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End of Season Ski Getaway in Vail, Colorado

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By Kühl Editor (<https://www.kuhl.com/borninthemountains/author/ed/>) on March 31, 2021

Every year as spring arrives, I realize that the remaining days of the ski season are limited. Within no time, the snow will melt and mud season will begin, so I immediately set aside spring ski days. Though an avid skier for decades, I had never arranged a ski getaway to Vail. At the beginning of the 2020-2021 season, I'd hoped that this was the year that would change.

Near the end of the season, the Grand Hyatt Vail (<https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/hotel/colorado/grand-hyatt-vail/egegh>) invited my husband and me to stay as media guests. The resort is situated on one-third of a mile along the Gore Creek at the base of Vail Mountain. In 2018, a multimillion-dollar renovation updated the resort's public areas, 285

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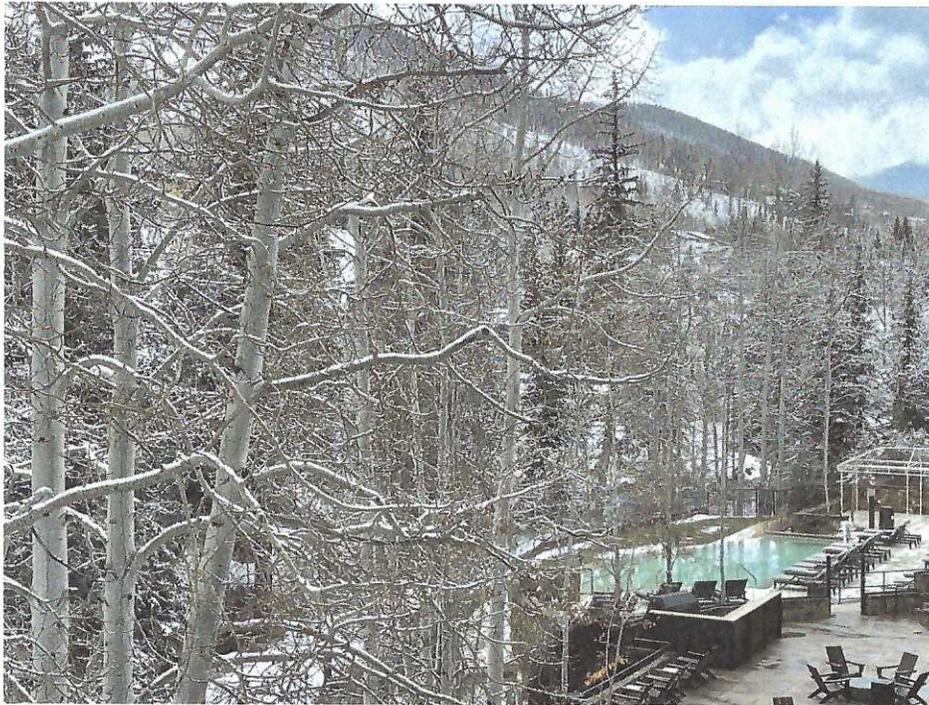
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guestrooms, and added distinctive motifs including Southern Ute Native American artwork. When the Grand Hyatt Vail opened in the summer of 2019, it became the second Grand Hyatt in Colorado and the first in a U.S. mountain resort destination.

Spacious Suite with Peaceful View

During our two-night stay, we enjoyed the convenience of the Grand Hyatt's ski-in/ski-out location, along with a luxurious suite featuring stunning views of the adjacent Gore Creek and tree-covered mountain. When Ira opened the door to our Grand Hyatt Vail room, I was immediately impressed. Our spacious suite had a comfortable sitting room attached to an expansive bedroom with a fully appointed bathroom. Equally remarkable was the view from the narrow balcony. Had it not been a bit chilly and slightly overcast, I could have happily spent the remainder of the afternoon gazing at the creek running alongside the adjacent mountain. Instead, we chose to take a walk along the path that led to nearby Lionshead and Vail Village.



Balcony view overlooking pool at Grand Hyatt Vail

Easy Access to Lionshead and Vail Village

On our way to the trail, we passed a group of lively children and their parents taking advantage of the creek-side heated infinity pool, as well as a few other adults in Adirondack chairs being warmed by open flames.

The snow packed Gore Valley Trail hugged the creek bank as it meandered through white dusted coniferous and deciduous trees. We breathed in crisp air laced with the unmistakable smell of pine and heard rushing water make its way through the icy, rock infested creek bed. Unlike the summer months when the Gore Valley Trail is filled with pedestrians and cyclists, we enjoyed the solitude of our private journey.

