

BIG WHITE

PART 2



Just because last issue's cruisers and carvers are well liked in Eastern Canada doesn't mean the All-Mountain and even Big Mountain skis on these pages are for western-skiing only. Winter is bigger than the country sometimes and whether you're looking for one All-Mountain ski that's at home in both the east and west or a fatter freeride ski that's reserved for a Big Mountain experience, on these pages you'll find one or two just right for you.

Special kudos to Big White for inviting us back for our second year in a row (indeed our fourth year of testing in the last 15) and providing the perfect setup of snow and conditions, terrain, teamwork, accommodation, gastronomy and après ski. All the top manufacturers available in the country showed up for the 30th annual Ski Canada Test, so read the results, check for complete scoring online at www.skicanadamag.com, and find your perfect ski!

THE CATEGORY

BIG MOUNTAIN

Like the name says—and beyond

THE PLAYING FIELD

The day started out with overcast skies and settled, chopped powder that was firm underneath and some light snow falling later in the morning. Although the chutes and bowls of Big White's Cliff area were calling out for the Ski Canada Test's newest category, there was still plenty of powder, steeps, trees and changing terrain right off the Ridge Rocket Express for the testers to stretch their imagination when it comes to ski design. With some new snow overnight, day two of the test belonged to Big Mountain or Freeride skis.

BIG MOUNTAIN - MEN'S RECOMMENDATIONS

| | SKIER WEIGHT ◀ LIGHTER HEAVIER ▶ | | SKIER ABILITY ◀ INTERMEDIATE EXPERT ▶ |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| BSI KOOTENAY PEAKSTICKS | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ | BSI KOOTENAY PEAKSTICKS | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ |
| VÖLKL MANTRA | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ | HEAD JOHN 94 | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ |
| SALOMON SHOGUN | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ | K2 OBSETHED | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ |
| HEAD JOHN 94 | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ | ROSSIGNOL PHANTOM SC 97 | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ |
| ROSSIGNOL PHANTOM SC 97 | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ | SALOMON SHOGUN | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ |
| ATOMIC NOMAD SAVAGE Ti | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ | LIBERTY HELIX | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ |
| PRIOR OVERLORD | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ | VÖLKL MANTRA | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ |
| LIBERTY HELIX | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ | FISCHER WATEA 94 | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ |
| K2 OBSETHED | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ | PRIOR OVERLORD | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ |
| OGASAKA CC 9.7 | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ | OGASAKA CC 9.7 | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ |
| FISCHER WATEA 94 | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ | ATOMIC NOMAD SAVAGE Ti | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ▲ |

THE CATEGORIES

EXPERT ALL-MOUNTAIN

All-terrain cruising, long and short turns

As well as checking agility and competence in soft snow, testers skied this category up to high cruising speeds for recreational skiers and assessed stability in long and short turns on the groomed. Testers pushed the limits in this category. They expect these skis to do everything and test them aggressively. Overall versatility in managing all kinds of conditions defined the best skis in this category. Waist 76-86. *(This issue.)*

ADVENTURE ALL-MOUNTAIN

All-terrain skiing, moderate speeds, medium turns

To match the expectations for this group, testing was not as fast or aggressive as in the high-performance Expert All-Mountain category. The same assessment of comfort in ungroomed snow was checked, with special attention to such things as how balanced they felt (sweet spot) and general good manners in less-than-perfect conditions. Testers want these skis to respond to every demand, and also be manageable and predictable. Waist 75-85. *(This issue.)*

BIG MOUNTAIN

Like the name says—and beyond

This freeride category continues to test the limits of design—as well as graphics. Twintips long ago evolved from the terrain park to the trees and off under the ropes. Big Mountain skis are being seen more and more all over the mountain and age spectrum now. Manoeuvrability and stability make them popular choices for travelling through tricky off-piste terrain as well as high-speed riding, taking air and landing switch. There are some radical setups such as degrees of camber, binding positions and flex patterns that make these skis more difficult to judge, so read the ski data carefully. Waist 90+. *(This issue.)*

