

THE MOUNTAIN JOURNAL

THE MOUNTAIN CLASS: TEST DRIVE FOR SKIS PROVIDES KEY INSIGHTS

By TONY CRESPI, SKIER NEWS' TECHNICAL EDITOR

For many skiers, new skis lining the racks of their mountain shop brings a smile. The graphics are new. The bases and edges are pristine. And virtually everyone is talking of the wonderful way these skis turn. Still, how can you find the ski which is best for your needs?

Consider a test ride.

"Many years ago I read the reports and spent lots of money. I never thought of testing. What a failure. I had to live with that ski I bought." reflects Keith Morris, a veteran Southern New England black diamond expert skier. "It was a bad choice!"

A test ride can save aggravation!

Given the expense of new skis and given the differences between skis, a test ride is a useful tool for selecting a new pair of skis. The truth is that new skis perform differently. I know. Over the years I have tested many skis. Truly, I have found the differences dramatic.

"I liked testing," adds Morris. "It was fun. And I found some skis were quicker. Some were better on ice. I was surprised."

You also have to consider the different manufacturers. We suggest you ask a shop to help sift through the different skis. If possible, talk to someone who has actu-

ally skied the ski.

Fortunately, most of the top shops have a number of qualified folks who can help. In fact, many shops have tested many different models. Still, are the differences real?

"I was surprised," notes Morris, "I couldn't believe the differences."

Understand, Keith Morris is a fine, tall, expert who can ski beautifully on most skis. However, with testing he found his dream ski. Unfortunately, though, because there are so many different models, it is easy to become overwhelmed. Ideally it can be helpful to select two or three models from different manufacturers.

How can you start?

Start by thinking about where you ski. How fast do you ski? Which turns do you most enjoy? Be honest with the shop.

Someone who races or typically skis bumps will have different choices than someone who mainly skis intermediate groomed terrain.

You should also look at the magazine reviews. Then try to narrow your choices to a few models. Explain to

the shop salesperson whether you mostly ski steeps, moguls, ski fast or slow, and tell the shop your favorite runs. Then arrange a test flight.

Keith Morris started his testing by taking a few runs on his own skis. That is the best way to begin. This provided a standard for comparison. His skis were also well tuned. Then, using similar terrain, he tested several models. But, before stopping, he then skied his own ski. That way, when he finished the day, he knew not only how these new skis performed, but how they performed in comparison to his skis.

While testing skis, consider a note card and placing a grade on each pair you test. Is it an "A" or a "B" or an "F"?

For now, read the magazines and talk to the shop. Get an idea of what skis to test and then choose a pair which best meets your needs and skiing ability.

Consider a test ride before that final purchase.

Technical Editor Tony Crespi has served as both a Ski School Supervisor and Development Team Coach. A contributor to publications throughout snow country, his column is published throughout the season.

JACKSON HOLE SAVORS SNOWIEST WINTER, LOOKS AHEAD

JACKSON HOLE, WY – Last winter was one for the record books. The resort's 558,390 skier visits marks the third highest in Resort history, after a record-setting winter in 2014 with over 563,000 skier days. The 2016-17 season finished with 593 inches of total snow and snow depths of 158 inches in Rendezvous Bowl, marking the deepest winter in the Resort's 51-year history.

Many records were broken in terms of snowfall and moisture in the Tetons last winter. With record snow depths in Rendezvous Bowl in the months of October, December, February, March and April, and with February 2017 holding an all time record of total snowfall with 148 inches, the 2016-17 season was the deepest winter in the resort's history. Here is more info to help propel you to your Jackson Hole ski vacation.

