

SKI TRIPS

SKI TRIP PLANNING AND TRICKS

Women and moms usually get the raw deal when it comes to vacations. We typically are the ones who get stuck planning everything. From where we will stay to what to pack to what food to bring. Hopefully this will take some of the stress out of it.

So you want to go on a ski trip. Here's some things to consider:

WHEN to go. During the week is typically cheaper and less crowded than weekends. January or late March/early April are good times of the year to go as spring skiing generally has warmer weather, lower costs and smaller crowds.

WHERE to go. That depends on the "experience" you want to have. Smaller ski resorts are usually less busy and a better choice if you have beginner skiers and your stay does not exceed two or three days. If you are only going for a weekend, try to keep your travel times to just a few hours. Two hundred miles is a good breakpoint for a weekend road trip versus a longer stay that would have three or more days of skiing.

For longer trips, look for resorts that offer a variety of trails including terrain parks and halfpipes, a sizable self contained base village with slope side lodging, a well laid out beginner area, and a good ski school with plenty of skier services. Generally big resorts offer many accommodations to their guests (like spa services) and have more and longer trails and faster lifts than smaller resorts. They have a good selection of groomed and non-groomed ski runs as well as multiple mountains (ie, Winter Park + Mary Jane). But big resorts are also generally busier and more expensive. Consider smaller resorts if you are looking for a calmer, more relaxing atmosphere and fewer crowds while skiing.

Something else to consider is the vertical drop of the resort. Many resorts post this on their website. Vertical drop indicates, in general, how long your ski runs will be. For example, Terry Peak in Lead, SD has a vertical drop of 1,100 feet whereas Jackson Hole has a drop of 4,139 feet.

A new thing to also consider is the legalization of marijuana in ski states. Colorado and Washington in particular. While it is illegal to smoke pot on federal land and most ski resorts are on federal land, this may be something you will encounter in the lift lines, on the slopes, outside the lodges, and in the terrain parks. A rapid number of pot shops are also opening in ski resort towns to target the tourist business. If this is something you're ok with then no

problem. But if you'd rather avoid it or exposing your kids to it, consider going to Utah where pot is still illegal.

DISCOUNTS & DEALS

Lift Tickets

A ski trip isn't a cheap trip to do. But there are discounts and deals out there if you know where to look. Lift tickets are a big expense and their prices are a good indicator of what other costs may be where you go. Websites that you can compare lift ticket prices are www.coloradoskiauthority.com or www.liftsift.com (this one will show you vertical drop and the distance from your location). Websites like www.liftopia.com, www.onthesnow.com, and www.getoutskiing.com are good websites to find deals on lift tickets online and also help plan your trip.

Look for retail specials through grocery stores for lift tickets. In Colorado, you can usually get discount lift tickets at King Souper for certain resorts. Gas stations may also have lift ticket deals. At certain Shell stations if you get 10 gallons of gas you can get a coupon for buy one lift ticket get a 2nd one free to select resorts. So see a complete listing for Shell stations and participating resorts go to www.skifreedeads.com.

Most resorts offer military and student discounts. Also ask about multi-day/half-day/night-ski/beginner-only tickets. Most resorts also offer early or late season discounts and have lift and lodging package deals. Finally, check if your home resort's season pass gets you any discounts anywhere. Terry Peak currently has partner deals with Big Sky and Bridger Bowl.

Lodging

Your next big expense is lodging. Staying slope side costs more, but the convenience for families with younger children can make it worth it. For stays a week or longer, check out VRBO -- [Vacation Rentals By Owner](http://VacationRentalsByOwner.com) -- for reasonably-priced slope side lodging. Private homes or condos with a full kitchen can provide economies over a standard hotel/motel room, especially for larger families or groups. Check to see if the resort has a centralized service to assist in booking residence-vacation lodging. Most do. You can save money by choosing more basic lodging that is a short drive from the slopes. Motels along major highways about 10 or 20 miles from a chosen resort can offer some of the best underused bargains during the winter. For example, a room in Keystone for a weekend trip in March would run over \$200 a night but a room in Georgetown which is 10 miles away for \$100 a night. However, if you're looking for things to do besides skiing or want to go out after skiing or shopping, stick to the resort towns.

You've got the "where" and "when" figured out, now what?

One month out: make restaurant reservations; make lesson reservations; make equipment rental reservations, especially if you are going over a holiday weekend.

PACKING TIPS

Use a checklist: Use a checklist that you can print out and use to be sure you don't forget anything. You can make your own or there are several online. One is posted at www.adventurechix.net too. There are also packing apps like PackingPro you can download to your smartphone or tablet.

Lay out all your clothing and gear: Before you put anything into your suitcase lay out all your clothes and gear on the floor and compare it to your checklist. Keep a note pad by your suitcase. As you start packing, make a list of items you may need to buy or find before you depart. Keep your ski clothing and gear separated from your everyday clothing you're going to take.

Pack all your ski clothing and gear in their own bag: Have a second bag for all the other clothing and stuff you are bringing. Keeping your ski stuff together will relieve you of trying to sort through everything you brought when you're trying to find your ski socks. It also helps prevent you from losing or forgetting some of your gear. When you're done skiing for the day (and your stuff has dried) you can put all your clothing and gear back in the bag or a designated area so it's ready for the next day. We like to use a plastic bin with a locking lid that is big enough to hold each of our ski clothing and gear, including helmets, goggles, and extras. We use a folding luggage cart to tote the bins in from the car to the room. If space is an issue, duffle bags are your best option.

