

# Opinion: What will winter hold?

By Sandy Evans Hall

Let me get my crystal ball. With the little dusting of snow that we received this month and the change to a much chillier temperature outside, I bet you are all thinking about winter. Am I right?



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Since I have no crystal ball, let me look at my recent Destimetrics report from Sept. 30 and see what's happening at ski resorts across the U.S.:

- GOOD – Early data through March 2015 shows a 7.4 percent gain in occupancy for the upcoming season.
- GOOD – At this point, occupancy is gaining in all five months of the season that data are available.
- GOOD – The average daily rate (ADR) is up a strong 7.5 percent at \$391.
- GOOD – Revenue is also up a very strong 15.5 percent at \$76 with increases in all four months.
- NOT SO GOOD – The Dow Jones Industrial Average declined very slightly in September, losing 0.3 percent, or minus 55.55 points to finish the month at 17,042.9.
- BAD – Consumer confidence declined sharply in September, losing 7.9 percent to finish the month at 86 points.

This is the first time the index has been below 90 points since June 2014 and is the first decline in confidence since April.

- GOOD – The national unemployment rate declined sharply in September, shedding two basis points and closing the month at 5.9 percent, the first time the rate has been below 6 percent since June 2008.

So, we have a combination of good, not so good and bad. Certainly early booking patterns are a good sign and how the economy plays out over the coming months will have some impact on the industry. Unemployment numbers are good for the economy but are bound to play havoc with hiring for the ski season. Weather is a big wild card and fingers and toes are crossed that we don't see a ridge set up again this year.

Sure wish I had a crystal ball.

Thinking, dreaming snow.

*Sandy Evans Hall is CEO/executive director of the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association.*