

PARK YOURSELF IN PARK CITY

This Charming Winter Wonderland Isn't Just For Sundance

For too long, Park City, Utah's sole claim to fame has been Robert Redford's glittery Sundance Film Festival, the annual celebration attracting the world's hottest, hippest movie stars and celebrities for premieres, skiing and, most importantly, parties. But in the past decade, Park City's vibrant ski resorts, hotels, nightlife and all-around charm have made this Rocky Mountain town one of the hottest winter retreats in the country.

A five-hour flight from Miami puts you at Salt Lake City International Airport, where you board a private van (arranged through your hotel or any of numerous private companies) for the one-hour trip past Zion National Park to the snowcapped mountains and cool Northwestern air of Park City. Although renting your own private house or cabin just steps from your favorite slope is ideal in ski country, finding a place after November 19th—the first day of ski season—is very tricky because private abodes fill quickly. Luckily, wonderful lodging alternatives are in town, ranging from mountain inns to high-end hotels. Three of Park City's most popular and unique are: the Washington School Inn, a charming 12-room schoolhouse turned bed and breakfast that was built in 1889; the Silver Queen Hotel, conveniently located on Main Street and just a two-minute walk from the town lift, shops, restaurants such as Zoom (Robert Redford's popular eatery), and hotspots like O'Shucks and Harry O's; and Hotel Park City, the popular two-year-old hotel featuring 54 suites with fireplaces, landscaped terraces, balconies, mountain views, two restaurants, concierge service, gift shop, year-round pool, putting green, free van transportation, and on-site spa offering in-room fireside massages. If you feel like splurging, stay at the penthouse suite: It starts at \$1,149 a night but offers more than 1,800 square feet of space, a wraparound balcony and awesome views. Each staff is friendly and informative and will gladly give you a tour of the property and fill you in on Park City's colorful history, which includes Brigham Young passing just to the north on his way to Salt Lake in 1847, the city's prosperous years as a silver-mining town, and its success in reinventing itself as a skiing destination in the late 1960s.

Park City's three resorts, Deer Valley Resort, Park

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Clockwise from top left: Skiers head up the town lift to the slopes at Park City Mountain Resort; the pool area and surrounding views of Hotel Park City; a trolley makes its way down Main Street on a snowy winter day; Park City in the evening.



City Mountain Resort and The Canyons, have been hailed collectively as "the Greatest Snow on Earth," and with steep elevations (the highest summit is nearly 10,000 feet) and powdery snow, it is a hotbed for skiers, moguls and snowboarders who say it boasts some of the best slopes in North America. Daily lift tickets start at around \$75 and are available on-site and at many hotels. To get there, grab your skis and head to any of the many stops on the city's free bus route, or take a walk down Main Street to the town lift, which drops you off right at Deer Valley. Whether you're an amateur skier (as I am) or a pro, start at Deer Valley Resort, site of the 2002 Winter Olympic Games and recently ranked the number-one ski resort in North America by *Ski* magazine. It consists of 90 trails, most of which are for intermediate skiers, and ranges in altitude from about 6,500 feet at its base to 9,500 at its summit.

Relax between slopes at one of the three day lodges offering ski rentals, instruction and Zagat-rated restaurants, including the romantic Fireside Dining and high-end Seafood Buffet. Why start there? Because they don't allow snowboarders (which can be distracting and frightening on your first day) and have a large beginner area replete with bunny slopes and ski instruction. Or if you're an avid skier, you can go up any of the sky-high lifts and stay clear of the novices.

On your second day, try Park City Mountain Resort. It's steeper than Deer Valley (its highest point), with more lifts and trails than Deer Valley. For about \$295, take the three-hour ski or snowboarding lesson, either basics or just brush up on your current skills. Park City also offers sleigh rides and mountain views. You can grab P.C. memorabilia at one of the many shops or a snack at restaurants such as Legends and Brew House.

End your trip at The Canyons Resort. The amenities of Deer Valley and Park City are second to none. The largest single ski and snowboard resort in Utah is also the local favorite, so you'll get to ski on some of the best slopes. Finish your trip on the slopes at any of the resorts or friends around town. If you can make it out for a long day of skiing, head back to Main Street at The Mustang Grill (try the Duck Chaser) and a seasonal brew at the post office Saloon. Just keep in mind that the rumors you've heard are true: You do have to be a man to drink, and yes, the beer there is 50 percent less alcohol than the real thing. At only a few dollars and you become a local (you even get a membership card with you). As for the beer, well, at 10,000 feet sea level, the air, and your alcohol tolerance, so you'll never know the difference.