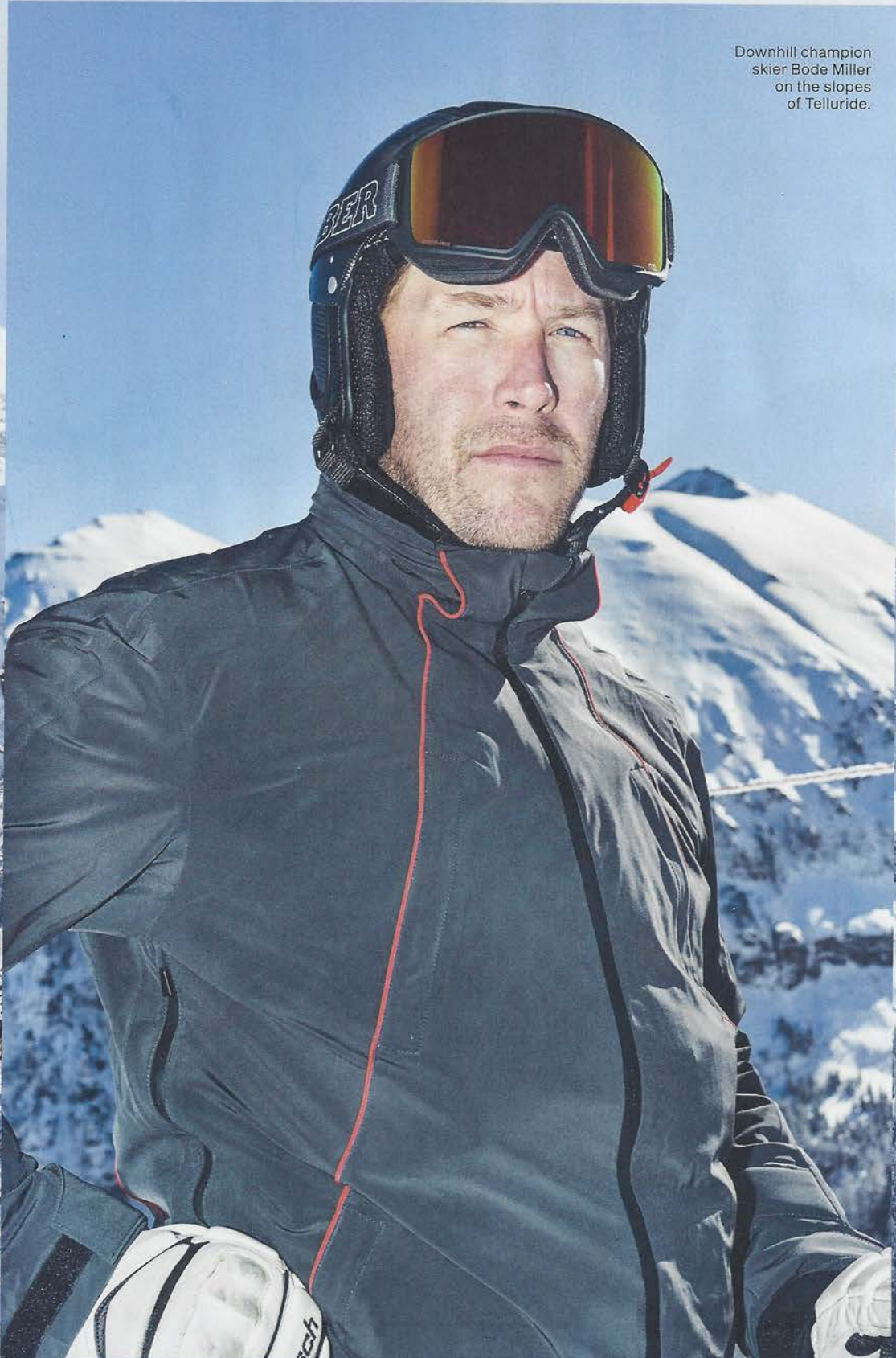


Downhill champion skier Bode Miller on the slopes of Telluride.



KING *of the* MOUNTAIN

Bode Miller's Bomber Experiences program takes skiers to some of the world's top off-piste spots, with game-upping tips from—and plenty of hang time with—the five-time Olympian himself.

by **VICKY LOWRY**. Photographs by **IAN ALLEN**

THE INSTRUCTIONS ON the printed itinerary were brief: "Meet Bode Miller in the locker room at 6:15 a.m." Precisely 15 minutes later—boots buckled, helmet clipped on, nerves suppressed—I found myself in the cab of a Sno-Cat on a crisp December morning in Telluride, Colorado, with America's most decorated male ski racer. The vehicle lumbered up to Revelation Bowl, a 12,500-foot-high, powder-coated ridgeline in the San Juan Mountains. As we waited in the thin air at the top of See Forever, a meandering trail that starts off steep along the upper ridge of the bowl, I practiced self-control (in other words, trying not to freak out). I was about to ski with a five-time Olympian who has won four World Cup championship titles and is a household name to anyone who follows sports, as well as the namesake for a legion of children and pets born in the 2000s, and I didn't want to fall. It turns out I had no reason to worry. Miller pointed his pole to the slope and gently instructed, "Ski this line, straight down the middle, where it's groomed. The snow on the sides will be soft and harder to hold an edge. Follow me."

