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# Kicking Horse steep, deep

## Revised master plan for B.C. resort includes more lifts, more skiing terrain

BY JOHN KOROBANIK, THE EDMONTON JOURNAL    FEBRUARY 12, 2009    COMMENTS (1)

STORY

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Kicking Horse mountain resort.

Photograph by: Supplied, Edmonton Journal

When visitors look out the windows of the Vagabond Lodge as they're enjoying their breakfast and see overcast skies, there's a temptation to have another cup of coffee and not worry about hitting the slopes of Kicking Horse Mountain Resort too early.

Don't succumb to the temptation.

As many skiers and snowboarders have discovered, it's often overcast at

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the base, but beautiful sunny skies up in the alpine. And that's where the best skiing and boarding is to be found.

Cheers will often be heard from visitors riding the gondola when they break through the low cloud cover and emerge into blue-sky territory, knowing there's little to prevent them from enjoying their day on the slopes.

### EXCEEDS JANUARY TARGETS

And that's what more and more skiers and boarders have been doing since the little ski hill called Whitetooth became Kicking Horse seven years ago.

"Last year, our visitor totals rounded out to 325,000," says marketing manager Jordan Petrovics. "That was up around seven to 10 per cent from the previous year (and way up from the 60,000 in its first season). Our numbers are tracking very well this year."

A weeklong snap of -30 C temperatures that hit Western Canada, cut back on skier visits in December, but Kicking Horse exceeded its January targets and is making up much of the numbers lost due to the weather.

That's not surprising, given the challenging terrain offered and the recent improvements to the TransCanada Highway that makes driving to Golden a lot easier these days.

"We're starting to become more of a hub," said Petrovics. "A lot of people are starting to come and stay here and take day trips to Lake Louise, it's 45 minutes away; Panorama's only an hour and a half away; and Revelstoke's only an hour away.

"In the last year and a half, the town of Golden is getting a lot more energized about marketing itself as a tourist destination."

Kicking Horse, about a 15-minute drive up the mountain from Golden, now offers a variety of accommodations, from the European-inn style Vagabond Lodge, to the boutique Copper Horse Lodge, to the traditional condo and hotels at the base area.

And the resort's revised master plan, being finalized this winter, calls for more rooms, more lifts and more skiing terrain. The plan calls for the skiable area to increase more than 500 hectares to about 2,200, the bed base to jump from the current 1,500 to 18,000 at buildout (but that's decades away) and vital improvements in the lift system.

At the moment, Kicking Horse has just three chair lifts and a gondola, plus a magic carpet. The gondola is the only lift that gets visitors from the

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base to the alpine area, providing access to two huge bowls and the Stairway to Heaven quad that runs to the 2,450-metre peak and gets skiers and boarders to Redemption Ridge and the popular and steep Feuz Bowl.

The gondola lineups can be long and when it isn't running, which has been the case a couple of times this winter

because of high winds and mechanical problems, there's no way to get to the alpine terrain. That's one issue Kicking Horse hopes to solve in the next five or six years, when the original Whitetooth Resort chair -- the Pioneer -- will have to be totally rebuilt or replaced.

#### SPECTACULAR LOWER MOUNTAIN

"Rather than (rebuild), we're looking at a high-speed quad that would go from (the existing base) with a mid-station near the top of the existing Pioneer chair and service to the bottom of Stairway to Heaven," said Petrovics. "With that we will two major ways to get people up into the alpine ski area.

"Right now, a lot of people look at us as Kicking Horse, steep and deep. We will always be that, but on the lower mountain we have some spectacular terrain, but now we're not using it to its full potential. The things we're pushing for the next two to three years is upgrading the Catamount Chair to high-speed quad ... based on investment and economy right now we're feeling pretty confident in the next few years we'll be able to upgrade that to high speed."

Also included in the long-range master plan is an expanded beginner area with several carpet lifts and an 18-hole golf course below the parking lot, with an open-air lift from the course to the ski base.

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