

# Miami Herald

## A ski enthusiast's plan for Park City: Ski, eat, repeat

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When I was a kid I loved going to Baskin-Robbins. I would walk slowly along the freezer cases reading the names of each of the 31 flavors, peering into ribbons of gooey delight. Oh, the joy and the agony of selecting a flavor.

Park City is kind of like Baskin-Robbins for me now. It's full of choices, including three outstanding ski resorts offering some 9,000 acres of terrain all within a 5-mile radius, more than 100 restaurants and bars, and lodging from chain hotels to luxury rental homes and condos.

Things to do include snowshoeing, snowmobiling and dog sledding, cultural and performing arts, or a visit to Olympic Park for a death-defying bobsled ride.

In late February I revisit one of my old ski haunts, my first time back to Park City since the 2002 Olympic Winter Games came to this small town nestled in the Wasatch Mountains of northern Utah.

I hardly recognize it. The ski resorts — Deer Valley, the Canyons and Park City Mountain Resort — are like old friends who have the same personalities but have undergone a series of facelifts. They have the same runs, the same lifts and mountain lodges, with some newer, spiffier ones added.

But the town is a different story. I recognize a few places along Main Street, but it is bustling with trendy boutiques, art galleries and jewelry stores, with expensive restaurants from one end to the other. Dining is nouveau Western, sushi and wild game; spas are organic; fur and leather have replaced nylon ski parkas. There are condos upon condos and buses roaring by.

Park City has grown up, with some 7,500 year-round residents. Multimillion-dollar homes blanket the valley and the mountainsides. It's the way most Western ski towns have developed in the past two decades as the corporate ski machine and mountain scenery attract Hollywood elite and wealthy financiers who invest billions in real estate both in town and the surrounding valleys.

Just 35 minutes from Salt Lake City's international airport, Park City is one of the most easily accessible ski areas in the nation. A free bus system transports skiers among the three resorts, and a free trolley cruises Main Street, making renting a car unnecessary. It's a highly efficient system with six different bus lines running every 20 minutes from a central transit center.

## MINING TO DINING

Perhaps this town was destined for fame and fortune. Park City was founded by mining prospectors in the 1860s and quickly became one of the richest silver mining towns in the West. Sixty-four buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, many of which are tastefully restored.

Ever since actor-director Robert Redford starting bringing his Sundance Film Festival here in 1984, Park City has transformed each January for 10 days from a small ski town to a wheeling, dealing Hollywood celebrity getaway.

Vestiges of Park City's Old West heritage can still be found. There's the No Name Saloon, which claims it has been "Helping People Forget Their Names Since 1903."

It looks much the same as I remembered, a rustic two-story establishment filled with loud, happy people and rusting memorabilia hanging from every nook and cranny. Known for its friendly bar, live music and buffalo burgers, the No Name has been a popular hangout for both locals and visitors for decades.

During the day, skiers have the option of boarding the Town Lift in the center of town to be whisked up to mid-mountain at Park City Mountain Resort. Your reward when you return (if you are over 21) is that you can ski from the bottom of the lift to the door of the trendiest joint in town: High West Distillery & Saloon.

As a sure sign that Park City has gone upscale, the après-skiers are here in full force, sipping whiskey, rye and handmade vodka at the world's only ski-in, ski-out distillery. High West proprietor and distiller David Perkins converted a 1907 livery stable and adjoining historic home into a block-long gastropub, where he concocts small-batch high-end spirits in a 2,500-gallon copper pot still.

Here you'll see moneyed millennials in ski jackets and boots belly up to a cozy bar to imbibe a selection of handcrafted whiskeys with names like American Prairie Reserve, Rendezvous Rye and Campfire. A menu of "innovative nouveau Western fare" is served in intimate dining rooms.

## **FOODIE ON TOUR**

One way to get to know a place is to take a walking tour, which is why I signed up for a Park City Food Tour. Guides share cultural and historical perspectives, town trivia, current affairs and other highlights about Park City, with tastings at various restaurants and shops.

Food tour founder Shirin Spangenberg is my congenial guide for three hours of grazing and gazing. We are in fine company, joined by a lively group of middle-aged women from Texas who are decked out in Mardi Gras party hats, along with a couple from Jupiter.

As we stroll, Spangenberg regales us with stories of Park City's mining past, the local arts scene and, of course, local chefs and restaurateurs. As we nibble and sip our way down Main Street, she points out Robert Redford's restaurant Zoom (it's not on today's tour) and we pop into the Park City Museum for a sneak peek at a historic ski exhibit.

