

2014 Memories

The following beautiful memories have been written by Claire Pharand.

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Caledon

I’m not sure if many skiers were like me, but I had butterflies driving to Caledon. Anticipation. Excitement. The thought of meeting friends from last year, having haphazardly kept in touch with some and others through email. The summer did seem long, the fall longer until I received the newsletter. Then, I felt like it was really happening. As I drove in, I kept thinking how lucky we were to have had Mother Nature and Ski Goddess working together to provide the perfect ski day.

The night before, I pulled out the equipment, tried everything, making sure the equipment and the clothing would be adequate for the start of the ski season. I prepared a small lunch to revitalize the energy. Tuck an extra pair of mitts and socks in the back pack. After all, the Polar Vortex was still a very vivid memory, having gone deep into Siberian colds earlier in the week.

And then it all happened on January 9th, 2014 at the Caledon Ski Club where Skicousi successfully launched the 2014 ski season. The cloudless sky with normal seasonal temperature provided the perfect set up for the Skicousi members.

The Board of Directors was on hand delivering well wishes and answering questions. Stewart was busy scheduling classes and answering questions. The ticket booth was having a great time selling tickets and answering questions! Everyone had a smile and a warm embrace. It felt like meeting long family members.

It was time to don the skis and face the slopes. The sun shone, the wind died and the temperature had risen to a comfortable minus 6C. The snow conditions were excellent. It was fast snow, no ice buildup as it is so frequent on the surrounding hills.

But soon, the sun travelled through the sky and started fading over the western slopes. It was time to return to base camp. To regretfully dismount the skis and pack them away. Everyone I met still had the fantastic smile and already memories of a great ski day.

As I drove home, I relived every moment of every run. I was totally relaxed, refreshed but tired. A hot bath cured some of the aches felt oh! So lightly in some of those old exhausted muscles. But it was well worth it.

I had the chance to recapture some of those moments when I met Jane the following Saturday and we spoke of Opening Day. And she too had so many good tales to tell. I can't wait to see you again next Thursday.

Let's ski on!

Blue Mountain

I had reservation skiing at Blue Mountain. I must admit I have been spoiled by the Skicousi format. Skiing in private clubs, the hill opened for 150 people.

Nonetheless, as I am getting close to Collingwood, the longing, the expectancy started. I know I will have a good.. No! scratch that! A GREAT day!

There is a thin cloud layer but I am not worried. The weatherman did forecast a sunny day. These clouds have to be the lake effect. The weather is in a comfortable range. I'll ski without the full face mask.

Out I go for a few warm-up runs. And already, it's time for lessons. Our fantastic instructor leads us to the Orchard side. That is when we get the guided tour!

Orchard had been developed and groomed for a few years but there were no chairlift. Blue Mountain installed the 6-people express chairlift this summer, along with the hill lights to accommodate night skiers.

Gord's Groove is the longest slope in Ontario. OK... so it's rated green but it had a nice mellow slide to it. I can now say that I have been on the longest slope of any Ontario hills! How many skiers can actually hold that claim to fame???

The Founder, Finally and Juicer were my preferred hills of the day. I was also in good company and that, my friend, makes all the difference when skiing.

The sun played hide-and-seek with the few lingering clouds around noon. And finally, the clouds were chased away and the sun brought Blue Mountain in its full glory. I had to say goodbye to another perfect day.

Jay Peak

To best describe the short trip to Jay Peak, one would have to set up categories: weather, social activities, ski conditions, guardian angels and unexpected events.

The weather was dreadfully cold. The first two days, the thermometer never went above -23. Celsius. And the Jay Peak staff must have a warped sense of humour because the Flyer Quad had a posted sign: 'Wind chill factor on the Flyer: -39'. Of course, one would have to read Fahrenheit because Jay Peak is in Vermont, USA, North America. But wait! Isn't -40 Fahrenheit the same at

-40 Celsius??? Any which way you read it, it is outrageously cold. Saturday came with a reprieve: -13 Celsius and snow. Plenty of snow. As a matter of fact, it never stopped snowing on Saturday. This, of course, led to great ski conditions, had it not been the wind sweeping all this fresh snow into the trees.

The mountain was fabulous with its array of hills. The panoply of grades appealed to all skiers. Jay Peak sat in its splendour, accepting the skier's tracks, challenging the descent. The only skiers tackling the hills with exhilaration were the Skicousi group. One surpassed the 40 mph barrier, on snowboard, barrelling down the Jet. Another discovered the glades and spent most of the time dancing with the trees. Others played safe and stayed indoors when reports of how cold it was out there came in.

