

# Park City resorts: Triplets that are far from identical

By Anne Z. Cooke and Steve Haggerty  
COX NEWS SERVICE

**P**ARK CITY, Utah — For Dillon Cook, sitting across from us in the gondola, the Canyons was a whole new world filled with kids who came from everywhere just to be in ski class with him.

"I liked the Tunnel of Fun," said the 9-year-old from Houston, describing the bumpy trail through the trees where the instructors take their classes to cut loose. "We had five boys and one girl," he said. "The girl ... was better than any of the boys."

Sherri Williams from Atlanta, on the last day of her vacation, noticed the Canyons' people-friendly design — a terraced layout that separates cars on the lower level from the Resort Village at midlevel, a pedestrian zone with the ticket office, rental shops, restaurants and the Grand Summit Hotel.

"The cabriolet saves a lot of walking," she said, referring to the canlike baskets (nicknamed "the teacups") that carry skiers from the parking lot up to the village. And tucking Red Pine Lodge into the forest at mid-mountain, well, that was brilliant.

"No traffic, no cars, no noise  
See **UTAH** on N5

— just us and the snow," she said.

Then there was Brian Price, wiry and tan. Taking advantage of two inches of new snow, the Salt Lake City resident was steering out-of-town friends around the first of this former mining town's ski trio: the Canyons, Park City Mountain Resort, and Deer Valley. With 8,925 acres to cover, he was in a hurry.

"I stick to the highlights," he explained — the new terrain parks, the best-groomed cruisers, and the photo-friendly vistas. The speedy new "six-pack" chairlifts, too. "But the Canyon's my favorite."

We fell for the Canyons, too. Strung in a ragged crescent above Park City, the

three ski resorts are part of the same range and even the same ridge, called the Wasatch Back. Yet the resorts are quite different.

## The Canyons

Its 3,700 acres are open and uncrowded, making it a best-kept secret. Spread over adjacent ridges, the resort's 152 trails flow and turn, challenging and entertaining in turn.

The heart of the resort is Red Pine Lodge, where the gondola unloads and ski school meets. A half-dozen lifts climb from there to near and distant peaks, each one connecting skiers with a new set of slopes.

Plenty of expert-only chutes, most rated double-black-diamond, plunge into Murdock Bowl and off Apex Ridge. But the Canyons really seems to be a bonanza for intermediate recreational skiers, who are happiest carving turns on groomed trails.

On the lower slopes, look for a tangle of woodland trails providing ski-in, ski-out access to a cluster of multimillion-dollar homes. Spawned by the real-estate greed that drives most contemporary resort development, some of these places, big enough to sleep 20 of your closest friends, are actually in the rental pool.

The Canyons is so spacious and spread out that you need a trail map just to find a restaurant. Chili and hot dogs are staples at some of the mountain's five chow lines. Pass them up for Lookout Cabin, where you'll dine on gourmet cuisine, with tablecloths, wine and 30-mile views. Or get down and jitterbug on Saturdays at Western Barbecue at Red Pine Lodge. Beef, chicken and the trimmings come with a live country band.

## Park City

We rented a cottage here, so we skied its eponymous re-

sort first. The base area — bustling with skiers, window shoppers, kids waiting for their parents, and newcomers renting skis — felt like a block party in progress.

The adult and children's ski schools meet on the snow across the square, and beyond is the Alpine Coaster, where we bumped into George, a 14-year-old local boy with a buzz cut.

"Park City's a nine on a scale of 10," he said, digging out money for a third ride on the over-snow roller coaster that opened last season.

The coaster, Park City resort's newest family diversion, is so hot that the ride was forced to take reservations. We showed up at 2 p.m. to risk the nine-minute ride in the bobsled-shaped car, which climbs slowly up a 6,000-foot-long track and rockets down around hairpin curves at avalanche speed.

With Park City's 3,300 skiable acres, you can keep moving all day and never ski the same run twice. But if you want to ski with the little ones, head for the slopes under the King Con and Motherlode chairlifts. Parallel runs, most intermediate but a few rated for experts, make it easy for parents and kids to split up and still meet at the bottom of the chairlift.

You can design a route to suit everyone, using the resort's Personal Mountain Planner. This computer program creates custom routes depending on your skill level, desired terrain and a challenge quotient. The information desk in the Legacy Lodge will do it for you, or you can do it at home, at [www.mymountainplanner.com](http://www.mymountainplanner.com). For ex-

ample: "Exit right off Bonanza lift. Take Homerun to Claimjumper. Board Silverlode lift."

The resort's real claim to fame — its link to Park City's early history — lends a genu-

ine sense of authenticity. Century-old structures, restored or stabilized, have been left in place on the mountain, many next to the ski runs. More than 1,200 miles of abandoned mining shafts are still there, too, a reminder that skiing is a late arrival.

## Deer Valley Resort

Luxury is Deer Valley's middle name, but courtesy counts here, too. The resort upgrades its chairlifts regularly, improves grooming, and restyles its restaurants. But it's the people who lift skiing from a sport to a culture.

