

Northstar gondola makes ride to slopes faster



Skiers and riders board Northstar's gondola to get to mid-mountain. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – Speed – it's what most riders want. Waiting in lines and slow lifts don't add to a memorable ski day, at least not in a positive way.

Comfort is another biggie.

Northstar has been listening. While skiers and snowboarders might not notice the changes at first, the Big Springs Gondola has been overhauled in the last two years. The latest upgrade

for this season is making the 30-year-old transport faster. In five minutes people are whisked from the village to mid-mountain.

The change allows for an increase of 10 percent more of the six-seater cars being able to get from the bottom to the top compared to years past.

During the summer engineers worked to make the whole apparatus quieter and smoother.



It's a quick ride for passengers on the gondola to get to mid-mountain. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

“The infrastructure was upgraded with the most recent technology available, keeping terminals from being too loud for guests waiting to onboard,” Cass Walker, the resort’s spokeswoman, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

In the previous offseason the doors and windows were replaced, as were the seats – which came with more cushioning. Most of

the work was done in house.

The outside equipment holder now accommodates the fatter skis, with it being able to hold six pairs of skis and four snowboards.

Prior to the gondola's opening in 1985 people had to rely on the Village Express Chairlift. The starting point is close to the gondola. But seldom does the lift run. It's just not as efficient. Plus, it drops people off right on a run.

The gondola drops people off within walking distance to three main chairlifts that go farther up the mountain. Plus, this is mid-mountain, where there is a day lodge. And for those who are not skiing and just want a ride up the mountain, the gondola is the E ticket ride to get there.



The gondola crosses the road leading to the Ritz-Carlton. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

“The entire terminal has also been renovated – featuring lovely scenic and village shots and some great accolades. We

will also be including new furnishings within the terminal," Walker said.

Per company policy Walker would not release how much it cost to improve the gondola. All she would say is parent company Vail Resorts has infused \$30 million into Northstar in the last five years since it acquired the property.

For now, this is the end of the planned upgrades to the gondola. This means it will be a while before Northstar has what Vail ski resort has – a heated eight-seater gondola.