

LOCAL DISHES

KILLER TERRAIN, COLD BEER, AND CHARACTER THE MEGARESORTS CAN'T TOUCH. THESE FIVE LOCAL HILLS MAKE UP FOR EVERY MARKETING DOLLAR THEY LACK WITH THE STUFF THAT REALLY MATTERS. SOUNDS LIKE A FAIR TRADE TO US.

MAGIC » ALEX WITKOWICZ
SCHWEITZER » KEVIN LUBY
MONARCH » PETER SCOVILLE
JUNE » DAVID PAGE
WHITE PASS » ANDY MAHRE

K.C. Deane and Elyse Saugstad share a moment on Chair 6 at Schweitzer Mountain, Idaho.



Idaho

SCHWEITZER MOUNTAIN

GHOST SKIING, THE PANHANDLE, AND FIRST-CHAIR HANGOVERS. BY KEVIN LUBY

Fog like this might make another resort

skier shudder—not me, not at Schweitzer. When storms sock us in, freshly fattened with moisture from Lake Pend Oreille, the skiing only gets better, more personal. I call it ghost skiing—snorkeling around by Braille through the mossy pine glades of Schweitzer Mountain in a full whiteout of free refills and fir trees.

Today you can taste the clouds. Eight inches fell overnight. Thanks to some ridgeline gusts, the bowls are filled in over-the-knee. I count the seconds between avy-bomb blasts along South Ridge. South Bowl will open with the lifts and I head there at first chair.

As I drop solo into R-2 Chute, a rollover fall line that ends in a mini choke or 15-foot diving board, the face shots and haze mute my school-girl giggles but not the rumble of bombs from the back bowls. It's still early. I can easily fit a couple more laps in before the next rope drop.

As patrol flips the open sign on North Bowl, I watch less-seasoned Schweitzer skiers descend into the abyss of Lakeside Chutes—not enough trees for this soup—and I break for Big Timber. Snow stacks on this north-facing coaster thanks to the towering old-growths

that act as a backstop to the wind. I knife between elephantine cedars, and dodge the occasional *whumpf* of powder cascading from the treetops.

At the bottom of Chair 6, a fellow north Idaho expat home on vacation hops on the chair with me. We chat about the draw of the Panhandle. It's not the powder or the absence of lift lines, but the intimate knowledge you get of every tree, powder stash, and deathtrap wind lip on the mountain during a foggy, flat-light day of Schweitzer glade laps.

After the lifts close, I head to Taps Bar for a beer and watch two lifties go shot for shot with cheap whiskey. They slur about their day off tomorrow and first chair. I'd smirk, but they're Panhandle dirtbag warriors. I'll probably find them waiting in line when I show up at day-break. By this point, the forecast has circulated: flurries spitting three to five overnight with peeking blue skies by midmorning. It won't take much, especially if there's sunshine. Tomorrow will be all-time.

Kevin Luby is Skiing's assistant editor.

Elyse Saugstad does her blue-sky dance at Schweitzer Mountain, Idaho.



Schweitzer Mountain: The gory details.

- » **Average Snowfall:** 300 inches
- » **Skiable Acres:** 2,900
- » **Vertical Feet:** 2,400
- » **Advanced/Expert Terrain:** 50%
- » **Lift Ticket Price:** \$67
- » **Grub:** Slices at Thor's Pizza
- » **Beer:** The St. Bernard
- » **Don't Miss:** Cat-skiing with Selkirk Powder Company
- » **More Info:** schweitzer.com