

Destinations

THE LATEST LOCAL TRAVEL DEALS AND GETAWAYS PLUS JOURNEYS AROUND THE GLOBE

Squaw Valley



ON WITH THE SNOW

When it comes to winter recreation, the West is where you want to be. Here are three spots guaranteed to beat the winter blues. »

BY BEKAH WRIGHT



POWDER HAS ARRIVED. It's time to grab your gear and hit favorite backcountry, bowls and bunny slopes. So where to start? We've got the season's 411 on three stellar resorts, including a sky-high milestone anniversary in Squaw Valley, the lure of big air via Brian Head's rebranded terrain parks, and a five-story adrenaline rush inside Aspen Snowmass' newest luxury hotel. Can't choose? Not to worry. The new Ikon Pass (see details below) makes it easy to hit many of the world's most notorious slopes. Smiling yet?

Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows

Smell those pine trees. Hear the swish of skis zipping down inclines. Check out the 450 inches of annual snowfall and it's obvious — you're in North Lake Tahoe, at California's Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows. This season, the resort welcomes visitors with the 50th-anniversary celebration of the Squaw Valley Aerial Tram. The world's largest such system zips passengers up 2,000 vertical feet in state-of-the-art cabins.

Riders are delivered to High Camp, where they can sip hot toddies at Terrace Restaurant and Bar, then make their way to the Observation Deck to survey the resort's two mountains and 6,000 acres of prime ski terrain within 14 zones and 270 trails. Something spied in the mix — the Subway beginner area, which has expanded its snowmaking

system, giving Achieve Tahoe's adaptive sports program more consistent conditions for teaching and easier access to the Alpine Meadows base area via the Subway chairlift.

Another reason to celebrate this winter season is the debut of the Ikon Pass (ikon.com). The program gives participants unlimited skiing at up to 13 destinations, with set days at 36 participating ski and snowboard destinations on three continents, four Canadian provinces and 12 states. The price tag is a cool \$999 for the Ikon Pass, \$699 for Ikon Base (prices subject to change). Californians will applaud the inclusion of Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows, Mammoth Mountain, June Mountain and Big Bear Mountain Resort. squawalpine.com

Brian Head Resort

Seems most ski destinations have their own taglines these days — that is true at Brian Head Resort, where they go with "the Greatest Snow on Earth." The resort doesn't make this claim lightly. A snow mecca, Brian Head has 650 acres of the white stuff gracing the mountain peaks of Giant Steps, Navajo and Brian Head, just right for downhill skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. It's also home to Utah's highest base elevation. Other stats that will speak to snow fans — 360 annual inches of snow, 71 runs, eight chairlifts and two surface lifts.



Opposite, clockwise from left: Squaw Valley Aerial Tram; New Year's Eve in Snowmass; Snowmass is fun for kids. This image: Brian Head Resort with views of the Tushar Mountains.

Not to miss are two newly branded progressive-terrain parks, Detour and Bypass, located at Blackfoot Lift and collectively known as the Training Grounds. Detour is designated for beginners, with Bypass targeted to intermediate/advanced levels. Calling for tubing time are Navajo Tube Hill's 75-foot vertical drop, with a 550-foot slope length, and Giant Steps Tube Hill, a 100-foot vertical drop with a 600-foot slope length.

As enticing as Brian Head's slopes action is, its backcountry snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling are also quite attractive. Nature's sheer magnificence dazzles by way of sites like Cedar Breaks National Monument, Dixie National Forest and Cedar Canyon, which offer up eye-catching marvels like snow-dusted red rock spires and the Parowan Gap Petroglyphs.

Where to head après-ski on a Saturday night? Giant Steps Lodge's Last Chair Saloon for barbecue and live music. The chef behind the grill is none other than Brian Head Resort owner John Grissinger, who revels in sharing a taste of his Kansas City hometown with guests.

Within walking distance are accommodations at Cedar Breaks Lodge and Spa, complete with indoor heated pool, day spa, bar and restaurant. What to plan while basking in the fireside hot tubs? Making the 1.5-hour drives to ooh and aah over Zion and Bryce Canyon national parks. brianhead.com

Aspen Snowmass

Four reasons *Ski Magazine* crowned Aspen Snowmass the 2019 Best of the West Resort: Aspen Mountain, Aspen Highlands, Buttermilk and Snowmass. These four mountains ensure powder hounds never get bored. Keeping skiers on the slopes: three of the four get 300 annual inches of snow (Buttermilk averages 200 inches). Some more impressive stats: between them the members of this quartet have 5,517 acres, 360 trails and 41 lifts.

Snowmass Base Village's \$600 million, 10-year revamp has a stellar update to check out — Limelight Hotel Snowmass. The 99-room property has features that run the gamut from a five-story climbing wall to an indoor-outdoor lounge with food. Also on tap are a fitness center, kids' game area, outdoor spas and a deck. Creating buzz even before the hotel's opening this month is Snowmass Mountain Club, a private club with social programming and luxe amenities (hello, ski valet). Convenient, considering this ski-in/ski-out hotel is adjacent to Elk Camp Gondola.

Making a visit all the sweeter is the resort's Ikon Pass participation. Even better, the Aspen Snowmass Premier, Flex and Double Flex and the Mountain Collective pass are complementary to the Ikon Pass program. aspensnowmass.com 