Arranging your suitcase: A couple of tips here. One, if you wear a helmet put your goggles and other items that are breakable inside for protection. If not, be sure to carefully wrap and pack your goggles, preferably in their google bag. Two, fill everything! Put socks in your shoes, underwear in your boots, etc. Third, roll your clothes before packing them. You can fit more clothes in your suitcase if you roll them. To make sure that you don't forget anything, pack your ski wear in the order that you usually wear them. Pack your long underwear. Then pack your mid layer. Don't forget your insulating layer (a fleece jacket), and finally your ski jacket and pants. It's recommend a pair of socks for each day of skiing. You don't want to start a new day with a smelly, matted, or damp pair of socks. As for long underwear, two pair of tops and bottoms, one lighter and one heavier is a good idea. For one thing, you can switch between pairs to allow them to get a chance to breathe. Second, you can pick the one best for that day's expected weather. Finally, if it is really cold, you can wear both.

Pack your ski accessories. Bring your helmet or your hat, two pairs of gloves or mittens (so one can dry if it gets wet), a neck gaiter, and goggles. Don't forget smaller items, like hand warmers and sunscreen.

Next pack the clothing that you plan on wearing when you're not on the slopes. Don't forget a good pair of boots and everyday gloves! You may have to do a lot of walking, and you want your feet to be stable on slush or ice and stay warm. And especially don't forget your swimsuit and flip flops for après ski hot tubbing!

If you pre-purchased lift tickets, lessons, or rentals, make sure you have the necessary paperwork with you. Don't forget to bring your boot dryers so you're your boots will be dry the next day. Rub on wax and anti-fog spray are also good things to throw in your bag. Other things you want to bring include a small coin/card purse so you don't have to take your wallet to the slopes. A hydration backpack is great for having on the slopes- you can fill it with water and get a drink whenever. And most have plenty of storage so you can carry some extra snacks, small clothing items, or extra goggles in them. Other must haves to put in your backpack or to carry on the slopes include your phone, money, tissues, sunscreen, and lip balm.

Finally, don't forget to also pack things for the car. Pack games, iPod's, videos, books, snacks, drinks, pillows, etc. to help everyone pass the highway time.

Packing your skis: Next is your ski equipment. If you are planning on renting, at least take your boots with you, if you own them. If you're driving, put ski boots, skis, and poles in the car if you can. Don't use a ski rack as your skis bindings will get full of dirt, grime and salt. If you do need to use a ski rack, be sure and wash out your bindings as soon as you reach your destination. Also, bring your ski boots into your room so they will stay warm. It's ok to leave your ski's in your car or in ski storage.

MEALS

Feeding your family on a ski trip can greatly add to the cost of the trip. Eating out for every meal can be expensive. To save money, a lot of folks, when they are selecting their lodging take into consideration what cooking capabilities it has. Luckily it doesn't take much to fix meals in your room. But again, we women and moms are who typically get stuck with planning the meals. We are on this ski trip to have a good time so we don't want to spend a lot of time prepping or make complicated dishes on vacation (or anytime). What we want is delicious hot food, that tastes as good as a restaurant, but doesn't require us to leave our toasty warm condo. Here's how to do it.

Plan ahead. Before you leave home plan out a couple of dinners. You probably won't eat every meal in, so don't over plan. Make a list of the ingredients you'll need to buy. If you need spices, measure and bag them for each recipe. Then, bring these bags along. Don't assume you'll have anything more than a frying pan and saucepan with which to cook, so keep it simple. If your room doesn't have any cooking facilities, consider purchasing a Hot Pot. They are typically around \$12 and you can get them at Target, Wal Mart, etc. They are great for heating up soups, noodles, boiling water for eggs, hot dogs, oatmeal, etc.

Make a List and Shop early. If you can, shop on your arrival day. Have a shopping list ready too so you're not forgetting anything and not over buying cause you're hungry after a day in the car. Try not to wait until after a day of skiing to go grocery shopping. It is so much nicer to come in from the cold and have hot chocolate, adult beverages, snacks and your dinner ingredients waiting for you.

Bring a crockpot. If you're driving and you have room, bring a crockpot. YOU WILL THANK ME FOR THIS! There are tons of frozen crockpot meals on the internet. Sites like www.savingyoudinero.com and www.sixsisterstuff.com are full of good recipes. A compilation of recipes from these sites can also be found at www.adventurechix.net. They are easy to make ahead, freeze, and bring on your trip. Before you head out to hit the slopes pull a meal out of the freezer and empty into your crockpot. When you come home from skiing it's done and your family and friends will be impressed! Easy breezy!!!

Lunch & Snacks on the slopes. You'll save a ton of money if you can pack your own lunch. Try to pack foods that will keep your muscles fueled like carbs. Some salty foods, fruits, nuts for electrolytes. PB & J on tortillas are great choices as are portable fruit or vegies. Dried fruits or ready washed bags of carrots or snap peas are great options. Some lodges will have hot water and microwaves that you can use to make Cup O Noodles or hotdogs also lunch possibilities. Or you can make your own noodle dishes like Pad Thai or spaghetti and put it in a microwavable bowl. Sistema makes great microwavable dishes. For snacks, try trail mix, cereal bars with protein or even a candy bar. But eat often so your energy level doesn't bonk out. If you plan on carrying your food in that hydration backpack mentioned earlier, you'll want to focus on foods that don't take up too much space and are crush proof.

Speaking of hydration, it's important you are. Drinking plenty of water will help to avoid altitude sickness. Hydration backpacks are wonderful. Otherwise consider a collapsible water bottle.

Après Ski? Go to happy hour. Avoid splurging at the bar during the day and hit up the après-ski happy hour, where both food and drinks are usually discounted. Plus, you're bound to encounter a lively atmosphere if you stop in just after the lifts close.

