

Great Galavanting Goons: Gothics Gastronomy

Oscar Bortz, Oliver Churchill, Nathan Merrill

Food

Food planning was one of our proudest feats. We planned for 4000 calories per day over the 34 days of our expedition, with 4 days of emergency food should weather thwart our planned pickup day. Oscar's mother freeze-dried large batches of food at home, which was excellent for our overnight trips away from base camp, as well as hot lunches on the go. Sausages, cheese, bacon, and steak all kept frozen, buried in our snow refrigerator, and our only regret was not bringing more. Next time we would mark our refrigerator better, as we lost access to our perishables after a storm knocked down our marker and buried the refrigerator for a week.

We ate oats or granola on rushed mornings, and powdered eggs and pancakes with jam or honey while we waited out storms. We developed an implicit understanding during storm days: whoever left the tent to pee first would cook food for the rest. Lunches were eaten on the go: salami or cheese for a rare treat, but normally just protein bars or tortillas with Biscoff butter. Since lunch was often forgotten in the blur of our adventure, we'd fill the calorie deficit when we got back to camp, gorging on pesto pasta with summer sausage, Shin ramen with bulgogi beef (freeze dried) and peanut butter, or spam and rice (with edamame!). We drank liters of Rosamonte yerba mate every day for our caffeine fix, consuming 2 kilograms of herb throughout the trip.

As our trip was nearing its end, we realized our food supply was as well. We had roughly 4 days in emergency calories to keep us going, but not much waste left over. Next time, we will bring more sauces!!! Our spice rack saved the day many times, but hot sauce, soy sauce, and sesame oil would have come in handy.

Also, bring tons of candy! We thought our 7lbs of twin snakes, 5lbs of swedish fish, 48-pack of snickers bars, and countless other treats were comically overkill, but by the last day only the bottom 1/3rd of our 5lbs of honey remained.

Equipment

For our base camp, we used 2 3-person 4-season tents for sleeping and a Black Diamond MegaSnow as our cook tent. This cook tent was essential, providing us a 3rd space as well as housing our 2-burning coleman stove and 15lbs propane tank. This setup was a workhorse for our Michelin-star menu, and our snow-melting factory. The propane tank couldn't have been a better size; it was virtually empty by the end of the trip.

The biggest mishap was on our second extended trip away from base camp, when we realized on our brand new tent, the poles were defective! The smaller pole-sections in each joint that make the poles snap together weren't secured in place, and would disappear inside the bigger pole sections leaving a useless jumble of metal. After briefly resigning to spend the night burritoed in our rescue sled, we found a special tapping motion that would dislodge the stuck sections, and swiftly epoxied them in place.

We each brought a pair of ski touring boots, which we ended up wearing the vast majority of the trip. We also brought approach shoes, mountaineering boots, and rock climbing shoes, preparing for a variety of potential conditions, and hoping to climb multipitch rock routes on the spectacular Adamant granite. We ended up jamming far more cracks in our ski boots! We brought a full trad rack which was only used twice on a minor spire next to our camp.

What worked, what didn't, and why

We had hoped that this trip would combine elements of classical mountaineering, multi-pitch traditional climbing, and backcountry skiing. However, the conditions from May 20-June 23 were conducive exclusively for travel on skis. We were hoping to encounter summer-time corn snow conditions and dry rock for climbing. Fresh snow accumulated constantly throughout the trip, keeping the rock snowy, cold, and wet. On the flip side, we skied lots of powder!! The predictable corn cycle we were hoping arrived at the very tail end of our trip, giving us phenomenal descents of Silvertip Mountain, Pioneer Peak, and Yggdrasil Mountain in our final days.

Travel Logistics

Leaving from Colorado Springs, we drove up to Golden, BC in one long push. We pushed the SUV to its limits on cargo, filling every nook and cranny (and the roof) with expedition gear and personal items that needed to get home. Eager to get out of the claustrophobic seats, we opted to stay in a hostel in Golden, BC. Camping would have been cheaper, but it would have meant redoing our meticulous pack job which was out of the question. We arrived at the Golden airport for our 9:00am departure, beating the pilot there, and began unloading. After loading up (possibly too much gear for our undersized helicopter), the team at Whitetooth Helicopters were kind enough to let us leave our car parked by the hanger.

The flight back to civilization went without a hiccup as well, and after touching down around 9:30am, we drove the 10 hours back to Vashon island, just outside of Seattle, where we slept at Oliver's house. After a day decompressing, Oliver dropped Oscar and Nathan off at the airport, where we flew home to Los Angeles and Portland.

