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## Trip Report: Aspen Snowmass Ski Resort

SKIING

TRAVEL

By **Kühl Editor** on March 28, 2020

Author's Note: Just a few weeks after our visit to Snowmass, Colorado ski resorts were forced to close to decrease the spread of COVID-19. Even though the reopening date for this ski resort, as well as other destinations around the world remains uncertain, we look forward to the day when the places mentioned in this story can be enjoyed by everyone.

## Snowmass Ski Adventure

Weekday ski getaways are designed to maximize avid skiers' time on the slopes. Even if the opportunity is limited to a handful of days, efficient planning combined with cooperating weather conditions can result in a remarkable time. Our Aspen Snowmass ski adventure is a perfect example.

While most metro Denver residents drive to closer options, we reaped the benefits of traveling a bit further than Winter Park Resort, Summit County or Vail/Beaver Creek.

## Limelight Hotel Snowmass

When we pulled into the underground parking garage at the Limelight Hotel Snowmass, the gray cloud cover had been replaced by a sapphire sky with a few ribbons of white. A fresh layer of snow blanketed the surrounding mountains. Without any delays, we checked into the hotel and our possessions were placed in our spacious room with ample storage. Floor to ceiling windows offered an abundance of natural light along with a view of the adjacent mountain. Well placed light fixtures made it possible to read and to do work after dark.



View from room at Limelight Hotel, Snowmass, Colorado

We stowed our ski equipment in the main floor locker area. Within steps of the Elk Camp gondola, we were assured that our morning introduction to a new mountain would be carefree. This prime hotel location also provided easy access to Snowmass' main attractions.

## Exploring Snowmass

Before dropping temperatures made walking outside too uncomfortable, we explored. Late afternoon skiers were headed back to the base area as we strolled by an abundance of dining and shopping options. Families were taking

advantage of a small outdoor skating rink. Colorado's tallest indoor climbing wall inside the Limelight, an indoor fitness room, and an outdoor jacuzzi appeared to be secondary options.

## Dinner at the Limelight

For our convenience, we dined at the hotel's onsite restaurant. Two musicians added to the festive happy hour which included good deals on selected menu items. That evening, hand-tossed 10-inch pizzas were by far the most popular item. Almost every table was occupied, primarily by families, when we entered the casual dining room with oversized windows and a large bar area. A significant number of the patrons didn't appear to be guests of the hotel. They entered and exited the room with their ski jackets, hats, and mittens.

As we listened to the music, we munched on an order of Colorado crudité with hummus. We dipped an assortment of seasonal vegetables and slices of crostini into the garlic hummus, Kalamata olive tapenade, and the roasted red pepper hummus.



Colorado Crudite appetizer at Limelight restaurant

For our main course, we selected the seared sustainable salmon served face down on a bed on grilled onions and sautéed kale. Our healthy appetizer and dinner options were offset by a shared chocolate chip cookie bake prepared in a cast iron pan and topped with salted caramel gelato.

# Skiing with the Over-the-Hillers Group

Before beginning our Snowmass ski-adventure the next morning, we took advantage of the complimentary buffet breakfast included with each guest's stay. With a ski-in/ski-out prime location, we walked a very short distance to the nearby gondola. We took a few warm-up runs before we met the Over the Hillers group at the Ullrhof Restaurant.



Sandy & Ira, Snowmass Ski Resort, Colorado

Every Tuesday from early January through the end of March, accomplished skiers and snowboarders over 50 are led by a dedicated Snowmass ambassador. Inside we were graciously greeted by Ruthie Waldman, a petite Canadian woman, who began skiing in Quebec's Laurentian mountains in the 1950s. Close to another dozen people gathered around Waldman as she offered a few instructions before we got ready to ski. Most knew Waldman by name and were familiar with the group's weekly routine.

