

Seasonal employment

Is winter your favourite Canadian season? You can earn some cash while you enjoy the great outdoors

By Lisa Evans

Along with fresh fallen snow comes a host of employment opportunities for winter outdoor enthusiasts. From November to April, many of Canada's largest ski resorts hire seasonal employees to operate ski lifts, and work as ski instructors, culinary staff and guest services.

In Ontario, Blue Mountain Resort hires 1,300 seasonal positions each year. In British Columbia, Whistler Blackcomb Resort has approximately 3,100 seasonal employees, about half of which return year after year. "Usually we go into every winter needing to fill 1,500 new seasonal positions," says Whistler recruiting manager Karen Bauckham.

Many of these positions are entry-level and are open to anyone legally entitled to work in Canada, even with just a temporary work visa. But winter seasonal employment can be an excellent opportunity for those who enjoy outdoor adventure to gain work experience and earn some cash. Plus, with a short four- to six-month commitment, a seasonal position can be a great way to try something new on a short-term basis — just be sure to dress warm!

Here's a sampling of some of the opportunities available at Canada's ski resorts.

Food/beverage services

Most of Canada's large ski resorts offer guests a plethora of hearty food selections to warm their palates. Whistler Blackcomb, for example, has more than 55 restaurants and bars, ranging from fine dining to small intimate huts serving waffles or warm soup. "Within all of those restaurants we need people who can cook, dishwashers, cashiers, bussers, food station attendants and cappuccino bar workers," says Bauckham. The majority of these positions are entry-level and require little to no experience, with the exception of chefs at the fine-dining establishments.

Retail shops

If you have some experience in customer service and sales, you may score a position at one of the ski resorts' many retail stores, selling souvenirs and outerwear. Those with some ski and snowboard product knowledge may land a job in the equipment repair centres or in rental centres where

you'll help outfit guests with skis, snowboards and boots.

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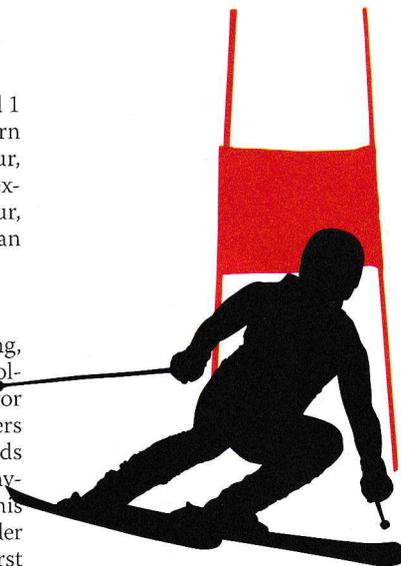
skills who love to hit the slopes may find their calling on the hill as a ski or snowboard instructor. In order to be hired as an instructor at a ski hill in Canada, you must be certified with the Canadian Ski Instructors' Alliance (CSIA).

Level 1 instructors must be 15 years of age or older, an intermediate-level skier and pass a three-day course that provides instruction on ski teaching, technique and methodology, specifically focused on teaching children. Advanced skiers who have passed the level 1 certification can move on to level 2, which allows instructors to teach adults, kids and intermediate-level skiers. There are four levels in the CSIA's certification process, though Miranda Sorensen, chair of CSIA Ontario, says the majority of instructors who fill seasonal positions have a level 1 or 2 certification.

According to Sorensen, level 1 ski instructors can expect to earn between \$11.50 to \$13 per hour, while level 2 instructors can expect to earn \$13 to \$15 per hour, and level 3 and 4 instructors can expect \$20 to \$30 per hour.

Ski patrol

If you love skiing all day long, you may wish to be a ski patroller. Patrollers are responsible for ensuring the safety of all skiers by monitoring trails for hazards and ensuring everyone is behaving appropriately on the hill. This position requires a first responder certification in addition to first aid and CPR. Ski patrollers must be able to react quickly while remaining calm under pressure and be able to work in a physically demanding environment under harsh winter weather conditions. At Blue Mountain, ski patrollers can earn \$12 to \$15 per hour,



ski or snowboard are preferred at Whistler Blackcomb as there are many lifts on the mountain that have to be skied to. These positions are very physically demanding and require you to spend the day outdoors in all-weather conditions. With the exception of lift operators, who are typically paid minimum wage, positions in ski hill operations can pay upwards of \$12 per hour.

Living your job

While some ski hills such as Blue Mountain don't require employees to live on-site, others, like Whistler Blackcomb that are located in more remote areas, have on-site residences for employees. Dorm-style staff housing at Whistler Blackcomb accommodates more than 1,000 seasonal staff. The accommodation is subsidized, costing around \$330 a month including internet, heat and cable. While these positions are highly sought after for single individuals between the ages of 18 and 25, they may not be suitable for individuals with families. ❄️

depending on level of experience.

Ski hill operations

Even if you aren't comfortable on skis but love spending time outdoors, you may find work as a lift operator, snowmaker or be part of the grounds and trail maintenance crew. Lift operators typically don't require any experience, although those who can

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