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Summer in Idaho
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Photos by Sherri Harkin/Courtesy Tamarack Resort

a resort for all seasons

ABOVE: **The Lodge at Osprey Meadows.**

OPPOSITE PAGE: **Tamarack offers four-season fun with golf, zipline courses, rafting on the Payette River, and tree skiing.**

ON MY FIRST visit, I zigged and zagged along Tamarack's wonderfully varied terrain on downhill skis. Sometimes I picked my way through snow-covered runs that curled around trees and other natural obstacles. Other times I just let the skis fly while zipping down broad, smoothly groomed runs.

Six months later, after another ride up the Tamarack Express chairlift from the resort's main village, I was zipping again, this time in a harness attached to a steel cable. Like Peter Pan, I was literally flying through tree canopies above some of the same terrain I'd skied that winter.

Located 90 miles north of Boise, Idaho, Tamarack is set in the hills just above Lake Cascade and the Payette River. From the resort's cozy village, Tamarack Mountain rises 2,800 vertical feet to a 7,700-foot summit. When the resort opened in December 2004, it was the nation's first new all-season resort in two decades.

STORY BY LEE JUILLERAT

Fittingly, things are zipping along in several directions at Tamarack.

In winter, the mountain's 1,100 acres of skiable terrain is accessed by seven lifts, including a trio of high-speed quads. Skiers and snowboarders have plenty of choices on 39 trails varying in difficulty from first-timer to expert. Toss in 265 acres of gladed tree skiing, the adrenaline-inspiring Hells Canyon SuperPipe (450 feet long with 18-foot-high walls), and a pair of terrain parks, and Tamarack's mix is enticing to riders and skiers.

On the lower slopes, 25 kilometers of machine-groomed trails keep cross-country skiers happy while snowshoers can make tracks on 15 kilometers of designated trails.

Everything, I learned, changes when the snow melts.

The cross-country ski trails transform to the award-winning Osprey Meadows 18-hole championship golf course. Designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr., the course is gathering awards and

enthusiastic reviews from golf magazines and players. And when 21-mile-long Lake Cascade thaws, it becomes a haven for swimming, fishing, power boating, canoeing, water skiing, sailing, wakeboarding, and, as I found out, spying pelicans, grebes, and other birds from sea kayaks.

The Payette River, which ices over in the winter, becomes a zippy waterway for canoers, kayakers, and rafters. From the resort it was a half-hour drive to the put-in for the 10-mile Cabarton section of the Payette River. Our paddle rafts rumbled through rollicking rapids but more often cruised along the lazy river with frequent sightings of osprey, great blue herons, and bald eagles.

Life on Tamarack Mountain changes, too. Instead of skiing and boarding, it becomes a destination for hikers, mountain bikers of all ability levels, and, as I appreciated, an adventure playground for Idaho's first zipline course. I joined others for a walking-flying journey that included eight different ziplines, including one 200 feet above the ground and one 875 feet long. We flew at speeds of 40 mph from a series of platforms, some in the trees and another reached by a suspension bridge. The course begins with a pair of confidence-building short zips, so by the time our group flew the final lines, everyone's confidence was sky-high.

He didn't zip, but when President Bush visited Tamarack in the summer of 2005 he sampled several of the mountain's 300 miles of bike trails.

On both of my visits I felt presidentially pampered in luxury cottages. In the winter, my housemates and I stepped outside and, depending on our individual whim, clicked into our downhill, telemark, or cross-country skis. In the summer, we ventured outside for morning runs or hikes.

In both seasons we walked to the elegant Lodge at Osprey Meadows. On a winter night we met locals and visitors during a cheese-and-wine tasting. On a summer night we savored gourmet dinners at Morels restaurant. Just yards away from the lodge is the Arling Center, a trio of historic buildings—chapel, schoolhouse, and grange—used for conferences and group meetings. The Center, Lodge, and cottages are easy walks from the shops, market, restaurants, and pub at Discovery Square.

