

Ski and Play in Utah

By Kathy Chin Leong



Less than a two-hour flight from the Bay Area beckons a state with epic mountainscapes, gourmet gastronomy and out-of-the-box experiences.

In one day, you can swim in a volcanic crater, down shots of green tea whiskey and hang on for dear life, riding in a 65 mph bobsled with an Olympian at the helm. True, not too many think of conservative Utah when it comes to these extraordinary activities. But once you've walked on the wild side of Utah, you will be anxious to return to challenge your mettle.

The snow communities of Ogden, Salt Lake City and Park City are within an hour's drive of one another. When it comes to a vacation here, this triple volley delivers a home run. You can comfortably ski three cities in three days.

Ogden

Flying to Salt Lake City on Delta or Alaska Airlines often costs under \$200 for a round trip. From the airport, rent a car, and zip to an Ogden ski slope in less than an hour. Powder Mountain takes pride in offering back country powder skiing. Beginner slopes run wide, long and mesmerizing with the stalwart Watsatch mountain range in the background.

Close by, Snowbasin is so opulent that the chandeliered lodges look like Ritz Carlton hotels. When is the last time you stepped into a ski resort bathroom with marble countertops, gold-gilded fixtures and wall-to-wall carpeting? Even on the mountain you can enjoy the lavish digs at the Earl Lodge.

Get there via gondola. Outside, Snowbasin's steep slopes are revered by intermediate and expert skiers.





(FYI: fly Alaska Airlines to Salt Lake City and your boarding pass gets you a free Snowbasin lift ticket.)

Ogden is also a growing enclave for art and architecture. See Prairie-style homes, wander restored Union Station and visit galleries. Historic 25th street represents the heart of Ogden with boutiques and tasty fare. Consider dinner at the happening Zucca Trattoria for Italian comfort food and wood-fired pizzas.

Lodge at the value-rich Hampton Inn and Suites with kitchenettes and breakfast. Meanwhile, the Ben Lomond Suites, a 1927 high-rise property, features Restaurant 1107 with skyline views.

Park City

The nation's largest ski zone is now Park City Mountain Resort with 7,300 acres. While here, ride the insanely cute Orange Bubble, the only chair lift in Utah with heated seats and an orange overhead cover.

While here, revel in a guided snowshoe walk and gourmet lunch at Lookout Cabin. Tromp through a forest glade and encounter woodland animals for a Narnia-like afternoon. Need to spike the adrenaline? For \$175, the Utah Olympic Park bobsled run may feel like the longest 45

seconds of your life. Afterwards, drive to the Homestead Resort to swim inside a volcanic crater in a warm mineral spring.

Next, tenderize the bod with spirits. At High West Distillery & Saloon, walk the factory and taste the whiskey. At the new Alpine Distillery, visitors can also tour and try bottling and labelling.

Downtown is riddled with shops, galleries, and restaurants. Try the new romantic Tupelo for New American fare and save room for dessert. For something different, get a whiskey pairing with your meal at High West Distillery.

Where to stay? We bedded down at the Grand Summit Hotel where convenience is the buzz word. Two ski lifts are stationed for ski-in, ski-out rights. Pools and outdoor hot tubs, the FARM restaurant, casual coffee shop and an on-site spa offers something for everyone. The 80-minute hydration spa ritual will leave you feeling happily intoxicated without a sip of alcohol.

Salt Lake

Skiers can crush terrain on the city outskirts. Nail runs at Alta, a ski-only resort started in 1938 with 2,575 acres and 9 chairs.

Trails are well marked for all levels. Alta is served by five inns, each bundling breakfast and dinner. The Goldminer's Daughter Lodge delivers on cozy rooms set in a 1960s motif. Amenities include indoor hot tub, game room and free ski lockers.

In downtown Salt Lake, you'll unmine a rising arts and restaurant scene. Patrons of the Eccles Theater, unveiled in October, bask in rust orange interiors, reminiscent of Utah's red rock formations. Blocks away, epicurean delights include the Stanza Italian Bistro & Wine Bar for homemade pastas. Dive into a plate of grilled calamari at Current Fish & Oyster, a seafood restaurant that has successfully repurposed a Ford dealership. Its adjacent lounge bar evokes a speak-easy atmosphere with a spread of least 90 cocktails.



Snooze at any of the 200-plus hotels downtown. The whimsical Kimpton Monaco, in particular, exudes a luxurious Art Deco vibe and pivots centrally to playhouses, shops and eats. With 225 rooms, each with a yoga mat, the Monaco also provides guests with a live goldfish in a bowl upon request.

This winter and even in early spring, snag a plane ticket and ski the wonders of Ogden, Park City and Salt Lake City. It's not too late to play in the powder.