

# SKI DAYS

BY: LEAH ROGIN-ROPER

As fall is waning and the snow is starting to fly, indications are good that the precipitation will be better than last year, with meteorologists predicting a healthy, El Niño-influenced winter. The long, warm fall has allowed bikes and running shoes to stay around longer than usual, but every day it gets closer to being time to wax up the skis and boards and start looking forward to cold nights and those glorious blue-sky snow days that make Colorado feel like the ideal winter wonderland.

Those who live in Evergreen are lucky to be poised in the midst of many winter options. More than a dozen resorts are easily accessible along the I-70 corridor, from small family-owned resorts like Loveland, to mega-resorts like Breckenridge. Whether looking for a quick day trip or a long weekend, it's time to start thinking about planning for winter adventures.

**Check it Out Online**  
**The Mountain Formerly Known As Echo**  
**frontrangeskiclub.com**  
**14.34 miles\***

While many used to consider Echo Mountain their hometown mountain, it has changed hands to become the private Front Range Ski Club, featured in last month's *Serenity*. Echo Mountain had the intriguing combo of being a great place for beginners, as well as a fun place for young snowboarders to come ride rails and kickers in the evenings. The Front Range Ski Club, which purchased the Echo Mountain facilities this year, will not be open to the public and has stated the goal of "becoming the premier Alpine training facility in the United States." The facility looks like it will have some amazing programs for budding ski-racers and is worth checking out online if there are young ski-racers in your life.

**Daytrip**  
**Loveland Ski Area**  
**skiloveland.com**  
**35.79 miles**

As you drive the interstates and back roads of Colorado, you might notice the ubiquitous "I Ski Loveland," "I Ride Loveland," and "I Tele Loveland" stickers on bumper after bumper. Loveland, a well-loved Colorado institution, celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Passes are on the inexpensive side, with children 5 and under free. Though they don't offer the access to multiple resorts that many of the more glamorous passes might include, they offer access to plenty of diverse terrain. The Valley is a wonderful part of Loveland, a mile down the road with a great beginner section, complete with a small chairlift and an excellent ski school. The Ridge offers double blacks steep enough to make the most confident rider's heart pound a

little as their board hangs over the edge and they peer down the 45-degree pitch in front of them. New this year, Loveland makes even more heart-pounding terrain available with its free 20-person shuttle, The Ridge Cat. The only thing Loveland lacks is a production. People like it low-key here, and are more likely to wear decade-old ski jackets patched with duct tape and bring a Hibachi grill to BBQ in the parking lot, than to wear Aspen-style furs and expect luxurious meals. While the facilities are adequate and the bar upstairs does offer a decent club sandwich, you'll have to keep heading further down the road if you're looking for the 'ski town experience.'

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**Overnight**  
**Winter Park**  
**winterparkresort.com**  
**46 miles**

Winter Park is a quintessential mountain town, with charm to spare. The exit at Berthoud Pass gets you off the I-70 corridor quickly, and from Denver it's even accessible by train. Along with next door neighbor, Frasier, Winter Park has restaurants, bars, parks, playgrounds, breweries, the sledding hill, ice-skating rink and Nordic center, which provide enough alternate entertainment options to tempt even non-skiers. The town is well worth visiting and appreciating in its own right, but the skiing and riding at Winter Park Resort and its sister peak, Mary Jane, are something special. The resort is known as one of the most diverse ski areas in the state. Mary Jane houses rugged tree and bump runs, while Winter Park boasts accessible cruisers and enough variety in jumps and rails to satisfy a wide variety of skill levels. Winter Park feels like a real town, while still having a nice balance of lodging options and walkability. Winter Park is a perfect spot to spend the night. After a long day of skiing, lodging options vary widely from inexpensive roadside motels to the full slope-side treatment offered by bigger hotels, such as the Winter

Park Hotel, which offers a special lodging pass to help ensure regular lovely weekend getaways throughout the winter.

**Weekender**  
**Breckenridge**  
**breckenridge.com**  
**61.36 miles**

The first time I went to Breckenridge, it was to visit my cousin Ari who had just gotten a job working at Bubba Gump's Shrimp Co. After we all feasted at the downtown seafood place, my cousin and husband-to-be came back from the bathroom beside themselves with laughter. Apparently, a Texan had ignored everyone's admonishments about drinking water and limiting alcohol in this nearly 10,000-foot town and had managed to pass out mid-urination, squeezing himself between two urinals. "You wouldn't believe how often something like this happens," Ari chuckled. "People just don't understand what drinking at 10,000 feet means." We snickered about the Texan until we went back to his house up the road in Blue River, at nearly 12,000 feet, at which point we started to feel the effects of our own libations. Between the altitude, the size of the mountain and the enjoyable options for dining and drinking, Breckenridge is a town where it is best to plan on spending the night.

Breckenridge has a rich mining history, reflected in the feel of its town, which contains everything from pre-1900 bars to a historic district including lovely Victorian homes. It is also typically one of the two most visited ski resorts in North America each year, and is a massive resort with room to spread out over its four peaks and more than 2,000 acres of terrain. Breckenridge truly does have something for everyone, whether it is super-pipes for professionals or baby terrain parks for beginners, the highest chairlift in North America with plenty of extreme terrain or wide-open cruisers. Breckenridge is the ideal place to visit with many skiers and riders at all different levels. Its size makes it more suitable for a long weekend, rather than a short day trip, though, and it has plenty of lodging options for families of every size, as well as a plethora of amenities for non-skiers.

With all of the tourist options, Breckenridge still somehow manages to feel like a real town. The combination of tourism, history and terrain make Breckenridge feel comfortable, despite its business and size. With a population of fewer than 5,000, Breckenridge feels like your favorite local ski town. Sneaking up on Friday and not coming back until late Sunday or Monday morning allows you to walk out of a downtown condo to a freshly powdered bluebird morning, and feel the charm of riding the gondola to the mountain, remembering all of the reasons why Colorado ski resorts are among the best in the world.

Many live in Evergreen because of its proximity to Downtown Denver and the sur-

rounding areas, in order to be able to combine mountain living with the ability to have a well-paying and/or meaningful job. The other reason, however, that Evergreen is the ideal place to live, is because of its quick access to ski resorts up the I-70 corridor. If you are only using Evergreen as a commute point to your job, you are missing out on one of the huge advantages offered by our community. Whether you want to get away for a day or the weekend, make sure you take some time to appreciate one of the finest benefits of being poised in this particular spot. You deserve a ski day!

\*Distance in miles from Evergreen.