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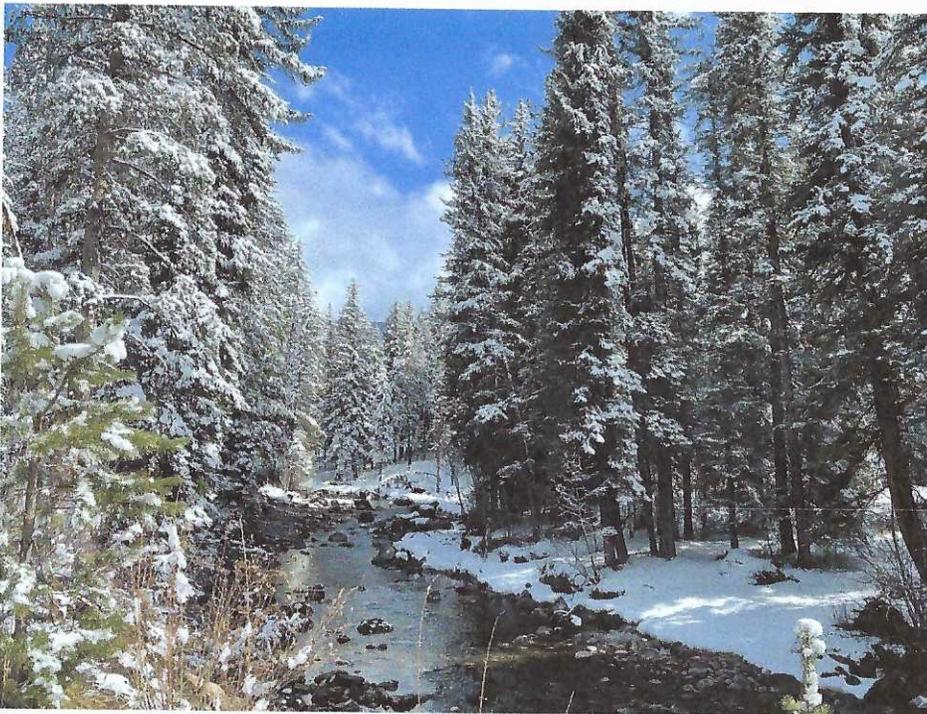
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Views from Gore Valley Trail, Vail, Colorado

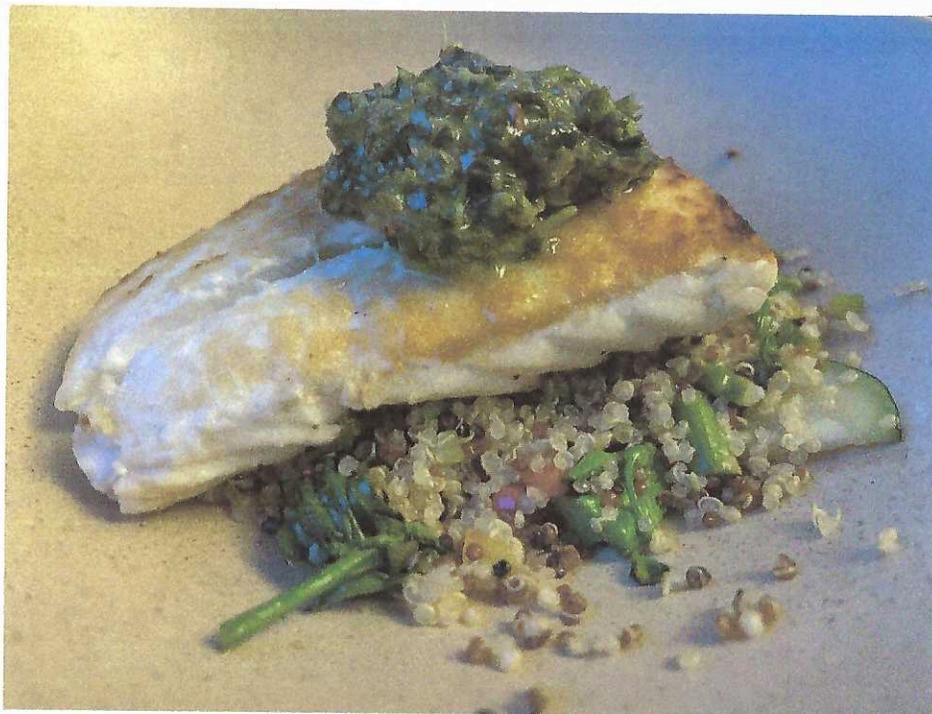
As we approached Lionshead, our quiet time was replaced by an abundance of locals and visitors. Large numbers of spring skiing/boarding enthusiasts had come to Vail and did not appear hampered by Colorado's COVID restrictions. Before returning to the hotel, we wandered a bit around Vail Village and then spent the next half hour strolling back to the resort.