At the entrance, valets took our skis and carried them up the steps. Every lift attendant made sure we sat together safely, and handed us dropped gloves and poles. Mountain hosts were on duty at the top, offering assis-

tance. The trails were well-marked, and the signs were easy to read from a distance.

With 1,825 acres, Deer Valley is half the size of the Canyons. But the mix of beginner, intermediate and expert trails off Bald and Flagstaff mountains meant we could ski together or separately, and still meet at midmountain for lunch at the Royal Street Cafe. With a limit of 6,500 lift tickets sold daily, there were few crowds, either on the slopes or in the lift lines. But the cap has nothing to do with skiing and everything to do with eating lunch. It is, in fact, the total number



of seats available at noon in the resort's on-mountain restaurants.

Former Olympic gold medalist Stein Eriksen, a legend at Deer Valley, happened to be at the next table. Typically gracious, he leaned over to offer a few words of welcome. Eriksen, who will be 80 this year, likes to get out and meet people, even skiing along for a few runs.

Who knows? You could be lucky.

## Hitting Park City's Slopes

Delta flies nonstop to **Salt Lake City International Airport** from **Philadelphia International Airport**. The lowest recent fare was about \$319.

The airport is 36 miles from **Park City**. Rent a car or take an airport shuttle. All Resort Express will pick you up, for \$34 per person. 1-800-457-9457, [www.allresort.com](http://www.allresort.com).

If you get an early flight, you can get a free day of skiing at one of the three Park City resorts, through **QuickSTART**. Present your boarding pass, a voucher from [www.parkcityinfo.com](http://www.parkcityinfo.com) (register and print it out ahead of time) and an out-of-state photo ID at any ticket window at the Canyons, Park City or Deer Valley ski area. Available through Dec. 24, Jan. 2-Feb. 14, and March 24 till the end of the season.

### Places to stay

If you're skiing with a group of family or friends, sharing a condo or townhouse can save money. We found our cottage, in downtown Park City, through R&R Properties. Properties come with fully equipped kitchens and laundry facilities; most have Internet access and hot tubs. 1-800-348-6759; [www.parkcitylodging.com](http://www.parkcitylodging.com)

### Places to eat

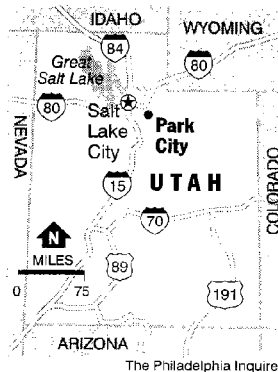
**The Snowed Inn**  
Park City Resort  
1-866-647-3310  
[www.snowedinnsligh.com](http://www.snowedinnsligh.com)

Bring the kids for a horse-drawn sleigh ride. Chow-line chuck wagon dinners include roast beef, chicken or trout, with Caesar salad, Dutch oven potatoes, vegetables and chili. Adults, \$79, children, \$49.

**Wasatch Brew Pub**  
250 Main St., Park City  
435-649-0900  
[www.wasatchbeers.com](http://www.wasatchbeers.com)  
Local beer and a casual



Park City Convention & Visitors Bureau  
**Park City has** an average annual snowfall of 143 inches. The ski resorts, at higher elevations, average 350 inches.



atmosphere. Steaks, trout, spaghetti and chicken, and soups and salad.

**Fireside Dining at Empire Canyon Lodge**  
435-645-6632  
[www.deervalley.com/dining\\_shopping/fireside\\_dining.html](http://www.deervalley.com/dining_shopping/fireside_dining.html)

Swiss Alpine and American cuisine served Wednesday through Friday evenings. Reservations available through **Deer Valley Resort**.

■ **Western Barbecue** (435-615-3446) and **Lookout Cabin** (435-615-2892) on the slopes at the **Canyons**. Call or make reservations through the resort.

### Equipment rental

**Black Tie Ski Rentals**  
1-800-821-4754

[www.blacktieskis.com](http://www.blacktieskis.com)

Black Tie comes to your door, bringing a choice of skis, boots and poles for the entire family. Equipment is preselected to match your preferences and sizes and fine-tuned upon delivery. If you don't like your skis, Black Tie's experts will bring you another pair to try. The rentals cost us a little more, but the skis were demo-quality, and the entire visit took only an hour, saving us the trip to a rental shop.

### More information

**Park City Convention and Visitors Bureau**  
1-800-453-1360  
[www.parkcityinfo.com](http://www.parkcityinfo.com)

**Salt Lake City Vacation Planning**  
1-800-541-4955  
[www.ski-saltlake.com](http://www.ski-saltlake.com)

**The Canyons**  
[www.thecanyons.com](http://www.thecanyons.com)  
1-888-226-9667

**Park City Mountain Resort**  
1-800-222-7275  
[www.parkcitymountain.com](http://www.parkcitymountain.com)

**Deer Valley**  
1-800-424-3337  
[www.deervalley.com](http://www.deervalley.com)

— Anne Z. Cooke  
and Steve Haggerty





**That's snow**, not sand, at McHenry's "Beach," where skiers at Deer Valley Resort soak up rays on warm days.

Deer Valley

## What's New This Season?

### Pennsylvania

#### Alpine Mountain

Anatolink  
 Three redesigned terrain parks with added rails, kicks, jumps, boxes.

