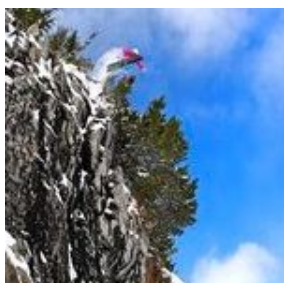


Kirkwood's snowfall is off the charts

By Kathryn Reed

Don't ever rely on Lake Tahoe storm totals to know what the conditions or accumulations are at Kirkwood Mountain Resort.

Even when it's not snowing at the lake, it might be at the 'Wood.



Not all the terrain is this gnarly at Kirkwood.

Photo/Provided

That's one of the things that makes Kirkwood so special – all that powder, all that natural snow. For the loyalists, it more than makes up for the lack of high speed lifts.

The hundreds of inches of snow the resort receives each year allowed it to hit its projected skier visit numbers in 2008-09.

“While a lot of resorts around the lake reported losses and down counts, we stayed right on par with the previous year's performance,” Julie Koster, Kirkwood spokeswoman, said of last year's numbers. “We did really, really well. We had a great season.”

With El Nino being the phrase of the pre-season, Koster said Kirkwood would love another 2005-06 season when more than 400 inches of white stuff fell, which led to more than 70 powder days with 6 or more inches of freshies. That was the year the resort had more snow than any place else in the world.

Changes to the terrain parks and evening snow cat tours are features to look forward to when the resort opens – which is dependent on natural snowfall. It's usually around Thanksgiving.

Skiers and boarders can practice their Olympian moves on the expanded boarder cross course. Kirkwood expects to double the length of this obstacle course of sorts.

The terrain parks are still off chairs 5 and 7, but with more and bigger features to test skier and boarders' skills.

To keep up ones energy, the resort has revamped its food selection at all the restaurants.

The chef is infusing the French fries with a sour cream and onion chip flavor that Koster says is something worth traveling the 45 minutes from South Lake Tahoe to the resort that encompasses three counties – El Dorado, Alpine and Amador.

Healthier options are a large part of the changes at Bub's and Off the Wall.

Closer to the December holidays Kirkwood will begin evening snow cat tours to the top of Red Cliffs or Caples Crest. Appetizers and drinks are part of the \$75 package.

Expedition Kirkwood continues to offer a slew of classes like avalanche beacon training and women specific clinics.

Daily lift tickets went up \$2 to \$74 a day for adults. For those 13 to 18 years in age, it will cost \$59 to ride Kirkwood.

Events are a large draw at Kirkwood. Each Saturday from noon-4pm there is live music on the village plaza. Saturday nights are the snow cat tours.

Other events include:

Jan. 23 – Snowbomb Slopestyle and JETs GS Race

Jan. 24, Jan. 31 – USASA Skier/Boarder X

Feb. 6 – JETs Rail Jam, JETs Skier/Boarder X

Feb. 7 – USASA Slopestyle

Feb. 25-27 – North Face Masters of Snowboarding

March 3-7 – North American Freeskiing Championships

March 13 – JETs Big Mountain Comp

April 2-4 – Kirkwood Jammin' XVII

April 3 – JETs Banked Slalom

Kirkwood is online at www.kirkwood.com.