

LOCAL SECRET

Powder Caches

Unmarked, fluff-rich tree runs include Black Forest, between Stein's Way and Perseverance, and X-Files, at the far end of the traverse past the Daly Chutes.

DEER VALLEY, UTAH

"An awesome all-around experience for all skier types."

WEBSTER'S DEFINES "VACATION" AS "A PERIOD OF rest and freedom from work." So does Deer Valley—which largely explains why readers made this "posh and wonderful" Park City resort the year's top overall pick. The stats tell the story: No. 1 rankings in Grooming, On-Mountain Food and Access, bolstered by Top 5 finishes in Dining, Lodging, Weather, Lifts and Family Programs. But it's in the Service category, which Deer Valley wins hands down, that the resort truly sets itself apart. "The service is so outstanding," says one reader, "that you may be able to pay somebody to wipe out for you." Well, not quite. But they're probably working on it. You can't swing a ski pole on any of the resort's 1,825 acres without bumping into a cheerful mountain host, a top-notch instructor, an able-bodied ski valet, a smiling liftie, or one of the other highly trained staffers who stand ready to help your vacation feel like a vacation.

Ultimately, though, service is not an end unto itself. Fewer hassles mean more time on the hill—and here Deer Valley satisfies as well. The mountain's 3,000 vertical feet are admittedly "not the most challenging terrain, by Utah standards," but they are "the perfect pitch for fast, fall-line cruising" on "unbelievably groomed, carpet-smooth" snow. Intermediates gravitate toward Bald Mountain's cruisers or test their mettle on Stein's Way. Advanced skiers can find "plenty of challenge" in Empire Canyon's Daly Chutes, and thanks to a daily cap on ticket sales (6,500) and a clientele that sticks largely to the groomers, locals and adventurous visitors know "the powder shots are everywhere," even days after the last storm. (Try the Triangle Trees glade.)

When you've had your fill of skiing, turn your attention to the "Iron Chef-level food." Lunch on the sundeck at the Royal Street Café is a must, while dinner favorites include the upscale Mariposa and Snow Park Lodge seafood buffet. Indeed, the only thing many readers found tough to swallow at Deer Valley was the price. "Bring a high-limit credit card," they counsel. Still, most agreed with the reader who said, "It's expensive, but I feel my money is well spent here." After all, it is your vacation. —Kendall Hamilton



THE LATEST A new, longer high-speed quad replaces Bald Mountain's Sultan chairlift, adding 1,000 vertical feet and 75 acres, including expanded glade skiing and a new intermediate run. **DON'T MISS** First Tracks. Get first crack at Deer Valley's famous corduroy with a guided 8 a.m. tour from the base of the Wasatch lift. \$1,200 for up to eight skiers. Book in advance.

AS GOOD AS IT GETS Last season at Deer Valley was one for the books—massive snowfall, ample sun and the smoothest service in ski country. No wonder readers named it their favorite resort.