While we have always included nature walks in our weekly schedule, Ira's brain cancer diagnosis has increased the number of these outdoor events. Quiet walks on scenic mountain paths rekindled and rejuvenated our spirits. Back at the Hyatt, we relaxed in the Gessner Fireside Lounge where we temporarily deviated from Ira's healthy diet by sipping on hot cocoa and munching on individually wrapped, homemade chocolate chip cookies.

Accommodating Dining Options

Due to lingering pandemic concerns, we chose not to take the complimentary shuttle to dine at nearby restaurants in Lionshead or Vail Village. Instead, we satisfied our robust appetites onsite. The Grand Hyatt Vail culinary staff, led by sous chef Jarrett Raiguel, was willing to work with our dietary requests and served a diverse selection of plant-based foods to complement our protein selections.

For our first evening, Jarrett suggested a sweet potato hummus appetizer with vegetables, falafel, and pita, followed by a Halibut entrée seasoned with pesto sauce and served on vegetarian quinoa. We finished our meal with an oversized portion of mixed berries.. Using my glass of chardonnay and Ira's mango flavored sparkling water, we tapped our glasses and toasted our first night in Vail. Throughout the remainder of our stay, the culinary staff continued to accommodate our requests.



Halibut entrée prepared by culinary team at Grand Hyatt Vail

Convenient Ski-in, Ski-Out Location

Ski-in/ski-out designations vary, but the Grand Hyatt Vail's ski lift could not be any closer to the building. Chair 20 (Cascade Village Lift) was just a few steps from the ski concierge room where we changed into our warmed ski boots. We grabbed our skis from the outside rack and were on the lift within seconds. Unlike other locations on the mountain, we did not encounter a lift line. This slow-moving quad lift took us to a mid-point location where we easily skied over to the Pride Express Lift (Chair 26). At the end of our ski day, we took a meandering trail back to the resort. Soft mushy snow mixed with icy patches prevailed in the lower parts of the run.

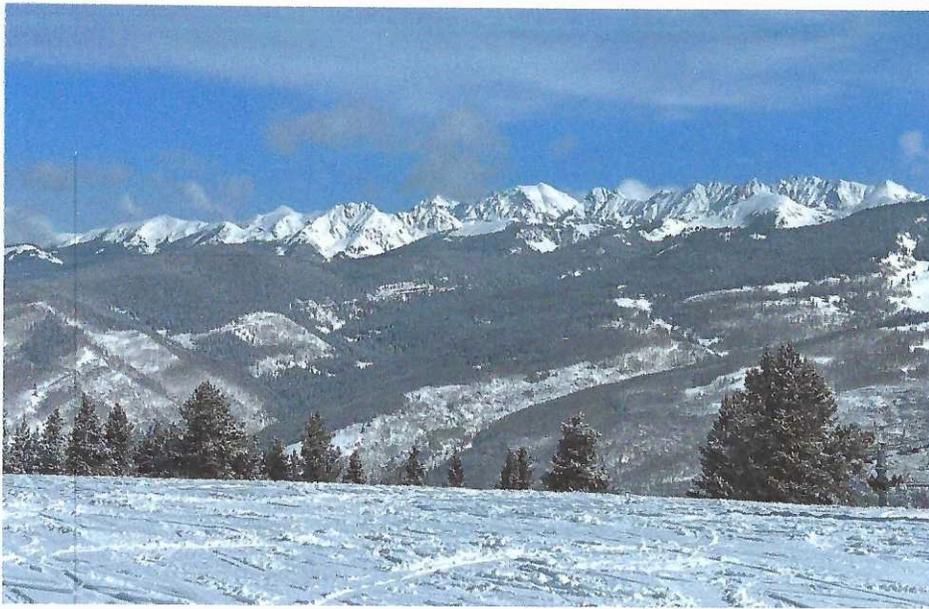


Cascade Lift at Grand Hyatt Vail ski resort

Fantastic Spring Skiing in Vail

Before venturing out on our first day, we reviewed an online trail map to plot different ski run options. From past experience, we know that exploring a new ski destination can be overwhelming and a bit confusing. To get acclimated, we initially planned to ski the runs adjacent to the Pride Express Lift (Chair 26) before traversing over to the area covered by the Avanti Express Lift (Chair 2).

From the moment we glided off the chairlift, we encountered fresh powder. Weather forecasters had predicted a mostly cloudy day, but sunny skies prevailed. Within no time, my jacket was unzipped, and I was enjoying the best part of spring skiing – moderate temperatures.