Party Central was quickly assigned to Double-D by the Social Committee. It was not long before the word was spread, even went viral, in staging an impromptu ice-breaker on Day One at Double-Dee. The only requirement was to bring an appetizer. The main meal consisted solely of liquid intake. No one was left hungry – there was so much to pass around! Our ladies of the Social Committee did not stop at the first night. They were speedy on making a reservation at the Foundry, reuniting all skiers for a last night of good food and plenty of laughs. Congrats to Judy, Bonnie and Charlotte for a job well done!

The trip back was much quieter. Laurie was nursing a twisted knee. Wendy was checking her bruised calf. Don was icing his ribs. The Guardian Angels were checking up on their patients making sure the best comfort was provided to the ailed skiers!

Good memories, plenty of photos to keep Jay Peak alive and well.

Closing Day – Devil's Glen - Canadian eh!

Many braved the winter hazard to attend a truly patriotic event on Closing Day at Devil's Glen. A sea of red and white pleased the organizers.

The weather outside was a bitterly reminder of the season cold and windy temp but fantastic snow. Many took frequent breaks with warm refreshments until the bar opened.

The Social Committee had worked hard to organize this day and it showed. Lunch was excellent and the table prize would simply not stop giving. Almost everyone went home with a prize!

I had a table to challenge the smarts: matching flag and flower to each Canadian provinces and territories. For all the effort, a chocolate was the ultimate reward.

Time for a quick photo to capture moment and it was already time to say farewell.

Thanks to Judy, Bonnie and Charlotte for a wonderful day. A well-deserved summer for all the hard work accomplished throughout the season. Looking forward to more events next year.

Happy 2014 summer!

Big White

This was my virgin long trip. My first time out to a big mountain. My initiation to real skiing in real snow. But fate had other plans for me. I was delayed in Calgary and unable to hit the slopes until Monday afternoon.

WOW! EUPHORIA! I was sure I was in dreamland. The slopes were unbelievable. Unbelievably long. Unbelievably challenging. Unbelievably desirable. Unbelievably loving.

OK, I will admit, the days I skied in the clouds, I skied hard, flexing, bending, carving. Wondering where earth met air and vice-versa. Skiing in the clouds... The guys from the East kept talking about fog but they were all wrong. Fog is something close to the ground, in the valley; it dissipates with sun, heat and wind. Clouds can stay around all day and there is wind and sometimes snow and sleet. I know, I lived it while skiing the big slopes of Big White.

I flexed, I extended, I pushed and leapt. I carved and slid. And it was all worth it. At the risk of repeating me, it was unbelievably long. Unbelievably challenging. Unbelievably desirable. Unbelievably loving.

I was glad to find my little resting corner at the end of the day. After all, I had been playing in the snow since 8:30AM and I could not let go of the slopes until the last run of the day.

I listened well to the ski instructor on Ladies' Day, which was timely as the cloud set in for the day. Even my buddy, Leki poles, dragged alongside my bindings to help stabilize and balance. Hopping side to side helped in the fresh powder. The Salomon boots were giggling as the toes were kept upward to help with the balance. I deserved the rest when lunch was served. Some of my friends could not understand how hard I worked. I think they were assigned to a much easier class than me.

All this prepared me for Friday. The sunrise was majestic that day. Peering through the highest peaks. The snow glistening. This was the perfect day to discover the mountain with a Snow Host. Brenda took me and a few friends into the bowl, onto blues and greens. I relished the feeling of the powder snow under my edges at the top of the mountain. The long runs, taking hard turns, feeling the snow changing to spring-like snow when landing at the bottom of the hill. Big White finally had shed her shroud to reveal herself. And what a view it was. Once more, the day was tiring and I was glad to be placed by in my corner for the night.

The week passed and it was already Sunday. It was time to pack up and return home, via Vancouver. I dreaded the flight back, knowing the hazard of travelling without my owner. And it happened again... I was left behind with my buddies boot and poles. My poor owner moved mountains (which are hard to find in southern Ontario) to find me and my buddies, boots and poles.

Finally 10 days later, I arrived. Tired and dusty, having travelled to many places before ending up at home. I am now cozied in for the summer, after a good clean. And time to relax.

I've already booked my time for the next long trip! Hope to see you there!