Our route traversed over expert and advanced intermediate terrain. The pace was quicker than I anticipated. Being unfamiliar with the twists and turns of the runs, I had to be mindful of Waldman's location so that I would not become separated from the group. By the time we reached the first ski lift, two participants had lost their way.

To accommodate people who needed a respite from the windy and snowy conditions, we stepped inside a tiny restaurant called Up 4 Pizza near the top of the Big Burn lift. Waldman treated us to their famous chocolate chip cookies, a sweet midmorning treat. Nostalgia buffs will love their small collection of black and white photos from

decades ago.

Most of the Over-the-Hiller participants skied for the remainder of the day and joined Waldman for lunch at Gynn's High Alpine Cafe. Instead, we joined Tucker Burton, the Senior Public Relations Manager for Aspen Snowmass, and her husband, at the recently opened Sam's restaurant located at the top of the Village Express chairlift. The \$2.5 million remodel showcases an open kitchen and bar area.

Unlike most mountain restaurants with a hearty audience of burger, chili, and pizza lovers, this formal restaurant offers all of the accoutrements of an upscale Italian eatery. Less serious skiers can easily indulge in a selection of antipasti dishes, sides, and main entrees without any concerns of skiing the remainder of the day. The hassle of dealing with bulky ski gear, boots, and jackets is eliminated with a self-check coat, helmet and boot closet equipped with slippers.

Each day, the bakery chef creates an assortment of breads that should not be skipped. The grilled salmon with za'atar and lemon matched perfectly with my desire to have a healthy meal filled with protein and vegetables. A non-dairy cappuccino made with almond milk provided a bit of warmth and an extra mid-day boost.



Grilled salmon at Sam's

Had we not been intent on maximizing our ski time, I would have been content to sip a glass of wine in this wonderful restaurant with spectacular views. Instead, we bundled ourselves up so we could enjoy several more hours of skiing with minimal crowds.

# Mardi Gras Entertainment

On Fat Tuesday, Snowmass followed its 38-year old tradition scheduling a full day of activities. While waiting for the pick-up for our snowcat dinner, we stood in front of the Bud Light HIFI concert stage in the Base Village where we listened to The Soul Rebels, an eight-piece brass ensemble. While our time was relatively short, we were able to hear a bit of soul, jazz, funk, hip-hop, rock and pop music.

## Snowcat Dinner at the Lynn Britt Cabin

After riding in a snowcat for about 15 minutes, we stopped in front of the Lynn Britt Cabin, a local favorite honoring the memory of a former Aspen Snowmass ski instructor who died at the age of 40 after a prolonged battle with cancer. A handful of skiers were climbing uphill on an adjacent run as the sun was setting on the horizon. On our way into the cabin, we passed by a blazing outdoor fire and were treated to a simmering hot cider drink served in a clear glass mug with a handle.



Lynn Britt Cabin, Snowmass, Colorado

Inside, a musician serenaded us with popular melodies as we reviewed our options for a four-course American inspired cuisine. Within a short period of time, the intimate dining room was filled to its capacity.

From the king crab starter with contrasting flavors of grapefruit and curry, to the frisee and apple salad with a

cider vinaigrette to the pan roasted arctic char entrée, to the almond cake coated with vanilla sauce and cherries, each course showcased the chef's talent to combine complimentary flavors.

## Guided Skiing with Kelly Hayes

Our introduction to Snowmass Mountain was further enhanced when we skied the second day with Kelly Hayes. Other than a brief stop for lunch at Gwyns High Alpine Restaurant, we skied almost non-stop. We encountered few lift lines and a diverse terrain filled with a variety of challenges. With a knowledgeable guide, we zipped from one part of the mountain to the next and fulfilled our desire to ski as much as possible. At the Maroon Vista overlook, we had spectacular views of numerous mountain peaks.