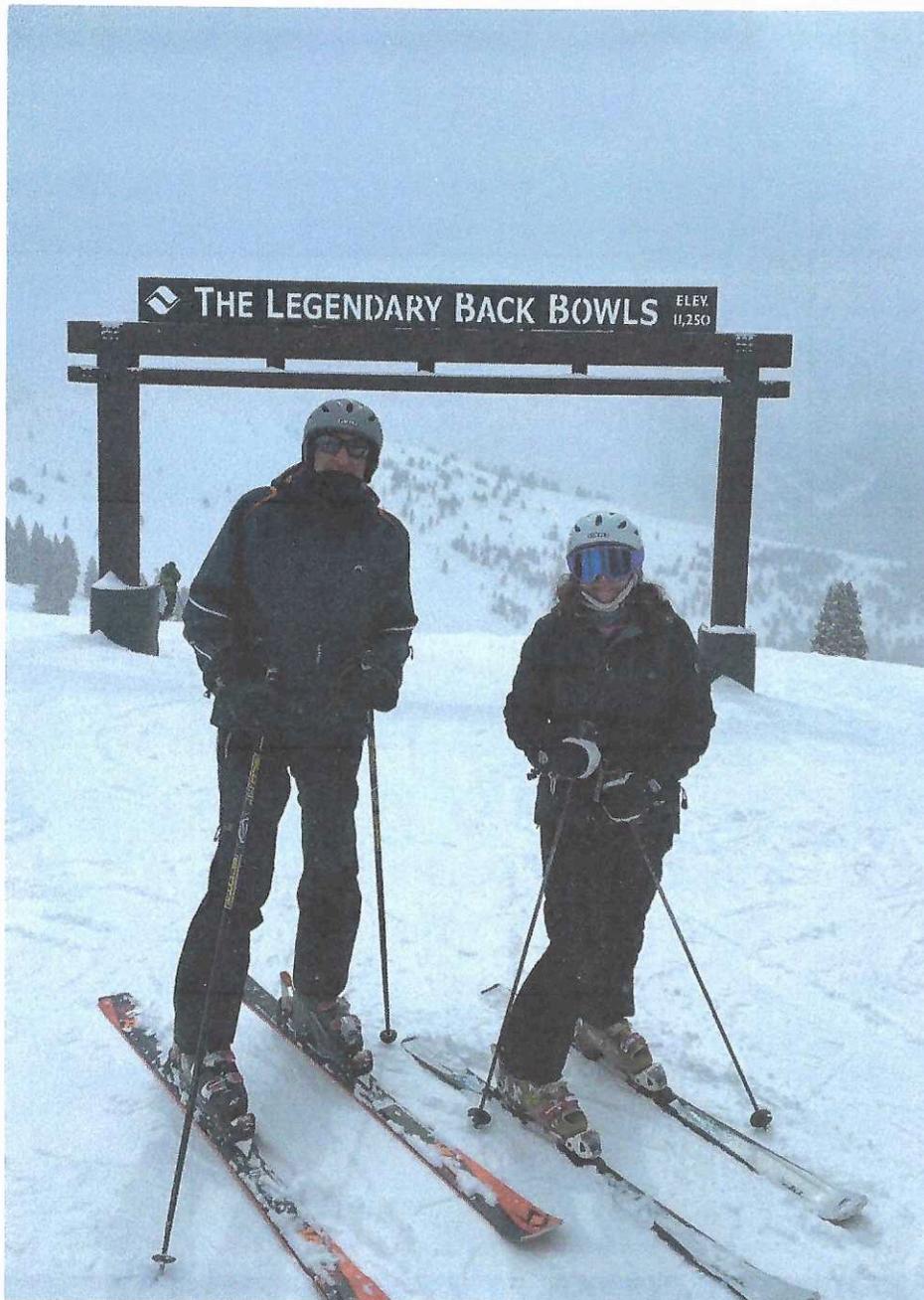


Views from top of Avanti Express Lift in Vail, Colorado

When lift lines became too long at the Avanti lift, we shifted to the Wildwood Express Lift (Chair 3) and the Mountain Top Express Lift (Chair 4). Before we became too tired, we made our way back to the runs near the Avanti Express Lift. At some point, we ended up at the base of Lionshead. We took the Born Free Express Lift (Chair 8) back to the top and gradually found our way back to the Grand Hyatt Vail.