#### Bear Creek

Macungie  
 Has completed a 64-room hotel with ski-in, ski-out access to the slopes, salon, spa, restaurant and pub. Increased snowmaking pumping capacity; added 20 guns.

#### Big Boulder Ski Area

Blakeslee  
 New Boulder Park Lodge and Hikeable Plaza.

#### Blue Mountain

Palmerton  
 Increased snowmaking; tubing building with party room; trail between Paradise and Razor's Edge.

#### Camelback Mountain Resort

Tannersville  
 Lights added on the Oak Grove terrain park; 650-foot handle tows on Oak Grove and the Rhodo Terrain Park; Tubing Park gets two new single chutes, a family chute, and a Magic Carpet conveyor lift; \$41 Ladies Day every Wednesday, including lifts, lunch, and morning ski and board clinics.

#### Eagle Rock

Hazleton  
 Tubing park; snowmaking; lighting; improved beginner slope.



Snowboarding at Sno Mountain, which has launched Zip Rider, a cable ride that shoots you down the mountain.

#### Elk Mountain

Union Dale  
 New grooming tractor; 64 new snow guns; 200 new snowboards and skis for rentals.

#### Jack Frost Mountain

Blakeslee  
 Stores have been overhauled; glades.

#### Liberty Mountain Resort

Carroll Valley  
 New snow guns on Upper Ultra and new underground snowmaking pipe; lighting added on Upper Ultra and installed in Vertigo Park and on the Halfpipe.

#### Seven Springs Resort

Seven Springs  
 Six-passenger chairlift.

#### Shawnee Mountain Ski Area

Shawnee-On-Deleware  
 A much larger, flatter and wider Beginners' Area for skiers and snowboarders and a contoured Learning Center for ski and snowboard lessons; two carpet conveyor lifts; Pocono Plunge Snow Tubing Park extended 50 feet.

#### Ski Roundtop

Lewisberry  
 Automated snowmaking system on the Minuteman Slope; expanded tubing runs and realigned lifts to increase capacity; regraded the children's teaching terrain; machine to customize foot beds for ski and snowboard boots.

#### Ski Sawmill Resort

Morris  
 Added 100 skis, boots and bindings and 50 snowboards in rental shop; built a dinosaur rail for terrain park; added a tube slide.

#### Sno Mountain

Scranton  
 Launches Zip Rider, a year-round cable ride that

shoots you down the mountain at up to 50 m.p.h. while skimming trees and dipping down over slopes and terrain parks; terrain park expansion, including 22-foot half-pipe, A-frame wall ride, boxes and rails spread across four slopes.

#### Whitetail Resort

Mercersburg  
 \$1.5 million in improvements, including all new snowboard rental equipment; enclosed Magic Carpet conveyor lift at Whitetail Adventure Tubing.

#### Mountain Creek

Vernon  
 Debuted one of the largest terrain parks in the East; check skis and boards for free; five new intermediate trails on the back side of Vernon Peak.

#### Ski Windham Resort

Windham, N.Y.  
 Three new trails; three new lifts; G lift triple chair replaced with a high-speed, detachable quad; C lift upgraded to more modern triple chair and relocated slightly; new carpet lift in learning area; ice skating center.

#### Mount Snow Resort

West Dover  
 \$3.5 million in fan-gun technology.

#### Stratton Mountain Resort

Bondville  
 The longest covered magic

carpet in North America (500 feet) in the Learning Park; \$2 million in improvements; 108 new snowguns for 95 percent snowmaking.

#### Bromley

Peru  
 Intermediate glade; more snowmaking on Lower Shinerack; Run Around #1 and #2; a BR250 Snow Cat.

#### Killington Ski Resort

Rutland  
 Upgrades to snowmaking system; remodeled Long Trail Pub at the Snowshed Lodge; refurbished lifts and lodges; \$2 million in upgrades to the Killington Grand Resort Hotel and Spa; new children's Ski and Snowboard School programs.

#### Okemo

Ludlow  
 Thirty new HKD tower guns; 400-foot surface lift will offer additional access to extended and regraded Bright Star Basic beginner trail at Jackson Gorge.

#### New Hampshire

Waterville Valley  
 Nordic center added two trails: Swayzeytown Trail for intermediate skiers and Connection Corner Trail for beginners.

#### Loon Mountain

Lincoln  
 \$10 million South Peak expansion linking South Peak to existing trail network; includes nearly 50 acres of new intermediate and advanced terrain; high-speed quad connecting to a second quad.

#### Crotched Mountain

Berlin  
 Three new trails, including one linking Super Nova with the Launch Pad Learning Center; work on summit to expand vertical drop to 1,000 feet.

— Jeff R. Lewis