Sandy Bornstein enjoys skiing in Snowmass, Colorado

Intent on finding great backdrops for photos stops, I gladly followed Hayes into a grove of trees. Years ago, before a series of orthopedic issues, I would not have hesitated. Runs littered with trees are now outside my comfort zone. My irrational fears made my departure a bit more harried than anticipated. Hayes adeptly helped

me overcome my unreasonable dilemma and reminded me to slide and shift my weight. Regaining my confidence and composure allowed me to minimize my fears.

## Mix6 Dinner in Snowmass Base Village

Just a few steps away from the Limelight, an innovate space opened at the end of December for people to gather together to eat, drink, play and learn. Downstairs, children and adults young at heart can take advantage of a state-of-the-art game lounge. In addition to offering an upbeat place for people to congregate for meetings and presentations, the Collective Snowmass showcases Chef Martin Oswald's creativity at mix6 and an assortment of alcoholic beverages at the moxiBar. At mix6, visitors and locals use their likes and dislikes to combine an assortment of healthy foods—vegetable dishes, protein options, legumes, rice and homemade sauces—to create their own entrees. After we were seated in the relaxed dining area, Chef Oswald introduced us to glühwein, a hot spiced wine traditionally enjoyed in wintertime.



Dinner at Mix 6

## Bonus Morning Skiing with Ruthie Waldman

We gladly accepted Waldman's offer to guide us on our last morning. Skiing with someone who knows a mountain well offers distinct advantages. No time is wasted in trying to decide where to go. The expert also knows the best routes to take in order to avoid potential crowds or windier places on overcast days.

During our morning together, we skied on spectacular runs and even found time to glide through a children's trail. Young at heart, we recalled our earlier days skiing with our growing family and rejoiced at the chance to ski at one of the top resorts in the world.



Sandy Bornstein and Ruthie Waldman, Snowmass, Colorado

Waldman advised us that new visitors to the mountain should consider the First Track program offered several days a week during ski season.

## Grand Finale: The Crepe Shack by Mawa's Kitchen

On our first afternoon, I had watched a group of afternoon skiers stand under heat lamps outside The Crepe Shack as they munched on their treats. Not knowing if there would be time to indulge before leaving Snowmass, I jotted down the name on my phone. Surprisingly, locals later on mentioned that this new addition to the Snowmass culinary scene was a great place to grab an innovative lunch.

Raised in Paris, Mawa McQueen is more than familiar with the art of crepe making. Her Snowmass renditions call upon local organic ingredients along with imported items to produce unusual combinations of ingredients that fit into a convenient pouch that can be eaten onsite or on the go. Our lunch choices included two savory crepes—Mawa's Greens and an Alaskan. The former was filled with generous portions of avocado, spinach, basil, pesto and mozzarella while the latter had mounds of Maine smoked salmon, tomato, capers, arugula and a smattering of dill cream sauce.



Enjoying great eats from the Crepe Shack. Pictured in [KÜHL Spyfire Jacket](#)

Our midday meal was completed with a dessert crepe called the German chocolate cake. We eagerly watched as the preparer sprinkled Ghiradelli chocolate chips, pieces of angel food cake, chocolate mousse, coconut slivers, and Bailey's Irish Cream onto the prepared crepe and then carefully folded it so it could fit into the pouch. Our

fingers were dripping with melted chocolate by the time we took our last bite. Sweet memories of food treats and mountain trails consumed our thoughts as we pulled out of the Limelight parking lot and drove back to Denver.

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*When Sandy Bornstein isn't trekking in Colorado or writing, she's [traveling with her husband Ira](#). After living as an international teacher in Bangalore, India, Sandy published an award-winning book, [May This Be the Best Year of Your Life](#), as a resource for people contemplating an expat lifestyle and living outside their comfort zone. Among other things, Sandy writes about family, intergenerational, and active midlife adventures highlighting land and water experiences.*

*Disclosure: Aspen Ski Company hosted the Traveling Bornsteins' 3-night stay at the Limelight Hotel, 3-days of lift tickets, and meals.*



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