

# SKI GUIDE





# Selecting the Right Skis

**T**here was a time when picking a pair of skis was easy. You'd choose between three basic types — downhill, slalom or giant slalom — and then get the right size.

Today, though, technology has made selecting skis a much more complicated process. With hundreds of models on the market, all in different shapes and sizes, your choices are virtually unlimited for finding skis that are a good fit for your needs.

## RESEARCH

While there are more skis on the market than ever before, there is also more information available about all of them.

Specialty publications exist both online and in print that offer professional or user reviews of all types of ski equipment. You can see what other people are saying about the latest models for your price range and experience level to help narrow down your search.

And when you visit the ski shop, make sure you take notes about the models they have available in the store. You can do more reading about those specific models later.

## CONDITIONS

It's important to know what types of snow conditions you most often encounter at your favorite ski resorts.

Because today's skis have advanced, computer-designed shapes, they're specifically engineered for a certain type of snow texture. Skis designed for the dry, thick powder of the Rocky Mountains may not work so well on denser, wet snow in the Northeast, for example.

## TRY THEM OUT

No matter how much research you do, the best way to decide on a pair of skis is to try them out. Actually strapping them on and heading for the slope is the only way to know whether you'll like the feel and performance.

Some ski shops will rent all the equipment they sell, so it's worth paying to rent a pair of skis before you commit to buying them.





# The Appeal of Cross-Country Skiing

**W**hen most people think of skiing, they imagine the typical resort setting: a big ski lift and lots of skiers going downhill.

Many people enjoy a different form of skiing, though, that's as physically demanding as it is enjoyable. It's called cross-country skiing.

Unlike downhill skiing — which, as its name implies, typically involves sliding down the side of a mountain — cross-country skiing involves traveling long distances downhill, over flat terrain and even uphill.

## EQUIPMENT

The equipment used in cross-country skiing is quite different from downhill skiing. The skis themselves are typically narrower, sometimes called “skinny skis,” with higher, more curved tips than other types to help guide them over uneven surfaces.

Most cross-country skis have flat bottoms that require waxing, and they have bindings to keep the toe of the boot attached to the ski.

Cross-country skiers also use poles to help steady the skier and provide propulsion, letting you push yourself forward when going uphill or crossing flat terrain.



PHOTO: IMAGE SOURCE IS2 / YAYMICRO.COM

## ENJOYMENT

One of the best parts of cross-country skiing is that it lets you enjoy the quiet, pristine wilderness away from the crowds.

When you ski cross-country, you get to see more of the countryside that is missed in the adrenaline-fueled thrill of downhill skiing, and it also helps build endurance. It can be one of the toughest, most demanding sports to compete in.

Cross-country skiing can present a safety problem for inexperienced skiers, though, so you should always stay on clearly marked trails and let people know where you're headed and when you will be back. Many of the same precautions as hiking apply to cross-country skiing, although they can be even more important because of the extremes of winter weather.

## WHERE TO SKI

While cross-country skiing can be done in any public place where there is snow, in theory, it's generally best to stick to trails that are built for the purpose.

Many ski resorts will have trails that are marked and groomed specifically for cross-country skiers. Some state parks will offer options, too, that are inexpensive and beautiful ways to enjoy the winter.



# A Great Form of Exercise



PHOTO: IMAGE SOURCE 152 / YAYMICRO.COM

One of the great things about skiing is that it's not only fun, but it's also an excellent way to stay in shape.

People who have never gone skiing before may think gravity does all the work as you slide downhill. But as anyone who has done it knows, any form of skiing can raise your pulse and give your muscles a serious workout.

## GOOD FOR YOUR BODY

Like any good form of exercise, hitting the ski slopes can help to tone and build your muscles over time.

Even the most basic downhill skiing can give you a full body workout as you turn and stop.

It's also great for helping with stability and balance. Some athletes find that by working on their skiing skills during the winter, they develop better coordination for the warm-weather sports like baseball, soccer, tennis or football. It helps you stay nimble and light on your feet.

And if you're looking for a really challenging workout, you can experiment with trying different forms of

skiing to improve specific skill sets, like high-speed reactions in downhill skiing or endurance in cross-country skiing.

