



# Aspen Mountain Ski Resorts

by Lisa Marie Mercer, Demand Media

The story of Aspen is a story of two dreams fulfilled. Friedl Pfeifer was a ski instructor who wanted to build a ski area in Aspen. Walter Paepcke was an industrialist who saw the town's potential as a mecca for cultural and intellectual pursuits. The men joined forces, and Aspen became a world class ski resort and center for the arts and culture. Aspen is actually a family of four resorts, which are accessed with one lift ticket. They function as a true family, sharing similar traits while displaying distinct differences in character and ambiance.

**Aspen Mountain** The town of Aspen's commitment to opulence and elegance began in 1892, when the Macy department store magnate Jerome Wheeler built the luxurious Hotel Jerome and the extravagant Wheeler Opera House. The hotel continues to provide upscale accommodations, and the opera house is a thriving entertainment venue. Aspen Mountain is known for its steep terrain and lack of suitable beginner runs; but even if your skills are not up to par, the town itself is worth a visit. If you are over age 50 and want to conquer your fear of moguls, consider enrolling in one of Aspen's three or four-day "Bumps for Boomers" clinics. As of 2010, the three-day clinic costs \$747, and a four-day clinic costs \$996.

Aspen/Snowmass P.O. Box 1248 Aspen, CO 81612 800-308-6935  
aspensnowmass.com

**Snowmass Ski Resort** Snowmass, thanks to its 25,000-square-foot Treehouse Kids' Adventure Center, is Aspen's most family-friendly resort. Six percent of the Snowmass trails are designated for beginners, and 50 percent are intermediate. The remaining 44 percent are divided into 12 percent advanced and 32 percent expert terrain; but despite its potentially intimidating trail ratings, Snowmass, thanks to its meticulous grooming, is a comfortable mountain to ski. If you're lodging at any of the accommodations near the Treehouse, begin your day by skiing down to the gondola. It's an easy warm-up run that doesn't require

waiting on a lift line. Snowmass is home to the annual late-January EpicSki Academy, a four-day ski clinic that was developed on a 16,000-member ski Internet forum. The elite coaching staff has included Eric DesLauriers, author of "Ski the Whole Mountain"; Mermer Blakeslee, author of "In the Yikes Zone: Conversations with Fear"; and extreme skier Dan Egan, who has appeared in 12 Warren Miller films. As of 2010, the four-day clinic costs \$999. Snowmass Ski Resort P.O. Box 1248 Aspen, CO 81612 800-308-6935  
[aspensnowmass.com/onmountain/statsfacts/statsfacts.cfm?area=Snowmass](http://aspensnowmass.com/onmountain/statsfacts/statsfacts.cfm?area=Snowmass)

**Aspen Highlands** Don't waste your time celebrity watching in Aspen. Instead, head to Highland Bowl, Olympic Bowl or Steeplechase and enjoy the views of Maroon Bells, the mountain peaks that surround the Maroon Lake. Bring your camera. The U.S. Forest Service describes the Maroon Bells as the "most photographed peaks in North America." Despite its reputation for "big mountain skiing," Aspen Highlands has considerable mid-mountain beginner and intermediate skiing. Groomed runs wind around the perimeter of some of the mogul runs, so people of mixed abilities can ski together. Aspen Highlands Ski Resort P.O. Box 1248 Aspen, CO 81612 800-308-6935  
[aspensnowmass.com/onmountain/statsfacts/statsfacts.cfm?area=Aspen Highlands](http://aspensnowmass.com/onmountain/statsfacts/statsfacts.cfm?area=Aspen%20Highlands)

**Buttermilk** Buttermilk's 35 percent beginner terrain makes it Aspen's best learning area; but despite its beginner distinction, the area has played host to the annual ESPN Winter X Games. Buttermilk's terrain parks make it a popular snowboarding mountain. Advanced freestyle skiers and riders play on the 22-foot superpipe. Park novices can take lessons at Buttermilk's designated ski and snowboard school park. Buttermilk Resort P.O. Box 1248 Aspen, CO 81612 800-308-6935  
[aspensnowmass.com/onmountain/statsfacts/statsfacts.cfm?area=Buttermilk](http://aspensnowmass.com/onmountain/statsfacts/statsfacts.cfm?area=Buttermilk)

Originally published in USA Today.

© 2010 USA TODAY, a division of Gannett Co. Inc.