

THE SKI ISSUE } WHAT'S NEW



Going Green, Luxuriously

By LIONEL BEEHNER

IF the ski industry has a buzzword this season, it's "green." Yes, all those snowmaking guns and high-speed lifts soak up untold amounts of energy, but thanks to eco-friendly capital improvements, skiers can schuss down the mountain this winter with a somewhat clearer conscience. Snow guns are using oil-free air compressors, mountaintop restaurants are being powered by solar panels, and carbon offsets can be purchased as part of your lift ticket. Ignore the S.U.V.'s crammed in the parking lot, and skiing might also seem like a sustainable sport.

That is, until, you hear the other buzzword this season: "luxury." Despite a softening real estate market, pricey condos and five-star hotels continue to go up with gusto, as alpine villages look more and more like the Las Vegas Strip every year. None of that, of course, bodes well for reducing skiers' carbon footprint, begging the question: Can luxury and green mix?

The folks at Vail say: absolutely. The ski giant recently announced plans to build North America's largest green resort, Ever Vail, with one million square feet of enviro-friendlier condos, hotel rooms, shops, restaurants and a gondola. It is not expected to open until 2012. In the meantime, here's a glance at what's new at North America's ski resorts this winter.

Northeast

With surprisingly little fanfare, Jiminy



TOP Mad River Glen's lift was overhauled to make it more energy efficient. ABOVE At the new Revelstoke Mountain Resort in Canada.

Peak (413-738-3500; www.jiminypeak.com), a small resort in Hancock, Mass., recently flipped the switch on a 1.5-megawatt wind turbine that reaches 386 feet into the air — making it, Jiminy Peak says, the first mountain resort in North America to install a wind turbine to generate power. The wind turbine will meet 33 percent of its electrical demand, the resort says.

Farther north, in Vermont, **Stowe Mountain Resort** is opening the Stowe Mountain Lodge (802-253-3560; www.stowemountainlodge.com), a 139-room rustic-chic lodge that will be the centerpiece of a 35-acre alpine village at the base of Spruce Peak, the resort's more luxurious half. The four-season village includes a residence club, performing arts center, high-speed gondola linking it to Stowe's other half, Mount Mans-

field, and a "green" golf course that uses recycled storm water.

Elsewhere in the Green Mountain state, crusty old **Mad River Glen** (802-496-3551; www.madriverglen.com) has gotten an upgrade. Don't fret, its single rickety chairlift — affectionately known as Old Faithful — is not getting scrapped. But the 58-year-old lift has been overhauled to make it faster, quieter and, of course, more energy efficient. It continues to service only skiers (no snowboarders) and the cooperative-owned mountain, one of the country's few remaining, still looks down on artificial snowmaking.

Gore Mountain (518-251-2411; www.goremountain.com), about four hours north of New York City, often feels crammed with a gazillion ski students. Not this winter, thanks to the opening of

the Northwoods Lodge, an old gondola station that has been transformed into a new Adirondack-style base camp that houses the busy ski school, along with day care and equipment rentals.

Closer to Manhattan, **Mountain Creek** (973-827-2000; www.mountaincreek.com), the New Jersey hill with a Napoleon complex, is competing with the big boys out West by adding an all-new, 60-acre freestyle terrain park — which it says is the largest jibber park in the East.

Canada

In what may be the biggest ski news of the winter, **Revelstoke Mountain Resort** (250-814-0087; www.revelstokemountainresort.com) kicks off its inaugural season on Dec. 22. Talked about for 20 years, the new billion-dollar resort is setting its sights high — very high. It will open with 4,700 vertical feet of terrain on more than 1,500 acres, but will eventually have 6,000 vertical feet of skiing, making the highest descent in North America, it says. Set in the Selkirk Mountains of British Columbia, Revelstoke has been a household name among hard-core heli-skiers, offering 500,000 acres of fresh terrain. "We're kind of the heli-ski capital of the world," said Don Simpson, the resort's principal developer. To wit: 20 development lots, some zoned for helipads, were snapped up in a single day in October.

Not to be outdone, **Whistler Blackcomb**, (800-766-0449; www.whistlerblackcomb.com), which is play-

Continued on Page 13

THE SKI ISSUE WHAT'S NEW

Going Green,
Luxuriously

From Page 6

ing host to the 2010 Winter Olympics, is also setting records. In fact, it is setting two: the new Peak to Peak gondola, which cost \$2 million Canadian dollars, will be the world's longest free span lift (1.88 miles), uniting Whistler and Blackcomb, and the world's highest lift above a valley (1,361 feet). Throw in the new 77-suite Nita Lake Lodge, (888-755-6482; www.nitalake.com), one of the final hotel pieces to go in, and Whistler Blackcomb is ready for the spotlight.

Canada just got closer for New York area skiers. Starting this month, Continental Airlines offers nonstop flights between Newark Liberty International Airport and Quebec's **Mont Tremblant** (888-738-1777; www.tremblant.ca), recently crowned again by Ski Magazine the best mountain in eastern North America.

Colorado Rockies

New bowls have been carved for this season. **Arapahoe Basin** near Keystone, Colo. (888-272-7246; www.arapahoebasin.com), better known as A-Basin by its hard-charging local fans, is almost doubling its size with the opening of Montezuma Bowl, with 400 acres of expert and intermediate runs. And **Telluride** (970-728-6900; www.tellurideskiresort.com) beefs up its backcountry terrain with the Black Iron Bowl. Steep chutes drop 1,000 feet in this European-style bowl, accessible only by a half-hour hike from the top of Lift 12.

