

## Trip Report - Vail

### Vail delivers early season snow...Again!



The 2015 Vail Trip was populated with many, many Vail regulars. It is traditionally the club's first trip of the year and brings out our hard core group. Many members have 10 years in a row and more!! This group is experienced, tight knit and continually watch out for each other. It was a complete delight for me to lead our crew.

This year we had 8 members on the short trip and 24 on the long. Our outbound trip was great as it was uneventful!!!! No flight delays, no missed flights, no missed connections, no lost bags or skis. After about 4 attempts at a headcount in the terminal, we all boarded the coach and did our headcount where I could hold them all in one place!!! No missing



Houstonians!! We were off with all on a Colorado High.

The whole crew was entertained by Barry Caspar's wonderful Geology overview of the Colorado Front Range. No one would let Barry take a break and eventually Barry expanded his session to include ideas on how we can thwart climate change.

Our next event was a quick stop at King Scooper for groceries and Apple Jack's for beverages. I must have been counseled 30 times to not encourage a long stop. 45 minutes tops was the goal set by all. Of course, guess who took the longest?? It was the rookie trip leader who was late as he searched every aisle for the right combo of soft drinks, wine and beer. Then I made a mad dash to King Scooper for our Welcome party supplies. Marilyn Swanson and Janet McKenzie were my guardian angels as we loaded up on high quality, healthy, low cal snacks. We built a menu on the fly and it would have been a 1.5 hour stop without their help.



Shortly, we were at the Lions Square Lodge (LSL). No wonder everyone insisted that I not change the location. LSL provided very spacious and upscale condos with the Gondola outside most of our front doors.

It was so smooth. All bags went to the right rooms and after the usual musical beds everyone was settled in and getting ready for the welcome party to be hosted by Marilyn, Janet and their condo mates; Bobbi and Ron Westendorf, Kasia, Rezmer, David Stotz and Keith Kirkman. Bobbi and Ron are new





members who live in Dallas and are longtime friends of Marilyn Swanson. Everyone loved Bobbi and Ron. Again, I was impressed how everyone was made to feel welcome and watched over.

Our welcome party was great!! Lots of food, wine beer and big smiling faces. We had everyone in one place to distribute our lift tickets and nail down our optional dinner. All was organized and maybe a little loud but our lunch rendezvous points and après ski sites were named and everyone was settling in. Hey, I thought these folks were supposed to be quiet and mostly retired!! I needed a drink and a nap but everyone else was calm, happy, looking at the trail maps and choosing their favorite dinner spots.

Here is a list of what sounded like the favorite restaurants: Lancelot, Montauk, my favorite Sweet Basil, Mo's BBQ, Garfinkles, Bully Ranch, Tavern on the Square and our in house restaurant El Sabor was good for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Barry Caspar

and the Hirasakis go for top notch sushi. Again this year, from Day 1, we had good snow coverage on the front of the mountain and Sun Down Bowl on the backside was open from the beginning of our trip. We have been blessed with good coverage, uncrowded slopes and great grooming at Vail in early December. Of Course the pedestrian nature of Vail makes everything special.

Vail Village can be dangerous for your credit card!!! Here's a picture below of the annual Fur shopping expedition. Please note the red tags on all the furs and think of all the money saved.

David Burrows, Meera Raghavendra invested in lessons and raved about their classes.

All the on mountain restaurants were good but most would agree that Two Elks had the best view and was the least congested.

Tuesday night we had our Vail Happy Hour party.







We had an informally catered Fajita bar, queso, chips and homemade guacamole at El Sabor. Ok, I won't compare Colorado Mexican food to Houston's but it was a great atmosphere, tequila was smooth and it was good to have all our people together.

The hot tub crowd respectfully accepted everyone's ski lies. After a long day and couple of beverages; we all graciously convinced each other that each of us was ready for the pro skiing circuit!!

Barry Caspar again did a great job arranging our group dinner held Wednesday night at The Left Bank Restaurant. The location was on the creek in Vail Village. LB offers fine continental dining and an even better wine list at a first class, formal dining spot in the heart of Vail Village.

Blue Sky Basin opened on Thursday. The snow, especially in the trees, was a real treat. Once Thursday hit, most spent max time on the slopes as our time was winding down.

Friday night we had our leftover party. Later Craig Campbell and Jim Jeans went to the Snow Daze concert in Vail Village to hear Big Head Todd and the Monsters.. You remember Big Head and his big hit Bittersweet?? It was a big young crowd and the aroma of



legalized Cannabis was everywhere. It was funny but we still felt old!

Saturday morning LSL was on the ball with all our bags picked up and stored out of the falling snow. The crew of bellman deserved extra praise as they worked quickly and kept everything dry and organized while we waited for the bus to arrive. Minor issue, no bus!!! 9:30 no bus; 9:45 no bus 10 no bus 10:15 no bus... Now we were all worried as our cell phones were saying that the roads were very slow going into Denver.. 10:35 our bus arrived and our bellmen went to work loading us up pronto. Those guys were great; the bus driver... not so much.. he was 1 hour late. Lesson learned. It was great to again see everyone watching out for each other and helping to pull bags as we headed to our flights. We had time for us all to load onto our United flight. No lost bags or lost skis or lost people.

It was a pleasure to lead this well-seasoned group of courteous, cooperative and happy Space City skiers. Plans are being made for our Vail trip next year. Everyone was truly a big help but Janet McKenzie, Marilyn Swanson and Barry Caspar were indispensable for this rookie TC.. Thanks guys!!!