As I discovered, change at Tamarack is zipping right along, despite the parent company's financial difficulties this year in a problematic real estate market. A mid-mountain lodge at the top of the Tamarack Express is expected to open next winter. A European-style village is scheduled for completion sometime in 2009, and the lodge will sprout a new addition with 41 condominiums, a yoga studio, and another restaurant, with an expected completion date of late 2009 or early 2010. Groundbreaking for the Fairmount Tamarack, a luxury hotel financed by husband/wife tennis greats Andre Agassi and Steffi

FYI

TAMARACK TREE

Tamarack Resort's namesake is the tamarack, a larch tree with short deciduous needles. These trees are plentiful on Tamarack Mountain and are easily visible from chairlifts and along ski and mountain bike routes. They are especially prominent in the fall, when their needles turn golden.



TAMARACK RESORT The resort is 90 miles north of Boise and west of the small town of Donnelly on the northwest shore of Lake Cascade. Year-round access is available on Highway 55, also known as the Payette River Scenic Byway. The Boise Airport offers direct flights from 19 regional and major U.S. cities, including such Northwest cities as Seattle, Spokane, and Portland.

OSPREY MEADOWS AT TAMARACK Since being named the #1 public course over \$75 by *Golf Digest* in January 2007, Osprey Meadows has continued to garner accolades in the press and by those who play there. The Robert Trent Jones designed course is located at 5,000 feet elevation and follows the natural contours of the land. The layout is strategically complex with its five par 5s, five par 3s, and eight par 4s. This Par 72 course is 7,319 yards from the tips and has four teeing options on each hole to accommodate beginners to professionals.

GETTING THERE From the Boise airport, travelers can take a direct shuttle, fly the resort's charter air service, fly an air taxi to McCall (17 miles north of Tamarack), or rent a car.

MORE SKIING Skiers at Tamarack often spend at least a day at Brundage Mountain Resort, a ski area outside McCall that is now in its 46th year of operation.

MCCALL McCall holds an annual winter festival that features ice sculptures. The town is also a popular summer destination for water sports on Payette Lake and offers easy access to the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Area.