Most Accessible Resort in the Rockies

This winter you can fly to Jackson Hole non-stop from 12 major US cities. Non-stop routes from Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Newark, JFK, Atlanta, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Seattle, Denver and Salt Lake City make Jackson Hole the most accessible Rocky Mountain destination resort. In addition, Jackson Hole airport, with its recent \$30 million renovation and expansion, makes the arrival and departure experiences efficient and comfortable. Jackson Hole Mountain Resort is just a short 30-minute drive from the terminal, delivering an experience like none other, and now it is easier than ever to reach. Check out: www.jacksonhole.com/by-air.html

Lodging and Lift Ticket Packages:

Best Value to Ski and Ride the Big One

Ski Free Christmas

Plan your Christmas vacation early and ski free. This winter start your holiday before Dec. 23, and earn not one, but two ski days at JHMR free when you book a four-night minimum lodging and lift package with Jackson Hole Central

Reservations. This unprecedented deal can also be combined with \$300 air credit to package and save. Some restrictions apply.

For details and to book, please visit their website at: www.jacksonhole.com/christmas-ski-trip-deals.html

Golden Ticket is Back by Popular Demand

Now in its third season, the Golden Ticket is back for January. Jackson Hole Mountain Resort (JHMR) is welcoming all skiers and snowboarders with a valid 2017-18 winter resort season pass from anywhere in the world. Visit Jackson Hole Mountain Resort and receive a very special lift ticket rate. The offer is valid for skiing and riding at JHMR Jan 6-31, 2018. Just present a current, valid season pass from any ski resort at the ticket office together with photo ID, and receive a 40 percent discount on lift tickets based on the current daily window rate.

Jackson Hole Resort Lodging: Kids Ski and Rent Free

Jackson Hole Resort Lodging (JHRL) is pleased to offer Kids Ski Free, an exclusive program to JHRL that applies to all types of vacation rentals and lodging packages. Choose any condominium or home rental for four nights or more, and receive 10 percent off you stay and for each paying adult. Visit www.jacksonhole.com/kids-ski-free.html. This program was new last winter. Kids also rent free with a paid adult rental. Restrictions are few in this exclusive deal for JHRL guests, and the program is valid for stays all winter except the Christmas Holiday week. Call for more details and to book at 1-800-443-8613.

Sweetwater Gondola

The new Sweetwater Gondola, which opened in December 2016, was part of a broader and sustained capital investment strategy to continue to ensure a world-class experience for JHMR guests. The new Sweetwater Gondola was a very popular addition to the JHMR lift infrastructure and has supported several specific objectives, including a significant increase to base area capacity.

Looking Ahead to Winter 2018-19: Solitude Station

In the continuing effort to enhance the beginner skier and family experience at JHMR, Solitude Station is the next phase of capital investment surrounding the Sweetwater Gondola. To be located at the Sweetwater Gondola mid-station, the Solitude Station facility will be 12,000 square feet of ski school, rental and dining facilities. This full service facility will be completed for winter 2018-19, and will bring to life a new center of learning and fun in Jackson Hole.

A covered surface carpet lift, top-notch ski instructors and state-of-the-art facility, are all accessed from a two-minute gondola ride from the base. Solitude Station will be the new hub of learning and growing the sport of skiing and riding in Jackson Hole. The building will be activated for a family après experience and private events both summer and winter.

Rendezvous Festival 2018

Expanded to two weekends, March 9-11 and 16-18

With great lift ticket promotions, concerts and family friendly events, it is not too early to start planning your Spring Break. Now in its fifth season, Rendezvous Festival has grown to one of the premier spring events, and this year the spring lifestyle festival is expanding to encompass two weekends. March 9-11, look for Collage Rendezvous with multiple young up and coming acts taking the stage under the Aerial Tramway.