## PREPARE ALL YEAR

One of the things that makes skiing special is that it can't be done all year long. It has a set season and is somewhat dictated by Mother Nature, which makes those perfect conditions on the slopes all the more fun to

savor.

If you're serious about skiing, though, it's important to prepare for ski season throughout the year. You'll want to focus on jogging, stairsteps, aerobics, rollerblading and the elliptical machine to keep your lower body conditioned.

Good physical preparation will make you less likely to suffer an injury or have an accident while skiing. And when you're in shape for ski season, it's all the more fun.

# Black Diamond or Bunny Hill?



PHOTO: PHOVOIR / YAYMICRO.COM

**E**nthusiasts know all about the sport of skiing. They know that the more physically fit they are, the better prepared they will be for the slopes.

In their minds, being physically fit equates to a smaller likelihood of sustaining an injury while having fun.

Unfortunately, novice skiers often have no clue about this. These beginners are just getting their toes indoctrinated into the pristine white slopes filled with turns and twists at the most basic level. They have yet to learn which manufacturers make the best equipment, how to fit a helmet, and where the best slopes are.

Before they get to that level, perhaps they need to understand which type of hill is for a beginner and which type is designed for more advanced skiers. After all, for a beginner, taking the ski lift to the top of the wrong hill could be a very bad idea.

Should novice skiers take to the bunny hill or the black diamond? At first guess, the bunny hill might seem more appropriate due to its gentle name. Is this correct? Yes, the novice skier should head to the closest bunny hill for his initial encounter with a pair of skis and snowy slopes.

On the other hand, the black diamond is designed for more advanced skiers since it includes the most difficult slopes. Traditionally, the black diamond slope is more difficult than any surrounding slopes and it should be traversed only by those with great skills.

Today, however, a new category has been created for difficult or slightly dangerous slopes. This new category

has been given the tag of double black diamond, a name which has the connotation of providing double the difficulty or twice the danger of injury.

The rating of individual ski runs is left up to the resort where they are located. No standard guidelines are in place yet, so two similar slopes that are located at two separate resorts might have different ratings even though they are similar in gradient, width and length. The trails are rated according to how they compare to the other trails available at the resort.

On the other hand, a bunny hill is designed for novice skiers as well as less adventurous skiers. Since the bunny hill is usually reserved for beginners or those who want to avoid the need to have great skills, skiing here is less stressful for those who are not quite sure of their skills yet.

Typically, a ski instructor is close by for those who might need assistance. Lessons are often provided for a small fee for those who want the benefit of instructions prior to skiing.

Shapes are not used by all locations when identifying the difficulty of ski trails. However, the color system is generally in place at each resort. Green is used to designate the easiest course. Blue is used to designate courses of moderate difficulty, while black is used to identify the most difficult trails.



# Going Uphill at Downhill Resorts

**Y**ou go to winter resorts to enjoy sliding downhill, but what goes down must first go up.

While ski patrol and other resort staff sometimes use snowmobiles to get around the resort quickly, customers normally use trams, gondolas, chair lifts and surface lifts. Helicopters and snowcoaches can be used for off-piste adventure but are uncommon inside resort boundaries.

## CHAIR LIFTS

Chair lifts are the most common and varied form of uphill transport found at ski resorts. They have capacities of two to six skiers per chair and can range from a very basic model to luxurious six-person detachable lifts with weather shields and foot rests.

An increasingly popular type of lift is the fast moving detachable quad, on which the chairs move very quickly up hill and then detach from the main cable in the loading zones for slower and safer loading and unloading.

The Mountain Top Express at Vail, Colorado is an example of a detachable quad.

## AERIAL TRAMWAYS

Aerial tramways, or trams, have large passenger cabins mounted on fixed cables. They are generally used to move passengers across long popular routes, often from a base area to a summit.

The well-know Snowbird tram in

Utah, for example, which runs from Snowbird Center base area to Hidden Peak covers 8,395 feet, or 1.6 miles, with a vertical rise of 2,900 feet and a capacity of 120 people. Trams often run in the summer for scenic rides or to provide uphill transport for mountain bikers.