ON-PISTE CRUISERS

High-performance GS-radius turns

These cruisers were not tested in gates, but most skis in this category have a racing pedigree. Testers pushed the limits to find the best balance between raw edge hold and user-friendliness. Where versatility is a big factor in All-Mountain skis, testers devoted special attention to such things as agility, power and edge grip for these skis. That said, testers did move in and out of a variety of terrain and asked the skis to demonstrate some versatility. The category is not expected to have a speed limit. Waist 68-78. *(See Buyer's Guide 2010, last issue.)*

EASY CRUISING

Mid-range performance in long and short turns

These skis represent excellent value, but also reasonable performance at intermediate to advanced speeds on groomed slopes. Appropriate criteria such as ease of initiation and stability got a lot of attention in identifying the best skis in this category. This category represents for many skiers their first carving skis and skis that can grow with them as speed and skills increase. Waist 70-75. *(See Buyer's Guide 2010, last issue.)*

POWDER

Fat boys, off-piste, heli- and cat-skiing

This most obvious category simply means big-snow and soft-snow. These skis hang in shop windows in places like Rossland, Revelstoke and Fernie more than they actually make it to car roofs, but if you still have room in your quiver, the long, über-wide boards with modest sidecuts and soft, even flexes will give you some unforgettable flotation and easy turning in the deep stuff. Waist 90+. *(See Travel Guide 2009, next issue.)*



| ATOMIC | BSI | FISCHER |
|--|--|--|
| NOMAD SAVAGE Ti | KOOTENAY PEAKSTICKS | WATEA 94 |
| \$1,199* | \$420 | \$999 |
| LENGTHS AVAILABLE: 159, 168, 177† , 186 | LENGTHS AVAILABLE: 170, 180† | LENGTHS AVAILABLE: 170, 178, 186† |
| 131 93 120.1 | 125 92 119 | 130 94 118 |
| 18 @ 177 | 18.2 @ 170 | 22 @ 186 |
| BEST IN: EDGE GRIP, STABILITY | BEST IN: AGILITY, SHORT RADIUS | BEST IN: LONG RADIUS, STABILITY |
| <p>According to one tester, but other comments agreed, the Savage Ti is "phenomenal," with a soft shovel that makes turning a breeze and rippin' through bumps and crud a dream. It's best suited for an athletic advanced skier who really wants to push a ski.</p> <p>☑ This is a Formula One racecar of a big-mountain ski. You can take it anywhere at any speed. » MIKE WEISS</p> <p>☑ It has a stiff tail but it's versatile and easy to ski. This ski will make you a better skier. » JOSH FOSTER</p> <p>☑ Wicked ski. Short turns are easy, it pivots nicely underfoot, and is lively yet solid. It chews through crud, chop and really shines on hardpack once the ski is up to speed. » GLEN HYLAND</p> | <p>A lighter, less-aggressive skier will appreciate this confidence-builder that's easy to steer and pivot in shorter-radius turns at moderate speeds. It would make a great first big-mountain ski or would suit an older pro-style skier who likes skiing freshies off-piste.</p> <p>☑ The ski flex and geometry make it an enjoyable ski. Its soft tip offers good initiation, but it holds you back when you step on the gas. » RON BETTS</p> <p>☑ This ski excelled at short-radius turns and cut up the soft snow. It does well in the chutes. » ROSS COUTTS</p> <p>☑ This ski enjoys being kept at a moderate speed to allow the user to gain the needed confidence to progress around the mountain. » D'ARCY SEGO</p> | <p>This ski is big, so it's best for a strong, well-balanced skier who really likes to rip. It's a brute of a ski that dominates in tough conditions. Just point it and go—it likes big, fast turns through everything. "Stable and solid" was a recurring description.</p> <p>☑ An extremely solid platform underfoot made challenging snow conditions feel easy. It has good transition to groomed. Work at the start of the turn to get the ski on edge. Very nice feel. » RON BETTS</p> <p>☑ It powers through crud and tracks with ease. This ski likes speed and is stable and solid underfoot, but be on front of the boot. » GLEN HYLAND</p> <p>☑ A true battleship of a ski that soaks up bumps like a sponge. The beast can get a little grumpy if you try to crank a few quickies. » MIKE NICHOLLS</p> |

*Suggested retail (with bindings). † Lengths tested.



