

Photos courtesy Tony Parisi



LEARNING CURVE: The Big Ride teaches groups how to sled safely in the mountains (L); after the lessons, snowmobilers can play in Valemount's plentiful powder.

VALEMOUNT

Famous guides, wild rides

Guided tours and amazing scenery make Valemount a top destination

by WHITNEY BLACK

From the logging and sawmill community of Valemount have come some of the pioneers in mountain snowmobiling. The loggers who built the roads would take their snowshoes and snowmobiles on the weekends and head out beyond the ends

of the roads to see how far they could go.

"We from Valemount come from a culture of guides anyway, because of the Rocky Mountains and the horse industry," said Tony Parisi, owner of Snowfarmers, a local tour guide company in Valemount. "So, handling people and guiding and taking on those responsibilities is second nature to us."

Experience The Big Ride

After over 30 years in the mountains of Valemount, Parisi is putting his expertise to work. Snowfarmers has been doing guided tours of the region for the past

nine years. Having provided ski, snowmobile and horseback tours through the area, Parisi and his business partners, Vinnie Clark of Alpine Country Rentals and Sue Marko of the Cougar Mountain Lodge, are now promoting The Big Ride. This is a new program aimed at getting snowmobilers from Ontario, Quebec and the rest of Eastern Canada to come out and ride the mountains.

The Big Ride targets snowmobilers who have at least an intermediate level of knowledge and experience; Parisi wants those sledders in the East to know that they are capable of coming to the mountains and riding.

"Easterners, with all the pictures they've seen, are actually quite ignorant that this is accessible to them," he said. "They see it, but it feels remote. What they needed was an all-inclusive package with a price on it that included everything so they could have this experience."

With guides like world champion hill-climber Vinnie Clark and X-games gold medallist Carl Kuster, along with Parisi himself, teaching sledders who have never ridden on mountains is much easier and safer.

"There are a lot of machines and there's a lot of accommodation, but there are very few guides," Parisi said. "It's very specialized because you have to know "

VALEMOUNT, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Holiday Inn
HOTELS · RESORTS

...dream all night

- JACUZZI ROOMS
- POOL, WATERSLIDE AND HOT TUB
- LICENSED RESTAURANT
- AMPLE PARKING FOR TRAILERS
- PRIVATE BALCONIES
- ATM MACHINES
- LARGE REMOTE TELEVISIONS
- FREE LOCAL CALLS

fly all day...

www.valemount.holiday-inn.com

1-866-777-1120

Photos: www.snowfarmers.com

The Perfect Finish to an Exciting Day of Sledding

We have the best service in town!

- hot tub • steam room • drying room
- movie and sports channels
- fridges and coffee in all rooms
- large parking area with plug-ins

The Canoe Restaurant, located across the street, is licensed and provides packaged meals for your sledding trip.

SNOWMOBILERS SPECIAL
\$69⁰⁰ PER NIGHT
(dbl occ, plus tax)

Immerse yourself in Valemount's splendour and experience the charm of Canoe Mountain Lodge.
Make your reservation today: **1-888-214-6611**
Phone: 250-566-9171 • www.canoeMountainLodge.com

» everything from the spark plugs to avalanches—also, how to handle and take control of a group that is sitting on 150-horsepower sleds and they're all very excited in a huge landscape of big mountains.”

Perfect for everyone

The Big Ride, however, is only one initiative Snowfarmers runs. Parisi and his guides are more than happy to take someone who has never been on a snowmobile and train them as well.

“Valemount has great scenery and it has great snow,” said Parisi. “It has a lot of areas that we can bring people to. The fundamental is finding people the good snow.”

Whether you are a beginner hoping to see some of the magnificent scenery Valemount has to offer or a thrill-seeker looking to climb high into the alpine, Valemount should be on the top of your list for places to visit. SR



EXPERT ADVICE: Even beginners can tackle the terrain around Valemount if they receive proper instruction.