Permitting

No permitting was necessary on our trip. The Gothics, Adamants, Nobility, and Sir Sanford Groups are all on Canadian Crownlands without fees or permits required for wilderness travel.

Leadership

In our team, the official leadership positions were "the kook" (Oscar), "the gumby" (Nathan), and "the gaper" (Oliver).

Before this trip each of us had very limited experience in the alpine. Nathan had the most experience with glacier travel, but mostly in late-summer conditions with a large rope-team. Oscar and Oliver had spent more time ski-touring, but exclusively in un-glaciated terrain. Nathan dawned climbing skins for the first time just 4 months before departing for what would become a 35 day ski-touring extravaganza.

Each of us were aware of our inexperience, and we approached new terrain with an abundance of caution, slowly progressing onto more committing lines. We experienced every communication blunder imaginable throughout the trip, and each of those moments made us better teammates and individual mountaineers.

By the end of the trip, each of us had skied more days on the Gothic Glacier than we ever had before, combined. This was a formative experience for each of us, changing our relationship with the mountains, and hopefully propelling us towards a life of adventure in the alpine.

Safety and risk management

Traveling on hazardous mountain terrain, our decisions had to take all of the possible risks into account and mitigate them. We wore avalanche beacons, carried radios, and kept our probes and shovels handy. We had daily discussions of the current avalanche problems present, and performed snow tests during the day. If we had any doubts of the snow's stability, we would stay off avalanche terrain for the day. We all wore harnesses with progress capture devices and slings to perform a crevasse rescue, and dynamically made the decision of when to rope up. While the classic mountaineer typically travels in a rope team on both the uphill and downhill, we wanted to ski the downhills. Because of this, we focused on relatively simple glacier terrain, used our skintrack as a guide to avoid hazards on the downhill, and skied in control. If the visibility worsened or it was a part of the glacier we weren't familiar with, we would rope up.

Route Descriptions/Itinerary

Mt Fria North Slope (Day 2):

We spent our first day on the Gothic Glacier digging out platforms for our tents, a pit for our refrigerator, and a cave for our food supplies. The next day, we explored the Gothic Glacier, roped up and probing for snow depth. The fat snowpack meant even our longest probe couldn't touch glacial ice. We un-roped and skinned up the ~30 degree slope leading to Fria's Eastern summit with an excellent position to scope the rest of the Gothics Group. Tricky skiing with grabby spring pow lead us back to the Gothic Glacier.

Pioneer Peak Eastern Summit (Day 3)

This was our first of 4 attempts to ski off of Pioneer Peak's main summit. We slept in too late and encountered very warm & wet mashed-potato conditions. Out of fear of wet loose slides, we pivoted to the lower Eastern Summit. We did not learn our lesson for the rest of the trip, repeatedly sleeping in and skiing too-warm snow.

Toadstool Col to Fria South Slope & Western Summit to Fria's 4th class ridge to Fria's North Slope. (Day 4)

After spending all day in our tents with fresh snowfall and intense winds, the weather broke and Oliver and Oscar decided to ski the Col next to camp at 5pm.

Oliver's first ski cut triggered a pretty mondo wet-loose slide and we should have immediately turned around. Instead we decided to ski the slide path and stranded ourselves below the Gothic Glacier.

Deciding against wallowing to our hips booting the couloir, we looked for a route we could ascend on skins. We traversed around Gibraltar and ended up skinning up the south slopes to the summit of Mt Fria.

From Fria's West Summit, we traversed the knife-edge 4th class ridge towards the north slope which we had skied two days before.

Using terrain features as protection, we alpine-humped and ski-boot-jammed our way to Fria's east summit in 3 pitches, where we followed our tracks back to camp, arriving at 10:30pm.



Pioneer Peak (Day 6)

After arriving at Friendship Col (our intended line), we encountered warm loose snow and bailed, learning from day 4's Toadstool Col epic.

Our alternative was the spectacular 3rd class ridge of Pioneer Peak! The route was straightforward but engaging and provided our first views of the Adamant Range. The wind-blasted snow high on the Gothic Glacier was much firmer and the skiing conditions were fabulous back down the Gothic Glacier.



Yggdrasil-Wotan Col (Day 7)

At the Yggdrasil-Wotan Col, it started to dump sleet and we briefly considered retreating. Fortunately we decided to stay and wait out the weather with a few short pitches on the Yggdrasil Glacier. The storm slowly cleared and we were greeted with blue skies on our ski descent back to the Gothic Glacier.