## GONDOLA

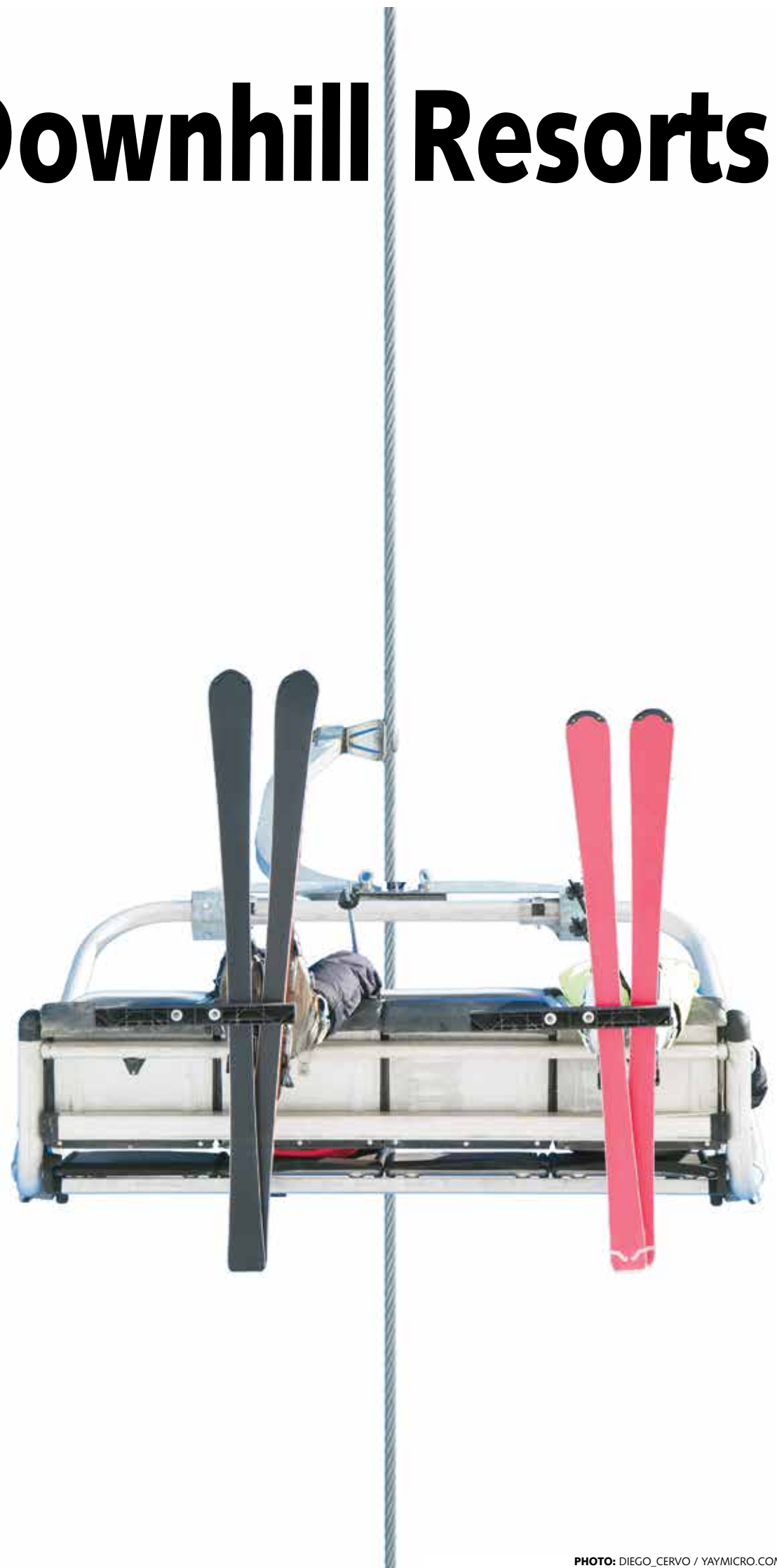
Gondolas or cable cars consist of passenger cabins which usually seat four to six people hooked on to a continuously moving steel cable.

