

Squaw offers the complete winter experience

By Susan Wood

OLYMPIC VILLAGE – With avalanche-control dynamite blasts rippling across the valley on a recent Sunday, comfort isn't the first word that comes to mind to describe skiing at Squaw Valley.

It takes skill to navigate the steeps, powder stashes and rock formations at Lake Tahoe's premier ski resort. First, the KT-22 Express chairlift provides access to a run named after Jonny Moseley, the Olympian who made death-defying maneuvers on skis an art form. Second, that same lift provides access to Julia's Gold, named after the resort's other Olympian – Julia Mancuso. Third, the Headwall Face requires even the advanced intermediate to pay attention. Fourth, the rocks on top of Granite Chief remind most people of the humility necessary to take on this massive mountain.



Squaw Valley Inn is steps from the slopes.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

And, that's all on a good day.

No matter what the slopes bring, true luxury and comfort are steps away when skiers and boarders come in from the cold to eat, drink, be merry, soak in hot water and sleep at PlumpJack's Squaw Valley Inn.

Across from the Squaw Village, guests are invited to plop down and take a load off from the day at the PlumpJack Cafe bar, where comfort-food appetizers, refreshing drinks and an open pit fire await. Seating there is prime real estate unless snuggling on a sofa off the main bar area is the goal.

For hotel guests, the bar is transformed into a full complimentary breakfast buffet. It's open to others for a fee.



Snow continued to fall at Squaw Valley on Dec. 13.

Those with a penchant for more a substantive nighttime meal can enjoy a full menu of fine dining and wine tasting that will satisfy a variety of foodies and wannabes. Even dessert is an experience. ([Click here to read about dining at PlumpJack.](#))

Just outside on the patio, two hot tubs set at the ideal 102-degrees attract angry and tight muscles. In the winter, the patio becomes a surreal scene with Mother Nature's abundant snow on the patio tables forming what looks like marshmallow snow lollipops.

After a major Sierra snowfall, the serenity of going outside

to the tubs can only be upstaged by the beauty of the mix of Aspen and pine trees blanketed with snow.

It's hard to imagine the scene completely changes in summer as the inn hosts patio parties with disc jockeys to entertain guests.



Rooms at Squaw Valley Inn are modern and comfortable.

The Squaw Valley Inn, (not to be confused with the Squaw Valley Lodge timeshare complex at slopeside) is a PlumpJack property. This hospitality company with wineries, wines, resorts and retail was founded by San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom.

The inn was built in 1959 as a home for the delegation of the 1960 Winter Olympic Games.

In 1995, PlumpJack completely renovated the place, offering 60 luxury guestrooms, 34 king and 21 queen rooms and a host of suites. The hotel is more than pet friendly. Canines will feel like royalty as they find their own bowls, treats and pillows to make their stay memorable as well.

"This is important to us," said Inn General Manager Kristina Jetton , herself a dog lover.

For human comforts, rooms feature down comforters, cozy, hooded terry-cloth robes, slippers, televisions with DVD

players and wireless Internet service. Views are good from most rooms and even better for groups in the 3,000-square-foot banquet facility on the second floor.

As companies have cut back on their business trips, resorts like Squaw Valley Inn are forced to be more creative with honing the market they want to attract.

“We do a lot of weddings here,” said Rob McCormick, director of sales.

The rooms provide subtle touches that enhance the comfort level. The headboards appear to be ergonomically designed for reading in bed. Tile at the entryway allows snow enthusiasts to kick off and put away their gear with no guilt of trampling on the carpet in the living space. Sample shampoos, conditioners and lotions make cleaning up in the full-size shower an inviting experience with scents like Lemon Grass, Sage and Mountain Breeze.

The decor is one that commands a second look. The lights in the bathroom look like something off a street lamp, providing a feel that complements a metal entertainment center, textured walls, recessed lighting, unique artwork and even a clip-on book light on the nightstand.

Rooms start at \$195 a night and work their way up to \$750 for a penthouse suite.

Squaw Valley is pulling out all the stops on its celebratory season that recognizes 50 years since hosting the 1960 Winter Games and six decades of being in business. An entire slate of events is scheduled for Olympic Heritage Week starting Jan. 8, including a special torch run that honors its own contribution to the history of the Olympics and the Games' return to the West Coast when Vancouver, British Columbia, kicks off its opening ceremonies the following month.

Whistler Blackcomb has already touted record snowfall, and

Squaw has much to be proud of in this early season as well. With winter officially beginning this week, Squaw lauds 35 to 60 inches. Coming off a full week of storms on Dec. 13, "Let It Snow" blasted over the speakers at the entrance to the Funitel.

The trees looked like an absolute wonderland. And, as one avid skier from Reno pointed out on the Squaw Creek chairlift, she had every intent of taking advantage of a seemingly end of the three-year drought with her now affordable season pass. To mark its big year, Squaw slashed its pass price by at least 60 percent because, as spokeswoman Savannah Cowley put it, "It was the time to do it."

The inn maybe reached by clicking [here](#) or calling (530) 583.1576.