Pioneer Pass to Lower 505 Bowl to The Ironman (Day 8)

Skied Pioneer Pass in barely edgeable hardpack, before transitioning to premature corn on the final pitch down the Lower 505 Bowl. Followed a concavity in the Granite Glacier towards the slope separating The Ironman and Austerity Mountain. Skinned up, using our tracks to box-out crevasses for the descent. Crossed the bergschrund via a narrow snowbridge to the saddle between the sub-summits of The Ironman..

Tackled 3,000 ft of incredible starchy snow in a number of smaller pitches, before camping at tree line by Fairy Meadows





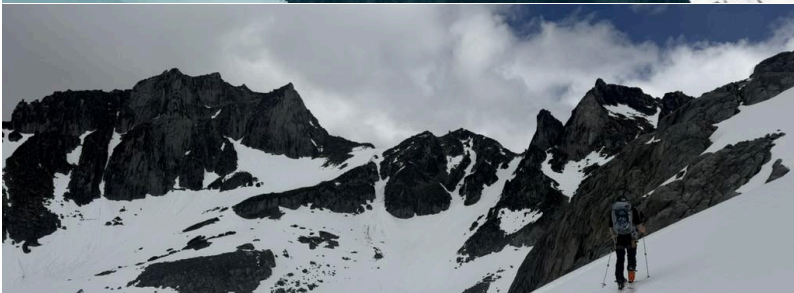
Upper Gothic Glacier from East Peak-Pioneer Col (Day 12)

After two brutal storm days confined to the tents, we decided to ski despite the conditions, akin to the inside of God's ping pong ball.

We had scoped this line extensively from our camp, and had identified the crevassed areas to avoid.

We ended up roping up to cross a complicated zone with thinly-bridged crevasses on the ascent. For the descent, we followed the GPS track from our ski of this glacier on day 2.

The whiteout made for very tricky ski conditions, but the cold powder turns were worth the disorientation.



Mt Stockmer West Face (Day 14)

We finally made the trek towards this appealing snow slope visible from our camp.

The skiing down the Yggdrasil-Wotan Col was incredible and the crevasses well-filled in on the concavities.

We were able to skin just shy of the summit before a ski-boot scramble on kitty-litter choss.

We skied a 1000ft of delectable over-warmed corn before reversing our route back to camp.

Friendship Col to The Echo Glacier (Day 17)

After a two day blizzard dropping a foot of warm powder, we skied over the friendship col to the Echo Glacier where we lapped the lower bowls all day



Friendship Col to Houdini Needle Couloir (Day 18)

We crossed friendship col again the next day with overnight gear, intending to spend three nights exploring the Echo Cirque and the Nobility Group. We had a second day of great powder skiing down the Echo Glacier. Then, we booted up the aesthetic couloir next to the Houdini Needle. The skiing was incredible and the vibes immaculate.



Lower Granite Glacier to Red Tube to the Forbes Glacier to Enterprise North (Day 19)

With poor visibility and fresh snow, we roped up on the ascent and encountered a stout snowpack with no signs of crevassing. We followed the ascent track diligently while skiing, scoring many zero viz pow turns.



Lower Granite Glacier to Red Tube to Forbes Glacier to Nobility Glacier to Mt Sir William to Upper Granite Glacier “Scotts Right” (Day 20)

This was one of the best days of the trip with incredible powder skiing and blue bird views. We all agreed Mt Sir William was the greatest pow run of our lives.



Thor Pass to Adamant Moraine to Lower Adamant Glacier to Azimuth Notch. (Day 24)

With the heaviest packs any of us have ever carried, we booted down Thor Pass on chossy dirt and rock barely dusted by snow. After dropping a food cache on the Upper Adamant Glacier, we hiked down the treacherous loose moraine to the lower glacier. We slogged over Azimuth Notch and decided to dig a platform to sleep there, with spectacular 360 views.



Azimuth Notch to Silvertip Glacier to Great Cairn (day 25)

We dropped another food cache off on the Silvertip Glacier before skiing its outflow all the way down to the snowline. After seeing the broken-up foot of the Sir Sanford Glacier, we decided to spend the night there and approach the glacier via an alternate route the next day.



