



Skiing

# Ski Trends: Superpipes and Miniparks

By MEG LUKENS NOONAN

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**T**HE country's major mountain ski resorts are more determined than ever to be all things to all people this winter - whether they are fans of Lincoln Logs, Linkin Park or Lincoln Navigators. That means skiers will find new lifts and programs devoted to children and beginners, souped-up terrain parks for hot-shot Generation Y "freeriders" and a commitment to the kind of services - from spa treatments to ski caddies - that ease the ski experience for aging baby boomers.

### What's New

For only the second time in two decades, a major new ski resort will open in the West. Tamarack, on the shores of Lake Cascade in west-central Idaho, is set to make its debut Dec. 15 with 5 lifts, 25 trails, a 10-acre terrain park, 19 miles of Nordic skiing and the hot feature of the moment: a 500-foot superpipe for snowboarders and skiers on twin-tip skis. Guests can stay in any of 62 two- and three-bedroom single-family well-appointed ski-in ski-out log cottages with concierge services. Moonlight Basin in Montana follows up its inaugural season with a new quad providing access to 27 new runs.



Sheri Harkin/Tamarack Resort  
Tamarack, in Idaho.

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Stowe, Vt., kicked off its 10-year \$250 million Spruce Mountain village and mountain redesign project by replacing a 1960's-era double chair with a high-speed detachable quad chair, adding a new triple chairlift and cutting a new beginner trail designed to have a consistent 8-to-10-degree pitch (best for learning) all the way down.

Crested Butte Mountain Resort in Colorado comes into the season with new owners. Tim and Diane Mueller, who own Okemo in Vermont and run Mount Sunapee in New Hampshire, will cut the ribbon on their acquisition with a new chairlift to three fresh trails, more grooming machines, new terrain parks and pipes, and a marked shift in marketing focus away from the mountain's extreme slopes and toward its family-friendly terrain. And Alta, in Utah, gets a long-wished-for base-to-summit chair.

Bretton Woods, New Hampshire's largest resort, continues to grow this winter with a dozen new trails and glades in the Rosebrook Summit area. The resort has joined with the Mount Washington Cog Railway, which will operate in winter for the first time and bring skiers partway up the 6,288-foot peak. Two milelong groomed trails parallel to the train tracks will be negotiable by intermediates and beginners.

Gladed trails, cut through stands of trees, are increasingly popular among advanced skiers. Deer Valley, Utah, and Big Sky in Montana have new lifts to expanded gladed terrain. Jackson Hole, Wyo., has opened 200 acres of bowls and tree skiing. In Vermont, there are new wooded trails at Okemo, Smugglers' Notch and Sugarbush. Novices can pick up tips in the new Wicked Venture Zones - simulated forests made out of flexible poles - in Waterville Valley, N.H., before trying the far-less-forgiving real thing.

Visitors to Vail will notice a handsome new stone-and-steel bridge across Gore Creek at the Lions Head base - the first step in a \$500 million multiyear plan that includes real estate and retail development. Vail will also be grooming 33 percent more of its trails, thanks to 10 new Sno-Cats.



Mount Washington Resort at Bretton Woods  
Mount Washington Cog Railway  
ski train.



Dana Nichols  
Grand Sierra Lodge, Mammoth  
Mountain.



## **Beginners' Luck**

After a 1999 National Ski Areas Association survey found that only 15 percent of first-timers became committed skiers and snowboarders, resorts began searching for new ways to attract and retain novices. This winter, that push is evident nationwide.

Winter Park in Colorado has expanded its Sorensen Park learning area from one-half acre to five acres and begun a program in which novices start out on snow bikes - bicyclelike contraptions that have skis instead of wheels - to get the feel for gliding. Stratton Mountain in Vermont, among others, will offer women's and girl's Burton Learn-to-Ride clinics with snowboards designed to speed up learning - and reduce the number of falls.

Squaw Valley in California adds a double chairlift for beginners in its year-old base learning area, as well as a second moving-carpet surface lift at its children's center. Park City, Utah, and Mammoth Mountain, Calif., have new chairlifts for their learning areas. Buttermilk, in Aspen, gets a new high-speed quad chair with a midway load station, allowing beginners and youngsters to do laps on West Buttermilk's gentle trails.

## **Terrain Mania**

Terrain parks and superpipes continue to be huge draws at ski areas of all sizes. Many resorts, such as Keystone, Colo., Northstar-at-Tahoe, Mammoth Mountain and Waterville Valley in New Hampshire are opening scaled-down miniparks, aimed at beginners who want to practice park-style skiing and snowboarding in an unintimidating setting.

Killington, Vt., has devoted nearly its entire Bear Mountain area to the free-ride movement with a peak full of jumps, rails and tables, and a new superpipe. Copper Mountain in Colorado has a new lighted terrain park that will open on certain Saturday nights and is free. New superpipes are in place at Sugarloaf in Maine and Snowbird, Utah. Buttermilk, host to the ESPN Winter X Games, Jan. 29 to Feb. 1, will leave the terrain park features in place for guests.

Whistler/Blackcomb, home of the 2010 Winter Olympics, will get a taste of the international stage when it puts on the 2005 World Snowboard Championships this January. Pipe events will be held on the new superpipe on Blackcomb Mountain, lighted for night skiing and riding.

## **The Good Life**

Several luxurious properties are newly opened or renovated. The St. Regis Aspen has undergone extensive remodeling and reopens this month with a 15,000-square-foot spa and 20 new rooms. The venerable 1936 Sun Valley Inn has been extensively remodeled; all rooms will have flat-screen plasma TV's, high-speed Ethernet connection and DVD players.

The Grand Sierra Lodge, the biggest and newest addition to the Village at Mammoth, opens with studio to three-bedroom condominiums. And early next year, Taos will have the new Edelweiss Lodge and Spa, with 31 luxury ski-in ski-out condos.

The Four Seasons Whistler resort has opened at the base of Blackcomb Mountain with 273 rooms, each with a fireplace, and a full spa. As good as a British Columbia glacial clay wrap might sound, though, there are times when all skiers really want is someone to help them carry their gear. Windham Mountain in New York is happy to help. This winter, on weekends and holidays, free snow caddies will meet skiers curbside, take their equipment and walk it over to the slopes for them while they park the car. Now that is luxury.

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