

Skier visits drop 12% – too much snow to get to resorts

By Hugo Martín, Los Angeles Times

California ski operators often complain that they don't have enough snow. This year, they're complaining that they had too much.

Mountain resorts saw a 12 percent decline in skiers and snowboarders this season compared with the previous one, with attendance falling to about 7.1 million, according to California Ski Industry Assn., the nonprofit trade group for the state's major winter sports areas.



Snowstorms kept people from visiting ski areas in the 2010-11 season.

Photo/LTN file

The trouble was that near-record snow too often closed roads or discouraged driving to the slopes under harsh conditions – particularly during crucial weekend periods.

“Had the snow fallen in the right times, it would have been a sensational season,” said Bob Roberts, director the trade group. “It was a challenging year.”

The bad timing began around the Christmas holidays and happened again in March, when fierce storms dropped so much snow on weekends that it prevented eager skiers and snowboarders from getting to the resorts.

Instead of colossal attendance numbers to match the massive snowfall this season, the state's ski resorts have reported an overall drop in visitor numbers compared with last season, when there was less snow but easier access to the slopes.

In California, where all outdoor activities generate about \$44 billion in spending annually, weather can affect ski resort revenue, the length of the white-water rafting season and even attendance at county fairs.

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