



Early season: Roger's Pass.

ATTI

A Selkirk Season

Photos and text
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Greg Hill takes the fall line, Selkirks.

Blow me down epiphany! Gleeefully wallowing in waste-deep Selkirk powder, a primal scream escaped me. Pure life, charged soul, standing on the edge of control. The uninhibited mountain moment grasped me with its simplicity, hooking me deeper into this lifestyle. With my pulse stampeding, I easily was convinced that a full season spent ski touring in the Selkirk Mountains was essential to my continued happiness. Looking behind me at the sweet pillow line, I vowed to return for further adventures.

The next fall brought an unexpected surprise. A record-breaking season had begun. According to the wardens at Roger's Pass, this was the worst early-season snowpack on record. Twenty-five centimeters of snow at the pass, and less than 1 meter in the alpine, made the season's prospects look pretty dismal. I, however, was an optimistic and determined skier. With my likewise-motivated partner, Greg, we pushed the season and began to explore the mountains of Glacier National Park. The shallow-faceted snow that would settle with determined regularity became our highway to stellar places. Travel conditions were difficult on the unsupported snowpack — often our skis would penetrate right to the ground. It became apparent that on moderate inclines and without more loading there wasn't enough snow for considerable avalanches.



**Jamie Polk on the
Spearhead Traverse.**

having fun. Winter was coming, of that there was never a doubt. If it was going to be good anywhere, it would be right here in our Selkirk home.

Still, the season continued to be stubborn, blue skies a mocking nemesis, beaten ski-luge tracks frustrating. It was time to disappear. And a visit to my family was the answer. I hoped that two weeks away would give the mountain time enough to shape up.

Then my true season began. The touring done before my departure quickly became a distant memory, still incredible but incomparable to the seven weeks that followed. Never before have I had such a sustained time of intense mountain experience.

Since the first day back, the season flowed with perfect symmetry. Each day led with seeming effortlessness into the next. Rarely did we make specific goals

in advance, it was more like the season unfolded before us. Trip to trip, day to day, each moment its own. The coffee house served as a location for the daily gathering of gossip and discussion. New friends, locals as eager as we were, had secrets to share. We would listen, ask questions and make decisions. Where have people never been? Where will the snow still be soft and crustless? Can we get into the alpine?

Our lines flowed like a spring creek flood. A crescendo of confidence and physical precision overwhelmed us. Our days grew long, as our mornings motivated more committing goals.

We were starving for the exhilaration that comes when venturing into new terrain. Many days passed between storm cycles, but it didn't even faze us. We consider it a challenge, all the more reason to look closer at our map-covered

walls to decide where to go next. Our foresight and commitment to exploring new areas kept us ahead of the hordes of skiers that visit Glacier National Park annually. If it was storming, we would ski the trees, if the skies were clear and the visibility good, we would push our lines into the sweet expanses of the alpine. The season had matured.

It's hard to describe specific days when looking back, those are not what stand out. I remember a time block of incredible experiences. A time so completely fulfilling that, by its end, exhausted, I felt it close. Incredible to realize that, without ever voicing a goal, Greg and I knew when we had accomplished what we had set out to do. Explore, experience, learn and have fun every day.

I believe in the preservation of adventure. It is not where or what you ski that is important, but rather, the experiences you share while doing so. It is truly exhilarating to set the first track into the mountains after a storm. Even knowing that countless people have followed those lines before, the unblemished blanket of fresh snow may as well be virgin terrain.

I find it funny that my reasons for moving were so singular. Two days of waist-deep powder affected me enough that I moved to Revelstoke expecting to experience that regularly. Only one day out of 60 did the snow approach the depth of that mind-altering weekend in the previous season.

It is interesting the way we adapt to new opportunities. That season was one of the lowest snowfall years on record, yet, because of this, my focus changed. I skied untracked powder every day I stepped into the backcountry. And each day presented a unique experience. Sharing this winter with friends while exploring different areas made it special. The worst season on record was the most incredible winter of my life.

The time I spend in the mountains makes moments clear, my senses amplified with concert-hall intensity. Exploring the mountains is where and when I'm happiest. Selfish? Perhaps, but I cannot ignore that which I live for.

Emphasize in stories and memories not where you go but the experiences you have. Live your time in the mountains, embrace them truly and you will be happily rewarded. **bc**