M



M



M



M



M

BIG MOUNTAIN

| HEAD | K2 | LIBERTY | OGASAKA | PRIOR |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| JOHN 94 | obSETHed | HELIX | CC 9.7 | OVERLORD |
| \$1,100* | \$729 | \$725 | \$1,399 | \$999 |
| LENGTHS AVAILABLE: 159, 166, 173, 180† , 187 | LENGTHS AVAILABLE: 169, 179† , 189 | LENGTHS AVAILABLE: 176, 187† | LENGTHS AVAILABLE: 163, 173, 183, 193† | LENGTHS AVAILABLE: 169, 175, 183, 193† |
| 132 94 119 19.5 @ 180 | 138 105 125 24 @ 179 | 135 105 122 25.5 @ 187 | 130 97 120 21 @ 173 | 144 118 130 29 @ 193 |
| BEST IN: VERSATILITY, LONG RADIUS | BEST IN: STABILITY, LONG RADIUS | BEST IN: EDGE GRIP, STABILITY | BEST IN: LONG RADIUS | BEST IN: STABILITY, LONG RADIUS |

“Lively” kept cropping up in the testers’ comments for this ski that offers good grip, and is quick and easy to steer without being jumpy. It handled a wide weight range and can easily take you to the expert level if you’re not there already.

■ This is an advanced to expert ski that’s easy, lively and fun to ski. It’s well rounded, like George St-Pierre.
» **KRISTIAN ARMSTRONG**

■ It’s a real smooth operator that moved easily in the crud and managed to stay on track even when the driver strayed.
» **DREW BRAGG**

■ Despite its size, it was fun and quick turning. This ski was light, lively and powerful, and at the same time nimble.
» **PAUL OUELETTE**

The obSETHed has a true big-mountain feel on the appropriate terrain and conditions with surprising edge grip and stability even when testers were back on the hardpack. It likes to be pushed hard from start to finish. A stronger, active all-mountain skier will love this ski.

■ This puppy screams. The wide platform underfoot caused me to skip over the top of chopped snow and bumps. Ski the rodeo and beyond.
» **DREW BRAGG**

■ For big bars, jump, punch, play—this ski goes over anything and responds to a strong, take-charge driver.
» **MIKE WEISS**

■ It hooks up and holds really well on hardpack and longer-radius turns. This ski has great flotation in crud and trace powder. It’s a little grabby on short radius, but likes speed and is stable.
» **GLEN HYLAND**

The Liberty Helix is sort of a big ol’ smooth GS ski for a Western powderhound. It prefers an athletic skier who likes to find his own way down the mountain. The ski responds best to a heavier weight.

■ I liked how stable this ski felt in the crud. It’s not overly stiff so it provided a smooth ride in difficult conditions. The soft tip let it start a turn easily.
» **RON BETTS**

■ The ski liked to go fast, and be tossed and dropped. It’s a nice big-mountain ski that put a grin on my face. It lets you blaze through all terrain.
» **D’ARCY SEGO**

■ I even loved it in the bumps and crud. It’s very agile and solid underfoot in the non-groomed. You must commit to the inside when you’re back on groomers; it’s tough to tip the inside over.
» **GLEN HYLAND**

The CC 9.7 was good in the steeps and big snow even if it’s tracked up but it’s a bit unpredictable on the easier terrain due to its very stiff tip. It’s best suited for a strong skier who knows how to dance down the mountain on it.

■ It’s easy to initiate but you better be on it to muscle it around the turn. If you show it who’s boss, you’ll be rewarded as it barrels through all snow conditions.
» **MIKE NICHOLLS**

■ This ski handled bumps okay, but not as quick as I wanted in tight spots. It’s a bit sluggish back on the groomed, but tail tuning could have been a problem.
» **DREW BRAGG**

■ A great short-turn ski! It’s nice in chop and crud, but had a speed limit on big open groomers—don’t go over it. This ski was great for trees, powder, bumps and chopped powder.
» **GLEN HYLAND**

Testers loved the Overlord in the powder, and some found that for such a wide ski it was surprisingly responsive. The soft tip and tail made small turns easy. This is a big ski that wants a big driver.

