

Forbes

The Easiest Family Ski Vacation In Aspen

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Snowmass is a great family ski area. There is varied terrain for all ability levels, and the village is quaint. But it was lacking in the luxury hotel sector until Viceroy Snowmass came along six years ago and infused a little Scandinavian chalet chic into the area. With its slopeside location, state-of-the-art spa, and varied dining options, it is the place to position yourself if you're looking for a relaxing getaway — particularly with kids in tow — as the ski-in/ski-out location can't be beat. The Viceroy's lower level ski shop makes rentals, lift tickets, and ski instructor meet-ups (all pre-arranged through a concierge) a breeze, and helpful ski valets attend to children's boot buckles and hand warmer needs. The resort feels very high-touch, but in a low-key, LEED-friendly way.

CLAIM TO FAME

All 173 spacious rooms — from 375-square-foot studios to sprawling four-bedroom suites — are furnished in dark woods, with pullout sofas, lovely throws, gourmet kitchenettes, and, best of all, washer-dryers. The last detail not only makes light work of wet gear at day's end, but also cuts down on packing needs. (Clearly, a parent was involved designing these stylish yet functional spaces.) The Viceroy's biggest claim to fame — aside from its 60-minute Path to Tranquility massage in the subterranean spa — is its location. Set just above the Assay Hill lift, you'll have access to 3,000+ acres of perfectly groomed trails and not have to worry about missing the last lift back to your lodge after the last run, as is often the case with other properties.

WHAT'S ON SITE

The Viceroy is a self-contained unit. If it's a spa weekend you're after, you'll never have to leave. Skiers, however, will delight in a host of offerings that starts with a hearty breakfast buffet of breakfast burritos and blueberry-lemon quinoa pancakes at Eight K, which becomes the hotel's fine dining restaurant by night. After fueling up, your warming ski boots are an elevator ride away. The valet at Four Mountain Sports will help with skis, poles, and replacing the inevitable lost mitten. Ski instructors will meet you right here, which lessens the chance of kid (or parent) meltdowns.

Après-ski offerings are a plus as well: welcoming hot chocolate and s'mores, a sleek outdoor pool, a fitness room for anyone with energy to spare, and an inviting bar all beckon. Friday nights throughout the ski season feature nighttime celebrations at nearby Elk Camp where tubing, snowshoeing, ice skating, and snow biking are all on offer and are easily accessible by nearby gondola.

THE FOOD

Breakfast, the most important meal of any ski day, is delicious, varied, and filling, as are dinners of Colorado rack of lamb at Eight K. But it was a lunch of grilled shrimp tacos at Nest Public House that won my heart. An easy ski run takes you to the restaurant next to the hotel's ski shop, where light chopped salads and creative sandwiches are served quickly for the skier who wants to get back on the mountain.

Aspen, seven miles down the road, is a true foodie town. So it's worth leaving Snowmass to explore such culinary gems as Casa Tua, Matsuhisa, and Meat & Cheese, the area's latest and greatest restaurant-cum-charcuterie market.

ROOM WITH A VIEW

Virtually every Viceroy room has a sweeping view of the Roaring Fork Valley and ski trails, but I highly recommend east-facing rooms overlooking the Assay lift for a family of four. The one-bedroom, sizable suites feature pullout sofas that work for younger kids. Streamlined gas fireplaces throw off serious heat, which lends the separate spaces a cozy feel. For a total house party, four-bedroom apartments include communal living spaces and great views of the surrounding peaks at twilight. Avoid north-facing rooms that look out over the access road to the main village. Not nearly as pretty.

THE PLACE IS PERFECT FOR

Anyone who likes design-led spaces as well as close proximity to a number of ski lifts. Viceroy is perfect for families, as rooms are configured for sharing and are often interconnected. The hotel's Very Important Kids program will appeal to the younger set with movies, games, bowling, and more.

BUT NOT SO PERFECT FOR

A quiet couples weekend. Viceroy is kid central, and while they do it in a quiet, casual way, school vacation times are packed with small people.

RATES

Studio rooms start at \$468 per night in season.

NEIGHBORHOOD VIBE

Snowmass doesn't have as much to offer as neighboring Aspen, so you'll want to go off campus — by complimentary shuttle bus or taxi — for a day of skiing nearby. Aspen Snowmass consists of four mountains, all accessible on one lift ticket: In addition to Snowmass, there's Aspen Mountain in Aspen town, lower-key

Aspen Highlands, and xtreme-sports friendly Buttermilk.

Your dedicated Aspen ski and snowboard instructor will accompany you to any of the mountains, making for a seamless ski experience on many varied terrains.

WHAT TO DO NEARBY

For a small mountain town, Aspen is packed with cultural offerings — galleries, lectures, museums, events. One of the newest is the Shigeru Ban-designed Aspen Art Museum with its rotating contemporary art exhibits and stunning rooftop café.

Food is another central focus, from the world-class sushi at Matsuhisa and Kenichi, to fine dining at Cache Cache and Casa Tua. For a lighter meal in a casual, buzzy atmosphere, head to the year-old Meat & Cheese on East Hopkins Avenue, where abundant cheese boards are accompanied by pickles, preserves, and crackers and porchetta assortments are ideal for sharing. The wood-fired pizzas at Mezzaluna make it a perennial kid favorite and its location near Aspen Mountain ensure added après-ski entertainment. Top off any hard day of skiing (or late night partying) with freshly baked cookies — chocolate chip, Snickerdoodle, gooey peanut putter — from the fragrant, centrally located Paradise Bakery at the bustling corner of South Galena.

Nordic skiers will love the Aspen Cross Country Center for its 25+ miles of trails. Lessons and gear are available through Ute Mountaineer.

Ashcroft Ski Touring is another great bet and offers cross country skiing through an old ghost town, just twelve miles from Aspen.