

NASHVILLE

LIFESTYLES

30 *DEFINING* MOMENTS

THAT MADE NASHVILLE AN "IT" CITY



A LOOK BACK

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Holiday
**LUXURY
GIFT
GUIDE**



Lake Tahoe, California.



Snow Days

It's that time of year again: Summer is a distant memory, and the cold has set in for the long haul. But if you can't beat the flurries, join 'em. This trio of wintry getaways—all easily doable from Nashville—will have you loading up your ski gear and ready to hit the slopes.

BY **JADE BROADUS** AND **KRISTIN LUNA**

Breckenridge, Colorado

Unlike Tennessee, where you have to drive a full day to reach a real skiing destination—sorry, Ober Gatlinburg doesn't count—the great state of Colorado boasts a flurry of slope-side activities. The problem is this: With more than a dozen resorts on tap, where do you start? After skiing my way through the bulk of them over the past few years, **Breckenridge** tops my list of favorite wintery breaks.

Our long weekend in Breck, as the locals call it, started with a flight out after work on a Wednesday. Three hours later, we landed in Denver, hopped in a rental car—making sure to have chains in the trunk in the rather likely case of a snowstorm—and, 100 miles later, were checked into our spacious and cozy condo at **Crystal Peak Lodge**, which offers en suite accommodations ranging from one bedroom to four.

Since we arrived under a veil of darkness, the panorama through the window the following morning was a surprising yet welcome sight: skiers and snowboarders loaded up on the **Independence Superchair** lift just feet from our condo, eager to make the first tracks of the day. But before we joined them, we needed breakfast.

We were itching to tackle the powder as soon as possible, so we didn't venture far for our inaugural Breckenridge meal; we walked next door to the Grand Lodge at the base of Peak 7, where **Sevens** serves three meals a day, with both grab-and-go and sit-down options. With a long day ahead of us on the slopes, we opted



Crystal Peak Lodge

for the latter, ordering a generous spread of eggs Benedict, pancakes, and hot chocolate. Then we took advantage of Crystal Peak's ski-in, ski-out access, got outfitted with rental gear from **Breck Sports**, and were ready to shred.

Not only does **Breckenridge Ski Resort** possess the highest chairlift in North America, but it also lays claim to five huge peaks, four terrain parks, 11 bowls, and a 22-foot Superpipe spread out among its 2,908 acres. I fancy myself an upper-level intermediate skier, while my husband is an advanced snowboarder. In some terrain, it can be tough finding a resort that caters to both of our tastes. Whether we're coasting down a challenging blue or navigating the tricky turns of a black diamond, we both like the wide, open groomers with occasional steep drops, but more importantly: no moguls. Breckenridge fits both of our slope styles—yet there are plenty of bumps for those who prefer them.

But what's a little skiing without some après action? Breckenridge has its own eponymous distillery as well as the even newer **Broken Compass Brewery**, conveniently located on the Ski Hill. Not only does the taproom follow theme—an old chair lift from the resort doubles as seating—but the brews on draft are diverse and creative, too, from a pumpkin pie stout to a coconut porter. For the beer extremist, there's a

chili pepper pale ale.

The charming Main Street is packed with stores, cafés, restaurants, and bars galore—plus a host of oxygen bars for those from the lowlands who suffer from altitude sickness. (The base elevation at Breckenridge is a dizzying 9,600 feet.) After a bit of window-shopping, we popped into **Modis** for a round of creative Prohibition-style classic cocktails before moving on to **Relish**, a cozy second-floor restaurant with a Colorado-inspired menu featuring both big game and seafood.

The remainder of the weekend was spent getting our ski legs on Peaks 7, 8, and 9, but sometimes you just need a day off from the physically taxing sport, which is why I love Breckenridge so much. Many ski towns of comparable size don't provide many options beyond the slopes, but it's got a little bit of everything—right down to dog-sledding excursions with **Good Times Adventures**.

Saturday, when Denver residents crowd the slopes, seemed like a good time to take a break, so we booked a ride with **Breck Guides**. Not being an avid cyclist, I was unfamiliar with these fat bikes that allow you to climb the trails, over the snowpack, and through the woods. While they required some serious pedaling when we hit the steep inclines, I was still ready





Breckenridge Distillery



Modis



Breck Guides

to invest in my own set of these oversized, low-pressure tires by the day's end. Bonus: If you fall—and it's quite likely you will—you'll tip over into a mound of fluffy powder.

After three hours up in the thick of the mountain canopy, we returned to cruising altitude, unloaded our gear at the shop on Main Street, then headed to **Cuppa Joe** for oatmeal lattes and a sweet potato burrito. Next, it was across the street to **Breck Create**, an artisan collective that showcases the city's finest creative talent. Classes are many—from mask-making and floral crowns to figure-drawing and light-painting through digital photography—and we signed up for a metalworking workshop, where we used electricity to produce a colorful array of earrings.

