

SUN VALLEY AMERICA'S SHANGRI-LA

by Patti Murphy



SUN VALLEY is a small mountain town in central Idaho, known worldwide for its skiing and outdoor recreation, superb dining, eclectic shopping, and casual pace that entice both the famous and not-so-famous to come back year after year.

Naturally, with an average snowfall of more than 200 inches, many vacation activities in Sun Valley (and its sister city Ketchum just a mile away) revolve around the white stuff. But, even for those who don't ski, board, or skate, there is much to do in this winter wonderland.

Lots of snow, unlimited possibilities

As long as we're talking about snow, meet Bald Mountain, or "Baldy," as it is affectionately known by skiers and boarders around the globe. With an elevation of 9,150 feet, a vertical drop of 3,400 feet,

and varying degrees of terrain and difficulty, Baldy has been called the best single ski mountain in the world. Several hundred inches of annual snow, plus a giant snowmaking operation, ensures great skiing all season. For the novice skier who prefers a gentler downhill experience, Dollar Mountain has been called "the finest teaching mountain in the world." This treeless 600-foot hill is a beginner's paradise. With its expert instruction, day lodge, Terrain Park, and new tubing hill, it is the perfect place to learn how to ski and board, or simply have an easy day of it.

If you'd rather not do the downhill thing, strap on some snowshoes or cross-country skis and get up close and personal with the stunning terrain of the area. The Sun Valley Nordic & Snowshoe Center near the Sun Valley Lodge maintains 25 miles of cross country and snowshoe trails.



Mush!

Not every winter activity requires a lift ticket. Bundle up, climb onto a dog-pulled sled and have a team of exuberant canines whisk you across the snow into the backcountry. Or, rent a snowmobile and plow through any of the hundreds of miles of groomed snowmobile trails weaving through the area's spectacular terrain. Off-trail riding is also available.

Skate!

The outdoor ice rink at the Sun Valley Lodge is open year round for public skating. This is the same rink where Olympic and top skaters from around the world perform during the summer Sun Valley ice shows. Or, if you're into a more natural setting, join the locals and skate for free at the outdoor ice rink at Atkinson's Park in Ketchum.

Learn about local history

Meander through the hallways of the elegant Sun Valley Lodge and enjoy hundreds of photos that capture the

history and elegance of this unique destination. Celebrities such as Gary Cooper, Clark Gable, Lucille Ball, Marilyn Monroe, and members of the Kennedy family have enjoyed the luxury and hospitality of the grand lodge. Make a day of it and have a casual brunch on the terrace while watching ice skaters swirl around the outdoor rink, and sip a cocktail and listen to live jazz in the Duchin Lounge, a favorite historical spot for socializing and dancing.

While in downtown Ketchum, don't miss the Ketchum/Sun Valley Heritage & Ski Museum, which features exhibits on Ernest Hemingway, Native American heritage in the area, and the history of skiing, with costumes and ski equipment from the past 100 years.

Ride a sleigh to dinner

A most memorable Sun Valley experience is riding through the forest in a classic horse-drawn sleigh

to dinner at the rustic Trail Creek Cabin. The jingling of sleigh bells, the crunching of snow under heavy hooves, the clear winter night as you glide through the snow, all topped off with an exquisite dinner in a rustic historic hunting lodge, creates an evening to treasure.

Getting around town

No car? No problem. Mountain Rides offers a free around-town bus service that connects the areas in Ketchum and Sun Valley, including Warm Springs and River Run lift access to Bald Mountain. Mountain Rides also provides a Down Valley service making several daily trips from Sun Valley/Ketchum to Hailey and Bellevue to the south.

The Ketchum/Sun Valley area is a magical place to visit—so magical that many people fall in love with the town and never leave. In the words of some of the locals, "I came for the winter and stayed for the summer." ■

WHEN YOU GO

Sun Valley / Ketchum Chamber of Commerce:

800-634-3347

www.visitsunvalley.com

Mountain Rides: Free in-town transportation.

www.mountainrides.org

Sun Valley Resort: Lift tickets, equipment rental, lessons, Nordic & Snowshoe Center.

www.sunvalley.com

Sun Valley Ice Rink

www.bit.ly/rarpdi

Sleigh ride dinners

www.sunvalley.com

Dog sled rides

www.allsunvalley.com

Ketchum Sun Valley Historical Society Heritage & Ski Museum

www.ksvhistoricalsociety.org

Pioneer Saloon: Rustic saloon in downtown Ketchum featuring steaks, prime rib, seafood, ribs, a full bar, and a lively crowd.

208-726-3139 | www.pioneersaloon.com

Grumpy's: Don't try calling for directions because Grumpy's doesn't have a phone, but they do have hearty burgers, wings, fries, and 32-ounce schooners of beer. No credit cards.

Sawtooth Club: Natural mesquite cooking, fine wines and cocktails.

208-726-5233 | www.sawtoothclub.com

Roosevelt Grille: Classic ski town bar and grill.

208-726-0051 | www.rooseveltgrille.com

Ketchum Grill: Fine dining in the 1885 Ed Williams House.

208-726-4660 | www.ketchumgrill.com

Ciro Restaurant and Wine Bar

208-727-1800 | www.cirosunvalley.com

Christina's Restaurant: Authentic Tuscan cooking by Christina Ceccatelli.

208-726-4499

www.cristinasofsunvalley.com

Sun Valley Lodge: Sunday brunch at the lodge is considered by many to be the Northwest's finest.

No reservations.

www.sunvalley.com