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Travel

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THE SKI ISSUE

snow days



Go for it: Charging down the slopes at Jackson Hole Mountain Resort

TRISTAN GRESZKO

Swooshing along with the ski patrol

BY BECKY KRYSAL

The teenage boy is slumped against the cinderblock wall in the Wintergreen Ski Patrol headquarters. He's not speaking all that clearly, so Susanne Ebling gets close to his face. "Are you okay?" she practically shouts. "What's wrong?"

In a matter of seconds, she calls for a wheelchair. The teen, about 15 or 16 with a fringe of blond hair hanging over his eyes, crumples into it.

A crowd descends on him in the examining room, like something out of "ER" or "Grey's Anatomy," minus the matching scrubs. The ski patrol members peel off several layers of the boy's clothing, careful not to jostle the arm that seems to be the source of his pain.

Ebling's diagnostic guess: a fractured wrist. Ouch.

It's exactly the kind of injury you'd expect at a ski resort. This one will probably be a "long form," the crew's euphemism for broken legs, concussions and other similar injuries that require a sheaf of paperwork.

Yes, even in a job as sexy-sounding as ski patroller, there are plenty of i's to dot and t's to cross.

Part medic, part traffic cop and part supreme winter athlete, each member of the Wintergreen Ski Patrol is a highly trained ambassador of the mountain. The crew

SKI PATROL CONTINUED ON F4

High living in a Jackson Hole yurt

BY DINA MISHEV
Special to The Washington Post

Dinner's over, and I have to go to the bathroom. Walking to the "facilities" — a tree 50 feet from the front door — I stumble into a snowdrift. My landing is soft — Wyoming's Jackson Hole Mountain Resort has reported 10 inches of fresh snow in the past 24 hours — and I don't have to go *that* badly, so I lie down rather than rush. ¶ With the day's storm over, more stars than I've ever seen twinkle above. Someone told me that if I stare at the sky here long enough, I'm certain to spot a satellite. I give it until a pine bough above releases a poof of powder into my upturned face. Snow fast melting inside my down jacket, I get a bit chilled. Which would be a problem if I were truly winter camping. JACKSON HOLE CONTINUED ON F6



The new tastes of Telluride

BY JOANNA WALTERS
Special to The Washington Post

My nose and eyes tell me that I'm in the Alps.

I can smell lavender in the little vase on the white cloth-draped table, strong cheese from the top of my piping-hot onion soup and crepes suzette being cooked a-la-minute for the people next to me. I can see a sharp, snowy, sunlit peak from the outdoor bistro where I'm lunching and young wait staff in trendy flat caps bustling around with croques monsieur and madame for hungry skiers.

But my ears tell me the truth.

"Have you tried the new restrooms? They're awesome. Five-star for sure," says a diner at the next table to her companion.

Then I hear "You're welcome," the waiter's automatic response when I thank him for bringing a fleecy blanket for my knees as the breeze coming down from the peak turns somewhat icy.

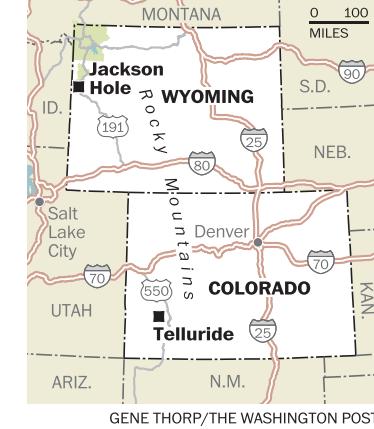
People don't generally say "awesome" in Courchevel, and wait staff from Kaprun to Cortina most certainly do not — at least not voluntarily — say "you're welcome" very often.

I'm in the United States!

