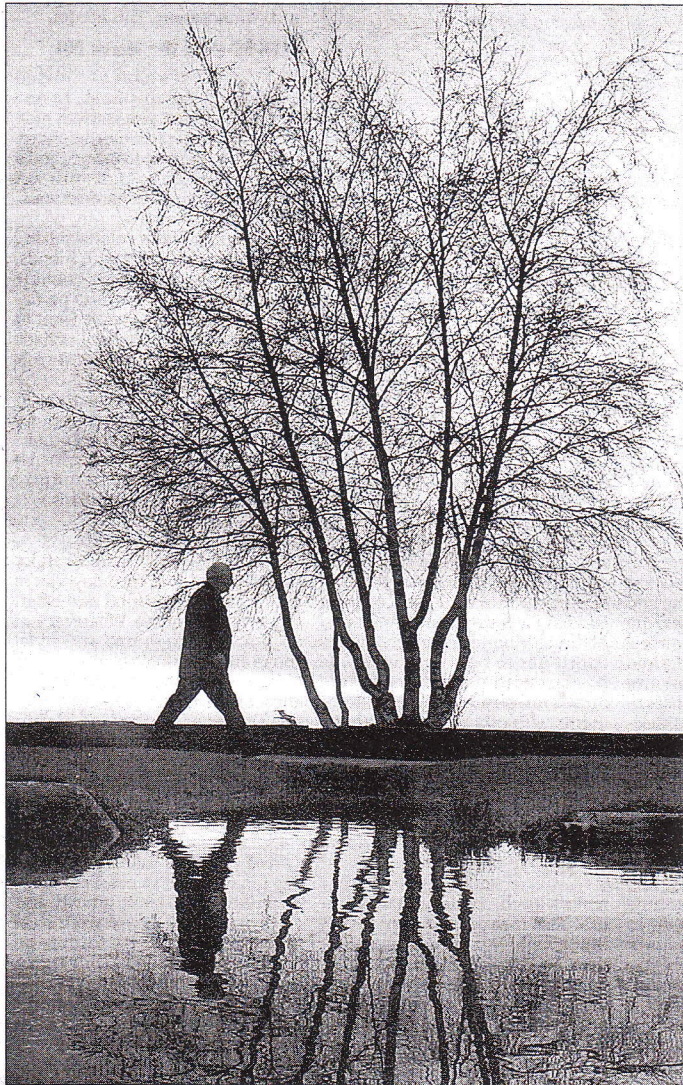


# What's your winter secret?

**NEW CONTEST:**  
Feeling a little snowbound? Draw some inspiration here — and you could win a fantastic prize



Beauty can be found in the winter gloom — as this man found during a break from the rain in an Ambleside park. FILE PHOTO BY WAYNE LEIDENFROST — THE PROVINCE

BY CHERYL CHAN  
STAFF REPORTER

When rainfall warnings replace UV readings, the natural instinct of British Columbians is to hunker down and hibernate until spring.

But for we hardy Canadians who thrive in rain, snow, sleet, and hail, now is the time to embrace the best the season has to offer. The stark beauty of a grey and white landscape after an overnight snowfall. The sexy sound of blades slicing through ice or snow. A decadent mug of hot chocolate enjoyed beside a crackling fire.

As a Swedish saying goes (hardy people too, Swedes): "There is no bad weather. Only bad clothing."

Shanda Jerrett, a transplanted Aussie and owner of Gumdrops, a Kitsilano store specializing in wet-weather gear, knows this first-hand.

The key to beating the winter blues is bundling up in the right gear, she says.

Rain is a blessing, believes Jerrett. "It's a reprieve for long, hot summers. It makes the grass green and flowers bloom," she says.

A fun rainy-day pastime she indulges in — to the dismay of her walking companions — is puddle-jumping. "The splashier, the better," she says. "It's all about getting someone else wet."

She savours the liberating feeling of stepping into a big puddle with "invincible boots" rather than walking around the intersection for a dry spot.

Once water-proofed, let yourself loose and do activities you would normally do, she says.



The Lower Mainland has plenty to offer.