■ This ski is better suited for powder. It skied chop well in short- to medium-radius turns, but doesn’t like longer turns on hardpack.
» **GLEN HYLAND**

■ Don’t judge this ski by its “huge” looks. It’s surprisingly quick on soft snow and strong in big turns.
» **JOSH FOSTER**

■ For its intended purpose, this ski is fantastic. It requires heaps of commitment—this ain’t no high school relationship.
» **KRISTIAN ARMSTRONG**

TEST CRITERIA

Each tester evaluates a number of characteristics out of 10 points to help present a complete picture of how a ski stacks up after a single run. This data is provided for the reader without alteration. At the end of each day, the testers meet to compare their impressions and offer a consensus on which type of skier would enjoy the ski. Testers have their preferences relating to their skiing background and style, so factors such as the length of the ski tested and the tune affects each skier's opinion. Weigh their comments against what's important to you and how you ski. Here's what they are measuring:

EDGE GRIP: How well does the ski hold its line once it's tipped on edge. Usually the stiffer the torsion, the better the edge grip. Edge grip is important for carving. Remember the test skis were tuned by factory technicians for the test day and checked during the day for any deterioration. It makes a huge difference.

STABILITY: As speed and snow conditions vary, so does the feel of the ski underfoot. A ski that is too soft may feel loose and floppy, while a stiff ski may feel heavy and be difficult to initiate into a turn. Well-balanced skis tend to be stable at designed-for speeds, but still retain liveliness for turning.

AGILITY: The result of easy initiation at a variety of speeds, energy transfer from edge-to-edge and good acceleration. When the wow factor is there, the skis are matching the skier's weight and skiing style, and feel light, responsive and inspire confidence. For big cruising turns, agility is a good thing but don't confuse it with wandering instability.

VERSATILITY: Versatility continues to be one of the most important factors and for good reason. Ski manufacturers continue to offer innovations in ski profiles and materials to define the perfect ski. Conditions change with every run and skiers live for the freedom of moving from the bumps, through the crud to carving at speed. In some cases the changes feel seamless to the testers, while in other cases the testers (who are only allowed one run per ski) have to really look for the sweet spot.



MEN



M



M



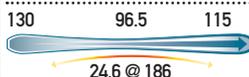
M

ROSSIGNOL

PHANTOM SC 97

\$929

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
170, 178, 186†



BEST IN:
LONG RADIUS, STABILITY

The Phantom is a versatile all-round ski with performance plus. It was at home on the steeps and broken snow, but was also nice on the groomed. Skillful technicians will have fun on it and still be able to pound it off-piste.

☑ This is a race rocket for mountain skiing—charge, go fast and feel secure at speed. It needs to be pushed and driven if you want tighter and shorter arcs. » **MIKE WEISS**

☑ It's a big hill power machine that loves speed through the broken fluff and stuff. » **ROSS COUTTS**

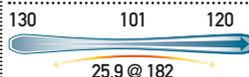
☑ It was a very positive ride, was quick to initiate and moved well in the bumps. It demonstrated good float through the crud. I felt confident letting this ski run. » **DREW BRAGG**

SALOMON

SHOGUN

\$850

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
164, 173, 182†, 191



BEST IN:
LONG RADIUS, AGILITY

The Shogun is for the advanced or even strong intermediate charger looking for a light, quick, agile ski that can handle all off-piste conditions. It's versatile and responsive in the bumps. Stand on the heel for long carving turns.