On our final night in town, we enjoyed happy hour at **Après Handcrafted Libations**, which has an impressive number of craft beers on tap, before loosening our snow pants and heading back up the mountain for dinner at **Traverse**. Housed in the **Lodge at Breckenridge**, which recently underwent a \$3.7 million renovation, the restaurant has a Texas chef,

Brent Turnipseede, at the helm, and the fare—lots of flavor, spice, and smokiness—reflects his roots. As we tucked into chicken lollipops with huckleberry-habanero BBQ, seared scallops, and potato-chive gnocchi, we watched the sun sink behind the Rockies out the picture window and considered it a long weekend well spent. —K.L.

GETTING THERE

Denver is a three-hour flight from Nashville, and Southwest Airlines operates a handful of nonstop flights a day. From Denver, Breckenridge is 100 miles by car.

RESOURCES

gobreck.com
breckenridge.com
brokencompassbrewing.com
cyclebreck.com
breckcreate.org

JESSIE UNRUH, CAMERON PAYNE, BOB WINSETT, BRECKENRIDGE DISTILLERY



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Lake Tahoe, California

Before I moved back to Nashville, I spent four years in Northern California; during that time, I was a season pass holder to many of the area's ski resorts, meaning I got to know Lake Tahoe on an intimate level. And while Northstar and Squaw Valley rank up there among the West Coast's best wintertime spots, I can't help but choose the laid-back vibe and lack of pretense on the south shore over the glitzier veneer of the north.

For me, it all hinges upon **Heavenly Ski Resort**. With 98 trails and 4,800 acres, Heavenly is by far one of California's largest ski resorts, and given the droughts the state has experienced in years past, its groomers and snow makers are also often key to pleasant conditions. And after several seasons off from South Lake Tahoe—mainly because there's not yet a direct flight from here to Reno—I returned to my favorite California resort this past winter for a group trip with friends.

Four of us bunked up in the **Aston Lakeland Village**, which as the name suggests, has stellar ground-level views of the lake itself. Perhaps “bunked up” is an inaccurate way to describe our three-bedroom, bi-level townhouse of sorts, as it offered more than enough room for our crew and was outfitted with a full kitchen, two bathrooms, and a deck that leads out to a lakefront beach. The only downside is that the 19-acre resort isn't directly connected to the center of town, from which you take the gondola to the resort—but a free shuttle that came regularly meant that we could easily be there within

five minutes.

At the base of the mountain is **Heavenly Village**, where visitors can rent gear, stock up on necessities, or grab a bite to eat. Those not interested in hitting the slopes on skis can still take the 2.4-mile ride up to the top, stopping midway at the observation platform before continuing on to the lodge at 9,123 feet. (The summit elevation is 10,067 feet.)

Our quartet included two skiers, one snowboarder, and a lodge bunny, so we deposited her at the newly remodeled **Tamarack Lodge**, where she could sip hot chocolate and use the free Wi-Fi while we checked out the mountain. Heavenly straddles the state border; as such, skiers and snowboarders can choose if they want to head for the California side and its unparalleled vistas of the lake on a bluebird day or the

Nevada part of the mountain to peek over into the desert region beyond. There's also **Heavenly Tubing Hill**, a five-lane, 500-foot-long slope for racing, and three different ropes adventure courses, complete with ziplines, tree bridges, and rappelling.

Come 3 p.m., we were too worn out to stick around for the lodge's **Unbuckle at Tamarack**, a rowdy après-party with a DJ, drinks, and dancing every Friday and Saturday, so we headed back down the mountain and went out in search of a beer. We made our way to the recently opened **Cold Water Brewery**, which wowed us with a number of IPA, amber, porter, rye, and wheat beers. We had planned to move on for food, but the brewhouse's diverse menu of bacon-wrapped dates, spare ribs, and even mussels lured us in.



TAHOE SOUTH, TOM ZIKAS



Snowmobile ride

We were in Tahoe to ski, sure, but the area surrounding the lake is rife with hiking and other outdoor pursuits like snowmobiling at **Zephyr Cove**. We took advantage of the balmy, 50-degree weather—not at all uncommon in Lake Tahoe, where recent winters have been very mild—laced up our boots, and hit the trails at **Emerald Bay State Park** and **Cave Rock**, both of which offer photo-worthy lookouts over the lake.