■ In February, Granville Island hosts Winter-ruption, a West Coast version of winter carnivals more common in colder climes.

You can enjoy winter-themed crafts, street entertainers and a myriad of art, performances and free entertainment.

■ If nature's your cup of tea, Vancouver's green spaces are ideal for serene rainy-day walks.

Chinatown's Sun Yat-Sen Garden, with its covered walkway, is especially enchanting in the winter, when raindrops bead like pearls on the sloping roof tiles before landing with a soft splash in lotus-strewn ponds.

■ Every second and fourth Saturday, wander the aisles of the Winter Farmers' Market at WISE Hall on Adanac Street and browse the edible goodies on offer, including honey, mushrooms, potted herbs, greenhouse veggies, and organic grass-fed meat.

■ As befits a winter Olympics city, Vancouver offers an endless array of winter activities within easy access, including skiing, snowboarding, skating, curling, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, tubing, even dog-sledding.



Local mountains offer some great but less-well-known activities:

■ Grab your skates and glide atop Grouse Mountain's 8,000-square-foot outdoor skating pond.

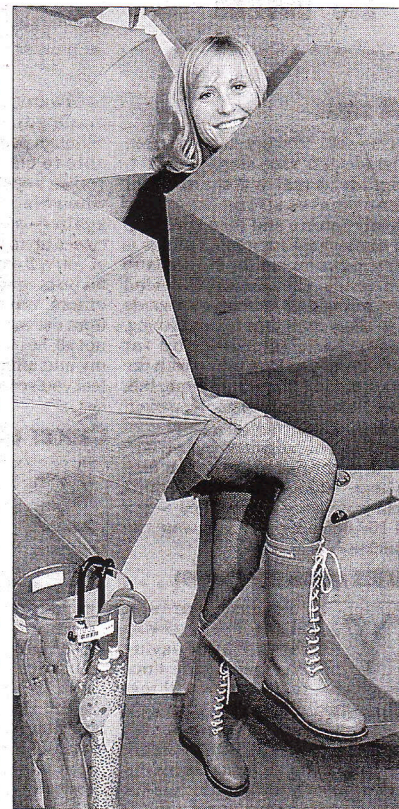
■ Go for a guts-and-glory experience at Cypress Mountain's Snowshoe Fondue Tour. A guided tour through hushed forests and snowy sub-alpine meadows ends with a cheese-and-chocolate fondue dinner in a mountain lodge.

■ Until March 24, Girls Ride Free after 6 p.m. on Mondays at Seymour Mountain. Women can ski and board for free.



■ Heed the call of the wild by dog-sledding on Mt. Seymour, where six majestic huskies haul blanket-equipped sleds through the pristine wilderness.

■ Farther afield, one of nature's most awesome spectacles — the largest gathering of bald eagles in North America — occurs every winter in Brackendale, north of Squamish.



Shanda Jerrett — owner of Gumdrops, a rainwear and accessories boutique — has a favourite rainy-day pastime: puddle-jumping. LES BAZZO — THE PROVINCE

Peer through binoculars as the white-headed creatures soar overhead or perch seven to eight atop bare branches of trees along the Squamish River.

■ In Whistler, the Whistler Arts Council is throwing a winter shindig to celebrate the upcoming Olympics.

Take advantage of the crisp mountain air and picturesque village setting and catch one of the outdoor film screenings. Or, bundle up, take a thermos of coffee, and head up the mountain to gape at the exquisite, delicate masterpieces hand-crafted by the Canadian Snow Sculpture Team on Feb. 27 and 29.

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## We want to hear from you

Before you know it, it'll be spring and you'll be wondering: Where did the winter go?

But first, we want to hear from *Province* readers about your favourite things to do and places to visit in the winter. Starting next Sunday in *Unwind*, our Winter Secrets contest will feature a selection of your letters and photos. Every reader who enters has a chance to win one of several great prizes. Just go to [www.theprovince.com](http://www.theprovince.com) and click on "Winter Secrets."

Visit [www.theprovincecontests.com](http://www.theprovincecontests.com) and you could win a great skiing vacation for four!