



## Two prime Utah ski spots gaining traction

Posted 1/29/2009 7:30 PM

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OGDEN, Utah — A short spin up Interstate 15 from Salt Lake City lie two of North America's best-kept ski secrets.



[Snowbasin](#) and [Powder Mountain](#), two mammoth ski areas spread over thousands of acres at the northern end of the Wasatch Range, certainly aren't lacking in size or longevity. But they have been overshadowed by Utah's more popular resorts clustered around increasingly tony [Park City](#) and in the canyons above Salt Lake.

Snowbasin is the better known of the two, thanks to its moment in the spotlight as a 2002 Olympics venue. Powder Mountain, about 30 minutes away, remained largely a locals' secret until a few years ago, when the resort garnered top ratings for value and snow quality in *Ski Magazine*.

"We were shocked. We didn't even know we were on the radar," says marketing manager Carolyn Daniels. "But it probably got people looking at us for the first time."

"We've been overshadowed by Park City and Salt Lake City for a long time," says Sara Toliver, president of the tourism bureau. "We had great (ski) resorts that the locals cherished, but there was no reason to come here. Now it's become an incredible destination. We have world-class skiing within 30 minutes of downtown, and we're still very affordable."

Both Snowbasin and Powder Mountain are tucked into the still-sparsely developed Ogden Valley. Both sport long, groomed runs and powder oases. At both, a day when 3,000 skiers hit the slopes is considered a busy one. But they're an odd couple, offering entirely different experiences.

Snowbasin, which opened in 1940 with a couple of rope tows, was bought in 1984 by Sun Valley Resort owner Earl Holding. He's known for attention to detail (he also owns the five-star Grand America Hotel in Salt Lake), and in anticipation of the 2002 Olympics, he built several lavish day lodges with cavernous fireplaces, Italian glass chandeliers and Spanish leather chairs. In the main base lodge, a fine-dining restaurant is supplemented by food stations where cooks serve made-to-order stir-frys, salads and other fresh fare.

"We don't disgrace this place by having signs like 'Bathroom,' " says Kevin Stauffer, the resort's guest services manager. "Of course, we *have* bathrooms — and some people come here just to use them."

The wood-paneled restrooms *are* impressive, but so are less necessary amenities, such as the curbside plastic wheelbarrows for toting ski gear to the lodge.

Over at Powder Mountain, the ambiance in the small day lodges tends toward Formica, plastic and \$3.50 chili. In business since 1972, the resort encompasses a total of 11,000 private acres originally owned by an Ogden Valley sheepherder whose physician son decided to open a ski hill. Though much of it (40%) is intermediate terrain, when conditions are right, the resort presents nirvana for powder hounds. Snowcats offer skiers a lift to off-piste terrain for \$12 a ride. On day-long adventure tours (\$180 for a group of six), guides lead skiers to untouched powder stashes. And the resort is the first in the USA to allow the still-obscure sport of snow kiting.

Its lack of luxe trappings doesn't faze devotees such as Chris and Brenda Mills of East Grinstead, England. Since discovering Powder Mountain several years ago, the retired British Airways pilot and his wife have been visiting annually for five weeks at a time. They're lured not only by the abundance of powder, but by the lack of crowds.

"We've never been in a lift line," says Brenda Mills. "It's a huge area where you can be all alone."