

Slow start to ski season impacts visitor numbers

By Danny King, Travel Weekly

Drought conditions in the Western U.S. are chipping away at North American ski-resort demand that had shown initial gains from the combination of a resurgent economy and early-season storms.

Despite the fact that some Colorado resorts late last month received their largest single- and two-day snowfall amounts in more than a decade, well-below-average snowfall at Lake Tahoe and Mammoth Mountain threaten to pull overall numbers down as prospective skiers shift their sights to warmer-weather destinations.

With lift-ticket sales down by as much as a third from last year because of dry conditions, it will be “virtually impossible” for North American resorts to meet the 2012-13 season total of almost 57 million skier days this season, said Ralf Garrison, director of DestiMetrics (formerly MTRiP).

Moreover, 2013-14 activity will be far below the record 61 million North American skier days in 2010-11, when many resorts received record snowfall.

Through Jan. 5, Vail Resorts’ lift-ticket revenue from its eight mountains rose 3.9 percent from a year earlier, as a 7.4 percent increase in Colorado and Utah ski visits more than offset the effect of a 23 percent plunge in visits to its three Lake Tahoe resorts.

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