☑ It's easy to turn and light underfoot—an enjoyable, lively ski that will go anywhere without arguments. » **D'ARCY SEGO**

☑ I loved the feel of the platform underfoot—that feeling was transmitted from groomed into bumps and crud. The ski was responsive in the bumps and easy to guide in the crud. » **GEORGE TERWIEL**

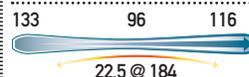
☑ This is a lively ski that's easy to turn in all conditions. It powers through crud and is easy to pivot in bumps. This ski is no trick pony. It's fun and versatile. » **RON BETTS**

VÖLKL

MANTRA

\$850

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
170, 177, 184†, 191



BEST IN:
LONG RADIUS, EDGE GRIP

The Mantra is a big-mountain expert ski that proved it can do it all. All the testers agreed that it was for the type of skier who thinks trees are slalom poles. It was a rocket launcher out of the turns.

☑ This is a very versatile ski that felt solid underfoot in the bumps and a little stiff in the tighter, bigger turns. It had great grip and radius back on the groomed. » **RON BETTS**

☑ It's the slalom ski of big-mountain off-piste. This ski was light and quick-turning, and was great for trees or bumps—a playful dancer. » **MIKE WEISS**

☑ It had great grip in the long turns, and a wider binding provides more leverage over the width of the ski. You can really charge on this ski. » **KRISTIAN ARMSTRONG**



BIG MOUNTAIN - WOMEN'S RECOMMENDATIONS

| | SKIER WEIGHT ◀ LIGHTER HEAVIER ▶ | | SKIER ABILITY ◀ INTERMEDIATE EXPERT ▶ |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| VÖLKL AURA | ██████████▲ | SALOMON GEISHA | ██████████▲ |
| ATOMIC ELYSIAN | ██████████▲ | VÖLKL AURA | ██████████▲ |
| HEAD JOHN 94 | ██████████▲ | K2 MISSBEHAVED | ██████████▲ |
| SALOMON GEISHA | ██████████▲ | OGASAKA CC 9.7 | ██████████▲ |
| K2 MISSBEHAVED | ██████████▲ | BSI KOOTENAY POWDERSTICKS | ██████████▲ |
| ROSSIGNOL PHANTOM SC 97 | ██████████▲ | ATOMIC ELYSIAN | ██████████▲ |
| FISCHER WATEA 94 | ██████████▲ | FISCHER WATEA 94 | ██████████▲ |
| PRIOR OVERLORD | ██████████▲ | ROSSIGNOL PHANTOM SC 97 | ██████████▲ |
| BSI KOOTENAY POWDERSTICKS | ██████████▲ | HEAD JOHN 94 | ██████████▲ |
| OGASAKA CC 9.7 | ██████████▲ | PRIOR OVERLORD | ██████████▲ |

BIG MOUNTAIN - WOMEN'S RECOMMENDATIONS

| | SNOW CONDITIONS ◀ SOFT HARD ▶ | | SKIER STYLE ◀ FINESSE POWER ▶ |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| PRIOR OVERLORD | ██████████▲ | SALOMON GEISHA | ██████████▲ |
| BSI KOOTENAY POWDERSTICKS | ██████████▲ | VÖLKL AURA | ██████████▲ |
| OGASAKA CC 9.7 | ██████████▲ | K2 MISSBEHAVED | ██████████▲ |
| K2 MISSBEHAVED | ██████████▲ | ATOMIC ELYSIAN | ██████████▲ |
| HEAD JOHN 94 | ██████████▲ | HEAD JOHN 94 | ██████████▲ |
| ROSSIGNOL PHANTOM SC 97 | ██████████▲ | ROSSIGNOL PHANTOM SC 97 | ██████████▲ |
| FISCHER WATEA 94 | ██████████▲ | FISCHER WATEA 94 | ██████████▲ |
| ATOMIC ELYSIAN | ██████████▲ | PRIOR OVERLORD | ██████████▲ |
| VÖLKL AURA | ██████████▲ | OGASAKA CC 9.7 | ██████████▲ |
| SALOMON GEISHA | ██████████▲ | BSI KOOTENAY POWDERSTICKS | ██████████▲ |



W



W



W



W



W

ATOMIC

ELYSIAN

\$899*

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
152, 160, 168†, 176

124 92 116



BEST IN:
AGILITY, LONG RADIUS

The Elysian is a speedy, versatile performance ski that will react when commanded by an advanced skier who knows what she wants. It rips in longer turns, but is also happy in shorter turns and rough conditions.