Miller is principal owner and brand ambassador for Bomber Ski, a company that manufactures state-of-the-art ski equipment in Italy. (It takes 32 hours to make a pair of Bomber skis, and fewer than 5,000 pairs are produced each year.) The New York City-based enterprise has a travel program called Bomber Experiences that gives recreational skiers the chance to ski with and learn from Miller at bucket-list destinations around the globe.

With itineraries that guarantee skiing fresh tracks—via Sno-Cats and helicopters—and expertly guided runs throughout the trip, Bomber has all but eliminated the usual aggravations, like waiting on lift lines and navigating crowded trails, to amplify the adrenaline-fueled exhilaration of whizzing downhill on snow.

For several years the program operated by invitation only; 2020 marks the first time it will be open to the public. A five-day Bomber trip in March, geared for couples, will bring skiers to the slopes of Telluride and Deer Valley, Utah, and will include scenic drives in Bentley SUVs, transport by private jet between the ski resorts, yoga classes, and nightly dinners at the best restaurants in town. For a weeklong expedition to Greenland in late April, to be followed by a similar one to Antarctica at the end of the year, Miller will be joined by Doug Stoup, an acclaimed polar explorer. Guests will sleep on a 250-foot luxury yacht, get whisked to the slopes by an onboard helicopter, and spend afternoons dogsledding, kayaking, and, in Antarctica, hiking among penguins. The groups will be kept small—18 to 22 people per trip—and most of the adventures will be open to skiers of all abilities.

The singular prerequisite, of course, is a passion for the sport. "You find inspiration and confidence and self-belief in random places, and I think skiing can be that place—I know it was for me," Miller told me over cocktails and platters of hamachi crudo and duck pastrami at Sidework, a lounge-like



*Clockwise from top left:
A pair of Bomber skis; a
cabin at Dunton Hot
Springs resort in
Colorado; the bar at
Dunton Hot Springs;
Miller leads a group
down the slopes; mealtime
with the Bomber group.*

MILLER, BOTH EASYGOING AND INTENSE, PROVED TO BE A COMPANIONABLE COACH WITH A LET'S-JUST-SKI SPIRIT.

restaurant with a retro vibe in downtown Telluride. The lifelong skier, who grew up in spartan circumstances living in a cabin without electricity or running water in the woods of New Hampshire, is especially reflective these days, after he and his wife, professional beach-volleyball player Morgan Beck, lost their 19-month-old daughter in a drowning accident in 2018. “You tend to take a much more critical look at things,” he said. “Both my wife and I wanted to find a way to balance our lives.”

Some of that balance is expected to come when the family moves to the open wilderness of Montana in the coming years. In the meantime, these Bomber Experiences allow the once head-wild athlete to share all that he has learned, in skiing and in life, by showing people a rarefied view of the sport. “I had the opportunity to experience the magical high end of skiing, where the red carpet is always rolled out, and I wanted to share that unique side of it,” he said. “Everyone has the ability to find excitement in skiing regardless of their level. You don’t have to be good at it to enjoy it, but you can enjoy improving.”

For the next three days, I awoke without protest at dawn and skied with Miller before the lifts opened to the public, gliding down the pleasurable terrain at Telluride. Perched above the historic Western town, whose streets are lined with charming Victorian-era homes, the resort offers some of the highest and most varied skiing in the Rockies, including impeccably groomed trails, aspen glades, untracked bowls, and narrow chutes pockmarked with moguls. Its hotel and dining establishments are just as alluring. The Lumière with Inspirato, a family-run ski-in, ski-out hotel, serves as base camp for Bomber trips to Telluride; it’s at once elegant and intimate, offering spacious, light-filled suites and just the kind of sumptuous breakfast fare to fuel high-octane skiing. The rare moments when I wasn’t on the slopes, Bomber kept me busy, with a day trip, for example, to the 19th-century mining town turned luxe resort of Dunton Hot Springs, where I soaked outdoors in a mineral-rich pool during a substantial snowstorm.

The main action, however, remained on the ski slopes with Miller. While he admitted to me that he was out of shape—his wife had just given birth to twins and he joked that the only parts of his body that had any strength were his biceps, from lifting children all day long—he descended the mountain with effortless power and grace. I, on the other hand, was legitimately rusty. While I grew up skiing in New England—it’s what my family did together on weekends—being based in New York City has

severely limited my time on the slopes, dulling my skills as much as my confidence on snow. If I get my ski legs at all, it’s usually on the last day of a trip at the end of the ski season. Miller, who is at once easygoing and intense, spinning with “about 10,000 ideas a minute,” as he put it—proved to be a companionable coach with a let’s-just-ski spirit. “I don’t get that technical. I might offer some basic tips or do some drills, but mostly I get to know people by watching them ski,” he explained. “You just can’t hide certain things from me while we are skiing. There’s no judgment. The more you engage your true personality, the more you ski as who you are, the more enjoyable it is.”

At the top of a knoll, along a nicely pitched slope called Polar Queen, one of Telluride’s central runs, Miller demonstrated his gift for knowing me through my skiing. “You ski beautifully, but a little conservatively—you’re not taking enough risk,” he counseled. “You’re finishing one turn and holding back, waiting to make the next turn.” Busted. “Trust yourself,” he continued, “and you’ll make much more fluid and smooth-looking turns.” And, just like that—thank you very much, Bode Miller—I did. ☺

For more information, go to bomberski.com/experience. Prices start around \$17,950 per person.



Bomber for Bentley Centenary Edition skis (left) and Black Diamond Edition skis on top of a Bentayga Bentley.