TELLURIDE CONTINUED ON F7

IMPULSIVE TRAVELER Dogged by Iditarod dreams? This Maine tour company helps make them come true (sort of). F8 BED CHECK Crawl into your well-appointed cave at this West Virginia resort and snuggle up like a hibernating bear. F3 WHAT'S THE DEAL? Scoping out the week's best travel bargains, winter and ski edition. F3

THE SKI ISSUE



DETAILS

GETTING THERE
Delta offers one-stop flights from Reagan National to Jackson Hole, Wyo., with mid-December fares currently starting at \$456 round trip.

WHERE TO STAY
Jackson Hole Mountain Resort Yurt
Teton Village
800-450-0477
www.jacksonhole.com
The yurt has enough bunks for eight people to have their own. Rates are \$425 a night for eight people; additional people are \$10 and are responsible for their own sleeping bags.

Four Seasons Resort Jackson Hole
7680 Granite Loop Rd.
307-732-5000
www.fourseasons.com/jackson_hole
Ski-in/ski-out with a 12,000-square-foot spa. Rooms from \$469.

Hotel Terra
3335 Village Dr.
307-739-4000
www.hotelterrajacksonhole.com
A silver LEED-certified boutique hotel with a rooftop hot tub. Rooms from \$219.

Rustic Inn
475 N. Cache, Jackson
800-323-9279
www.rusticinnatjh.com
Cabins five blocks from Jackson's elk-antler-arched Town Square. Rooms from \$119.

WHERE TO EAT
Snake River Grill
84 E. Broadway Ave.
307-733-0557
www.snakerivergrill.com
Gourmet comfort food with impeccable service. Entrees start at \$21.

Il Villaggio Osteria
3335 W. Village Dr.
307-739-4100
jhosteria.com
Inventive Italian and a bustling scene. Entrees start at \$17.

Village Cafe
3275 McCollister Dr.
307-732-2233
villagecafjh.com
Fresh-made baked goods, breakfast burritos, pizza by the slice and sandwiches. Slices from \$3.50. Sandwiches from \$8.

WHAT TO DO
Jackson Hole Mountain Resort
Teton Village
307-733-2292
www.jacksonhole.com
2,500 acres of in-bounds terrain across two mountains served by 13 lifts, including a new-this-season high-speed quad serving the most popular intermediate area. Open daily 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Nov. 24 to April 7. Single-day lift tickets from \$68.

National Elk Refuge Sleigh Rides
532 N. Cache St.
307-733-0227
www.bart5.com
Draft horses pull sleighs into the middle of the national elk herd. Daily 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Dec. 17 to April 6. \$18 per adult.

Jackson Hole Iditarod Sled Dog Tours
11 North Granite Creek Rd.
307-733-7388
www.jhsleddog.com
Mush with an Iditarod veteran. Daily from early December until late March, conditions permitting. Half-day trips from \$240; full-day from \$310.

INFORMATION
www.jacksonhole.com
www.jacksonholechamber.com

— D.M.



PHOTOS BY DINA MISHEV FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

At top, the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort maintains a yurt for skiers and snowboarders. Bunks, above, ring a table inside the Rock Springs yurt.

In addition to the flask of Baileys, I also have one filled with Drambuie. And in case the card and dice games that are a yurt's usual evening entertainments get out of hand, an entire bottle of 12-year-old Macallan. Oh, and a toothbrush, a headlamp, clothes to sleep in and down booties to put on when my ski boots come off. (You really don't want to forget shoes to change into; using an outhouse, even in winter, isn't that bad . . . unless you have to put on wet ski boots to walk outside.)

To the yurt

Sitting on a ridge between the Hobacks and Rock Springs Canyon, which is part of the resort's 3,000 acres of side-country terrain, the yurt is accessible by different routes.

My friends and I are all experienced backcountry skiers with the gear and avalanche knowledge to ski the sidecountry — terrain that's accessible via lifts but is not patrolled, controlled for avalanches or marked for hazards. Wanting to settle in as quickly as possible, we opt for the fastest route: inbounds down Rendezvous Bowl to Rendezvous Trail to the South Hoback.

