

HOW TO DO WINTER IN COLORADO LIKE A LOCAL

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When the leaves start to change, Coloradans eagerly wait for those first flakes to fall, a sign that wintery fun is around the corner. Here's some insight on how to do it right, whether you're hankering to dive right into the powdery paradise, conserve some cash or try something new.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: SKIER, GETTY IMAGES; YAMPATKA, SNOWMASS SKI SCHOOL; BLAINE HARRINGTON III, SUNLIGHT MOUNTAIN RESORT; GLENWOOD SPRINGS CHAMBER



SAVE WITH THE KIDS.

It's no secret that the earlier you start the little ones on the slopes, the stronger skiers and snowboarders they'll become (maybe even the next Lindsey Vonn or Mikaela Shiffrin?). Thankfully, Colorado's 26 ski areas and resorts offer a plethora of great deals for families with junior skiers on their hands. Plus, while they're learning the ropes, you can power down the slopes solo knowing that they're in good hands (aka: free babysitting).

Consider a Woodward Experience package at **Eldora Mountain Resort in Nederland**, which includes equipment rentals, a lift ticket for ages 4-14, lunch and one day of lessons at the ski and ride school for a cool \$159. Affectionately dubbed the "locals' mountain," Eldora's new indoor action zone helps youngsters achieve the balance and coordination to develop strong ski legs.

The Ski Swim Stay package at **Sunlight Mountain Resort** near **Glenwood Springs** is also a cost-saving way to get your brood on the slopes. The \$99 package includes lodging, one adult lift ticket, one kid's lift ticket (ages 12



years or younger), and a one-day pass to Glenwood Hot Springs for an après-ski soak. Area hotels also have shuttles to and from the mountain, so you can access the hundreds of acres of mild greens, intermediate slopes and black diamonds in a cinch.

DON'T BE AFRAID OF LESSONS.

Seasoned powder pros often tell newbies that snow sports become way more enjoyable once you've mastered the basics (and face-

planted in the snow a few times). While guidance from a patient friend or family member is helpful, lessons are often the ticket to quickly learning what it takes to power down the mountain or conquer the backcountry on cross-country skis — and they're certainly not just for the 18-and-under crowd.

For lady skiers, **Breckenridge Ski Resort, Vail, Keystone** and **Beaver Creek** offer **Women's Ultimate 4 Ski Lessons**, where women in groups of four learn the ropes from a female instructor. Meanwhile, **Arapahoe Basin's 4 Lessons 4 You Program** gives groups four transferable lessons that can be used by anyone (ages 3 and up) at any ability level, so families and friends can enjoy powder days together. Or if your clan prefers to learn together, families of up four (kids ages 7 and up) can book a two-hour private lesson at **Loveland Ski Area**.

Hook up with **Grand Mesa Nordic Council**, a nonprofit that promotes Nordic sports on western Colorado's **Grand Mesa** near **Grand Junction**, for private or group cross-country-skiing lessons. The kind experts at GMNC outfit you with the proper equipment, supply an introduction to some of the groomed trail systems on the Grand Mesa — the world's largest flat-top mountain — and will have you basking in the state's snow-cloaked splendor (and burning countless calories) in no time.

GO FOR A TOUR.

Colorado is a big state, and it's safe to say most locals haven't explored every nook and cranny. Winter guides, who can often take you to areas you might not be able to access on your own, operate all over the state and offer all kinds of excursions, whether you'd like to cross-country ski from hut to hut or discover the untamed wilderness via dog sled.





Grand Adventures offers snowmobile rentals and hosts tours in the wilds surrounding **Winter Park** and **Grand Lake** (where you can famously snowmobile into town). On the two-hour Trailblazer Tour, you'll get an overview of the region's history and be led through plush meadows and the Arapaho National Forest to uninterrupted views of the Continental Divide and Gore Range.

Snowshoeing is a tried-and-true way to set your sights on some of the state's most inimitable landscapes. **Yampatika**, an environmental center in **Steamboat Springs**, enriches its snowshoeing tours through the area's hills and valleys with detailed insight into the Yampa Valley's bustling natural world. Gain knowledge about Steamboat's flora, fauna and snow science.

STAY INDOORS IF YOU WANT (IT'S OK).

Many of our residents yearn for epic days on the mountains and trails, while others are perfectly happy lounging by the fire. Skiers and lodge-dwellers live in harmony in high-country ski towns, where enthusiasm for the outdoors mixes with fine dining, art galleries, on-trend boutiques and historic museums, so there's always plenty to see and do.

Those who didn't hit the slopes are still encouraged to participate in the après-ski ritual. Toast your warmth with a jam cocktail (try the red-pepper jelly and vodka) at **There** in **Telluride**, a town wedged in a pretty glacial canyon with deep-rooted ski cred. Or if you're in legendary **Aspen** — celebrated for its winter pursuits — claim a stool at **Justice Snow's**, a hip bar with an old soul (it's housed in the 1889 Wheeler Opera House building).



Dig into Centennial State history at the myriad museums located in alpine hamlets. **Vail** has the **Colorado Ski & Snowboard Museum**, where you can see equipment and gear used by the 10th Mountain Division's WWII ski troopers who trained at **Ski Cooper** near **Leadville**. And **Breckenridge** has the **Edwin Carter Discovery Center**, the 1870s home of a local taxidermist known for collecting Rocky Mountain wildlife specimens and touted to be Colorado's oldest museum.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: GRAND MESA, NORDIC CENTER; YAMPATIKA; SNOWBOARD; GETTY IMAGES.

WANT MORE? GO TO COLORADO.COM/SKI AND COLORADO.COM/OFFTHESLOPES.