Citadel Mountain to Sir Sanford Glacier to Palisade Pass to Haworth Glacier to Great Cairn. (day 27)

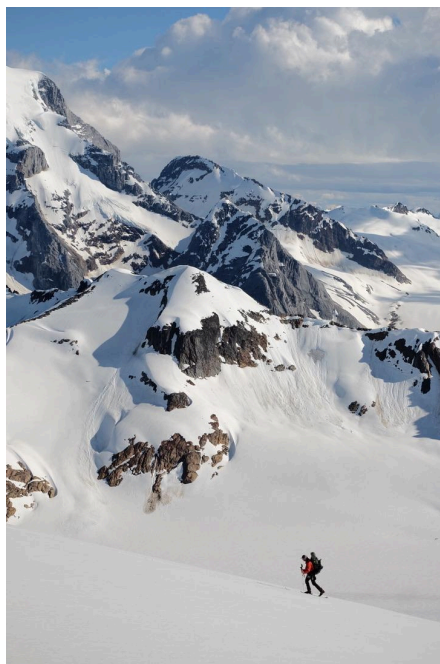
We woke up early and booted up the North Face of Citadel Mountain to its summit. Oliver and Oscar skied down the chalky steeps while Nathan reversed the bootpack.

A storm approached, so we packed up camp and reversed course, arriving at the treeline to spend the night.



Silvertip Couloir to Azimuth Notch to Lower Adamant Glacier to Adamant Moraine to Upper Adamant Glacier (Day 29)

Booted up the Silvertip Couloir at dawn, and scored spectacular corn skiing down to our camp. Packed up camp and skinned up the Silvertip Glacier before booting across Azimuth Notch and skiing down to the Adamant Glacier. The ascent over the moraine was terrifying as giant rocks detached from snowfields and plummeted down adjacent gullies.



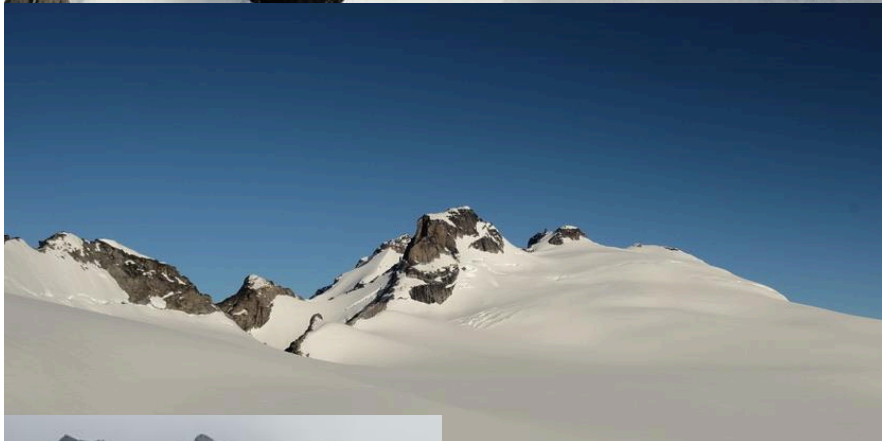
Upper Adamant Glacier to Thor Pass to Goon Mtn (Day 30)

Enjoyed a lazy morning beneath the Adamant Cirque, ate all of our remaining food, packed up camp, skied the Upper Adamant Glacier, skinned up the Thor Glacier, booted Thor Pass, and skinned across the Gothic Glacier back to home-sweet-home: Goon Mountain.



Ski Descent of Pioneer Peak True Summit (Day 31)

Enjoyed a gorgeous blue-bird day on the summit of Pioneer Peak, soaking in the panoramic views of our previous objectives. Hoots, hollers, yips, yews, and other assorted stoke-sounds serenaded our ski descent down thousands of feet of perfect bouncy corn. This was one of our best days, with perfect weather, perfect skiing, and a summit which had eluded us since our first attempt on day 3.



Ascent of Mt Thor (Day 32)

Enjoyed our final lazy storm day on Goon Mtn before strapping on our mountain boots (for the first time of the trip) and booting up Mt Thor's 4th class East Ridge, adjacent to our camp. Oscar chipped a tooth on a cliff bar at the summit.



Ascents of Mt. Wotan and Yggdrasil Mtn (Day 33)

Skied Goon Mtn North Face, skinned across the Gothic Glacier and up the Yggdrasil-Wotan Col. Scrambled Mt Wotan via its 3rd class SE ridge and skied its East Face. Climbed Yggdrasil's spectacular South Ridge on solid 4th class granite with insane exposure. Enjoyed a phenomenal final lap down the Yggdrasil-Wotan Col. Reminiscenced over our final dinner (pesto pasta with summer sausage and goat cheese), dug out the landing site, packed up our cooktent, and got ready for our helicopter extraction the next morning at 8am

