

Bumps for Boomers: Out of the Intermediate Rut

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A Bumps for Boomers class on Aspen Mountain.

By William Triplett

Mention Aspen and most people can't avoid thinking of multi-million dollar homes, designer boutiques, private jets and tailored slopes covered with arguably the best snow money can buy. Far fewer see Aspen the way I recently experienced it — as a resort where we Baby Boomers can learn to keep skiing

into retirement years and beyond, and where you can easily get by on a budget that doesn't require the income of a movie star or CEO.

I signed up for something called "Bumps for Boomers," a four-day clinic designed and taught by Boomers primarily (though not exclusively) to Boomers. Joe Nevin, a former executive at Apple, came up with the idea. As skiers age, they naturally worry more about injuries and thus ski less of the mountain than they used to, sticking close to those Blue groomers. "Eighty percent of all skiers ski only 20 percent of trails," Nevin notes.

Nevin says he saw the source of greatest frustration among our generation of skiers to be moguls, those obstacle courses of snow mounds that can sometimes humble even the experts. But don't count on a refresher course – ski schools everywhere are geared toward the young and their quick reflexes.



Getting into the moguls is the name of the game.

Like a lot of other skiers, I've generally stayed away from moguls mainly because I never really understood why anyone would want to ski them. Trying to avoid a face-plant... that's *fun*? Then I took this clinic and learned a lot about what I was missing, and it was much more than just skiing moguls.

"If you don't have good technique, you can't do bumps," Nevin says. Sounds obvious, yes, but most people don't realize that they can hide or mask bad technique even from themselves. Unless you're a racer, an extreme skier or a twenty-something adrenalin junkie, moguls are all about slowing down, and when you slow down, you can't hide anything, particularly when you are on skis less than two feet long. You've got to have very good balance and technique to ski short boards. The clinic puts you on these confounded things the first day because instructors need to assess your abilities, and, as one instructor says, "The boards don't lie."

"Our biggest challenge is to discover bad habits, undo them, and then replace them with good ones," says Nevin.

The goal is to teach you how to navigate a mogul field pretty much bump by bump, not picking a line through the entire field. Two key techniques to learn: Smear a turn, not carve it; after the turn, get the skis slightly more than

perpendicular to the fall line and, locking eyes on your next turning spot, side-slip toward it. And avoid the troughs between the moguls. And relax.

If, like me, you've been stuck in intermediate hell for longer than you can remember, this sounds way easier to say than do. At first I jerked, I flailed, I lunged — all unintentionally. But after a while you find a rhythm. It starts to make sense. It starts to feel.... fun. Then on Day Three they put you back on regular skis. After an initial period of readjusting (read: jerking, flailing, lunging), you find that rhythm again.



Not that I came out of the clinic a mogul demon — I have a lot to practice. But I now know I can do it. In fact, I can do more than moguls. For instance, I can make my way not just safely but gracefully down a steep black diamond without stopping. How? Just execute the same turns as in the mogul field. Before, I was always stopping to stay in control. *Slopus interruptus*. Ultimately, Bumps for Boomers is all about learning how to ski well going slow and being in control. “You can always go faster,” Nevin says. “If you can ski well going slow, you’ll ski well going fast. But it isn’t necessarily true the other way around.” “What we try to do is make it less physically taxing to ski,” he continues. “And once we’ve shown you that, you can enjoy more of the mountain. You don’t have to get bored with groomers.”

Learn more about Bumps for Boomers [mogul ski lesson program](#).

ASPEN DETAILS

It’s no secret that if you’ve got the cash, you can spent the equivalent of a major real estate down-payment and get some posh accommodations and world-class dining in Aspen. But assuming you’re not among the top two percent of Americans making more money than they know what to do with, here are a few tips on how to get by without breaking your bank.

Pick a week that doesn’t include a holiday, particularly Christmas. Rates are lower and, to boot, crowds are much thinner. I arrived on January 2, when virtually everyone except the natives was leaving. I got a hotel close to the gondola and I don’t think I saw anything that looked like a lift-line in four days.

Dining

Bar Food. Many eateries, including the pricier ones, offer a bar menu that is very similar to the main menu. The portions are slightly smaller, but the prices are usually substantially so. Also, look for places that have apres-ski deals — you can fill up quite nicely if you don’t mind eating a little earlier in the evening.

Buy in advance. You can book lift tickets online often at a discount, depending on the dates. (Did I say to avoid Christmas time?)

Lodging

Hotels run the gamut. I stayed in the [Limelight Lodge](#), which is a complete renovation of the original hotel of the same name first built some 50 years ago. It's casual ski-lodge chic with complementary continental style breakfast and free airport transfers, among other amenities. I found it cozy and welcoming. Rooms start around \$370 a night, with specials that include a third night free and/or free lift tickets.

The more budget conscious might consider the [Hotel Aspen](#) (\$230 and up) or Aspen Studio Condos (\$150-\$475 a night depending on time of year; weekly rates also available).

***William Triplett** is a contributor to *The Daily Beast* and the former DC bureau chief for *Variety*. Triplett has written about various destinations, from Scotland's Inverness and Paris's Pere Lachaise Cemetery to Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon and the Beatles' old haunts in Hamburg. His work has appeared in the *The Washington Post*, *The Baltimore Sun*, and *Capital Style*.*

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