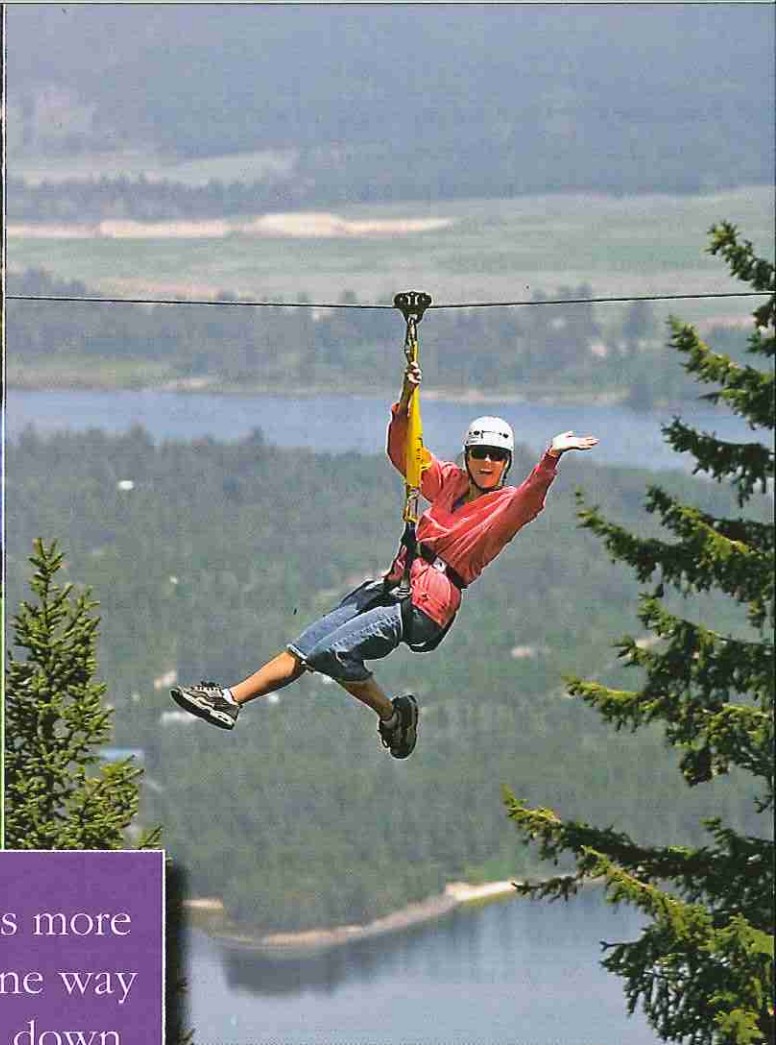
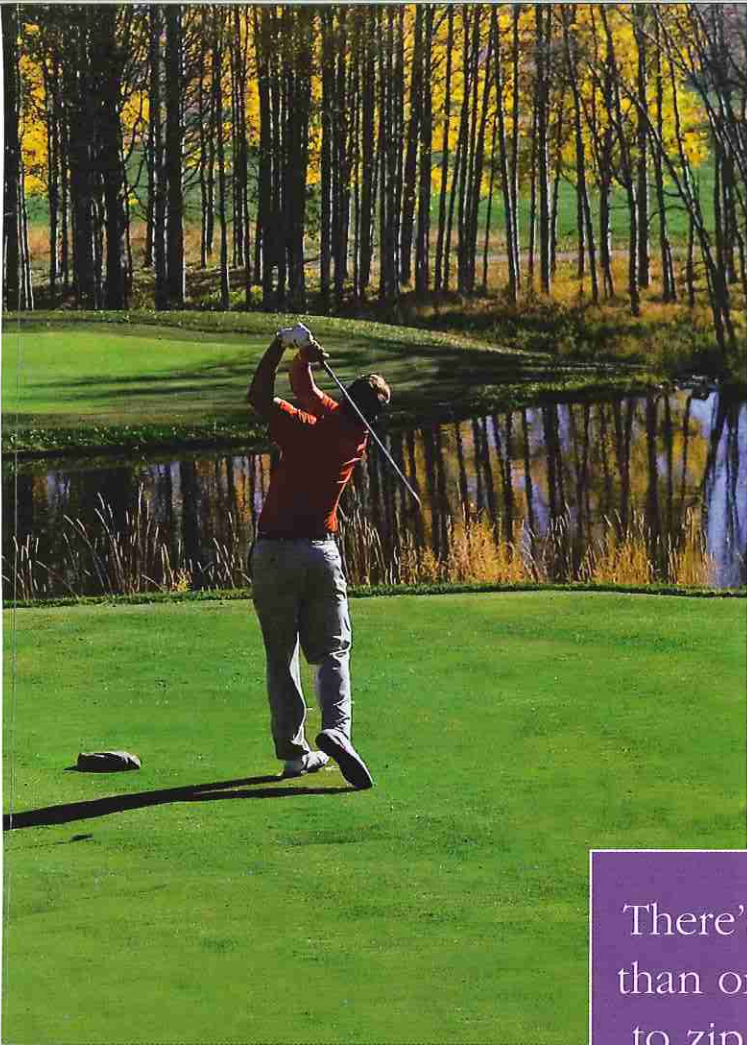
TAMARACK RESORT (866-649-6903; www.tamarackidaho.com)

BRUNDAGE MOUNTAIN RESORT (800-888-7544; www.brundage.com)

MCCALL, IDAHO (800-260-5130; www.mccallchamber.org)

Graf, will take place sometime this year, with its opening anticipated sometime in 2010. During my winter visit I'd seen Agassi, who visits Tamarack frequently with his wife and children, gearing up at the rental shop for a private snowboarding lesson.

Agassi should be in top form this winter. Maybe I'll challenge him to a race. I don't expect to win, but, just like everything else I've experienced at Tamarack, it should be zippety-do-dah fun. □



There's more than one way to zip down the slopes at Idaho's Tamarack Resort.