Passengers place their skis in pockets on the sides of the cars and then sit comfortably inside, sheltered from the weather for the ride.

Although they can be somewhat slower than high speed chairlifts or trams, families and casual skiers appreciate the comfort. Like trams, gondolas are sometimes used for summer recreation and sightseeing.

## SURFACE LIFTS

Surface lifts, including T-bars, rope tows and platter lifts, are normally used for short rides in uncrowded areas, often on relatively gentle slopes. They are frequently found in the novice areas of resorts, such as the one at the novice area of Red Resort in British Columbia or near race courses.



# Let's Go Crazy

## SNOWBOARDING OFFERS AN EXCITING ALTERNATIVE

Ordinary skiing offers a rush that few sports can match. For people who want to take it up a notch, though — both in terms of style and fun — snowboarding has emerged as one of the most popular winter activities.

It's become so popular, in fact, that it's developed its own subculture. Snowboarders have adopted a sense of style more akin to skateboarders and hip-hop artists, lending a laid-back feel to an incredibly fast-paced sport.

### FREESTYLE

While some people enjoy racing down a hill on their boards, slalom style, a much more popular trend is freestyle riding.

Inspired by X-Games-style stunts, freestyle snowboarding involves doing tricks, jumps and spins in the process of traversing the snow. You might slide over a box, jump over a tree and do a spin in midair — something that takes lots of practice and can be dangerous, especially for beginners.

Freestyling also includes riding the halfpipe, a virtual tube of snow carved out to make high-speed, mid-air jumps and spins possible. Injuries aren't uncommon in snowboarding, but that's part of the appeal for the people who choose to participate in it. If it were perfectly safe, it wouldn't provide the same adrenaline rush.

Fortunately, many ski resorts are offering the training and facilities to make freestyle snowboarding as safe as possible.

### THE BOARDS

Snowboards themselves have come a long way from their origins in the 1960s. Back then, they were literally wood boards with boot anchors attached to them, but today they're among the most complex and high-tech equipment in the ski industry.

Snowboards come in a wide variety of shapes, prices and forms to suit their riders. The vast majority of beginning riders choose to buy “all-mountain” boards at the outset, which are designed to perform well in a variety of conditions.

More advanced snowboarders will quickly move on to more specialized boards, though, that are designed specifically for one type of riding, snow condition and even size of rider.

Special boards for women, children, powdered snow, backcountry riding and freestyling are just the start. And that's before you consider all the fun colors and ways to customize the style of the board.

No matter what board you pick, though, snowboarders share one thing: a love for excitement. From the very beginning, that's been the heart of this American-grown winter sport.



# The Benefits of Training

**M**any skiers won't hesitate to spend money on ski lodges, lift tickets, snow clothing and good equipment for the slopes.

One of the best places to spend cash, though, is on excellent training from an experienced ski instructor.

Not only will good training help you make the best use of your equipment — something important after you've made an investment in the sport — but also help you have more fun on your ski trips.

## SAFETY FIRST

As everyone knows, skiing can be dangerous for people who don't know what they're doing. The combination of slick surfaces, high speeds and gravitational pull can result in injuries or disaster if you're not careful.

Good training is one of the best investments you can make because it

helps ensure you and your family's safety. A professional trainer can help you determine your skill and conditioning level, getting you to the point where you can safely ski down more advanced terrain.

## FAMILY FUN

Training is important for people of all ages, too. From advanced adult skiers to the youngest children, ski training can make family trips to the mountains more enjoyable.

Part of the fun of skiing is getting better at it. Everyone starts off awkwardly at first before building more confidence as their experience grows — and proper training plays a major role in building that confidence.

By getting thorough training for the entire family, you'll be making the most of your vacation dollars.

## ADVANCED TRAINING

Finally, while some people may stop getting training after they've reached a certain level, this can be a big mistake.

Not only can it lead to overconfidence — tackling dangerous terrain without guidance — but it can also make you miss out on the fun of pushing yourself to ever greater heights.

Think about it. Even Olympic skiers, who represent the best of the best, have coaches to help them get better.

That just goes to show how important ski training is.

