

WHERE CY-FAIR SKIIS

Family Fun in the Winter Time

Written by Brenda Thompson



Steamboat Colorado offers something for all ages

Photo by Larry Pierce



Taos in New Mexico is a family-owned ski resort

Photo courtesy of Taos Ski Valley

Crested Butte has a small town, friendly atmosphere and is about four hours from Denver by car



Photo courtesy of Crested Butte



Deer Valley Utah is a short drive from Salt Lake City

Photo courtesy of Deer Valley Resort



The ski school at Taos is a hit with families

Photo Courtesy of Taos Ski Valley

When the thermometer pops back up to 70 degrees outside and it's only February in Cy-Fair, you may start dreaming of snow, skiing, and hot chocolate. Many Cy-Fair families love to head to the mountains. With so many choices, how do you choose? Check out these recommendations from some local families.

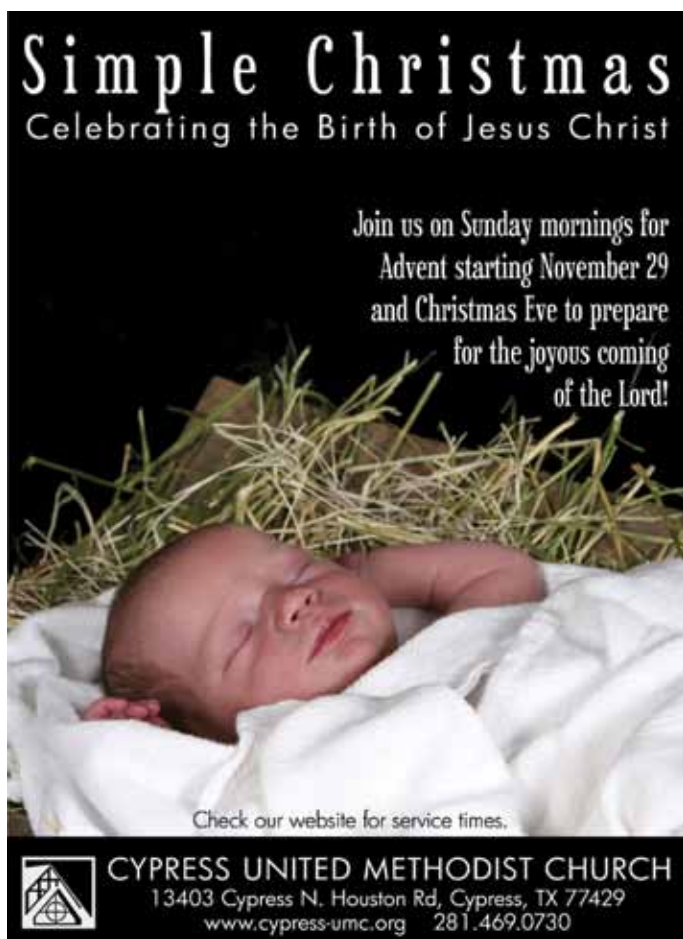
DEER VALLEY RESORT, UTAH

www.deervalley.com

According to the Ski Magazine 2009 Reader Resort Survey, Deer Valley, Utah won top honors edging out the ever popular number two Vail, CO who usually wins the survey. Deer Valley is a short drive from Salt Lake City and visiting can transport you to a different state of mind, one that's wonderfully relaxed and invigorating all at the same time.

Alan and Amanda Ward and children, Rebecca, Matthew, and Griffin, loved Deer Valley for the fun both on and off the slopes. The kids went to ski school and loved to show off their new skills after lessons. "That was a very important part of every afternoon. We would pick the children up at the bottom of the slope after school and still have some daylight left to do a few runs as a family," says Amanda.

When it's time for a break, there's snowmobiling, sledding, tubing, strolling through town, and more. "Our day of play was one of the highlights of the trip," says Amanda. Lodges welcome guests with an elegant mountain atmosphere. "I personally loved the restaurant's deck at the bottom of the mountain. I had a perfect view of the chair lifts and could sit and enjoy my latte and wonderful food while watching my children progress," she says.



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CRESTED BUTTE, COLORADO

www.skicb.com

Crested Butte is centrally located. The resort is about a four-hour drive from either Denver or Colorado Springs with direct flights also available.

Ross and Vickie Sears and their children, ages 11 and 8, try to go skiing a couple of times a year. "We love Crested Butte because of the small town friendly atmosphere," says Vickie. The Sears family recommends renting a large, ski-in, ski-out condo so a few families can share expenses. "Crested Butte has a shuttle that brings you from the airport to the condo for a small fee. After that, you ski in and out or you take the condo's free shuttle. With the town's free bus system, there's no reason to rent a car," says Vickie. Condos equipped with kitchens can also help you save on meals and provide some needed downtime at the end of a long day. "We find that we prefer many times to eat at the condo at the end of a day of skiing because we are too tired to go out to eat," she says.

