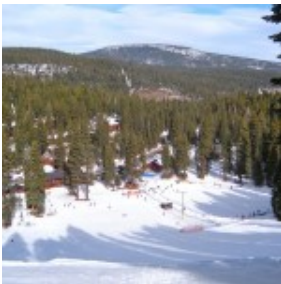


Granlibakken embraces fun and relaxation

By Susan Wood

TAHOE CITY – Granlibakken means “hillside sheltered by fir trees: in Norwegian, but it should stand for recreation meets relaxation in English.

One of the Lake Tahoe Basin’s best kept secrets, the 74-acre resort nestled in a mountain valley a half mile south of Tahoe City is a kids’ paradise where the outdoors meets the outgoing. Children of all ages and seniors who are young at heart can appreciate the healthy blend of Tahoe-type activities and the history behind the resort.



Granlibakken's
ski and
sledding
hills.

Photos/Kathryn
Reed

On one recent Saturday morning steps from the resort’s main lodge, families seeking snow play covered the sledding and ski hill. A Poma lift and rope tow assist skiers and boarders; sledders must walk. The chatter and squeals made it clear how much fun can be had on a saucer, toboggan or skis.

Granlibakken Conference Center & Lodge employee Jason Works

said this was a typical Saturday.

“Lots of families come out here,” he said, adding it’s also fun to work at the resort.

It seems to be an ideal spot for little ones learning how to ski. Its wide-open space and easy slope give beginners the security to learn the sport. According to Works, most spend hours going up and down the hill much like a Labrador retriever never tires of chasing a tennis ball.

An adult lift ticket runs \$21, children \$14.



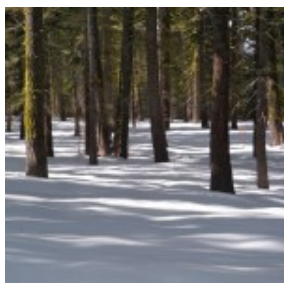
Susan Wood

If skiing the bunny hill or sliding isn’t your thing, snowshoers and cross country skiers can spend the day above the lift. The resort’s hill provides one free ride up to a vast web of groomed and ungroomed trails. A 3-mile round-trip jaunt can weave you through some of the most gorgeous U.S. Forest Service territory on the North Shore to Page Meadows. For the more ambitious, the Granite Chief Wilderness beckons with Scott Peak in the background. Due west, Ward Peak towers in the distance at 8,637 feet.

The Tahoe Rim Trail Association offers snowshoe tours to the meadow.

Kae and I elected to go up the Poma lift to tour a few miles of the snowcat-groomed trails on the ridge. The lift provided the most humbling experience because I had never been on a Pomo on cross country skis. I learned to ski via a Poma in

Vermont at age 6 at the oldest ski area in the United States so I knew I could negotiate the spring-bound pole lift. But on Nordic skis the unloading was awkward. I survived unscathed, but had to pick myself up.



Pristine snow is inches from the groomed trail.

Wide trails make it ideal for skate skiers and those who need to snowplow coming down.

Word to the wise: the topographical map is a little funky when it comes to directions to Page Meadows from the water tank. Don't head due west. Head slowly south, climbing the ridge before making a sharp northern turn before heading west.

After a day of fun, the resort provides lodging options ranging from studios and townhomes to an eight-bedroom forest lodge chalet and executive lodge suite. The latter is spacious and comfortable with a fireplace and a full kitchen that's suitable for gatherings. The complex has 45 guest rooms that start at \$310/night.

Ski and Stay packages run \$109 Sunday-Thursday and \$132 on Friday and Saturday.

Summertime comes alive for tennis buffs, as courts are steps away from most units.



Lodging
options.

A night's stay offers access to a heated pool, hot tub and sauna with a full, hot breakfast buffet the next morning. Executive Chef Ron Eber, who's logged more than a quarter century with the resort, brings out his signature homemade bread pudding to accompany eggs, pastries, pancakes, sausage, coffee, juice and an assortment of fruit. It's difficult to imagine anyone going away hungry.

In addition to a 16,000-square-foot conference center, the resort features the Cedar House Pub in the main lodge. We didn't have a chance to eat there, but it looked like a perfect spot to unwind in front of the fire for appetizers or dinner.

Among the historic photos lining the hallways, the most telling for the resort is a large portrait of Kjell "Rusty" Rustad, who in 1947 leased the toboggan runs and undeveloped land from the Forest Service. He improved the ski jumping facilities and cleared timber for the downhill area.

I thought it was fitting that my brush with history as a child brought me decades later to check out the site of this country's first ski lift – a 600-foot tow rope. The 1932 Olympic ski-jumping trials were staged here, adding to the mystique of the secluded resort.

To this day, the resort still delves into the history of the Tahoe region. It hosted an Olympic Legends' dinner earlier this month, which featured the likes of 1960 Winter Games

racer Joe Pete Wilson and cross country ski course groomer extraordinaire Chummy Broomhall.

Staff scurried to make its honorary guests comfortable. Resort Manager Kay Williams appeared quite tickled to hear the Olympic stories from the senior skiers and volunteers and sat with them over breakfast. And, General Manager Ron Parson described the evening in one word: "Incredible."

For more information, go to www.granlibakken.com.