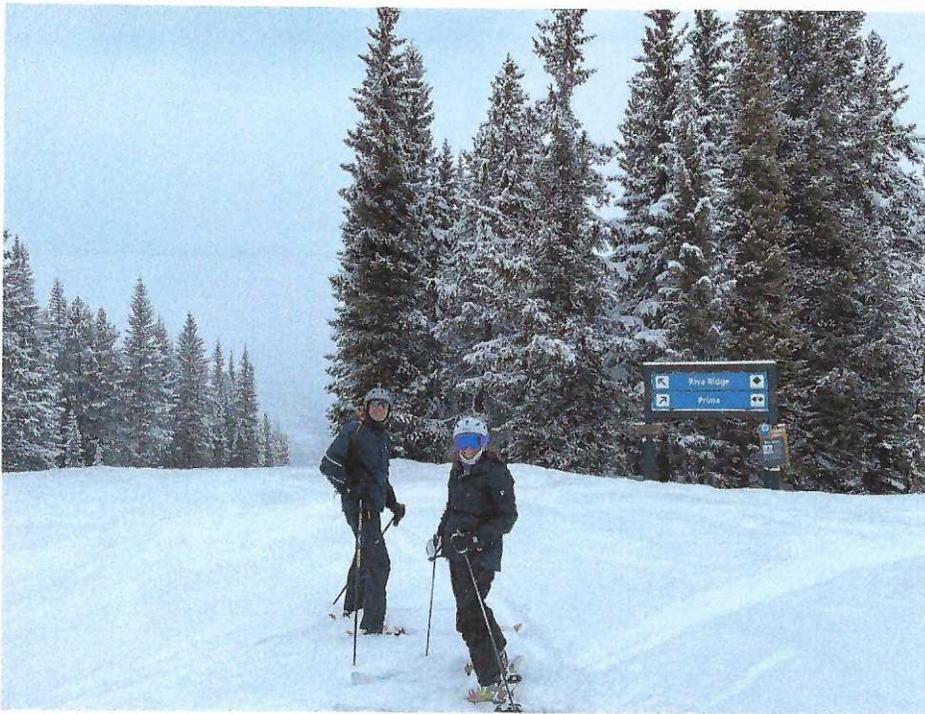
We didn't have to worry about navigating the mountain on our second day. Our youngest son, Jordan, drove from Denver to ski with us. After skiing on familiar trails, we moved farther east so we could have panoramic views and get a taste of the Legendary Back Bowls. Unfortunately, the rapidly changing weather conditions made it impossible to see the surrounding mountain ranges.

Darkening skies and a fairly steady snowfall made it more challenging to navigate our way through the deep powder. With Jordan leading the way, we traversed across the bowl as wind pelted our bodies. It had been years since Ira and I encountered such intense conditions. Neither Ira's cancer nor my autumn arthroscopic knee surgery prevented us from reaching the lift with enormous smiles on our faces. By pushing a bit outside my comfort zone, I was invigorated.



Ira and Sandy navigate the Legendary Back Bowls in Vail, Colorado

Shortly thereafter, Jordan escorted us to the top of the Riva Ridge run. He insisted that we take Vail's most famous run. History buffs recall the World War II battle in Italy after which the run is named, while skiers and boarders are more interested in the mixture of intermediate and expert runs measuring a total distance of nearly four miles.



Ira and Sandy skiing near Riva Ridge in Vail, Colorado. Pictured in KÜHL Deflektr Hybrid Shell
(<https://www.kuhl.com/kuhl/womens/outerwear/ws-deflektr-hybrid-shell/>)

Romantic Yurt Experience

On our last night, we were treated to a romantic experience. Sous chef Jarrett demonstrated a champagne sabering near one of the Cascade Village fire pits. Inside the adjacent yurt, I enjoyed Chandon Brut champagne while Ira had flavored sparkling water. We nibbled on a festive cheese and meat board filled with olives, pickles, and pretzel bread, followed by a healthy chia pudding dessert.



Ira and Sandy enjoy a romantic yurt experience at Grand Hyatt Vail

Our introduction to Vail's 5,317 acres of skiable terrain was enhanced by our stay at the Grand Hyatt. While it's not always economically feasible to select a ski-in/ski-out resort, the added benefits from such an experience can turn a wonderful ski trip into an extraordinary adventure. We spent the bulk of our available time skiing instead of wasting precious moments getting to and from our accommodations or waiting in excessively long lift lines. At a time when Ira and I are consciously seeking hassle free experiences, the Grand Hyatt Vail delivered.

*When Sandy Bornstein isn't trekking in Colorado or writing, she's traveling with her husband Ira (<http://www.thetravelingbornsteins.com/>). After living as an international teacher in Bangalore, India, Sandy published an award-winning book, *May This Be the Best Year of Your Life* (<https://sandrabornstein.com/>), 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.*