Give this ski some authority to initiate the turn and it's on a roll. The firm tail will hold heavier skiers. It's adaptive to all snow conditions. » MARTINA OSMAN

The weight of the ski makes it easy to work through tricky snow, but it's light enough to pick up and turn. Great edge control. » ROBYN BEAUDRY

A very smooth, soft ride down the mountain. It's easy to ski well on this one; you will improve on this ski. » VAL CLUTIER

BSI

KOOTENAY PEAKSTICKS

\$420

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
170†, 180

125 92 119



BEST IN:
STABILITY, LONG RADIUS

Testers felt this ski would best suit a heavier, aggressive advanced-expert skier looking for an off-piste-only ski. It's most at home in soft snow, but could also handle the crud with little worry.

This is a great soft-snow, off-piste ski that's manoeuvrable, floaty and light. It handled crud easily, and is stable at speed in big, long turns. Timid need not apply. » LISA SUUTARI

It was surprisingly stable in long turns for such a light ski and agile in shorter turns. I had to work the ski to get it turning on groomed and harder bumps. » MELANIE KAMPHUIS

It has a sweet, consistent edge grip hooking up the turns. This ski offers a slick ride through powder and crud, and likes to go fast. What an all-round terrific ski off-piste! » NIKI COCHREN

FISCHER

WATEA 94

\$999

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
170, 178†, 186

130 94 118



BEST IN:
LONG RADIUS, STABILITY

This ski had the wow factor. It's made for the heavy, aggressive skier who knows how to rip it up off-piste. Both the women and men (who tested the same model, different length) related it to a Cadillac.

Wow, what a ride! The new short bow-type tip plows through anything. It loves to eat up powder, carve long turns, and handled soft and hard bumps. » MELANIE KAMPHUIS

Heavier skiers will use the flex of this ski, but intermediates may be tested by the pivoting effort required to turn it. It's a bully in long-radius turns. » MICHELLE OSTAFEW

Great performance ski. It has awesome stability on soft snow with high-speed control. It's easy to control, turns well and is able to cruise downhill with long radius. A shorter test length would have improved short-radius turning. » AIKA MASUDA

HEAD

JOHN 94

\$750

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
159, 166, 173†, 180, 187

131 93 118



BEST IN:
LONG RADIUS, STABILITY,
AGILITY

Strong girls with advanced skills can take this ski anywhere. It's a versatile ski that was solid in all conditions and could handle all turn shapes. It scored high by the female testers for edge control.

It's super playful and lively, and has great energy in short turns and awesome edge grip. The ski is stable on long, groomed runs, and could switch turn shapes with ease. » WENDY ANDERSON

This is a great ski for a lightweight who likes to go hard. It's extremely responsive and cuts through the crud like it's a groomer. » NIKI COCHREN

It feels very precise from edge-to-edge. This ski is great for an athletic, aggressive skier. » PATTY ATKEY

K2

MISSBEHAVED

\$650

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
149, 159, 169†

130 98 118



BEST IN:
STABILITY

An advanced to expert female skier who likes to venture off-piste will enjoy the Missbehaved. It's a solid and agile one-package deal that ate up the pow, zipped through the bumps and bounced back onto the groomers with glee.

This ski is stable and responsive in the crud. It likes big turns, but easily navigated through the trees. A fun ski! » NIKI COCHREN

It's easy on the legs in powder and crud, and sprightly in the bumps. It's solid cruising at speed, but completely workable at a moderate pace. This is a great fun and energetic all-mountain ski. » LISA SUUTARI

It has a super-solid platform in chopped snow, and is awesome in big, long turns in soft snow. It floats on top of the snow and glides effortlessly. Fine on groomed. Very forgiving. » WENDY ANDERSON

