

DESTINATIONS

# Spring skiing: Reaching Zen on the slopes of Beaver Creek

By Becca Hensley

March 6, 2015



People say golf's a Zen sport. But so is skiing.

I've never understood that until today, when I whiz down a mountain on skis with Kenny Thayer, a golf pro at Colorado's Beaver Creek in summer, who moonlights as one of the resort's most popular ski instructors when it snows. There's some message he sends telepathically that encourages me to ski just so, to traverse light as a feather down snow as flaky as shaved coconut atop a cake.

He uses his golf ingenuity to put me in a mindful ski place, not really using golfing terms, but emitting a golfer's solid tranquil confidence, casting it out in a net that encircles and informs me as I follow him down the sheers. We carve mountains I would never consider taking on alone and he just says things like: "There you go: play offense, not defense." Or, "You are way too good to be skiing something easier." Soon, I actually believe him.

Kenny's like my own, personal Nike commercial: "Just do it," he says - and I do. Feeling at peace with nature, I understand for the first time that mind-set that connects the Buddha to golf - let alone skiing. Out here, on these snowy slopes, with pine trees wafting their pungent scent into the air and a blue sky capping us, we're at one with the world, in beginner's monkey mind, blank slates waiting to be etched. We ski so hard, I channel my pre-teen ski self, she who has no interest whatsoever in stopping for lunch. But Kenny insists we take a break.

We whoosh to a stop at SaddleRidge, one of Beaver Creek's newer restaurants, located at the base of Beaver Creek Mountain's eastern slope - and only accessible by skis, snow shoes or snow cat. A luxury log cabin, this cozy enclave not only has de rigueur fireplaces, but also offers gastronomic cuisine. Though open to the public, the restaurant gives ski instructors and their charges priority during lunchtime - so the spacious rooms are dotted with pairs like us.

Using his influence, Kenny procures us a top table, a bonus at this dining spot which also holds one of the world's largest private collections of art and artifacts from America's West. That makes it a veritable museum, and items such as Geronimo's tomahawk compete with a mountain vista that flows in from panoramic windows. As we munch rabbit and chorizo pot pie, we spot an old canteen.

"That belonged to General Custer," says the manager. "And, look, here's his hat."

Up-market SaddleRidge is the sort of experience Beaver Creek's been doing well for eons. Owned by Vail Resorts, minutes from Vail itself, this tony, more intimate resort, which recently hosted the 2015 World Alpine Ski Championships, has something for everyone. Wide-open runs, high speed zoomers, slow creepers, 45-degree steeps and tree-dotted roulettes cater to all levels.

Upper-mountain green slopes give novices a chance to ski at higher altitudes, an experience that awakens their adrenaline, shows them why people fall in love with this addictive, wintertime sport.

With customer service at a premium, Beaver Creek keeps its 1,832-skiable acres affable with home-style touches, such as complimentary warm chocolate chip cookies served at the end of the day at the mountain's base, champagne ice bars and even a mid-mountain candy cabin, which offers oodles of old-fashioned sweets from vintage barrels in a nostalgic setting.

With gourmet fare being showcased, another cabin, Beano's, serves fine-tuned local cuisine and Mamie's Mountain Grill gives snow bunnies the chance to cook their own burgers and s'mores for a flame roasted ski break.

But the resort also knows how to raise the bar. This year, they're offering the "White Glove Package," a mollycoddling five-day stay for four snow aficionados in Trapper's Cabin, a haven of rough-hewn chic that sleeps ten. Perched atop a mid-mountain ski run, it has room to sleep ten, a deck that overlooks the slopes, a Jacuzzi from which bears have been sighted, a fully equipped kitchen - and a butler to do your bidding. Costing \$50,000, the package includes ski regalia for all, rental equipment, daily private ski instructors per person, meals, first class airfare and a helicopter transfer to and from Eagle Airport and the resort. If that seems a bit steep, Vail Resorts has options. While you can purchase a daily ski ticket for Beaver Creek or sister resorts - such as Keystone - a season pass makes multiple ski days surprisingly affordable. Buy one, for approximately the cost of six one day tickets and score the possibility of skiing at a bevy of desirable resorts. In fact, with Vail Resorts recent procurement of Park City Mountain and Canyons in Utah, the

season ticket includes 26 possibilities that range in location from Colorado to France.

But if you're hankering for some golf Zen on the mountain, Beaver Creek awaits. **MORE INFORMATION**

If you go

Getting there

Beaver Creek is 120 miles west of Denver, and United Airlines flies nonstop to Eagle County Airport, about 20 miles away from the resort. Shuttle services are available from both airports if you opt not to rent a car.

**WHERE TO STAY**

The Osprey at Beaver Creek: Ski-in, ski-out hotel in Beaver Creek village.

Osprey's Spring Break Escape promotion runs through April 13 and includes 35-percent off lodging for stays three nights or longer;

[ospreyatbeavercreek.rockresorts.com/specials.asp](http://ospreyatbeavercreek.rockresorts.com/specials.asp).

Trapper's Cabin: To book the White Glove Package, call 877-774-6223.

**WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK**

Beanos Cabin: Watch for foxes, bears and raccoon as you ride a snow cat up the mountain to eat at this Beaver Creek fine-dining staple;

[beanoscabinbeavercreek.com](http://beanoscabinbeavercreek.com).

SaddleRidge: Regional Colorado cuisine with emphasis on wild game served up in a museum-recalling setting. Open for lunch; [saddleridgebeavercreek.com](http://saddleridgebeavercreek.com).

Buffalos: Sit on a stool at this bar in the Ritz-Carlton Bachelor Gulch where bartenders spin craft cocktails from such things as pumpkin-infused spirits, among other swoon-worthy, man-enhanced ingredients; [ritzcarlton.com/en/properties/bachelorgulch](http://ritzcarlton.com/en/properties/bachelorgulch).

**WHAT TO DO**

Ski/snowboard: Lift tickets, if purchased online, are about \$139 per day and include a complimentary two-hour welcome tour by a resort guide if desired.

Private ski lessons start at \$625.

McCoy Park: Part of Beaver Creek, this snow shoe and cross country arena offers free workshops every day.

**MORE INFORMATION:** [beavercreek.com](http://beavercreek.com)