Though Rendezvous Bowl and the South Hoback are ungroomed black-diamond runs, Mike says that he

has helped intermediate skiers get to the yurt. "We just take our time," he says. Less-skilled skiers can also talk to the resort about getting to the yurt via a combination of snowmobile and snowshoe. Parents with young kids have sometimes done this.

Advanced skiers looking for adventure can hire a trained backcountry guide for a half-day of side-country skiing that ends at the yurt.

Following Mike down the South Hoback, we ski past a "Resort Boundary" sign. Several more turns and we're at the yurt, which is literally a snowball's throw outside the boundary. (I test this later.)

Unaware of the two igloos just uphill of the yurt — built as overflow accommodations — I almost launch off one. (Mike tells us that he once yurtmeistered for a group of 27; there's room for only 10 inside the yurt.)

Having propped our skis up against the deck's railing, we head inside. Bunk beds line the walls. Just to the left of the door are a kitchen counter and cabinets. Prayer flags stretch across the ceiling. There's a skylight in the center over the dining table.

We throw our packs onto bunks, which come with two-inch-thick sleeping pads. Some bunks are wide enough to sleep couples comfortably. Mike gets the wood-burning stove going and then wanders outdoors to collect snow to melt for water.

Unpacking, I'm amazed at the breadth of our makeshift bar. We give Mike a locally brewed Snake River Lager and he begins slicing, preparing an hors d'oeuvres platter that could be dinner for a family of four.

We get out of our ski clothes. One friend sprawls out on his bunk.

As Mike continues slicing, I wander out onto the deck, which almost wraps around the yurt, to admire the early-evening light, take some photos and scope out the bathroom situation. A hundred feet from the yurt is a double outhouse, each stall with a toilet-seat frame that accommodates WAG (Waste Alleviation and Gelling) bags. Mike has already promised to teach us how to use these.

Between the outhouses and the yurt are additional "facilities" — two pee trees, one for men and one for women.

Mike sets his artfully arranged appetizer on the table and we pounce on it as if we've spent the day skiing with heavy packs. Fifteen minutes later, it's nearly all gone.

I guess it's being at a yurt that inspires the appetite rather than the effort required (or not required) to get there.

All toasty

On usual yurt trips, the time between post-skiing snacks and dinner is spent doing chores. But here we have no chores. The dice and cards come out. Kelly puts her headlamp on, pulls up a chair to the wood-burning stove and settles in to the book she brought.

I consider offering to help Mike with dinner, but don't.

Three hours later, it's obvious that he didn't miss me. I'd never guess that the tortellini in creamy tomato sauce with smoked salmon was cooked on a two-burner Coleman stove. I'd also never guess that, after having just recently devoured 10 pounds of salami, cheese and fruit, my friends and I would be capable of eating as much tortellini as we do.

Rather than watch Mike wash the dishes, I make my way outside to the pee tree and get waylaid by the snowdrift and looking for satellites. I don't see one.

Having extricated myself from the snow and emptied my bladder, I go back inside, where it's easily 80-some degrees.

I want to stay up and play dice but instead give in to the heat and my food coma. I wake up once in the middle of the night, sweating profusely, to toss off the yurt's minus-20-degree sleeping bag.

Mike's alarm should wake us all up — the yurt is 20 feet in diameter and the alarm is on the table in the center — but no one (aside from Mike) stirs until the yurt fills with the smells of coffee and toasting bagels.

Taking a mug of coffee and my sleeping bag outside onto the deck, I open a canvas folding chair, drape the bag over me and soak up some early-morning sun. Skiers who've caught an early tram and skied down Rock Springs fly by no more than 100 feet away. Shielded by pine trees, they have no idea that the yurt or I are there.

Fifteen minutes later, we're packed and stepping into our skis. Twenty minutes later, we're back at the resort base, no cleanup or schlepping of heavy packs required.

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Mishev is editor in chief of Jackson Hole magazine.