New this year, March 8-15, College Students enjoy 40 percent off the current daily window rate on lift tickets with a valid college ID. March 16-18, the main stage of Rendezvous Festival will host national level acts at no costs to guests. Stay tuned for band announcements via www.jacksonhole.com

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Lodging and Lift Ticket Packages: Best Value to Ski and Visit Jackson Hole's Web and Social Media sites at: www.jacksonhole.com; Twitter @jhski; and Instagram @jacksonhole #jacksonhole #jhdreaming

STEAMBOAT GETS MOUNTAIN COASTER, GONDOLA UPGRADES, ADDITIONAL NONSTOP FLIGHTS and NEW OWNERSHIP HIGHLIGHT CHANGES for 2017-18

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, CO – A summer of behind-the-scenes changes sets Steamboat up for another successful season during the 2017-18 winter. The biggest news for the resort during the off season was the finalization of the sale of all Intrawest properties, including Steamboat, to a newly formed company headed by KSL Capital Partners, LLC (KSL) and Henry Crown & Co. (HCC). The yet-to-be-named new company will bring together 13 industry-leading resorts from across North America, including Steamboat, Mammoth, Squaw/Alpine and Deer Valley.

"This was a busy summer for Steamboat as we invested in our future with multiple guest-facing and behind-the-scenes projects," said Rob Perlman, president and chief operating officer of Steamboat Ski & Resort Corporation.

New Ownership

On July 31, 2017, KSL and HCC completed the purchase of Intrawest and Mammoth Resorts to create a new company featuring 13 industry-leading resorts across North America plus Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH). The new family of resorts features all former Intrawest resorts – including Steamboat, Winter Park, Tremblant, Blue Mountain, Snowshoe and Stratton – as well as Squaw/Alpine Meadows, Mammoth Mountain, June Mountain, Bear Mountain and Snow Summit. In August, the new company formed an agreement to purchase Deer Valley Resort, with closing expected prior to the start of ski season. For the 2017-18 winter season, resorts will continue with business as usual, with new company announcements regarding passes, upgrades and more being communicated in the near future or as they become available.

Outlaw Mountain Coaster

Steamboat is now home to the longest mountain coaster in North America. Operating both summer and winter seasons, the mountain coaster ride is more than 6,000 linear feet, with 2,600 feet of uphill track and 3,680 feet of downhill fun. Covering 420 vertical feet, the track is in the area of Christie Peak Express lift and rises up to 40 feet above the ground with dips, waves, turns and 360-degree circles. Mountain coasters are gravity-driven sleds that run on a tubular stainless-steel rail system. Individuals ride the sled up the mountain and then slide down the rails with the ability to control the sled's speed through a braking system.

Gondola Upgrades

Mountain crews worked with industry-leader Doppelmayr to make improvements to the Steamboat gondola, including major renovations within the gondola terminals. Grips, hangers and terminal equipment were replaced and a new control system was relocated to the western corner of the lower terminal, ultimately changing the traffic flow getting on the gondola. Additional changes also were made to the gondola departure and arrival bays and freight handling system.

Accessibility

Two new nonstop flights from Austin (AUS) and Kansas City (MCI) make travel to Steamboat/Hayden (HDN) even more accessible for the 2017-18 winter season. ViaAir will operate the flights, and Embark Aviation will manage the commercial elements of the new program. Flights currently are scheduled for the upcoming winter on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays with additional flights available during one week in January.

From Denver, United will add a daily flight, now offering three per day throughout the entire season and four daily flights from Dec. 20 to Jan 7 and Feb. 15 to April 2. United also expands to daily service from Chicago for the entire winter. The combination of all new nonstop flights from San Diego adding Sundays for three flights a week represents a 5 percent increase in the Steamboat airline program compared with 2016-17.

14 nonstop flight markets

Steamboat's air program continues to be one of the most robust in the Rocky Mountains with seven new nonstop markets in the past five years. With 14 total nonstop markets flying to Ski Town, U.S.A.®, Steamboat is among one of the most accessible ski resort destinations in the Rocky Mountains.

Technology: Automated snow stake

Snow reporting is one of the most popular pieces of information snowsports enthusiasts seek, and Steamboat steps up its industry-leading accuracy with an automated snow stake recording the resort's official mid-mountain snow statistics as well as snowfall at the summit.

Working with Campbell Scientific, a leader in the automated weather recording industry, Steamboat installed sonic ranging sensors to measure reliably snow depth and accumulation. Also, weather stations across the mountain monitor wind speed and direction, air temperature, relative humidity, barometric pressure and precipitation.

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