Families are the focus of several resort upgrades, none more so than **Aspen Snowmass** (800-525-6200; www.aspensnowmass.com). Its new \$17 million Treehouse Kids' Adventure Center at the Snowmass base village offers 25,000-square-feet of mini-climbing

walls and nature-themed rooms for teens and tots. The resort also installed a 10.64-kilowatt solar photovoltaic array at its employee apartments in Carbondale, Colo.

A Victorian-era oldie but goldie, **Crested Butte** (800-810-7669; www.skibc.com), far from the Aspen glitz in Colorado's outback southwest of Denver, is redefining itself as a family resort. The centerpiece of its \$200 million renovation is the new Lodge at Mountaineer Square, a large condominium complex steps from the ski lift. The resort's moldy gothic building has been torn down and will be replaced by a 92-room luxury studio and retail complex called the Cimarron. And a former Club Med has been turned into a slopeside luxury hotel with spa.

Over at **Breckenridge** (800-789-7669; www.breckenridge.com), a new children's learning school, Mountains of Discovery, combines traditional ski lessons with an Amazing Race-style hunt for slopeside landmarks. The resort also points out that the new BreckConnect gondola, which opened last December, is saving some 20,000 gallons of fuel each season by reducing shuttle usage between Main Street and Peak 8.

Shuttle buses, in fact, seem to be going the way of strap-in skis. **Beaver Creek** (800-404-3333; www.beavercreek.com) has a new eight-person gondola, the Riverfront Express, that will link the town of Avon with the mountain later this month. It is part of the new \$50 million Riverfront Village, with the centerpiece **Westin Riverfront Resort & Spa** (888-748-5420;

ABOVE The Treehouse Kids' Adventure Center at Aspen Snowmass, BELOW The new express lift at Deer Valley.

resortandsapa.com) expected to open sometime next year. A second new gondola, the Buckaroo Express, serves its beginner terrain along with three new magic carpets.

Vail also has a new, buzz-worthy hotel. The stately **Arrabelle at Vail Square**, (866-662-7625; www.arrabelle.rocksresorts.com), part of the continuing revitalization of Vail Square, opens next month with 36 rooms, an 11,000-square-foot spa and fitness area and a rooftop pool. **Vail Resorts** is also replacing the Highline and Sourdough lifts with new high-speed quads.

West

Farther west in Idaho, the three-year-old **Tamarack Resort** (888-248-7218;

www.tamarackidaho.com) continues to bring new features on line. This winter, it is adding two new runs and carving out a super-pipe, one of a half dozen in North America with Olympic-regulation 22-foot-high walls. But the biggest attractions won't come until next year. In the spring, ground is set to be broken on a new condo-hotel developed by Andre Agassi and Steffi Graf, and in the fall the \$100 million Village Plaza is scheduled to open with 23 restaurants, boutiques and other attractions.

Also in Idaho is **Schweitzer Mountain Resort** (208-263-5555, www.schweitzer.com), an under-the-radar ski hill in northern Idaho that was recently ranked by Skiing Magazine among North America's top 25 resorts. In addition, skiers can expect shorter lift lines this season as the mountain opens two new chairlifts — a triple and a high-speed quad — boosting capacity by 28 percent.

Deer Valley Resort in Utah (800-424-3337; www.deervalleyresort.com) is adding a high-speed quad chairlift, Lady Morgan Express, that will serve nine new ski runs covering some 200 skiable acres. And with the 2002 Winter Olympics under its belt, **Park City Mountain Resort** (800-222-7275; www.parkcitymountain.com) is now training its sights on the environment. Its heated walkway at the base plaza has been upgraded with a new boiler snow-melt system that is 86 percent more energy efficient. Also, to offset the walkway's carbon output, the resort is considering planting more trees.

In Mammoth, in California, the West-

ern Monarchs (760-834-2526; www.westinnmammoth.com) just opened with 230 luxury units, becoming the biggest piece of the new Village at Mammoth to be completed since the Starwood Capital Group bought a majority interest in the resort. There is also a new Cloud Nine Express chairlift and, further catering to its snowboard following, a new beginners' terrain park with a mini-halfpipe that measures 10 feet high.

Somewhat off the beaten path, **Crystal Mountain** in Washington (888-754-6199; www.skicrystal.com) is opening its Northway Chairlift, providing access to 1,000 acres of advanced backcountry glades, bowls and chutes. The mountain also renovated its cafeteria-style Summit House from a chili-and-cheeseburger joint into a fine-dining establishment, serving up Swiss fondue and amazing views of Mount Rainier.

And in Jackson Hole, the new **Terra Jackson Hole**, (307-739-4690; www.hotelterrajacksonhole.com) might make other ski lodges green with envy. The 72-room, eco-boutique hotel is set to open next month with energy-efficient windows, custom mattresses fashioned from organic cotton, chemical-free cleaning products and a rooftop hot tub where you can sip fair-trade coffee. Meanwhile, the chic Wyoming ski resort announced earlier this year that it hopes to eventually offset 100 percent of its energy usage with wind, biomass and other renewable energy sources. Who said green and luxury can't co-exist?

ONLINE: MORE SKI COVERAGE

The Skiing Interest Guide archives past ski stories and multimedia, including Matt Gross's Traveler column on Verbier, Switzerland, and slide shows exploring the slopes of Mont Tremblant in Quebec and the alpine beauty of Methow Valley, Wash. nytimes.com/skilingguide



JOHN VRIABEL, DEER VALLEY RESORT