The Sears family recommends looking for a resort that has a lot of beginner runs and youthful energetic ski instructors who will make the experience fun for kids. Ski school may seem like an expensive extra up-front cost, but for kids, being in a class with others at their own level along with experienced instructors can help lessen any fears and increase their level of enjoyment. "Here the instructors are young and fun. They serve awesome kid friendly food, the kids make friends, and at the end of the day I'm shocked at how much improvement they've made in their skiing," says Vickie.

For more fun in the snow there's playing, snowmobiling, and more. Vickie says, "In Crested Butte they have sledding, outdoor ice skating, sleigh rides, and nighttime tubing where they light up the mountain trail."

STEAMBOAT, COLORADO

www.steamboat.com

Steamboat is Colorado's most accessible resort with daily non-stop flights into Steamboat.

Ed and Sharon Buckle have been going to Steamboat for more than 15 years and the last six with their children, Joseph, Grace, Ann Marie, and Erin. "It just has the perfect combination of kid stuff, parent stuff, and a real small town atmosphere. We've noticed that we see the same instructors year after year in the ski school, and I think that says a lot about the mountain and the local management," says Ed.

Catering to kids is tops at Steamboat, whether they ski or not. There are five kids-only lifts and two special beginner teaching areas. "The kids have always raved about how much fun ski school is. Grace always makes new friends and loves the treasure hunts and downhill racing. Joseph has loved the ski jumping and tree skiing," she says. More advanced kids can enjoy the frontier-style fort or kids-only terrain park.

When it's time for a ski break there's snow shoeing, horseback riding, Gondola rides up the mountain, ice fishing, sleigh ride dinners, dog sled rides to the natural hot springs park and more. "In downtown, you can watch ski jumping at Howelson Hill. The kids love this," says Sharon.



TIPS FOR YOUR TRIP

PLANNING YOUR VACATION

Some resorts book up early, but many offer last minute specials. Many also offer packages that allow you to take advantage of the many amenities available, such as package ski lift tickets, free shuttle services, and more. Be sure to look into ski school reservations early as some resorts fill their spring ski season classes by the end of December. Check websites for details.

FAMILY & FRIENDS

Traveling with family and friends can be a great way to share expenses and make wonderful memories. And often times, you're more likely to have someone at your ski level to hang out with each day.

GETTING THERE

Time and money will usually determine how you will travel to your destination. Some resorts are easy to get to by car but can often mean driving on snowy or icy roads. Flying in can also save time, allowing for more time on the slopes and less time on the road.

TRANSPORTATION

Check with the resort for details on free shuttle services. You may not need a rental car if getting around town is taken care of for you.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Most ski resorts now offer activities for families with children of all ages from infants on up. While the grown-ups and older kids can hit the slopes, little ones can enjoy age-appropriate activities including some fun snow games.

WHAT TO WEAR

It's not always as cold as you might think. Dress in layers to maximize comfort. Boots to slush in the snow are a must for keeping toes dry and warm. Ask friends if you can borrow clothes or equipment.

SKI EQUIPMENT MUST HAVES

Renting equipment at the resort or shops nearby is easiest for most skiers. Their experienced staff will help find what's just right for you. Also, once you've got it all together, ski valets are a nice option that let's someone else deal with the logistics of equipment storage and retrieval when you're not on the slopes.

TAOS, NEW MEXICO

www.skitaos.com

For laid back ski adventures, Taos Ski Valley may be just the place. About two hours north of Albuquerque, it remains one of the few family owned and operated ski resorts in North America.

Benji and Maria Martinez and their children, Jacob and Catie Rose, have been skiing together in New Mexico for the last three years. "For us, Taos is a low key place without the bells and whistles of a more popular ski resort," says Maria. Fewer crowds also make it attractive. "We go during peak season and we never wait in long lines at the lifts. That's really important to us because of the kids' limited school breaks," she says.

The mountain is very accommodating to all ski levels with runs for beginners to the most experienced skier. "Taos also has one of the best ski schools in the country and I feel better knowing that the kids are with someone very experienced who can teach them better than Mom and Dad," she says. "Ski vacations can be somewhat expensive because of the equipment rentals, lift tickets, and ski school. Taos is not one of the most expensive. I think because it's more of a 'purest' ski place," says Maria. Off the slopes, Taos is full of activities like ice skating, tubing, snowmobiling, exploring new cultures, and hot air ballooning.

So, with all the choices, the next question you should be asking yourself is how soon can you get there? **CFM**

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