



Morning powder at WinterFest

VANTAGE POINT

Gay Après

Winter sports fanatic SCOTT HOLMAN loves cold men, slippery slopes, and vacations filled with ups and downs

I have long been a ski freak, but now that I live in Manhattan I need to ski, to trade in grimy concrete for pristine powder and diesel fumes for the scent of pine. For many years it seemed to me that skiing was an activity that some gay people did, but never collectively; skiing was not a gay activity.

Enter gay ski week. My first was the daddy of them all, Aspen, Colo., over a decade ago. I was crammed into a tiny room with my best friend. We packed ourselves into every event venue with hot gay guys, regal queens drenched in fur, and sporty lesbians who were just as curious as I was to see who would win the downhill (literally and figuratively) drag ski race. I loved it. I booked my next gay ski week—and many more since then—immediately after returning home.

In Whistler, British Columbia, I did what all the good gay boys do: I went directly from a day on the mountain to après-ski. We partied at 6,069 feet in the mountaintop Roundhouse Lodge, which was hosting the night's soiree. By the time I was downing my third martini, a roomful of bundled-up butch guys were wobbling precariously in their ski boots and falling all over each other. But the real fun was on the gondola ride to the lodge, reserved exclusively to transport gay revelers—and thus filled with shivering hotties who, despite the chill, just had to be scantily clad.

In Telluride, Colo., I found my home away from home, and I return each winter to reunite with friends old and new. Tucked into a fold in nearly 14,000-foot mountains, the historic setting couldn't be more rustic; plus the pace of gay ski week is less harried than at the bigger resorts, the slopes a bit less crowded. I was ready to nest. And recruit.

"No way. Black people don't ski," my slope-resistant African-American boyfriend muttered in New York. "It's in our rule book." A bit of arm-twisting and a plane ride later, he had strapped on his first pair of skis, taken lessons, and was having a blast...at least until he tackled a trail a diamond above his beginner skill level, in subzero temps and whiteout conditions. We're still thawing him out.

He is living proof that even nonskiers love gay ski week. (A little too much, perhaps; the giant eagle sculpture made from elk horns that he scoped out in a Telluride gallery—with a wingspan wider than our tiny Manhattan condo—appeared to be a fantastic find, until we got it home.) The locals love it too; one White Night party left a pair of resident desperate housewives so overcome by the number of hot men on the dance floor that they grabbed hold of my partner and me and wouldn't let go. We eventually gave them the slip; we had other plans. ❖

Events With Altitude

The lowdown on the chilly snow circuit from California to Canada

February 1-8

WinterPride

The Whistler, British Columbia, event attracts nearly 3,000 revelers (80% men) to the tidy, swank ski resort about two hours north of gay-popular Vancouver. Plan on the Mr. Gay World Competition, themed dance parties (including some ladies-only nights), zip-line canopy tours, snowmobile trips, a fashion show, and culinary courses. GayWhistler.com

February 13-16

Winter Explosion

This year is the 15th anniversary of the largest and longest-running African-American LGBT winter event of its kind, with more than 600 attendees converging on New York's Hudson Valley Resort and Spa (near New Paltz) over Presidents' Day weekend. It's OK to come just for the shows (Fantasia performs this year), film festival, charity balls, and indoor beach parties—only about one quarter of the participants are skiers. WinterExplosion.com

February 21-28

Telluride Gay Ski Week

More casual and low-key than Aspen's ski week, Telluride, Colo., draws a young and laid-back crowd of about 1,500 (with a smattering of gay celebs), including a lot of returning devotees for the annual Oscar Night T-Bag party, sleigh ride dinner, torchlight parade, and White Night party. TellurideGaySkiWeek.com

March 1-8

Lake Tahoe WinterFest

One of the granddaddy ski weeks (since 1996), this no-attitude happening includes access to six ski areas and lodging right on the postcard-perfect Lake Tahoe (California side), drawing in a tight-knit community of friends and newcomers, mostly in their 30s and 40s, for parties, a concert, a paddleboat lake cruise, book signings, and the OutLaugh Festival. LakeTahoeWinterFest.com

—Matt Link

Pink-plumed skiers strike a pose during WinterPride.



FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF WINTERFEST; MIHAIL; TATIANA/WHISTLER.COM