On the final night of our group trip, we weren't feeling pub grub so we settled on a Greek restaurant, **Artemis**, for a bite. Even better: It's one of the best places along the south shore to see the sunset, so we arrived early with our cameras in tow. We couldn't, however, leave town without a visit to **Himmel Haus**; we nabbed a coveted corner booth and loaded up on steins of pilsner and bingo cards as the packed room got into the game. The chill atmosphere of the German restaurant and bierhaus further epitomized everything I love about South Lake Tahoe: relaxed, unassuming, but always out for a good time. —K.L.

GETTING THERE

Southwest Airlines operates several flights a day from Nashville to Reno with connections in Las Vegas or Denver. From Reno, South Lake Tahoe is 60 miles by car.

RESOURCES

tahoesouth.com
skiheavenly.com
tahoe coldwaterbrewery.com
himmelhaustahoe.com
artemismediterranean grill.com

TAHOE SOUTH, ZEPHYR COVER RESORT



Unbuckle in
Tamarack
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Snowshoe Mountain, West Virginia

Outfitted in my too-cool-for-ski-school bright pink jacket and matching pants, I call over to my husband: “Where’s the lift?”

He glides over. “We’re already on top of the mountain—no lift, no line, just need to pick the run and go!”

Skiing ahead, Bob waves for me to follow, turning toward the first blue run in sight. Three minutes after we clipped into our rentals, we’re headed down our first run. Now this is my idea of perfect.

It’s no wonder I fell in love with **Snowshoe Mountain**. That sharp feeling of the first slice of snow under my skis is something I look forward to each and every winter; the sooner I start flying down the slopes, the better. Located at the top of the mountain, Snowshoe eliminates the morning lift lines and has skiers on their way for a second run before most resorts are even able to get guests up on their first.

Accessibility to the slopes is especially important at Snowshoe because there is so much terrain for skiers to cover in a day. With more than 251 skiable acres and backcountry trails with 1,500-foot vertical drops, this West Virginia mountain is an excellent resort for newbies and experts, skiers and snowboarders, and families and couples to enjoy a long winter weekend. And at only nine hours from Nashville, it’s a road trip any group can embark upon.

My husband, a self-described “black diamond shredder,” and I arrive on a Thursday night to check into our one-bedroom suite at **Allegheny Springs**. With a heated pool, sauna, and fire pit, this is one of several condo-style lodges on top of Snowshoe and the perfect setup for roasting marshmallows and relaxing muscles after a long day on the slopes. Although it’s in the heart of the village, our suite overlooks the mountains,



giving us epic sunsets every night—ideal for those Instagram-worthy shots we love to share.

While some vacations are all about sleeping in, ski trips are all about getting on the mountain as fast as possible. We rise with the sun and fuel up at **The Junction**, a “saloon” serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner, starting with the Old Fashion Drop Doughnuts (a dozen hot mini doughnuts tossed in cinnamon and sugar) and finishing with grits and banana-blueberry pancakes. Some might argue that we’re carb-loading for our first day on the mountain.

Even though all the lodges are at capacity, we never feel crowded on the mountain; rather, we always seem to find at least one run we have all to ourselves. With dozens of wide greens and blues, beginners and the ski schools can easily learn at Snowshoe without feeling rushed or bombarded by faster, more experienced skiers.

Ready for a bit more adventure, Bob and I head over to the **Western Territory**, where the longest run is a mile and a half with a 1,500-foot vertical drop. This area, I later discover, was intended for far more experienced skiers than myself—those less concerned with a coordinating jacket-pants-gloves-beanie-goggles combination. My mismatched husband loves it.

For a quick snack, we stop at **Waffle Cabin**, a slope-side hut that offers guests the ability to grab food without taking off those cumbersome skis. We share a waffle dipped in Nutella and two hot chocolates while a flurry of snow softly falls around us.

To further rest my muscles, I book a hot stone massage appointment at **The Spa at Snowshoe**. This 3,600-square-foot luxury spa located in the village is the perfect escape for body and mind. I leave feeling like I could ski



for another week—no aches whatsoever.

We had planned to switch onto snowboards for the late afternoon but instead decide to take a spontaneous one-hour **Off-Road Adventure Tour** in an enclosed, heated Polaris RZR to explore some of the backcountry that few visitors get to see for themselves. As the sun starts to set, we depart in a hybrid-snowmobile set on skis, immediately understanding why it’s called a razor. Effortlessly gliding through the packed snow, the slopes are surprisingly elegant at night, coming alive in a completely different way than during the day—the snow reflects the moon, and everything around exudes a milky glow.

After a hearty barbecue meal at **Foxfire Grille**, we waddle back to the lodge, crank up the fire, and recount our adventures of the day. Our long weekend getaway was a hit, and one we’re excited to make a yearly tradition. —J.B.

GETTING THERE

Snowshoe is 544 miles, or 8 hours and 40 minutes by car, from Nashville.

RESOURCES

snowshoemtn.com