



## THE BEST HELI-SKIING *Revelstoke, British Columbia*

Just occasionally on the snakes-and-ladders board of life you may be lucky enough to experience a sensation that somehow transcends the normal boundaries of our humdrum daily existence. If you're a skier, one way to do this is to go to Revelstoke and book yourself on an A-Star helicopter. You'll also need a modicum of technical skill (although a pair of ultra-wide skis will help significantly), and an expert mountain guide from the unlikely named Selkirk Tangiers Heli Skiing.

For 36 years, sleepy Revelstoke, sandwiched between the Monashee and Selkirk mountain ranges, has been the world capital of heli-skiing. In an average winter, some 40ft of snow tumbles out of the sky. Usually, heli-skiing outfits operate from remote lodges, and if the weather closes in and flying is impossible, the money meter is still ticking. Not so in Revelstoke. In 2007, the resort built a giant two-mile-long gondola up Mount Mackenzie (whose 5,620ft vertical drop is the longest in any North American ski resort) and bought Selkirk Tangiers, along with a local snowcat-skiing operation, whose vehicles can take you to places that cannot be accessed by lift. With all this, you can ski almost anywhere.

The heli-skiing starts from designated drop zones scattered across half a million acres of rugged, unpopulated terrain. Depending on the weather and the skills of the group, the guide can choose to explore wide open bowls and chutes way above the treeline or lead his party through abandoned logging trails.

For somewhere to stay, Revelstoke has the best hyperchalet outside the Alps. British-owned Big Horn is built on a grandiose scale, its four storeys housing eight large bedrooms, a pool spa and an outdoor tub big enough for 16. It also has a chef worthy of a Michelin star, and its own heli-pad from which to collect guests. With these extras, skiing couldn't get better. **PETER HARDY** Selkirk Tangiers Heli Skiing ([selkirk-tangiers.com](http://selkirk-tangiers.com)) costs £960pp a day, and Big Horn ([bighornrevelstoke.com](http://bighornrevelstoke.com)) from £29,220 a week.

## THE BEST ADRENALIN WEEKEND *Innsbruck, Austria*

Every four years we marvel at the skill, balance and sheer bottle of our Winter Olympians as they slide, glide and soar through the different death-defying disciplines. Of all the events, it is the bob skeleton that seems to captivate our attention more than any other – not simply because we Britons are quite good at it, but because it confounds all conventional logic.

Think the Cresta Run but with more bends, no brakes and no restrictions on women taking part. Riders lie face down on a glorified tea tray, with their hands clamped by their sides and their noses 3in from the ice as they hurtle down the track at speeds of up to 90mph.

Sound like the kind of winter thrill you were looking for? Well, you now have the chance to try it yourself in the exclusive company of one of Britain's greatest Olympians, Amy Williams (right), the 2010 Olympic gold medallist, on one of the greatest tracks of them all, at Innsbruck.

I think back to my first skeleton ride and the beads of sweat that formed on my brow, despite the cold, when I first caught a glimpse of this giant track – the walls so much steeper, the turns so much sharper than I had ever expected. "Next on the track: Starmer-Smith." There is no way to describe how helpless you feel at the starting

gate, nor the adrenalin that courses through your veins when you face the same centrifugal forces as a fighter pilot as you shake, rattle and roll down the course at warp speed. And it's especially hard to convey the endorphins that flow after you reach the finish – alive. More alive. It's the ride of your life.

**CHARLES STARMER-SMITH** Momentum Ski (020 7371 9111; [momentumski.com](http://momentumski.com)) offers two nights' b&b at the five-star Grand Hotel Europa in Innsbruck, return transfers, skeleton and bobsleigh rides, tuition and two dinners with Amy Williams from £1,250. Return Club Europe tickets with British Airways ([ba.com](http://ba.com)) cost from £250.



STEVE SHANNON/REUTERS