WOMEN

BIG MOUNTAIN



W



W



W



W



W

OGASAKA

CC 9.7

\$1,399

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
163, 173, **183†**, 193

130 97 120

21 @ 173

BEST IN:
STABILITY, LONG RADIUS

PRIOR

OVERLORD

\$999

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
169, **175†**, 183, 193

140 112 128

23 @ 175

BEST IN:
STABILITY

ROSSIGNOL

PHANTOM SC 97

\$929

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
170, **178†**, 186

130 96.5 115

22.2 @ 178

BEST IN:
LONG RADIUS, EDGE GRIP

SALOMON

GEISHA

\$850

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
164†, 173

126 97 116

20.6 @ 164

BEST IN:
VERSATILITY

VÖLKL

AURA

\$850

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
156, 163, **170†**

130 94 113

21.1 @ 170

BEST IN:
AGILITY

The CC 9.7 is for an aggressive expert and backside skier looking for the steeps and deep. It offers a stable platform on soft snow, prefers longer-radius turns and cuts through crud with ease.

Bring your expert turns for this one. The stiffer tail makes initiating turns harder, but once you've got the rhythm it floats smoothly on top of powder and through crud. » MARTINA OSMAN

This ski is easy to turn, big or small. It has tremendous edging, likes to go fast and has great precision in crud. » NIKI COCHREN

It wants to ride soft snow on steep runs. Get off centre and it will give you a little kick. Work it and it will turn, but it really just wants to ride. » SHARON WATSON

Young, aggressive skiers who tend toward the backcountry will appreciate this soft-snow specialist that could also handle the crud. Testers found it surprisingly agile for such a big ski.

Wow! The ski likes to travel through anything, always providing a smooth ride even for the lighter skier. It's an irresistible ski that you can't help but smile on and on. » NIKI COCHREN

This ski begs for lots and lots of powder. It's responsive and solid. For an added bonus, it plows effortlessly through the broken snow. » MARTINA OSMAN

It's a stable ski through the crusty snow, handled soft bumps with ease, and did well in short and long turns. It's not happy on hardpack—this is a soft-snow, big-line ski. » MELANIE KAMPHUIS

The testers debated whether this ski is best for a lighter or heavier skier, but all of them loved it no matter their weight. It's a versatile, adaptable and energetic ski for an aggressive, finesse skier.

I found this ski super-versatile and easy to skid or steer. It floats well, cuts through crud and reacts fast in bumps. » ROBYN BEAUDRY

This ski has great performance on- and off-piste, and awesome stability at speed. It works well in bumps and in long and short turns. It's lots of fun for a mountaineer. » AIKA MASUDA

Skiers will enjoy the energy in this ski in the bumps, short turns and fast cruising. In deep and mixed stuff it was very manoeuvrable, but needs a well-balanced driver. » LISA SUUTARI

This is a sassy intermediate to advanced ski that felt more like an all-mountain ski. It was solid in bumps and chopped-up snow, with good performance edge-to-edge. The stiffer tail can catch you looking if you get behind it.

I really enjoyed this ski. It's stable and forgiving, a good confidence booster, that did well in the short and long turns in crusty conditions. » MELANIE KAMPHUIS

This ski would be better suited for a heavier skier. It's easy to skid turns, so an intermediate would benefit the most. It likes big skidded turn at moderate speeds. » ROBYN BEAUDRY

The sweet spot is forward, and a stiff tail makes it very agile if you're on top of it. It's solid in chopped snow and has good edge grip at speed. » WENDY ANDERSON

The Aura is for the finesse expert who can feel the snow and adjust her skiing to make the ski-and-skier-bond work. It proved to be a stable ski that sliced through the crud, floated on the powder and yet carved up the groomed.

This ski is incredibly nimble, reliable and forgiving at the same time. It's ideal for a lighter skier, and so much fun you won't take it off. » MARTINA OSMAN

Wow, I'm impressed, this ski is so versatile. Short, long, soft, groomed—I was skiing well all the time. » VAL CLUTIER

This is a lively ski with great range and versatility. It wants to turn and gives up very little. It's great on-piste, short or long turns, and predictable in the steep and deep. » LISA SUUTARI