

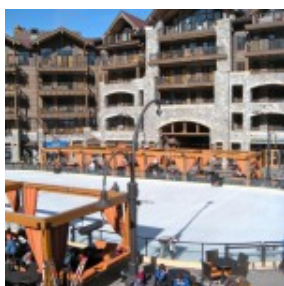
Northstar improves mountain, not overall experience

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – Magic Moguls – that’s the one run I always want to do at Northstar.

Each season the rollers off Vista Express are a little different. Each season it’s worth having some fun on them. It reminds me a bit of when I was a kid and we’d ski here as a family. My friend Darla would take me all over the mountain, over little jumps we’d go, so sure we had gotten some big air.

Seeing what boarders and skiers do these days, I’m not even sure we got any air back then.



Northstar-at-Tahoe Village

These Magic Moguls aren’t anything compared to what is in the terrain park that the lift crosses over. The features in there look pretty intense – especially for non-aerialists.

It was a week ago today that Sue and I spent the day at Northstar-at-Tahoe. Having the luxury of being able to stay at my sister’s place made the experience all the more enjoyable.

Fortunately, we arrived mid-morning. This meant missing the single-digit temperatures on the mountain that fellow skiers had experienced.

The snow on the front side was good. (I wish we were there today for the freshies from this past storm.) The back side, though, was slick, hard and unforgiving.

It reminded me a bit of the men's downhill course at Whistler, just not as steep. It was like this area didn't get any of the fresh snow that had sprinkled the rest of the mountain the previous couple of days.

This area didn't even exist when I was kid. Only the front side of the Comstock lift was inbounds.

It's the backside and Lookout Mountain where the bulk of the black diamonds are. In the past I've had some fun skiing the trees at Lookout Mountain. The conditions didn't allow for it this particular day, but still, the groomers kept us entertained.

The views into the Martis Valley and into the wilderness are spectacular. Lake Tahoe is visible from other areas of the mountain, which always confounds me because that big body of water is not where I think it should be.

From the mid-mountain lodge the Ritz-Carlton peaks out among the trees. They've done a good job to not make it obtrusive. It's open to the public and could be skied to for lunch. A free gondola takes riders between the village and Ritz.

The village at the base is a great spot to rest. Cushy seating around massive fire pits beckon. An ice rink sits in the middle of everything so free entertainment is available, even if it means watching a woman be carted off on a stretcher after blowing out her knee on the ice.

One of the things about staying at Northstar is being able to access the free bus service. Our bus-mate in the morning, though, said all the changes to the area in the last few years have meant having to wait longer for a ride. It took 20 minutes for a bus to arrive to haul us to the village.

Back at the village after showering we looked around for a place to eat. Our choices were upscale, Japanese or pizza. We picked the latter. And it was yummy. But the options were obviously limited.

Most of the shops were closed as we walked around at 6pm. It was dead.

All of this was rather disappointing since we'd had a great mid-week village experience at Whistler a month earlier.

Northstar was once known as a family destination. In talking to people visiting the resort some still see it that way. Their conclusion is families don't do villages.

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