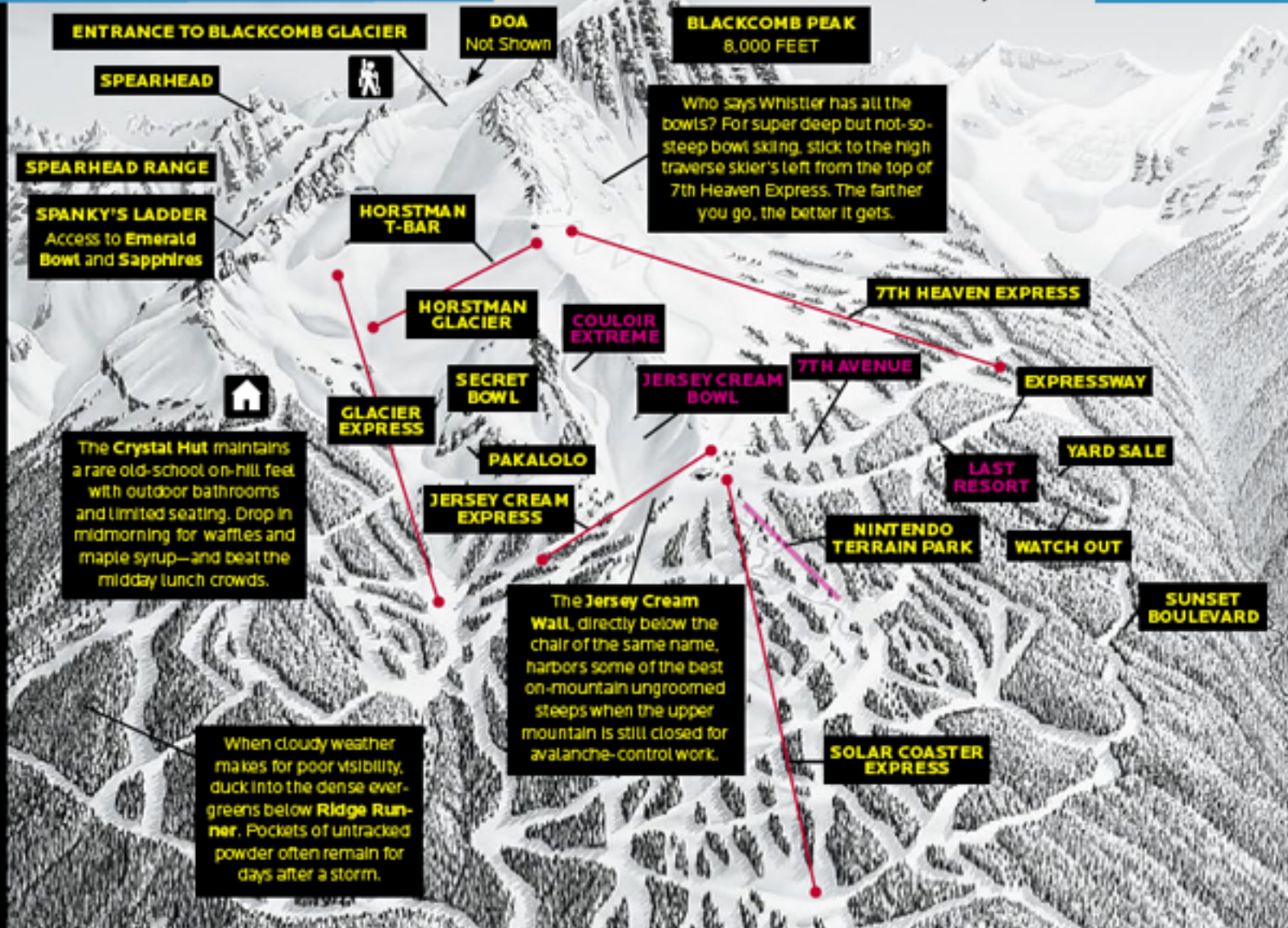


MARQUEE ROUTE: Blackcomb's test piece is the **Couloir Extreme**, a 40-degree chute within gaping view of the Jersey Cream lift. Drop into the main gut or head down the steeper and rockier skier's left wall. Then traverse high and left to the wind-loaded slopes of **Jersey Cream Bowl**.

OFF-BROADWAY: From the top of the Solar Coaster Express, follow **7th Avenue** to **Last Resort** and drop right into steep trees consistently passed over by skiers traversing to the 7th Heaven chair.



the inside line **BLACKCOMB MOUNTAIN, BRITISH COLUMBIA**

the guide

ONCE THE ROCK STAR OF THE WHISTLER valley, Blackcomb merged with Whistler in 1998 to create the biggest resort in North America. But Blackcomb still belts it out. With 3,414 acres of high-consequence steep, sweeping glaciers, and a bounty of unmarked couloirs and cliffs, this is Keith to Whistler's Mick: craggier, more weather-beaten, and not quite as often in the spotlight. And even if you live longer than Keith's legacy, you'll never be able to ski all of the 480,000 acres lurking in Garibaldi Provincial Park just beyond the resort's open boundary.

POWDER DAY

Nab the Glacier Express Quad at the first turn of the bullwheel, unload to the right, and follow the high traverse across the **Horstman Glacier** to **Secret Bowl**, a mellow, 30-degree scoop that leads into **Pakalolo**—a 40- to 45-degree chute with a tricky entrance that's eight feet wide.

THREE DAYS LATER

Hike **Spanky's Ladder**, a 30-foot

boot-pack that accesses the north-facing "gem" bowls. Hit **Emerald Bowl** and the **Sapphires**, snow-stuffed chutes that roll away to 50 degrees.

PARK AND PIPE

When the 3,480-foot-long **Nintendo Terrain Park** is no longer big enough, head next door to the Highest Level Park for gargantuan tabletops, spines, and hip jumps.

BACKCOUNTRY ACCESS

From the Horstman T-bar, traverse the **Blackcomb Glacier** to the **Blackcomb-Spearhead** col. Continue up the back side of **Blackcomb Peak** to **DOA**, an exposed couloir that drops back into the resort. Check avalanche.ca before you go.

WEATHER

Blackcomb gets its deep snow—and cloudy weather—from the regular storms that pile in off the Pacific over Vancouver Island. Come in February for the best snow.

APRÈS

On the rare days it's truly

sunny, locals soak it up on the patio of Merlins, at the base of the Wizard chair. Inside, slug pitchers of Kokanee and chow on jalapeño-heaped nachos while you watch live hockey on the 10-foot-wide screen.

FUEL

Spitz Grill, on Main Street, serves five-ounce grilled-to-order burgers with fries for C\$9. Don't eat cow? Try Sushi Village—in the village square—for sashimi and hot sake.

UP ALL NIGHT

The Boot Pub is everything that Whistler Village isn't: dirty, local, and authentic. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays feature the Boot Ballet—which sounds cultural, but is really just a strip show.

DIGS

Last year's bleak season means hotel rates aren't as exorbitant as they once were. The ultraswank Fairmont Chateau Whistler, for example, is offering a five-night ski-and-stay package for C\$562.

— KEVIN ARNOLD

ELEVATION: 7,494 feet VERTICAL DROP: 5,280 feet SNOWFALL: 400 inches at 6,000 feet ACRES: 3,414 GETTING THERE: Fly to Vancouver, drive across Lions Gate Bridge, and head north on Highway 99 for 70 miles. INFO: whistlerblackcomb.com