We stop at four restaurants — the Wasatch Brew Pub for a taste of coconut shrimp and Polygamy Porter ("Why Have Just One?"), the charming Bistro 412 for a lovely French chardonnay and Forest Mushroom Tarte, the extremely elegant Wahso for a delightful endive and orange salad, and the strangely sublime Tokyo Nachos at Flying Sumo sushi restaurant, where we finish up.

This is the first Park City Food Tour for Bruce and Wendy Wasserman, the couple from Jupiter, although they have been visiting Park City annually for the past seven years. The foodies confess that eating holds equal importance to skiing.

"We do one ski trip a year and it's always Park City," Bruce says. "It's easy to get here, easy to get around, there's great skiing and great restaurants. Every year we find new restaurants. The food on the mountain is great, too."

## **SKIING THE RESORTS**

For sheer variety, it's hard to beat Park City with its three world-class resorts. All offer a range of terrain, ski schools and children's day care.

For anyone staying in town, Park City Mountain Resort is virtually in your back yard. Recently purchased by mighty Vail Resorts, which owns the nearby Canyons, the resort offers more than 3,300 acres of skiable terrain with 52 percent intermediate runs, nine bowls, four terrain parks and one superpipe. Runs here can be challenging, with plenty of steep and deep for the experts.

This is a boarder's paradise, too, with plenty of space to let loose in the bowls and terrain parks. If you're not into the hard stuff, cruise the 3.5-mile Home Run from the top of the mountain to the base for a scenic ride, or tackle a Signature Run, the resort's newly designated advanced runs that have been groomed for intermediate bragging rights.

The Canyons is one hunk of magnificent forested real estate. With 4,000 skiable acres of terrain, it's the largest ski resort in Utah. From the base, a breathtaking gondola ride sweeps skiers along craggy cliffs to mid-mountain, where they can access 182 runs, five bowls, six natural halfpipes and one terrain park.

The vastness of the terrain and the wide trails meandering amid the pine forest make the Canyons a favorite in my book. Not a beginner resort, it's 44 percent intermediate and 46 percent advanced. Be sure to find your way to Lookout Cabin for lunch on the deck with a spectacular view of the Wasatch Range. (Order the cheese fondue and a glass of wine to feel like you're in France.)

Legendary Deer Valley is a must-ski for anyone visiting Park City. The resort is consistently rated one of the top North American ski resorts for its impeccable grooming, service, on-mountain food, restaurants, lodging and family programs. When you arrive, neatly uniformed attendants are waiting to assist.

Deer Valley offers an intimate ski experience (no snowboarding allowed) with 2,000 acres of terrain, 20 lifts and a high-speed gondola. Nearly half the runs are intermediate, with the rest divided almost equally between advanced and beginner. If you like fine dining and luxury accommodation, Deer Valley is the place for you. The resort offers a diverse array of dining including the much-heralded and elegant Mariposa Restaurant.

After a week of eating my way through Park City and skiing three massive resorts, my knees are screaming for mercy and my waist seems to have expanded. While it's not quite the Park City I remember, I think I'll be back.

Ski Butlers

Hate hauling skis?

If you've had it with the cumbersome ski bag and airline fees, Ski Butlers is an alternative.

It's a rental delivery service that acts as sort of a ski gear concierge. You sign up on the website before leaving home, ordering the type and length of skis you want and your boot size. They also rent jackets, helmets and goggles. Enter the date, time and location where you want delivery and voilà, it all appears at your door.

The Ski Butler assists you in fitting the boots and adjusting the skis, and the service will deliver a change of equipment if you need a different size. When you leave, they pick up your gear.

The cost is a bit more than you would pay at a rental shop. My six-day day rental package (skis, boots and poles) was \$264. Average rate for rentals is \$35 to \$40 per day.

Ski Butlers is available at 35 Western ski resorts. For more information, go to [www.skibutlers.com](http://www.skibutlers.com).

Utah's Big Three

Deer Valley Resort: 435-649-1000, [www.deervalley.com](http://www.deervalley.com)

Canyons Resort: 435-645-8983, [www.canyonsresort.com](http://www.canyonsresort.com)

Park City Mountain Resort: 435-649-8111, [www.parkcitymountain.com](http://www.parkcitymountain.com)

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