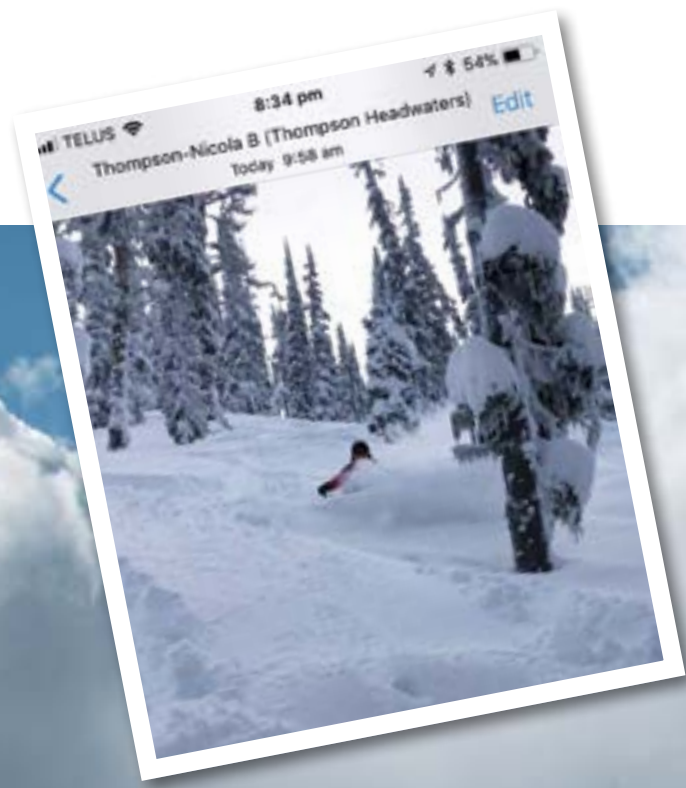


Get your **WIEGELE** on



FROM THE HIGH ALPINE TO THE TREES IT'S ALL AWESOME AT WIEGELES
© LUKE LAURIN; JASON MARTIN; INSET ROB AIVATOGLU

SITTING AT HOME IN 40° HEAT IS BAD ENOUGH, THEN PING, IT'S ANOTHER WHATSAPP FROM **ROB AIVATOGLU** IN DEEP IN CANADA. THANKS BRO. BUT WHY JUST TELL YOUR MATES? LET'S SHARE THE ENVY, SO WE CAN ALL SEE WHAT WE'RE MISSING OUT ON.

Vapor trails of powder, tracing the ridge lines of the Monashee or Cariboo mountain ranges, are the visual norm when you visit Mike Wiegele Helicopter Skiing in Blue River British Columbia. You will stand on the summit, awed by the view.

It's the holy grail for those that worship the great snow wave. Anyone that considers themselves advanced intermediate or better can take a bite of this juicy apple. But one fact cannot be questioned, ski lifts and those pesky lift lines that accompany them will not be part of the equation for your week in Blue River!

Meeting the guides and pilots is a case of speed dating and relationship building. After all, they are very important as if something bad happens, it's these guys that will look after you. Not that it's likely. I've been lucky enough to enjoy 12 trips, and never encountered a situation I'd describe as 'eventful.'

Safety is the highest priority of the Wiegele operation, perched way above everything else, including light, dry powder snow! In fact, the week commences with safety videos, helipad etiquette and movement in/out of the chopper, transceiver training, shovel pack familiarization, and mountain awareness. This education session extends over an evening and for three hours the next morning. Focus and concentration are critical during these learnings as split second decisions can save lives. This is real.

In terms of the terrain, riders will have choices, all of them amazing. Up high in the alpine, you have the vast expanses of immense glaciers. They roll for hundreds of vertical metres and are the focus when the weather is clear and stable. Riding in this terrain provides incredible vistas, some great pitches and genuine leg burners as sections that run 140-150 consecutive turns are common. Below the glaciers, one can ski the 'trees' where terrain is more varied, unpredictable and will command your full attention. Lots of options for the adventurous in the trees. And then you have the 'log cuts', where playful bumps (cut down tree stumps covered with snow) permeate the landscape creating an awesome natural playground. Truth be known, it's all good!

Blue River is the ideal departure point for aspiring powder riders. Fly direct to Vancouver, take the 40 minute hop across to Kamloops, where the Wiegele shuttle will be waiting to transport you straight up Highway 5 for 2

hours. This highway continues on to Jasper and then Prince George, it's a major summer tourist route. On one side of the highway are the Monashees, and on the other are the Cariboos. They are both magnificent, stunning mountain ranges. Options abound. However, the punter in the back of the chopper need not fret, there are no decisions to be made by them. Our lead guide, together with the pilot and fellow guides map out the day, then adjust as required depending on the conditions and always deliver the goods. Our job is to ride and smile - simple.

As is the Wiegele mantra, priority #1 for the lead guide is safety. Priority #2 for the lead guide is sensational powder snow. In my experience, they always deliver on both fronts. One guide in front setting the path (lead guide), the other (tail guide) corralling, assisting, and ensuring that every skier and boarder has avoided any hazards or dangers. The two guide system (in a group with 10 riders) is well proven and no doubt saved many from a difficult or embarrassing circumstance. It provides the rider with peace of mind, regardless of your riding ability. So in a Bell 212 helicopter there are the pilot, 2 guides and 10 riders.

Descents are logged by the run and are measured in vertical feet. At the end of the week, each guest receives a full report of all runs skied and the vertical achieved. Typically, a group will ride approximately 135,000 vertical feet for the week. Regular attendees who have amassed 1,000,000 vertical feet are acknowledged with the time honoured Wiegele Silver Buckle during a special presentation that takes place at the Friday Night Show. It's purely ceremonial, but what price bragging rights, right?

To stop Rob bragging check it out for yourself
www.wiegele.com



Your turn is now



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