

Here we are again in 2018, continuing the tradition of early December Vail trips which started in the 90's. Eighteen of us arrived in Denver on three different flights with all bags present and accounted for. A very nice Arrow Stage Lines bus took us for the customary visit to King Soopers for groceries and Applejack's for adult beverages, before a very quick drive to Vail. Two more skiers arrived on a much later flight and joined us in the evening. The travel day ended with the always excellent selection of pizzas from The Blue Moose accompanied by a leafy salad, with beer & wine. The high spirits of the evening were enhanced by the remote controlled, heated "wash & blow dry" toilette seat in condo 211.

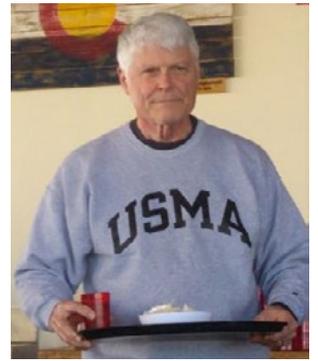
The continued presence since last December of the trail map in my freezer appears to have garnered favor from the snow gods who delivered plentiful snow allowing for most of the Vail terrain to be open, including the bowls and the Blue Sky Basin. Everyone headed to bed with the expectation of an excellent week of skiing and fun.

Sunday morning greeted us with sunshine, some clouds and lots of snowy terrain to explore. The Big Dogs (Keith Kirkman, Ross Baker, George Hirasaki, Barry Caspar and Dave Stotz) headed off for the steep, deep and bumpy. Ron Ramin led his group which included Janet McKenzie, Darlene Hirasaki, Francis Ackart, Susan Stanley, Craig Campbell, Joan Waddill and Tami Kawasugi, down pretty groomers. Ash Moza and Kasia Rezmer were joined by Anne & Tom Thomas, Andy Smith who were staying with Lori White & Larry Edmondson in Silverthorne, on an expedition to Blue Sky. Most of us got together for lunch at the cafeteria at the top of the Eagle's Nest gondola. Ginger and Evan Howell had a later start after their late arrival the night before. Mary Heafner, Scott Boates and Susan Gould made up our non-skiing group and spent the day exploring Vail. Après ski was at El Sabor where stories from the day were exchanged and much fun was had. A group headed off to The George Restaurant for their legendary duck.



Monday was another excellent ski day with lunch at Two Elks Lodge. We après skied at the Garfinkel's Sports Bar.

In the evening most of the group shared a family style dinner of beef ribs, pulled pork and the usual sides brought from the always outstanding Moe's Original BBQ.



On Tuesday our non-skiers, Mary Heafner, Susan Gould & Scott Boates had a great day exploring on snowmobiles, while Susan Stanley discovered very well priced group lessons offered to holders of the Epic Pass. Lunch was at the Mid Vail cafeteria where a rare sighting of Jim Edwards wearing ski boots was recorded.

After lunch a large group of skiers headed towards the back bowls where some steep black runs were groomed and so accessible to most of us.



This intrepid group tackled Genghis Khan and Yonder. Barry Casper managed to remain upright when skied into by another skier who crashed but received a lecture from a ski patrolman on the virtues of skiing in control and watching where one is going!



Après ski was held at the Arrabelle's Tavern on the Square.

Wednesday brought more wonderful skiing conditions which everyone enjoyed. Lunch gathering was again at the cafeteria at the top of the Eagle's Nest gondola where we



watched snow clouds roll in. We après skied at the Chop House where Phil Long entertained the crowd and exchanged \$1 bills for shots of Fireball.



The evening ended with a group visiting the always excellent Montauk Seafood Grill and walked back in the falling snow promising a wonderful powdery day to come.

Thursday was a “powder” day with a few inches of fresh snow on the ground which we all rushed out to enjoy. Susan Stanley, Joan Waddill and Evan Howell joined a group lesson to further polish up their skiing skills, and Mary Heafner & Scott Boates went snowshoeing. Lunch was again at Two Elks Lodge which, while not centrally located, appears to be the group’s favorite. Après ski was at El Sabor where only a very small group met to exchange stories of the day.

Friday was our last ski day and everyone was keen to get the most of it. The Big Dogs set out for the back bowls and succeeded in skiing all seven in a single day where Barry Casper took this great photo.



Another group headed for Riva Ridge and the ride back up in the heated Vail gondola.



After lunch at Two Elks Lodge everyone headed to find their favorite runs to end the trip with. Darlene Hirasaki and Francis Ackart put their trust in Kasia Rezmer to show them a different way to get to Game Creek Bowl where they twice tackled and tamed the black and bumpy Wildcard. For après ski some gathered at the Lion Square Lodge lounge area where a cheese & wine social was held and we got a chance to chat with the lodge GM about plans for 2019 trip. The highlight was Evan Howell dressed in this evening best singing for his dinner.



We did not plan a traditional leftovers party as everyone claimed absence of leftovers. Yet Evan Howell showed off another talent in managing to prepare an excellent stir fry dinner from a very mixed bunch of what was left in the condo 211 fridge which about 10 of us greatly enjoyed.

On Saturday morning it was time to leave Vail. We piled into our two Peak 1 Express vans to head back to Denver and home, and start planning the next visit.



All photos taken by trip participants and published with their permission.