



INSIDE

TOM PARSONS: The latest hotel deals **2K**
TROUBLESHOOTER: Reader wants a cruise refund **3K**
SAN FRANCISCO: A haven for the handmade **4K**
NEW ZEALAND: Beautiful, secluded Stewart Island **6K**

EUROPE

A woman selling truffles at the 12th annual truffle festival in the village of Livade, Croatia, holds out a large specimen for visitors to smell. The truffles have a, shall we say, distinctive odor.



Trained truffle-hunting dogs Jackie (right) and Biba demonstrate how they lead their master, Ivica Kalcic, to the prized fungi, which grow underground, using their noses.

ON THE TRUFFLE TRAIL IN CROATIA

Discover secrets of the prized delicacy and this underappreciated Adriatic land

Story and photos by **SUZANNE MORPHET**
 Special Contributor

LIVADE, Croatia — The waiter waves the offensive-smelling nugget under my nose with a flourish.

In his white-gloved hand, it looks like a small knob of ginger, but the intense smell gives it away as a white truffle, the prized and pricey fungus that foodies rhapsodize about while debating how best to describe its disagreeable odor.

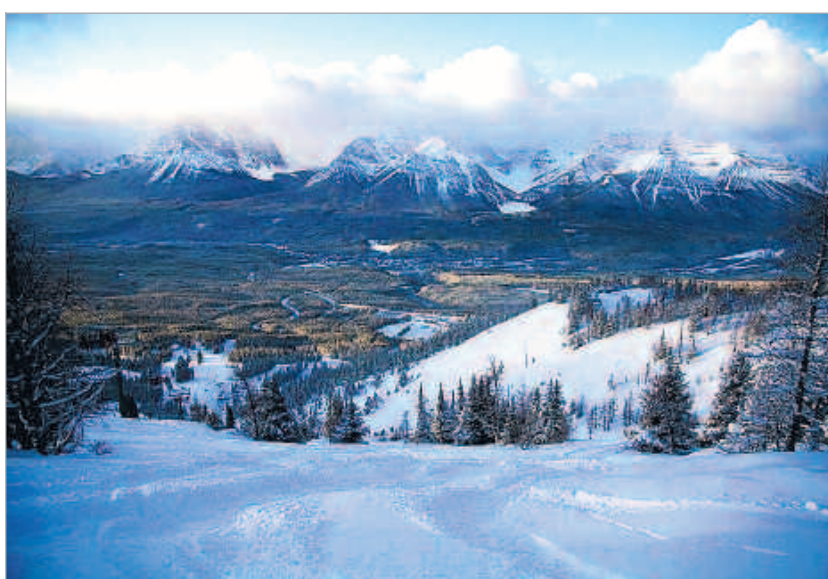
Dirty socks? I propose “a bouquet of overripe cheese with a big hit of musk” to my dining companions as more accurate — and more apt — given the snobbish appeal of this rare delicacy.

We’re at the 12th annual truffle festival in this small village on Croatia’s Istrian peninsula. Perhaps because Croatia is not yet part of the European Union — it’s being admitted next year — much of the country is still largely undiscovered by North Americans. The scenery and cuisine are similar to that of Italy, which is just a couple of hours by ferry

See **TRUFFLE** Page 4K



A waiter at Restaurant Zigante in Livade, Croatia, shaves fresh white truffle over a plate of venison carpaccio. Restaurant owner Giancarlo Zigante found the world’s largest truffle, a beefy 2.8 pounds, in 1999.



Too little snow is rarely a problem at Lake Louise. Most western Canada resorts aren’t experiencing the warm winter pinching U.S. resorts.

Chris Moseley

SKIING | CANADA

Where’s the snow? Up north

It might be warm here in the U.S., but western Canada has all the powder a skier could want

By **LOUISE HUDSON**
 Special Contributor

Early-season skiing can be a gamble any year. But December saw some record-breaking warm temps, spoiling the snow on many U.S. and European ski hills and hampering attempts to create manmade alternatives.

Now Colorado is making up for lost time with snow falling daily.

Over the holidays, only Canada was doused in powder, and, boy, did I luck out: With scanty snow conditions in the States in December, I happened to plan a three-week ski safari around Canada.

I arrived in the middle of December at Alberta’s Big Three area, which

has a great early-season snow record. With more than 80 Winterstart World Cups under its belt, Lake Louise has only ever had to reschedule two fixtures — and those were because of too much snow.

There’s still plenty of time to enjoy Canada’s snow; most resorts stay

See **POWDER** Page 5K

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