

Is technology changing how we approach a ski day?

By Brenda Knox

On a sunny bluebird ski day we gathered around my iPhone at the top of Grandview to check out where we wanted to ski after lunch. My iPhone had a good connection and it was fun to peruse the Sierra-at-Tahoe map from the iTrail application.

I'm finding that my iPhone applications work extremely well inside and in great weather. But out in the elements and the storms, my iPhone never leaves my inside jacket pocket. With thousands of ski applications out there for the iPhone, my mission to see if the applications were worthwhile, practical, or even useful to a recreational skier/rider began.



Brenda Knox
takes notes on
her iPhone.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Overall, I found the ski report applications and trail map applications impractical while actually on the slopes. I did enjoy looking through the various reports in the morning from the comfort of my home with a cappuccino in hand. Although, several inconsistencies existed between the snow levels out my window and what was being reported.

One morning looking out the window at several inches of new snow I wondered how many inches my favorite resorts had received. Using the iSki application I looked up Heavenly, Sierra, Kirkwood and Homewood. Heavenly and Sierra were reporting zero inches, even though my Heavenly email stated 10 inches. Kirkwood and Homewood information had not been updated in several days. I'm not sure what process the resorts participate in to keep their information updated, but it obviously was not reflecting actual snow activity on this day.

Another issue is connectivity. I had varying degrees of success getting a good strong signal at the resorts. Grandview at the top of Sierra was good. East Peak Lodge is my favorite resting location at Heavenly, but has zero service for my iPhone. I connected at the California Lodge and Gunbarrel Grill last week and showed off the iTrail map to friends.

On the slopes, the iPhone is better built to listen to music or to brag to your friends about all the powder you're enjoying. I don't go anywhere without my iPhone, but keep it safely tucked away in inclement weather. It's pretty much impossible to use with gloves on, so I do my information gathering on it while at home. My favorite ski apps are iSki and the REI snow report.

Brenda Knox is a gadget girl who mostly lives in South Lake Tahoe.