE PEOPLE; PARKSCANADA.GC.CA))

10) NEW BACKCOUNTRY

A group of skiers from Smithers, in **northern B.C.**, tapped into \$600,000 of provincial and federal government funding to cut a backcountry ski area out of the Coast Mountains, a first of its kind. In addition to downhill runs and routes for uphill skinning, the 3,770-hectare **Hankin Evelyn Recreation Area** has a day-use yurt and a winterized overnight cabin. (BCNORTH.CA/BVBACKPACKERS)

11) SKI-CROSS AT LOUISE

Come January, **Alberta's Lake Louise Ski Area** will turn part of its World Cup downhill race course into a banked and bermed ski-cross course. Which means you and your skier or boarder friends can test your skills at head-to-head racing. The resort is also planning to host some professional ski-cross races. (SKILOUISE.COM)



13) SUPER EXPANSION

For years now, **Kicking Horse Mountain Resort's** southern bowl has been one of the most tempting pieces of closed terrain at any North American ski area. This winter, it's game on for the Super Bowl. The resort—in **Golden, B.C.**—will open 15 black and double black chutes in the bowl, a short hike from the gondola summit. (KICKINGHORSERESORT.COM)

14) THE OTHER SKI MARATHON

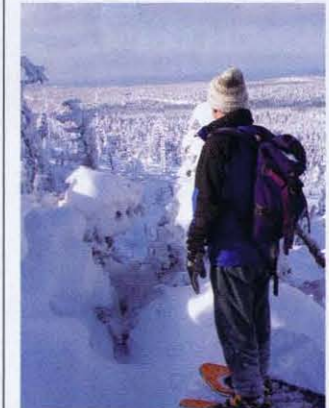
While Quebec's Canadian Ski Marathon is our best-known test of cross-country endurance, **Saskatchewan's** 77-kilometre Kupeswin race takes a close second. The Kupeswin—part of the Don Allen Saskaloppet weekend—is held in the frozen forests of **Lac La Ronge Provincial Park**. Racers ski 32 kilometres, spend



15) WINTER TRIATHLON

Forget the normal swimming, biking and running routine. In **Edmonton**, in February, a triathlon means skating, skiing and running. The 25-kilometre Edmonton Winter Triathlon starts on skates with 10 laps of a one-kilometre outdoor oval. Then there's 10 kilometres of cross-country skiing, followed by a five-kilometre run. ([FEBRUARY 20; FROM \\$45; SILVERSKATEFESTIVAL.ORG](http://FEBRUARY 20; FROM $45; SILVERSKATEFESTIVAL.ORG))

the night at a campsite, and then ski 45 kilometres to the finish. The Sasquatch competitors haul all their own gear. ([MARCH 4 AND 5; FROM \\$30; SKILARONGE.CA](http://MARCH 4 AND 5; FROM $30; SKILARONGE.CA))



16) SNOWSHOEING CAPE BRETON

The northern part of Cape Breton Island gets the highest annual snowfall in the Atlantic provinces. Which means that **Cape Breton Highlands National Park** and the protected wilderness just to the north are perfect for snowshoeing. You get the same fantastic views as in the summer, but it's actually easier to move around the backcountry. Sea Spray Outdoor Adventures offers guided tours in the park and nearby. ([FROM \\$180 FOR TWO; CABOT-TRAIL-OUTDOORS.COM](http://FROM $180 FOR TWO; CABOT-TRAIL-OUTDOORS.COM))

17) MUSHING ON XC SKIS

Do it wrong and skijoring—being pulled on your skis by a sled dog—can be a painful experience. Do it right and it's cross-country skiing's adrenalin child. Learn the sport's ins and outs at CanoeSki

Discovery's skijoring weekend, which takes place on the trail network in **Saskatchewan's Prince Albert National Park**. ([FEBRUARY 11 TO 13; \\$495; CANOESKI.COM](http://FEBRUARY 11 TO 13; $495; CANOESKI.COM))

18) UP THE ESCARPMENT

If you think the ski hills at **Collingwood, Ontario**, don't have much vertical, you should enter the Switchback Challenge snowshoe race. In just over a kilometre on the Switchback Trail at Craigeith Ski Club, competitors gain 700 feet from the base of the Niagara Escarpment to the top. Brutal. There are five- and 10-kilometre races. ([\\$20; CRAIGLEITH.COM](http://$20; CRAIGLEITH.COM))

19) WINTER ORIENTEERING

Orienteering is tough enough to begin with, and it takes on an interesting new twist in the winter. If you'd like to test your fitness and navigation skills, sign up for the Stars Orienteering Club's winter adventure race in **Ontario's Wasaga Beach Provincial Park** in January. You can race on snowshoes or cross-country skis, either solo or in teams of two, against some of the top competitors in Canada. (JANUARY 24; BALEKA.ORG/STARS)

20) THE ULTIMATE ESCAPE

A cozy cabin on a secluded lake in the middle of the **Yukon** wilderness. Northern lights. Snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Gourmet meals and a sauna. And did we mention you have to fly in on a ski plane from **Whitehorse** to get there? Yup, it's the dream winter adventure. And you can also extend the eight-day trip to include a dogsledding excursion. ([\\$3,350 PER PERSON; FRANCESLAKE.CA](http://$3,350 PER PERSON; FRANCESLAKE.CA)) e

UPPER LEFT: RYAN CREAMY; LEFT: ROB STIMPSON; UPPER RIGHT: CELES DAVAR; BELOW: BENJAMIN GAGNON/LE MASSIF DE CHARLEVOIX

UPPER LEFT: WALLY RANDAL; UPPER RIGHT: MARC J CHALFOUX; LOWER LEFT: JOSIE BOULDOING; RIGHT: SEA SPRAY OUTDOOR ADVENTURES