“Experience Premier Hospitality at an **AFFORDABLE** price!”



- 72 Rooms • Seniors Discount • Tour Rates
- 5 Satellite Channels • Complimentary Tea & Coffee
- Unbeatable Snowmobile Rates • Restaurant on Premises
- Indoor Pool, Hot Tub & Sauna

Premier Mountain Lodge & Suites

1495 6th Ave. on Karas Dr., Valemount, BC • 250-566-4445
E-mail: reservations@premiermountainlodge.com
www.premiermountainlodge.com • Toll free: 1-888-830-7888

FERNIE

More than skiing

Downhill fun also comes on sleds

by TANYA LAING MOORE

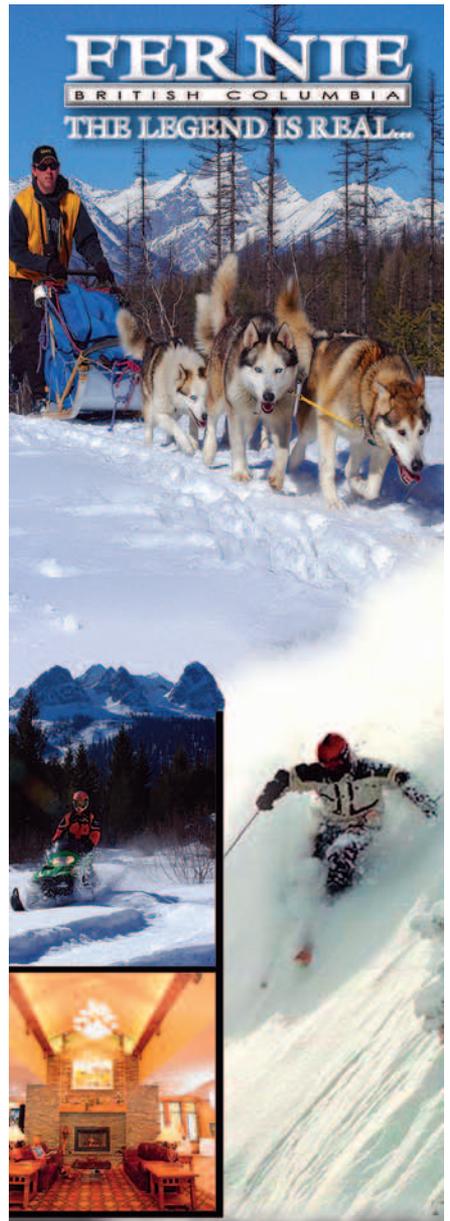
While thousands of people a year will flock to the slopes of Fernie for its superlative skiing opportunities, snowmobilers know that the real treat is taking to the hills on their sled of choice. The views cannot be topped and it's a common occurrence to see wildlife as one climbs up into a bowl or flies along one of the many groomed trails.

Andy Buchan of the Fernie Snowmobile Club thinks that one of the best features of the region is the fact that there are trails, chutes and bowls for every level of sledder.

“We have lots of variety of terrain,” said Buchan, “from extreme to not so extreme. And we have an abundance of snow almost every year.”

Buchan added that there are both groomed and ungroomed trails in the region. The major areas, such as Coal Creek and Morrissey Trail up to the pipeline trails, are groomed and suitable for beginner and intermediate sledders. Other favourites are the Lodgepole trails and Ram Creek Trail, which has a cabin.

Buchan said he likes to do the majority of his snowmobiling in spring, when access to some of the harder-to-reach areas is easier. SR



EXPERIENCE THE EXTRAORDINARY

What DRIVES YOU?

ALPINE COUNTRY RENTALS
(250) 566-9774 • Fax (250) 566-9771
Box 758, Valemount, BC
www.alpinecountryrentals.com

DISCOVER IT.

Fernie Mountain Lodge
Call for Reservations
1-866-423-5566
www.bestwesternfernie.com